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# ‘Tha Feum Air Cabhaig’ The Initiative of the Folklore Institute of Scotland

HUGH CHEAPE

‘There is a need for haste’ formed the editorial message in *An Gàidheal* in May 1947, more pithily expressive in Gaelic, calling for the urgent collection of the oral tradition of Gaelic Scotland. Shortly thereafter, The Folklore Institute of Scotland (FIOS) was formed with the stated object of recording song and story and the oral cultural heritage of the country.<sup>1</sup> Just over four years later, The School of Scottish Studies was established with the same broad aim, symbolising the outcome of a process of scholarly argument that had emerged in the 1930s in the context of ‘folkloristics’ espoused by European nation-states. This essay examines the emergence of FIOS to rediscover some of the arguments adduced for the founding of the School of Scottish Studies.<sup>2</sup>

‘Tha feum air cabhaig’ was the title and conclusion of a long editorial by the Rev. Thomas Murchison in *An Gàidheal*, the magazine of An Comunn Gàidhealach. He concluded with an oratorical flourish: ‘Tha cus de’n ùine air ruith cheana, agus tha gach latha ag cur ri ar call. Dèanamaid cabhaig anns a’ chùis.’<sup>3</sup> John Lorne Campbell was one of the names behind this initiative and, significantly in the light of his efforts, was elected President of FIOS at its meeting in Glasgow in September 1947. He had been campaigning for the support and salvaging of Scottish Gaelic and for the recognition of the extraordinary legacy of the language – its literature, its oral tradition and the many facets of the language itself. In developing his arguments, he drew on his personal experience of collecting stories and songs in Barra, Uist and Nova Scotia since 1933, and on the example of the Irish Folklore Commission. He and others placed this cause in a wider context by recalling the work of collectors of the oral tradition since the late eighteenth century, principally the initiative of his namesake, John Francis Campbell of Islay, who had collected nearly 800 stories between 1859 and 1870, and worked according to criteria which marked the emergence of a ‘scientific’ methodology (Campbell 1949: 9).

An able and energetic writer, John Lorne Campbell appealed for national recognition of the value of Scottish Gaelic in the face of rapid cultural attrition and official indifference. His particularist argument for a *vox populi* before an apparently hostile government had been honed with the Sea League, founded by him and Compton Mackenzie in Barra in 1933, which drew inspiration from the activities of the nineteenth-century Land League and from the fishery policies of Norway, Iceland and the Færoes.<sup>4</sup> The context of what seemed to Campbell a lonely campaign

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<sup>1</sup> The acronym FIOS – a Gaelic word (*fios*) meaning ‘knowledge’, ‘information’ or ‘understanding’ – provided a useful means of representing or symbolising the cause for which the name was adopted. While these initial letters did not supply an appropriate phrase or title in Gaelic, and because not all would recognise *fios*, the symbolic force of *fios* might be muted outside the Gaelic world. *Comunn Beul-Aithris na h-Albann* was adopted as the title in Gaelic, but offered no comparable acronym. The letters FIOS in attenuated form were designed into a circlet of interlace to form a badge or logo placed centrally on the letterhead under the organisation’s names.

<sup>2</sup> This essay is offered to Dr John MacInnes as reprise of past conversations about the contribution of Dr John Lorne Campbell – Fear Chanaigh – to the establishment of the School of Scottish Studies. It is based principally on the papers of FIOS, catalogued under CH2/2/2 Folklore Correspondence in Canna House under the care of the National Trust for Scotland and represents work in progress.

<sup>3</sup> *An Gàidheal* XLII/8 (An Ceitein 1947): 93–94. ‘Too much time has passed already, and every day adds to our loss. Let us make haste in the matter.’

