

War or Peace

There are settings of this tune in the following manuscript sources:

- **Donald MacDonald snr.**'s MS, ff.240-244;
- **Peter Reid**'s MS, f.22;
- **John MacDougall Gillies**'s MS, f.108;

and in the following published sources:

- **Niel MacLeod of Gesto**, *Collection of Pibaireachd or Pipe Tunes*, pp.6-8;
- **Angus MacKay**, *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.128-130;
- **C. S. Thomason**, *Ceol Mor*, p.132;
- **David Glen**, *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, pp.136-9;
- **G. F. Ross**, *Collection of MacCrimmon and Other Piobaireachd*, pp.6-7.

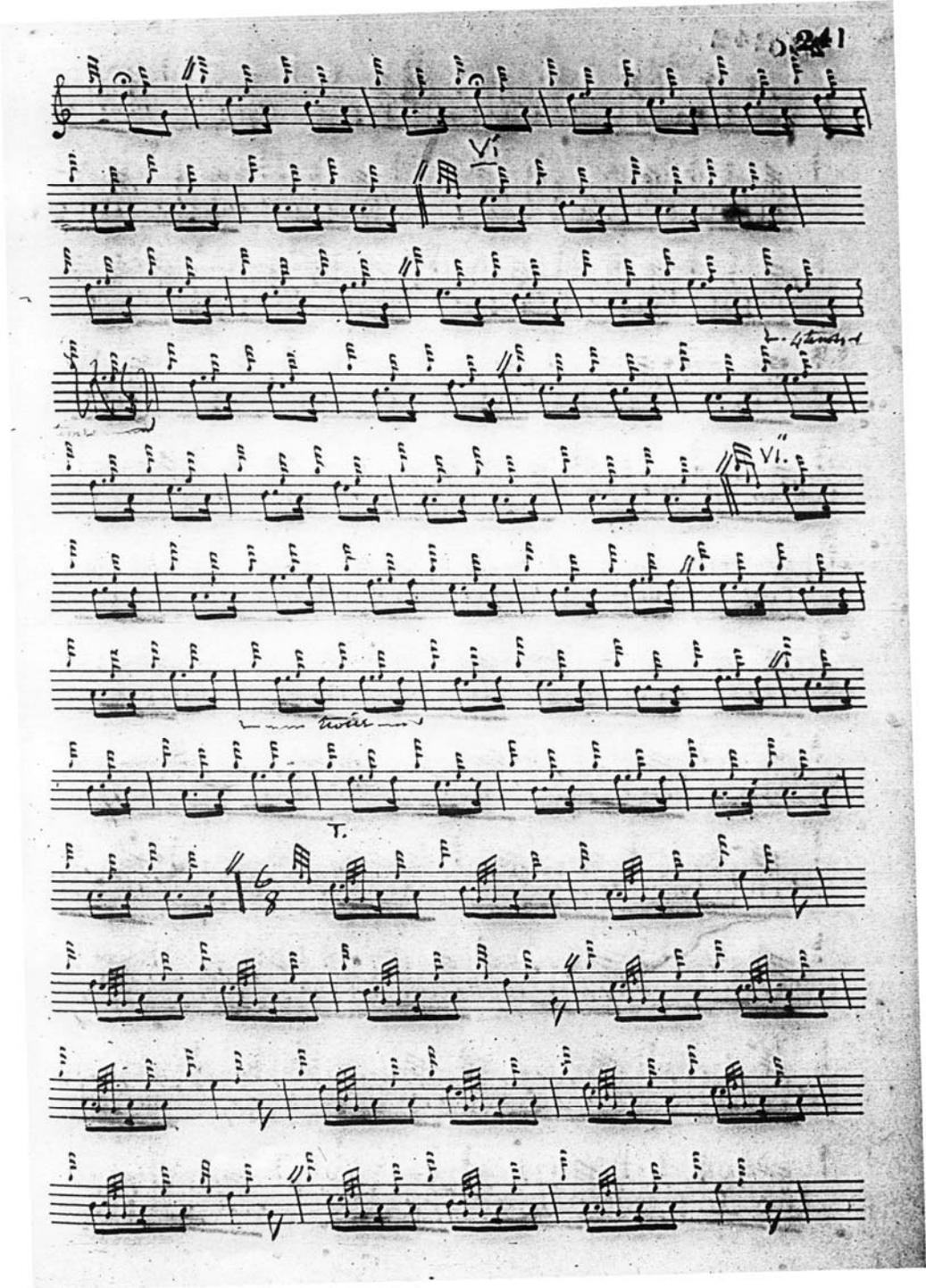
Donald MacDonald sets the tune like this:

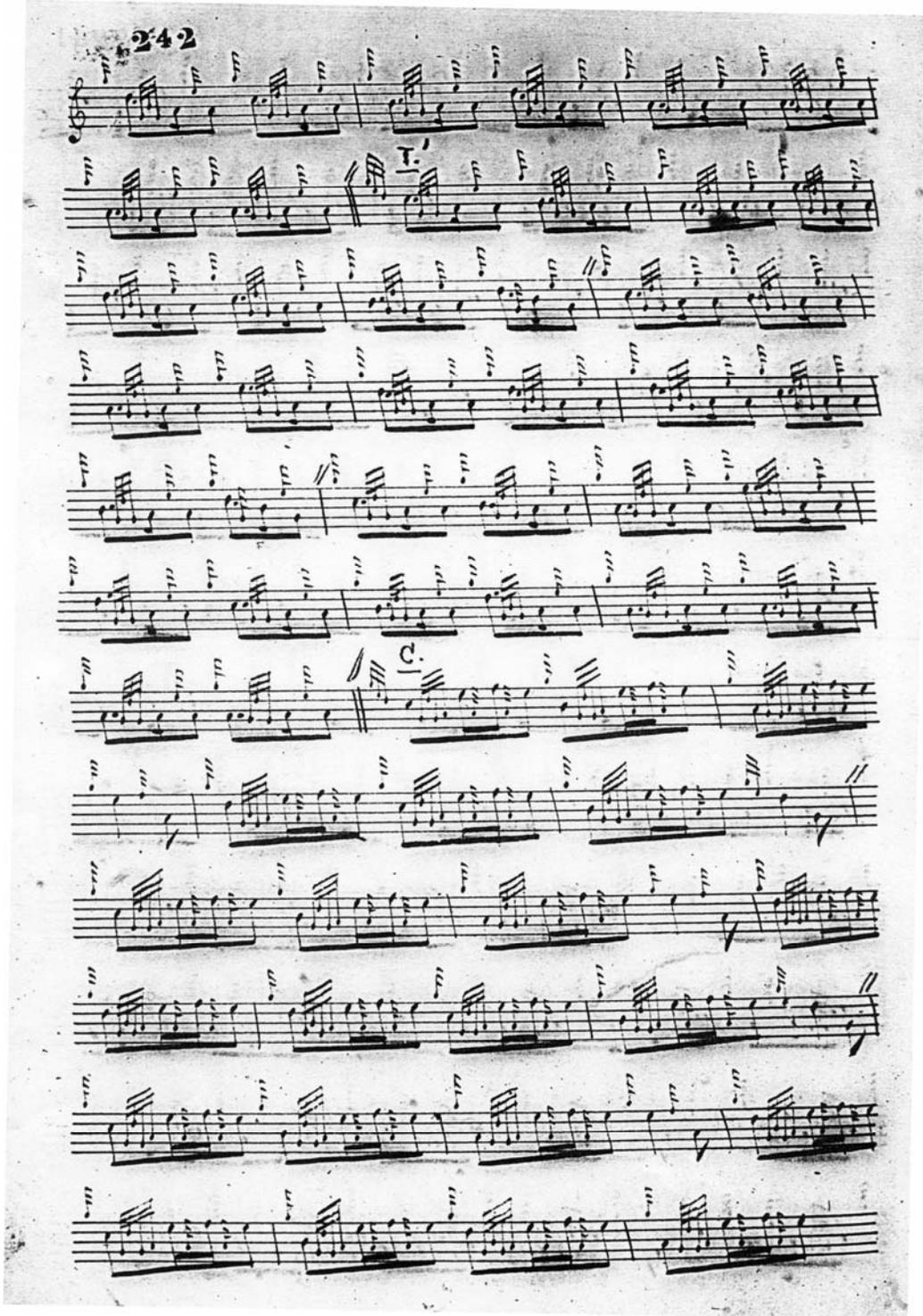
COGADH NA SITH.

