

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for 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, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 466. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 162 corresponds to Litir 466.

Cò às a thàinig an t-ainm airson nam beann as àirde anns an Eilean Sgitheanach – a tha ainmeil fad’ is farsaing? An Cuiltheann – *the Cuillin*. Is iomadh beachd a chualas air sin thairis air na bliadhnaichean. Ach saoilidh mi gu bheil am mìneachadh aig Peter Drummond anns an leabhar aige *Scottish Hill Names* a’ coimhead gu math coltach. Thig mi gu sin an ceartuair.

’S dòcha gur e a’ chiad rud a bu chòir dhomh ràdh gur e ainm singilte a th’ ann an Cuiltheann. An Cuiltheann. Chan e Na Cuiltheann. Agus chan e Beanntan a’ Chuilthinn nas motha. Dìreach *An Cuiltheann*. Mar sin, ’s e *The Cuillin*, seach *The Cuillins* a chanas mòran ann am Beurla.

Faodaidh sinn a bhith an ìre mhath cinnteach nach eil an Cuiltheann air ainmeachadh às dèidh a’ ghaigich Ghàidhealaich Cuchulainn, ged a bha am mìneachadh sin **anns an fhasan** uaireigin. Tha beul-aithris ag innse dhuinn gun do dh’ionnsaich an t-Ultach Cuchulainn a chuid sgilean sabaid bhon Bhanrigh Sgàthach. Bha caisteal aice aig Dùn Sgàthaich anns an Eilean Sgitheanach às am faighear sealladh àlainn dhen Chuiltheann.

Tha cuid air ceangal a dhèanamh eadar na beanntan agus gaisgeach Gàidhealach eile – Fionn MacCumhail. **Os cionn Phort Rìgh** tha àite air a bheil Suidhe Fhinn. Bhiodh Fionn a’ coimhead air an Fhèinn fhad ’s a bha iad a’ sealg anns a’ ghleann fodha. ’S e an Cuiltheann, ma-thà, Cùil Fhinn, *the nook or hiding place of Fionn*. Mmm, chan eil sin ro choltach nas motha.

Tha feadhainn air smuain eile a chur air adhart – gu bheil an t-ainm co-cheangailte ris a’ Ghàidhlig airson *holly* – cuileann. Tha na beanntan sin gu math biorach, mar a tha duilleagan cuilinn. Ach a-rithist, chan eil sin coltach. Chan eil eisimpleir eile ann de a leithid.

Bha amharas agam riamh nach e ainm Gàidhlig a bh’ ann. Agus – mar a tha Peter Drummond ag innse dhuinn – bu chòir dhuinn a bhith a’ coimhead a dh’ionnsaigh Lochlainn airson an fhuasglaidh. ’S iomadh beinn Albannach a chithear bhon mhuir air a bheil ainm Lochlannach. Agus nach biodh maraichean Lochlannach a’ cleachdadh a’ Chuilthinn mar chomharra-iùil?

Tha Peter Drummond ag innse dhuinn gu bheil beanntan ann an Nirribhidh air a bheil *Kjølen* mar ainm. Tha feadhainn eile air a bheil *Kiolen* ann an Innis Tìle. Tha beanntan ann an Nirribhidh cuideachd air a bheil *Velskjølen* agus *Kvitingskjølen*. Agus tha *kjølen* a’ ciallachadh “creagan àrda”. An tàinig Cuiltheann bhon ainm Lochlannach airson nam beann sin – *Kjølen*? Dhèanadh e ciall, ceart gu leòr. Is fhiach barrachd rannsachaidh a dhèanamh air a’ chuspair.

Tha mi a' tuigsinn gu bheil *kjølen* cuideachd a' ciallachadh “an druim”, nuair a thathar a' bruidhinn mu bhàtaichean. *The keel* ann am Beurla. Ma dh'fhaodte gun do rinn na seann Lochlannaich coimeas eadar cuid de bheanntan agus druim bàta mar a tha e nuair a tha am bàta bun-os-cionn.

Tha sin a' cur ceist eile nam cheann. Tha mòran bheanntan, no pàirtean de bheanntan, ann an Alba, air a bheil *Druim* mar ainm. Tha Druim nan Ràmh anns a' Chuiltheann. Saoil an robh *druim* anns an t-suidheachadh sin an-còmhnaidh a' riochdachadh *back* no *spine* – mar a tha ann an Èirinn? No, aig amannan, an do lean na Gàidheil ann an Alba dòigh Lochlannach le bhith a' cur *an druim* an sàs airson *kjølen* a riochdachadh? A-rithist bhiodh tuilleadh rannsachaidh feumail.

Kjølen – Cuiltheann – An Cuiltheann – The Cuillin. Dh'fhaodadh e bhith, ceart gu leòr.

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Faclan na Litreach: An Cuiltheann: *The Cuillin*; an ceartuair: *presently*; Ultach: *Ulsterman*; Suidhe Fhinn: *Fionn's [Fingal's] Seat*; cuileann: *holly*; comharra-iùil: *landmark, navigational mark*.

Abairtean na Litreach: airson nam beann as àirde: *for the highest mountains*; ainmeil fad' is farsaing: *famous far and wide*; is iomadh beachd a chualas: *many an opinion was heard*; saoilidh mi gu bheil am mìneachadh aig X a' coimhead gu math coltach: *I reckon X's explanation is pretty likely [correct]*; gur e a' chiad rud a bu chòir dhomh ràdh: *that the first thing I should say*; às dèidh a' ghaigich Ghàidhealaich Cuchulainn: *after the Gaelic hero Cuchullin*; a chuid sgilean sabaid bhon Bhanrigh Sgàthach: *his fighting skills from Queen Sgàthach*; às am faighear sealladh àlainn: *from which is had a beautiful view*; a' coimhead air an Fhèinn fhad 's a bha iad a' sealg anns a' ghleann fodha: *watching the Fenians as they were hunting in the glen below him*; chan eil sin ro choltach nas motha: *that's not particularly likely either*; biorach, mar a tha duilleagan cuilinn: *sharp, as are holly leaves*; eisimpleir eile de a leithid: *another example of the [same] sort*; a dh'ionnsaigh Lochlainn airson an fhuasglaidh: *towards Scandinavia for the solution*; a chithear bhon mhuir: *which is/can be seen from the sea*; dhèanadh e ciall: *it would make sense*; is fhiach barrachd rannsachaidh a dhèanamh: *it's worth doing more research*; ma dh'fhaodte: *perhaps*; druim bàta mar a tha e nuair a tha am bàta bun-os-cionn: *a boat's keel as it is when the boat is upside-down*; an-còmhnaidh a' riochdachadh: *always representing*; an do lean na Gàidheil ann an Alba dòigh Lochlannach?: *did the Gaels in Scotland follow a Scandinavian way [of thinking]?*

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Os cionn Phort Rìgh: *above Portree*. This example builds on the point I made in *Litir 459 (18.04.08)* about how we genitivise place names. *Os cionn*, being a compound preposition, takes the genitive. To show the genitive of a place name like *Port Rìgh*, in which there is no article, we lenite it – thus *os cionn Phort Rìgh*. Similarly we call “the people of Portree” *muinntir Phort Rìgh*. “Above Glasgow” is *os cionn Ghlaschu*. *Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway)* cannot be lenited. It is slenderised in the genitive – thus we would say *os cionn Steòrnabhaigh*. And place names with the article operate just as any noun would – thus *os cionn a' Ghearasdain (above Fort William)*, *os cionn an Òbain (above Òban)*.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: anns an fhasan: *in fashion [lit. in the fashion]*.

* Tha “*Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh*” air a maoinachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig

