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# ESSAYS IN MEMORY OF ELEANOR KNOTT

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**74d** Maidir le liomáistí Thir Mhaine (nó na liomáistí a d'éiligh Muintir Cheallaigh) sa tréimhse seo, féach nóta 10 sa pháipéar thuas. Tá an Beannchar seo i gCo. Uíbh Fháilí.

**75a** Tá Lusmhaigh i gCo. Uíbh Fháilí. Maidir le díochlaonadh na bhfocal *Lusmhach* (a bhfuil *Lusmhach* mar thuiséal tabharthach aige) agus *Lusmhagh* (a bhfuil *Lusmhaigh* mar thuiséal tabharthach aige), féach *JGT* II, §138.

**75b** Tá *Fitig* le ceangal leis na logainmneacha *Mullach Fidicci* (*Fitig* an litríú in Annála Locha Cé; áit i gCloinn Chommhagh) agus *Port Fidigídh* (*Fitige* an litríú i Leabhar Ua Maine; ceantar ar an tSuca) (féach *OG*<sup>2</sup> §§22120 agus 22669). Áit éigin ar an teorainn idir Co. Ros Comáin agus Co. na Gaillimhe atá i gceist anseo.

# SCÉLA MONGÁIN MAC FIACHNAI OCUS ECHDACH RÍGÉICIS: A REAPPRAISAL OF TEXT AND LANGUAGE

*Chantal Kobel\**

## ABSTRACT

In 1916, Eleanor Knott published an edition of the medieval Irish tale 'Why Mongán was deprived of noble issue'. The edition was accompanied by a short introduction, translation and some brief notes concerning textual difficulties. Since its publication, the tale has received little attention and a thorough examination of the language remains outstanding. This article re-examines the sole surviving witness of the text and offers a revised edition and modernised translation, together with some new interpretations. It also analyses the language of the text which suggests the original dates to the period broadly between c. 850–950.

## INTRODUCTION

Eleanor Knott made many significant and lasting contributions to the field of Celtic Studies. Although Knott's expertise centred on Classical Irish poetry and the language of the Early Modern Irish period, she also worked on the language and literature of the earlier period.<sup>1</sup> Knott's keen interest and research on early Irish literature began early in her academic career. In 1914, she published a note on the obscure phrase *bó thuir* and an explanation of the phrase *i ndileman dáil* 'towards (the) Creator'.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, she published an edition of a medieval Irish narrative concerning Mongán mac Fiachnai, to which she gave the title 'Why Mongán was deprived of noble issue', on the basis of the concluding sentence: *Is sed sin danó tall degiariatige ó Mongáin*

\* An earlier version of this article was presented at the conference held in memory of Eleanor Knott in Trinity College Dublin in 2016. I am grateful to Liam Breathnach, Uáinéar Mac Gearailt, Christina Cleary and Mícheál Hoyne, whose comments, suggestions and corrections on earlier versions helped improve the content and structure of this article. I am, of course, solely responsible for any remaining errors.

<sup>1</sup> For a list of Knott's publications, see Mac Carthaigh (2005, 59–61).

<sup>2</sup> See Knott (1914: 1914a).

*mac Fiachnai*, 'Thus was Mongán, son of Fiachnae, deprived of noble issue',<sup>3</sup> Wiley (2008, 49 and 65) referred to the tale as *Scéla Mongáin ocus Echdach Rígéicis* 'The story of Mongán and Eochaid Rígéicis', abbreviated SMER, which is the title I use throughout this article.<sup>4</sup>

The tale belongs to the story complex concerning Mongán mac Fiachnai (†625), son of the Dál nAraidi king of Ulster, Fiachnae mac Báetáin (†626).<sup>5</sup> Eochaid *rígéicis* ('king-poet' or 'royal poet'), the chief poet of Ireland, also from Ulster, is the other main character.<sup>6</sup> The other literary tales concerning Mongán mac Fiachnai are:<sup>7</sup> *Comper Mongáin* 'The conception (or birth tale) of Mongán' (CM); *Scélasa mberar combad hé Find mac Cumail Mongán* 'A story from which it is inferred that Mongán was Find mac Cumail' (SFM); *Scél Mongáin*, 'The story of Mongán' (SM); *Tucait Bali Mongáin* 'The cause of Mongán's frenzy / vision' (TBM) and *Comper Mongáin 7 Serc Duibe Lacha do Mongán*, 'The conception and birth of Mongán and Mongán's love for Dub Lacha' (CMSDB).<sup>8</sup>

CM, SFM, SM and TBM are thought to derive from the now lost *Cin Dromma Snechtaí* (CDS).<sup>9</sup> These tales are generally assigned to the Old Irish period, possibly the eighth century, but derived from an early Middle Irish

archetype.<sup>10</sup> CMSDB is an Early Modern Irish compilation based on earlier sources.<sup>11</sup>

According to Knott (1916, 155), SMER belongs to the same period of composition as CM, SFM and SM, but she gives no supporting evidence for this. White (2006, 43) observes that SMER contains 'some forms which appear tantalisingly old', but that, since it also contains many later forms, a thorough evaluation is required to date the tale. Ní Mhaonaigh (2011, 210–1) makes the brief observation that SMER is 'of roughly the same date' as SFM. Ó Corráin (2017, 1419), on the other hand, considers SMER to be later than the Mongán tales, writing: 'The retelling [of SMER] is the sardonic work of a learned and witty man of letters who knew the early stories of Mongán well and used them skilfully (sic) as sources and, very likely, as intertextual resonances, for his new creation'.

Apart from these comments, and some other minor observations on its textual content and relationship with the other Mongán tales,<sup>12</sup> a detailed linguistic analysis of SMER remains wanting. Therefore, this article undertakes a linguistic analysis of the text to secure a date of composition as firmly as is possible. But first, it is necessary to make some preliminary textual observations on the tale and to revisit the manuscript copy.

#### THE TALE

A discussion of the tale's historical context or an in-depth literary interpretation is beyond the scope of the present article. However, an examination of its contents may help to place SMER within its literary context and provide a *terminus post quem* for its composition.

The text contains narrative techniques reflective of the style of Early Irish tales, such as *Fingal Rónáin*, rather than the more diffuse narrative style that developed in the later Middle Irish period.<sup>13</sup> The author employs scene

<sup>3</sup> See Knott (1916, 155 and 157).

<sup>4</sup> Wiley presumably takes *scéla* as a singular *io*-stem 'news, tidings' (*eDIL* s.v. *scél*, 1(c)), rather than the nom. pl. of neuter *o*-stem *scél*.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion on the historical Mongán mac Fiachnai, see, for instance, White (2006, 58–61).  
<sup>6</sup> There has been some discussion as to whether this Eochaid is to be identified as Dálán Forgaill; see, for instance, Stokes (1899, 35); Meyer (1909, 38); Knott (1916, 155); White (2006, 51); Bisagni (2019, 208). Ní Dhonnchadha (2010, 566–8) argues that Dálán Forgaill is a historical figure and an alias for Eochaid *rígéicis*. In a more recent article, Zhivlova (2015, 152–8) argues that the identification of Dálán with Eochaid is a later development.

<sup>7</sup> Mongán mac Fiachnai appears briefly elsewhere in the literary tradition. In *Immacallam Choluim Chille 7 ind Óclraig* (ed. Carey 2002), Mongán mac Fiachnai occurs at the beginning of the text (Carey 2002, 60.1–2 and 61). According to Carey (2002, 62), this may be a later addition. Mongán also appears in *Beatha Colaim Chille* §87 (O'Kelleher 1918, 78–83). I am grateful to Charles Dillon for bringing this reference to my attention. For further references to Mongán mac Fiachnai in the literary tradition, see Meyer (1895, 84–90).

<sup>8</sup> For a critical edition, translation and discussion of the manuscript tradition of CM, SFM, SM and TBM, see White (2006). There are two extant copies of CMSDB, namely, RIA MS 23 E 29 (1134; the Book of Fernoy), p. 131a–138b34, ed. and trns. Meyer (1895, 58–84); Nat. Univ. Lib. Galway, Hyde MSS 13, ed. O Duilearga (1928, 347–70).

<sup>9</sup> On the date of CDS, see Thurneysen (1912, 16); (1921, 15–18); Murphy (1952, 149–151); Mac Mathúna (1985, 421–69), but cf. Breithnach (1988, 191), McCone (2000, 67–70); Carey (1995, 91); (2002, 53); White (2006, 35–7); Stifter (2017, 23–4).

<sup>10</sup> On the date of composition of these tales, see White (2006, 25–32; esp. 32, 33).

<sup>11</sup> No comprehensive study of the language of CMSDB has yet been undertaken. However, Ní Mhaonaigh (2011, 212) notes that 'its religious sentiments accord well with fifteenth-century concerns pertaining to the perceived laxity of clergy, both secular and in religious orders'.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Mac Cana (1972, 134); Henry (1976, 93); Nagy (1997, 307); Krivoshechkova (2022, 16–17).

<sup>13</sup> On the narrative techniques and styles of the later Middle Irish period, see, for instance, Mac Gearailt (1988, 346–50).

switches, which create narrative momentum, as well as verbal parallelism as a means of increasing tension throughout.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the first sentence of the third, fourth and fifth paragraph shares a similar use of words and echoes each other. Repetition of syntactical patterns is found in the first encounter between Echaid and the youths, where the young men state: *do-n-uc Dia dūnd iārum rīgēices hērend*, 'So God has led the king-poet of Ireland to us', [15], and the third meeting where they say: *do-fuc Dia dūn iārum in fer cen anfs*, 'God has brought to us, however, a man without any ignorance', [44]. There are also the repeated mocking assertions of Echaid's ignorance (*anfs*), at [21], [28], [35], and [51].

