

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

## le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

### **Cè Tormod Dòmhnallach agus Puirt-à-Beul (3)**

*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.maclea@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 692. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 388 corresponds to Litir 692.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun Sgitheanach, Cè Tormod Dòmhnallach, a dh’fhoillsich an leabhar *Puirt-a-Beul* ann an naoi ceud deug ’s a h-aon (1901). Ann an ath-fhoillseachadh dhen leabhar a nochd am-bliadhna, thug an deasaiche, Uilleam Lamb, sùil air tùs na doigh-sheinn sin. Tha a chunntas gu math inntinneach.

Tha Lamb ag ràdh nach eil e coltach gu tàinig puirt-à-beul gu bith a chionn ’s gun robh casg air seinn na pìob-mhòir an cois Achd an Toirmisg ann an seachd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a seachd (1747). Ged a bha an achd a’ cur stad air daoine bho bhith a’ cur orra dad co-cheangailte ri èideadh nan Gàidheal, tha e coltach nach robh cus bacaidh air seinn na pìoba fhèin.

Tha beachd-smuain eile air a bhith ann mu thùs phort-à-beul. ’S e sin gun robh luchd nan ionnsramaidean a’ gleidheadh nam port aca le bhith gan seinn leis a’ ghuth. Bha sin a chionn ’s gun deach casg a chur air cluich fhìdhlean is ionnsramaidean eile le muinntir nan Eaglaisean ann am meadhan an naoidheamh linn deug. Ach tha duilgheadas an cois sin – tha grunn chunntasan ann de phuirt-à-beul roimhe sin.

Chaidh port-à-beul a chruinneachadh ann an Hiort timcheall air seachd ceud deug is seachdad (1770). Bha na Hiortaich air leth measail air danns. Cha robh ach aon ionnsramaidean aca – an tromb. Gu tric, ’s e puirt-à-beul a bhiodh aca airson danns. Rinn Boswell is MacIain dannsa-ruidhle air mullach Dùn Cana ann an Ratharsair ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad ’s a trì (1773). Bha sin deicheadan ro dhùsgadh anns an Eaglais anns an naoidheamh linn deug. Bha puirt-à-beul gu cinnteach a’ dol anns an ochdamh linn deug.

’S ann an ochd ceud deug is còig-deug (1815) **a chaidh an abairt port-à-beul a chur an clò airson a’ chiad turais**. Bha fear Alasdair Caimbeul a’ sgrìobhadh mu dheidhinn daoine a’ dannsa agus a’ seinn, an dà chuid aig an aon àm, ann an Loch nam Madadh ann an Uibhist a Tuath.

Ciamar as urrainn dhut a bhith a’ dannsadh agus a’ seinn aig an aon àm? Tha an Caimbeulach ag ràdh gun robh na boireannaich agus na fireannaich a’ seinn mu seach. “The men and women sing a bar of the tune alternately by which they preserve the respiration free,” sgrìobh e, “and at the same time preserve the accent and rhythms quite accurately.”

Tha Lamb a’ dèanamh iomradh air cunntas a dh’fhaodadh **fianais airson puirt-à-beul a thoirt air ais** don t-siathamh linn deug. Tha i a’ nochdadh ann an còig ceud deug, naochad ’s a trì (1593), nuair a bha na h-ùghdarrasan a’ dìteadh cuid de boireannaich, agus iad ag ràdh gur e bana-bhuidsich a bh’ annta. Dh’aidich triùir

bhoireannach à Eilginn gun robh iad a’ seinn òran-dannsaidh de sheòrsa a bha “deamhnaidh”.

Bhuineadh an t-òran do sheòrsa ris an cainte *gillatrype*. Tha beachd ann gun tàinig am facal *gillatrype* às a’ Ghàidhlig *gille a’ truimb* – ’s e sin port a bhiodh a’ leantainn dòigh-sheinn an truimb. Bha na Hiortaich a’ cleachdadh na dà chuid – an tromb agus an guth – airson ceòl-dannsaidh. Agus tha cunntas na cùirte ag ràdh gum b’ e “*foull hieland sang*” a bh’ anns an òran; thathar an dùil, mar sin, gur ann an Gàidhlig a bha e.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Faclan na Litreach:** Cè Tormod Dòmhnallach: *Keith Norman MacDonald*; ath-fhoillseachadh: *republication [new edition]*; Hiort: *St Kilda*; an-uiridh: *last year*; tromb: *trump [jaw harp, Jew’s harp]*; deamhnaidh: *devilish*;

**Abairtean na Litreach:** thug an deasaiche sùil air tùs na doigh-sheinn sin: *the editor examined the origin of that style of singing*; a chionn ’s gun robh casg air seinn na pìob-mhòir: *because there was a ban on the playing of the bagpipes*; an cois Achd an Toirmisg: *as part of the Act of Proscription*; co-cheangailte ri èideadh nan Gàidheal: *connected with the clothing of the Highlander*; cus bacaidh: *too much of a restriction*; gun robh luchd nan ionnsramaidean a’ gleidheadh nam port aca: *that instrumentalists were preserving their tunes*; gan seinn leis a’ ghuth: *singing them with the voice*; cluich fhìdhlean: *playing of fiddles*; tha duilgheadas an cois sin: *there’s a difficulty with that*; tha grunn chunntasan ann de phuirt-à-beul roimhe sin: *there are a few accounts of puirt-à-beul before that*; measail air danns: *keen on dance*; rinn Boswell is MacIain dannsa-ruidhle air mullach Dùn Cana: *Boswell and Johnson danced a reel on the summit of Dun Caan*; deicheadan ro dhùsgadh anns an Eaglais: *decades before a rise in evangelism in the Church*; Loch nam Madadh ann an Uibhist a Tuath: *Lochmaddy in North Uist*; a’ seinn mu seach: *singing alternately*; nuair a bha na h-ùghdarrasan a’ diteadh cuid de bhoireannaich: *when they authorities were condemning some women*; agus iad ag ràdh gur e bana-bhuidsich a bh’ annta: *saying they were witches*; trìùir bhoireannach à Eilginn: *three women from Elgin*; cunntas na cùirte: *the account of the court [trial]*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** a chaidh an abairt *port-à-beul* a chur an clò airson a’ chiad turais: *that the phrase port-à-beul was put in print for the first time*. Lamb quotes an account by Alasdair Campbell, the author of *Albyn’s Anthology*. It might be historically significant but it is also tediously patronising ... “I witnessed for the first time, persons singing at the same time they dance, and this is called dancing to port-a-beul, being a succedaneous [substitute] contrivance to supply the want of a musical instrument ... and gives an idea of what one might conceive to be customary among tribes but little removed from a state of Nature... [There is] gratification arising from the union of song and dance – rude, it is confessed – but such as pleases the vulgar, and not displeasing to one who feels disposed to join in rustic pleasures...”

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** a dh’fhaodadh fianais airson puirt-à-beul a thoirt air ais don t-siathamh linn deug: *that could take evidence for puirt-à-beul back to the sixteenth century*.

Tha “*Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh*” air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA