Tool making, technological determinism and the role of memory: absolute alphabetical organisation in medieval glossaries

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Item 1 'but one step' in the Oxford English Dictionary[1]
6. to make or **take a step**.   **a.** To perform the act of moving the foot as in walking or climbing. Cf. F. *faire un pas*.
  to make or **take but one step** (*from ━ to ━*): to pass the interval in a single stride.

d. fig. *to take a step* or *steps*: to perform a move or moves in a course of action; to take action or measures towards attaining an end. Similarly *to make a step* or *steps* (now *rare*).
  to take the necessary steps: often, to take the action prescribed by law as necessary to attain some implied object, e.g. the enforcement of a debt.

8. a. [Partly fig. use of sense 12.] A degree in an ascending scale; a remove in an upward process; a grade in rank or promotion. *to get the* or *one's step* (*Mil.*): to be promoted to the next higher grade.

Item 2 Extract from preface to Papias the Lombard's *Elementarium doctrinae erudimentum*

Anyone who wishes to find anything quickly must also notice that this whole book is composed according to the alphabet, not only in the first letters of the parts but also in the second, third and sometimes even in the further determinative arrangement of the letters. The first indication of division then, will be made by a.b.c. and the other letters in order. This will be subdivided in the second order of differentiation by the same letters a.b.c. etc. in larger form before any change of the letters. In the third order of subdivision, however, all that is included under one variety [combination?] of three letters will be distinguished by a third paragraph so that whatever is sought may be found within exactly this space. But once the first, second and third order of these letters has been observed, the same cannot be maintained in the following letters to the extent that one does not put them in the wrong order. Even in these first, second and third steps the relationship will sometimes vary because of the writing of different letters. For example, hyena is written by some with an i, by others with a y or an aspiration. And the plant that some call verbena others call berbena. Informed, therefore, by these and many other examples, it will not be disadvantageous to be forwarded about similar matters. (Lloyd W. Daly and Bernardine A. Daly, 'Some techniques in medieval Latin lexicography', Speculum 39 p.233).

Item 3 Lecan Glossary
For example, the antonyms **clean and unclean** are grouped together:
§13. Andag .i. glan
§14. Anandac[h] .i. nemglan[2]

As are the synonyms for words such as **slaughter**:
§50. Orguin .i. guin
§51. Oirgther .i. guin
§52. Hirt .i. orguin
§53. Bith .i. guin[3]

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[1] step, *n.*[1] *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. 4 Apr. 2000 http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50237097 (acessed 22 April, 2010)

[2] Whitley Stokes, 'The Lecan Glossary', Archiv f ¨ur celtische Lexikographie 1 (1900) 50-100: 51
[3] Ibid. 51

and **harlot**:
§106. Bleasc .i. merdrech
§107. Dormuin .i. merdrech
§108. Ben imroma .i. merdrech
§109. Be charna .i. merdrech[4]

Item 4 Dúil Laithne

Finit DUBaltach FIRbisigh [sic]
adomcomhnvic.
1643. 5o maij
baile mic aodhagaín
molocc[5]
'Finit it is I D. [Mac] F., 1643, 5th May. I am at Baile Mic Aodhagaín'

Terms for food:
§81 Anrad .i. biad 'cibus' [food]
§82 Doib .i. deogh 'potus' [drink]
§83 Muincir .i. mír 'frustum', 'bucca' [portion]
§84 Betroisgenn .i. barigen 'placenta' [loaf; cake]
§85 Sceglan .i. salann 'sal' [salt]
§86 Anros .i. arbar 'fruges' [arbar can be translated as 'grain'; Stoke's use of fruges indicates 'crops']
§87 Bloa .i. vbla 'poma' [apple]
§88 Gortan .i. cainenn 'porrus' [leek]
§89 Roinn .i. coirm 'cerevisia?' [beer]
§90 Ailmis .i. as 'lac' [milk]
§91 Mincill .i. mil 'mel' [honey]
§92 Iodamm .i. im 'butyrum' [butter]
§93 Collruim .i. feoil 'caro' [meat]
§94 Gech .i. saillte 'sale conditus,' 'lardum'? [lard?]
§95 Sailalm .i. saill 'pinguedo' [salted meat]
§96 Gorgruth .i. gruth 'lac pressum' [curd]
§97 Gortrus .i. grus . . . ?' [curd]
§98 Mvincedhg .i. medhg 'serum' [whey]
§99 Mvinchidh .i. miodh 'hydromeli' [mead]
§100 Brasach .i. blathach 'butyri serum' [buttermilk]
§101 Lemocen .i. lemhnacht 'lac dulce' [sweet milk]
§102 Mvadhgalan .i. muillenn 'mola' [flour]

Terms for animals
§110 Eabadcoll .i. ech 'grex equorum' [a stud of mares]
§111 Ebandan .i. ech 'equus' [steed]
§112 Ebathan .i. lair 'equa' [mare]
§113 Bethan .i. bo 'vacca' [cow]
§114 Davrailm .i. damh 'bos' [bull]
§115 Duraibind .i. dartaid 'bucula' [heifer]
§116 Bviglen .i. laogh 'vitulus' [bull calf]
§117 Cetaimni no rosca .i. cáirig [ms. cáiridh] 'oves' [sheep]
§118 Glædmuine no Gairmnech .i. gabar 'caper' [goat]
§119 Mvinscvill .i. muc 'sus' [pig]
§120 Collar .i. cv 'canis' [dog]

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[4] Ibid
[5] Whitley Stokes, Goidelica (2nd ed. London 1872) 79.

§121 Caipist .i. cat 'felis' [cat]
§122 Luipist .i. luch 'mus' [mouse]
§123 Luathan .i. en 'avis' [bird]
§124 Sceman .i. sionnach 'vulpes' [fox]
§125 Lornan .i. patu 'lepus' [hare]
§126 Orail .i. eilit 'cerva' [doe]
§127 Roscon .i. rón 'phoca' [seal]
§128 Bedban .i. bradan 'salmo' [salmon]
§129 Snuad .i. cechlus 'quævis herba' [some herb]
§130 Bibe .i. bech 'apis' [bee]134

Item 5 O'Clery's Glossary

In his preface to the work, signed 28th October 1643, O'Clery describes it as a:

Foclóir no sanasán nua, in a mínighthear cáil eigin dfoclaibh cruaidhe na gaoidheilge, ar na sgriobhadh ar urd aibghitre[6]

An ceathramhadh ní bíodh a fhios ag an áos óg agas ag an áos ainbfis lerab mian na seinleabhair do leúghadh (ní nach bfuil na aincheas ar eolchaibh ar ttíre) gurab annamh bhios coimhéd aca ar chaol re leathan, no ar leathan re ccaol do sgriobhadh, agas ar firthearc cuirid uathadh ar na connsainibh mar áta, bh, ch, dh, fh, etc. agas fós as annamh chuirid síneadh fada ar fhoclaibh. Scriobhthar go minic cuid dona consainibh ar son a cheile, mar ata c, ar son g, agas t, ar son d. Ag so samhail na bfocal tre sa dtuigfidhear sin. Ar son an fhocailsi clog, ionann agas cloc, agad, acat, beag, beac, codladh, cotladh, ard, art, etc. Cuirthear fós go minic ae, ar son ao, agas ái ar son aoi, agas fós oi ar son aoi. Sompla airsin mar sgriobhthar go minic aedh ionann agas aodh, agas cael as ionann agas caol. Agas bói agas fós bái as ionann agas báoi. Sgriobhthar go minic E ar son A sna seinleabhraibh, mar ata die, as ionann agas dia, cie as ionann agas cia, etc. Sgriobhthar go minic I ar son A, mar ata so dochuaidh, as ionann agas dichuaidh. Sgriobhthar go coitcheann a, o, u ar son a cheile a ndeireadh focail mar áta sompla, somplo, somplu, ceardcha, ceardcho, ceardchu, etc. 'Fourthly, the young and ignorant who wish to read the old books, (a thing which is not difficult for the educated of our country), must know that they rarely guard against writing slender with broad, or broad with slender, and that they very rarely put the aspirate upon the consonants, as bh, ch, dh, fh, etc, and also that they seldom put the long accent on vowels. Some of the consonants are often written one for another, as c for g, and t for d. Here are some examples of words by which this will be understood: clog the same as cloc; agad, . . . etc. Also ae is often put for ao, and ái for doi and also oi for aoi. For example aed, is often written for aodh, and cael is the same as caol. And bói and also bái is the same as báoi. E is often written instead of A in the old books, as die, which is the same dia, cie which is the same as cia etc. I is often written instead of A, as dochuaidh, a, o, u are commonly written one for another at the end of a words as sompla, somplo, somplu . . . '.[7]

