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THE HISTORY OF THE OLD IRISH PREVERB *TO-*^{*}

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Abstract

Zur Klärung der Frage, ob das altirische Präverb *do·to-* auf **to* oder **tu* zurückgeht, werden zuerst alle festlandkeltischen Belege kurz besprochen. Der Hauptteil der Untersuchung widmet sich dann der Frage, ob die Schreibung runder Vokale in vortonigen Silben mit *o* oder *u* im Altirischen Rückschlüsse auf ihre Vorgeschichte zulässt. Das Ergebnis, nach eingehender Diskussion aller Quellen, ist, dass nicht nur im klassischen Altirischen alle runden Vokale bereits zusammengefallen und sich ihre Verteilung nach ganz neuen Kriterien wie dem Grad der Schwachtonigkeit richtet, sondern dass auch in den wenigen erhaltenen frühaltirischen Texten das Auftreten von *o* und *u* in dieser Stellung offenbar rein zufällig ist und keinem erkennbaren Muster folgt. Der weitgehende Zusammenfall vortoniger gerundeter Vokale muss also schon vor der frühaltirischen Zeit erfolgt sein. Entgegen der verbreiteten Ansicht können die frühaltirischen Belege somit vorläufig nicht als Hinweis auf die etymologische Qualität dieser Vokale herangezogen werden. Eine eingehende Auswertung von *to-* in betonter Stellung dagegen führt zu dem Ergebnis, dass sich die Verteilung der Allomorphe nur mit dem etymologischen Ansatz **to* erklären lassen. Der

* I thank Bernhard Bauer and Aaron Griffith for their support in the collection of the data for this article. The following abbreviations for languages are used in this study: Clt. = Celtic, Gaul. = Gaulish, IE = Indo-European, MBret. = Middle Breton, MCorn. = Middle Cornish, MW = Middle Welsh, OIr. = Old Irish, PC = Proto-Celtic, PIE = Proto-Indo-European, OW = Old Welsh, W = Welsh.

Aufsatz endet mit Überlegungen zur Funktion und Herkunft von **to*. Ein Nebenprodukt dieser Untersuchung sind über das bekannte Material hinausgehende Überlegungen zur Frage, ob in der Vorgeschichte des Irischen *u* vor einem folgenden *e* zu *o* gesenkt wurde. Das vorliegende Material unterstützt die Ansicht, dass das nicht der Fall war.

1. Introduction

The Celtic preverb *to-* is not only very well attested in Irish and British, but there are also reliable instances of it in Gaulish and probably also in Celtiberian. Only for Lepontic or, perhaps more appropriately, for the Celtic languages in Northern Italy apart from Gaulish, the attestations are less certain. Despite its frequency and prominent role in Celtic verbal and nominal compounding,¹ its etymology – its historical phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax – has not yet been satisfactorily clarified, in particular because there is no manifest cognate, or at least no comparably prominent cognate preverb, in other Indo-European languages.² It was long believed that this preverb was etymologically identical with the OIr. preposition *do* ‘to, for’,³ but Holmer (1933: 116) demonstrated their

¹ The preverb *to-* occurs only in nominal compounds that are derived from verbal compounds, i.e. in verbal abstracts and in a few other nouns that are clearly secondary to verbal formations, like, for instance, OIr. *toísech* ‘first’, MW *twyssawc* which ultimately go back to a compound verb **to-ȝeid-* (Schumacher 2000: 54–55).

² Important previous studies of Clt. **to-* are Holmer 1933, *GOI* 506, 531–533, Dillon 1947, 1955, 1962, 1972, Wagner 1972, *LEIA* T-81, Schrijver (1995: 17 fn. 2), Eska 2007.

³ E.g., *VKG* II 74, 300–301. This idea is still expressed in Matasović (2009: 381).

unrelatedness. While the preposition *do* is cognate with prepositions in Germanic, Baltic and Slavic of the same meaning, Holmer considered *to-* to be etymologically obscure.

Traditionally, the preverb is traced back to a Proto-Celtic or Proto-Indo-European preform **to*,⁴ but Peter Schrijver, following a theory proposed by Wagner (1972: 39–40), and himself followed by Schumacher (2000: 33–34; *KP* 84), suggested that the vowel of the preverb be better reconstructed as *u* (Schrijver 1995: 17 fn. 2). His arguments for reconstructing **tu* may be cited *in extenso*:

“(1) The oldest form of the pretonic preverb in OIr. was *tu*: Wb. *prima manus túercomlássat 7a7* (in *toncomra* gl. *ut tederet nos* (14b23), *tu-* may have been lowered to *to-* by the vowel of the pronoun **nos* or **nes*); Cambrai Homily *tuthegot* (*Thes.* II.247 l. 17);

(2) MW *tywyssawc* ‘lord’ < **tu-wissāko-*; **to-wissāko-* would have become ***tewyssawc*;

(3) the contraction of **tu* with a following vowel agrees with that of **su-* ‘good’ (elision of **-u-*) and differs from **uo* ‘under’ (contraction of **-o-* + V): OIr. prototonic *.testa* ‘is lacking’ < **tu-eks-tā-*, *saibir* ‘rich’ < **su- + adbar* ‘matter’ vs. *.fácaib* ‘leaves’ < **uo-ad-gab-* etc.”

Neither Schrijver nor Schumacher 2000 are outspoken as to whether they reconstruct **tu* for Insular Celtic only, or al-

⁴ See the end of this article for some suggestions regarding the etymological analysis of this particle.

ready for Proto-Celtic, although Schrijver's formulation seems to suggest the latter. In *KP* 84, Schumacher explicitly sets up **tu* for Insular Celtic only, whereas for Proto-Celtic he operates with **to*, albeit with a question mark. Schumacher (2000: 33–34) added a further piece of evidence for the vowel *u*, MW *tyle* m./f. 'lair, bed', which he derived from **tu-leg(i)ā* or **tu-legiom*. He later put this suggestion into perspective: *apud* Eska (2007: 187 fn. 8), he pointed out "that the form may be a compound of *ty* 'house' and *lle* 'place'". While neither Schrijver or Schumacher give an account of where **tu* acquired its vowel, Joseph Eska (2007: 199–200) explains it by allophonic variation of original **to* in hiatus position before front vowels, for which he adduces parallels from Continental Celtic. He then goes on to say that "[...] after the allophonic doublets [...] **[to]-* and **[tu]-*, were created, their original complementary distribution was blurred; new compounds could have been built with either allomorph".⁵

The purpose of this study is to subject Schrijver's hypothesis about the vocalism of the preverb **to/tu* to a meticulous inspection, and to make some comments about its etymology.

2. The Continental Celtic evidence

Despite some fundamental scepticism about two of Schrijver's three arguments (see below), Eska 2007 accepted the basic idea because of Schrijver's explanation of MW *tywys-sawc*. In this, he was unaware of Sims-Williams's (2003: 151 fn. 902) critical assessment of this particular etymology (see

⁵ The allomorphs of the nominal prefix **so-/*su-* 'good' in Old Irish show exactly such a random distribution as claimed by Eska for **to-/*tu-*.

also below). However, Eska draws attention to the fact that all good evidence from Continental Celtic supports **to*, with no certain attestation of **tu*; accordingly he concludes that **tu* must have been an exclusively Insular Celtic phenomenon. With reference to the possible IE etymology of the preverb as a sentence-introducing connective particle, Eska (2007: 187–195) argues that in Continental Celtic *to* is still palpable as a clausal connector, not only as a preverb. The following list contains a cursory survey of Eska's examples of *to*, augmented by a possible instance that has come to light in the meantime:

- (1) The analysis as a clausal connector is possible for the conjunction *toni* in a graffito from La Graufesenque (*Mar.* 12.10; *RIG* II-2, 121) which functions as a connective ‘and, then, furthermore’ in a trinomial series of names (Eska 2007: 189–190).
- (2) This is also a viable solution for the Celtiberian rock inscription from Peñalba de Villastar (K.3.3) where plain *to* appears to function as the connector of two conjoined clauses (Eska 2007: 188–189).
- (3) In the Latin-Gaulish bilingual from Vercelli (*LexLep* VC.1.2), *to* in the verbal form *tošokote*, corresponding to Lat. *dedit* ‘gave’, is likely to be some sort of dummy host for a pronoun (-šo-), in an intermediary position between clausal connector and preverb (Eska 2007: 191–192).
- (4) The newly found inscription from Chartres (Viret et al. 2013) has once or twice the form *eto* (A5⁶ and B5) which to all intents and purposes has the appearance of a sentential con-

⁶ The reading of *eto* in line A5 is uncertain. There could be another letter in front of it.

junction. Given the propensity of Gaulish to link up particles in chains (cp., e.g., *RIG* L-13, *RIG* L-98, *RIG* L-100 *etic* < **eti-k^ue*, *RIG* L-65 *duci* < **dō-kei* (?) or **dō-k^ue*⁷ (?), *Mar.* 12.10 *toni* < **to-ni*, *Chartres duti* < **dō-(e)ti*?), a possible analysis of *eto* is **et(i)-to*, consisting of the conjunction **eti* with apocope or syncope of the final *-i* and **to*. *Eto* seems to be different in meaning and function from plain *eti* ‘and, furthermore’, which also occurs in the same inscription (lines A9, B6).

