

CHAPTER 4

**FIDDLE AND OTHER SOURCES FOR PIBROCH.**

As Johnson(1984:119) has shown, the earliest known records of bagpipe music are to be found in the fiddle texts of the eighteenth century

'Pieces proper to the bagpipes have been transferred on to the fiddle since at least the beginning of the 18th century.'

and they:

'experimented with ceòl mór from about 1710 until the end of the century, in the Lowlands as well as in the Highlands.'  
(ibid. 124)

He also observes that:

'Most pipe transcriptions in the early part of the century were taken over on to the fiddle with minimum alterations.'(ibid. 119)

involving little more than transposition to other keys to suit the fiddle. This would seem to be the case as the melody lines have not altered in any appreciable manner.

However, as he remarks again:

'fiddlers were adventurous, and did not stop at merely transcribing the pipe repertory; they also wrote new tunes in pipe style.'(ibid.)

Johnson gives a number of these in his book and one of the examples found in the case studies is A Ghlas Mheur. (CS 4)

*MacIntosh's lament*

His reservations about this adventurous style is that:

'it is not always clear which ones are genuine pipe tunes 112 and which are fiddlers' imitations.'

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112 MacFarlane's (1740) Ms. gives a number of tunes such as Fàilte Dhòmhuill Ghuirm (p.162 no.199) which is clearly in pibroch form, the first four phrases of which has a song scansion. However, it has a greater compass than the pipe scale. Another tune is Fàilte na Miosg (Salute to

Sometimes, however, the melodic and rhythmic figures in the fiddlers' imitative tunes provide sufficient evidence to set them apart from the nature of the melodic motifs and the conventional ornamentations which appear throughout the pibroch tradition. eg. see 'Pibroch' p.128.

Although this evidence by itself may not be conclusive, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that there was at least an approximate imitation of the melodic and rhythmic style, with particular notes being decorated, a series of stylised variations and the whole tune, sometimes but not necessarily, within the compass of the bagpipe scale. *As Johnson states, the fiddlers decided early on, that the best way to tackle the form was to go for the overall effect rather than the precise details (p.124)*  
 Some of the fiddle sets which have been identified by Johnson as being related to pibroch, suggest the kinds of sets which are historically associated with the Irish Harper O'Carolan, such as the tune which appears in MacFarlane's Ms.(1740)<sup>113</sup> *include Pt.*

A most important feature of the notation of some fiddle texts which is also relevant to song and pipe performance style, concerns the note values given to the ornamentations where pipers might play cadences in the tunes. In the fiddle collections, <sup>*Dow, etc.*</sup> these cadences appear as short one note quavers, sparsely distributed and sometimes non-existent within the tunes.<sup>114</sup> It is likely that the fiddlers simplified the cadences by notating the perceived pitch of the pipe ornamentation. Just as fiddlers may have shortened the three note run cadence to one short ornament so the pipers

drunkenness) MacFarlane (1740: 80 no.108) which has a similarity to the melody to which 'My Heart's in the Highlands' is sung. A variant form appears in the Campbell Canntaireachd (vol.2 no.22) with the title 'Faill na Misk'. Another tune called Fàilte MhicGilleoin, (MacLean's Salute) (MacFarlane, 1740: 250) which has not survived in the piping tradition and which has the four canntaireachd *hiharin* motifs introduced by a short F rather than a short E, probably because the tune contains F's throughout.

<sup>*113*</sup> They are mostly adapted to the fiddle. MacFarlane Ms. vol ii no.162 (see Johnson p.128) It has similar motifs to a tune played by the folk group The Chieftains (~~NAME~~) The Lament for the Bishop of Argyle is one which appears in the same Ms.vol.iii no.34. and which has been published in PS series bk.15. However, it does not have the characteristics of a pibroch composed for pipes and as Johnson states (p141) it was probably composed originally for harp.

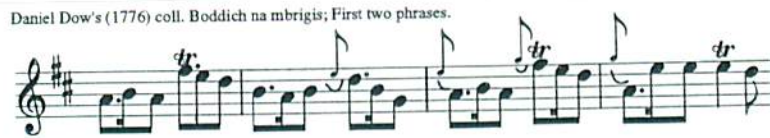
<sup>*114*</sup> These sources were: Oswald's Caledonian Pocket Companion 1747-69; Robert Riddell's A collection of Scotch, Galwegian and Border tunes.(1794) Daniel Dow's A collection of ancient Scots music. (1776)

*O'Neill's march*

have acted similarly but, in contrast, have lengthened the E of the cadence run disproportionately.

Daniel Dow's (1776) notated version of Carles with the Breeks has a number of these short cadences which appear in similar positions in the pibroch scores.

Ex. 1



The evidence shows that, where a pibroch setting exists for a tune found in a fiddle source, such as Carles with the Breeks, (CS 2) the fiddlers have many one note semiquaver ornamentations coincident with the pibroch cadences. Where a pibroch version of the tune does not appear to exist, the tunes written in the pibroch form by the fiddlers do not have such a profusion of ornaments like the pipe cadences. The coincidence of decorations to the themal notes, in the fiddle and pipe setting, suggests that the notator has been emulating the pipes.

One important manuscript which dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century is the Eliza Ross Ms. which contains pibrochs based on the playing style of Angus MacKay's father, John. This has been examined by Cooke (1985 Piob Soc. Conference) and the method of notating cadences which Ross generally adopted, shows that the Es were short when played to the following notes. These are represented sometimes by single quavers, or two semiquavers or three semiquaver runs.

For example, in her version of MacIntosh's Lament where the pipe cadence would be expected to occur, she has an ornament consisting of quavers and semiquavers before the themal note. At the end of the first phrase for example, is:

Ex. 2

Elizabeth Ross Ms. MacIntosh's Lament.



and in her notation of Failt' Shir Seumas MachDhonuil(sic) she has the same short cadences:

Ex 3



The more complex conventions of piping have been recognised by a tr. above the relevant notes although in a number of cases these may be the fiddlers' own ornamentations.

Patrick MacDonald's collection of 1784, which has four pibrochs notated<sup>115</sup> gives more details on the nature of the cadence runs and notates them as demisemi-quaver and semi-quaver runs as well as quaver graces as in the other fiddle collections, leaving little doubt as to their duration in comparison with the following themal notes. These are discussed in the respective case studies. Although he only notates two of the tunes specifically for fiddle, the performances are as performed on the pipes as specified in a previous discussion on this source.

As Peter Cooke pointed out (1985)<sup>116</sup> the pibrochs in Eliza Ross's Ms.

'can almost certainly be viewed as being derived from the piping of John MacKay senior.'

the father of Angus MacKay. In this way her manuscript, like the fiddlers' Mss. give some insight into the contemporary style of playing.

Clearly there has been quite a cross-fertilisation between the pibroch idiom and the fiddling tradition. Fiddlers are unlikely to have had little effect on the technical aspects of pibroch playing on the pipes such as the *clarsach* may have had, but the fiddle would seem to have represented a vehicle for its transmission which should not be undervalued in an oral tradition. For example, the tune played today called 'Togail nam Bó' or MacFarlane's Gathering is said to have been notated by John MacDougall Gillies from a

<sup>115</sup> The modern titles of these are MacIntosh's Lament, The Fingerlock, War or Peace and MacCrimmon will never return.

<sup>116</sup> Piobaireachd Society Conference report, College of Piping, Glasgow. ||

as much  
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fiddler in the Glendaruel area.<sup>117</sup> The other tunes in MacFarlane's collection, already mentioned, are witness to the interplay which was occurring between the two instrumental traditions. (|

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<sup>117</sup> PT vol. 8 no. 2 Nov. 1955. This was stated in a letter from a George MacDonald, Dunoon. The fiddler was called Leitch.