

ON THE PREHISTORY OF ASPECT AND TENSE IN OLD IRISH¹

THIS article deals with the prehistory and development of the Old Irish (OIr.) tense system, which is characterized by the following features: 1. syncretism of the Indo-European verbal categories aorist and perfect, which merge into a preterite as a narrative tense; 2. development and transformation of the inherited thematic imperfect; 3. production of a new perfect based on a syntagmatic aspect formation; 4. development and transformation of a future tense consisting of different allomorphic subclasses: (a) the late *f*-formation, whose historical background is unclear;² (b) subjunctives in prospective function;³ (c) Indo-European desiderative formations.⁴

The paper is arranged as follows: 1. *Aspect flexionnel*; 2. Syncretism of aorist and perfect; 3. *Aspect syntagmatique*; 4. *Aspect syntagmatique* > perfect/Mood. The subsequent development which took place in the course of the ninth century, when 'ro-forms come to be used in narrative also',⁵ is outside the scope of my article.

1. ASPECT FLEXIONNEL

The term *aspect flexionnel*, introduced by J. Holt,⁶ described a type of aspect whose components are formally characterized by the differentiation of stem formation.⁷ In Indo-European, *aspect flexionnel* is based on the opposition of perfective aorist and imperfective imperfect/present, while the perfect going back to an old diathesis is outside

¹I would like to thank Karin Hlaváček and Mícheál Ó Flaithearta for correcting my English.

²Cf. R. Thurneysen, *A grammar of Old Irish* (Dublin 1946) 398 § 637; C. Watkins, 'The origin of the *f*-future', *Ériu* 20 (1966) 67–81. M. Ó Flaithearta has drawn my attention also to E. G. Quin, 'The origin of the *f*-future: an alternative explanation', *Ériu* 29 (1978) 13–25.

³Cf. K. H. Schmidt, 'Konjunktiv und Futurum im Altirischen', *Studia Celtica* 1 (1966) 19–26.

⁴The archaisms of the Gaulish (Gaul.) inscription of Chamalières include three verbal forms of a Gaulish future in *sje-/sjo-*: *bissiet* 'he will split': **bheid*, **bhid-*; *pissiu mi* 'I shall see': OIr. *ad.cí* 'he sees' < *-*k^uis-e-t*; *toncnaman toncsiiontío* 'who will swear the oath' (K. H. Schmidt, 'On the reconstruction of Proto-Celtic', in *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies* (ed. G. W. MacLennan, Ottawa 1988) 231–48, p. 241; idem, 'Zur Rekonstruktion des Keltischen. Festlandkeltisches und inselkeltisches Verbum', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 41 (1986) 159–79, pp. 174–5. The Gaul. *sje-/sjo*-future has been identified as an equivalent of the Sanskrit (Skt) (and Old Iranian) future with possible reflexes in Baltic, Slavic and Greek (Gk). The evidence of this originally Proto-Celtic formation must be seen in the light of another archaic Celtic future formation, i.e. the reduplicated future of OIr., which has its exact equivalent in the Sanskrit desiderative (cf. Thurneysen, *Grammar*, 414–15 § 669).

⁵Thurneysen, *Grammar*, 341 § 530.

⁶*Études d'aspect* (Acta Jutlandica IX/2, København 1943).

⁷It must be added, however, that Holt's model for Greek, consisting of an aorist distinct from the opposition between a marked perfect and an unmarked present (*Études*, 32), must be rejected.

the opposition. In contrast to the imperfective imperfect/present stem, the aorist occupies the unmarked position of the binary aspect system,⁸ so that Meillet's definition of aspect in Classical Greek may also be applied to Indo-European:

Le thème de présent indique un procès considéré dans son développement, dans sa durée; le thème d'aoriste, le procès pur et simple: l'un peut être symbolisé par une ligne, l'autre par un point.⁹

In Indo-European, aspect is the nucleus of the later formed tense-system, as is proved by the so-called injunctive, a verbal category which is characterized by the lack of primary endings and augment; the use of the augment as a marker for the past tenses of the indicative is one of the most important isoglosses among the Eastern Indo-European languages Sanskrit (Skt), Iranian (Iran.), Greek (Gk), Armenian (Arm.) and Phrygian: present **bher-e-t-i*, imperfect **e-bher-e-t* (Gk *ἔφερε*, Skt *abharat*, Arm. *eber*) vs injunctive **bher-e-t*.¹⁰ As far as its function is concerned, Thurneysen defined the injunctive as follows: 'Es waren dies zwar schon reine verbalformen; aber sie bezeichneten nur die verbindung einer thätigkeit mit einer person, ohne rücksicht auf tempus und modus'.¹¹ This definition was later confirmed by K. Hoffmann in his synchronic investigation of the Vedic injunctive: 'Zeitstufenlosigkeit und Nicht-Bericht ("Erwähnung") sind demnach der Funktion des Injunktivs eigentümlich'.¹² The archaic injunctive category has been particularly well preserved in the context of the Indo-European prohibitive negation **mé*, Vedic *mā*, where it occurs either as a derivation of the aorist stem (the so-called *preventive*) or as a derivation of the present stem (the so-called *inhibitive*).¹³

⁸Cf. B. Comrie, *Aspect* (Cambridge 1976) 21.

