

## Abstract

Einar Hreinsson, Nätverk och nepotism. Den regionala förvaltningen på Island 1770–1870. Avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg 37 (Göteborg 2003). 289 pages. Written in Swedish with an English summary. (*Network and nepotism. The Regional Administration in Iceland 1770–1870*. Dissertation from the History Department, Göteborg University, 37, 2003). ISBN 91-88614-47-6; ISSN 1100-6781.

During the last decades of the 18th century and the 19th century, the Danish monarchy, and in particular its civil administration underwent radical changes. The central power increased its influence, which led to a more intensified exercise of power and to higher demands for total control over society. Regional officials played a key role in this development, being the only formal link between the central power in Copenhagen and various parts of the conglomerate state. On the remote island of Iceland it was vital that the state could rely on its representatives. This dissertation deals with the development of the regional administration in Iceland and the crown's recruiting policy. It was of utmost importance to the central power that the right candidates were appointed as higher officials, but how did the officials exercise their assignments, and whose interests were given priority as they ran the errands of the central administration?

The administration is surveyed with the use of both normative sources and studies of its everyday function. The characteristics and the recruitment of officials are investigated. Informal links between officials are analysed using the concept of social network. Taking a few key issues as examples, the role of the official's social network is surveyed. The goal is to shed light on how the officials carried out the policies of the central power.

The social network of Icelandic officials was the group that influenced the development of the administration most during this period. By the end of the 18th century, a closely interconnected network, with roots in the old landowning elite in Iceland, controlled all regional offices in Iceland. The central power in Copenhagen was fully aware of the existence of the officials network and tried to reduce its influence on the matters of the state. The introduction of the titles of noblesse de robe in the Monarchy, had great impact in Iceland, giving Icelandic higher officials a new noble identity that enabled them to demarcate them as an elite, from other, lower ranking officials and society.

At the turn of the century, when absolutism was abolished in the Danish Monarchy, the regional officials and their network played one of the main roles in the political development in Iceland. In this dissertation it is claimed that events seen by previous researcher as peasant revolts or distant echoes from revolutions in Europe, probably had more to do with conflicts between the officials network and those who attempted to challenge its power.

The central power's ambitions to exercise maximum power and influence over Icelandic administration and the society in general, most often resulted in compromises, if the wishes of the central power did not coincide with the interests of the officials and their social network.

KEY WORDS: administration, officials, central power, state building, modernization, social networks, corruption, nepotism, Iceland, Danish Monarchy, 18th century history, 19th century history.