

CASE STUDY 12**CUMHA NAM BRAITHREAN**

(BROTHER'S LAMENT.)

SOURCESPibroch<sup>1</sup>

Angus MacArthur Ms. c1820 no. 15

(Untitled.)

Angus MacKay Ms. Vol 1 1826-1840 no. 9.

'Cumha nam Brathairean: The Brothers' Lament. Blind Ronald MacDougall.'

Song Text.Turner Ms. XIV<sup>2</sup> c1750 page 51.

'Cumha na Mbrathar.'

<sup>1</sup> There are three different laments with this title. Angus MacKay implies (how?) below its title, that this was composed by blind Ronald MacDougall.

However, if the song link is correct, this would imply MacDougall set the tune to an already existing, much older song. The pibroch seems to be mixed up with the Sister's Lament in the variations although the two tunes differ substantially in melody. W. Ross (1869: 42) has another setting in that there are 15 phrases in the tune; his fourth and fifth phrases being an addition to the MacArthur text. No reasons can be ascertained for the existence of this setting especially as when it does not represent a more standard 16-phrase version. It also appears in Thomason's Ceol Mor (p. 220.) The second, different melody called Brother's Lament (2) is in CC (Vol 2 no. 41) and has been published in PS Book 13. The third Brother's Lament (3) is in John Smith's Ms. p. 123. (Owned by Piobaireachd Society.)

<sup>2</sup> This is in NLS Adv. 73. 2. 2. (Gaelic Ms. CXXI) and consists of a collection of the poems of William MacMurchy's collection of poems/songs. The Ms. was obtained by a Peter Turner and in 1808 (this Ms. it was given to John Campbell of the Highland Society of Scotland. [Information from List of Gaelic Mss. Vol 2 compiled by R. Black, North Reading Room NLS] It also appears in Cameron's Reliquiae Celticae. (1892-1894, Vol 2: 333.) ed. MacBain and Kennedy, Inverness. The whole contents of the William MacMurchy's Ms. are printed there (310+).

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Music Source.

Angus Fraser Ms.

c1855

no. 31.

'Cumha air a brathair le nighean òg'.

DESCRIPTION

This is a D tune which is unusual in form with thirteen phrases. The first four phrases <sup>are</sup> can be identified with a song text which has a melodic form ABCD. The four phrases are repeated with a different melodic motif on the eighth phrase <sup>or 5th phrase equivalent</sup> to allow the tune to develop. This development <sup>progression</sup> consists of a series of reworkings of previous melodic and rhythmic figures which constitutes the remaining five phrases of the tune. <sup>make up</sup>

ANALYSISThe Song

A recorded sung version of the text is not available, so the following analysis identifies one poetic text of Brother's Lament with a pibroch version.

A reading of this song, in the absence of music, suggests syllabic verse metre. The implications of this poetic feature for the music are that <sup>where</sup> each syllable <sup>represents</sup> sets a musical stress. This isorhythmic characteristic gives a strong sense of rhythm in the song, common in the performance of *dàn* or heroic ballad. The first quatrain is shown below, beside which are the notes of the pibroch which are considered to be appropriate to the words. This works out at one note per syllable. <sup>Each note is equivalent to 1 syll.</sup>

Seisior Sinne saor ar sliochd, {DDDA BDE}  
 Seisior nach do smaoin an t òc {DFEB DEF}  
 Ta fear don tseisior gun teachd {BDFD EEE}  
 O leachd an Fhir chaoimh a nochd. {DXFE DDD}

Put letters  
under  
syllables

(Six free people we are in our family/six that did not think badly/there is one of the six who has not arrived/tonight from the tomb of the meek one)



This is clearly a very old song. The archaic language and the use of alliteration with a set number of seven syllables per line throughout is evidence of this. The style of singing suggested by the syllabic metre of the poetry results in a tendency to give equal stressing to each syllable of language and not to a particular sequence of four vowels <sup>with words</sup> as in most of present day Gaelic song metre. Although there are four stresses per line in the quatrain above, this four-stressed feature is not so dominant because of the internal syllable rhythm which emphasises the syllabic metre of the poetry. vowel stresses

There are two settings of this song in AF Ms. It would appear that he made several attempts at notating <sup>it</sup> this one <sup>as he notates one</sup> because one setting is in 6/4 and the other ~~is~~ in 3/4. Alternatively, as the settings are metrically different, it could be that there two different song texts (of different metre) sung to the same melody. *Another possibility is that*

The 3/4 setting in Ex. 1 has a three lined stanza, rather than the four lined stanzas considered here. The third line of the stanza, in the 3/4 setting, is longer than the preceding ones, giving a stanza of 4, 4, and 5 stresses. This is similar to bardic verse where one would normally have 2, 2 and 3 stresses. This is followed by a three lined refrain which was probably made up of vocables.

