

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Leabhraichean Chlann Raghnaill

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 966. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 662 corresponds to Litir 966.

'S docha gum bi sibh air cluinntinn mun Leabhar Dhearg aig Clann Raghnaill. *The Red Book of Clanranald*. **Ann na tritheadan dhen fhicheadamh linn**, nochd aithris ann am pàipear-naidheachd ann an Astràilia gun robhar a' smaoinichadh gun robh an leabhar anns an dùthaich sin. Sgrìobh J L Michie, Àrd-ollamh nan Clasaigean ann an Oilthigh Tìr na Bànrigh, don Chourier-Mail ann am Brisbane gun robh amharas ann gun robh an leabhar uaireigin ann an làmhnan nighean ceann-cinnidh Dòmhnallaich Chlann Raghnaill, a bha a' fuireach ann an Astràilia. Bha e a' sireadh fiosrachaidh bhon luchd-leughaidh mun leabhar.

Chan eil fhios agam dè an rathad a ghabh an rannsachadh sin, ach tha an Leabhar Dhearg a-nise ann an Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba ann an Dùn Èideann. **Chunnaic mi e le mo shùilean fhèin** o chionn ghoirid. Chuir e iongnadh orm cho beag 's a bha e.

Beag no mòr, tha an leabhar gu math prìseil. Bha e air a sgrìobhadh aig toiseach an ochdamh linn deug anns na h-Eileanan an Iar ann an Gàidhlig chlasaigeach le fear Niall MacMhuirich. Bha MacMhuirich a' fuireach ann an Uibhist a Deas, agus bha e na bhall de chinneadh a bh' air a bhith nam bàird is luchd-eachdraidh do chinn-chinnidh nan Dòmhnallach thar ùine mhòr.

Chaidh Seumas 'Oisean' MacMhuirich, no Mac a' Phearsain, a bhuineadh do Bhàideanach, a dh'Uibhist ann an seachd ceud deug is seasgad (1760). Bha e air bàrdachd Oisein fhoillseachadh, ach bha gu leòr ann, leithid Shomhairle MhicIain, a bha a' cumail a-mach gur e MacMhuirich fhèin a chruthaich i. Chaidh MacMhuirich air feadh na Gàidhealtachd, a' coimhead airson làmh-sgrìobhainnean anns an robh seann bhàrdachd Oiseanach. Nochd e aig taigh ceann-cinnidh Chlann Raghnaill.

Chuir an ceann-cinnidh e gu fear Niall MacMhuirich – ogha an duine, dhen aon ainm, a sgrìobh an Leabhar Dhearg. A rèir beul-aithris, chaidh an leabhar a thoirt seachad do Sheumas MacMhuirich air iasad. Ach cha deach a thoirt air ais don teaghlach. Nuair a chaochail Seumas MacMhuirich, bha an leabhar am measg an stuth aige ann an Lunnainn. 'S ann an dèidh sin uaireigin a fhuair Clann Raghnaill an Leabhar Dhearg air ais. Co-dhiù bha e uair sam bith ann an Astràilia, chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh.

Tha leabhar eile ann a tha car coltach – Leabhar Dubh Chlann Raghnaill. Eadar an dà leabhar, tha tòrr fiosrachaidh ann mu dhualchas nan Gàidheal aig deireadh nam meadhan-aoisean. Chaidh an leabhar seo a lorg ann am bùth-leabhraichean ann am Baile Atha Cliath ann an ochd ceud deug is ceathrad (1840)

leis an eachdraiche Albannach, Uilleam Foirbeis Skene. Goirid ro a bhàs thug Skene an Leabhar Dubh do cheann-cinnidh Chlann Raghnaill. Mu cheud bliadhna an dèidh sin, thug Clann Raghnaill an dà leabhar – am fear dearg agus am fear dubh – don nàisean. 'S e sin as coireach gu bheil iad leis an Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta, seach an Leabharlann Nàiseanta.

Bha barrachd air aon ùghdar aig an Leabhar Dhubh. B' e am fear a bu mhotha dhiubh Crìsdean Peutan, ball de theaghlach ainmeil eile. Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun robh e na oide aig meur Aontraim Chlann Dòmhnail. Ma tha sibh anns an Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta uair sam bith, mholainn gun toir sibh sùil air an dà leabhar bheag sin – a tha cho mòr ann an dualchas nan Gàidheal.

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Faclan na Litreach: Àrd-ollamh nan Clasaigean: *Professor of Classics*; Oilthigh Tìr na Bànrigh: *The University of Queensland*; Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba: *The National Museum of Scotland*; Bàideanach: *Badenoch*; Baile Atha Cliath: *Dublin*.

Abairtean na Litreach: gun robhar a' smaoinichadh gun robh an leabhar anns an dùthaich sin: *that it was thought the book was in that country*; gun robh an leabhar uaireigin ann an làmhnan nighean ceann-cinnidh Dòmhnallaich Chlann Raghnaill: *that the book was at one time in the hands of the daughter of the Clanranald Chief*; bha e na bhall de chinneadh a bh' air a bhith nam bàird is luchd-eachdraidh do chinn-chinnidh nan Dòmhnallach thar ùine mhòr: *he was a member of a line that had been poets and historians to the MacDonald chiefs over a long time*; bha e air bàrdachd Oisein fhoillseachadh: *he had published the poetry of Ossian*; bha gu leòr ann, leithid Shomhairle MhicIain, a bha a' cumail a-mach gur e MacMhuirich fhèin a chruthaich i: *there were plenty [of people], such as Samuel Johnson, that were maintaining that MacPherson himself created it*; a' coimhead airson làmh-sgrìobhainnean: *looking for manuscripts*; ogha an duine, dhen aon ainm, a sgrìobh an Leabhar Dearg: *the grandfather of the man, of the same name, who wrote the Red Book*; chaidh an leabhar a thoirt seachad air iasad: *the book was loaned*; co-dhiù bha e uair sam bith ann an Astràilia, chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh: *whether it was ever in Australia, I cannot say*; 'S e sin as coireach gu bheil iad leis an Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta, seach an Leabharlann Nàiseanta: *that's the reason they are owned by the National Museum, rather than the National Library*; barrachd air aon ùghdar: *more than one author*; b' e am fear a bu mhotha dhiubh Crìsdean Peutan, ball de theaghlach ainmeil eile: *the most important of them was Christopher Beaton, a member of another famous family*; thathar a' smaoinichadh gun robh e na oide aig meur Aontraim Chlann Dòmhnail: *it's thought he was a tutor for the Antrim branch of the MacDonalds*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Anns na tritheadan dhen fhicheadamh linn: *In the 1930s 'the thirties of the twentieth century'*. Another way of saying it would be 'anns na naoi ceud deug 's tritheadan' but that is a bit awkward and Gaelic speakers will often use the English form 'anns na 1930s'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Chunnaic mi e le mo shùilean fhèin: *I saw it with my own eyes*.

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