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Editorial assistance

Viktoriya Kolp

Informatic editing

Răzvan Adrian Marinescu

In Search of “A Distinct and Peculiar Race of People”: the Mackenzie Expedition to Iceland, 1810

ANNA AGNARSDÓTTIR
University of Iceland, Reykjavík

ABSTRACT

European scientists first began exploring Iceland in the late 18th century. Until then, Iceland on the periphery of Europe had been a *terra incognita* to the scientific world. This chapter focuses on the Mackenzie expedition of 1810, because of the excellent and all-encompassing nature of the published account of the voyage and the interesting geological and political consequences of the voyage. Why did Sir George Steuart Mackenzie decide to go to Iceland in 1810? What did he find surprising and of special interest? What were the consequences of his expedition? To the historian, Mackenzie's interpretation of the history of the Icelanders from the Golden Age of medieval times to their decline in 1810 is of particular interest, as are his attempts at finding the causes that so spectacularly changed the character of this “distinct and peculiar race of people”, from a nation producing the great medieval saga literature to the apathetic and feeble people he found in 1810.

Á öndverðri atjándu öld var Ísland lítt þekktur útkjálki í Evrópu frá sjónarhorni vísindanna en þegar leið á öldina fóru erlendir vísindamenn að leggja leið sína hingað. Attu danskir upplýsingarmenn frumkvæðið og árið 1749 var Niels Horrebow sendur á vegum Vísindafélagsins danska til Íslands til að stunda rannsóknir. Horrebow reit fyrstu greinargóðu lýsinguna um Ísland sem birtist á prenti og var hún þýdd á þýsku, ensku, frönsku og hollensku. Frakkar voru fyrsta erlenda þjóðin sem sendi vísindaleiðangra til Íslands. Komu tveir leiðangrar til Vestfjarða á árunum 1767-72 og síðan tók við hver breski leiðangurinn á fætur öðrum. Þungamiðja þessarar greinar er sá leiðangur sem Sir George Steuart Mackenzie veitti forystu árið 1810. Af hverju varð Ísland fyrir valinu? Hvað vakti helst athygli leiðangursmanna? Hafði leiðangurinn einhver ábrif? eru spurningar sem leitað er svara við. Söguskodun Mackenzies er sérlega áhugaverð. Hann var afar hrifinn af fornbókmenntum Íslendinga og varð fyrir vonbrigðum þegar hann hitti afkomendur þessara snillinga árið 1810. Hvernig var eiginlega komið fyrir Íslendingum? Hvað hafði

gerst? Skýring hans fólst fyrst og fremst í því, að ógleymdum náttúruhamförum, hafði missir hins forna sjálfstæðis og misráðin yfirráð Dana dregið allan mátt úr þjóðinni. Loks vaknar sú spurning að þar sem Íslendingar voru konungshollir og yfirleitt sáttir við að tilheyra Danaveldi, voru það Englendingarnir sem komu hingað og rituðu um óstjórn Dana sem vöktu upp Danahatrið í Íslendingum?

INTRODUCTION

To Europeans in the late 18th century Iceland, the westernmost island of the continent, “remote and desolate”¹, was an exotic place, an unexplored territory. As Sir Joseph Banks, the great naturalist and celebrated world circumnavigator, remarked in 1772, Iceland

[...] has been visited but seldom & never at all by any good naturalist to my knowledge, the whole face of the country new to the botanist & zoologist as well as the many volcanoes with which it is said to abound made it very desirable to explore it².

He had recently returned from travelling around the world with Captain Cook on the *Endeavour* (1768-1771), generally agreed to be one of the most famous voyages of discovery, and a year later decided to lead the first British expedition to Iceland.

And, as late as 1812, the British peer and politician Sir John Thomas Stanley, who had followed in Banks’s footsteps and visited Iceland as a young man in 1789, was asked by a gentleman in London if Iceland, settled in the 9th century, “had been recently colonised?”. Sir John’s wife, Lady Maria, added an exclamation mark when recounting this to her daughter-in-law³. Thus, despite an article on *Islande* in Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, published in 1751-1772, Iceland remained to all intents and purposes a *terra incognita* to most Europeans, a country *très peu connue*⁴.

