

An Litir Bheag **le Ruairidh MacIlleathain**

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 392 (which corresponds to Litir 696). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about a small new book about two Gaelic islands. Those are Aranmore in Ireland and Barra in Scotland. The book is trilingual. Its title in Scottish Gaelic is Dùthchas na Mara. Its title in Irish Gaelic is Dúchas na Mara. The word dùthchas is still alive in both Gaelic languages.

But what is the English for Dùthchas na Mara? The English title the authors chose is Belonging to the Sea.

The authors, Iain Mackinnon and Ruth Brennan, explain that the word dùthchas came from dùth. Dùth means 'land'. But they say that dùthchas is just as meaningful in relation to the sea as it is to the land.

But what exactly is dùthchas? To explain it, they turn to the Gaelic scholar, John MacInnes. Dùthchas is a total field of understanding encompassing,' he says, 'not so much a landscape, not a sense of geography alone, nor of history alone, but a formal order of experience in which all these are merged.'

He continues by saying that indigenous people have a unique view

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu leabhar beag ùr mu dhà eilean Ghàidhealach. 'S iad sin Árainn Mhór ann an Èirinn agus Barraigh ann an Alba. Tha an leabhar trì-chànanach. 'S e a thiotal ann an Gàidhlig *Dùthchas na Mara*. 'S e a thiotal ann an Gaeilge *Dúchas na Mara*. Tha am facal *dùthchas* beò fhathast anns an dà Ghàidhlig.

Ach dè a' Bheurla a tha air *Dùthchas na Mara*? 'S e an tiotal Beurla a thagh na h-ùghdaran *Belonging to the Sea*.

Tha na h-ùghdaran, Iain MacFhionghain agus Ruth Ní Bhraonáin a' mìneachadh gun tàinig *dùthchas* on fhacal *dùth*. Tha *dùth* a' ciallachadh 'talamh' no 'fearann'. Ach tha iad ag ràdh gu bheil *dùthchas* a' buntainn ris a' mhuir, a cheart cho math ris an tìr.

Ach dè dìreach a tha ann an *dùthchas*? Airson a mhìneachadh, tha iad a' tionndadh don sgoilear Ghàidhlig, Iain MacAonghuis. 'S e na tha ann an *dùthchas* raon-tuigse làn anns a bheil,' tha e ag ràdh, 'barrachd na uachdar na dùthcha no cruinn-eòlas leotha fhèin, no faireachdainn dìreach mun eachdraidh, ach rian-fiosrachaidh foirmeil san tig iad seo uile còmhla.'

Tha e a' leantainn le bhith ag ràdh gu bheil sealladh sònraichte aig *dùthchas*-

of their country. Strangers sometimes characterize the Highlands as an empty wilderness. To the person with a native sensibility, it is a dynamic land. It is even heroic, heavily populated by historical figures.

I do many workshops with English speaking people. Most of them do not relate to the land as native people. But when they hear about the dùthchas of the Gael, they are envious.

But it is a sorry thing that the dùthchas of the Gael is not as strong as it was. We must strengthen it. We should be proud that we are an indigenous people.

Mackinnon and Brennan say that dùthchas of the sea is still alive in Aranmore and Barra. That is the case because the Gaelic language is still alive in those islands. May she survive a long time, and her dùthchas along with her.

aich air an dùthaich aca. Bidh coigrich uaireannan a' tomhas na Gàidhealtachd mar fhàsach falamh. Don dùthchasach, 's e fearann beothail a tha ann. Tha e eadhon gaisgeil agus a' cur thairis le pearsaichean eachdraidheil.

Bidh mi a' dèanamh tòrr bhùthan-obrach le muinntir na Beurla. Chan eil càirdeas aig a' chuid mhòir dhiubh don tìr mar luchd-dùthchais. Ach nuair a chluinneas iad mu dhùthchas nan Gàidheal, tha farmad orra.

Ach 's e rud duilich a tha ann nach eil dùthchas nan Gàidheal fhèin cho làidir 's a bha. Feumaidh sinn a neartachadh. Bu chòir dhuinn a bhith moiteil gur e luchd-dùthchais a tha annainn.

Tha MacFhionghain agus Ní Bhraonáin ag ràdh gu bheil dùthchas mara fhathast beò ann an Árainn Mhór agus Barraigh. Tha sin fìor air sgàth 's gu bheil a' Ghàidhlig fhathast beò anns na h-eileanan sin. Guma fada beò a mhaireas i, agus a dùthchas leatha.