

Bríathartheosc Con Culainn in the Context of Early Irish Wisdom-Literature¹

Maxim Fomin

Irish wisdom-literature is found in variety of styles and manuscripts. Firstly, one can recall the multiplicity of its genres: apart from wisdom-texts intended specifically for kings and specifically for ecclesiastics, there is a wide range of proverbial compositions of general character intended for the laity.²

Secondly, the extent of the compositions should also be considered. A wisdom-text and its different recensions can occupy part of a single manuscript.³ A wisdom-text can also be integrated into the body of another composition, as in the case of *The Wisdom Sayings of Cú Chulainn* (*Bríathartheosc Con Culainn*, hereinafter *BCC*) or *The Instruction to Cúscraid* (*Tecosca Cúscraid*, hereinafter *TCúsc*).⁴ Finally, a few groupings of proverbs can be encountered in legal treatises or sagas, where they may comprise only a few lines.⁵ Beside wisdom texts in the vernacular, some were composed in Latin (e.g. *De duodecim abusivis*).⁶

¹ I acknowledge the generous help of Dr John Carey, University College Cork, in the preparation of this article as well as in his supervision of my research in the years 2000-2003. I am also grateful to Prof. Fergus Kelly and Dr Gregory Toner for their comments and suggestions. I remain solely responsible for all errors and mistakes. Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

² See the general discussion of early Irish wisdom-literature by C. Ireland (1999, 8-10), who distinguishes 'secular wisdom-texts written in the vernacular which concern themselves with proper conduct and its consequences for society at large' and 'religious writings, notably homilies and monastic rules, [which] not only show a concern for proper conduct but also display similarities in style and vocabulary with secular gnomic-texts'.

³ For instance, the Book of Leinster contains two recensions of *Andacht Moraind* (fols. 293-4, 347) and the full version of *Tecosca Cormaic* (hereinafter *TC*), followed by *Senbriathra Fíthail* (fols. 343-6). On the origin of *Senbriathra Fíthail* as a conflation of *Briathra Flainn Fhína* (hereinafter *BFF*) and *TC* see Ireland (1999, 43).

⁴ Both can be found in the sagas of the Ulster cycle. *TCúsc* is found in *Cath Airtig*, (T.C.D. MS H. 3. 18), ed. Best (1916).

⁵ On verbal correspondences between *AM* and the *Bretha Nemed* corpus see Kelly (1976, xviii-xix, xly, also notes to §32.84 (*Ad-mestar* series) on 42-43). In saga material, §3 of *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*, ed. Thurneysen (1935, 3-4, esp. lines 6-23) comes to mind. On the latter, see Ní Chróinín (1941). Hagiography should not be disregarded either. The list of blessings conferred by Mac Creiche on Blathmac and his nobles (*Facbhaim ioth ⁊ bliocht in bharr tír, ⁊ mes for bharr ccoilltibh, ⁊ toradh in bharr talmain*, 'I leave corn and milk in your land, and mast in your woods, and increase in your soil'), in *Betha Meic Creiche* (Plummer 1925, 44, 83) recalls the blessings of the righteous rule not only in the later *Scéla Néill Fhrossaig*

Thirdly, wisdom-texts survived in a variety of forms. One of the earliest wisdom-texts, *Audacht Moraind* (hereinafter *AM*), exhibits archaic features in its syntax, such as tmesis constructions and examples of Bergin's law.⁷ Both recensions of *AM* contain variations of complex alliterative patterns.⁸ The bulk of the wisdom-literature, however, employs simple syntactic structures, such as *cech, ferr* or *dligid* formulae.⁹ Some wisdom-texts, such as *Diambad méisse bad rí réil* or *Cert cech rīg co réil*, are composed as standard syllabic verse, employing rhyme and consonance as devices of organising their structure.¹⁰ While different in style, language and syntax, they all served the single purpose of passing human sagacity on to the audience in a simple way. Although fables, legends or stories were part of the repertoire of early Irish literature, it seems probable that wisdom-literature was the genre which was primarily important in fulfilling this function.

Discussion of *Briaththesc Con Culainn* within the Framework of the Saga *Serglige Con Culainn*.

Much scholarly attention has been already devoted to *BCC*. The text was previously edited and translated by Smith (1924) and Dillon (1951, 57-8).¹¹ It occurs within the framework of the *tarbfheis* episode that involves the divination procedure for finding a new candidate for kingship and the candidate's subsequent inauguration.

The saga—along with its manuscript tradition and sources—has been extensively discussed by Zimmer (1887b), Thurneysen (1921, 416), Dillon (1953, xi-xvii), Salberg (1992), and most recently Carey (1994). The overall discussion has been summarized by Carey (1994, 77, 82) as follows:

(Wiley 2005, 22: *Boí mess ⁊ class ⁊ íth ⁊ bliocht fria lind*, 'There was [the produce of wood and of the earth], corn and milk in his time'), but also in the earlier *AM* (Kelly 1976, 6, §§17-19 (Rec. B), 60-1, §§14-6 (Rec. A)) and *TC* §1.19, 22, 24 (Meyer 1909, 2), and the legal formula *íth ⁊ mbliocht ⁊ mes* (cf. *CIH* 213.15-6).

⁶ See the most recent discussion of the development of the Hiberno-Latin gnomic tradition in Breen (2002).

⁷ Kelly 1976, xxxiv-xxxviii.

⁸ Kelly 1976, xl-xlii.

⁹ See Ireland (1999, 11, 18-20, 39) for discussion of these formulae in the context of *BFF*.

¹⁰ Ed. O'Donoghue 1912; 1921-3.

¹¹ Dillon (1953, 33-36, esp. notes to ll. 266, 275, 282, 285) revised some of his earlier views, but he did not provide a translation. Smith drew heavily upon the earlier translations of the text provided by D'Arbois de Jubainville (1888; 1891), and O'Curry (1858; 1859). On his part, Dillon sometimes followed readings and translations by Zimmer (1887a) and Thurneysen (1901).

An interesting feature of the *Serglige* is its composite character: the sole manuscript, *Lebor na hUidre*, combines portions of two versions of the tale, dating apparently from the late Old Irish and late Middle Irish periods. Somewhat confusingly, the earlier version has come to be called B, and the later A... The three scholars that have worked most closely with the *Serglige* have come to different conclusions regarding the background of this section. Zimmer held that it belonged to Version A. Thurneysen that it was either part of Version B or the work of a compiler.

The *Serglige* was treated in detail by Dillon (1941, 129), who concluded:

A compiler ... composed these two [recensions] into one, perhaps in the 11th century, and added in a separate story, *Briatharbecosc Con Culaind*. This compilation was the text of *Lebor Buide Sláne* from which the interpolator... derived his material.

Having independently examined the language of the *BCC* episode, Carey proposed that it was written by the Middle Irish redactor of Version B. According to Carey (1994, 82), the language of *BCC* is Middle Irish, his argument being some verbal forms characterized by the loss of strong or deponent flexions:

One distinctive late form found both in the episode and in the preceding B text [of the *Serglige*] is *adfiadar* (232, 251): the two instances are only 25 lines apart in the manuscript, rendering the chance that this agreement is accidental fairly slim.

We will draw upon Carey's findings as well as upon Dillon's conclusions with regard to *BCC*'s provenance in the text of the *Serglige*. However, our main aim will be different: we will not seek to establish the relationship between the *BCC* section and other parts of the *Serglige* but rather that between the wisdom-text and early Irish literature as a whole. The passages that constitute the body of *BCC* cannot reveal their contents fully if either quoted individually or taken within the framework of the saga. Therefore it is intriguing to explore the background of the compiler's artistry: what sources he drew upon, what rules he followed in his literary activity and, finally, what he had in mind in making this wisdom-text a part of his compilation.¹¹

¹¹ Ireland (1999, 34) believes that 'the date of the text cannot be set precisely because of its stylistic simplicity. The lack of syntactic archaism, however, is not a conclusive argument against greater age... The presence of these maxims in other texts does not tell us anything about their provenance or their age relative to the texts in which they are found'. Contrary to his opinion, I deem that looking at syntax, structure and different types of alliteration, observed throughout the text, as well as the instances of shared vocabulary in other gnomic compositions may well help us in this inquiry.

Text and Translation of *Bríathartheosc Con Culaind*.

The text is preserved in two manuscripts, *Lebor na hUidre* (folio 46^b1-30)¹² and TCD H. 4. 22 (hereinafter H).¹³ The second manuscript, as Dillon (1949, 139, 146) argues, derives from the first and probably belongs to the 17th century. For this reason, the testimony of H can safely be disregarded. Our editorial policy has been to present the text of the original, making as few emendations as possible. Such emendations as have been made are either incorporated into the main text, with the original reading supplied in the footnote or, in the case of a few aspirated consonants, lenition is simply indicated by square brackets. Regular contractions have been expanded and appear in the text in italics. Deletions are marked by parenthesis. I have restored the length of certain vowels, but also retained the manuscript readings in the footnotes.

¹² These correspond to lines 3466-3506 of the diplomatic edition of *Lebor na hUidre*. For the following edition I have used a photostat of *LU*'s folio 47^b made available to me by Dr Carey. For the sake of convenience of the reader, all individual lines of *BCC* mentioned further will be referred to *LU*'s diplomatic edition.

¹³ For an edition of the TCD version of *BCC* see Dillon (1949).

BRÍATHAR THECOSC CONCULAIND INSO.

a.

- (3466) Nírbat^a taer(r)*rechtach* deb**tha** déne^b dóergairce.
 (3467) Nírbat^c díscir doic**hlech**^d díummasach.
 (3468) Níbbát^e ecal ocal op**ond** esamain.
 (3469) Nípát^f tairne ó main mandart**ba** mesct**ba**.
 (3470) Níbat^g dergnat c[h]olla coirme hi tig rurech.
 (3471) Níbat^h ilf**hurig** *im* írad n-ec**h**trand.
 (3472) Níⁱ sáis daíne doc**h**la dí**ch**umaing.

b.

