

Iceland as 'The First New Nation'

RICHARD F. TOMASSON

University of New Mexico

1. Introduction

This is my first attempt to look at the Icelandic experience in a macro-comparative and historical perspective. Specifically, I propose that Iceland can be usefully viewed as a 'new nation' and a 'new society' in the same way that these concepts are used by Seymour Martin Lipset, Louis Hartz, and others.¹ I also suggest some parallels between the Icelandic and American experiences as new nations. I do not mean to challenge Lipset's view of America as 'The First New Nation'; he sees America as 'first' only in the modern period, a world that was post-feudal, post-capitalist, and post-Protestant. Iceland, by contrast, was founded centuries earlier in a different historical epoch, in the middle of that period of the great expansion of the Scandinavian peoples (800–1050 A.D.). And there are numerous other differences, but there remain some noteworthy similarities in their dynamics of development.

What is significant is that new nations are confronted by similar challenges and experiences, and this is particularly true of those which have come into being through distant overseas migration. In addition to being new nations they are 'fragment societies,' a specie of society of different dynamics than 'whole societies.' In the words of Louis Hartz, whose terms these are,

... when a part of a European nation is detached from the whole of it, and hurled outward onto new soil, it loses the stimulus toward change that the whole provides. It lapses into a kind of immobility. Nor does it matter what stage of European history the part embodies, whether it is feudal, as in Latin America and French Canada, bourgeois, as in the United States, Dutch South Africa, and English Canada, or actually radical, charged with the proletarian turmoil of the Industrial Revolution, as in Australia and British South Africa. The fragments reflect every phase of the European revolution, but they evince alike the immobilities of fragmentation When a fragment of Europe becomes the whole of a new nation, it becomes unrecognizable in European terms.²

Iceland, then, can properly be placed in that category of fragment new societies like America, New Zealand, or Argentina which are offshoots of a European

Iceland as 'The First New Nation'

RICHARD F. TOMASSON

University of New Mexico

1. Introduction

This is my first attempt to look at the Icelandic experience in a macro-comparative and historical perspective. Specifically, I propose that Iceland can be usefully viewed as a 'new nation' and a 'new society' in the same way that these concepts are used by Seymour Martin Lipset, Louis Hartz, and others.¹ I also suggest some parallels between the Icelandic and American experiences as new nations. I do not mean to challenge Lipset's view of America as 'The First New Nation'; he sees America as 'first' only in the modern period, a world that was post-feudal, post-capitalist, and post-Protestant. Iceland, by contrast, was founded centuries earlier in a different historical epoch, in the middle of that period of the great expansion of the Scandinavian peoples (800–1050 A.D.). And there are numerous other differences, but there remain some noteworthy similarities in their dynamics of development.

What is significant is that new nations are confronted by similar challenges and experiences, and this is particularly true of those which have come into being through distant overseas migration. In addition to being new nations they are 'fragment societies,' a specie of society of different dynamics than 'whole societies.' In the words of Louis Hartz, whose terms these are,

... when a part of a European nation is detached from the whole of it, and hurled outward onto new soil, it loses the stimulus toward change that the whole provides. It lapses into a kind of immobility. Nor does it matter what stage of European history the part embodies, whether it is feudal, as in Latin America and French Canada, bourgeois, as in the United States, Dutch South Africa, and English Canada, or actually radical, charged with the proletarian turmoil of the Industrial Revolution, as in Australia and British South Africa. The fragments reflect every phase of the European revolution, but they evince alike the immobilities of fragmentation When a fragment of Europe becomes the whole of a new nation, it becomes unrecognizable in European terms.²

Iceland, then, can properly be placed in that category of fragment new societies like America, New Zealand, or Argentina which are offshoots of a European

mother country, transmuted by transmaritime migration, and faced with similar challenges of establishing national autonomy and nation-building. Indeed, Iceland is the first 'new nation' to have come into being in the full light of history, and it is the only European society whose origins are known. Perhaps, though, we should not even regard Iceland as a European nation, but rather, as does Vilhjalmur Stefansson, as 'the first American Republic.'³ After all, the line dividing the Eastern and Western hemisphere runs east of the center of Iceland!

The island was fully settled during the six decades between 870 and 930 by Norsemen with a minority of Irish and Scottish. Most of the settlers did not migrate directly from Norway, but came indirectly after spending some years in Britain and Ireland, the Hebrides and Orkney. Many brought with them Celtic wives and slaves. Of those who came directly from Norway, most came from the Southwest, particularly from Sogn and Hordaland. Some also came from North Norway, but few from the eastern part of the country. There were also a few from other places. We know the names of over 400 of the original settlers (excluding wives, children, and followers) from the *Book of Settlements*⁴, first compiled early in the twelfth century; it contains around 3,500 personal names and more than 1,500 place names.⁵ From this unique volume and other sources we know where many of the settlers came from, where they settled, who accompanied them, and much else. An early version of the *Book of Settlements* even tells us that it was written, among other reasons, to establish for 'foreigners' the accurate ancestry of the Icelanders:

People often say that writing about the Settlements is irrelevant learning, but we think we can better meet the criticism of foreigners when they accuse us of being descended from slaves or scoundrels, if we know for certain the truth about our ancestry. And for those who want to know ancient lore and how to trace genealogies, it's better to start at the beginning than to come in at the middle. Anyway, all civilized nations want to know about the origins of their own society and the beginnings of their own race.⁶

Few social scientists have ever studied the medieval Icelandic sources, but those who have, like myself, are much impressed. Rosalie Wax has written that she does not believe 'there is any other record of comparable richness, volume, and interest in the world' for the study of cultural genealogies.⁷ Victor W. Turner, another anthropologist, has written that 'the texts here are many and rich and full of the very materials that anthropologists rejoice in when vouchsafed to them by informants in the field.'⁸

In 1973 Iceland had a population of only 213,000, and it is probably the smallest nation in the world with the full panoply of the institutions of Western nationhood: a national language, history, and literature, governmental institutions, a full-fledged university, and diplomatic relations throughout the world. Only the military is missing. Still, Iceland is a mini-nation, smaller than the proverbial 'small countries.' But during the time of the Republic (930–1262) Ice-

land loomed much larger among the societies of the North. Around 1100 with a population of 70–80,000 Iceland⁹ was close to a third as populous as Norway, which then had a population of only around 250,000.¹⁰ And not until the second half of the seventeenth century did the population of the British colonies exceed the population of Iceland.¹¹

