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Title	Córus Bésgnai: A window on the medieval Irish church
Authors	Murray, Kevin
Publication date	2020-09-01
Original Citation	Murray, K. (2020) 'Córus Bésgnai: A window on the medieval Irish church', Studia Hibernica, 46(1), pp. 135-143. doi: 10.3828/sh.2020.12
Type of publication	Review
Link to publisher's version	https://doi.org/10.3828/sh.2020.12 - 10.3828/sh.2020.12
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Download date	2026-11-08 09:19:18
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/11737



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Alt Léirmheasa/Review Article

Córus Bésgnai: a window on the medieval Irish church[1]

KEVIN MURRAY

(Coláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh)

The volume under review — authored by Liam Breatnach — is the seventh instalment in the Early Irish Law Series published by the School of Celtic Studies at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. It comprises an edition, translation and analysis of — along with scholarly commentary upon — the Old Irish legal text *Córus Bésgnai* (*CB*) 'The Arrangement of Discipline', a constituent tract of *Senchas Már* (*SM*) 'The Great Tradition', probably the most important vernacular legal source from medieval Ireland. After a brief introduction (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 provides an edition, translation and analysis of the Old Irish text solely while Chapter 3 focuses upon the canonical text, glosses and commentary preserved in TCD MS H.2.15A (1316) [MS A]. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the extracts and commentary extant in TCD MS H.3.17 (1336) [MS B], Chapter 5 to the extracts and glosses found in TCD MS H.3.18 (1337) [MS C], and Chapter 6 to the extracts and commentary present in Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson MS B 506 [MS D]. The volume also contains six Appendices (pp. 306–27), a number of Indexes (pp. 329–35) and a Bibliography (pp. 337–46).

The editorial approach adopted in this volume is worthy of comment. Before dealing with the four primary manuscript witnesses to *Córus Bésgnai* in Chapters 3-6, we are first presented with a normalised edition of the Old Irish canonical text (without the associated gloss and commentary) in Chapter 2.[2] Though this leads unavoidably to a certain amount of duplication between the chapters, this method of presentation has one great advantage: it foregrounds for the reader the fact that the second part of the canonical text is very fragmentary. The author estimates (p. 16) that '[o]n the basis of word-count … it seems reasonable to conclude that at least half of this tract, roughly 1800 words, has been lost'. Sometimes, the presentation of a legal tract as preserved in the manuscripts may obscure the fragmentary nature of its core canonical text because of the presence of a wealth of later gloss and commentary. This is not the case here. The first 66 paragraphs of the canonical text, for example, occupy 200 lines on the printed page and may be read continuously and coherently;

[1] *Córus Bésgnai: an Old Irish law tract on the church and society*, edited by Liam Breatnach, Early Irish Law Series, vol. vii (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2017) xii + 346pp. ISBN: 978-1-85500-232-6. Price: €40 (Hbk).

[2] It is worth pointing out that some of the restored text in the fragmentary second portion of the tract is only to be found as citations in O'Davoren's Glossary or as extracts in the legal digests.

the final 46 paragraphs take up only 60 lines and — with a couple of exceptions (§§91-2, 101) — generally preserve only short phrases of canonical text which are disjointed and which do not follow on from each other. Thus, we have only a very limited understanding of the second section of this *Senchas Már* law-tract.

The subject matter of *Córus Bésgnai* is quite varied. For example, in the first section, we find *inter alia* paragraphs devoted to the issue of contracts; maintaining order in society; the duties of the church to the laity and the duties of the laity to the church; reciprocal relationships between kin-members, and between father and son. The fragmentary second section contains extracts on vassals leaving their original churches; on succession to religious high office; and on theft. The emphasis on the church is so central in *CB* that Donnchadh Ó Corráin has referred to it and the first third of *Bretha Nemed* as 'vernacular canon law texts'.[3] An account of Patrick's revision of Irish law is also to be found within the first section (§§30-37). Various versions of this legend are to be found in different sources with the rendering in *Córus Bésgnai* the most extensive account preserved among the constituent tracts of *Senchas Már* (though there are more references to it in *Di Astud Chirt ⁊ Dligid* 'On the Establishing of Right and Entitlement');[4] furthermore, a fully developed version of the narrative forms a central part of the 'Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the *Senchas Már*'.

