

stitches IN time

EXHIBITION OF TRADITIONAL CLOTHING ON INIS OÍRR

seanstÍL éADACH

taispeántas d'éadaí traidisiúnta in INIS OÍRR





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Introduction

Many writers, artists and scholars visiting the Aran Islands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were struck by the manner in which the islanders dressed. Their take on traditional Irish dress codes lent them a distinctive appearance, even among their contemporaries in the West of Ireland. A style or costume evolved here which reflected local raw materials, traditional skills in textiles, physical conditions on the island, the demands of work and a shared aesthetic. This style of dressing was still evident among older members of the community until the 1960s. Now that it has disappeared, a group of women on Inis Oírr have assembled an exhibition of the island costume as they remember it. They have gone rooting in presses and attics to find old items of family clothing and, with the help of photographs and their own recollections, they have brought to life, once again, the traditional Aran 'look'.

A distinctive dress code

Homespun fabric and homemade clothes were customary throughout nineteenth century Ireland but the clothes were worn in a particular way on the Aran islands. The only items regarded as being truly unique to the islands were the cowhide shoes 'bróga úrleathair' and the woven belt 'an crios'. The outer sleeveless 'veist' gave the men a signature look while layering and colour played their part in making the Aran costume distinctive. Blue, for example, was always used for the back of the 'veist' while the front was left a natural grey-brown (dath glas). The women's famous red skirts (cótaí dearga) were not unique to the Aran islands, but they were widely worn here. The heavy brown shawls much-loved by island women were popular throughout County Galway and were in fact, expensive imports from Scottish factories.

Whatever their origins, traditional dress codes persisted longer on the Aran islands than elsewhere in Ireland and so caught the attention of the modern world through the work of visiting artists, photographers, ethnologists and writers such as John Millington Synge. They popularised notions of Aran island identity based on the virtues of simplicity, self-sufficiency, frugality, antiquity and hardiness. All of these values can be read into the traditional Aran costume.

Réamhrá

Ba chúis iontais é gléas na n-oileánach do chuid mhaith scríbhneoirí, ealaíontóirí agus scoláirí a thug cuairt ar Oileáin Árann ag deireadh na naoú haoise déag tús na fichiú haoise. Bhreathnais difríocht ó dhreamanna eile in Iarthar na hÉireann mar gheall ar an mbealach a gcaithidís an gléas traidisiúnta. Cuireadh an gléas in oiriúint don bhunábhar áitiúil, do scileanna traidisiúnta teicstíle, do choinníollacha fisiciúla an oileáin, don éileamh oibre agus don tuairim chomónta faoin rud a bhí slachtmhar. Bhíodh an gléas seo á chaitheamh ag an dream a bhí suas sna blianta suas chomh deireanach leis na 1960aidí. Mar go bhfuil sé imithe uilig as an saol anois chuir grúpa ban in Inis Oírr taispeántas d'éadaí traidisiúnta an oileáin, mar is cuimhin leosan é, le chéile. Chuaigh siad ag cuardach na seanéadaí i gcófraí agus áilleir agus le cúnamh grianghraf agus a gcuimhni féin tá bailiúchán acu den ghléas traidisiúnta.

Gléas ar leith

Bhí éadaí a bhí déanta agus sniofa sa mbaile coitianta in Éirinn sa naoú haois déag ach go gcaití ar bhealach áirithe iad ar Oileáin Árann. Glactar leis nach gcaití na bróga úrleathair, déanta as craiceann bó, agus an bheilt fhite ar a dtugtar 'crios' in áiteacha eile seachas sna hoileáin seo. B'ábhar suntais iad na fir lena gcuid veisteanna gan mhuintill in éineacht le go raibh baint mhór ag dath agus ag an gcaoi a gcaití na brait le gléas ar leith Árann. Bhíodh dath gorm mar shampla ar dhroim na veiste ach d'fhágtá dath glas ar an bpiosa tosaigh. Ní in Oileáin Árann amháin a chaití na cótaí dearga cáiliúla ach go rabhadar an-choitianta ann. Bhí an seál donn 'Paisley,' a raibh an-tóir ag na mná sna hoileáin air, coitianta go maith in Iarthar na hÉireann ach ba isteach as monarchana in Albain a thugtaí na seálta daora seo.

Cibé cé as ar dtáinig siad mhair na héadaí traidisiúnta in Oileáin Árann níos faide ná mar mhair siad in aon áit eile in Éirinn agus dá bharr seo tugtar suntas dóibh sa lá atá inniu ann trí obair ealaíontóirí cuairte, grianghrafadóirí, eitneolaithe agus scríbhneoirí ar nós John Millington Synge. Chuir siad féiniúlacht Oileáin Árann chun cinn bunaithe ar shimplíocht, féindóthanacht, tiosaíocht, ársacht agus cruas. Is féidir na luachanna seo uilig a bhraith in éadaí traidisiúnta Árann.



Host family to visiting scholar Thomas Mason, Inis Oírr, 1929.

An teaghlach ar fhan an scólaire cuairte Thomas Mason leo in Inis Oírr, 1929



the men's costume ÉADACH NA BHFEAR

"There were always three pockets in the veist. In it a man would keep things like tobacco, a box of matches, snuff, a couple of nails, rosary beads, a piece of blessed Palm, a few coins maybe. Sometimes, they also had a holy medal pinned inside the collar to protect them at sea".

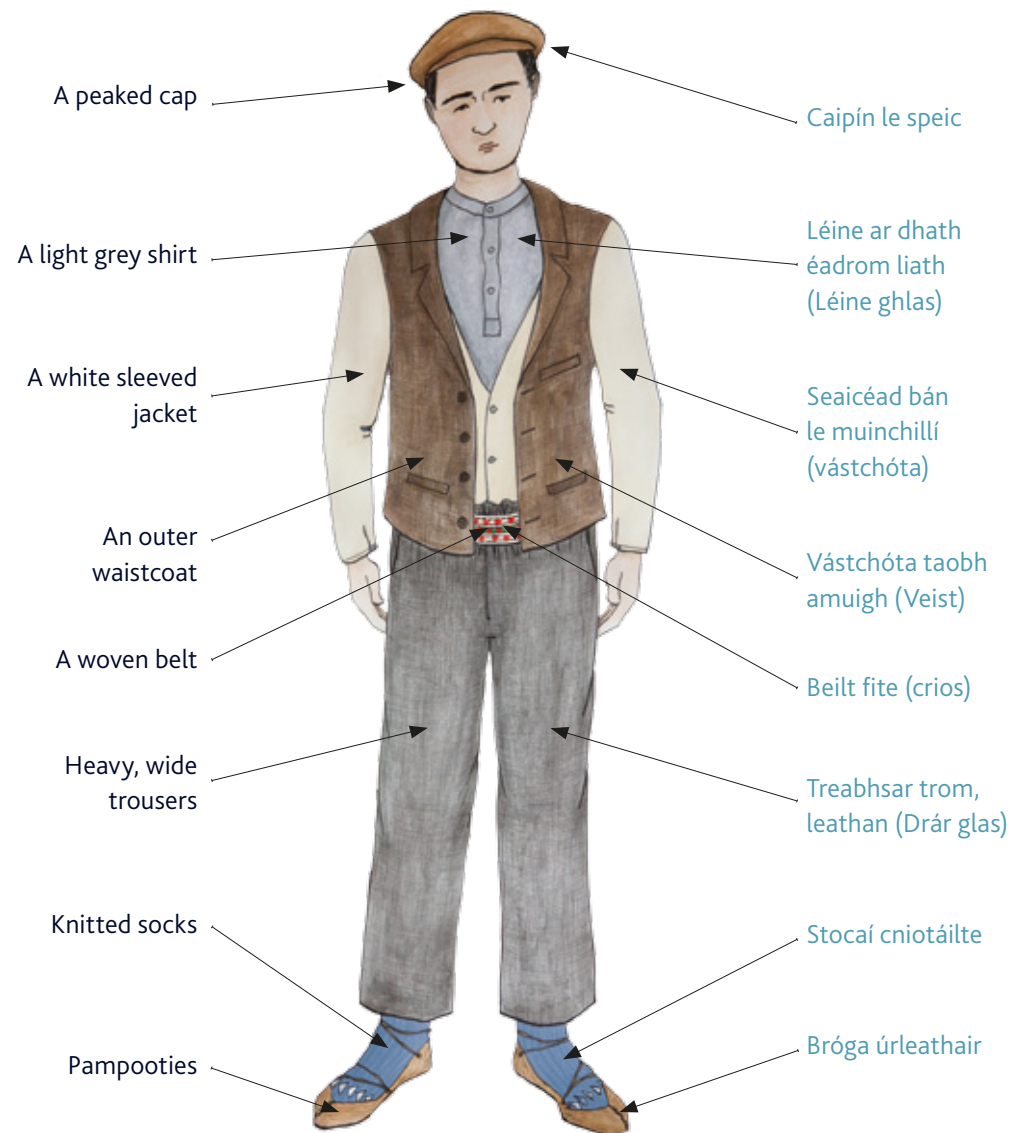
"There was a lot of work in making a veist or a pair of good trousers".

"Bhíodh trí phóca sa veist i gcónaí. Iontu seo choinníodh na fir tobac, bosca cipíní solais, snaois, cúpla tairne, paidrín, píosa Pailme beannaíthe agus b'fhéidir cúpla bonn airgid. Bhíodh bonn beannaíthe ar an taobh istigh den chába acu corr uair freisin le hiad a chosaint ar an bhfarraige".

"Bhí obair go leor i gceist le veist nó péire maith treabhsair a dhéanamh"..

Men wore several layers of homespun woollen clothes to keep them warm and dry as they worked outdoors in all weather. The layers varied according to the seasons.

Bhíodh glac mhaith brait éadaí, a bhíodh sníofa agus déanta sa mbaile, á gcaitheamh ag na fir le go mbeidís te agus tirim ag obair taobh amuigh i chuire chineál aimsire. D'athraidís na brait de réir na séasúr.





The typical men's costume on Inis Oírr consisted of:

- A lightweight grey woollen or cotton collarless shirt worn next to the skin (**léine ghlas**).
- A heavier blue, woollen over-shirt (**léine ghorm**). In later years, this was replaced by a blue knitted jersey (**geansaí**).
- A jacket (**vástchóta**) of white homespun wool. This was often worn instead of the léine ghorm in summer or as an extra layer in winter.
- An outer sleeveless jacket (**veist**) of heavier wool. The back was always dyed blue while the front was left in natural grey-brown or 'dath glas'. The front was lined with undyed white wool (**báinín**). It had a revered collar (**cába**) and three pockets.
- Heavy, wide woollen trousers (**drár glas**).
- A second pair of lightweight white woollen under-trousers (**drár bán**). In warm summer weather, the under-trousers could be worn on their own. They had slits at the bottom to make it easier to roll them up to keep dry when launching a currach for example.
- Men sometimes had a pair of good trousers (**treabhsar**) for special occasions, such as getting married or going to Galway. They were often borrowed from a neighbour or friend.
- A woven belt (**crios**) was wrapped around the waist several times and tucked in at the back to hold up the drawers or trousers.
- Knee-length knitted socks (**stocaí**). These were usually black or navy blue with a triangular pattern on the front at the toes and a couple of stripes at the top. Socks were held in place with home-made garters (**doirtéil**).
- Homemade shoes (**bróga úrleathair**), now widely referred to as 'pampooties', were made from untanned cowhide fastened around the foot with laces made from two pieces of fishing string (**dorú**). They gave good grip on wet rocks, when harvesting seaweed for example, and were perfect for wearing in a light skin or canvas boat (**currach**).
- A soft-peaked cap (**caipín speic**) or a felt hat (**hata feilte**) bought in Galway was most commonly worn on Inis Oírr. The Scottish style 'tam-a-shanter', a knitted beret with a pom-pom decoration, was popular on Inis Mór.

Because the Aran island men did not traditionally wear overcoats or rainproof jackets, they relied on the natural oils in their woollen clothes to keep them reasonably dry in wet weather. Some fishermen experimented with home-made oilers, created by rubbing linseed oil into heavy calico.

Ba iad na gnáthéadaí a chaitheadh fir Inis Oírr ná:

