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State formation and pre-modern identities in the North:

A synchronic perspective from the early 14th century

I. The case of the absent official

Around 1300, a large part of the life of an Icelandic official of the Norwegian crown was spent onboard a ship. In this floating spatial platform, a place without a place, members of this elite profession traversed a fair bit of the Atlantic Ocean regularly on their way to the king's court in Norway. To get an idea of the frequency of such travels, we can take as an example the perambulations of one such royal official, Erlendr Ólafsson (c. 1235–1312), who served as the king's sheriff in the Western Quarter of Iceland from 1290. According to annals, Erlendr left Iceland in 1294, returned again in 1295, left again in 1296, returned in 1299, left in 1302, returned in 1303, left in 1304 and returned again in 1305 (*Íslandske Annaler*, 197–200). Erlendr was a man of high status, who had the title of a knight (*herra*), and had been lawman 1283–1289 before he acquired the lucrative position as the king's tax-collector. A privileged position which also required him to spend periods of time in a ship on the sea-route between Iceland and Norway, and to reside several winters at the king's court.

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Abstract: Most studies of state-formation concentrate on long periods of time, which is often necessary if one wants to examine the slow shifting of structures inherent in a long-drawn process. However, if we concentrate on the *longue durée*-aspects of such transformations there are other aspects that we will invariably miss, such as: how did the process affect active participants in it at any given time? It is my intention in this article to offer a concentrated perspective on two important protagonists of this process in Iceland: Erlendr Ólafsson and his son, Haukr Erlendsson. The period under study is limited to a couple of decades: the years 1290–1310. In this manner, I aim to present synchronic perspective on the process of state-formation and the intrinsic complexities of the situation that faced the most important social actors of this process.

Keywords: world view, medieval identities, heterotopias, state formation.

The repeated journeys of Erlendr to the Norwegian court and his prolonged stays in Norway illustrate the complexities of a system that is often depicted in unproblematically schematic ways. An official such as Erlendr had a place within a hierarchical system as the king's representative in Iceland. However, frequent absences from the place where was supposed to officiate were not aberrations from the usual practice of his position, they were an integral part of it. How is the case of such an absent official to be dealt with? I argue in this paper that it highlights some problems inherent in a system that had been recently introduced in Iceland: The multiregional state. One of the primary functions of such an entity was governing regions such as Iceland, but the requirements made to the functionaries entrusted with this responsibility were complex, as the case of Erlendr illustrates. Iceland was perhaps a remote corner of a multi-regional entity, but the Norwegian kingdom encompassed much remoter areas, such as Greenland, and in any case one must not over-emphasize the difficulties of sea travel in a time when land-travel was also an arduous process. As evidenced by *Hauksbók*, a work that will be discussed in greater detail below, the journey from Iceland to Norway only took seven days (*Hauksbók*: 4). The difficulty of sea-travel was in itself not the reason why a royal official would spend great periods of time away from the place where he was supposed to carry out his duties. Yet we should be aware of the fact that this sea-journey was occasioned by the very manner in which an official in Iceland had to conduct his job in the 1300s.

The boat which brought an Icelandic official to and from the Norwegian court was a *heterotopia*, in the sense in which Michel Foucault has used the term (cf. Foucault 1984). It was a spatial container, a world of its own, and yet surrounded by the vast stretches of the North Atlantic. Aboard several spaces were juxtaposed, several sites that were in themselves incompatible. The passengers were in an intermediate position between one site and another, removed from both subjects and lords. The time spent on the ship, even if only as little as seven days, was the only time such an official had that could truly be his own.

As the case of Erlendr Ólafsson demonstrates, a royal official had to be very mobile. He basically had to have a second home in Norway where he would spend long periods of time. An official of this type thus belonged to two worlds simultaneously. He had to be constantly aware of the space of Norwegian court where the extent and loyalty of his allegiance to the monarch was always in question, but where advancement was also possible. In contrast, the field of operation of these officials was

their native land, the dependency of Iceland, where a few officials wielded enormous executive power, and their scope for action was extensive, but where they might also be expected to encounter resistance by recalcitrant farmers. This intermediate position was not an easy one, even if it was both lucrative and coveted by many.

Most studies of state-formation concentrate on long periods of time, which is often necessary if one wants to examine the slow shifting of structures inherent in a long-drawn process. However, if we concentrate on the *longue durée*-aspects of such transformations there are other aspects that we will invariably miss, such as: how did the process affect active participants in it at any given time? It is my intention in this article to offer a concentrated perspective on two important protagonists of this process in Iceland: Erlendr Ólafsson and his son, Haukr Erlendsson. The period under study is limited to a couple of decades: the years 1290–1310. In this manner, I aim to present synchronic perspective on the process of state-formation and the intrinsic complexities of the situation that faced the most important social actors of this process.

II. Setting the scene:

The monarch's new acquisition

Iceland had become a Norwegian dependency in 1262–1264, but before that time several Icelandic magnates had become royal courtiers and served throughout the kingdom. Following the submission of Icelanders to the Norwegian monarch, this class of Icelandic courtiers provided the pool from which royal officials in Iceland were drawn.¹

Some of the king's men in Iceland came from the powerful families that had divided the island into spheres of influence in the first quarter of the 13th century, occasioning the civil strife that in the end brought down the Icelandic commonwealth, in 1262. In their contest for power in Iceland, most of the magnates had at one time or another sought the support of the Norwegian monarch. This elite had, however, been depleted during the final struggle (1235–1264), and opportunities had also opened for ambitious farmer's sons. The father of Erlendr Ólafsson was a man of obscure ancestry, possibly partly Norwegian, who had had the fortune

¹ On Icelandic royal officials in the 13th and 14th centuries see major studies by Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 1995; Axel Kristinsson 1998; Sigríður Beck 2007; Wærdahl 2006: 142–43, 167–76.

of becoming the son-in-law of a minor chieftain in the south of Iceland.² Being a grandson of a chieftain provided Erlendr with sufficient social capital to make his way in the world, even if he did not belong to any of the great families of the early 13th century. He also enjoyed the patronage of the king from the 1280s onwards, probably through an alliance with the leading royal representative in Iceland, Hrafn Oddsson (1226–1289, cf. Björn Þorsteinsson 1956: 56–57, 62–63, 117).

The entry of Iceland into the Norwegian kingdom was characterized by both change and continuity. Local elites continued to wield power but their situation had changed, as exemplified by the frequent journeys a royal official had to make to the king's court. The king had been a key player in Icelandic politics before in 1262, but by now he had become the sole source of authority.

In some ways, however, the situation of Iceland in 1300 was not so different from its situation a century before. Iceland was still a legal unit known as a *land* in Old Norse, with its own particular law and institutions. Lands were commonly subject to a king, such as Seeland, Scania, Funen and Jutland were subject to the Danish king. Iceland was an exception to that rule before 1262/1264, but afterwards its situation became more typical. However, its status as a *land* did not change markedly, it just went from being a land without a king to a land subject to the Norwegian monarch (Sverrir Jakobsson 2005: 336–41).

Iceland never really gained the status of being regarded as parallel to an independent kingdom, called *þjóðland* in Old Norse (on this term cf. Sverrir Jakobsson 2005: 201). In Old Norse texts from the 12th and 13th centuries, it is widely reported that there were three such entities in Scandinavia, Sweden, Denmark and Norway.³ Whether this reflects the situation in earlier times, as far back as the 9th century, is far from substantiated by the evidence. Even if it was of ancient provenance, the nature of a monarchy had changed a great deal in the 12th and 13th centuries in comparison to earlier times. The kings were trying to usurp traditional rights of popular assemblies, such as law-making and the right to control succession to the crown (cf. *inter al.* Christensen 1945; Bagge 1986; Gustafsson 1997: 33–34).

² On different theories of the origins of this family the best introduction is still Munch 1847: 171–73.

³ An exception is a fake papal letter which is said to have been fabricated in Hamburg around 1122–23 where Iceland is enumerated among the kingdoms of Scandinavia: “in omnia regna septentrionalia, Danorum scilicet, Suenorum, Noruenorum, Hislandicorum ...” cf. *Diplomatarium Islandicum. Íslenzket fornbréfasafn* I: 55.

