Bunas Bree

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A series of short articles on Manx Gaelic grammar, idiom, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Relatives

This month we will look at various issues involving the relative form the verb and relative clauses.

In all tenses apart from the future, the positive form of the relative is the same as the independent, but in the future these is a special form with lenition and ending in *-ys*. The negative in all tenses has *nagh* plus the dependent form of the verb:

ta	nagh vel		
va	nagh row	chaill	nagh chaill
veagh	nagh beagh	chaillagh	nagh gaillagh
vees	nagh bee	**ch**aill**ys**	nagh gaill

In English, relative clauses are introduced by relative pronouns *who*, *which* and *that* (e.g. the cat **that sat on the mat**). Subordinate clauses (e.g. I know **that he is ill**) can also be introduced by 'that'. In Manx positive subordinate clauses of this kind are introduced by *dy* plus dependent. This can make for confusion: relatives and subordinates must be kept separate in Manx. For example,

* paart dy reddyn **dy noddagh** oo jannoo er my hon - some things that you could do for me

is ungrammatical. It should be, and can only be

paart dy reddyn **oddagh** oo jannoo er my hon

with the relative (here same as independent) form of the verb. In the negative, there can be no such confusion, for *nagh* is used in both relatives and subordinates.

Another sources of confusion from English is the fact that, in some circumstances, both relative and subordinate clauses can appear without *that*.

I know he's coming
the man you didn't see

But in Manx the relative or subordinate forms cannot be dropped:

* Ta fys aym t'eh çheet is wrong (It must be, Ta fys aym **dy vel** eh çheet)
* yn dooinney cha vaik oo is also wrong (It must be, yn dooinney **nagh** vaik oo)

The generalizing relative

A further source of confusion from Manx itself is that there *is* in fact a kind of relative clause which uses *dy* plus dependent verb. The *dy* in the 'generalizing relative' is, however, historically different from the *dy* of subordinate clauses. The generalizing relative *dy* is originally a prepositional element from *jeh / dy* 'of' (Irish *dá*), whereas the subordinate *dy* (earler Manx *gy*) is cognate with the Irish conjunction *go*.

The generalizing relative is only used after *erbee* or *veg* 'any', or when the sense of 'any' is understood. It is most familiar from expressions such as *keayrt dy row* 'once upon a time', *laa dy row* 'one day', *dooinney dy row* 'a certain man'. The idea behind it is 'out of those that…', so *dooinney erbee elley dy vel bio* (Daniel 2:30) is 'any other man out of those who are alive' i.e. 'any other man who is alive'.

Examples of the generalizing relative:

meerioose jeh nyn yoin er currym erbee **dy vel** fyss eu er - the wilful Neglect of any known Duty [any duty that you know] (FRC p. 62-3)

Vel Jee erbee cheu-mooie jeem's? dy firrinagh-focklagh, cha vel Jee erbee elley **dy nhione** dooys - Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any [that I know] (Isaiah 44:8)

raad erbee **dy vaik** oo mie as jesh dhyt hene, gow dty chummal ayns shen - whither [wherever] it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go [dwell there] (Jeremiah 40:4)

cha vel y folliaght shoh er ny hoilshaghey dooys, son veg y chreenaght **dy vel** aym's erskyn dooinney erbee elley **dy vel** bio - this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living [that are alive] (Daniel 2:30)

ard-valley ny balley erbee **dy jed** shiu stiagh ayn - into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter (Mian 10:11)

Eisht cheayll mee noo loayrt, as dooyrt noo **dy row** rish yn noo shen ren loayrt - Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint [a certain saint] said unto that certain saint [that saint] which spake (Daniel 8:13)

va deiney **dy row** va jeant neughlen liorish bentyn rish corp dooinney marroo - there were certain men, who were defiled by [touching] the dead body of a man (Numbers 9:6)

Son va shin hene myrgeddin keayrt **dy row** mee-hushtagh, mee-viallagh, ayns marranys… - For we ourselves also were sometimes [once, at one time] foolish, disobedient, deceived… (Titus 3:3)

O Chreenaght insh dooin! cha vel [dhyt] gyn-yss / nhee **dy row** rieau, **dy bee**, ny **dy vel** nish - O Wisdom tell us! nothing is unknown to you that ever was, that will be, or that is now (Pargys Caillit ll. 25-6)

The most important thing to note is that relatives of the type *dy vel* are highly restricted in their use, and can never be used instead of ordinary relatives.

