

The Etymology of OIr. *ocus* “and”

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Note: For purposes of disambiguation, in what follows, unless a specific attestation is being quoted, *ocus* / *acus* will refer to “and” while *occus* / *accus* will refer to “near”.

o. Conjunction in Old Irish

Binchy (1960) outlines four principle means of conjunction (coordination) in OIr.:

1. *-ch* < PIE **-k^he*: contra Binchy (1960: 77) originally used after nouns and verbs, but became restricted to pretonic position following apocope;
2. *sceo^t* / *sceui^t* + gen. < **sk^hiū* “with mention of” (?);
3. *os* < ???; used before a stressed personal pronoun in Classical OIr., but originally could also conjoin sentences;
4. *ocus^t* / *ocuis^t* / *acus^t*; the usual method of conjoining elements in OIr.; seems to be a recent creation, but its etymology is not self-evident.

This paper seeks to document in full the usage of *ocus* and provide it with an etymology that accounts for this usage.

1. OIr. *ocus*

1.1. Form:

- Usually abbreviated as *7*, but written out in full occasionally
acus once (Wb. 3^a15)
ocus 17 times (15 times in Cambrai, Ml. 65^a7, 94^c5)
ocuis five times (Cambrai)
- Assumption: original palatalization in *ocuis* was lost in an unstressed word
- Question: is **acuis* or **ocuis* the original Early Old Irish form?

1.2. Lenition:

- generally taken to be the regular reflex after *ocus* (GOI 145, 548, Hamp 1981)
- but: lenition is restricted to a following nominal in the glosses (Pedersen 1899: 425, Lambert 1979)
- restriction probably not due to “a need for symmetry between two coordinated nouns or adjectives, the first of which is lenited” (Lambert 1979: 63), but it demands an explanation

1.3. Usage:

- *ocus* can conjoin almost any syntactic category:

Sentences: Ml. 62^c7 *is mé bis and 7 ní*· ipse “it is *mé* that is there and it is not *ipse*”
Verbs: Ml. 44^d1 *amal dunesmar 7 asroither uisce* “as water is poured forth and scattered”
Nouns: Ml. 59^a15 *hifochaidib 7 imnedaib* “in tribulations and afflictions”
Noun Phrases: Ml. 22^d1 *armu sémise 7 mu mindchecht* “for my thinness and my misery”

Adjectives:	Ml. 31 ^{b10} <i>labrad huallach 7 chaintoimtenach dib fadesin</i> “speech, proud and of good opinions concerning themselves”
Adverbs:	Ml. 63 ^{b16} <i>innunn 7 hille</i> “here and there”
Prep. Phrases:	Ml. 27 ^{c9} <i>horuccai 7 homebuil</i> “because of shame and because of disgrace”

- Verbal agreement is found only with the closest conjunct:

- (1) Ml. 42^{b2} *lassambí indfeuchrae 7 incrodatu* “with whom is savageness and cruelty”
 (2) Ml. 34^{a23-4} *is immaircide doib incairigud 7 inpian doratad for asru* “the reproach and the punishment that was inflicted on the Assyrians are suitable to them.”

- When a pronoun and noun are conjoined, the noun is in the nominative:

- (3) Wb. 10^{d1} *dún-ni et Barnaip* “for me and Barnabas”
 (4) CG l. 199 *leis 7 a ben* “with him and his wife”
 (5) Ml. 75^{a6a} *a chomraic-som 7 saul* “of the encounter of him and Saul” (?)

The above (form, lenition, usage) represents the basic descriptive facts of *ocus* “and”, and any good explanation of its origin should capture these points.

