

## TWO ETYMOLOGIES

### 1. *áú* 'away'

D. A. Binchy has surely defined for us the force in its original use of *co nómad n-áú* within the bounding framework of the *derbfhine*.<sup>1</sup> In referring to Thurneysen he calls *áú* the 'original form of the preposition *ó* . . . used for the conjugated preposition + dative sg. m. and n.',<sup>2</sup> and he cites *GOI*,<sup>3</sup> 524 § 847, where this shape of *ó*, *úa* would be 'possibly retained as an adverb'. Later Binchy speaks of 'the ninth man from him'.<sup>4</sup> He compares *áú* in this use to *and* and *for*.<sup>5</sup> I have no quarrel with any of this; and, as always, I can only admire and feel gratitude to Binchy for the clear and penetrating light he has regularly shed on difficult, vexed, gratuitously muddled, and important problems of language and history. He has left the Irish phase of this riddle well scoured. I wish simply by this note pedantically to insist on certain points which this valuable archaic form documents and which may be added to our dossier of Indo-European grammar attested in Celtic.

While forms such as *for* (OWelsh *guar*, *guor*, *GMW*,<sup>6</sup> 188 § 205 n. (a), Breton *war*, Vannetais *ar*), *fo*<sup>L</sup> (early Welsh *o*, *GMW*, 205 § 231 n. 2),<sup>7</sup> *a*<sup>h</sup> (Latin *ex*), *eter* (Cornish *yntre*, Latin *inter*, Sanskrit *antár*), *i*<sup>N</sup> (Welsh, *y*<sup>N</sup> Greek *ἐν*), *tar* (Sanskrit *tiráḥ*, Avestan *tarō* < \**tr̥sés*, i.e. \**tr̥H<sub>a</sub>és*, and *tri*<sup>L</sup> (perhaps \**tr(e)ri*, i.e. \**treH<sub>e</sub>i* ~ *triH<sub>e</sub>*) developed into simple grammatical prepositions, Indo-European adverbial particles as well as derived<sup>8</sup> or inflected<sup>9</sup> forms took their places as suppletive 3 sg. non-feminine (unmarked) members of the inflected ('conjugated') paradigm of the prepositions. Thus these forms of the 'conjugated prepositions' never ceased in Celtic to be adverbs, continuing their Indo-European adverbial syntax regardless of their source morphology. I have written about *and* in this connexion;<sup>10</sup> I have suggested that *de* is to

<sup>1</sup>The original meaning of *co nómad náú* (*nó*); linguists v. historians?', *Celtica* 16 (1984) 1–12.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*, 6.

<sup>3</sup>R. Thurneysen, *A grammar of Old Irish* (Dublin 1946).

<sup>4</sup>*Celtica* 16 (1984) 10.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid.*, 6.

<sup>6</sup>D. Simons Evans, *A grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin 1964).

<sup>7</sup>For detail on the British cognates of these two prepositions and prefixes see E. P. Hamp, *Studia Celtica* 7 (1972) 155–6.

<sup>8</sup>3 sg. *riam* 'before (it)' must be, as *GOI* 528 § 851 teaches us, \**pr̥samō* 'foremost'.

<sup>9</sup>In 3 sg. *etir* 'between (it)' we may have a convergence of \**ent(é)r-em* or \**ent(é)r-id* 'between him/it' (as *GOI* 283–4 implies) and an old locative sg. \**entér-i* (:Sanskrit *antarā*) or \**enter-ei* (if thematic; cf. Sanskrit *ántara-*) 'in the interval' > 'in between; at all'.

<sup>10</sup>In 'Albanian *ështëë*', *American Indian and Indo-European studies: papers in honor of Madison S. Beeler* (ed. K. Klar, M. Langdon, S. Silver, The Hague 1980) 337–46.

be derived from \**dʰ(-)*;<sup>11</sup> and I have stated my position on the status of the elements that have since become prepositions.<sup>12</sup>

Thus an Indo-European particle, which could become a preverb when adjoined to a verb nucleus (*do-n-formaig* and *format*, with \**wor* < \**uer* < \**upér*) or a preposition to a noun phrase (*for a ciunn*, *mis for bliadain*, *co n-etarceirt*, *cum magna fide*), or a postposition (Latin *magno cum periculo*, *quoad* = Oscan **adpúd**, Umbrian **asam-a(ř)** 'to/at the altar', **-ku(m) -co(m)** 'at'), or a conjunction when adjoined to a clause (Armenian *ew* 'and', Sanskrit *ápi* 'also' = Greek *ἐπί*, Latin *ante* = English *and*, perhaps OIr. *air*<sup>(L)</sup> 'for' as a conjunction *GOI*, 559–60 § 906), or a captured grammatical clitic or affix (OIr. *ro*, *Ver-cingetorix*), could also remain an independent adverbial constituent. Of course, such a constituent could make up a part of a larger phrasal structure, as the projected initial nasalization of *co nómad n-áú* makes plain.