Relative pronouns

Generally there are no relative pronouns in Manx, the relative form of the verb being used instead. *Ny* is not a general relative pronoun; it means 'what' in the sense of 'that which'.

Ny ta scruit aym, te scruit - What I have written I have written [it is written] (John 19:22)

It is, however, used after *ooilley* when followed by a relative clause:

ooilley ny ta son goll magh gys caggey ayns Israel - all that are able to go forth to war in Israel (Numbers 1:3)

In imitation of English, the interrogative pronoun *quoi* 'who' is occasionally pressed into service as a relative pronoun, but this appears to be due to slavish translation and was never natural in the language. It should be avoided.

One example will suffice:

Son cha vel geill oc da cairys, ta'n Chiarn dy ghra; **quoi** ta stoyral seose berchys ayns nyn blaaseyn liorish tranlaase as roosteyrys - For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces (Amos 3:10)

The complex and unfamiliar sentence structure has thrown the translator. A more normal Manx translation would be *cha vel geill **ocsyn** da cairys, ta'n Chiarn dy ghra, **ta** stoyral seose…*

Relative clauses with prepositions

In classical Manx the preposition agrees with the antecedent in number and gender, and can precede the relative verb, or come at the end of the clause, the form of the verb being the same in either case.

yn guilley **rish** t'ee ayns graih
yn guilley t'ee ayns graih **rish** - the boy she is in love with

yn inneen **r'ee** t'eh ayns graih
yn inneen t'eh ayns graih **r'ee** - the girl he is in love with

ny guillyn **roo** t'ee ayns graih
ny guillyn t'ee ayns graih **roo** - the boys she is in love with

Examples:

ny greeshyn **orroo hie** eh seose - his ascent [the stairs] by which he went up (2 Chronicles 9:4)

thieyn **ayndoo nagh vel** dooinney erbee cummal - in houses which no man inhabiteth [lives in] (Job 15:28)

adsyn **oc ta** enney er - they that know him (Job 24:1)

nyn moir, **r'ee ta** mee er scarrey? - your mother…whom I have put away [from whom I have separated] (Isaiah 50:1)

moddee yollyssagh **nagh vel** dy bragh dy liooar **oc** - greedy dogs which can never have enough (Isaiah 56:11)

ymmodee **va** drogh-spyrrydyn **ayndoo** - many that were possessed with devils [many in whom there were devils] (Matthew 8:16)

With interrogatives there is a small number of prepositions (ec, ayns, gys) which can appear in their basic, unconjugated forms before the relative verb:

cre gys nee'm dty hoylaghey - what thing shall I liken to thee (Lamentations 2:13)

quoi gys hem mayd? - to whom shall we go? (John 6:68)

Quoi ec ta fys? - Who knows?

Quoi ec ta seaghyn? **quoi ec ta** trimshey? **quoi ec ta** anvea? **quoi ec ta** beealeraght? **quoi ec ta** lhottyn gyn oyr? **quoi ec ta** jirgid sooillyn? - Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? (Proverbs 23:29)

cre ayns ta dty niart vooar lhie - wherein thy great strength lieth (Judges 16:15)

Quoi ayns smoo ghoghe y ree taitnys dy hroggal gys ard-ooashley syrjey na mee hene? - To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? (Esther 6:6)

The normal relative construction, that is, with conjugated prepositions, may also be used:

quoi echey ta niart erbee…? - who hath any strength…? (Psalm 18:31)

And this is compulsory if the preposition is at the end: one could say *quoi ta niart erbee echey?* but never **quoi ta niart erbee ec?* Manx prepositions, unlike English

ones (whatever the Latin-influenced teachings of pedants may say[1]), cannot appear on their own without a directly following complement. The pronominal element of prepositional pronouns (*orroo* etc.) fulfils this need, and since the prepositional pronouns are by their nature inflected for number and gender, agreement is necessitated between the antecedent and the preposition.