- (3473) Ní^j íadat iubaili *for* éte**ch**tí^k ail.
 (3474) Airliter *cum*mi cóic**h** comarbai cré.
 (3475) Cuibsigter senc[h]aid sin co fí**rim**e fíu^l hit f**h**íadnaisi.
 (3476) Fimatar b[r]et**h**amain^m brát**h**irⁿ scéo mbroga.
 (3477) Mrogatar genelaigi gésc**i**^o úa genit**[h]**er gein.
 (3478) Gairter bí, beo**ai**gter fri oethu(.) airm irro trebsat mairb.^p
 (3479) Maínigter comarbai fora t(**h**)é**ch**tu^q thoich.
 (3480) Toc**[h]**omlúat^r an**f**imí coa nem**t**he nert.

c.

- (3481) Ní^s fresnesea co labur.
 (3482) Ní^t aisnéisea^u co gló**r**ach.
 (3483-5) Ní fuirse, ní *ch*uitbe, ní fait**ch**it**h**er senó**r**i^v

^a nírbat^b dene^c Nírbat^d dóichlech^e Níbbát^f Níbat^g Níbat^h Níbatⁱ Ní^j Ní^k etechtu^l fírim e fíu^m bethamainⁿ brat**h**ir^o gesci^p mairm^q te**ch**tu^r to**ch**omlúat^s Ní^t Ní^u aisneisea^v senori

THE INSTRUCTION OF CÚ CHULAINN HERE.

a.

Do not be a seeker of fierce, ignobly rough strife.
Do not be violent, churlish, [and] arrogant.
Do not be timorous, touchy, hasty, [and] bold.
Do not be brought low by the trick of drunken ruin.
Do not be [like] a drunken 'flesh flea' in the house of a great king.
Do not put off [too] much as regards invasion by foreigners.
Do not pursue infamous, powerless men.

b.

Let prescriptive periods not be established upon a foundation of illegality.
Let memories be consulted [to determine] whose is the land of an heir.
Let aged historians be questioned with justice of worth in your presence.
Let judges enquire [into the matters of] kinship and property.
Let the branches of genealogy from which offspring is born be extended.
Let the living be summoned, let the dead be revived by means of oaths
[sworn] where they dwelt.
Let heirs be endowed according to their proper inheritance.
Let those without kin set out with the strength of their privilege.

c.

Do not answer garrulously.
Do not ask vociferously.
Do not mock, do not deride, do not intimidate old men.

d.

(3486) Nípa mít*bo*mtinac^a o neoch.(3487) Ní géis co *ansa*.(3488) Ní^b ettis *nech* *cena* *domanches*.

e.

(3489) Caín-oís. Caín-éra. Caín-airlice.

f.

(3490) Bát *umal* *múnta* ó *gáet*baib.(3491) Bat *cum*mech coisc ót *s*henaib.(3492) Bát *seic*mech riaglá at*h*ardai.(3493) Nípat^c úarc[h]raidech *im* *ch*ardiu.(3494) Bat *gus*mar *im* *náim*tiu.^d(3495) Nípa *frit*benech *debt*ha hi *til*chomraicib.^e(3496) Nírbat scélac^f at*h*c[h]ossánach.(3497-9) Ní fáisce, ní *t*haisce, ní^g ba torba(3500) Consec*h*a do c[h]úrsachad i [n]gnímaib *ánté*ch*h*taí.^h(3501) Níⁱ *ch*omainse *th*[[?]*fb*]írim*e* ar *t*hoil daíne.

g.

(3502) Níbat^j at*h*boingid ar nábat^k ait*h*rech.(3503) Níbat^l *com*romach ar nábat *misc*nech.(3504) Nírbat^m *lesc* ar nábatⁿ *meir*b.(3505) Nírbat róescid ar nábat *dóes*cair.^o

h.

(3506) Ard*ot*ch*u*ibdig fri *se*ch*e*m na *m*briat*h*ar^p *sin*, a *meic*!^amit*bo*mtinac*h*^bNi^cNípat^dnáim*ti*u^ehitil*ch*omraicib^fNírbat scelac*h*^gní^hantec*h*taíⁱNi^jNibát^knarbat^lNibat^mNírbatⁿnarbat^oNrbat roescid arnabat
doescair^pbriat*h*ar

d.

Do not be thought ill of by anyone.

Do not beseech in a tough way.

Do not repudiate anyone unless he serves badly.

e.

Be gracious in offering. Be gracious in giving. Lend graciously.

f.

Be humble [to accept] instruction from wise men.

Be mindful [to withstand] reproach from your elders.

Be vigilant [to observe] regulations of [your] fathers.

Do not be cold-hearted concerning friends.

Be vigorous concerning enemies.

Do not be an opponent of debate in assemblies.

Do not be gossipy and reproachful.

Do not press, do not hoard: it will be no profit.

Restrain your reproof in respect to entirely proper actions.

Do not trample on your righteousness at the behest of men.

g.

Do not deliver an unnecessary blow lest you regret it.

Do not indulge in contentions lest you become odious.

Do not be sluggish lest you find your death.

Do not be too hasty lest you look ludicrous.

h.

Reconcile yourself to the adherence to these words, son!

Summary of the contents.

In section (a) a young king is warned against the extremes of behaviour usually attributed to young warriors of the *fian*-brotherhood, or else to the heroes of the Ulster Cycle of tales. Reproof of such characteristics as being *díscir*, *doichlech*, and *díummasach*, is contained in several wisdom-texts and will be dealt with later.

Section (b) is devoted to different sides of legal procedure in which the early Irish king was involved. The section starts with advice on how to deal with crimes in general, and proceeds to enumerate such topics as the inheritance of land (ll. 3474, 3476, and 3479) and the privileges of the learned class (l. 3480). The different stages of a law-case in relation to the inheritance of land are the focus of attention in ll. 3474-78. Then the text lists different ways of ascertaining the truth for the above purposes. It starts with consulting memories of the past (l. 3474), then goes on to inquiring of aged historians (l. 3475). The testimony of judges and of genealogies is presented as even more compelling evidence in the case of an heir's claim, and, finally, hearing the testimony of the dead by means of swearing oaths is evidently the climax of the theme (l. 3478). The section contains some legal vocabulary: cf. *inbaile*, meaning '(positive) prescription' and *ail*, 'legal foundation' in l. 3473.¹⁴ The section finishes off with ll. 3479-80 which deal with two kinds of people in society. Those with kin-connections (*comarbai*) are established by means of their inherited property, while those without such connections (*anfíne*) are not fixed to a certain place: their status is therefore provided by their skill (*nemed*).

Section (c), which is probably modelled on precepts for monastic rulers and to the clergy in general, advocates befitting manners of communication in a king, as well as disapproving of any manifestation of disrespect towards elder persons. Section (d) condemns a ruler's maltreatment of his people, encouraging him to provide gifts and demonstrate generosity (section (e)).

Section (f) is miscellaneous in content. The king is given advice concerning suitable conduct. Royal behaviour at the assembly (l.3495) and in private (l.3496), a king's policy towards the elder and the wise persons (ll.3490-2), towards his friends and his enemies (l.3493-4), and towards his subjects (ll.3497-9, 3501) ought to be moderate and prudent.

Section (g) finishes off the text, and its tone seems to echo that of the beginning. The section presents, as contrastive pairs, the misdemeanours against which the king should be watchful, and the implications of the words used here are mainly restricted to descriptions of the extremes of a warrior's behaviour. Their general deprecation by the scribes of *tecosc-*

¹⁴ See *DIL*, s.v. *inbaile* III (I: 331.15), and 1 *ail* (d) (A: 113.13).

literature (and *BCC*'s author is no exception) is yet another commonplace.¹⁵ Usually wisdom-texts stop suddenly, and do not have elaborately constructed endings. By contrast, *BCC*'s author is distinctive in treating his text not as a pure collection of gnomes, but as a literary production, with a clear structure, a title and an end. Section (h)'s finishing '*a meic*' may originally have been its *iarcomarc*, 'final word', thus furnishing the text with a *dúnad*.¹⁶

***BCC*'s structure: principles of alliteration and text's syntax.**

Before we proceed to the treatment of *BCC*'s sources, we shall look at the text from the point of view of its syntax, and the literary devices employed in its structure. An important feature of the *teosc*-genre is the extensive use of alliteration, especially highlighting similar characteristics. The composition is also characterised by various rigid syntactic patterns, and these shall be discussed as well.

a. Alliteration is used in different ways in our text. Where the main structural feature is a series of lines beginning with a single word, such as ll.3466-71, 3502-5 starting with *ní(r)bat*, ll.3472-3, 3481-8 starting with *ní* (with the exception of *nípa* on l.3486) and ll.3490-91 starting with *bát*, there is a great deal of *internal* alliteration. These are strings of words alliterating with *d* in ll.3466-3467, 3472 (*debtha déne dóergairce... díscir doichlech díummasach... dáine dochla díchumaing*), with a vowel in ll.3468, 3471 (*ecal ocal opond esamain... ilfhuirig im írad n-echtrand*) and with *m* in l.3469 (*ó main mandartha mesctha*). Variations in syntax are used to highlight alliterating words. Lines 3469-71 employ prepositions (*ó, i n-, im*) to precede their last two words. 3466-9 employ an alliterative sequence of three stressed words at the end of the line. 3470 has only two alliterating words in the middle (*cholla coirme*) and 3471 has three stressed words beginning with vowels (*ilfhuirig im írad n-echtrand*).

When the series starting with *ní(r)bat* or *ní* stops at l.3473, the next part (ll.3473-80) still involves the use of some *internal* alliteration, as in

¹⁵ Cp. BFF's (Ireland 1999, 92-93) *mairg dān laechdacht*, 'the martial life is a woeful occupation', and Aipgitir Chrábaid's (Hull 1968b, 72-3 §25) *cetharda fo-[f]era fiannas do duiniu .i. to-imairc cricha; to-formaig écraiti; etar-díben sāegul; ar-cuirethar píana*, 'The four things that the profession of arms causes to mankind: it contracts territories; it increases enmity; it cuts off life; [and] it lengthens torments'.