In this context, the king presented the Icelanders with a new law code in 1271, and another one in 1281, as the first code proved to be unpopular. In many ways, the Icelanders resisted the attempts of the king to impose upon them the legal uniformity which he desired for his kingdom, and clung steadfastly to their own customs (cf. Ólafur Lárusson 1924). The identity of Icelanders was greatly strengthened in the first decades of Norwegian rule, as they now had to close ranks against the crown in Norway and representatives of the king who were not native Icelanders. One example of such resistance is the so-called 'almúgans samþykkt' (the agreement of the populace), made by the parliament in 1306. In this document, the people confirm their willingness to obey the law-code and all their agreements with the king, but also put forth several demands. Among these are demands that all the sheriffs and lawmen should be Icelanders from the ancient chieftain families, that the sailing of ships to Iceland were guaranteed, and that no one should be summoned abroad 'framar en lögbók vottar' (more than the law requires) (*Diplomatarium Islandicum. Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* II: 333–36).

The retainers of the king in Iceland were not a party to this letter, but that only proves that their position vis-à-vis the king was precarious, not that they disagreed with its demands. In fact, most of these demands reflected the interest of the Icelandic elite, who clearly benefitted from monopolizing the seats of power in Iceland and was perhaps growing tired of the constant travelling which accompanied the hands-on management policies of the Norwegian king. In fact, this demand had been raised by the Icelandic parliament already in 1302, with the consent of the king's retainers (Jón Jóhannesson 1958: 247–49).

In 1306, the Norwegian monarch sent a royal official to Iceland in order to settle his dispute with the Icelanders. As it turns out, the person chosen for this task was the son of Erlendr Ólafsson, Haukr Erlendsson. Just as illustrious as his father, Haukr is also of considerable interest as the redactor of one of the monumental works of Icelandic medieval literature, *Hauksbók*, parts of which he wrote with his own hand. This work is a useful guide to Haukr's ideas about the shape of the world and its inhabitants, and thus, by extension, what paradigms shaped the world view of an Icelandic royal official around 1300. Interestingly, large sections of the book were probably composed during Haukr's sojourn in Iceland, which lasted from 1306 to 1308. Why did Haukr spend his time in Iceland putting together such a manuscript? He has not left behind any clues to his motive, but any venture at a guess has to take the nature and scope of *Hauksbók* as a point of departure. To this work we now turn.

III. A royal official surveys the world

Haukr Erlendsson was one of the most distinguished Icelanders of his generation. He seems to have been one of the king's closest advisers, and sat on his council. He was one of the Norwegian officials that witnessed the union of Norway and Sweden in 1319. He was also a very literate official of a type that was becoming more frequent, as public administration depended increasingly upon documents of various types (cf. Nedkvitne 2005). The habitual use of writing was no doubt conducive to Haukr's decision to put his ideas about the world into a book.

In order to understand the significance of a work such as *Hauksbók*, it is necessary to explore briefly its contents, while admitting that the subject has already been explored in a greater detail on previous occasions (cf. Finnur Jónsson 1892–1896; Sverrir Jakobsson 2007a). *Hauksbók* is a codex in the Arnarnagnæan collection of Icelandic medieval and early modern manuscripts in *Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi* (divided into AM 371, 544 and 675 4to), of which 141 of about 210 leaves are preserved. It is intimately connected with the royal official Haukr Erlendsson, and parts of it are assumed to be in his own hand. The bulk of the manuscript was probably written within a relatively short period, 1302–10, and it has even been suggested that the years Haukr spent in Iceland are the most likely time for him to undertake such a venture. Interestingly, it is the public letters of Haukr Erlendsson as an official that have made it possible for us to recognize his handwriting (cf. Stefán Karlsson 1964). A few parts of the manuscript may be later additions (e.g. *Elucidarius* in AM 675 4to) and some were even added after Haukr's death (e.g. *Völuspá* in AM 544 4to).

What plan did the redactor of *Hauksbók* have for the work which he compiled? In *Medieval Scandinavia* we find contrasting assessments of the nature of *Hauksbók*. According to Gunnar Harðarson and Stefán Karlsson, the work is 'an entire private library' (Gunnar Harðarson and Stefán Karlsson 1993), whereas Margaret Clunies Ross and Rudolf Simek list it among medieval encyclopedias (Clunies Ross and Simek 1993). Neither definition is entirely satisfactory. On the one hand, Gunnar Harðarson and Stefán Karlsson do not suggest any principle according to which Haukr might have selected the texts included in *Hauksbók*. On the other hand, the term encyclopedia is vague and was not in general use in the Middle Ages (cf. Le Goff 1994: 25; Fowler 1997: 27–29). In an Icelandic context, the plural term *alfræði* has usually been applied to texts much smaller in scope than *Hauksbók*, in the sense of 'encyclopedic writings'.

Nevertheless, the term ‘encyclopedia’ may offer some guidance for exploring the mentality of Haukr Erlendsson and his contemporaries, and provide heuristic guidelines for analysing Hauksbók. The word is derived from Greek ‘*ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία*’ which in Antiquity referred to the all-round education of aristocratic youth. This education had two characteristics, it was elementary in nature and it was reserved for an élite (Fowler 1997: 15). In a medieval context this might be applied to clerical learning in general, but it often seems to be used in a narrower sense, referring specifically to the part of clerical education dealing with world view. A systematic representation of the clerical world view is to be found in textbooks such as the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville (c.560–636) or the *Imago mundi* of Honorius Augustodunensis (c.1070–1140), rather than in instruction in the *artes liberales* of clerical education. An ambitious effort of this kind was the *Speculum majus* of Vincent of Beauvais (c.1190–1264). The writings of Isidore, Honorius and Vincent were known in medieval Iceland and are quoted in works which were central to the construction of a world view. The word ‘cleric’ is now understood to relate more to literacy in general than to specifically ecclesiastical education (cf. Clanchy 1979: 177–81). In practice, literacy and ecclesiastical education usually went together. An educated royal official from an aristocratic background, such as Haukr Erlendsson, probably received an education similar to that of those who pursued a career within the church.

In Hauksbók there is a collection of miscellanea known as *Heimslýsing ok helgifræði* (Description of the world and sacred learning, i.e. theology). This includes, for example, a geographical description of the world dealing mostly with the names of countries and cities connected with prominent saints. In addition there are treatises on ecclesiastical and philosophical matters, a translation of Bede’s *Prognostica temporum*, a list of holy days in the calendar (*Cisiojanus*) and a section on Arabic mathematics (*Algorismus*). The last item demonstrates the redactor’s interest in the most recent trends in European learning. Hauksbók also contains information about precious stones and several lists of geographical material, lists of ecclesiastical dignitaries, royal genealogies etc. This is an indication of the clerical learning of the redactor but also forms a background to the main part of Hauksbók, which is made up of historical narratives of great variety in length and subject matter. In incorporating such narratives, Hauksbók marks a departure from the medieval encyclopedic tradition, which was more concerned with the statement and definition of facts than narrative (Ribémont 1997: 52).

The bulk of the material in *Hauksbók* is general, Scandinavian or Icelandic history. *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sögur* belong to the realm of world history, whereas Scandinavian history is represented by *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* (though until the last part of the saga the action mostly takes place in southern Europe), *Ragnarssona þáttr*, *þáttr af Upplendinga konungum*, *Skáldasaga* and *Hemings þáttr*. It is remarkable that most of these narratives (all except the last two) deal with the period before the settlement of Iceland—ancient history in Nordic terms. This indicates a genealogical or translational perspective, concerned with the origins and movements of genealogies through time and space. Haukr seems to have been interested in Scandinavian history insofar as it dealt with the Nordic ancestors of the Icelanders, but, developments in Scandinavia after the settlement of Iceland seem to have held less interest for him.

It is not easy to classify a work such as *Hauksbók*, which is probably the reason for the scholarly neglect (or even contempt) the work has suffered in comparisons to many other products of Icelandic medieval textual culture. There is a lack of recognizable order and system in the work that would easily drive 19th and 20th-century scholars to exasperation. However, that is only to be expected if we grant that the world that the manuscript of Haukr is trying to encompass is indeed both complex and dynamic. It is one of the virtues of *Hauksbók* as a vehicle for analysis that its world view is not susceptible to reductive and all-encompassing generalizations.

Hauksbók is a unique work that can be viewed as a heterotopia, no less than the ships that transferred royal officials from Iceland to the court and back. In this work, a powerful official and courtier steps out of his official space into a private space which nevertheless included the whole world, as the *litterati* of the 13th century knew it. *Hauksbók* is a collection of various texts on heterogeneous matters that has intrigued scholars for centuries. Viewed in its entirety, it offers an interesting glimpse into the world view of Haukr and his contemporaries. Through the medium of a book, knowledge about the wider world was formalized and put into a context which reflects the social and intellectual ideals of the time (Sverrir Jakobsson 2007a: 29–33).

The value of *Hauksbók* lies in the fact that it offers a view into a private space of its owner and creator. It is not an illuminated manuscript destined to be a showpiece for others, but texts collected by Haukr in order to elucidate the shape of the world and its history. There is a geographical section, treatises on how one should interpret the pagan gods, and also a lot of history, of ‘World events’, of the Scandinavian past

and the settlement of Iceland and the introduction of Christianity to the country.

Haukr Erlendsson was for a considerable period lawman in the Norwegian Gulatingslov with a residence in Bergen. He was probably born and raised in Iceland in the 1260s, sometime around the years that Icelanders entered the Norwegian monarchy (Munch 1847: 175). In the Hauksbók redaction of the Book of settlements (*Landnámabók*) the genealogy of Haukr and his wife is traced to several Icelandic ancestors, including some of chieftain pedigree. Haukr, as the king's representative in Iceland 1306–1308, probably felt the need to demonstrate that he for one had the genealogical background required by Icelanders of the holders of that position. Haukr might also have been of Norwegian ancestry, which might explain why the antecedents of his grandfather were so little known in Iceland (Jón Jóhannesson 1958: 233). If that is so, Haukr did not feel any need to elucidate that part of his family history, neither in the Book of settlements nor in any other section of Hauksbók. Although a high-ranking official in Norway, Haukr seems to have felt no need to elaborate on his Norwegian ancestry, if indeed he had one. For an official in Norway, an Icelandic background was just as good as that of any other of a king's subject.

Hauksbók contains much beside the earliest history of Iceland: texts that relate to World history and Scandinavian pre-history, geographic information and theological texts. Taken in unison, the codex is a unique source to the world view of a medieval Icelander, a work of comprehensive learning written in part by the compiler's own hand. Although extraordinary in scope and breadth, Hauksbók is fairly typical in its world view and thus an excellent representative for the world view of Haukr's contemporaries among the Icelandic litterati (cf. Sverrir Jakobsson 2007a: 22–24).

The world view which is manifested in Hauksbók, and shared by Icelandic medieval texts in general, is representative in the way it indicates the attitudes of the Icelandic literary elite and insofar as the ideas common among the elite were shared by the population in general (Burke 1978: 28). This world view was clearly 'catholic' in nature. The world was seen as a unity, in accordance with the Bible's account that the apostles had gone to all its corners. It was finite, a 'space of emplacement' (*espace de localisation* in Foucault's terminology) which could be apprehended and understood by the intellectuals of the time, a world of answers rather than questions. A codex such as Hauksbók was at the same time, a small parcel of the world and the totality of the world, a universalizing heterotopia.

This was predominantly a literate world view, a construction that would not have gained similar ground in a predominantly oral culture. The catholic world view is predominant in Icelandic texts from the 12th century onwards, but it cannot be ascertained whether there was an overlap between it and more ancient views held before the advent of literacy. In all likelihood the introduction of book culture in Iceland made a crucial difference for the formation of a new world view, akin to that dominant within the written culture of the catholic world. A new paradigm was introduced, that of Biblical history, which formed a grand narrative which all other narratives had to acknowledge. The role of the clergy or the *litterati* was vital in this transition. Translations from Latin works from various periods, such as *Elucidarius*, *Imago mundi*, *Historia scholastica* and *Speculum historiale*, provided an important framework to which Icelanders conformed. This textual tradition stems from the 12th century but was hardly ripe until the time of Haukr Erlendsson around 1300.

In accordance with the general paradigm introduced by clerics and literates, world history was the history of the Bible and the apostolic succession. Very soon, however, traces of another paradigm were being integrated into this structure, Greco-Roman history, which was already present in the 12th century *Veraldar saga* (History of the World). In *Hauksbók* this occurs in the section where it is stated that Moses was the world's first historian, but Dares Phrygius is given preeminence within a more 'worldly tradition' (*Hauksbók*, 152; cf. Sverrir Jakobsson 2007a: 27–28).

In the 13th century, chieftains gained an important position among the literary elite in Iceland and their inclusion into the ranks of the *litterati* facilitated the spread of the catholic world view in a larger community of literate people. At the same time, the lay aristocracy began to use this new medium to promote their own traditions (Hermann 2002: 103–4). The office of law-speaker seems to have been very important in that development. This mantle of learning was inherited by the office of lawman which replaced the law-speaker in 1271.

From *Hauksbók* one can learn how global Icelandic royal officials could be in their outlook. The work demonstrates an interest in far-away places, such as India, as well as more exotic places in the vicinity, such as Greenland. As in other works of similar nature, the genealogy of Haukr himself and other noblemen is traced back to ancient Troy via the Nordic gods, who were euhemeristically portrayed as noble ancestors. Thus, they had a genealogical connection with the Near East, which was regarded as the place where the most important events of world history had taken place (Sverrir Jakobsson 2007a: 30–31).