There is much to interest medieval Irish scholars in this edition of *Córus Bésgnai*. For example, on p. 22 the author points to a significant number of words, compounds and phrases which are either not to be found elsewhere or are otherwise rarely attested. Furthermore, some very interesting points of interpretation, particularly with regard to language and vocabulary, are advanced throughout the volume. I deal with a number of these in turn here:

On p. 30 §25, we find that 'a devilish feast' (*fled demundae*) is prepared (amongst others) *do … drochdoínib .i. do drúthaib ⁊ cáintib ⁊ oblairib ⁊ braigirib* 'for … evil persons, that is for buffoons and lampooners and jesters and farters'. Many of these terms develop nearly synonymous meanings and this list could also be translated as 'for fools and satirists and jugglers and buffoons'. An alternative would be to translate the last item here as 'professional farters', following Fergus Kelly,[5] to highlight their occupational role at feasts and assemblies. The role of the *pétomane* or professional farter (*braigire* / *braigetóir*) was well-established in a number of medieval societies. Perhaps the most famous example was

[3] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Clavis litterarum Hibernensium: medieval Irish books and texts (c. 400 – c. 1600)*, 3 vols (Turnhout, 2017) ii, section 18 (preamble): 'The vernacular laws'.

[4] See Fangzhe Qiu, 'Narratives in early Irish law tracts', Unpublished PhD thesis (University College Cork, 2014) 152.

[5] Fergus Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law* (Dublin, 1988) 64. See also Kim McCone, 'Varia: II.1', *Ériu* 36 (1985) 169-71.

Roland le Fartere in England who was granted land by King Edward I as a reward for his performance. In an Irish context, it is worth drawing attention to the famous image of 'Mac Sweyne's feast' in John Derricke's *The Image of lrelande* (1581) which shows a couple of these *braigiri* in mid-performance.[6]

On p. 34 §35, there is one possible example of the archaic connective *–ch* in *toch-airrchechnatar fáidi leo* 'and prophets among them had foretold'. The manuscript witnesses to this read: *DOTOIRCECHNATAR DIDHU* (A; p. 154) and *toich doairrcechnatar* (O'Davoren's Glossary, p. 316 §711) so the evidence is ambiguous. The verb is 3rd plural perfect of *do-airchain* 'foretells, prophesies' and the restoration of the infixed *–ch* was proposed by Binchy and is followed by Breatnach (p. 78) and is likely but not certain.[7] All commentators thus far are united in seeing the use of connective *–ch* as a very early linguistic feature, one which survives solely in *Senchas Már*.[8] For example, Thomas Charles-Edwards and Fergus Kelly in their edition of *Bechbretha* saw its presence therein as evidence that the tract dated to 'the seventh century, probably towards the middle of the century'.[9] Its presence in *Córus Bésgnai*, if upheld, would be an important dating criterion pointing towards a seventh-century date of composition. Contrary opinions do exist, however: for example, Thomas Charles-Edwards is of the opinion that *CB* dates to the early eighth century.[10]

On pp. 52-4 (at p. 52), Breatnach has shown, *contra* M.A. O'Brien,[11] 'that the denominative verb *creccaid* co-existed with *crenaid* in O[ld] Ir[ish], rather than being a Middle or Early Modern Irish replacement of it'. Most of the examples which illustrate this point are taken from the corpus of vernacular law texts. Among the examples which he cites, we find the use of an infixed pronoun Class C (*nod creca*) and of a suffixed pronoun (*Crecsus*) so the argument advanced is conclusive. Interestingly, the author proposes that *creccaid* is not just a simple development of *crenaid* (with the original meaning 'buys, obtains'; later also 'sells, disposes') but that the verb differs in some way from both *crenaid* and *renaid* 'sells'. He suggests (p. 54) that the best translation might be '"trades, transacts,

[6] For image and discussion, see Greer Ramsey, 'A breath of fresh air: rectal music in Gaelic Ireland', *Archaeology Ireland* 16, no. 1 (Spring, 2002) 22-3.
[7] D.A. Binchy, 'IE. **q^{u}e* in Irish', *Celtica* 5 (1960) 77-94 at 84.
[8] Traditionally, it was thought that there was at least one, and possibly two, examples of the use of *–ch* in *Amra Coluim Chille*. However, the most recent editor of the text, Jacopo Bisagni, *Amrae Coluimb Chille: a critical edition* (Dublin, 2019) 108-16 §3.3.2.2 has discussed these examples in detail concluding (p. 116) that the *Amra* 'does not contain any secure occurrence of the archaic conjunction *–ch*'.
[9] *Bechbretha: An Old Irish law-tract on bee-keeping* (Dublin, 1983) 28.
[10] T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Oxford, 2005) 196 n. 58, 582.
[11] M.A. O'Brien, 'Short notes', *Celtica* 4 (1958) 97-102 at 101.

deals with", with neutralisation of the opposition "buys / sells", although in some contexts it is most easily rendered "buys"'.

On p. 58, the distinction between *recht* and *ríagal* is discussed. The author (following the glossator in A) suggests that '*recht* refers to the general laws of the church, which are always binding, and *ríagal* to regulations which are intended for specific situations only'. Factoring in clerical names such as Mac Ríagla, one might tentatively suggest that a rule (*ríagal*) may have applied only to ecclesiastics while a law (*recht*) — depending on its focus — could apply to ecclesiastics or to all members of the church. Thus, the two glosses on *recht* in A (p. 134 §13) refer to confessors teaching the gospel (relevant to clerics only) and to the non-consumption of meat on Fridays and Wednesdays (relevant to all Christians) while the gloss on *ríagal* refers to fasting (apart from a solitary meal) from one nones to the next (pertinent solely to clerics). Though a minute examination of this word and its varied meanings is beyond the scope of this review, the fact that it is a loanword from Latin *rēgula* would also fit with this interpretation as would its use in the title of *Ríagal Phátraic* 'The Rule of Patrick', which lays down precepts which are ecclesiastical in nature.[12] Further examination will be required across a fairly comprehensive sample of attestations to see if this suggestion might hold good.

On p. 59, the author rejects the etymology, proposed by Heinrich Wagner,[13] that the second element in in *rechtge* is from **gusis* 'choice, option'. He analyses an example where *rechtge* and *bráthchae* are contrasted in *Sanas Chormaic* and suggests that *rechtge* means 'royal authority, (royal) promulgation' and that *bráthchae* might best be translated as 'judicial process'.

On pp. 64-5, there is a discussion of the phrase *dé sechtmaine* previously translated as 'once a week', an interpretation which Breatnach now finds unsatisfactory.[14] Comparing the example in *Córus Bésgnai* §20 with other attestations of this phrase, he suggests that it 'probably refers to an occasion taking place a week after another one, perhaps a burial service one week after death, but more likely a commemoration of the deceased one week after burial'. The second suggestion seems more plausible considering the relevant gloss in A (pp. 140-41) which reads: *.i. maine bē lind. dīa mbē lind is dīa mís* 'i.e. if there is no drink; if

[12] For the text, see J.G. O'Keeffe, 'The Rule of Patrick', *Ériu* 1 (1904) 216-24. For discussion, see Patricia Kelly, 'The Rule of Patrick: textual affinities', in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages: texts and transmissions / Irland und Europa im früheren Mittelalter: Texte und Überlieferung* (Dublin, 2002) 284-95.

[13] Heinrich Wagner, 'Studies in the origins of early Celtic civilisation', *ZCP* 31 (1970) 1-58 at 38-9.

[14] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Aidan Breen, 'The laws of the Irish', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 382-438 at 407.

there be drink it is a month later [that it is provided]'. These interpretations have parallels in other medieval cultures: *dé sechtmaine* calls to mind the Old Norse *sjaund*, the seventh day after a person died when the ritual funeral ale was drunk, while the month mentioned in the gloss may reflect the tradition of the month's mind which was well established in medieval England and which is still such a central part of celebrating the dead in Ireland. In the same way that Old Norse *sjaund* 'a period of seven, seven nights' (< *sjau* 'seven') came to be used of the funeral service and/or funeral banquet, perhaps the phrase *dé sechtmaine* ('after a week, in seven days') came to be utilised in a similar manner to refer to the commemoration of the dead a week after burial. Such ritual remembrance was an important part of medieval Irish culture. One may instance, for example, the concept of the octave (< *octava dies* 'eighth day') for the feasts of the saints which also played a significant role in the liturgical calendar.

On p. 234 §67, we find a very interesting two-stanza poem, probably dating to the early Middle Irish period, which lists six sons from whom a father is not due honour (according to *Senchas Már*). These are: a foundling; a religious novice (who has his own superior); a son to whom a father displays hatred; a landless son; and a son in bondage. The first among the six listed is the son of a *cétmuinter* who seems out of place here. As our author has shown elsewhere, *mac (na) cétmuintire* means 'the legitimate son' who is entitled to inheritance; he is also known as *macc óge* 'full son'.[15] It is unclear to me why this poet claims, on the authority of *Senchas Már*, that a father is not due honour from his legitimate son.

On pp. 257-8, Prof. Breatnach corrects various readings printed in *Corpus iuris Hibernici*,[16] to show that the second element in MS *banap–* is *apaid* 'harbouring' and not *apad* 'act of proclaiming, giving notice'. He translates *bānapaid* as 'white harbouring', i.e. unknowingly harbouring a criminal or harbouring a person before they have committed a crime. This is contrasted with *dergapaid* 'red harbouring', i.e. harbouring a person after they have committed a crime. The juxtaposition *bánapaid / dergapaid* brings to mind the opposition between *bánmartrae* 'white martyrdom' and *dergmartrae* 'red martyrdom' which was teased out by Clare Stancliffe and Próinséas Ní Chatháin, and the contrast between *bánbéim* 'white blow' and *dergbéim* 'red blow' which was treated of by Neil McLeod.[17] One

[15] Liam Breatnach, 'On old Irish collective and abstract nouns, the meaning of *cétmuinter*, and marriage in early mediaeval Ireland', *Ériu* 66 (2016) 1-29 at 10-11, 14-15.

[16] D.A. Binchy, *Corpus iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols (Dublin, 1978).

[17] Clare Stancliffe, 'Red, white and blue martyrdom', in David Dumville, Rosamond McKitterick and Dorothy Whitelock (eds), *Ireland in early mediaeval Europe: Studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes* (Cambridge, 1982) 21-46; Próinséas Ní Chatháin, 'A reading in the Cambrai Homily', *Celtica* 21 (1990) 417; Neil

welcome development resulting from Breatnach's discussion is the creation of new entries in eDIL (the electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language) s.vv. *bánapaid* (dil.ie/5328) and *dergapaid* (dil.ie/50624) to replace *bánapad* 'white notice' and *dergapad* 'red warning' (found s.v. *derg*) of the print edition.

A further addendum to eDIL from *Córus Bésgnai* alone which might merit re-examination is the addition of an entry which reads (dil.ie/50380):

> *licaib* adj d pl. do chethraib licaib, *CB* 36 §43. glossed: nō mlichtaib .i. do cethraib glanaib .i. ro udpartha a Recht, *CB* 162 §43'.

As may be seen, although the reading *licaib* is glossed *nō mlichtaib* in A, this has been rejected by the editor (despite the early form with initial *ml–*) because of the presence of the gloss *do cethraib glanaib* referring to 'clean' livestock; consequently, this is how the phrase *do chethraib licaib* is translated in the canonical text (pp. 37, 163 §43). However, it seems possible that *licaib* may represent a miscopying of earlier *dlicthechaib*, with loss of initial 'd' and with the reading of a suspension stroke accidentally omitted (< *[d]lic–aib*). The primary sense of the adjective *dligthech* (spelt *dlichtech* in the Würzburg glosses [5c20]) is 'lawful', and when applied to animals it may have the meaning 'lawful or clean' referring to a beast which may be sacrificed or given to the church. Such usage is to be found, for example, in *Lebor Gabála* concerning animals to be taken in the ark, with God permitting Noah both clean and unclean animals (*dligthech / indligthech*),[18] surely reflecting a knowledge of Gen. 7:2: 'Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate'. Thus, positing a reading *[d]lic–aib* might account both for the form *licaib* and for the presence of the gloss *do cethraib glanaib*.

Other suggestions made in this volume might also be usefully incorporated within eDIL. For example, *?1. fuba(e)* [dil.ie/24730] and *1. ruba(e)* [dil.ie/35660] are translated 'attack' and 'defence' respectively in the Dictionary (especially when used together). Breatnach suggests (p. 69) that their meanings might be more specific and recommends 'repelling' (*fuba(e)*) and 'patrolling' (*ruba(e)*) as better renderings of the Irish terms.

McLeod, 'Di Ércib Fola', *Ériu* 52 (2002) 123-216. The colour *glas* 'blue / green' is used as another category with reference both to martyrdom and to types of blows but is not found with harbouring.