¹⁶ As Dr Carey pointed out to me, many accentual didactic compositions begin with such phrases (e.g. '*A meic áin Ugaine*', LL 1.1787), and therefore it may well be that *BCC* once contained an opening line which was lost in the course of the text's transmission. In favour of the latter, the evidence of 'Advice to Doidin' can be cited (ed. Smith 1932). It begins with an exhortation (*Mo cosg dbuit a Dhoidbén meci Nin*), proceeding to a subjunctive prohibition (*ní urfhaombae rígh*, etc.) of the sort which opens *BCC*.

l.3474: *cumni cóich comarbai cré...*; or l.3477: *genelaigi gésci úa genither gein...*; but it is also structured around *linking* alliteration : *ail* / *Airliter*, *cré* / *Cuibsigter*, *mbroga* / *Mrogatar*, *gein* / *Gairter*, *mairb* / *Mainigter*, *thoich* / *Tochomláat*, *ner* / *Ní*, with a break between ll. 3475 and 3476, finishing with *fhíadnaisi* and starting with *finnatar* respectively.¹⁷ Employing the definition of complex alliteration proposed by D. Sproule (1987, 186-7), we can postulate the presence of complex internal and of complex linking alliteration in our text. The former may be observed on ll.3469, 3472, 3475, 3477 (*main mandarthba... dochla díchumaing ... senchaid sin ... genither gein*) and restored on l.3476 (*b[r]ethamain bráthir*); the latter can be noted between the ll.3476-7 and 3479-80 (thus *mbroga* / *Mrogatar* and *thoich* / *Tochomláat* respectively).¹⁸

b. As far as the syntax is concerned, the striking feature of the wisdom-text is that the opening word is usually the NEG. PRES. SUBJ. 2 SG. OF THE COPULA.¹⁹ However, on a closer look, the syntactic patterns seem to be more sophisticated. Lines 3466, 3469-71 involve NEG. PRES. SUBJ. 2 SG. OF THE COPULA + QUALIFYING ATTRIBUTE (+ PREPOSITION + OBJECT) / QUALIFIER + (PREPOSITION + OBJECT) / QUALIFIER (+QUALIFIER). Lines 3467-8 have uniform syntactic structure: NEG. PRES. SUBJ. 2 SG. OF THE COPULA + REPETITIVE QUALIFYING ATTRIBUTE. The part of the text containing ll.3473-3480 has a uniform opening of (NEG. PART. +) VERB + SUBJECT.²⁰ From then on each of them differs from the other. The structure of ll.3475, 3477 is somewhat similar: SUBJECT is followed by QUALIFIER +

¹⁷ Dillon (1953, 34, note to l. 272) was not sure whether to accept the manuscript reading *co fírinne fíu* or to follow Binchy in 'reading *fiadut*, with *it fhíadnaisi* as a gloss'. Although this emendation is very questionable, accepting it would allow us to restore the linking alliteration between the lines.

¹⁸ Similarly, *TC* (= Meyer 1909, 4-11) is consistent in applying linking alliteration as the main form of ornament in second and third paragraphs, devoted to juridical aspect of royal behaviour and to the constituents of the people's welfare. More specifically, in the second paragraph of *TC* the linking alliteration is noted on ll. 4-5, 8-10, 12-3, 14-5. In the third paragraph, it is found at the beginning (ll. 4-6) and in the middle (ll. 11-13, 17-22). Some of the examples contain instances of complex linking (§2.4-5, 14-5; §3.5-6, 11-13, 19-21) and internal (§3.19) alliteration.

¹⁹ Although a rule cannot safely be postulated here, it is to be noted that the openings of *teosca rí* can rarely be described as having a negative character: cf. *ad-cota*, *ferr*, and *dligid* formulae in *BFF*, *Is tre fhír flathemon* and *ad-mestar* series in *AM*, and the generally positive tone of the first six paragraphs of *TC* dealing exclusively with the subject of ideal kingship.

²⁰ Section (b) is exceptional in *BCC* for the way in which it employs a verb, mostly ipv. pass. pl., to start a new line. With the exception of l. 3473, all the verbs are positive, which is also striking in view of the generally negative character of *BCC*'s dicta. *TC*'s §2.4-17, 29-30 are similarly constructed, having ipv. 3 sg. of the verb as their opening word.

PREP. + (OBJECT + QUALIFIER) / PASSIVE SG. + OBJECT. The subject of the sentence of the l.3474 is followed by an interrogative pronoun *cóich*; in l.3478 it is followed by another verb that forms part of the phrase, and in l.3476 the subject is followed by its object. In ll.3479-3480 the following structure can be observed: VERB + SUBJECT + PREP. WITH 3 PL. POSS. PRON.+ PREPOSED ATTRIBUTE + OBJECT OF PREPOSITION.

c. From then on the text employs antithesis and parallelism rather than alliteration as its principal structural feature. Lines 3481-2 are constructed according to the following pattern: NEG. OF THE COPULA + VERBAL NOUN + PREP. + QUALIFIER. Lines 3490-4 employ SUBJ. PRES. 2 SG. OF THE COPULA (*bát, bat, nípat*) + QUALIFYING ATTRIBUTE rendered by an adjective (*úarchraidech, gusmar*) or an adjectival compound (*umal múnta, cumnech coisc, seichmech ríagla, frithenech debtha*) + PREPOSITION + INDIRECT OBJECT expressed by a noun or a substantive (*gáethaib, t-senaib, athardai, chardiu, náimtiu*). Lines 3497-8 contain a uniform NEG. SUBJ. PRES. 2 SG. OF THE VERB; 3500-1 employ the structure (NEG. PART. +) VERB + PSS. PRON. 2 SG.. + OBJECT (*chúrsachad, fhírinne*) + PREP. (*i n-, ar*) + INDIRECT OBJECT (*gnímaib, thoil*) + QUALIFYING ATTRIBUTE expressed by an adjective (*ántéchtai*) or a dependent genitive (*daíne*). Lines 3502-5 are all constructed analogously: PRES. SUBJ. 2 SG. OF THE COPULA + QUALIFIER + CONJ. *AR* + NEG. PRES. SUBJ. 2 SG. OF THE COPULA + QUALIFIER.

BCC's sources: a blend of *tecosca ríg*, legal literature and gnomic texts relating to clerics.

In our discussion of sources, most of the attention will be given to the vernacular wisdom-literature, although compositions from other genres will be considered as well. It should be noted that some of the principles of alliteration noted above have their parallels not only in wisdom-texts devoted to the topic of ideal kingship, such as *AM* and *TC*, but also in those devoted to clerics, such as *Aipgitir Chrábaid*. The exceptional standing of section (b) will be made obvious by comparing it to the fragment from MS H. 3. 18, fol. 233^b of legal character. The fragment is found in the compilation 'on prescriptive rights ... made up of citations from various OIr. texts with interspersed later glosses' (Breatnach 2005, 32).

Audacht Moraind.

Section (a)

Internal alliteration is employed in the *Apair fris* series of recension A of *AM*. Conspicuous examples are §32, containing a string of five alliterating adjectives all starting with *d*, and §42, containing three starting with *s*:

Abhair fris, nírop diumsach diupartach duilig doinnech dodcadach... Abhair fris, níp sotal soisil sainairlech (Kelly 1976, 64, 67).

Tell him, he should not be arrogant, fraudulent, intractable, tempestuous, unfortunate... Tell him, he should not be proud, arrogant, self-opinionated.

Recension A of *AM* is also consistent in applying different syntactic patterns within the framework of the *Abhair fris* series that are reminiscent of the ones in *BCC* just discussed. §34, and the first clauses of §§36, 42 have the structure NEG. PRES. SUBJ. 3 SG. OF THE COPULA + REPETITIVE QUALITATIVE ATTRIBUTE which is similar to the syntactic structure of the ll.3467-8 of *BCC*. The coincidence in wording and syntax between §32 of *AM* and the l.3467 of *LU* leaves no doubt that recension A of *AM* was employed here as a model.²¹ §34 c of *AM* should also be considered in this connection:

Dligid cach diumsach tairnem (Kelly 1976, 65)
Humiliation is proper for every proud person.

The author of *BCC* probably chose to employ the key-words of the *AM* passage on ll.3466-7.²² The original collocation *diumsach tairnem* can be seen as split into two distinct statements in *BCC* both employing uniform NEG. PRES. SUBJ. 2 SG. OF THE COPULA. This enabled the author to expand the original subject-matter on two separate lines: *nírbat ... diumsach ... nípát tairne*. We tentatively propose to describe this literary technique as ‘de-fragmentation’, thus presenting the author of *BCC* as a compiler who chose to set the components of collocations occurring in gnomic literature apart from each other. In our discussion of *TC* we shall further observe the general inclination of the author of *BCC* to use *TC*’s collocations as primary building blocks, and the use of this technique.

Section (e)

²¹ But the influence of other texts should not be disregarded. Both *díscir* and *díummusach* run together in a verse preserved at the end of the saga *De chophur in dá muccida: is amlaid Dond Cualngi diumsach díscir*, ‘Thus is Donn Cúalnge, arrogant and wild’ (Windisch 1891, 245).

²² Although it might well be that the proverbial diction *díummusach tairnem*, ‘humbling the proud’ had a wider colloquial provenance: cf. *at-cota díumus tornem* (Ireland 1999, 64, v.l. from RIA 967 (23 N 10) to 1.19).

Another significant feature of *BCC* is the extensive use of syntactic constructions employed by earlier wisdom-texts. For this section, we wish to compare §20.43 of ‘The Story of the Finding of Cashel’, the story itself partly belonging to recension R of *AM*.²³ The line consists of three 2 SG. PRES. SUBJ./IPV. verbs preceded by a preverbal particle that imparts a beneficial sense:

Slán-sir, slán-eiris, slán-imte,

Ask properly, pay properly, refuse (?) properly (Kelly 1976, 74, 72).

Aipgitir Chrábaid.

In our discussion of the influence of *Aipgitir Chrábaid* (hereinafter *AChr*) on the contents of *BCC* we shall go directly to sections (c)-(f). Here the author of *BCC* has simply paraphrased *AChr*: there is no other way of explaining the similarity of certain passages to one another, or the fact that some words employed in *AChr* and *BCC* are not to be found in any other early Irish texts. Consider the section on *De vertutibus animae*, *AChr* §21:

Cetharda nádcon tecmaing do neuch charas Dīa .i. nī fuirsedar; nī fathgūathar; nī [m]ben éndach; nī mī-thomnadar ō neuch

The four things that do not happen to anyone who loves God: He is mocked at (?); he is not lied about (?); defamation does not touch him; [and] he is not thought ill of by anyone (Hull 1968b, 72-3).