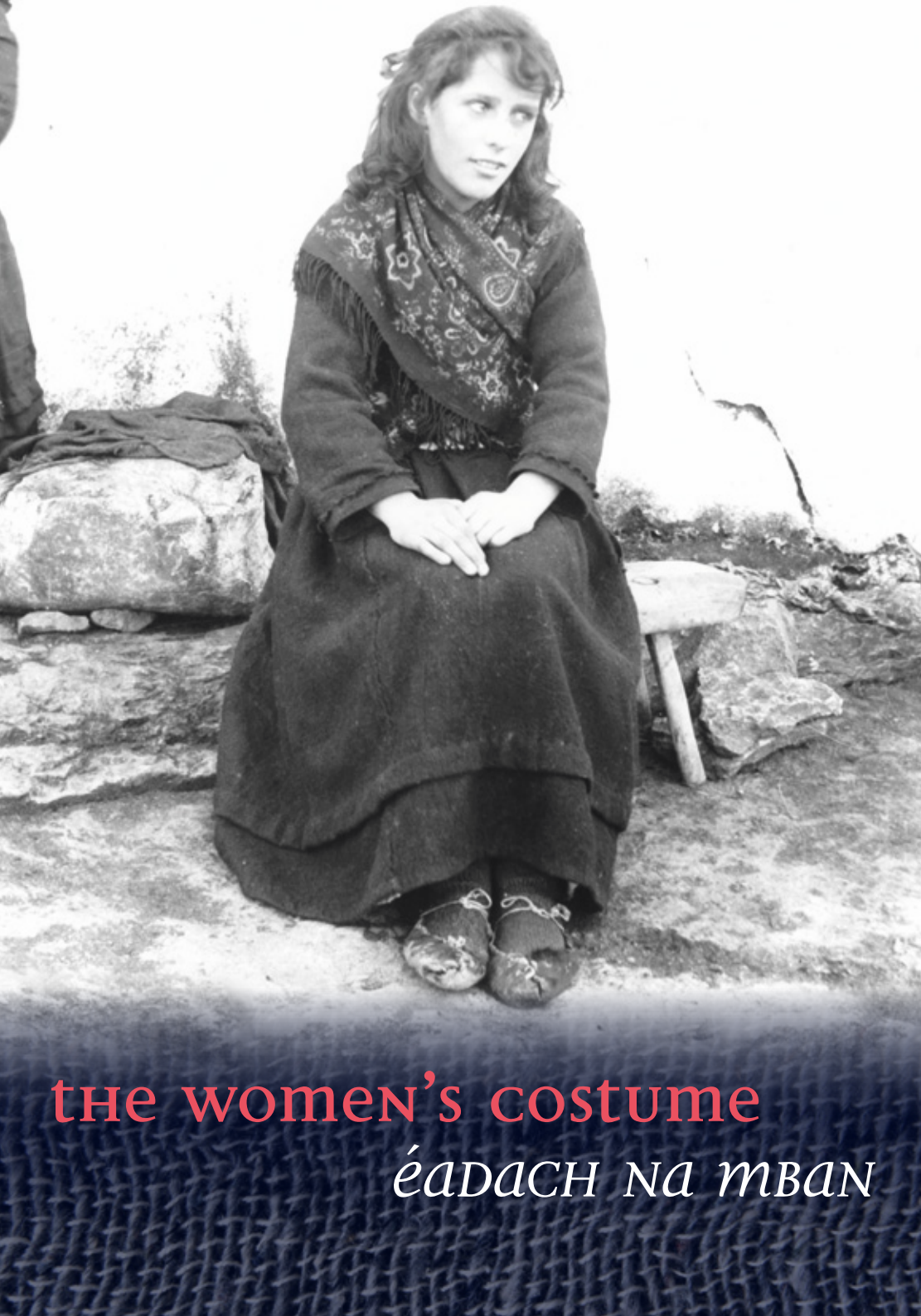
- **Léine ghlas** - seo léine éadrom liath gan cába déanta as cadás nó olann a chaití leis an gcráiceann.
- **Léine ghorm** - léine olann níos troime le caitheamh os cionn léine. Sna blianta níos deireanaí chaití geansaí gorm cniotáilte in áit an léine ghorm.
- **Vástchóta** - Seaicéad bán d'olann a sníomhadh sa bhaile. Is minic go gcaití é seo sa samhradh in áit an léine ghorm nó mar bhrat eile sa ngeimhreadh.
- **Veist** - seaicéad olann níos troime gan mhuinchillí a chaití os cionn na n-éadaí eile. Bhíodh droim na veiste daite gorm agus d'fhágtáí an dath glas ar an bpíosa tosaigh. Bhíodh líneáil báinín ar na píosaí tosaigh. Bhíodh cába uirthi agus trí phóca.
- **Drár glas** - treabhsar trom, leathan déanta as olann.
- Chaitheadh na fir drár bán faoi seo, bhíodh an drár bán níos éadroime. Chaití an drár bán leis féin sa samhradh nuair a bhíodh sé te. Bhíodh scoilte iontu in íochtar le go mbeadh sé furasta iad a iompú suas agus a choinneáil tirim nuair a bheidís ag sá currach mar shampla.
- **Corr uair bheadh treabhsar maith ag fear d'ócáidí speisialta ar nós lena bhainín nó le dul go Gaillimh. Gheobhaidís treabhsar ar íasacht ó chomharsan mura mbíodh ceann maith acu.**
- Choinníte suas an drár nó treabhsar le crios a bhíodh casta timpeall an bhásta cúpla babhta agus saíte isteach thiar ar an droim.
- Stocaí cniotáilte a théadh go glúin. Bhíodh dubh nó dúghorm de ghnáth le pátrún triantánach ag áit na méaracha agus cúpla líne ar bharr na stocaí. **Doirtéal** a dhéantaí sa mbaile a bhíodh acu ag coinneáil suas na stocaí.
- **Bróga úrleathair**, ar a dtugtar 'pampooties' anois, dhéantaí iad seo as cráiceann bó agus dhá pháosa dorú a bhíodh iontu mar iallacha bróige. Bhí greim maith ag na bróga úrleathair ar charraigeacha fliucha, nuair a bhí ag baint feamainne mar shampla agus iad thar a bheith feilúnach sa gcurrach canbháis nó craicinn mar nach bpollaidís í.
- Is caipín speice nó hata feilte a cheannaítí i nGaillimh is mó a chaití in Inis Oírr. Bhí 'tam-a-shanter' na hAlban, beret cniotáilte le bobailín, coitianta in Inis Mór.

Ni raibh sé d'fhaisean ag na hiascairí cóta ná seaicéad báistí a chaitheamh. Bhíodís ag brath ar olaí nádúrtha a n-éadaí olann le hiad a choinneáil réasúnta tirim san aimsir fhliucha. Baineadh triail as "oilers" baile, sé sin chuimhlí ola rois isteach i gceailteacó láidre.

