VARIA II

A rule for *z-deletion in Irish?*

Common Celtic *zh, zd* and *zg* gave *dh, d, dz* in Old Irish (e.g., McCone 1996, 98; Watkins 1999, 540–3). The standard examples are:

- the personal name *Tadh* vs. Gaul. *Tasgillus*.
- *medg* ‘whey’ vs. MLat. *mesgus* (from Gaulish).
- *odh* ‘knob, lump’ vs. Gr. ὀδη «hip».
- *nei* ‘nest’ < PIE *nizdos* ‘id’.

This means that *z* before a voiced stop developed into a voiced dental fricative originally. The early Ogam-Irish name *TASEGAGNI* (M 28. Church Clara, Co. Kilkenny; = /tazgaynl/ with anaptyctic vowel; see Ziegler 1994, 234), a diminutive formation from the later name *Tadg*, indicates that the change *z* > *d* must have occurred relatively late in the prehistory of Irish and cannot have been an early Insular Celtic innovation (pace Watkins 1999, 540–3). The Proto-Irish cluster of a voiced dental fricative and a voiced dental was, in a further step, delimited to a single voiced dental stop, obeying a general Irish rule of delenition of homorganic sounds. Thurneysen (GO! 134) implies that the rule *z* > *d* was restricted to stressed syllables only. According to him, *z* showed a different outcome after unstressed vowels: before *g*, *z* supposedly became *r*; before *d*, it was dropped altogether. The remaining single *d* was then affected by lenition in the normal way. Thurneysen cites no example for *"zg* in this position (in all likelihood there are none). In this article it will be shown that Thurneysen’s examples for this minor Irish sound change, which I will call *z-deletion* in unstressed syllables, are not conclusive, and a further possible instance not mentioned by Thurneysen will be discussed.

The idea of a change of unstressed *"zg* > *rg* was without doubt suggested by the rhotacism of *z* > *r* in the prehistories of Latin and the Germanic languages, but rhotacism is otherwise unknown in the phonological systems of the old and medieval Celtic languages (for sporadic rhotacism in Breton see Jackson 1967, 534, 663–4; late Cornish also shows rare instances of it, according to Anders Jørgensen, pers. comm.). Thurneysen has only a single example for *"zg* > *rg*. The weak *i*-verb *dobidci* ‘to shoot, cast, hurl’ < *di-be/izi*- and the *a*-stem noun *bedg* ‘start, spring, leap, bound’ are derived

1 The term ‘z-deletion’ does not cover the alleged development *"zg* > *rg*, but, as will be shown below, Thurneysen’s single example for it is to be explained differently anyway.

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from a base *bezg- or *bizg- without further etymology. The prototonic stem allomorph of the verb is * dibairg-. Also found in the verbal noun * dibairciud. Instead of taking this as a phonological alternation δ - > η, this verb is widely and convincingly regarded as displaying stem suppletion (VKG 1:88; LEIA B-26; Schrijver 1995, 55-6; Schulze-Thulin 2000, 158; Schulze-Thulin 2001, 120; Veselinovic 2003: 167; also noted as an alternative in GOI 134), the prototonic stem being provided by the root *bezg-<PIE *bhergh2 'high'. This root is attested in the required meaning in Welsh bwrw 'to throw, cast' < causative *borgejei- 'to raise, make high'. The different quality of the b in, for example, 2sg. impv. dibairg < causative * diborgi against dibhidi with either radical e or i (which would entail palatalisation of the b), proves that we are looking at a different stem formation altogether and that this cannot be an instance of simple *ezg > *ig in an underlying root *beizg-. The early spelling of the verbal noun dibairciud (ML. 58c6, 99d1) with medial i against later dibairciud, dibraiciud, etc. with ai is not necessarily indicative of a different ablaut grade *-bezg-, but may represent non-palatalised b, i.e. < * diborgetis, since word-internally i may stand after a non-palatalised consonant (GOI 64 §102.5). Finally, deuterotonic verbal forms where the root *beizg- has been moved out of the stressed position without being replaced by *borg-<as in * dorrubile (Ml. 40d9) and * dorrubid (Ml. 58c3), are not valid counter-examples against Thurneysen's formulation of the rule, because these forms could conceivably be due to inner-paradigmatic levelling.

