

Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 4

Records of the discussions at the conference room on 19-10-2016

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Elizabeth Boyle, Deborah Hayden, Gearóid Úa Conchubhair, Lára Ní Mhaoláin, Anne Harrington, Brendan Doherty, Bernhard Bauer, Fangzhe Qiu, Romanas Bulatovas, Lars Nooij (scribe)¹

Practicalities

Should any participant be in need of a scanned copy of the GOI, Bernhard has made a remarkably high-quality – and hefty/sizeable – scan of the text.

Next week's meeting might be limited to the first hour, but David will inform us in due course.

Looking back

The award-winning² PhD dissertation by Peadar Ó Muirheartaigh on “Gaelic dialects present and past: a study of modern and medieval dialect relationships in the Gaelic languages” should, when it is published as a book, be included amongst the references to secondary literature in the grammar. In this dissertation, Ó Muirheartaigh considers the Gaelic dialects from an historical perspective, using methods of dialectometry in a framework of historical sociolinguistic. It includes research on the social structures which may have led to the emergence of OIr. as a standard language. Furthermore, he makes note of the striking prevalence of North-Eastern centres of learning in the attested materials from the OIr. period.

Neil McLeod again made some useful comments on the proceedings on academia.edu. He notes that a single block definition of Middle Irish is inadequate to accurately describe the significant developments in the language during this period. This is a valid point and, although it is beyond the area covered by the grammar itself, it should be noted in passing. As to the use of legal texts as sources of OIr., this is also a good point. We shall discuss this in greater detail when we reach the section of the GOI where the use of OIr. texts found first in manuscripts from later periods is treated. McLeod's comments on the dating of continental manuscripts are briefly considered, but dismissed. Most of the early Irish manuscripts which are found on the continent (such as that containing the Milan glosses) are believed to have been written in Ireland.

Additionally, Cormac Anderson helpfully pointed out on academia.edu that Ascoli's 1878 edition of the Milan (and Turin?) glosses is available on <https://archive.org/details/archivioglottol18salvgoog>).

The Turin glosses (§6)

The c. 140 OIr. glosses in the Turin manuscript comprise a relatively small corpus, but are given significant prominence in the GOI by being listed directly after the Milan glosses, ahead of the ‘shorter sources’. This is due entirely to the claim made in the GOI that they were ‘written by the scribe of M[i]l[an].’ As this claim is absent from the *Handbuch*, where the Turin glosses come after the Priscian/St.Gall glosses, it must have originated after the *Handbuch* was published. This fact is not mentioned in the *Thesaurus* either, nor in Bronner's *Verzeichnis altirischer Quellen*. As relatively little

¹ Jokes: “Are we missing anyone?” “Thurneysen, perhaps?” “He's not coming.”

² Johann Kaspar Zeuss-prize of the Societas Celtologica Europaea 2016. Note that our esteemed scribe, Lars Nooij, was awarded the corresponding prize for his MA thesis. [DS]

work has been done on the Turin glosses, it is considered uncertain. A comparison should clearly be made. Perhaps Elliott (*in absentia*) has an opinion on this?

The Book of Armagh (§7)

The dating (“in part written by the year 807, and completed before 846, the date of the scribe’s death”) is rather solid, as it is indeed based on information gleaned from the Annals. The Book of Armagh contains a few, short glosses, but also includes the “Irish additions to Tírechán’s Latin life of St. Patrick”. It is important to note that these “Irish additions” offer a rare example of continuous OIr. prose, rather than just glosses. “They [i.e. the additions] are clearly derived from earlier sources; hence the fluctuation between archaic and later forms”. As we have not studied these sources in detail, we do not know the validity of this claim.

The main edition is that by Ludwig Bieler, with the aid of Fergus Kelly, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (1979). Bieler was an Austrian Medieval Latinist and Palaeographer, who fled Austria ahead of the Second World War, after the nazi’s came to power in Austria. He lectured at University College Dublin and, although he never learned OIr. himself, added his great expertise in Medieval Latin to the field. The MS is also found online through the Royal Irish Academy St. Patrick’s Confessio Hypertext Stack (at <http://www.confessio.ie/#>).³

It is remarked that the practice of assigning dates to the manuscripts themselves, rather than to the texts contained therein, could cause confusion to the cursory reader. We should be very clear about the approach taken to describing the sources in a new introduction to this chapter. In the case of the Book of Armagh it would seem that all Irish (in a geographical sense) material contained therein may well derive from an earlier period than the manuscript’s 9th-century composition.

Finally, it is noted that the Latin texts contained in Armagh are also of interest for our understanding of OIr. for the Irish names contained therein, and that the 9th and 10th century additions to the manuscript (e.g. charters) – on which a considerable amount of scholarship has been published – deserve mention.

Dagmar Bronner’s *Verzeichnis altirischer Quellen*

We turn to a more detailed discussion of Bronner’s essentially up-to-date catalogue of all contemporary manuscripts containing OIr. It is a useful catalogue, organized by the city (in the local language) in which the manuscripts are now kept, and it includes a discussion of datings and other essentials. The *Verzeichnis* can be found online through the website of the Universität Marburg (<https://www.uni-marburg.de/fb09/lingbas/publikationen/pub/materialien/altirische-quellen.pdf>). The ChronHib project also retains a copy and it may be that Elliott has a more recent English version.

If anyone knows of any sources of OIr. in contemporary manuscripts not contained therein, or of pertinent secondary literature, one should contact Bronner, for she is still working on the catalogue. The point is raised that Donnchadh Ó Corráin’s catalogue may soon supersede Bronner’s work to some extent, as it will include all sources of OIr. and Middle Irish. Nevertheless, the *Verzeichnis* remains a valid aid.

The Priscian/St. Gall glosses (§7)

³ Trivia: David suspects that, although it is a flagship DH project of the RIA, it has perhaps not been used very extensively, as he discovered over the summer that the final manuscript page had been uploaded upside-down! This has now been rectified.

Thurneysen's formulation ("Sg. etc.") is certainly awkward. In fact, the name 'St. Gall glosses' in itself is problematic, as it is used to reference five separate manuscripts containing OIr. glosses on Priscian's Latin grammar. 'Priscian glosses' would certainly be a more appropriate name, but the matter is nevertheless controversial. It has become standard practice to refer to these glosses as the 'St. Gall glosses' and changing the name might cause confusion. The origin of the naming practice is to some extent understandable, as out of the c. 3800 OIr. glosses on Priscian, c. 3500 are found in the St. Gall manuscript.

The fifth manuscript said to contain OIr. glosses on Priscian is curious. The St. Gall, Karlsruhe, Milan (only c. 10 glosses) and Leiden manuscripts of the text are regularly covered in discussions of these glosses. However, a fifth, Dublin manuscript is also mentioned by some scholars, although none of them seem to have actually used it for examples.

A discussion ensues on whether we should retain Thurneysen's division of the gloss corpora into major (Wb., Ml.-and-Tur.) and minor (Arm., Sg., etc.). It is decided that we should be very careful in adding any value judgments to the chapter on sources. This division should therefore be dropped. Some alternative orderings are discussed (chronological, thematic), but it is felt that such practices might skew the evidence. Giving precedence to the Würzburg, Milan and Priscian glosses for their key significance in our understanding of OIr. grammar seems equally problematic. As such, it is decided that a neutral, alphabetical order (of the abbreviations used in citing examples) will be applied. Moreover, no mention of 'importance' as such will be made in discussing any particular source, rather e.g. the number of glosses contained therein will be mentioned. Additionally, it is concluded that this chapter should not be exhaustive, but should limit itself to brief discussions of the main sources used in compiling the grammar.⁴

The St. Gall manuscript was presumably written in Bangor (Hofman 1996) and is dated very precisely to 850-851 (O'Neill) on the basis of annalistic evidence. Thurneysen's dating of the manuscript has been superseded. The dating of the glosses themselves is less clear as there are various layers of glossing from different periods and possibly spanning the period 700-850. Unfortunately, the distribution of these layers of glosses seems random and it is difficult to properly distinguish between the strata.⁵ The glosses were added by two main glossators, very shortly after the main text was copied. The glossators used the same exemplar. A third, considerably later glossator added c. 10 glosses to the corpus. The manuscript was moved to St. Gall at an unknown date, but certainly after 888 AD, as it was not mentioned in a St. Gall manuscript catalogue of that year. The manuscript contains some 9500 glosses, most of which are in Latin. It also includes some *ogam* and poems, which deserves mention.

The Priscian manuscripts seem to go back to the same archetype as there are parallel glosses, although these are sometimes spelled differently. The scribes of the manuscripts are in no way related. The origins of the manuscripts (apart from the St. Gall one) is unknown to us, although it is believed that the one kept in Karlsruhe may well also have been written in Ireland. Brief mention is made of two similar manuscripts kept in Paris which also include some British glosses.

"The St. Gall glosses, which are replete with scribal abbreviations, are of great lexicographic value." Whilst abbreviations are used, they did not strike Bernhard or David as being at all unusual. The glosses are indeed of lexicographic interest as Priscian used many unusual words in his Latin, triggering the use

⁴ Trivia: at this stage the webcam in the conference room suddenly started moving about.

⁵ Joke: "We need the scribe! Call the scribe!"

of equally rare words and calques in the OIr. glosses. However, the statement could be misleading; the other corpora are certainly not of lesser value for the attestation of OIr. words. Matters like these should rather be treated in a general introduction to the chapter on sources, explaining the nature of the material. Continuing on this theme, it is considered that there are unavoidable uncertainties in writing a grammar on the basis of glosses; one can never exclude the influence of Latin on the OIr.

As to the editions, the Thesaurus still deserves mention. Other than that Hofman's edition (of about one third of the St. Gall glosses), Moran's edition (which build upon Hofman's work) and Bernhard's dictionary/database should be referenced.

St. Paul im Lavanttal / Reichenau (§7)

David stresses that he has not yet seen the manuscript.⁶ The monastery was closed when he went for a visit. The curiously double name for this manuscript derives from the fact that the monastery of Reichenau (an island in Lake Konstanz) donated it – along with other treasures – to its chapter in St. Paul, in Carinthia. Unfortunately, the monastery of St. Paul lacks the means to properly maintain its many treasures: the monks “are literally drowning in this gold.”

The manuscript was not written in Reichenau, but seems to have been written somewhere within Franconia. Its contents are extremely varied. It was probably a schoolmaster's notebook. It contains an incantation and four Irish poems, of which the most well known is *Messe ocus Pangur Bán*. It also includes the earliest attested – and only Old Irish – full praise poem to one Áed Oll, an otherwise unknown prince from Leinster. The inclusion of a praise poem to such an obscure nobleman might indicate a connection between the manuscript and Leinster. The manuscript also contains Greek texts and Latin scientific writings.

As to the editions, the Thesaurus should be mentioned. Hildegard Tristram has very usefully put photographs of the manuscript online on her website (<http://hildegard.tristram.de/schulheft/>).

The language is not early, but certainly not Middle Irish yet either (late OIr.). Oskamp, in his article ‘The Irish material in the St. Paul Irish codex’ (1978), made the claim that the scribe may be identified with the scribe of a number of other manuscripts.

“To the above may be added:” (§7)

Thurneysen very briefly (yet more briefly in the *Handbuch*) mentions a number of other sources. It is essentially just a list. Some additions need to be made:

The Stowe Missal (RIA MS 1238), including an Irish tract on the mass, which is dated to c. 800 AD, is conspicuously missing both in the *Handbuch* and in GOI. The language sometimes appears older than one would expect for 800 and it may perhaps be a copy of an earlier text, with some modernizations. Very curiously, given its early date, the punctum delens is used to denote lenition, although this practice is not found in either Milan or Würzburg. The manuscript also includes three charms written in Irish, which were added by later scribes (and which are somewhat difficult to read, especially the first one).

There is also another St. Gall manuscript (St. Gall MS 1395) with Irish charms, which should be mentioned.

⁶ Trivium: Bernhard has. It is tiny. And unfortunately it was opened on a page containing Greek at the time.

The Liber Hymnorum, an 11th-century manuscript containing a number of Old Irish hymns with Middle Irish commentaries is also discussed, but it is decided that although it should be mentioned it should be added to the section on OIr. sources found in later manuscripts.

Old Irish sources in later manuscripts (§8)

“But the scribes seldom copy accurately”. This is an unnecessarily harsh statement. We would rather adopt Rodway’s distinction, found in his *Dating Medieval Welsh Literature: Evidence from the Verbal System* (2013), between scribes that are faithful to the manuscript (who retain archaisms) and scribes that are faithful to the text (who modernize the text).

“Hence sources of this kind must be used with caution.” Although true, the word ‘caution’ is felt to be a bit strong. Thurneysen’s remark that texts in (syllabic) verse are nonetheless of particular value as “the fixed number of syllables and the rhyme serv[es] to protect old forms, or at least to facilitate their restoration” is certainly true.

As in the preceding section, we should also mention texts that will be used in writing the new grammar. An alphabetical ordering should be adopted for neutrality’s sake. Dating is of course crucial and the introduction to this section needs to mention the criteria for dating.

Félire Óengusso (§8)

The dating of this text is somewhat controversial. The beginning of the 9th century seems to be most accepted, Thurneysen’s late 8th century date would seem less acceptable.

“Linguistically it is very close to M[i]ll[an].” Unless there is a highly specific need for pronouncing such a judgement, we consider it best to leave such statements out. Some aspects of its language seem very old, others young. An example of the former is found in the distribution of the first person singular endings *-im* and *-u*, which are distributed exactly as expected from the point of view of its Proto-Indo-European inheritance. No such clear distribution is ever found in the glosses. Perhaps we should consult Nicole Volmering, who is working on a new edition of the *Félire* on her thoughts? And perhaps the members of the Utrecht project on Medieval Code-Switching (e.g. Nike Stam) should also be consulted? In the *Handbuch*, Thurneysen uses the *Félire* to help date the Milan and Würzburg glosses, which is a very doubtful practice and was rightly dropped in the GOI.

Vita Tripartita (§8)

Curiously, this text was not mentioned in the *Handbuch*, although – given the practice with which the GOI was produced – it seems likely that he did draw examples from it in the German original. The language of the *Vita Tripartita* appears to show influences from different periods of the Irish language and it may not be the most reliable source. We will have to see to what extent it is actually needed to write a grammar of Old Irish.

Saltair na Rann (§8)

Although less securely dated at present than Thurneysen’s very specific 987 date of composition, it is definitely not an OIr., but rather a Middle Irish source. In the *Handbuch* this is very clearly stated: “*Saltair na Rann*... zeigt schon einen ganz anderen Sprachcharakter und wird besser dem Mittelirischen zugerechnet.” GOI is far less clear on this issue.

We will not use *Saltair na Rann* as a source of OIr.