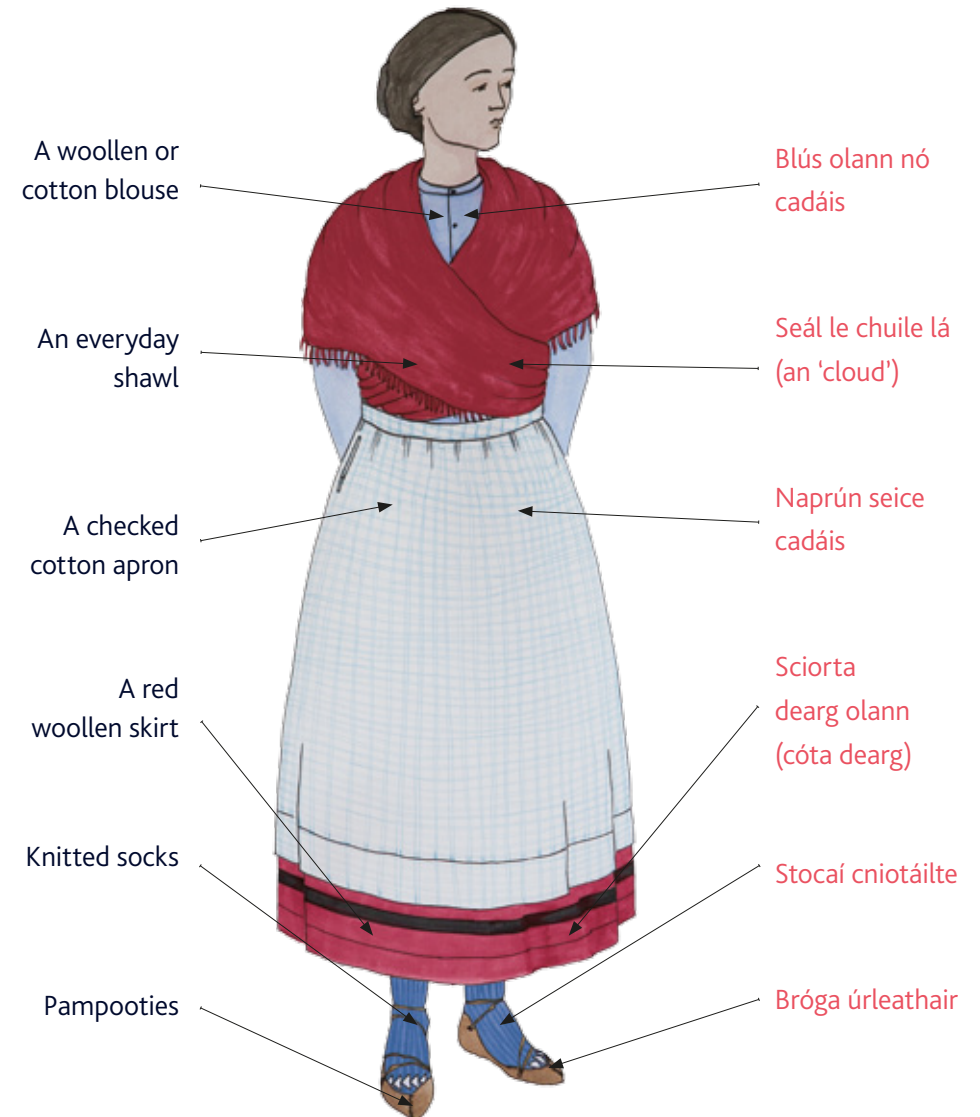


Women also dressed in layers with a checked apron over their heavy woollen skirts to keep them clean. Clothes, especially working clothes, were rarely washed but were regularly mended and adjusted.

Bhíodh glac brait éadaí ar na mná iad féin, chaithidís sciorta déanta as ollann agus naprún seice os a chionn le é choinneáil glan. Ní níte na héadaí rómhinic, go mórmhór éadaí oibre, ach bhíidís coinnithe deisithe agus cóirithe.



the women's costume ÉADACH NA MBAN



The typical women's clothing worn on Inis Oírr consisted of:

- A heavy cotton **blouse** with a high collar (**bóna**) and buttons down the front
- A long undershirt (**léine**) worn next to the skin. This was often made with recycled cotton flour bags.
- A red skirt or petticoat (**cóta dearg**) of heavy homespun wool. This was a wide, pleated skirt with a cotton waistband and strings or a woven crios at the waist. Both string and pleats made it easy to adjust the skirt when necessary, such as during pregnancy. A deep welt and hem also made it easy to adjust the length. The welt and hem were often decorated with a band of black velvet.
- A white underskirt of homespun wool (**cóta bán**) was worn under the red skirt.
- A blue and white checked cotton apron was worn over the outer skirt to keep it clean. In addition to household chores, caring for children and cooking, island women carried out heavy work transporting dung and seaweed to the fields in baskets on their backs, sewing potatoes and looking after calves, pigs and fowl.
- An everyday shawl (**an 'cloud'**) was worn indoors and outdoors. It was crossed over the chest in front and tied in a knot at the waist. Homemade shawls were usually knitted or crocheted. The fringes were known as **scóga**.
- '**An seál mór**' a heavier shawl was worn as an overcoat for special occasions and for going to mass. A common favourite was the fancy brown Paisley shawl which women acquired on marriage.
- Women also wore knitted knee-length socks and pampooties. In later years, when they could afford to buy shoes, they wore black leather brogues.
- Other decorative items, such as ribbons, headscarves or brooches, were worn to add a little flair to the traditional costume

"In later years, when money became more plentiful, women usually had two red skirts, one for everyday use and a good one for Sundays and special occasions. The latter was known as a **cóta cóirthe** and had a smoother finish."

Ba iad na gnáthéadaí a chaitheadh mná Inis Oírr ná:

- *Blús trom déanta as cadás le **bóna** ard agus cnaipí anuas chun tosaigh.*
- *Istigh lena gcráiceann bhíodh fo-léine fada. Is minic gurb as máillíní plúir, a bhíodh déanta as cadás, a dhéantaí an léine seo.*
- *Cóta dearg - Sciorta nó peireacót (petticoat) déanta sa mbaile as olann throm. Ba sciorta leathan pléatáilte é seo le banda cadáis, agus le sreang cadáis nó crios ag an mbásta. Bhí sé furasta mar gheall ar an sreang agus na pléataí an sciorta a athrú nuair a bhí gá leis mar shampla nuair a bheadh an bhean torrach. D'fhéadfai ligean le fad an sciorta mar go mbíodh welt (lasca) mór orthu. Bhíodh banda dubh de ghnáth ar na cótaí dearga in íochtar nó ar an inneach.*
- *Chaitheadís cóta bán a bhíodh déanta d'olann faoi seo.*
- *Bhíodh naprún seice orthu taobh amuigh den chóta dearg le é a choinneáil glan. In éineacht le cúramai teaghlaigh agus tí thugadh mná an oileáin faoi obair throm eile, thugaidís bualtrach agus feamainn i gcléibh ar a ndroim chomh fada leis na garranta, bhídís ag cur na bhfataí agus ag breathnú i ndiaidh laonna, muca agus cearca.*
- *Bhíodh seál nó 'cloud' orthu chuile lá istigh sa teach agus taobh amuigh, agus é curtha thar a chéile chun tosaigh agus ceangailte le snaidhm taobh thiar ag an mbásta. Bhíodh na seálta baile cniotáilte, cróiseáilte nó sníofa. Thugtaí scóga ar an bpíosa a bhíodh síos as.*
- *Chaití an seál mór mar chóta d'ócáidí speisialta nó le dul ag an Aifreann. Bhí an-tóir ar an gceann deas donn Paisley a gheobhadh na mná nuair a phósaidís.*
- *Chaitheadh na mná iad féin stocai cniotáilte go glúin agus bróga úrleathair. Sna blianta ina dhiaidh sin agus luach bróga acu gheobhaidís cinn dhubha leathair.*
- *Chaití ribíní, seáliní, bróistí nó nithe maisiúla eile a d'fhéadfai a cheannach leis an ngléas traidisiúnta a dhéanamh níos galánta.*

"Sna blianta ina dhiaidh sin nuair a bhí an t-airgead níos fairsinge ba ghnách leis na mná dhá sciorta dearg a bheith acu, ceann do chuile lá agus ceann don Domhnach agus d'ócáidí speisialta. Cóta cóirthe a thugtaí ar an gceann speisialta seo agus bhíodh éadach níos mine ann."





making the cloth as Déanamh an éadaigh

Homespun wool

Homespun wool was known on Inis Oírr as flainín (flannel). Sheep on the island were sheared in early summer. Women washed the fleece and spread it out on the walls to dry, teasing it with their fingers to loosen it. The fibres were then 'carded' or combed using a pair of wooden brushes with spikes (known as hand carders). The soft rolls of wool (*rilire*) were then spun on a spinning wheel which had a very large wheel. The finished yarn was taken to the island weaver to be woven into lengths of fabric. It then underwent another process to thicken it. The cloth was soaked in a mixture of water, soap flakes and sometimes stale urine (*máistir*) before being tossed about roughly by the feet on a wooden door or upturned table. The work was carried out by two people, usually men, who kicked the material over and back to each other in their bare feet for several hours. This softened and thickened the flannel. It was then washed in a tub of water and dried before it was ready for cutting and sewing into garments. All of this work was carried out in family homes until the mid twentieth century. The last weaver on Inis Oírr was Micil Ó Coistealbha, who worked on a wooden loom he made himself. He died in 1990.

Colour

Sheep fleece came in two natural colours, white (*bán*) and grey-brown (*glas caorach*), although the tones varied from one sheep to another. Thread (yarn) made from the undyed white and grey-brown fleece was woven together to create a dark flannel used mainly in men's outer garments. Plain white flannel (*báinín*) was used for the men's 'vástchóta' and under trousers (*drár ban*) as well as for the women's underskirt (*cóta bán*).

Red and blue also were part of the traditional colour palette. Natural plant dyes were used until chemical compounds became widely available in the twentieth century. The rich blue came from a compound known as '*plúirín*' (indigo). Some colours would be applied by steeping the cloth in water for several weeks, while others had to be boiled in a large pot on the open fire. A mordant or colour fixer was sometimes necessary. Stale urine (*máistir*) was applied in some cases as it contained ammonia.

"Girls and younger women traditionally wore blue skirts and only began to wear a red one when they married".

An Flainín

In Inis Oírr tugtar flainín ar olann shníofa. Bheartaí na caoire ar an oileán go luath sa samhradh. Níodh na mná an olann agus scaipeadh amach ar chlaí é le triomú, bhogaidís amach é lena gcuid méaracha. Chardáilte nó chíortaí na snáithíní ansin le dhá scuab adhmaid a mbíodh spící iontu (ar a dtugtaí cardaí). Shníotaí na rollaí (*rilire*) ansin ar an tuirne ar a mbeadh roth an-mhór. As sin thugtaí an snáth ag fíodóir an oileáin, d'fhíodh seisean ina phíosáí éadaigh é. Bhíodh sé le ramhrú nuair a gheofaí ar ais é. Chuirte an t-éadach ar bogadh i meascán d'uisce, gallúnach agus scaití fual neamh-úr ar a dtugtaí an máistir, ansin leagtaí ar dhoras adhmaid nó ar bhord a bhíodh iompaíthe bun os cionn é agus bhrútaí anonn is anall leis na cosa é. Beirt a bhíodh i mbun na hoibre seo, fir de ghnáth agus iad cosnocht, agus bhíodh ag ciceáil an t-éadach anonn is anall ag a chéile ar feadh uaireanta an chloig. Bhogadh agus ramhraíodh sé seo an flainín. Níte i dtobán uisce ansin é, thriomáite é agus bhíodh sé réidh ansin le gearradh agus le fuáil ina bhall éadaigh. Suas go lár na fichiú haoise ba sa mbaile a dhéantaí an obair seo uilig, ach ina dhiaidh sin chuirte go Gaillimh é le cardáil. Ba é Micil Ó Coistealbha an fíodóir deireanach in Inis Oírr, agus ba ar sheol adhmaid a rinne sé féin a bhíodh seisean ag fíodóireacht. Cailleadh i 1990 é, beannacht Dé lena anam.

Dathanna

Dhá dhath a bhíodh ar an olann, bán agus glas le difríocht beag ó chaora go caora. Bhíodh seo fite le chéile le flainín dorcha a fháil a d'úsáidte sna héadaí a chaitheadh na fir taobh amuigh. Bhíodh vástchóta agus drár bán na bhfeair agus cóta bán na mban déanta as báinín.



Micil Ó Coistealbha, Inis Oírr, 1957

D'úsáidte dearg agus gorm freisin sna héadaí traidisiúnta. Bhí dathanna nádúrtha na bplandaí á n-úsáid le héadaí a dhathú nó gur tháinig na dathanna ceimiceacha sa bhfichiú haois. Plúirín a thugtaí ar an dath gorm. Ní mar a chéile a d'oibríodh chuile dhath - le cuid chuirte an t-éadach ar bogadh ann ar feadh roinnt seachtaine ach le dathanna eile chaite fiuchadh a bhaint as i bpota mór ar thine oscailte. Theastaíodh buanaitheoir corr uair. D'úsáidte fual neamhúr (*máistir*) corr uair mar go raibh amóinia ann.

"Sciortaí gorma a bhíodh ar na cailíní agus ar na mná óga de ghnáth nó go bpósaíodh agus ansin chaithidís ceann dearg".



items of clothing

BAILL ÉADAIGH

Pampooties

Simple handmade shoes made of untanned cowhide and fastened with laces of tough fishing string, were worn on Inis Oírr until recent decades. These rawhide shoes attracted a lot of comment from foreign scholars who first dubbed them 'pampooties'. They were somewhat similar in style to the soft leather shoes used for Irish dancing nowadays. The skin was worn with the hair of the animal on the outside to improve the wearer's grip on the slippery wet limestone crags. Pampooties were worn by women and men, young and old alike as they carried out the heavy work of harvesting seaweed on the shore. They were ideal for working fishermen as they would not puncture a skin or canvas boat. Worn in and out of salt water and wet grass they were almost always damp. In summer, when they might dry out completely, they had to be softened again by soaking them overnight in water.

Making pampooties was a year round task. It took only a couple of hours to make a pair and they might last a month depending on wear. It is believed that they were originally made from sealskin.

"Pampooties were nearly always damp from use. If they dried out completely they would get too hard to wear so every now and then you'd have to soak them in water overnight".

