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 (Bríatharthecosc Con Culainn, hereinafter BCC) or The Instruction to Cúscraid (Tecosc 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 abusinis).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 Audacht Moraind (fols. 293-4, 347) and the full version of Teosca Cormaic (hereinafter TC), followed by Senbriathra Fitbail (fols. 343-6). On the origin of Senbriathra Fitbail 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, xlv, also notes to §32.84 (Ad-mestar series) on 42-43). In saga material, §3 of Sélta Muice 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 (Faccbhaim ioth, bliocht in blax itir, mes for blax coilltibh, toradh in blax tuirmain, ‘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 Sélta 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. Both recensions of *AM* contain variations of complex alliterative patterns. The bulk of the wisdom-literature, however, employs simple syntactic structures, such as *cech, ferr* or *dligid* formulae. Some wisdom-texts, such as *Diambad messe bad ri reil* or *Cert cech rig co reil*, are composed as standard syllabic verse, employing rhyme and consonance as devices of organising their structure. 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 *Briaththecosc 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). 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:

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(Wiley 2005, 22: *Boí mess , class , itb , blicht 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 *itb , mblicht , 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-xliv.

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, *Briathartbeose Con Culaind*. This compilation was the text of *Lebor Buide Sláinte* 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 *adfíadar* (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 46b1-30)\(^{12}\) 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 17\(^{th}\) 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).
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Bríathartheosc Conculaind Inso.

a.
(3466) Nírbat a taer (r) reachtach déanta dé dóergairce.
(3467) Nírbat dísclir doicbheach diúmasach.
(3468) Níbbát ecal ocal opond esamain.
(3469) Nípáth tairne ó main mandartha mescatha.
(3470) Níbat e dergnat c[h]olla coirme hi tig rurech.
(3471) Níbat ilfhurig im iarad n-echtrand.
(3472) Ní sáis daine dochla dichumaing.

b.
(3473) Ní fádat iubaili for étechthrí ail.
(3474) Airliter cumna cóich comarbai cré.
(3475) Cuibsigator senc[h]aid sin co firinne fiú hit fhiradnaísi.
(3476) Fimnatar b[re]t[ba]main bhraitío scéo mbroga.
(3477) Mrogatar genelaigí géiscí úa genit[h]er géin.
(3478) Gairter bi, beoaiarter fri oethu(,) airm irro trebsat mairb.
(3479) Mainigter comarbai fora t(h)échtu thuóich.
(3480) Toc[h]omhúát anfini coa nemtbe nert.

c.
(3481) Ní fresnesea co labur.
(3482) Ní aisnéisea co glórach.
(3483-5) Ní fúirse, ní chuitbe, ní faitechthí senóirí.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{a}}\text{} nírbat\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{b} dene}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{c} Nírbat}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{d} dóichlech}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{e} Níbbát}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{f} Níbat}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{g} Níbat}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{h} Níbat}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{i} Ni}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{j} Ni}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{k} etechtu}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{l} firinne fiú}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{m} bethamain}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{n} bráthair}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{o} géiscí}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{p} maim}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{q} tecthú}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{r} toomhúát}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{s} Ni}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{t} Ni}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{u} aisnéisea}\text{,}\text{\textsuperscript{v} senóirí}\]
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) Nípá mitbomthinach o neoch.
(3487) Ní géis co anu.
(3488) Níth ettis nech cena domanches.

e.

f.
(3490) Bát umal múnta ó gáethaib.
(3491) Bat cunmec b coisc ót shenaib.
(3492) Bát seic/mech riaglá at/bardai.
(3493) Nípatc úarc[?]raidech in chardiu.
(3494) Bat gusmar in náintiu.
(3495) Nípa frithenech debt/ha hi tilebomraicib.
(3496) Nirbat scélach f atba[?]ossánach.
(3497-9) Ní fáisce, ní ghaisce, ní be torba
(3500) Consecba do c[?]ársachad in [n]gínmaib ántéchtai.
(3501) Ní chomainse tba[t]tírimne ar thoil daíne.

g.
(3502) Nirbat atbhoingid ar nábat aithbrech.
(3503) Nirbat comromach ar nábat misnech.
(3504) Nirbat m lesc ar nábat mirb.
(3505) Nirbat róescid ar nábat dóescair.

h.
(3506) Ardotchuidig fri sechem na mbríatbar sin, a meic!
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.

   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 fían-brotherhood, or else to the heroes of the Ulster Cycle of tales. Reproof of such characteristics as being discir, 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 (anfine) 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 teosc-
literature (and BCC’s author is no exception) is yet another commonplace. 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 iaromart, ‘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 tecosc-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)bát, 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 (dubhtha dén dèrgaire… discir doichlech diùmmasach… dàin dochla dibumaing), with a vowel in ll.3468, 3471 (eal ocal opond esamain… ilfhurig im òn éad n-echtrá) and with m in l.3469 (ò main mandartha meschatba). Variations in syntax are used to highlight alliterating words. Lines 3469-71 employ prepositions (ò, 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 (ilfhurig im òn éad n-echtrá).

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

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15 Cp. **BFF**’s (Ireland 1999, 92-93) maicg dàin laechdacht, ‘the martial life is a woeful occupation’, and **Aigítir Chrábaídí**’s (Hull 1968b, 72-3 §25) eithdra fo-iffíera fhuannas do dún na i. to-imaírc crích; to-formaí écréait; etar-díben sáigú; ar-cuirethar píana, ‘The four things that the profession of arms causes to mankind: it contra cts 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 àin Ugaine’, **LL** l.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 dhuit a Doidhín meic Nin), proceeding to a subjunctive prohibition (ní urthaomhae rígh, etc.) of the sort which opens BCC.
l.3474: *cumnì cóich combarbai crè...*; or l.3477: *genelaigí géisi úa geníthir gein...*; but it is also structured around linking alliteration: *ail / Airliter, crè / Cuibsígter, mbroga / Mrogatar, gein / Gearter, mairb / Mainíteg, toich / Tochomlaiat, nér / Ní*, with a break between ll. 3475 and 3476, finishing with *fhiadhnaisi* 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 mandartha... dochla dichsunaing ... sencaid sin ... geníthir gein*) and restored on l.3476 (*br[e]thamain bráthir*); the latter can be noted between the ll.3476-7 and 3479-80 (thus *mbroga / Mrogatar and toich / Tochomlaiat* 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 *fíadut*, with *it fhiadhnaisi* 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 *tecossa ríg* 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 coise, seichnech riáglá, fritchenech débha) + 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 (cbúrsachad, 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 rig, 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 Chrábaíd. The exceptional standing of section (b) will be made obvious by comparing it to the fragment from MS H. 3. 18, fol. 233b 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’ (Breathnach 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.
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 Apair 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: nirbat ... diumsach ... nipat 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 discir and diummsach run together in a verse preserved at the end of the saga De chophur in dà muccida: is amlaid Dond Cualngi diumsach discir, ‘Thus is Donn Cúalnge, arrogant and wild’ (Windisch 1891, 245).

22 Although it might well be that the proverbial diction diummsach tairnem, ‘humbling the proud’ had a wider colloquial provenance: cf. at-cota dimus 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. The line consists of three 2 SG. PRES. SUBJ./IPV. verbs preceded by a preverbal particle that imparts a beneficial sense:

\[\text{Slán-sir, slán-eiris, slán-imte,} \]
Ask properly, pay properly, refuse (?) properly (Kelly 1976, 74, 72).

\textbf{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:

\[\text{Cetharda nádon tecmnaing do neuch charas Dú} \]
\[\text{i. ni fúrisedar; ni fathgúathar; ní [m]ben éndach; ní m-thomnadar ó neuch} \]
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 \(ní \text{ mben éndach}\). 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 \(ní \text{ chuítbe}, \) ‘let you not deride’, and \(\text{senóri}, \) ‘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 \(\text{óc}, \) ‘a young person’. Cormac, when telling about his habits when he was a young man, says, \(ní \text{ cuítbinn sen ciárba óc,} \) ‘I did not deride an old person though I was young’ (Meyer 1909, 16-17, §7.22) The prohibition \(ní \text{ cuítbe nach sen ciárba 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 \(\text{óc con-tibi sen,} \) ‘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).
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 mi-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. _fírinne_) and the discussion is mainly concerned with different ways of obscuring righteousness, as well as with the ways of guarding righteousness from obscurcation, 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:

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 ottis_, 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 \textit{fírinne} dealt with in this passage has more to do with the religious aspect of royal righteousness, rather than with its fecundating aspect (\textit{cf. Is tre fhír flatheamon} series of \textit{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 \textit{cain-}, ‘fair’, and 2 SG. PRES. SUBJ. of a verb. Something similar can be observed in the section \textit{De prudentissimo homine}, §36:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

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 \textit{ACbr} are, however, different from those of \textit{BCC}. The latter welcomes the idea of being generous when bestowing gifts, whereas the author of \textit{ACbr} approves of being humble when corrected. This is however precisely what \textit{BCC} expounds on l.3500:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Consecha do chúrsachad i [n]\textit{guimaib} àntéchtai},

‘Restrain your reproof in respect to entirely proper actions’.
\end{quote}

Coincidence between the two texts not only in thought but in wording should also be noted: compare \textit{BCC’s} \textit{con-secha do c[b]úrsachad} and \textit{ACbr’s} \textit{cain-coscaid \ldots fri cúrsachad}. It may well be that the author of \textit{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 \textit{ACbr} in a way appropriate for the context of \textit{BCC}.

\textit{Tegosc Cúscraid.}

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

\begin{quote}
\textit{Bad frit[h]almach deibha deince duiri doergaire, 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).
\end{quote}

Here we should again bear in mind the context of \textit{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 Crólighe (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 fian-brotherhood:

_Basa liath, nihsa taerrechtach, nihsa 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. In the Annals of Ulster and in Áigidecht Aithirne, ‘The Guesting of Athirne’, 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).

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

26 See Mac Airt, S., & Mac Niocaill, G. (1983, 454-5; A.D. 1018.6) _a tairreicht creiche_, ‘in pursuit of a raiding party’, (456-7; A.D. 1021.3) _ion tairrecht_, ‘in the pursuit’.

27 Meyer 1905a, 6: _tairrechtaid ceca [tána] 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, 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 fórns cuitheda la Féine?
Fer nóit … 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 bláibh báráig im cceub 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-aílt 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 doendae_) in _Córs Céin_.

_Caitte in fled doenad? Fled cuirmthige caich dia fholaidh amail bes a dliogd dia nàset a airílltnib féis, fuirirrud, dithit… A coinide do cumdach do each mainingud do each lesegud iar nDía , duine fri sobes, fri sorecht, 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 (_féis_), supper (_fuirirrud_), lunch (_dithit…_) Protecting his lord with every enrichment and benefit

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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’. 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. 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.

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 näimtiu, indracus 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-degùir, 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) immacoomarnic tro dūib 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 mescbuid aenaig, urgal cuirmthige ‘contentions of hostings, sticks (quarrels) in an ale house’. Binchy (1971, 156) notes further parallels in Cethairsblicht Athgabálae (CIH 401.15): mescbuid 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 *shenaib. (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 *fían*-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 máel[ch]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 cuíthe 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 233b 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
CIH & 751.28-752.2: \\
LU & 3473-80 \\
\text{Ni iadat ratha for étechta.} & \text{Ni iadat iubaili for étechtu ail.} \\
\text{Aircsither cuimne cormhara[i]s.} & \text{Airliter cuimni cóch comarbai crí.} \\
\text{Caibsigher senc[i]aidhe} & \text{Caibsigter senchaid sin} \\
\text{co firinne ficht.} & \text{co firinne fin bit fbiadnaisi.} \\
\text{Finnathar beithemain braithri.} & \text{Finnatar beithamain braithir} \\
\text{seeo brogha gesce.} & \text{seó mibróga.} \\
\text{[-Aenether clanda].} & \text{Mm̓gnatar genelaigi gesci úa geniter gín.} \\
\text{Gairther bii.} & \text{Gäirter bí} \\
\text{Bheoaighter oiuin.} & \text{bëoaighter fri óethn.} \\
\text{Airm a mbráigtrebsat mairb.} & \text{Airm irro trebsat mairm.} \\
\text{Lesaighther comarbai} & \text{Mainighter comarbai} \\
\text{fora techta toich.} & \text{fora thechtu toibh.} \\
\text{Tucchomluat anfini coa neimthiu nert.} & \text{Tucchomluat anfini coa nemthe nert.}
\end{align*}
\]

I provide a translation of the legal fragment in the footnote.\footnote{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-fet) 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 aenaithe, passive plural from oenaithidor, ‘joins’.}

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’.

\footnote{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-fet) 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 aenaithe, passive plural from oenaithidor, ‘joins’.
At a closer look on an archaic legal poem, it seems that the legal dicta mess tīre ‘valuation of land’, mrogad coicrích ‘marking out [fresh] boundaries’, cór cualne ‘planting stakes’, and rann eter comorbhu ‘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, 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 staring 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 rátha, ‘sureties’, whereas in the wisdom-text it is inbailí, ‘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 rátha can be taken as secondary. On the other hand, occurrence of a legal maxim ni asta inbaile inndliged just few lines below (CIH 752.7) prior to a passage, starting with ni iadat faill (CIH 752.9) can explain the provenance of inbaile 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 firinne ficht 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. l).

