

Rhyming syllabic verses in early Irish legal texts

2022, PAVIA

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Styles in legal texts

- prose
- rhyming syllabic poetry
- *roscada* (Breatnach 1996: 197, 2005: 370)

Styles in legal texts

1) Plain exposition prose

- **Int othrus ní·fil indiu isind aimsir-so acht lóg a degfóloig do chách íarna míad iter fochraicc lego 7 lind 7 bíathad...**
- The [institution of] sick-maintenance, it is no longer extent today at this time, but [replaced by] a price of his proper maintenance to each one, according to his status, [including] the physician's fee and drink and food... (*Críth Gablach*, Binchy 1941: 2, normalised from CIH 777.36-37)

Styles in legal texts

2) ‘Textbook’ style prose (Charles-Edwards 1980: 146-156)

- **Cid i n-arragar breithemnus bērla fēni .nī. i fīr 7 dliged 7 aicned.**
- What is it in which the judgment of the laymen’s lawsuit was bound? Not difficult, in ‘truth’ and ‘entitlement’ and ‘natural law’. (*Uraicecht Becc*, normalised from CIH 1590.1)

Styles in legal texts

3) Narrative prose

- **Dogeni fergus ogcoru tarsa nericso 7 luid doa tir 7 bir[t] a cumail lais i foghnum. In tan ronainic fergus a methus luid docum mara sechis 7 a ara muena a ainm.**
- In consideration of this mulct Fergus concluded full peace and went to his own land, bringing with him his bondmaid into servitude. When he had reached his domain he went on to the sea accompanied by his charioteer, whose name was Muena. ('The saga of Fergus mac Léti', Binchy 1952: 37, 41, CIH 882.25-27)

Styles in legal texts

4) Gnostic prose

- **A maic ara-fesser blaí dílse. Blaí moga mugsaine. Blaí ech óenach. Blaí ord indeoin. Blaí con congáil...**
- O son you should know the immunities of propriety. Servitude is immunity of a servant. A gathering is immunity of horses. An anvil is immunity of sledge hammers. A dog-fight is immunity of a dog ...
- (*Bretha Étgid*, normalised from CIH 263.34-268.12)

Styles in legal texts

5) Non-rhyming poems with fixed stress pattern and linking alliteration

Cladair fert, fuirmigther lia, Ligairne laigen, úas dindaib.

Do·renar .x. sétaib, segair comláithre, coa trí tar muir...

‘Let a grave be dug, let a stone be placed, of Ligairne of the Laigin, above prominent peaks.

Ten séts are compensated, [recompense of] accomplice is sought, as far as their three [waves?] across the sea...’

- (*Ántéchtæ*, normalised from CIH 1244.18-20)

Styles in legal texts

6) Non-rhyming syllabic poems

**Bertai Senchae cétbrethach
bantellach ar fertellach
combtar ferba fulachta
fora grúaidib iar cilbrethaib.**

‘Senchae the first-judging one adjudged it,
female entry by means of male entry,
and blisters have been sustained
on his cheeks after false judgments.’

(Din Techtugud, normalised from CIH 209.12-13)

Styles in legal texts

7) *Roscada* with extensive alliteration but no fixed pattern

**A Moruind a maine i mocha
mitid mes fír for fodhuil dire,
direch cach dicedla dana;
i suidighti slechtuiph suadh
la righ Gabalmuighe cin gaoe.**

‘O wealthy mighty Morand,
give a true judgement of the distribution of honour-price.
Every chanter of poetic art is due honour-price;
he is to be placed amongst the divisions of sages
by the king of Gabalmag without falsehood.’

(*Bretha Nemed Toísech*, CIH 2219.4-5, Breatnach 1987: 34-5)

Styles in legal texts

8) Rhyming syllabic poems

Dubh Dhūanach

dubh dhruth chongbhalach cūanach.

focheird crand mbūarach

la gach funghaire solus

sreathaigh(h)er eich fo dubhrothuibh dorus.

Dúanach the Dark,

dark and wanton, tenacious, surrounding by companies
who places the bar of spancels,

by each bright daybreak,

horses are arranged under dark wheels by the doorway.

(Bretha Nemed Dédenach, CIH 1112.18-23, partly trans. McLaughlin 2005: 26, n.56)

Old Irish rhyming syllabic verses

- ‘The use of rhyming syllabic verse in legal texts is quite limited in the OIr. period (for later instances see Chapter 3.3); I have noted only the verse in 777.3-4 at the end of Cáin Fhuithirbe (see Breatnach, 1986, 50-1) and the four verses at the end of SM3, 34, Bretha Déin Chécht (2315.37-2316.2).’ (L. Breatnach 2005: 370)
- Plus:
 - verses embedded in Críth Gablach (568.19-20)
 - and Bretha Nemed Dédenach (1112.13-17; 1112.18-23)

Late medieval compositions

- 562.3-22:
 - 10 quatrains and elaborates on the seven grades of the poetic profession in *debide*
- 871.1-874.34 :
 - by Gilla na Naomh Mac Dhuinn Sléibhe Maic Aodhagháin (d. 1309)
 - On distraint, unedited.
- 1584.1-1585.8 :
 - ‘An Address to a Student of Law’ ed. Máirín Nic Dhonnchadha (1989).

Questions:

- How many rhyming syllabic verses are there in CIH?
- Where are they located?
- Why are they included?

Questions:

- How many rhyming syllabic verses are there in CIH?
 - rhyming syllabic meters mentioned in the Middle Irish poetic tracts (Mittelirische Verslehren I - IV),
 - called ‘new-forms’ (nuachrutha) in MV i §68

Questions:

- How many rhyming syllabic verses are there in CIH?

tuc thall IN aidmneach drisic 7 in tuaiscleimnech tamham 7 in buaibleorach
35 oblairi. Deismirecht arin aidmnigh ndrisicon. A ben fuil isin cuili. in tabrai
biadh do duine. tabair damh a ben bán. soill loim im is arán. deismirecht

CIH 555

7 in buaibleorach oblaire; deismirecht sé° arin aidmnech ndrисиucan .i. a ben
30 fuil isan cuiligh,/ in tabraid biad duine./ tabair damh a ben ban./ saill loim
im 7 aran./ Ata form/ maine tuca biad im dornn/ | berat heinech a ben
ben / in isin fad dam dardhan / deismirecht sé° arin tuaiscleimnech tamham

CIH 1535

Questions:

- How many rhyming syllabic verses are there in CIH?

BEARA CACH SLÁN SAORCORACH/ .i. breithemnaigi-si conad slán gac cor doní
in sofer fóna tecar curu .i. inti dina dlegar ceillsine, it saor a cura .i. cuma-naisce
ceachtar nae for ar.ii. cen raith etarrudh Saighis coibche caemcluda/ .i. for
meas .i. innsaighis claochmó nó comoigi chuir 7 cunnartha. Cia thaidhnaic
a derbdiubairt/ .i. ciadh tidnaic a diubairt co deimain, 7 cidh derb diubairt do
breith uadha. Ni tualaing a tathluithe/ .i. nocha tualaing 7 nocha cuimgeach
379.20 é taithmech amuich aris for cula Conid trian tairgither/ fri hineach cor
comnama/ .i. conad é ní thairgiter asta curuice a trian 7 ar sgath inighi inti

CIH 992, Di Astud Chor, cf. McLeod 1996: 112-114

Questions:

- How many rhyming syllabic verses are there in CIH?
 - 127 found
 - 8 quatrains: commentary to *Coibnes Uisci Thairidne* (457.34-458.14, ed. Binchy 1955: 74)
 - 5 quatrains: commentary to *Cóic Conara Fuigill* (1028.2-12, 1280.13-21, ed. Archan 2007: 320-1)
 - 4 in a commentary to *Cáin Aicillne* (1800.10-17) on ‘live separations’ (beoscartha)
 - 4 in a commentary to *Cethairslicht Athgabálae* (1664.22-31) on the words *buo* and *ferb*

Questions:

- Where are they located?
 - 19 from a text derived from *Uraicecht Becc* and MV ii (549.19-558.25).
 - *deismirecht for/ar* ‘an example of’

Questions:

- Where are they located?
- 552.32-34 (example of *dían midsheng* = MV ii §4, cf. Meyer 1912 §13)

deismirecht for dein miing [leg. midseng]:

Anmchad osraighi amra

cainfollo flaithri[ge]

dregan bruthmar bruiti alca [leg. alta]

mac concearca in cathmile.

An example of *dían midseng*:

Anmchad the Wonderful of Osraige,

Gentleness of distributing nobility

A fiery dragon of wild boiling (?)

The son of Cú Cerca the thousand-battles.

Questions:

- Where are they located?

- Copies of Uraicecht Becc

Ni·bí briugu nad·bí cétach ‘he who is not hundredfold is not a hospitaller’ (1608.16-18, cf.

McCone 1984: 3)

7 desmirecht so ar foillsiugud cach cetra
da fuil .c.agun briugaid .c.ach:

Ba muca heich cairig gobair
Coin cait cerca geth seoit sobail
Beich becga foglenad cach mbeathla
It e .x. cetra fer in domain

And this is an example to illustrate each animal that
a hundredfold hospitaller owns:

Cows, pigs, horses, sheep and goats
Dogs, cats, hens, geese, prosperous possessions
Tiny bees which adhere to every beehive
These are the ten animals of the men of the world.

Questions:

- Where are they located?
 - Copies of Uraicecht Becc

ed ‘law’ (1590.28-29, cf. *Auraicept na nÉces* 2730):

Ead .i. dliged...7 deismirecht:

Ead dliged

Fil a mberla na filed

Ed dliged dlige gan acht

Is ed mideas filideacht

Ed, i.e. law,... and an example:

Ed means ‘law’,

Which is in the parlance of the poets.

Ed means ‘law’, a rule without doubt,

It is that which evaluates the poetic art.

Questions:

- Where are they located?
 - *Dúil Dromma Cetta* (18)
 - attributed to Mór Muman, Fer Muman (Mahon 2006), Rechtgal úa Síadhail (late 8th c., Ó Aodha 1999), Máel Brigte (mac Tornáin d. 927?), Torpaid [mac Taicthech, d.913?], Cormac and *in Éicsine* ‘the student of poetic art’.
 - *ut dixit* or *ut dicitur*

Questions:

- Where are they located?
 - *Dúil Dromma Cetta* (18)

Muldach .i. seiscenn, **ut dx.** ua siagail ag
tothlugud cairr

Slicht a da gae tre gach mullach
cullach flescach férach
amal cairr a mberar lamhach
tre condold fand ferach (617.31-33)

Múalach, i.e. a swamp, **as** [Rechtgal] úa Síadail **said** when he
was demanding for a cart:

The track of his two spears through each swamp -
A swamp with packs of wolves, and abounding in shoots and
grass;
Like a cart in which hurling of missiles is borne
Through stubble which is pliant and grassy.

(trans. Ó hAodha 1999: 197)

Questions:

- Where are they located?
 - *Dúil Dromma Cetta* (18)
 - 7 poems shared by D1 & D2
 - 3 unique to D1, 8 unique to D2
 - Russell, Paul. “Dúil Dromma Cetta and Cormac’s Glossary.” *Études Celtiques* 32 (1996): 147–74.

Questions:

- Where are they located?
 - other glossary materials (20)
 - ‘Loman’ and ‘Irsan’ glossaries that are related to CormYadd and O’Mulchonry’s Glossary, O’Davoren’s Glossary, and other collections
 - metrical Dindshenchas (1092.32-33 = MD i 50 v17)
 - ‘Broccán’s hymn’ (1093.1-2 = Thes. ii. 337-8)
 - *Do Flathiusaib Hérend* (1092.28-29 = LL 2117)

Questions:

- Where are they located?
 - 10 < SM2, Cetharslicht Athgabálae
 - 4 < the Pseudo-historical prologue of Senchas Már
 - 3 < Bretha Nemed Dédenach, Cóic Conara Fuigill and Córus Bésgnai each
 - 2 < Cáin Fhuithirbe, Bretha Étgid, and BNT each
 - 1 < Bretha Déin Chécht, Cáin Aicillne, Cáin Sóerraith, Críth Gablach, Coibnes Uisci Thairdne, Tósach Bésgnai, the Introduction to Senchas Már, and Mellbretha each.
 - late medieval legal ‘digests’ B1, C22 and D9

Questions:

- Why are they included?
 - exemplifying meters
 - exemplifying words
 - explicating legal contents

Questions:

- Why are they included?
 - exemplifying words
2256.10-12 (commentary to UB)

Anmanda cid co heargnaid
Isna ceithre primberlaib
Cae ona heabraib re headh
Coth a greg, quid a laidean
Is fir do gach fir, ni cealg
7 is cidh a gaeidhealg

Names of ‘what’, distinctively,
In the four prestigious languages:
‘cae’ from Hebrew, whilst
‘coth’ in Greek, ‘quid’ in Latin,
It is true for every man, no concealment
And it is ‘cid’ in Irish.

