VARIA I

OIr cuæ, MW keu, MB queu ‘hollow’

Old Irish cuæ, cuæ, cuæ, cuæ, Middle Irish cuæ, cuæ ‘hollow, cavity; (empty) expanse’, Middle Welsh keu, Modern Welsh cau (adj.) ‘hollow, empty’, Middle Breton queu, queu ‘hollow’ (adj.), Modern Breton këv (adj.) ‘hollow’, (m.) ‘cave’ are normally reconstructed as *koujo- (IEW 594: LEIA C-258).

The Irish forms are fairly poorly attested. They are translated by DIL (s.v. 1 cuæ) as ‘hollow, cavity; (empty) expanse’, but by LEIA (C-258) as ‘adj. et subst. ‘creux; objet creux’’. Despite its translation, which implies only a substantive use, some of the best examples given by DIL seem to be adjectives: ceppan caue crin dara ‘a hollow block of withered oak’ (Anecd. ii. 17.16), gabat a gabata grece uas latine, l quia cautat est i. cuæ (OM1 608)2 ‘gabat from Greek gabata, Latin uas, or because it is hollowed, i.e. cuæ’, cuad i. fid cuad... ‘cuad, i.e. hollow wood...’ (OM1 249). The cases which do seem to show cuæ used as a noun tend to be rather doubtful: in cuæ grece chaos ‘cuae, chaos in Greek’ (OM1 253), there may have been influence from formally similar chaos. The meaning of cuæ unna ‘hollow of the pine (?)’ (e.g. Sanas Cormaic B 409) is uncertain: i.e. fir-cones or pine kernels? The cases where cuæ means ‘cup’ or ‘bowl’ are perhaps due to the influence of cúach ‘cup, goblet, bowl’: in cuæ cluic’ ‘bell-shaped cup’ (Laws i 134.5).

The Irish forms could go back to *koujo- via *kuyeyah > Old Irish cuæ, cuæ. The form cuæ would then be the result of the the same hypercorrect misspelling as in *noujo- > Old Irish naue beside regular naue, nue, Middle Irish núa, with the additional possibility of influence from Latin causus ‘hollow’ (Greene 1976, 29; Uhlich 1995, 38–43).

However, Schrijver (1995, 293–8, 302) has shown that the regular result of British *-oujo- is Middle Welsh -wy, Middle Breton -ou (< Old Breton -oe) as illustrated by the verbal of necessity *-oujo- > Middle Welsh -dwy, Middle Cornish -dow, Old Breton -tow, Middle Breton -tou (cf. Sanskrit -tavyah), and by *kâoujo- > Welsh Conwy (British Latin Kanouio, Conouio; cf. Welsh cawn ‘reeds’), *dekanoujo- > Welsh Degannwy.

1 The research for this article was supported by a Doctoral Competition grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council of Great Britain and a Rhyf Studentship at Jesus College, Oxford. I am grateful to Professor Liam Breathnach, Dr Anders Jorgensen, Dr Daniel Kolligan, Dr Paul Russell and an anonymous reviewer for Eriu for their extremely helpful comments and advice. All mistakes, of course, remain my own.

2 Following OM1, except for gabata from OM2 129 and Irsan 143 (= Clth ii.631.21a), and i. from OM2. All quotations from O’Moloney’s Glossary and Sanas Cormaic are taken from the Early Irish Glossaries Database, created by Paul Russell, Sharon Arbuthnot and Pádraic Moran, and available online at http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/irishglossaries/ (accessed 8 December 2010). This replaces Stokes’s edition of O’Moloney’s Glossary (O’Mulg) and earlier editions of Sanas Cormaic (Corm., Corm. Bodl., Corm. tr., Corm. Y).

DOI: 10.3318/ERIU.2011.61.165
Eriu LXI (2011) 165–168 © Royal Irish Academy
LEIA (loc. cit.) attributes Welsh -eu > -au rather than expected -wy to ‘le traitement gall. exceptionnel du groupe -ou-, comparer mgall. -ffau, gall. ffau de lat. fouea > *fouia’. Schrijver (loc. cit.) shows that this development is the regular result of *-ouia in Welsh, and it gives Middle Breton -ou, Breton -ou (cf. Latin fouea > Breton faou ‘den’). Therefore, *koqia would fail to give the attested Breton forms, producing Middle Welsh keu, Middle Breton *quou, Breton *kaou.

A more plausible reconstruction is therefore *kaqio-; 3 this would regularly give Early Old Irish caue > Old Irish cuæ, cue > Middle Irish cuæ (cf. *aqtios > *aqqios > *aeqja > aue > úae ‘ear’ (gen. sg.); Uhlich 1995, 17, 39). Although Schrijver (1995, 297) states that ‘there is no unambiguous material that shows the development of [British] *-aqio-’, he concludes that the difference between Middle Welsh teneu, Welsh tenau ‘thin’ and Breton tanav, Middle Cornish tanow ‘thin’, with and without i-affection, is best explained by assuming that teneu comes from < *tanaqio-, and the South West British forms from *tanqia (cf. Old Irish tanae ‘thin’ < *tanqio-). He finds no other evidence for *-aqio- in Welsh, and no examples in South West British. Middle Welsh keu < *kaqio-, of course, would exactly match teneu < *tanqio-. Since the reflex of *-aqio- in Breton is unknown, but no other possible preform would give the Breton forms, a reconstruction *kaqio- is extremely plausible. Middle Welsh keu, Welsh cau, Middle Breton queu, queue, Breton kev < *kaqio- are therefore a valuable addition to the evidence for British *-aqio-.