The observation that there were fewer Icelanders in the middle of the nineteenth century *before* the great emigration to Canada and the United States than there were in 1100 supports the contention that Iceland represents the most extremely inhospitable environment in which a European people has been able to survive and maintain its culture. No other European people has been so persistently ravaged by natural calamities – famines, epidemics, volcanic eruptions, flooding, shipwrecks, and drownings – singly and in combination as the Icelanders. The Icelandic geneticist and ecologist Sturla Fredriksson has shown that Iceland's population prior to this century was limited to under 100,000 by the fodder available for animals.¹² The consequences of this rigorous environment and the short growing season, together with the near-absence of any agriculture except the growing of hay, are basic to any understanding of the Icelandic experience. No new society faced challenges from the environment comparable to Iceland. And this is the underlying reason why the Icelandic Republic could not survive and ultimately lost its autonomy to Norway in 1262–64.

There is one major challenge, however, that the Icelanders never had to face: an indigenous population in their new land. Here one of the central themes of new societies is missing: the interplay of settlers and natives. Iceland is in fact the largest uninhabited area settled in historical times. One basic disadvantage of this absence was that the settlers had no help in adjusting to their new environment. The Icelandic geologist and geographer Sigurdur Thorarinsson is of the opinion that the Icelanders did not as a matter of fact adjust very well to their new environment. He notes they never learned to clothe themselves effectively against cold and rain and 'their shoes were inferior to those of any other nation inhabiting a cold country'.¹³ During famines they never learned to eat several edible indigenous products available to them.

2. The Founding

One of the most readily apparent ways whereby new societies differ from old ones is that they know their origins, how they came into being, and this assumes major importance in the history and mythology of the nation. One of the first tasks of new nations is to develop unifying myths, a sense of national distinctiveness and nationhood. Americans celebrate their pilgrim fathers and the taming of the West, the Afrikaners the *trekboers* who conquered and occupied the wilderness of South Africa in the eighteenth century, the Argentinians the freedom of the pampas typified above all in the *gaucho*. Iceland celebrates the founding of the society and the early history of the island, particularly the century around 930–1030 known in Icelandic chronology as the Saga Age. This is the period in

which the Sagas of the Icelanders take place. Aside from being great contributions to world literature, these are the folk literature of Iceland – a kind of Icelandic ‘Westerns.’ Their subject is the conflicts of the yeoman farmers who were the original settlers, their children, and grandchildren. They are accounts of prototypical frontiersmen in continual strife with their neighbors. They are a kind of historical fiction – many of the characters are known to have lived and many of the events to have occurred. Parts of the sagas are close to history, parts are pure fiction. Even though the origins of Iceland lie farther back in time than those of the other new nations, the mythology of the founding is more coherent and peopled with more concrete figures than is that of any other new nation. Magnus Magnusson, the Icelandic-Scottish translator of many sagas into English, is quite correct in his assertion that: ‘Much, much more than the garbled and debased mythology of the Wild West, Iceland is the remembered and continuing land of frontiersmen.’¹⁴

Icelanders from the beginning of their existence have dwelled on their origins, the early settlers, and their genealogy. The enormous number of manuscripts of the sagas which have survived from medieval times, and which is known to be only a small fraction of the total, confirms that the copying and reading of the sagas was a major endeavor of the people. Literally scores of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travelers to Iceland have written about the pervasive popularity of the sagas in Iceland. Unfortunately, there were no medieval travelers who wrote about such things. Let two examples suffice for many. Two centuries ago Uno von Troil, an antiquarian who died as Archbishop of Sweden, wrote in his *Bref rörande en resa til Island* (Letters on Iceland): ‘Their chief amusement in their leisure hours is to recount to one another the history of former times; so to this day you do not meet with an Icelander who is not well acquainted with the history of his own country: they also play at cards.’¹⁵ A century later James Bryce noted that the average Icelander ‘is certain to be familiar with the masterpieces of his own ancient literature. It is this knowledge of the Sagas that has more than anything else given a measure of elevation as well as culture to his mind.’¹⁶

W. P. Ker, an eminent medievalist and saga scholar, provides a stunning capsule account of the founding of the Icelandic nation in his *Dark Ages*, the history that every Icelandic child learns:

The whole of Icelandic history is miraculous. A number of barbarian gentlemen leave Norway because the government there is becoming civilized and interfering; they settle in Iceland because they want to keep what they can of the unreformed past, the old freedom. It looks like anarchy. But immediately they begin to frame a Social Contract and to make laws in the most intelligent manner: a colonial agent is sent back to the Mother Country to study law and present a report. They might have sunk into mere hard work and ignorance, contending with the difficulties of their new country; they might have become boors without a history, without a ballad. In fact the Iceland settlers took with them the intellect of Norway; they wrote the history of the kings and the adventures of the

gods. The settlement of Iceland looks like a furious plunge of angry and intemperate chiefs, away from order into a grim and reckless land of Cockayne. The truth is that those rebels and their commonwealth were more self-possessed, more clearly conscious of their own aims, more critical of their own achievements, than any polity on earth since the fall of Athens. Iceland, though the country is large, has always been like a city-state in many of its ways; the small population, though widely scattered, was not broken up, and the four quarters of Iceland took as much interest in one another's gossip as the quarters of Florence. In the Sagas, where nothing is of much importance except individual men, and where all the chief men are known to one another, a journey from Borg to Eyjafirth is no more than going past a few houses. The distant corners of the island are near one another. There is no sense of those impersonal forces, those nameless multitudes, that make history a different thing from biography in other lands. All history in Iceland shaped itself as biography or as drama, and there was no large crowd at the back of the stage.¹⁷

The development of Icelandic independence proceeded in a way analogous to that of the American colonies, and it took about the same amount of time – a century and a half from the time of first settlement. The impression from Snorri's *History of the Kings of Norway* is that King Olaf Tryggvason as late as 999–1000, when he was aggressively and cruelly campaigning to Christianize his domain, regarded himself as King of the Icelanders and the Icelanders so regarded him. A quarter of a century later, around 1024–1025, when Olaf Haraldsson (St. Olaf) was king of Norway the situation had changed. At the 1024 *Althing* a messenger sent by King Olaf spoke as follows:

I parted from King Olaf Haraldsson four days ago. He gave me greetings hither to all the people, both men and women, the young as well as the old, the rich as well as the poor – both God's and his greetings – and bade me say that he will be your king if you will be his subjects, and both be friends and help one another in all things of good report.¹⁸

This message, even if the wording is apocryphal, indicates that the suzerainty of King Olaf was not clear.

The King wanted tribute paid to him by the Icelanders, and he specifically requested that he be given the island of Grimsey, which lies at the mouth of Eyjafjord, the strategically most important fjord in the north of Iceland. Some of the chieftains at the *Althing* favored having the 'friendship' of King Olaf, others opposed entering into 'bondage' under the King. In the end the *Althing* refused both the payment of taxes to the King and his request for the island of Grimsey. They followed the lead of the chieftain Einar Eyolfsson, the leader of the opposition forces. According to Snorri again, Einar is alleged to have argued that it was

best for the people of our country not to subject themselves here to pay

tribute to King Olaf, nor to all those taxes such as he has imposed on Norwegians. And we would impose that bondage not only on ourselves but both on ourselves and our sons and all our people who live in this land; and that bondage this land would never be free or rid of.¹⁹

How much this has been embellished by Snorri, we don't know. Still, from his perspective two centuries after the event, this was Iceland's Declaration of Independence. For almost two and a half centuries more Iceland was to continue as a republic and be independent of Norway. The Orkneys and the Faroes, much smaller in population and less isolated from Norway than was Iceland, did not 'revolt' and agreed to pay tribute to the King.

The Sagas of the Icelanders give the impression that the earliest generation of Icelanders had a strong sense of nationality and felt a distinctiveness from the Norwegians, but it is necessary to remember that these sagas were written in a world two centuries removed from the Saga Age. Yet there is recognition, even at this late date, of Norway as the center and themselves as the periphery; Norway, not Iceland, is the focus of attention. In the sagas and histories, Iceland is outside while Norway is 'home'. The Icelanders *sail out* to Iceland, but *sail home* to Norway.²⁰ There is avid interest in how Norwegian royalty view the Icelanders. The kings and earls are always impressed by how splendidly handsome, intelligent, well-mannered, noble in behavior, and accomplished in sports the Icelanders are. This is notably the case, for example, in *Laxdaela Saga* where 'the kings of Norway are wheeled on the stage merely to fete and flatter the illustrious Icelanders who visit them.'²¹ This preoccupation is the same 'concern with the "good opinion" of the elite of the former metropolitan power,' that Lipset points out as frequently characteristic of new nations.²²

Frequent emphasis is placed on the noble lineage of these Icelandic adventurers, many of whom are alleged to be descended from Norwegian kings. All of this should be taken with a grain of salt. No one is so impressed with nobility as republicans!

One peculiar way that the Icelanders continued to see the world from a Norwegian perspective was their terminology for points of the compass. They persisted in calling 'inland' northeast. This works satisfactorily for Norway, but is a fiction for most of Iceland. People from Ireland, Britain, and the islands of the North Atlantic are spoken of in the old literature as coming from 'the west.' Again, this makes sense in Norway, but not at all in Iceland.

Icelanders continue to remain closer in sentiment to Norway as the mother country and as a people like them than to any other. The feeling is perhaps akin to the feelings English Canadians have toward England. In the spring and summer of 1971 I interviewed a representative sample of 100 Icelandic adults born in the first half of this century on a broad array of topics. Among the inquiries I made was to see how my respondents would rank order six peoples in order of their 'similarity to Icelanders.' Later in the interview I asked them to rank order six countries in terms of which they would prefer to emigrate, if they 'had to leave Iceland.'

Table 1. People 'most like Icelanders' and preferred country of emigration of 100 representative Icelanders born 1901-1950, interviewed in 1971 (Mean Rank Orders).

A. People 'most like Icelanders'

Norwegians	1.59
Faroese	1.91
Danes	3.28
Irish	3.88
English	4.86
Americans	5.08

Question: Which of the following peoples (on this card) do you believe are most like Icelanders? Which least? Please rank the following peoples in order of similarity to Icelanders, from one to six.

B. Preferred country of emigration

Norway	1.88
Sweden	3.00
Denmark	3.03
Canada	3.66
U. S.	3.67
Australia	5.76

Question: Which of the countries (on this card) would you most wish to move to, if you had to leave Iceland? Please rank order them from one to six.

Note from this table that the Icelanders regard the Norwegians as most like themselves. This is true in spite of the observations that Iceland was a colony of Denmark from 1382 to 1944, that Danish is the second language in Iceland, the linguistic link to the rest of Scandinavia, and that Denmark for centuries has been the principal country to which Icelanders have gone for specialized training. Also, Denmark is the country to which Icelanders are most likely to emigrate. But note that Norway is clearly first choice for hypothetical emigration. The Irish were put on this list in the belief that the Icelanders feel a greater affinity with their Celtic neighbors than any people after the other Scandinavians. This seems to be the case even though there has been virtually no contact between the two countries since Viking times. The Icelanders remain conscious of their dual Norwegian and Irish ancestry, even if the latter was probably the numerical minority and had relatively little influence on the culture that developed. Mysteriously, the distribution of blood groups among the Icelanders is closer to that of the Irish than to that of the Norwegians.²³

3. Effects of Overseas Migration

A factor in the dynamics of fragment new societies is the effects of overseas migration. Arnold J. Toynbee and William H. McNeill have both been impressed with this phenomenon in history and the stimulation it provides to new societies.²⁴

In addition to the observation that those who leave the mother country are always special categories of people, and never representative of the total society, is the law that not everything is taken! Only certain property, certain institutions, and certain ideas are transported. Great migrations are selective in all ways. Also, overseas migrations result in the intermingling and interbreeding of diverse peoples. At the very least kin groups and communities are broken up. The cake of custom is shattered or at least altered by the ingredients being mixed in new ways. New societies – at least at first – are characterized by a lesser influence of kin and traditional community than the mother country. The Hobbesian War of all against all, so latent in new societies, has a tendency to be mitigated by the development of law over kinship as the source of authority. Law tends to assume a central role in new societies, greater than in mother countries.

Overseas migration resulting in the breakdown of kinship has been stressed by Toynbee as the explanation for the early development of an English legal polity and for the general political achievements of medieval England.²⁵ Primitive conceptions of social organization based on kin were disrupted by the overseas migration of the Angles and Jutes in the fifth century, the Danish invasions beginning in 851, and two centuries later the invasion of those Frenchified descendants of Danish and Norwegian Vikings under William the Conqueror.

It is little wonder that law gained such a commanding role in the new nation of America, being settled by overseas migrants from the country where the doctrine of fundamental law – law beyond human control – had been most fully developed. Iceland, in a more primitive way than seventeenth-century New England, also became a polity where law was central. Killing at night for almost any reason, for example, was murder and condemned a man to being an outlaw; killing under appropriate conditions in daylight, however, was not illegal. The respect for legal proceedings was so great in Saga times that they came to be regarded as magic charms; any error in legal formulae could lose a case.²⁶

Another consequence of the breakdown of traditional kinship and communal ties and the intermingling of people is the homogenization of culture that occurs in new societies. This is particularly observable in language and the breakdown of dialects. American English has always been more uniform than the English of the mother country just as the Spanish of Latin America shows less variation from Mexico to Argentina than does the Spanish of Castille and Galicia. Iceland is perhaps the most extreme example of this tendency of the homogenization of language in new societies. Persons from the same area did not have any tendency to settle in the same place in the new country. The Icelandic linguist Hreinn Benediktsson has written that at the end of the Age of Settlement, in the middle of the tenth century, Icelandic 'probably was to the furthest possible degree, uniform and free of dialect variations.'²⁷ And 'it has remained almost as uniform as a language spoken within an area of its size ever can be.' This Icelandic was a blend of the dialects of the Norwegian West – most of the important settlers came from Sogn, Rogaland, and Telemark.

Great migrations, perhaps not necessarily overseas migrations, seem to make people aware of great events and great personages. And it is momentous events

and leaders who become the source of epics. The embellished events of the past become more interesting as a source of tales than the mundane present of the descendants of those who participated in the great movement. No greater stimulus exists, it seems, to the development of epics than great overseas migrations. 'This explains,' in the words of Toynbee following Bertha S. Phillpotts, 'why the Hellenic epic developed in transmarine Ionia and not, like the Hellenic Drama, in the European Greek peninsula, the Teutonic Epic on the island of Britain and not on the European Continent; and the Scandinavia Saga on the island of Iceland and not, like the Scandinavia Drama, in Denmark or Sweden.'²⁸

4. Conservatism of New Societies

Another general phenomenon of fragment new nations compared with their mother countries is the tendency toward various kinds of institutional and ideological conservatism. This is the dynamic that Hartz calls 'immobility,'²⁹ that Toynbee calls 'atrophy,'³⁰ and the unnamed process brilliantly described by Samuel P. Huntington whereby America adopted 'the principal elements of the English sixteenth-century constitution . . . at precisely the time they were being abandoned in the home country.'³¹ Only a part of the old society migrates and not all of the culture is transported. In the new land the part then becomes the basis for a new whole. The part is simpler, less rich, and less diversified than the whole. It has fewer capacities within itself for change because much of the stimulus for change has been left behind. When there is knowledge of the origins of the society and there is celebration of its founding, there is a tendency for national institutions to become touched with the sacred. Such seems to be the dynamics of the conservatism of new societies.

As America preserved much of the English medieval in her political institutions, so did the Icelandic Republic keep much of the Old Germanic polity at the time when it was disappearing in Norway. England in the seventeenth century modernized her polity by establishing the sovereignty of the monarch and the state while the ideology of the supremacy of the law disappeared; in America an antique polity was established based on the essentially medieval conception of the supremacy of the law, the divisions of sovereignty, and strong local autonomy. 'Neither the divine right of kings, nor absolute sovereignty, nor parliamentary supremacy had a place on the western shores of the Atlantic' writes Huntington.³² To push the point to an extreme, he calls the American Presidency 'the only survival in the contemporary world of the constitutional monarch once prevalent throughout medieval Europe.'³³ From the beginning of its existence America has been a modern society with an antique polity. So, in its time, was the Icelandic Republic.

Knut Gjerset, perhaps the only non-Icelander to write a scholarly history of Iceland, observed that 'In private life as well as in state organization and public institutions the Icelanders adhered with great fidelity to the ways of their ancestors. This conservatism which had been adopted as a distinct program by the

early settlers, was strengthened through the isolated location of the colony.³⁴ Such an observation might have been made of seventeenth-century New England.

The Icelandic Republic represented the fullest development of the Scandinavian variant of the Old Germanic polity. At the time when Norway was beginning its centuries long development into a Christian and national state – or at least a state under one king – Iceland reasserted the fundamental elements of the diffuse traditional polity and expanded them in ways unknown elsewhere.

First was the institution of the *thing*, the assembly of freemen known to have existed among all the Germanic peoples; it was described as early as the first century A.D. in the *Germania* of Tacitus.³⁵ Immediately after their arrival in Iceland the settlers established local *things* all over the island for resolving the disputes among them.³⁶ Then, around 927 a man by the name of Ulfljot was chosen to prepare a code of law for the whole island. He went to Norway for three years and studied the law of the *thing* of Gula in southwestern Norway, with jurisdiction for Sogn, Hordaland, and Fjordane. On the basis of this provincial code he prepared a law code for all of Iceland. This code was adopted as the law of the land at Thingvellir, a place previously chosen for the national assembly about the year 930. So the *Althing* was founded, the first and only truly national *thing* of the Germanic peoples. In Norway and everywhere else the *thing* had been only a local assembly. Here was a new growth of a primordial Germanic institution, one that became the pre-eminent national institution in Iceland for more than three centuries. The *Althing* was a national legislative and adjudicating assembly, a fair, a marriage mart, and a national celebration in which a large but unknown proportion of the Icelandic population participated for two weeks each June. During these centuries of the Icelandic Republic, the *things* were declining in Norway with the spread of the authority of the Church and the clergy and the beginnings of national kingship.

The same efflorescence of an Old Germanic institution is seen in the expansion of the role of the chieftains. Because no one in the new settlement could claim power, the chieftains achieved a kind of dominance under the ancient customs greater than they had ever known before. In Iceland the chieftains came to be known as *godar* (sing., *godi*) with overriding, but rather vague, political and religious duties. At the founding of the *Althing* the number of *godar* was established at 36 (later increased to 39). The office could be inherited, sold, divided-up, and even loaned. These *godar*, together with the lawspeaker of the *Althing*, and later the bishops, made up the *logretta* (meaning to order the law), the legislative branch of the *Althing*. The *godar* were also responsible for naming the jurors in legal disputes. This was indeed the ruling class in the Icelandic Republic. Still, however, freemen had a free choice of who their *godi* was to be, and they were not limited to those in their part of the country. Later in the Republic some families got to own several *godar* and hence had many supporting farmers. The *godar* also had the responsibility to maintain a *hof* or temple. However, their religious duties were generally secondary to their secular duties. Later, after Christianity was established, the *godar* kept the churches and chose the priests. Like the *Althing*, the *godi* was a unique institution, but one rooted in the role of

the Old Germanic chieftain. There was lots of law, but little government, in this Icelandic Republic. It suffered from the fatal flaw of the Old Germanic polity, an inability to develop any ordered and regular hierarchy of command.³⁷

The first century of the Icelandic settlement also saw a marked return to the 'old time religion' of the Norse gods. Thor above all was favored among Icelanders in the tenth and eleventh centuries. A number of the settlers had been Christians, and some even had Christian names like Markús, Páll, and Margrét. The *Book of Settlements* tells us about the decline of Christianity among the early generations:

Learned men say that some of the settlers who occupied Iceland were baptized men, mostly those who came from west across the sea. Under this head are named Helgi the Lean, and Orlyg the Old, Helgi Bjola, Jorund the Christian, Aud the Deep-minded, Ketil the Fool, and still more men who came from west across the sea. Some of them remained faithful to Christianity to the day of their death, but this rarely held good for their families, for the sons of some of them raised temples and sacrificed, and the land was altogether heathen for almost a hundred years.³⁸

Even after the decision to adopt Christianity was made in 999 or 1000 there was official toleration of some of the old heathen practices. The Icelanders seem to have adopted Christianity at the *Althing* for pragmatic reasons, partly to gain the release of some Icelanders kept captive by King Olaf Tryggvason in Norway, partly out of the belief that the Icelanders could have only 'one law.' In any case, the official adoption of Christianity at the *Althing* brought no social or political transformation of any great magnitude in this antique Germanic polity until the thirteenth century when Iceland lost her autonomy to the King of Norway and the Bishop of Nitharós (Trondheim). With the passing of the Republic in 1262, Iceland went the way of Christian Europe: the Church and the King grew in authority, the autonomy of the *Althing* declined, and the peculiar institution of the *godar* passed away completely.

5. An Undifferentiated Social Structure

But this new nation with the old-fashioned polity was, just as America was to become several centuries later, a 'modern' society in its time. The cake of old custom had been shaken-up. Among the values that took shape in the early period of the Icelandic settlement and which have continued down through the centuries in the folk culture are egalitarianism, individualism, skepticism of authority, empiricism, and pragmatism – a configuration of values close to those that developed in America.³⁹ Indeed, the frontiersman-farmer social type that came to predominate in America some centuries later shows a marked familial relation to that earlier 'new man' – the Icelander. But this is explicable because, as I am trying to demonstrate here – and as Ellsworth Huntington noted half a century

ago – ‘much of the story of Iceland is repeated in that of the early white settlers in America.’⁴⁰

If we look at the accounts of the social character of Icelanders in Saga Times (as written about in the thirteenth century) through the numerous traveler accounts of the nineteenth century before the advent of modernization, a consistent type emerges. The male form is the yeoman farmer; the female form the independent household manager. These types certainly bear a family resemblance to the yeoman farmers of Scandinavia and Britain. But there is one overriding difference: the Icelanders existed in a much less differentiated social structure. Even the simple distinction between the farmer and cottar class in Norway as described by Eilert Sundt in the 1850s has not been of much significance.⁴¹

Until the last two decades of the nineteenth century the overwhelming majority of Icelanders lived on farms. Indeed up to about 1880, nearly the entire population was involved in farming as they had been for the previous thousand years. As late as 1880, only about 7 percent of the Icelandic population lived in towns and villages of over 300 people. Not even commercial fishing achieved much importance until the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

The traditional Icelandic farm has always been large and isolated. The farmers raised sheep, cattle, and horses, and many fished for a portion of each year. The farms were in effect tiny self-sufficient communities of an extended family, frequently with a servant, or two or three. Probably from 8 to 12 people lived on most farms. From the end of the eleventh century when the first accounting was made down to the present, the number of farms has varied only between 4,560 and 6,150. Most range in size between 450 and 3,000 acres, exclusive of mountains, with an average of around 750 acres. The most important crop has always been hay for fodder.

In the centuries since medieval times there have been marked changes in the patterns of land ownership, but the significance of these changes has not been great.⁴² An extreme situation was reached in the period 1695–1760 when some 90 percent of farmers were tenants, a third of the farm land was owned by the Church and a third by the Danish Crown. Still, the distinction between landowner and tenant has had little status or cultural significance throughout Icelandic history. Tenants have generally been isolated from and largely independent of whoever owned their land. The social structure of Iceland until well into the nineteenth century had been strikingly simple and undifferentiated. Two classes found in almost every other western society hardly existed: a trading class and a ruling class. This is why Jón A. Hjaltalín could say to an English audience as late as 1867, the Icelanders ‘at present are not much further advanced in industry or the arts of life than our earliest ancestors.’⁴³

At the top of the traditional Icelandic class structure were the larger landowners, the clergy, and the sheriffs (who were typically respected farmers). Then came the great majority of the population who were free farmers or members of their families. Under them were three categories: sub-tenants, servants and farm workers, and paupers. While there was little distinction between landowners and tenants, apparently being a sub-tenant did convey inferior status. Most servants

and farm workers were young and later married when a farm became available. This is a kind of age mobility that has been very common in Iceland. The pattern was to contract with a farmer for a year of service at a time. There have always been few casual laborers in Iceland. At the bottom of this simple class system were the paupers, who have been cared for by the *hreppar* (parishes) since the beginning of the settlement. Jón Sigurdsson wrote in 1842 that there were 'mainly two classes or groups' in Iceland: 'the common people and the learned men, but we mostly lack a middle class.'⁴⁴

A peculiarity of Iceland from the beginning compared with the rest of Scandinavia and Europe has been a high degree of internal migration. This is a characteristic of new societies compared with old societies. Icelanders have never had much of that attachment to place that has characterized traditional agricultural peoples. This is because grain-growing contributed little to the material well-being of the Icelanders up to the sixteenth century, after which time it ceased completely. From the beginning Icelandic agriculture has been overwhelmingly based on the raising of livestock. Sigurdur Thorarinsson has written about this as follows:

There was thus from the beginning a basic difference between Icelandic farming and farming in Scandinavian countries and on the British Isles, where grain-growing was a basic industry, a difference which exerted a profound influence on Icelandic civilization. The farmer's attachment to his farmstead depends first and foremost on agriculture and the cultivation of the soil. With cultivation goes stability and immobility, but Icelandic farming has always had a touch of nomadism The Icelandic farmer has never been so closely attached to his farmstead as his Scandinavian counterparts. The movement of homes between districts and different parts of the country has been much commoner over here.⁴⁵

One consequence of a high level of internal movement in a country, as with transmaritime migration, is to enhance the uniformity of culture, particularly the language.

6. Icelandic Egalitarianism

One observation that can be made about the Icelanders from the beginning is that they have been egalitarian and that class distinctions have been minor, both characteristics more of new than of old societies. This must not be taken to mean that Icelanders are not given to making all sorts of invidious distinctions among themselves. They certainly are.⁴⁶ It is only that such distinctions are not much made on the basis of class criteria. Obviously Alan E. Boucher, an English translator of Icelandic literature living in Reykjavik, overstated the case when he wrote some years ago that 'class distinctions simply do not exist in Iceland.'⁴⁷ Still, and

it has been noted by many travelers to Iceland, a low degree of class consciousness combined with a radically egalitarian ethic has been fundamental to Iceland's folk society. This situation grew out of the conditions under which Iceland was settled, the harshness of life whereby everyone had to work, and, above all, the undifferentiated agricultural social structure that existed. Just like the language, the rural social structure has not changed much since medieval times. This folk society, in the words of Nordal, 'is the fountainhead from which the new urban social classes spring, and its values have been carried to the towns, usually in an idealized form. From this class spring the egalitarian values which are so very strong in Iceland today.'⁴⁸

The sagas show, I believe, an egalitarianism found in no other literary or historical body of writing prior to the seventeenth century.⁴⁹ They portray a society with an egalitarian ethic, and are written from an egalitarian viewpoint by their frequently anonymous authors. They are crammed with diverse personalities. *Njal's Saga*, for example, the most renowned and longest of the Sagas of the Icelanders, contains at least 36 rich character portrayals.⁵⁰ Here wives and thralls are dealt with as personalities worthy of description, inherently just as interesting as their husbands and masters. Dorothy M. Hoare in comparing the very different Icelandic and Irish sagas writes: 'In Iceland the chieftain represents the common characteristics of the race more eminently; in Ireland the chief seems to be distinct from the masses, as in *Beowulf*.'⁵¹ The major protagonists in *Njal's Saga* are in fact not even chieftains, just esteemed farmers.

Even the central characters in the sagas do mundane, everyday tasks. Hallgerd and Bergthora, the wives of the two most illustrious men – Gunnar and Njal – in *Njal's Saga*, serve meals and are involved in household tasks. Gunnar, perhaps the most admired of all saga characters, sowed his own grain. In Chapter 53 of *Njal's Saga* we read this matter-of-fact description: 'That same day Gunnar had left home by himself, carrying a seed-basket and armed only with a hand-axe. He walked to his cornfield, and started sowing the grain . . . He was busy sowing when Otkel came galloping out of control across the field.'⁵²

In the sagas only kings and queens, parents and sometimes kin are addressed with titles. To everyone else, regardless of age or station, given names are used. There is little status deference to be found in the dialogue, a mode of equality permeates interpersonal relations that seems very modern. Not even in the frequent, and mostly fictional, encounters with Norwegian kings and kinglets are the Icelanders deferential.

Most of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travelers to Iceland have been impressed with the equality of material conditions and of social relations that prevailed there. Some have commented on the Icelanders' dislike of authority, their failure to show deference to rank, the absence of any stigma attached to physical work, and their concern with the opinions of others. There is similarity here with the observations of nineteenth-century American travelers (De Toqueville, Bryce, etc.), but the egalitarianism observed in Iceland is simpler and more radical, and class distinctions less. Another difference is that the Icelanders are often regarded as poor, yet without any abject poverty. As von Troil put it two

centuries ago, 'they are not very rich, neither have they any beggars.'⁵³ Such observations were repeated dozens of times afterwards.

The radical egalitarianism of the Icelanders was often commented upon, and not always favorably, by the educated travelers who came. Ebenezer Henderson, an indefatigable Scotsman who trekked all over Iceland in 1814 and 1815 distributing Bibles for the British and Foreign Bible Society, noted that 'both at meeting and parting, an appropriate kiss on the mouth, without distinction of rank, age, or sex, is the only mode of salutation'.⁵⁴ Thirty years later a snobbish Austrian woman by the name of Ida Pfeiffer visited Iceland and wrote negatively about her experiences among this peculiar people. She disliked their 'loud' kissing, their republican sentiments, the lack of courtesy among the 'better classes', and much else. At some assembly in Reykjavík she observed: 'All ranks meet there, and everything is said to be on a very republican footing. The shoemaker invites the wife of the *Stiftsamtmann* (governor) to dance, and that great personage himself leads out the wife or daughter of the shoemaker and baker.'⁵⁵

One of the most sensitive observers of the many travelers who visited Iceland in the nineteenth century was James Bryce, who even learned to read the language. He noted that 'there is really no distinction of ranks,' and was much impressed with their 'social equality which involves no obtrusive self-assertion by the poorer, since it is the natural result of the conditions under which life goes on.'⁵⁶ Richard F. Burton, who wrote a two volume account of his 1872 summer in Iceland, almost as snobbish and prejudiced as Ida Pfeiffer's account but more intelligent and informed, was negatively impressed by the 'rude equality' of what he mistakenly calls 'the servant class.'⁵⁷ William Morris, who spent the summers of 1871 and 1873 in Iceland, like Bryce and Burton was impressed by the social equality he found, so much so that it was a factor in the transformation of his political and social views, and 'he talked about it for years to the alarm of many of his friends.'⁵⁸