The tale begins with Echaid *rīgēices* being invited by Fiachnae to be his royal poet. However, the poet forewarns Fiachnae that his young son, described as the most knowledgeable in Ireland, will dishonour him (Echaid), being influenced by 'evil people' (*drochdañe*).<sup>15</sup> Echaid will have no choice but to curse Mongán (*do-bēr-sa miscaid fair*) as a result and this will be a cause of strife between the poet and the king. Fiachnae promises that Mongán will behave and be civil to Echaid, and he agrees to stay until the end of the year. One day (§2), the poet is imparting knowledge (*oc indisin eolais*). A group of boys confront Mongán for not contradicting Echaid, and they disparage the poet by referring to him as a mendacious *bachlach*, a social rank of non-noble status.<sup>16</sup> When on a royal circuit with the king (§3), Echaid has three different encounters with young men. In the first instance, Echaid meets a group of young clerics (*cethrur maiccleirech*), one of whom is presumably Mongán in

disguise. They challenge the poet's knowledge concerning who erected a group of standing stones but provide him with no clue. Echaid answers incorrectly, whereas the youths know the correct answer. Fiachnae tells the poet not to be ashamed that the students (*na scolaiqe*) disagree with him. The poet then encounters four young men (*cethrur oclach*) at an abandoned fort (§4), who query what fort it is and who lived in it. They cite a stanza containing three lines, as a clue, and Echaid is supposed to be able to work out the solution from the incomplete stanza but fails to do so. They mock his ignorance at not knowing the answer. Then Echaid meets four youths (*cethrur macām*) at another fort, who are quarrelling as to who built it (§5). On this occasion, Mongán does not bother with a clue and cites a complete stanza. The poet does not know who the person was who built the fort and he is once again shamed. However, Fiachnae reiterates that the poet's rank will not be lessened as a result. Finally, Echaid and Mongán, undisguised, come face to face (§6). Echaid reveals that he knows it was Mongán who embarrassed him and he satirises Mongán for this:<sup>17</sup>

*Ní faigēbha maith dídu, or Eochaid, faicēb-sa ailig fort  
dara ēisi: In āinnus romōr tūargabais fort behir cen āinnus  
dara ēisi. Nícon bia ach[it] teach bachla[ic]h ūait, 7 nība mōr  
i tīr faicēbtha athgabāil, 7 nīcon festar tara dōe fēn, §6.*

'You won profit, then, said Echaid, I shall leave a satire upon you in return for it: the great sport you have made for yourself, one shall be without sport in consequence of it. There will be nothing save a house of commoners descended from you, and you shall not leave any great inheritance, neither shall it [the house] be known beyond its own rampart'.

Thus, Mongán's behaviour has provoked a satire of lasting consequence (*aif*) for his family and the tale fittingly concludes with *Is sed sin danō tall degiariāqe ō Mongán mac Fiachnai*, 'It is thus that Mongán, son of Fiachnae,

<sup>14</sup> Uáitēar Mac Gearait has kindly brought to my attention a similar use of scene switching in *Fingal Rónáin*, where events are set up in a similar fashion in the first one hundred lines; see Mac Gearait (2006–2007, 76).

<sup>15</sup> Knott (1916, 158, n. 1) translates *drochdañe* literally as 'evil people' and suggests that it is used possibly in the sense of 'common people', 'the vulgar', just as *degdañe* means 'gentlefolk'. See *etJL* s.v. *dañe* for compounds with *dag-* and *droch-*. In *Cornu Bégui*, *drochdañe* is used in a pejorative sense in a passage which notes the type of people who attend the *fled demandae* 'devilish feast': *Fled demandae i. fled do-berr do maccaib baís 7 drochdañib i. do drithaib 7 cēinib 7 oblaib 7 bráigib 7 fursib 7 merlechaib 7 geinib 7 merdrechaib 7 drochdañib olchēne*. 'A devilish feast, that is, a feast that is given to sons of death and bad people, namely buffoons and satirists and inferior poets and farmers and clowns and bandits and pagans and whores and other bad people', §25 (Breathnach 2017, 30).

<sup>16</sup> A *bachlach* is an ecclesiastical counterpart to the secular rent-paying *atthech*; see further Eieghnam (1999, 397–8). Equating somebody with someone of a lower grade or occupation, such as a comb-maker, as a slur or insult is seen elsewhere in medieval Irish literature (see McLaughlin 2008, 24–5).

<sup>17</sup> The entire translation of the text is given below. I follow Knott's translation throughout this article but any deviation from Knott's translation is fully explained in the footnotes.

was deprived of noble issue'.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, given that Echaïd was disparagingly called a *bachlach* by the boys, it is ironic that Mongán's progeny will be nothing more than a house of commoners (*teach bachlach*), of low status, with no inheritance or repute.

SMER belongs to a genre of medieval Irish tales in which a poet serves as a central figure.<sup>19</sup> Similar to SFM, SM and CMSDB, Mongán's knowledge in SMER is represented as being superior to that of the poet. The author of SMER particularly drew on SFM to compose his tale, with the result being that the two tales complement one another.

In SFM, Mongán is depicted as a king who asks his visiting poet, Forgoll, to tell him the account of the death of Fothad Airgthech.<sup>20</sup> Forgoll asserts that Fothad's death occurred in Dubthar, Leinster, which Mongán states is false. Thus, Mongán insults Forgoll, who then threatens to satirise Mongán:

*As-bert in fili nond-airfed dia áithgiud ocus no-airfed a athair ocus a máthair ocus a senathair ocus do-cechnad for a n-uisciu conna gébhae iasc ina inberaib. Do-cechnad for a fedaib conna-tibertaís torad for a maige, comitis ambriti caidchi cacha clainde, §3 SFM (White 2006, 73).*

'The poet said that he would satirise him for contradicting him and he would satirise his father and his mother and his grandfather and he would chant upon their water so that fish would not be caught in its river mouths. He would chant upon their woods so that they would not give fruits onto their

plains, so that they would be barren henceforth of every produce', §3 SFM (White 2006, 79).<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the satire would affect not only Mongán but also the head of his kin and his kinsmen, possibly leaving them without offspring in the future.<sup>22</sup>

Like the confrontation between Mongán and Forgoll, where the former undermines the poet's authority, Echaïd's expertise is undermined by Mongán in SMER. The poet issues a warning to Fiachnae at the beginning of the tale that if Mongán does not behave he will place a curse (*miscad*) on the latter, which will be a cause of strife between the poet and Fiachnae. At the end of the tale, the poet satirises the youth, after having been insulted on several occasions during his visit, even though he had been assured by Fiachnae that his son would behave. In contrast to SFM, the threat of satire is followed through in this tale. This has dire consequences for Mongán's lineage, and indeed that of Fiachnae's, and ultimately gives Echaïd *rigéicis* the last laugh.

#### THE MANUSCRIPT COPY OF SMER

The tale survives in only one witness, TCD MS H 2.16 (1318), cols 800.34–802.7, also known as the Yellow Book of Lecan, henceforth YBL. It forms part of the last section of the manuscript, cols 573–958, which was written in 1391–2, mostly by Giolla Íosa Mac Fhíir Bhisigh, who died in 1418.<sup>23</sup> SMER is preceded by a number of tales concerning Comgán mac Da Cherda, Cummine Fota and Guaire Aidni mac Colmáin and followed by various religious texts.

<sup>18</sup> The sense of *iarraige* meaning 'offspring, descendants' is attested in the early Irish law tracts and continues into the Early Modern Irish period (see *eDIL* s.v. *iarraige* (d) and (e), Thurneysen 1923, 371–2; Binchy 1936, 53–4, 70; 1938, 66; 1966, 16; *GEIL* 131). Subsequently, *iarraige* takes on the extended meaning of 'result, consequence' (see *eDIL* s.v. *iarraige* (a)), a sense which is already attested in the late Old Irish period, for example in the late Old Irish *irejocal A mmo Chloimidiu nēil*, attributed to Fingen mac Flainn, a student of Dúbarach Béri, who died in the 860s (*AFM* s.a. 865; *AI* s.a. 868); *bad hé iarraighe tairle*, 'let that be the consequence of advising you', §18 (Meyer 1907, 295). On the date of this poem, see Bretnach (2005, 368–9).

<sup>19</sup> For a brief outline of these tales, see Bretnach (2009, 111).

<sup>20</sup> White (2006, 51) suggests this Forgoll may represent Dallán Forgaill.

<sup>21</sup> White (2006, 79) translates *clainde* as 'produce' (see *eDIL* s.v. *clan* (a)), with the implied sense here that the 'woods' would be barren (*ambriti*) henceforth. However, the earlier semantic sense of *ambriti* refers to infertility in people, with this meaning extending to that of plants in the later period (see *eDIL* s.v. *ambriti*). It is possible in this instance, therefore, that *comitis ambriti* refers to Mongán's mother, father, and grandfather and that *clainde* could be translated as 'offspring' (*eDIL* s.v. *clan* (c)). Cf. White (2006, 125).

<sup>22</sup> Curses and satires affecting the head of the kin as well as kinsmen of an offender are evidenced elsewhere in early Irish literature (Bretnach 2004, 29–30). In *Acallam na Senóirch*, Patrick curses Bécán for having refused him hospitality, and leaves him without descendants (see discussion by Ó Cathasaigh 1986, 11).

<sup>23</sup> On the characteristics of Giolla Íosa's hand, see Ó Concheanainn (1974, 157 and 165). On the date, see Thurneysen (1921, 51); McCone (2000, 4).

It is found separate from the other four tales concerning Mongán mac Fiachnaí, which are arranged together at cols 911–914.<sup>24</sup>

The manuscript copy was interfered with by a modern hand who inserted word division markers, added individual letters and wrote words on erasure, using a fine pen with a slightly lighter ink, but added little of significance to the text. This is likely to have been the eighteenth-century scholar Charles O'Connor of Belanagare, whose hand is witnessed elsewhere throughout the manuscript.<sup>25</sup> His interventions do not improve the text. It may be that he had another copy of SMER to hand which he used to make modifications to this copy, but without another extant witness of the text it is difficult to say this with any certainty.

