

A NOTE ON *COMACCOMOL*¹

IN the opening lines of the Old Irish law tract *Din Techtugud*, which is the eleventh tract in the *Senchas Már* compilation,² we find a word *comaccomol*. The readings from the two manuscript witnesses of these lines,³ plus the reading from O'Davoren's Glossary (O'Dav.),⁴ are as follows:

E 3.5:
tocombachtaib sealb saerteallug modaigh mairc mbrugsaithe bac-
tair cricha comacomol

H 3.18:
docombachta selba saortellug ʒrl- o modaib mairc bach tar cricha
comacomal

O'Dav.:
bach tar cricha comacomal

These lines have been normalised and translated by D. A. Binchy and presented in an article by Calvert Watkins, quoted below:

*To-combacht selb sóertellug
ó modaib marc mrogsaithe
ba-ch tar cricha com<a>comal*

'Landed property has been recovered by means of high occupation / through the labors of horses who extended it, / and it was a joining across borders.'⁵

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²Liam Breatnach, *A companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin 2005), 292.

³The first one is in TCD MS 1433 (E 3.5), p. 6b = D. A. Binchy (ed.), *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, I-VI (Dublin 1978) (hereafter *CIH*), I, 205.22–206.11. The second is in TCD MS 1337 (H 3.18), p. 384b = *CIH* III, 907.36–908.8.

⁴Whitley Stokes, 'O'Davoren's Glossary', in *Archiv für celtische Lexikographie*, II. Band (ed. Whitley Stokes and Kuno Meyer, Halle 1904), 197–504 (at 245, no. 304); *CIH* IV, 1477.33. This entry is lacking from the acephalous copy in TCD MS 1317 (H 2.15B), pp. 120–35.

⁵Calvert Watkins, 'Indo-European metrics and archaic Irish verse', *Celtica* 6 (1963), 194–249, at 221. The extended space before the last word of each line emphasises the cadence thereafter,

The rest of this opening section of *Din Techtugud*, which is written in versified form and deals with the procedure for a male person claiming possession of land from its occupant,⁶ has been reconstructed by Binchy in the same article. The whole verse, as Watkins argues, has a fixed metrical structure of heptasyllabic lines, each ending with a trisyllabic word; and this metre represents an inherited, Indo-European metrical format that can be detected in the oldest stratum of Irish poetry and across many other Indo-European poetic traditions. Watkins's view of an inherited, Indo-European metrical pattern has been challenged by scholars who argue instead for (Hiberno-)Latin archetypes for this and other non-rhyming, 'archaic' metres.⁷ It is not the purpose of this article to engage in this debate; rather, it focuses on the word *comaccomol* to see what it can bring to our understanding of early Irish law texts and metrical devices.

The manuscript forms *comacomol* and *comacomal* are clearly tetrasyllabic, so one does need a good reason to emend them to the trisyllabic form. What is this word? Apparently it is a verbal noun based on the verbal root *lā-*, with preverbs in the sequence of *com-ad-com-*. The compound verbal noun of the root *lā-* has zero grade, possibly only formed after the loss of an original laryngeal in the root,⁸ so at first sight the pre-form of *comacomol* (o, n) can be reconstructed as ***kom-ad-kom-l-o-m*. But ***kom-ad-kom-l-o-* cannot be a primary formation due to the doubling of the preverb *com*.⁹ Since *com* remains a productive prefix in Old Irish, *comaccomol* would be better interpreted as the prefix *com-* plus the verbal noun *accomol* (HI verb *ad-comla*).¹⁰ If the prefixing of *com* to **ad-kom-l-o-* occurred before syncope, the formation would have yielded *comcomol* as proposed by Binchy (cf. *con-anaig*, vn.

and Binchy uses <a> to indicate editorial deletion, see D. A. Binchy, 'IE *que in Irish', *Celtica* 5 (1960), 77–94 (86): '...*comcomal* / *sic leg.*, with syncope, for metre; *comacomal* MSS.'

⁶Fergus Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law* (Dublin 1988), 186–7; T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh kinship* (Oxford 1993), 260–73.

