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A Century Apart

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Examples of perception of the Chinese people in Icelandic media

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"I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and a result of my own research."

Birgir Hrannar Stefánsson

"I hereby declare that this thesis satisfies, in my own opinion, requirements for a B.A. degree."

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Abstract

Iceland and China are two nations situated almost at the opposite side of the globe. In this thesis, I am taking two examples of media coverage on China; the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson are compared with the discussion in Akureyri Vikublað regarding Huang Nubo.

Ólafur Ólafsson was a pioneer of intercultural communication between Iceland and China in the early 20th century. Working as a missionary in China he sent home letters published through the magazine Ljósberinn and later on these writings became the foundation for his two books, Mission on China and 14 Years in China. Through those writings Ólafur Ólafsson created one of the first images of China in the Icelandic collective consciousness.

Akureyri Vikublað, a local weekly newspaper edited by Björn Þorláksson, was first published during the fall of 2011. At a very similar time the interest of Huang Nubo in Grímsstaðir á Fjöllum became public, sparking reactions both locally and internationally. Akureyri Vikublað published material regarding this matter through sent-in articles, interviews and news articles.

Here, the image, perception and coverage of China and the Chinese people under discussion within these two main media sources will be compared leading to the conclusion that the image portrayed today, as it was almost a century ago, is tainted by stereotypes, insularity and xenophobia.

Útdráttur

Ísland og Kína eru tvær þjóðir staðsettar sitt hvoru megin á hnettinum. Í þessari ritgerð skoða ég sjónarmið gagnvart Kínverjum sem slíkum með því að bera saman tvö dæmi, annað skrif Ólafs Ólafssonar kristniboða og hins vegar umræðu í Akureyri Vikublaði í tengslum við mál Huang Nubo.

Ólafur Ólafsson var frumkvöðull í upplýsingaflæði milli Kína og Íslands í upphafi tuttugustu aldar. Hann vann sem kristniboði í Kína og sendi heim bréf sem hann fékk birt í tímaritinu Ljósberinn. Þessi bréf urðu síðar grunnurinn af tveimur bókum sem hann skrifaði, „Kristniboð í Kína“ og „14 ár í Kína“. Í gegnum þessi skrif gat íslenska þjóðin myndað sér skoðun á stöðu mála í Kína.

Akureyri Vikublað er blað sem dreift er á Akureyrarsvæðinu og fjallar að mestu um staðbundin málefni. Björn Þorláksson er ritstjóri þess og blaðið kom fyrst út haustið 2011. Á þessum tíma hófst umræða um áhuga Huang Nubo á Grimstöðum á Fjöllum sem leiddi til litríkra viðbragða bæði innan lands sem utan. Í Akureyri Vikublaði birtust um málið bæði innsendar greinar, viðtöl og fréttir.

Í þessum tveim dæmum er skoðuð sú ímynd og sá skilningur sem fram kemur í umfjöllun um Kína og kínverska þjóð í þessum miðlum og gerður samanburður. Niðurstaðan er að sú mynd sem fram kemur í dag er lituð af staðalímyndum, heimóttartortryggni og útlendingafælni á sama hátt og hún var fyrir um hundrað árum.

I want to thank my instructor, Prof. Giorgio Baruchello, for taking me in under his wing and guiding me through this process. I also want to thank Markus Meckl for his contribution, my father for his assistance and guidance and last but not at all least my fiancée, Karen Dúa Kristjánsdóttir, for her help, patience and comfort.

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1. Introduction

In a geographically isolated country like Iceland, which is an island in the North Atlantic with no borders shared with other countries, the media plays a very important role in portraying the world far beyond the nation's coastline. One of the farthest countries you can find from Iceland, both geographically and socially, is the People's Republic of China, found on the other side of the globe, the world's most populous country and one of the oldest civilizations in the world.

An Icelandic missionary, Ólafur Ólafsson, created one of the first images of China in the Icelandic collective consciousness with his writings about his missionary work there in the beginning of the 20th century. One of the most recent images portrayed in the Icelandic media in the early 21st century, instead, concerned Huang Nubo, a Chinese businessman and real estate developer, and his interest in Grímsstaðir á Fjöllum, a large portion of land covering just over 30,000 hectares in northeast Iceland.

In this thesis I shall discuss and compare the image, perception and coverage of China and the Chinese people portrayed in both these cases, which are almost a century apart from each other. Two books written by Ólafur will be used and compared to the first three volumes of *Akureyri Vikublað*, a local newspaper.

In the essay I cover definitions and concepts in connection with my fields of emphasis within modern studies that are Icelandic media and social studies. Focusing on the approach and writings found within these two main media-sources, I provide examples and findings to support the conclusion that the image portrayed today, as it was almost a century ago, is far from being objective and is tainted with insularity, stereotypes and xenophobia rather than attempting at being neutral and informative.

2. Ólafur Ólafsson

Ólafur Ólafsson was a pioneer of intercultural communication between Iceland and China in the early 20th century. China was mentioned in the international news throughout the 19th century in newspapers, journals and other printed media sources as can be seen in the media database found on the web page *timarit.is*. On closer inspection it becomes apparent that these writings were mainly translations or rewritings of news from other European countries found in magazines such as *Skírnir*, *Norðanfari* and *Þjóðólfur*. As these papers did not have access to a first-party source they had to rely on material from other sources rewritten or translated for their publications.

News and reports regarding Chinese immigration to the United States, where the immigrants were used as cheap labor mainly on the west coast, were prominent in news coming from the west, but the bulk of what can be found was in regards to the commercial and military invasion of China by Europe's most powerful countries, and with that the crumbling of the Chinese imperial dynasty's power.

What Ólafur Ólafsson brought to readers was a totally different perspective than what had been seen until then. No longer just a blend of translations and rewritings of superficial international news: Icelanders now could read about China from an Icelandic's first-hand point of view, a true first-party source of information.

Ólafur Ólafsson was born on the 14th of August in 1895 on the farm Desey in Norðurárdalur in north-west Iceland. His thirst for education and knowledge soon led him south to Reykjavík and from there he went to Oslo in Norway for five years to study at a local Lutheran missionary school. In Norway Ólafsson met his wife, who later traveled with him around the world. After finishing his studies in Norway, he moved across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States, where he furthered his missionary studies for another year. In the year 1921 Ólafur Ólafsson moved to China with his family, where he studied the language

for a year before he was employed as a missionary in the historical Henan province, located in the central part of the country. Ólafur Ólafsson is regarded as the first Icelander to be sent on such a mission. (Guðnason & Haraldsson, 1967)

During the time he spent in China, Ólafsson published his story firstly through letters and articles sent home to Iceland and published in a Christian newsletter for children and youngsters called *Ljósberinn* (the Light Bearer). These writings were also later the foundations of two books telling the story of his time and experience in China. The first book came out in 1928 and is called *Kristniboð í Kína* (Mission in China) and the second one, published ten years later, is called *14 ár í Kína* (14 Years in China).

With the publications of these letters and articles, which later formed the two books under discussion, Ólafsson brought Icelanders closer to China than they had ever been before. This had a big impact on creating an image of China and the Chinese people for Icelanders beyond the basic coverage provided by other media sources.

2.1 Kristniboð í Kína

“*Kristniboð í Kína*” (Mission in China) was published in 1928 when Ólafur Ólafsson had been in China for about 7 years. It is a fairly short book assembled in part on the foundations created by his writings, published in *Ljósberinn* but with a bit of a different approach. *Ljósberinn* was aimed at younger readers, while this book is for adult readers, for whom he sheds a light on why he is in China, how he got there and what he aims to achieve before returning back to Iceland.

Ólafur Ólafsson starts out by trying to explain why he and others are taking part in missionary work all around the world, keeping on with the work that Jesus

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entrusted Paul the Apostle to do amongst the pagan people of the world i.e., according to the Bible, to spread the word of God. This calling is something that Ólafur Ólafsson sees as a duty of every Christian man: to save people from damnation and sin and lead them to the only source of salvation and forgiveness.

No one else but the son of God has been given the power to forgive sins. He is the only unfailing cure against sin which is the root and cause of distress and divide in the world.

(Ólafsson, *Kristniboð í Kína*, 1928, p. 6)

It appears that his travels to the other side of the world to spread the word of God have been met with some criticism in Iceland, since justification of his missionary works is the main topic of the first chapters of the book. After trying to explain that such a work is the calling of all Christians, he then tries to explain that even though the financial and spiritual status of the church in Iceland could be better, that is no excuse for not answering the duty of missionary work outside the country, work that Jesus started himself and then left to man to carry on.