Of ‘the four things’ in the passage above the author of *BCC* chose not to include *nī mben éndach*. The other three were given an appropriate context, introduced by NEG. 2 SG. PRES. SUBJ. of the verb (ll. 3483-5) and of the copula (l. 3486). However, the words *ní chuitbe*, ‘let you not deride’, and *senóri*, ‘old men’, are not to be found in *AChr*. The theme of mocking the old is dealt with in *TC* and in the Triads, where both the verb *con-tibi* and substantival *sen*, ‘an old person’ are used along with the substantival *óc*, ‘a young person’. Cormac, when telling about his habits when he was a young man, says, *ní cuitbinn sen ciarba óc*, ‘I did not deride an old person though I was young’ (Meyer 1909, 16-17, §7.22) The prohibition *ní cuitbe nach sen ciarba óc* ‘do not deride any old person though you are young’ is also to be found among all sorts of advice given to Caipre by Cormac (ib., 20-21, §12.3). Echoing *TC*, Triad 82 describes *óc con-tibi sen*, ‘a youngster mocking an old man’, as one of the three rudest persons of the world. Given that Lugaid is a young man worthy to become a king, it is appropriate for his dictum to be included here. In *AChr*, the pair ‘old age–youth’ is to be found in the same section, and it is also to be found together with injunctions reminiscent of *BCC*:

²³ Kelly (1976, 72, also xiv).

Tol 7 oitiu, écc 7 sentu is ferr bid di chēin a foimtiu. Nī geiss, nī obbais.

Desire and youth, death and old age, it is better that they should be prepared for long beforehand. You shall not beseech; you shall not refuse (Hull 1968b, 74.155-75, §34).

Similarly, once the prohibition with respect to treating old men properly was expounded in ll. 3483-5, the author of *BCC* continued with dicta concerning the appreciation expressed by a future king towards his subjects and vice versa, but continued to draw on *AChr*. He changed *AChr*'s *nī mī-thomnadar*, NEG. 3 SG. PASS. PRES. IND. of the verb to NEG. 2 SG. PRES. SUBJ. of the copula + ADJ. as this was more appropriate in the new context, but probably chose not to change *nī geiss* on similar grounds.²⁴

The section *De peritia veritatis* in *AChr* is also worthy of attention. Here the main subject of the text is the theme of righteousness (OIr. *fīrinne*) and the discussion is mainly concerned with different ways of obscuring righteousness, as well as with the ways of guarding righteousness from obscurity, and also of attaining it. The point that the author of *AChr* is trying to make throughout the whole section is that the person who is zealously eager to become righteous ought to obtain a faultless heart, which can only be gained if his human nature is overcome:

Ma beith nech ad-chobra in fīrinne, is dūal dó ro-bē d'ēolus leis inna thēchtu ced doda-ceil... Dos-ceil ind fīrinne ar chāch cota-nessa... Indmus 7 enae 7 fīr-etlae is imalle ros-[s]aig duine. Cuin roda-saig duine? In tan as ndílacht a fīrinne. Cuin as ndílacht a fīrinne? In tan mbīs a chride inna thēchtu is and is fīrinne i ssuidiu amail nī roichned ō duini (Hull, 1968b, 64.62-66.63, 66.80-68.83)

If there be anyone who desires the truth, it is meet for him that he may know properly what conceals it... Truth conceals itself from everyone who spurns it... Moderation and wisdom and true holiness, together it is that a man attains them. When does a man attain them? When his truth is faultless. When is his truth faultless? When his heart is in his proper condition, then truth is therein as if he had not been born of man (ib., 65-69).

The point being made here is that human nature and righteousness are of different, if not contradictory natures, and cannot be seen as a unity. On his part, the author of *BCC* expresses different vein of thought. In l.3501 of section (f) he advises a king not to 'condemn' his royal righteousness for the benefit of his subjects, thus treating it as a means to establish people's wellbeing. It is noteworthy that both *AChr* and *BCC* employ forms of the verb *con-nessa* in the passages in question, which we take to be further evidence of the employment of *AChr* by the author of *BCC*. We may also

²⁴ The use of *nī ettis*, 2 sg. pres. subj. of *as-toing*, 'refuses', in *BCC* for *AChr*'s *nī ottis*, 2 sg. pres. subj. of *as-boind* with the same meaning is to be explained as synonymous.

mention that the *fírinne* dealt with in this passage has more to do with the religious aspect of royal righteousness, rather than with its fecundating aspect (*cf. Is tre fhír flathemon* series of *AM*), or with its legal aspect (referred to in l.3475 of our text).

The topic of the relationship between the ideal king and his subjects is also touched upon in section (e), where the author introduces the theme of generosity. As already mentioned, three collocations consist of a preverbal *cain-*, ‘fair’, and 2 SG. PRES. SUBJ. of a verb. Something similar can be observed in the section *De prudentissimo homine*, §36:

Cia trebairém? Int-í can-abēra (leg. can-epēra) re mbās a n-ad-ais iar mbās. Cain-coscaid. Ní cain-cūsachaid. Cot-ēraig menmae fri cūsachad. Is ísel fri cosc (Hull, 1968b, 76.163-5).

Who is most prudent? He who shall welcome (?) before death what he fears after death. You do well to correct. You do not do well to reprove. The mind rebels against reproof. It is humble at being corrected (*ib.*, 77).

The tone and the purport of the above passage from *AChr* are, however, different from those of *BCC*. The latter welcomes the idea of being generous when bestowing gifts, whereas the author of *AChr* approves of being humble when corrected. This is however precisely what *BCC* expounds on l.3500:

Consecha do chūsachad i [n]gnímaib ántéchtai,
‘Restrain your reproof in respect to entirely proper actions’.

Coincidence between the two texts not only in thought but in wording should also be noted: compare *BCC*’s *con-secha do c[h]ūsachad* and *AChr*’s *cain-coscaid ... fri cūsachad*. It may well be that the author of *BCC* has here tried to implement his own method of compiling a wisdom-text tentatively described as ‘de-fragmentation’ earlier. In creating this piece, he may have copied related gnomes of the monastic source to form a new section, using *AChr* in a way appropriate for the context of *BCC*.

Tegosc Cūscaid.

Despite the coincidence in vocabulary and thought between the opening line (3466) of *BCC* and a passage in *TCúsc* to be discussed below, the latter is not to be treated as *BCC*’s source. *TCúsc* follows the wording of *BCC* very closely:

Bad fri[th]almach debtha deine duiro doergairge, arna tormastar fort iliúna lén lighe.
Be on the lookout for rapid, severe, ignobly fierce strife so that many sorrows of sick bed may not be added to you (Best 1916, 172, 179).

Here we should again bear in mind the context of *BCC*: the text purports to give the words of Cú Chulainn lying sick in Emain, who provides his foster-

son Lugaid with a series of instructions in the practice of kingship. The reference contained in the lines of *TCúsc* cited above may be the only one preserved in wisdom literature pointing to the significance of the Irish legal institution of sick-maintenance. The collocation *lige lén*, ‘sick bed’, is used quite often in the main tract on the subject of sick-maintenance, *Bretha Crólige* (Binchy 1938, 61). Coincidentally, Cú Chulainn also lies in his sick-bed and is instructing Lugaid using exactly the same words. The match in phraseology between the two texts (with the exception of *duiri*, ‘severe’, in *TCúsc*) and the reference to a sick-bed in *TCúsc* may therefore both be taken as indications that *BCC* was employed as a source by the author of *TCúsc*.

Tecosca Cormaic.

Having identified the secondary character of the passage in *TCúsc*, we are still left with the question of the origin of the precept in *BCC*. The word *taerrechtach* that opens it occurs in the section of *TC* the text devoted to the youth of a future king among the members of a *fián*-brotherhood:

Basa luath, nibsa tairrechtach, nibsa faemseach (Meyer 1909, 17, n. 11).
I was swift, I was not pursuing, I was not estimating.

Wisdom literature apart, other early Irish sources provide few examples of the usage of the word *tairrecht* and its derivatives.²⁵ In the *Annals of Ulster*²⁶ and in *Áigidecht Aithirni*, ‘The Guesting of Athirne’,²⁷ the words are associated with leadership, which may be appropriate for our text: kings chasing their foes, and a bull tracking his herd, initiate and therefore lead the pursuit. By including this injunction, Cú Chulainn urges the future king Lugaid to be temperate and to beware of spontaneous provocative behaviour. But let us come back to our treatment of the influence of *TC* on the composition of *BCC*, as it is intriguing to find out that the compiler has redeployed *TC* in a variety of ways.

Section (a).

²⁵ I take *AM*’s *Dligid cach airrechtach atha[í]r* (Kelly 1976, 65) ‘Reproach is proper for every quarrelsome [one]’ and *Nírbat taerrechtach debtha* of *BCC* to belong together on the basis of similarity in thought. It is to be noted that *airrechtach* and *tairrechtach* were confused with each other in early sources. Cf. *TC*: *nipsa airrechtach* of LL 45913 and *nipsa tairrechtach* of BB 63^a25 (Meyer 1909, 17, § 7 n. 11); also *Áigidecht Aithirni*: *airechtach* of Harleian 5280 and editorial *tairrehtaid* (Meyer 1905a, 6).

²⁶ See Mac Airt, S., & Mac Niocaill, G. (1983, 454-5; A.D. 1018.6) *a tairriucht creiche*, ‘in pursuit of a raiding party’, (456-7; A.D. 1021.3) *icon tairrecht*, ‘in the pursuit’.

²⁷ Meyer 1905a, 6: *tairrehtaid cecha [tāna] in tarb*, ‘the pursuer of every herd is a bull’.

Line 3468 breaks the pattern of three alliterating stressed words at the end of the line evident in most of the lines of the section,²⁸ providing instead alliteration between four words all starting with the vowels *e* and *o*. There can be no doubt concerning the source of the line as *TC* lists the first three words together in the following section:

Cate forus cuitbeda la Féine?
Fer neóit ... ecal ocal opunn, anfaitech ansercach anraitech

What is the code of ridicule among the Irish?
 A man niggardly... timorous, violent, impulsive; incautious, loveless, valiant
 (Meyer 1909, 48 §32.1-2, 8-9, 49).

The provenance of *essamain* in *BCC* is in question, as it is not found in other gnomic compositions. It may well be that the compiler of *BCC* has employed *TC*'s dictum, but, not satisfied with a mere citation from the source, and having the two previous lines finishing with a trisyllabic word, he added *essamain* and did so by analogy with the similar word in *TC*. *Essamain* is formed on the basis of neg. *es(s)* and *omun*, 'fear', and, similarly, *anfaitech* in the passage from *TC* just cited, contains neg. prefix *an-* and *faitech*, 'fearful'.

Lines 3469-70 are devoted to the regulation of behaviour at the public occasions, and we should probably note that the author returns to the subject along similar lines at l.3495. *AM* simply refers to the existence of a legal institution of 'three immunities of violence at every assembly' (*tre blai búraig im cech n-óenach*) (Kelly 1976, 8.68-9). Especially prominent is the third immunity, called *búaid cuirmthige*, 'the privilege of an ale-house' (Kelly 1976, 10.73-11). *TC* provides a whole section devoted to behaviour in the ale-house of the king, starting with the question 'what are the dues of a chief and of an ale-house?' (*cadeat ada flatha 7 cuirmthige*), probably introduced as a continuation of the last line of the previous paragraph: 'let him not be greasy in the mead-court house' (*ní ba gerthide i n-ailt midchúarto*) (Meyer 1909, 10-13). The description of an ale-house that one finds in *TC* has some resemblances to the description of a human feast (*fled dóendae*) in *Córus Béscnai*:

Caite in fhled doena? Fled cuirmtíge caich dia fblaith amail bes a dlíged dia nceset a airilltnib feis, fuiririud, dithbit... A coimded do cumdach do cach mainiugud do cach lesegud iar nDia 7 duine fri sobes, fri soirecht, fri soairle (CIH 525.5-6, 23-25).

What is the human feast? Everyone's ale-house feast for his lord according to his entitlement with which there go according to deserts dinner party (*feis*), supper (*fuiririud*), lunch (*dithbit*)... Protecting his lord with every enrichment and benefit

²⁸ See lines 3466-3467 and 3471-72 of the text.

according to God and man as regards good conduct, good law, good attention (McCone 1990, 221).

The central topic in the passage just cited is the provision of hospitality and of other obligations expected from a client to a lord.

On the other hand, the attitude of *BCC*'s author to public assemblies is extremely pessimistic: the vindictiveness of unrestrained behaviour is stressed in ll.3468-9, as well as 3495. One of the words employed by *BCC*'s author on l.3495 is *debuid*, 'strife'.²⁹ It is to be noted that the genre of Irish literature known as *fleda*, 'feasts', is concerned with similar themes. It shows the analogous negative approach to the descriptions of feasts and it is quite certain that *debuid* between the warriors when dividing their *curadmír* or 'champion's portion' at the feast is the focal point of the *fled*-saga.³⁰ It can be surmised that the author of *BCC* chose to take a somewhat realistic approach to the theme of feasting, and preferred to describe the proper royal behaviour at a public assembly by denying certain common things pertaining to it, in opposition to *AM* and *TC* that preferred an idealistic way of presenting the subject.³¹

Section (f).

On the level of phraseology, it is noteworthy to observe some coincidence in wording between §3 of *TC* just cited and section (f) of *BCC*. *TC* §3.7 and §3.11 finish off with words similar to those which conclude ll.3490 and 3491 of *BCC*.

Fochmarc fri gáethaib ... sechem senchusa

Questioning the wise ... following ancient lore (Meyer 1909, 8-9).

On the level of syntax, *TC* §3.24 and 25 with their structure NOUN + PREP. *FRI* + ACC. PL. can be compared with ll.3493 and 3494 of *BCC* which also exhibit the parallel syntax (NEG.) 2 SG. PRES. SUBJ. OF THE COPULA + ADJ. + PREP. *IM* + ACC. PL.

Inire fri náimtiu, indraccus fri bráthriu

²⁹ Thus taken by the author of *BCC* in its first sense 'dispute', as opposed to a second sense 'act of fighting, combat'. See *DIL*, s.v. *debuith* (Fasc. i, *D-degóir*, 182.36 and 183.40). Note that *debuith* in its second sense is observed in the line 3466 of the composition.

³⁰ Cf. *Fled Bricrenn* (LU 8471) *immacomarnic tra dóib debaid do dénam imman curadmír*, 'then the strife happened to them concerning the division of a champions' portion'.

³¹ Similarly to the tone of *BCC*, the author of an archaic legal poem urges the king to be aware of *mesbada slóg, sabaid cuirmthige* 'contentions of hostings, sticks (quarrels) in an ale house'. Binchy (1971, 156) notes further parallels in *Cethairsblicht Athgabálae* (CIH 401.15): *mesbuid aenaig, urgal cuirmthige*, translating them as 'contention in an assembly, fighting in an ale-house'.

Manliness against foes, honesty towards brothers (Meyer 1909, 8-9).

It is even more important to note the use of ‘de-fragmentation’ device in these passages. Let us consider the collocation *sechem senchusa* of *TC* (§3.11). The derivative of the first word, *seichmech*, occurs in the l.3492 of *BCC*, whereas dat. pl. of the adjective *sen*, from which *senchusa* derives, occurs in the preceding line of *BCC*. Furthermore, the collocation *riagla athardai* is contained on the same line as *seichmech* in *BCC*, but the adjective *riaglach* is contained in *TC* just before *sechem*:

TC §3.10-11 *riaglach sechem senchusa...*
BCC 3491-2 *sbenaiþ. (Bát) seichmech riagla...*

It is most probable that the compiler of *BCC* employed *TC*'s collocations extensively, having played upon the meaning of the individual words in *TC*. He did not necessarily have to cite his source word by word in this case; instead he chose the method to fabricate new injunctions on the basis of well-known gnomes from *TC*.

A similar example can be inferred from §31.27 of *TC*. When describing a young man, Cormac speaks of one who is well-instructed, humble and obedient: *duine óc sochoisc umal erlataid* (Meyer 1909, 48). The words *umal*, ‘humble’, and *coisc*, ‘of reproof’ (whose derivative *sochoisc* is contained in *TC*) can also be found in ll.3490-91 of *BCC*, a parallel which is unlikely to be coincidental.

Section (g).

Although the closing lines of *BCC* are considered to be mere citations by Dillon (1953, 36, notes to ll.299-301) it is intriguing to note their syntactic parallels elsewhere in *TC*. Lines 16-26 of §7 (in recension N of *TC*), devoted to a description of Cormac’s experience as a member of the *fíán*-brotherhood give a series of complex phrases, all negative. Syntactically, each line consists of two antithetical clauses, linked by the conjunctive particles *ar* and *cia*, and echoing ll.3502-5 of *BCC*.³²

*Nírba crúaid ar ná ba áertha, nírba timm ar ná ba máelc[h]end, nírba ocus ar ná ba tromm,
nírba labar ciapsa gáeth* (Meyer 1909, 16.16-19).

I was not hard lest I be satirised, I was not soft lest I was close-cut, I was not near
lest I was heavy, I was not talkative though I was wise.

³² The use of §7 of *TC* was noted elsewhere in the context of section (c), lines 3484-5. See also §12 of *TC* that provides similar contrastive pairs, some of which (e.g. *ní cuitbe nach sen ciarba óc*, ‘do not deride any old person though you are young’) owe their provenance to the already mentioned §7.

Do Taithmech Rudartha [Budesta].

Folio 233^b of the manuscript H 3.18 contains a fragment (with interspersed later glosses and without a heading) where most of the maxims expounded in section (b) of our text can be found. The fragment is found within a collection entitled *Do Taithmech Rudartha Budesta* (hereinafter *DTRB*??). For the sake of the reader's convenience, I will cite only the Old Irish text, employing glosses where necessary to illumine the interpretation of difficult verbal forms. I will also set it aside with the *LU*'s original text of the *BCC*'s section (b) in order for the reader to envisage the observed similarities:

CIH 751.28-752.2:

Ni iadat ratha for étechta.

Aircsither cuimne comorba[i]s.

Cuibsigter senc??aidhe

co fírinne fícht.

Finnathar beithemain braithri.

sceo brogha gesce.

[*Aenether clanda*].

Gairther bíi.

Beoaighter oitiu.

Airm a mbriugtrebsat mairb.

Lesaighter comarbai

fora techta toich.

Tochomlat anfine coa neimthiu nert.

LU 3473-80

Ni iadat iubaili for étechtu ail.

Airliter cummi cóich comarbai cré.

Cuibsigter senchaid sin

co fírinne fu bit fhíadnaisi.

Finnatar bethamain bráthir

scéo mbroga.

Mrogatar genelaigi gesci úa geniter gein.

Gairter bí

beoaighter fri óethu.

Airm irro trebsat mairm.

Maínigter comarbai

fora thechtu thoich.

Tochomliat anfini coa nemthe nert.

I provide a translation of the legal fragment in the footnote.³³

The subject dealt with in the both passages is the legal matters, with a special focus on the matters of right of inheritance. Wiley (2005, 22-3), referring to Gerriets (1988) on the basis of the evidence provided by *AM* (Kelly 1976, 6, 60) and an archaic legal poem (Binchy 1971, 156-7) writes:

Although it is not entirely clear what specific roles the early Irish king played in matters judicial, there is some fairly compelling evidence that in certain cases one of the king's duties was to 'judge inheritance'.

³³ Instances of linking alliteration are given in bold face throughout the texts. Translation: 'Sureties should not be established upon illegality. Memory of patrimony is to be preceded. Let historians be questioned with keen justice. Judges should find out [with regard to] kinsmen. And property (and) branches. Let the off-spring be joined. Let the living be summoned. Let the young be revived. At the place which the dead inhabited as abode. Let the heirs be cherished according to their proper inheritance. Let those without kin proceed to their privileges of strength'. I have translated the verb *aircsither* (*cf. ar-fét*) on the basis of its gloss *do-fedar*, a passive form of *do-fed*, 'takes precedence of'. Also, *aenether* was translated on the basis of a gloss *aenaighter*, passive plural from *oenaigidir*, 'joins'.

