A French Furniture Maker and the 'Courtly Style' in Sixteenth-Century Scotland

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New evidence of the lives of Edinburgh woodworking craftsmen emerges from the minutes of the Edinburgh Incorporation of Masons and Wrights, which have recently come to light in the Edinburgh City Archives and cover the period 1553–1583.[1] The minutes explain how the craft admitted new members and how their careers progressed. The craft was led by an elected Deacon with the Kirk Master, the Box Master and a quorum of the other masters. The craft supervised apprenticeships and the process of becoming a full master, exacting dues at each stage, and discouraged craftsmen without master status from working and trading on their own. Wrights — woodworkers who had served apprenticeships — could become free masters of their craft, with the right to employ 'servant' craftsmen, make contracts, and vote in the election of the officers of the Incorporation.

The minute books of the 1550s describe two cases of how aspiring wrights made an 'assay' or 'essay', a kind of master piece of a piece of furniture. The assay was judged by four masters, as had been the customary since 1475 when the founding charter stated the 'sufficiency' of candidates should be tested by four expert wrights.[2] This practice evolved into the 'assay' scheme, described in parliamentary legislation of June 1555 when all Scottish crafts were brought under burgh council control by legal reforms.[3] Incorporations existed in other Scottish towns but assay practices may have varied. Equivalent minutes from Aberdeen for this period do not survive, though essays are known from the eighteenth century.[4] In Perth the wright craft (which also catered for bowyers, coopers, barbers and surgeons) did not require an assay. Entrants were required to pay for a football match and a banquet, as was the practice of other the crafts in the town, but the sixteenth-century minutes do not describe any test of skill.[5]

Trade incorporations were also religious fraternities. The minutes discussed here were written by a chaplain called Robert Ewyn. The Edinburgh wrights and masons owned and maintained the altar of St John in the Collegiate Church of St Giles. In Perth the wrights maintained the altar of Our Lady of Pity in the parish church of St John and took part in a Corpus Christi procession. The founding charter of Edinburgh Incorporation, its Seal of Cause of 1475, lays down religious duties, including the participation of whole membership in an annual procession, 'in the manner of the town of Bruges'. This was held on 3 May, also the start of Beltane accounting term, and a fixture in the Edinburgh crafts' calendar.[6] This kind of civic

[1] These minutes were recently rediscovered in Edinburgh City Archives (ECA) by Dr Aaron Allen. Provisionally known as ECA B1–5, the five books cover dates in 1553–1555, 1555, 1559–1560, 1568–1569 and 1574–1583.
[2] Marwick (1869), pp. 30–32.
[3] Lynch (1991), p. 208; Brown et al. (2007–2018), A1555/6/27.
[4] Brinsden (2004), p. 37; Jones (1991), p. 84, fn. 6.
[5] NLS, MS. 19288.
[6] Marwick (1869), pp. 30–32; Boogaart (2001).

display is not prominent in the minute books although the craft made a taffeta banner in 1579 for the entry of James VI to Edinburgh.[7] Edinburgh members paid a weekly 'penny' for the altar fund, its upkeep, and oil for the lamp, as well as fees, termly dues, contributing to money kept in a box which was sometimes used for charity. Many pages of the minutes are concerned with collecting such payments and contributions from its members, listing names and trades. Masters did not have to be burgesses of Edinburgh at this time, and apprentices and servant craftsmen are also listed, making these minutes a unique source for the craft population whose names are not recorded elsewhere.

Some Scottish families were conspicuous in the craft in more than one town. Amongst surnames prominent in the minutes are members of the Fendour family, often associated with Aberdeen where John Fendour worked between 1495 and 1515 on the ceiling and stalls at St Nicholas Church and on the stalls at King's College Chapel.[8] Later generations of this family were represented in Edinburgh by the deacon of the craft Robert Fendour and the servant wrights John and George Fendour.[9] Another John Fendour was active in Perth between 1528 and 1558. In 1551 he took as an apprentice Robert Henderson for five years during which time John would teach him 'the haill poynts of the wrycht craft without ony fraud.'[10] Another surname 'Schang' is found in both towns, with Adam, Patrick and David in Edinburgh and in Perth, David, James, Marcus, William and Thomas Schang. This may be the same David, and Patrick, settled in Edinburgh, may have been the son and apprentice of James Schang, deacon of the Perth craft mentioned in minutes of 1538.[11] In 1562 Mary Queen of Scot's brother James, Earl of Moray, had a bed made by one 'Schang'.[12] Visible here is the tension between on the one hand an urban craft system that sought to control who might work at a craft within a town and on the other the attraction of relocation between towns when large scale projects offered consistently paid work. The Fendours and Schangs represent both movement and settlement, an experience particularly shared with masons but perhaps less common among bakers, shoemakers or weavers.