240

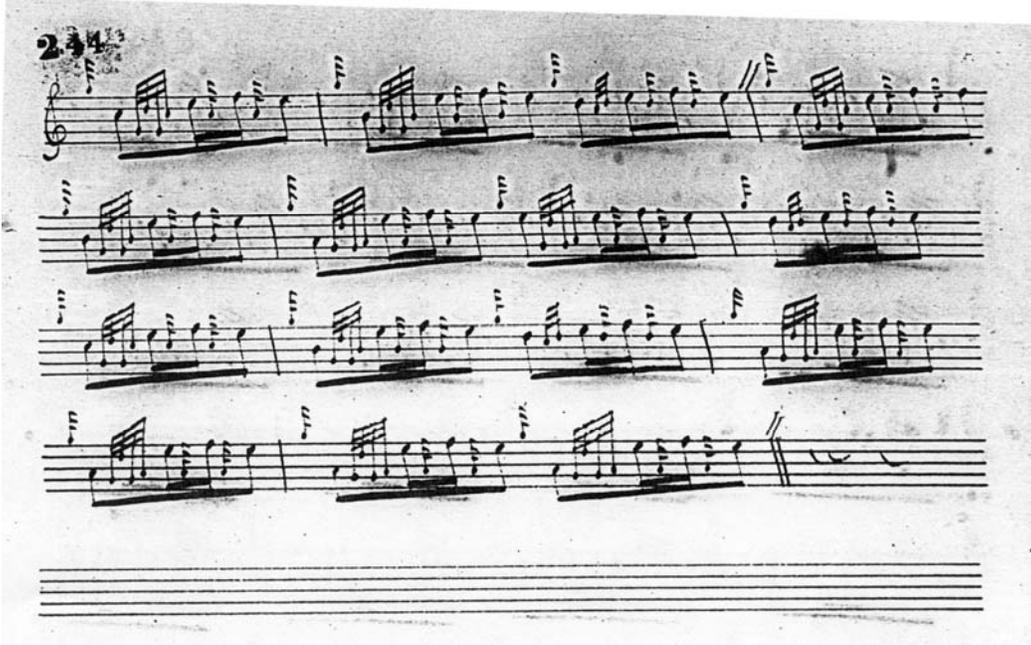
The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for a pipe and drum tune. At the top, the title "COGADH NA SITH." is written in a cursive hand. Below it, the number "240" is written in a bold, black font. The music is written on 12 staves, each with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several annotations in the score: "B." is written above the third staff, "G." above the sixth staff, and "V." above the tenth staff. The paper appears aged and slightly stained.

