

Before such research, it was widely thought that the uilleann pipes had evolved from the *píob mór*, an early Irish form of mouth-blown bagpipe that closely resembled the current Scottish highland pipes. Just how the uilleann pipes had supposedly evolved from the very different *píob mór* was unknown. Discoveries regarding the pastoral pipes have largely supplanted this hypothesis.

The demise of the *píob mór* and the ascendance of the uilleann pipes were, however, closely related, according to L. E. McCullough:

At some unverifiable point in the late 17th or early 18th century, the mouth-blown bagpipe of Ireland (*píob mór*) began to be supplanted in the country's musical life by a new type of bagpipe operated by a bellows (*píob uilleann*). Some commentators have explained the demise of the *píob mór* as resulting from a Penal Law proscription that classified it as a military instrument of war. The bellows-blown bagpipe, it is said, was quieter and could be played indoors where it would not be heard as easily by hostile authorities. Also, it had to be played sitting down and could not very well be used as a marching instrument. However, the *píob mór* was used at non-military occasions, such as weddings, wakes, dances, and sporting events, and continued to appear sporadically in public performances during the first few decades of the 1700s. Thus its progressive disappearance during the 18th century was more likely due to the fact that a more versatile bagpipe with a Western European tonality and scale system had to be developed to cope with the demands of the newly-emerging idiom of dance music being created and performed by Irish musicians on fiddles and flutes.<sup>xvii</sup>

The *píob mór*, like the pastoral bagpipe, had no capacity for momentary interruptions of the flow of air. Thus, their melodies were constant, unbroken streams of sound. Any articulations, by necessity, were created *solely* by movements of the fingers.



*Figure 1-19. A piper playing the píob mór at the Glens Feis, probably at Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, ca. 1904 – 1906. The costume was designed by F. J. Biggar (died 1927), a member of the Gaelic League, as his interpretation of traditional Irish dress. The kilt may have been saffron colored.*

The implications of this can be understood most clearly when imagining the player of such a bagpipe playing two consecutive melody notes of the same pitch. Since the flow of air cannot be interrupted, you can see that the second note can only be produced by *articulating* it with a fingering technique. The varied use of such fingered articulations became an integral and sophisticated element of Irish bagpipe music.