⁹Cf. A. Meillet, *Introduction à l'étude comparative des langues indo-européennes* 5th ed. (Paris 1922; reissue, University of Alabama Press 1964) 249.

¹⁰The term *injunctivus* was coined by K. Brugmann, *Morphologische Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiet der indogermanischen Sprachen* III (Leipzig 1880), as a substitute for B. Delbrück's *unechter conjunctiv*; it originally served to designate 'arische indicative mit conjunctivischer bedeutung' (Brugmann, *Morphologische Untersuchungen* III, 1) in the sense of '*iniungere alicui officium* u. dgl., franz. *enjoindre*' (ibid., 2).

¹¹R. Thurneysen, 'Der indogermanische imperativ', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung [KZ]* 27 (1885) 172-82, p. 173.

¹²*Der Injunktiv im Veda* (Heidelberg 1967) 226. From a typological point of view, this 'Zeitstufenlosigkeit' may be compared with the gnomic function of the archaic *permansive* in Old Georgian; cf. G. Deeters, *Das kharthwelische Verbum* (Leipzig 1930) 111-12; K. H. Schmidt, 'On aspect and tense in Old Georgian', *Folia Slavica* 7 (1984) 290-302, pp. 292-3.

¹³The terms *Präventiv* and *Inhibitiv* were coined by H. Ammann, 'Die älteste Formen des Prohibitivsatzes im Griechischen und Lateinischen', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 45 (1927) 328-44, p. 328. On the prohibitive constructions in OIr. (*preventive* = *ní* + subjunctive; *inhibitive* = *ná* + imperative) see W. Meid, 'Die sprachliche Form des Prohibitivsatzes im Altirischen', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 29 (1964) 155-72.

E. Schwyzer used the term *'tempus' primitivum* as a substitute for *injunctive*: 'Im ältesten Indogermanischen mag es an "Tempora" nur das "Primitiv" . . . und das Perfekt gegeben haben. Mit Augment wurde das Primitiv zum "Präteritum"'.¹⁴ The *'tempus' primitivum* split into imperfect/present and aorist, the semantics of the verbal stem determining its use as an imperfect/present or as an aorist: e.g. imperfective aspect > imperfect/present (Gk $\xi\phi\alpha/\phi\alpha\tau\acute{\iota}$) vs perfective aspect > aorist (Gk $\xi\sigma\tau\alpha$, present $\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\iota$).¹⁵ In general, the aspectual semantics of an Indo-European verb is confirmed by several languages: e.g. perfective aspect > aorist: (a) Gk $\xi\sigma\tau\alpha$, Skt *asthāt*; (b) Gk (middle) $\xi\theta\epsilon\tau\omicron$, Skt *ádḥāt*, Arm. *ed*, Old Church Slavonic *dě*; (c) Gk (middle) $\xi\delta\omicron\sigma\omicron$, Skt *ádāt*, Arm. *et*, etc. Besides this, there is also some evidence for paradigmatic shift: e.g. imperfective aspect > imperfect/present: (a) **ebheret / *bhereti* (Gk, Skt), **bhereto* (imperfect in OIr. *bered*) > aorist (Arm.), (b) **eġeneto* (Skt *ájanata* > aorist (Gk $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron$) etc. Consequently, the development of Schwyzer's *'tempus' primitivum* implies three different stages of the Indo-European tense system: (1) perfect vs *'tempus' primitivum*, (2) *'tempus' primitivum* > perfective aspect vs imperfective aspect, (3) perfective aspect vs imperfective aspect > aorist vs imperfect/present. As a matter of fact, the transition from stage 1 to stage 2 had already taken place in Indo-European time; if not, we would have no explanation for the stem formations of present/imperfect.¹⁶ On the arrangement of the stem formations of present/imperfect and to a lesser extent of aorist, Cowgill points out that 'imperfectives to telic roots were created by using various affixes that formed verbs proper of imperfective aspect and emptying them . . . of their semantic content other than that of imperfective aspect. This is the frequent Indo-European pattern of root aorist and derived present, of the type Sanskrit aorist *ádḥāt* : present *dádḥāti*, or Homeric aorist $\beta\lambda\eta\tau\omicron$: (nasal) present $\beta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omega$. At the same time, perfectives to atelic roots were – perhaps only very sparingly at first – created by using a suffix **-s-*. . .'.¹⁷

Celtic remnants of the injunctive are preserved in the paradigms of (a) imperfect and (b) imperative: (a) OIr. 3rd singular (sg.) *bered* < **bhereto* (middle), 3rd plural (pl.) *beirtis* (modelled on the 1st pl.