⁷E.g. Johan Corthals, 'Zur Entstehung der archaischen irischen Metrik und Syntax', in *Compositiones Indogermanicae in memoriam Jochem Schindler* (ed. Heiner Eichner and Hans Christian Luschützky, Praha 1999), 19–45; but see the different opinion in Michael W. Herren, 'Hibernolateinische und irische Verskunst mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Siebensilbers', in *Metrik und Medienwechsel/Metrics and Media*, ScriptOralia 35, ed. Hildegard L. C. Tristram (Tübingen 1991), 173–88.

⁸Stefan Schumacher, *The historical morphology of the Welsh verbal noun*, Maynooth studies in Celtic linguistics 4 (Maynooth 2000), 168.

⁹In Proto-Indo-European there may have been reduplication of the preverb **pro* with an iterative sense, as is attested in Homeric Greek, Vedic Sanskrit and Hittite (Kim McCone, *The origins and development of the Insular Celtic verbal complex*, Maynooth studies in Celtic linguistics 6 (Maynooth 2006), 56), but no other preverb is found with such behaviour, and among the many examples of such preverbal accretion cited by McCone (*The origins and development*, 180–4), no one single example demonstrates an identical preverb occurring twice in the verbal complex. One should also notice that the OIr. preposition/verbal particle *ro*, which developed from IE **pro*, may occur in a verbal complex that also contains lexical *ro*, though here the two *ros* fulfil different functions, see GOI §535 (a) (pointed out to me by the *Celtica* peer-reviewer).

¹⁰Kim McCone, *The early Irish verb*, rev. 2nd ed. with index verborum (Maynooth 1997), 90–91 recognises that prefixing of a single extra preverb to an already existing simple or compound verbal form is a normal method of forming new compound verbs throughout the prehistory of Old Irish, and not exclusively a secondary composition under the influence of Latin.

comnagal; *con-iccim*, prot. *-cumcim*), but unsyncoated *comaccomol* is the attested form, testifying that this prefixing happened after syncope took place perhaps around the mid-sixth century.¹¹ One can compare the similar formation *comaccobor* ‘concupiscence’ in the Würzburg Glosses:¹² since Latin *concupiscens* comes from *con* + *cupīscere* (< *cupere* ‘to desire’), the Irish rendering is therefore *com* + *accobor* ‘desire’ (vn. of *ad-cobra* ‘desires’), without syncope in the second syllable.¹³ Could *comaccomol* also be the result of Latinate calque formation in the Old Irish period?

Examples of *comaccomol* in early Irish texts suggest that this is indeed the case. Most of the examples cited in *DIL* s.v. *comaccomol* (b) are from the St. Gall glosses, one from the Milan glosses, one from a gloss in the *Auraicept na nÉces*,¹⁴ and another example from the commentary to *Amra Coluim Chille*, which was possibly compiled in the eleventh century¹⁵ but contains extensive materials from Old Irish sources.¹⁶ These examples use *comaccomol* as the equivalent of the Latin grammatical term *coniunctio* ‘conjunction’ in vernacular grammatical discourse,¹⁷ based on *acomol* that has the meaning of *iunctio* ‘junction’. On the other hand, examples in *DIL* s.v. *comaccomol* (a) appear to have a generalised meaning ‘joining, union’. Its examples include the O’Dav. citation of the *Din Techtugud* verse mentioned above, the *DIL* interpretation of which is probably based on Binchy’s translation. Besides two late occurrences from *In Cath Catharda* and *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* respectively, there is an example of *comaccomol* (a) from a commentary to the *Auraicept*,¹⁸ the meaning of which (‘joining’) can be taken as an extension from the grammatical term *coniunctio*, and another, from the so-called

¹¹Kim McCone, *Towards a relative chronology of ancient and medieval Celtic sound change* (Maynooth 1996), 127.

¹²Wb. 3c22, 3c25, gl. *concupiscentiam*, see Séamus Kavanagh, *A lexicon of the Old Irish glosses in the Würzburg manuscript of the Epistles of St. Paul*, ed. Dagmar S. Wodtke (Wien 2001), 216.

¹³As is the case with other secondary formations with *com-*, e.g. *comopar* (*opar* < Lat. *opera*); *comimmaircide* gl. *conpetens* Ml. 131d2 (*immaircide*, gl. *opportuno, conueniens, iustum*, etc., see *DIL* s.v. *immaircide*).

