# Wisdom-texts from Early Christian Ireland: Aspects of Style, Syntax and Semantics'

# Wisdom-texts from Early Christian Ireland: Aspects of Style, Syntax and Semantics

*Maxim Fomin*

## 1. Introduction

This article presents a brief discussion of the nature, as well as the aspects of style, syntax, and semantic structure of the three wisdom-texts, originated in early medieval Ireland – two vernacular ones (*Audacht Moraind* 'The Testament of Morainn', and *Tecosca Cormaic* 'Instructions of Cormac') and one Hiberno-Latin composition (*De duodecim abusiuis saeculi* (hereinafter *De duodecim*), 'Concerning the twelve abuses of the world') under the title *Nonus abusionis gradus est rex iniquus*, 'The ninth abuse of the world is an unjust king'. The data contained in vernacular and Hiberno-Latin texts will be represented on the basis of the semantics of their contents, but most importantly in relation to the syntagmatics of their structure.

## 2. Early Irish wisdom-literature: discussion of the state of scholarship

To provide the reader with a broader outlook on the subject, we need to glance through the evidence of the secondary literature to date. Following D. A. Binchy's influential introduction to his edition of *Bretha Déin Chécht* (1966), scholars speak of the wisdom-tradition, rather than individual wisdom-texts. However, speaking of the texts under consideration as stemming from wisdom-tradition is problematic, as this implies at least some common pool of ideas, formulas, devices, that one can draw upon in order to establish a common wisdom-tradition.

### 2.1. Binchy on Early Irish wisdom-literature

Binchy gave a very short, but at the time very influential, treatment of *Audacht Morainn* (hereinafter *AM*), its language, nature and character. He observed the preponderance with Christian sentiments in *AM*'s recension A and noted the absence of Christian loanwords in the more ancient recension B of the text: 'that is to say words which came into Irish with Christianity, not such ancient borrowings as *ór, arcat, cland, fín, olann*, etc.' (Binchy 1966: 3). He also pointed out that this is not accidental, nor is it a deliberate avoidance on the part of the scribe: 'linguistic nationalism, with its prejudice against *Fremdwörter* is a modern phenomenon.

A much more tenable explanation of their absence in some Irish texts is that these texts date from a period before Christianity and Latin learning had percolated into the native schools' (Binchy 1966: 4). The concept of the division of the schools of learning into native (read 'secular') and clerical has played a prominent part in arguments for the non-clerical composition of some of the vernacular gnomic texts in question. In this connection an extremely valuable observation has, however, been made by D. Ó Corráin (1980: 151-2):

> 'Indeed, it is easy to exaggerate the archaistic character of the Irish men of learning especially since their aetiological approach caused them to project recent events and circumstances into the remote past… However, the old traditions and the new Christian learning fused at an early date and there was a close relationship between poets, judges and clerical scholars… Law was practised in the monastic towns… Christian elements were freely absorbed and fused with native tradition. There are no neat categories.'
>
> Ó Corráin (1980: 151-2)

## 2.2. *Hellmann's discussion of De duodecim*

Despite its continental prominence – *De duodecim* survived mainly in continental manuscripts (Hellmann 1909: 26-30; Breen 2002: 88-89, 92-3) – its Irish origins (or at least strong connections) have been generally recognised. Hellmann's (1909: 3-4, 15-6) view on the nature of *De duodecim* was that this tract had been written in Ireland between 650 and 700 AD.[1] As far as its authorship is concerned, Hellmann noted that besides its attribution to Ps.-Cyprian, it was also ascribed to Isidore of Seville, Augustine of Hippo, Origen and St. Patrick (Hellmann 1909: 19-20).[2] He saw some lexical features characteristic of Hiberno-Latin, for instance, failure to discern between *enim* and *autem*, *igitur* and *ergo* (Hellmann 1909: 30); other scholars also referred to Ps.-Cyprian's allusions to the Old Testament's view of God's relationship with the kings of Israel also reveal his Irish outlook.[3] As can be seen

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[1] Anton (1982: 569-574) and Breen (2002: 79, 83) come to the same conclusion with regard to its origin. Aitchison's view is in broad agreement, suggesting however that the text had been 'written on the continent by an Irish scholar' (Aitchison 1994: 63).

[2] A. Breen (1987a: 81, 82, 93, 100; 2002: 79, 82-3) has undertaken to gain a more accurate idea of the real authorship of the text. In his opinion, *De duodecim* was written by a member of the *Romani* faction in the Irish church.

[3] 'Ps.-Cyprian and the Old Testament view of God's relationship with the kings of Israel apparently went very well together. That is not surprising as the Irish were renowned for their affinity to the Old Testament. They were, for example, also the first to adopt part of the dietary regulations from the Old Testament' (Meens 1998: 56). Much has been written on this subject (see Ó Corráin, Breatnach and Breen 1984: 382-438; Breatnach 1986; Ó Corráin 1987; Davies 1996).

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already from the title of the text, *De duodecim* exhibits the so-called 'enumerative style', a characteristic feature of Irish literacy as a whole.[4] Some passages in the ninth section of the treatise exhibit the use of alliteration and the stylistic device of homoeoteleuton (rhyme), of which Irish authors were especially fond.[5]

## 2.3. *Kelly's view on Audacht Moraind*

Kelly took an extremely moderate position when dealing with the ideology and character of the *tecosc* texts. In the introduction to his edition of Recension B of *AM*, he examined the previous discussion on its date, ascribed authorship and customary use. As far as the presence of Christian sentiments and Latin loan-words in the text is concerned, he did not distance himself significantly from Binchy's standpoint, stating that 'though one cannot rule out the possibility of outside influence in a text which must have taken roughly its present form over 200 years after the arrival of Christianity, it has yet to be shown that any of the ideas which it expresses are of Christian provenance' (Kelly 1976: xv). To support his view of the native origin of the text itself, Kelly cited Hellmann's hypothesis concerning the decisive influence of the Irish gnomic texts in moulding and propagating the Latin genre of the *speculum principis*, comparing this with the contribution made to European literature by the Irish Otherworld tradition exemplified in the *imram* and *echtra* tales. Kelly held essentially the same views in his *Guide to Early Irish Law*. Discussing the matter concerned with the legal manuscript tradition, the origin of the law-texts and their authors, etc., he argues for the non-clerical composition of *AM*:

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[4] 'In comparison to most continental sources, Irish biblical commentaries, florilegia and homily collections are remarkable for their persistent use of numerical motifs, often grouped in sequence or employed as a structural principle, as in the influential tract *De duodecim abusiuis saeculi*' (Wright 1993: 21). He discusses this topic most fully in section 2, 'The 'enumerative style' in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England' (Wright 1993: 49ff.).

[5] In what follows, we shall examine the ninth section of *De duodecim* for its use of these features. As F. Quadlbauer (1982: 433) noted, in early medieval Europe, alliteration was used as either a follow-on to the antique and late antique Latin practice (in the works of Sidonius Apollinarius, for instance) or as a genuinely native stylistic device. The antique rhetoric (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*) warned of the use of the same letter. On the other hand, within the tradition of the antique Latin grammar (Donatus, fourth century A.D.) its use was defined through Isidore. Bede legitimised alliteration, using it as a positive stylistic device. Alliteration was accepted as a form of verbal ornament, and was especially favoured by Irish and Anglo-Saxon authors composing in Latin. As an illustration, we may note the repeated use of alliteration in *Audite omnes amantes*, a Hiberno-Latin hymn dedicated to St. Patrick (Orchard 1993: 156-7).

'The question then arises: was *Audacht Morainn* composed by a cleric? I would doubt this. Apart from a few Christian loanwords (e.g. §59 *bendacht* 'blessing') and a reference to the Creator (§32 *dúilem*), *Audacht Morainn* seems devoid of Christian elements. If it were the work of a cleric, one would surely expect him to attribute the prosperity of the territory not only to the king's justice (*fír flathemon*) but also to divine favour.'

(Kelly 1988: 236)

### 2.4. McCone's Pagan Past and Christian Present

A useful discussion of a question by K. McCone is based on a comparison of various excerpts from the gnomic literature with the ecclesiastical literature of the Bible, i.e. Psalms, Book of Proverbs, etc. and the Hiberno-Latin wisdom-texts. As a further argument for the Christian provenance of the wisdom texts, he offered the conjecture that the ascriptions of the 'most comprehensive extant wisdom texts' to Morand, Cormac mac Art and Fíthal, who were reputed to be the first people in Ireland to have worshipped the true God of the Old Testament, 'indicate that their authors regarded the texts in question as fundamentally compatible with Christian teaching' (McCone 1990: 142). He illustrated this statement by drawing attention to the resemblances between the merciful and peaceful spirit of the gnomic precepts and the paradigm of Christian morality.

'Instead of asking what is specifically Christian about extant vernacular instructions for princes and the like, one might equally or more appropriately ask what they contain that is specifically pagan or inapplicable to early Christian Irish society. The answer is, little or nothing.'

(McCone 1990: 142)

### 2.5. Ireland on Bríathra Flainn Fhína

Another account of the problem of the origin, message and authorship of the Irish wisdom-texts can be found in Colin Ireland's monograph *An Old Irish Wisdom-Text Attributed to Aldfrith of Northumbria: An Edition of* Bríathra Flainn Fhína maic Ossu (1999) (the wisdom-text is hereinafter referred to as *BFF*). Drawing our attention to the stylistic affinity between the maxims of the *Triads* (ed. Meyer 1906) and legal precedents, Ireland distinguished 'secular wisdom-texts written in vernacular which concern themselves with proper conduct and its consequences for society at large' in the corpus of Old Irish texts, but was not sure whether the similar

texts written in Latin 'have been composed from either a secular or a theological point of view' (Ireland 1999: 8). In a survey of the *speculum principis* genre, he established a link between it and some 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… The 'Rule of Ailbe of Emly' is an Old Irish monastic rule which has much in common stylistically with *specula*. It is presented as the advice of a venerated elder… through an intermediary to… a younger person about to assume a position of authority… The advice of Morann to Feradach is presented in much the same fashion in *Audacht Morainn*.'

(Ireland 1999: 9)

When discussing the problem of the authorship of the wisdom texts, he stressed the importance of the 'reputation of, and cultural role played by, the purported author – even when ascribed to a legendary or mythological figure. Ascriptions, therefore, must be taken seriously' (Ireland 1999: 48). Although he paid particular attention to the existence of oral culture as well as lay literacy in vernacular, together with religious writing, and of the fact that *BFF* was composed for a literate, secular audience, he nevertheless specified that the collection was a product of an ecclesiastically educated redactor (Ireland 1999: 48).

### 2.6. Stacey on law and memory

Quite recently, R.S. Stacey presented some useful discussion on the nature of law and memory in early mediaeval Ireland. He suggested treating wisdom and legal literature maxims as 'compositions in a genre rather than as stable, unchanging entities'. Writing 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 re-contextualising of this matter rather than the preservation of it verbatim' (Stacey 2004: 66-67).

What about the evidence of the texts themselves? Having looked in some detail at the extensive controversy which surrounds their nature, in what follows the evidence of the texts themselves will be examined. Setting aside the various pre-conceptions which have often determined various approaches described above, we will devote some attention to the variations in style, syntax, patterns of alliteration and literary devices employed in *De duodecim*, *AM* and *TC*, as well as to the similarities observed when juxtaposing the texts with one another.

### 3. Evidence of *De duodecim* on kingship

The aim of *De duodecim* is to denounce the twelve negative examples of behaviour deemed immoral by Christian standards and to reinforce the Christian morality of the audience. The composition of *De duodecim* was often attributed to a third-century bishop of Carthage, Cyprian, and for that reason its author is usually referred to as Pseudo-Cyprian. *De duodecim* was one of the sources used by the compilers of the principal Hiberno-Latin collection of canon law (*Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*, hereinafter *CCH*) (see Breen 2002: 82). Its influence on the further development of the genre in medieval Europe was also important. As has been shown by Anton (1982: 578ff.), the relevant passages from *CCH* were constantly employed in later texts of the *speculum principis* genre to illustrate the positive consequences of the deeds of the good king and the destructive results of the deeds of the bad one.[6]

It has been well observed that the ninth section of the composition may be placed in the category of *speculum principis* or 'prince's mirror'. In light of *De duodecim*'s early seventh century date,[7] the section under discussion can be described as one of the oldest specimens of its kind. It stands out as being exceptional within *De duodecim* as a whole. Throughout the composition, as Meens has stated, 'all the other categories treat a whole range of unlawful behaviour but the effects are mainly of an eschatological kind… Only in the ninth *abusio*, that of the *rex iniquus*, the unjust king, do we find consequences on a truly cosmological scale' (Meens 1998: 349-50).

As I have no access to an English translation of the text, I shall provide my own renderings of the original Latin, supplemented by references to the corresponding pages and line numbers in the German edition.

The section's structure can be construed without difficulty. At the starting point (Hellmann 1909: 51.9-52.8) we are provided with a list of the components of righteous rule, introduced by the formula *Iustitia vero regis est* 'The justice of a king is indeed [the following]'. When this enumeration is finished, the scribe summarises: *haec regni prosperitatem in praesenti faciunt et regem ad caelestia regna meliora perducunt*, 'these things [listed above] create the prosperity of the kingdom in the present, and lead the king to the better heavenly realms' (Hellmann

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[6] See, for instance, sections CCXXXIV (*De eo quod bonorum regum opera aedificent*) and CCXXXV (*De eo quod malorum regum opera prosperitas mundi destruant*) in Fornasari (1970: 142-143).

[7] *De duodecim* was most likely written in the seventh century. For dating see Hellmann (1909: 2-4), who proposed a dating in the period 650x670. Kenney (1929: 281-2) and more recently Breen (1987b: 230, n. 3; 2002: 82-84), argue for a date of composition 630x650.

1909: 52.7-8). However, if a king fails to comply with the requirements of king's justice (*iustitia regis*), this results in the devastation of his kingdom. This is described in the middle part of the section, and is followed by an antithetical evocation in the third part. The latter consists of a series of short maxims which, when taken as a whole, comprise an account of the natural and societal consequences of keeping to every king's law.

The introductory part of the section is dedicated solely to a discussion of the king's proper function, which is described as being the corrector of the wicked (*iniquorum correctorem*). In the opinion of *De duodecim*'s author, the king (*rex*) exercises his rule (*rectoris officium*) by correcting (*corrigere*) the moral behaviour (*proprios mores*) of his subjects and of himself. This theme dominates the introduction, which is built upon the different connotations of the nouns *rex*, *rector* and *corrector*, as well as the verb *corrigere*.[8]

### 3.1. *Nonus abusionis gradus est rex iniquus*, Part 1: text and translation

The introduction is followed by the first part, which consists mainly of a string of short clauses, each of which concludes with a verb in the infinitive, usually governing an accusative object.

*Quoniam in iustitia regis exaltatur solium et in veritate solidantur*
*gubernacula populorum. Iustitia vero regis est*
(1) *neminem iniuste per potentiam opprimere,*
(2) *sine acceptione personarum inter virum et proximum suum iudicare,*
(3) *advenis et pupillis et viduis defensorem esse,*
(4) *furta cohibere,* (5) *adulteria punire,*
(6) *iniquos non exaltare,* (7) *impudicos et striones non nutrire,*
(8) *impios de terra perdere,* (9) *parricidas et periurantes vivere non sinere,*
(10) *ecclesias defendere,* (11) *pauperes elemosynis alere,*
(12) *iustos super regni negotia constituere,*
(13) *senes et sapientes et sobrios consiliarios habere,*
(14) *magorum et hariolorum et pythonissarum superstitionibus non*
*intendere…* (23) *ante horas congruas non gustare cibum:* (24) *"Vae enim*
*terrae, cuius rex est puer et cuius principes mane comedunt". Haec regni*
*prosperitatem in praesenti faciunt et regem ad caelestia regna meliora*
*perducunt.*

(Hellmann 1909: 51.8-52.8)

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[8] For full treatment of this etymological derivation, see Fomin (1999: 164-165).

'For it is in the justice of the king that the throne is exalted and in truth that the rudder of the peoples is strengthened. Truly, the justice of the king is [the following]:

(1) to oppress nobody unjustly by his might, (2) to judge between a man and his neighbour without regarding of persons, (3) to be the protector of strangers and orphans and widows, (4) to repress thefts, (5) to punish adultery, (6) not to exalt the unjust, (7) not to maintain shameless persons and stage-players, (8) to drive the impious out of the country, (9) not to allow parricides and perjurers to live, (10) to defend churches, (11) to sustain the poor with alms (12) to give just men responsibility for the business of the realm, (13) to have as counsellors the old, the wise and the reasonable, (14) not to pay attention to the superstitions of magicians, prophets and sorceresses… (23) not to taste food before the suitable time: (24) "Woe to the land, whose king is a boy and whose governors eat early in the morning". These things create the prosperity of the kingdom in the present and lead the king to the better heavenly realms.'

### 3.2. *Nonus abusionis gradus est rex iniquus, Part 2: text and translation*

The second part can be separated into several sub-divisions. The first, beginning with *Idcirco enim saepe pax populorum rumpitur* as far as *servitia populorum praepediuntur*, consists of a series of clauses, in each of which the subject is expressed by the nominative case of a noun, governing a passive verb. Then, from *multi et varii dolores prosperitatem regni inficiunt* as far as *arborum flores et pampinos exurunt*, the passive voice of the verb is changed into active, but they all continue to be plural, in this resembling the second, third and fourth clauses in the preceding series. The concluding subdivision of the second part, which provides an illustrative digression on the topic of David's righteousness (*iustitiam David regis*) and Solomon's sin (*piaculum enim Salomonis*), departs from both patterns not only in terms of style, but also from the point of view of the grammar, being governed by singular verbs.

> *Qui vero regnum secundum hanc legem non dispensat, multas nimirum adversitates imperii tolerat. Idcirco enim saepe* (1) *pax populorum rumpitur et* (2) *offendicula etiam de regno suscitantur;* (3) *terrarum quoque fructus diminuuntur et* (4) *servitia populorum praepediuntur.* (5) *Multi et varii dolores prosperitatem regni inficiunt…* (9a) *tempestates aeris et* (9b) *hemisperia turbata* (9c) *terrarum fecunditatem et* (9d) *maris ministeria prohibent et aliquando* (10) *fulminum ictus* (10a)

*segetes et* (10b) *arborum flores et* (10c) *pampinos exurunt.* (11) *Super omnia vero regis iniustitia non solum praesentis imperii* (11a) *faciem fuscat, sed etiam filios et nepotes, ne post se regni hereditatem teneant, obscurat.* (12) *Propter piaculum enim Salomonis regnum domus Israhel dominus de manibus filiorum eius dispersit, et propter iustitiam David regis lucernam de semine eius semper in Hierusalem reliquit.*

(Hellmann 1909: 52.9 – 53.5)

'Whoever, indeed, does not rule the kingdom according to this law, without doubt endures many misfortunes of rule. Therefore often (1) the peace of his people is destroyed, and (2) scandals are stirred up concerning his reign, and (3) the fruits of the lands are lessened, and (4) the servitude of his people is limited.

(5) Numerous and various troubles corrupt the prosperity of his kingdom… (9a) storms of the air and (9b) agitated skies destroy (9c) the fecundity of the land and (9d) the supplies of the sea, and at times (10) the blows of lightnings strip bare (10a) the crops and (10b) the flowers and (10c) young leaves of the trees. Moreover, indeed, the injustice of the king (11a) not only darkens the face of the present reign, but it even casts a shadow over (11) his sons and descendants, preventing them from inheriting the kingdom from him. (12) Because of Solomon's sin God scattered the kingdom of Israel's race from his sons' hands, and on account of king David's justice he left a lamp of his seed forever in Jerusalem.'

### 3.3. *Aspects of Ps.-Cyprian's literary style*

The literary style of Ps.-Cyprian should be given some consideration. The sentence structure of the composition is not elaborate, and the author mainly uses relatively short units to form the basic building blocks of the text. This is not to say that he does not also occasionally use longer units; these, as can be demonstrated, are echoes or quotations from the Bible.[9]

Alliteration is not especially frequent, but several examples can be noted.[10] This normally involves pairs of adjacent words (part 1: **p**arricidas et **p**eriurantes

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[9] There are two passages in our text which are direct quotations from the Bible. Ex. (24) of the first part comes at the very end of the section and is cited from Eccl. 10:16. Ex. (12) of the second part comes at the end of the section as well and is a conflation of 1 Kings 11:31, 36 and 2 Sam. 22 (22:29).

[10] Here, and elsewhere, the alliterating consonants are emboldened.

(9), *elemosynis alere* (11); part 2: ***p**ax **p**opulorum* (1), ***p**opulorum **p**raepediuntur* (4), ***t**urbata **t**errarium* (9b-c), ***m**aris **m**inisteria* (9d)*, **f**aciem **f**uscat* (11a), and there is one triad of alliterating nouns in part 1: ***s**enes et **s**apientes et **s**obrios* (13). What look like instances of complex alliteration[11] crop up in the beginning of the first part in the opening phrase ***s**olium et in veritate **s**olidantur gubernacula*, as well as in the following examples: (9) ***p**arricidas et **p**eriurantes,* (11) ***e**lemosynis **a**lere.* In the second part, the following can be presented as another instance of complex alliteration: (9) *hemisperia **t**urbata **t**errarum fecunditatem*. Evidently, alliteration performs the function of patterning of syntax, especially in examples (9) and (13) of the first part. By contrast with the usage in Irish verse, alliterating words may here be separated by words bearing stress, e.g. ***s**olium et in veritate **s**olidantur*; ***i**niustitia non solum praesentis **i**mperii*.

Elsewhere, homoeoteleuton (rhyme) performs the same patterning of syntax, as in exx. (3) and (14) of the first part, where the passages *advenis et pupillis et viduis defensorem esse* and *magorum et hariolorum et pythonissarum superstitionibus non intendere* share the pattern of a triad of gen. plurals dependent on a noun, governed by the infinitive of the verb. This patterning is underlined by the rhymes on *advenis: pupillis: viduis* in the first instance and *magorum: hariolorum: pythonissarum* in the second.