In this sense, following Binchy, I would equally render this phrase 'until the ninth [man] away', i.e. 'off', or 'removed'. In the later bleached meaning, even, of 'for ages' or 'forever', this adverbial conserved its value (roughly 'on') to the vanishing point, and shows up in Thurneysen's [Binchy's and Bergin's] glosses (*GOI*, 524 § 847) 'from him on' and 'from that on'. Additionally to Binchy, therefore, I would delete from Thurneysen's note (loc. laud.) the word 'possibly'.

I would also see the *-d* of (*h*)*úad* (*huaid*) as a genuine inheritance in the grammar, and not by analogy with *and*, *indi*, etc. I take this 3rd person *-d* (also in *samlaid* and in the Welsh second conjugation) to be cognate with the Hittite dental adverbial ending.<sup>13</sup>

Our forms of *ó/úa*<sup>L</sup> are therefore pure Indo-European, with syntax suffering appreciable attrition only in pre-verbal nexus.

It is now time to consider the shape of this particle. It is immediately clear that ⟨n-⟩*áú* conserves the stressed configuration seen in *áú* 'ear' and *áue* 'grandson'; cf. *GOI*, 44 § 69. It is not at all clear that it is necessary to have an \**s* following in order to preserve an earlier \**au* in this rather sparsely occurring diphthong; cf. *ibid.*, 40 § 60 and 44 § 69. We might rather see *áú* as the earlier Old Irish outcome of main stressed \**au*, and *ó* (merging with \**ou*) as the similar outcome of clitic \**au*. This would accord perfectly with the attested forms of our free-standing particle. Then by analogy the *ó* vocalism would have been transported to the stressed 'conjugated' forms, as well as to the compound *húa-béla* and its descendants (a type which Sanskrit attests; note *avapána-* 'drinking place', *ávapanna-* 'fallen down').

<sup>11</sup> *American Journal of Philology* 101 (1980) 190–93.

<sup>12</sup> *Ériu* 33 (1982) 180–81. See additionally the recent searching discussions of Paul Russell, *Transactions of the Philological Society* 86/22 (1988) 144–72, and *Ériu* 39 (1988) 95–126.

<sup>13</sup> See extensively on such adverbs and local cases the pair of articles by Philo Houwink ten Cate and by Folke Josephson, *Revue Hittite et Asiatique* 24 (1966) 123–32 and 133–52.

In any event, we seem now to be assured that the background of our etymon is *\*au*, and not *\*apo* > *\*ao*, which we might in any case assume to have given OIr. †*ǎ*. The cognacy of Latin *au-ferō* and Slavic *u* 'from' now appears to be beyond doubt. The Indo-European particle in question is *\*H<sub>a</sub>eu*; the Sanskrit preverb *áva* is an extended form.

This fits well, too, with our British evidence. Welsh *o* 'from' goes naturally in its phonology with a clitic reduction from *\*au*. Then Welsh *a* (*GMW*, 37 § 39) 'of' and Cornish and Breton *a* are best credited, as I have claimed,<sup>14</sup> to *\*apo*.<sup>15</sup> K. H. Jackson, *Historical phonology of Breton* (Dublin 1967) 312 § 426, then, requires correction in this respect.

## 2. *ní* '(any)thing'

*DIL*<sup>16</sup> N-41 observes for *ní* (n. and m.) 'a thing' that the 'transition from indef. pron. to subst. is gradual' and begins as early as Old Irish in the glosses with *mór ní* 'a great thing' = 'greatly'. The account continues, 'Preceded by indef. pron. adj.: *na ní ararogart som* "anything which he has forbidden" Wb. 5 c 23. *na nní robu thol dó do frithoircnib* "whatever injuries he wished (to do)" Ml. 33 a 18. . . . The transition was further aided by confusion with the OIr. demonstr. pron. *í*, in neut. with art. *a n-í* (*siu, sin*) "this, that" which was later analysed as *a-ní*; *aní* is common in Mid.Ir. both as demonstr. and introducing rel. clause, being used indifferently with the forms *anní, in ní*'. The observations of the material here are useful, but the reasoning on the transition from indefinite pronoun to noun is flawed. The principal error lies in negligence of conservative Irish (and Scottish Gaelic) phonetics and phonology; so too *LÉIA*<sup>17</sup> N-14 s.v. *ní*.

We must first make clear what we understand as the phonological (the phonetic and morphophonemic) shapes of the relevant forms. The indefinite pronoun should have been [nɪ:] *Ní<sup>(h)</sup>*. The ultimate noun must have been [nɪ:] *Ní*. Articulated, this became [ə'nɪ:] *a<sup>N</sup> Ní* (neut.) and [in'nɪ:] or [ə(n)'nɪ:] *in Ní* (masc.); the accusative of the masculine was [in'nɪ:] or [ə(n)'nɪ:] *in<sup>N</sup> Ní<sup>N</sup>*. All of these noun-phrases could have sounded alike [ə'nɪ:] or [ə'nɪ:]; the masculine forms may have been heard as [ɪ'nɪ:] or [ɪ'nɪ:]. One can imagine that the indefinite pronoun and non-definite noun were [nɪ:], while the definite nouns were sometimes [ɲ'nɪ:].