¹⁴George Calder, *Auraicept na n-Éces: the scholars’ primer* (Edinburgh 1917), 183 (l. 2668).

¹⁵Máire Herbert, ‘The preface to the *Amra Coluim Cille*’, in *Sages, saints and storytellers: Celtic studies in honour of Professor James Carney*, ed. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach, and Kim McCone (Maynooth 1989), 67–75.

¹⁶Fangzhe Qiu, ‘Wandering cows and obscure words: a rimeless poem from legal manuscripts and beyond’, *Studia Celtica Fennica* 10 (2013), 90–111; Paul Russell, ‘*In aliis libris*: adaptation, re-working and transmission’, in *Authorities and adaptations: the reworking and transmission of textual sources in medieval Ireland*, ed. Elizabeth Boyle and Deborah Hayden (Dublin 2014), 63–93.

¹⁷Another example in Calder, *Auraicept*, 206 (l. 3391). *Comaccomol* is also employed to render Latin *coniunctivus* ‘subjunctive mood’, which has the same root plus an adjectival ending, cf. Ml. 61a18, 62a15 and Samantha Schad, *A lexicon of Latin grammatical terminology*, *Studia Erudita* 6 (Pisa 2007), 86. There is another Irish calque for *coniunctio* in the linguistic sense, however, namely *comhfhocul*, as one finds in Calder, *Auraicept na nÉces*, 24 (l. 321).

¹⁸Calder, *Auraicept*, 146 (l. 1901). Also in the same meaning Calder, *Auraicept*, 148 (l. 1924).

‘Lecan Glossary’,¹⁹ may be understood similarly. A logical proposition is that the calque *comaccomol* was created first in a specific linguistic context to render the grammatical term *coniunctio* ‘conjunction’, and afterwards took on the ordinary meaning of the Latin noun *coniunctio* ‘putting together, comparison, etc.’

But Latin *coniunctio* can have another meaning in the legal context. In Roman law, it denotes ‘an institution of several heirs for the same estate or of several legatees for the same thing in common. The estate (or legacy) became common property of the *coheredes* (or *collegatarii*). The heirs or legatees thus awarded are termed *coniuncti*.’²⁰ In the Old Irish glosses, *heredes* is often glossed *comarbai*.²¹ Since in early Ireland most farmland was kin-land (*fintiu*) which was to be shared by all eligible inheritors, including but not limited to the sons of the deceased, multiple inheritors were usually involved, and the term *comarbae* can be translated as ‘co-heir’;²² it is in the context of religious communities that *comarbae* often refers to the single heir to a position.²³ Irish kin-land (*fintiu*) before its distribution to kinsmen was thus similar to the undivided property in *coniunctio*: it was to be divided among all the qualified heirs (*comarbai*, (*co*)*heredes*) by arrangement, and one member’s failure to inherit would be to the benefit of the other members.²⁴ The same principle of accrual to the other co-heirs, should one heir fail to inherit, applies to Roman *coniunctio*.²⁵

I am inclined to see *comaccomol* in *Din Techtugud* as a rendering of Latin *coniunctio*, denoting the state of co-inheritance. Such an interpretation

¹⁹Paul Russell, ‘The sounds of a silence: the growth of Cormac’s glossary’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 15 (Summer 1988), 1–30, at 7. *CIH* III 948.27: *comocamal .i. comcudrumugud etar da cail* ‘comaccomol, i.e. comparison between two qualities’, cf. Sg. 39a10 *inna comchutrumaichthi-so gl. comparationes*.

²⁰Adolf Berger, *Encyclopedic dictionary of Roman Law*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society New Ser. vol. 43 part 2 (Philadelphia 1953), s.v. *coniunctio*. Some references from the Justinian *Institutes* and *Digests*, which as a whole were unlikely to have been known to early medieval Irish jurists, are as follows from the editions: *Gai Institutiones or Institutes of Roman Law by Gaius*, ed. Edward Poste and E. A. Whittuck (Oxford 1904) and *Corpus iuris civilis: editio stereotypa*, ed. Paul Krüger and Theodor Mommsen (Berlin 1872): *Institutes* II §§199, 205, 208 (*De Legatis*); *Digests* XXVIII 5.20.2, XXVIII 6.7.5, XXXII.80.

²¹e.g. AU 851.2: *comarbbai Patraicc* gl. *heredes*, Wb. 19c20. Also see Ml. 23d15, where Latin *herede* was glossed with *comorbain* (MS *comorbain*), acc. sg. of the agent noun *comorbham* ‘co-inheritor’ based on the same root.

²²Charles-Edwards, *Kinship*, 61–73; Kelly, *A guide*, 100–101. This sense of collective possession may be reflected in the etymology of *comarbae*. < **kom-orb-ij-o-*, compare *orbbae* ‘inheritance’ < **orb-ij-o-*, and also the agent noun *orbham* ‘inheritor’ < **orb-amon-*.

²³e.g. AU 851.2: *comarbbai Patraicc* ‘of the successor of Patrick’, cf. AU 852.1: *Duo heredes Patricii*, and the entry on the Book of Armagh *herede Patricii*, *Thesaurus Palaeo-hibernicus*, ed. Whitley Stokes and John Strachan (Cambridge, 1901–3; reprinted Dublin, 1975), II, xiv.

²⁴Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, Early Irish Law Series 4 (Dublin 1997), 402–3, 412–15. However, under Roman law once the *coniunctio* has been divided, the heirs have full rights to their property, whereas there are heavy restrictions on the disposal of *fintiu* by the Irish *comarbai*.

²⁵Reinhard Zimmermann, ‘VI. “Coniunctio verbis tantum”: accrual, the methods of joinder in a will and the rule against partial intestacy in Roman-Dutch and Roman Law’, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: romanistische Abteilung* 101 (1984), 234–74.

fits the scenario given by the prose narrative that serves as commentary to this verse,²⁶ where a man named Nin (or Ninne) from the Féni crossed the border into the territory of the Ulaid. He unyoked his horses on a piece of land to graze, but was expelled by the occupant of the land. Although initially stating that ‘it was not to seek a share in it’,²⁷ after discovering that this used to be his ancestral kin-land he refused to remove his horses, and started the procedure of *tellach* ‘claiming possession of land by entry’. Nin (presumably on behalf of his kin) was finally awarded the property by Conchobar mac Nessa, king of the Ulaid.²⁸ Since the land had been occupied by an Ulsterman, it was yet to be divided among Nin’s kindred at the time of this incident, in this way creating a co-inheritance resembling the Roman *coniunctio*. It is not necessarily a ‘joining’ of Nin’s property at both sides of the border, as Binchy’s translation indicates, but surely recovery of kin-land subject to *comaccomol* ‘co-inheritance’. *Comaccomol* may have even been used as a metonymy for the kin-land itself. Accordingly, I translate the *Din Techtugud* text cited above as:

‘Property has been exacted through noble-entry,²⁹ / by means of
the deeds of horses which advanced,³⁰ / and it was a co-inheritance
across the borders.’

Does this imply that the composer of the original poem may have had a certain degree of knowledge of Roman law?³¹ At the least, it directly contradicts Watkins’ assertion that these Old Irish law texts written in unrhymed syllabic verse are ‘uninfluenced by Roman law, civil or canon’, and that ‘in this same archaic stratum of the laws, there are essentially *no* Latin loanwords’.³² Of course, nowadays the consensus among scholars of early Irish law is that it has been heavily influenced by the Latinate ecclesiastical culture.³³

Since tetrasyllabic *comaccomol* stands out when all other lines in this verse end in a trisyllabic cadence, it is tempting to see if *comaccomol* can be scanned as trisyllabic, especially in terms of Corthals’ convincing demonstration that heptasyllabic verse with a trisyllabic cadence is a well-established metre in Old Irish that exactly mirrors the half-septenarius metre in Latin poetry.³⁴ There is indeed an alternative to Binchy’s *comcomal* to keep

²⁶*CIH* III, 907.36–908.14; *CIH* V, 1859.6–15.

²⁷*CIH* III, 908.2: *nab ar cuinnchi chota ann*.

²⁸See n. 6 above.

²⁹Whether the first two words (E 3.5: *tocombachtaib sealb*; H 3.18: *docombachta selba*) should be taken as singular *to-combacht selb* or plural *to-combachta selba* needs further investigation. I will deal with this problem in a critical edition of *Din Techtugud*.

³⁰Pace Binchy’s translation, *mrogsate* cannot contain a suffixed pronoun. This is the relative form of pret. 3 pl. of *mrogaid*, the intransitive sense of which is ‘move forward, advance’.

³¹See W. N. Osborough, ‘Roman Law in Ireland’, *Irish Jurist* 25–27 (1990), 212–68 for other instances.

³²Watkins, ‘Indo-European Metrics’, 220; emphasis in the original.

³³For a summary see Liam Breatnach, ‘Law’, in *Progress in medieval Irish studies*, ed. Kim McCone and Katharine Simms (Maynooth 1996), 107–21.

³⁴Corthals, ‘Zur Entstehung’, pp. 34–35.

the trisyllabic cadence, namely, to scan the word as *comaccoml* without the epenthetic vowel. This feature (and indeed, this very word) has been regarded by Lindeman as being archaic,³⁵ since the anaptyxis in Irish had already reached completion by the middle of the seventh century.³⁶ James Carney has noted similar examples of tetrasyllabic words (*faeburamnass* and *otharlige*) occurring where metrical considerations appear to call for trisyllables, and in his view *faebur* and *othar* ‘were monosyllables, or could be treated as such when metrically desirable ... in archaic Irish as some of their cognates are in Welsh, but by the Old Irish period had developed a secondary vowel.’³⁷ Fergus Kelly also argues that in the seventh-century poem *Tiughraind Bhécáin* the metrics guarantee that *domun* is to be scanned as monosyllabic *domn*.³⁸

While admitting that these words are *treated* as free of the secondary vowel developing from anaptyxis, we should ask, as John Carey points out, whether such phenomena are historical or merely stylistic: that is to say, whether such words were still pronounced without the intrusive vowel at the time when the text was composed, or whether the vowel existed in speech but was deliberately ignored for metrical reasons.³⁹ If they are historical, we have to ascribe the poem to a date prior to 650;⁴⁰ if they are stylistic conventions used in poetic diction to meet special necessities, then they cannot be checked against the historical development of the actual epenthetic vowel as a dating criterion. A strong argument in favour of the unhistorical nature of these seemingly pre-anaptyxis words is that the practice of reducing the epenthetic vowel in these ‘archaic’ verses is not consistent or historically correct.⁴¹

³⁵Fredrik Otto Lindeman, ‘An archaic linguistic feature in an Irish law text’, *Celtica* 16 (1984), 57–58.

³⁶Kim McCone, *Towards a relative chronology*, 127.

³⁷James Carney, ‘Aspects of archaic Irish’, *Éigse* 17 (1979), 417–35, at 426–27. The epenthetic vowel had already developed within certain groups of consonants before the Middle Welsh period, but this vowel does not have full syllabic value, and has very rarely been recognised as syllabic in verse, see D. Simon Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin 1964), 12–13; Stefan Schumacher, ‘Mittel- und Frühneukymrisch’, in *Brythonic Celtic – Britannisches Keltisch*, Münchner Forschungen zur historischen Sprachwissenschaft 11 (ed. Elmar Ternes, Bremen 2011), 85–236, at 120.

³⁸Fergus Kelly, ‘Tiughraind Bhécáin’, *Ériu* 26 (1975), 66–98, at 66–7. Monosyllabic *domn* (< *duβno-) is attested in early Old Irish Ogam DOMNGEN (CIIC 73). Kelly in the same article (67) also mentions that ‘words of this type could be treated as either monosyllabic or disyllabic in archaic verse’, but the disyllabic examples he gives are from *Amra Coluim Chille*, which was not necessarily composed in early Old Irish, see Jacopo Bisagni, ‘The language and the date of Amrae Coluim Chille’, in *Kelten am Rhein, Akten des dreizehnten internationalen Keltologiekongresses*, ed. Stefan Zimmer (Mainz am Rhein 2009), 1–12.

