

VARIA I

OIr *cuae*, MW *keu*, MB *queu* ‘hollow’*

Old Irish *caue*, *cuæ*, *cuae*, *cue*, Middle Irish *cua*, *cúa* ‘hollow, cavity; (empty) expanse’, Middle Welsh *keu*, Modern Welsh *cau* (adj.) ‘hollow, empty’, Middle Breton *queu*, *queau* ‘hollow’ (adj.), Modern Breton *kev* (adj.) ‘hollow’, (m.) ‘cave’ are normally reconstructed as **koujo-* (IEW 594; LEIA C-258).¹ The Irish forms are fairly poorly attested. They are translated by *DIL* (s.v. 1 *cúa*) 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 crín dara* ‘a hollow block of withered oak’ (Anecd. ii. 17.16), *gabata a gabata grece uas latine, t quia cauata est .i. cuæ* (OM1 608)² ‘*gabata* from Greek *gabata*, Latin *uas*, or because it is hollowed, i.e. *cúa*’, *cuad .i. fíd cua . . . ‘cuad, i.e. hollow wood . . .’* (OM1 249). The cases which do seem to show *cuae* used as a noun tend to be rather doubtful: in *cuæ grece chaos* ‘*cuæ*, *chaos* in Greek’ (OM1 253), there may have been influence from formally similar *chaos*. The meaning of *cue uinn* ‘hollow of the pine (?)’ (e.g. *Sanas Cormaic* B 409) is uncertain: i.e. fir-cones or pine kernels? The cases where *cuae* means ‘cup’ or ‘bowl’ are perhaps due to the influence of *cúach* ‘cup, goblet, bowl’: *in cua chuic* ‘bell-shaped cup’ (Laws i 134.5).

The Irish forms could go back to **koujo-* via **kuuejah* > Old Irish *cuae*, *cue*. The form *caue* would then be the result of the the same hypercorrect misspelling as in **noujo-* > Old Irish *naue* beside regular *nuae*, *nue*, Middle Irish *núa*, with the additional possibility of influence from Latin *cauus* ‘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 **-toujo-* > Middle Welsh *-dwy*, Middle Cornish *-dow*, Old Breton *-toe*, Middle Breton *-dou* (cf. Sanskrit *-tavyah*), and by **kānoujo-* > Welsh *Conwy* (British Latin *Kanouio*, *Conouio*; cf. Welsh *cawn* ‘reeds’), **dekantoujo-* > Welsh *Degannwy*.

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¹ Matasović (2009, 230–1) reconstructs **kuuo-*, but this would give Old Irish **cáu*, **có*, Middle Breton **kou* (cf. Old Irish *dáu*, *dó*, Middle Breton *dou* ‘two’ < **duuo*; Cowgill 1985, 20–5; Uhlich 1995, 22–3; Schrijver 1995, 326–36: 343).

² Following OM1, except for *gabata* from OM2 129 and *Irsan* 143 (= *CIH* ii.631.21a), and *.i.* from OM2. All quotations from O’Mulconry’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’Mulconry’s Glossary (O’Mulc) and earlier editions of *Sanas Cormaic* (Corm., Corm. Bodl., Corm. Tr., Corm. Y).

LEIA (loc. cit.) attributes Welsh *-eu* > *-au* rather than expected *-wy* to 'le traitement gall. exceptionnel du groupe *-ouǵ-*, comparer mgall. *-ffeu*, gall. *ffau* de lat. *fouea* > **fouǵa*'. Schrijver (loc. cit.) shows that this development is the regular result of **-ouǵā* in Welsh, and it gives Middle Breton *-ou*, Breton *-aou* (cf. Latin *fouea* > Breton *faou* 'den'). Therefore, **kouǵā* would fail to give the attested Breton forms, producing Middle Welsh *keu*, Middle Breton **quou*, Breton **kaou*.

A more plausible reconstruction is therefore **kauǵo-*,³ this would regularly give Early Old Irish *caue* > Old Irish *cuæ*, *cue* > Middle Irish *cúa* (cf. **amesos* > **auǵios* > **auejah* > *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] **-auǵo-*', 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 < **tanaǵo-*, and the South West British forms from **tanaǵā* (cf. Old Irish *tanae* 'thin' < **tanaǵo-*). He finds no other evidence for **-auǵo-* in Welsh, and no examples in South West British. Middle Welsh *keu* < **kauǵo-*, of course, would exactly match *teneu* < **tanaǵo-*. Since the reflex of **-auǵo-* in Breton is unknown, but no other possible preform would give the Breton forms, a reconstruction **kauǵo-* is extremely plausible. Middle Welsh *keu*, Welsh *cau*, Middle Breton *queu*, *queau*, Breton *kev* < **kauǵo-* are therefore a valuable addition to the evidence for British **-auǵo-*.⁴