pipes | drums



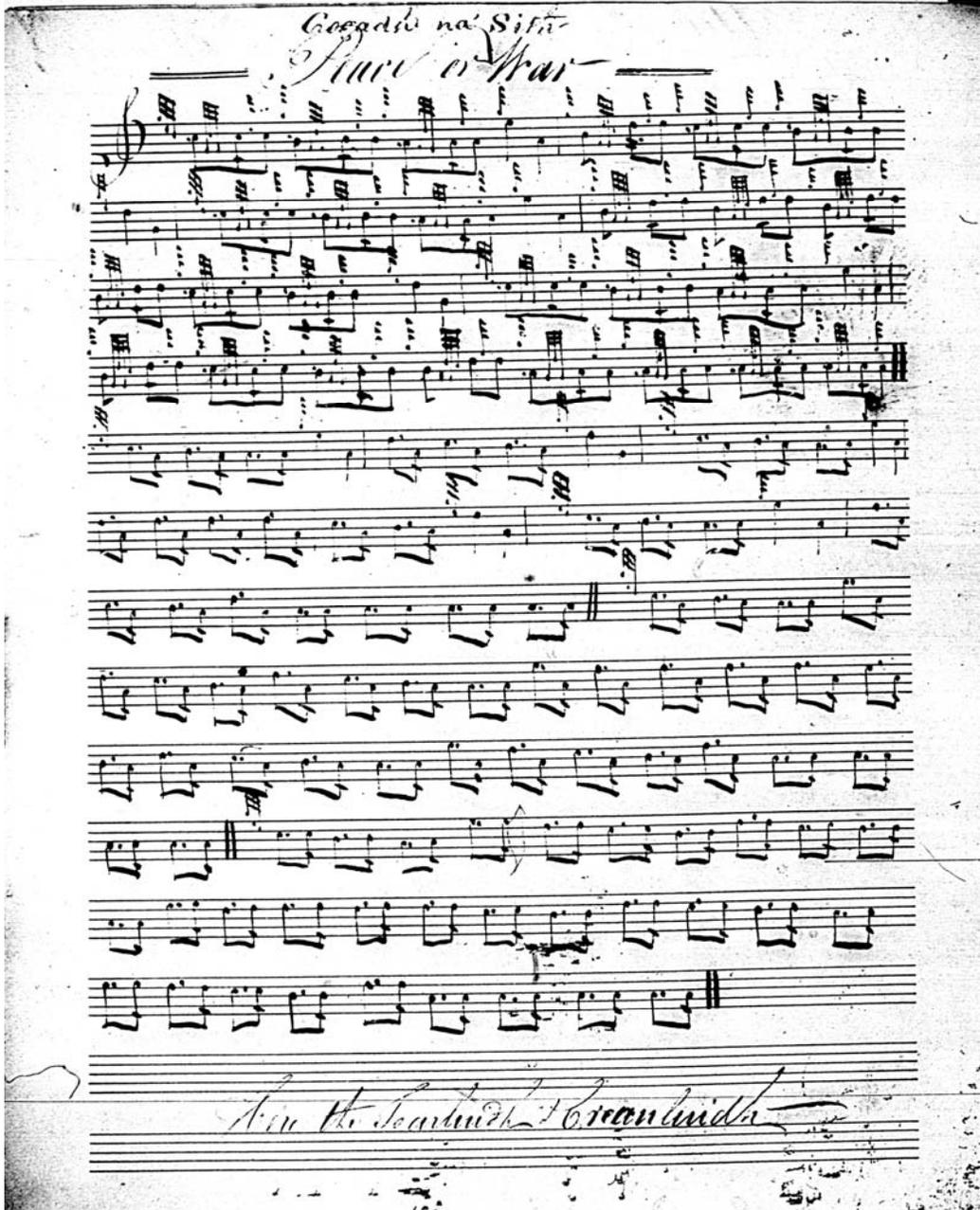


A page of handwritten musical notation for pipes and drums. The score consists of 12 staves of music, each containing complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes. In the top right corner, there is a common time signature 'C.' and the number '243'. The notation is dense and characteristic of traditional pipe and drum music.



MacDonald's score would not nowadays be considered "regular," being a bar short of the 4 6 4 2 pattern to which it might be expected to adhere, in the second line of the ground and in corresponding places throughout the variations. The doubling of the ground presents additional problems. The emendations to the score above are probably in the hand of General Thomason, who at one time owned the MS, although the version he eventually published in *Ceol Mor* came from Colin Cameron.

Peter Reid sets the tune like this:



Reid's setting also seems short in the second line in the ground and throughout the tune. Although he has no doubling of the urlar, the style seems generally similar to MacDonald's.

Niel MacLeod of Gesto sets the tune like this:

hadatri, hodatri, hodatri, hoin.
Double. I hiedatri, hadatri, hodatri, hodatri,
 hodatri, hodatri, hodatri, hodatri,
 hindatre, hodatri, hindatri, hodatri,
 hodatri, hodatri, hodatri, hiodatri,
 hiodatri, hodatri, hodatri, hiodatri,
 hodatri, hadatri, hodatri, hiodatri,
 hadatri, hadatri, hodatri, hodatri,
 hiodatri, hodatri, hodatri, hiodatri,
 hiodatri, hidatri, hadatri, hidatri,
 hiedatri, hadatri, hodatri, hodatri,
 hadatri, hiedatri, hodatri, hiedatri,
 hadatri, hodatri, hodatri, hodatri.

No. III.

COGHIEGH NHA SHIE—WAR OR PEACE.

The True Gathering of the Clans.

I hodroho, hodroho, haninin hiechin,
 hodroha, hodroho, hodroho hachin,
 hiodroho, hodroho, haninin hiechin,
 hodroha, hodroha, hodroha, hodroha,
 hodroha, hodroho, hodroho hachin,
 hiodroho, hodroho, haninin hiechin,
 hodroha, hodroho, hodroho, hodroha,
 haninun, haninun, haninun, haninun.

1st Var. I hodroho, hodroho, haninin hodroho,
 hodroha, hodroho, hodroho, hodroha,
 hodroho, hodroho, haninin hodroho
 hodroha, hodroha, hodroha, hodroha,
 hodroha, hodroho, hodroho hodroha,
 hodroho, hodroho, haninin hodroho,
 hodroha, hodroho, hodroho, hodroha,
 hainun, haninun, haninun, haninun.