Paradoxically, however, Iceland was *not* in fact the isolated island in the mid-Atlantic as might be supposed and indeed has been portrayed as such in much Icelandic historiography. Though no scientist visited the island prior to the 18th century, English seamen had been attracted to the rich fishing banks off Iceland as early as ca. 1400, the 15th century in Icelandic history actually being dubbed “The English Century”. About 100 ships a year sailed from English ports to fish and trade in Icelandic waters. There were frequent disputes between the Kings of England and Denmark regarding the “illegal” English fishing but, at the same time, a great deal of contact between the English doggers and the Icelanders.

Accounts of the island in the north with amazing and untruthful stories had been published in Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* in 1544 and by the infamous Dutchman Dithmar Blefken in 1607, to name a couple⁵. Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson (1541-1627), famous for translating the Bible into Icelandic in 1584, was incensed by these accounts and commissioned a young clergyman, Arngrímur Jónsson (1568-1648), to

write a treatise refuting the calumnies against Iceland. Jónsson attempted to dispel the travel lies in various works, but his *Brevis Commentarius de Islandia*, published in Copenhagen 1593, received the widest circulation. It was the first Icelandic work to be written for foreigners, in Latin of course, and it was subsequently published five years later in 1598 in an English translation in the first volume of Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*⁶.

However, ignorance at the highest levels was still to be found and, in 1632, Mr. Secretary Coke, one of the two secretaries of state of Charles I, wrote in a memorandum on the Iceland fishing: "Iceland itself is a great territory, and unknown whether it be a main continent with Newfoundland or not"⁷. Cultural contacts continued, especially among antiquarians⁸, and it must be mentioned that the Royal Society (founded in 1662) was extremely active in collecting news of Iceland and its phenomena right from its year of foundation, asking that a "set of queries" be prepared for Iceland. There was, in fact, quite a lot of correspondence between the Society and learned Icelanders, for example, the Rev. Páll Björnsson in Selárdal, who answered some of the queries in 1671 and had a paper published in *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* in 1674⁹.

The French too had been interested in Iceland during the 17th century. For instance the theologian Isaac de la Peyrère (1594-1676) wrote his *Relation de l'Islande* in 1644 (published in 1663), based on information he had either heard or read about Iceland. He corresponded with Ole Worm (1588-1655), the celebrated Danish antiquarian, and his sections on the history of Iceland and Norse mythology are reliable. However, his book is in many ways uncritical; he prints, for instance, all the travel lies of Blefken, which Arngrímur Jónsson had sought to dispel in his *Anatome Blefkeniana*¹⁰.

EUROPEAN SCIENTISTS DISCOVER ICELAND

Banks was certainly not correct in his above-mentioned quotation. He was *not* the first "good naturalist" to visit Iceland. In the late 18th century Iceland was a dependency of Denmark. The Danish authorities, imbued with the spirit of the Enlightenment, had been sending scientists to explore the Danish realm since the middle of that century¹¹. The Danish Royal Society, founded in 1742, sent for example Niels Horrebow in 1749-1751 to make astronomical and meteorological observations, which resulted in the first reliable account of Iceland translated into the major European languages¹². Thankfully, he was the main source for the *Encyclopédie*.