2. Past attempts at etymology: *oc* “at, by” and *accus* “near”

- no serious attempt to specify the relationship between *oc* and *ocus*.
- Hamp (1981) connects *ocus* “and” and *accus* “near”.
 - *ocus* originally had an initial *a*; initial *o-* via semantic contamination from *oc*.
 - from root **ghes-* “hand”: **ad-gostu-* “at hand” > *accus* “near”
 - **ad-gost(e)i* (the dat. or loc. of related *i*-stem noun) > *acuis* “and”

Problems:

- for Hamp, the connection of “and” and “near” continues something ancient
- hard to square with evidence that *ocus* is a late arrival (Binchy 1960: 80)
- does not make clear why the lenition after *ocuis* is restricted to nominals
- any connection between “and” and “near” must be a later development

Possible alternative connection of *accus* and *ocus*:

- *acuis* “and” is the equative to the adjective *accus* “near”; cf. adjectives where equative is etymologically the old genitive of the positive (see Jasanoff 1990: 186-8, Bergin 1946)
 - *máir* “as big as” < **mārī*, gen. sg. of *már* < **māros*
 - *reimir* “as thick as” < **remrī*, gen. sg. of *remor* < **remros*
- old equative of *accus* then *accuis* < **aggusī*
 - would regularly lenite and should only be followed by nominals
 - A *accuis* B “A (being) of a nearness with B” > “A with B” > “A and B”.
- later became grammaticalized simply as “and”

Still has problems:

- a *u*-stem adjective would not originally have had a genitive in **-ī*
- must assume a late contamination of *acuis* with *oc* to yield *ocuis* (Cambrai)
- not supported by distribution of *ocuis* vs. *ocus* in Cambrai (discussed below)

3. Formal questions: *ocus* or *acus*?

- sound change of *ocus* > *acus* or reverse is unlikely (see GOI 50-3 on interchange of *o* and *a*)
- either the *a*- or the *o*- must be analogical
- *o*- more likely original given 20 attestations in Cambrai vs. 1 with *a*- in Wb.¹
- assuming plausible etymologies can be found, the likeliest explanation for *ocus* beside *acus* is that the vocalism of “and” became crossed with that of “near”
 - Wb. generalized *acus* and *accus*
 - Ml. generalized *ocus* and *occus*

3.1. Extended digression: *accus* “near”

- *accus* (Wb.) / *ocus* (Ml., Sg.) “near” is *u*-stem adj. with nom. pl. *oicsi* Ml. 78^{c2}
- compound *comacus* “near” has nom. pl. *comaicsi* Ml. 26^{b11}, comp. *comaicsiu*.
- MW *agos* “near” suggests that *a*-vocalism is older
- Welsh requires **aggostV-* or **aggustā*
- Irish apparently compatible with neither of these
 - **aggustā* would have given *accos* / *accas* via lowering
 - raising could not have operated in **aggostV-* to give *accus* (unaccented vowels do not raise; see McCone 1996: 110, apparently ignored by Hamp 1981: 160 in his assumption that **aggostu-* gave *accus*)
- *u*-infection of unaccented *o* might yield *accus* from **aggostu-*
- no exact parallels to this change, but cf. *routh* < **rotū* Wb. 11^{a3} *a prima manu*
- Insular Celtic **aggostu-* > MW *agos* and Pre-Irish **aggoustu-* > **aggustu-* > OIr. *accus*

Theoretically, Insular Celtic **aggustu-* is a possible preform, if Welsh generalized the fem. form of the adjective (i.e. with *a*-affection), but there is no reason to expect such a generalization in this case. Plus, a preform **aggustu-* deprives *accus* and *agos* of the only remotely plausible etymology.

Concerns:

- palatalized clusters in *oicsi*, *comaicsi*, and *comaicsiu* are difficult
- only syncopated front vowels or **u* before a palatalized consonant yield a palatalized cluster (Greene 1973: 134, McCone 1996: 119, Stifter, forthcoming)
- syncopated **o* (unaccented) never palatalizes and cannot be raised to **u*

Solution: new sound law: unaccented non-front vowels become *u* before palatalized *s*.

There is some support for the rule:

- *accuis* “cause” < **accāsiō* (< L *occāsiō*), acc. sg. *aicsin*; cf. MW *achaws*
- *miscuis* “hatred”, compound of *mis-* and *cais* (contra GOI 231); cf. *miscsech*
- various forms of *in-túaisi* “listens” < **en-tōsī-*, e.g. impv. 3pl. *éitset* (Wb. 13^{a11})

¹ On the basis of the context in Wb. 3^{a15} *a adnacuil acus a báis* “His burial and His death”, David Stifter has suggested to me (p.c.) the possibility that the Würzburg form is not an accurate reflection of the etymon, but is rather the result of influence from the surrounding *a*’s in the gloss. I view this as possible, but will operate with the (for my theory) more difficult assumption that *acus* is a real form.