At a closer look on an archaic legal poem, it seems that the legal dicta *mess tire* ‘valuation of land’, *mrogad coicríbh* ‘marking out [fresh] boundaries’, *cor cualne* ‘planting stakes’, and *rann eter comorbu* ‘partition among co-heirs’ (Binchy 1971, 156-7) describe the actual procedural steps of taking possession of land by an heir, rather than an abstract law of inheritance. The passages from *BCC* and *DTRB* differ from them. They are rather concerned with the matters of a legal claim made by an heir regarding his patrimony to a king. Having enumerated the historians, the judges, the living and the dead, *BCC* presented them as witnesses in the law court during the procedure. Now let us deserve some attention to the analysis of parallels and differences between the passages themselves.

The passage from *DTRB* is not to be treated as a source of *BCC*’s author. The passages probably go back to the same original, now irretrievably lost. There are several arguments in favour of this suggestion. Firstly, section (b) of *BCC* preserved the linking alliteration between its lines in its entirety,³⁴ whereas two breaks in alliteration can be observed in the passage from *DTRB*. The first break is the line *aenether clanda*. It can probably be regarded as an intrusion: in its absence, the linking alliteration between its preceding and following lines (*gesce* – *gairther*) can be restored. The second break is between a line finishing at *mairb* and the next one starting with *lesaighter*. In view of the parallel statement in *BCC* (l.3479), we can tentatively take the verb *lesaighter* (‘let them be cherished’) to be a scribal emendation of an earlier *mainigter* (‘let them be looked after’).

As far as the differences between the passages are concerned, few details are to be noted. The first lines of the both passages differ in their subject. The subject of the legal passage is *ratha*, ‘sureties’, whereas in the wisdom-text it is *inbaili*, ‘prescriptive periods’. It is to be noted that *DTRB* on the whole is devoted to the prescriptive rights, hence its title. It may well be that the reading *ratha* can be taken as secondary. On the other hand, occurrence of a legal maxim *ni asta iubaile inndliged* just few lines below (*CIH* 752.7) prior to a passage, starting with *ní iadat faill* (*CIH* 752.9) can explain the provenance of *iubaile* in *BCC*’s maxim as a scribal error. There are variations in employment of different verbs between the passages and an omission of two words (*mrogatar genelaigi*) between *brogha* and *gesce* in *CIH* 751.34, which can be explained as haplography.³⁵

³⁴ For discussion of the break in alliteration between the lines 3475 and 3476 see note 56 above. Binchy’s emendation of *bit fhíadnaisi* on line 3475 probably owed to the collocation *co fírinne fícht* of *CIH* 751.31. He was aware of the correspondence between the passages, referring to the lines of *BCC* in question as ‘a more correct version’ (*CIH* 751, n. 1).

³⁵ The form *brogha* preserved in *CIH* 751.34 is later than *BCC*’s *mbroga* which presents a Middle Irish deviation from an Old Irish exemplar *mroga*. Therefore, it is more probable that the passage in question is earlier in case of *BCC* and later in case of *CIH*.

A careful examination of the language of both passages has to be done in order to find out whether the language of a legal fragment is earlier than the one from the *teosc*. Certain things in the passage from the compilation *DTRB* can be regarded as the variant readings of the collocations preserved in *BCC*, and it is far from certain whether the author of *BCC* had misinterpreted the common original or had retained it.³⁶

The pool of gnomic sayings.

It may be objected that the coincidence in wording between *BCC* and the few wisdom-texts noted above is due to the existence of a pool of common gnomic sayings in early Irish literary tradition upon which both *TC* and *BCC* have drawn. In *BCC*, we have not observed extensive use of gnomes from other wisdom compositions that would be similar to collocations of *TC* already cited. Two particular examples, however, may contradict this. Triad 98 describes:

Trí fuiric thigí drochdúni: debuid ar do chinn, athchosan frit, a chú dot gabáil (Meyer 1906a, 12-13)

‘Three preparations of a bad man’s house: strife before you, complaining to you, his hound taking hold of you’.

Note also the thematic parallel between *debaid*, ‘strife’, and *atbhosánach*, ‘reproachful’ in *BFF*’s dictum:

Descad debtha atbhomsán,

‘Reproach is a mark of strife’ (Ireland 1999, 76-77, §4.18).

Lines 3495 and 3496 of *BCC* exhibit the use of gen. sg. of *debaid* and of an adjective, derived from *athchosan* respectively. It may well be that the author of *BCC* exploited this aphorism in order to denounce the offensive aspect of a young king’s manners. It is most likely that the derivation of the above lines from the common pool of vernacular gnomes would be the most plausible explanation in regard to their origin.

Conclusion.

The author of *BCC* was well-versed in early Irish wisdom-literature. He was well-acquainted with sections of *TC*, not traditionally devoted to kingship, but with those which contain maxims of a more general character. The latter were only employed, however, if they contained advice to young persons. Furthermore, the author of *BCC* refrained from citing his source (except for

³⁶ For instance, the provenance of *oitin*, ‘the young’ (*CIH* 751.38) being the direct object of the verb *beoaignter*, may be due to misunderstanding of the compiler of the passage in the original which might have had *fri óethu*, ‘by oaths’, as the indirect object of the verb.

the last three lines of the last section), but chose to recast *TC*'s dicta by employing a technique what we tentatively described as 'de-fragmentation'.

Intriguingly, only syntactic and alliterative patterns of *AM* (of *A* and *R* recensions) were used by the author of *BCC*. On the other hand, one can never be sure that he took these from *AM*, rather than from the pool of common gnomic sayings that existed in early Irish literary tradition. Phraseologically, dicta of *AChr* with their evident clerical connotations seemed to be more appealing to him than the dicta of the wisdom-text, traditionally orientated to the young kings.³⁷ Not only does the author of *BCC* demonstrate knowledge of *AChr*, but its syntactic patterns are also echoed in the middle sections of the text. The legal material was employed by the author in the section of the wisdom-text purely devoted to juridical matters of the king's functioning. In this part, the author of *BCC* chose to draw upon an earlier source now lost. Its provenance was proved by a comparison of the dicta of the section (b) of *BCC* with those found in H 3.18, fol. 233^b, within the framework of *DTRB*.

In terms of its underlying message, it must be said that *BCC* is not without its contradictions. Although the author does not hesitate to enjoin vigorous behaviour on a young king when withstanding his foes (l.3494), this is almost immediately followed by a deprecation of the characteristics traditionally associated with the warfare and combat (ll.3502-5).³⁸ Incidentally, the author is greatly concerned with warning a young king against stirring (or leading) a conflict, especially at assemblies, which can be seen as an indirect continuation of a theme developed in earlier compositions such as *AM*, *TC* and *Córus Béscnai*.

Although the precepts of *BCC* are put into the mouth of the hero Cú Chulainn, the wisdom fit for a king is not understood in terms of a heroic

³⁷ Thus ecclesiastical vocabulary figures in the praise of the quiet persons (l.3496). Vernacular wisdom-texts for kings included statements of this kind, as in *AM* (A) §42 *Is éd as dech cacha gáese dóenachtae: dílse ⁊ díuite, tua ⁊ trebair* (Kelly 1976, 67.159): 'This is [what is] the best of all human wisdom: appropriateness and simplicity, silence and prudence'. However, *nírbat scélach* of our text stems rather from gnomic compositions intended for clerics, such as *Anmchairdes Mancháin Léith* (cf. *nā bud sgélach cēilidhech* (Meyer 1910, 311 §9): 'let him not be verbose and given to visiting') or *Regula Choluimb Chille* (cf. *mog gor crāibdech nemscealach* (Meyer 1899, 29): 'a pious slave, devout and not talkative').

³⁸ We should mention that the word *comromach*, 'contentious' (l. 3503) is not attested in wisdom-texts other than *TC* and *BCC*, but is otherwise well-attested in narrative literature. In the *Táin*, Medb addresses Cú Chulainn as *a Chú chomramach Cíalngi* 'o triumphant Hound of Cúailnge' (O'Rahilly 1967, 178.1442). In *Fled Bricrenn* (LU 8955-8957), Cathbad speaks of Cú Chulainn in similar words: *is err threntairptech | is cur cáin cathbúadach | is glond catha comramaig* 'he is the strong vigorous champion | he is a fair victorious-in-battle hero | he is a champion of triumphant battle'.

ethos, but rather in terms of moderation and prudence in keeping with the general tone of the vernacular Irish gnomic compositions.³⁹

The structure of the inauguration procedure in *Serglige Con Culainn* was studied by K. McCone, who observed its affinities with that described in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*. The difference between them is the list of taboos imposed on Conaire, in the place where the usual instructions could have followed, because the writer ‘didn’t wish the teaching to break the flow of the story’ (McCone 1990, 158). The few other passages of the similar kind to be found in early Irish saga material have led some scholars to believe that some excerpts from the gnomic texts could have constituted a part of ‘the actual *formulae* used at the consecration of the kings’ (Byrne 1973, 188).⁴⁰

Be this as it may, there is at least a clear difference between *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and the *Serglige*. In the former, the taboos played an important part in the flow of the story, leading Conaire towards his personal disaster as a king. The *Serglige* cannot be described as a saga devoted to a description of a king’s career. *BCC* does not belong to the main strand of the story, and together with the inauguration procedure can be easily left out.

The compiler of the *Serglige*, however, deemed it worthwhile to include both the *tarbfbes* and the *tecosc*, but did not provide them with a suitable context. Whatever the explanation of this dilemma may be, we are inclined to think that *BCC* had a literary origin, being a compilation of different strata, combining legal maxims with pieces of monastic rules and also with some gnomic sayings of a general character. Therefore, it can by no means be described as a composition of the genre that was ‘traditional and pre-literate and an integral part of the pagan liturgy of sovereignty (Mac Cana 1979, 448). On the contrary, it is a specimen of the genre that had its own rules of textual compilation, its own literary techniques, such as complex alliterative and syntactic patterns and a long established literary tradition of the ways of dealing with sources, one of which (tentatively described as ‘de-fragmentation’) played an important role in the production of our text.⁴¹

³⁹ Ireland (1999, 20) concludes on *BFF*’s content and intent: ‘In summary, we have a text which emphasises considerate behaviour in interpersonal relationships ... which encourages humility and non-violence. All of the above characteristics are tempered by a consistent tone of moderation’.