At first, the connection between a literary work, such as *Hauksbók*, with few contemporary references, and the administration of Iceland in the early 14th century, when Haukr Erlendsson was sent to his native country as a problem-solver, seems tenuous. But the very lack of contemporary references in *Hauksbók* tells us an important story. Haukr Erlendsson and his contemporaries were men of immediate secular concerns, struggling with every-day events, but their view of the world was very much a holistic long-term perspective. Haukr was not gathering facts about current events, but histories about the origin of settlement in Iceland and its history for the quarter of a millenium; events in Scandinavia before the settlement of Iceland were clearly important, also material concerning the settlement of Greenland and Scandinavian attempts to settle in *Vínland*. His history of the Trojans and the Bretons also deals with original myths, as the genealogy of Scandinavian kings and noblemen is thus traced to Asia minor.

An interesting picture of the identity of the king's officials emerges; they were preoccupied with their origins, especially if they could be traced to far-away and central places. Their status in the world was presented as ancient and hallowed, not dependent on the vicissitudes of court politics. The view of the world which emerges from *Hauksbók* is that of a secular official; yet it was not a secular world-view. In Haukr's heterotopia the world was united in the Catholic faith, and the footprints of Christ's apostles were everywhere.⁴ Thus, a royal official had internalized the clerical values that may have seemed less self-evident in the 12th century, when literacy was introduced to Iceland.

IV. The growth of royal power and the catholic world-view

What is the significance of the matter, that here has been dwelt upon, the heterotopias of a family of Icelandic royal officials at the beginning of the 14th century? Can anything be generalized from these examples?

Viewed in a historical context, the travels of Erlendr Ólafsson to the royal court in Norway were in many ways a continuation of what Icelandic chieftains had been doing for decades, even centuries, before the submission of Iceland to the Norwegian king. In the early 13th century

⁴ Cf. the world description in *Hauksbók*: 153–56; this is a general trend in such world descriptions, cf. Simek 1990: 174–83.

most of the magnates competing for power in the country had found advantage in becoming the courtiers of the Norwegian monarch (Jón Jóhannesson 1958: 205–25).

This may only have been a culmination of a trend that had earlier roots. In 1163 the chieftain Jón Loftsson had gone to Norway in order to confirm his blood relationship to the king, and at this time many ambitious Icelanders served in the king's court. Although contemporary evidence is lacking, we can gather from the evidence of the sagas that historians of the 13th century assumed that this had also been the situation in the 10th and 11th centuries. In the sagas we find a prevalent notion that service at the king's court added to the honour of a well-born man, and might be used as political capital at home (cf. Sverrir Jakobsson 2001). This may, of course, only reflect the views of Icelanders in the 12th and 13th centuries but at the least we may infer from this evidence that travel to the king's court was an important rite of passage well before 1262–1264.

The difference between Erlendr Ólafsson and his many Icelandic predecessors is the formal and compulsory nature of the service to the king. In the sagas of the Icelanders and several episodes in the king's sagas, Icelanders are shown being drawn like bees to honey to the power and status of the king. It is clear that service to the king included obligations and courtiers could not leave their overlord at their will. These, however, cannot be compared to the obligation of frequent travelling which was demanded of an official like Erlendr in the early 1300's.

Another major difference in the situation of the king's courtiers in Iceland around 1300 is that their service to the king was no longer an experience that was of little consequence to their countrymen. The king's courtiers now had business in their own country and were likely to meet resistance by their own countrymen. Their loyalties could become very stretched, as the petition from 1306 brought to light.

Although the evidence is more abundant in Iceland than in most other corners of the Scandinavian monarchies, we have no reason to assume that the situation of Iceland was markedly different than that of other lands that had become integrated into the kingdoms earlier. In the civil wars of the 12th century, different lands supported different candidates for the throne. In the *Gesta Danorum*, Saxo Grammaticus, has clearly a distaste for the Jutes that had opposed King Valdemar, but his narrative also shows that resistance to royal authority was also to be found closer to home, as the revolt against Archbishop Absalon in Scania demonstrates (Sverrir Jakobsson 1999: 95–96). In Norway, the situation was similar. King Magnús Erlingsson, for example, had a stronghold in Viken,

as the inheritor of his uncle Ingi. His opponents, however, usually draw their strength from Trondheim or the Upplands, where the resistance to the king's sheriffs is greatest.

