

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Na Ceiltich (5)

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. This is Litir 974. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 670 corresponds to Litir 974.

Yan, tyan, tethera, methera, pimp, sethera, lethera, hovera, dovera, dick. Bha mi a’ cunntadh gu deich – ach dè an cànan a bh’ ann? Canaidh mi a-rithist e, ach leanaidh mi an uair sin gu ceithir-deug. Yan, tyan, tethera, methera, pimp, sethera, lethera, hovera, dovera, dick, yanadick, tyanadick, tetheradick, metheradick.

Tha e car coltach ri Cuimris ’s dòcha. Co-dhiù, tha pimp a’ ciallachadh ‘còig’ ann an Cuimris agus sa chànan seo. Agus chan eil e gu tur eucoltach ris a’ Ghàidhlig – yan, a h-aon, yanadick, a h-aon-deug. ’S e seo an dòigh anns am biodh tuathanaich gu traidiseanta a’ cunntadh an cuid chaorach ann am Cumbria.

Tha daoine ag argamaid mu thùs an t-siostaim-chunntaidh seo. Tha cuid ag ràdh gun tàinig e bho Sheann Lochlannais no bhon t-Seann Bheurla. Ach tha feadhainn eile ag ràdh gun robh e air a bhonntachadh nuair a bha Seann Bhreatannais – cànan Ceilteach – aig na daoine. Gu cinnteach, bha an cànan sin aig na daoine fad ùine mus d’ fhuair na h-Anglaich làmh-an-uachdair orra.

Co-dhiù, fàgaidh mi aon phìos fiosrachaidh eile agaibh an-dràsta. Bha mi ag èisteachd ri tè a’ cunntadh chaorach ann am bhidio air an eadar-lìon. Bha i a’ cunntadh gu fichead, a’ cur sgòr na maide, agus a’ tòiseachadh a-rithist is a’ dol gu fichead a-rithist. ’S e siostam ficheadach a bh’ ann. Agus dè am facal a bh’ aice airson fichead? Seadh – *figgit!* Nise tha sin cho coltach ris na cànanan Gàidhealach! Agus bha i à Lincolnshire, seach iar-thuath Shasainn.

Tha e a’ cur nar cuimhne gu bheil dualchas Ceilteach aig Sasainn cuideachd, ged nach eil e cho follaiseach an-diugh. Agus tha sin gam thoirt gu Rheged. Taobh a-muigh na Cùirn, na Cuimrigh, agus Shrath Chluaidh, b’ e Rheged an rìoghachd Bhreatannach mu dheireadh ann am Breatainn. Tha mi a’ ciallachadh le sin Breatannach Ceilteach.

Bha Rheged timcheall far a bheil Cumbria an-diugh. Cumbria – dùthaich nan Cuimreach. Chan eil sinn buileach cinnteach cà’ robh crìochan na dùthcha, ach faodaidh sinn a bhith cinnteach gun robh i ann, oir tha i clàraichte aig sgrìobhadairean Cuimreach. Tha dùil gun robh i a’ dol a-steach gu ceann a deas na h-Alba anns a’ cheann a tuath, agus gu ruige Siorrachd Iorc anns a’ cheann a deas.

Thathar a’ smaoinichadh gun d’ fhuair an rìoghachd a h-ainm bhon treubh Cheilteach – na *Brigantes*. Dh’atharraich Brigant gu Breged gu Rheged. Thàinig i gu bith às dèidh do na Ròmanaich falbh, timcheall na bliadhna ceithir cheud is caogad (450). B’ e a’ chiad rìgh aca fear Gwrast.

Bha Gwrast air a leantainn le a mhac a bu shine – Meirchion. An dèidh bàs Mheirchion, anns a’ bhliadhna còig ceud, trithead ’s a còig (535), chaidh an rìoghachd a dhèanamh na dhà leth – Rheged a’ Chinn a Tuath agus Rheged a’ Chinn a Deas. B’ e Cathair Luail prìomh bhaile na rìoghachd mu thuath.

Goirid an dèidh sin, tha sinn a’ cluinntinn mun rìgh a b’ ainmeile aig Rheged – fear Urien. Bha esan na rìgh anns a’ cheann a tuath. Ach **bha nàimhdean air gach taobh dheth**, gu h-àraidh na Berniciaich air an taobh sear, ach cuideachd Rìgh Shrath Chluaidh – Breatannach eile – anns a’ cheann a tuath. Tuilleadh air seo an-ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Cuimris: *Welsh*; Seann Lochlannais: *Old Norse*; Berniciaich: *Bernicians*.

Abairtean na Litreach: dè an cànan a bh’ ann?: *what language was it?*; canaidh mi a-rithist e: *I’ll say it again*; leanaidh mi an uair sin gu ceithir-deug: *then I’ll continue to fourteen*; tha daoine ag argamaid mu thùs an t-siostaim-chunntaidh seo: *people argue about this counting system*; air a bhonntachadh: *established*; mus d’ fhuair na h-Anglaich làmh-an-uachdair orra: *before the Angles came to dominate them*; a’ cur sgòr na maide: *putting a notch in her stick*; seach iar-thuath Shasainn: *rather than the north-west of England*; taobh a-muigh na Cùirn, na Cuimrigh, agus Shrath Chluaidh: *outside Cornwall, Wales and Strathclyde*; faodaidh sinn a bhith cinnteach gun robh i ann: *we can be sure that it existed*; clàraichte aig sgrìobhadairean Cuimreach: *recorded by Welsh writers*; gu ruige Siorrachd Iorc anns a’ cheann a deas: *to Yorkshire in the south*; thàinig i gu bith às dèidh do na Ròmanaich falbh: *it came into being after the Romans left*; thathar a’ smaoineachadh gun d’ fhuair an rìoghachd a h-ainm: *it’s thought that the kingdom got its name*; air a leantainn le a mhac a bu shine: *followed by his eldest son*; chaidh an rìoghachd a dhèanamh na dhà leth: *the kingdom was split in two*; b’ e Cathair Luail prìomh bhaile na rìoghachd mu thuath: *Carlisle was the capital of the northern kingdom*; tha sinn a’ cluinntinn mun rìgh a b’ ainmeile aig Rheged: *we hear about Rheged’s most famous king*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *In her book ‘The Inner Hebrides and their Legends’, Otta Swire writes of ‘a Broadford man, a shepherd at Skeabost in my mother’s childhood, who used to count sheep by “fairy counting”, or so he told the children.’ And his counting system was ‘yan, tan, tethera, pethera, pimp ...’ ie almost identical to the system I gave in the Litir. I do not know if this man was a native of Skye and a Gael, or whether he or his family had originated in the south. Can anyone out there enlighten me? You can email me on rmac@uags.scot.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: *bha nàimhdean air gach taobh dheth: there were enemies on all sides of him.*

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