For *zd > *d in unstressed syllables Thurneysen offers two examples. One is the 1pl. form don-infetdam (Wb. 14d32) of the verb don-infet 'to inspire', and its verbal-noun forms tinfed, tinphed, tinpheth 'inspiration, aspiration', a compound of Proto-Celtic *suzid-e/o- 'to blow' (Schumacher 2004, 611-2), viz. *tu-ande-suzid-d-. Thurneysen does not mention that 3sg. forms with the expected unlimited voiced dental are actually attested, viz. tinfed-som (Wb. 4b4), don-infet (Wb. 4b3), dund-infet (Ml. 41d17); as well as fris-infet 'he blows against' (Ml. 28b8). In the 3pl. don-infetf (Eriu 2, 110 §29) and in the 3sg. preterite doninfed (Meyer 1894, 6.173, 110, 169.18), doninfid (Ml. 96c7) and doninfish (Tepp. 2, 7), Thurneysen's predicted fricative is found. Other attested forms of the paradigm (subjunctive, preterite passive) are not probative. With its alternation, 3sg. ind. pres. ~ /d/ vs. ~ /th/ everywhere else, don-infet conforms fully to the pattern of a small group of strong verbs in Old Irish with roots ending in a dental, like do-inbhat 'to show, display' < *genid- 'to relate', doinnmhthir 'to serve' < *ret- 'to run', etc. (class S1b in McConnell 1997, 29-30).

The semantic motivation for the Welsh verb may be: 'to start up' → 'to make a start at something' → 'to venture, dare'. For the phonological development, compare MW megod 'wheny' < *meθθo- < *meθθo- < *medi- < *mezgo- with Old Irish miedy, Gallo-Lat. mezgo.

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2 Perhaps related to PC *brt- 'finger' and derived via the addition of a suffix or second compound member, i.e. *brtg-, then simplification of complex clusters, i.e. *brtg-, and finally voicing assimilation, i.e. *bicg- For the process, compare Old Irish adh 'knot' < *zθθo- < *σθθo- related to PIE *brt- 'bone'. Be that as it may, pace LEIA B-26, it is quite likely that heidido 'to venture, dare, presume, defy' is the Welsh cognate of Old Irish hēdg. The semantic motivation for the Welsh verb may be: 'to start up' → 'to make a start at something' → 'to venture, dare'. For the phonological development, compare MW megod 'wheny' < *meθθo- < *meθθo- < *medi- < *mezgo- with Old Irish miedy, Gallo-Lat. mezgo.

3 The voiceles ence of innér.
These owe their extraordinary pattern to a Primitive Irish sound change, whereby the vowel of the final syllable between two identical consonants was syncopated if the syllable was at least two positions removed from the stress (McCone 1996, 105-6). The two identical consonants then merged in a geminate sound that was not liable to be affected by lenition or loss of final consonants. While the final sound of the 3sg. in this class of verbs must originally have been a voiceless stop, e.g. *tuambhi-ði-rebel > *tuambhi-di-rem > *tuambhi-di-ret > *tuimbhi'ret, it eventually became voiced, shortly before the Old Irish period, by the extensive voicing of voiceless consonants at the unstressed word boundary (McCone 1996, 132-4). This resulted in do-immi thúre > do-im'th'r'd ('serves'). The 3sg. do-infet with final /ð/ may, thus, have served as a pivot for drawing the whole verb into the pattern of class S1b. Of course, the reverse is also true. If the verb had root-final /ð/ from z-deletion to start with, it would inflect as S1b in any case. It is not possible to determine which of the two scenarios is correct. It should also be noted that the W2 verb ar-petti, airfiti, verbal noun airfioidh/airfitiud ‘to entertain, play music’, a compound of soitéd ‘to blow’ from the same root *suéit:ed-e/o- with full grade, shows no sign of z-deletion.