Sample derivations of nom. pl. **agosīh* (see GOI 227 on the ending) and *éitset* follow:

Pre-Irish	* <i>agosīh</i>	* <i>ēdōsido</i> (< * <i>en-tōsī-ntō</i>)
1 st Pal.	* <i>agos'ih</i>	* <i>ēdos'ido</i>
Special Raising	* <i>agus'ih</i>	* <i>ēdus'ido</i>
Other	* <i>agūs'ih</i>	* <i>ēdūs'ido</i>
3 rd Pal.	* <i>ag'ūs'ih</i>	* <i>ēd'ūs'ido</i>
Other	* <i>ag's'i</i>	* <i>ēd's'id</i>
OIr.	<i>oicsi</i>	<i>éitset</i>

Analysis:

- explanation requires *u*-affection of unaccented **o* and introduces a sound law
- assumptions are necessary for the etymology of *accus* to work
- accounts efficiently for *accuis*, *miscuis*, and forms of *in-túaisi*
- counterexamples to sound law are negligible²

3.2. Back to *ocus* “and”

- connected perhaps with *oc* “at, by” (GOI 549, LEIA s.v. *ocus*)
- cf. also MW *wng* “near, close, nearness” < **onku(s)*

Proposal: In late Pre-Irish, speakers created a coordinating conjunction from *oc(c)o* “at it, by it, with it” (3sg. masc./nt. of *oc*) plus *as* “which is” (3sg. pres. ind. rel. of the copula), yielding **oco as* “beside/with that which is”.

- collocation seems clumsy (but compare *cid ara* “what is it for which” = “why”)
- appears to have the correct semantics:
 - A *oco as* B “A beside/with that which is B” > “A with B” > “A and B”
- **oco as* must have contracted early via loss of the vowel of the clitic *as*. How?
 - possibly **oco as* was pronounced [ogowəs] and with the loss of ə, **ocows* could have given *ocus* directly
 - possibly original form of the conjugated preposition was **ocu*³ < **onku(s)-ū*, from which **ocu as* > *ocus*
- sequence of sounds probably unique in late Pre-Irish, but seems possible that *ocus* was the expected result

Note: see Ó Cathasaigh 1990 for examples with the same structure as **oco as*. Pronouns implicit in verbs (6) and prepositions (7), as well as zero elements (8), may serve as antecedents for relative verbs:

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---|
| (6) | Wb. 32 ^a 22 | <i>at-tá immurgu as-béer</i>
“there is something which I will say” |
| (7) | CIH II 596.19 | <i>ma-ni-taisilbt[h]er do bes fiado do-gnether</i>
“unless it (testimony) be ascribed to him who is present at what was done” |
| (8) | MI. 89 ^d 6 | <i>du-beir-som du dumugud a aisndísen as n-uilliud oldaas...</i>
“in order to exaggerate his declaration he says (lit. puts) what is more than...” |

² The only exception to the proposed rule, 3sg. abs. and 2sg. conj. preterite of *ā*-verbs *marbais* < **marbassi(s)* (for expected **marbuis*) is due to paradigm leveling.

³ Wb. and MI. *occo* / *occa* suggests earlier *occo*, but the pretonic form *ocu* in *ocu-ben* “touches” shows that *ocu* was a regularly-attested form in Classical Old Irish.

3.3. *ocus* and *accus*

Locatives and conjunction have a certain affinity cross-linguistically (Stolz 1996: 144-72, 1998: 119-20), so *accus* “near” and *ocus* “and” could have been mistakenly viewed as related by speakers, who generalized one form for them both (Wb. *acus*, Ml. *ocus*).

4. Comments on the proposal *ocus* < **oco* + **as*

Negatives: see above 3.2.

Positives:

1. *ocus*^l: the *as* in **oco* + *as* is a leniting relative, which explains why *ocus* lenites.
2. Lenition only following nouns and adjectives: **oco* + *as* could only conjoin nominals, which are the elements lenited by *ocus*. Later spread of *ocus* to other positions due to grammaticalization, but lenition left behind by the spread.
3. Number concord: in the original syntax, the number of A **oco* as B was the number of A. This is reflected in OIr. verbal agreement (exx. 9-10 = 1-2 above):

- (9) Ml. 42^b2 *lassambí indfeuchrae 7 incrodatu* “with whom is savageness and cruelty”
 (10) Ml. 34^a23-4 *is immaircide doib incairigud 7 inpian doratad for asru*
 “the reproach and the punishment that was inflicted on the Assyrians are suitable to them.”

4. Case forms: in A **oco* as B, element B should have nominative case. This restriction was generally lost (11), but retained when a noun was conjoined with a pronoun (exx. 12-13 = 3-4 above) and maybe in some poetry (GOI 156, ex. (14)):

- (11) Ml. 37^a10 *do-gní doidngi 7 chumdubairt insin* “that causes difficulty and doubt”
 (12) Wb. 10^d1 *dún-ni et Barnaíp* “for me and Barnabas”
 (13) CG l. 199 *leis 7 a ben* “with him and his wife”
 (14) SR 313ff. *rí do-rigne aéar n-úar | oculus tene rēil rorúad | oculus talam bladmar brass* “the King made the cold air and the clear red fire and the glorious great earth”

5. *is cummae* A *ocus* B “A is the same as B”: fits the overall picture suggested here “A is alike with that which is B”, but it could also be a subcategory of case 3 above (verbal agreement with the first conjunct) or is part of a broader pattern for expressing the complement of equative expressions (see Lambert 1974).

5. What about *ocuis*?

- *ocuis* is a real form
- no reason to believe that it is a miscopying of *ocus* or *ocuss* (Binchy 1960: 80)
- besides explaining *ocuis*, must also consider how *ocus* expanded from its locus as a nominal coordinator
- may simply have been extended after grammaticalization was complete (i.e. after *ocus*^l meant “and” and was no longer analyzable)
 - does not yield an explanation of *ocuis*
 - does not account for the restricted lenition pattern of *ocus*
 - cf. nominal Ml. 42^b9 *aithairec no thaidbsiu* “repetition or demonstration” beside verbal Ml. 14^c5 *no chon-utangar* “or it is edified”

- why not nominal Ml. 31^b10 *huallach 7 chaintoimtenach* “proud and of good opinions” beside verbal *7 *cho·cualae* “and he heard”
- perhaps *ocus* expanded when it was only partially grammaticalized
 - meaning had become “and”, but it was still analyzable as a contraction of **oco* and **as*
 - to generalize *ocus* before prepositions would have been problematic: **oco* + *as*, with *as*^t, was only possible with a following noun as predicate
 - speakers could simply have accepted the bad grammar (i.e. use *ocus* before PPs) or they could “undo” the relative construction: replace **as* with **is*
 - rough parallel in cleft-construction: only nouns and adjectives followed by relative verbs; other fronted elements followed by non-relative verbs
 - from prepositions, **oco is* spread to conjoin verbs and sentences, following the hierarchy of coordination in Payne (1985):

S(entence) - V(erb) P(hrase) - P(repositional) P(hrase) - N(oun) P(hrase)⁴

- “individual coordination strategies are used to cover contiguous categories” (Payne 1985: 5-6), which means, for example, that a strategy may not be used for NPs and VPs unless it is also used for PPs
- once **oco is* (> *ocuis*) was introduced into PPs and grammaticalized, only it, and not *ocus*, could spread to conjoin VPs and Ss
- later, with the loss of palatalization in clitics, *ocuis* and *ocus* fell together

Consequences:

- **ocois* (from **oco* + **is*) gives *ocuis* by the rule suggested above (section 3.1.)
- *is*, and by extension *ocuis*, does not lenite (no exx. in Cambrai with lenition)
- as an unaccented word, *ocuis* would have lost its palatalized final *s* early
- BUT: this is all rather slender evidence to reconstruct a second conjunction

