One must bear in mind when considering the relationships of the sources containing material relevant to CL that A contains the only complete version of the tract; fragments of the tract are preserved in many other sources (see the Manuscript Introduction for full details). The fragmentary state of the surviving manuscript witnesses makes the task of determining how the sources are related to each other particularly difficult, if not impossible. It may never be possible to state confidently how the sources are related to each other or other collections of legal material.

The handwriting and the layout of the tract, glosses, and commentary in A clearly demonstrate that we have two scribes copying not only the tract, but also some of the glosses and all of the commentary; one assumes due to the layout of the material on the manuscript page (both scribes left room to accommodate this extra material) that the glosses and commentary that they copied were part of their exemplar. We can distinguish two broad layers of glossing. The first layer seems to have been done not long after the text was copied and is seen in the glosses written by Glossators 1 and 3. Although it is hard to locate chronologically, the placement of the glosses written by Glossators 2 and 6 on the page indicates that they worked after Glossators 1 and 3. Thus, they are part of the later layer of glossing activity, which includes Glossators 4, 5, and 7. How much later these glossators worked is unknown.

What is also unknown is whether the material written by the glossators was composed by them or copied from another source. With Glossator 5, it would appear to be the case that his material came from another manuscript source, which he indicated by the letters “s.d.” appended to the end of each of his glosses. Throughout all of this, one must be vigilant of the common practice not just in Ireland, but also on the continent, and not just with secular legal material, but also canon law material, of making collections of glosses and/or commentary on a particular subject or text. These collections are easily incorporated into other collections. This practice of ever-increasing collections of material from a variety of sources makes the task of creating a stemma all the more difficult, since it is possible to have one stemma reflect the tradition of the tract
and another represent the later glosses and commentary. My conclusions below are tentative, as all conclusions of this kind necessarily are.

If we begin with the assumption that the original written version of the tract is the product of one person (as discussed in the Legal Introduction), we can reasonably take it that all of our surviving manuscript witnesses must ultimately derive in one way or another from either this original or later configurations of the material. The source that most likely represents the earliest surviving version of portions of CL is D. D has been dated by Breatnach to “not very long” after the middle of the 8th century and contains some older linguistic forms not just for the material relating to CL, but also for a number of other law tracts.¹ This glossary also contains a rather different glossing tradition than that reflected in either A or B. For example, out of the 21 glosses in D that pertain to CL, only four contain material either partially or wholly duplicated in A; none of the glosses from D are found in B. Although the text used by the compiler of D is very close to that used by the scribes of A, it is independent from it.²

The next source to be considered is C. Although it contains only a copy of § 2 of the tract and some commentary, it is significant for several reasons. The first is that the tract contained in C probably does not derive directly from A (nor any of the other surviving sources), but rather a version of the material closer to A’s exemplar. This conclusion is based on the fact that C contains the word cadiat, which is omitted in A; the MS has bein, the older acc. sg. form of ben “woman”, where A has ben (if we assume that the form in C is not an accident of orthography, but, as discussed in the section on dating, a genuinely archaic form—A contains this older form in other sections of the text); the manuscript layout for the tract and commentary is the same as that for A;³ and the commentary is largely the same as that for A, but with the addition of extra material at the

¹ CCIH, p. 344, and 342–343. Russell, “Laws, Glossaries and Legal Glossaries in Early Ireland,” p. 89, has noted that glossae collectae such as this one are “only of practical use in relation to the text from which they have been taken.”

² On p. 8 of their edition of Bechbretha, Charles-Edwards and Kelly state that the text used by this glossary is also independent from, but quite close to, that used in their A (TCD 1316 [H.2.15A]). Similarly to CL, there is only one complete surviving copy of Bechbretha with fragments found in several other manuscripts; note that Bechbretha is found in a different section of TCD 1316 (H.2.15A) than CL.

³ See p. 39 of the facsimile; Best and Thurneysen, The Oldest Fragments of the Senchas Már. Note that digest D also has this same type of manuscript layout for other sections; see D(17) (CIH 1964.21–38), D(36) (CIH 2011.11–2012.8), and D(37) (CIH 2016.6–10); and CCIH, pp. 326–327. This further supports the claim that the two scribes of A were copying preexisting material.