ANDREW MANSIOUN

The craft, however, was not dominated by these families and welcomed some foreigners. The Edinburgh minutes identify some craftsmen as French in the 1550s. These included three wrights, Andrew Mansioun, Peris, and Nicholas, and a painter, Guilliam. Other French workers may also have been present. Andrew Mansioun was still resident in Edinburgh when he died in 1579, with an apprentice James Philp and a servant wright William Littlejohn.[13] He was married and had four sons but his wife's name is unknown. Two of his sons, Francis and Joshua, made pulpits and beds for

[7] ECA B5, Minutes 1574–1583, f. 33r.
[8] Simpson (2000).
[9] ECA B3 f. 2–4.
[10] NLS, Ms. 19288, fols 9r, 13r, 20r, 24v, 27v, 67v, 69r.
[11] Ibid, fol. 68v.
[12] HMC (1887), 649.
[13] ECA B3, fols 3r, 6r; B5, fol. 51r.

James VI in the 1590s.[14] Mansioun took part in the judging of assays and it is therefore reasonable to think of a French School of furniture making in Edinburgh. His involvement in setting and judging technique and style took place at a time when fine furniture was said, in a least one inventory, to be made in the 'courtly manner'.[15] Panelling and doors surviving from buildings in Edinburgh and Leith, associated (however loosely) with Mary of Guise, incorporate a range of features that resemble the François Ier style, including 'Romayne' portrait medallions, grotesques and references to the Italian rediscovery of Classical ornament.[16]

Mansioun was in fact a master of several trades. He lived in the Canongate, then a separate burgh, but was prominent in the Edinburgh wrights' Incorporation. Andrew was consistently described as a Frenchman. The first notice of 'Andro' is at Holyroodhouse in 1535, as a master with a servant working on the building or its interior fittings.[17] If this was Mansioun, he came to Scotland before the marriage of James V to Madeleine of Valois in 1537. Scots in France and elsewhere would recruit likely craftsman for the busy royal workshop in Edinburgh Castle, for building, shipbuilding and especially artillery works. In subsequent years French craftsmen may have arrived in the service of Mary of Guise and the French troops in Scotland. We don't know where Andrew came from, but the name, spelt 'Mansioun' in Scottish records, and 'Mention' in the one instance of his signature, has been prevalent in Normandy, Picardy, and French speaking areas in Belgium.[18]

As a wright with the royal artillery, Mansioun built stocks and cranes for moving guns and heavy weights, and with colleagues also made fittings and furniture, including 'the chambers and carved work' for the king and queen's boat. The chambers in the two royal barques which took James V and Mary of Guise for short journeys on the Forth were presumably complete panelled rooms with integral furniture. In 1540 Andrew made a cradle for the Prince James.[19] A bed completed after the king's death was delivered from his workshop to the wardrobe at Holyroodhouse.[20] He carved wooden moulds for the badges on bronze guns made in Edinburgh and assisted with the casting of guns. In March 1542 he was directed by John Drummond, the King's master wright, to engrave the royal arms, unicorns, thistles and fleurs-de-lys on a brass cannon, while in 1541 he engraved a brass for the tomb of Cardinal David Beaton's parents at Markinch and in 1543 engraved an inscription for the tomb of James V in 'Roman letters'.[21]

The records of Mansioun as a carver have led to the suggestion that he made some of the oak portrait medallions for the palace at Stirling Castle, now known as the 'Stirling Heads', as well as the later heraldic ceiling motifs at Holyroodhouse.[22] The Stirling medallions were carved from a pack of three-deep Baltic oak planks, in some