In the late 1760s the French government was the first 'foreign' nation to show scientific interest in Iceland. At the end of the Seven Years' War, the loss of Canada to Britain was a great disappointment, with France intent on regaining her former colony. One plan suggested exchanging Iceland for the territorially large but unproductive French colony Louisiana, the idea being to establish a French naval station in Iceland from

whence ships could be sent to regain Canada. Étienne François de Choiseul, chief minister of Louis XV, received detailed plans to that effect¹³. At the beginning of 1767, Yves Joseph de Kerguelen-Trémarec (1734-1797) was summoned to Versailles to sail off to the North Atlantic to explore the islands there. His book, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Mer du Nord, Aux Côtes d'Islande ... en 1767 & 1768*, was published in 1771. Though his book is in many ways valuable, he claimed to have found marble, crystal and mines of copper and iron in Iceland. To date these have not been discovered. Kerguelen was, on the whole, fairly impressed by the Icelanders: they were keen chess players, well-proportioned with superb teeth, but lazy and prone to drink. Like all subsequent foreign travellers to Iceland, he found the dress of the Icelandic women unbecoming; to him it resembled the habits of the Jesuits.

A few years later, in 1771, a more ambitious expedition *par ordre du roi* set off, led by Jean-René Antoine, Marquis de Verdun de la Crenne (1741-1805), accompanied by a party of scientists to explore the wider Atlantic region. They were to correct maps and use new instruments and methods pertaining to navigation. In June 1772, they arrived at Patreksfjörður in western Iceland where they erected an observatory, planning to take various astronomical measurements. Unfortunately, they had no idea that during an Icelandic summer there is little difference between day and night, besides which torrents of rain and dense fog understandably hampered their work. Their book *Voyage fait par ordre du Roi en 1771 et 1772, en diverses parties de l'Europe ...* was published in 1778. They kept to the Western Fjords and left on 20 July.

Coincidentally, that same year, a month later on 28 August 1772, the first British expedition arrived in Hafnarfjörður in south-west Iceland. The oft-mentioned Joseph Banks arrived with his 20-strong retinue, including scientists, draughtsmen, field assistants doubling as horn-blowers (much to the non-musical Icelanders' surprise) and a French cook. He was in total ignorance of the French, not surprisingly, as they kept to different parts of a country with very primitive communications¹⁴. This keen botanist was disappointed to find the Icelandic flora withered and wrote in his journal that, despite the late season, he hoped "that something might be done ... which might promote examination of it by some others"¹⁵. In this he was successful, as other Englishmen were to follow in his footsteps to Iceland: the afore-mentioned Sir John Thomas Stanley in 1789¹⁶, William Jackson Hooker, the botanist, in 1809¹⁷ and Sir George Steuart Mackenzie in 1810. They all sought Banks's advice and assistance, acknowledging their debt to his pioneering effort. Though all wrote journals and books, it is on Mackenzie's expedition that this chapter will focus, for the two following reasons: Mackenzie published the most detailed account of Iceland, a virtual encyclopaedia, which in the words of one expert is "a work which far surpassed in both ambition and achievement all previous books available in English about Iceland"¹⁸ and his visit to Iceland had both interesting scientific and political consequences, as hopefully will become clear below.

SIR GEORGE STEUART MACKENZIE'S EXPEDITION TO ICELAND IN 1810

A rich Scottish landowner, Mackenzie (1780-1848) was a mineralogist¹⁹ who was also to have a stab at being a playwright²⁰. He was noted for his discovery that diamonds were a pure form of carbon, making "free use of his mother's jewels" in his experiments²¹. What aroused Mackenzie's interest in Iceland? In the preface to his book, he explained that it was the mineralogy [geology] of Iceland that made the exploration of Iceland "particularly desirable"²². The period 1750-1850 saw the development of scientific travel, the main interest being in botany and zoology, geology coming as a poor second. First travel was regional, but as the voyages of the French and British to the South Pacific in the late 18th century show, Europe was soon left behind. Instructions for travellers regarding geological observations first appeared in Italy in 1751. And in Linnæus's *Instructio peregrinatoris* (1760), chapters 8, *Physica*, and 9, *Lithologica*, prescribed measuring the height of mountains and collecting minerals and fossils, something Mackenzie diligently obeyed²³. Professor Andrew Wawn has pointed out that the Scottish baronet was a convinced Huttonian, a follower of James Hutton (1726-1797) of Edinburgh, who was engaged in debate with Abraham Gottlob Werner (1749-1817) of Freiberg in Saxony, leader of the Wernerians, on how the earth's surface had been formed²⁴. Would Iceland provide the answer?

