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THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSULAR CELTIC VERBAL COMPLEX

by
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To my former teacher
Anna Morpurgo Davies

Foreword.

A period of six years from 1979 to 1985 saw the production of a doctoral thesis (McCone, 1979; see bibliography) and several articles (McCone, 1979c, 1980, 1982 and 1985b) on topics relating to the main concerns of the present volume. The two decades or so that have elapsed since have been a period of comparative reticence on these issues broken only by a restatement as well as some elaboration of my basic position in Irish (McCone, 1994, 140-143, 176-180 and 196-8), by further development of my views on the personal and relative endings of the verb in a contribution in German (McCone, 1995) to the *Festschrift für Klaus Strunk*, and finally by a paper in English (McCone, 1997) given to the Delbrück Colloquium of the *Indogermanische Gesellschaft* in Madrid at the kind invitation of the organisers.

A central theme of several of the aforementioned investigations has been the contention that a particle **es* or the like held by a number of scholars, most notably the late Warren Cowgill (1975) in an epoch making contribution, to have been generalised in Insular Celtic main clauses is both unviable and unnecessary. A new variant of this hypothetical element has since reared its mischievous head in a detailed study by Peter Schrijver (1997) published as volume II of the present series and has now been incorporated into the reconstruction of a whole range of verbal inflections by my former Ph.D. student Stefan Schumacher (2004) in his important recent book on Celtic primary verbs. Lest it be thought that *qui tacet consentit*, I have decided after a period of comparative quiescence to gird up my loins once again in the probably vain hope of laying this phantom menace to rest once and for all as part of an overall attempt to trace the evolution of the verbal complex from its Proto-Indo-European antecedents via Proto-Celtic, Gallo-Insular and Insular Celtic to the fully developed end product in Old Irish.

The bulk of this book was written during a year's sabbatical leave (2004-5) from NUI Maynooth, for which I am duly grateful, but some parts of it are more or less modified versions of accounts already published or due to be published elsewhere. The final section (3.1-9) of chapter I is basically an English translation of the second half of a plenary paper (McCone, forthcoming) given in German to the *Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft* in Halle in 2001 and due to appear in the *Akten* thereof. The first two sections (1.1-2.4) of chapter II are a somewhat expanded version of the already mentioned paper presented to the Madrid Colloquium and subsequently published in its proceedings. The last section (3.1-3) of chapter III is largely drawn from a recent article in *Celtica* (McCone, 2003), while some parts of chapter IV (notably 1.1 and 2.1-4) have been taken over with certain changes from my book on *The Early Irish Verb* (see *EIV* in the bibliography). It remains to note that much of chapter V is a reworking of the text and handout of a hitherto unpublished lecture given in Cambridge at the kind invitation of Professor Geoff Horrocks a few years ago.

The D. Phil. thesis referred to at the beginning of this foreword as lying at the root of my subsequent endeavours in this area was supervised by Professor Anna Morpurgo Davies (and in its later stages co-supervised with equal attention and erudition by the late Professor David Green of the Celtic School of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies). To her I owe not only invaluable criticism and discussion of my postgraduate research but also my induction into comparative Indo-European linguistics as an undergraduate. Chapter VI of the present volume started life as a study intended for a recently published *Festschrift* to mark her retirement from a long and distinguished tenure of the Oxford Chair of Comparative Philology. When, however,

it became obvious that it was going to exceed the upper limit on the size of contributions considerably, it seemed best to build it into a larger book. It is a pleasure to dedicate this to Anna with affection and gratitude.

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