### 3.4. *De duodecim* and *Collection Canonum Hibernensis*

It should be noted that the first three parts of our text are found in a less elaborate form in chapter XXV of *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* (hereinafter *CCH*), devoted to kings (Wasserschleben 1885: 91-2). Breen (2002: 82) points out that 'the extracts are neither garbled nor verbatim, but they are clearly taken from some version of *De duodecim*' and elsewhere, 'the supported derivations … can be shown to have been taken directly from *De duodecim*'. I will provide the text of *CCH* for the purposes of reference at the end of this section. The divergences between the texts do not, however, seem significant in terms of contents and terminology. Even after a thorough comparison of the relevant passages in *CCH*, it does not seem possible to assess the problem of their connection with *De duodecim* at this stage.[12]

I am, however, inclined to think that the material in *CCH* reflects an earlier stage of the text, before it was exposed to the redaction of Carolingian scribes. This is suggested by the fact that the readings of *CCH* not only differ from those in our text, but exhibit greater consistency. For instance, the diversity of the verbal pattern in the second part of section 9 in *De duodecim*, including both passive and active plurals, can be contrasted with the simplicity of the pattern used in *CCH*, where the 3 sg. pres. form of the verb is used throughout:[13]

> *Pax populorum **rumpitur** et offendicula… de regno **suscitantur**, terrarum …fructus **diminuuntur** et servitia populorum **praepediuntur**, multi et varii dolores prosperitatem regni **inficiunt**, carorum et liberorum mortes tristitiam **conferunt**, hostium incursus provincias undique **vastant**.*
>
> (Hellmann 1909: 52.9-15)

> *Pacem populi **rumpit**, offendicula regno **suscitat**, terrarum fructus **deprimit**, seruitia populorum **impedit**,* (note the absence of the corresponding phrase in *CCH*), *carorum mortem **praeparat**, hostium incursus in provincias undique **concitat**.*
>
> (Wasserschleben 1885: 91-2)

### 4. Recension A of *Audacht Moraind*

The next composition to be considered is the vernacular wisdom-text *Audacht Morainn*, 'The Testament of Morand' (hereinafter *AM*). As stated earlier, this text has been preserved in two main recensions, A and B, of which the latter is considered to be the earlier. L[1] which is a recension preserved in the Book of Leinster (hereinafter *LL*, lines 37523-37635) usually agrees with readings of A, but some of its parts are shared with B recension. The composition on the whole is extremely heterogeneous, consisting of different segments, and one can tell it from the linguistic analysis of its structure. I will be devoting most of my attention to recension A, employing those of B and L[1] only for illustrative purposes.[14]

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[11] In the definition by D. Sproule, 'we will take complex alliteration as occurring between two or more stressed words in sequence…when the initial consonants are the same (whether mutated are not…) and the second consonants are the same. In the case of words, beginning with a vowel… when the first consonants in the words are identical'. For a full argument, postulating the use of this type of alliteration in early Irish verse see Sproule (1987: 183-195).

[12] Anton (1982) argues for the common derivation of *abusio* 9 and *CCH* XXV, 3-4 from a hypothetical Irish *Sentenzensammlung*, or collection of proverbial maxims, that was circulating in a Hiberno-Latin milieu. Breen, however skeptical he is with regard to

the existence of such a relationship between *De duodecim* and *CCH*, acknowledges the possibility 'that some common pool of proverbial material may once have existed' on the basis of 'similarities between phrases and expressions in *De duodecim* and other Hiberno-Latin texts' (Breen 2002: 82, n. 14).

[13] *Cf.* Breen (1988: 31-34) for a full list of divergences between the two compositions together with discussion.

[14] Useful discussion of *AM* is contained in Kelly (1976: xiii-xlv). For the readings of A, employed here, see Appendix 1 of Kelly's edition which presents the conflated edition of recensions that do not belong to recension B (Kelly 1976: 58-71).

### 4.1. Audacht Moraind: introductory part

The introductory part, which is very similar to a similar passage in recension B, is very neatly bound together by means of the different patterns of alliteration employed. The text opens in all recensions with an injunction which can be translated by the imperative 'Arise!'. Recs. A and L¹, both employing the ipv. form of the verb *con-éirig*, 'rises', agree against B, whose *at-ré* is an –s– subj. form of the verb *ad-reig* with a similar meaning.

The next three lines of Rec. A do not substantially differ from those of B and L¹. It is only in the last line of the paragraph that A becomes more elaborate, employing an alliterating sequence of five words: *Fásaig fírinni fírforbor flatho féig* (Kelly 1976: 59.16) 'announce the truly powerful justice of a sharp-sighted ruler'. B has *fír*, 'truth', rather than *fírinne*, 'justice, righteousness', at the centre of its exposition: *fasaich, forbeir fír*, 'announce, increase truth' (Kelly 1976: 2-3). One should note that both linking alliteration (thus *Núallgnāith* alliterating with *noíthiut*, *ngoire* with *gor* and *Fechtnach* with *fasaig*) and line-internal alliteration within the last line are used within the paragraph in both the A and B recensions.

### 4.2. Audacht Moraind, §3

On a closer look, §3 of A is very neatly bound together by means of the different patterns of alliteration employed. Comparing the paragraph in question with the relevant part of § 2 in Rec. B, we can see that there is much parallelism between the two in terms of both content and wording.¹⁵ This offers the hope of reconstructing the underlying structural pattern of the paragraph. We therefore present the following arrangement of the text below, one which is more akin to the exposition of §2 in Rec. B. If we regard linking alliteration as the primary and internal alliteration as a secondary organising principle, the arrangement of lines may be as follows:

*Fírmaíni mo **b**riathar | rem **b**ás berta[e] | **b**úaid **d**irge | **D**legair cacha flatheman in sin.|
Ad-mestar dar **m**idríana | Ad- **m**órchlotha -**m**idither. | **M**a thé[i]s[i] sech **r**íga,|
**R**eise co **F**eradach | **F**ind **F**echtnach.| **F**ó **b**úan | **B**íth **s**uthain | **S**ír **f**ír |
**F**lathemon **s**uíthi **c**luines.| **C**omath mo chosc íarmothá sund.*

<div align="right">(Kelly 1976: 59.22-24)</div>

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¹⁵ Note the occurrence of the following words and phrases in both recensions. Some are identical, such as *comath mo chosc etc.* or *reisi co Feradach F.F.*; some involve different arrangements of the same words, such as *mo bríathar rem bas* (A) – *mo bríathra rem bas* (B); *bertae búaid* (A) – *beir dó búaid* (B); *dírge dlegar cach flathemon* (A) – *ndírge dligther cech flathemoin* (B); *ad-mestar* (A) – *ate-midiur-sa* (B); some are instances of paraphrase: *fírmaíni* (A) - *finda* (B); *bith suthain* (A) – *bith sírfhlaithech* (B).

'It is the true treasures of my words | before my death that bring | victory: that is righteousness, | which is required of each ruler. | Let him estimate [it] beyond the seas of mead | [according to which] great reputations are evaluated. | If you go past kings, | you will reach Feradach | Find Fechtnach. | Good, lasting, | eternal, extended | Everlasting is the justice | of a ruler who hearkens to wisdom. | Let him keep my advice, which follows here.'

With this line division we obtain exactly two stresses per line throughout, except for the last two lines which have three stresses each. There is, however, a break in alliteration between the fourth and the fifth lines, partly because the new sentence starts here.

This arrangement obviously assigns less importance to line-internal alliteration as an organising principle; even so, it may still be observed in the second (**b**ás **b**erta[e]), sixth (**m**órchlotha -**m**idither), and the ninth (**F**ind **F**echtnach) lines of the text.

### 4.3. Audacht Moraind: Is tre fhír flathemon series (§§10-26)

This section can be characterised as listing the components of righteous rule. Many, but not all of them, correspond to the relevant paragraphs of the *Is tre f.f.* section of Rec. B.¹⁶

§10a. *Ar is tria fhír flathemon condat- túatha móra –midet[h]ar.*
§10b. *[Is tria fhír flathemon] at[h]- mor[t]laithi móra di dóenib –ding(a)ba[ta]r.*
§11. *Is tria fhír flatha[mon]- mórchatha fri crícha comnámat –cuirethar. (MS. cuiredar)*
§12. *Is tria fhír flathemon cach recht rán, cach lestar lán inna fhlaith.*
§13. *Is tria fhír flathemon [foss], sláne, síd, subaigi, sám[a]e, soad, sothocath, somaíne, sádaile, slánchride;*
§13a. *[Is tria f.f.] cach comarba cona chlí in[n]a chainfhorbbai clannas.*
§14. *Is tria fhír flathemon cach soad soinmech, cach tír toirthech, cach lámnad lánchóir.*
§15. *Is tria fhír flathemon cach etha ardúasail immed.*
§16. *Is tria fhír flathemon mesrada mórfheda ath- manna milisi- mblaissiter…*
§18. *Is tria fhír flathemon com(b)rar comgi cecha cethra hi críchaib flatha fíríóin.*
§19. *Is tria fhír flathemon ni-fuigledar nach fui[g]lid, nad-bí co fásaigib fíreóin fosaiger a breith.*

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¹⁶ To be precise, §§12, 14, 20-22, 25, 28-9 do not occur in Rec. B.

§20.   *Is tria fhír flathemon tromliberna lán[a] mban, mōr maíne, mōr mbārc hi cind cach thíre tathigedar.*

§§21, 23.   *Is tria fhír flathemon t[ócbait d]t[...?]) i[...]dai airgdidi [...? ai[d]bli [Is tria f.f.?] ... a huisciu íasca tonnaib segaiter.*

(§22.)*Is tria fhír flathemon do-cuiridar ildelba muir: míla mina móra for tráchtaib dérgetar. (A: do-regdar)*

§24.   *Is tria fhír flathemon focaeb cach dán mochta inna shuidiu íarna sáetha co fáthaib fiss fri forcital féthamail.*

§25.   *Is tria fhír flathemon sína[...]ni cach tremsi téchtaidi do-cengat. Gaim caín coisnech[...]rach tirim gáethach, sam t[ur f]rossach, fogomar drūchtach comrom. Ar is gó flatha do-ber sína saeba for túatha cláena, co[n]-sega talman torad.*

§26.   *Is tria fhír flathemon téora blaí búirig in cach n-óenach imma-costatar cluichi co mbilib co mbúadaib, co sínaib bláithib.*

(Kelly 1976: 60.38-62.81)

§10a   For it is through the ruler's truth that he judges great tribes.

§10b.   [It is through the ruler's truth that] great plagues [are?] continuously warded off from the people.

§11.   It is through the ruler's truth that he dispatches great battalions to the boundaries of his fellow-fighters.

§12.   It is through the ruler's truth that each law is noble, each vessel is full in his reign.

§13.   It is through the ruler's truth that [there is] stability, health, peace, joy, tranquillity, well-being, good fortune, profit, repose, wholeness of heart.

§13a.   [It is through the ruler's truth that] every heir [is] with his house post that he plants in his fair patrimony.

§14.   It is through the ruler's truth that every well-being is prosperous, every land is fertile, every parturition is wholly proper.

§15.   It is through the ruler's truth that [there is] an abundance of every high corn.

§16.   It is through the ruler's truth that tree-fruits of a great forest are tasted [like] a sweet manna…

§18.   It is through the ruler's truth that [there is] an enclosure of protection of each cow within the borders of a righteous ruler.

§19.   It is through the ruler's truth that any judge is not appealed to, unless it is by just legal precedents that he establishes his judgement.

§20.   It is through the ruler's truth that [there are] heavy ships, plenty of women, abundance of treasures, abundance of ships frequents each promontory.

§§ 21, 23.   It is through the ruler's truth that there arise many golden [and] silver [and] […?] great rewards; […?] fishes out of waters are sought [in the midst of] streams.

(§22.)It is through the ruler's truth that the sea deposits many shapes: big and small beasts are strewn upon the shore.

§24.   It is through the ruler's truth that there arises every mighty [man of] art in his seat after labour for peaceful teaching with lore of knowledge.

§25.   It is through the ruler's truth that the fair weathers of each proper season come, i.e. clement [and] frosty winter, dry [and] windy spring, dry [and] showery summer, dewy and even autumn. For it is the falsehood of the ruler which brings deranged weather upon perverse people so that it dries up the land's produce.

§26.   It is through the ruler's truth that there are three immunities of violence at every assembly that are mutually established [concerning] games with trees, with triumphs, with mild seasons.

The main principle of organisation within the paragraphs is line-internal alliteration. It is rigidly applied in §§ 11, 13a, 13b, 15, 16, 18, 19, 24, and partly in §§ 10b, 15, 20, 21-23, 25, 26. Comparing the different patterns of alliteration within each paragraph, we can observe several.

*4.3.1. Alliterating words in pairs*

Firstly, the alliterating terms are arranged in pairs, such as examples in (§10b) **mor[t] laithi m**óra; (§12) **recht** rán… **lestar lán**; (§14) **soad soinmech**… **tír toirthech**… **lámna[...]nchóir**; (§23) *a* **huisciu íasc**; (§25) **tremsi téchtaidi**… **caín coisnech**… **sína saeba**… **talman torad**; (§26) *co* **mbilib**, *co* **mbúadaib**.

Most of these are instances of normal alliteration, involving only the initial consonants of the affected words; but this is not the only form of alliteration present. Employing the concept of complex alliteration (Sproule 1987), we can postulate the presence of complex alliteration in §§10b, 14 and 23, where it is constituted by a combination of consonants, such as *m-r* in the first instance (**mor[t]laithi móra**), *t-r* in the second (**tír toirthech**) and *-sc-* in the third (*a* **huisciu íasca**). The same pattern can be observed throughout §§12-13, 15, 17-21 (Kelly 1976: 6.38-41, 43-44, 47-50) and §§24-25, 28-29, 31 of Rec. B (Kelly 1976: 8.60-63, 10.69-77, 10.82-3). Not only is normal alliteration[17] employed there, but complex alliteration as well.[18]

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[17] Thus normal alliteration is present in the pairs *clanda caini* (§21), *blaí búraig* (§28), *costuthaib cuicilche* (ib.), *díb dúnath* (ib.), *mannaib móraib* (ib.), *moíni mára* and *lobru lén* (§31).

[18] Examples would be *márthúatha mármoíni* (§13), *mármeso márfhedo* (§17) providing a complex alliteration of the *m-r* cluster; as well as *shellaib súile* (§26), *comrara comge* (§27), *midchórto medarde* (§28), *flatho folam* (§29).