<sup>4</sup> An extensive archive for the Sea League is held with the Campbell Collections in Canna House under the stewardship of the National Trust for Scotland.

was one of the confused politics and coalition governments of the inter-war years, a drift towards centralisation and standardisation, and massive economic insecurity. This was a perplexed age for the economically marginalized Highlands and Islands, under the pressure of far-reaching economic changes, suffering what can now be defined as the trauma of generations of emigration from the region, and witnessing a dramatic fall in the numbers of speakers of the language. The forty-year-old John Lorne Campbell, working outside university circles and by then ensconced in the Island of Canna (see Perman 2010), began to formulate the intellectual and ideological concerns behind economic disadvantage and language loss, and developed a rhetoric that suffuses the surviving documentation of FIOS.

Cultural attrition, as perceived, was being transformed into a political cause, as had also happened in Ireland. A slowly-growing Home Rule movement in Scotland provided a platform from which the likes of Christopher Murray Grieve, among others, urged the salvaging of a distinctive Scottish culture.<sup>5</sup> Although the cause concerned the spoken word, however, no demagogue emerged to punch home the message on public platforms on behalf of the Gaelic language. The message of FIOS was a powerful one, but it seems that, in the political atmosphere of the time and immediate post-war years, the protagonists were largely both receivers and deliverers of a message which failed to become a popular cause. The rhetoric employed the idiom of the twentieth century, using words such as ‘struggle’ and ‘survival’, but arguably the liberal humanist edge of such language was blunted in a war-weary Europe in 1947. Intellectual cut-and-thrust were eloquently and fluently delivered – but on paper, as the archives of FIOS and the pages of *An Gaidheal* and contemporary newspapers illustrate. If this was the wordplay of scholars and gentlemen, Campbell was a natural leader. Quietly spoken but of austere and rigorous views, Campbell’s favoured medium was the written word, and the opening shots of a new campaign for Scottish Gaelic were fired in print.

A well-crafted review of the ‘Journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society’, *Béaloides* Volume 15, was printed in *An Gaidheal* in April 1947. The author, ‘A M’ (probably Angus Matheson), celebrated the achievements of the Irish Folklore Commission, and deftly described the *seanchas* or ‘reminiscences of the old people’. He drew attention to the selection of Scottish stories published in the volume, and briskly countered criticism of the Commission collecting in Scotland, with Calum Maclean having been sent from Dublin in 1945 and 1946 (Maclean 1975: vii–x). He pointed up the contemporary absence of financial backing or any support whatsoever in Scotland for the collecting of oral tradition, and concluded on notes of irony and elegy: ‘It is not the fact that Calum Maclean has recorded these old songs and tales for all time that will make them vanish from the Isles, but the passing on of the old people in whose retentive minds they were stored and the like of whom will not be seen again.’

A long letter from John Lorne Campbell under the heading ‘Folklore’ appeared in the next issue of *An Gaidheal* (May 1947), in a regular column headed ‘Eadar Sinn Fhèin’. Campbell wrote to ‘express agreement’ with A M’s remarks, and went on to provide a concise summary of the contemporary situation which identified shortcomings in resources and attitude, critiqued university expenditure on the natural sciences as opposed to the human sciences in the Highlands and Islands, defended the activities of the Irish Folklore Commission, and laid out a well-reasoned programme of action for the immediate future. He pointed not only to the lack of finance but also to the absence of training for the work of collecting oral tradition – preparation that he rightly regarded as the professional pre-requisite based on his own experience in Barra and Cape Breton in 1937. He referred in detail to the support of the Irish Folklore Commission, whose methods he had indeed

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<sup>5</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid as Mr C. M. Grieve was noted as having attended the founding meeting of FIOS in Glasgow on behalf of the ‘Dunedin Society’, CH2/2/2/5.

adopted in his own collecting and editorial work.<sup>6</sup> He concluded – to counter, as he put it, a popular assumption that this was about ‘superstition’ – by defining ‘Folklore’ as ‘the whole oral tradition of the Gaelic people – local history, songs, stories, music, place-names. This tradition goes back in Gaeldom to the times of Fionn MacCumhail and the Fiann, 1500 years at least, probably the oldest living tradition in Europe today.’

In conversation with the writer of this essay, Campbell frequently alluded to a verbal exchange with ‘the Lecturer in Celtic at a certain Scottish University’, in which he had suggested to that member of staff that the university might buy an Ediphone recorder which could be used by ‘his best Gaelic students’ to record songs and stories at home on vacation in the Islands. ‘His reply,’ he said, ‘was that, if he went before the authorities with such a suggestion, he would only be laughed at.’ This brief conversation had a profound influence on John Lorne Campbell. It became clear in the re-telling that the Lecturer in Celtic was James Carmichael Watson, the University was Edinburgh and one of the students in question was from Harris.

There is copious sub-text to the recounting of the exchange which self-evidently was Campbell’s own response, not as spontaneous personal riposte to Carmichael Watson (since the conversation had then gone no further) but as reasoned counter-argument developed to persuade officialdom to support FIOS’ cause. These were some of the points which suffuse FIOS’ communications: beyond the lack of official interest or will was the need to develop a professional and properly funded approach to the work of recording in the face of the relative poverty of output from hobby-collectors and amateurs in the field. A professional approach, as exemplified by the Irish Folklore Commission, would be predicated on the changing technology of mechanical recording, then offering opportunities hitherto unavailable. Another point, which Campbell derived from the teaching he had received at Oxford from Professor John Fraser, was an appreciation of the importance of colloquial Gaelic to an understanding of the language and its literature, with views on the superiority of idiom and even of vocabulary of Outer Isles’ Gaelic to book-learnt Gaelic, the lack of recognition of this dichotomy in the academic study and teaching of the language, the failure of scholars with too few exceptions to leave their closets and consult the people, and, perhaps on a more personal level, to remind future scholars that if James Carmichael Watson had had recourse to oral tradition in Harris, he might have been able to improve on his published collection of the *bàrdachd* of Mary MacLeod.<sup>7</sup> It was a matter of personal frustration for Campbell that there was so little interest in Scotland in the production of oral recording; he would say that it was very hard to rouse anyone to take an interest in the subject, and that scholars and the universities were ‘blatantly uninterested and reprehensibly negligent’.<sup>8</sup> This seemed to have become a personal campaign, to an extent that he wrote in 1951:

... for a time I considered my researches in the field were finished for good. However with the encouragement of Professor Delargy of the Irish Folklore Commission, who very kindly sent Mr Seumas Ennis of the Commission at their

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<sup>6</sup> Campbell had also adopted their editorial principles: ‘In writing down these stories, whether from the speaker’s own dictation .... or from Ediphone records, I have deliberately reproduced the dialects of the speakers. This is in accordance with the method used by contemporary Irish collectors of oral Gaelic literature, for example by most of the contributors to *Béaloides* (the Journal of the Irish Folklore Society). In my opinion, any attempt to force oral Gaelic literature into the artificial mould of the standardised literary spelling and grammatical forms is a mistake, as it not only actually produces a false impression of the real language of the stories, but also obscures many interesting grammatical points’ (Campbell 1939: 6); see also Campbell 1938.

<sup>7</sup> *An Gàidheal* XLII/8 (An Ceitein 1947): 103–105; see MacInnes 1966: 3–25 for the neglect of music and current traditions in the editing of the record of Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh.

<sup>8</sup> Personal letter from John Lorne Campbell, 10 November 1994. This is also explored in Cheape 2013: 97–98.

expense to transcribe the tunes on my old Ediphone folksong records in the winter of 1946–1947, I took up the work again.<sup>9</sup>

If John Lorne Campbell spoke to an anglophone world – the world of the status quo and of authority – the editor of *An Gaidheal*, the Rev. Thomas Murchison, sent a compelling message to the Gaelic world in his editorial in the same May 1947 number of the magazine. Other writers in Gaelic, notably Iain M. MacLeòid, a retired headmaster from Beauly, sustained a written campaign which probably drew strength from the contemporary upsurge of support for Home Rule. MacLeòid’s article ‘Dimeas na Gàidhlighe’ pointed to the reluctance of Gaels to use their mother-tongue in the face of a numerically and socially dominant English – ‘Beurla chruaidh Shasainn’ – and appealed *inter alia* for Gaelic-medium education on an equal footing with English (MacLeòid 1947: 86–7). Thomas Murchison had previously devoted his interest and time to the politics of the crofting cause, and he brought the skills of political argument to the cause of language. By 1939, he had begun active committee work with An Comunn Gàidhealach, taking on the editorship of *An Gaidheal* for twelve years between 1946 and 1958 (MacCalmain 2011: 207–12). Aware of a wider intellectual context, he reminded Gaels of the change in attitude in most of Europe towards the legacy of literature, languages and oral tradition, and of how this change had originated in Sweden and Ireland. His 1947 editorial commended Swedish scholarship, naming Dr Nils Holmer and Professor Carl Hjalmar Borgstrøm for their work in Argyll and Barra respectively.



John Lorne Campbell (*l.*) and the Rev. Thomas Murchison (*r.*) with South Uist seanchaidh and storyteller Duncan MacDonal  
(*photo: Margaret Fay Shaw*)

Murchison wrote movingly of the recent deaths of three tradition-bearers in the Outer Isles, Seonaidh Caimbeul of South Uist and, in Eriskay, of Dugald MacMillan and Gillespie MacIsaac, regretting that more had not been put on paper or on record of what they and others had to tell – ‘gach fear dhiubh ag giùlan leis gu sàmhchair na h-uaigne ionmhas priseil de litreachas-aithris.’<sup>10</sup> Mention had already been made in *An Gaidheal* of the collecting work of Calum Maclean and the Irish Folklore Commission, and a letter from the Commission’s Archivist, Seán Ó Súilleabháin, to a third party in Newcastle, was included almost verbatim in the text of Murchison’s editorial. Ó Súilleabháin’s letter – which can be read either as a wake-up call or as moral blackmail – stated the Commission’s preference that the people of Scotland would undertake this recording work but, since this was not being done, the Commission had initiated it: ‘*B’fhearr linn go mór gurab iad muinntir na hAlban iad féin do thógfadh an obair seo idir lámhaibh, ach ní dócha go bhfuil seans air sin i láthair na huairé*’.<sup>11</sup> The Commission further offered to provide technical and practical help, including the supplying of copies of recordings on microfilm.<sup>12</sup> The Commission’s pan-

<sup>9</sup> CH2/8/12 Report to Leverhulme Trustees, 2; John Lorne Campbell also reported that he had suffered a breakdown in health in 1945–1946.

<sup>10</sup> ‘... each one of them carrying to the silence of the grave a precious treasure of oral literature’; but see MacAonghuis 1936.

<sup>11</sup> ‘We would greatly prefer that the people of Scotland would themselves take this work in hand, but it is not likely that there is a chance of that at the present time.’

<sup>12</sup> It was the practice of the Irish Folklore Commission that all Ediphone wax-cylinder recordings be transcribed and the pages bound into volumes, leaving the wax cylinders available for re-use. The Main Manuscripts or core collection of the Irish Folklore Commission amounts to 1,735 volumes of orally-collected material (Almqvist 1979: 5).

Gaelic vision encompassed the Gaelic of Scotland as well as that of Ireland, and set out a plan to save the folklore of both countries. Murchison then underlined Ó Súilleabháin’s message by rehearsing it in Scottish Gaelic, and closed with an appeal for a ‘Comunn Beul-oideas na h-Albann’ to be created, and for An Comunn Gàidhealach, the Gaelic Society of Inverness and other societies and groups to join in the enterprise (Murchison 1947: 93–94).

On 14 June 1947, Thomas Murchison convened a meeting in Glasgow of ‘persons interested in Gaelic folklore’ to discuss the urgent need for systematic collecting work. The business for the meeting was prefigured in the pages of *An Gàidheal*, the imperative had been delivered by Thomas Murchison and others, and John Lorne Campbell’s ‘Folklore’ letter supplied the agenda. The meeting agreed unanimously to form a committee under the convenorship of Thomas Murchison to set about establishing a ‘Scottish Gaelic Folklore Society’ for the collection, preservation and publication of oral lore, with the ultimate and more wide-reaching (and presumably appealing and popularising) aim of establishing a ‘Scottish Folklore Institute’. A further meeting was agreed, and the Convenor and Secretary invited representatives from the Scottish Anthropological and Folklore Society and the Saltire Society to a meeting in Glasgow on 9 July 1947.<sup>13</sup> The discussion was widened to encompass the formation of one organisation for ‘the whole field of Scottish folk culture’, and those attending agreed to enlarge the Committee by co-opting interested persons and representatives of cultural organisations.

An enlarged Committee met in the Saltire Club in Wellington Street, Glasgow, on Saturday morning, 20 September 1947. Thirty-one people attended, a notable list of names representing the cultural organisations of the day; in addition, letters of support were received from other individuals and organisations. A special guest at the meeting was Professor Seumas Ó Duilearga, Director of the Irish Folklore Commission and recently appointed to the Chair of Irish Folklore in University College Dublin. Added to Seán Ó Súilleabháin’s letter, Ó Duilearga’s attendance in Glasgow and the Commission’s work to date in Raasay, Eigg, Canna, South Uist and Benbecula lent a significant note to the proceedings. A draft Constitution was tabled along with a resolution from the Scottish Anthropological and Folklore Society ‘that a Committee be appointed to form the nucleus of a Scottish Institute of Folk-Culture, with a view to co-ordinating the activities of all interested and authoritative bodies’.<sup>14</sup> The ensuing debate, *more Scotico*, revealed divisions and the difficulty of forming a national group devoted to the cause of Gaelic. The meeting finally resolved ‘that those present do now constitute themselves the Folklore Institute of Scotland’, and it was minuted additionally that ‘the initials of this title form the Gaelic word “FIOS”, meaning “knowledge”. It was also agreed that in the Gaelic name of the Institute the older form of the genitive case of “Alba” be used, namely, “Albann”’.<sup>15</sup> A draft constitution was approved, and office-bearers were appointed with twenty-four nominations for a proposed Council of seven. Possibly only ten of these were Gaelic speakers, and it was agreed to hold a postal ballot. As it happened, the seven elected were all from among the Gaelic nominees.

The onward progress of FIOS then evidently proceeded according to the individual effort and input of John Lorne Campbell and Thomas Murchison, who effectively shared all the secretarial

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<sup>13</sup> See [www.therai.org.uk/archives-and-manuscripts](http://www.therai.org.uk/archives-and-manuscripts) and papers in Edinburgh University Library Special Collections for the Scottish Anthropological and Folklore Society, founded in 1934 and wound up in the early 1960s.

<sup>14</sup> The resolution, tabled by Cyril Aldred of the Royal Scottish Museum, appealed for all interested bodies to combine forces for folklore collection and the establishment of folk museums. Mr C. M. Grieve opposed the resolution with the view that learned but moribund societies were merely ‘trying to horn in on the work of others after they had proved themselves utterly incapable of doing the work themselves’. Alexander Nicolson returned to the founding imperative of the initiative: ‘the Gaelic aspect of the matter was being obscured, and he urged that we should get to work in the Gaelic field without further delay and that steps be taken to ensure that the Gaelic interest should not be further obscured in constituting the Institute.’

<sup>15</sup> Folklore Institute of Scotland. Minutes of Meeting held on 20 September 1947, CH2/2/2.

work between them, thereby producing the detailed record that has survived. The development of the Institute had apparently been handicapped by the failure of the Honorary Secretary to attend to the administration and he had had to be asked to resign. References to this issue in FIOS documents suggest that the zeal and practical application needed to carry forward the cause was not more widely shared. Thomas Murchison acted as Interim Secretary until April 1948, when Ian M. Campbell, Lecturer in Comparative Philology in Glasgow University, was appointed. Campbell, who had studied Old and Middle Irish with Professor John Fraser at Oxford and was a great-great-grandson of ‘Cruachan Beann’ author Patrick MacIntyre, met with the approval of the Council.<sup>16</sup> In due course, Derick Thomson became Secretary of FIOS.