2d Var. I hiodirit, hodorit, handirit, hiedin,
 hadirit, hodorit, hodorit, hachin
 hiodirit, hodorit, handerit, hiechin,
 hadirit, hadirit, hadirit, hadirit,
 hadirit, hodorit, hodorit, hachin,
 hodorit, hodorit, handirit, hiechin,
 hadirit, hodorit, hodorit, hadirit,
 hundirit, hundirit, hundirit, hundirit.

Double. I hodorit, hodorit, handirit, hodorit,
 hadirit, hodorit, hodorit, hadirit,
 hiodirit, hodorit, handirit, hiedirit,
 hadirit, hadirit, hadirit, hadirit,
 hadirit, hodorit, hodorit, hadirit,
 hodorit, hodorit, handirit, hiedirit,
 hadirit, hodorit, hodorit, hadirit,
 hundirit, hundirit, hundirit, hundirit.

3d Var. I hodatri, hodatri, handatri, hiedin,
 hadatri, hodatri, hodatri, hadin,
 hiodatri, hodatri, handatri, hiedin,
 hindatri, hadatri, hadatri, hadatri,
 hadatri, hodatri, hodatri, hachin,
 hodatri, hodatri, hindatri, hiechin,
 hadatri, hodatri, hodatri, hadatri,
 hundatri, hundatri, hundatri, hundatri.

Double. I hiodatri, hodatri, hiendatri, hodatri,
 hadatri, hodatri, hodatri, hadatri,
 hodatri, hodatri, hiendatri, hodatri,
 hadatri, hadatri, hadatri, hadatri,
 hadatri, hodatri, hodatri, hadatri,
 hodatri, hodatri, hiendatri, hiedatri,
 hadatri, hodatri, hodatri, hadatri,
 hundatri, hundatri, hundatri, hundatri.

4th Var. I hodatiri, hodatiri, hindatiri, hiedatiri,
 hadatiri, hodatiri, hodatiri, hadatiri,
 hodatiri, hodatiri, hindatiri, hiedatiri,
 hadatiri, hadatiri, hadatiri, hadatiri,
 hadatiri, hodatiri, hodatiri, hadatiri,
 hodatiri, hodatiri, hindatiri, hiedatiri,

hadatiri, hodatiri, hodatiri, hadatiri,
hundatiri, hundatiri, hundatiri, hundatiri.

Crunluath Mach or Finishing Measure.

Last Part. hiodratatateriri, hiodratatateriri, hiendatateriri, hiodratatateriri,
hadratatateriri, hadratatateriri, hiodratatateriri, hadratatateriri,
hiodratatateriri, hiodratatateriri, hiendatateriri, hiodratatateriri,
hadratatateriri, hadratatateriri, hadratatateriri, hadratatateriri,
hadratatateriri, hiodratatateriri, hiodratatateriri, hadratatateriri,
hiodratatateriri, hiodratatateriri, hiendatateriri, hiodratatateriri,
hadratatateriri, hiodratatateriri, hiodratatateriri, hadratatateriri,
hiundratatateriri, hiendatateriri, hiundratatateriri, hiundratatateriri.

No. IV.

MAC, VIC HOROMOID, *alias* M'LEOD GESTO'S
GATHERING.

Hierurine hoderiro, hierurine hiodrodin,
hien hine hiodin, hiurerin hoderiro,
hiurerin, hiodrodin, hien hine hiodin,
hiodiriro hiodrodin, hien hine hiodro,
hien hine hiodin, hiuririn hiodiriro,
hiuririn hiodrodin, hien hine hiodin.
1st Var. I hindan hindan, hiochin hiochin,
hindan hindan, hiochin hindan,
hindan hiochin, hiochin hiochin,
hiendan hiundan, hiendan hiochin,
hiochin hindan, hiundan hindan hiochin,
hindan hiochin, hiochin hiochin,
hindan hundan, hindan hiochin.
Double. I hindan hindan, to ho, ho ho,
hindan hindan, tio ho hindan.

hindan hindan, tio ho,
hindan to ho, ho ho,
hindan hundan, hindan to ho, ho ho,
hindan hundan, hindan to ho,
hindan to ho, ho ho,
hindan hundan, hindan to ho.

2d Var. I hiarerin hiarerin, horerin hiorerin,
hiarerin hiarerin, horerin hiorerin,
hiarerin hauninin, hiarerin horerin,
hiarerin horerin, hiorerin hiorerin,
hiarerin hauninin, hiarerin horerin,
horerin hiarerin, hauninin hiorerin,
hiarerin hiorerin, horerin hiorerin,
hiarerin hauninin, hiarerin hiorerin.
Double. I hiadirin hiadirin, hodroho hiodroho,
hiadirin hiadirin, hodroho hiadirin,
hiadirin hauninin, hiadirin hiodroho,
hiadirin hiodroho, hodroho hiodroho,
hiadirin hauninin, hiadirin hodroho,
hodroho hiadirin, hauninin hiodroho,
hiadirin hiodroho, hodroho hiodroho,
hiadirin hauninin, hiadirin hiodroho.
3d Var. I hiandatiri hiandatiri, hodatiri hiodatiri,
hiandatiri hiandatiri, hodatiri hiandatiri,
hiandatiri haundatiri, hiandatiri hodatiri,
hiandatiri hodatiri, hiodatiri hodatiri,
hiandatiri haundatiri, hiandatiri hodatiri,
hodatiri hiandatiri, haundatiri hiodatiri,
hiandatiri hiodatiri, hodatiri hiodatiri,
hiandatiri haundatiri, hiandatiri hiodatiri.
Double. I hiandatiri hiandatiri, hodrotiri hiodrotiri,
hiandatiri hiandatiri, hodrotiri hiandatiri,
hiandatiri haundatiri, hiandatiri hodrotiri,
hiandatiri hiodrotiri, hodrotiri hiodrotiri,
hiandatiri haundatiri, hiandatiri hodrotiri,
hodrotiri hiandatiri, haundatiri hiodrotiri,
hiandatiri hiodrotiri, hodrotiri hiodrotiri,
hiandatiri haundatiri, hiandatiri hiodrotiri.

Gesto would appear to be indicating a ground with doubling of ground, taorluath singling and doubling, and crunluath singling, doubling, trebling and a mach. Whatever difficulties of interpretation the score may present in detail (for discussion of which, see below) it seems consistent in broad outline with modern notions of "regularity," unlike those of MacDonald, Reid and MacKay.

Angus MacKay sets the tune as follows:

COGADH NA SITH. War or Peace.

L.

Bis

Doubling of Part 1

Variation 1.

Bis

Doubling of Variation 1.

Variation 2.

Bis

Doubling of Variation 2.

Variation 3.

Bis

The musical score consists of ten staves of music. The first staff is the beginning of Variation 3. The second staff is labeled 'Doubling of Variation 3.' and includes a 'Bis' instruction. The third staff continues the doubling and includes a '2nd' instruction. The fourth staff is labeled 'Trebbling of Variation 3.' and includes a 'Bis' instruction. The fifth staff continues the trebling and includes a '1st' instruction. The sixth staff is labeled 'Variation 4' and includes a 'Bis' instruction. The seventh staff continues Variation 4 and includes a '2nd' instruction. The eighth staff is labeled 'Doubling of Variation 4.' and includes a 'Bis' instruction. The ninth staff continues the doubling and includes a '1st' instruction. The tenth staff is labeled 'Trebbling of Variation 4.' and includes a 'Bis' instruction. The music is written in a single melodic line with a complex rhythmic pattern.

D. C. Thema.

Crun-luath.

2nd
Bis

Doubling of Crun-luath.

2nd
Bis

Trebling of Crun-luath.

2nd
Bis

Quatrebling of Crun-luath.

2nd
Bis

D. C. Thema.

There are structural problems also with MacKay's score. The doubling of the ground has what looks like a superfluous bar at the end of the first line (echoed in the later variations) and a bar missing in line three. The latter could perhaps be read thus, making corresponding adjustments to the tone row in the following variations:



The first variation is based on the tone row of the ground, but the second variation changes the tone row from C-B-A-E-D-C-B-D> to C-B-A-A-C-D-C-B> to reflect the pattern established in the doubling of the ground and this is picked up again in the trebling movements of the later variations thus lending variety and interest to a set of otherwise rather restricted musical motifs.

C. S. Thomason gives two settings in *Ceol Mor*, the first from Colin Cameron, thus:

N.B.—C Cameron plays first two bars only once, and makes the metre 4, 4, 4, 4.

