

Medieval Sourcebook:

Cain Adamnain: An Old-Irish Treatise on the Law of Adamnan

This law treatise is found in only two manuscripts, both late, but derived from the lost Book of Raphoe, written in Old Irish probably in the ninth century. The book of Raphoe is believed to have been a collection of materials on St. Adomnan. The Canons of Adamnan are also believed to have been copied from it. It claims to be the first Irish law to protect women, children, and the clergy from violence. The Annals of Ulster dates the promulgation of this law to 696/7 at the Synod of Birr. This treatise seeks to explain the law and is not a copy of the actual law code that was enacted at Birr in 697. There is a long list of guarantors of the law near the end of the treatise, who as far as can be checked, were all alive in 697. This law is also known as the Law of the Innocents. My notes are included in brackets, all others are from Meyer. See the hard back edition of this text for the treatise in Irish and for all of Meyer's notes. This edition is beyond copyright but Meyer should still be cited in all references and reference to this web site would be appreciated. [MZ]

1. Five ages before the birth of Christ, to wit, from Adam to the Flood, from the Flood to Abraham, from Abraham to David, from David to the Captivity in Babylon, from the Babylonian Captivity to the birth of Christ. During that time women were in bondage and in slavery, until Adamnan, son of Ronan, son of Tinne, son of Aed, son of Colum, son of Lugaid, son of Setne, son of Fergus, son of Conall, son of Niall, came.
2. *Cumalach* [1] was a name for women till Adamnan come to free them. And this was the *cumalach*, a woman for whom a hole was dug at the end of the door so that it came over her nakedness. The end of the great spit was placed upon her till the cooking of the portion was ended. After she had come out of that earth-pit she had to dip a candle four man's hands in length in a plate of butter or lard; that candle to be on her palm until division of food and distribution of liquor and making of beds, in the houses of kings and cheiftains, had ended. That women had no share in bag or in basket, nor in the company of the house-master; but she dwelt in a hut outside the enclosure, lest bane from sea or land should come to her chief.
3. The work which the best women had to do, was to go to battle and battlefield, encounter and camping, fighting and hosting, wounding and slaying. On one side of her she would carry her bag of provisions, on the other her babe. Her wooden pole upon her back. Thirty feet long it was, and had on one end an iron hook, which she would thrust into the tress of some woman in the opposite battalion. Her husband behind her, carrying a fence-stake in his hand, and flogging her on to battle. For [2] at that time it was the head of a woman, or her two breasts, which were taken as trophies.
4. Now after the coming of Adamnan no woman is deprived of her testimony, if it be bound in righteous deeds. For a mother is a venerable treasure, a mother is a goodly treasure, the mother of saints and bishops and righteous men, an increase in the Kingdom of Heaven, a propagation on earth.
5. Adamnan suffered much hardship for your sake, O women, so that ever since Adomnan's time one half of your house is yours, and there is a place for your chair in the other half; so that your contract and your safeguard are free; and the first law made in Heaven and on earth for women is Adamnan's Law.
6. This is the beginning of the story. Once Adamnan and his mother were wending their way by Ath Drochait [3] in Uaithne in Ui Aido Odba in the south of Bregia. 'Come upon my back, dear mother!' saith

he. 'I shall not go', saith she. 'What is this? what ails you?', saith he. 'Because you are not a dutiful son', saith she. 'Who is more dutiful than I am? since I put a girdle upon my breast, carrying you about from place to place, keeping you from dirt [4] and wet. I know of no duty which a son of a man could do to his mother that I do not do for you, except the humming tune which women perform [5]..... Because I cannot perform that tune, I will have a sweet-sounding harp made for you, to play to you, with a strap of bronze out of it'. 'Even so', she said. 'Your dutifulness were good; however, that is not the duty I desire, but that you should free women for me from encounter, from camping, from fighting, from hosting, from wounding, from slaying, from the bondage of the cauldron.'

7. Then she went [6] on her son's back until they chanced to come upon a battlefield. Such was the thickness of the slaughter into which they came to that the soles of one woman would touch the neck of another. Through they beheld the battlefield, they saw nothing more touching and pitiful than the head of a woman in one place and the body in another, and her little babe upon the breasts of the corpse, a stream of milk upon one of its cheeks, and a stream of blood upon the other.