In older Manx, and still in Irish and Scottish Gaelic, the dependent is used in relative clauses involving prepositions. Traces of this may be seen in the Traditionary Ballad:

Quoi yn chied er **ec row** rieau ee - Who was the first who ever had her (v. 2)

Mannanan Beg va mac y Leirr, / Shen yn chied er **ec row** rieau ee - Mannanan Beg who was the son of Leirr, that is the first one who ever had her (v. 3)

Compare Scottish Gaelic:

thàinig na h-uile gin do'n fheadhainn **aig an robh** an dà bhall dhubh air an aodann - all of those who had the two black patches on their face came (*Popular Tales of the West Highlands* p. 350)

Parenthetic clauses

Sentences of the following type are wont to confuse, and even the native writers sometimes display confusion:

the man who I know is coming

'The man who is coming' would be a straightforward relative: *yn dooinney ta çheet*. And 'I know that the man is coming' would be a straightforward subordinate *Ta fys aym dy vel y dooinney çheet*. But to say *yn dooinney ta fys aym ta çheet* seems to violate the rule that one cannot say **Ta fys aym ta…* On the other hand, **yn dooinney ta fys aym dy vel çheet* seems to fail because *dy vel çheet* has no subject. It is, in fact, *yn dooinney ta fys aym ta çheet* which is correct. *Ta fys aym* is a parenthetic ('bracketed') clause, inserted between the main clause and the relative clause:

I know
ta fys aym
∨
yn dooinney.....ta çheet
the man.....who is coming

Examples:

Shen va yn dhonney [dooinney] **ta mee er glashtyn va** reil[l] yn seihll ro[i]sh adam - That is the man I have heard ruled the world before Adam (Ned Beg 30)

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[1] I mean that although some look down on preposition-stranding in sentences such as '*What are you standing in?* and prefer *In what are you standing?*, the former type are, and have for a very long time been, natural in English, whereas **Cre t'ou dty hassoo ayns?* really would be ungrammatical. Note that the construction deemed more grammatical in English, is absolutely impossible in Manx. One can say *Cre ayn(s) t'ou dty hassoo?* or *Cre t'ou dty hassoo ayn?* but not **Ayns cre t'ou dty hassoo?*.

’Syn ynnyd shoh, (**ta shiu gra vees** treigit fegooish dooinney ny baagh - in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast (Jeremiah 33:10)

ny biljyn **ta fys ayd nagh vel** son beaghey - the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat [the trees which thou knowest are not…] (Deuteronomy 20:20)

quoi jeu **ta shiu smooinaghtyn ta**’n chooid share echey ’sy vea shoh? - which do you think has the better of it in this Life? (FRC p. 24)

t’ad jannoo shen **sheign fys vie ve oc hene ta** mee-chairagh - they do what they must know to be [is] unjust (SW p. 111)

There is some confusion in the following example:

Agh quoi ta shiuish gra, dy vel mee? - But whom say ye that I am? (Matthew 16:15)

Normally with *quoi* the (zero) copula would be used, e.g. *Quoi oo? Quoi uss?* so *Quoi mee?* But the copula would be odd in a parenthetic construction, especially since *she* does not seem to be much used in relatives, and the short form of the copula is only used with adjectives and fixed expressions. Scottish Gaelic has no such compunctions, the equivalent being *cò tha sibhse ag ràdh as mi?* (Mx. **quoi ta shiuish gra s’mee?*).

Because *ta* can be used for the copula in Manx, one would expect *quoi ta shiuish gra ta mee?* and this is what Phillips has:

quei ta shuiss grá ta mi?

Proverb of the Month:

Cha nee yn wooa smoo eieys smoo vlieaunys - It is not the cow that cries the most that milks the most.