

A NOTE ON SOME ADVERBIAL FORMS IN CO. DONEGAL IRISH

MY intention in this brief note is to demonstrate how developments affecting inherited final *-r* in Donegal dialects have led in two quite distinct dialects to a re-interpretation of the original phonemic structure of particular phrases and, in the first instance discussed, to the substitution of an unhistorical lexeme in the phrase.

1. INISHOWEN *ar chos ar bith* 'AT ALL'

This phrase has been recorded as in regular use, cf. Ó Tuathail (1941:107), Ó Canainn and Watson (1990:139), in Inishowen Irish in the sense 'at all' and, as such, corresponds exactly to the structurally and phonetically very similar phrase *ar chor ar bith* common throughout Ulster and elsewhere, cf. Wagner (1959: Map 68). The use of the word *cos* here strikes one as rather unusual: other similarly constructed phrases with the same semantic content normally feature in this location in the phrase a lexeme signifying 'manner', e.g. *ar chaoi ar bith*, or 'situation', *i gcás ar bith* and *ar chor ar bith* itself, (cf. Ó Dónaill (1977: s.v. *caoi*, *cás*, *cor*, *dóigh*, etc.). *Cos* employed in either of the aforementioned senses appears to be untypical and what I propose by way of explanation in the case is that *ar chos ar bith* is a variant of *ar chor ar bith*, which is also found in Inishowen Irish, cf. Wagner (1959: Map 68).

In suggesting the origin of such a variant I would draw attention to two aspects of the dialect: firstly its strong Scottish connections and secondly the treatment of inherited final *-r*. A survey of features shared with neighbouring Scottish Gaelic dialects,¹ and generally speaking, found among N. Irish dialects in Inishowen alone or on this same northern periphery, reveals the following: first, in the category of phonology (i) instances of the typically Scottish variety of svarabhakti, as in *bolg*, *dealg*, *dearg*, *lorg*, cf. Evans (1969: 68); (ii) both the existence of hiatus, as in e.g. *athair*, *lá arna mhárach* (: 58–9) and its development to /h/, as in *daingean*, *faobhar* (:33, 100); (iii) general absence of retroflexion in the cluster /sr/, (: 47); and (iv) an interdental variety of sibilant, transcribed by Evans (1969: 43) for Inishowen as [S]. This last feature is shared both by the neighbouring dialect of Fanad, cf. Evans (1972: 172), as is Scottish svarabhakti (: 171) and the development of hiatus to /h/ (: 206) and by Rathlin, cf. Holmer (1942: 32–3) who also records hiatus for this particular dialect (: 38–9).

Deserving of particular attention in the category of shared morphological items are the following: (v) instances of verbal nouns in *-achadh*, e.g. *sal[a]chadh*, cf. Evans (1969: 119), *cruinneachadh*, cf. Ó Canainn and Watson (1990); (vi) 1st person pronoun *mi*, cf. Evans (1969: 112); and (vii) the preverbal particle *s(h)ula mun* 'before', cf. Ó Canainn and Watson (1990: 139) with unhistorical final eclipsing *-n*, clearly marking the form as a combination of Irish *s(h)ul (m)a*, also found in

¹ For information on the features discussed as relating to dialects of Scottish Gaelic cf. on, (i, ii, v, vii), O'Rahilly (1972: 145–6, 142–5, 69–70 and 43 respectively; on (ii) Borgström, for Barra, (1937: §120, re. *ambach*; 1940: 215, re. *cumbachd*; on (iii) Holmer (1957: 25); Grant (1987: 388); on (iv) Holmer (1962: 25); on (vi) Ó Baoill (1978: 143) and on (viii) (: 150) and Dwelly (1977: s.v. various headwords).

Inishowen, cf. Evans (1969: 125) and Wagner and Ó Baoill (1969: Pt. 68, Q.377) and Scottish Gaelic *mu' n*.