Thurneysen’s other example for *zd > *d is sockhaid ‘multitude, crowd, host’, which he analyses as a compound of so- ‘good’ and cuit ‘share, part, portion’, the latter going back to *kizh–, cp. W pekh, Bret. pezh ‘thing’, Gall-Lat. petia ‘piece of land’. The suggestion is semantically attractive, but the derivation raises some questions that need to be addressed. Compounds with so- as the first member and a disyllabic base as second member fall into two formal groups. A few compounds regularly syncopate the first vowel of the second compound member, e.g. sochaidgh ‘multitude’, sochan ‘well-born, of good family’ < so- + tonge ‘tongue’, or sochuí ‘good luck, fortune’ < so- + tócaid ‘fortune, chance’. This is the expected and unmarked behaviour. Nothing prevents us from regarding these formations as old. Most of these compounds, however, do not show the expected syncope, e.g. sochaid ò ‘well-born, of good family’ < so- + cóna ‘family’, or somlís ‘very sweet’ < so- + milis ‘sweet’. This behaviour can be explained in two different ways, both of which cast doubt on the derivation of sockhaid from cuit.

One explanation is that they are old, i.e. pre-syncope, compounds, in which the full form of the second member was re-introduced by analogy with the uncompounded base word after syncope had taken place regularly. In order for this explanation to work with sockhaid, this would mean that the relationship between the base, which at that time must have been *kóud(d), and the derivative *kóud:z was still felt, which seems unlikely in view of the absence of a regular alternation rule between *d(d) and *ð in nominal morphology. If, on the other hand, as the second explanation would have it, sockhaid is a post-syncope compound, then we are confronted with a similar problem. The corollary would be that there existed at that
time in the language an active rule of $^{*}d(d) > ^{*}d$ after unstressed vowels, a possibility that is positively disproved by numerous words with retained $t < ^{*}d(d) < ^{*}m$ in that position, e.g. sochraite ‘the state of having good friends’, argat ‘silver’, námait ‘enemies (gen. pl.)’, etc. An alternative explanation could be to assume that in post-syncope Irish $^{*}d$ had not yet been deleted to $^{*}d(d)$, or that $^{*}d$ as such was still retained, and that the first element of these clusters was deleted. Neither of these possibilities is in any way attractive or plausible. The only way to salvage an etymological relationship between sochuidhe and cuird is to assume an early adjectival compound $^{*}so-kezdei$ ‘having or consisting of a good portion = many, numerous’ with z-deletion > $^{*}so-kezi$. This would have developed regularly to $^{*}sochuid$, without being affected by syncope. It must then be assumed that in post-syncope Irish, an abstract sochuidhe was derived from this adjective, after the pattern of sogar ‘profitable, fruitful’ → sogaire ‘dutifulness, respect’, or sonairst ‘strong’ → sonaire ‘strength’. The chief drawback of this explanation is that an adjective $^{*}sochuid$ is not attested in our sources.

Clearly, an alternative etymology needs to be considered. LEIA S-159 does not even mention Thurneysen’s suggestion, but cites Pedersen (VKG II 205), who proposed a compound $^{*}so-k’oifja$, the second element of which he compares with Bret. pet ‘how much, how many?’ < *k’oifjo-, Gr. τοσο-, Lat. quot, etc. This explanation runs up against the same difficulties as the derivation from cuird: if it were an old compound syncope would be expected; if it were a recent formation the derivational base is synchronically lacking in Old Irish. Therefore I would propose as a third etymology a compound of so+ cuaid ‘vessel, cup’ < Pre-Celtic *kaputo- (cf. Schrijver 1997, 294-5 for related forms) + abstract suffix $^{*}-ja$. The apparent non-syncope of sochuidhe would be regular in that case, given that cuaid was disyllabic. Semantically, the compound would have referred to ‘a good cupful’. A comparable development from an expression for an undefined mass of things to a group of people, although not an exact parallel, is found in Germ Haufen, which can have the double meaning of ‘heap’ and ‘host’.