Knott reproduced the text in the manuscript faithfully, apart from a few minor inaccuracies and inconsistencies, with few improvements required. The edition below follows modern editorial conventions.<sup>26</sup> All deviations from Knott's edition and translation are explained in detail in the footnotes.

# TEXT

§1. Eochaid rígeiges andfili na hÉrend, ro baí [800.35] Fiachna mac Boetán oca chuired chucai do éicisi dō, ar ba rī Uíad in Fiachna 7 ba di Uíatib int Eochaid. Nícon bēo-sa it arrad,<sup>27</sup> or Eochaid, sech cach rīg do rīgthaib Érenn, ar atā maccān lat .i. Mongān mac Fiachna. Is sē mac dīan līa eōlus i nÉrind. Bīarī-se [800.40] oc scēlaib 7 oc eōlus.

<sup>24</sup> On the textual transmission of this group of tales, see White (2006, 5–10).

<sup>25</sup> The interference by Charles O'Connor to this manuscript has come to the attention of previous scholars. For instance, Gwynn (1935, 6) comments: 'the text of the *Dindenchas* has been corrected throughout by a late hand — perhaps Charles O'Connor, who has similarly maltreated the section of the MS. containing coll. 573–958. His corrections sometimes obliterate the original reading.' Similarly, O'Keefe (1995, 190) comments on the copy of *Éistilí lasr*: 'The last sixteen lines are in the handwriting of Charles O'Connor of Belanagare'. Knott (1936, xiii) comments on the YBL copy of *Togail Bruidne Da Dergae*: 'The frequent lenition of the mediae in Y is by a later hand'. A similar observation is made by O'Rahilly (1976, xxiii) on the YBL copy of the *Táin Bó Cuailgne*. I am grateful to Liam Breathnach for supplying these references to me. Cf. the observations on Charles O'Connor's interventions by O'Muirailé (2010, 226–44; esp. 236–8).

<sup>26</sup> Emendations are kept to a minimum. Words or letters added above the line are indicated by /, and those inserted below by \. Hyphenation is introduced where necessary, for example, nasalisation of initial vowels, verbal forms and *noíse augentes*. All expanded suspension-strokes, abbreviations and compendia, including *n*-strokes, *m*-strokes, marks of lenition are italicised.

<sup>27</sup> A later hand has added a prosthetic *f*, in faint ink, below the line to read *farad*.

Do-bērat in drochdaíne<sup>28</sup> fair frithtuideacht frim-sa, do-bēr-sa miscaid fair, bid debaid lat-so frim-sa anní sin. Natō, or Fiachna, acēlat-si mo mac conā tī frīt-so, is ē bus míne frīt-so isin teaglach-sa. Maith, or Eochaid, do-gēntar [800.45]. Bíd ammin co cend mbliadna.

§2. Baí-seom laa n-ann oc indisin eōlais. Ole duid, a Mongāin, ar na gilla, cen elegrad in bachlaig oc rād na gōa. Maith, or Mongān.

§3. Luid Fiachna for cuairt rīg 7 Eochu lais.<sup>29</sup> A mbatar laa n-and fora n-ēraim co n-acatar [800.50] sē choirthi cloichi móra ara cind 7 cehtur maicclēireach [801] imna coirthi. Cid do-gnī[d]<sup>30</sup> and sin, a chlērchī? or Fiachnaí. Atāum sund oc cuindechidh fīs 7 eōlais: do-n-uc

Dia dund iarrum rígeices hÉrend .i. Eochaid dīa gleodh dūs cīa no shāith na leca-sa [801.5] 7 cīa rosa ralla. Ám ām,<sup>31</sup> or Eochaid, nícon fil for memmain dam-sa sin uile. Ba dóich līm bad<sup>32</sup> Cland Deadhaíd do-n-ūargabset do dēnam Chathrach Chon Raí. Maith a<sup>33</sup> Eochaid, ar fer díb, at-berad na maicclēirich immot-rala-su. [801.10] Nā cairigh, or araile. Bēs is anfis dō, ara chēle. Is anfis dō, ar araile.

Maith, or Eochaid, ocus sib-si, caidi bar n-edingleod-si díib? Is hē ār n-eōlus-ní,<sup>34</sup> ām, vī līc and sō nīathbuíne 7 vī līic lāthbuíne: Connall Cemach roda lā la hllland [801.15] mac Fergus a ro marb vīar sund dā cētgaisced: ar-raí a lechla<sup>35</sup> do turebāil ara ofī, conda thūarcaib Connall Cemach leis, ar ba bēsad do Uíatib āit a ndēndais /a/ cētgaisced turebaitis a cortī ind līna ro marbdais, 7 airc-seo, a

<sup>28</sup> The *r* in *droch-* is added by a later hand and *daine* is written on erasure.

<sup>29</sup> *Eochu* occurs only once in this text, against *Eochaid* elsewhere; for the alternation between *Eochu* and *Eochaid* in later manuscripts, see Bergin (1932, 140–46, esp. 143).

<sup>30</sup> The final *-d* in the 2pl. pres. ind. of *do-gnī* 'makes, does' was lost during transmission.

<sup>31</sup> Knott (1916, 156) reads *ammin*, due to the confusion of minims. The particle *am* is repeated for emphasis and is used in an affirmative sense. This could perhaps be loosely translated as 'hmm, hmm', cf. the use of *om(m)* used in combination with *éim* for emphasis, discussed by Kelly (2007, 101).

<sup>32</sup> The expected lenition of *Cland*, following the 3 sg. past subj. of the copula, is omitted here.

<sup>33</sup> The vocative particle *a* is repeated in the manuscript by the later hand.

<sup>34</sup> For Knott's *eōlais-ní* (1916, 156), reading *eōl-* + a *us*-compendium.

<sup>35</sup> MS *a lechla* is written on erasure after *arrai*.

Eochaid, lat ainfiuss.<sup>36</sup> [801.20] Níbad imdergad lat, a Eochaid, or Fiachna, /nabad\ cubdī let na scolaige.<sup>37</sup>

§4. Tagait fora rēmim in chētna co n-acadar maelrāith<sup>38</sup> moir a cind,<sup>39</sup> 7 cethor ōclach co n-ētaigh corcraí ara dorús. Taidlig Eochaid in lis. Maith, or Fiachna [801.25] cid as āil dūib? Ail dūn a fīs ō Eochaid cistī rāth sō<sup>40</sup> 7 cīa ro baí indī. Socchaide lasa n\ēntar rātha, or Eochaid, conāch talla for meimain. Léic nait, ōr is anfis dō, ara chēle. Cade bar n-eólus didiu, or Fiachna. Nī ansa ām:

Cīan ō do bī — meadar mas —<sup>41</sup> [801.30]  
oc ōl meda a cum glas  
isim imscing ar aithech<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The form *fius* is written on erasure by the later hand.

<sup>37</sup> MS *nabad* is written below *cub-* and above *in chētna*. Knott (1916, 157) expands MS *cub-* as the sg. adj. *cubaid*. However, since the MS form is ambiguous, *cub-* could also be expanded as the plural form *cui(i)bdī*, in concordance with the pl. subject *scolaige*.

<sup>38</sup> Knott (1916, 157) reads *in aethraih mair* 'a large limewashed castle'. In the manuscript, there is a small gap between the first and second minim, where the scribe lifted his pen momentarily. This could easily be mistaken for the sequence *l* and *n*. However, there is a scribal tendency for the letter *n* to have a distinctive serif at the top of the initial minim (for instance, in *clach*, col. 800.27; in *chenna*, col. 801.22), but this is not the case in this instance. Here, in contrast, we find a more rounded top which flows into the bow of the second minim. I therefore read the letter *m* (cf. *imaine*, col. 800.4) and thus the manuscript has the form *maelrāith* (a compound of *edJL* s.v. *l mael* (c) + 2 *rāth*). Another example of this is *imnai moel rātha*, *CMT* §167, 1.833–4 (Gray 1982, 72), 'an abundance of barren forts'. However, Carey (1989–90), taking this as the compound *maelrātha*, translates it more accurately as 'many forts abandoned'. My translation below follows Carey's translation.

<sup>39</sup> Leg. *ara cind* 'before them', with *ar* omitted in error; cf. *ara cind*, [35].

<sup>40</sup> On the demonstrative pronoun *sō* with a long stressed vowel in Old and Middle Irish, see Bretnach (2003, 137–8). For the variant *sō*, alongside *sō*, in Early Modern Irish, see Hoyne (2016, 191–5).

<sup>41</sup> I take the phrase *meadar mas* as a cheville here, namely '[it is] fine merry-making'. *Meda* (or is frequently used in chevilles, with the best-known example being found in the poem *Dom-jarai fidbuidel* concerning the scribe in the woods: *fommchain coi meim meadair mas*, 'A clear-voiced cuckoo sings to me (goodly utterance)' (Murphy 1956, 4).

<sup>42</sup> Knott (1916, 157) suggests reading *isim imscing ar'la f(?)aithech*. The last word could certainly be *\*aithech* (s.v. *aithech*, *aitheche*) with initial lenited *f* omitted, translating as 'in front of a green'. For the omission of a lenited *f* in OIr, see *GOI* §23.1. Alternatively, it could be the word *aitheche* used here in a concrete sense meaning a type of musical instrument (see *edJL* s.v. 2 *aitheche*). Moreover, Knott (1916, 157) presents this line as prose. However, it belongs to the stanza, of which only three lines are given as a clue to Echaid, with the fourth deliberately omitted. There is no need to supply the poss. pron. in this instance as the line has the required seven syllables.

*Ocus nī thucais a haimm iar suidiu, a Eochaid. Maith didiu, or Eochaid.*

§5. Tīagaid ass iar sin co n-acadar rāith aile ara cind 7 cethor macām ina dorús oc imresair. Is fīru dam-sa! Nī fīriu duid-siu! [801.35] Cid tāthai, a maccu? or Fiachna. Oc imresain atām dūs cistī rāth sō 7 cīa lasro classa ind rāith-so. Do-fuc Dīa dūn iarum in fer cen anfis iur dīa rēlad dūn. Nacha n-imderg<sup>43</sup> ara chēle, is anfis dō. Cade didiu bar fīs/-se? or Fiachnai. [801.40] Nī ansa immurgu.<sup>44</sup>

Cīan ō thessaigthe int shlat<sup>45</sup>  
do fīr ro cheachlaid Rāith Imgatt,  
Immgat<sup>46</sup> airm na mnā roda gart,  
ingen Buīse maic Didrachn

Rāith Immgat a airm iarum, a Eochaid 7 nīo sisan duid a ainbīs.  
Ro hindergad iarum iur Eochaid. [801.45] Cumma duid, a Eochaid,  
or Fiachnai, nība lugaidd do grād.

§6. Tīagaid iarum dīa mbaile fessiv.<sup>47</sup> Mongān cona muintir is taig

<sup>43</sup> MS *im* is written on erasure.

<sup>44</sup> The following quatrain is written in *deblide*, with *rind* and *airdrind* rhyme. The second and third line have an extra syllable each. This can be remedied by reading *d'fir* in the second line. In the third line, the article can be omitted before a defining relative clause (see Uhlisch 2013).

<sup>45</sup> Knott (1916, 157) reads *in slat*, but the MS has a *spiritus asper* above the s. *edJL* s.v. *tesaigid* 'warns, heats' suggests that *in slat* in Knott's edition should be read as *indlat* with the concrete sense of 'water for washing' (*edJL* s.v. *indlat* (b)). The phrase *tesaigid* + *indlat* is certainly attested in the OIr fragment of *Mesca Ulad*, i.e. *tesaigid indlat dōib*, *LU* 1447, 'Let water for washing be heated for them' (Hennessy 1898, 47). *Immgat* may be a compound of the intensive prefix *imn-* + the homonym *gat* (see *edJL* s.v. *gat* 'with, oster' (o-stem); *gat* 'taking away, theft, robbery' (OIr *gat*, ā-stem)), which has a final voiced stop. *Indlat*: *imgat* would give perfect rhyme. Alternatively, Liam Bretnach has suggested to me that one could emend *thessaigthe* to *thessaigthe* (from *do-essing* 'saves, rescues') and translate 'it is a long time since the young woman was rescued [...]'. For *slat* used of women, see *edJL* s.v. *slat* (c). This is a less intrusive emendation than the suggestion of *indlat* for *slat*, and I adopt this translation below. *Slair* (with voiceless final -t): *imgat* would give imperfect rhyme here, but such looser rhyme would be acceptable in the earlier period (see *ELM* 33). The scribe may have written -t in *imgat* to aid visual rhyme in this instance (see *SWG* III, §2.11).

<sup>46</sup> For Knott's *Immgat* (1916, 157), reading a suprascript / above *g* rather than a suspension stroke.

<sup>47</sup> For Knott's *fessiv* (1916, 157), reading an ss-ligature since the first minim descends below the line.



55 ara cind. Maith, or Eochaid, tusu do-rōnne suut, a Mongáin, ro-fétar-sa. [802] Is tú at-rubairt, ar Mongán. Ní faigébtú maith díú, or Eochaid, faicēb-sa ailig fort dara éisi: Int áinus romór tūargabais fort bethir cen áiníus dara éisi. Nícon bia ach[t] [802.5] teach bachlach<sup>48</sup> úat, 7 níba mór i tír faicēbtha aibgabail, 7 nīcon festar tara dóe fēn.<sup>49</sup>

Is sed sin danō tall degārtaiage ō Mongáin<sup>50</sup> mac Fiachnai. Finit.

TRANSLATION

§1. Echaíd *ri géices*, chief poet of Ireland, Fiachnae, son of Bāetán was inviting him to him to be his official poet, for Fiachnae was king of Ulaid and Echaíd was of the Ulaid. 'I will not be in your employment,' said Echaíd, 'more than that of any of the kings of Ireland, for you have a young son, Mongán, son of Fiachnae. He is the most learned youth in Ireland. I will relate tales and give instruction, and evil people will set him to contradict me, I shall curse him and you will quarrel with me on that account.' 'No,' said Fiachnae, 'I shall speak to my son so that he does not contradict you, it is he who will be the most civil towards you in this household.' 'Well,' said Echaíd, 'it shall be done. Let it be thus until the end of a year.'

§2. One day he was imparting knowledge. 'Evil of you, Mongán,' said the boys, 'that you do not challenge the churl uttering falsehood.' 'Alright,' said Mongán.

§3. Fiachnae went on a royal visitation, accompanied by Echu. One day on their journey they saw six large stone pillars before them, and four young clerics by the stones. 'What are you doing here, clerics?' said Fiachnae. 'We are here seeking knowledge and instruction. So God has led the king-poet of

Ireland, namely, Echaíd, to us to reveal who planted these stones and for whom they were arranged.' 'Indeed, indeed,' said Echaíd, 'I do not remember all that. I should think the Children of Dedá raised them, to build the City of Cú Roí.' 'Well, Echaíd,' said one of them, 'the young clerics say you are bewildered.' 'Do not blame him,' said another. 'Perhaps he does not know,' said his companion. 'He does not know,' said another. 'Well,' said Echaíd, 'and you, what is your explanation of them?' 'This, then, is our information – these are three stones of a champion-band and three stones of a warrior-band. Conall Cernach placed them, along with Illand, son of Fergus, who slew three here in his first prowess. He was unable to lift up the pillars on account of his youth, and Conall Cernach raised them with him, for it was the custom of the Ulaid, wherever they performed their first act of valour, to erect pillar-stones for how many that they slew, – and be off, Echaíd, with your ignorance.' 'Do not be ashamed, Echaíd,' said Fiachnae, 'that the scholars might disagree with you.'<sup>51</sup> §4. They proceed on their way as before, and they perceived a large, abandoned fort in front of them, and four young youths in purple raiment before the door. Echaíd approached the enclosure. 'Well,' said Fiachnae, 'what do you want?' 'We want to hear from Echaíd what fort this is, and who lived in it.' 'Forts are built by many,'<sup>52</sup> said Echaíd, 'that they do not all find room in the memory.' 'Let be,' said the other, 'for he does not know.' 'What is your information, then?' said Fiachnae. 'Not difficult, indeed –

[It is] a long time since he was – [it is] fine merry-making –<sup>53</sup>  
drinking mead from a grey drinking-horn<sup>54</sup>  
in the enclosure in front of a green.

You have not grasped his name, Echaíd.' 'Alright,' said Echaíd.

<sup>48</sup> The later hand has inserted *i* below the line. Knott (1916, 157) reads *acht eachbachlach* 'save horseboys'. However, there is a line break between *ach* and *teach*. I read this as two separate elements, namely the nom. sg. *teach* followed by the gen. pl. of *bachlach* (*-o*-stem), which O'Connor later emended to nom. pl. *eachbachlach*. A final *-i* is editorially supplied in *ach*, as this could easily have been omitted, since the following word also begins with *i*. For the phrase *at-íd* meaning 'to descend from', see *etDIL* s.v. *at-íd*.  
<sup>49</sup> For Knott's *iarad de* (1916, 157; cf. White 2006, 51), reading *iarad* followed by *dōe*, with the rounded bow of *d* biting the *o*.  
<sup>50</sup> The dat. sg. *Mongáin* is expected following the preposition *ō*, but the manuscript clearly reads *Mongáin*.

<sup>51</sup> Knott (1916, 157, n. 1 and 158), unsure where to place *nabad* in the edited text, translates *cubaid let na scolaiage* as 'the scholars are a match (?) for thee.' The scribe may have omitted *nabad* due to haplography. The form *nabad*, consisting of the subordinate negative *nā* + 3sg. past subjunctive of the copula, precedes MS *cub* – translates literally as 'that the scholars might not agree with you'. Lenition is omitted here.  
<sup>52</sup> Lit. '[It is] a multitude by whom forts are built'. The verbal form is discussed in the linguistic section below.  
<sup>53</sup> See fn. 41 for this translation.  
<sup>54</sup> Knott (1916, 159) translates *glas* as 'green'. However, I follow Mac Cana (1993, 93, n. 35) who notes that *glas* might refer to the colour of the bone from which the drinking horn is made.

\$5. Then they proceeded, and they saw another fort before them, and four youths quarrelling in front of the entrance. 'I am right!' 'You are not right!' 'What are you at, boys?' said Fiachnae. 'We are contending as to what fort this is, and by whom it was built. God has brought to us, however, a man without any ignorance to reveal it to us.' 'Do not shame him,' said his companion, 'he does not know'. 'What do you know about it?' said Fiachnae. 'Not difficult, indeed –

It is a long time since the young woman was rescued<sup>55</sup>

from the man who dug Ráth Imgat.

Imgat was the name of the woman who named it (the fort), daughter of Buise, son of Didrach.<sup>56</sup>

Ráth Imgat, then, is its name, Echaid, and it shall not be fortunate for you that you are ignorant of it.' Then Echaid was put to shame. 'It is all the same to you, Echaid,' said Fiachnae, 'you shall not be thought the less of.'

\$6. They go home then, and find Mongán and his following within. 'Well,' said Echaid, 'you have done that, Mongán, I know it. 'It is you who has said it', said Mongán. 'You won't profit, then,'<sup>57</sup> said Echaid. 'I shall leave a satire<sup>58</sup> upon you in return for it: the great sport you have made for yourself, one shall be<sup>59</sup> without sport in consequence of it. There will be nothing save a

house of commoners descended from you, and you shall not leave any great inheritance,<sup>60</sup> neither shall it be known beyond its own rampart'.<sup>61</sup>

It is thus that Mongán, son of Fiachnae, was deprived of noble issue.