¹⁴ *Griechische Grammatik* 2nd ed. I (München 1953) 645.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 640; and see also W. Cowgill, 'Anatolian *hi*-conjugation and Indo-European perfect: instalment II', in *Hethitisch und Indogermanisch* (ed. E. Neu and W. Meid, Innsbruck 1979) 25–39, p. 35.

¹⁶ On Hittite, see N. Oettinger, *Die Stammbildung des hethitischen Verbums* (Nürnberg 1978). O. Szemerényi's rejection of 'Aspekt als eine frühe Kategorie, ja sogar eine Kategorie, die dem Tempus voranging' is untenable: *Einführung in die vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft* 3rd ed. (Darmstadt 1989) 337; *idem*, 'The origin of aspect in the Indo-European languages', *Glotta* 65 (1987) 1–18; R. Schmitt-Brandt, 'Aspektkategorien im PIE?', *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 15/1–2 (1987) 81–92. See also the evidence of an *aspect flexionnel* outside Indo-European (on Kartvelian, see Schmidt, *Folia Slavica* 7 (1984) 290–302).

¹⁷ Cowgill, in *Hethitisch und Indogermanisch*, 35.

·*beirmis*) < *·*berat* < **bheronto*; furthermore 2nd sg. in *-tha*;¹⁸ in Brittonic the Middle Welsh ending *-ad* (preserved e.g. in *gwydat*, 3rd sg. imperfect of *gwybot* 'to know') can be traced back to *·*a-to*;¹⁹ in Gaul. we have *logito* 'he has laid/located' < **logh-ej-e-to* with paradigmatic shift from imperfect to aorist/preterite, although the reading is not quite sure.²⁰ Furthermore, in the Lepontic (Lep.) and Gaulish evidence, there are hybrids consisting of root plus perfect ending: Lep. *karite* = *gar-i-t-e* 'he has enclosed', *kalite* = *kal-i-t-e* 'he has erected'; Gaul. *karn-i-t-u* 'locavit et statuit', pl. *karn-i-t-u-s*; *lub-i-t-u-s* beside imperative *lub-i*: Skt *lubhyati*, Latin (Lat.) *lubet*, *libet* etc.²¹ (b)²² In OIr., the 2nd sg. *beir* < **bher-e*, 'an extragrammatical, extrasyntactical form',²³ is the nucleus of a paradigm which was later completed by the injunctive: 2nd pl. *berid* < **bher-e-te*, 3rd sg. *bered* < **bhere-to*, 3rd pl. *berat* < **bher-o-nto*.²⁴

In spite of the recent criticism,²⁵ the principle of suppletion cannot be completely separated from the *aspect flexionnel* of the archaic injunctive period. Among the evidence provided by Thurneysen,²⁶ we observe the preterite stem *bert-*:²⁷ present *berid* 'bears'; together with *do-u(i)c* 'has brought' and *do-rat* 'has given', *birt*, *·bert*, perfect *·ru-bart*, constitute a suppletive paradigm. This is in agreement with Pokorny's statement that the Indo-European root **bher-* is durative and *cannot* be the basis of an aorist or a perfect²⁸ (cf. Gk *ἡμυεγκον*, *ἐνῆνοχα*; Lat. *tetuli* etc.).

¹⁸K. H. Schmidt, 'Zum altirischen Imperfektum', *Studia Celtica* 3 (1968) 19–23, p. 22.

¹⁹Cf. H. Lewis and H. Pedersen, *A concise comparative Celtic grammar* (Göttingen 1937; 3rd ed. 1974) 284; D. S. Evans, *A grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin 1964) 122.

²⁰Cf. Schmidt, *ZCP* 41 (1986) 179; M. Lejeune, *Recueil des inscriptions gauloises* II/1 (Paris 1988) 96.

²¹Schmidt, *ZCP* 41 (1986) 177.

²²On the use of the injunctive in the imperative paradigm cf. R. Thurneysen, *KZ* 27 (1885) 172–82; K. H. Schmidt, 'Probleme des Prohibitivsatzes', *Studia classica et orientalia Antonino Pagliaro oblata* III (Roma 1969) 223–32; idem, *Studia Celtica* 3 (1968) 22; Szemerényi, *Einführung*, 263.

²³C. Watkins, 'Preliminaries to a historical and comparative analysis of the syntax of the Old Irish verb', *Celtica* 6 (1963) 1–49, p. 44.