WAR OR PEACE.
1, 11, 15 G

26

30, 40 (as D but without hammer) 50 (R) 60, 80, 120

70, 90, 100, 140 (following T)

It is interesting that one of piping's greatest 19th century families, the Camerons, should consider this a four line tune despite the testimony of MacDonald and MacKay.

Thomason's second setting cites Donald MacDonald and Gesto as the main sources (although it includes a MacKay-style leumluath), producing a composite score based on MacDonald, but guided by Gesto's more regular structure to produce a three-lined tune with a 4 6 4 2 pattern throughout:

132. LXXXIV. WAR OR PEACE. After D. MacDonald's MSS. and Gesto's Ceannarsachd, which practically agree.

1, 11, 16 G. 2 G.

3 D., and 4 D., 5 D* (R), both without pauses. 6 L., 8 T., 12 C.

7 L., 9 T., 10 T* (L*), 13 C., 14 C* (D).

This appears to have provided the basis for the Piobaireachd Society's current recension of the tune.

The setting in **John MacDougall Gillies's** manuscript is a partial one, showing the ground and doubling of the ground only. It is close in style to the second of General Thomason's settings and is not reproduced here.

David Glen's published setting broadly follows that of Angus MacKay, but he differs from MacKay in the doubling of the ground and following variations thus:

WAR OR PEACE.†

COGADH NO SITH.

59. Urlar.

Doubling of Urlar.

Var. 1st

Doubling of Var. 1st

Var. 2nd (Or Trebling of Var. 1st)

†The Gathering of the Clans. Written. Played.

*The Player may please himself as to the repeating of the parts of this Tune.



Doubling of Var. 2nd (Or Quadrupling of Var. 1st)



Var. 3rd (Leam-luath.)



Doubling of Var. 3rd



Trebling of Var. 3rd



Var. 4th (Taor-luath.)



Three staves of musical notation for the first variation, featuring a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and slurs.

Doubling of Var. 4th



Three staves of musical notation for the doubling variation, which is a faster version of the first variation.

Trebling of Var. 4th



Three staves of musical notation for the trebling variation, which is the fastest version of the first variation.

Repeat the Urlar.

Var. 5th (Crùn-luath.)



Two staves of musical notation for the second variation, featuring a different rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and slurs.



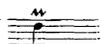
Doubling and Trebling of Var. 5th



For the Trebling repeat the Var. playing the lower note A. where the Notes are superposed.

(Crun-lùath-a-mach.)



Written.  Played. 

*The Higher Note is the Note of the Doubling.

*The Lower Note is the Note of the Trebling.

Glen's remark about repeats is a little puzzling in this context, and his tonally rather awkward recension of the doubling of the ground, while it achieves regularity, may not please every ear, especially when we consider that the intervals recur regularly in the later development of the tune.

G. F. Ross takes a still different route through the tune, taking his cue to some extent from Thomason's first setting. He re-casts it in three lines in 6 6 4 so-called "primary" metre, and—perhaps prompted by David Glen's suggestion about repeats – drops the concluding "flourish bars" altogether. It is an interesting approach although it does, perhaps, tend to rob the tune of tension, reducing it to a sequence of bland stepwise descending figures:

WAR OR PEACE. (Very old).

Bar Nos.	$\frac{1}{13}$	$\frac{2}{14}$	$\frac{3}{9}$	$\frac{4}{10}$	$\frac{5}{11}$	$\frac{6}{12}$ $\frac{15}{16}$
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(1) Ground

(2) Doubling

(3) Siubhal Singling (a) (4) Doubling (as printed below) (5) Trebling (b) (6) Quadrupling (c)

(a) For the beats marked * substitute the corresponding Ground beats, but to fit the time. (b) Substitute the Siubhal beat on low A for those beats marked *. (c) Play "open" following the notes of the Trebling i.e. CC, BB, AA, AA and so on.

7
A MacCrimmon composition.

Bar Nos.	$\frac{1}{7}$ 13	$\frac{2}{8}$ 14	$\frac{3}{9}$ 9	$\frac{4}{10}$ 10	$\frac{5}{11}$ 15	$\frac{6}{12}$ 18
(7) Leumludh (10) Taobhludh (18) Creanludh.						
(8) Leumludh Doubling (11) Taobhludh Doubling (14) Creanludh Doubling.						
(9) Leumludh Trebling (12) Taobhludh Trebling (15) Creanludh Trebling (16) Creanludh a mach.						

