

Presentation Policy

Reasons for outlining policy

The purpose of this document is to highlight the choices that I made in creating my Irish Sagas Online webpages. I have two reasons for formalising this policy now:

- To draw attention to the issues on which I had to make choices.
- As a reminder to myself, so that I will apply this policy consistently to each new saga presented.

The aims of the website

I had two aims in presenting these editions of Irish Sagas:

- To present Irish Sagas in the most attractive way possible, using modern technology, so as to maximise the reader's enjoyment of these stories.
- To make the original medieval Irish text of these stories understandable to the reader, especially to readers with a knowledge of Modern Irish.

Details of my approach

Irish Sagas are part of the Treasures of Ireland. They are masterpieces of Irish storytelling, some of which are comparable to the masterpieces of Irish craftsmanship in the National Museum. Whatever the motives of those who composed these sagas, they are basically stories and should be enjoyed as such. A central feature of my website is the presentation of a modern Irish version of each saga alongside the original Irish text and an English translation. The reader's enjoyment of each saga is enhanced by supplying links to the wealth of background information that is available online.

By putting the original Irish text, a Modern Irish version and an English translation side by side and **phrase by phrase** on the same page, the original text becomes much easier to understand. Knowing that a phrase in medieval Irish is similar in meaning to one in Modern Irish, a reader with a knowledge of Modern Irish can often guess the meaning of an **individual word** in the original text, especially if the medieval Irish word looks or sounds like the corresponding Modern Irish word. This is most likely to be true if the word is a noun or an adjective. In this way, the Modern Irish version of the saga facilitates a more detailed understanding of the original text than that provided by an English translation alone.

Where possible, a link is provided to the digital image of the relevant manuscript page. In viewing these images, the reader becomes aware that we can only enjoy these stories today because of the Irish scribes who preserved these stories for us. We use the best technology of our day to view their work preserved in the best available technology of their day.

A problem in putting phrases of similar meaning side by side

A key feature of my presentation is that a phrase in the original Irish text is placed beside a phrase in the Modern Irish version and a phrase in the English translation and **all three phrases have the same overall meaning**. (This is not always possible in

poetry where the verse is utilised as the basic unit.) However, putting phrases with the same meaning side by side must be done in a way that does not disrupt the order in which these phrases occur in the three individual versions. Sometimes, phrases with the same overall meaning **occur in the same order** in the three versions:

Medieval Irish	Modern Irish	English translation
1a	1b	1c
2a	2b	2c
3a	3b	3c

where 1a, 1b and 1c represent phrases with the same meaning.

However, sometimes the phrases with the same meaning **do not occur in the same order** in the three versions, e.g.

Medieval Irish	Modern Irish	English translation
1a	2b	1c
2a	1b	3c
3a	3b	2c

In my edition, this is displayed as follows:

Medieval Irish	Modern Irish	English translation
1a		1c
		3c
2a	2b	2c
	1b	
3a	3b	

Thus, as far as possible, phrases with the same overall meaning are side-by-side; otherwise, they are “fairly close together”. However, the order in which the phrases occur in the three individual versions has been maintained. The result is not pretty, but it is the best compromise I could think of.

Sometimes, it is not possible to “disentangle” the phrases with the same meaning in three corresponding blocks of text in the three versions. In such circumstances, the three blocks of text are placed side by side.

Titles of the sagas

The titles used are those chosen by the editors of the medieval Irish texts. Where the saga is untitled in the manuscript, I have supplied my own titles, e.g. “Eochaid Rígéiges ocus Mongán” for the saga “Why Mongán was Deprived of Noble Issue”. The English title that I have used for each saga is that chosen by the author of the English translation (who may not be the same person who edited the text.)

Sections

Where the editor has divided the original Irish text into sections, I use the same sections in my edition. Otherwise, the division into sections is my own (as in the case of ‘Baile Binnbérach mac Buain’).

Synchronisation of punctuation

In my presentations, the punctuation in all three versions has been regularised, **in so far as this is possible**. In particular:

- Double quotations marks (“ ”) are used for spoken passages; otherwise single quotation marks (‘ ’) are used, e.g. for quotation-within-a-quotation.
- Exclamation marks (!) and question marks (?) occur, or not, in all three corresponding phrases. If **two out of three** corresponding phrases have an exclamation mark (or a question mark), then an exclamation mark (or a question mark) is **inserted** in the remaining phrase. If **only one of the three** corresponding phrases has an exclamation mark (or a question mark), then that exclamation mark (or question mark) is **deleted**.

Omissions in my presentations

To make the original Irish text easier to read, the following omissions are made:

- **Manuscript page numbers and line numbers** are omitted (this means that references to placenames and personal names are by section only).
- In the printed edition of the original Irish text, **italics** are normally used to mark expansions of manuscript contractions. Such italics are omitted in my presentations.

Treatment of macrons in the original Irish text

Macrons and acute accents over vowels are both represented by *fadas*.

Treatment of the dotted consonants f, s, m, and n in the original Irish text

For f and s with superscript puncta, fh and sh are written. For m and n with superscript puncta, regular m and n are supplied. Dots under letters have been omitted.