Ex. 1

3/4 Version.

Refrain:

Verse: etc.

AF notates the verse again but this time it implies a four lined stanza as in the 6/4 version.

AF's 6/4 version has been chosen for comparison because of its quatrain form, which is shown in Ex. 2 below. If the melodic stresses of the music are compared with the words, one can see that for every seven musical figures there is an equivalent syllable in Gaelic. The first poetic couplet therefore matches the music with seven syllables per line or alternatively four coincident stresses of poetry and music. ? phrase

## Ex. 2 Verse



The second musical couplet, however, suggests eight syllables, or alternatively, five musical stresses and therefore does not suit the poetry. The rhythmical features are similar, however, and one can see how the notation and word rhythm relate in Ex. 3. Some alterations have been made in order to make a proper match between words and music and one has to consider the pibroch settings in order to explain how these alterations have been made.

The tune first appears on the stave in AMcA's Ms. and each bar has cadences to the first note. Although these are short demisemiquavers, they are probably too numerous for the tune. Angus MacKay made each introduction into a full E, as was his wont, exacerbating the melodic and rhythmic restrictions of what should have been subtle effects of decoration. One can consult this source for his treatment of the tune. As MacKay's method of pibroch notation has been addressed in other case studies and as AMcA's cadences are irrelevant for the purpose of identifying the melody line of the original tune, only the themal notes of the AMcA version are shown in Ex. 3. below.

In view of the changes which have been discovered to have occurred in pibroch notation, by the addition of notes, (cf. Cumha Choire an Easa) my edited version of the pibroch is shown below the AMcA version. This has a rhythmic scansion which accommodates the words of the song and these can be seen matched with the music. The perceived points of stress are shown by the small bars.

## Ex. 3 (overleaf)



## Ex. 3

AMcA

Edited Version

Seis - ior sin - ne saor ar sliochd. Seis - ior nach do smuain an t-olc.

Ta fear do t-seis - ior gun teachd. O leachd an fhir chaoimh a nochd

As one can see from Ex.3, two notes are taken out of the first phrase. Even without the words with which to compare, the first bar, in AMcA and subsequent pibroch sources, does not have the same rhythmic scheme as the second bar. It appears that notes have been added in the process of 'instrumentation'. The Ds are accented in the first bar, giving a completely different and inappropriate rhythmic effect in contrast with the more evenly distributed rhythmic scheme which follows. The first bar has therefore been represented in the rhythm which accords with the rest of the tune. One can see now how closely the words and music relate in the edited version of the pibroch.

The pibroch version of Brother's Lament differs from the song in the first instance by the addition of notes and in the second by the insertion of cadences. The removal of some of the notes as has been done in the example above is one way of bringing the tune back into the idiom from which it arose. It is still possible to apply pibroch conventions, similar to AMcA's style and at the same time preserve the important rhythmic character of the tune by the insertion of cadences played as demisemi or semiquaver runs in specific places. For example, one might choose to play the tune in a manner which approximates the following:

Ex. 4



### CONCLUSION

The evidence suggests that this pibroch tune may have been adapted from a song which can be identified with a style of singing which was much more commonly heard, especially in the Gaelic society of the eighteenth century. It would seem that some notes may have been added by the pibroch players as a matter of convention and the addition of notes such as D's and E's, especially in AMcK's system, was a feature which was fairly common in the process of adapting songs from voice to instrument. It would seem that the introduction of notes onto the melody line not only happened as a result of taking the cadence ornamentations onto the melody line, but that some notes were simply drawn into the melody line as an accepted method of adaptation from the song tradition.

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