8. 'That is a touching and pitiful sight', said Ronnat, the mother of Adamnan, 'what I see under thy feet, my good cleric!' Why dost thou not let me down upon the ground that I may give it my breast? However, it is long since my breasts have run dry! Nothing would be found in them. Why dost thou not prove thy clerkship for us upon yon wretched body, to see whether the Lord will resuscitate it for thee?' (Hence is the ancient saw: 'Beautiful is every pup under its dam'.) At the word of his mother Adamnan turned aside, adjusted the head on the neck, and made the sign of the cross with his staff across the breast of the woman. And the woman rose up.

9. 'Alas! O my great Lord of the elements!' said she. 'What makes you say alas?' said Adamnan, 'My being put to the sword on the battlefield and thrown into the torments of Hell. I know no one here or yonder who would do a kindness or show mercy to me save Adamnan, the Virgin Mary urging him thereto on behalf of the host of Heaven'.

10. And the woman who was there resuscitated at the word of Adamnan was Smirgat daughter of Aed Finn king of the Bregni of Connaught, wife of the king of Luaigni of Tara. For the woman of Ui Aido Odba and of the south of Bregia and the Luaigni of Tara had met around the ford, so that not a soul of them had come away abiding in its body, but they had fallen sole to sole.

11. 'Well now, Adamnan,' said she, 'to thee henceforth it is given to free the women of the western world. Neither drink or food shall go into thy mouth until women have been freed by thee'. 'No living creature can be without food,' said Adamnan. 'If my eyes see it, I shall stretch out my hands for it.' 'But thine eyes shall *not* see and thine hands shall *not* reach it.'

12. Then Ronnat turned aside to Brugach son of Deda and brought a chain from him, which she put around her son's neck at the Bridge of the Swilly in Tirconnell, where the covenant had been made between his mother's and his father's kindred, even between the race of Enda and that of Lugaid [7], to wit, that whoever of them would break the covenant should be buried alive in the earth, but he who would fulfil it was to dwell with Adamnan in Heaven. And she takes a stone which filled her hand. It was used for striking fire. She puts it into one of her son's cheeks, so that in it he had his fill of both food and drink.

13. Then, at the end of eight months, his mother came to visit him, and she beheld the crown of his head. 'My dear son yonder,' said she, 'is like an apple upon a wave. Little is his hold on the earth, he has no prayer in Heaven [8]. But salt water has scorched him, the gulls of the sea have dropped him' 'It is the Lord that ought to be blamed, dear mother!' said he. 'For Christ's sake, change my torture!'

14. This is the change of torture that she made for him, not many women would do so for their sons: she buried him in a stone chest at Raphoe [9] in Tirconnell, so that worms devoured the root of his tongue, so

that the slime of his head broke forth through his ears. Thereafter she took him to Carric in Chulinn[10], where he stayed for another eight months.

15. At the end of four years God's angels came from Heaven to converse with him. And Adamnan was lifted out of his stone chest and taken to the plain of Birr at the confines of the Ui Neill and Munster. 'Arise now out of thy hiding-place,' said the angel to Adamnan. 'I will not arise,' said Adomnan, 'until women are freed for me'. It is then the angel said: 'Omnia quae a Domino rogabis propter laborem tuum habebis'.

16. 'It shall not be in my time if it is done, ' said Loingsech Bregban, native of Fanait he was, of the race of Conall. 'An evil time when a man's sleep shall be murdered for a woman, that women should live, men should be slain. Put the deaf and dumb one to the sword, who asserts anything but that women shall be in everlasting bondage to the brink of Doom.'

17. These are the kings who then arose at the word of Loingsech to put Adamnan to the sword: Doelgus son of Oengus son of Dondfraech, high-king of Munster; Elodach, king of Deisi; Cucherca, king of Ossory; Cellach the Red, king of Leinster; Irglach grandson of Conaing, king of Bregia; Brugach son of Dega; Fingin Eoganach, -- these were all that were there of the kings of the western world. Adamnan took no sword with him to battle, but the Bell of Adamnan's Wrath, to wit, the little bell of Adamnan's alter-table. It is then Adamnan spoke these words:

18. 'I strike this little bell by the site of Lettir on purpose that dapper Doelgus may not drink the ale that Oengus had been [11], I shall sing my psalms to-day in the stone cave, may it not be without fame! Lest dapper Doelgus drink the ale which is drunk with dregs. God's curse on Elodach, the chief of Femen of the Deissi, lest king or king's heir spring from him after him! My humble, gentle attendant, thou armed son of the rule [12], strike the bell against Cellach of Carman, that he may be in the earth before a year's end.'