Following Iceland's incorporation into the domains of Norway, it became one of the more troublesome parts of the kingdom. In 1305, Krók-Álfr, one of the king's emissaries died unexpectedly in the country, and Icelandic loyalists seems at great pains to maintain that his death was not unnatural (Jón Jóhannesson 1958: 264–67).

In this context of a strenuous relationship between the king and his Icelandic subjects the mission of Haukr Erlendsson is of great interest. The lack of contemporary references in Hauksbók seems odd in this respect, but tells us a great deal about the mindset of a royal official in this period.

Haukr Erlendsson had no interest in recording the petty disharmonies of his own period, although he was very much aware of them, as his obsession with proving his descent from illustrious chieftains clearly indicates. But mostly, he was looking towards greater things. He had the interest of an educated man of his times, and his view was firmly focused on the world at large, the pagan past, the translation of the Scandinavian nobility from Asia minor, and the invention and settlement of Iceland and Greenland. Hauksbók is the manifestation of a world-view, not a polemic reflecting the author's idiosyncracies.

The education of Haukr Erlendsson was the product of a another evolution, that of literate culture, which was driven by other social agents from the 12th century onwards. The Church was an instrumental agent in creating literate culture in Iceland, and the world-view that went with it, although the monarchy became an indirect beneficiary. With the spread of literacy, Icelandic literates became more international in their outlook, but also in their mindset. Local tradition did not disappear completely, but was adapted to the catholic mentality that dominates the writings of these literates (cf. Sverrir Jakobsson 2007b). In Hauksbók we can see this adaption in progress, as the settlement myths are written into the context of a larger, catholic world.

The heterotopia which is Hauksbók puts the mindset of Scandinavian royal officials in the earthly 14th century into a new perspective. With their career divided between two places, among their peers and competitors at court or with sometimes unruly subjects in the provinces, they also had a notion of a wider world, a catholic past replete with heroes and events which had resonance even at the most extreme outposts of the known world.

V. Conclusion: Between many worlds

Above, I have endeavoured to take a microscopic view of two individuals from the same Icelandic family, Erlendr Ólafsson and Haukr Erlendsson, and put one piece of their activities into a larger framework of state-formation in Scandinavia. In Erlendr's case, his frequent travels to and from the Norwegian court demonstrate a shift from an earlier behavioral pattern of ambitious magnates who sought to advance their honour by service to the Norwegian monarch at some stage in their lives. In Erlendr's time as an official, ca 1284–1305, these travels had ceased being a rite of passage for a young man looking for advancement, and become a commonplace for a weary official who had to balance between maintaining the confidence of the king while enjoying the confidence of his subjects who could easily become unruly and even violent. Erlendr was the man of a new age in Iceland, but similar characters had no doubt appeared in other Scandinavian lands during the state-formation period of each monarchy.

Although the centralizing tendencies of Magnús Hákonarson, who ruled 1263–1280, and his two sons, Eiríkr (r. 1280–1299) and Hákon V. (r. 1299–1319) were greater than of any other rulers of Iceland before 1550, the system that was created during the reign of these kings was kept in essence by their successors. The source of power for ambitious Icelanders was to be found abroad, and they could only gain it by traversing the North-Atlantic. The ships that carried them between Norway and Iceland were heterotopias that changed the royal official from a wealthy and ambitious man to a servant of the king, from a respectful subject to a person of supreme authority within his district.

The case of Haukr Erlendsson, who happens to be Erlendr's son but who in many ways had a different career, closer to the seat of power and more distant from his native country, illustrates another aspect of this state-formation. It coincided with and contributed to the spread of literacy, but it is also concurrent with the adoption and adaption of a catholic world-view among the Icelandic literary elite, from where it was distilled to other social groups. *Hauksbók*, a large and impressive manuscript of Haukr Erlendsson, is the manifestation of such a world-view.

Although *Hauksbók* is a mine of information on both Icelandic and Norwegian history, it is very apparent in the work that Norway was not the centre of the world, let alone Iceland. The heterotopia of Haukr Erlendsson was the universe, with its many localities and throughout its long history. Thus, the creator and possessor of *Hauksbók* attempted to capture the whole world in all its complexities and manifestations.

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