ARCHAISMS IN OLD IRISH NOUN INFLECTION

1. Survival of Instrumental Flexion

F. O. Lindeman has perceptively analyzed for us the exact sense of *seis (Bretha Déin Chécht § 36) and has identified this synchronic dative singular as having the instrumental value ‘by sitting’. His reasoning — because the person is forced to sit — is exact. We are directed to look back to GOI 161 § 251.3

Lindeman then leaves the matter undecided whether we have an ancient i-stem feminine *seis or an a-stem *sæss. I believe that on principle both by Occam’s razor (an i-stem would be the perfect and direct known ancestor in Indo-European) and by the lectio difficilior (no chance of a scribal short-circuit) we should prefer the former.

We would then have a surviving instrumental singular *sed-ti-? of the verbal noun *sed-ti-s with cognate formation to Skt. gati- = βάσις. Thus our noun would have escaped transfer to an Italo-Celtic (and, it seems, Armenian) nasal extension, as did Latin tussis (tundō).

I would now add as a surviving instrumental in Irish the dative use with indl (= Welsh yn1) which forms what is called an adverb, and which I have mentioned in my discussion of traces of *participial -do-.2

Of course, the *+mi dative sg. of the neuter n-stems3 descends from an instrumental ancestry which we see clearly in Balto-Slavic, just as the Old Irish slender -b dative pl. does, which is now gaining cognates attested in both Gaulish and Celtiberian; but the case of *+mi is different because it got trapped in the nasal stem-final.

2. Dative of Apposition

The occurrence of an appositive in the dative case to a preceding personal in whatever case (e.g. a 3 pl. pronoun . . . feraib) is dealt with at GOI 160. However, at GOI 156 we learn that apposition can also be expressed in the nominative.

Perhaps we may see the seeds of this dual treatment in the double possible reading of a Latin construction which could represent a reflex of the parent

2See ‘Traces of participial *-do- in Celtic’, Ériu 40 (1989) 113–17, at 116. The last matters remind us of the terrain of the topic tá sé i n-a fhear, which would take us too far here and which I hope to address on another occasion. Myles Dillon prepared the way for us (Zeitschrift für celtisches Philologie 17 (1928) 307–46) by distinguishing the substantive verb and copula (on the foundation work of Pedersen, Ó Máille, and Baudiš) enriching the dated chronology as well as distinctions and related syntax for these verbal, for the dative of apposition, for the substantive verb with predicate noun and adjective, for the nominative of apposition and for the appearance of ip in these. The use of the Irish locutions reminds one of the function(s) of the Slavic instrumental as a comparandum.
syntax: ‘Hecate, quae mater Asteria est’,\(^4\) which can be rendered in acceptable English, ‘H, who has A for her mother’, seems also to be ‘H, who is A for/to her mother’. This could be disambiguated one way by substituting _H_, _cui mater_ . . . , though perhaps shifting emphasis or agency; alternatively, in the last sequence _mater_ could be substituted for _mater_. But if _Q_ (or relative) ‘… est’ were not present the Irish equivalence would automatically result.

3. **Survival in Old Irish Noun Case Form**

 _GOI_ 155 declares that Old Irish displays five declensional cases surviving from Indo-European: nom(inative), voc(ative), acc(usative), gen(itive), dat(ive). And on the first page of his 1996 Preface to the reprint of Macalister’s _Corpus_ i, Damian McManus illustrates the loss of Ogam final-syllable segments with these same five in the singular of _wiras_. Thurneysen and McManus knew, of course, what they were doing, what their goals were, and they are correct by a useful and desirable criterion of synchronic consistency in description.\(^5\) On the other hand, we can ask the question — what has survived and in what form(s) in the total language? In studying the declensions of Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit some years ago,\(^6\) where the paradigms were the full lists presented in columns as school and undergraduate textbooks do, I was struck by a concealed but simple fact. The exercise in the book, a perfectly valid one, was to reconstruct the past on the basis of an ‘average’ or official version of the present or some chosen time (Cicero, or perhaps Jerome). If you played the game and stuck to that, you did the best you could or sometimes found there was no answer. Some nouns are rare, some are somehow defective, and others again occur (like _preces_ in Latin) in only a few forms. Still others, such as _rūs_ ‘countryside’ and names of cities, have regular locatives. If you simply add (and deduct) these facts, which could scarcely be called cheating (and, even more, add poetic, dialect, and archaic items which _are_ current),\(^7\) you end up with more ragged paradigms. But also much of your reconstructive exercise vanishes! Perhaps it becomes an exercise in prudent choosing. The Latin paradigm could become:\(^8\)

\(^4\)Cicero, _de Deorum Natura_ 3.18.


\(^6\)Über das Deklinationssystem . . . ’, _General Linguistics_ 24 (1984) 179–86. I was reacting at the time to a textbook that was occupied with historical linguistics and had an introductory section to show how comparison is done. The illustrative material was a set of cognate full paradigms.

\(^7\)My mother-in-law said ‘boughten bread’ after bread not from a shop was scarcely expected. _Gnairod_ is cheating, on an inscription visibly archaized.

\(^8\)For an equivalent set of forms in Archaic Latin, with commentary and further detail, see _Archivio Glottologico Italiano_ (to appear).
Nom. | seruos, equos, deus (SACROS Lapis Niger is archaic)
---|---
Acc. | seruom, equom
Gen. | equī, uirī, dītūrī, VALESIOSIO (Satricum)
Dat. | equō, deō
Abl. | BENVENTOD (on a coin)
Instr. | MERETO, ualdē, benē
Loc. | Brundisiī
Voc. | Marce

We see that with good philology we mostly do not reconstruct (in this material); we practically equate identities. In the above only Dat. and Loc. get reconstructed (using Greek and Indic with Lithuanian and Oscan until we reach the modern phase of internal PIE reconstruction, e.g. Instr. *-ē < *-e-²). Latin can be called less changed than Sanskrit!

Thus I have become more deeply interested in the marginal, or buried, survival in language change. My essay in the Festschrift for Ellis Evans (lacking a Scottish Gaelic noun chart in phonetic script) addresses a bit of this. Now let us consider Old Irish facts of this order. We tabulate sample or solitary known forms. All § numbers are GOI.

First, obvious paradigmatic core survivors:

| Nom. | fer /fer`/ or //fër`/ § 277; aub` /aũw`/ § 333; anm`e /anm`e/ § 328. | Pl. | fir¹ //fir`L`/.
|---|---|---|---
| Acc. | fer² /fer`²/ //fër`²/ § 277; W. afon § 333. Pl. firu //fir`u//. |
| Gen. | fir³ //fir`³/ //fir`³/ § 277; abae /aũe/ § 333; anmae /anm`e/ § 328. Pl. fer³ //fir`³/; ban³ (: mná). |
| Dat. | fiur³ //fur`³/ //fur`³/ // § 277. Pl. < *Instr.; aibnib /aũn`b`/. |
| Voc. | fhir³ /fir`³/ or #fir³ //fir`³/; micc³ § 277. Pl. fhiru //fur`u// < *nom. |
| Abl. (āu) | ō fhíur #fir`³/ > Dat. §§ 60, 847. |
| Loc. | Bret. aven § 333; Ére³ |

Now for the fragments, including discernible grammatical function:

| Nom. | cáia (W. pwy) § 457 *k`w`ei (paralleled only in Nuristani). Note also be³N, and siur among other archaisms, such as cu¹ and aueb. |

I have insisted elsewhere that -an- of anuana is not a phonetic change from -man- etc., but that the two belong to a set of suffixes with equally ancient descent in Indo-Hittite from a change originally after *-a-. |
Acc. $^N$ infix *-n (versus Continental *-m) (Acc. object and temporal ≠ non-lentited *Nom. *-s deuterotonic) Welsh meidyr : bóthar,\textsuperscript{10} beunydd *kʷakʷon+di-

Gen. coich § 460 *-kʷes = Slavic čes-o


Abl. > Dat. with comparison § 251, 1; thematic class (original home of *Abl.) *-ōd > -ā = *Dat.

Instr. see above §§ 300, 303. *-u- on u-stem would give *-ā (§ 311).\textsuperscript{12} Gaul. GOBEDBI. In the pl. *Instr. has taken over the Dat. pl.

Loc. KOI < cē << c(e), Gaul. ci (see Celtica 24 (2003) 129).

temporal: in tain, ciunn ‘at the end’, (h)uaraib ‘at times’ § 251.3.

Dat. is rare as *locatival unaccompanied by a preposition. Here specification won out.

Voc. The close *-ē of the thematic final shows up in the high-vowel affection.


With the thematic Nom. pl. and Voc. pl. we have both forms of *Nom. pl. represented. As I shall show in detail, no other IE language shows the PIE phrase structure so completely.

If the Anatolian ‘directive’ was, as C. Brixhe\textsuperscript{13} has argued, an innovation and not a PIE case, then Old Irish above attests a complete set of IE case distinctions formally identifiable in its grammar. We see that the only complete loss in segmental form is the *Dat. pl., which the Continental dialects attest. Unless is ‘under’ is a relic (Pedersen), Celtic shows us no reflex of the *Loc. pl. *su.

E. P. HAMP

University of Chicago


\textsuperscript{11}(M. Lejeune, Études Celtiques 12 (1971) 452–67; Lambert, Langue gauloise\textsubscript{2}, 21–2) Celtiberian arekoretikubos, Galic. Lucubo(s).

\textsuperscript{12}In the thematic class (to heed Latin) with an -o- vocalism *-o- > *-ā > *-ū (= *Abl.), but *e- > *e-.

\textsuperscript{13}Mélanges Laroche, 1979.