

# **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 626 (which corresponds to Litir 930). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*Years ago I wrote in the Litrichean about the Reverend John Ross. He was famous as a missionary in Korea and China in the nineteenth century. He belonged to the area of the seaboard villages in Easter Ross. He spoke Gaelic as his first language. He learned Korean to fluency. And, apparently, he spoke ten other languages. He translated the New Testament into Korean.*

*Matters were not easy for Christian missionaries in China. At the end of the nineteenth century there was the Boxer Rebellion. Eight countries – western ones and Japan – sent armies to China. Britain was among those countries. They subdued the Chinese.*

*Thousands of Christians were killed in the revolution. The church that the Rev. John Ross established was burned to the ground. Finally, Ross returned to Scotland and he died in Edinburgh.*

*Why am I thinking about John Ross? It's because a Chinese manuscript was found in the Archives of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh. It's been in the Archives for a long time. But it's in Chinese.*

O chionn bhliadhnaichean, sgrìobh mi anns na Litrichean mun Urramach Iain Ros. Bha e ainmeil mar mhiseanaraidh ann an Coirìa is Sìona anns an naoidheamh linn deug. Bhuineadh e do sgìre nam bailtean mara ann an Ros an Ear. Bha Gàidhlig aige mar chiad chànan. Dh'ionnsaich e Coirìanais gu fileantachd. Agus, a rèir aithris, bha deich cànanan eile aige. Dh'eadar-theangaich e an Tiomnadh Nuadh gu Coirìanais.

Cha robh cùisean furasta do mhiseanaraidhean Crìosdail ann an Sìona. Aig deireadh an naoidheamh linn deug bha Ar-a-mach nam Bogsairean ann. Chuir ochd dùthchannan – feadhainn Siarach agus Iapan – armailtean gu ruige Sìona. Bha Breatainn am measg nan dùthchannan sin. Cheannaich iad na Sìonaich.

Chaidh na mìltean de Chrìosdaidhean a mharbhadh anns an ar-a-mach. Chaidh an eaglais a stèidhich an t-Urr. Iain Ros a losgadh gu làr. Aig a' cheann thall, thill Ros a dh'Alba agus chaochail e ann an Dùn Èideann.

Carson a tha mi a' beachdachadh air Iain Ros? Tha, a chionn 's gun deach làmh-sgrìobhainn Sìonach a lorg ann an Tasglann Eaglais na h-Alba ann an Dùn Èideann. Tha i air a bhith anns an Tasglann airson ùine mhòr. Ach tha i ann an Sìonais. Cha robh

*Nobody knew how important it was. Recently it was translated.*

*The manuscript was published by the Emperor Kuang Hsu after the Boxer Rebellion. That was in 1901. The Emperor was wanting the people to be positive towards Christians. He wanted there to be peace. The manuscript is important as evidence for what happened at that time.*

*After the rebellion, when there was peace, John Ross was involved in conversations with the Chinese Government. That was about reopening Protestant churches. There is a good chance that it was Ross that took the manuscript home to Scotland.*

*The Protestant churches were then open for decades. They closed again in the Cultural Revolution in the sixties and seventies. But that's another story.*

fios aig duine dè cho cudromach 's a bha i. O chionn ghoirid chaidh a h-eadar-theangachadh.

Chaidh an làmh-sgrìobhainn a chur a-mach leis an Ìmpire Kuang Hsu an dèidh Ar-a-mach nam Bogsairean. Bha sin ann an naoi ceud deug 's a h-aon (1901). Bha an t-Ìmpire ag iarraidh air a' mhòr-shluagh a bhith bàigheil ri Crìosdaidhean. Bha e ag iarraidh gum biodh sìth ann. Tha an làmh-sgrìobhainn cudromach mar fhianais air na thachair aig an àm sin.

An dèidh an ar-a-mach, nuair a bha sìth ann, bha Iain Ros an sàs ann an còmhradh le Riaghaltas Shìonaidh. Bha sin mu dheidhinn eaglaisean Pròstanach fhosgladh às ùr. Tha deagh theans ann gur e Ros a thug dhachaigh an làmh-sgrìobhainn a dh'Alba.

Bha na h-eaglaisean Pròstanach fosgailte an uair sin airson deicheadan. Dhùin iad a-rithist anns an Rèabhlaid Chultaraich anns na seasgadan is seachdadan. Ach 's e sgeul eile a tha sin.