[14] NRS E22/9, November 1592, fol. 37r, 'to Joshua Mansioun for a lit de camp bed, £200'.
[15] Mackenzie (1990), p. 30.
[16] Thomas (2013), p. 45; NRS CS7/20 fol. 109r; Mackenzie (1990), pp. 24–33.
[17] Dunbar (1999), pp. 162, 164–65.
[18] NRS E25/1/12, receipt for the 'quene tabill' 22 December 1558; Germain and Herbillon (2007), p. 702.
[19] Balfour Paul (1907), pp. 189, 307; Thomas (2005), p. 199. The two princes died in 1541.
[20] Balfour Paul (1908), pp. 163–64.
[21] Balfour Paul (1908), pp. 127, 143; Hannay (1913), pp. xxxviii, 125; Sanderson (1986), p. 139.
[22] Dunbar (1999), pp. 162, 164–65; Dunbar (1975), pp. 15, 23, head number 29.

cases with the backgrounds pierced through. The carving of a woman in masquing costume (number 29) was found in 2005 to have a drawing on the back showing two grotesque figures holding masks and scrolls centred on a baluster, with a lower register of a leafy pendant. The drawing is in black chalk or crayon, with some incised horizontal lines, and was presumably a sketch for a carved frieze which has not survived. This may be a drawing by Andrew Mansioun, who, as we can deduce from his work on the artillery, was a skilled draftsman.[23]

Mansioun had a position as a royal carpenter and gunner from 3 August 1543 with a monthly salary of £3.[24] This was a permanent appointment, the payment akin to a retainer, and he continued to be paid costs for any work and services performed. In May 1544 Andrew hurt his hand firing cannon at the English on the Royal Mile, on the day Holyroodhouse was looted, an event recently described in this Journal by Aidan Harrison.[25] The gunners in the castle managed to destroy an English siege cannon set up to batter the castle. Subsequently Mansioun's salary was augmented on account of being 'lamyt of the ane hand by the schot of ane gun'.[26] This mishap wasn't the end of his career. Instead, we must suppose he was master of a workshop and that his servants, wrights who had finished their apprenticeships, did much of the work. In 1559 he was paid £5 for work on the 'queen's table', which may have been an altarpiece, framing panel paintings bought in Flanders, to be installed in the Chapel Royal at Stirling Castle.[27] On 28 December 1561, Mary, Queen of Scots made him 'Master Wrycht and Gunnare ordinare' for life.[28] For this, Andrew received a monthly salary of £8 6*s* 8*d*. On his death in August 1579, the position was given to his son Francis.[29]

Mansioun also worked for Edinburgh town and was made a burgess on 4 September 1549.[30] In November 1552 he and three companion wrights were working in St Giles, which work included turning stools and working alongside Robert Fendour. Mansioun was contracted to make stalls in the quire of St Giles in November 1552. Fendour had made satisfactory but expensive stalls in one side of the quire, and Mansioun offered to undercut Fendour's price. When the south quire stalls were completed in July 1554, Mansioun was rewarded with a pension of ten merks (£8 3*s* 4*d*) with an option to convert this to an income from an altar worth £10 yearly for his sons. Mansion was obliged by his contract to serve the town in future works and make good any problems with the stalls.[31]

The town council also recognised his engineering skills, gained in lifting and mounting cannon. In February 1555, Andrew and his Flemish colleague Thebalt Roqueno from the royal artillery met the town's master wrights to discuss how the new timberwork of the Tolbooth belfry and steeple could be hauled into position. The framework of the belfry, called a 'brandrauth', was subsequently raised by twenty-eight men 'by

[23] Robertson (2008), pp. 4, 5, 18.
[24] Livingstone (1936), p. 62, no. 428.
[25] Harrison (2017).
[26] Balfour Paul (1908), pp. 299, 484.
[27] NRS, E25/1, nos. 9, 12, 34.
[28] Beveridge and Donaldson (1957), p. 236, no. 942.
[29] Murray (1978), p. 283.
[30] Boog Watson (1929), p. 347.
[31] Marwick (1871), pp. 174, 196, 338–39.

force at once'.[32] In the summer of 1555 Mansioun worked at Inchkeith island in the Firth of Forth, managing horses that winched building materials up from the boats for the new fort.[33] This engineering work was typical for gunners: lifting guns onto ships, or simply on and off their stocks, or moving heavy guns around the challenging terrain of Edinburgh castle. It seems surprising that Mansioun made choir stalls, yet his manager John Drummond had made an organ loft. These master wrights were not narrow specialists.

