

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk **

Dè an ceangal a th’ ann eadar Leabhar Habacuic anns a’ Bhìoball agus an catalog aig J D Williams trom biodh mòran air a’ Ghaidhealtachd uaireigin a’ ceannach aodach? Mmm. Ceist dhoirbh, is cinnteach. Uill, bha mi a’ leughadh leabhar o chionn ghoirid, a bh’ air a sgrìobhadh leis an Urramach Dòmhnall Uilleam MacCoinnich – “*As it Was – Sin Mar a Bha*”, mu dheidhinn bliadhnaichean òige ann an eilean Ulbha, làimh ri Muile.

Anns an leabhar, tha an t-ùghdar ag innse dhuinn mu dheidhinn ministear anns an Eilean Sgitheanach a bha a’ searmonachadh turas. Dh’iarr e air a’ choitheanal sùil a thoirt air earrann de Leabhar Habacuic. Uill, chan eil anns an leabhar sin ach mu dhà dhuilleig, agus bha duilgheadas aig mòran anns a’ choitheanal a lorg am measg leabhraichean an t-Seann Tiomnaidh.

Thug iad ùine, a’ tionndadh duilleagan is a’ cur dàil air an t-searmon, agus dh’fhàs am ministear mì-fhoighidneach. Mu dheireadh, thuirt e, “A, nam b’ e leabhar J D Williams a bh’ ann, ’s fhada bhon a bha e air a bhith agaibh!” Cha robh e fhèin a’ saoilinn mòran dhen chatalog sin!

Thachair mi ri Mgr MacCoinnich o chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean, nuair a bha mi a’ dèanamh prògram-rèidio mu dheidhinn Ulbha, agus bha e ag obair air an leabhar aige aig an àm. Tha mi air leth toilichte gun deach a chur an clò, oir tha e gu math inntinneach agus tha e ag innse dhuinn mòran mu dheidhinn eilean snog a bha, tràth anns an fhicheadamh linn, cho Gaidhealach ri gin.

Tha mòran naidheachdan beaga anns an leabhar a chòrdas ri duine sam bith aig a bheil ùidh ann an Gàidhlig. Mar eisimpleir, bha calmair aca a bhiodh a’ caoirean fad an là agus bhiodh Dòmhnall òg a’ faighneachd de athair, a bha cuideachd na mhinistear, gu dè bha na h-eòin ag ràdh. Chanadh athair ris gur ann a’ bruidhinn ri chèile a bha iad agus gu robh iad ag ràdh, “cha b’ ann de mo chuideachd thu.” Ma chanas sibh sin trì tursan sreath chèile gu luath, chì sibh dè bha e a’ ciallachadh.

Agus nuair a bhiodh daoine ag ithe uighean, chuireadh iad spàin an toiseach ann an luath no salann. Bha beachd ann am Muile gu robh uighean cunnartach agus ’s dòcha gun do dh’èirich an saobh-chràbhadh air sàilleamh sin. Co-dhiù, bha seanfhacal aca:

*Ugh gun ìm, gun luath, gun salann
'n ceann seachd bliadhna gun tig galar.*

Is tha an t-ùghdar ag innse seanfhacal eile, air am bi feadhainn agaibh eòlach ’s dòcha, co-cheangailte ris mar a ghuir cearc aca uighean tunnaig turas a bha seo. A dh’aindeoin ’s nach

robh a h-àl coltach rithe idir, cha do ghabh a' chearc dragh sam bith. Agus bha na h-iseanan fhèin toilichte gu leòr leantainn oirre mar gum b' i am màthair - fhad 's a bha an turadh ann.

Ach là bha seo, bha i fliuch agus bha glumagan ann. Ged nach robh a' chearc airson 's gun rachadh na tunnagan beaga faisg air an uisge, cha b' urrainn dhi stad a chur orra. Bha iad air an dòigh glan, a' plubadaich anns na glumagan. Agus 's e an seanfhacal – *thèid dualchas an aghaidh nan creag*. Thèid dualchas an aghaidh nan creag.

Nuair a bha mi a' dèanamh a' phrògram mu dheidhinn Ulbha, thachair mi ri fear eile a bha mion-eòlach air an eilean agus aig an robh eòlas fìor mhath air taobh siar Mhuile – Ruairidh MacNèill nach maireann. Innsidh mi dhuibh beagan mu dheidhinn-san an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na seachdaine: Leabhar Habacuic: *The Book of Habakkuk*; ùghdar: *author*; mì-fhoighidneach: *impatient*; air leth toilichte: *very pleased*; inntinneach: *interesting*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: trom biodh mòran uaireigin a' ceannach aodach: *through which many would at one time buy clothes*; mu dheidhinn bliadhnaichean òige ann an eilean Ulbha, làimh ri Muile: *about the days of his youth in the isle of Ulva, next to Mull*; chan eil anns an leabhar sin ach mu dhà dhuilleig: *there are only about two pages in that book*; am measg leabhraichean an t-Seann Tiomnaidh: *among the books of the Old Testament*; a' cur dàil air an t-searmon: *delaying the sermon*; nam b' e X a bh' ann, 's fhada bhon a bha e air a bhith agaibh: *if it had been X, you would have had [found] it long ago*; cha robh e a' saoilinn mòran de.: *he didn't think much of.*; a bha cho Gaidhealach ri gin: *that was as Highland [Gaelic] as any*; a chòrdas ri X: *which X will enjoy*; bha calmain aca a bhiodh a' caoirean fad an là: *they had doves which would coo all day*; cha b' ann de mo chuideachd thu: *you don't belong to my people*; chuireadh iad an spàin an toiseach ann an luath no salann: *they would first put the spoon in ash or salt*; 'n ceann seachd bliadhna gun tig galar: *in seven years a disease will come*; mar a ghuir cearc uigheann tunnaig: *how a hen incubated duck's eggs*; mar gum b' i am màthair: *as if she were their mother*; fhad 's a bha an turadh ann: *as long as the weather was dry*; cha b' urrainn dhi stad a chur orra: *she couldn't stop them*; bha iad air an dòigh glan, a' plubadaich anns na glumagan: *they were as happy as could be, splashing in the puddles*.

Puing-ghràmail na seachdaine: A dh'aindeoin 's nach robh a h-àl coltach rithe idir, cha do ghabh a' chearc dragh sam bith: *although her offspring was not at all like her, the hen was not upset. Have you sometimes been in the situation, when listening to conversation, of misinterpreting the "h" sound at the start of a noun, as in "a h-àl"? It is obvious in the written form, but less so in speech. The important point to remember is that very few words in Gaelic start with "h". Indeed a scan of a dictionary will show that they are almost all loan words or proper or place names which originate in Norse (eg Na Hearadh, Hiort), Hebrew (Habacuc), English (halò) and Greek or Latin via English or French (heileacoptar, heactair). The "h" sound is usually caused by one of the agents of lenition working on a consonant like "t" or "s" (mo thòn, do shuipear) or, as in the above case, by the insertion of an "h" before a vowel, following the possessive feminine adjective, "a". Other examples would be a h-anail (her breath), a h-eanchainn (her brain), a h-òige (her youth). The equivalent masculine possessives would be, simply, anail (his breath), eanchainn (his brain), òige (his youth).*

Seanfhacal na seachdaine: Thèid dualchas an aghaidh nan creag: *one's inheritance will come to the fore. This also exists as thèid dùthchas an aghaidh nan creag. In terms of humans, this might be used to express the perceived dominance of nature over nurture.*

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