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WELSH *BRESYCH* 'CABBAGES'

В статье выдвигается предположение, что валлийское *bresych* 'капуста' скорее является не развитием заимствованной древне-ирландской формы *braisech*, как это считают многие исследователи, а может рассматриваться как вариант регулярной валлийской формы *bresyg* (< лат. *brassicae*) с геминацией, которая могла передавать негативное или презрительное отношение говорящего к капусте.

Ключевые слова: валлийская лексикография, межкельтские заимствования, средневековая валлийская поэзия.

Welsh *bresych* 'cabbages' ultimately derives from Latin *brassicae*, but the final /χ/ instead of expected /g/ is puzzling. John Rhys compared the fluctuation between *tywyllwch* and *tywyllwg* 'darkness' (Rhys 1873: 270; cf. *GPC*, s.v. *tywyllwch, tywyllwg*), but this is hardly illuminating, as the latter is unexplained. Stefan Zimmer (2000: 433, n. 19) calls *tywyllwg* a 'dissimilated variant', presumably meaning that the preceding /ɬ/ has triggered the change /χ/ > /g/, but I cannot call to mind any other examples of such a 'dissimilation'. Another possibility, suggested to me by Dr Alexander Falileyev, is derivation from a Vulgar Latin **brassiccae*, but I have found no attestation of such a form.

By 1895, John Rhys had a different explanation for *bresych*, namely that had been borrowed via Irish (Rhys 1895: 265), and this has been adopted by subsequent commentators (e.g. *GPC*, s.v. *bresych, bresyg*; Lewis 1931a: 84[1]; Evans 1983: 969, n. 91; Bauer 2015: 87–88)[2]. Old Irish *braisech* (Modern Irish/Scottish Gaelic *braiseach*, *praiseach*) represents an early borrowing from Latin that could conceivably (although not necessarily) pre-date the first stratum of Christian loan-words. If the Welsh form comes from Irish, it must have done so after Irish lenition (probably fifth-century, or even earlier (Jackson 1953: 143; McCone 1996: 89, 91; Bauer 2015: 161)) but before internal *i*-affection in Welsh (dated to the seventh century by Kenneth Jackson, 1953: 616–18, 697, but to *c.* 735–800

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[1] But note that Henry Lewis makes no mention of Irish in his discussion of *bresych* in Lewis 1943: 33, where he mentions instead Rhys's earlier idea.
[2] I am very grateful to Dr. Bernhard Bauer for providing me with a copy of his excellent unpublished thesis on intra-Celtic loans.

by Patrick Sims-Williams 2003: 286; cf. Rodway 2013: 120–21; Bauer 2015: 158–59). This window, and the fact that neither Breton nor Cornish preserves this lexeme, suggests the Irish-speaking communities in Wales between the fifth and seventh centuries as the most likely medium. Nonetheless, it seems odd that Welsh would borrow a word from Irish for a vegetable which was introduced to Ireland from Britain, and not *vice versa* (F. Kelly 1997: 255).

Note, however, the less common Welsh form *bresyg* which could derive directly from Latin. This may be attested as early as the middle of the thirteenth century, judging by the form *bressyc* in the Black Book of Chirk (Lewis 1913: 42), but in the eccentric orthography of this manuscript, this could represent /bresɨχ/[3]. *GPC* cites an example of *bresygen* from *c.* 1800, and notes that this form is current in the Glamorgan dialect (cf. Lewis 1943: 33; Thomas 1993, II: 94)[4]. I wonder if *bresych* might be variant of this form with contemptuous force? There are plenty of other examples of 'negative' gemination of /k/ (> /kk/ > /χ/) in Welsh, e.g. *gwraig* 'woman' < *wraki* v. *gwrach* 'witch' < *wrakkā. The negative connotation of /kk/ seems to have been a peculiarly Welsh development: compare the neutral cognates Old Cornish *gruah* gl. *anus* 'old woman': Breton *gwrac'h* 'old woman': Old Irish *fracc* 'woman'[5]. Note in particular the dialect forms *bresach*, *bresiach* from North Wales (Foster Evans 2007: 218; *GPC*, s.v. *bresych*, *bresyg*) and *brysach* from Nantgarw, Glamorgan (Thomas 1993, II: 104)[6]. Dylan Foster Evans (2007: 218) considered *bresach* to represent the variant *bresech*[7], i.e. an example of the well-attested Gwynedd sound-change by which /e/ in the final syllable of a polysyllabic word is

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[3] In the very next line we find *syc* for *sych* 'dry'. For further examples of <c> = /χ/ in this manuscript, see Russell 1995–96. The text can be seen online: http://cadair.aber.ac.uk/dspace/handle/2160/11163. For the date of the manuscript, see Jenkins 1973: 132.

[4] John Rhys (1895: 265) mentions the form *breswg* beside *bresygen*.

[5] See Sims-Williams 2011: 183–84 on the 'phonaestheme' /χ/ in Welsh; cf. Zimmer 2000: 278; Wmffre 2007: 59. Other geminated consonants could perhaps have negative force in Welsh: cf. P. Kelly 1997: 48–49 on the pejorative connotations of *ceffyl* 'horse' < *cappillos,* as opposed to *cafall* < *caballos*, or from Latin *caballus*.

[6] I am grateful to Dr. Iwan Wmffre for supplying me with the latter reference.

[7] Could this form derive from singular *brassica* with *a*-affection? One would, of course, expect *braseach*, but might this have become *bresech* through vowel harmony, or through analogy with plural *bresych*?

pronounced [a]. This pronunciation is also a feature of the Nantgarw dialect (Thomas and Thomas 1989: 40–42), so this is perfectly plausible. Equally, however, these forms could well have been influenced by the negative suffix *-ach*, seen in forms such as *papurach* 'useless papers, bumf'[8]. Relevant here, no doubt, is Welsh *cawlach* 'mess' < *cawl* 'cabbage' + *-ach* (Zimmer 2000: 279).

Contempt for the cabbage is certainly to be found in the modern world, and medieval attitudes seem not to have been much more positive, bearing in mind that it would have been more prominent in the diet of the lowly than of the nobility. It certainly does not seem to have been regarded as a luxury in early medieval Ireland in view of the fact that penitents were allowed it with their bread according to *Ríagail na Céle nDé* 'the Rule of the Céli Dé' (Gwynn 1927: 64, § 4; cf. F. Kelly 1997: 255–56). Vegetables in general were held in low regard in Wales in the Middle Ages (see Davies 1982: 35–41; cf. Edwards 2013: 223–24). We have a number of references to cabbages in satirical poetry from the fourteenth century onwards. It seems to have been a particular favourite of the fourteenth-century poet Iolo Goch, who referred to Hersdin Hogl as *gwrach fresychgach* 'a cabbage-shitting hag' (Johnston 1988: XXXVI.18; Johnston 1993: 36.18), and who called the Grey Friar *moelrhawn bresychlawn sychlodr* 'stiff-trousered seal full of cabbage' (Johnston 1988: XXXV.15; Johnston 1993: 35.15)[9]. A thirteenth-century poet, Madog ap Gwallter, refers to the falsehood of the world *Vn vyget gerded a gard vressych* 'moving with the same honour as a cabbage garden', doubtless a negative rather than a positive image (Andrews and others 1996: 33.20 and note on p. 375; rather differently, Lewis 1931b: 250; McKenna 1991: 199). Satirists elsewhere have seen fit to refer to brassicas, e.g. in the Middle Irish anti-clerical tale *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* 'The Vision of Mac Con Glinne', in which an abbot is descended from a certain Barr Braisce Bíthe ('head of a tender cabbage'), and in which priests yearn particularly for juicy cabbages (Jackson 1990: ll. 410 and 1199; trans. Cross and Slover 1936: 561 and 583; cf. F. Kelly 1997: 256); cf. a reference to

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[8] On *-ach*, see Lloyd-Jones 1952: 124; Russell 1990: 80–84; Zimmer 2000: 274–81; Isaac 2002: 14.

[9] For other references to *bresych* in medieval satires, note Edwards 2000: 6.73 (Hywel Ystorm); 7.18 (anonymous); Foster Evans 2007: 11.3 (Rhys Goch Eryri). For a disparaging reference in a non-satirical poem, see Daniel 2003: 4.75 (Ieuan ap Rhydderch).

men 'swollen with kale' in an eighteenth-century Scottish Gaelic satirical poem (Black 2001: 22.98). Thus I think it possible to explain Welsh *bresych* without recourse to positing an Irish intervention.

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S. Rodway. Welsh *bresych* 'cabbages'

This note suggests that Welsh *bresych*, rather than being a borrowing from the ancestor of Old Irish *braisech*, might be a variant of the regular form *bresyg* < Latin *brassicae* with gemination indicating a negative or contemptuous attitude towards the cabbage, reflected in medieval poetry.

Keywords: Welsh lexicography; intra-Celtic loanwords; medieval Welsh poetry.