After defending the existence of missionary work, Ólafur Ólafsson moves on to telling the story of *Robert Morrisson* who, according to him, was the pioneer of the evangelist mission in China, where he first set foot in the beginning of the 19th century. Morrisson had a mountain to climb when he first came to a country where foreigners were not particularly welcome, and he did not just face adversity from the Chinese, but also from western merchants who had nothing to do with him and despised him as much as the Chinese despised foreigners. This though was not enough to make him give up as he rather chose to go into hiding for the first two years to try to adapt to local surroundings and learn the language that locals could not teach him-according to their laws at that time it was punishable with death to teach foreigners Chinese. Persistence paid off in the end, seven years later Robert Morrisson baptized his first local and twelve

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years later he finished translating the holy scripture into Chinese, a language a quarter of the world spoke at that time. The xenophobia then reached a climax around the year 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion after years of riots and infringement from foreign merchants. The Chinese government then ordered all foreigners to be killed, even the ones that would try to escape. In a short amount of time, 134 missionary workers lost their lives, something that Ólafur Ólafsson classifies as martyrdom. These missionaries were not the only ones to lose their life during this time, as the same fate awaited 52 of their children and around five thousand Christian Chinese. (Ólafsson, Kristniboð í Kína, 1928)

According to Ólafur Ólafsson the main objectives of missionaries can be split into three categories: teaching, preaching and healing. By doing that, missionaries are following in the steps of Jesus, who traveled around cities and villages, teaching and preaching the word of God to the people and healing the ones in need of treatment.

The practices of missionaries are mainly three, - but also all intertwined: they teach, preach and heal; they build schools, churches and hospitals; they preach the gospel to the heathens, teach them the Christian ways and other miscellaneous useful knowledge, and to work to relief suffering through charity. Missionary work amongst the heathen is believed to be the world's greatest charity.

(Ólafsson, Kristniboð í Kína, 1928, p. 10)

As soon as a congregation is formed in a heathen country, it is inevitable to establish Christian schools according to Ólafur Ólafsson since Christian parents cannot send their children to heathen schools, which also are usually not up to acceptable standards, as their conditions are usually very bad, even inhumane, and the education they offer is only a little better. In a country where only about 15-20 men and around two women out of a hundred can read, it is obvious that the education amongst common people is rare and very basic.

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Regularly, throughout the book, Ólafsson provides examples or short stories as arguments to support his claim that the work of the missionaries is not only good and important, but also very much needed to try to better the heathens and correct their way of life.

In 1908 the Norwegian Missionary association sent a doctor to the area for the first time, he started a small medical shelter where he was kept very busy. Six years later an army of robbers took over the area amongst civil unrest in China. The doctor was busy from dusk until dawn treating whomever needed treatment regardless of who they were, missionaries, locals or even the robbers themselves. At the end of the day the doctor was on his way back to the missionary station to treat a friend and a colleague, when he was confronted in the street by a robber. Even though the doctor explained who he was, he could not escape death by the hands of the robber who did not believe him, adding one more name to the list of martyrs.

Women and children are used as examples of the innocent being trampled on by heathen and Buddhist traditions and norms. Children's engagement is common and, according to Ólafsson, it is just plain commerce or trade, especially when young girls are concerned. They are not owned by their parents but rather their future in-laws. Until they are married they are just a burden on their parents and not even counted as their offspring, as becomes obvious when a Chinese father is asked how many children he has and he answers with his number of sons: the girls are not counted the same way. Girls also have less access to education than boys as they only get basic education regarding chores, needlework and other practical activities.

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A ridiculous practice is still customary in China, when a girl is two years old, her feet are bound; the toes are crumbled under the sole and then the foot is bound so tightly that it can not be stretched out again. This is accompanied by a lifetime of pain and suffering as Chinese women have to walk on their heels. – It is forbidden to bind the feet of girls in all missionary schools.

(Ólafsson, Kristniboð í Kína, 1928, p. 27)

According to Ólafsson, the status of women within the Chinese community is far from good. Within Buddhism only men are considered to have a soul and the place of a woman within the Chinese community is the one of the almost invisible servant. So much so, that only women missionaries could gain proper access to Chinese women, as it was tradition and considered politeness that when a man entered the home, the women would go into hiding and remain as inconspicuous as possible. The binding of their feet is mentioned on few occasions throughout the book. When a girl is around two- to four-years old, her feet are bound to limit its size and shape according to tradition, limiting greatly women's quality of life and freedom. A married woman is under the ownership of her husband and does not have the right to complain under any circumstances, but the man can have as many lovers as he likes and divorce her when he sees fit. In such case she falls into the ownership of her relatives that arrange for her marriage again, not asking her permission or opinion, just like they did before when she was a child.

If there is such a thing as a person in need of help in the world, then that applies to Chinese women.

(Ólafsson, Kristniboð í Kína, 1928, p. 27)

The exposure of newborn children is something that Ólafsson points out as a common practice amongst the heathens. In isolated places on the outskirts of Dengzhou the sight of a wrapped green package bound together by string lying around is a regular thing; within the packaging lie bodies of infant children. This

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is so common that it is hard to find villages or areas that can claim that their children are not abandoned in such a way. So frequently does this happen that women can shame-free talk about it publicly how many children they have killed and in what ways.

To such a low level can no creature go, as to killing its own offspring. A woman that kills her own child is not whole, she is empowered by evil – but we know that Christ can set free, those who follow him and stand before God

(Ólafsson, *Kristniboð í Kína*, 1928, p. 42)

The reality of women and children in China is something Ólafsson recalls on more than one occasion and can be explained through their non-Christian lifestyle and their worshipping of false gods as, according to his beliefs, there is only one true God. Ólafsson does not explain the local beliefs that he has encountered in any detail, but rather focuses on what he thinks are the results or consequences of their existence and popularity, i.e. the wrongdoings of the people. The traditions, rituals and gods within these heathen beliefs Ólafsson connects with fear. He claims he notices the fear of slaves in the people, as they are slaves to their heathen religion, and the only solution to this problem is found in Christianity.

In the final chapters of the book Ólafsson goes into more detail as to how the missionary work goes on and portrays various numbers and statistics to point out the achievements already accomplished and the great amount of work left to be done by missionaries in one of the world's most populated countries. This emphasis on reporting on the missionary work itself is in connection to the fact that on the backside of the cover page there can be found the claim that all profits from the book will go to missionary work.

The image of China and the Chinese people portrayed by Ólafur Ólafsson in *Kristniboð í Kína* is a very dark one. Filtered through his cultural background and religion the Chinese are portrayed as inferior, poor and even savage at times. The missionaries, on the other hand, are portrayed as rescuers who traveled around the world to show them the right way of life and save them. The only way to salvation and to redeem them from their heathen lifestyles of sin, worshiping of false gods and living in fear of them is to lead them to Christianity and therefore their own salvation. As it is stated early on in the book: “No one else but the son of God has been given the power to forgive sins.” (Ólafsson, *Kristniboð í Kína*, 1928)

2.2 14 ár í Kína

“14 ár í Kína” (Fourteen years in China) was published ten years after *“Kristniboð í Kína”*. Although the topic of the two books being very similar there is a prominent difference in the approach taken and the final product published. It seems like the stay in China has softened the author’s view towards the natives, as he is not as judgmental and harsh as in the previous publication. This being a much longer book, there is more room for detailed descriptions of the trip to China, its surroundings and the overall situation.

The first chapter of the book is dedicated to the journey, a trip that took almost four months to complete from Oslo in Norway to Dengzhou in China. The shorter route by train through Siberia was taken home from the last trip to China and, according to Ólafur Ólafsson, that is a trip a man only makes once in his lifetime. After just over a month on the ocean, Ólafsson, his family and colleagues reach Hong Kong. A majority of the distance had then been traveled, but the hardest part of the trip was still left, i.e. traveling up the rivers of China to the Henan province, almost in the center of the country. There they would find the city of Dengzhou, where the missionary headquarters of the province was based at that

time. The trip ahead of them from that point on was slow and dangerous since they would be traveling through areas of unrest and turmoil amidst an ongoing civil war. Ólafsson refers to the two sides faced in battle in the civil war as soldiers and robbers, the soldiers were working for the government but no details regarding the robbers is offered other than that they are Chinese men who spent their days smoking opium, drinking and their nights robbing and raiding. After having paid armed robbers for an escort through an area under their control, they reached an area under the control of governmental soldiers, only to find out that they were confiscating boats and vessels to transport the army south as the civil war was coming to an end. Most of the boats were confiscated and the people and cargo they were carrying dropped onto the nearest shore, but the boats in the convoy with the missionaries were for some reason left alone and so they were free to continue with the last part of their journey.

After lengthy and detailed description of the area surrounding the station that Ólafsson managed and how it has changed throughout the years from a missionary perspective, he offers some information regarding the living standard of the people in the area.