³⁹John Carey, ‘The Lough Foyle colloquy texts: *Immacaldam Choluim Chille* γ *ind óclaig oc Carraie Eolairg* and *Immacaldam in Druad Brain* γ *inna banfátho Febuil ós Loch Febuil*’, *Ériu* 52 (2002), 53–87, at 83.

⁴⁰Although *Din Techtugud* is a component of *Senchas Már*, the compilation of which dates to ca. 660–80, a date not long before 650 for part of *Din Techtugud* is not impossible. See Liam Breatnach, *The early Irish law text Senchas Már and the question of its date*, E. C. Quiggin Memorial Lectures 13 (Cambridge 2011) for the date.

⁴¹David Stifter, ‘Towards the linguistic dating of early Irish law texts’, in *Medieval Irish law: texts and contexts*, Sydney Series in Celtic Studies 12 (ed. Anders Ahlqvist and Pamela O’Neill, Sydney 2013), 163–208, at 186–7.

Carey in the above-cited article has noticed that in one poem *olldomuin* at a disyllabic cadence is supposed to be read as *olldomn*, whereas the metre ensures that *febul* in the same poem cannot be reduced to historically correct **febl*; moreover *credail* in the poem ‘A maccucáin, sruith in tiág’⁴² is scanned as monosyllabic, but cannot etymologically ever have had such a form (< Lat. *credulus*).

A possible further example of the arbitrary nature of such pre-anaptyxis forms is provided by a word in *Din Techtugud*, namely *forcomol* ‘enforced entry, obligation’. This word (< **uor-kom-l-o-*) appears twice in the text,⁴³ in two versified sections that narrate the procedure of taking possession by entry for two women respectively. The metrical structures of these two sections are not yet totally clear, and a critical edition is needed to answer some textual problems. However, there is little doubt regarding the division of lines and therefore the cadence. In the first of these sections,⁴⁴ each one of the twenty lines has a trisyllabic cadence, including the word *forcomol*.⁴⁵ In the other section of eight lines,⁴⁶ however, the seventh line ends with *forcomol* while all other lines have a disyllabic cadence. One can certainly argue for an alternating cadence length,⁴⁷ yet the most economical hypothesis should be that *forcomol* in the second verse, as *comaccomol* above, is treated as devoid of the epenthetic vowel: the metre in this verse, however we should describe it, requires this word to be scanned as **forcoml*, whereas in the first verse of trisyllabic cadence, *forcomol* is allowed its post-anaptyxis form. Again, without reliable extra-linguistic evidence, pre-anaptyxis forms in verse, even when they are etymologically correct, are best regarded as a stylistic device, and should not be accepted as evidence of a pre-anaptyxis date of composition.⁴⁸

FANGZHE QIU

Maynooth University

⁴²James Carney, ‘A maccucáin, sruith in tiág’, *Celtica* 15 (1983), 25–41, at 35.

⁴³The first instance at *CIH* I, 208.14, III, 909.2; the second at *CIH* I, 209.31, III, 909.25.

⁴⁴The first 8 lines of which, normalised and translated by Binchy, are presented in Watkins, ‘Indo-European metrics’, 227.

⁴⁵For the cadence of the 14th line, the MSS read: *CIH* 208.18 *comnaidm* (or *-maim?*); 1566.15 *comnadhmain*. The line should read, in normalised Old Irish spelling: *cúairt saiges a comnaidmaim* ‘a circuit she enforces by means of her joint binding-surety’, with independent (instrumental) dat. sg. *comnadhmain* (trisyllabic).

⁴⁶Normalised and translated by Binchy, and presented in Watkins, ‘Indo-European metrics’, 234–5.

⁴⁷Corthals, ‘Zur Entstehung’, 35.

⁴⁸Compare the similar suggestion about the so-called pre-syncopated forms in Patrick Sims-Williams, ‘Gildas and vernacular poetry’, in *Gildas: new approaches*, Studies in Celtic History 5, ed. Michael Lapidge and D. N. Dumville (Woodbridge 1984), 169–92 (at 173 n. 29): ‘while the metres with quasi-trisyllabic cadences clearly originated before the syncope, poems may have been composed in them after the syncope, if disyllables with medial consonant-clusters were now felt to have the same metrical weight as trisyllables.’