19. 'Cellach the Red, king of Leinster, save the son that is in his wife's womb, shall leave no seed nor issue; and even he, there shall be decay and ruin to his offspring unless they be obedient to me. So long as they levy my groats for me, no other tribe shall prevail over them, and the palm of encounter and of spoil. The kingship of the Ui Chellaig shall descend from them.'

20. 'O lad of the church-armor [13], having come to renowned Maistiu [Mullaghmast], strike the little bell against Domnall, that his year may not be full.'

'Domnall, the son of Murchad, king of Ulster, save for the son and thy father, shall not leave seed or issue, and even so, a fall shall carry off one of them, decay shall carry off the other. I take the over-kingship of Ulster from them'.

21. 'My little bell of true judgements by which Irgalach is made childless. I beseech the King of true judgements that no king descend from Irgalach. God's vengeance upon Irgalach that he be not on Bregia of true dwellings, May there be neither offspring nor race, may he be forsaken childless! The bell of truly-miraculous Adamnan has made desolate many kings, each one to whom it gives battle one thing awaits -- it has made them desolate.'

While it has made desolate strongholds, it has made kings desolate in defense of women, in bringing them to belief, so that their contract and their safeguard are free from the time of Adamnan until now, so that the Law of Adamnan is the first law made (for women) in Heaven and upon earth.

22. Adamnan did not rest satisfied until securities and bonds were given to him for the emancipation of women. These were the securities: sun and moon, and all other elements of God; Peter, Paul, Andrew, and the other apostles; Gregory, the two Patricks, the two Ciarans, the two Cronans[14], the four Fintans, Mobiu [Abbot of Cumsraig], Mobi [called Clarenech (flat face) Abbot of Glasnevin d. 545], Momædoc,

Munnu [Bishop and Abbot of Cluain Eidmech in Largis (Lex)- also called Fintan], Scothine, Senan, Fechine, Duilech, Cairnech, Cianan, Cartach, Victor, bishop Curitan, bishop Maeldub, Ionan son of Saman, Foilan abbot of Imlech Ibair, Cilline abbot of Lorrha, Colman son of Sechnusach, Eochaid abbot of Cluain Uama, the two Finns, and son of Labraid Lan.

23. Those guarantors gave three shouts of malediction on every male who would kill a woman with his right hand or left, by a kick, or by his tongue, so that his heirs are elder and nettle, and the corncrake. The same guarantors gave three shouts of blessing on every female who would do something for the community of Adamnan, however often his reliquaries would come. A horse to be given quarter to his reliquaries, (to be sent) to the coarb to the bath at Raphoe; but that this is from queens only, with whatever every other woman is able to give.

24. Women have said and vowed that they would give one half of their household to Adamnan for having brought them out of the bondage and out of the slavery in which they had been. Adamnan accepted but a little from them, to wit, a white tunic with a black border from every penitent nun, a scruple of gold from every chieftain's wife, a linen cloth from every gentleman's wife, seven cakes from every unfree woman, a wether from every flock, the first lamb that was brought forth in a house, whether black or white, for God and for Adamnan.

25. In consideration of this small and large tribute, he to take two women to Heaven every Monday, three women every Tuesday, four women every Wednesday, five women every Thursday, seven women every Friday, twelve women every Saturday, fifty women on Sunday. In addition to this it was decided that every namesake of his mother's, whatever woman on earth would be called Ronnat, and every woman who would choose (for herself) his burial-place, should be taken to Heaven without judgement.

26. Adamnan did not rest satisfied till sureties and pledges were given into his hand for his fulfillment to him of this small and large tribute (for the reason why a guarantee is taken from a bad debtor is, in order that the guarantor may pay the debt if the debtor do not pay): his son for a house-master, his soul for a confessor, every creature that moves about, every noble that walks the earth, every bell that is struck at the Hours are as hostages and pledges in the hand of God and Adamnan for the fulfillment of this Law.