Mackenzie also mentioned that he had long entertained the idea of visiting the island. He had accidentally met and then befriended a young Icelandic medical student, Ólafur Loftsson, who had become stranded in Stornoway after the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and Denmark in the autumn of 1807. Mackenzie took Loftsson to Edinburgh to further his medical studies and wrote, "from the information I received from him, I resolved not to delay my long projected visit to his country"²⁵. A letter he wrote to Banks, the acknowledged British expert on Iceland, in May 1809 explains why. He had learnt from Loftsson that the Danish government had "long neglected the island, and kept the inhabitants in great distress", assuring Mackenzie that the Icelanders would "most gladly place themselves under the care of our [the British] sovereign". Mackenzie had also written to Lord Castlereagh, the Secretary for War, proposing that "a sloop of war ... be sent to take possession" of Iceland, mentioning that he would be "thankful to be employed as governor"²⁶. The government declined his offer but Mackenzie nevertheless had made up his mind to mount an expedition to Iceland. The purpose of all scientific expeditions is to gain new knowledge, but sometimes science has been used to cloak other motives. A famous example is Napoleon's venture in Egypt in 1798-1801, clothed in the glory of scientific discovery when his true motives were acquiring Egypt as a colony and trade opportunities in the Levant, coupled with the advantage of striking a blow against British seapower²⁷. But there is nothing to suggest that Mackenzie had any ulterior purpose of this nature when he set off to Iceland in 1810, accompanied by two medical students, Richard Bright (1789-1858) an early pioneer into the research of kidney disease (Bright's disease), and Henry Holland (1788-1873), who

became eminent in his field, his most famous patient being Queen Victoria to whom he was appointed *Physician Extraordinary*²⁸.

Though Mackenzie was primarily interested in the exploration of natural phenomena, especially geology, he found practically everything of interest. Thus, Mackenzie's book includes detailed accounts of the three excursions the trio made from their base in Reykjavík in the south and west of Iceland, where they climbed the famous glacier and volcano Snæfellsjökull²⁹ and of course Hekla, the most celebrated Icelandic volcano, which according to Mackenzie did not measure up to its reputation, being far less spectacular than Etna and Vesuvius³⁰. The book was augmented with specific chapters dealing with history and literature, rural affairs, education, the government, laws and religion of Iceland, the state of commerce and zoology, botany and mineralogy. To this were added appendices relating to diseases of the Icelanders, Icelandic flora, a catalogue of minerals, miscellaneous articles connected with history and literature, music, a register of the weather during their stay and last, but not least, an account of the Icelandic Revolution of 1809.

There is a saying in Icelandic *glögg er gests augað* which might be roughly translated as "keen (or perceptive) is the eye of the guest", meaning that the visitor observes and notices things that the native takes for granted. This, of course, makes travel literature such a valuable source for the historian. From Mackenzie's book the following examples have been chosen, the focus being on his opinion of the Icelanders. Mackenzie was pained to find the Icelanders negligent in their personal hygiene. "We could not endure being touched ourselves by the natives", he wrote, because of "the cutaneous eruptions" afflicting most Icelanders³¹. Their homes, "little removed from the savage state", were quite simply disgusting and Mackenzie was surprised to find the house of correction in Reykjavík by "a mistake, not unnatural in such a country as Iceland" the most comfortable building by far in the country³². Mackenzie was quite correct in his assessment and this former prison now houses the offices of the Prime Minister of Iceland. He also found the custom of men greeting each other by warm kisses (now no longer practised) disconcerting to say the least. The explorers were sometimes required to suffer Icelandic music or singing, declared "inharmonious and uncouth"³³ but on the positive side was the fact that books were to be found in most farm-houses of the unusually literate Icelanders and many played chess extremely well. Mackenzie made a great point of the fact that the level of education was high and "the degree of information existing, even among the lower classes, is probably greater than in almost any part of continental Europe". Moreover, Iceland could boast individuals "whose talents and acquirements would grace the most refined circles of civilized society"³⁴. On the other hand, to the British visitors, these individuals, the Icelandic élite educated at the University of Copenhagen and commanding the highest royal positions, lacked refinement in their appearance. Stefán Stephensen, deputy-governor of western Iceland and scion of Iceland's most illustrious family, earned the highest praise by being deemed the Icelander most resembling

an Englishman in appearance and manners, to which was added "it might be nearest the truth to compare him with one of the highest class of farmers in England"³⁵ while Steingrímur Jónsson (1769-1845), then a lecturer at the cathedral school and later bishop of Iceland, also earned praise for displaying "a degree of intelligence not common in the physiognomies of Icelanders"³⁶. While Icelandic women were quite attractive, "their features in general well-formed; and their complexions fair and florid" the only woman they met with deserving to be called a "lady" was the Danish wife of a provincial merchant³⁷. Here it might simply be remarked that the wives of the Icelandic élite had doubtless never been abroad and that the Danish lady was a citizen of Copenhagen and not dressed in the Icelandic costume which Mackenzie found "rather ludicrous"³⁸.

MACKENZIE ON ICELANDIC HISTORY AND THE ICELANDIC CHARACTER

What is particularly interesting to the historian is Mackenzie's interpretation of the history of the Icelanders, mainly focusing on the literature, and his analysis of the character of the people. He found the Icelanders "a distinct and peculiar race of people", indeed a nation³⁹. Though oppressed by a severe climate they had managed to conserve for over almost a millenium:

[...] an enlightened system of internal policy, an exalted character in all religious and social duties, liberal methods of education, and the culture of even the more refined branches of literature and knowledge⁴⁰.

Mackenzie was a great admirer of the medieval Icelanders, imbued with an independent spirit and a sense of adventure, and the Saga literature they had produced. He believed the myth that noble Norwegians, distinguished by "vigour, activity and talent" and fleeing despotism, had settled Iceland⁴¹. From the 10th to the 14th centuries, Icelandic literary culture had flourished. But the Icelanders he met with in 1810 were not the heroic Icelanders, the men of genius, of ancient times. These were people reduced to "a state of apathy, superstition, and ignorance". In fact, there was little hope for them, Mackenzie declaring that "the glory of the Icelanders is now for ever sunk and their name almost lost among nations", probably never to be regained. Only "a feeble remnant of that reputation, which had formerly extended throughout the greater part of Europe" was now being kept alive⁴².

What great changes had been wrought to the national character leading to this decline? The causes were many: a disastrous climate resulting in the decay of agriculture, followed by famine, epidemics, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions had all taken their toll as had depredations by pirates, even English ones. But Mackenzie placed the greatest importance on Iceland's loss of independence when it was annexed by a foreign power, i.e. Denmark. Naturally enough to a man like Mackenzie, the Catholic Church also had to take its share of the blame. While European nations were liberating themselves "from the bondage of ignorance and superstition" the "ecclesiastical tyranny" of the Catholic

Church was engulfing Iceland⁴³. During this “gloomy age, the talents and literature of the Icelanders were depressed almost to extinction”⁴⁴. Matters improved, however, in the wake of the Reformation, a new era in Iceland’s history, and by the 18th century thanks were due even to the Danes who had begun showing interest in their dependency and initiating improvements. Most historians would agree but it must also be remembered that Mackenzie was indebted to the Danish governor of Iceland, Count Trampe, for his assistance and dedicated his book to him. It would not do to be too negative about the Danes.

