



Moran, P.: *De origine scoticae linguae (O'Mulconry's Glossary): An Early Irish Linguistic Tract, with a Related Glossary, Irsan*. Turnhout: Brepols. Corpus Christianorum, Lexica latina medii aevi 7. 592 pp. + 1 plate. ISBN: 978-2-503-58179-9. €230.

The book reviewed here provides a critical and in-depth treatment of an important medieval glossary, namely *De origine scoticae linguae* (hereafter OM). The text dates to the Old Irish period, in spite of the Latin title. This text underscores the fascination the early medieval Irish *literati* had with their own language. It discusses the origin of Irish words by means of etymological derivations, very often deriving them from Latin, Greek, Hebrew and, on rare occasion, Norse. Difficult or obscure words found in texts of a legal, poetic or narrative nature are also frequently elucidated, demonstrating the broader intellectual interests and readership of the glossary's compiler(s). Glossaries such as this continued to be the focus of scribal engagement over the centuries and were an important component of the educational curriculum of the later medieval *literati*, a fact which led to complex textual transmissions. In this volume, Pádraic Moran expertly guides the reader through such complexities and elucidates the origin and development of this important glossary, shedding light on its contents and sources, along with providing a critical edition of a closely related but shorter glossary known as the *Irsan* Glossary.

This book applies philological methods of high standards and considers the manuscript context and materiality of the text, thereby marking a welcome departure from earlier editions of glossaries, most of which appeared in print well over a hundred years ago and which often lacked accompanying translations and detailed critical engagement with the text. This is the case with the earlier editions of OM and *Irsan* published by Whitley Stokes in 1900 and 1859 respectively. In contrast, Moran's book begins with an extensive introduction which gives a general overview of past scholarship (pp. 11–15), a detailed discussion of the manuscript tradition (pp. 16–27), an excursus on the structure and content of the glossaries (pp. 28–57), a survey of the language (pp. 58–90), a discussion of the origin and development of the text (pp. 91–98), an outline of the editorial method (pp. 99–103) and a complete bibliography (pp. 105–124).

The editions proper with accompanying translations (pp. 127–271), follow this extensive introduction. The main glossary edited in this volume (pp. 127–246) is more widely known as 'O'Mulconry's Glossary' (OM), on account of the copy in the Yellow Book of Lecan (TCD MS 1318 (*olim* H.2.16; OM¹)), cols. 88–112, a manuscript which was associated with the Uí Mhaoil Chonaire scribes. This was the sole copy used by Stokes in his edition of the glossary. However, Moran

(p. 14) argues that the title should rightly be *De origine scoticae linguae*, which is given at the beginning of the prologue, because it ‘signals affiliation to the Latin intellectual tradition’. In contrast to Stokes’ edition, Moran draws on a further three witnesses, namely TCD MS 1317 (*olim* H.2.15B; OM²), pp. 41–42 (pp. 118–119); TCD MS 1317 (*olim* H.2.15B; OM³), pp. 102–104 (pp. 178–80) and UCD OFM MS A 12 (OM⁴), pp. 41–42. In a discussion of the relationship of the manuscripts (pp. 21–23), Moran shows that OM¹, OM³, and OM⁴ derive from a common archetype. Moreover, OM⁴ is derived from OM¹ on the evidence of shared errors. OM² is an independent, but drastically shorter, copy and possibly reflects an earlier version of OM¹. However, it has been modernised and significantly interfered with by subsequent copyists, making it less reliable than OM¹. For this reason, Moran, like Stokes, has based his edition on OM¹, which is the most complete text, but with superior readings supplied from OM³ when warranted. Moran provides readings from OM² and OM⁴ in the apparatus when they can help with the interpretation of an entry.

Moran’s edition corrects Stokes’s previous interpretations on occasion. For instance, Moran has *cadens germen* ‘falling sprout’ in OM 567–568 (with discussion on p. 90 and p. 464) for Stokes’s *cadens germanice*, which is a mis-expansion of MS *germ-*. Moran confirms the correct reading by consulting the source from which the citation originates, namely, Jerome’s *Liber Interpretationis Hebraicorum Nominum Faldas* 6.17: *Faldas ... cadens germen* ‘Pildash ... falling shoot’. This is likewise confirmed by the direct translation of the Hebrew phrase into Irish *cland-tot[h]im* ‘plant falling’ in OM 567–568. This example illustrates the importance of identifying and checking the sources that were used during the compilation of glossaries, which Moran diligently does throughout this edition.

OM is comprised of two strata of differing dates, of which the first stratum was compiled in the mid-seventh to eighth century and was likely to have originated in Leinster, given the prevalence of Leinster place names and references to Leinster population groups and their legendary history (p. 93). The linguistic dating of texts, particularly those with copies found in manuscripts which post-date a text’s date of composition by several centuries, is always fraught with methodological difficulties. Moran provides a detailed survey of the phonological and morphological features of the two strata of OM. Moran is aware of the pitfalls of relying on phonological features as a dating criterion and he reminds the reader that since OM is written in non-contemporary manuscript witnesses, certain phonological features such as final *-th* in unstressed syllables, although possibly a sign of an early date, can also reflect the later scribal tendency to archaise the orthography of the texts. One might note that this can also be the case with the orthographical omission of glides, a scribal practice which continues into the Middle Irish period and their omission could belong to the scribal policy of a particular later manuscript, rather than being a sign of an early date. Despite these difficulties, Moran’s linguistic analysis corroborates Mac Neill’s (1932: 113)

contention that some entries in the first stratum date to between the mid-seventh and eighth centuries on the grounds of phonological features such as Early Old Irish *-é-* which has not yet been diphthongised to *-ia-* before non-palatalised consonants. Notably, five headwords beginning with *Fía-* are placed in sequence in the *Fe-* block which shows the older forms were used at the time the block was established and thereby corroborate an early date of compilation. The second stratum dates to the late-ninth or early-tenth century (p. 77).

The inclusion of a critical edition of the *Irsan* glossary in this volume is central to understanding the evolution of OM because it shares 130 of its 232 entries with OM. There is only one extant copy of *Irsan*, namely in TCD MS 1337 (*olim* H.3.18), 3, pp. 79c–83a. *Irsan* was first published by Stokes (1859: 206–215), and subsequently by Binchy (1978: 627.36–633.33), both without translation and critical comment. In the present volume, *Irsan* receives full critical treatment, with a commentary and discussion of its entries, although a linguistic commentary on the entries which do not correspond to OM is wanting.

Moran (pp. 25–27) gives a detailed excursus of the *mise-en-page* of *Irsan*, accompanied by a plate, which illustrates scribal practice and the process of compilation by several scribal hands. Indeed, the gathering in which *Irsan* is copied was inserted at a later point into a larger manuscript, known as ‘Máel Íosa’s book’, which contains several other glossaries of various lengths (see Kobel 2020 for a detailed catalogue description). This manuscript is particularly interesting in terms of the materiality of such texts. It shows how the scribe(s) engaged with glossaries by extracting entries and copying extracts of interest onto vellum tabs, like modern sticky-notes. For instance, fol. v is a small, inserted vellum tab that contains an entry on *cúthal* ‘feeble’, along with several other glossarial entries. This entry is also found in OM 268 and a corresponding entry is in *Dúil Dromma Cetta* (*CIH* ii, 609.15–17), also in ‘Máel Íosa’s book’. The scribe(s) frequently jotted glossarial material in the margins or used them as filler-texts. For example, extracts from the medieval Irish glossary known as *Sanas Cormaic* are written in the upper margin and at the end of column b on p. 14 in ‘Máel Íosa’s book’ (described in Kobel 2020: 195 and 199). Therefore, scribes were not only adding entries to glossaries at various stages, as is the case with *Irsan*, but also extracting entries of interest, perhaps with a view to inserting them into a different glossary at a later stage.

Moran (pp. 32–35) deftly elucidates the accrual of different strata in the OM and *Irsan* glossaries. This accrual is apparent in the arrangement and the sequence of the entries in OM and *Irsan*. Such stratification reveals scholarly interaction with these texts from an early period and reflects how glossaries were not static texts, but were adapted, abridged, or added to as later redactors copied them out and encountered material in them which was of interest to them, as noted above. Such scribal engagement illustrates that the fluid and compilatory nature of these glossaries can make it difficult not only to establish the original format and extent

of a glossary but also to ascertain the relationship between glossaries, a fact which is not overlooked by Moran (p. 55).

The entries in OM and *Irsan* mostly take the form of ‘x’, that is, ‘y’, followed by an etymological explanation, or on occasion even a semantic one, followed by the textual citation. Major sources included not only Irish sources but also Greek-Latin glossaries, Charisius, Isidore, and Jerome (pp. 43–49). Irish sources are wide-ranging, including legal texts such as *Críth Gablach* and *Bretha Crólige*, the ‘Leinster poems’ which deal with genealogical matters, and several narrative texts such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Brisleach Mór Maige Muirthemni*, to name but a few (pp. 49–50). These sources were mined at various stages during the glossary’s development and organisation (pp. 96–97). The entries cover a wide variety of subject-matter, including topics such as women, farming and legal terms. On occasion, citations consist of syllabic or non-syllabic verse containing obscure or difficult words that the glossator felt necessary to explain, as is the case with *droch*, which is explained as the ‘wheel of a chariot’ (OM 350) and *lang*, explained as a ‘falsehood’ (OM 789). Given the central importance of manuscript culture to medieval Irish learning, it is unsurprising to see several terms referring to the materiality of books, such as *cín memraim*, ‘book(let) of parchment’ (OM 228) and *medb* (OM 815), which is suggested may possibly be a term for ink. The entry *billóg* (OM 187) is explained as *tiag lobar*, which was previously interpreted as a ‘leper’s wallet’. However, Sharon Arbuthnot plausibly suggests to Moran that the headword refers to *bileóc* ‘leaf (of a book)’ and that the etymology is ‘a punning reference to the inferiority of wrapping a book in a leaf of parchment rather than a leather binding’ (p. 327).

Following the editions, Moran (pp. 276–551) provides an alphabetised commentary on OM and *Irsan* that discusses any textual difficulties. The book concludes with indexes (pp. 553–589), including standardised glossary headwords, followed by cited words of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, personal names, place names and population groups and lastly, a comprehensive list of all the sources from which the two glossaries cite. The combined commentary and detailed indexes allow the reader to easily navigate through the two glossaries and help make the entries easily accessible.

This book will be of interest to those scholars whose research focuses on medieval glossaries, medieval Irish language, intellectual culture and the transmission of knowledge in Ireland and further afield. The book appears in the Corpus Christianorum Series. The copy-editing is of a high standard with relatively few typographical errors. The only draw-back is the price of this volume, the high cost making it inaccessible to anyone not in a permanent post. Given its importance for the scholarly community, it is imperative that every research library should at the least have one copy.

Moran’s book marks a welcome advent in the editing of glossaries and this reviewer hopes that more scholarly editions of such texts will be forthcoming,

which will have to follow the high standards set in this volume under review. This publication will undoubtedly spur on a new generation of scholars to work on medieval Irish glossaries, many of which are still in need of critical editions and translations.

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