#### LANGUAGE OF SMER

To establish the date of the original, the earliest orthographical, phonological and morphological features are established, followed by later linguistic forms. The following analysis shows that although there are many Old Irish forms, there are also a significant number of Middle Irish forms, which point to a date for the original broadly between 850 and 950. Inevitably, some Middle Irish forms represent innovations or modernisations that were introduced in the line of transmission. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding an archetype because there is only one extant manuscript witness.

#### Old Irish orthographical and phonological features

The orthography is generally in keeping with that of the Old Irish system, most notably with post-vocalic *c*, *p*, *t* for voiced consonants and post-vocalic *b*, *d*, and *g* for voiced fricatives. The prepositions *fri*, *for*, *ar*, *oc* and *co* are in keeping with the norms of the Old Irish period. Unstressed *i* and *a* in pretonic position are not interchangeable. There is no elision of the proclitic vowel in prepositions preceding words beginning with vowels in *do éicis*, [2], *di Ultaib*, [3]. However, for *do fír*, [48], it is necessary to read *d'fír* to fulfil the required syllable count.<sup>62</sup>

There is a consistent practice of writing a broad glide following a preceding non-palatalised consonant, an orthographical practice established by the time

<sup>55</sup> Knott (1916, 159) leaves this sentence untranslated. My translation is based on the proposed emendation in fn. 45.

<sup>56</sup> Alternatively, *buise* could be a descriptive genitive of *búes* 'folly, wanton', followed by the otherwise unattested proper name or sobriquet *Maic Didrach* (gen. sg. of *mac* + adjectival form *didrach* (see *eDIL* s.v. 1 *mac*, IV; *didrach*, which cites only the example from this text), translating 'wild daughter of Mac Didrach').

<sup>57</sup> I take *-fáigēbha* as the 2sg. secondary future of *-fáigibh*.

<sup>58</sup> The entries under *eDIL* s.v. 2 *alíech* 'satire, invective' are oblique forms of *eDIL* s.v. 2 *alí* 'disgrace, reproach', which Marstrander (1962, 207) suggests is the same word as *eDIL* s.v. 1 *alí* 'rock'. The distinguishing feature of an *alí*, a type of satire, is that it is of a permanent nature and can take the form of either a nickname or a verbal reproach which may be rhymed or unrhymed (see McLaughlin 2008, 65).

<sup>59</sup> Knott (1916, 160) translates *bellir* as the 2sg. future, noting it could be an impersonal future form of *alí-íd*, I take it as the impersonal jussive subjunctive.

<sup>60</sup> I follow Knott (1916, 160) in taking *fáicēbha* as the 2sg. conditional of *Olir -fo-acaitb* 'leaves'. For the phrase *-fo-acaitb + aithgabáil*, see *eDIL* s.v. *aithgabáil* (c) 'leaves, gives pledge, security (in compensation, leaves possessions)'. *Aithgabáil* can also have the extended meaning of 'inheritance', e.g. *et nūd mbiad a aithgabáil / dia chiriud co bráth*, Trip<sup>2</sup> 2513–6, which the Dictionary translates as 'that none should ask after his people and that he should leave no inheritance to his people' (s.v. *aithgabáil* (c)).

<sup>61</sup> Knott (1916, 160) leaves *níon fesar iarad de fén* untranslated. White (2006, 51) reads *níon fesar iarad de fén*, translating it as 'the fruit/produce of himself (?) will not be known'. This is based on a misreading of the manuscript, which reads *iarad dāe fén*. I take *iarad* as the preposition *iar* + 3 sg. poss. pron. (*eDIL* s.v. 1 *iar*, *dár*), referring to the aforementioned house. For the translation of *dāe* as 'rampart', see *eDIL* s.v. 3.

<sup>62</sup> *SNG* III, §3.27.

of the Ml. glosses, e.g. gen. sg. *Fíachnai*, [62]. The spelling of the -(i)u ending for the dat. sg. of *io*-stem *suid* in *iár suidu*, [39] is retained. Such spellings of final unstressed vowels in later manuscripts should be treated with caution though since these may also reflect the Middle Irish spelling of /a/. There is an inconsistency in the writing of palatal glides before palatalised consonants, e.g. *corthi*, [27], *fora réim*, [30], *a chlérchi*, [14], *ara chéile*, [35], *fessin*, [54], *fé*, [61] (versus *cuidchidh*, [15], *cuirigh*, [21], *cloichi*, [13], etc.).<sup>63</sup>

Lenition of *f* is usually marked with a *punctum delens*, e.g. *anfis*, [21], *Fíachnai* (follg. a gen. sg.), [62].<sup>64</sup> The spelling of palatalised final unstressed guttural spirants varies, for instance, nom. pl. *na maicléirich*, [20], and gen. sg. *in bachlaig*, [11]. This variation in spelling is attested in the Old and Middle Irish period.<sup>65</sup>

The copy contains spellings such as *laa*, [10], *laa*, [12], *diib*, [22], *liic*, [23], *suat*, [55]<sup>66</sup> against *dib*, [20], *lic*, [23], *dās*, [16], *alām*, [43], with one instance of the peculiar spelling *alāum*, [15]. Since these forms written with double vowels are in prose sections, it is difficult to confirm if these reflect historically

correct hiatus words or whether they reflect a rare Middle Irish convention for denoting long vowels.<sup>67</sup>

In *and*, [14], *sund*, [15], and *Clund*, [18], final stressed *-nd* possibly has not assimilated to *-nn*, a development which is common already in the Ml. glosses.<sup>68</sup> However, since confusion of *nd* for *nn* /N/ is found in *cenā*, [9], *indsin*, [10], *dīnd*, [16] (versus *dūn*, [32], [44]), *cind*, [41], [55], the spelling *-nd* in *and*, *sund* and *Clund* cannot be taken seriously as a diagnostic feature since they can reflect the later confusion of *-nd* and *-nn*.

The Old Irish fem. dat. sg. pronominal form *indī*, [33], is replaced with *inte*, with a voiceless *t*, in the later language. According to Thurneysen, the acc. fem. suffix *-e* is already beginning to spread by the time of the Ml. glosses.<sup>69</sup>

The Old Irish 3sg. masc. pronominal form *chucai*, [2], retains a non-palatalised *-c-*, a form which later tended to be replaced by *cūici*, influenced by the 3sg. fem. *cūice*.<sup>70</sup> Although the initial lenition is a widespread Middle Irish phenomenon, this is already attested on rare occasion in the Olr glosses, and may have been in the original.<sup>71</sup>

The Old Irish 1pl. *dūn* with non-palatalised final *-n(n)* is preserved in [16], [32] and [44], rather than the later form *dūin(n)*. According to Thurneysen, the quality of the final *-n(n)* fluctuated in Old Irish.<sup>72</sup> Examples such as *dūini*, Wb. 1a3, and *dūini*, Ml. 110d12, with the 1sg. *nota augins*, are orthographically ambiguous as to the quality of the final consonant. However, that *dūn* had a non-palatalised final *-n* is metrically confirmed in a rhyming example in the late Old Irish *trefoal* beg. *A mmo Choimmdiu nēl*, i.e. *clūdhai: dūnai* (leg. *dūn*-[n]ai).<sup>73</sup> The non-palatalised *-n* in *dūn* is also orthographically reflected

<sup>63</sup> For the argument that the omission of a palatal glide suggests an early date, see, for instance, Stifter (2013, 189). However, this scribal practice was also employed in manuscripts contemporary with the Middle Irish period and cannot be securely used as a diagnostic dating criterion for an early date. For instance, *muredach* (= Muredach), Vienna Cod. 1247, f. 141r Ir. marg. (ed. Stifter 2018, 227). This manuscript was written by Marianus Scottus (Muredach mac Robartaig) in 1079 (Stifter 2018, 227). O Cuiv (1990, 49) also notes examples without the *i*-glide in the Codex Palatino-Vaticanus 830, a manuscript written by another Marianus Scottus (Móel Bríge), who died in 1082 or 1083, and wrote the manuscript in 1072 (see f. 33r).

<sup>64</sup> According to Thurneysen (GOI §231.7), this practice is encountered not earlier than the Sg. glosses.

<sup>65</sup> GOI §130.1 (b). For the Middle Irish convention, see SNG III, §2.6.

<sup>66</sup> Thurneysen understood the demonstrative pronoun *sui* to be a shortened form of *sucut* (GOI §475(c); LEIA S-205). The intermediary stage of *sucut* to *sui* may have gone through an interim stage where the *-c-* was lost, thus giving an intermediary disyllabic form, i.e. *suii*, which subsequently gave rise to the long *ui*. Alternatively, the loss of *-c-* could have resulted in compensatory lengthening. A full etymological study of this pronoun, as well as its relationship to *uici*, *ui*, is required. Unfortunately, there are no diagnostic examples of disyllabic *suii* attested in poetry. The only instances of the pronoun with the spelling *suii* that I am aware of occur in prose and are written in manuscripts that are not contemporary with the Olr period and reflect the Middle Irish representation of length in the vowel. For example, in the later introduction to *Cáin Adomnáin*, dated to c. 1000 (Ni Dhonnchadha 2001, 53): *is baedh 7 is trogh lim-sa suu*, 'That is a touching and a pitiful sight', 88 (Meyer 1905, 6); *Mo macán-sa suu*, 'My dear son yonder', §13 (Meyer 1905, 8). Another example is in the Middle Irish tale *Aided Gaill meic Carbadha ocus Garib Glinne Ríge: ocus iarfáigid Cú-chulainn dó: 'Cúich in suu?', and Cuculainn asks him, 'Who is yon?' §16 (Stokes 1893, 406 and trans. 407).*

<sup>67</sup> On this Middle Irish orthographical practice, see SNG III, §2.8. Hiatus words also occur as literary forms in the later period. Examples are found for instance in the poetry of Fíann Mainistrech (†1065), cited in SNG III, §3.2. Hiatus forms also survive into present day Scots Gaelic (McCone 1996, 141). Therefore, hiatus words are not necessarily a diagnostic feature for an Olr date.