²⁴Cf. Thurneysen, *Grammar*, 374 § 587 (with Gaulish evidence); W. Meid, *Die indogermanischen Grundlagen der altirischen absoluten und konjunkten Verbalflexion* (Wiesbaden 1963) 70. On the Celtiberian evidence in *-t-u-s* cf. K. H. Schmidt, 'Historisch-vergleichende Analyse des der keltiberischen Inschrift von Botorrita in Grunde liegenden Morpheminventors', *Studies in Greek, Italic, and Indo-European linguistics offered to L. R. Palmer* (ed. A. Morpurgo Davies and W. Meid, Innsbruck 1976) 359–371, pp. 365–6; and recently (with a different explanation), J. F. Eska, 'Towards an interpretation of the Hispano-Celtic inscription of Botorrita' (Dissertation, Toronto 1988) 171–2.

²⁵K. Strunk, 'Überlegungen zu Defektivität und Suppletion im Griechischen und Indogermanischen', *Glotta* 55 (1977) 2–34; Szemerényi, *Einführung*, 327–8.

²⁶*Grammar*, 468–74 §§ 75–73.

²⁷*ibid.*, 422 § 682.

²⁸J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern 1959–69) 128.

For this reason the *s*-aorist formation *bert*²⁹ must be rather late. On the other hand, the Indo-European root **dheh₁-* (**dhē*) in *do·rat* < **to-pro-ad-dhh₁-t* is confirmed by Continental Celtic verbal formations of the 3rd person: Gaul. *δεδε* < **dhe-dhh₁-e-i*, Lep. *tetu*, i.e. *dedu* < **dhe-dhh₁-u*, Celtiberian *tatus*, i.e. *datus* < **dhh₁-t-u-s*.³⁰

Finally, the theory concerning the identification of the conjunct endings in Insular Celtic with the injunctive³¹ must be rejected. The two main arguments against it are the following: (1) the resulting equivalation of conjunct flexion and Indo-European injunctive is not in keeping with the late date of Irish evidence, (2) it is not clear why Old Irish or Insular Celtic should have undertaken a distribution of primary and secondary endings different from all other Indo-European languages and why the primary endings should have been restricted to simple verbs.³²

2. SYNCRETISM OF AORIST AND PERFECT

The syncretism or merger of aorist and perfect into a preterite is a feature of later linguistic development in Indo-European. H. Zimmer had already noticed this transformation in Old Irish and Latin:

Das altir. präteritum ist wie das sogenannte lateinische perfekt vom standpunkt der form ein synkretisches tempus: beim abgeleiteten verb fungiert eine neubildung wie im Latein, wenn auch ganz anderen ursprunges (*s*-präteritum); beim starken verb ist ganz wie im Latein bald die fortsetzung des alten *s*-aorists, bald die des alten reduplizierten präteritums (perfekts) in gebrauch. Vom standpunkt der bedeutung sind alle diese bildungen verschiedenen ursprunges ebenso einheitlich wie ein lat. *expugnāvi, lēgi, dīxi*. Es müssen also bei erhaltung alter formen ziemlich starke verschiebungen der bedeutung vor sich gegangen sein.³³

This fusion may be observed in individual Indo-European languages in three particularly clear variations:³⁴

²⁹Cf. H. Zimmer, 'Keltische studien', *KZ* 30 (1888) 1–292, pp. 198–217; C. Watkins, 'The origin of the *t*-preterite', *Ériu* 19 (1962) 25–46; idem, *Indo-European origins of the Celtic verb* (Dublin 1962) 156–74, for the explanation of the OIr. *t*-preterite with the relevant bibliography.

³⁰Cf. K. H. Schmidt, 'Grundlagen einer festlandkeltischen Grammatik', *Le lingue indoeuropee di frammentaria attestazione* (ed. E. Vineis, Pisa 1983) 65–90, p. 73; idem, *ZCP* 41 (1986) 176. There is an alternative explanation of these verbal forms on the basis of the root *deh₃-* (*dō-*) 'to give' (cf. Eska, *Botorrita*, 104, with the relevant bibliography).

³¹Cf. Meid, *Grundlagen*; Watkins, *Celtica* 6 (1963) 1–49; and recently Szemerényi, *Einführung*, 249–52 with further references.

³²Schmidt, *KZ* 94 (1980) 191.

³³'Keltische Studien 18', *KZ* 36 (1900) 461–556, p. 464.

³⁴Cf. K. H. Schmidt, 'Das Perfektum in indogermanischen Sprachen. Wandel einer Verbalkategorie', *Glotta* 42 (1964) 1–18, pp. 12–14.

1. The new preterite consists of allomorphs which can be traced back either to an aorist or to a perfect. This type corresponds to Old Irish and Latin;³⁵ it is also attested in Tocharian³⁶ and Albanian.³⁷ In Celtic, the allomorphic fusion probably antedates the Continental Celtic inscriptions, because (a) perfect formations and (b) aorists occur in contexts which are obviously identical from a structural point of view: (a) $\delta\epsilon\delta\epsilon$, *tetu*, *karite*, *kalite*, *karnitu(s)* (see above); Gaul. *ieuru* etc.;³⁸ (b) *s*-aorists *sesit* (Chamalières) 'he has sown' < **seh*₁-*s-t-et*, *legasit* (Séraucourt à Bourges) 'he has laid' < *legh-ā-s-t-et*, *prinas* (La Graufesenque) 'he has bought' < **k^wri-n-eh*₂-*s-t* or **k^wri-n-h*₂-*s-t*.³⁹

2. In Germanic,⁴⁰ the strong preterite is basically confined to the paradigm of the old perfect.

3. In Slavic and Modern Greek, the preterite is basically confined to the paradigm of the *s*-aorist.

The transformation of the old perfect of state into a resultative perfect is a prerequisite for the merger of aorist and perfect into a preterite with the function of a narrative tense (*temps de récit*).⁴¹ Originally, the Indo-European perfect referred to the state of the subject resulting from a preceding action or process. This type is attested in Greek, Sanskrit and Iranian because of their early tradition;⁴² e.g. *τολμήεις μοι θυμός, ἐπεὶ κακὰ πολλὰ πέποιθα* (ρ 284); Vedic *bibhāya* 'he is afraid'. The later Indo-European evidence is characterized by a function shift by which 'das Perfekt von einer vergangenen Handlung gebraucht wird, deren Wirkung im oder am Objekt noch in der Gegenwart fortduert'.⁴³ The formal features of the Indo-European perfect – special personal

³⁵See Zimmer, *KZ* 36 (1900).

³⁶Cf. W. Krause and W. Thomas, *Tocharisches Elementarbuch I* (Heidelberg 1960) 254; W. Thomas, *Die Erforschung des Tocharischen* (1960–1984) (Stuttgart 1985) 75–9.

³⁷Cf. G. Meyer, 'Zum indogermanischen \bar{e} -Perfektum', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 5 (1895) 180–82.

³⁸Schmidt, *ZCP* 41 (1986) 175–6.

³⁹*ibid.*, 167–8.

⁴⁰Cf. J. Kuryłowicz, *The inflectional categories of Indo-European* (Heidelberg 1964) 128; W. Meid, *Das germanische Praeteritum* (Innsbruck 1971).

⁴¹Cf. J. Wackernagel, 'Studien zum griechischen Perfectum', *Programm zur akademischen Preisverteilung* (Göttingen 1904) 3–24 = *Kleine Schriften II* (Göttingen 1953) 1000–1021. Cf. also L. Renou, *La valeur du parfait dans les hymnes védiques* (Paris 1925); H. Reichelt, *Awestisches Elementarbuch* (Heidelberg 1909) 309–312; P. C. Chantraine, *Histoire du parfait grec* (Paris 1927).

⁴²On the problem of Hittite cf. recently A. Kammenhuber, 'Zum Modus Injunktiv und zum Drei-Genus-System', in *Studia linguistica: diachronica et synchronica: Festschrift Werner Winter* (ed. U. Pieper and G. Stickel, Berlin, New York, Amsterdam, 1985) 435–66; and Szemerényi, *Einführung*, 262 (with the relevant bibliography).

⁴³Wackernagel, *Kl. Schriften*, 1001.

endings;⁴⁴ reduplication and/or Ablaut⁴⁵ – are all preserved in Celtic.⁴⁶ Moreover, the above-mentioned hybrid formations in Continental Celtic (*karite*, *kalite*, *karnitus*) may possibly belong to the great number of innovations ('große Anzahl von Neuerungen') in the perfect formation referred to by Szemerényi.⁴⁷

Finally, the uncompounded *praeteritum narrativum*⁴⁸ discovered by Zimmer⁴⁹ must be regarded as an archaism.⁵⁰

3. ASPECT SYNTAGMATIQUE

In contrast to the early *aspect flexionnel* of Greek, Sanskrit and Iranian (see above), the later aspect systems correspond to an *aspect syntagmatique* type, the perfective aspect being the marked member of the aspectual opposition.⁵¹ The perfective aspect is generally formed by verbal composition, while the imperfective aspect is not compounded. The change from *aspect flexionnel* to *aspect syntagmatique* implies a functional shift of the aspect system; the opposition of *point vs ligne* (*aspect flexionnel*) is replaced by *accomplished/telic vs non-accomplished/atelic* action (*aspect syntagmatique*): 'Perfektiv heißt eine Handlung im Hinblick auf ihre Vollendung, d. h. eine solche, bei der dem Redenden ein Abschluß vorschwebt, ohne Rücksicht auf die etwaige Dauer der Handlung oder des Vorganges bis zu dem Abschluß'.⁵²

The most significant example of *aspect syntagmatique* (based on verbal composition) is attested in Slavic, whose aspect system has been

⁴⁴Szemerényi, *Einführung*, 259.

⁴⁵*ibid.*, 318.

⁴⁶Cf. W. Meid, 'Keltisches und indogermanisches Verbalsystem', in *Indogermanisch und Keltisch* (ed. K. H. Schmidt unter Mitwirkung von R. Ködderitzsch, Wiesbaden 1977) 108–131, p. 123.

⁴⁷Szemerényi, *Einführung*, 317, points to the Latin *vi*-perfect, the Greek *k*-perfect, the weak preterite in Germanic, the Osco-Umbrian *f*-perfect, the Oscan *tt*-perfect and the Umbrian *nš*-perfect.

⁴⁸R. Thurneysen, 'Zum keltischen verbum', *KZ* 37 (1904) 52–120, p. 56.

⁴⁹*KZ* 36 (1900) 484; cf. also K. McCone, *The early Irish verb* (Maynooth 1987) 103.

⁵⁰Cf. Thurneysen, *Grammar*, 341 § 530, 'In the course of the ninth century *ro*-forms come to be used in narrative also'; Meid in *Indogermanisch und Keltisch* (1977) 121–2; J. West, 'Preverbs in Gothic and Old Irish: a typological parallel?', *Studia Celtica* 16–17 (1981–2) 248–58, p. 255.

⁵¹Cf. Holt, *Études*, 60–68.

⁵²A. Leskien, *Handbuch der altbulgarischen Sprache* 6th ed. (Heidelberg 1922) 170. Cf. also Holt, *Études*, 67–8; Schmidt, *Folia Slavica* 7 (1984) 294; West, *Studia Celtica* 16–17 (1981–2) 255, 'a telic situation, that is, one with a built in terminal point'; Szemerényi, *Einführung*, 332–41, with further references.

compared with Germanic,⁵³ Baltic,⁵⁴ East Iranian⁵⁵ and the non-Indo-European Kartvelian (South Caucasian) languages.⁵⁶

The functional verbal composition of Insular Celtic must be taken as another example of *aspect syntagmatique*, which, however, has been transformed 'from a perfective past into a perfect, which is the stage we have reached by the time of our earliest sources in Irish'.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the stage of an *aspect syntagmatique* must be taken as the basis for the non-preterite contexts of functional verbal composition.⁵⁸ These 'meanings'⁵⁹ had already been investigated around the turn of the century⁶⁰ and have recently been discussed e.g. by Wagner,⁶¹ West,⁶² and McCone, who points out 'that the Old Irish system of resultative/potential augmentation has its origins in the telic effects of certain preverbs upon a wide range of mostly atelic roots'.⁶³

The functional split in Insular Celtic (perfect vs *aspect syntagmatique*) requires a thorough systematic investigation which can be supported by typological comparison. To give just a few examples: (a) West,⁶⁴ tries to illustrate the potential and optative function of *ro*⁶⁵ by Gothic parallels; (b) the gnomic present, which served to designate 'general clauses of universal time',⁶⁶ can be compared typologically with tenseless categories such as the injunctive (see above), the gnomic permansive of Old Georgian⁶⁷ or the gnomic aorist of Greek, whose 'Ausgangsverwendung beruht auf einem uralten zeitlosen Gebrauch des Aorists'.⁶⁸ e.g. ὅς κε θεοῖς ἐπιπείθηται, μάλα τ' ἔκλυον (aorist) αὐτοῦ

⁵³Cf. e.g. W. Streitberg, 'Perfektive und imperfektive Aktionsart im Germanischen', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 15 (1891) 70–177, p. 71, 'Ein perfectives verbum schließt . . . noch den nebenbegriff der "vollendung" in sich'; F. Josephson, 'On the function of the Gothic preverb *ga-*', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 81 (1976) 152–75; West, *Studia Celtica* 16–17 (1981–2) 248–58.

⁵⁴Cf. A. Senn, 'Verbal aspects in Germanic, Slavic and Baltic', *Language* 25 (1949) 402–9.

⁵⁵Cf. R. L. Fisher, 'IE **po-* in Slavic and Iranian', *KZ* 91 (1977) 218–29, p. 229, 'Ossetic and Khotanese, and to a lesser degree Sogdian, provide a hard core of words that are most readily explained as being prefixed with **pa-*'; K. H. Schmidt, 'Zur Sprachtypologie des Ossetischen', *Bedi Kartlisa* 27 (1970) 161–8; G. Achvlediani, *Sbornik izbrannykh rabot po osetinskomu jazyku* (Tbilisi 1960) 179–84; V. J. Abaev, *Skifo-evropejskie izoglossy* (Moskva 1965) 54–6.

⁵⁶Schmidt, *Folia Slavica* 7 (1984) 294–6.

⁵⁷West, *Studia Celtica* 16–17 (1981–2) 255.

⁵⁸Thurneysen, *Grammar*, 342–3 §§ 530–31.

⁵⁹*ibid.*, 341 § 530.

⁶⁰Cf. e.g. notes 75 and 88.

⁶¹See note 76.

⁶²*Studia Celtica* 16–17 (1981–2).

⁶³*Early Irish verb*, 125.

⁶⁴*Studia Celtica* 16–17 (1981–2) 353.

⁶⁵Thurneysen, *Grammar*, 343 § 531.

⁶⁶*ibid.*, 342 § 530.

⁶⁷Cf. Deeters, *Das kharthwelische Verbum*, 111–12; K. H. Schmidt, 'Typologischer Vergleich der kartvelischen und indogermanischen Verbalsystem', *Revue des Études Géorgiennes et Caucasiennes* 1 (1985) 81–96, p. 87.

⁶⁸E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik* II (München 1950) 285.

(A 218);⁶⁹ (c) in other cases the original *aspect syntagmatique* is confirmed by the semantics of the verbal compound; compounds such as *ibid* 'he drinks' + *ess-*, *ithid* 'he eats' + *de-fo*⁷⁰ express the telic action very clearly.⁷¹

4. ASPECT SYNTAGMATIQUE > perfect/MOOD

The functional shift from *aspect syntagmatique* to perfect is restricted to verbal composition in the context of 'preterite indicative and past subjunctive'.⁷² In other contexts – as e.g. the gnomic function in connection with the present⁷³ or the potential and hortative functions⁷⁴ – the compound verb has basically preserved the stage of the *aspect syntagmatique*. The different processes entail a functional split which must be taken into consideration in reconstructing the history of the compound verb.⁷⁵ Furthermore, as has already been stated, the functional split took place both in Goidelic and in Brittonic.⁷⁶

⁶⁹On the tenseless use of the gnomic present cf. J. Wackernagel, *Vorlesungen über Syntax* 2nd ed. I (Basel 1950) 157.

⁷⁰Thurneysen, *Grammar*, 345 § 534, 471 § 765.

⁷¹Cf. the numerous parallels from other languages: German *austrinken*, *aufessen*, Lat. *dēvorare* etc. (McCone, *Early Irish verb*, 120–25), and see the deictic differentiations between OIr. *tét* 'he goes': *do-tét* 'he comes' etc. (K. H. Schmidt, 'Zum Suppletivismus der Verba für "gehen" und "kommen" im Altirischen', *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 19 (1966) 117–28). In other languages, as for instance in non-Indo-European Svan, a Kartvelian language, the imperfective present and the perfective aorist exhibit suppletive verb inflection which is based on the *aspect flexionnel*: *i-zb-i* 'he eats': aorist *la-la-ēm*, *i-tr-e* 'he drinks': aorist *la-īš*, *la-l-ēš*; cf. also *an-γr-i* 'he comes': aorist *an-qad* etc. (Schmidt, *Folia Slavica* 7 (1984) 298); cf. also Thurneysen, *KZ* 37 (1904) 60; idem, *Grammar*, 528 § 852 referring to OIr. *ro-saig*, *-roig*, *-roich* 'reaches': *saigid* 'seeks, makes for', which he compares semantically with Lat. *assequi*, *consequi*: *sequi*.

⁷²Thurneysen, *Grammar*, 341 § 530. The functional change from perfectivity to anteriority results in a perfect/pluperfect; therefore Thurneysen's definition of the function of *ro* ('it gives perfective force to the preterite indicative and past subjunctive', *ibid.*) must be rejected. On the other hand, Zimmer's explanation (*KZ* 36 (1900) 495–6) puts too much emphasis on its function as a pluperfect.

⁷³*ibid.*, 342 § 530.

⁷⁴*ibid.*, 343 § 531.

⁷⁵McCone uses the term *augment* for the functional preverb 'insofar as an extra element is added to the simple or compound verb for purely grammatical reasons . . . while bearing in mind that structural and syntactic similarities between these Old Irish augments and their Greek counterpart do not extend beyond the vague definition just given' (*Early Irish verb*, 96). In looking for an alternative term, one might think of *marked* (e.g. marked preterite; marked present subjunctive etc.).

⁷⁶Cf. e.g. J. Strachan, 'Welsh *ry-* = Irish *ro-* of possibility', *Ériu* 2 (1905) 60–61; idem, 'Further remarks on Welsh *ry-*', *Ériu* 2 (1905) 215–20; J. Loth, 'Questions de grammaire et de linguistique brittonique', *Revue Celtique* 29 (1908) 1–67, p. 56: '*ry-* se trouve avec le présent, indiquant qu'une chose se fait habituellement'; idem, 'Questions de grammaire et de linguistique: la particule verbale *ro-(ry-)* en gallois, cornique et breton', *Revue Celtique* 30 (1909) 1–36; Loth distinguishes five different uses of **ro-* in Brittonic: '1. constatation de l'antériorité d'une action ou fait par rapport au présent ou au passé; 2. l'achèvement d'une action passé, dans le présent, ou la continuation d'une action passé dans le présent; 3. le souhait; 4. la *possibilité* au présent; 5. l'habitude au présent', *ibid.*, 25; cf. also J. Loth, 'Questions de grammaire

Because of the fragmentary evidence of Continental Celtic, it is difficult to determine the beginnings of the two processes (i.e. (a) the development of an *aspect syntagmatique*, (b) the functional split). But the functional similarities between Celtic and Germanic with regard to the *aspect syntagmatique*⁷⁷ might suggest a common tendency towards the establishment of this type of aspect.⁷⁸ In any case, however, the similarities with regard to aspect between different Indo-European languages as well as between Goidelic and Brittonic must be the result of a later convergence.

As the necessary re-examination of the Insular Celtic evidence, including the historiography of the problem, cannot be undertaken in this article, I will conclude with some remarks on the earliest investigations,⁷⁹ beginning with J. K. Zeuß: 'Sunt RU (*ro*) et NU (*no*) notae usitatae illa actionis perfectae, haec infectae'.⁸⁰ Zimmer stressed the prepositional character of *ro*⁸¹ and pointed to the Slavic parallel.⁸² Thurneysen observed Old Irish calques on Latin compound verbs,⁸³ but did not yet realize the function of the uncompounded *praeteritum narrativum*⁸⁴ (see above). While he offered a considerable collection of data, Strachan did not recognize the function of OIr. *ro*,⁸⁵ as becomes apparent from the following: 'The particle *ro-* served to form a perfective form to such verbs as had no perfective (aorist) stem'.⁸⁶ Zimmer was

et de linguistique brittonique: la particule verbale *ro* (*suite*)', *Revue Celtique* 31 (1910) 23-48; G. P. Williams, 'The preverbal particle *re* in Cornish', *ZCP* 7 (1910) 313-53.

⁷⁷Cf. H. Wagner, 'Beiträge in Erinnerung an Julius Pokorny', *ZCP* 32 (1972) 1-89, pp. 19-22; idem, 'Beiträge zur vergleichenden Erforschung des Irischen', *Celtica* 11 (1976) 264-9, p. 266; idem, 'The Celtic invasions of Ireland and Great Britain - facts and theories', *ZCP* 42 (1987) 1-40, pp. 29-36 (see also idem, *Das Verbum in den Sprachen der britischen Inseln* (Tübingen 1959) 141-51); and West, *Studia Celtica* 16-17 (1981-2). On the question of further wide-ranging connections cf. J. Lohmann, 'Das Verbalpräfix *ro-* im Keltischen als allgemein-sprachwissenschaftliches Problem', *Celtica* 3 (1956) 311-16.

⁷⁸Cf. also the evidence of other languages, including Slavic, Baltic and Ossetic.

⁷⁹McCone, *Early Irish verb*, gives only very few bibliographical references apart from Thurneysen's *Grammar* and Strachan's *Old Irish paradigms*, mostly in the chapter on 'Composition and the Augment' (93-136). But the reference 'Ebel in 1859 (*KZ* 2, 190ff.)' (ibid., 130) is erroneous; in *KZ* 2 (1853) 190-209 we find an article by F. Woeste on 'Vokale der niederdeutschen mundarten in den kreisen Iserlohn und Altena (Fortsetzung)'.
⁸⁰*Grammatica Celtica* editio altera curavit H. Ebel (Berlin 1871) 411.

⁸¹*Keltische Studien* II (Berlin 1884) 121.

⁸²ibid., 122.

⁸³'Zur irischen Accent- und Verslehre', *Revue Celtique* 6 (1883-5) 309-47, p. 323. Cf. also McCone, *Early Irish verb*, 94-5, ignoring Thurneysen.

⁸⁴Thurneysen, *Revue Celtique* 6 (1883-5) 322.

⁸⁵'On the use of the particle *ro-* with preterital tenses in Old-Irish', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1896, 77-193, *ro* + preterite; idem, 'On the uses of the subjunctive mood in Irish', *Trans. Phil. Soc.* 1897, 225-356, pp. 326-56, *ro* + subjunctive.

⁸⁶Strachan, *Trans. Phil. Soc.* 1896, 164.

the first to solve this problem (see above).⁸⁷ Moreover, he discovered the narrative character of the uncompounded preterite.⁸⁸ On the basis of Zimmer's most important findings the question was discussed anew by Thurneysen, who included the different grammatical contexts.⁸⁹

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⁸⁷*KZ* 36 (1900) 463–586.

⁸⁸*ibid.*, 484.

⁸⁹*KZ* 37 (1904) 52–120. Early contributions were also made by J. Strachan, 'Action and time in the Irish verb', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1899–1902, 408–438; Chr. Sarauw, *Irske Studier* (København 1900) 61 ('Praesens indikativ med *ro*'); *idem*, 'Syntaktisches', *KZ* 38 (1905) 145–93; H. Pedersen, 'Zur lehre von den aktionsarten', *KZ* 37 (1904) 219–50; *idem*, 'Erklärung', *KZ* 38 (1905) 421–5, etc.