When work started in this area in the year 1911, the population of the area was around 700 thousand people. Since then it has fallen by almost 200 thousand, leaving the present population around 520 thousand people.

(Ólafsson, 14 ár í Kína, 1938, p. 28)

Civil wars and seasons yielding a bad harvest have plagued the area for years, leading to famine and a large drop in population, but still leaving the area densely populated, at least according to the opinion of Ólafur Ólafsson. With almost every space of land used for agriculture, the people lived together in small villages on the available land. Their safety in numbers also played its part in the condensation of habitation during the years of civil unrest, as each small

village had some kind of fence or form of basic protection against possible invaders. The living quarters of locals Ólafsson compared to the old Icelandic turf houses regarding living space size but built a lot more lightly, as they were merely shelter from the hottest and coldest days of the year; the rest of the year locals usually spent outside in the open air. Around the small village of houses was usually a wall or a fence up to two- or three-meters tall for protection, as the houses themselves offered very little in that regard.

The years of schooling and missionary work are paying off, as the number of Christians in the Henan province has increased steadily since their work started. Their masses and assemblies now spread throughout the province with the help of the missionary network operation. Ólafur Ólafsson goes through the evolution of this network and its local offsprings in length, while giving examples of successful missionary work where Christianity has saved individuals. He brings up a story of a Chinese man who approaches him on the street asking for the chance to take up Christianity. When asked why he tells the story of his relative who changed drastically when he became Christian himself and confessed to his sins:

He got rid of the vice of opium, and he has not been nearly as bad to his wife.
Before he never had peace with his neighbors but now this has all changed.

(Ólafsson, 14 ár í Kína, 1938, p. 44)

Another example given was a family of six that brought with them their 26-year-old son that had been mental for the last two years; no other explanation is given regarding his condition other than within the walls of their home were false gods and that a large tree fell on his legs, so his younger brother had to carry him on his back. During the last day of the assembly he opened up his heart, mind and soul to Christianity, the young man's problems disappeared and have not returned. (Ólafsson, 14 ár í Kína, 1938, p. 44)

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A young woman that had killed her husband in partnership with her lover was charged by her former mother-in-law but without any substantial evidence in hand. The lovers were brought into questioning, that later on led to beatings and torture to try to get the truth out of them with no success, since even throughout the torture they steadily denied having anything to do with the murder. A short while later that same woman stumbles upon a religious revival assembly held by the missionaries and decides to join in to satisfy her curiosity. This curiosity led to that she was affected by the spirit of Christ and saw her past sins in a new light. She was not forced in to telling the truth because of torture but through faith and Christian conscience; this brought her straight to her old mother in-law where she confessed to the killing of her son. The mother in-law was so blown away by this that she did not contact the police but went straight to the local missionary to find out what had caused this transformation; this later led to that she herself also took up Christian faith in the end. (Ólafsson, 14 ár í Kína, 1938, pp. 120-121)

The participation of man in charity has always had its roots in the mindset rather than in education or traits man is born with. To be correct it has its roots in Christianity. Charity is virtually unknown amongst heathen nations, except for the work that is done there through the Christian church.

(Ólafsson, 14 ár í Kína, 1938, p. 90)

This connection between charity and Christianity is something Ólafur Ólafson brings up very regularly throughout his writings. Not only on an individual level but also regarding culture, governments or even a whole continent, as he uses Europe as an example of the change that Christianity brings with it. There he points out that things that the public take for granted today, such as charity, hospitals or even the practice of medicine itself, all of which owe their existence to Christianity in some way. Once there were only monasteries instead of hospitals, monks instead of doctors and nuns instead of nurses, but they were doing the same thing, helping people in need. (Ólafsson, 14 ár í Kína, 1938, p. 91)

This lack of a charitable and Christian mindset has plagued China for a long time, leading to some devastating consequences. Ólafsson recalls a story of a missionary doctor that had been pleading with the local government for assistance in setting up a hospital for people with leprosy, only to get the answer from the local official that he offered him payment for each individual with leprosy he would exterminate. According to the same doctor, this official took his plans of extermination further as he invited individuals who were sick with leprosy to a party in a shed. When they came there they were greeted with food, alcohol and opium and when the social gathering had reached its climax soldiers torched the shed while standing guard, making sure nobody could escape the inferno. Another such act of eradication took place during the night of the 25th of April 1937, when 215 individuals with leprosy were shot. Men, women and children were executed during the dark of the night in a province south of the one where Ólafur Ólafson and his colleagues were living and working. (Ólafsson, 14 ár í Kína, 1938, p. 94)

The image of China and the Chinese people portrayed by Ólafur Ólafsson in *14 ár í Kína* is softer and more refined than in his first book. The Chinese are still portrayed as heathens in dire need of Christianity to guide them away from false gods, fear and a barbaric way of life as portrayed in the examples throughout the book. Whether it is opium addiction, sin or lack of a charitable mindset the solution can be found within the Christian faith and salvation according to Ólafur Ólafsson.

3. Akureyri Vikublað

The publication company *Fótspor* was founded in the fall of 2008. It started around a weekly television guide called *Birta*, but today the company also publishes nine different local newspapers around Iceland. Most of these papers are published weekly and *Akureyri Vikublað* is one of these, a few every two weeks, and the ones located in the most rural areas of the country are published monthly. The managing director and owner of *Fótspor* is Ámundi Ámundason, who also controls the marketing and advertisement side of each paper *Fótspor* publishes. Each paper then has its own editor that controls the content and subject matter of the paper, so even though they all have a very similar look to them, they are all independent in regards to content and emphasis, as they each focus on local matters from their own area. Björn Þorláksson is the editor and co-founder of *Akureyri Vikublað* and the only full-time journalist employed by the paper; other employees are Arndís Bergsdóttir as a part-time journalist and Völundur Jónsson, who is the paper's photographer and layout manager.

Oddur Helgi Halldórsson, is the chairman of the town council and the man behind the L-party that controls a clean political majority in Akureyri. In an unpublished interview with *Akureyri Vikublað* he says that he is not aware of any provided restraint by the local media. Do we want to live in an environment where the most powerful individual of a community containing 17.000 individuals describes the media in that way? Is not the watchdog role one of the most important roles of the media?

Another goal is the gate-keeping, that the media differentiate between information that work for public good and other information regarding private benefit.

This paper is going to do that.

(Þorláksson, 2011)

In the first edition of *Akureyri Vikublað*, published on the 11th of August 2011, Björn Þorláksson writes an editorial trying to explain what kind of paper readers

can expect. The editor explains that only time will tell what kind of paper *Akureyri Vikublað* is, but the aim is to produce a lively, fun and informative paper. Björn Þorláksson points out a special emphasis on the watchdog or guardian role of the local media, a role that the local chairman of the town council, Oddur Helgi Halldórsson, has experienced as almost non-existent, according to an interview later published in the same paper. The role of watchdog and gate-keeping are two roles Björn Þorláksson wants his paper to fulfill as he states in his first editorial.

Within the first three volumes of *Akureyri Vikublað* there were twelve sources regarding Huang Nubo and his plans, to simplify here, they have been divided up into three categories: Sent-in, interviews and then last but not least articles.

3.1 Sent-in

3.1.1 Nýju Föt Keisarans

The first mention of Huang Nubo in *Akureyri Vikublað* can be found in the eighth issue of the first volume, published on the 29th of September 2011 in a sent-in article by Pétur Snæbjörnsson, who works as a hotel manager. The title of the article is “*Nýju Fötin Keisarans*” (e. The Emperor’s New Clothes) referring to Hans Christian Andersen’s short tale of the Emperor who got fooled by two swindlers he hired to tailor for him the best possible suit, only visible to those who are fit for their position and not to the ones unfit, incompetent or stupid. The point Pétur Snæbjörnsson is making by this reference is that he finds this idea of Nubo as lunatic as clothes that people cannot see; he even goes further and points out that if he came up with a similar idea his friends and coworkers would think he had lost his mind:

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I am not sure I would be taken seriously if I would have brought up similar ideas that the agents of Nubo have done. I am though pretty sure that my colleagues and friends would consider me out of my mind.

(Snæbjörnsson, 2011)

The reality and the achievability of Huang Nubo's business plans are then further questioned and almost mocked with an approach loaded with sarcasm and doubt after stating about his own experience: "I have been involved in the tourism industry all my life and know it well." (Snæbjörnsson, 2011) The hotel manager lists the possible barriers facing these lofty plans of a 300-room resort with an 18-hole golf course, horse ranch, accommodation and services needed for the employees and their family.