<sup>68</sup> GOI §151.

<sup>69</sup> GOI §452.

<sup>70</sup> On this development, see McCone (1993). Examples of Old Irish 3sg. masc. *cucai* are seen, for instance, in *cucit*, Wb. 9d14 (albeit orthographically ambiguous), *cucai*, Ml. 38c1 and *chucai*, Ml. 46c1.

<sup>71</sup> McCone 1985, 88–9; SNG III, §4.7.

<sup>72</sup> GOI §448. In GOI §435, Thurneysen notes *dūn-ni* and *dūn-nai*.

<sup>73</sup> Meyer (1907b, 298, §68).

by the non-palatal glide in *-nai*.<sup>74</sup> In the later language, the 1pl. *nota augens* had a palatalising tendency on the preceding consonant, except in certain circumstances,<sup>75</sup> and this occurs already in the tenth century, according to Carney (1941–42, 223–4).<sup>76</sup> In SMER incidentally, the nom. sg. *eólas* (MS *eol + us-compendium*), [23], with a non-palatalised final consonant is followed by the 1pl. *-ni* but unfortunately it is orthographically ambiguous.

#### *Middle Irish and Early Modern Irish orthographical and phonological features*

It is unsurprising that there are orthographical features in this copy typical of the Middle and Early Modern Irish period, considering the date of the manuscript. This includes the confusion of final unstressed vowels with *e* or *i* after palatalised consonants as in nom. pl. *drochdaíne* (OIr *-i*), [6] and voc. sg. *a chlérchi* (OIr *-iu*), [14], and *a* after non-palatalised consonants as in *Fiachna* (OIr *-ae*), [1] and *gilla* (OIr *-ai*), [11].<sup>77</sup> Hypercorrect final *-ai* represents a Middle Irish */a/* in the nom. sg. in *Fiachnai* (OIr *-ae*), [15], [46], [53]. Moreover, we find *d* for *t/d*, e.g. *ar-berad*, [20], *tiagaid*, [54],<sup>78</sup> *g* for *c/g*, e.g. *rígéiges*, [1],<sup>79</sup> *bj* for earlier nasalised *f* in *ainbís*, [51] vs. *anfs*, [21], [35], [45] and the 2pl. possessive adjective *bar* in [22], [35], [46].<sup>80</sup>

Certain orthographical features reflect later phonological developments.

Some of these developments already occur in the Old Irish period, and such forms in the text may theoretically belong to the original. These include the dissimilation of *-l-* to *-r-* in *araille*, [21],<sup>81</sup> *-i-* for *-iu-* before a non-palatalised consonant in a stressed monosyllable in *ara cind* (OIr *ara ciunn*), [13], [41].

<sup>74</sup> The non-palatal glide in the 1pl. *nota augens* is not always written in Old Irish sources, but there are some examples, for instance, *arromannai*, 'our measure', ML 26b6.

<sup>75</sup> These exceptions are outlined in *IGT* I, II, 215–8, for which see Mac Carthaigh (2014, 64–65 and discussion on 200–201).

<sup>76</sup> In *SNG* III, §10.2, Liam Breathnach notes that there are no examples of earlier *-nai* in Middle Irish.

<sup>77</sup> *SNG* III, §3.1.

<sup>78</sup> *SNG* III, §2.2.

<sup>79</sup> *SNG* III, §3.2.

<sup>80</sup> The form *bar* is already found in Old Irish following prepositions (*GOI* §440).

<sup>81</sup> Although *araille* is the typical form in Middle Irish, *alaille* and *araille* are already found interchanging in Old Irish. Examples of *alaille* and *araille* are found in the main hand of the Wb. glosses, e.g. *alailiu*, Wb. 2a14, *arailiu*, 21a13. See *GOI* §486b).

[55] and the possible contraction of hiatus in the metrically confirmed form *ól* (for earlier *ool*), [37].<sup>82</sup>

Other features represent trivial scribal modifications, including: (i) long vowels arising from diphthongs in *maccām* (OIr *maccim*), [42], *bí* (OIr *boi*), [36],<sup>83</sup> (ii) falling together of diphthongs resulting in orthographical variation in *baí* (OIr *boi*), [10], *Raí* (OIr *Roē*), [21], *Buise* (OIr *Baise*), [50]; (iii) loss of *u*-infection in an unstressed syllable in *oca chured*, [2],<sup>84</sup> (iv) use of a broad glide following *e* before a non-palatalised consonant in *teaglach*, [8], *Deadhaid* (for OIr gen. sg. *Dedad*) [18], *meadar*, [36], *teach*, [58];<sup>85</sup> (v) *eo* for *e* before lenited gutturals in stressed position as in *Eochaid*, [1], *Eochu*, [12],<sup>86</sup> (vi) */u/ > /d/* in *duid*, [42], [51], [52],<sup>87</sup> (vii) loss of final lenited *-d* in *do-gn̄d*, [6], (viii) a prosthetic *f* in *do-fuc* (OIr *do-uc*), [44];<sup>88</sup> (ix) loss of an initial consonant following nasalisation in *MS lasa nentar* (for *lasa ndentar*), [33],<sup>89</sup> (x) 18 instances of *or* and 6 *ar* for OIr *ol* 'says'.

#### *Old Irish morphological features*

The definite article in SMER generally adheres to Old Irish norms. The normal form of the article is seen in the nom., acc., and dat. sg. of both genders and the gen. sg. masc. The masc. nom. pl. form *in* is used in one instance, in *drochdaíne*, [6],<sup>90</sup> against the Middle Irish masc. pl. *na* in *na gilla*, [11], and *na maicléirich*, [20], forms which are likely later scribal modernisations. The

<sup>82</sup> However it should be noted that it is difficult to say whether this was originally a hiatus word. It is metrically confirmed as a disyllable in *Imram Brain* §13, according to Meyer's (1895, 9) edition. But in Mac Mathúna's (1985, 35, I, 60) edition, the editor adopts a reading based on two manuscripts where *dí* is treated as a monosyllable. It is also treated as a monosyllable in *Sentaine Berrí* §12 (Murphy 1953, 92). Some further examples of *ól/ool* are given in O Flaithearta (2006, 230–1). Contraction of hiatus forms occurs already in the Old Irish period, for instance, in the *Poems of Blathmac* (discussed in Stifter 2015, 72–6) and *Félire Óengusso* (discussed in Carney 1982–1983, 194–6). See also fn. 67.

<sup>83</sup> *SNG* III, §3.8.

<sup>84</sup> *SNG* III, §3.11. *Cuirred* is the verbal noun of *cuirid* (for earlier *do-cuirthar*).

<sup>85</sup> According to *SNG* III, §2.10, this is still uncommon in the Middle Irish period.

<sup>86</sup> *SNG* III, §3.7.

<sup>87</sup> For the development of *duir > duid*, see McCone (1981). Examples of *duid* are cited in *eDIL* s.v. *1 do*. Two further examples include *duid-seo*, *S Cano* 194, *fo-chen duid*, *S Cano* 219.

<sup>88</sup> See *SNG* III, §3.21; *EIV*, 199–200.

<sup>89</sup> In the manuscript, Charles O'Connor inserts the letter *d* above the line, i.e. *ndentar*. The examples cited in *SNG* III, §4.10 are found in twelfth-century manuscripts.

<sup>90</sup> According to Ó Máille (1910, 124), the last instance of nom pl. *in* in AU occurs in the entry for A.D. 999.

form *ind* is used before lenited *l* and *r* in gen. sg. *ind lina*, [27], and nom. sg. *ind rāih*, [44].<sup>91</sup> The shortened form *na* (for *inna*) of the masc. acc. pl. and fem. gen. sg. article is used, for instance, *ardhli na hÉirend*, [1].<sup>92</sup> There are no instances of masc. gen. pl., fem. nom. and gen. pl., or neut. nom., acc., or gen. pl. forms of the article in the text. The article alone, instead of *int-í*, is used with a proper name in *in Frachna*, [2], and *int Eochaid*, [3].<sup>93</sup>

There is no instance where a nom. sg. neuter noun is followed by nasalisation to indicate a neuter gender. The acc. sg. *ailig*, [57], of *ail* (originally an *i*-stem), is inflected as a *k*-stem, an inflectional development that occurs already in Old Irish.<sup>94</sup> For the gen. sg. of *u*-stems we find final *-a* in *lina*, [27], and *meda*, [37]. In syntax, the nom. sg. is used with the passive sg. in *lasro classa ind rāih-so*, [44].<sup>95</sup> Nasalisation is preserved on the adverbial and following the acc. sg. *laa*, [10], [12]. The non-palatalisation of final *-dn* in the gen. sg. *Boetān* (for *Baetān*), [1], is a feature which is already well attested in Old Irish.<sup>96</sup>

There are two instances of the comparative form functioning as superlative, namely *is sē mac dān līa eóius*, 'he is the most learned youth', [5]; *is é bus mīne frit-so*, 'it is he will be the most civil towards you', [8]. The collapse of the morphological distinction between superlative *-am/-em* and comparative *-(i)u* is witnessed already in the Old Irish period.<sup>97</sup> The historical

comparative ending is seen in *friu*, [42].<sup>98</sup> The irregular comparative form of *il* in *līa*, [5], albeit with superlative meaning, is possibly original, preserving the irregular comparative ending in *-a*.<sup>99</sup>

The adjectival form *lugaiddi* 'the lesser', [53], may represent a scribal reinterpretation of Old *lugu* (comparative of *bec*) + independent *dē*, which is treated as an enclitic by the Middle Irish period.<sup>100</sup>

The use of the infixed pronoun in SMER conforms to Old Irish norms:

**Class A:** 2sg. *immot-rála-su*, [20] (leg. *immo-t-rálae-su*); 3sg. masc. *do-n-uc Dīa*, [15];<sup>101</sup> *Nācha n-imderg*, [45];<sup>102</sup> 3sg. neut. *ro-fétar-sa*, [55].

