

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 * This is Litir 269.*

Cò an Gàidheal as ainmeile a th’ ann ann an Coirìa? Seadh – Coirìa – an dùthaich, a tha sgarichte ann an dà phàirt, a tha làimh ri ceann a tuath Sìonaidh. Uill, chan urrainn dhomh a’ cheist sin a fhreagairt. Ach tha amharas agam gum biodh an t-Urramach Iain Ros nach maireann faisg air mullach na liosta, mura biodh e aig a’ mhullach fhèin. Carson – uill, thig mi gu sin an ceann greis.

Rugadh Iain Ros ann an taobh sear Siorrachd Rois, faisg air Bàgh an Eig, anns a’ bhliadhna ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a dhà (1842). Eadhon aig an àm ud bha Gàidhlig aig a’ mhòr-chuid de shluagh na sgìre sin, agus ’s e Gàidhlig a-mhàin a bh’ aig Iain nuair a thòisich e san sgoil ann am Baile a’ Chnuic. Ach, mus tigeadh a shaoghal gu crìch, bhiodh e fileanta ann an grunn chànanan eile, Sìonais agus Corianais nam measg.

Bha athair na thàillear agus bha e cuideachd na bhall de Bhòrd na Slàinte, buidheann a chaidh a chur air chois airson dèiligeadh ris a’ bhuinich-mhòir, no *cholera*. Thathar a’ smaoinichadh gun tug trì rudan buaidh air Iain, agus e òg. Anns a’ chiad dol a-mach, bha a theaghlach an sàs gu mòr anns an Eaglais. A bharrachd air sin, bhiodh Iain a’ faicinn soithichean a’ tighinn is a’ falbh gu gach àird, is bhiodh sin a’ toirt air smaoinichadh mun t-saoghal mhòr. Agus bha e air a chuirteachadh le àiteachan a bha muinntir an àite a’ comharrachadh mar co-cheangailte ris na sìthichean. Ged nach robh e fhèin air an aon ràmh a thaobh rudan os-nàdarrach, thuigeadh e mar a bhiodh daoine a bha a’ fuireach ann an sgìrean dùthchail a’ coimhead air an t-saoghal.

Anns na seasgadan, dh’fhalbh e a Ghlaschu far an do rinn e ceum san oilthigh. An uair sin chaidh e a-steach don Mhinistrealachd ann an Talla Dhiadhaireach nan Clèireach Aonaichte ann an Dùn Èideann. Bha ùidh aige ann a bhith a’ falbh a-null thairis airson a bhith na mhiseanaraidh, agus thuir am fear a bha os cionn Bòrd Misean Cèin na h-Eaglaise gum biodh an dàrna cuid Na h-Ìnnseachan no Sìona freagarrach dha. Bha am Bòrd air aithneachadh gu robh sgilean cànan air leth aige.

Ach bha tarraing eile air – a dhachaigh. Bha Iain gu math measail air a’ Ghàidhealtachd agus bha bòrd eile dhen Eaglais – Bòrd Misean na Dachaigh – dhen bheachd gum bu chòir dha tilleadh don Ghàidhealtachd. Eadhon aig an àm

ud bha gainnead ann de mhinistearan aig an robh comas searmonachadh ann an Gàidhlig.

Chaidh Iain a dh'Inbhir Nis is an uair sin a Phort Rìgh. Ach cha robh e toilichte san Eilean Sgitheanach agus dh'iarr e air an Eaglais a ghluasad a Steòrnabhagh. Eadhon ann an Leòdhas, ge-tà, cha robh e riarichte, agus sgrìobh e a-rithist gu Bòrd a' Mhisein Chèin, ag iarraidh orra a chur a-null a Shìonaidh. Sgrìobh Cathraiche a' Bhùird, an Dotair Uilleam MacGill, ris gum biodh e na b' fheàrr dha a bhith "na shradag misein [thall thairis] na lasair ann an Ros an Ear".

Anns a' Ghearran ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a dhà (1872) fhuair e cead dhol a Shìonaidh. Goirid mus do dh'fhalbh e, phòs e, agus e a-nise trithead bliadhna a dh'aois. Aig an toiseach chaidh e gu ruige Chefoo (air a bheil Yantai an-diugh), air a' chosta mu choinneimh Choirìa, far an robh miseanaraidhean eile. Cha b' fhada gus an robh e a' coimhead airson àite ùr dha fhèin, ge-tà. Innsidh mi dhuibh mar a choisinn e cliù mhòr dha fhèin ann am Manchuria is Coirìa an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na seachdaine: sgarichte: *divided*; làimh ri: *adjacent to*; an t-Urramach Iain Ros: *The Reverend John Ross*; Siorrachd Rois: *Ross-shire*; Bàgh an Eig: *Nigg*; Baile a' Chnuic: *Hilton of Cadboll*; tàillear: *tailor*; a' Mhinistrealachd: *the (Church) Ministry*; cèin: *foreign*; riarichte: *satisfied*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: cò an Gàidheal as ainmeile ann an Coirìa?: *who is the most famous Gael in Korea?*; mura biodh e aig a' mhullach fhèin: *if he weren't at the very top*; thig mi gu sin an ceann greis: *I will come to that after a while*; eadhon aig an àm ud: *even at that time*; mus tigeadh a shaoghal gu crìch: *before his life came to an end*; bhiodh e fileanta ann an grunn chànanan eile: *he would be fluent in several other languages*; buidheann a chaidh a chur air chois: *a group which was established*; thathar a' smaoinichadh: *it is thought*; bhiodh sin a' toirt air smaoinichadh: *that would make him think*; bha e air a chuairteachadh: *he was surrounded*; ged nach robh e fhèin air an aon ràmh a thaobh rudan os-nàdarrach: *although he wasn't on the same wavelength (literally "oar") regarding supernatural things*; anns na seasgadan: *in the sixties (1860s)*; Talla Dhiadhaireach nan Clèireach Aonaichte: *United Presbyterian Theological Hall*; a-null thairis airson a bhith na mhiseanaraidh: *overseas to be a missionary*; gum biodh an dàrna cuid Na h-Ìnnseachan no Sìona freagarrach dha: *that either India or China would be suitable for him*; gu robh sgilean cànan air leth aige: *that he had exceptional linguistic skills*; bha gainnead ann: *there was a shortage*; gum biodh e na b' fheàrr dha a bhith: *that it would be better for him to be*; na shradag misein [thall thairis] na lasair ann an Ros an Ear: *a mission spark [overseas] than a flame in Easter Ross*; anns a' Ghearran: *in February*; air a bheil Yantai an-diugh: *which is called Yantai today*; mar a choisinn e cliù mhòr dha fhèin: *how he won a big reputation for himself*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: 'S e Gàidhlig a-mhàin a bh' aig Iain nuair a thòisich e san sgoil: *it was only Gaelic that Iain spoke when he started school. I*

want to reiterate a very basic point this week – that is, the proper idiomatic way to say that somebody speaks a language, in this case Gaelic. We say in Gaelic that “he has” the language, not that “he speaks” it. I sometimes hear learners say of another – “am bi e a’ bruidhinn Gàidhlig?” (meaning “does he speak Gaelic”) when they should say “a bheil Gàidhlig aige?” No verb to “speak” appears – all we need is the verb “to be” and one of the prepositional pronouns associated with aig. Here is an example of how you might use both in the one sentence: tha Fraingis aige ach bidh e a’ bruidhinn Gearmailtis ri bhean (he has/speaks French but he speaks German to his wife). Or: tha Gàidhlig agam nuair a tha mi nam chadal, ged nach bruidhinn mi i ach nuair a tha mi nam dhùisg: I “have” Gaelic when I am asleep although I only speak it when I am awake.

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: goirid mus do dh’fhalbh e: shortly before he left.
Goirid mus do rinn X Y: shortly before X did Y.

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