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[6] 'A new vocabulary or glossary, in which are explained some difficult words of Gaelic, written in alphabetical order . . . .' Miller, Arthur W. K., (ed), 1879-80. 'O'Clery's Glossary', Revue Celtique 4, 349-428; 5 (1881-83), 1-71 : p. 349.

[7] Ibid. 355-6

Item 2 List of manuscripts containing major medieval Irish-language glossaries

Sanas Cormaic
1. Dublin, RIA, 1230, (olim 23. P. 16.) al. *Leabhar Breac* al. *Leabhar Mór Dúna Daighre*, 263-72
2. Dublin, TCL, 1318 (olim H. 2. 16) al. *Yellow Book of Lecan* col. 3-87
3. Dublin, RIA, 1225 (olim D. ii. 1) al. Book of *Uí Maine* f. 177-84, col. a
4. Oxford, Bodleian L, *Laud Misc*. 610, f. 70r-84r
5. Dublin, TCL, 1339 (olim H. 2. 18) al. *Book of Leinster* (miscellany) 179
6. Dublin, TCL, 1317 (olim H. 2. 15B), 13-37; 77-102
7. Dublin, TCL, 1337 (olim H. 3. 18), 76-83

O'Mulconry's Glossary
1. Dublin, TCL, 1318 (olim H. 2. 16) al. *Yellow Book of Lecan* col. 88-122

Lecan Glossary
1. Dublin, TCL, 1319 (olim H. 2. 17), 331-35
2. Dublin, RIA, 1225 (olim D. ii. 1) al. *Book of U í Maine*, 184
3. Dublin, TCL, 1337 (olim H. 3. 18), 415-16; 663a-667
4. Dublin, RIA, MS Stowe, C. i. 2, f. 8b-10b2, 29b111
5. Dublin, TCL, 1363 (olim H. 4. 22), 36

O'Davoren's Glossary
1. London, BL, Egerton 88, f. 79a-92c

H3
1. Dublin, TCL, 1337 (olim H. 3. 18), 623-28

Dúil Laithne
1. Dublin, TCL, 1317 (olim MS H. 2. 15B), 116

Dúil Dromma Cetta
1. Dublin, TCL, 1337 (olim H. 3. 18), 63-75; 633a-638b
2. London, BL, Egerton 1782, f. 15
3. Dublin, TCL, MS H. 1.13, 361-62

O'Clery's Glossary
1. Arthur W. K. Miller (ed), 'O'Clery's Glossary', *Revue Celtique*, 4 (1879-80), 349-428; 5 (1881-83), 1-71. (Originally published at Louvain in 1643).

The Stowe Glossaries
1. Dublin, RIA, 1234 (olim C. i. 2.) f. 8b-f. 10b; f. 29 b 1-f. 31 b 3

For a bibliography of edited versions of the manuscripts listed see: Paul Russell, 'The sounds of a silence: the growth of Cormac's glossary', Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies 15 (Summer 1998) p. 2-8