Vocabulary too reveals interesting connections of a similar nature with regard to a number of basic items, e.g. (viii) *giúlan* 'carry', *baga* 'bag', *beainnne* 'bank', *preasantas* 'present', cf. Ó Tuathail (1941: 99, 111) and Ó Canainn and Watson (1990), *dusan* 'dozen' and *freagairt* 'to suit', cf. Ó Baoill (1978: 124-8), and Ó Canainn and Watson (1990).

The derivation which I would propose for *ar chos ar bith* is as a variant of *ar chor ar bith* in which the Scottish Gaelic equivalent of *ar bith* 'any', namely *sam bith*, has been substituted for the former, viz. *ar chor sam bith*. *Sam bith* is regularly pronounced without the final *-m* of the article in Scottish Gaelic dialects, cf. Wagner and Ó Baoill (1969: Pts (a)-(e), QQ. 305-6) and the mutation of voiceless [b] to voiced [b] following the article on the lips of a Scottish speaker would presumably not have signified to an Irish-speaker. Ó Baoill (1978: 29) notes that while *ar chor ar bith* is generally listed in dictionaries of the Scottish language – no doubt as an archaism – it has only been recorded as a spoken form in Kintyre, cf. Holmer (1962: §120), where it is, very likely, a local importation from Antrim.² A Scottish speaker in adapting the unfamiliar *ar bith* would have replaced this with the phrase *sam bith* but the initial *ar chor* would have been familiar enough from phrases like *ar choreigin*. Such a substitution would have produced a phrase *ar chor sa bith* from which final *-r* in *chor* would have been lost as a result of the weakening, regular in Ulster and Scottish Gaelic dialects, cf. Watson (1986: 196-8), and Wagner and Ó Baoill (1969: Pt 68, QQ.852 and 1102 for the particularly apposite exx. from Inishowen *ag cu[r]sneachta* and *chu[r] siad*, respectively, which show loss of the final *-r* of stressed syllables in external sandhi before following initial *s*).

Following such a development a fresh syllabic division *ar chos a bith* would have produced the familiar *chos* followed by *a bith*, a regularly occurring variant of *ar bith*, cf. Wagner (1959: Map 68) with loss of final *-r*, hence *ar chos ar bith* ~ *ar chor ar bith*.

2. INISHOWEN, GLENCOLMCILLE *ar shúil* 'AWAY, GONE'

The form [əɾ ·hu:l] recorded by Wagner (1959: 225) for the two dialect areas in question and also noted by Ó Tuathail in the case of Inishowen (1941: 112) clearly corresponds to forms in initial [χ^l-, x^l-, hj-]³ in the second element of the phrase which are found over the rest of Donegal and throughout Ulster. The question arises as to how the initial of *siubhal*, historically a palatal consonant produced a non-palatal consonant when lenited in the forms under discussion in the two dialects.

Ar shiúil is, of course, closely related formally to *ar siúil* without lenition and with distinction of meaning 'in progress', common in dialects outside Ulster, cf. Mac Clúin (1940: 325), Ó Cuív (1944: 109), Mhac an Fhailigh (1968: 476) and

² It is tempting to speculate that the Scotticisation proposed in this article was motivated by the lack of familiarity with the Scottish Gaelic adverb *idir* in Inishowen Irish, a form known both in Antrim Irish, cf. Holmer (1940: 177), and in the adjoining Kintyre dialect (1962: 152).

³ On the phonetic reality of such forms, cf. Ó Dochartaigh (1987: 253).

Stockman (1974: 94) and we note that *ar siúl* (without lenition) is itself used in the sense ‘away, gone’ at points outside Donegal, cf. Wagner (1959: 225), e.g. Tyrone, Sligo and NW Galway,⁴ with earlier instances of the usage noted in *DIL* s.v. *sibal*. The versions with and without aspiration are recorded – both with the latter meaning – from SW Donegal, Pts 85, 86(a) and 84, 86 respectively. My own information for the dialect of Glencolmcille is, however, that either form may be employed here with this same meaning, and this would appear to have been the case for Tyrone Irish also, cf. Wagner and Stockman (1965: 147-8).