It is then that Adamnan spoke these words:

27. 'Unless ye women of this world do good to my community, the offspring ye will bear shall decay, or they shall die full of crimes. Scarcity shall fill your storehouses, the Kingdom of Heaven ye shall not obtain; ye shall not escape by niggardliness or falsehood from Adamnan of Hi [Iona].

'Adamnan of Hi [Iona] will help you, O women!
Give unto your prince all the good things that are you!'

Adamnan of Hi [Iona], beloved of all, has read the books of the Gael.

28. This is the enactment of the Law of Adamnan of Hi [Iona]. At Birr this enactment was enjoined by the men of Ireland and Britain as a perpetual law by order of their nobles, clerics and laymen, both their chiefs and ollaves and bishops and sages and confessors, including

Fland Febla, the sage-bishop of Armagh [d. 715]

Diblaine

Elnai, abbot of Imlech Ibair (ie Emly)

Cennfaelad, abbot of Bangor [d. 705]

Failbe Becc, abbot of Clonmacnoise [d. 713]

Conodar, abbot of Lismore [abbot of Fore d. 707]

Cilline son of Luibnean, abbot of Birr [Martyrology of Donegal, April 14]

Colman son of Sechnusach, abbot of Lorrha [d. 710]

Eochuid, abbot of Cloyne
Forandan of Kildare [d. 698]
Suadbar of Inis Demle
Diblene, abbot of Tir-da-glas
Mochonnuí of Derry [d. 706, Martyrology of Donegal, May 15]
Oisine son of Glas, abbot of Clonfermulloe [d. 706]
Manchine of Leithglinn [now Leighlin d. 726]
Moacru
Mobeoc of Ard
Murchu of Balla [successor of Cronan Balnae d. 692]
Moling of Lauchair [d. 696]
Mend Maiche, abbot of Ferns
Colcu son of Moenach, abbot of Lusk [d. 702]
Bishop Ceti [Coeddi Bishop of Iona d. 712]
Bishop Curetan [of Ross Mein]
Bishop Conamail son of Conan [d. 705]
Colman grandson of Orc, abbot of Clonard [d. 701]
Aed, Bishop of Setty ['ancorita' d. 700, Aidus Slettiensis in Tirechan's notes]
Colman son of Findbarr [abbot of Lismore d. 703]
Cardide of Ross Mor
Togialloc grandson of Luan, the Wise
Bishop Ichtbriect (ie. Egbert) [Northumbrian who converted Iona to the Roman Easter, d. 729]
Feradach grandson of Arthur
Faelchu son of Maelrubai
Faellan of Clonfert-Brenainn
Dibchene son of Fili
Mosacra
Maelcoisni son of Conall
Murchu the descendant of Maetheine [wrote the *Life of Patrick* in the Book of Armagh]
Bishop Maeldub
Ioain of the wisdom, son of the Smith
Iohain son of Samuel
Faellan grandson of Silne [d. 711]
Loingsech son of Oengus, King of Ireland [\[15\]](#)
Congalach son of Fergus, king of Tirconnell
Fland Find son of Maeltuile, king of Tyrone [d. 700]
Conchabur son of Maelduin, king of Kinel Coirpri [d. 706]
Eterscel son of Maelhuma, king of Munster
Cudinaise son of Cellach, king of East Munster [d. 709 battle of Mag Elni]
Cucherca, king of Ossory [d. 713]
Congal son of Suibne, king of Deissi [d. 701]
Eoganan son of Crundmal, king of the Ui Fidgenti [predecessor of Conall son of Donennach d. 701]
Andelaith, king of the northern Deissi
Elodach son of Dunlang, king of Desmond
Ailill son fo Cu-cen-mathair, king of Mag Fene ['Rex Muman' d. 701 AU]
Fiachra Cosalach, king of Picts [\[16\]](#)
Becc Boirchi, king of Ulster [d. 718]
Niall son of Cernach, king of Breg-mag [d. 701]
Cellach son of Gerthide, king of Diaballaigin [AU d. 715]
Condalach son of Conang, king of Corco Dubne [AU d. 717]
Corpri son of Cu-choluimb, king of Ui Chennselaig [d. 709]
Congal grandson of Mrachaide
Conall son of Doinennch, king of the Ui (Fidgente) [d. 701]

Cellach son of Ragallach, king of Connacht [d. 703 AU 'post clericatum']
 Dluthach son of Fidchellach, king of the Ui Maine [burnt to death in 712 AU]
 Dunchad king of the Ui Amalgaid and of the Ui Fiachrach Murisc
 Muirges son of Maelduin [king of Cenel Coirpri in Co. Longford, d. 698]
 Macnia, king of Ard of the Ui Echach [d. 702]
 Murchad of Meath
 Colman son of Rechtabra, king of Ferns
 Maelgothartaig son of Maeldub [king of Airgialla d. 697]
 Dub-diberg [son of Dongall (?) d. 702]
 Mane son of Niall [son of Cernach Sotal - slain in battle in 712]
 Maelcaich son of Noindenach
 Erthuile grandson of Crundmal [\[17\]](#)
 Aed of Odba [killed 701]
 Echuid son of Dunchad, king of Deisi
 Aed son of Dluthach, king of Fir Cul [killed in the battle of Kells d. 718]
 Flaithnia son of Fergal
 Fiannamail grandson of Dunchad [king of Irish Dalriada d. 700]
 Feradach grandson of Ciaran [?son of Maelduin king of Cenel Loegaire slain in c. 704]
 Fedlimid grandson of Fergus [son of Fergus son of Aeddan in AU d. 701]
 Fallomain, king of the Ui Tuirtri
 Fergus Forchraid Fogarach [\[18\]](#)
 Garban, king of Meath [d. 702]
 Eochu Lemna, king of the Ui Cremthain [died in the battle of Corann in 703]
 Eochu grandson of Domnall, king of ... [Ui Cremthainn, died in the battle of Corann in 703]
 Conall Grant, king of southern Bregia [d. 718]
 Tuathal son of Dunchad, king of the Ui Chonail Gabra [? slain in the battle of Corann in 703]
 Toiethach son of Cennfaelad, king of Luigni [d. 734 AU]
 Bodbethath, king of Luigni [slain in the battle of Cloenad in 704]
 Irgalach grandson of Conang, king of Connacht [slain by Britons in Inis mac Nessian in 702]
 Bruide son of Derile, king of the Pict-folk [\[19\]](#)
 and the intercession of all the men of Ireland, both laymen and clerics.

29. All then, both laymen and clerics, have sworn to fulfill the whole Law of Adamnan till Doom. They have offered up the full *eric* of their female stock to Adamnan, and to every coarb who will be in his seat till Doom, nor does Adamnan take way fines from cheiftain and chruch and family to whom they are due.

30. Now, all the holy churches of Ireland together with Adamnan have besought the unity of the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and the heavenly hosts, and the saints of the earth, that whoever fulfills this Law, both as a claim and levy and fulfilment and *eric*, may have a long and prosperous life, and may be honored in the eyes of God and of men, may be exalted in Heaven and on earth.

31. The holy churches of Ireland, together with Adamnan, have also besought God with the orders of Heaven and the saints of the earth, that whoever shall break the Law of Adamnan, both laymen and clerics, whoever shall not claim it, and shall not fulfill it to the best of his power, and shall not levy it from every one, both cheiftain and church, -- his life may be short with suffering and dishonour, without any of their offspring attaining Heaven or earth.

32. Adamnan has also set down an order of malediction for them, to wit, a psalm for every day up to twenty days and an apostle or a noble saint for every day to be invoked with it, to wit, '*Quare*' adn Peter, '*Domine quid multiplicati*' and John, '*Verba mea*' and Philip, '*Domine deus meus*' and Bartholomew, '*Dixit insipiens*' and Thomas, '*Deus, deus meus respice*' and Matthew '*Iudica me Domine innocentium*' and Jacob '*Dixit iniustus*' and Simon '*Domine ne in furore*' and Thaddeus, '*Dixi custodiam*' and Mattias, '*Deus doerum*' and Mark, '*Quid gloriaris*' and Luke, '*Dixit insipiens*' and Stephen, '*Exturgat deus*' and