(5) The beginning of line 3 of the Gaulish inscription *RIG* L-70 is sometimes read as *toberte* (doubtful Eska 2007: 194), but this alleged example of *to-* has to be dropped. Instead, these letters, which are *to* instead of *to* (Schumacher 2008: 203–204), have to be read together with the last two letters of the preceding line to form the verbal form *tióberte*, consisting of the preverb *tio-* (occurring also in *RIG* L-98 *tiopritom*, *RIG* L-52 *tioinuoru* and in nominal derivatives *RIG* L-111 *tiono*, *RIG* L-72 *tótamica*) and a form of the verbal root *ber-*.

(6) In Celtiberian, *touertaunei* is the traditionally suggested reading for Botorrita 1 (K.1.1. A-2), but the first letter *to* is in fact illegible due to damage at exactly this spot of the bronze. So the form cannot be used in the present discussion (Eska 2007: 194–195).

(7) *Tomezeclai* on the infamous bilingual inscription from Voltino (*LexLep* BS-3) in Northern Italy is regarded as an example of a Celtic compound verb with an infixed pronoun

⁷ If this should be the correct morphological analysis, the development must have taken the following path: pre-Clt. **dō-k^ue* > PC **dū-k^ue* > Gaul. **dūk* (apocope and delabialisation) > **dūke* (restitution of the apocopated vowel from contexts where it was retained). The *-i* of *duci* would be due to the frequent confusion of final *-e* and *-i* in Gaulish.

and the preverb *to-* as the first element (Eska 2007: 192–193), but the inscription has come under doubt recently, first of all in regard to the correct reading of its non-Latin section, and secondly as to whether it is Celtic at all (Schürr 2006, Zavaroni 2008). Despite Eska and Wallace's recent efforts (2011) to vindicate the Celtic character of the inscription, I remain cautious and would prefer not to use Voltino in Celtic linguistics at all.

Even though a good part of the handful of examples of *to* in Continental Celtic are ultimately doubtful in one way or the other, there are just enough of them to corroborate that its vowel was *o* in several ancient Celtic languages. The Celtiberian verbal form *tures* in Celtiberian script has been interpreted as a sigmatic aorist **rēg-s-t* with a preverb *tu-* by Blanca Prósper (in Villar and Prósper 2005: 299–300, 302–305), but the latter is not evidence for Schrijver's preverb **tu*. The Celtiberian script is ambiguous in regard to the voicedness of obstruents. Prósper has convincingly demonstrated that the past participle, which corresponds to the aorist *tures* in Celtiberian script, is *dureita* < **dū-reχ-to-* with *d* in Latin script. *Tures* is thus a genuine verbal compound with the Celtic preposition **dū* which, in contrast to all other Celtic languages, must have developed into a preverb in Celtiberian.

3. Insular Celtic: previous refutations of **tu*

All three arguments put forward by Schrijver (1995: 17 fn. 2) for Insular Celtic **tu* have already been rejected by other scholars individually, but never together as a group. Number 2 was inadvertently disproved by none other than Peter Schrijver himself in the same book in which he posited **tu*. This was later stated explicitly by Patrick Sims-Williams (2003: 151 fn.

902) who noted that according to Schrijver's own rules (Schrijver 1995: 342) the prehistoric sequence **uui*, which would occur in Schrijver's preform **tuuissāko-* (1995: 17), should have developed into **aui*. This would then have undergone the identical *i*-affection $> **teuiss^{\circ}$ that would have also affected the more traditional reconstruction **touuissāko-*. This development is borne out by Lat. *ruina* which via intermediate **rayūna* gave W *rhewin*. In the context of the derivation of W *tywys* 'beginning', Schrijver (1995: 342) observes that the first vowel *y* cannot continue **u* directly, but must have been re-introduced secondarily from the unaffected allomorph. Yet he did not connect this observation with his earlier statements about the prehistory of *to/tu*. The upshot of this is that irrespective of whether one starts from **touuissāko-* or **tuuissāko-*, the expected result would have been MW ***tewysauc*. In either case, analogical influence from the vocalism of the unaffected preverb **ty/dy* has to be invoked in order to arrive at the attested *tywysauc*. Schrijver's **tuuissāko-* thus has no advantage over the traditional reconstruction and is deprived of its *raison d'être*.

Against no. 3, Eska (2007: 196) pointed out that not only does the preverb *to/tu* show elision before a vowel in composition, but that the so-called augment or perfective particle *ro* $< *pro$ of Old Irish, with its etymologically inherited vowel **o*, behaves in exactly the same way. Therefore, if *ro* shows elision in this context, the similar behaviour of *to* loses its significance, undermining the validity of Schrijver's observation. Nevertheless, the treatment of *ro* and *to* does differ from that of the similarly shaped OIr. preverb *fo* $< *uo < *upo$. Instead of showing elision, *fo* regularly coalesces with a following vowel, either to give a long vowel, e.g. **fo-ad-gab- > fácaib*, or a diphthong, e.g. **fo-em- > foím*. The reason for this different behaviour must

be sought in the fact that PC **yo* was an exclusively lexical preverb, whereas **ro* and **to* probably had grammatical beside lexical functions as well, and were thus subject to different analogical influences. The grammatical function of *ro*, in addition to its use as a lexical preverb in compounds like *ro-icc*, is amply known from Old Irish and Middle Welsh. As for *to*, it will be argued at the end of this article that its origin and use were different from other preverbs and that it may have possessed a different function originally. However, things are not so simple. In one instance in British at least, the behaviour of *to* before a vowel is the same as that of *fo* in Old Irish *fácaib*, namely in the word ‘to come’: **to-ag-e/o-* > **dāge/o-* (with analogical lenition of the initial **t*) > **doy-* > 3sg. MW *daw*, MBret. *deu*, MCorn. *due*, *de*, *duea*, 1sg. MW *deuaf*, MBret. *deuaff*, MCorn. *dof* (Schrijver 1995: 329; *KP* 190–192; Eska 2007: 196). So, even the alleged clear-cut difference in behaviour between *to* and other preverbs turns out to be an illusion.

Finally, regarding Schrijver’s first argument in favour of setting up **tu*, the significance of the spellings with *tu* in Early Old Irish sources, Eska (2007: 195–196) critically comments that beside *tu* the same textual sources also have *to*, and a similar variation is also found with *ro/ru*. There is, then, no reason to place special diagnostic value on the orthographic vocalism of *tu* in the Würzburg *prima manus*. In the present study, Eska’s point will be corroborated with further arguments. For this, the matter has to be placed in the wider context of an examination of the fate of rounded vowels in pretonic syllables in Early and Classical Old Irish.

4. Pretonic rounded vowels in Old Irish

Schrijver's claim that the oldest form of the preverb in Early Old Irish texts was *tu*, which he supported with one form each from the Cambrai Homily (*Thes. II 247.17 tuthegot*) and the Würzburg *prima manus* (Wb 7a7 *túercomlássat*), builds on the tacit presupposition that after the loss of the length distinction in Primitive Irish, the distinction in quality of rounded vowels in pretonic elements like preverbal particles, prepositions, possessive pronouns or certain forms of the copula was still preserved in the earliest surviving documents of Old Irish, like the *Cambrai Homily* or the Würzburg *prima manus*. This hypothesis is exemplified in table 1 by four Proto-Goidelic preverbal elements, the augment **ro-*, the clause-initial particle **nu-*, the possessive pronoun **tō* 'your (thy)' < **tou*' and the preposition **dū* 'to, for', representing the four possible prehistoric variants of pretonic rounded vowels.

stage	source	<i>*ro</i>	<i>*nu</i>	<i>*tō</i>	<i>*dū</i>
1. Prim. Ir.	—	<i>*ro</i>	<i>*nu</i>	<i>*to</i>	<i>*du</i>
2. Early OIr.	CH, Wb ¹	<i>ro</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>du</i>
3. OIr. ₁		<i>ro</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>do</i>

Table 1: The corollary of Schrijver's hypothesis – Early Old Irish sources represent the inherited vocalism (key: CH = Cambrai Homily, Wb¹ = Würzburg *prima manus*, OIr.₁ = idealised standard Old Irish after the merger of pretonic, rounded vowels)