Let us finally return to Mackenzie’s opinion of the character of the Icelanders: “Being of quiet and harmless dispositions...[having] nothing to inspire emulation; no object of ambition; the Icelanders may be said merely to live”⁴⁵. This is a pretty depressing picture, it must be admitted, but a careful reading of Mackenzie reveals that in his opinion this once “distinct and peculiar race of people” did possess innate good qualities. He found it noteworthy that no Icelander was willing to take on the task of executioner, thus criminals condemned to death were transported to Denmark. They were innocent, amiable, moral, religious, extremely hospitable, besides which virtue, honour and integrity stamped the Icelandic character.

Mackenzie was well read in Icelandic literature. His thinking owed much to scholars such as the oft mentioned Arngrímur Jónsson the Learned, especially his work *Crymogæa* (1609) on the history of Iceland in Latin. What is most interesting about Mackenzie’s interpretation is the fact that he offers basically the same argument as that used by the leaders of Iceland’s struggle for independence only several decades later in the 19th century. In the beginning there was the Golden Age of an independent people forming their own Commonwealth with its incredible Saga literature, followed by a steep decline due to loss of independence and the despotism of a foreign power.

MACKENZIE’S LEGACY

Mackenzie’s book, *Travels in the Island of Iceland during the Summer of the Year 1810*, proved influential. It was lengthy, 491 pages, and no expense was spared to publish this handsome volume, well illustrated, both in black and white and colour, with interesting tables⁴⁶, drawings and maps. It was published to favourable reviews in Edinburgh in 1811 and sold well; a second edition was printed the following year and eventually a cheap edition made its appearance in 1842. Mackenzie’s audience was the intellectual élite of Europe, translations appearing in German and Dutch⁴⁷. From the geological point of view the visit was a success. Mackenzie had carefully collected mineral examples of basaltic volcanic rocks, the examination of which furthered the argument of the Huttonians⁴⁸.

Perhaps the most interesting result of the expedition was Mackenzie’s continuing political interest in the island. His proposal that the island should be annexed to the British Empire and his wish to become Governor of Iceland have already been noted.

He was no doubt motivated to some degree by self-interest; a governorship was a prestigious appointment. But, after studying the history of Iceland and the negative impact of Danish rule, he appears to have firmly believed that the Icelanders would be much better off under Great Britain. In his book, he portrayed the Icelanders as desirous of coming under English rule and felt that Britain had a duty to take formal possession of the island, feeling certain that the lot of the Icelanders would greatly improve "under the fostering care of a benevolent government". He emphasized that the fisheries were "exuberant and inexhaustible" and he believed that the possession of Iceland would not prove "too burdensome to England"⁴⁹. Both former explorers of Iceland, Sir Joseph Banks and William Jackson Hooker, had presented similar arguments, concurring with Mackenzie about the appropriateness of Britain taking possession of Iceland. This was the only means to free the Icelanders from Danish rule, under which they had degenerated to "their present torpid character". British rule would "give an instantaneous energy to the character of the Icelander", to use the words of Sir Joseph Banks, and the Icelanders would again become "animated, active and zealous"⁵⁰ participants in the European world. Mackenzie continued to take an interest in Iceland. He was worried about the trade situation and sent a memorial to the Board of Trade in 1811, suggesting further commercial benefits for the Icelanders, while indicating his disagreement with the government's decision "not to take possession of Iceland"⁵¹.

Could it be that the British friends of Iceland kindled the idea of "the bad Danes", such a necessary and potent weapon in the struggle for national independence in the latter half of the 19th century? Certainly contemporary Icelanders, such as the leading family of Stephensen, were perfectly happy under Danish rule and strenuously objected to the Iceland Revolution of 1809, which declared Iceland an independent country under the protection of Great Britain⁵².

The British government, however, was not interested in annexing Iceland but Mackenzie did not give up, and, in fact, his travels to Iceland were just the start of a curious political career in which he became actively engaged in saving the Icelanders, even going so far as to approach the King of Denmark. But that is another story⁵³.

NOTES

¹ G.S. Mackenzie, *Travels in the Island of Iceland during the Summer of the Year 1810*, Edinburgh 1811, p. 4.