Distribution of *ocus* and *ocuis*:

To date, no one has explored the distribution of *ocus* and *ocuis* in Cambrai. The table below separates *ocus* and *ocuis* depending on whether they conjoin a noun (no conjoined adjectives occur in Cambrai) or anything else (represented by X):

	<i>ocus</i>	<i>ocuis</i>
Noun + Noun ⁵	10	0
X ₁ + X ₁	5	5

Table 1: Distribution of *ocus* vs. *ocuis*; p = 0.033

⁴ Payne includes A(djective) P(hrase) between VP and PP, but it is not certain if it belongs there or not (Drellishak 2004: 52). Predicative adjectives and attributive adjectives may pattern separately. Note that predicative adjectives behave more like verbs (and can be coordinated in OIr. only with an overt copula, see GOI 548), while attributive adjectives behave more like nouns (and are coordinated with *ocus*).

⁵ I have made one important assumption here: I have grouped together all nouns, regardless of gender and number. Originally, *ocus* would have had different forms before fem., masc./nt., and plural nouns. This difference would surely have been the first one given up as the construction was grammaticalized as “and”. Compare the usage of the pleonastic infixed pronoun (see Lucht 1994), which was beginning to become grammaticalized in OIr. There, the pleonastic pronoun was sometimes masc./nt. sg. regardless of the doubled noun (5 of 5 cases in Wb., 3 of 14 in Ml., 0 of 1 in Sg.). Eventually in MIr. meaningless lenition (originally a masc./nt. sg. inf. pron.) appeared frequently after initial preverbs. It thus seems safe to assume that *ocus* would have very early become the only form to conjoin nouns.

- not accidental that *ocuis* was restricted to non-nouns
- *ocuis* represents a phonological archaism
- its distribution represents a syntactic archaism
- distribution can be explained under current proposal

6. Conclusions

Just like the facts it aims to capture, the proposal offered here is quite complex. The basic idea is that speakers of late Pre-Irish used a phrase **oco as* “beside/with that which is” to conjoin two nominals. While it seems initially clumsy, this collocation can explain several points of syntax:

- verbal agreement with the first conjunct only
- the relicial use of the nominative after *ocus* in some constructions
- lenition after *ocus*
- restriction of such lenition to nominals
- For non-nominal conjunction, non-relative syntax was adopted: **oco is*, which accounts both for non-lenition and for the restriction of *ocuis* in Cambrai to conjunction of non-nominals.

Also part of this proposal is the separation of *accus* “near” from *ocus* “and”. While it seems necessary for the two to have influenced each other, given that Wb. has *ac(c)us* for both while Ml. has *oc(c)us*, it does not seem likely that either of them can be derived from the other (despite Hamp 1981). A further part of the present proposal is the introduction of a new minor sound law stating that non-front unaccented vowels became **u* before a palatalized *s*.⁶

Abbreviations

Cambrai = *Thes.* ii 244-7.

CG = Binchy, D.A. 1979. *Críth Gablach*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

CIH = *Corpus iuris hibernici*. 1978. Ed. D.A. Binchy. 6 vols. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

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

LEIA = Vendryes, J. 1959-. *Lexique Étymologique de l'Irlandais Ancien*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

Ml. = Milan Glosses, see *Thes.*

Sg. = Saint Gall Glosses, see *Thes.*

SR = Whitley Stokes. 1883. *The Saltair na rann*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Thes. = Stokes, Whitley and John Strachan. 1901-3. *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*. 2 Vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wb. = Würzburg Glosses, see *Thes.*

⁶ The phonetics of the sound change are not totally clear, but it is likely that this is some sort of raising caused by the high position of the tongue before the palatalized dental. If so, we may be able to offer an explanation of the notoriously difficult 3sg. pres. of the copula: *is*. The vowel *i* has always posed problems for phonological explanations, but if we posit that all unaccented vowels became high vowels before palatalized *s*, then *is* would fall out regularly from **esti*. This is no more than a possibility, but it is an intriguing one.

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