A skepticism of authority and a failure to be impressed by rank characterize the Icelandic as much as the American variety of egalitarianism. James Nicoll noted in 1840 that the distance between the clergy and the people in Iceland was smaller than in other countries and that 'the Icelander pays little deference to his pastor on account of his office, and unless his personal character secures respect, he is soon treated as a common peasant, in whose labours he is often compelled to join.'⁵⁹ Valtýr Gudmundsson, who wrote a book explaining his countrymen to the Danes in 1902, noted that the Icelander 'has no respect for authorities, but wants always to be his own master or lord, in thought as well as in action.'⁶⁰ Hjalmar Lindroth, a Swedish linguist who knew the folk culture of Iceland as intimately as any foreigner in this century, comments that the Icelander 'does not like to subordinate himself in any way.'⁶¹ The treatment of the King of Denmark was described by Samuel Kneeland, one of the members of the American delegation visiting Iceland in 1874 on the occasion of the thousand year celebration of the Icelandic settlement, who noted that the king mingled with the people in a 'friendly, yet dignified way; but must have been disappointed by, and perhaps

wounded, by the sturdy, democratic, independent spirit, degenerating sometimes into stolid disrespect, with which he was met in public.'⁶²

The clergy in most of Lutheran Europe had high status, were deferentially treated, and generally had the accoutrements of the well-off. This has been less the case in Lutheran Iceland. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Niels Horrebøw, a Danish astronomer and mathematician, observed that the Icelandic clergy 'are obliged to have recourse to manual labor for maintaining their families, or to go fishing like the common people.'⁶³ In 1835 John Barrow noted that 'there is little doubt that the pastor and his flock are nearly on an equality as to worldly concerns.'⁶⁴ Burton observed that as 'in the United States, there is no gentlemen class except the liberal professions, and even the clergy until the present generation were farmers and fishermen, labourers, mechanics, and so forth, often poorer and shabbier than the laity.'⁶⁵ But in Iceland there has never been much status inhibition to doing physical work. The Scottish geologist George Steuart MacKenzie, for example, in observing the 'habits and modes of life among the Icelanders of the highest class' noted 'that almost every man in the country knows how to shoe a horse; even the son and heir of the Chief Justice of Iceland having been seen thus occupied.'⁶⁶ Bryce noted some years later that 'everybody has to work for himself, and works (except, to be sure, a few storekeepers in Reykjavík, and at one or two spots on the coast), with his own hands.'⁶⁷

These are only a sample of quotations to illustrate the egalitarianism and the low degree of class consciousness that appears so pervasively in the travelers' accounts. I have come by only one set of empirical data that demonstrates the relative lack of class distinctions that has existed in Iceland. Johannes Nordal in his 1953 dissertation at the University of London studied the social mobility patterns of 405 leading Icelanders born in the years 1651–1850 and who had completed an academic education. Of the marriage pattern of these 'learned' Icelanders, he writes: 'It is striking to see that the social origin of the subjects seems to have no influence on their marriage pattern: those having both a father and a grandfather in Class I are no more likely to marry into that class than those whose fathers and grandfathers belonged to Class III.'⁶⁸ Class III it should be noted, consists of all the rural population except the 'learned class' (Class I) and 'landowners and farmers holding important posts' and a few minor categories (Class II).

7. Summary

In this article I have attempted to show that the experience of Iceland can be usefully viewed as a 'new nation' and a fragment 'new society' as these concepts are used by Lipset, Hartz, and others. I have also suggested that the cultural and structural transmutations resulting from transmaritime migration, as discussed by Toynbee, can contribute to an understanding of the development of Iceland and other new societies. I further proposed that there are some parallels between the Icelandic and American experiences. Both societies preserved and transformed

antique political forms, were ideologically conservative, celebrated their origins, developed homogeneous cultures and languages, and were characterized by a high degree of internal migration from the beginning. There is also a striking similarity in the value systems that developed in the two societies – above all, the central role by an egalitarian ethic. The predominant social types that developed in the two rural societies were essentially variations on the theme of the frontiersman-farmer.

NOTES

1. See particularly Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1963) and Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964). I am conscious of the different meanings of 'new nation' and 'new society' – the former emphasizes the political structures of a society, but the distinction is not usually important here. Lipset's book might have been better entitled *The First New Society* (and this article, too).
2. Hartz, pp. 3–4.
3. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Iceland: The First American Republic* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1939).
4. See the new English translation of the *Book of Settlements* by Herman Pálsson and Paul Edwards (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1972).
5. Noted by Jakob Benediktsson in 'Landnámabók: Some Remarks on its Value as a Historical Source,' *Saga-Book* of the Viking Society for Northern Research, XVII (4, 1969), pp. 275–292.
6. Quoted on p. 6 of the Introduction to the *Book of Settlements*.
7. Rosalie H. Wax, *Magic, Fate, and History* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1969), p. 17.
8. Victor W. Turner, 'An Anthropological Approach to the Icelandic Saga,' in T. O. Beidelman, ed., *The Translation of Culture* (London: Tavistock, 1971), pp. 349–374, p. 351.
9. Jón Steffensen, 'Population: Island' in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder* (Reykjavík: Bókaverzlun Isafolder, 1968), XIII, columns 390–392.
10. Andreas Holmsen and Magnus Jensen, *Norges Historie: Fra De Eldste Tider Til 1660* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1949), p. 517.
11. Richard Hofstadter notes that in 1650 the population of the American colonies was only 50,000. See *America at 1750* (New York: Knopf, 1971), p. xiii.
12. See Sturla Fridriksson, 'Grass and Grass Utilization in Iceland,' *Ecology*, 53, 5 (Late Summer 1972), pp. 787–796.
13. Sigurdur Thorarinsson, 'Iceland in the Saga Period: Some Geographical Aspects,' reprinted from the Third Viking Congress, (*Arbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags, fylgirit* 1958), p. 21.
14. Quoted in 'Iceland is . . .,' *Iceland Review*, 6, 2 (1968), pp. 35–43, 43.
15. Quoted from the English translation, Uno von Troil, *Letters on Iceland*, Second Edition 'Corrected and Improved,' (London: J. Robson, W. Richardson, and N. Conant, 1780), p. 27.
16. Viscount Bryce, 'Impressions of Iceland,' in *Memories of Travel* (New York: Macmillan, 1923, originally written in 1872), p. 30.
17. W. P. Ker, *The Dark Ages* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1904), pp. 314–315.
18. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, trans. by Lee M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), p. 394.
19. Snorri, p. 395.
20. I was first made conscious of this by reading W. P. Ker's lecture 'Iceland and the Humanities,' *Saga-Book of the Viking Club* (London), April 1908, 13 pp.
21. Quoted from p. 29 of the Introduction to *Laxdaela Saga* by Magnus Magnusson and Herman Pálsson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969).
22. Lipset, p. 74.