[18] R.A.S. Macalister and John MacNeill, *Leabhar Gabhála, the book of conquests of Ireland: the recension of Micheál Ó Cléirigh*, part 1 (Dublin, 1916) 8; R.A. Stewart Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn: the book of the taking of Ireland*, Part 1, Irish Texts Society 34 (Dublin, 1938) 110 §58.

Editorial policy in a text this long and detailed is a complex matter particularly when differing forms of presentation are involved (as here). There is a restored canonical text in Chapter 2 while Chapters 3-6 combine a diplomatic presentation of the canonical text alongside a semi-diplomatic edition of the gloss and commentary. Both of these approaches have issues associated with them. With regard to the canonical text presented in Chapter 2, some of the restored Old Irish forms reflect significant editorial intervention.[19] These include, for example:

ADRAGAR (p. 134)	→	ad-regtar (p. 28 §14)
BOICHT DODIDNADAIB (p. 138)	→	boicht do dídnad biadaib (p. 30 §20)
CONEIRGEDTHA (p. 150)	→	con-airgeda (p. 32 §30)
DOAIRFET (p. 150)	→	Do-árbid (p. 32 §31)
ANG*H*IALL LA (p. 152)	→	i ngíallnai la (p. 32 §32)
AILITRIUCH (p. 244)	→	ailithre (p. 44 §83)

The final example cited here represents quite an interesting editorial decision as there is a headword cited in eDIL, *?2 ailithrech* (dil.ie/1034), under which our manuscript form is cited (along with two other examples), and which has been taken therein as a possible by-form of *ailithre*. Breatnach remains unconvinced by this, however, believing (p. 106 §83) that the example in *Córus Bésgnai* 'must be an error'.

With regard to the diplomatic and semi-diplomatic editions in Chapters 3, 4 and 6, one aspect that caught my eye was the decision (noted on p. 306) to expand the punctum over *f* and *s* as *h* because 'the lenition of *c*, *d*, etc. can be indicated by either a dot or the *spiritus asper*'. This is unproblematic insofar as it concerns gloss and commentary. However, I think it might have been better to avoid such presentation of the canonical text because it leads to the following situation (when comparing the canonical text in Chapter 2 with the equivalent diplomatic edition in subsequent chapters):

p. 138: INFHLED	→	ind ḟled (p. 30 §20)
p. 140: DOFHLAITHAIB	→	do ḟlaithib (p. 30 §21)

[19] Though the dangers of this are offset to some extent by the fact that all this material is available in diplomatic or semi-diplomatic format within the volume, nevertheless the presentation of a canonical text which is clean and easy to read will render it more likely that it is this text which will remain at the centre of future scholarly discussions.

p. 142: IN FHLED / DIAFHLAITH → ind ḟled / dia ḟlaith (p. 30 §22)
p. 144: DIAFHLAITH → dia ḟlaith (p. 30 §24)
p. 146: ARFHOCHRIC → ar ḟochric (p. 30 §25)

I have not observed any examples of lenited *s* written 'SH' in the diplomatic canonical text though there are more examples of lenited *f* rendered as 'FH'. Consequently, if one remains unaware of the brief note on p. 306 (which is tucked away in an Appendix), the use of the punctum in Chapter 2 looks like an editorial change rather reflecting what is actually in the manuscripts. Perhaps it might have been better to use a roman h to mark lenition of consonants with the *spiritus asper* and an italic *h* to mark lenition of consonants with the punctum (with the exception of *f* and *s*), and to retain *ḟ* and *ṡ* in the diplomatic and semi-diplomatic editions.

The translation of the tract throughout is fluid and clear which makes this difficult text accessible to a wide range of scholars. I only noted a couple of very minor inconsistencies:

p. 150 §31: *is ē cētduine ro ēirghestar reime rīam hē isin Teamraigh* 'he is the first person who arose (*recte* who ever rose up) before him in Tara'

p. 152 §32: *ERC IS Ē CĒTDUINE RO ĒRID RĒ PĀTRAIC* 'ERC, HE WAS (*recte* IS) THE FIRST PERSON WHO ROSE UP BEFORE PATRICK'

pp. 150-51 §31: It is easy to follow the logic of rendering canonical text *DUBTACH MAC UALUGAIR* in the translation as 'DUBTHACH MACCU LUGAIR' and *Dubthach mac hūaLughair* in the gloss as 'Dubthach mac uaLugair' (similarly on pp. 154-5 §35); nevertheless, the variance in forms might well be confusing for those not familiar with the change in nomenclature (notwithstanding the note on p. 76 §31).