Treatment of the Insular Ampersand (7) in the original Irish text

The Insular Ampersand “7” in the original Irish text is represented by “ocus”. However, “7c” and “7c̄” are represented by “et cetera”; also “7r”, “7rl” and “7rl-a” are represented by “et reliqua.”

Treatment of the Tironian note † in the original Irish text

The Tironian note “†” (short for “vel” meaning “or”) in the original Irish text is represented by “nó”.

Treatment of ligatures with length marks in the original Irish text

In Irish manuscripts, two consecutive letters are often fused together to form a **ligature**; for example, the letters a and e are often fused into the ligature which is represented in print as æ. This is printed as æ in our documents regardless of whether it is marked long or not in the original edition. The ligature a’o is written as áo throughout.

Treatment of omissions in the Modern Irish version

In the Modern Irish version, there are two types of omissions, which I describe as “accidental omissions” and “deliberate omissions”. An “accidental omission” is a **phrase** in the original Irish text for which the author of the Modern Irish version has not supplied an equivalent phrase, for whatever reason. Three examples of this occur in “Baile Binnbérach mac Buain”:

In Section 3:

A clé fri tír.

His left was towards the
land.

In Section 4:

mar síge gaithe tar glas
muir,

like a blast of wind over the
green sea,

In Section 10:

ocus tiagatsum,

And these tablets also
came there,

A “deliberate omission” is a **section** of the original text for which the author has decided, for whatever reason, not to supply a Modern Irish equivalent. An example of this in ‘Baile Binnbérach mac Buain’ is the poem at the end of the text on p. 474 of O’Curry’s book.

There are two options for dealing with these omissions:

- Leave the blanks in the Modern Irish version, but display the original Irish text and English translation in full.
- Provide a Modern Irish version of the missing phrases or sections.

In the case of some of the texts presented on this website, the first option has been adopted. For other texts where a Modern Irish version has been supplied for the missing phrases or sections, this is indicated by the use of asterisks (*) in the Modern Irish version.

Treatment of omissions in the English translation

In the English translation, “accidental omissions” and “deliberate omissions” can also occur. For example, in his translations in Volume 2 of *Silva Gadelica*, O’Grady does not always translate the poetry in the original Irish text; e.g. he does not translate any of the poems in “Geneamuin Chormaic”.

As with omissions from the Modern Irish version, there are two options for dealing with omissions from the English translation:

- Leave the blanks in the English translation, but display the original Irish text and Modern Irish version in full.
- Provide an English translation of the missing phrases or sections.

In the case of some of the texts presented on this website, the first option has been adopted. For other texts where an English translation has been supplied for the missing phrases or sections, this is indicated by the use of asterisks (*) in the English translation.

Use of underlining in the Modern Irish version and the English translation

To facilitate comparison, any text in the Modern Irish version or in the English translation **which does not correspond to any part of the original text** (but has been introduced by the author/translator for explanatory purposes) is underlined. This is generally not feasible in the cases of poetry or retoric.

Use of italics in the Modern Irish version and the English translation

In the Modern Irish version, any words of the original text that have not been translated into Modern Irish, **but are still in Latin**, are italicised. In the English translation, any words of the original text that have not been translated into English, **but are still in Irish or Latin**, are italicised.

Place and tribal names

I use Hogan's version of each placename as headword, rather than the version(s) occurring in the textual sources, and this version is displayed in bold type at the start of each entry. The information given about the placename is, in general, taken from Hogan, but sometimes it is taken from other sources, such as O'Donovan's notes to his edition of the Annals of the Four Masters. In that case, this source is listed, along with *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, before the list of placenames. References are given to maps of tribal areas on the "Irish History in Maps" website. Links are provided to the relevant placenames from the Placenames Database of Ireland (logainm.ie and placenamesni.org) to demonstrate that Modern Irish names of places mentioned in the sagas are often very similar to the original names. On these websites, the archival records for some placenames trace how those placenames have altered over the centuries.

Being aware of the location of the placenames mentioned in the saga adds a whole new dimension to the enjoyment of the saga; it enables the reader to "follow the action" of the story. While reading the "Text and translation" page of the saga in one tab in a window on the computer screen, I recommend that the reader keep the "Place and tribal names" page open in another tab, and the "Google Map of Places in text" open in yet another tab.

Online Sources

Where possible, the base edition I use is that chosen by the author of the Modern Irish version, for obvious reasons. The only exception to this is when a more recent edition of the original text is available online.

Background information online

I include references in the Irish Annals to the events and characters mentioned in each saga. This is to emphasise that some of the sagas are "historical romances" composed about historical characters. Normally, only references in the Annals of Ulster are included, but sometimes I give references to other annals where these provide extra details.

The reason for listing Related Sagas Online is to widen the scope of the ISO website **beyond** those sagas for which a Modern Irish version is available (and to encourage suitably-qualified scholars to provide Modern Irish versions of other sagas!)

The references to the *Dindshenchas* provide links to stories which purport to explain the origin of placenames mentioned in the sagas. Where the dindshenchas entry for a placename refers to events or characters mentioned in the saga, the placename is given in bold type in the list of placenames.

Wikipedia regularly provides reliable information about characters mentioned in certain sagas.

Irish Dictionaries online

I recommend that the reader keep the Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language (www.dil.ie) open in a separate tab to determine the meaning of individual words in the original Irish text.

Tom O'Donovan