We know that eclipsis before vowel resulted in a weak nasal. Therefore the demonstrative neuter (employing the article) must have been [ə'ní:]<sup>18</sup> *a<sup>N</sup>-í* 'this/that object/matter'; the demonstrative masculine

<sup>14</sup> *Études Celtiques* 15 (1976-7) 191, 18 (1981) 113.

<sup>15</sup> In view of Greek ἄπο, Sanskrit *ápa*, Hittite *appa*, Albanian *hap* 'open(s)', this must be IE *\*h<sub>2</sub>épo*.

<sup>16</sup> *Dictionary of the Irish language* (Dublin 1913-76).

<sup>17</sup> J. Vendryes et al., *Lezique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien* (Paris and Dublin 1959-).

<sup>18</sup> For a clear perception of the difference today between /N'/ and /n'/ the dialect of Colonsay is excellent.

[iɲ<sup>h</sup>t'i:] *iNt*-*i* or *iNd<sup>h</sup>*-*i* 'this/that one' is not essential to our argument. We see immediately that no native speaker could have confused [ə'ni:] *a<sup>N</sup>*-*i* 'this/that thing' and [ə'ɲ(i)i:] *a<sup>N</sup>* *Ni* 'the (this/that) thing'. Only a non-native or a modern speaker of an acculturated variety could miss the distinction; the difference in tension, pressure, length (nasal duration), and palatal contact must have been substantial, noticeable, even visible.<sup>19</sup>

Thurneysen shows (*GOI*, 310 § 489b) that he grasped all this by noting the alternatives *an*-*i*, the indefinite pronoun *ní* 'anything, nothing' and the combination *nanní*, i.e. *na<sup>h</sup>*-*Ni<sup>(h)</sup>*; and by suggesting that *anní* *MI*. 90 b 13 is a hybrid form developed from these. The weakness, however, of Thurneysen's argument is that it is incomplete. We wish to know what the conditions were for such a 'hybridization'. It is preferable not to say simply that *na<sup>h</sup>* *Ni* got in the way of *a<sup>h</sup>* *ní* to produce *a<sup>h</sup>* *Ní*, just as we have avoided imagining that *a<sup>h</sup>* *ní* reminded speakers of *a<sup>h</sup>* *Ní*. In fact, the latter proposal at least has on its side a shared syntactic noun-phrase structure.

I think there is a much simpler explanation of the genesis of *ní* 'thing' that lies to hand. We must start from the given that Old Irish had the locution *na-nní na ní* 'anything whatever' (*GOI*, 310 § 489 b), glossed with a comma 'anything, whatever' in *DIL* N-5, [nə'ɲ(i)i:] *na<sup>h</sup>*-*Ni<sup>(h)</sup>*. The internal syntax of this expression seems to be in origin a sort of reduplication, *na<sup>h</sup>* adjectival 'any' (*GOI*, 309-310 § 489b) + *ní* 'anything' (*GOI*, 309 § 489a), perhaps < \**ne<sup>h</sup>*-*ní* < \**nek<sup>w</sup>*' + *nē*( ) (cf. Thurneysen's perplexity *GOI*, 311 § 491). Synchronically this sequence in Old Irish was an adjectival plus a pronoun, perhaps with a heightened value 'anything at all' vs the simple *ní* 'anything.'

The emergence of the neuter noun *ní* is correlated with the frequency of the grammatically neuter concatenation *na-nní* in Old Irish. The appearance of the noun *nech* 'a person' (*DIL* N-18), not dealt with at all in *LÉIA*, only in Middle Irish matches the fact that such a syntactic concatenation was not exploited in anything like the same fashion in the masculine.

Now the construction of indefinite *nach/na<sup>h</sup>* + noun was perfectly regular in the grammar; cf. *GOI*, 309 § 489b, *DIL* N-4/5. So we find *cen na forcenn* *Wb*. 28 a 17 [ǵɛn nə 'fɔr'kɛn] *g'en<sup>L</sup>* *na<sup>h</sup>* *fork'an<sup>N</sup>* 'without any end'. It is clear then that at any time *na-nní* could have been reinterpreted as indefinite adjectival + noun. Thus in the phrase *na<sup>h</sup>* + *Ní* the second element was taken as a noun and the whole phrase was understood as 'any + thing'.

I assume that the Old Irish phrase *mór ní* was taken as a loose compound *mór<sup>L</sup>* *Ní* → *mór<sup>L</sup>* *ní*.

<sup>19</sup>Our insistence on careful reconstruction of hypothetical phonetics is not aimed at false realism or mime, but is to provide clear discutable criteria for the understanding and interpretation of graphs, syntaxes, and linguistic changes.

The vocalism of  $ni^{(h)}$  would appear to be related to the  $*\bar{e}$  of the Slavic indefinites in  $ně-$ . I find Lewis and Pedersen's 'loss of final *-od*' in  $*ne-k^u od$ <sup>20</sup> unmotivated, as well as being unexplanatory as a reconstruction.

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<sup>20</sup>*A concise comparative Celtic grammar* (Göttingen 1937 and 1961, repr. 1974) 233 § 382.