It seems to me that it is in variation of the type /ər s' u:l/ ~ /ər çu:l/ that we may trace the origins of the other form under discussion, namely / ar hu:l/. In the data we have from numerous dialects of Ulster Irish in Wagner and Ó Baoill 1969 (cf. QQ.242, 267, 385, 413, 452, 754-5, 846, 936, 948, 1027, etc.) it is evident that [r]/[r'] + [s]/[s'] in external sandhi results in non-palatalised -r plus that kind of retroflex or retracted variety of sibilant found in internal position in *rs* clusters⁵ with the palatal/non-palatal distinction clearly set aside as in internal sandhi. Despite the similarity of certain of the retracted sibilant allophones found in this environment⁶ to the commonest allophone of /s'/ the cluster appears to have been interpreted by speakers as non-palatalised,⁷ perhaps on account of the non-palatalised *r*, and, in parts of Ulster, the retracted alveolar sibilant variety of allophone known here. With *s* in this sandhi cluster being perceived as non-palatalised, the variant of the phrase with palatal initial following the preposition *ar* could quite naturally acquire a non-palatal initial /hu:l/ according to an interpretation *ar*^L *súl* > *ar shúl*, as an alternative to the inherited lenited form /çu:l/, which would thus give the form in the dialects under discussion.

It would seem that *ar síul* with the meaning ‘away, gone’ is very largely found outside of Co. Donegal and it is presumably not without significance that the two dialects treated of here are located in either case on the extreme periphery of that county. We have noted above that both the variants of the phrase with and without lenition are known in Glencolmcille and it is likely that the same situation obtained in Inishowen, for both lenited and unlenited forms have been recorded to the east in Tyrone, as previously outlined here, and it is probable that such was the case in other parts of E Ulster. Delargy, for example, reports the existence in Glens of Antrim Irish, cf. Watson (1987: 175) of the lenited as well as the unlenited forms of the phrase, and although Holmer, on the other hand, reports only lenited initials he notes the curious forms [hə rʰəl], [hə rʰəl], [hə r'ʰəl], [ə rōəl], [rōəl] all from native-speakers in the Glens (1940: 127), and (1942: 119) and, from speakers in Rathlin (1942: 119), [r'ʰəl], [ə r'öəŋ]⁸ (with [ʰ] > [ŋ]), as well as [ər çʰəl]. The forms in initial [rʰ], [rō] seem to point clearly to [ə r hʰ],

⁴ I have also heard *ar siúl* with the meaning ‘away’ in Erris, Co. Mayo; so that this clearly has a wider distribution in Connacht than is recorded in Wagner 1959 or the various monographs.

⁵ Cf. Quiggin (1906: 96), Sommerfelt (1922: 64-5; 1929: 30), Wagner (1959: 29) and Evans (1969: 46-7). For a fuller discussion of these sounds see Watson (1994).

⁶ Cf. Wagner (1959: 25).

⁷ An interpretation reflected in the analysis of various linguists, cf. O’Rahilly (1972: 206). Ó Siadhail and Wigger (1975: 119). (This interpretation is supported by the existence of spellings such as *giorsach* on the part of native writers, cf. Dinneen (1934: 538)).

⁸ Forms in [ö] very probably derive from the historical *by*-form *siobhal*.

[ər hö] with loss of the glottal fricative. It would appear that the preposition *ar* was liable to be confounded in this phrase in Antrim and, no doubt, also in Rathlin, with *thar*, which would itself account for the loss of initial in *[hʎə], *[hʎə] through dissimilation, viz. [hər hʎə], *[ər hʎə] > [hər ʎə], [ər ʎə].⁹ Here again, a key factor was the existence of *ar siú* as reported by Delargy, alongside *ar shiú* which former, with lenition of perceived non-palatalised *s*, would have given the form with initial /h/ in these dialects also.

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⁹ The palatalised initial [rʲ] derives from a form of the preposition with palatalised final, such as *thaire*, cf. Hamilton (1974: 220).

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