The early documents are therefore presumed to provide crucial first-hand information about the etymological quality of the vowels. In the following, the validity of this hypothesis will be tested. But before we embark on the detailed examination of

the Early Old Irish evidence, it is apposite to trace briefly the development of historically rounded pretonic vowels in the subsequent periods up to Middle Irish. For the purposes of normalisation of Old Irish in textual editions, it is usually assumed that by the time of the classical Old Irish language (= stage 3. *Old Irish 1* in Table 1), the qualitative opposition among rounded vowels in pretonic elements had been given up completely, and all fell together in *o* as the main representation of all previously rounded vowels. While the fact of a merger is evident, this state of phonological affairs is nevertheless strictly hypothetical. It is possible that this stage of perfect merger is nowhere actually attested in Old Irish, certainly not in the contemporary documents of Old Irish that are collected in the *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus (Thes.)*. At the same time when the merger happened, or very shortly afterwards, the vowel *u* was reintroduced into pretonic particles as a new, marked, allophonic variant of *o* in positions when it “has the minimum amount of stress” (*GOI* 63). That is to say, in a pretonic second syllable, when some other sentence- or clause-initial element precedes the preverb, the underlying *o* can surface as *u*. This development was posterior to the general merger of pretonic rounded vowels and it is independent of the etymological quality of the vowels. It affects equally *do-* from earlier **to* and from earlier **di*, which did not contain a rounded vowel originally, e.g. Wb 5c23 *madu·gnether* ‘if it should be done’, 10c21 *andu·gniat* ‘what they do’ <**di-gnī-*>. Subtle rules govern the raising of *o* > *u* in this position, because the treatment apparently depends on the preceding particle.⁸ The most notable among the elements

⁸ All following statements about the frequency of the variants in the glossed manuscripts rest on preliminary collections. Only when the dictionaries for

that trigger the reduction is *má* ‘if’. Forms with *u* are almost obligatory after *má* throughout Würzburg and Milan, and even in St Gall where *u* in general has suffered a very drastic decline in usage.⁹ After other conjunctions like *cé*, *cía* ‘although’, *a* ‘when, what’ or *amal* ‘like’ there seems to be a free choice of the vowel, with *o* being somewhat preferred in Würzburg.

This state of affairs, where *u* is restricted to weakly-stressed positions, is best represented by Würzburg’s main hand, but even in his glosses *u* sometimes appears in positions where *o* would be expected. This phenomenon comes much more to the foreground in the Milan glosses. Depending on the word in question, forms with *u* occasionally outweigh those with *o* there, but have not fully ousted them yet.¹⁰

Over the late 8th and early 9th century, *u* apparently encroached more and more upon positions that had previously been held by *o*. Ultimately a state was reached where every pre-

all three glossed corpora of Old Irish, including Milan and St Gall, are completed, can absolute figures for the phenomena be given.

⁹ The ratios of *nu·*, *du·*, *ru·* against *no·*, *do·*, *ro·* etc. after *má* are:

Wb: 19 : 1 (20a11)

MI: 11 : 0

Sg: 6 : 2 (16b2, 27a18)

¹⁰ A few random examples can illustrate the checkered picture that emerges from Milan:

preverbal particle *no·*: <no> 175 attestations, <nu> 72;

possessive pronoun *do·*: <do> 19, <du> 33;

preposition *do·*: <do> 663, <du> 465;

preverb *do·*: <do> 37, <du> 344, <to> 4, <tu> 2;

possessive pronoun *mo·*: <mo> 29, <mu> 34;

preposition *de* (!): <do> 39, <du> 64.

These figures are taken from a provisional version of the dictionary database of the Milan glosses (January 2013). Additional factors like exact syntactic contexts have not been taken into account in the analysis yet.

tonic rounded vowel could be represented by the letter *u*. This situation is encountered in the language of the latest glossator of Würzburg (the ‘*tertia manus*’) who was responsible for the glosses on the final folios 33 and 34 of the manuscript. Hardly any pretonic *o* is found on those three pages.¹¹ This is also the state of affairs in other minor glossed manuscripts and texts, e.g. in the Notes in the Book of Armagh, in the Irish glosses on the New Testament in the Book of Armagh, or in the Reichenau Primer, kept in St. Paul im Lavanttal in Carinthia. Because there is no large Old Irish manuscript that displays this phonetic-orthographic feature, it has received only little attention, but the material suffices to give evidence of a general soundchange, either diachronic or perhaps diatopic, by which every pretonic *o* became *u* by the first half of the 9th century. This sound change was subsequently reversed again.

Ó Máille (1910: 168) observed that in the language of the *Annals of Ulster* the spelling *ru* for the perfective particle is found only between the years 803 and 852, and only as an option (“only in a few words”) beside the more usual spelling with *o*. It is tempting to connect Ó Máille’s dates with the difference in the usage of *u* in the various Old Irish glossed manu-

¹¹ The figures for the Würzburg *tertia manus* are:
 Preverbal particle *no*: <no> 2 [33b8, c1], <nu> 0;
 preverb and preposition *fo*: <fo> 1 [33a12], <fu> 4 [33a12, b13, 18, c12, 34a2];
 preposition *co*: <co> 0, <cu> 1 [33d8];
 particle *ro*: <ro> 1? [33a20 *rombu*, but the manuscript could actually read *rambu*], <ru> 11 [33a5, 11 (2×), 12, 22, b1, 5, c4a, 7, d6, 34a4];
 copula *-bo*: <bo, po> 0, <bu, pu> 5 [33a5, 20, 22, b4, 13];
 possessive pronoun *mo*: <mo> 0, <mu> 1 [33a11];
 preverb *do*: <do> 2 [33c3, d8], <du> 6 [33a15, b3, 8, d5, 10 (2×)];
 preposition *do*: <do> 0, <du> 4 [33b6 (3×), d10].

scripts. In particular, the St Gall glosses, which show a drastic drop of spellings with *u* compared with the other two major Old Irish glossed manuscripts,¹² have been dated to the year 851 (Ó Néill 2000), that is, to exactly the same time when *ru* disappears from the *Annals of Ulster* according to Ó Máille. However, Ó Máille only counted the perfective particle, not all pretonic elements with rounded vowels. In fact, *u* continues to appear in pretonic syllables in the *Annals of Ulster*, mostly in the preposition *du* ‘to’, for a long while after the middle of the 9th century, at least until 927.¹³ But even before the period indicated by Ó Máille, that is, in the 7th and 8th centuries, the *Annals of Ulster* do contain sporadic instances of *u*.

In summary (table 2), at least from the time of the Würzburg main glossator onwards the distribution of spellings with *o* or *u* of pretonic rounded vowels in final position of Old Irish reflects not the etymological origin of those vowels, but synchronic allophonic variation caused by factors like different grades of vowel reduction in unaccented syllables.

¹² A representative sample:

preposition *do*: <do> 132, <du> 1

preposition *fo*: <fo> 15, <fu> 0

preverb *do*· in *do-beir* and *do·gní*: <do> 33, <du> 0

possessive pronoun *mo*: <mo> 3, <mu> 0

preverbal particle *no*·: <no> 14, <nu> 3

copula *-bo*: <bo, po> 0, <bu, pu> 8

It is telling that all three instances of *nu*· occur after the conjunction *má* (Sg 31b21, 32a1, 72b6). The copula *-bu* by necessity comes after another element and therefore in very weakly stressed position.

¹³ The preposition *do* occurs in the form <du> in the following years after the middle of the 9th century: 856.1, 865.4 (beside *do*), 871.2 (beside *do*), 874.5 (2×), 877.3, 878.9, 913.8 (beside *do*), 914.3, 914.7, 927.3 (beside *do*).

stage	source	*ro	*nu	*tō	*dū	
1. Prim. Ir.	—	*ro	*nu	*tō	*dū	
2. Early OIr.	CH, Wb ¹ ,...	?ro	?nu	?tō	?dū	
3. OIr. ₁	?	ro	no	do	do	
4. OIr. ₂	Wb ^m	ro/-ru	no/-nu	do	do	
5. OIr. ₃	Ml	ro/ru	no/nu	do/du	do/du	
6. OIr. ₄	Wb ³ , StP, Ardm...	ru	nu	du	du	
7. OIr. ₅	Sg	ro(/-ru)	no(/-nu)	do	do	

Table 2: The distribution of spellings with *u* and *o* in the sources of Old Irish (key: OIr.₁ = idealised standard Old Irish after the merger of pretonic, rounded vowels; CH = Cambrai Homily, Wb¹ = Würzburg *prima manus*, Wb^m = Würzburg *main glossator*, Ml = Milan *glosses*, Wb³ = Würzburg *tertia manus*, StP = Reichenau *Primer in St. Paul/Lavanttal*, Ardm = *texts in the Book of Armagh*, Sg = *St. Gall *glosses**)