Ambrose, '*Salvum me*' and Gregory of Rome, '*Deus, uenerunt gentes*' and Martin, '*Deus, quis similis*' and old Paul, '*Deus laudem*', and George, '*Audite caeli quae loquor*', '*Non nobis, Dominem, non nobis, sed nomini tue*,' &c. [20]

33. Here begins the speech of the angel to Adamnan: ---

After fourteen years Adamnan obtained this Law of God, and this is the cause. On Pentecost eve a holy angel of the Lord came to him, and again at Pentecost after a year, and seized a staff, and struck his side and said to him; 'Go forth into Ireland, and make a law in it that women be not in any manner killed by men, through slaughter or any other death, either by poisen, or in water, or in fire, or by any other beast, or in a pit, or by dogs, but that they shall die in their lawful bed. Thou shalt establish a law in Ireland and Britain for the sake of the mother of each one, because a mother has borne each one, and for the sake of Mary mother of Jesus Christ, through whom all are. Mary besought her Son on behalf of Adamnan about this Law. For whoever slays a woman shall be condemned to a twofold punsihment, that is, his right hand and his left foot shall be cut off before death, and then he shall die, and his kindred shall pay seven full *cumals* [21], and one-seventh part of the penance. If, instead of life and amputation, a fine has been imposed, the penance is fourteen years, and fourteen *cumals* shall be paid. But if a host has done it, every fifth man up to three hundred shall be condemned to that punishment; if few, they shall be divided into three parts. The first part of them shall be put to death by lot, hand and foot having been first cut off; the second part shall pay fourteen full *cumals*; the thrid shall be cast into exile beyond the sea, under the rule of a hard regimen; for the sin is great when any slays the mother and sister of Christ's mother and the mother of Christ, and her who carries a spindle and who clothes every one. But he who from this day forward shall put a woman to death and does not do penance according to the Law, shall not only perish in eternity, and be cursed for God and Adamnan, but all shall be cursed that have heard it and do not curse him, and do not chastise him according to the judgement of this Law'.

This is the speech of the angel to Adamnan.--

34. This is the enactment of Adamnan's Law in Ireland and Britain: exemption of the Church of God with her people and her emblems and her sanctuaries and all her properties, live and dead, and her law-abiding laymen with their lawful wives who are obedient to Adamnan and to a lawful, wise and pious confessor. The enactment of this Law of Adamnan is a perpetual law on behalf of clerics and women and innocent children until they are capable of slaying a man, and until they take their place in the tribe, and their (first) expedition is known.

35. Whoever wounds or slays a young clerical student or an innocent child under the ordinance of Adamnan's Law, eight *cumals* for it for every hand (engaged), with eight years of penance, up to three hundred *cumals*; and one year of penance for it for each one from three hundred to three thousand or an indefinate number; and it is the same fine for him who commits the deed and for him who sees it and does not save to the best of his ability. If there is neglect or ignorance, half the fine for it, and (*arracuir*) that is neglect and that it is ignorance.

36. A further enactment of this Law: full due to every Church which is in good behaviour; half-due to her for her *termon* outside the green; full due to her for every degree [22], both for wounding and theft and burning; half-due for her sanctuaries; half-due for merely touching the hair (?) of clerics without wounding or theft. It is all due to every church for violating her emblems wherever it is done.

37. These are the judges of Adamnan's Laws in every church and in every tribe, to wit, the clerics whom the community of Adamnan chooses and to whom they commit the enactment of the Law.

38. These are the pledges of this Law: one-third of the pledge in bronze or silver, according to the estimation of every territory, out of the property of every case. The pledge (to be redeemed) on the third day, judgement on the fifth day, payment on the tenth in all other cases; in this case the pledge (is to be redeemed) at once (?), judgement on the third day and payment on the fifth.

39. A further enactment of the Law, that in every suit a hostage is to be adjudged (?) both for the ranks of the laity and those of the church, within the territories inside and outside, for small and large dues, in obedience to Adamnan or his communities. There is a legal notice and impounding, and the Law of Adamnan or his communities shall not become extinct.