**Class B:** 3sg. masc. *at-rai*, [25]; 3sg. neut. *at-rubairt*, [56] (leg. *at-rubart*).

**Class C:** 3sg. fem. *roda gart*, [49]; 3pl. *Conall Cernach roda lā*, [24]; *conda tharcaib Conall Cernach*, [25] (leg. *conda tharcaib*).

The text preserves the Old Irish Class C 3sg. fem. and pl. *-da*, later replaced by *-das*, which survives until the late tenth century.<sup>103</sup> There are no instances of an independent pronoun used to express the object with an active verb, instead of an infixed pronoun, a development which is still not yet reflected in the late tenth-century *Salair na Rann*. The earlier construction *atá x la y* is found in *atā maccān la*, [4], which is replaced with *atá x oclag y* in the twelfth century.<sup>104</sup> This construction rather than the rarer construction with the

<sup>91</sup> Note, however, that the historical form survives into the Middle Irish period, see SNG III, §7.7 for examples.

<sup>92</sup> However, in a study of the language of the Poems of Blathmac, Stifter (2015, 76–7) suggests that use of the shortened form *na* is not necessarily indicative of a later date.

<sup>93</sup> According to Thurneysen (GOI §474), proper names preceded with the article alone instead of by *int-í* are found 'in later MSS'. The following examples occur in the late Old Irish tale *Scéla Cano meic Gartnain*: *A n-íis moccu Chéilín ro-bai in Gartnain*, 'The aforesaid Gartnain was in his moccu Chéilín', *SCano* 1; *in Slatán*, *SCano* 44, and *in n-Illand*, 'the aforementioned Illand (king of Coru Loigde)', *SCano* 377.

<sup>94</sup> GOI §320.

<sup>95</sup> The use of the acc. after a passive verbal form is witnessed already in *Salair na Rann*; see SNG III, §5.2 for examples. However, instances of the passive and nominative still occur in the late Middle Irish period, e.g. in the twelfth-century tale *Bruiden Da Choca* (Toner 2007, 71).

<sup>96</sup> See GOI §280.1, SNG III, §5.5, McManus (1986, 11, n. 16). See Carney (1964, 155, 5d) for examples of non-palatalised final *-r* in the nom. pl. of masc. nouns ending in *-dn*.

<sup>97</sup> See Stifter (2015, 21–2) for a discussion of the comparative form for the superlative in the Poems of Blathmac. Two of the examples are metrically fixed. For examples in *Félire Dengusso*, see Stokes (1905, xxxviii). Note also that the superlative ending continues in use into the Middle Irish period, either as superlative or as the hypercorrect comparative ending, for which see SNG III, §6.15.

<sup>98</sup> Note however that this ending continues to be written in the Middle Irish period (SNG III, §6.11), in the Middle Irish period, the *-(i)u* ending encroaches to the irregular forms of the comparative which ended in *-a* in Old Irish, e.g. *at līu*, SR 7291. For further examples, see SNG III, §6.12. However, it survives as a literary form in the later period also, e.g. *līn bas līa*, LL 31043 (*Togail Troi*).

<sup>99</sup> That *dē* has a long stressed vowel in Old Irish is evidenced in rhyming examples from the Old Irish period (Brambach 2003, 135). It is treated as an independent word when following the comparative (see GOI §378 and the translator's note on p. 679; *eDIL* s.v. *5 de*), as shown in the rhyming example, for instance, in the poem *A mmo Chloimniu nēl amnē: mēnu dē*, §15 (Meyer 1907b, 294). In the Middle Irish period, it is treated as an enclitic, e.g. *mōte*, SR 1535 (SNG III, §6.13).

<sup>100</sup> According to Thurneysen (GOI §415), *do* and *ro* for *da* and *ra* are already found in the ninth century.

<sup>101</sup> This Middle Irish form is discussed further below on p. 154.

<sup>102</sup> In SNG III, §10.6, Liam Breatnach notes examples of *-das* alongside *-da* in *Salair na Rann* and in a poem written by Aibertach mac Cosse in 982. The form *-da* is not used in LU or LL.

<sup>103</sup> See *eDIL* s.v. *la*, VI (a); *oc*, IV (b). However, this construction is also used as an archaism in EModIr prose, for which see Mac Gearailt (2012, 95).

suffixed pronoun with dative force, i.e. *táthut maccáin*, may point to an early Middle Irish date.<sup>105</sup>

The emphatic negative *nícon* is preserved throughout the text, in [3], [58], [60]. The form with *i* becomes rarer in Middle Irish and is ultimately replaced by *noch*, *nacha* or *noco*.<sup>106</sup>

The text retains deuterotonic forms of compound verbs, viz. *do-bērat*, [6], *do-bēr-sa*, [6], *do-gēntar*, [9], *do-gnī[d]*, [14], *do-n-uc*, [15], *do-n-ūargaisset*, [19], *at-berad*, [20], *do-īuc*, [44], *at-rubairt*, [56], *do-rōme*, [55]. There are three contracted deuterotonic forms where the preverb ends in a vowel and the stressed portion begins with a vowel, viz. *faicēb-sa*, [57] (1sg. fut. of *fo-acuib* 'leaves'); *faicēbhna*, [60] (2sg. cond. of *fo-acuib* 'leaves'); *tall* (3sg. pret. of *do-alla* 'takes away, steals'), [62]. The form *lasa ndēntar*, [33], is the syncopated 3 pl. pres. ind. proto. pass. form of *do-gnī* (GOI §579)<sup>107</sup>

There are 11 preterite forms and 18 perfect forms, including the substantive verb and copula, with the perfect used with resultative force or in dialogue. *Ro* is generally infixed, as in *do-n-ūargaisset* (from *do-focuib*), [19]. There are no instances of the *ro*-past replacing the preterite, with the exception of *do bí*, [36], for which see below.

Many verbal forms in the text continue in use into the later language and are not indicative of an early date. For instance, the *t*-preterite is retained in *roda gart*, [49], the 3sg. perfect of *gairid*, later replaced by the *s*-/ suffixless inflexion, but this is still attested into the Middle Irish period, e.g. *ro gart*, SR 5635. The reduplicated preterite stem of *claidid* in *ro cheachlaid*, [41], also survives into Middle Irish (see examples in *eDIL* s.v. 1 *claidid*). The 3sg. prototonic s-subjunctive in *conā tī*, [8], from *do-ic* 'comes', is still used in the Middle Irish period.<sup>108</sup>

#### Later linguistic features

Trivial forms in the text include the dat. sg. *imresain*, [42], inflected as an *i*-stem, originally an *o*-stem in the Wb. and Ml. glosses.<sup>109</sup> The gen. sg. of *gáu* in *góa*, [11], may reflect a modernisation for earlier *guē*.<sup>110</sup> Nasalisation after the acc. sg. is missing in *ráith aile* (Olr *ráith n-aile*), [41], and *rígeices hērend* (Olr *rígeices nērend*), [16], which reflects the Middle Irish use of the nominative for the accusative as the object of the verb, a confusion which is found already in *Saltair na Rann*.<sup>111</sup> The loss of the dat. pl. ending is seen in the attributive adj. in *co n-éaigib corcraí* (Olr *co n-éaigib corcraib*), [31].<sup>112</sup> The adverbial form *anní*, [7], represents the confounding of the neut. indefinite pronoun *ní* with the deictic particle *i*, resulting in the hybrid form *an(n)i*. This form occurs predominantly in the Middle Irish period, but instances do occur earlier, e.g. Ml. 90b13 (noted in GOI §489). Minor innovations in the verbal system include palatalised final *-r* in *at-rubairt*, [56],<sup>113</sup> palatalised *-bs-* in *do-n-ūargaisset*, [19], *do* for *ro*, i.e. *do bí*, [36],<sup>114</sup> and Middle Irish lenition after the negative particle in *nī thucais*, [39].<sup>115</sup>

Aside from such trivial forms, which could easily have entered during the line of transmission, the text also contains a significant number of noteworthy linguistic forms. The text contains several instances of the Middle Irish construction of *ceithrar* + qualifying gen. pl. (for Old Irish construction *ceithair* + pl. noun), in *ceithrar maicléireach* (Olr *ceithair maicléirig*), [14], *ceithror óclach* (Olr *ceithair óclacha*), [31], and *ceithror maccám* (Olr *ceithair maccóim*), [41].<sup>116</sup> The consistent use of this Middle Irish construction suggests it belonged in the original rather than being introduced at a later point.

<sup>109</sup> See examples in *eDIL* s.v. *imresan*.

<sup>110</sup> This survives as a hiatus form in the Middle Irish period, e.g. *cen brath briathar goa*, LL 23489 (cited in SNG III, § 3.2).

<sup>111</sup> See Toner (2007, 71); Jackson (1990, 84).

<sup>112</sup> The dat. pl. ending with adjectives is still common in *Saltair na Rann*, apart from one instance, but it seems to be generally absent in the later Middle Irish period (SNG III, §6.3).

<sup>113</sup> SNG III, §12.45.

<sup>114</sup> SNG III, §11.4.

<sup>115</sup> For examples of lenition occurring after the negative particle in the Middle Irish period, see *eDIL* s.v. 3 *ní*.

<sup>116</sup> This newer construction developed towards the end of the tenth century. In SNG III, §8.8, Liam Breathnach cites an example from a poem preserved in *LL* that is attributed to Cúan Ua Lothcháin (†1024). Another example is found in *Orgain Denna Ríg*, viz. *ceithror óclach*, l. 439. Greene (1955, 17) dates this text to 'not before the early part of the tenth century'.