5. Pretonic rounded vowels in Early Old Irish

But to what extent do spellings in Early Old Irish sources concur with the etymological values of the vowels? To find an answer to this, we must scrutinise the entire available evidence in those archaic sources which Thurneysen (*GOI* 8–9) considered to be “linguistically older than the main body of the Würzburg *glosses*, some even as early as the sixth century”:

1. the *glosses of the prima manus* in Würzburg, a collection of 79 very short *glosses* scattered throughout the Würzburg manuscript (*Thes.* I xxiv);

2. the Cambrai Homily, a short sermon-like exposition about a text from the Holy Scripture (*Thes.* II 244–247);
3. three manuscripts with a small number of glosses on Philargyrius' scholia on Vergil's *bucolica*, Florence Cod. Laurent. Plut. xlv Cod. 14 and Paris Bibl. Nat. MS Lat. 7960 (*Thes.* II 46–48), and Paris Bibl. Nat. MS Lat. 11.308 (*Thes.* II 360–363);
4. a manuscript from Naples, Bibl. Naz. IV A 34, with a few glosses on the *Ars Malsachani* (Thurneysen 1940: 280–284; 1941: 37–38);
5. a single folio from Turin, Cod. Taur. F. iv. 24, with glosses on the second Epistle of St. Peter (*Thes.* I 713–714);
6. Irish names in Latin texts from the seventh century, most notably Muirchú's and Tírechán's lives of St. Patrick and Adomnán's life of St. Colm Cille (all edited in *Thes.* II 259–280).
7. the list of disciples and relatives of St. Colm Cille in Brit. Lib. Royal 8 D ix (*Thes.* II 281).¹⁴

In addition to being very meagre in number, another factor seriously compromises their evidential value. Thurneysen acknowledges that those texts that are transmitted in later

¹⁴ There is no proper description of this manuscript witness in *Thes.* II xxxi, but footnote 4 on that same page states that it is a mid-15th century vellum manuscript. The short text follows a copy of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*. The forms of the names in this witness point to a very early date of composition, perhaps contemporary with the composition of the *Vita Columbae* in the late 7th century. This source is not mentioned in the list of archaic texts by Thurneysen, presumably because it is contained in a Late Medieval manuscript.

manuscripts may have undergone modernisation during their transmission (*GOI* 8). With the single exception of the Turin fragment, all texts mentioned above are only extant in later copies, sometimes with obvious errors that betray copying by persons unfamiliar with the Irish language. When one tries to gaze through this veil of late transmission it becomes hard to judge which features are old and which modernised. Since, however, this is the only material available, it is warranted to embark on a close study of all the forms contained in them.

The first text to be looked at is the longest continuous piece of Early Old Irish prose, the *Cambrai Homily*. The approach taken here is to proceed gradually from the uncontroversial to the complex. The preposition *ó* ‘from’ is written *o*.¹⁵ Because this is invariably true for all other early sources as well, rendering it evident that *ó* < **aū* was never liable to vowel reduction or to being written as *u*, it will not be further discussed. Inherited long **ū* is written with the letter *u* five times¹⁶ in the preposition *du* ‘to, for’ which goes back to PC **dū*¹⁷ < Pre-Clt. **dō* with lengthened grade. Inherited short **o* is twice written with *o* in the preverb *fo-* < *PC **yo* < PIE **upo*.¹⁸ In these instances it can be said that the written vocalism reflects the etymological vocalism.

This is not so in the other forms. There is a slight controversy about how to reconstruct the preform of the dummy

¹⁵ *o imbud* (MS: *om/bub*, *Thes.* II 246.15).

¹⁶ *du dea* (246.6), *ducach* (246.21), *duduiniu* (246.29), *duduini/u* (247.2), *dundaib* (247.12).

¹⁷ Cp. Gaul. *duci* (La Graufesenque, cp. Delamarre 2003: 153; *RIG* L-65) and maybe *duti* < **dō-(e)ti* (?) (lead-plate from Chartres, Lambert et al. 2013); OW *di*, MW *y*.

¹⁸ *fogeir* (246.2), *fonge/ra* (246.4–5).

preverb *no-*. While most people derive it from PC **nu*, which ultimately can be traced back to the identical PIE temporal adverb for ‘now’ (e.g., *LEIA* N-18, Watkins 1963: 13–15, McCone 2006: 272), Schrijver (1997: 160–161) in particular pleads for comparing it with the Middle Welsh particle of somewhat unclear semantics *neu* or *neut*, and a reconstruction of a common preform **noye*. It is my intention to devote a separate paper to the prehistory of the particle *no-* and its alleged relationship with MW *neu*, but for present purposes the exact preform is not of central importance. For argument’s sake, both alternatives can be used to test their suitability to explain the attested forms. As shall be seen, both lead to an aporia. The particle *no-* is found three times in the *Homily*, twice as *nu-*: *num-secheth-se* ‘let him follow me’ (MS: *ocuisnum sichethre*, 245.6) and *nun/dem* ‘we are’ (246.5–6). Under the assumption that the particle continues **nu*, *num-secheth-se* can be easily analysed as directly reflecting the etymological vowel. Under the alternative assumption that it continues **nou* the vocalism requires a more elaborate strategy. One could claim that the first person singular infix pronoun of *num-secheth-se* continues **mū* and that its vowel, which was subsequently lost, caused the raising of the preceding **o/ō*. This hypothetical raising in a pretonic syllable would not be part of the received rules of Primitive Irish vowel raising which apply only to stressed syllables (McCone 1996: 109–115), but it would have to be subsumed under some sort of extended rules.

In the case of *nundem*, however, such a diachronic explanation is bound to fail. *Nundem* contains the particle in question, **nu* or **nou*, followed either by the plain grammaticalised nasalisation *-n-* or, diachronically, by a relativising particle like **iom*, **som* or the like, + particle **d(e)* + copula 1pl **em*, i.e.

n(o)u-n-de-em*. Unlike *num-secheth-se*, there is no element here that could have caused the raising of the vowel of the particle, if the vowel had been **o/ō/ou*, as required by Schrijver's theory. But *nundem* causes problems also for those who operate with the preform **nu*. According to Kortlandt's theory of lowering of **u* to **o* before **e* across a non-palatalised consonant in the prehistory of Irish (Kortlandt 1979: 42–47; followed by Schrijver 1995: 50–52), a preform like **nu-n-d(e)-em* should have yielded OIr. *nondem*. But even for those who do not believe in the lowering effect of **e* the form is problematic, because according to a rule formulated by Karin Stüber (1997: 87) “*u* fell together with *o* in front of a group of nasal plus stop or in front of an unlenited nasal”. *Nundem* contains exactly the context of Stüber's rule, but the result is not ***nondem*. Whichever of the two theories one follows, none can account for the first vowel of *nundem*, which, in fact, is directly contradictory to both theories. An *ad-hoc* explanation would be to posit the sporadic raising of the vowel in front of a nasal.

Furthermore, the dummy preverb is once attested as *no-* in the Cambrai Homily: *manos-comalnnamar* ‘if we fulfil them’ (MS: *manos comalnn mar*, 247.24). Curiously enough, here the variant *no-* with the lowered variant of the vowel is found after the conjunction *má* ‘if’ which rigorously and almost without exception entails the use of the raised vowel *u* in the three great glossed manuscripts of Old Irish. Adherents of the preform **noʊ* can claim that the inherited vocalism is here directly preserved. Adherents of the preform **nu* can claim that the lowered vowel is due to the infix pronoun *-s* ‘them’, which goes back to **-sos* (Griffith 2005: 61 fn. 24) and whose lost vowel caused the lowering of the preceding particle. It is evident from

all this that in the explanation of these forms allowance must be made for a considerable number of arbitrary factors.

The preverb *to* is twice attested as *tu* in the Cambrai Homily: *tuthegot* ‘who come’ (247.17) and *tuesmot* ‘who shed’ (247.19). For adherents of the preform **tu*, they simply represent the inherited vocalism. Schrijver accordingly uses them as witnesses for his hypothesis. But both are relative verbs, that is, both continue preforms which historically contained the relative particle **jo*. **Tu₁jo₂*, however, should have yielded lowered ***to*, if the possibility is considered that lost vowels exerted lowering influence in pretonic complexes, as argued above as a possibility for *manos-comalnnamar*. If no allowance is made for such a possibility, this has repercussions on *manos-comalnnamar*, whose *o* then cannot be due to lowering. The only way to account for it then is to connect its vocalism with its position after *má*, a position which, as stated above, is special throughout the entire Old Irish period. But arguing this way entails the implication that the allophonic redistribution of pretonic rounded vowels had already begun or had already taken place at the time of the *Cambrai Homily*, thus vitiating the working hypothesis that the sources of Early Old Irish still differentiated the vowels of pretonic elements according to their etymology. For adherents of the preform **to*, *tu-esmot* is explicable by a rule of raising in hiatus before a vowel in deuterotonic verbal forms that Eska (2007: 199) suggested for Insular Celtic. *Tu-thegot*, on the other hand, cannot be so explained, but the analogical spread of *tu* must be assumed.