40. A further enactment of the Law: If innocent children or clerics are slain, it is to their tombs of burial their dues come, and their *urradas*-dues to their chiefs within their kindred.

41. A further enactment of the Law, that payment in full fines is to be made to Adamnan for every woman that has been slain, whether a man has a share in it, or cattle or hound or fire or a ditch or a building, -- for everything that is made liable under the Law, both ditch and pit and bridge and fire-place and (door-)step and pools and kilns, and every other danger[23], except the woman deserves it. But one third is left to be kept. If it is a witless person, the other two thirds shall die. The one-third is his who has the right to it.

42. Whatever violent death a woman dies, except it be (by) the hand of God, or (in consequence of) rightful lawful cohabitation, it is paid in full fines to Adamnan, both slaying and drowning and burning and poison and breaking and perishing in a quagmire and death by tame beasts and pigs and cattle. If, however, it is a first crime *a folath* (*foluth*?) or on the part of pigs or hounds, they shall be killed at once, and half due to the human hand for it; if it is not a first crime, full due is paid.

43. There shall be no cross-case or balancing of guilt in Adamnan's Law, but each one pays for his crimes for his own hand. Every trespass which is committed in Adamnan's Law, the communities of Adamnan are to a *forbach* of it, apart from women, whether it be innocents, or clerics, or anyone to whom they commit it, viz. a *cumal forbaich* to the community of Hii where seven *cumals* are paid, and half a *cumal* from seven half-*cumals*. Six *séts* on thirty *séts*, three *séts* on five *séts*.

44. One-eighth of everything small and great to the community of Adamnan from the slaying of clerics or innocent children. If it be a life-wound any one inflicts on a woman or a cleric or an innocent, seven half-*cumals* are due from him, fifteen *séts* upon the nearest and remoter kindred as being accomplices. Three *séts* for every white blow[24], five *séts* for every drawing of blood, seven *séts* for every wound requiring a tent, a *cumal* for every confinement to bed, and payment of the physician besides. If it be more than that, it goes upon half-dues for killing a person. If the blow with the palm of the hand or with the fist, one ounce of silver (is the fine) for it. If there be a green or red mark, or a swelling, an ounce and six scruples for it. For seizing women by the hair, five wethers. If there is a fight among women with outrage (?), three wethers.

45. Men and women are equally liable for large and small dues from this on to (any) fights of women, except outright death. For a woman deserves death for the killing of a man or woman, or for giving poison whereof death ensues, or for burning, or for digging under a church[25], that is to say, she is to be put in a boat of one paddle as a sea-waif (?) upon the ocean to go with the wind from the land. A vessel of meal and water to be given with her. Judgement on her as God deems it.

46. If it be charms from which death ensues that any one give to another, the fines of murder followed by concealment of the corpse (are to be paid) for it. Secret plunderings and *cnáim-chró* which are traced (?) to (one of) the four nearest lands, unless these four nearest lands can lay them on any one particularly, they swear by the *altbu* (?) of their soul that they do not to lay it upon any one and pay it themselves. If they suspect any one and prove it, it is he who shall be liable. If the probability lie between two or a greater number, let their names be written on leaves; each leaf arranged around a lot. and the lots are put into a chalice upon the altar. He on whom the lot falls is liable.

47. If the offenders who violate the Law do not pay, their kindred pay full fines according to the greatness of the crime, and after that (the offender) becomes forfeited, and is banished until the end of the law. One-half of seven *cumals* for accompliceship upon every direct and indirect kindred afterwards. If there be

assistance and shelter and connivance, it is death for it; but such as the fine (of the principals) was such shall be that of accomplices.

48. A further enactment of the Law: they shall feed the stewards of Adamnan's Law, whatever their number, with the good food [26] of their people, viz. five men as guarantors, and the feeding of every one who shall levy the dues of the Law shall be according to the wealth of every one, both chieftan and church and people. A *cumal* for leaving any one of them fasting, while fines are being levied, and offenders with regard to feeding [27], and they sustain a joint contract of debts unless they feed them. Two *cumals* to them from offenders.

49. This is the exemption of every guarantor who come to levy this tribute, viz. the guilt of their family does not come upon them so long as they support guarantors and while they are in possession and do not escape; but their own guilt (comes upon them) or the guilt of their offspring and their children and of their retainers.