*4.3.2. Alliterating words in threes*

Secondly, there are instances of alliteration between the three stressed words at the end of the line. The examples are (§11) *crícha comnámat cuirethar*; (§15) *etha ardúasail immed* and (§26) *túatha téchta tecradar*. Note also the instances of complex alliteration, occurring in the last two examples between the last two words of the lines.

*4.3.3. Alliterating sequences of nouns*

Thirdly, the paragraph may list a sequence of nouns with a similar semantic range, centred on one characteristic of a righteous rule. In §13's example (*sláne, síd, subaige, sám[a]e, soad, sothocath, somaíne, sádaile, slánchride*) all the nouns denote the pacific, quiet and long-lasting character of the just king's rule. The above list includes more items than the relevant passage in Rec. B (§14). These are *sláne* 'health', *sothocad* 'good fortune', *somaíne* 'profit', *slánchride* 'wholeness of heart', which are absent from the text of B. However, this does not argue in favour of expansion in the latter list, nor for the primary/dependent character of either, nor for the influence of either of them on the other. We are inclined to explain the difference between them on the basis of the pattern chosen by the compiler of each recension in order to portray the peacefulness of the righteous ruler. The list in Rec. B mainly consists of one- or two-syllable words (with the exception of *sádili* 'comfort'); that in A consists mainly of two- or three-syllable words (with the exception of *síd* 'peace'), most of which are compounds. The first in the series are formations with the prefix *su-*, meaning 'good, fortunate, blessed' and a simple noun. Thus, *su-* + *maín* 'gift' results in *somaine* 'profit'; *su-* + *tocad* 'fortune', makes *sothocad* 'good fortune'; *su-* + *sáith* 'sufficiency', produces *soad* 'ease'. *Subaige* 'joyfulness', may be regarded as an example of the same pattern: morphologically the word is derived from *subach* 'joyful', which itself is from *subae* 'joy' (= *su-* + *\*be* 'being').[19] One may add that the compound *slanchride* at the end of the list was probably added to form a *dúnad* with *sláne* at the beginning.

In (§13a)'s example (*cach comarba con- a chlí in[n]a chainfhorbbai clandas*), the entire vocabulary is centred on the righteous ruler's ability to ensure that every heir enjoys his right of inheritance. The corresponding § 16 in B indicates that originally this passage was a separate maxim, and was probably preceded by the *Is tre f.f.* formula.

Both (§15) and (§16) (*mesrada ath- mórfheda manna milsi -mblaisiter*)

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[19] Note that the parallel passage in *Tochmarc Emere*, alluded to by Kelly (1976: 28), reads *suboidhe < subaige*, rather than *subae*.

characterise the abundance of crops and the fecundity of forest-fruit during the reign of a righteous ruler. It may be noted that in Rec. B these passages occur in a different order, and that our text lacks description of the abundance of *mlechti*, 'milk-produce' (§18 of B), another important ingredient of a righteous rule's fecundity.

In turn, (§18)'s collocation *comrar comgi cecha cethra hi crichaib* is dedicated to the proper maintenance of cattle in the ruler's domains.

(§19) expounds a series of alliterating nouns, starting with *f-*: *ni-fuigledar nach fui[g]lid, nad-bí co fásaigib fírinne fossaigedar a breith*. Here legal vocabulary is involved, and the maxim expounds the ruler's duties regarding court procedure. Similarly to a passage in B (§23), it focuses on the figure of the judge. The versions in ⟦=⟧ d B both exhibit line-internal alliteration within the second clause: *fásaigib fírinne fossaigedar* (A) and *fasach fírinne fiastar* (B).

(§21) *t[ócbait d]úsi ili órdai airgdidi [...?] ai[d]bli* describes the generosity of a righteous ruler, which is necessary for securing the loyalty of his subjects ⟦=⟧

(§22) AL²'s sequence of *muir míla mina móra*[20] and §23's *a huisciu íasca* share the topic of abundance of fish: §23 says that plenty of fish are to be found in the streams, flowing in the domains of the righteous ruler, while §22 goes even further – there is no need to catch any fish in the sea, as the sea-produce is deposited by the waves themselves.

§24's maxim (*sáethur co fáthaib fiss fri forcital féthamail*) expresses the right of the man of art to enjoy the benefits of his knowledge. A semantic antithesis between *sáethur co fáthaib f[h]iss*, '[their] hard work with compositions of wisdom' and *forcital féthamail*, 'peaceful instruction', where two alliterating pairs alliterate with one another, is to be noted. In none of the instances above was alliteration employed in order to link two themes within a phrase, but rather to emphasise a single aspect of a whole paragraph. This device can be taken as an example of the artistry of the compiler of the Recension A. A similar passage in B (§24) lacks such antithesis, as well as the association of ardent work with the acquisition of knowledge.

And ⟦=⟧ exa⟦=⟧le of the compiler's artistry is the alliterating sequence of (§20) *tromlibarna lán mban, mór maíne, mór mbárc*, which exhibits a ring-structure, with *maíne* 'treasures', in the middle, surrounded first by one pair of alliterating words, *mór… mór*, and then by the second alliterating pair *mban… mbárc*.

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[20] Note that the L¹N version of the paragraph employs the pattern of paired alliteration: *Is tre f.f. ildelba ilmíle a muirib domnib sceo máruib for trachtaib téchtaib tochratar* (LL 37554) 'It is through the ruler's truth that many thousands of various creatures are cast up out of deep and vast seas on the proper shores'. As F. Kelly pointed out to me the passage may refer to the legal entitlement of the ruler to different objects cast upon the shore.

### *4.4. Audacht Moraind: Apair fris series*

Towards its end, *AM* tends to use different patterns to reveal its contents. The whole picture of ideal kingship is now seen in negative terms, the text turns from describing what should be present in the domains of the good king to warning the king against doing something. Thus the positive cosmological picture of abundance is turned into the moralistic injunctions of extremely prosaic character. Here, similarly to the paragraphs starting with *Apair fris* in Rec. B (§§23, 29-31), a king is warned against carrying out certain actions that may ruin his good fortune. Although there is a general correspondence with Rec. B in terms of style, a brief look at the text tells us that closely corresponding passages can hardly be found in B, in contrast to the preceding *Is t.f.f.* series. Moreover, recension A is consistent in applying different syntactic patterns within the framework of the *Apair fris* series, which are also employed by other wisdom-texts such as *Tecosca Cormaic* (Meyer 1909: 12-5, §6; 20-21, §12; 36-9, §19 etc.), *Bríatharthecosc Con Culainn* (Dillon 1953: 9.262-268, 10.287-93, 298-301) etc. These minor structural patterns are less sophisticated, and along with alliteration employ other features: use of contrastive words, comparative forms, and positive or negative forms of the 3 sg. pres. subj. copula:

§34.   *Abbair fris, nirop díumsach díupartach duilig doinnech dodcadach…*

§36.   *Abbair fris, nip fuilech, [nip cuilech]: nip guinech a lám, nir cróda a acra, nip renn a sanas, nip úar a anál…*

§42.   *Abbair fris, níp sotal soisil sainairlech.*

§34.   Tell him, he should not be arrogant, fraudulent, intractable, tempestuous, unfortunate…

§36.   Tell him, he should not be bloodthirsty, he should not be sinful: his arm should not be wounding, his prosecution should not be cruel, his secret counsel should not be swift; his breath should not be cold…

§42.   Tell him, he should not be proud, arrogant, self-opinionated.