In addition to Thurneysen’s three examples for z-deletion, a possible fourth instance has been brought to my attention by Anders Jørgensen (pers. comm.). Bret. evezh ‘attention, heed’ can be compared with Lat. audid ‘to hear’ and Gr. αἰσθάνομαι ‘to perceive’ and traced back to a PIE compound $^{*}h_euis-d’h_j’, ‘to render clearly’, cp. Ved. avij, Avest. ónti ‘evidently’ < $^{*}h_euisub. The intermediate Celtic verbal stem $^{*}agizd-(ii/o/o)$- ‘to pay attention’, with the application of Thurneysen’s z-deletion rule, would yield an Old Irish W2 verb $^{*}aidu$ (or perhaps $^{*}uida$) with u-infection before the bilabial glide?). From this, a deverbal noun $^{*}aid (uid?)$ could be derived. It is not possible to derive the noun directly from a pre-form like $^{*}agizd$; instead a form like $^{*}uid$ with hiatus would be expected. Indeed, in Middle Irish the noun oid, aid, oíd, uid ‘heed, attention, observation’ is found, continued in Modern Irish by oídh, óidh, úidh. Beside this, remnants of a verb $^{*}oidu$ are attested, a verb which DIL O 118.23 in turn analyses as denotational from $^{*}oid$. LEIA O-16 knows no etymology for oíd. Aside from ao classical Modern Ir oíit–ait–aoit taiosch cróiseach ‘javelin, s the first two directl < $^{*}niedutako-, croi formation and is the reflexes of toeiseach: aoisdh continue an oit.’

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\text{old. Aside from aoidh, etc., McManus (1994, 349) mentions three other}
\text{classical Modern Irish words that show the remarkable triple alternation}
\text{\textit{oi-oi-} -o; toiseach/tuiseabhtuiseach 'leading, leader', cruiseach/croiusech/}
\text{croiseach 'javelin, spear', faoigfhdh/faoigfhdh/faoigfhdh 'will leave'. Of these,}
\text{the first two directly continue words with an original i-diphthong (toiseach}
\text{< *tiuedaiko-, croisech < *kruvesikt); faoigfhdh, etc. is a relatively late}
\text{formation and is therefore irrelevant here. The pattern of the Modern Irish}
\text{reflexes of toiseach and croisech renders it virtually certain that aoidh, aoidh,}
\text{aoidh continue an Old Irish noun with i-diphthong.}
\text{It is noteworthy that both toiseach and croisech ultimately continue for-
\text{mations that at some stage must have contained a sequence *-uide-}. This}
\text{could be coincidence, but the observation may merit further investigation.}
\text{It may, in fact, be the case that there was no general merger of the diph-
\text{thongs ai, oi and \textit{ai}. Be that as it may, this question is not fully relevant for}
\text{the present etymology since it is also possible to derive the Celtic and the}
\text{Latin words from \textit{o}-grade *h\textit{oyis-d\textit{ph}}\textit{h}-, which would yield an erstwhile}
\text{diphthong *ai in Early Old Irish in any case. The Greek verb would then}
\text{only be a distant cognate. Returning to the question of the reflex of *zd}
\text{in Irish, however, we may note that this example is not absolutely proba-
\text{tive either, because theoretically the Celtic and Latin words could also}
\text{be derived from a pre-form *h\textit{oyis-dph}}\textit{h}- with the stem of the first}
\text{compounded member without s (again, the Greek word would then be a}
\text{more distant relative). Bret. evezh could then owe its \textit{s} to the analogy of}
\text{the frequent denominal hay-verb \textit{eveshaat} 'to observe'. However, a unitary}
\text{pre-form *h\textit{oyis-dph}}\textit{h}- for all three language groups is preferable. In any}
\text{case, the comparison of Bret. evezh with Irish oid is semantically satisfying,}
\text{but it requires a series of additional assumptions and intermediate steps for}
\text{which no unequivocal support exists in the sources.}
\text{We may now conclude that of the four possible examples for a specia-
\text{l treatment of *z in unstressed syllables, the only example for *zg, viz.}
\text{do-indei vs. dibarcind, has been wrongly assessed and has to be omitted. All}
\text{other examples involve *zd, which, according to Thurneysen's idea, via *zd}
\text{would have given *}b\text{ by a special dissimilation rule rather than by a gen-
\text{eral loss of *z in the position before a voiced stop. Of these examples, one,}
\text{viz. tintol, etc., is inconclusive, as it may have been influenced by a class of}
\text{formally similar verbs, and in the case of the other two, scochaid and}
\text{oid, the proposed etymologies with *zd are not certain. In both cases, the}
\text{etymologies involving *zd are semantically attractive, but face more or less}
\text{grave formal problems. With the available material, Thurneysen's rule for}
\text{the treatment of z in unstressed syllables can therefore neither be proved}
\text{nor disproved. Perhaps some day another lexical item can be identified that}
\text{will settle the question one way or the other.}

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