² Quoted in A. Agnarsdóttir, *Sir Joseph Banks and the exploration of Iceland*, in R.E.R. Banks, B. Elliot, J.G. Hawkes, D. King-Hele, G.L. Lucas (eds.), *Sir Joseph Banks. A Global Perspective*, London 1994, p. 31.

³ Maria Josepha Stanley to Mrs. E[dward] Stanley, 3 May 1812, in J.H. Adeane (ed.), *The Early Married Life of Maria Josepha Lady Stanley*, London 1899, p. 335.

⁴ Y.J. de Kerguelen-Trémarec, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Mer du Nord, Aux Côtes d'Islande ... en 1767 & 1768*, Paris 1771, p. 34. Part of this book was translated into English and published by J. Pinkerton

- in his first volume of *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World...*, London 1808. Mackenzie makes no mention of this publication in his book.
- ⁵ There are two excellent books on foreign accounts of Iceland: Þ. Thoroddsen, *Landfræðissaga Íslands*, first published in Copenhagen 1896-1898 and reprinted in Reykjavík 2003-2009, 5 vols.; and S.R. Ísleifsson, *Ísland framandi land*, Reykjavík 1996.
 - ⁶ See further Mary C. Fuller, *Where was Iceland in 1600?*, in J. Singh (ed.), *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, Oxford 2009, pp. 149-162.
 - ⁷ Quoted by E. Seaton, *Literary Relations of England and Scandinavia in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford 1935, p. 221, from *State Papers, Domestic*.
 - ⁸ Robert Hooke (1635-1703), one of the luminaries of the Scientific Revolution, prepared his 'Enquiries for Iceland' for the Royal Society, in 1662/3 which appeared in print at various points in the 17th and 18th centuries, see R. Hooke, *Philosophical Experiments and Observations* (first published 1726, Oxford 1967), pp. 19-21.
 - ⁹ See extensively on this in chapter VI in Seaton, *Literary Relations* cit.
 - ¹⁰ See e.g. Thoroddsen, *Landfræðissaga Íslands* cit., vol. II, pp. 143-145; Ísleifsson, *Ísland* cit., p. 66. Another book by a Frenchman, Pierre-Martin de la Martinière (1634-1690) published *Voyage des Pais Septentrionaux* in 1671 with a chapter on Iceland, though little in his text suggests he actually visited the island. Both these books, however, were probably instrumental in keeping alive in France the travel-lies originating from the 16th century.
 - ¹¹ H. Sigurðsson, *Nátturuvísindi og landafræði*, in I. Sigurðsson (ed.), *Upplýsingin á Íslandi. Tíu ritgerðir*, Reykjavík 1990, pp. 269-292.
 - ¹² Horrebow's work *Tilførladelige Efterretninger om Island* was published in Danish in 1752 and translated into German (1753), Dutch (1756), English (1758) and French (1764).
 - ¹³ The documents are preserved in the archives of the Ministère de la Défence at the Château de Vincennes and the research is ongoing.
 - ¹⁴ Though he inevitably discovered this fact later. See Banks to Hooker, 18 December 1811, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Archives, Hooker's Correspondence, I, no. 34.
 - ¹⁵ Quoted by Agnarsdóttir, *Banks and Iceland* cit., p. 39.
 - ¹⁶ The Banks and Stanley expeditions left little contemporary trace. Uno von Troil, a member of Banks's expedition and later archbishop of Uppsala, published *Letters on Iceland*, first in Swedish in 1777 and subsequently in English in 1780 while the journals of the two expeditions were not published until the latter half of the 20th century.
 - ¹⁷ W.J. Hooker, *Journal of a Tour in Iceland in the Summer of 1809*, Yarmouth 1811, London 1813.
 - ¹⁸ A. Wawn, *Gunnlaugs saga Ormstunga and the Theatre Royal Edinburgh 1812. Melodrama, Mineralogy and Sir George Mackenzie*, in "Scandinavica", 1982, p. 141.
 - ¹⁹ Today he would be called a geologist but the term had not been coined at the time.
 - ²⁰ His play, *Helga or the Rival Minstrels*, based on an Icelandic saga, "was damned to everlasting redemption" in Edinburgh, Wawn, *Sir George Mackenzie* cit., p. 139.
 - ²¹ *The Dictionary of National Biography*, London 1921-1922, pp. xii, 593-594.
 - ²² Mackenzie, *Travels* cit., p. viii.
 - ²³ E. Vaccari, *The Organized traveller: scientific instructions for geological travels in Italy and Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*, in P.N. Wyse Jackson (ed.), *Four Centuries of Geological travel: The Search for Knowledge on Foot, Bicycle, Sledge and Camel*, Geological Society, London, Special Publications, 2007, 287, pp. 7-10.
 - ²⁴ Wawn, *Sir George Mackenzie* cit., pp. 146-147.