Bróga Úrleathair

Bhíodh bróga simplí a dhéantaí sa mbaile as craiceann bó agus dorú iontu mar iallacha á gcaitheamh in Inis Oírr go dtí le leathchéad bliain. Bhíodh scoláirí ón iasacht an-tógtha leis na bróga úrleathair agus thug siad an t-ainm 'pampooties' orthu. Bheidís cosúil go maith, ó thaobh a ndéanamh, leis na bróga boga leathair a úsáidtear don damhsa Gaelach sa lá atá inniu ann. Is ar an taobh amuigh a bhíodh an fionnadh le greim níos fearr a thabhairt ar na leaca aolchloiche ar mhínic leo bheith sciorrach is iad fliuch. Bhíodh fir agus mná, sean agus óg, á gcaitheamh mar go mbíodís uilig ag déanamh obair throm ar nós ag plé le feamainn sa gcladach. D'fheil siad go breá d'iascairí mar nach bpollaidís currach canbháis ná bád déanta as craiceann. Bhíodís orthu sa sáile agus sa bhféar fliuch agus mar sin is beag am nach mbíodís tais. Sa samhradh nuair a bhí seans ann go dtriomóidís amach ar fad chuirte ar bogadh in uisce ar feadh na hoíche iad le go mbogaidís amach.

Dhéantaí bróga úrleathair chuile am den bhliain. Ní thógadh sé ach cúpla uair an chloig péire a dhéanamh agus d'fhéadaidís seasamh ar feadh míosa ag brath ar a n-úsáid. Creidtear gurb as craiceann rón a dhéantaí an chéad lá riamh iad.

"Is beag nach mbíodh na bróga úrleathair tais i gcónaí de bharr úsáide. Dá dtriomóidís amach ar fad bheidís róchrúa le caitheamh agus mar sin chuirte ar bogadh in uisce ar feadh na hoíche iad le go mbogaidís amach".





Crios

These colourful fringed woollen belts measured about three metres long for a man and two metres for a woman. They were made without a loom and islanders devised several techniques for weaving them at home, using the rungs of two chairs, pieces of wood stuck into the ground outdoors or a board with nails attached to hold the strands of yarn in place. According to Inis Oírr tradition, each críos should have three dark colours, three bright colours and a white border.

Once the warp was set, the críos could be completed by hand. This woman is using her foot to hold the end in place as she weaves.

The 'Aran geansaí'

Apart from stockings, knitwear did not form part of the traditional adult costume on the Aran islands until the early twentieth century. It is believed that the navy geansaí that became popular among younger men was adapted from the 'Guernsey' fishermen. These gradually replaced the local homespun blue shirt ('léine ghorm'). At first, women knitted 'geansaithe' in simple styles with perhaps a chain stitch to the armpits and a barley corn stitch across the shoulders. More intricate styles were developed for tourist and export markets from the 1930s on and local women became skilled knitters as well as important cash earners, often from a young age.

Crios

Déantar an chrios (beilt daite déanta as olann) i gcónaí in Inis Oírr, bíonn sí timpeall trí mhéadar ar fad d'fhear agus dhá mhéadar do bhean. Bhí meascán bealaí ag na hoileánaigh le hiad a shníomh sa mbaile, mar shampla choinnítí na snáithe in áit le rungaí dhá chathaoir, le piosaí adhmaid a sháití sa talamh taobh amuigh, le clár a mbeadh tairní ann nó scaití lena gcosa agus mar sin ní úsáidte an seol lena n-aghaidh. De réir seanchas Inis Oírr, ba cheart go mbeadh trí dhath dorcha, trí dhath éadrom agus ciumhais bán ar an gcrios.

Nuair a bhíodh an dlúth socraithe d'fhéadfaí an chrios a chríochnú le lámh. Is í a cois atá ag an mbean seo ag coinneáil an deireadh in áit agus í ag sníomh.

Geansaí Árann

Go dtí tús na fichiú haoise, ní raibh aon éadach cniotáilte, seachas stocaí, mar chuid d'éadach traidisiúnta an duine fásta ar Oileáin Árann. Ceaptar gur ó stíl iascairí 'Guernsey' a tháinig an geansaí dúghorm a mbíodh tóir ag na fir óga uirthi. De réir a chéile thógadar seo áit an léine ghorm le cnaipí a dhéantaí sa mbaile. Ar dtús ba stíleanna simplí, b'fhéidir lúb slabhra faoin ascaill agus lúb an ghráinín eorna ar na guaillí, a bhíodh ar na geansaithe a chníotáladh na mná. Ó 1930 ar aghaidh thosaigh stíleanna níos casta ag teacht chun cinn, mar gheall ar mhargáil na turasoíreachta agus na heaspórtála, agus mná na háite anois oílte sa gcniotáil, chomh maith le go rabhadar ag saothrú airgead tirim maith, go minic ó bhíodar an-óg.



the galway shawl seál na gailimhe

"You could tell who was coming up the road before you by the pattern of her shawl or the way she wore it"

For special occasions, and for going to mass for example, women donned a heavy, woven outer shawl (*an seál mór*). By the late nineteenth century, the craze for the fancy 'Paisley' shawl had spread to the Aran Islands. Ironically, they are better known in Ireland as 'Galway shawls' after the ever popular nineteenth century ballad of that name, even though they were designed and manufactured in Paisley, Scotland. They were imported by the Galway Woollen Mills which added the fringe (scóga). These eye-catching shawls were costly items and reserved for Sunday best. They were coveted by women as they were thought to bestow a certain status and were usually inherited or acquired for the bride-to-be on marriage. Paisley shawls were 'minded like an egg' incase they would get torn or attacked by moths. An old shawl could be revamped with a set of new fringes. Although the Paisley shawl was popular throughout County Galway, it became closely associated with Aran in the public imagination.

Underneath these 'good' heavy shawls, women wore a lighter everyday shawl (an cloud) indoors and out. These were usually handknit or crocheted but as money became more widely used in trade, they were bought. Plaid and patterned shawls became very popular among women and girls alike.

"For everyday wear, a plain knitted red shawl was most common here on Inis Oírr. Crocheted shawls with lots of different colours in them were more typical of Inis Meáin".

"Bheadh a fhios agat cé bhí suas an bóthar romhat de réir patrún a seál agus an bealach a gaitheadh sí é."

Chaitheadh na mná an seál mór ag dul ar Aifreann agus d'ócáidí speisialta. Faoi dheireadh na naoú haoise déag bhí tóir an seál 'Paisley' scaipthe chomh fada le hOileáin Árann. In Éirinn is 'seál na Gaillimhe' (Galway shawl) a thugtar go minic air, i ndiaidh amhrán cáiliúil na naoú haoise déag den ainm sin. Ba i bPaisley na hAlban a dheartaí agus a dhéantaí an seál seo agus is amhlaidh a thugadh Muilt Olann na Gaillimhe isteach iad agus is iadsan a chuireadh an scóga orthu. Bhí siad daor agus mar sin choinníte don Domhnach iad. Bhí tóir ag na mná orthu mar gur cheapadar go raibh stádas áirithe ag baint leo agus de ghnáth cheannaití nó thugtaí ceann do bhean a bheadh le linn pósadh. Thugtaí 'aire na huibhe circe' dóibh ar fhaitíos go stróicfí iad nó go rachadh na leoin acu. D'fhéadfaí scóga nua a chur ar sheanseál. Cé go raibh na seálta Paisley coitianta ar fud Chontae na Gaillimhe, ceanglaíonn daoine le hOileáin Árann iad.