The other item I am uncertain about is the decision (pp. 32-3 §32) to translate *druí* as 'wizard'. Though such a translation is of course permissible — and it was Whitley Stokes' preference, for example —its presence here may have been influenced by the fact that Mathu macc Úmóir is the name of a mythical *druí* who is said in other sources to belong to Túatha Dé Donann (for references, see eDIL s.v. *3 Matha* [dil.ie/31677]). Notwithstanding this, I would suggest that a translation 'druid' would be preferable in this situation as Mathu is to be

taken here as a representative of the old religious order which is about to be supplanted by the coming of Christianity.

The accuracy of presentation throughout is commendable and I only noticed a couple of minor slips. On p. 32 §29, we find the phrase *Trefḋail doda-fét* which is translated 'For the three categories which precede them'. The manuscript readings underpinning the verbal form are *DODAFET* (A; p. 150) and *Tofet* (C; p. 272). Two small points: the verb in question is *do-fet* (< *to-fed-*) 'takes precedence over' so the *e* should not be marked long (either here or on p. 73); secondly, considering the early date assigned to *Córus Bésgnai* by the author, the form of the preverb in C might be used to render the restored text as *toda-fet*. Restoration of the preverb *to-* is found elsewhere. For example, as discussed above, Breatnach bases *toch-airrchechnatar* (p. 34 §35) in the canonical text in Chapter 2 on the manuscript readings *DOTOIRCECHNATAR* (A; p. 154) and *toich doairrcechnatar* (O'Davoren's Glossary; p. 316 §711). A similar approach seems warranted with *toda-fet*. There are are couple of other small mistakes that need correction: 'in §37 (*recte* §35) below' (p. 76) and 'there was originally one more tract in the First (*recte* Final) Third' (p. 326).

Moving away from such points of detail, there is one final aspect of this volume that I wish to mention. This is the assertion found in the initial paragraph of the volume (p. 1) that: 'Linguistic evidence dates *Senchas Már* with certainty to the Old Irish period, and internal textual evidence allows us to date it more precisely to some time between 660 and 680 AD, and to locate the place of writing as Armagh'. There are three distinct points here: (i) that *SM* is a unified text and that arguments advanced concerning it apply to all of its constituent tracts (including *CB*); (ii) that it was authored between 660-680; and (iii) that it was composed at Armagh. These are all suggestions which require more investigation and analysis; there is no doubt that this important theory has far-reaching implications, but it has yet to be fully assessed. The detailed evidence underpinning these arguments has been presented by the author in his Quiggin Memorial Lecture which might profitably be read in conjunction with this edition of *Córus Bésgnai*; particularly pertinent is his observation with regard to the Introduction to *Senchas Már* that the 'end of §6 and all of §§7-8 are (slightly adapted) citations from tract 8 [i.e. *CB*]'.[20] Although this theory has only recently been

[20] Liam Breatnach, *The early Irish law text Senchas Már and the question of its date*, E.C. Quiggin Memorial Lectures 13 (Cambridge, 2011) 10.

advanced and has not yet attracted sufficient critical scrutiny,[21] Prof. Breatnach has performed an important scholarly service by bringing his interpretation to the fore.

To conclude: this publication adds considerably to the Early Irish Law Series and will remain the standard work on *Córus Bésgnai* for many years to come. The book is handsomely produced, the cover design by Eibhlín Nic Dhonncha is most attractive, and the School of Celtic Studies at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies has given good value by making this hardback volume available for €40. Those familiar with *Corpus iuris Hibernici* will be aware of the scope of the work undertaken in this volume and the very considerable scholarly achievement that it represents. It is very fitting that this edition and translation of *Córus Bésgnai* is dedicated to Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at University College Cork, who did so much to tease out and explicate the relationships between church and civil society in medieval Ireland, and who died shortly after the book was published. He would have been to the forefront in welcoming its appearance.

[21] It forms a significant part of the backdrop, however, for a recent article by Patrick Wadden, 'The pseudo-historical origins of the *Senchas Már* and royal legislation in early Ireland', *Peritia* 27 (2016) 141-58.