Questions:

- Why are they included?

- explicating legal contents

1958.15-16 (Digest D9, on athgabáil inbleogain ‘vicarious distraint’)

Triar ac tocsal, toirim ngleith(e)
Fer tairgille, fiada feichem
Breithemh, fiadha, feidm co se
Tall naidm 7 aitre

Three persons at the ‘driving away’, ... grazing,
A man of fore-pledge, a witness [and] a claimant;
A judge, a witness, working until now,
There is [also] the binding surety and the surety in-between.

Questions:

- Why are they included?
 - exemplifying meters
 - exemplifying words
 - explicating legal contents
 - **poems in narrative contexts**

Questions:

- Why are they included?
 - poems in narrative contexts
 - *Situationgedichte* (Mac Cana 1997)
 - summary of a narrative
 - enumeration of characters

Questions:

- Why are they included?

- poems in narrative contexts
- *Situationgedichte*

2128.1-2 (sung by Cú Chulainn after slaying his own son, ed. O'Keeffe 1904)

Trom naire
Tucus lim tar magh nene
Airm móra mo meic im laim
Iss a faidb 'sa laim eile

Heavy the burden
I have borne across Mag Ene!
The great weapons of my son in one hand,
And in the other his spoils. (trans. O'Keeffe)

Questions:

- Why are they included?

- poems in narrative contexts
- Summary of narrative

883.20-22 (the saga of Fergus mac Léti, ed. Binchy 1952)

is de-som rocet:

Fergus mac leidi in ri(g)

luid i fertus rudraigi

huath donarfas fa gann ngle

ba he fochond a ainme.

Of this was sung:

King Fergus, son of Léte

Went on the sandbank of Rudraige;

A horror which appeared to him - fierce was the conflict -

Was the cause of his disfigurement. (trans. Binchy)

Questions:

- Why are they included?
 - poems in narrative contexts
 - Enumeration of characters

380.8-13 (commentary to Cethairslicht Athgabálae, translated by R. Smith (1942, 548))

Fer 7 fergnia na fir
is ed innisit na sin
am 7 iam derctas sloig
da primingin parthaloin

Fer and Fergnia the men
It is what the ancients told
Am and Iam who destroyed a host
They are the two chief daughters of Partholón.

Dating the poems

- non-linguistic criteria
 - Canonical law texts (7th-8th centuries)
 - Colmán Léiníni and Rechtgal úa Síadhail
 - Middle Irish metrical tracts (before end of 11th century)
 - Gilla na Naomh Mac Aodhagáin (d. 1309)
- Metrical criteria?

Dating the poems

- Metrical criteria?
 - *debide* (55) and *rannaigecht* (37)
 - *casbairdne* and *sétnad* meters
 - MV III: the most common meters (*aisti ind airechtail i coitchinn*)
 - also Irish Grammatical Tracts I-IV and Bardic Syntactic Tract I
 - MV I and II: *dechnad*, *nath* and other meters
 - Colmán mac Léiníni and Rechtgal úa Síadhail: *dechnad mór* and *anaír* metres

Dating the poems

- Metrical criteria?

633.20-23 (a glossary, emended
according to ZCP 9.167 and O'Mulc. 815)

*Tolcda di tolcaib seimenn**
*gáir peinn di dromaib duillenn**
*lind serb a belaib deibenn**
mid medb di brataib cuilenn.*

1070.35-38 (DDC)
*Diam cuthal craidhe tlaith**
*rombathadh for mortuinn muaidh**
madain mir dochoidh ba mOCH
*graidh maic lir ar lOCH fa tuaidh**

Thank you!

- All data are available on:
- https://github.com/Dimurjan/RhymSyllVerses_CIH/blob/main/Verse_texts.md
- Fangzhe.qiu@ucd.ie