THE COURTLY STYLE

Sixteenth-century descriptions of furniture of any detail are rare. Fine furniture and its appearance is rarely mentioned in Scottish inventories, with one notable exception, attached to a witness statement in a dispute over the house of Sanquhar Hamilton, also known as Newton Castle, in 1559. The castle has now been demolished and was far from Edinburgh, in Ayrshire, but it is significant because Sir William Hamilton of Sanquhar had important and relevant Edinburgh connections. In 1550 he was Captain of Edinburgh Castle and in favour with the ruler of Scotland, James Hamilton, Regent Arran. George, 7th Lord Seton, married Sanquhar's daughter Isobel on 12 August 1550 and Regent Arran paid for the wedding breakfast in the castle.[34] William was intimate with the Regent and his court, and manager of the busy workmen at Edinburgh Castle who looked after the guns and made furniture. He was also provost and leader of the town council of Edinburgh in 1555. Sir William described his furnishing at Sanquhar Hamilton in Ayrshire as 'richly carved and decorated in the most courtly manner'. The phrase may simply mean refined, rather than 'made like furniture made for the court', and yet a more literal interpretation seems possible: that the furniture was made earlier in the decade by the royal carpenters. In the context of domestic furnishing, Andrea Thomas also takes the phrase at face value and wonders if the homes of nobles and bishops of yet higher rank were even more lavish.[35] The inventory itself, excepting the superlative descriptions, is typical for Scottish castles in its categories of goods and types of furnishings. Several pieces, especially in the hall, though courtly were massive rather than portable:

> In the hall, ane hie buird sett in a creddil of thrie almereis underneath the samyn of carvit and rasit werk, with twa greit forms of burdwork conforming thairto, uthir thrie syde buirds of thik planks of aik, with six fourmes of aik baith the said thrie boards togidder thairwith a cupboard of eistland tymmer, of carvit and raisit work decorit in the maist courtlie manner, Ane weill bandit, double-lockit keyst with fyne german quhit work, price of all the said tymmer work, ourheid £80.[36]

Seven beds also had carved and raised work in the 'maist courtlie manner' on sides, heads and roofs. A later inventory of 1588 recorded in the Memorial Book of John Masoun describes the remaining furniture in the hall at Sanquhar-Hamilton in more usual terms:

[32] Adam (1899), pp. 147–49.
[33] NRS, E34/21/3, fol. 37r, Account for building a fort on Inchkeith.
[34] NRS, E32/10, fol. 154v, Household account of Regent Arran.
[35] Thomas (2013), p. 45.
[36] NRS, CS7/20, fol. 109r; Mackenzie (1990), p. 30.

> In the hall … ane hie sait buird with ane furme lowse.
> Item other three lang sait boards with forms affixit on thair sydes, ane chyr,
> Item ane copbuird affixit in the wallis, ane sylour upon the bak of the sait hall buird.[37]

The seat or bench at the top table had a canopy, called a 'sylour' presumably with 'carved and raised work'. The cupboard of Eastland timber (wainscot oak) with its fine metalwork was carved in the courtly manner. Trestles are almost absent from Scottish inventories, and table frames called branders are often mentioned. In this and other inventories, seats were fixed to the tables: 'seat boards with forms affixit on their sides'. Fixed furniture is a feature of this inventory with beds joined to panelling and 'portals', or internal porches. Some of these 'portallis' had carved work in the 'maist rare & curious fassoun'.[38]

Hall furniture could be difficult to move: in 1592 the cupboard and hall table at Coldingham Priory were moved by wrights, suggesting that some expertise was required.[39] The fittings of these rooms were not easily transportable in their original form or useful after the decline of communal hall dining. Nevertheless, key elements of carved and raised work might be saved if the family association remained meaningful through the inclusion of heraldry and inscriptions, and so carved panels now in museums may well have formed part of the dais of such baronial halls. If 'courtlie manner' may convey the idea of quality carving and detail, including ironwork, we should also entertain the idea that this quality work was applied to largely immobile joinery and fitted furniture, which is not adaptable and so is unlikely to survive in its original form.

MANSIOUN AND MASTER PIECES

In September 1555 Mansioun was appointed assay master for the Edinburgh craft. The craft minutes record two wrights' master pieces in 1555. There were four masters to judge the 'relevance' and 'sufficiency' of the piece, just as the 1475 Seal of Cause had prescribed four masters to judge newcomers' sufficiency. The process of judging assays was recorded after the Regent, Mary of Guise, had temporarily abolished the Incorporations in 1555, when the craft was re-establishing its practices. The assays were an extending or drawing table with three leaves and a 'pale' dresser — a dresser or cupboard with a wooden canopy.

Thomas Wod undertook to make the table. The action of the table was clearly described, with two leaves (lids) to be drawn out together and the upper (omest) leaf to sit down in the middle between the two that had been underneath:

> The said day Thomas Wod wrycht hes taine him till ane assay viz: to mak ane drawin burde with ane close case with thre lids, that is to say baith the lidds to draw furth at anis & ye omest lid to fall doun In the midds betwix the tua undermaist, & sall fall to the samyn the morne and bide quhill it be done & thir ar his maistirs assayers viz Andro Mansioun, Jhone Stewart, Jhone Cunninghame & Jhone Mewrois.[40]

[37] Bain (1834), pp. 136–38.
[38] NRS, CS7/20, fol. 109r.
[39] NRAS, 859, box 17/Folder 2.
[40] ECA, B2, Minutes 1555, fols 6v–7r.

Thomas was told to set to work immediately next morning and until it was complete. He had 'servant wright' status but was not necessarily employed by a master, and either had premises and the means to support himself while making the assay, or was perhaps permitted to work in a master's shop.

Wood became a successful master, a burgess of Edinburgh, and was deacon of the wrights in 1574 and an assay master. He was reasonably prosperous when he died in 1585 during the plague. His wife was Bessie Wallace and he had two female household servants Marion Thomson and Janet Forrest. He rented his house and premises from a merchant, Alexander Hunter, for an annual rent of £8, and rented other houses to sub-let. At his death, his workhouse stock included two long drawing tables, another table, a short form, three new almeries at £12 each, a new langsadill (a bench) at £6, another 'humble' langsadill at £4, seventy pieces of wainscot (oak) £1 each, deals and broken timber in the loft, and more deals in the yard (some recently bought for £3 the dozen), some cloth and £180 cash. His stock was worth about £300. The will and inventory (which he produced himself) was witnessed by fellow craftsmen David Huchesoun, slater, and John Gordon, wright. He was owed £7 10*s* by Nicol Uddart dean of Guild for work in the steeple of the church, showing that he also was involved in construction. He also had bought deals from Nicol.[41] Thomas Wood may have made a number of drawing tables over his thirty-year career. They don't appear described as such in Scottish inventories until the seventeenth century, but, as Victor Chinnery suggested, they may have been described as 'compters'.[42] Perhaps these tables were in demand in Edinburgh for dining, in urban settings where wealthy merchants or gentry lodgers had no use for the whole trappings of the formal hall in its 'courtlie manner' and ate in less spacious settings.

Of the other assay masters, John Cunningham was also a wright employed by the artillery, recorded in various works, including the making of charcoal in the woods, and operating a powder mill. Royal artillery workers based at Edinburgh Castle or Holyrood would join Edinburgh craft incorporations.[43]

The other assay described in detail was the dresser by Thomas Kennedy in May 1555. This was an elaborate decorated piece to serve as a cupboard at dinner.[44] The vocabulary used to describe its detail is obscure. The back was 'square' which often means 'proportionate'. The 'head' may be another word for the 'pale', a canopy. The rest of the description refers to broad 'muldreis' (mouldings) and other carving applied to the 'hale wair' — the whole of the piece:

> The quhilk day the dekynis & maisters forsaid hes assiginit Thomas Kennedye till mak his ane assay as use is betuix this and witsonday nixt to cum, viz ane pale dressour with ane squair bak & ane heid, ye hale wair of the dressour beand fillit with muldreis brad, with [?virglare] inmait it, At the completing of the samyn the maisters hes ordanit Patrick Schang, Jhone Stewart, Thomas Lyndesay and Adam Purves for to vesye the said assay gif it be relevant or not.

[41] Will of Thomas Wod, NRS, CC8/8/16, pp. 3–6, registered 26 July 1586.
[42] Chinnery (1980), pp. 286–87.
[43] Balfour Paul (1907), pp. 493–95.
[44] Eames (1977), pp. 62–65.

The term 'dresser' or 'dressoire' is very rare in Scottish inventories, as is 'buffet', the word 'cupboard' being more usual for the serving table and display shelves used at dinner in hall. A 'dresser' of walnut was noted in Edinburgh in 1596, almost certainly a French piece belonging to a wealthy shipping magnate, Baillie John McMoran.[45] Inventories record increasing numbers of walnut pieces, many described as French, and Scottish furniture was likely to have been influenced by these direct imports, as well the colony of French craftsman. At Edinburgh Castle in 1567 the hall of the gunners of the royal artillery had a 'dresser' described as 'ane dressour for setting of stouppis [jugs]'.[46] This and the assay piece were perhaps called 'dressers' because current vocabulary was influenced by its French membership and the assay master and gunner Andrew Mansioun. Four months after the assay was set Kennedy became a master on 12 September 1555, paying for his establishment an 'upset fee' and thirty shillings for a dinner for the craft.

In May 1575 Andrew Mansioun was assay master with Patrick Schang. Schang had made the displays for the processional entry of Mary Queen of Scots to Edinburgh in 1561 and may be the Schang who made an oak bed for Mary's half-brother, the Earl of Moray, mentioned in an inventory of 1562.[47] In this case they declared that John Quhytelaw had failed to complete his assay, of a 'squair dressour', presumably a piece like the example described above. At first the craft decided that John could not become a master. He was made to swear to make only 'lattrouns' (table desks), coffers, chairs and stools in his own shop from timber he bought, and not to work in houses, except as a servant wright to a master.[48] The judgement gives some idea of what work a wright who was not yet a master could undertake, if he had premises. The craft tried to stop servants making contracts, or furniture from timber bought by a trading partner or client, which was restrictive. Nevertheless, the expectation seems to be that servants could and would make and sell the listed types of furniture. However, on this occasion other masters objected and Quhytelaw was admitted as a full master.[49] The surviving five books of sixteenth-century minutes end in September 1583. By this time, aspiring masters had to explicitly fulfil other criteria: to become burgesses of Edinburgh, living within the town limits rather than its suburbs, perform an oath of fidelity and pay for a banquet. Assays are rarely mentioned in the minutes, and perhaps only those in dispute, like Quhytelaw's, were ever recorded.

CONCLUSION

Sir William Hamilton's inventory was unusual for its language, praising furniture and fittings in his Ayrshire house carved in the 'courtly manner'. Sir William was a trusted officer for his kinsman, Regent Arran, who employed Andrew Mansioun in Edinburgh at Edinburgh Castle, where Sir William was Constable. Mansioun was an Edinburgh burgess and active in the craft Incorporation. The courtly manner in furnishing ought

[45] Macphail (1924), p. 226.
[46] Thomson (1815), p. 174. A stoup is a drinking measure or tankard.
[47] MacDonald (Spring 1997); *HMC* (1887), p. 649.
[48] ECA, B5, Minutes 1574–1583, fol. 6r.
[49] ECA, B5, fol. 6r–7r.

to be associated with Mansioun, often recorded as a Frenchman in a variety of sources, and presumably working in the idiom of French carvers in the first half of the sixteenth century for the court. He had a workshop, with servants and apprentices, and influenced the training of other woodworkers by supervising the 'assay' scheme. The sample pieces of the drawing table, and its continuity in Thomas Wod's oeuvre, may point to the longevity of this influence, even if no Edinburgh drawing tables may be found. With the new evidence from the craft minutes and wills, surviving pieces of Scottish woodwork may now possibly be attributed to an Edinburgh school of mid sixteenth-century carving and furniture making.

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