23. O. Bjarnason, *et al.*, 'The blood groups of Icelanders,' *Annals of Human Genetics* (London), 36 (1973), pp. 425-454.
24. See Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962, originally published 1934), pp. 84-100; and William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 210-226.
25. Toynbee, pp. 99-100.
26. See observations of George Casper Homans in his *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), pp. 215-316.
27. Hreinn Benediktsson, 'Icelandic Dialectology: Methods and Results,' *Islenzk Tunga*, 3 (1961-62), pp. 72-113, 102.
28. Toynbee, p. 96.
29. Hartz, p. 3, *passim*.
30. Toynbee, p. 96.
31. Samuel P. Huntington, 'Political Modernization: America vs. Europe,' *World Politics*, XVIII, 3 (April 1966), pp. 378-414. Reprinted in Rheinhard Bendix, ed., *State and Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), pp. 170-200. (References to this article are to the Bendix volume.) Huntington does once use the word 'atrophy;' in footnote 66 on p. 92 he speaks of 'the atrophy of settlement colonies.' The following sentences, and many others, about the conservatism of the early American polity apply just as well to early Iceland: 'The English (Norse) colonists took these late medieval and Tudor (Old Germanic) political ideas, practices, and institutions across the Atlantic with them during the great migrations in the first half of the seventeenth century (in the years 870-930). The patterns of thought and behavior established in the New World (Iceland) developed and grew but did not substantially change during the century and a half of colonyhood.' Bendix, p. 172.
32. Bendix, p. 178.
33. Bendix, p. 185.
34. Knut Gjerset, *History of Iceland* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 80.
35. Tacitus, *Germania*, trans. by S. A. Handford (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1948), Chapters 11-13.
36. The basic Icelandic account of the settlement to 1262 is Jón Johannesson, *Islendinga Saga*, I (Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafelagið, 1956). This has been translated into Norwegian. A brief, but good, account of early Iceland in Swedish is Njörður Njarðvík, *Island i forntiden* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1973). For a good account in English see Gjerset and James Bryce, 'Primitive Iceland,' in *Studies in History and Jurisprudence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1901), pp. 263-300.
37. Paul Johnson claims the viability of Old English society was just its success in overcoming this impediment. See his *The Offshore Islanders* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1952), pp. 46-47.
38. *Book of Settlements*, Sturlubók version, paragraph 399.
39. There are other persistent Icelandic values, too, but I don't believe they belong to this configuration. For example, the belief in prescience, second sight, and other psychic phenomena has been characteristic of the Icelanders from the beginning.
40. Ellsworth Huntington, *The Character of Races* (New York: Scribner's, 1924), p. 301.
41. See the comparative discussion of the cottar and farmer classes in Norway, containing a long excerpt from Sundt, in Michael Drake, *Population and Society in Norway, 1735-1685* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1969), pp. 138-149.
42. Much of the material in this and the following paragraphs is from Johannes Nordal, *Changes in Icelandic Social Structure since the End of the Eighteenth Century, with Particular Reference to Trends in Social Mobility* (London: Unpublished University of London Ph.D. Dissertation, 1953).
43. Jón A. Hjaltalín, 'On the Civilization of the First Icelandic Colonists, with a short account of their manners and customs,' a lecture read on May 7, 1867, 8 pp.
44. Quoted by Nordal, p. 35.
45. Sigurdur Thorarinsson, pp. 8-9.
46. See Guðmundur Finnbogason, *Islendingar* (Reykjavík: Bókadeild Menningarsjóðs, 1933) for the qualities used in describing Icelanders based on 1,000 biographies, 'gifted' was most common.
47. Alan E. Boucher, *Iceland: Some Impressions* (Reykjavík: Prentfell H.F., 1949), p. 35.

48. Nordal, p. 33.
49. Here I am thinking of the writings of the radical English puritans.
50. Einar Ol. Sveinsson, *Njal's Saga: A Literary Masterpiece*, edited and trans. by Paul Schach (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. 85.
51. Dorothy M. Hoare, *The Works of Morris and of Yeats in Relation to Early Saga Literature* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1937), p. 10.
52. *Njal's Saga*, trans. by Magnus Magnusson and Herman Pálsson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 131.
53. von Troil, p. 20.
54. Ebenezer Henderson, *Iceland; or the Journal of a Residence in that Island During the Years 1814 and 1815* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Waugh and Innes, 1818), p. 28.
55. Ida Pfeiffer, *A Journey to Iceland and Travels in Sweden and Norway*, trans. Charlotte Fenimore Cooper (London: Richard Bentley, 1852), p. 95.
56. Bryce, *Memories of Travel*, pp. 33, 38.
57. Richard F. Burton, *Ultima Thule or, A Summer in Iceland* (London: William P. Nimmo, 1875), Vol. II, p. 363.
58. John Purkis, *The Icelandic Jaunt: A Study of the Expeditions Made by Morris to Iceland in 1871 and 1873* (Surrey, England: William Morris Society, 1962), p. 28.
59. James Nicoll, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1841), p. 211.
60. Valtýr Gudmundsson, *Islands kultur ved aarhundredskiftet 1900* (Copenhagen: Ernst Bojesen, 1902), p. 19.
61. Hjalmar Lindroth, *Iceland: A Land of Contrasts*, trans. by Adolph B. Bensen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1937), p. 16.
62. Samuel Kneeland, *An American in Iceland* (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks, and Co., 1876) p. 125.
63. Niels Horrebow, *The Natural History of Iceland* (London: A Linde, 1758), p. 132.
64. John Barrow, *A Visit to Iceland* (London: John Murray, 1835), pp. 239-240.
65. Burton, Vol. I, p. 141.
66. George Steuart Mackenzie, *Travels in the Island of Iceland During the Summer of the Year 1810* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1811), pp. 149-150.
67. Bryce, *Memories of Travel*, p. 33.
68. Nordal, p. 47.