50. If it be rape of a maiden, seven half-*cumals* (is the fine) for it. If a hand (is put) upon her or in her girdle, ten ounces for it. If a hand (is put) under her dress to defile her, three ounces and seven *cumals* for it. If there be a blemish on her head or her eyes or in the face or in the ear or nose or tooth or tongue or foot or hand, seven *cumals* are (to be paid) for it. If it be a blemish on any other part of her body, seven half-*cumals* are (to be paid) for it. If it be tearing of her dress, seven ounces and one *cumal* for it.

51. If it be making a gentlewoman blush by imputing unchastity to her or by denying her offspring, there are seven *cumals* (to be paid) for it until it comes to (the wife of) an *aire désa*. For her onwards to a *muirí*, seven ounces.

52. If women be employed in an assault or in a host or fight, seven *cumals* for every hand as far as seven, and beyond that it is to be accounted as the crime of one man. If a woman has been got with child by stealth, without contract, without full rights, without dowry, without betrothal, a full fine for it. Whatever . . . which is of hand-produce, great or small, whatever of dye-stuff, or woad or beans. If it be red dye of a cloak, ... of a cloak for it [28].

53. Three guarantors for every chief church for the Law of Adamnan, viz. the prior and the cook and the steward; and a guarantor of the Law from (every) parent-family throughout all Ireland; and two guarantors of the Law from high chieftains, and hostages to be held for its payment, if there be the proof of a woman.

Notes:

1. A derivative of *cumal*, 'a female slave, bondmaid'.
2. The use of 'for' seems to imply that these trophies were put upon the stake which the men carried.
3. 'The Ford of the Bridge', now Drogheda. Cf. Book of Fenagh, p. 81 n. 4
4. Literally, 'urine'.
5. Here the words are *lebor bæl bachlaich oca* are quite obscure to me.
6. Literally, 'she turns'.
7. Enda was the eponymous ancestor of Adamnan's mother, and Lugaid that of his father.

8. i.e. 'his prayer is not heard in Heaven' or 'he has no spokesman in Heaven'.
9. [Note that this and other materials on Adomnan were kept in the Book of Raphoe and the region of Tirconnell has played a prominent role in this treatise. The king of Tirconnell signed the list of the guarantors directly after the "king of Ireland"; overall second on the list of kings. MZ]
10. 'The Rock of the Holly'
11. ie. 'that Doelgus may not enjoy the kingship of his father Oengus'. This play upon the words *flaith*, 'kingship', and *flaith*, 'ale' (i.e. *laith* with the prothetic *f*), is common in Irish storytelling.
12. i.e. of the rule of the church or monastery.
13. Literally, 'of the armour of orders' (*grdd*).
14. [two Cronans: Cronan Bishop of Inisamahil d. 643 and Cronan of Moville d. 650 and addressee of Pope John IV's letter.]
15. [see section 16, reigned 696-703, slain by Cellach son of Ragallach King of Connacht in the battle of Corann. This synod may have been called at the beginning of the reign of the new high king.]
16. [Irish Picts/ Cruithne of Dalriada in the king list of Dalriada kings in the Book of Leinster.]
17. [expelled from the kingship of Cenel Eogan and went to Britain in 700 AU]
18. [Fogartach is a separate man, probably the son of Niall, grandson of Cernach who later became king of Ireland and was slain in the battle of Cenn- Delgden in 724. Fergus Forchriad died in the battle of Corann in 703.]
19. [d. 706, Picts of Scotland, possibly a kinsman of Adomnan's friend Bruide son of Beli who Adomnan buried on Iona in 693, see *Life of Adomnan*]
20. See a poem on these maledictive psalms (*sailm escaine*) of Adamnan in *Hibernica Minora*, p. 44.
21. A *cumal* or 'bondmaid' represented the value of three milch-cows.
22. i.e. the orders of the Church
23. Literally, 'persecution'.
24. i.e. a blow that neither draws blood nor causes discolouring.
25. viz. to look for treasure.
26. Or, perhaps, 'the food of a freeman'.
27. Something seems to be omitted.
28. *dilim* or *dirim* (probably the same word) are obscure to me.