

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 rodny.macleay@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 232.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu dheidhinn an Eilein Ghuirm air an do rinn Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn aithris anns an leabhar aige air eileanan na h-Alba, a nochd ann an clò an toiseach o chionn trì cheud bliadhna. Chaidh criubha soithich Shasannaich air tìr, agus thog iad càrn, no tùr, de dh’fhiodh airson ’s gum faicte an t-eilean, oir bha e gu math ìosal.

Uill, chan e maraichean a-mhàin a chunnaic e, oir chuala am ministear a rinn aithris air a’ chùis do MhàcIlleMhàrtainn, an t-Urramach Iain MacSuain, gum faca cuid de mhuinntir Cholasa e, agus iad aig mullach cnuic anns an eilean aca fhèin air là brèagha. Bha iad cinnteach gur e tìr a bh’ ann, ged nach robh iad air dad fhaicinn ann a sin riamh-roimhe.

Nuair a chuala Mgr MacSuain bhon mharaiche Shasannach gu robh a chriubha air tùr-fiodha a thogail anns an “Eilean Ghorm”, thuig e gur e sin a chunnaic muinntir Cholasa bhon chnoc aca. Bha an t-eilean ro ìosal airson fhaicinn, a chionn ’s gu robh e fad air falbh. Ach ghabhadh an tùr-fiodha fhaicinn, agus do mhuinntir Cholasa bha e mar gu robh eilean air nochdadh gun rabhadh a-mach às a’ chuan.

Às dèidh gun deach an samhradh sin seachad, chan fhaca na Colasaich an tùr-fiodha, no an t-Eilean Gorm, a-chaidh tuilleadh. Carson? Uill, bha MacIlleMhàrtainn dhen bheachd gur e a’ ghaoth a bu choireach – gun do chuir stoirmean an tùr as a chèile. Agus às aonais an tùir, cha robh sgeul air an eilean – co-dhiù do mhuinntir Cholasa.

Ach chan eil sin a’ mìneachadh mar a chaidh an t-eilean, a bharrachd air an tùr, às an t-sealladh buileach glan. No mar nach eil aithris againn air bho sheòladairean eile. Chan eil eilean air a’ chairt-mhara ann a sin an-diugh – agus cha robh a leithid air na seann mhapaichean nas mò.

Ach tha an aon rud fìor mu eilean eile a nochdas ann am beul-aithris nan Gaidheal – Rocabarra. Thathar ag ràdh gu bheil Rocabarra, a tha, no a bha, na eilean beag anns a’ Chuan Siar, air nochdadh os cionn na mara dà thuras. Agus dà thuras chaidh e fodha a-rithist. Thathar ag ràdh, ma nochdas e treas turas, gun tig an saoghal gu crìch. Gu dearbh, theirte “Nuair a thig Rocabarra ris, is dual gun tèid an saoghal a sgrios.” Nuair a thig Rocabarra ris, is dual gun tèid an saoghal a sgrios.

Tha Eilean Reachra eadar Alba is Eirinn agus tha cuid air a bhith dhen bheachd gur dòcha gur e sin an t-Eilean Gorm air an robh am maraiche Sasannach a-mach. Ach chanainn gu bheil e ro fhaisg air Eirinn airson sin. Is dòcha nach bi fios againn a-chaidh air co-dhiù bha an aithris a rinn am maraiche Sasannach fìrinneach no breugach. No an robh an t-Urramach Iain MacSuain a thug am fiosrachadh gu Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn

e fhèin fìrinneach no breugach, oir tha e coltach gu robh e rudeigin measail air an stuth ruadh, ma tha sibh gam thuigs’.

Cha deach MacIlleMhàrtainn faisg air an Eilean Ghorm, ach chaidh e a Cholasa agus don eilean a tha ceangailte ris ach a-mhàin nuair a bhios an làn ann – Orasa. Nuair a bha e ann, dh’iarr fear an taighe air Màrtainn am Bìoball aige a thoirt dha air iasad airson leigheas a dhèanamh air cuideigin a bha tinn leis an fiabhras. Chleachd e am Bìoball mar ghaotharan airson am fear tinn fhionnarachadh. ’S e seann chleachdadh a bh’ ann, agus tha e coltach gum b’ iad duilleagan a’ Bhìobaill an fheadhainn a b’ fheàrr a dhèanadh a’ chùis.

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Faclan na seachdainne: Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn: *Martin Martin*; an t-Urramach Iain MacSuain: *Rev. John MacSween*; muinntir Cholasa: *the people of Colonsay*; Reachra: *Rathlin*; fìrinneach: *truthful*; breugach: *untruthful*; am Bìoball: *The Bible*; leigheas: *cure*; fiabhras: *fever*; gaotharan: *fan*; duilleagan: *pages*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: mu dheidhinn an Eilein Ghuirm: *about the Green Island*; a nochd ann an clò an toiseach: *which first appeared in print*; criubha soithich Shasannaich: *the crew of an English vessel*; chan e maraichean a-mhàin a chunnaic e: *it is not only seafarers that saw it*; agus iad aig mullach cnuic: *when they were on the top of a hill*; a chionn ’s gu robh e fad air falbh: *because it was a long way away*; mar gu robh eilean air nochdadh gun rabhadh: *as if an island had appeared without warning*; chan fhaca X Y a-chaidh tuilleadh: *X never saw Y again*; gur e a’ ghaoth a bu choireach: *that the wind was responsible*; gun do chuir X Y as a chèile: *that X broke up Y*; às aonais an tùir: *without the tower*; às an t-sealladh buileach glan: *completely out of sight*; a bha na eilean beag anns a’ Chuan Siar: *which was a small island in the Atlantic Ocean*; chaidh e fodha: *it submerged*; ma nochdas e treas turas: *if it appears a third time*; air an robh X a-mach: *which X was on about*; gu robh e measail air an stuath ruadh: *that he was keen on the amber stuff (ie whisky)*; ma tha sibh gam thuigs(inn): *if you understand me*; nuair a bhios an làn ann: *at high-tide*; airson am fear tinn fhionnarachadh: *to cool the sick man*; an fheadhainn a b’ fheàrr a dhèanadh a’ chùis: *the best ones for [that would do] the job*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: *how did you cope with the nasty passive I threw your way this week?!* Thog iad an tùr de dh’fhiodh airson ’s gum faicte an t-eilean. *They built a tower of wood so that How would you translate the rest? The –te ending of faicte is characteristic of the conditional passive, meaning “would be somethinged”; in this case it is with the irregular verb faic. The translation might be “so the island would be seen”. But the conditional tense in Gaelic might also imply capability and this is certainly true of faic. Thus the best English translation of airson ’s gum faicte an t-eilean is “so that the island could be seen.” The independent conditional passive of faic (ie the form not dependent on a conjunction like gum) is chite (the verb is irregular) so chite iad means “they would be seen” or “they could be seen.” In some dialects the conditional passive ending is –iteadh or –ithist eg chiteadh e, chithist e, rather than chite e.*

Seanfhacal na seachdainne: Nuair a thig Rocabarra ris, is dual gun tèid an saoghal a sgrios: *when Rocabarra appears again, the world is doomed to destruction.*

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