§34, and the first clauses of §§36, 42 have the following structure: neg. pres. subj. 3 sg. of the copula + adjective(s). Here the author describes miscellaneous traits of a predominantly negative character. The adjectives employed in §§34, 36 not only alliterate, but are also linked by repeated use of a single adjectival suffix: (§34) *díums**ach** díupart**ach** du**ilig** d**óinech** dodcad**ach***; (§36) *fui**lech**… cui**lech** … guin**ech***; (§42) *sotal soisil sainairl**ech***. However, there is more to both §36 and §42. The second part of §36 consists of phrases that employ an additional object, expressed by poss. 3 sg. form of

the pronoun (*a*) and a noun (*lám, acra* etc.) to which their predicate is related, thus *nip guinech a lám, nir cróda a acra* etc. Thus the predicate no longer refers to the subject of the sentence (the ruler), but to the object (his characteristics). Note that most of the nouns involved here – the ruler's hand (*lám*), whisper (*sanas*), breath (*anál*), as well as L²'s variant reading *acnam* 'gnawing' – are all physical characteristics, constituting his image, and are metonymically taken in the text to represent several of his proper functions, i.e. of military attach, of judgement at court, taking counsel and showing his benevolence.

### 5. *Tecosca Cormaic* 'Cormac's Counsel'

Unlike *Audacht Moraind*, *Tecosca Cormaic* (hereinafter *TC*) has not received much attention since its publication in 1909 by K. Meyer, apart from being mentioned in general discussions on kingship.[21] C. Ireland (1999) has covered some topics relating to *TC*, such as its form and affinities with other gnomic texts, its MS tradition, etc., mainly in its relationship to *BFF*. Let us briefly mention some of the important points in his discussion. In spite of the fact that *TC* consists of heterogeneous matter, much of which has nothing to do with kingship, Ireland has no doubt that *TC* is a *speculum principis* text, 'compiled for a socially high-ranking audience by specifically addressing its concerns' (Ireland 1999: 14).[22]

As far as its form and affinities with other texts of the wisdom genre are concerned, 'to convey the ideas expressed… [*TC*] tends to use adjectives or nouns of agency rather than abstract nouns' (Ireland 1999: 14). All in all, it is an extremely difficult wisdom-text not only because of its variety of subjects, but because of different recensions, and the fact that edition by Meyer is outdated does not help either.[23] We shall confine ourselves only to the first and the seventh paragraphs of the text, discussing, as above, alliterative and syntactic patterns that structure the contents of the text.

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[21] It has been summarised by K. McCone, who has devoted some space to a discussion of *TC*'s topics, such as the qualities of a proper king, the benefits of a pious king flowing from God, the king and his prohibitions (*geissi*), as well as the description of hospitallers and members of *fíanna*, etc. He argues that the text owes its origin to the biblical wisdom-genre, citing similarities in style, and the attribution of the text to Cormac, 'giving sectionalized practical and moral instructions to his son, just as the king of Jerusalem and Israel, Solomon, is envisaged addressing various chapters (2, 3, 5, 6 etc.) of his Proverbs to his son' (McCone 1990: 31). Examples will be cited from Meyer's edition unless otherwise stated.

[22] Quite useful discussion of the *speculum principis* sub-genre of gnomic literature is contained in Ireland (1999: 6-7).

[23] 'A new, thorough edition of *Tecosca Cormaic* would help us to understand its textual history' (Ireland 1999: 45).

### 5.1. Tecosca Cormaic on a good king (§1). Patterns of alliteration and syntax

The opening paragraph presents a collection of maxims on various topics, all centred around the figure of a good king. However, the presentation of the subject-matter is very different from that in *AM*. In the latter, each subject, whether it is the portrait of the good king, or the elements constituting the welfare of his subjects, or the topic of the ruler's *fides*, loyalties and relations, is introduced by a separate formula. There is no such thing in *TC*. On the whole, §1 consists of three- or two-word maxims, and includes a wide range of topics which on closer examination seem to comprise multiple aspects of a few crucial qualities connected with the figure of a good king, such as uttering truth (exx. 3, 5, 8, 16), preserving peace (exx. 2, 6), and various means of consolidating it, such as punishing criminals (ex. 15), keeping hostages (ex. 4), sureties (ex. 7), fasting upon neighbours (ex. 9), raids on their lands (ex. 10). The topic of abundance is covered in traditional terms, involving different aspects of fertility (exx. 12-14):

> '*A húi Chuind, a Chormaic*', ol Carpre, '*cid as dech do rig?*' '*Ní hansa*', ol Cormac. '*Dech do* (1) *fosta cen fheirg*, (2) *ainmne cen debaid* …(3) *frithfolad fír*, (4) *géill i nglassaib*… (5) *fír cen fhuillem*… (6) *síd do thúathaib*, (7) *ratha écsamla*, (8) *bretha fíra*, (9) *troscud for cocrichaib*… (10) *forrána dar crícha*…(11) *almsana ile*…(12) *mess for crannaib*, (13) *íasc i n-inberaib*, (14) *talam tortech*… (15) *torramad lubru*, (16) *lessaiged triunu*, (17) *techtad fír* (18) *cairiged gói*, (19) *carad fírinni*… (20) *báded bidbadu*, (21) *bered fírbretha*'.

'O grandson of Conn, O Cormac', said Carbre, 'what is best for a king?' 'Not hard to tell,' said Cormac. 'Best for him (1) firmness without anger, (2) patience without strife… (3) giving truth for truth, (4) hostages in fetters… (5) truth without addition… (6) peace to tribes, (7) manifold sureties, (8) true judgements, (9) fasting upon neighbours… (10) raids across borders… (11) many alms, (12) mast upon trees, (13) fish in the river-mouths (14) earth fruitful… (15) let him attend to the sick, (16) let him benefit the strong, (17) let him possess truth, (18) let him chide falsehood, (19) let him love righteousness… (20) let him crush criminals, (21) let him give just judgements'.[24]

(Meyer 1909: 2-5)

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[24] I translate *fírbretha* as 'just judgments', rather than 'true judgements' (Meyer 1909: 5.38). For examples supporting this interpretation, see DIL, **fír**, COMPDS. A (a).

As regards the alliterative patterns employed in the paragraph, an abundant usage of line-internal and linking alliteration is to be noted. The former is mainly used throughout the first section of the paragraph (Meyer 1909: 2.3-4.30), the latter is mostly observed in the second section (Meyer 1909: 4.31-45).

Firstly, instances of line-internal alliteration are as follows: ***f**rithfholad **f**ír* 'giving truth for truth' (ex. 3); ***g**éill i **ng**lassaib* 'hostages in fetters' (ex. 4), ***t**alam **t**ortech* 'earth fruitful' (ex. 14).

Secondly, one can observe instances of complex alliteration in (11) ***al**msana **il**e*, (20-21) ***b**áded **b**idbadu, **b**ered **f**írbretha*. Note that visually the opening verbs in exx. 18-19 alliterate, providing another example of complex alliteration: ***cair**iged gói, **car**ad fírinni*, as well as that there is a visual similarity between the verbs *cairiged* and *carad* and the idea of contrast between *gói* 'falsehood', and *fírinni* 'righteousness'.

