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Two early modern Celtic-English glossaries

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Abstract

Even before the beginning of the systematic study of the Celtic languages, Elizabethan and Jacobean scholars were collecting lexicographical, phonological and etymological information about them. In this paper, I will compare two hitherto unknown early modern Celtic-English ‘glossaries’ to address their methods, rationale and authorship. Were they compiled by English or bilingual speakers? What may have been their envisaged uses? What place does English take in them? The paper will posit that the sources underlying the compilation of these early glossaries were aural, and it will show that the understanding of the power dynamics between English and the Celtic languages was complex and nuanced.