

Peter Foote Memorial Bursary Report

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Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

The Peter Foote Memorial Bursary enabled me to conduct geographic, historiographic, and onomastic research for my PhD thesis, ‘Visualising the Social Networks of the *Sturlubók* and *Melabók* Redactions of *Landnámabók*’ at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavik, Iceland. Without the support of the Viking Society for Northern Research, I would not have the means to fund a research trip to Iceland for two weeks, therefore, I am very grateful to the Society for providing this opportunity.

This experience has greatly improved my PhD research as well as my development as a scholar in Viking Studies. I can now conceptualise and engage with Icelandic perceptions of place more thoroughly after utilizing the collection of the Árni Magnússon Institute, conversing with other scholars, and interacting with the landscape. In the Institute’s collection, I was able to access modern Icelandic texts and maps not available at the University of Nottingham such as one of the most recent collection of essays on *Landnámabók*, *Landnám Íslands: úr fyrirlestraröð Miðaldastofu Háskóla Íslands 2014-2015*, and a 1940s edition of *Landnámabók* which contains a complete collection of maps delineating all boundaries of a settler’s land-claim(s). These maps will be helpful when analysing relationships and disputes caused by land to see what impact boundaries and minor place-names had in these interactions. I thank Guðný Ragnarsdóttir for reserving a desk for me at the Institute as well as showing me how to access and sort through the collection. Additionally, I was able to browse the collection of the Department of Name Studies at the Laugavegur 13 site and was delighted to see how well-recorded minor names are in Iceland compared to England. These place-names are important to assess in *Landnámabók* because they on occasion are named after ‘individuals’. If my social network graphs show that individuals have minimal connections, but lend their name to a place, it may indicate that they were created to fill the landscape.

The scholars based at the Árni Magnússon Institute and University of Iceland were very encouraging and provided excellent feedback on my PhD project as well as general advice on academia and Iceland. I met with Emily Lethbridge on several occasions to discuss the transmission of *Landnámabók* as well as how to incorporate geographic information into my database and visualisations of the text’s social networks. She kindly shared the latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates from the Icelandic Saga Map for the *Sturlubók* redaction. This data has allowed me to attach places to people in the Social Network Analysis software, *Gephi*, which I can then export to Google Planet to show how relationships form geographically in *Landnámabók*. Margaret Cormack made useful suggestions on how to analyse religious elements of the text. This knowledge will be helpful if I assign approximate dates to individuals within *Landnámabók*. Trausti Dagsson also provided helpful feedback on my database and recommended other visualisation software such as Network X and

Cytoscope where I can import my existing data to visualise it in different ways to identify additional patterns of settlement in the text. I met many other scholars and postgraduate students by attending lectures in the Centre for Medieval Studies Lecture Series. These included ‘*Fóstbræðra saga: A Missing Link?*’ given by Mikael Males and ‘A leek with a grain of salt: *Laukr* in *Völsa þáttr* and elsewhere’ presented by Merrill Kaplan. Furthermore, I attended the morning office yoga sessions and coffee breaks. During these sessions, I was able to listen to modern Icelandic as well as ask about the best way to learn the language and they provided helpful tips. It is impossible to list everyone that I met in Iceland in this short report, but I am thankful for all of the academic, cultural, and general feedback they provided and I will endeavour to return to the Institute when the Summer School in Scandinavian Manuscript Studies is next in Reykjavík.

Not only did the people at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies help to progress my studies, but also experiencing the landscape proved invaluable. It is hard to appreciate the scale of topographical features and the dramatic changes from region to region from pictures alone. While at Þingvellir, it was immediately clear to me why this place was selected to be the site of the Alþingi and remains important within the Icelandic consciousness. Visiting sites in the Snæfellsnes peninsula and on the southern shore provided the context in which relationships in *Landnámabók* were created or destroyed. Thus understanding this environment is fundamental to understanding the social networks in the text. Furthermore, seeing the sites improved my onomastic knowledge. It is often said that Icelandic place-names are transparent so it was informative to see how place-name elements were applied to certain geographical features and in many instances the name does indeed match the location.

In addition to touring the landscape, I visited several museums to provide historical context to what I was experiencing on the island. Þjóðminjasafn Íslands ‘National Museum of Iceland’ put on the exhibition, ‘Making of a Nation - Heritage and History in Iceland’. This exhibition featured many Settlement Period artifacts and information that incorporated textual, archeological, and onomastic evidence. Seeing a settlement site in situ at the Landnámssýningin ‘The Settlement Exhibition’ also helped me visualize the farms of *Landnámabók*.

I again thank the Viking Society for Northern Research for awarding me the Peter Foote Memorial Bursary which allowed me to visit the place that has preoccupied all my thoughts since I began my PhD research. Now I not only have thoughts and ideas of Iceland, but memories that I can use to not only inform my project, but also my development as a scholar.