Faoina seálta maithe troma seo, chaitheadh na mná seál níos éadroime (an cloud) chuile lá istigh sa teach agus amuigh. Is iondúil gur cniotáilte nó cróiseáilte sa mbaile a bhídis seo ach de réir mar a bhí airgead ag fáil níos fairsinge tosaíodh á gceannach. Bhí an-tóir ag mná agus cailíní óga ar an seál plaid agus ar an seál le patrún.

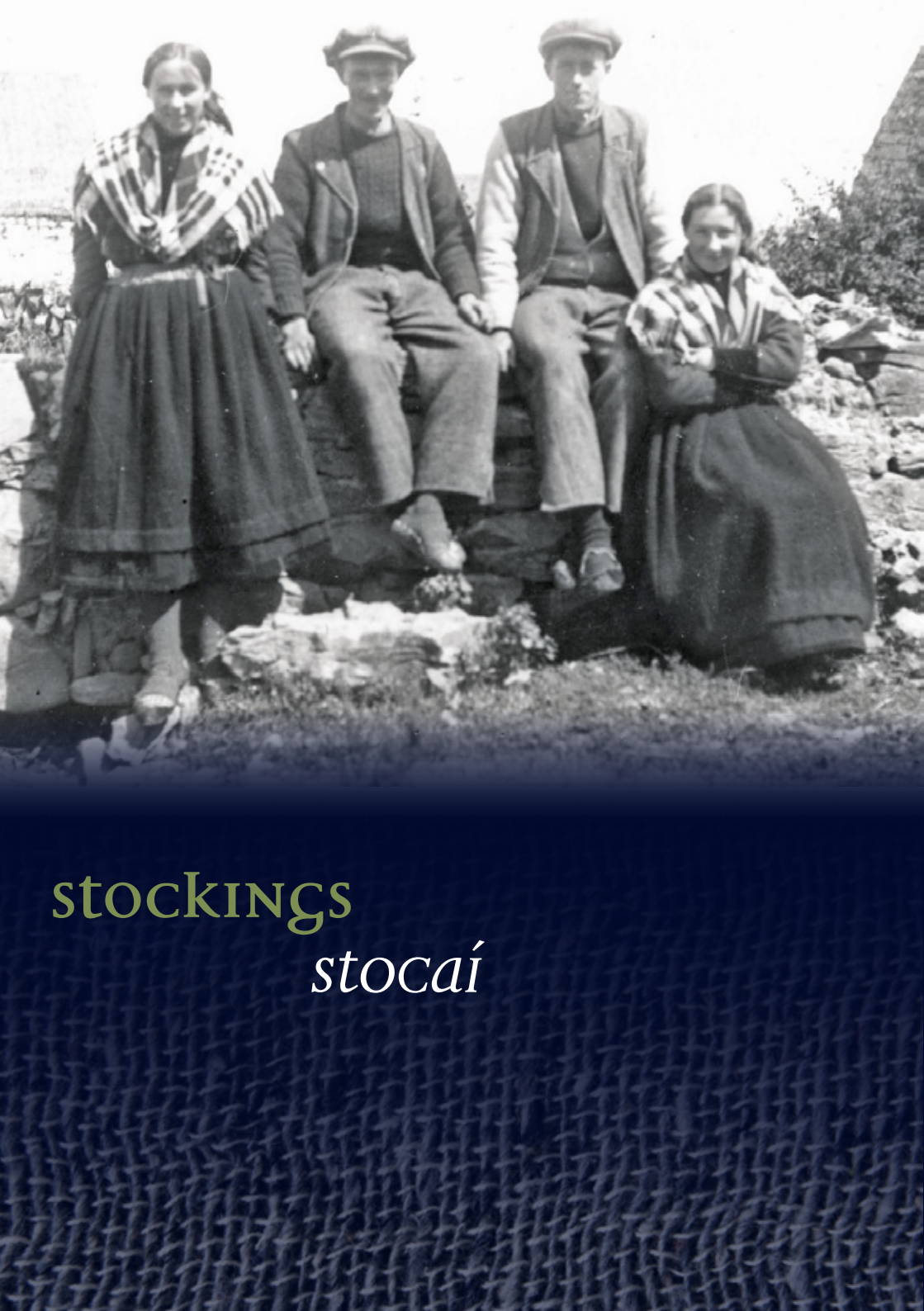
"Bhí seál dearg cniotáilte le caitheamh chuile lá an-choitianta in Inis Oírr. Seálta cróiseáilte, ildaite is mó a bhíodh acu in Inis Meáin."



Uaireanta, is amhlaidh a chaitheadh mná sciorta flainín eile (cóta dearg) anuas ar a gcloigne agus guailli nuair a bhídis ag dul amach.

Sometimes women simply used another flannel skirt to cover their heads and shoulders when they were going out.





stockings

stocaí

These most practical of garments also had their own traditional design on Inis Oírr. Usually navy or black in colour, they had a triangular pattern called crúibíní or méiríní in white on the front of the toes and a couple of stripes at the top. Women sometimes knitted a line of little eyelets down the back of their stockings to add a touch of style. Stockings were held in place with homemade garters (*doirtéil*).

"Some women had little eyelets in their stockings but these could sometimes draw the attention of a pecking hen".

Bhí a stíl féin ag muintir Inis Oírr ar na stocaí seo. De ghnáth bhíodh dath dúghorm nó dubh orthu, pátrún triantánach bán ag na méaracha, (crúibíní nó méiríní) agus cúpla stríoca ag a mbarr. Scaití chniotáladh mná líne súilíní síos taobh thiar ina gcuid stocaí le go mbeidís galánta. Doirtéal a bhíodh acu ag coinneáil suas na stocaí.

"Bhíodh súilíní taobh thiar sna stocaí ag cuid de na mná, a tharraingíodh súil agus priocadh ó chearc scaití".





CHILDREN'S DRESS ÉADACH NA BPÁISTÍ

Like other Irish country children, boys and girls on Inis Oírr wore a blue woollen dress (cóta) in their early childhood years. This was practical for toilet training and economical in large families. Photographs from the turn of the nineteenth century show both boys and girls in dresses until about the age of seven. By the mid twentieth century however, it was customary on Inis Oírr for boys to get their first pair of trousers when they started school. This was an important milestone in a boy's development. Like their fathers, boys usually wore a cap of some kind. Mothers often knitted a white geansaí for boys making their First Holy Communion or Confirmation and for Sunday best

Over their blue dresses, girls wore a white pinafore known as a 'bib' and a shawl or a knitted cardigan. Older girls wore a blue skirt and separate blouse or a cotton dress, especially in summer. These were homemade or sometimes received in a parcel from a family member living abroad.

In summer, most children went barefoot.