It emerges by now that the various *ad-formam* explanations for the divergent vocalism of pretonic elements in the *Cambrai Homily* are mutually exclusive. The quest for one consistent, unified theory will lead into rough water. The water gets

even muddier in the case of the third attestation of the preverb *to-* in the *Homily*: *ton/dechomnuchuir* ‘it has happened’ (247.11–12). This is unproblematic if one starts from the preform **to*. As it opens a nasalising relative clause after the conjunction *amail*, and as it contains an infixed neuter pronoun, the diachronic context is the same as for *nundem* above. Adherents of the preform **tu* could explain the form by the lowering expected in such a context, along either of the two possibilities stated above. However, the evidence of *nundem* and *tond·echomnuchuir* is directly contradictory and mutually exclusive in the framework of any hypothesis.

To complicate things even further, the *Cambræi Homily* preserves two instances of an unstressed particle that, unlike the pretonic preverb *no-*, undisputedly continues the diphthong **ou*, namely the conjunction *nó* ‘or’. In both instances, this word occurs in the wholly unexpected form *nu* (245.36, .37).¹⁹ For adherents of the theory that the dummy particle *no-* continues **nou*, this allomorph *nu* of ‘or’ is convenient because all forms, the two tokens *nu-* of the dummy preverb and the two tokens of the disjunctive conjunction, can then be explained by one *ad-hoc* rule whereby **ou* is raised to *u* in the language of the *Cambræi Homily*. However, this explanation, which is ultimately required for Schrijver’s various hypotheses, runs up against the counterintuitive corollary that etymologically short **u* should be lowered to **o* in the case of *tond-*, but that etymologically

¹⁹ This allomorph of the disjunctive conjunction *nó* occurs also three times in the Milan glosses (M1 38b7, 75a4, 137c7), a fact not acknowledged in *DIL*. The *Cambræi Homily* as edited in *Thes. II* 247.4–5 contains two further forms that appear to be relevant *rucésa* and *nú*, but these are only misreadings for *nicésa* and *na* (Ní Chatháin 1990).

long *ō from diphthongal *ou should be raised to *u in exactly the same context in *nundem*. Therefore the best explanation for the unexpected variant *nu* of the conjunction ‘or’ rests in the observation that in both instances it is followed by *ine* ‘in his’, a form starting with a high vowel. Possibly, the raising here is due to the same sandhi feature suggested by Eska (2007: 199), whereby *o* is raised to *u* in hiatus.

To sum up provisionally, it appears to be impossible to arrive at a consistent system of diachronic explanations for how pretonic rounded vowels are represented in the *Cambrai Homily*. Given the amount of variation, those instances which on occasion – depending on one’s theories – seem to reflect the inherited vocalism could simply be due to coincidence.

The other Early Old Irish sources add to the confused picture. The Würzburg *prima manus* has the main clause verb túercómlássát ‘they have brought together’ (Wb 7a7), cited by Schrijver as one of his central witnesses for inherited *tu. It is noteworthy, however, that here, too, *tu* stands before a vowel and so could be a consequence of the hiatus. The same preverb, with *o*, is found a second time, namely in *toncomra* ‘it wearies us’ (or *toncomrit*; Wb 14b23). Schrijver (1995: 17 fn. 2) explains the *o* by lowering caused by the lost vowel of the 1pl infixated pronoun, *-nes²⁰ or *-nos. As was argued before, accepting the influence of lost vowels of infixated elements in some forms has to be bought at the expense of being no longer able to explain other forms.

²⁰ *-nes only works if allowance is made for the possibility of lowering before *e.

Finally, the Würzburg *prima manus* contains three instances of the perfective preverb *ro*-: these are expected *ro-slogeth* ‘it has been swallowed’ (Wb 13d24) and *ro-bé* ‘there may be’ (18c4) with *o*, and unexpected *ru-laimur* ‘I dare’ with *u* (17c21). All three instances are main clause verbs without infixes. There is no diachronic or morphological factor here at all that would warrant the variant treatments of the vowels.

The glosses on Philargyrius, which are preserved in two recensions in three manuscripts,²¹ contain on the one hand *tu-crecha* ‘he feigns’ (no. 13 in L, P; IV.42 in P²), on the other hand *to-dihel* ‘he went astray’ (no. 44, *todidel* L, *dodihel* P; *todiel* P² VII.7). The same glosses contain also two instances of the lexical preverb *fo*-: once *fu-silis-su*, glossing Latin *damnabis* ‘you will damn’ (no. 25, *fisi lusu* L, *fusi lisu* P; *fusilisu* P² V.80), once *fo-lloinc* ‘he suffers’ (no. 82, *follo inc[l]* L, *folloinc* P; *follo inc[l]* P² IX.51). All these forms are main clause verbs without infixes. One could be tempted to explain the *u* of *fu-silis-su* by non-standard raising before the following *i*, but this will not explain the variation between *tu-crecha* and *to-diel*, which show exactly the opposite distribution of vowels.

The Naples glosses of *Ars Malsachani* have 2. *to-im-dirut* ‘I serve’, glossing Lat. *offitio*, 6. *fu-(n)nuu* (MS: *furruu*) ‘I bake, cook’ for Lat. *asso*, 8. *tu-comracim* (MS: *tucóracim*) ‘I gather, collect (?)’ for Lat. *aggero*, 32. *tu-aithbung* (MS: *tuaidhbung*) ‘I desolve’ for Lat. *abrogo*. All verbs are main-clause one-word glosses on the Latin. Again, the evidence runs coun-

²¹ L = Florence Cod. Laurent. Plut. xlvi Cod. 14; P = Paris Bibl. Nat. MS Lat. 7960, both edited in *Thes. II* 46–48. P² = Paris Bibl. Nat. MS Lat. 11.308 (*Thes. II* 360–363). See *Thes. (II xvii)* for the relations between the three manuscripts.

ter to all hypotheses: etymological **o* appears as *u* in *fu·(n)nuu*, in *to·imdirut* the first vowel is in the lowered variant despite standing in hiatus and despite being followed by a high vowel.

The glosses on the second epistle of St. Peter in the Codex Taurinensis contain three relevant forms in a distribution that mirrors that of the main glossator of the Würzburg glosses. *Donnatdet* ‘to whom are not’ and *nochtectaidsi* (= *no·techtaid-si*) ‘that you may have’ seem to have *o* as the default vowel of pretonic syllables, whereas *cenudedissidi* (= *cenuded físsidi*) ‘although you are knowing’ is one of those instances with minimum amount of stress after a sentence particle where reduction of *o* to *u* is the norm in Würzburg. It is easiest to suppose for these glosses that they are younger than those of the other texts discussed so far. If they aren’t, but belong to the same chronological horizon, there remains no alternative than to return the same verdict on them as on all the other archaic texts: the only secure conclusion that the distributional figures (table 3) allow is that there is variation between the vowels *o* and *u* in all preverbs, but without a consistent pattern.

The evidence from the *Book of Armagh* and from Adomnán’s *Vita Columbae*, in the copy of his disciple Dorbéne in the Schaffhausen manuscript, consists on the one hand of *du Dichoin* (*Thes. II* 259.16), *mudebróth* (260.39), *mudebrod* (261.18),²² *du Achud* (267.18), and, in Adomnán’s work, of the 1sg possessive pronoun in *Mo Lua* (278.45). The final archaic Irish source, the list of disciples and relatives of St. Colm Cille, provides two relevant names which contain the possessive pro-

²² For a linguistic study of Patrick’s phrase *mudebrod*, see Rodway 2009.

noun *to* ‘thy’: *To Channu Mocu Fircetea* (281.9) and *To Cum-mi Mocu Cein* (281.19), both with the inherited vowel quality.

The adduced examples illustrate clearly that spellings with *u* are not an exclusive characteristic of the preverb *to*, but that this phenomenon affects all preverbs and pretonic elements with a similar shape, like *ro*, *do*, or *mo*, as well.²³ The apparent prominence of *tu* in the material is due to the conspiracy of three factors:

1. The exploitable corpus of archaic sources is very limited, less than a dozen very short texts.
2. The overall number of possible cases of pretonic rounded vowels is small so that almost no statistically significant conclusions can be drawn from them.
3. Because of its special status as a preverb that occupies the first position in compound verbs, the token frequency of *to/tu* in pretonic position is higher than average. Therefore the relative frequency of *tu* is more glaring than that of other preverbs because of the mere number of possible contexts.

²³ The preposition, which continues PC **dū*, is remarkable in always displaying *u* in these sources, but the evidence is restricted to only two texts.

stage	<i>to/tu</i>	<i>do/du</i> ‘to’	<i>fo/fu</i>	<i>ro/ru</i>	<i>no/nu</i>	<i>mo/mu</i>	<i>to/tu</i> ‘thy’
Cambr.	1/2	0/5	2/0	—	1/2	—	—
Wb ¹	1/1	—	—	2/1	—	—	—
Phyl.	1/1	—	1/1	—	—	—	—
Napol.	1/2	—	0/1	—	—	—	—
Taur.	—	—	—	—	1/1	—	—
Arm./VC	—	0/2	—	—	—	2/1	—
BL 8 D ix	—	—	—	—	—	—	2/0
total	4/6 (10)	0/7 (7)	3/2 (5)	2/1 (3)	2/3 (5)	2/1 (3)	2/0 (2)

Table 3: The aggregate absolute numbers for preverbs ending in rounded vowels in Thurneysen’s archaic sources.

So far, the discussion was confined to Thurneysen’s list of archaic sources which are preserved in manuscripts from the Old Irish period – although re-copied and therefore likely to be modernised in most cases. However, many more sources from the early period could be utilised if also those narrative texts are allowed into the equation that have been transmitted in manuscripts from the post-Old Irish period. An example is the tale *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig* (BCC) ‘The Vision of Conn Cétchathach’ which probably formed part of the lost, early manuscript *Cín Dromma Snechtai* ‘The Book of Druimm Snechtai’. Its first 27 paragraphs have been assigned by an internal historical reference to the reign of Fínsnechta Fledach, king of Tara 675–695; the final six paragraphs may have been added c. 720 (Bhreathnach 2005: 61–62). Texts like this provide more evidence, but the witnesses are harder to interpret because their

evidential value has to be subjected to an even more critical philological evaluation.²⁴

Due to the restrictions of space, only one item that is particularly important for the present investigation can be looked at in detail, because it is from a precisely datable historical source and because its preform is uncontested. For the year 663, the *Annals of Ulster* (AU) record the name *Tu Enog*. The reading with *u* is supported by the parallel entries in the *Annals of Tigernach* (*Tu Enóc*, ATig 663.4) and the *Fragmentary Annals* (*TuEanoc*, FA 663.26). It is a hypocoristic monastic name consisting of the 2sg possessive pronoun 'thy (your)' followed by the diminutive name *Énóc*, formed according to a productive pattern (see Lewis 1936, Russell 2001). If in the middle of the

²⁴ The two preverbs which appear as pretonic *do-* in Classical Old Irish occur in the following forms in *BCC*. The main cited form is that of the edition in Bhreathnach and Murray 2005, the forms in brackets represent the actual attestations in the manuscripts (N = Royal Irish Academy 23 N 10, E = British Library Egerton 88): §8 *dis-nigig* (*disngig* N, *discc nigh* E), §9 *tus-nena* (*tusnena* N, *dusnena* E), §20 *dis-nigig* (*disngig* N, *disccng* E), §25 *dis-nigig* (*discig* N, *dosccnig-* E), §29 *do-tetha* (*dothetha* N, *dotheath-* E), §32 *dis-nigig* (*iscisch* N, *disgich* E), §34 *tus-nesfa* (*tussness* N, *tosneas* E), §35 *dos-n-icfa* (*dossnicfa* N, *tusnicf-* E). It is noteworthy that with the exception of §29 *do-thetha*, which is probably a compound verb **di-tā-* 'to dwindle', the first consonant of each pretonic preverb always alliterates with preceding or, rarer, with following words. While alliteration is a feature of the stressed parts of words in the majority of Old Irish versification, a looser kind of alliteration, in which unstressed elements take part as well, does occasionally occur. This list from *BCC* seems to support mostly the variant **tu-* of that preverb. However, a healthy amount of caution is in place because this spelling could have been introduced by later scribes. Evidence for this is constituted by §12 *doa* 'to his', alliterating with the following *dind* 'summit', which in N is written unhistorically as *tua* (but *do* in E). All other pretonic elements with rounded vowels in *BCC* are written with *o*, even those which continue preforms with **u*: §10 *fo*, §12 *doa* (*tua* N, *do* E), §27 *co*, §31 *do* (– N, *do* E), §35 *co*.

7th century the 2sg possessive pronoun *to*, which undisputedly goes back to a preform with **o* (< **tō* < **tōu*’ < earlier **tēue*), can appear with a *u* in a synchronically formed personal name, we are in all likelihood looking at a contemporary Early Old Irish rule of raising of *o* to *u* before a vowel. Thus, there is no need to attribute the tokens with *u* of the etymologically separate, but formally identical preverb *to* to an earlier Insular Celtic rule of raising in hiatus, as Eska suggested. There was probably a rule of raising in hiatus, but it is not of Insular Celtic, but of Early Old Irish date.

This is the opportunity for an intermediate summary. The various rules that operated in prehistory on the inherited pretonic vowels **o* (< **o* and **ō*) and **u* (< **u* and **ū*), i.e. raising in hiatus,²⁵ lowering before elements that originally followed like certain infix pronouns like **sos*, the relative particle **jo*, etc., and – more speculatively – non-canonical raising of pretonic vowels before infix pronouns like **mu*, created a complex allomorphy among the pretonic particles (table 4). When most of the triggers for the allomorphy were lost by various processes, the distribution of variants became so opaque that ultimately the choice of the pretonic rounded vowel must have become a matter of taste.

²⁵ As per Eska (2007: 199–200), but not necessarily of an Insular Celtic date, but active in Late Primitive Irish.

	unaffected ^a	in hiatus	lowered	(raised) ^b
* <i>ro</i>	* <i>ro</i>	* <i>ru</i>	* <i>ro</i>	(* <i>ru</i>)
* <i>nu</i>	* <i>nu</i>	* <i>nu</i>	* <i>no</i>	(* <i>nu</i>)
* <i>tō</i>	* <i>to</i>	* <i>tu</i>	* <i>to</i>	(* <i>tu</i>)
* <i>dū</i>	* <i>du</i> ^c	* <i>du</i>	* <i>do</i>	(* <i>du</i>) ^c

*Table 4: The reconstructable allomorphy of pretonic elements with u and o in Primitive Irish (key: ^a= when followed by no other pretonic element or when followed by an element that had no effect, i.e. an element that caused raising on u or lowering on o; ^b= under the hypothesis that there was a non-canonical rule of raising in pretonic syllables; ^c= **dū* would almost exclusively have occurred in unaffected and raised contexts, which may explain the fact that it only occurs as *du* in Early Old Irish, but see fn. 23)*

The conditioning factors for the allomorphy were only present until the apocope of c. 500 A.D., that is in the prehistory of the Irish language. When the language comes into the light of history, the conditioning factors are long gone, and by the late 7th century, the time of the earliest extant Early Old Irish sources, the distribution of allomorphs is entirely arbitrary. Alternatively, as suggested by McCone (1996: 135), the vowels could have simply merged in a single, neutral rounded vowel by the 7th century, and this vowel could be spelt with *u* or *o*, according to one's preferences. In consequence, as illustrated in table 5, the spelling variation of pretonic rounded vowels in archaic Old Irish sources cannot reveal anything about the etymology of those preverbs. The available Old Irish evidence does not permit the drawing of inferences about the vocalism of the precursor forms.²⁶

²⁶ Similarly, on phonological grounds alone nothing can be said about the

stage	source	*ro	*nu	*tō	*dū	
1. Prim. Ir.	—	*ro	*nu	*tō	*dū	
2. Early OIr.	CH, Wb ¹ ,...	ro/ru	no/nu	to/tu	do/du	
3. OIr. ₁	?	ro	no	do	do	
4. OIr. ₂	Wb ^m	ro/-ru	no/-nu	do	do	
5. OIr. ₃	Ml	ro/ru	no/nu	do/du	do/du	
6. OIr. ₄	Wb ³ , StP, Ardm...	ru	nu	du	du	
7. OIr. ₅	Sg	ro(/-ru)	no(/-nu)	do	do	

Table 5: The actual distribution of spellings with *u* and *o* in the sources of Old Irish (key: OIr.₁ = idealised standard Old Irish after the merger of pre-tonic, rounded vowels – not attested as such, but frequently used for textual editions; CH = *Cambrai Homily*, Wb¹ = Würzburg prima manus, Wb^m = Würzburg main glossator, Ml = *Milan glosses*, Wb³ = Würzburg tertia manus, StP = *Reichenau Primer in St. Paul/Lavanttal*, Ardm = texts in the *Book of Armagh*, Sg = *St. Gall glosses*)

preform of the Old Irish empty particle *no*. If it is to be connected with PIE *nu, the line of argument must be syntactic, semantic and functional.

6. Tonic *to-* in Old Irish

There is another important group of evidence against Schrijver's Celtic preverb **tu*. The evidence was so far limited to pretonic position in deuterotonic verbs. But Old Irish preverbs can also appear in stressed position, for instance in the prototonic forms of the verbs, or in verbal nouns. If the preverb had been **tu*, reflexes of *u* ought to show up under the appropriate conditions in syllables bearing the accent. Whereas **to* and **tu* would both yield *to-* due to lowering when a syllable containing *a* or *o* had followed historically,²⁷ in certain contexts the two would give different reflexes, namely when *e*, *i* or *u* followed, depending on the nature of the intervening consonants. According to the standard doctrine of historical Irish phonology as expounded by McCone (1996: 109–115), **tu* should always show up as *tu-* if followed by any of those three vowels. **To* should remain before *e*, it should be raised before *i* and *u* if a single voiced consonant intervened, but it should remain *to-* even before the latter two vowels if a voiceless consonant or a consonant cluster intervened.²⁸ In Kortlandt's system of historical developments (1979: 42–47), **tu* should be lowered before *e*, but otherwise the results should be the same. Effectively this means that if the preverb had been **tu* historically, it should surface as *tu-* before a following *e* in McCone's framework of historical phonology, and before *i* and *u* across a voiceless consonant or a consonant cluster in either system, McCone's and Kortlandt's. If *to-* is found instead in such contexts this is proof that the vowel was originally *o*. The follow-

²⁷ **to* V **tu* > *to* /#_C{*a,o*}.

²⁸ **to* > *to* /#_C[_{-voiced}]{*e,i,u*} & #_CC{*e,i,u*}; but **tu* > *tu-* /#_C[_{-voiced}]{*e,i,u*} & #_CC{*e,i,u*}.

ing forms, collected from the *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, originally contained an *e* in the second syllable (where applicable, verbal nouns are used to represent verbs): *do-cer/-tochar* ‘fell’ < **to-ker-*²⁹, *tabart* ‘giving’ < **tobart* < **to-bertā*, *tar-raing* ‘pulling’ < **to-sreng-*, *tochell* ‘stake’ < **to-k^uellā*, *tochim* ‘proceeding’ < **to-céimm-* < **to-kangsman*, *tochrechad* ‘plot’ < **to-krekātus*, *tofonn* ‘hunt’ < **to-suennos*, *toimtiu* ‘thinking’ < **to-mēddiū* < **to-mantījū*, *toiscélad* ‘ascertaining’ < **to- + scél + -ātus*, *tomalt* ‘consumption’ < **to-meltā*, *tomus* ‘measuring’ < **to-med-tus*, *tonach* ‘washing’ < **to-nēgom*, *torad* ‘fruit’ < **to-retom*, *toraim* ‘riding around?’ < **to-rēdsman*, *to-thacht* ‘substance’ < **to-textā*.

According to McCone’s scheme of historical phonology, *u* would be expected in these contexts if the preverb had been **tu*. For Kortlandt these forms pose no problems because according to his rule of lowering before *e*, *u* would have become *o* anyway if the intervening consonant was non-palatalised. However, even for Kortlandt’s rule there should be no lowering whatsoever when an *u* or *i* followed in the next syllable. The relevant forms are: *tobrúchtad* ‘gushing forth’ < **to-brūχ-tātus*, *tochra* ‘bride-price’ < **to-k^urijom*, *toglenamon* ‘adherence’ < **to-glinamnā*, *tognam* ‘labour, service’ < **to-gnīmus*, *toichned* ‘fasting’ < **to-kinātus?*, *tomlacht* ‘milking’ < **to-*

²⁹ Preempting the result of this investigation, and in order not to create unjustified ambiguity for cursory readers of this article, I only use **to-* in the reconstruction of the following forms.

mligtV, tothaimm ‘fall’ < **to-tudsman*,³⁰ *tothlugud* ‘petition, crave’ < **to-tluketus*,³¹ *tothrebach* ‘eruption’ < **to-tri-bog-*.

³⁰ See Stüber (1998: 77) for the reconstruction of this verbal noun with zero-grade root.

³¹ *Tothlugud* is the verbal noun of *do-tluchethar* ‘to desire, request’, which, like *ad-tluchethar* ‘to give thanks’, is a compound of the synchronic root *tluch-*. No simple verb is attested. The two verbs inflect synchronically as weak *ī*-verbs, but several residual forms that are incompatible with the *ī*-inflection give an indication of its origin in a strong thematic verb that had only recently been transferred to the weak class, as happened to other originally strong deponent verbs, e.g. *seichithir* ‘to follow’ < PIE **sekʰ-ētor*. In an Old Irish homily, transmitted in the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (Strachan 1907: 2–4), several forms occur that can only be analysed as strong: the 3sg *atluchat[h]ar* with unpalatalised root-final consonant (beside *atluchet[h]ar* in the same text) can regularly continue *-*uke-*; the *o* of 1pl *atlochomar* and 3pl *atlóchotar* (only in RIA MS 23P2) is best taken to reflect *-*uko-* with regular lowering of the **u* before the following **o*. All these forms are compatible with a strong *-*e/o*-thematic verb. The strong 1pl *dun-tlucham* (Wb 21d9) could also be a point in case, but it may be innovative, as the non-deponent ending and the lack of lowering betray. This verb is a potentially central witness in the debate whether there was lowering of *u* before *e* (Kortlandt’s theory, 1979: 42–47) or not. As a strong verb, its stem would originally have alternated between **tluke-* and **tluko-*. According to Kortlandt, the variant **tluke-* should have resulted in lowered **tloke-*, just like the other stem allomorph **tluko-* regularly gave **tloko-* (possible reflexes of which are cited above). In that way, the inherited root vowel *u* would have become *o* throughout the present, and no fulcrum would have been left for reintroducing *u* into the paradigm. Since, however, almost all extant forms attest to *u*, thus proving – against the prediction of Kortlandt’s theory – that the vowel could not have been lowered in the entire paradigm, *tluchethar* is indirect evidence against lowering of *u* before *e*. The only serious evidence in favour of Kortlandt’s rule that I am aware of is a group of verbs with the preverb **uss* (< **ud-s* or **up-s*; see Russell 1988). When this preverb, followed by a root of the shape *CeC*, stands in the tonic position of the verbal complex, it occasionally appears in the allomorph *o-*, not the expected *u-*, e.g. *do-opair* ‘to offer’ < **to-uss-ber-*, *con-omalt* ‘he crushed’ < **kom-uss-mel-*, *ossair* ‘couch, litter (of reeds)’ < **uss-ser-*. However, in Russell’s collection (1988: 96–115), only the three cited roots (*ber-*, *mel-*, *ser-*) show this

Under any theory of Irish historical phonology, this second group of forms can only be explained if the preverb was **to* at the time when the word was formed. It could be objected that its presence in these forms could be due to the late analogical spread of the lowered allomorph *to* at the expense of *tu*, replacing any older such formation. However, the fallacy of this argument is demonstrated by the fact that the raised allomorph *tu* is actually found, and that it is found in precisely those contexts where it is predicted by McCone's scheme of Irish historical phonology: *do-luid/-tulaid*, *·tultatar* 'came' < **to-lude/-ontor*, *tubae* 'attacking' < **to-bijom*, *tudrach* 'exciting' < **to-dīuoregom*, *tuicse* 'chosen' < **to-gustijo-*, *tuidchisse* 'led' < **to-diko(m)uedtijo-*, *tuididen* 'leading' < **to-dīuedenā*, *tuidme* 'binding' < **to-dīmijom*, *tuile* 'flowing, flood' < **to-lijom*, *tuilled* 'increase' < **to-līnātus*, *tuillem* 'earning, gain' < **to-slīmā*,

behaviour. No lowering occurs before the roots *sel-*, *sem-*, *serb-*. Therefore, the unexpected instances of the allomorph *o-* may have spread from contexts where it was regularly due to lowering. This hypothesis finds support in the occurrence of *o-* even in contexts where *i* or *u* originally followed, e.g. the participle *omlithe* 'polished' < **uss-mlitijo-*, *as-boind*, *·opoind* 'to refuse' < **uss-bund-*, *in-ommailg* 'to exact levies' < **en-uss-mlig-*. It is noteworthy that very often the unexpected *o-* occurs before a labial sound.

The further Indo-European etymology of **tluch-* (which is neither contained in *KP* nor in *LIV*) is difficult. From the internal point of view of Goidelic, its root must have been **tluk^(u)-*, in order to explain the attested root vocalism *u* (unless it is due to analogy; cp. *KP* 581 for a similar context). Possible PIE root forms are **tlek^u-* or **tuelk^(u)-*, but both create detail problems when one tries to reconcile all potential cognates (Latin *loquor* 'to talk', Old Church Slavonic *tl̥kъ*, Russian *tolkъ* 'interpreter', prob. borrowed into Lithuanian as *tūlkas* 'interpreter, translator'; maybe Gaul. *lopites* [L-100.3] belongs here as well). The root **tolk^u-* 'to talk, to expound (?)' in *IEW* 1088 explains almost none of the attested forms. The problem is aggravated by the rare and late Ir. *tlus* 'lie, falsehood', which, if its original meaning was 'saying, utterance', could continue **tluk^(u)-s-u-*.

tuinide ‘possession’ < **to-nisediio-*, *tuinnem* ‘struggle’ **to-snī-mā*, *tuinsem* ‘trampling down’ < **to-nistāmu/os*, *tuirem* ‘enumerating’ < **to-rīmā*, *tuus* ‘leading, precedence’ < **to-uidtus*.

It is thus clear that the allomorphy *to/tu* was tolerated perfectly well in the language, but that the attested distribution between the two is only compatible with **to* as a starting point. In fact, the Irish evidence makes the reconstruction of **to* inevitable.

7. On the prehistory of **to*

The final section will be devoted to very brief remarks on the possible etymology of the preverb. This has proved to be notoriously difficult. Fundamentally, two suggestions have been made about the Indo-European ancestry of **to*. One theory sees in it a lexical preverb or preposition with the meaning ‘to, for’. Isolated remnants of this are supposed to be found in a number of Indo-European branches, notably Messapic *tabara* ‘female priest’,³² Cuneiform Luvian *taparn-* ‘to rule’, Hittite *tabarna/labarna* ‘a royal title’,³³ Phrygian *t-edatoy*, *t-edaes* ‘dedicated (uel sim.)’.³⁴ This evidence is not breath-taking, to put it mildly. The other theory connects **to* with the Old Hittite clausal connector *ta* and related particles in other languages.³⁵

³² < *to-b^horeh₂* (e.g., NIL 18 and 26 fn. 73; Meid 2009: 75).

³³ < **to-* + *b^her-* according to Dunkel (1998: 98); but analysed entirely differently by Anatolists (see the discussion of various proposals in Kloekhorst 2008: 520–521, 829–831).

³⁴ Lubotsky (1988: 14).

³⁵ E.g., Dillon 1962, Watkins (1963: 14), Dillon 1972, Eska 2007; McCone (2006: 182–184) takes a cautious stand. For the Anatolian background see, e.g., Rieken 1999, Kloekhorst (2008: 801).

The clausal-connector theory has one good point to commend itself, namely that it easily accounts for the peculiarity of **to* to be restricted almost without exception to the first position in the verbal complex (see McCone 2006: 182–184 for details). The fact that **to-* occurs only in such nominal formations that have verbal compounds beside themselves strengthens the case that its origin is fundamentally different from other lexical prepositions which can be used more freely to create nominal compounds. However, its assumed lexical semantics ‘to, for’ is incongruous with this origin. In his final contribution on the matter, Dillon 1972 observed that in fact there are only very few instances where the semantic contribution of the preverb *to* to a verb is palpable under the heading ‘to, for’. Dillon drew the conclusion that the preverb does not have a semantic component at all, but that it served a syntactic function at first, which coincides well with the comparison with the Hittite clausal particle, and acquired ultimately a perfective, i.e. grammatical function. However, a re-reading of Dillon’s list of verbal compounds with *to* permits perhaps yet another conclusion. In a handful of Old Irish verbal compounds, the apparent semantic contribution of *to* is not so much ‘to, for’, that is, the target-oriented movement in the direction of someone or something, but occasionally it may be captured by the meaning ‘back’, that is, motion in the reverse direction, or by the Latin preverb ‘*re-*’, that is ‘to the proper place of something’: *do·aidlea* ‘to revisit’, *do·aithig* ‘to visit, frequent’, *do·cing* ‘to stride back’, *do·intai* ‘to turn back, return’, *do·rá* ‘to row back’, *do·reith* ‘to run back’. One may also think of the two prominent compounds *do·beir* ‘to bring, give’ and *do·tét* ‘to come’ which, in some aspects of their broad meanings, may be captured under the semantics ‘to return something to the place/person it be-

longs or is due (= *reddere*)’ and ‘to go back’ respectively. From the ‘turning back’, it is only a short step to ‘away’: *do·aig* ‘to drive away/back’, *do·foídi* ‘to send away’, *do·léici* ‘to fling’, *do·glúaisi* ‘to miscarry’. This allows for another, speculative, approach to understanding the prehistory of **to*, in the footsteps of Pedersen (VKG II 74, followed by IEW 71). If the semantics ‘back, *re-*’ are original, i.e. the oldest, the particle **to* could stand in a comparable formal relationship to other Indo-European particles with the same or related meanings, that is, **ati*,³⁶ **ato* or **at* (IEW 70–71), just like the particle **po* relates to **apo*, **opi* etc. (IEW 53–55, 323–325), or like **do* relates to **ad* (IEW 3, 181–183).³⁷ In such a case, the preverb **to* needs to be separated etymologically from the clausal connector **to*. Possibly, two different, albeit homophonous preverbs or particles, a preposition **to₁* ‘back, *re-*’ and a clausal connector **to₂* could have merged in Celtic **to*. Its prehistory as a clausal connector would clarify the syntactic peculiarity that **to* always comes first in composition, whereas its separate prehistory as a preverb would account for some of the semantics and for the fact that it was drawn into the Celtic verbal complex.

³⁶ Present in Celtic in Gaul. *ate-*, OIr. *aith-*, W *ad-* ‘again, *re-*’.

³⁷ The assumed relationship between **at*, **ato*, **ati* and **to* etc. is not one of standard Indo-European ablaut, but must reflect morphological rules of a very archaic level.

Abbreviations

ATig = Ó Corráin, Donnchadh (ed.) 1996. *The Annals of Tigernach*, retrieved from <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/G100002/> (6 March 2013); dating according to Dan McCarthy.

AU = Mac Airt, Seán and Mac Niocaill, Gearóid (eds.) 1983. *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*. Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

DIL = Ernest G. Quin et al. (ed.) 1983. *Dictionary of the Irish Language. Compact Edition*. Dublin, Royal Irish Academy.

FA = Newlon Radner, Joan 1978. *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*. Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

GOI = Thurneysen, Rudolf 1946. *A Grammar of Old Irish*. Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

IEW = Pokorny, Julius 1959. *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Tübingen und Basel, A. Francke.

K.x.x = Jürgen Untermann 1997. *Monumenta Linguarum Hispanicarum*. Bd. IV. *Die tartessischen, keltiberischen und lusitanischen Inschriften*. Wiesbaden, Reichert.

KP = Schumacher, Stefan 2004. *Die keltischen Primärverben. Ein vergleichendes, etymologisches und morphologisches Lexikon*. Unter Mitarbeit von Britta Schulze-Thulin und Caroline aan de Wiel. Innsbruck, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft.

LEIA = Vendryes, Joseph et al. 1959–. *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien*. Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

LexLep = Stifter, David et al. 2010–. *Lexicon Leponticum*. Wien: <http://www.univie.ac.at/lexlep>.

LIV = Kümmel, Martin and Rix, Helmut 2001. *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben. Die Wurzeln und ihre Primärstammbildungen* [2]. Wiesbaden, Reichert Verlag.

Mar. = Marichal, Robert 1988. *Les graffites de La Graufesenque*. Paris, CNRS Editions.

MI = The Milan Glosses on the Psalms (*Thes.* I, 7–483).

NIL = Wodtko, Dagmar S., Irslinger, Britta and Schneider, Carolin 2008. *Nomina im Indogermanischen Lexikon*. Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag Winter.

RIG L-x = Lambert, Pierre-Yves 2002. *Recueil des Inscriptions Gauloises (R.I.G.). Volume II, fas. 2. Textes gallo-latins sur instrumentum*. Paris, CNRS Editions.

Sg = The St. Gall Glosses on Priscian (*Thes.* II, 49–224.)

VKG = Pedersen, Holger 1913. *Vergleichende Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen. 2. Band. Bedeutungslehre (Wortlehre)*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Thes. = Stokes, Whitley and Strachan, John 1901–03. *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*. II vols., Cambridge (repr. Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies).

Wb = The Würzburg Glosses on the Pauline Epistles (*Thes.* I, 499–714).

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