The finances of FIOS never prospered as its instigators had hoped. After five years, the balance sheet stood at under £300. Membership had barely topped fifty, and brought in under £70 per annum, although income had been boosted at the start by a small number of life memberships which rose to ten. Subscriptions included some from overseas as well as grants from organisations such as An Comunn Gàidhealach, the Gaelic League of Scotland, and the Saltire Society.<sup>17</sup> The cryptic comment recorded in July 1949 encapsulated the problem of FIOS: ‘These funds are now almost exhausted.’ The lack of funds struck at the heart of the initiative, since professional fieldworkers could not be paid or recording machinery purchased. No money was available even to pay for a brochure to advertise the aims and methods of FIOS. The fortunes of FIOS were entirely wrapped up in the efforts of a few individuals, their families and friends, some of whom were probably less motivated personally to take action to support FIOS as a political cause in the face of what were described as ‘difficulties and discouragements’.

On the other hand, positive progress was reported in terms of fieldwork, which John Lorne Campbell put in the context of his own work since 1937 and of a group of ten individuals consisting of his wife, Margaret Fay Shaw, and a number of his friends in Barra and South Uist, including members of the ‘Barra Folklore Committee’.<sup>18</sup> International relations were healthy thanks to Campbell’s personally-sustained links with France, the USA, Canada and Ireland, with Seumas Ó Duilearga’s offer to FIOS of all the material from their full-time collector in the Hebrides for publication in any journal founded by the Institute. The Constitution of FIOS had declared that ‘The Institute shall as soon as possible establish a periodical (Scottish Folklore Journal), which shall be published once a year and preferably twice a year, in which shall be published some of the material collected and also matters of more general interest which may further the objects of the Institute’. The printing of a ‘Folk-Song Journal’ was reported as imminent in July 1949, and was to have been dedicated to a collection of waulking songs from Barra and Cape Breton, to be followed by ‘Folklore of a Uist Township’ by Margaret Fay Shaw. Although FIOS never produced a journal under its own imprint, John Lorne Campbell’s efforts and input from others such as Annie Johnson in Barra led to the production, for FIOS, of a set of five 12-inch discs of songs recorded in Barra in 1938, together with a booklet, by the Linguaphone Institute in London. Campbell’s comment on these was:

Such songs are amongst the greatest of our traditional songs, but owing to their length and the intricacy of their airs they are never heard nowadays on concert platforms or on the radio. They are representative of the ancient pentatonic modal folk-music of the Hebrides that is one of the most interesting survivals of our times.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *An Gaidheal* Leabhar XLIII Earrann 7 (An Giblein 1948), 86.

<sup>17</sup> CH2/2/2 Folklore 1952-1953.

<sup>18</sup> The FIOS Bulletin No. 1 lists the fieldworkers as: The President [John Lorne Campbell], Margaret Fay Shaw, Annie Johnston, Barra, John MacPherson, Barra, J. MacCormick, Eriskay, Rev. A. MacKellaig, Bornish, John MacLean, Mallaig School, Rev. D. MacKellaig, Roy Bridge, Donald Sinclair, Barra, and Calum Johnston, Edinburgh.

<sup>19</sup> CH2/2/2/5 Folklore Institute of Scotland, Bulletin No. 1 (July 1949): 4.

A robust résumé of ‘Gaelic Folk-Songs’ by John Lorne Campbell appeared in *The Scotsman* on 17 September 1949. He opened in stringent style on the subject of a ‘controversy that raged in the correspondence columns of *The Scotsman* a year ago’ concerning the treatment of Gaelic folk-songs by Marjorie Kennedy Fraser, and concluded trenchantly that ‘the arrangements she published have no scientific value and the notion that she has exhausted the subject has done great harm’. He listed the work of other collectors – Frances Tolmie, Lucy Broadwood, Amy Murray, Margaret Fay Shaw, Calum Maclean, the Linguistic Survey of Scotland, and ‘the writer and other collaborators working under the aegis of the Folklore Institute of Scotland’ – and compared their results to the work of collectors in England, Ireland and Hungary, such as Bartók, Kodály, and the Irish Folklore Commission. He urged that international interest and technical advances with ‘portable mechanical means of recording on tape, wire or discs’ made the ‘endowment of a body in Scotland similar to the Irish Folklore Commission’ an imperative, and called for the co-operation of the universities, the BBC and the Scottish Education Department. He concluded in rhetorical style but in a mood of seeming desperation:

The expense of the work puts it beyond the means of amateurs and unendowed bodies. Its dignity and intrinsic merit and significance for the cultural life of Scotland demand that it be recognised as an important object of research and adequately carried out. For folk-music is the basis of all national music, and how can Scottish music flourish at the top, if its roots are neglected? (Campbell 1949: 9)

The constantly reiterated appeal by FIOS for a properly funded organisation supported by the universities was also prefigured in its Constitution, with the undertaking to appoint necessary staff such as Director of Research, Librarian or Archivist, Editor, and one or more ‘Field Secretaries’ or Collectors, ideally as full-time salaried appointments. None of this was achieved, and in August 1951 the situation was spelt out starkly and in a tone of frustration in the bulletin of FIOS. The author – probably Thomas Murchison – declared:

Until the Institute receives a wider measure of public recognition and support, the burden of its work – administrative as well as field work – will continue to fall upon a small number, and if they grow weary in this particular enterprise the whole thing may just fade out. This explanation of the situation should help to meet the criticism sometimes made (by people who have not raised a finger to help) that the Institute has so little to show for its five years of existence.

The same bulletin countered the criticism that FIOS was only interested in the Gaelic areas of the country by declaring that all Scotland was its field of operation, but that the situation of Gaelic was more precarious. It further claimed, tendentiously, that ‘Gaelic folklore is by far the most considerable, the most coherent, and the most ancient body of folklore in Scotland’.<sup>20</sup>

By this time, however, the pessimistic report and counter-claims published by FIOS had been overtaken by events. Edinburgh University’s Dialect and Folklore Survey, set up in 1949, was recast in 1950 as the ‘Linguistic Survey of Scotland’; and the following year saw the establishment of the School of Scottish Studies.<sup>21</sup> John Lorne Campbell endowed the nascent School with copies

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<sup>20</sup> CH2/2/2/5 Folklore Institute of Scotland, Bulletin No. 2 (August 1951), 4.

<sup>21</sup> Edinburgh University Library. Papers of Professor David Abercrombie. GEN 1045 Papers, Minutes *etc.* relating to the Linguistic Survey of Scotland; see, *inter alia*, ‘Report on a Sampling Survey of Scottish Dialects’ (August–September 1949) by J. C. Catford, page 13: ‘However, if one is pressed for time, as I was in the South West, one should be aware of the clerical tendency to prolong interviews with anecdotes and sometimes inaccurate information about the local dialect.’



of many of his recordings, and composed a ten-page ‘Report to the School of Scottish Studies’ on the methodology and output of FIOS.<sup>22</sup>

At the Annual General Meeting of FIOS in Glasgow in December 1952, John Lorne Campbell presented his president’s report, reiterating the need for financial support of the ongoing recording and collecting work, and his conviction that FIOS should be headed by a professional scholar and associated with the Celtic Department of one of the universities. His call for the cataloguing of existing collections such as the Carmichael and Henderson Papers, by then in Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities respectively, indicated that his own interests were moving on. The report included what is clearly a valedictory note:

I believe the struggle to preserve our folklore and popularise it in its authentic form is well worth while. In these five years I have not been unconscious of opposition – partly from those interests which would like our tradition to disappear entirely, partly from others who only want them to survive in a sentimentalised form; but I think this could, and should, be overcome ...<sup>23</sup>

John Lorne Campbell declined to stand for re-election as president, and Angus Matheson of Glasgow University’s Department of Celtic took up the honour. The Council of FIOS passed a resolution effectively putting the organisation on hold, and the existing administration and scholarly assets of FIOS were lodged in the Glasgow University Celtic Department.

The development to national status of the School of Scottish Studies has tended to overshadow the work of its precursor, FIOS. It is debatable how much the former owes to the latter for its coming into being, and how much weight should be given to the apparently crucial intervention in Scotland of the Irish Folklore Commission.<sup>24</sup> Prejudice against the Irish Folklore Commission’s role in recording in Scotland is detectable in a reported comment: ‘Fàgaibh sin againne; nì sinn fhèin e’.<sup>25</sup> The papers of FIOS, however, are unequivocal in their appreciation of the Commission’s support, referring frequently to the Commission and its methodology, to Seumas Ó Duilearga’s advocacy, and to the work of the Commission through the agency of Calum Maclean. The reception by Ó Duilearga of *Òrain Ghàidhlig le Seonaidh Caimbeul* (1936) and *Sia Sgeulachdan* (1939) was, according to John Lorne Campbell, crucial in the Commission’s decision to send Maclean to conduct fieldwork in Scotland.<sup>26</sup>

Campbell’s own summation of FIOS was that it was intended as a ‘ginger-group’ to pressurise academics and politicians. FIOS’s formulation of a cause and ideology, supported by Ó Duilearga’s activities and utterances, might well have contributed to this outcome, but at the cost of FIOS’s continuing existence and a measure of disappointment for those who formed it and worked for it. Given John Lorne Campbell’s personal input into FIOS, the expression of disappointment might be

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<sup>22</sup> CH2/2/2 Folklore Correspondence 1951–1952; this document is couched in terms that might be seen as offering a ‘founding charter’ for the School.

<sup>23</sup> CH2/2/2/5 President’s Address at the AGM of FIOS, December 1952.

<sup>24</sup> See Briody 2007, for a view of the central role of Seumas Ó Duilearga in the founding of the School of Scottish Studies.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Leave that to us; we’ll do it!’ *An Gaidheal* XLII/10 (An t-Iuchar 1947): 126, an intriguing and strongly partisan letter headed ‘Eadar Sinn Fhèin / Beul-aithris’ and signed ‘Calum MacGilleathain’. The strongest advocacy of the Irish Folklore Commission together with the Gaelic Society of Inverness, and a side-swipe at John Lorne Campbell as ‘*tarcuiseach*’ (i.e. showing contempt), suggests that the writer of the letter was not Calum I. Maclean of Raasay but may have been the Rev. Malcolm Maclean of Scarp. I am grateful to Dr John MacInnes for this suggestion.

<sup>26</sup> CH2/2/2 Folklore Correspondence. Letter (part only) from Ó Duilearga to J. L. Campbell, 1936 (?), urging Campbell to come to Ireland to join him and Professor Carl von Sydow and to initiate a process of co-operation: ‘I am convinced that active co-operation can only be accomplished through personal contact. I don’t believe in letter-writing.’ See also Briody 2007 and Bringéus 2009.

taken as largely his own pique and a reflection of an ambivalence about his own status as an ‘independent scholar’. Though there might have been no official disavowal of FIOS, the organization seems to have been ignored. In retrospect this seems disingenuous; a closer study of the friendship between one of the principal architects of the ‘Linguistic Survey of Scotland’, Professor Angus McIntosh, and John Lorne Campbell, whom he had met in Barra in the 1930s, will probably reveal more about the dynamics of the development of the School and of the views of those who had created FIOS.

Once Edinburgh University had taken up the challenge of fieldwork recording, it seemed to disassociate itself from FIOS and its efforts. Professor McIntosh, writing in *The Scotsman* about the work of the Linguistic Survey in October 1951, presented the new initiative as very much their own, and did so in positive and optimistic terms:

An academic interest in the great wealth of dialect and other folk material still available for collection and study has been slow to develop. Scholarship has till recently been more preoccupied with the evidence provided by books and manuscripts than with that which can be obtained by exploring the knowledge of everyday people. .... But the tide has turned and there is now a growing awareness of what can be learnt from material so acquired and it is a precious heritage, fast disappearing, with a very great significance both in a general cultural way and from a narrow academic standpoint (McIntosh 1951).

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