The Gaulish form couio- in the name Couio[marus] (Schmidt 1957, 185; Evans 1967, 226) should not be seen as problematic for the reconstruction *kaqio-, even if the proposed reading of its second part is correct. Since we have no idea of its semantic content, we do not know couio- belongs here at all; in fact, as a name ‘hollow and great’ or ‘great in hollowness’ sound rather implausible.

A reconstruction *kaqio- is compatible with the Indo-European evidence. It is usually assumed that the original root was keuH-, which would regularly give forms like Greek (Hesychius) κόοι ‘chasms in the earth’ < *koqo-, Greek κόος ‘caves, dens’ < *koqo-, Greek κοῖλος ‘hollow’, Albanian thelë ‘deep, hollow’ < koqilo-, Avestan sūra- ‘hollow’ < *küro-, Sanskrit śāna- ‘emptiness’, Armenian soun ‘few’ < *kūno- (IEW 593–4). 4 Latin causus ‘hollow’ is explained as coming from koqo- < *koqH-o- by

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3 This was originally suggested by Pokorny (1921, 41), but he had evidently changed his mind by the time of IEW.

4 In passing, one can note another possible, but less certain, example of *-aqio- in Brittonic. Old Irish cnai (f.) ‘fleece’ seems to come from *knæg. Middle Breton kneau, cnov, Breton kreôn (m.) ‘fleece’, Middle Cornish knew (m.) ‘fleece’ could be the direct result of knæg but since they are masculine, *knæg- is also a possibility (LEIA C-128–9).

5 IEW includes these forms in a collection of words which should be traced back to at least two different roots. Only those forms which clearly belong with the Celtic ‘hollow’ words are discussed here. Armenian sōyl ‘cave’, quoted by IEW, seems not to be attested. If it were, it could go back to *koqo- < *keHau-lo-.
Thurneysen-Havet’s law, by which *-ou- became *-au- (Meiser 1998, 85; Vine 2006, 235–7). However, the Celtic forms suggest that this reconstruction is not correct; instead we should posit a root *keH3u-. A form *kH3u-o- could give both Latin cauus and Greek κόοι directly, and would also be the basis for Proto-Celtic *kaqio-, derived from *kaqo- <*kH3u-o-. Greek κοιος <*koüilo- and Albanian thëllë <*kaüilo- would both come from <*kH3u-ilo-, another derivation from *kH3u-o-, and κοος would be a full-grade form *keH3u-o-. A form kHjq-o- could give both Latin cauus and Greek κορ- directly, and would also be the basis for Proto-Celtic xkar4jo-, derived from xkaqo- <*kHjq-o-. Greek κορ-, oq <*ko4ilo- and Armenian thël- <*kawilo- would both come from <*kHrp-ilo-, another derivation from *kHjq-o-, and κο- <*k6roq would be a full-grade form *keHjq-o-. There are only two forms for which a root xkeHjq- is problematic. These are Greek κορ ‘hole, eye of a needle’, and Armenian σορ ‘gap, hole’. Greek κορ is apparently from *kuH3r-. This is probably due to remodelling the nom. sg. *keH3u-r- → *kuH3r- after gen. sg. *kH3u-es- → *kuH3r-es (cf. πνε ‘grease’ < *piH-r ← *pejH-r). The probable preform of Armenian sor is *koqoro- (cf. nor ‘new’ < *noyo-ro-); *kH3yo-ro- → *kaqoro- probably ought to have given *nagor (cf. ε’organ ‘they went’ < *kjouanto < *kjey- to, aganim ‘I put on’ < *ayane/o- < *H2ey-). The Armenian word probably reflects a secondary formation *koqH3-o-, derived from the zero-grade of the root *kuH3r-, which had been created in forms like sown < *kuH3-ro- → *kH3u-no-.

We can conclude that since other preforms are ruled out, Old Irish caue, cuae, Middle Irish cúa, Middle Welsh keu, Welsh cau, Middle Breton queu, queau, Breton kev must come from *kayio-; this agrees with the reflex of *-auio- shown by Middle Welsh teneu and provides our only evidence for this sequence in Breton. The Celtic forms, therefore, lead us to reanalyse the other Indo-European evidence for this root and reconstruct it as *keH3u- rather than *keH3r-.

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6 Vine argues that the law only applies to unstrressed *-ou-, according to Proto-Indo-European accentuation rules.

7 Latin cauus would thus not need to be an example of Thurneysen-Havet’s law. Vine’s explanation of Romance forms showing o-grade (Portuguese cóvo ‘concave, hollow, deep’, cova ‘pit, cavity, hole’, Spanish cueva ‘cave’, Catalan cova) as remnants of root-accented forms such as *kóyiH-o- or kóyiH-eH3 may, therefore, not be correct. However, the sequence *-ou- gave *-oy- in Portuguese ovo, Spanish huevo, Catalan ou ‘egg’ < Latin dúum (because of the opening of *-o- by dissimilation: see Viñuela 1981, 51). Perhaps these words reflect a *kouo-, unattested in Latin, but cognate with Greek κοοι. The parallel with ‘egg’ was suggested to me by Dr Jørgensen.
ABBREVIATIONS

Except where specified, abbreviations of texts discussed in this paper are those established in *DIL*.


REFERENCES