Chaitheadh buachaillí agus cailíní beaga in Inis Oírr gúna gorm déanta as olann cosúil le páistí eile faoin tuath in Éirinn. Bhí sé úsáideach ó thaobh traenáil leithris agus tíosach i gcás teaghlach móra. Tá pictiúir ann ó thús na naoú haoise déag de bhuachaillí i gcótaí suas go dtí seacht mbliana d'aois ach bhí sé mar nós in Inis Oírr ó lár na fichiú haoise go gcuirfí treabhsar ar na buachaillí nuair a thosaíds ag an scoil. Ba chéim mhór í seo i saol an bhuachalla. De ghnáth bhíodh caipín ar na buachaillí freisin, ar nós a n-aithreacha. Sna blianta níos deireanaí, chnótáladh máthair geansaí bán do na buachaillí dá gCéad Chomaoineach nó le dul faoi lámh Easpaig agus don Domhnach.

Chaitheadh na cailíní bibe cadáis os cionn a ngúna agus seál nó cairdeagan cníotáilte. Chaitheadh cailíní níos sine sciorta gorm agus blús. Faoin tráth seo freisin, ba mhínic gúna cadáis ar na cailíní sa samhradh – déanta sa mbaile nó faighte i mbeart ó dhuine de na gaolta thar lear.

Bhíodh formhór na bpáistí cosnócht sa samhradh.





tides of change

ATHRÚ SAOIL



Inis Oírr, circa 1960



Mná a bhí ag obair ag monarcha stocáí, Inis Oírr, 1952
Women working at knitting factory, Inis Oírr, 1952

From the mid twentieth century on, a number of economic and social factors contributed to the decline of the traditional costume on Inis Oírr. The making of clothes using local flannel gradually diminished and islanders began to purchase cloth and then tailor-made clothes in Galway.

In addition to emigrant remittances, cash was becoming more readily available on Inis Oírr from the 1950s on. Women here were discovering their earning power and began to replace domestic chores linked to textile making with cash generating activities. They kept visitors and Irish students, worked in the local stocking factory or knitted at home for the famous Aran sweater market on the mainland and around the world.

There was also the modernising influence of returned emigrants who tended to hold on to their American or British clothes if they settled back on Inis Oírr. Emigrants living abroad also sent home parcels of cloth and shop-bought clothes to their island relatives.

Many islanders began to dress in shop-bought clothes to be less conspicuous in Galway city, where the traditional costume was associated with backwardness. Nowadays there is greater appreciation of the region's unique culture and identity.

Bhí laghdú ar úsáid na n-éadaí traidisiúnta in Inis Oírr ó lár na fichiú haoise ar aghaidh de bharr roinnt athruithe ar shaol eacnamaíochta agus sóisialta an oileáin. De réir a chéile tháinig deireadh le déanamh éadach as flainín na háite agus thosaigh na hoileánaigh ag ceannach an ábhair agus ag fáil éadaí déanta i nGaillimh.

In éineacht leis an airgead a thagadh ón dream a bhí ar imirce bhí airgead tirim níos fairsinge in Inis Oírr óna 1950aidí ar aghaidh. Fuair mná amach go bhféadaidís airgead tirim a dhéanamh as rudaí eile seachas obair tí a bhain le déanamh éadaí. Thosaigh siad ag coinneáil scoláirí Gaeilge agus turasóirí, ag obair sa mhonarcha áitiúil stocáí nó ag cniotáil sa mbaile don mhargadh a bhí ar an mórthír agus ar fud an domhain do gheansaithe Árann.

Anuas ar sin bhí tionchar nua-aoiseach na n-imirceach a tháinig ar ais le cónaí in Inis Oírr ann mar gur choinnigh siadsan orthu ag caitheamh éadaí Meiriceánach nó Sasanach agus iad in Inis Oírr. Chomh maith leis sin chuireadh gaolta thar lear píosaí éadaigh agus éadaí siopa abhaile ag a muintir.

Rud eile de ná nach mbíodh oileánaigh ag iarraidh aird a tharraingt orthu féin i gcathair na Gaillimhe, áit a gceanglaí a n-éadach traidisiúnta le hiargúlacht. Tá tuiscint níos fearr sa lá atá inniu ann ar chultúr agus féiniúlacht ar leith na háite seo.



Buíochas

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The project team was Mary Naughton, Mary McCarty, Mairéad Ní Gallachóir, Máire Ní Mhaoláin and Mary Owens (writer/researcher). Irish language version by Cleas Teo. Illustrations by Ursula Murry. Storyboard and brochure design by Spear Design.

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Memories

Their memory lives on in my mind:
White bawneen coats and gleaming shirts,
Blue shirts and grey waistcoats,
Trousers and drawers of homespun tweed
That old and honoured men used to wear
As they went to Mass on Sunday morning
Making the long journey by foot,
When I was young they turned my thoughts
To purity, freshness, and also to piety.

Their memory lives on in my mind:
Long stately skirts coloured crimson,
Blue skirts that were dyed with indigo,
Heavy shawls down from Galway,
That neat and well-dressed women used to wear
As they went to Mass in the selfsame manner;
And though they're rapidly going out of fashion
Their memory lives on in my mind
And will still live on till I go to the graveyard.

Máirtín Ó Direáin, Inis Meáin (1910-1988)

Cuimhní Cinn

Maireann a gcuimhne fós i m'aigne,
Báiníní bána is léinte geala,
Léinte gorma is veistí glasa,
Treabhsair is dráir de bhréidín baile,
Bhíodh ar fheara cásacha aosta
Ag triall ar an aifreann maidin Domhnaigh
De shiúl cos ar aistear fhada,
A mhúsclaíodh i m'óige smaointe ionamsa
Ar ghlaire, ar úire is fós ar bheannaíocht.

Maireann a gcuimhne fós i m'aigne,
Cótaí cóirithe fada dearga,
Cótaí gorma le plúirín daite,
Seálta troma aníos as Gaillimh,
Bhíodh ar mhná píochta néata
Ag triall ar an aifreann mar an gceanna;
Is cé go bhfuilid ag imeacht as faisean
Maireann a gcuimhne fós i m'aigne
Is mairfidh cinnte go dté me i dtalamh.

Máirtín Ó Direáin, Inis Meáin (1910-1988)



Maoinithe ag Rialtas na hÉireann faoin bPlean Forbartha Náisiúnta, 2007-2013

Funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2007-2013



Ciste Talmhaíochta na hEorpa don Fhorbairt Tuaithe: Infheistiú á dhéanamh ag an Eoraip i gCeantair Tuaithe

Mason and Stephen's photographic collections from the National Museum of Ireland circa 1920's and 30's



Fuair an togra seo tacaíocht deontais ó Chlár Forbartha Tuaithe Chomhar na nOileán Teo atá maoinithe ag Rialtas na hÉireann faoin bPlean Forbartha Náisiúnta na hÉireann 2007-2013 agus ag Ciste Talmhaíochta na hEorpa don Fhorbairt Tuaithe: Infheistiú á dhéanamh ag an Eoraip i gCeantair Tuaithe.



Comhshuidh. Pobal agus Riaras Áitiúil
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