By comparing the plans to the story of the Emperor's New Clothes it is hard to say that a positive image is portrayed by Pétur Snæbjörnsson in his article. It is very obvious that he is talking about someone that is an outsider, or even a foreigner, since he drops very regular hints throughout his writings that seem to refer to stupidity or lack of knowledge of the area with an ironic approach. He does not only stick to knowledge of the area since he then moves on to the topic of how to run a hotel in such a place. This is aimed not only against Nubo, but also his "agents", as Pétur Snæbjörnsson refers to Nubo's Icelandic colleagues in the article. (Snæbjörnsson, 2011)

3.1.2 Grímsstaðir, raunverulegt tækifæri?

Jón Þorvaldur Heiðarsson, assistant professor at the faculty of business and science of the University of Akureyri is the author of the article called "Grímsstaðir, raunverulegt tækifæri?" (Grímsstaðir, a real opportunity?). In this sent-in article Jón Þorvaldur has chosen irony as his main approach, but uses it in a positive way to point out the bigotry that he feels has dominated the

discussion surrounding Huang Nubo's business plans. The area under discussion might be regarded as isolated, harsh, lifeless, boring or even useless by locals. In the eyes of wealthy people coming from crowded places around the world, however, it might just be what they are looking to enjoy the northern lights for example, in solitude and isolation. With short distances to nature's wonders such as one of the most powerful waterfalls in Europe and also one of its largest glaciers, this might seem like a tempting place for them to visit as long as the accommodations are up to their standards. (Heiðarsson, 2012)

Huang Nubo is portrayed as businessman who has noticed an opportunity that he is willing to take a risk on. This article focuses more on the Icelandic people and their reaction to the news of the foreign interest in developing the area as a significant tourist attraction.

3.1.3 Þórarinn Nefjólfsson eða nupo

Jökull Guðmundsson approaches Huang Nubo's business plans through the old saga of Þórarinn Nefjólfsson from *Heimskringla*, written in 1177. The saga tells the tale of Þórarinn Nefjólfsson, who was sent by Ólafur Helgi, the king of Norway, to Iceland. His quest was to bring best wishes to Icelanders from the king, who requested the gift of Grímsey, an island north of Eyjafjörður. A request that is protested by Einar, the brother of Guðmundur á Möðruvöllum, who was regarded as the man in charge of the island. The argument that Einar laid out was that though smaller gifts between friends were a free choice, the gift of an Island was a sacrifice of freedom and there the king could build a large army. This argument won over the people and Þórarinn's cause was lost.

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“Let us not repeat the situation from the 13th century when the independence of the nation was sold to the King of Norway for riches, power and side jobs to those who helped.”

(Guðmundsson, 2012)

This comparison is good according to Jökull, who says it does not matter if it is Þórarinn Nefjólfsen or Huang Nubo, that come with an offer of friendship or Chinese gold, these words of warning from Einar are just as valid today as they ever were.

Jökull then takes his comparison even further into the history of Iceland, comparing the situation with Nubo to the 13th century, when Icelanders became the subjects of the king of Norway, calling out that the nation should avoid going down that road and rather use the victory in the Cod War against the United Kingdom as an example to follow.

The image of Huang Nubo in the article by Jökull is dark, so say the least. Nubo is portrayed as an outsider trying to get in, coming to Iceland waving a false flag of profit for all and well-being, when he is looking for personal gain and power.

His connection with being considered an enemy of the nation is very prominent in the examples, where Nubo is compared to a foreign king trying to gain a foothold in Iceland and the enemy in the nation's only war in its short history as an independent country.

3.2 Interviews

3.2.1 Helstu atvinnutækifærin eru í ferðapjónustu og útflutningi

The two-page interview with Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson, former managing director of Eyjafjörður Business Development Agency, touches down on the topic of Huang Nubo's plans. The former managing director had quit his position after ten years just before the interview was taken so most of it regards his future plans and former work, and that is where Nubo comes into play. When asked about his position on the matter of Huang Nubo and his plan Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson claims that he is "dumbfounded" about the discussion. He is very adamant about it being off-track as he points out that this matter is not about private ownership of natural resources, neither is it about the restrictions or laws regarding land-ownership of foreigners or Chinese in Iceland. According to the former managing director this is about a request of exemption or as he puts it in his own words:

This is about an exemption petition and 26 of those have been granted in spite of these existing laws. That is why Nubo put forward his exemption request and he is not the first man from China to do since there are already lands under Chinese ownership in Iceland.

(Helstu atvinnutækifærin eru í ferðapjónustu og útflutningi, 2011)

Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson claims that since there are many examples where such requests were approved, there should be the need for a strong argument backing the denial, but those arguments are nowhere to be found. What he sees in this case is the failure of the government's employment policy since he can see no reason why there should be any opposition against the development of deserted land under tourism. There are other things the former managing director has noticed as he does not beat around the bush about and states clearly: "What I have noticed is ignorance, xenophobia and bloated national socialism". (Helstu atvinnutækifærin eru í ferðapjónustu og útflutningi, 2011)

When then asked if foreigners will come and save our economy Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson short version of the answer is no. Iceland is part of the global economic system according to him and survives by doing business with foreigners, they could come here to invest but only if it is beneficial to both sides and as he ends the answer to this question himself: “As it stands currently they are not queuing up, that is pretty clear.” (Helstu atvinnutækifærin eru í ferðapjónustu og útflutningi, 2011)

The most prominent image in connection with Huang Nubo’s plans is the one to be found in the words of Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson and not *Akureyri Vikublað*. There is not to be found any connection between the questions before and after the topic turns to Nubo, just those two straight to the point questions that the former managing director answers with assertiveness. In his answer he uses very strong terms such as ignorance, xenophobia and last but not least; National Socialism. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, National Socialism is also known as Nazism therefore connecting it with the Nazi Party movement led by Adolf Hitler and sharing many elements with Italian fascism according to the encyclopedia. (Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.)

3.2.2 Leiðist mest sendibréf frá rasistum og símtöl frá ölvuðu fólki!

Gunnlaugur Stefánsson, the president of the municipal council of Norðurþing in northern Iceland, is back in *Akureyri Vikublað* talking about Huang Nubo a month later he was quoted shortly in an article on May 10th 2013. This time it is not a short article but a full-page interview, mainly focusing on his controversial emphasis on creating employment in the municipality. An emphasis that has lead to his support for big projects like heavy industry and the rental of land to

Huang Nubo under his tourism plans, projects that are controversial and split opinion.

The interview starts out with a question regarding if the president of the municipality thinks that they have gone overboard in their ambitions regarding heavy industry and the debt status of the municipality. This is then followed up with the question: “Who is responsible for that the municipality’s financial status is one of the worst in the country?” The only question where Huang Nubo is mentioned is regarding the feedback he has got after the quotes from him that there was no difference in rental of land in Grímsstaðir or Reykjavík or as it is put in the paper: “Do you take it personally when you are accused of causing Iceland and its nature damage?” Gunnlaugur Stefánsson says that he does not take it personally that irrelevant comments about him could be found, but explicitly denies any allegations that he is doing the nation or its nature any harm. In spite of that answer the next question is asking his opinion about some of this angry feedback, included allegations connecting him with treason, a question that Gunnlaugur Stefánsson thinks is not worthy of an answer. A bit later on the rest of the interview then touches on many topics such as the Húsavík airport, the future, politics and golf to name a few. (Leiðist mest sendibréf frá rasistum og símtöl frá ölvuðu fólki!, 2012)

It is hard to talk about a medium creating a perception through an interview which mostly quotes straight from the interviewee himself, but the questions in this interview are leading and do lay the groundwork for a certain perception.

In the first question there is a mention about going overboard or too far; that is followed up by asking about the financial consequences of such overdoing; and then finally comes the question about who is responsible for something that the journalist calls “the worst financial status of a municipality in Iceland”. With this

string of questions *Akureyri Vikublað* creates the perception that it is its opinion that the people in charge have gone overboard, sailed the financial ship into trouble and someone should be held responsible. This is then followed up by a question about his reaction to people's anger towards his support of, or commitment towards, another possible large project creating the image that his opinion and support are going against the will of people and creating anger in society, which is then backed up with the connection to treason with the question: "People even use the word 'treason'. What do you think about that?" In that question it is implied that the term "treason" came from people commenting on the article when, in fact, it is used in the short article published about a month earlier. Hence, the introduction is not down to the people's reaction, but *Akureyri Vikublað* itself. (Leiðist mest sendibréf frá rasistum og símtöl frá ölvuðu fólki!, 2012)

3.2.3 Hið opinbera fái sama svigrúm til hagræðinga og einkageirinn

Sigurður Guðmundsson is a prominent figure in Akureyri as a productive local businessman and town council member he is, in this two-page interview, answering questions on a variety of topics ranging from his personal life to business and politics.

When he is asked about what he considers are the most important future issues regarding Akureyri and the northern part of Iceland Sigurður Guðmundsson answers: "We need to focus on employment and education". This is followed up by asking why he, an "advocate of liberty" as it is phrased by *Akureyri Vikublað*, has had doubts regarding Huang Nubo and his plans to which he replies: "I simply believe that the intentions of the Chinese in the far north do not comply with the social system that we have". He then adds that many things regarding the matter have been vague and unclear and that he could never accept the damage such an investment would cause. Sigurður Guðmundsson is then asked

if the approach of the business development agencies is debatable, to which he replies, that they were simply doing the job they were asked to do: to look into if this was doable and then adds: “How far they went is debatable.” (Hið opinbera fáí sama svigrúm til hagræðinga og einkageirinn, 2013)

The image portrayed in this interview really has nothing to do with Huang Nubo himself, but rather his nationality. Sigurður Guðmundsson is asked about Nubo but answers with a generalization about the intentions of the Chinese and how they would not comply with the Icelandic social system. Nuang Nubo, according to this generalization, is then not a business man working on his own but more an emissary or a carrier of some common Chinese cause.

The image created of Sigurður Guðmundsson is one of a business man, local politician and “advocate of liberty”, which adds weight to his words and finding that we, as a nation, don’t comply with the plans of the Chinese.

3.3 Articles / News

3.3.1 Ekki munur á leigulandi á Grímsstöðum og í Reykjavík

Gunnlaugur Stefánsson, the president of the municipal council of Norðurþing in northern Iceland, comes up twice in Akureyri Vikublað with regard to Huang Nubo’s plans. His first mention is in a short article published on May 10th 2012 with the title “Ekki munur á leigulandi á Grímsstöðum og í Reykjavík (e. No difference between rent land in Grímsstaðir and Reykjavík) (Ekki munur á leigulandi á Grímsstöðum og Reykjavík). In the article it is firstly mentioned that there are split opinions regarding the rental of Grímsstaðir to Huang Nobo and his hotel resort plans. Then the argument that representatives that are elected for four years at a time are going too far in signing a contract committing the

municipality, far beyond the four years they are elected to serve. Gunnlaugur Stefánsson does not agree with these arguments or the implication that the ones that are in charge of the contract process are guilty of treason. He points out that municipalities all around the country sign long-term contracts regarding rent of land under buildings and other operations regularly, also stating that he can not see the difference whether the land is located in Grímsstaðir or Reykjavík as long as it returns into the hands of the municipality or organizations associated with the municipality in the end. (Ekki munur á leigulandi á Grímsstöðum og í reykjavík, 2012)

Since the article is very short and simple there is little room to create a well-defined image. He is introduced as the president of the municipality which links him with the image of having some degree of authority. He and his colleagues are then connected with treason as the word is put in front of his answer regarding that the representatives are taking on commitments that go beyond their time in power. The image connected with the word “treason” is anything but positive, since it is regarded as a deliberate betrayal towards a nation or sovereign, an act of disloyalty or even a crime.

3.3.2 Byggðarök til umræðu á málþingi um Grímsstaði

In the sixteenth issue of the second volume of *Akureyri Vikublað* published on May 31st 2012, there is an article about a forum held by the Eyjafjörður Business Development Agency regarding Huang Nubo and his plans in Grímsstaðir.

The majority of the article is about two questions raised at the forum. Sigurður Guðmundsson, a local councilor, asked Kjartan Ólafsson a question regarding how it would be possible to man a 400-people workplace in such an isolated area, when it was his opinion that it might be a problem in Akureyri where

around eighteen thousand people live. Kjartan agreed that it could be a problem, since the closest town is 25 minutes away, while Þorvaldur Lúðvíksson, a representative of Eyjafjörður Business Development Agency, pointed out that the neighboring areas and small towns would grow and gain strength with this project. Ólöf Hallgrímsdóttir, a local farmer and tourism entrepreneur, pointed out the fact that the number of schoolchildren in Reykjahlíð had dropped from 80 to 40 in three years and that locals were not treated like equals compared to people in the capital region. In the final words of the article there is a short mention of this possible future workplace employing mostly foreign workers, and then the final sentence is used under the opinion of the supporters of Huang Nubo's plans that it is his problem to worry about how he will find people for the jobs created by the project. (Byggðarök til umræðu á málþingi um Grímsstaði, 2012)

The image portrayed in this article is a one of doubt and toil as the emphasis is mainly on the question if this is possible and then if it were possible, it would only be because of foreign workers. It almost seems as the paper is trying to cast a shadow of doubt on the project.

3.3.3 Vaxandi taugatitringur vegna Nubo

The largest and by far most extensive article about Huang Nubo's plans was written by Sóley Björk Stefánsdóttir, then editor of the webpage AKV.is and part-time journalist at *Akureyri Vikublað*. This full-page discussion offers a view from one town delegate member from each of the six political parties in power in Akureyri at that time, with the addition of short mentions or quotes from six other individuals that include reporters, specialists, scholars and the foreign minister of Iceland or, as Sóley put it herself in the subheading of the article:

“Akureyri Vikublað gathers together the vision of the town council delegates and goes over various points that have come forward in public debate regarding the case in recent months.” (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

Oddur Helgi Halldórsson, a representative of the political party called “Listi Fólksins”, puts emphasis on that the majority of the land should be under public ownership, Nubo should be renting only a part of it through an Icelandic company, *GáF*, founded in cooperation by the local municipalities. This rental agreement would include the right of usage of the land around. This would guarantee public access and that the local government could control to some extent any future construction and development plans. By doing this, Halldórsson points out that the contracts would be between to Icelandic companies, drafted in Icelandic, and backed up as well as protected by Icelandic laws. The development of the north-east corner of Iceland could lead to the benefit of all people living in the area, according to Oddur Helgi Halldórsson, as he points out that thoroughly going through all sides of the matter before writing it off was a responsibility of the local governments. (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

Sigurður Guðmundsson, a representative of the political party called “Bæjarlistinn”, says that he can no longer understand the role of Akureyri in this matter and really wants this whole issue “off the political table”, as he phrases it himself. The main reasons he points out are uncertainty, financial limitations and the fate of the locals, who would stand no chance in competing with Huang Nubo and his plans. (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

Andrea Hjálmsdóttir, a representative for the political party called “Vinstrihreyfingin – grænt framboð” said that she always had doubts about this, right from the start. Misleading news about future plans and the role of Akureyri have strengthened that opinion and she reiterates that this process should be open and transparent, something she thinks has been neglected so far. The goals and objectives of the contracts should be clear and there is full reason to learn

from similar examples in neighboring countries and listen to specialists that have warned that the contracts and their goals are sometimes/often unclear and obscure. (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

Guðmundur Baldvin Guðmundsson is the representative of “Framsóknarflokkurinn” and the first local council delegate to declare his support to the idea that they have a say in these contracts, since that insures that they have a say in the matter. He then lays down a certain safety net or disclaimer by stating his doubts about the feasibility of the plans, but also points out that it has to be approached without prejudice. Now the matter is in the hands of *GáF* and Huang Nubo and until that part of the project is resolved he says it is premature to comment further. (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

Logi Már Einarsson, a representative of “Samfylkingin”, states that even though many things are still uncertain and vague, and that the little he has seen of the contract drafts under discussion show that there is still work to be done and details to be refined. Logi Már Einarsson says he is in favor of these ideas, that international investment is welcome during hard times, and people should be open to bold ideas. (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

Ólafur Jónsson, a representative of “Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn”, says that his position has not changed: he is against the idea of the local municipalities joining forces under the name *GáF*, as it could cause future conflicts of interest. He also states that the instability and constant change in regards to the final execution of plans is something that he did not expect, a clear plan right from the start was his expectation. (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

The other points of interest regarding Huang Nubo’s plans, as Sóley Björk Stefánsdóttir stated in her subheading, are grouped together in the left side of the full-page dedicated to this topic. There are short quotes, opinions and

information, all of which have in common a negative view towards Huang Nubo's plans or other similar Chinese business ventures.

Even though there is a hint of positivity to be found in the words of three political representatives, they also include negativity or uncertainty as some form of safety net to fall back on. This small portion of positivity made visible does little to counterbalance as the rest of this full-page discussion as it is anything but positive. The journalist gathered together mainly negative opinions and then adds to that a collection of even more negative information, quotes and opinions leaving little to none room left for positivity. Looking at the page as a whole and the image it creates while reading is mainly the one of doubt, distrust, uncertainty, and negativity.

3.3.4 Hamlað gegn landsbyggðarflóttu

Húsavíkurstofa is the center for stakeholders in trade and services in Húsavík and it sent out a resolution regarding Huang Nubo and his future plans in Grímsstaðir that is the foundation of this article. Throughout the article the main points of the resolution are brought up. If these plans were to become reality, it would mean benefits such as higher employment, tourism, construction projects, and have a positive effect on both local and national economies. The project could empower the local countryside and could also reverse the displacement of residents. (Hamlað gegn landsbyggðarflóttu, 2012)

This is the first article that is positive all the way through that is published by *Akureyri Vikublað* regarding Huang Nubo and his plans. There is no casting of shadows, doubt or prejudice by any means present, since this is almost word-

for-word straight from Húsavíkurstofa with no analysis or further discussion offered by *Akureyri Vikublað*.

3.3.5 Huang Nubo með samningsdrög í yfirlestri

After just over seven months of no mention of Huang Nubo's plans in *Akureyri Vikublað* the paper publishes a short article about ongoing contract talks between *GáF* and Huang Nubo.

In the article it is stated that there is no reconciliation in reach regarding the utilization of the land and it is unclear what course the project will take in the future. An informant/source of *Akureyri Vikublað* tells that the papers that *GáF* looks at the project as a development project that has to be worked on in agreement with the government, the local landowners and other stakeholders. Even though it is known that Huang Nubo is tired of the opposition of Icelanders, these talks are an indicator that there is still interest from his part. (Huang Nupo með samningsdrög í yfirlestri, 2013)

The image created in this article is mostly down to two things. Firstly it is the mention that there is little reconciliation in reach regarding the utilization of the land and secondly the alleged tiredness of Nubo towards the opposition of Icelanders. The first one hints at a lack of unity or reconciliation which is one of the main matters since this is rental of land under discussion and then the notice of tiredness which is vague where that is coming from. Both hinting towards that there is a gap between Nubo and Icelanders and that things are not going as they should under optimum conditions.

3.3.6 Nýr ráðherra hlynntur Nupo?

This article is different from the rest, since it is almost entirely based on an article in the *Financial Times*. Almost half of the article goes into pondering if the change of ministers might benefit Huang Nubo and his future plans. Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir, the newly appointed Minister of industry and business, had recently stated her interest towards possible investments by Nubo, according to the paper, which is a total u-turn from the approach taken by the former minister, Ögmundur Jónasson. After that the article moves on towards China's interest in searching for oil in and around Iceland and their newly granted status of permanent observer within the Arctic Council. (Nýr ráðherra hlynntur Nupo?, 2013)

What is portrayed in this article can be, like the article itself, split in half. In the first half there is talk about the claim that the new minister might be more positive towards Nubo's plans than her predecessor but such positivity has been labeled as treason in earlier writings. The second half of the article is not about Nubo but China and their recent boost of interest and activity in the arctic region.

4. Analysis / Articulation

4.2 Ólafur Ólafsson

In "*Kristniboð í Kína*" China and the Chinese people are made visible to the reader but filtered through the writings of an Icelandic missionary, his culture and his religion. What has to be kept in mind is that the main purpose of these writings is not to educate the Icelandic readers about China and its culture, history or people but to raise funds for missionary work aimed at correcting their way of life. Proof of this can be found even before reading starts as on the

backside of the cover page can be found the claim that all profits from the book will go to missionary work.

The book is short, simple and straight to the point whereas “*14 ár í Kína*” is much longer and with more emphasis on how it is written. In short one could say that “*Kristniboð í Kína*” could almost be categorized as a pamphlet version of “*14 ár Kína*” where things are cut down, brought to the reader to shock or surprise that might lead the reader to offer financial support. Even though the book is short it still has a lot more material that could be seen as stereotyping, insularity or even xenophobia then can be found in the later published and longer “*Kristniboð í Kína*”. The reason for this might be found in the roots or the starting point of both of these writings, the letters Ólafur Ólafsson was sending home to be published in *Ljósberinn*. Some of these writings can be found through timarit.is and there the emphasis of fundraising is even more prominent as within most of the letters there is to be found a plea for solidarity and financial help in some form. This is most prominent regarding “the Chinese boy”, which is a young boy introduced on the 28th of April 1923 as a possible child the missionaries could save, if they only had the available funds to do so. (Ólafsson, Til íslenzkra barna, 1923) He is then a regular mention in the paper until the last mention of him, found in a paper published almost exactly seven years later on April 19th 1930, where the readers are thanked for their contribution that most likely saved him and his mother. (Ólafsson, Frá kínverska drengnum, kveðja og þökk, 1930)

Since the writings in *Ljósberinn* are mostly aimed at children the approach is different but the image portrayed for the children is similar to the one found in the books where the Chinese are portrayed as they are in need for Christianity to save them from their heathen lifestyle and the misery that comes with it. This is visible for example in the Christmas edition of *Ljósberinn* from 1922:

Many children in China feel extremely bad. They are not all allowed to go to school, but the ones that do, only learn a coarse language and bad habits

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since their teachers are heathens, not knowing God. Young girls are frequently abandoned or sold to bad men. You know, the Chinese are heathens. They do not read the word of God, they do not pray to Jesus; they have no Christmas or Easter nor do they keep the Sabbath day holy. They do not baptize their children, they do not have lead them to a priest nor do they get to go through Sunday school or confirmation. Then the Chinese children will also become heathens, not having heard the word of God. That is why they feel so bad.

(Ólafsson, Bréf til íslenzkra barna frá Kína, 1922, p. 408)

So it seems that, with time, the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson about China became softer and more focused on aesthetics rather than fundraising. As the title of the book claims, he had lived in China for around 14 years when he wrote the later book under discussion and that might also have contributed to this softening of the approach but Ólafur Ólafsson himself is the only one who could give a decisive answer to that.

Whether it is to be found in *Ljósberinn*, *Kristniboð í Kína* or *14 ár í Kína* the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson are loaded with stereotypes. Even though he does mention the size and population of China regularly and compares it to Iceland he tends to classify the Chinese people as one whole, not mentioning possible variations within the population giving the impression of a homogeneous community. The only division mentioned within the Chinese community by Ólafur Ólafsson has either to do with gender, where he focuses on the poor stature of women, faith where he only classifies people based on if they are Christian or not and then his classification of “soldiers” and “robbers” when talking about participants in the ongoing civil unrest in the area.

In the mindset of the missionary devoted to the cause Ólafur Ólafsson does not only stereotype the Chinese but also the Christian missionaries. They are portrayed in a fixed and oversimplified manor as the bringers of the solution to China's problems, Christianity. This solution is not only portrayed through faith

on its own but through the three main practices of missionaries: to teach, preach and heal. These three practices go well beyond just the concept of religion or faith as they bring with them drastic changes to the Chinese community through a network of religious establishments, schools and hospitals, everything operating to western standards. This insularity or lack of interest towards the existing faith, culture and establishments of China portrayed regularly throughout the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson as he sees them as things in need of correction.

In both *Kristniboð í Kína* and *14 ár í Kína* Ólafur Ólafsson talks about the xenophobia of the Chinese towards foreigners that climaxed during the Boxer Revolution with the orders of the Chinese government to kill all foreigners. The missionaries who lost their life to the hands of the Chinese Ólafsson classifies as martyrs and mentions them on more than one occasion in both books. He also mentions their offspring that also lost their life and then, finally, he mentions shortly the many Christian Chinese that also lost their lives. Ólafsson also mentions that, during these hard times, the population in the area dropped greatly with famine as the main cause of death. Roughly rounding the numbers mentioned by Ólafur Ólafsson there were around 200 non-Chinese people who lost their lives versus around 200 thousand Chinese. The five thousand Chinese Christians that lost their lives, many of them even working for and with the missionaries, are not connected to martyrdom pointing to that the author does not base the value of lives of people on their religion but their nationality.

4.3 Akureyri Vikublað

Sent-in articles

Even though the sent in articles are not works of the paper itself or its employees it is the decision of the editor to place them amongst the work of the paper and publish it. They are though labeled clearly in the paper as a sent-in

articles above their headline and then in addition with the name and picture of the author.

Just over two years after Pétur Snæbjörnsson gets his article titled *Nýju Fötin Keisarans* published in *Akureyri Vikublað*, where he compared Huang Nubo's plans with to Hans Christian Andersen's short tale of the Emperor's New Clothes, he is again in the paper. Quoted in a an article regarding increase in hotels the community of Mývatnssveit this time he is not just titled a hotel manager, but the manager for Hótel Reynihlíð and Hótel Reykjahlíð, both based in Reynihlíð by Mývatn, which is only 40km away from Grímsstaðir. In that article he is quoted stating that the supply is nowhere near the demands during the summer season. According to him there are around 120 hotel rooms per day available in the area around Mývatn and that number is rising to around 200 rooms, if plans of future hotels there go through. The demand in June, July and August on the other hand is much higher or around 500 rooms per day. He also states that the main problem facing tourism in the area is that it is not a all-year-round business and that needs to change for the benefit of all and especially the people living in the area, since their numbers are declining. (Stórfjölgun hótela sögð skapa 500 ferðamannastörf í Mývatnssveit, 2013)

This is far from the tone set by himself in the article *Nýju Fötin Keisarans* where he mocked the idea of a 300-room resort only around 40km away. That leads to the question: Why the change in reaction towards possible competition? Is it the 40km distance that changes the opinion of Pétur Snæbjörnsson or the nationality of the competition? When kept in mind that most tourists coming to Iceland have to travel a long way to get to Mývatn, which is over 500km from the main international airport in Keflavík and the fact that having the competition closer can hardly be better, it seems hard to see how an extra 40km could play a major role. This then leaves the nationality of the competition left on the table

and points towards that xenophobia could play a part in why Pétur Snæbjörnsson wrote and sent in the article *Nýju Fötin Keisarans*.

The irrational dislike or fear of the foreign element regarding Huang Nubo's plans is something Jón Þorvaldur Heiðarsson touches down on in his article titled: Grímsstaðir, raunverulegt tækifæri? There he ponders how Icelanders should and should not react towards the foreign interest in land locals would classify as wasteland. Should they turn to xenophobia, insularity, envy and listen to propaganda or should they simply react with positivity? The latter is the opinion of Jón Þorvaldur Heiðarsson which leaves him swimming against the main current of opinions regarding Huang Nubo's plans made visible in *Akureyri Vikublað*.

Jökull Guðmundsson approaches Huang Nubo's plans also, like Pétur Snæbjörnsson, by comparing it to a story. His comparison comes through the saga of Þórarinn Nefjólfsen from *Heimskringla*, who was sent to Iceland to try to gain the ownership of Grímsey on behalf of the King of Norway. In both these stories there is the similarity of an outsider working his way in to swindle. The main difference in the approach of Jökull Guðmundsson is that he is not talking about a swindle of money or pride but the independence of Iceland and the liberty of its people. There is no doubt about the xenophobia in his writings as he compares the Huang Nubo situation to when Icelanders had to fight for their independence, liberty and rights. It does not seem to matter to Jökull Guðmundsson that he is comparing situations from Iceland's history regarding the authorities of Norway and the United Kingdom to a businessman from China as he is fixated on the xenophobia towards what is foreign.

Interviews

There were three interviews within the first three volumes of *Akureyri Vikublað* that touched down on the topic of Huang Nubo and his possible business plans in Iceland, none of them focused solely on that topic though. Out of those three, two of them are positive, or that is to say, the answers given by the interviewee's showed positivity towards Nubo's plans. What those two also have in common though is that answers given in them point out the negative approach of Icelanders as Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson claims he is "dumbfounded" about the discussion regarding the matter and Gunnlaugur Stefánsson also talks about the negative feedback he got after voicing a positive opinion towards Nubo and his plans.

Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson shows no fear towards using strong words to describe the discussion as he claims he has witnessed as "ignorance, xenophobia and bloated national socialism". Gunnlaugur Stefánsson uses a much softer and diplomatic approach, that might be explained by the fact that Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson's interview is taken shortly after he resigned as managing director of Eyjafjörður Business Development Agency, Gunnlaugur Stefánsson on the other hand is an elected representative and if he would compare anything, even remotely, to Nazism it might have drastic consequences for his political future. As stated earlier Gunnlaugur Stefánsson faced a series of questions that left a negative perception right before the topic of Huang Nubo was brought up. Towards the end of the interview, there was a short questions regarding what he found most boring or tedious to do and he answers: "To vacuum, getting letters from racists and intoxicated phone calls from people." (*Leiðist mest sendibréf frá rasistum og símtöl frá ölvuðu fólki!*, 2012) There was no follow up question after his answer, even though he mentioned racism in letters which could be regarded as a criminal offence leaving the paper with a possibly interesting follow-up story, the reader is left in doubt as to the origins of the racism and intoxicated calls.

Sigurður Guðmundsson is, like Gunnlaugur Stefánsson, an elected official but does not use the same diplomatic approach at all as he simply asserts that the intentions of the Chinese do not comply with the Icelandic social system. He does not clarify nor does Akureyri Vikublað follow up on these words in any way, even though the paper used the term “advocate of liberty” in the question, the reader is left in the dark regarding what plans he is referring to and how they do not comply with the existing social system. What the reader does get is to witness Sigurður Guðmundsson’s stereotyping as he is asked about Huang Nubo and his plans and answers regarding the Chinese as a whole, portraying Nubo as an oversimplified image of Chinese as a whole and also implying that they have some kind of common intentions in and around Iceland. Even though there is no clarification regarding these implied common plans it is apparent that he is not just talking about Grímsstaðir as it is hard to see how a resort in a fairly isolated part of the Icelandic highlands can not comply with the social dynamics of the nation. By implying that there is some kind of common plan that does not comply with Icelanders Sigurður Guðmundsson is not only leaning towards stereotyping but also portraying some kind of fear or dislike towards the foreign element in this situation.

Articles

The article “Byggðarök til umræðu á málþingi um Grímsstaði” seems, at a glance, to be a very basic and straight forward article reporting on a forum held by the Eyjafjörður Business Development Agency regarding Huang Nubo and his plans in Grímsstaðir. According to the agenda of the forum found on the website of the University of Akureyri the news article is far from being thorough. To start with it was not just the Eyjafjörður Business Development Agency who held the forum but in a collaboration with Þingeyjarsýsla Business Development Agency,

the Regional Development Institute and the University of Akureyri. (Málþing um uppbyggingu á Grímsstöðum á fjöllum, n.d.)

There are no quotes or reports on what any of the four speakers on the agenda had to say, the two quotes in the article were based on questions from the audience during the panel discussion and the only mention of any of the four main speakers is in one of those quoted questions. The whole forum is available online through the webpage Youtube.com in five different parts, one video of each speaker and then the panel discussions in a separate video. (Grímsstaðir á Fjöllum, 2012) This leaves the question that will not be answered in this essay: why did *Akureyri Vikublað* decide to use most of this news report to ponder two questions from the audience instead of reporting what the speakers had to say?

In his speech Þorvaldur Lúðvík Sigurjónsson, who is the current managing director of Eyjafjörður Business Development Agency, introduces the project plans and status of ongoing contract situation with representatives of Huang Nubo. He then talks about what he calls rumors or scare tactics surrounding the project but that, along with material from the other speakers does, for some reason unknown, not reach the pages of *Akureyri Vikublað*. (Grímsstaðir á Fjöllum, 2012)

The longest and most extensive article regarding Huang Nubo's plans in Grímsstaðir found in *Akureyri Vikublað* is the full-page compilation written by Sóley Björk Stefánsdóttir called "Vaxandi taugatitringur vegna Nubo". Even though it is extensive it is only so towards the opinion of adversaries of the plans as the article is almost totally dedicated to that side of the matter.

The main focus is on collecting and portraying the opinions or views from the representatives of each of the political parties in Akureyri and adding to that as stated in the subheading: "various points that have come forward in public debate regarding the case in recent months." Within these points are the

opinions of experts such as Juan Pablo Cardenal, a Spanish journalist that specializes in Chinese investment as he is quoted: “The first thing that came to my mind when I heard about these plans just over a year ago was that it made little sense to me.” Another International specialist on Chinese international investment, Nora Szikorova, says that wherever there are business opportunities, there you will find the Chinese and that they go as far as they can as she warns Icelanders: “You have to put special focus on the quality of the contracts and to be certain that there are no loopholes that they can take advantage of. The framework must be rigid, tight and clear.” In addition to these quotes there is a mention that news had spread regarding the free trade agreement between Iceland and China had stalled because of the emphasis of the Chinese to get added leeway involving visas, residence permits and work permits. (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

This compiled with talk about misleading information from Huang Nubo and his representatives is far from creating a positive image, Chinese businessmen are stereotyped together as a whole and portrayed as ruthless opportunists looking for any contractual loopholes to exploit at first chance.

Sigurður Guðmundsson is, once again, a prominent advisory of Huang Nubo and his plans. This time he voices the opinion that these plans could cost the Icelandic taxpayers a substantial amount of money as the project would be subsidized, a point not published before within the pages of *Akureyri Vikublað*. Even though he mentions that the total cost for the taxpayers could be three billion ISK he does not go into any further detail and rather focuses on the things he thinks that amount should rather be spent on; the conservation of Iceland’s nature. (Stefánsdóttir, 2012)

In the next issue of *Akureyri Vikublað* there was an article based on a resolution sent out from Húsavíkurstofa with the title “Hamlað gegn landsbyggðarflóttu”. In this article there are to be found positive points that could have been brought up

in the full page discussion in the previous week's paper. Points such as the positive effects on neighboring areas and even the nation as a whole regarding the economy, employment, tourism and the decrease in population in the countryside to name a few mentioned in the article. These points brought up by Húsavíkurstofa should be the points that a local newspaper with a declared emphasis on the roles of watchdog and gatekeeper should focus more on, positive effects for the area. Still they have barely been mentioned in the paper until this article was published and then not by the initiative of the paper but a sent in resolution from Húsavíkurstofa. (Hamlað gegn landsbyggðarflótta, 2012)

5 Findings / Conclusion

Within the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson published in the early part of the 20th century can be found the an image of China and the Chinese people portrayed and published through *Ljósberinn*, *Kristniboð í Kína* and *14 ár í Kína*. Through the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson the image was mainly affected by his religion which also was the driving force behind his writings as he was a missionary in China at the time.

Instead of spending time and his writings on exploring, researching and discussing the local population, its history, customs, religion and social structure for example, Ólafur Ólafsson turns to stereotyping and insularity. Stereotype is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. Insularity is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as ignorance or a lack of interest in cultures, ideas or people outside one's own experience. (Oxford University Press, 2014)

This oversimplified image created and portrayed by Ólafur Ólafsson is filtered mainly through his religious belief. In the writings there is an apparent class system where religion is used as the main tool in classification of the people, providing Ólafur Ólafsson with a thrown from where he writes from and looks down on the local population seen as in need of saving from its heathen lifestyle. Christianity is seen and portrayed as the only correct way of life and the only hope of salvation for those living without it in sin. The people living without it are portrayed in a dark and judgmental way and their wrongdoings, in almost any shape or form, are connected with their lack of Christianity. Opium addiction, anti social behavior, lack of compassion, murder and insanity are amongst the examples provided by Ólafur Ólafsson in his writings of things that he portrays Christianity as the solution of.

What has to be kept in mind is that when Ólafur Ólafsson is talking about Christianity and what the missionaries are bringing to China he is not only

talking about just the religion. As he states in both books under discussion, there are three main elements or practices of missionaries; to teach, preach and heal. With these three elements come three pillars of western civilization in the form of religious establishments, schools and hospitals, all working according to western standards and ways of religion, education and health care. To put emphasis on the need for such drastic change Ólafur Ólafsson attacks the same foundations already in place within one of the most populated and oldest countries in the world with examples loaded with oversimplification and ignorance. Little to no information can be found within the writings as to the religious systems to be found within China at that time, showing the level of ignorance towards what was already in place. The only few short mentions of local religion or religious establishments are connected with allegories aimed to point out the flaws or wrongdoings of the heathen lifestyle connected with them. The oversimplified image of a nation of heathens leaves no room for the mention of some of the religions already in place in China like Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism for example. Only Buddhism gets a short mention in the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson and then only when he is trying to put emphasis on the poor stature of women as he states his opinion that, within Buddhism, women are not considered to having a soul.

A very similar approach is used by Ólafur Ólafsson when he is talking about the existing standards of education and health care as he connects both of them with religion to point out their shortcomings as they are run by heathens using their methods. The schools he claims are not up to acceptable standards, even inhumane in some cases. Portraying them as a factory of heathenism since there, the teachers are heathen and the children would therefore not hear the word of god, something that Christian parents could not accept for their children. The poor standard of health care Ólafur Ólafsson connects with Christianity in the way that it owes its very existence to it as he states that before the time of

hospitals, doctors and nurses you had monasteries, monks and nuns doing the same thing for society.

The class system portrayed by Ólafur Ólafsson does not only classify based on religion as within the Christians there is in further classification evident, based on nationality. This becomes apparent when he is writing about the individuals that have lost their lives. There he counts the western missionaries who lost their lives as martyrs while he barely mentions the far more numerous Chinese who lost their lives under very similar circumstances. This example provides arguments for that Ólafur Ólafsson did not see the Chinese as his equals, even though they had taken up Christianity and even worked as teachers or missionaries themselves.

Xenophobia is also visible throughout the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson as it is a term used here to denote a phobic attitude towards something that is considered foreign or strange, or as it is defined by the Oxford Dictionary: Intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries. (Oxford University Press, 2014) This sort of phobia can not only be visible in the form of condemnation of something considered foreign but also with the exaltation of the domestic. This approach is very prominent throughout the writings of Ólafur Ólafsson as he and the other missionaries are, in short, exporting their own religion, values, culture and social system into China through the missionary work.

Even though Ólafur Ólafsson does use religion to try to justify or rationalize his insularity and xenophobia towards the Chinese it clashes with the Christian values that he himself displays in his texts. Throughout his writings Ólafur Ólafsson portrays an image of Christians as kind, helpful, devoted, self-sacrificing, charitable individuals doing their best to save heathens from their wrongdoings and eternal damnation while, at the same time, he is offering

examples that portray the Chinese as unintelligent, cruel or even barbarian or animalistic at times.

As stated earlier, the work of the missionaries in China could be seen as an exportation of a religion, values, social system and culture. This is the way the business plans of Huang Nubo were portrayed by some through the newspaper *Akureyri Vikublað* or even as an invasion portraying xenophobia, at least according to discussion on the topic in the majority of the sent-in articles regarding the matter. Pétur Snæbjörnsson started the discussion with his article where he hinted that these plans of Nubo were that unreal, impractical and even undoable that he connected them with a possible swindle or trickery. This underlying tone or hint that the plans of Huang Nubo being some kind of cover-up for the real hidden agenda is visible throughout the writings found in *Akureyri Vikublað* as he is connected with anything from natural resources like water and oil to gaining a foothold to secure shipping routes through the arctic, even threatening the sovereignty of Iceland. Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson and Gunnlaugur Stefánsson made the discussion a talking point in their interviews as they think that it is off-track and hateful, Magnús Þór Ásgeirsson takes it even further and cuts no corners in classifying it as ignorant, xenophobia and national-socialism. A very similar but more diplomatic approach is taken by Jón Þorvaldur Heiðarsson in his sent in article where he points out how people have reacted and how he thinks they should react.

The talk about the hidden agenda is though not only visible through interviews and sent-in articles, the full-page compilation by Sóley Björk Stefánsdóttir focuses on the opinion of local politicians and to the side of the main text there are short quotes from domestic and foreign specialists casting a shadow of doubt on Nubo's plans and intentions. There the achievability and reality of the plans is also questioned but mainly there are warnings as to the trade practices of the Chinese. This oversimplified image and stereotyping of the Chinese as sly,

cunning and ruthless businessmen who search for loopholes in contracts to take advantage of might have a foothold in reality, but, that is not only connected to the Chinese nationality. This is something Icelanders should know after the financial crash in Iceland where the sentence “siðlaust en löglegt” (unethical but legal) was a common mention in the discussions regarding the causes of the collapse of the Icelandic economy.

Insularity within *Akureyri Vikublað* is visible through ignorance towards the Chinese who are portrayed as foreign and different, the only summary of the case printed was the article by Sóley Björk Stefánsdóttir and that portrayed mainly doubts and negativity as stated before. There is no summary or detailed discussion regarding the possibilities these plans could offer for the area, its inhabitants or the economy of the country as the plans are rather mocked and doubted then discussed. There was an opportunity to create such a summary in regards to the forum held about the development of Grímsstaðir but, as the article on the forum shows, the opportunity was wasted as nothing that the four main speakers talked about reached the paper.

The climax of xenophobia within *Akureyri Vikublað* is to be found in the words of Jökull Guðmundsson where he compared the Huang Nubo situation to attempts of foreign leaders to gain power in Iceland and the only war the nation has took part in. By comparing it to the nations rivals or even enemies it is apparent that fear, dislike and the aim to spread that is the driving forces in his writings.

It has come clear that stereotyping, insularity and xenophobia are prominent in the approach and writings found in both Ólafur Ólafsson's writings and *Akureyri Vikublað* as they are tainted mainly by the foreign element of the subject matter. An outcome that does not come as a surprise, especially not in regards to Ólafur Ólafsson, as his writings had a clear purpose and aim as to support the Christian cause of the missionaries. The writings of *Akureyr Vikublað* surprised a bit more since the attempt of being neutral and informative should be the aim of a

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newspaper and there is a certain unbalance present, a balance that is hard to see that would be there if the potential buyer of Grímsstaðir would have been domestic.

The stereotype has changed throughout the years and the main influence there is the rise of communism in China but time, technology and access to information does not seem to change the fact that insularity and xenophobia still plague the views, opinions and approach of writings about China and the Chinese in Icelandic media.

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