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 *tecosc*. 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:

*Tri fuiric thigi drochduni: debuid ar do chinn, atchbosan 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 *atchossánach*, ‘reproachful’ in *BFF*’s dictum:

*Descad debtha atchbomsán,*
‘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 *atchbosan* 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 *oitiu*, ‘the young’ (*CIH* 751.38) being the direct object of the verb *beoaighter*, may be due to misunderstanding of the compiler of the passage in the original which might had 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 ACbr 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.\footnote{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 caatha gáse doenachtae: dílse , diúite, tua , trehain (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 Manchúin Lúth (cf. na’ bud sgélach cèilidhech (Meyer 1910, 311 §9): ‘let him not be verbose and given to visiting’) or Regula Chaolaim Chille (cf. mag gor cráibidech nemscélach (Meyer 1899, 29): ‘a pious slave, devout and not talkative’.}

Not only does the author of BCC demonstrate knowledge of ACbr, 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\textsuperscript{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 depreciation of the characteristics traditionally associated with the warfare and combat (ll.3502-5).\footnote{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 Cúalnge ‘o triumphant Hound of Cúalnge’ (O’Rahilly 1967, 178.1442). In Fled Bricrenn (LU 8955-8957), Cathbad speaks of Cú Chulainn in similar words: is err threntairpach | is cur cain cathbhadach | is goid catha conramaig ‘he is the strong vigorous champion | he is a fair victorious-in-battle hero | he is a champion of triumphant battle’.}

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 Bésenai.

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
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. McConne, 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’ (McConne 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 *tarbfhes* 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 ríg* 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 aithrech 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, univerbated from do-airindi. The compound verbs came to be treated as simple in Mid. Ir., e.g. do-shuindi, ‘denies’, treated as diúltaid in Mid. Ir. (Cf. ro diúlt a athair di 7 nir leic cuci bi, 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 mhain 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 *Nírbat dergnat cholla coirme b-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 124a, containing the saga *Aided Chonchobuir*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nírbat dergnat chormthigi,} \\
\text{nírbhach do chlathmuide,} \\
\text{nírbat mnúchnch i n-wathind,} \\
\text{nírbat biũñuch socbaide,} \\
\text{Do not be a flea of an ale-house,} \\
\text{Do not relinquish your reputation,} \\
\text{Do not be mournful in solitude,} \\
\text{Do not be boastful among the many.}
\end{align*}
\]

It is noteworthy that the author of the above quatrain employs *nírbat* 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 b-i 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;

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

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) coirmthetic* 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. *cōbo* would naturally come to be written *colla* in Mid. Ir.: cf. *ce n tarrach[tain] 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*.
Another option would be to render ìrad as ‘a donation, a gift’, extrapolated from –ír, preterite of ernenid, ‘bestows’, on the basis of TCúsc, that lists one of the duties of the good lord at the meeting of the nobles (turoimracc n-degdaoine) as ìrad 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 ìrad to be a scribal error for i of the original. This emendation will provide us with a reading inrad, later form of indeird, ‘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 sáis, ‘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-dodelbth, 223.14). However, this translation does not accommodate the original sense of the passage. Firstly, it is obvious that the sense of dochla and dichumaing 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 rocuibhi[sg] in gataig ‘if he questioned the thief’ (CIH 1419.17) and coros cuibsigestar a hathair, ‘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, beoai̇gter 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 Antéctae 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 beoai̇gthi marberi ‘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 Antéchtae tract is provided by Bretnach (1989, 30; 2005, 166-9).

3479 fora t(b)échtu thoich, ‘according to their proper inheritance’. Dillon (1953, 76) is not sure whether to take the verb maingter as ipv. pass. pl. of maingid, ‘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 teccos-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, guála nemid ‘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 faitchither, ‘Do not intimidate’. In his note, Hull (1968, 88) explains that ‘the translation is based on the tentative assumption that -fathgúat[h]ar is connected with gáu (gó) ‘falsehood’… Or should we emend to ní faitchigher ‘he is not made uneasy?’ In his notes, Dillon (1953, 35) takes ‘-faitchither as pres. subj. sg. 2 of unknown meaning’, but in the vocabulary emends to –faitchigther, 2 sg. pres. subj. conjunct of *faitchig(l)d’ ‘warns, threatens’, on the basis of Wb. 11*16: tomad tra et fautigud 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: aigésach dunaid ard lán eneclann don rig a n-ailges do gabail de a sloigedh 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 Cán Lánamna (ar ni heitech do neoch mad o dáim 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 domanchesesa 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 dimainche from the Triad 81: tríe ara miscechtur cara: fogal, dognas, dimainche (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 bi cumregar clóine: cotach, riagail, reachtge (Meyer 1906a, 26–27). This can be correlated with Triad 200 (trí all frisa timargar bésena: 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 (reachtge, cf. reachtge 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 ãarchraidech, ‘Do not be cold-hearted’. Although close parallels seem hard to find in the early language, the basic idea is quite straightforward. The collocation cride 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. gwth-ween ‘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 bi 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. bi t)’ (s.v. conraithbe, 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, nába (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 corombaib 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 aitheach, 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-atb-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 impgonaid 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
SMMDT = Thurneysen 1935.
TC = Meyer 1909.
TCúsc = Best 1916.

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