⁴⁰ This conjecture probably stems from a remark by Keating (Dinneen, 1908b, 10), that a *tecosc rí*g was recited at the inauguration of the king. See also Charles-Edwards (1999, 46-7) who noted a close resemblance between the recital of prohibitions on Conaire at his inauguration and the injunctions levied upon the kings in the laws and *speculum principis* literature.

⁴¹ Similarly, R.C. Stacey (2004, 66-67) suggests to treat wisdom and legal literature maxims as ‘compositions in a genre rather than as stable, unchanging entities’. Writing

Notes to translation.

I have chosen not to translate the lines of *BCC* literally. For that reason, the subjunctives were in most cases rendered as imperatives (e.g. *ní fuirse, ní chuitbe* of the lines 3483-4 were translated as ‘do not mock, do not deride’ rather than lit. ‘let you not mock, let you not deride etc.’). Also, I preferred to employ verbal forms where adjectives occur (e.g. *ar nábat aithbrech* of the line 3502 was translated as ‘lest you regret it’ rather than lit. ‘so that you may not be repentant’) and adverbs instead of prepositional constructions (e.g. *co glórach* of the line 3482 was rendered ‘vociferously’ rather than lit. ‘with difficulty’).

3469 *tairne*, ‘brought low’. We have argued above that the word derives from *AM*, *dligid cach diumsach tairnem*. *LL* 37582 reads the last word as *tairnium*, *LL* 46474 has *tairniud*, and *RIA* 23 N 27’s reading is *toirneamh*. *H. 2. 7*’s reading *tairnem* is the closest to *BCC* in this case, and both represent later verbal nouns of the verb *do-airindi*, ‘lowers’. Smith (1924, 190) proposed taking *tairne* as ‘the passive participle of *tairnim*, ‘I lower’, attributing the manuscript form to the vanishing of the mark of abbreviation over the *n*. The arguments in favour of his suggestion are as follows. First, it is clear that *tairne* is a form of *tairnid*, unverbated from *do-airindi*. The compound verbs came to be treated as simple in Mid. Ir., e.g. *do-sluindi*, ‘denies’, treated as *diúltaid* in Mid. Ir. (Cf. *ro diúlt a athair di 7 nir leic cuci hí*, *LU* 3185). The verb *tairnid* is mentioned twice in our text, on ll.3243 and 3418 that belong to the later B recension—to which *BCC* also belongs, and *tairne* may well be treated as its form.

3469 *ó main mandartha mesctha*, ‘by the trick of drunken ruin’. The manuscript reading *o mbain* is taken as dative singular of *omun*, ‘fear’ by Smith (1924, 188-9). Dillon treats it as *ó main*, ‘from wealth’. His translation is problematic; this solution, however, connects *main* through alliteration with the last two words of the line. I propose to take *main* as a form of 3 *muin*, ‘a wile, ruse, trick’, also spelt as *main* (*DIL*, s.v. 3 *muin*, M: 187.57). Cf. *doberadh main mór im Concobur... d’fagbail sunn* ‘that it would be a great hoax for C. to find’ (Meyer 1905b, 502.9). The meaning of *mandartha* is unclear, as examples of the word are extremely rare. In *DIL* (s.v. *mandrad*, M: 56.25), *mandartha* is quoted among the examples of the vn. of *mandraid*, ‘disintegrates, spoils’, taken as its genitive singular form. As far as the last word in the line is concerned, Dillon provides two explanations for its meaning: either it is a genitive singular form of *mescad*, ‘intoxication’, deriving

about the existing parallels between *Di astud chor* and *Berrad Airechta*, he says: ‘while it is possible that at the core of all ... of these sentences lies an ancient orally transmitted maxim, the priority of these authors was clearly the reworking and recontextualising of this matter rather than the preservation of it verbatim’.

from the verb *mescaid*, or the past participle of the verb, which seems preferable for me.

3470 *Níbat dergnat cholla coirme h-i tig rurech*, ‘Do not be [like] a drunken ‘flesh flea’ in the house of a great king’. The author of the *BCC* uses the metaphor *dergnat cholla*, ‘flea of flesh’ to refer to a drunken person. Its meaning is revealed in the following examples. Firstly, *LL* preserved a syllabic quatrain written in the upper margin of folio 124^a, containing the saga *Aided Chonchobuir*:

Nirbat dergnat chormthigi,
nir fhacba do chlothuide,
nirbat muichnech i n-uathiuud,
nirbat búafnech sochaide,
 Do not be a flea of an ale-house,
 Do not relinquish your reputation,
 Do not be mournful in solitude,
 Do not be boastful among the many.

It is noteworthy that the author of the above quatrain employs *nirbat* as the starting formula of the three out of the four lines, which is similar to *BCC*. We may also note the parallelism between *coirme hi tig* of our text and *coirmthige* of the quatrain from *LL*. Another passage in which the noun *dergnat* is used metaphorically occurs in a legal text;

Dligid gac flaith urerghe...ní dligheinn in flaith ??? fo tri roime aurergi isin aenlaite
...ara meud rob écoir don ri dergnait airechta do deunum don céile (c.ii)... (CIH
 1907.25, 26-7, 32)
 ‘The chief is entitled to [have the vassal] rise before him only three times
 in one day ... it would be wrong for the chief to make an assembly-flea of
 the vassal’ (transl. *DIL*, s.v. *dergnat*, D, vol. ii, *degra-dodelbtha*, 38.63-5).

Following the latter, Dillon proposes to translate *dergnat* of *BCC* figuratively – ‘one who rises too often’ (Dillon 1953, 60). I suspect that the collocations *dergnat airechta* and *dergnat (colla) coirm(thig)e* are based on different analogies with the flea: the former hops too much, the latter sucks blood. But how should one best render *dergnat colla*? Dillon proposes treating *colla* as genitive singular of *colainn*, ‘body, flesh’, as OIr. *colno* would naturally come to be written *colla* in Mid. Ir.: cf. *cen tarracht[ain] colla*, lit. ‘without finding of the body,’ *CIH* 253.17. Thus the rendering of the collocation would be ‘flesh flea’, which is probably just an expanded synonym of ‘flea’, providing alliteration with the following *coirme*.

3471 *im írad n-echtrand*, ‘as regards invasion by foreigners’. The rendering of *írad* is problematic. The word is rare, and one of the options would be to take it as ‘border, boundary’, emending to *inrud*. *DIL* follows this path, providing its meaning as ‘edge, margin’ on the basis of a gloss *inrud extremitas*

gl. *margo* from Sg 52^a13 (*s.v. irr(i)nd*, I: 301.35-6). Another option would be to render *írad* as ‘a donation, a gift’, extrapolated from *–ír*, preterite of *ernaid*, ‘bestows’, on the basis of *TCúsc*, that lists one of the duties of the good lord at the meeting of the nobles (*turcomracc n-degdaoine*) as *írad fearbbai sceo gabrai*, translated by Best (1916, 172, 179) as ‘donation of chattels and horses’. A third option, which I am most willing to accept, is to take long *–í-* in *írad* to be a scribal error for *ī* of the original. This emendation will provide us with a reading *inrad*, later form of *indred*, ‘foray, invasion’. The weakness of this suggestion, however, is that *i[n]rad* is sg., but rendering the final phrase as ‘concerning an invasion’ makes good sense.

3472 *Ní sáís*, ‘Do not pursue’. *DIL* provides a tentative translation of the passage as ‘thou shalt not attack insignificant, helpless people’ (*s.v. dochla*, D, vol. ii, *degra-dodelbtha*, 223.14). However, this translation does not accommodate the original sense of the passage. Firstly, it is obvious that the sense of *dochla* and *díchumaing* is maintained by prefixing particles implying negative connotations. Secondly, to judge from the instances cited in *DIL* (*s.v. saigid* (c), S: 21.66-72), the verb *saigid* in its meaning ‘attacks’ seems to be relatively rare. Its usual sense ‘seeks out, strives after’ is much commoner and employing it makes much more sense: the king is supposed to avoid wicked men, but he ought to associate with reputed and influential people.

3475 *Cuibsigter senchaid*, ‘Let historians be questioned’. The verb *coibsen(aig)idir* is rare and has distinct ecclesiastical connotations which are inappropriate here. If we look for other passages where sacramental confession is not involved, e.g. *ma rocuibhsi[g] in gataigi* ‘if he questioned the thief’ (*CIH* 1419.17) and *coros cuibsigestar a bathair*, ‘so that her father questioned her’ (*LL* 36992), it is evident that the verb is *cuibsigidir* rather than *coibsen(aig)idir* suggested by *DIL* (C: 291.48). We seem accordingly to be dealing with two verbs, distinct in both form and meaning.

3476 *Finnatar brethamain*, ‘Let judges enquire’. It is clear that we should read *brethamain* instead of the *bethamain* of the manuscript. Note that *DTRB* (*CIH* 751.33) here agrees with *BCC* and reads *beithemain*. Dillon insists on this emendation but does not explain it. Explanations in favour of emendation to *brethamain* are the principle of linking alliteration (*bethamain* alliterating with *bráthir* of the next line) and a similar scribal error in the genealogies (*i mbesaib bethamain*, O’Brien 1976, 79.15).

3478 *Gairter bí, béoaigter fri óethu airm irro trebsat mairb*. Carey (1987, 27 n. 94) provides his translation of the passage as ‘Let the living be summoned, let them be enlivened by oaths in the place where the dead have dwelt’. Dillon translated the passage: ‘Let the living be summoned: let the place where the dead have dwelt be established upon oaths’ (Dillon 1951, 57). An interesting parallel is provided by *Antéchtæ* law-text where it is explicitly stated that the witness of the dead had been employed as valid evidence, e.g. claims involving property: *nochbit mairb beōaighthi marbcru* ‘and there are dead

(witnesses) who bring back to life dead men's property,' (*CIH* 2098.33; trans. and discussed by Binchy 1960, 94; cf. also *CIH* 2157.5-25). Some discussion of the *Antéchtæ* tract is provided by Breatnach (1989, 30; 2005, 166-9).

3479 *fora t(h)échtu thoich*, 'according to their proper inheritance'. Dillon (1953, 76) is not sure whether to take the verb *mainigter* as ipv. pass. pl. of *mainigid*, 'maintain': 'If *a* refers to *comarbai*, the following lenition is a scribal error, but it may be neut. sg.'. Smith (1924, 189) preferred to take the verb form as ipv. pass. sing. and *a* as poss. pron. masc. 3 sg. We are inclined to emend to *téchtu*, seeing the lenition as having been suggested by analogy with the following *thoich*.