(3). Linking alliteration connects exx. 15-17: *torramad **l**ubru, **l**essaiged triunu, **t**echtad **f**ír* 'let him attend to the sick, benefit the strong, possess truth'; exx. 20-21: ***b**áded **b**idbadu, **b**ered **f**írbretha* 'let him crush criminals [and] give just judgements'. In the latter, as in exx. 18-19, however, the main organising principle of the clause is based upon the implicit contrast between *bidbadu* 'criminals', and *fírbretha* 'just judgements'.

There are several syntactic patterns observed. The first section distinguishes three. The first syntactic pattern is noun + prep. *cen* + accus. employed in exx. 1-2, 5. The next pattern can be described as noun + a qualifier, of which the subdivisions are noun + gen. (ex. 3), and noun + adj. (exx. 7-8, 11, 14). The third pattern involves the subject of the phrase taking a direct object with accusative or indirect object with a preposition followed by dative or accusative. The pattern noun + accus. is represented by such maxims as *mórad nemed, airmitiu fhiled* 'exalting privileged persons, honouring poets' (Meyer 1909: 4-5, §1.16-17). The pattern noun + prep. (*i n-, do , for, dar*) + noun can be observed in exx. 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 10.

The second part is characterised by a uniform syntactic pattern: ipv. 3 sg. + accus. (exx. 15-21). The message, embedded in this part, is given more strength by opposing the objects of the first eight maxims to each other: *cp.* the antithesis between the sick and the strong (exx. 15-16), between truth and falsehood (exx. 17-18), between criminals and just judgements (exx. 20-21).

### 5.2. Tecosca Cormaic on king's youth (§7)

§7 is devoted to the topic of the king's or lord's youth, spent in the *fianna*-brotherhood. By devoting this and the next paragraph to the topic of the king's or lord's youth, spent in the *fianna*-brotherhood, *TC* shows that the 'outlawish' aspect is important in terms of understanding the nature of ideal kingship in early Ireland. In this paragraph, in contrast to the one just discussed, the compiler of *TC* ignores

alliteration and predominantly uses the device of contrast for purposes of arranging his subject-matter. The whole section can be divided into two parts. The citation below is representative to present the major stylistic devices employed throughout the paragraph:

> *'A húi Chuind, a Chormaic,' ol Carpre, 'cia bátar do bésa intan ropsa gilla?'*
> *'Ní hansa,' ol Cormac. '(4) Ba-sa coistechtach caille, (5) ba décsenach renda, (6) ba dall rúine, (7) ba tó fásaig, (8) ba labor sochuide, (9) ba sulig midchúarta, (10) ba dulig irgaile… (14) ba fann fri amnirt, (15) ba trén fri rúanaid, (16) nírba crúaid ar ná ba áertha… (19) nírba labar ciapsa gáeth, (20) nírba taircsinach ciarba trén.'*

'O grandson of Conn, O Cormac,' said Carbre, 'what were your habits when you were a lad?' 'Not hard to tell,' said Cormac. '(4) I was a listener in woods, (5) I was a gazer at stars, (6) I was blind where secrets were concerned, (7) I was silent in a wilderness, (8) I was talkative among many, (9) I was mild in the mead-hall, (10) I was stern in battle … (14) I was weak towards the strengthless, (15) I was strong towards the powerful… (19) I was not arrogant though I was wise, (20) I was not given to promising though I was strong.'

(Meyer 1909: 16-17)

### 5.2.1. §7. Part a.

Lines 4-15 of the paragraph start with past 1 sg. of the copula, followed by an adjective. Here some of the aspects of a young man's behaviour are given in pairs of opposites: the young man is portrayed as being both watchful (*décsenach*) and blind (*dall*) on ll. 5-6; as quiet (*tó*) and talkative (*labor*) on ll. 7-8; as agreeable (*sulig*) and harsh (*dulig*) on ll. 9-10; he used to take pity on the powerless (*ba fann fri amnirt*) and to be strong against the mighty (*ba trén fri rúanaid*) on ll. 14-15. In the latter the contrast is strengthened by attaching objects to each phrase that have opposing meaning: *amnirt* 'the powerless' vs. *rúanaid* 'the mighty'[25].

### 5.2.2. §7. Part b.

Lines 16-24 diverge in the N and L recensions. The N recension (Meyer 1909: 16.16-26) goes on to give a series of complex phrases, all negative, each consisting of two antithetical clauses which are linked either by the conj. part. *ar* or condit. conj. part. *cia* with past 1 sg. of the copula. The whole message of the second part

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[25] In interpreting these lines I have employed J. Nagy's (1985: 127-8) translation of the passage.

in N is that the young *fénnid* never transgressed a certain limit in his actions: for instance, in l. 16 Cormac says: *nírba crúaid ar ná ba áertha* 'I was not hard lest I be satirised', in l. 19: *nírba labar ciapsa gáeth* 'I was not talkative though I was wise'.

Recension L (*LL* 45904-45914) is simpler in its exposition, employing phrases consisting of posit./neg. past 1 sg. of the copula + adj. In L the overall tone is the same as in N, the underlying principle of moderation being outlined either by using a negation of the adj. with a prefixed *ro-*, which has an intensifying meaning: *nipsa rochrúaid, nipsa roirusa, nipsa rothim* 'I was not too harsh, I was not too easy, I was not too feeble' (*LL* 45904-45906)[26]; or by juxtaposing opposite phrases with each other: *nipsa tromda, basa gáeth… nipsa forlobar* (MS. *fhorlob), basa thrén; nipsa airrechtach, nipsa fomsech* 'I was not oppressive, I was wise… I was not too sick, I was strong; I was not spirited, I was not measuring' (*LL* 45907-8, 45911-12, 45913-4).[27]

### 6. Conclusion

Of necessity, these observations are only tentative speculations: in the end, we can only say that *TC* has neither a uniform syntactic structure nor a uniform single stylistic device. This is probably true to say of all the three texts discussed in this article. Indeed, it would be surprising if there was only one device to be employed, given the heterogeneous character of these wisdom-texts. This heterogeneity argues in favour of the hypothesis – which can, however, never be proven – that the texts under investigation consist of different strata and that the first and the second parts of *De duodecim,* relevant passages from *Is tre f.f.* and *Apair fris* series of *AM*, as well as those from the first and the seventh paragraphs of *TC* examined in this contribution were composed if not at different times, but clearly for different purposes. We have seen that *TC* differs very much from *AM* in the way in which it employs its own alliterative and syntactic patterns to organise its subject-matter, as well as in the literary devices of parallelism and contrast. On the other hand, some collocations of the second part of *De duodecim* (juxtaposed with those from *CCH*) discussed earlier consist of a sequence of two-word phrases. These phrases are a noun together with a dependent genitive, and the same syntactic pattern can also be observed in several passages throughout *TC*. It may well be that on the level of semantic content, some maxims from *TC* may be based on a superficial knowledge of the relevant parts of *De duodecim* (e.g. note the coincidence both in wording and pattern of alliteration employed to describe the prescription of distributing alms). However, in spite of the striking superficial similarities between the three texts (e.g., royal provision of justice, pre-occupation with issues of truth and falsehood linked to the concept of abundance),

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[26] The translation is my own, based mainly on Meyer's.
[27] The translation is my own.

it is not feasible to argue for any of the texts' derivation from the other or from the earlier wisdom-tradition. Let me conclude by saying that early Irish wisdom literature is the genre that has its own rules of textual compilation, its own literary techniques, such as complex alliterative and syntactic patterns, and each text should be assessed on its own merit before one can proceed to express general statements in regard to the tradition as a whole.

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