- ²⁵ Mackenzie, *Travels* cit., p. ix.
- ²⁶ Mackenzie to Banks, 20 May 1809, The Natural History Museum, Botany Library, The Banks Correspondence.
- ²⁷ F. McLynn, *Napoleon. A Biography*, London 1998, pp. 167-171.
- ²⁸ Holland kept a journal, to which Mackenzie liberally helped himself when writing his book. It was first published by The Hakluyt Society, A. Wawn (ed.), *The Iceland Journal of Henry Holland 1810*, London 1987. It is of great interest to the historian to compare these two types of written sources describing the same events, one a private journal, the other a published travel-book.
- ²⁹ Jules Verne's starting point in *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, published in 1864.
- ³⁰ Mackenzie, *Travels* cit., p. 249.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- ³² *Ibid.*, pp. 295, 319-320.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 308.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 292.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 202; Holland, *Journal* cit., p. 216.
- ³⁶ Mackenzie, *Travels* cit., p. 104.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 173.
- ³⁸ The costume is described in great detail by Mackenzie, *Travels* cit., pp. 85-87.
- ³⁹ Mackenzie, *Travels* cit., pp. 3-4.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 51-52.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 17, 50. But this has been refuted by archaeological evidence.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 285-286, 52.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55 and see pp. 59-60.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 270.
- ⁴⁶ As an example, Mackenzie translates a parish register showing the family structure and the notes inscribed by the clergyman regarding the conduct and general abilities of all his parishioners, Guðrún Jónsdóttir, aged 17, is "Above mediocrity in her abilities" while Gunnar Grímsson, aged 25, "has neglected his improvement, and is therefore admonished". Mackenzie, *Travels* cit., p. 143.
- ⁴⁷ See, for example, *Reis van Sir George Steuart Mackenzie naar en op het Eiland Ysland; in den zomer van het jaar 1810*. Te's Gravenhage: Bij W.K. Mandemaker 1821. *Reise durch die Insel Islands im Sommer 1810. Nach der zweiten Ausgabe des englischen Originals*, Weimar 1815.
- ⁴⁸ Thoroddsen, *Landfræðissaga Íslands* cit., (Reykjavík 2005), III, p. 161.
- ⁴⁹ Mackenzie, *Travels* cit., pp. 271, 339.
- ⁵⁰ 30 December 1807, Banks to Lord Hawkesbury, The Natural History Museum, London, Botany Library, Dawson Turner Copies XVII.
- ⁵¹ 21 August 1811, Mackenzie to Board of Trade, The National Archives, London, BT 1/64.
- ⁵² See further: A. Agnarsdóttir, *Iceland under British Protection during the Napoleonic Wars*, in M. Bregnsbo, P. Ihalainen (eds.), *Scandinavia during the Age of Revolution*, due to be published by Ashgate in 2011.
- ⁵³ For the rest of the story see A. Agnarsdóttir, *Scottish Plans for the Annexation of Iceland 1785-1813*, in "Northern Studies", 1992, 29, pp. 91-95.

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