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Old Irish

Phonology – Part 3: Morphophonemics



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Roadmap

- Stress
- Morphophonemics
 - Mutations
 - Palatalisation
 - Metaphony (Umlaut)
 - Syncope

Accent

- Stress accent
- Lexical
- Non-contrastive
- Not focus-marking
- Word-initial
- PC **k^henno_uindo-** > OIr. *cennand* ‘white-headed’
- PC **ambisouomos* > OIr. *.impam* ‘we turn’

*cf. Gaul. *Pennouindos*, W *Penwyn*, Ogam *QENOVENDA-*

Systematic exceptions to initial stress

- Adverbial stress after proclitic elements
 - *indíu* [i' n̪iːw] 'today' < *in* 'article' + dat.sg. **díu* 'day'
 - *anúas* [a' nuas] 'from above' < *an-* 'directional prefix' + *úas* 'up, above'

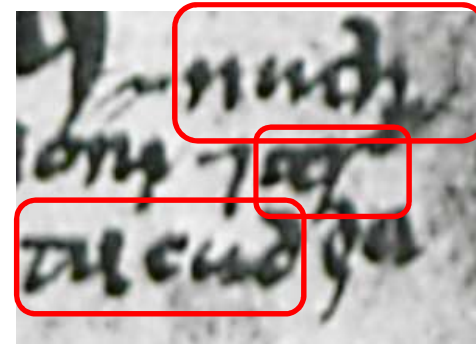
- Stress on second element of verbal complex (apart from absolute simple verbs)
 - *beirid* ['bʲerʲəðʲ] 'carries', but
 - *ní·beir* [n̪iː' bʲerʲ] 'does not carry' (*ní·* = negative conjunct particle)
 - *do·beir* [do' bʲerʲ] 'brings' (*to-* = lexical (aspectual?) preverb)
 - *ní·tabair* [n̪iː' taβərʲ] 'does not bring'

Systematic exceptions to initial stress

asnacha·tucad [asnəxa'tugəð]

'out of which he could not have brought them'

(MI. 125b7)



nach_a

as

tucad

a – *s* – *nach* – *a* – *tuc* – *ad*

'out of' – PREP. – REL.NEG. – 3PL.OBJ. – PERSPECTIVE – 3SG. 2NDARY ENDING

REL. + PRON. PRON. SUBJ. stem
 (*to-uc-*) of
do·beir 'bring'

Systematic exceptions to initial stress

- Function words are unstressed and cliticised
- Articles, e.g. *dintsruth* ‘from the stream’ (*dint śruth*),
arindisin ‘for this’ (*arind í-sin*),
innatoimten ‘of the opinions’ (*inna toimten*)
- Prepositions, e.g. *dintsruth* ‘from the stream’ (*dint śruth*),
arindisin ‘for this’ (*arind í-sin*),
dodenum ‘to do’ (*do dénum*)
- Conjunctions, e.g. *coatbelainse* ‘so that I might die’ (*co at·belain-se*),
manubbaitsimse ‘if I baptise ye’ (*má nub·baitsim-se*)

Systematic exceptions to initial stress

- Function words are unstressed and cliticised
- Pronouns, e.g. *fundamthabartisse* ‘that they would subdue me’ (*fundam·thabartis-se*),
arindisin ‘for this’ (*arind í-sin*),
manubbaitsimse ‘if I baptise ye’ (*má nub·baitsim-se*)
- Copula, e.g. *asned* ‘that this is’ (*as n-ed*),
airrubulatharthæ ‘for he was exposed’ (*air rubu látharthæ*),
cotabéu ‘so that I am alive’ (*cota béu*)

Stress-related phenomena

- Full phonemic contrasts only under stress
- Neutralisation of contrasts further away from stress
 - Restrictions on vocalism
 - Depalatalisation of pretonic consonants
 - Voicing of fricatives and stops
- Massive consequences for the verbal complex and verbal allomorphy
- Reduction of second compound elements (*gai* [gaj] ‘spear’ + *scíath* [sʲkʲiaθ] ‘shield’ > *gaisced* [gasʲkʲəð] ‘weapons’)

Morphophonemics

- Old Irish is characterised by a wide range of phonetic alternations that
 - Accompany morphological and syntactic processes
 - Are grammatical processes in their own right
 - Create a large amount of allomorphy

- Major processes:
 - Initial mutations (lenition, nasalisation, aspiration)
 - Palatalization
 - Syncope
 - Metaphony (umlaut)

Mutations

- Three types:

- Lenition X^L (turns a consonant in its lenited counterpart)
- Nasalisation X^N (prefixes nasal to *b, d, g*, vowel;
voices *p, t, c, f* – not indicated in writing)
- Aspiration X^H (prefixes [h] to vowel – not indicated in writing)

Mutations

- Operate across word boundaries
- Are triggered by preceding element in syntactic concatenations
- Overt in NPs and PPs, e.g.
 - in^l chell* [in çelʲ] ‘the church’
 - a^N torad* [a dorəð] ‘the fruit’
 - fo^l menmain* [fo βʲenmənʲ] ‘in the mind’
 - fri^H aicned* [fʲrʲi hakʲnʲəð] ‘contrary to nature’

Mutations

- Operate across word boundaries
- Are triggered by preceding element in syntactic concatenations
- Sometimes covert in VPs, e.g.
 - dom^L·fairci* [dom 'arʲkʲi] 'overlooks me'
 - da^N·mbidc* [da 'mʲbʲiðʲgʲ] 'pelted him'
 - do·beir* [do 'bʲerʲ] 'brings' but *do(-X^N)·mbeir* [do 'mʲbʲerʲ] 'what he brings'
 - fo·claid* [fo 'klaðʲ] 'digs' but *fo(-X^L)·chlaid* [fo 'xlaðʲ] 'who digs'

Palatalisation

- Central morphophonemic process in inflection and stem formation
- A reflex of prehistoric endings, e.g.
 - Primlr. nom.sg. **karrāh* > OIr. *carr* [kar:] ‘cart’
 - gen.sg. **karrī* > OIr. *cairr* [karʲ:] ‘of a cart’
- Alternation often concomitant with overt endings, e.g.
 - nom.sg. *cnáim* [kna:βʲ] ‘bone’ vs. gen.sg. *cnáma* [kna:βa]
 - 3sg. *beirid* [bʲerʲəðʲ] ‘carries’ vs. 3pl. *berait* [bʲerədʲ] (root *ber-*)

Metaphony (Umlaut)

- Often concomitant with changes in palatalisation
- Many varieties of alternations of (mostly short) vowels, esp.
 - Raising ($e > i$, $o > u$), e.g.
nom.sg. *fer* [fʲer] ‘man’ vs. nom.pl. *fir* [fʲirʲ] ‘men’
 - Lowering ($i > e$, $u > o$), e.g.
nom.sg. *fuil* [fulʲ] ‘blood’ vs. gen.sg. *folo* [folo]
 - u-infection, e.g.
1sg. *canu* [kanu] ‘I sing’ vs. *ní-caun* [nʲi:ˈkaʷn] ‘I don’t sing’
 - ...

Syncope

- Historically a rule whereby the vowel of every second non-final syllable is deleted
- Synchronically a rule whereby vowels are deleted in inflection and word-formation
 - nom.sg. *claideb* [klaðʲəβ] ‘sword’ vs. acc.pl. *claidbiu* [klaðʲβʲu] < **cladibu*
 - 1sg. *caraimm* [karəmʲ] ‘I love’ vs. 1pl. *carmai* [karmi] < **carammai*
 - *dígal* [dʲi:ɣəl] ‘revenge’ vs. *díglach* [dʲi:ɣləx] ‘vengeful’ < **dígalach*
- Syncope operates on (diachronically) underlying forms, cf.
 - sg. *ingen* [inʲgʲən] ‘nail, claw’ vs. pl. *ingnea* < PC **ang^wīnās* < PIE **h₃ngʰu-iHneh₂es*
 - sg. *ingen* [inʲɣʲən] ‘girl, daughter’ vs. pl. *ingena* < PC **enigenās* < PIE **h₁eni-ĝeneh₂es*

Syncope (and accompanying effects)

- Entails many other concomitant changes, esp.
 - Palatalisation/depalatalisation
 - Devoicing
 - Assimilation
 - Homorganic delentition, e.g.
bentae [bʲen(:)te] ‘ye strike’ < *ben[†]the* [bʲen-θe],
trócar [tro:kəɾ] ‘charitable’ < *tróg* [tro:ɣ] ‘miserable’ + *-char* [xəɾ] ‘loving’
 - Epenthesis, e.g.
ad·gládathar ‘converses’ vs. *ní·acaldathar* < *·*ag-gl[†]dathar*

Morphophonemics – all together now

- All of these processes interact in the most complex ways, e.g. in verbal morphology. The following pairs continue the same underlying preforms under different accentual patterns:

- **ambi-soyont* ‘they turn’

- *im-soät* [im'so.əd] vs. *ní-impat* [nʲi:'impəd]

- **dī-slondīt* ‘denies’

- *do-sluindi* [do'slunʲdʲi] vs. *ní-díltai* [nʲi:'dʲi:lʲti]

- **ad-garijū* ‘I accuse’

- *ad-gairiu* [ađ'garʲu] vs. *ní-acru* [nʲi:'agru]

Ad·tlochur indithim dúib!



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