Commentary:

In his note to this tune in "Remarks by Captain MacLeod, as far as he has been informed by the late John MacCrimmon, Piper, Dunvegan, Isle of Skye" (*Celtic Magazine*, vol. 8, 1883, pp.434-5), Niel MacLeod says "*Coghiegh na Shie* (War or Peace).—Played by pipers of the different clans who held of the Lords of the Isles (before the forfeiture of John, last Lord of the Isles) during their independence of the Crown of Scotland, and also to bring the different clans to battle when the Scots were to cross the Border to England." (p.434)

James Logan says in his "Historical and Traditional Notes on the Piobaireachd":

The author of this piece seems to be unknown, but it is creditable to the composer. It is evidently ancient, from its simple, bold, and characteristic style, and is played all over the Highlands; in fact the title is appropriate to no particular clan, but applicable to all, indicating that indifference which a warlike, spirited, and resolute people, in the days of proud independence, would have, as to whether the disputes of their patriarchal chiefs would terminate amicably or end in bloodshed. Happily the arts of peace have superseded the art of war, and the Highlander appreciates the blessings of the *Sith* without being afraid of the *Cogadh*.

Is comadh leam s' comadh leam cogadh na sith ann.
Marbhair sa chogadh na crochair sa'n t-shith mi. (p.12)

In his "Historic, Biographic and Legendary Notes to the Tunes," attached to David Glen's *Ancient Piobaireachd*, "Fionn" says of War or Peace

This composition is also known by the title of "The Gathering of the Clans." Its style is simple and bold, which goes a long way to prove that it is more or less ancient. No doubt the Highlander appreciated the blessings of peace, without being afraid, however, of the arbitrament of war. There is some humour in the Gaelic distich: -

"S coma leam, 's coma leam cogadh na sith,
Marbhar 'sa chogadh, no crochar 'san t-sith mi."

It's all the same to me, war or peace,
I'm killed in the war or hung during peace.

This tune will be found in Patrick MacDonald's Collection of 1784.

(For a discussion of Patrick MacDonald's *Highland Vocal Airs* and bagpipe music, see my book *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950: Transmission, Change and the Concept of Tradition*, 2nd impression, Edinburgh 2008, chapter 3).

In the spring of 1904 there was an exchange of letters about the Gesto canntaireachd in the columns of the *Oban Times* which drew attention to the difficulties of interpreting the notation. With the advice of David Glen, "Fionn" (Highland historian and journalist Henry Whyte), Lt. Iain McLennan (father of G. S. McLennan), and William Sutherland of Airdrie (former piper to the Duke of Sutherland) Dr. Charles Bannatyne had devised a "key" to the system, and was about to publish the results in Glen's *Edinburgh Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music*. This prompted a vigorous attack by William Stewart of Ensay (who was to edit most of the *Piobaireachd Society Collection*, first series) writing under the pseudonym "Eileanach":

There is nothing in cainntaireachd to indicate time or the length of notes, and that makes it useless as a system of musical notation, and makes it impossible to read an unknown tune in it. Captain MacLeod called it a system of verbal instruction. The voice of the teacher as he sang or chanted the words gave the air, and the syllables of the words indicated the notes—more or less correctly. If the air is known it is perfectly easy to follow the words and recognise the notes and compare them with the ordinary notation, but if the air is lost there does not appear to be anything in the words by which it can be regained.

A word indicates a note or a group of notes, but the same word does not always represent the same notes. One word often indicates three or four entirely different groups of notes, and that fact of itself makes a key to the system an impossibility. For proof of this we can compare any well known piobaireachd with Macleod's version. "Cogadh na sith" begins "Hodroho, hodroho." This in ordinary notation is C C C, B B B. Again, the second line begins "Hodroho" but this time it is B D D. In the fourth line the third "hodroho" is A A A. Here, then, we have four different sets of notes, represented by the one word "hodroho." How could a key indicate which one of the four is the right one if the air is unknown? ("Canntaireachd," *Oban Times*, 09/04/1904, p.3).

Bannatyne replied indicating that he was basically identifying tunes by tracking the grounds through Thomason's *Ceol Mor*, but some may feel that Ensay had put his finger on a serious weakness of the system used by Niel MacLeod of Gesto.

* * *

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