3480 *coa nemthe nert*, 'with the strength of their privilege'. It is to be noted that in *teosc*-texts the word *nemed* is frequently used of poets in the figurative sense, i.e. 'a privileged person': examples occur in *TC* (*mórad nemed* 'exalting privileged persons') (Meyer 1909, 2-3, §1.16) as well as in the Triads (Triad 255, *gúala nemid filed* 'a coffer of a privileged poet', Meyer 1906a, 53-54). *Aibidil maic Cuigni Éremóin* states *cach dán a nemed* 'to every art its privilege'. Smith (1928, 49) translates 'to every art its practiser'. I follow *DIL* (*s.v. nemed*, N: 22.63) that proposes to take *nemed* in the sense II.a, 'privilege, status, dignity'.

3485 *Ní faithchithir*, 'Do not intimidate'. In his note, Hull (1968, 88) explains that 'the translation is based on the tentative assumption that -*faithgúat[h]ar* is connected with *gáu* (*gó*) 'falshood'... Or should we emend to *ní faithgithir* 'he is not made uneasy?' In his notes, Dillon (1953, 35) takes '-*faithchithir* as pres. subj. sg. 2 of unknown meaning', but in the vocabulary emends to -*faithchithir*, 2 sg. pres. subj. conjunct of **faithigid(ir)* 'warns, threatens', on the basis of *Wb.* 11^a16: *tomad tra et faitgugud anisiu* 'a threatening, then, and a cautioning (is) this'.

3487 *Ní géis co ansa*, 'Do not beseech in a tough way'. A legal text entitled *Triall Taithmig Cundartha* 'Endeavour of dissolving (of) the contracts' provides the following rule in connection with a king's right of encampment: *ailgesach dunaid 7rl. lán eneclann don rí a n-ailges do gabail de a sloighedh no a n-dunaid iar n-escairi a nemgabala*, 'Importunate encampment etc.: full compensation to the king for his demand of a hosting or an encampment after the overthrowing of their non-acceptance' (*CIH* 2159.4-5). In view of this legal parallel, *BCC*'s injunction is clearly understood as urging a king not to misuse his rights or privileges towards his subjects.

3488 *domanches*, lit. 'bad service'. Dillon was not sure whether a word of ecclesiastical provenance ('*mainches* ... seems to mean only services due to an abbot or to the Church') would suit the context of *BCC*. He was in favour of emending to *dáim n-ansa* or *n-anceisse*, 'do not refuse anyone who has not a burdensome retinue' on the basis of a passage in *Cáin Lánamna* (*ar ní heitech do neoch mad o daim techta ci as-to*, 'for it is not a refusal for anyone if it be after

a lawful retinue, though he refuse’) (Dillon 1953, 35). Given that the language of *AChr* has been used by the author throughout both this and the previous sections of the text, accepting the reading of *-mainches* with its pronounced ecclesiastical connotations need not be a problem. *DIL* (*s.v.* *domanchess*) translates *domanchess* ‘request’ (?) on the basis of S. O’Grady’s interpretation of a passage from the *Fragmentary Annals: is é mo domainchessa ar sí m’aenmhacán*, ‘she went on: ‘My petition is that my young and only son be restored to me’ (O’Grady 1892, i 401, ii 437). However, the meaning of the word is probably sought not in the woman’s own words, but in the verse, concluding with *Ní dechaid cin domainches*, ‘He has not gone without his *d.*’. Cf. also *dímainche* from the Triad 81: *tréde ara miscnigther cara: fogal, dognas, dímainche* (Meyer 1906a, 10) ‘three things for which a friend is hated: committing an offence, lack of companionship, uselessness’.

3492 *riagla athardai*, ‘regulations of [your] fathers’, lit. ‘paternal authority’. Although *riagol* (Lat. *regula*) is well attested in a primary sense ‘a monastic rule’, later it developed the sense ‘rule, authority’, becoming simply a Latin-derived synonym of *recht*. Triad 199 lists *riagail* as one of the three chains that bind ‘evil propensity’: *trí slabrada hi cumregar clóine: cotach, riagail, rechtge* (Meyer 1906a, 26-27). This can be correlated with Triad 200 (*trí all frisa timargar béscna: mainister, flaith, fine*, ‘three rocks to which lawful behaviour is tied: a monastery, a chieftain, the family’ (Meyer 1906a, 26-27)): relationships within kin (*fine*) are based on the paternal authority (*riagail*); a king or lord (*flaith*) issues his law (*rechtge*, cf. *rechtge la flaith*, (TC § 3.13 = Meyer 1909, 8) ‘enforcing the law [belongs] to a lord’); and, finally, the church (*mainister*) is responsible for imposing its rule (*cotach*) on the laity.

3493 *Nípat úarchraidech*, ‘Do not be cold-hearted’. Although close parallels seem hard to find in the early language, the basic idea is quite straightforward. The collocation *críde n-ega*, ‘heart of ice’, from *SMMDT* (Thurneysen 1935, 15 §15.13-14) should be recalled in this instance.

3495 *Nípa frithenech debtha*, ‘Do not be an opponent of debate’. I follow Smith (1934, 192, n. 30), in interpreting *enech* in the first word as ‘a face’, and not as ‘an honour’: ‘a perfect parallel to *frith-enech* (*u□t-enəqu), ‘contentious, antagonistic’, is found in W. *gnwrth-wyneb* ‘opposite, contrary’. Cf. analogous *frithagaid*, mostly used in a hostile sense. Following *DIL* (*s.v.* *frithenech*, F: 438.18), I take *frithenech* to be an agent noun.

3495 *hi tilchomraicib*, ‘in assemblies’. *DIL* gives *bit ilchomraicib* as its only example of a compound *ilchomraic*, ‘many combats’, presumably understood to mean ‘in your numerous encounters’ (*s.v.* *il*, compds., I: 57.41), but notes that it is possible to emend to ‘? *bit ilchomraicib* (perh. *leg. hi t.*)’ (*s.v.* *comraicthe*, C: 406.69). *Pace* this interpretation, I am inclined to connect the passage not with the preceding statement (where Lugaid is instructed with regard to his behaviour in battle), but with the next one (where the young king is advised not to indulge in long-windedness). Lines 3495 and 3496 are connected

thematically, as well as syntactically, employing adjectival predicates to follow neg. 2 sg. pres. subj. of the copula.

3497-9 *Ní thaisce, ní ba torba*, ‘Do not hoard: it will be no profit’. Dillon prefers to emend the text of *LU*, adopting the reading of *H* instead: *ní thaisce inní ba torba*. He also objects to Smith, who reads ‘*ní thaisce ní ní ba torba ...* but this would require a relative *nád, naba (napa)* and the punctuation of *LU* does not support it’ (Dillon 1953, 35). However, *ní ba torba* can be treated as an independent clause, in which case a relative is not necessarily required. The difference between *ní ní* of *LU* and *inní* of *H* is really a matter of differing scribal interpretation of six minims. Therefore, the simplest explanation of the provenance of *ní* before *ní ba torba* in *LU* is dittography, as the scribe went from one line to the next.

3500 *i[n]gnímaib ántéchtai*, ‘in respect to entirely proper actions’. The word *ántéchtai* here exhibits a peculiar late feature. If not simply the work of the scribe, the absence of dat. pl. of *ántéchta* here corresponds to Mid. Ir. development where the plural flexions of the dependent adjectives in dative had been supplied by those of the accusative. The adjective *ántéchta* is rare (I follow Breatnach 2005, 167, who corrects *DIL*’s ‘unfitting, misplaced’ (*s.v. aintécha*) to ‘a compound of *án* ‘splendid’ and *téchtae* ‘due, proper’), but *téchtae*, ‘proper’, from which it derives, provides a few examples of this development. Cf. *cona comorbaib téchta*, ‘with lawful heirs’, *CIH* 584.21, contrasting with *cona tomsib téchtaib*, ‘with appropriate amounts’, *CIH* 483.3.

3502 *Níbat athboingid*, ‘Do not deliver an unnecessary blow’, lit. ‘Do not be a [repeated] striker’. On the basis of the parallelism in syntax between ll.3502 and 3503, I suggest reading the last word as *athboingid* alliterating with *aithrech*, observed in the second part of the line, contrary to Dillon who emends to *tathboingid*, ‘one who breaks a contract’ (Dillon 1953, 87), an agent noun formed on the basis of the verb *to-ath-bong*, ‘dissolves (a contract)’ (*ib.*, 35). Smith does not explain the meaning of the word and translates ‘a distrainer’ (Smith 1924, 191). He probably relied on Windisch’s rendering of *athboingid* in *IT*’s *Wörterbuch*, *s.v.*, where it is treated as a form of *tobaing* ‘he distrains’ on the basis of the gloss *atbois .i. tobach* in O’Donovan’s Supplement to O’Reilly’s *Irish Dictionary*. The meaning of *athboingid* is however still rather dubious, and the rendering ‘a repeated striker’ is very tentative. Dr Carey pointed out to me the possibility that **ad-boing* could be a calque on Latin *refringo*, ‘breaks open’. It is also worth comparing *TC* with our text from which the other three injunctions of the section ultimately derived. The line in *TC* preceding *ní ba comromach ar ná ba miscnech* (the source of l.3503 of *BCC*) reads: *ní ba imgonaid ar ná ba mélachtach* ‘be no fighter lest you be disgraced’ (Meyer 1909, 38-9), which in its tone similar to the injunction in *BCC* that prescribes the future king not to be overwhelmingly aggressive.

Abbreviations:

AM = Kelly 1976

AChr = Hull 1968

BB = Atkinson, R. (1887) *The Book of Ballymote : A collection of pieces (prose and verse) in the Irish language, compiled about the beginning of the fifteenth century , now for the first time published from the original manuscript in the library of the Royal Irish academy, by the Royal Irish academy.* Dublin.

BFF = Ireland 1999

CIH = Binchy, D.A. (1978) *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, I-VI. Dublin.

DIL = Quin, E.G. (1990) *Dictionary of the Irish Language based mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials.* Compact edition. Dublin.

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