<sup>105</sup> Breathnach (1977, 86) notes only ten attestations of the 2sg. suffixed pronoun in the OIr period. According to Breathnach (1977, 103–4), use of the suffixed pronoun had diminished by the early Middle Irish period.

<sup>106</sup> See *eDIL* s.v. *nícon*; SNG III §11.7.

<sup>107</sup> GOI §579.

<sup>108</sup> See examples in SNG III, §12.90.

In the pronominal system, we find the Middle Irish 3sg. masc. inf. pron. in *nācha n-imderg* (Olr *nach n-imderg*), [45],<sup>117</sup> and the petrified pronoun in *at-berad*, 'they say' (Olr *as-berat*), [20], the latter which could have been introduced by a later scribe.<sup>118</sup>

There are also more innovative verbal forms such as simplified verbal forms. For instance, *tuidlig*, [31], is the simplex form based on the prototonic stem of the Old Irish compound *do-aidlea*, seen with a new simplex absolute ending. The final lenited -g, for -d, possibly reflects post-twelfth century scribal usage.<sup>119</sup> The simplex form *tūargabais* (Olr *do-fūargabais*), [57], reflects the spread of prototonic forms.<sup>120</sup> The placement of the *ro* particle in *ro himdergad* [52] shows that the verb is being treated as a simple verb *imdergaid*, rather than as a compound verb *imm-derga*.<sup>121</sup> The 1sg. *ē*-future of *acallaid* 'addresses' in *acēlait-si*, [8], replaces Old Irish deponent *ad-glādathar* which takes a reduplicated future, i.e. -gegallar.<sup>122</sup> Bergin suggested to Knott (1916, 156 n. 1) that this should be emended to *acēla-sa*, with the 1sg. abs. fut. ending. However, the ending -ait is well attested in the Middle Irish period.<sup>123</sup> Another instance of such an ending is seen in the 1sg. fut. of the substantive verb, *bāit-se*, [5].

Other significant verbal forms include the 2sg. ipv. *cairigh*, [21], here with an active ending (Olr -*cairigthe* from the deponent *cairigidir* 'rebukes').<sup>124</sup> The ending of the 3sg. perfect passive *lasro classa* (Olr *lasro class*), [44], reflects the loss of differentiation between the absolute and conjunct ending.<sup>125</sup> The 3sg. perfect active *do-rōime*, [55], (Olr *do-rigēni* or *do-rigini*), reflects the

<sup>117</sup> Middle Irish examples of this pronoun are attested in *Saltair na Rann*, as cited in *SWG III*, §10.6. For further examples, see also *eDIL* s.v. 2 *nach*, *nāch*.

<sup>118</sup> See *SWG III*, §11.23.

<sup>119</sup> This confusion already occurs in the later Middle Irish period (*SWG III*, §3.18).

<sup>120</sup> *SWG III*, §11.28.

<sup>121</sup> *SWG III*, §11.16.

<sup>122</sup> *EW 221*; *SWG III*, §12.117.

<sup>123</sup> e.g. *geban*, *LU 7071* (= *BDD* §73), *faisigif-sea*, *LU 1173* (Lebor Breimach); *reguit-se*, *LL 37151*; *gebat-sa*, *LL 36635*. See also Bergin (1932, 136). On the development of this ending in the Middle Irish period, see Breimach (1977, 104–6); *EIV* 174–5.

<sup>124</sup> This occurs already in *Saltair na Rann* (*SWG III*, §12.24). The context here suggests that this form should be a 2sg., rather than 3pl. *cairigid*, i.e. one of the *maccléirig* is addressing one of the other three members of his group, see [16–7].

<sup>125</sup> *SWG III*, §12.70. Another example is cited in *eDIL* s.v. *claidid* (d), from the prose *dindsenchas* of Silge Dala: *roclasa a fer and there his grave was dug* (Stokes 1894, 454).

Middle Irish analogical extension of the passive stem to the active.<sup>126</sup> The phrase *cid iathai*, 'what ails ye', [43], is a re-formation of Olr *cid no taaid* (*cid* + relative form of the substantive verb).<sup>127</sup> In *rosa ralla*, [17], *rosa* is a combination of the Middle Irish form of the preposition (*ro*) with the relative particle (corresponding to Olr *frisa*) and the 3pl. perf. pass. of *ro-lá* (the suppletive form of *fo-ceird*), which translates literally as 'against/ for whom they were placed'.<sup>128</sup> The perfect is used in *do bī*, [36], following the conjunction *ó* 'from the time that, after', which in Old Irish was followed by the preterite.<sup>129</sup> The adverb *bés* is followed by the indicative in the phrase *bés is*, [21] (for the Old Irish construction *bés* + subjunctive, i.e. *bésu*, *béso*, meaning 'perhaps, maybe').<sup>130</sup> The 3sg. form of the copula is used with a plural subject in the phrase *nābad cabdi lei na scolaiqe*, [29], reflecting the Middle Irish lack of concordance between the copula and subject.<sup>131</sup> The predicative adjective form in the manuscript is ambiguous, and therefore it is unclear whether the singular or plural form was originally intended.

Finally, the relative particle *a<sup>n</sup>* is followed by a dependent rather than an independent verbal form in *a ndēndais* (Olr *a ndo-gnitis*), [26].<sup>132</sup> The sentence *ba dōich im bad Claid Deadhaid do-n-ūargabseil*, [18], translates literally as 'I should think the Children of Deda raised them', with the object understood. The nasal relative marker with a subject antecedent would not be permitted in

<sup>126</sup> *SWG III* §12.66. The analogical extension of the perfect passive stem for the active in *do-gni* occurs already in *Saltair na Rann* (*EIV* 234).

<sup>127</sup> See *eDIL* s.v. *atá* 1(d); *GOI* §§502, 779, 2.

<sup>128</sup> Knott (1916, 156) has *ro-s-aralla*, which *eDIL* cites under the headword s.v. *ar-dili* (b) 'induces, causes, brings about', but cf. *eDIL* s.v. *fo-ceird* which, also citing the example from Knott's edition, tentatively suggests reading *frisa ralla*.

<sup>129</sup> In Old Irish, the conjunction *ó* with a following preterite had the meaning of 'from the time that, since', but in the Middle Irish period, the preterite came to be replaced by the perfect, i.e. *ó* + perfect 'since' (see *eDIL* s.v. 2 *ó* (a)). The earliest example cited in *eDIL* s.v. 2 *ó* of the latter construction is found in the Egerton copy of *Tochmarc Étaíne*: i.e. *Atáa sunn ém ri ficher m-blidan o rogenar issin i-sid*, §5 (Windisch 1880, 120.20). 'And indeed twenty years have I lived in this place, ever since I was born in the mound' (Leahy 1905, 13). Emending *do boi* in the first line of the stanza (l. 36) to the preterite *boi* is not possible as this would leave the line one syllable short.

<sup>130</sup> See *GOI* §517; *eDIL* s.v. 2 *bés*, e.g. *béss iss hé lssau*, *SR 2893*. Ó Fiannachta (1964/66, 76) suggests the Middle Irish construction is treated as an asseveration, 'translating "indeed", "verily"', On *bés* being marked long in manuscripts, see Dillon (1975, 42). It is metrically confirmed as short in Classical Modern Irish, see *eDIL* s.v. 2 *bés* for examples.

<sup>131</sup> *SWG III*, §14.4.

<sup>132</sup> *SWG III*, §10.25.



Old Irish and reflects an archaism introduced at a point after which nasalising relative constructions were no longer understood.<sup>133</sup>

# CONCLUSION

Previous scholarship has suggested that SMER is similar in date to the other Mongán tales. However, the linguistic evidence outlined above shows that this is not the case. Certainly, the original does contain Old Irish linguistic features. However, many of these forms continue in use into the early Middle Irish period. Moreover, the text contains a significant and consistent amount of later linguistic features. This points to a date of composition between c. 850 to 950, if not shortly thereafter, and with the possibility of an archetype having undergone modernisation in the late Middle Irish period. This date is further supported by the style of the prose and dialogue similar to other contemporary tales, such as *Fingal Ronáin*. Furthermore, it has been shown that the earlier Mongán tales were sources that influenced the author of SMER, who drew on the similar themes found in SFM and SM. Given that a date for SMER has now been established, it is hoped that further study of the narrative and the characterisation of Mongán in this tale will help highlight the connection between it and the Mongán tales and indeed the development of the Mongán literary cycle as a whole.

## VERSES IN THE 'IONA CHRONICLE'? TEXTUAL AND LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE

Fangzhe Qiu\*

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the verses shared by both the *Annals of Ulster* and either the *Annals of Tigernach* or the *Chronicon Scotiorum* or both and tries to establish the textual history of these verses. It also analyses the linguistic profiles of these verses in order to evaluate whether they are contemporary to the incidents depicted in them. Since these verses describe events before the eighth century, if they are linguistically contemporary, they could have belonged to the ancestor of all extant Irish annals (the 'Iona Chronicle') before it was brought to Ireland in the mid-eighth century. The result has important bearings on our understanding of the origin and the evolution of the Irish annals.

### INTRODUCTION

All extant copies of Irish annals contain varying amounts of syllabic verse written in Irish. In the TCD MS H 1.8 (1282; hereafter H) copy of the *Annals of Ulster* (hereafter AU),<sup>1</sup> many verses are inscribed in the margins and interlinear spaces, but only one marginal verse is found in the Rawl. B 489 copy (hereafter R)<sup>2</sup> of AU. Syllabic verses are found integrated into the annal

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<sup>1</sup> Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, MS H 1.8 (1282), the part up to 1131 edited by Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill (1983). Here, as elsewhere in scholarly literature, this edition is referred to as *AC*.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 489. The only marginal verse in this manuscript is found at the lower margin of f. 2v and has been edited by Bretnach (2015, 222–3).

<sup>133</sup> See Ó hUiginn (1986, 69–70, 75). It is likely that the nasalizing relative clause ceased to be productive in the earlier part of the tenth century.