

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.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 515. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 211 corresponds to Litir 515.

Tha e inntinneach gun robh a’ Ghàidhlig aig an dithis bhràithrean, Gilleasbaig is Fionnladh Cook, eadar-dhealaichte bho chèile. Carson a tha e inntinneach? Uill, thogadh iad còmhla ann an Eilean Arainn ach tha e coltach gun do chùm Gilleasbaig ris an dualchainnt Arainnich, an ìre mhath co-dhiù. Leig Fionnladh le dualchainntean eile buaidh a thoirt air a’ Ghàidhlig aige.

Tuigidh sibh, ma tha mi a’ bruidhinn air Gàidhlig Arainn nach eil mi a-mach air daoine a tha beò. Chaochail an fheadhainn mu dheireadh aig an robh Gàidhlig Arainneach mu ghinealach air ais. Agus bha na bràithrean Cook beò grunn ghinealach air ais. Bha iad le chèile ainmeil mar shearmonaichean anns a’ chùbaid. Agus mar Arainnich cha robh iad leotha fhèin. Thàinig mòran do chùbaidean Gàidhealach anns an naoidheamh linn deug à Eilean Arainn.

Bha Gillesbaig, no Archibald, Cook gu sònraichte ainmeil mar shearmonaiche – ann an Gàidhlig agus Beurla. Rugadh e ann an seachd ceud deug, ochdad ’s a naoi (1789). Bha Fionnladh aon bhliadhn’ deug na bu shine. Bha esan na mhinistear ann an Leòdhas a bharrachd air Gallaibh agus Inbhir Nis. Bha a bhràthair na mhinistear a-mhàin air tìr-mòr.

Sgrìobh aon phears-eaglais, a bhuineadh do Chnapadal ann an Earra-Ghàidheal, gun robh dualchainnt Arainn gu math eadar-dhealaichte eadhon bhon dualchainnt aige fhèin. Mar eisimpleir, bhiodh na h-Arainnich a’ fuaimneachadh na litreach “a” ann an dòigh eadar-dhealaichte bhon a h-uile àite eile. Sgrìobh am fear seo gum biodh an “a” air a ceangal ri fuaimreag eile airson dà-fhoghair, no *diphthong*, a chruthachadh. Tha Tormod Caimbeul à Leòdhas, a sgrìobh mu bheatha is obair Chook anns an tè as ùire de dh’irisean Chomunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis, ag ràdh gu robh e coltach gun canadh muinntir Arainn “mweh” airson *math*. Tha e coltach cuideachd gun canadh iad “bwèuh” airson *bàta* agus “bwè” airson *bà*.

Ach nuair a thathar a’ sgrùdadh nan searmonan Gàidhlig aig Archibald Cook, tha e follaiseach gun do ghabh e grunn fhaclan a-staigh bho dhualchainntean eile. Is beag an t-iongnadh. Bha e **fad bhliadhnaichean** na mhinistear ann an Gallaibh, baile Inbhir Nis agus ann an Deimhidh faisg air Inbhir Nis. Eadar ochd ceud deug, fichead ’s a trì (1823) agus trithead ’s a seachd (1837), mar eisimpleir, bha e ann am paraiste Latharain ann an Gallaibh far an robh a’ Ghàidhlig fhathast làidir aig an àm, ged a bha i a’ crìonadh. Aig àm a’ chomanachaidh bhiodh Cook a’ searmonachadh ann am Beurla cuideachd, agus bhiodh feadhainn a’ siubhal naoi mìle à Inbhir Ùige airson èisteachd ris.

Nuair a bha e ann an Gallaibh agus ann an Siorrachd Inbhir Nis ’s iongantach mura gabh e a-steach faclan neo-Arainneach a bhuineadh do na dualchainntean sin. Mar eisimpleir,

ann an Arainn, b' e *madadh* am facal àbhaisteach airson *dog*. Ach bhiodh Cook cuideachd a' cleachdadh an fhacail *cù*. An an searmon turas chleachd e na dhà anns an aon seantans: *Leumaidh iad a-mach à 'n leapaichean*, thuirt e, *gun ùrnaigh, mar chuilean madaidh agus leumaidh iad a-mach às an eaglais mar chù dhe theadhair*.

Bhiodh Cook cuideachd a' cleachdadh an fhacail *nàbaidh*, an àite *coimhearsnach*, airson *neighbour*. 'S dòcha gun do thog e sin am measg nan Gàidheal ann an Gallaibh. Agus chleachdadh e faclan mar *tìm* is *meall* nach robh air an clàradh ann an Gàidhlig Arainn.

Ach ge bith dè cho coltach no eucoltach 's a bha an dualchainnt aige ri Gàidhlig a choitheanalan, chan eil teagamh nach robh Cook na shàr-shearmonaiche. Bheir sinn sùil a bharrachd air a' mhinistear àraidh seo an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: pears-eaglais: *churchman*; Cnapadal: *Knapdale*; dà-fhoghair: *diphthong*; Tormod Caimbeul: *Norman Campbell*; Deimhidh: *Daviot*; Latharan: *Latheron*; Gallaibh: *Caithness*.

Abairtean na Litreach: an dithis bhràithrean, Gilleasbaig is Fionnladh Cook: *the two brothers, Archibald and Finlay Cook*; eadar-dhealaichte bho chèile: *different from each other*; thogadh iad còmhla ann an Eilean Arainn: *they were brought up together on the Isle of Arran*; an ìre mhath co-dhiù: *pretty much, anyway*; leig Fionnladh le dualchainntean eile buaidh a thoirt air a' Ghàidhlig aige: *Finlay let other dialects affect his own Gaelic*; grunn ghinealach air ais: *a few generations ago*; mar shearmonaichean anns a' chùbaid: *as preachers in the pulpit*; cha robh iad leotha fhèin: *they weren't on their own*; bhiodh na h-Arainnich a' fuaimneachadh X ann an dòigh eadar-dhealaichte: *the Arran folk would pronounce X in a different way*; is beag an t-iongnadh: *it's hardly surprising*; ged a bha i a' crìonadh: *although it was in decline*; àm a' chomanachaidh: *communion time*; 's iongantach mura gabh e a-steach faclan neo-Arainneach: *it would hardly be surprising if he absorbed non-Arran words*; a-mach à 'n leapaichean gun ùrnaigh, mar chuilean madaidh: *out of their beds without a prayer like a puppy*; mar chù dhe theadhair: *like a dog off its leash*; ge bith dè cho coltach no eucoltach 's a bha an dualchainnt aige: *regardless of how alike or unlike [the others] his dialect was*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *The Gaelic dialect of the Isle of Arran was characterized by the linguist Nils Holmer as having "a larger amount of analogies with Irish Gaelic than any other Scottish Gaelic dialect". What a crying shame that the state's destructive and misguided education and social policies brought about its demise – as was the case with many rich and fascinating regional dialects from Caithness to the Clyde. Arran in the late 18th and 19th Centuries supplied many Gaelic-speaking ministers to churches throughout Gaelic Scotland and even in 1891 some 85% of the inhabitants of Lochranza still spoke the language. But the writing was on the wall. Norman Campbell in his interesting paper on "Rev. Archibald Cook of Daviot" (Transactions of Gaelic Soc. of Inverness, vol. LXIV) informs us that the last fully bilingual person on Arran to speak the local Gaelic dialect was Donald Craig of Machrie who died in 1978.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Bha e **fad bhliadhnaichean** na mhinistear: *he was a minister for years*.

Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA