Phonological and morphological variants in 19th century Icelandic

In connection with the research project *Language Change and Linguistic Variation in 19th-Century Icelandic and the Emergence of a National Standard* (LCLV19)(see: [http://www.arnastofnun.is/page/ord_19old](http://www.arnastofnun.is/page/ord_19old)), a list of phonological and morphological variants in 19th century Icelandic has been compiled. The aim of the LCLV19-project is to make an accurate description of 19th century Icelandic, with emphasis on stylistic and sociolinguistic variation, so that the process of standardization and its linguistic and ideological foundations is better understood.

The main aim and purpose of this variant list is to get a clearer picture of linguistic variation at this particular time in Iceland and an overview of the main variants, which will serve as a basis for the selection and definition of variables for a more detailed analysis. In the paper I will discuss the compilation of the list and address some questions that arose in connection with the task:

- Which innovations were rejected, which were adopted?
- Which old forms were reinvented, which were not?
- Which innovations were dialectal features?
- Which innovations or changes were well known and which were lesser known?
- Who or what decided / affected the choices?

Variants have especially been sought where a new form has arisen as a consequence of a linguistic change and then later disappeared and the older (original) form has been standardized in Modern Icelandic. An example of such a sound change is *lf, rf > lb, rb* (where at least in some parts of the country a fricative (f) changed into a stop (b) after *l* and *r*), e.g. *kálfur* ‘calf’, *orf* ‘scythe shaft’ > *kálbur, orb*. Here the variants are *lb – lf/lw; rb – rf/rv*. An example from the morphology are the nom/acc plural forms *fingurnir/fingurna, fæturnir/fæturna* in masc. → *fingurnar, fæturnar* fem (from nom. sg. *fingur* ‘finger’, *fótur* ‘foot’). In Modern Icelandic these new forms (*lb and fingurnar, fæturnar*) have mostly disappeared. The younger forms have thus become obsolete or been made substandard and older or original forms revived or standardized again. The question is whether, in those cases, a *linguistic change has been reversed*. To ascertain whether this hypothesis is correct it is necessary to look thoroughly at the sound changes in play in the 19th century. This variant list is a good starting point in that quest.