The Gaulish form *couio-* in the name *Couio[marus]* (Schmidt 1957, 185; Evans 1967, 226) should not be seen as problematic for the reconstruction **kauǵo-*, 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 **kauǵo-* is compatible with the Indo-European evidence. It is usually assumed that the original root was *ḱeuH-*, which would regularly give forms like Greek (Hesychius) κόοι 'chasms in the earth' < **koǵo-*, Greek κῶσι 'caves, dens' < **kōǵo-*, Greek κοῖλος 'hollow', Albanian *théllë* 'deep, hollow' < *ḱouilo-*, Avestan *sūra-* 'hollow' < **kūro-*, Sanskrit *śūna-* 'emptiness', Armenian *sown* 'few' < **kūno-* (*IEW* 593–4).⁵ Latin *cauus* 'hollow' is explained as coming from *ḱouo-* < **ḱouH-o-* by

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 **-auǵo-* in Brittonic. Old Irish *cnai* (f.) 'fleece' seems to come from **knāǵī*. Middle Breton *kneau*, *cnev*, Breton *kreoñ* (m.) 'fleece', Middle Cornish *knew* (m.) 'fleece' could be the direct result of *knāǵī* but since they are masculine, **knāǵo-* 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 *soyl* 'cave', quoted by *IEW*, seems not to be attested. If it were, it could go back to **keǵo-* < **keH₃u-lo-*.

Thurneysen-Havet's law, by which **-ou-* became **-au-* (Meiser 1998, 85; Vine 2006, 235–7).⁶

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,⁷ and would also be the basis for Proto-Celtic **kaui̯o-*, derived from **kauo-* < **kH₃u-o-*. Greek *κοῖλος* < **koũilo-* and Albanian *théllë* < **kaũilo-* would both come from < **kH₃u-ilo-*, another derivation from **kH₃u-o-*, and *κῶος* would be a full-grade form **kH₃u-o-*. Avestan *sūra-* and Sanskrit *śūna-*, Armenian *sown* would come from **kH₃u-ro-* and **kH₃u-no-*, respectively (via **kuH₃-ro-/no-* with regular metathesis of the laryngeal; on this metathesis see Mayrhofer 1986, 175).

There are only two forms for which a root **keH₃u-* is problematic. These are Greek *κύαρ* 'hole, eye of a needle', and Armenian *sor* 'gap, hole'. Greek *κύαρ* is apparently from **kuH₃-r̥*. This is probably due to remodelling the nom. sg. **keH₃u-r̥* → **kuH₃-r̥* after gen. sg. **kH₃u-n-es* > **kH₃u-n-es* (cf. *πῶρ* 'grease' < **piH-r̥* ← **peḷH-r̥*). The probable preform of Armenian *sor* is **kouoro-* (cf. *nor* 'new' < **nouo-ro-*); **kH₃u-o-ro-* > **kauro-* probably ought to have given **nagor* (cf. *č'ogan* 'they went' < **kioũanto* < **kieu-ŋ* to, *aganim* 'I put on' < **aũane/o-* < **H₂eu-*). The Armenian word probably reflects a secondary formation **kouH₃-o-*, derived from the zero-grade of the root **kuH₃-*, which had been created in forms like *sown* < **kuH₃-no-* < **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 **kaui̯o-*; this agrees with the reflex of **-aui̯o-* 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 **keuH₃-*.

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⁶ Vine argues that the law only applies to unstressed **-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 *côvo* 'concave, hollow, deep', *cova* 'pit, cavity, hole', Spanish *cueva* 'cave', Catalan *cova*) as remnants of root-accented forms such as **kóuH-o-* or **kóuH-eH₂* may, therefore, not be correct. However, the sequence **-ou-* gave **-ou-* in Portuguese *ovo*, Spanish *huevo*, Catalan *ou* 'egg' < Latin *ovum* (because of the opening of **-o-* by dissimilation: see Väinänen 1981, 51). Perhaps these words reflect a **kouo-*, unattested in Latin, but cognate with Greek *κόοι*. 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*.

- DIL* Royal Irish Academy, *Dictionary of the Irish language (and Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish language)*. (Dublin, 1913–75; compact edition 1983, reprinted 2008).
- IEW* J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. (Bern und München, 1959–69.)
- LEIA* J. Vendryes, E. Bachellery, and P.-Y. Lambert, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien*. (Dublin, 1959–).

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