

V. LAW

The first laws of the Icelandic commonwealth, the '*Útljót's Code*', are said to have been adapted from the Norwegian Gulathing's law, as the majority of the settlers were of Norwegian origin. The laws were not reduced to writing till long after Christianity had been established in Iceland, but were handed down orally from generation to generation. Our knowledge of the oldest body of Icelandic republican laws is, therefore, very fragmentary. But the Althingi of 1117 appointed a committee for the purpose of writing down the laws, and the following year the code compiled by this committee and called '*Haflíðaskrá*' after one of the compilers, was adopted. This code has not come down to posterity in its original shape, but there are still extant comprehensive collections of Icelandic republican civil laws, mainly contained in two manuscripts dating from the thirteenth century. A code of church laws for Iceland (still extant in a number of MSS) was written down during the years 1122—1133. Both these codes are called by the name of '*Grágás*' (the 'Grey Goose'). The laws of the *Grágás*, independent and original as they are in many points, are yet akin to old Teutonic, and more especially to old Norwegian, laws. '*Grágás*' contains by far the largest and most comprehensive body of old Teutonic laws extant, and is therefore very important in the history of law, not only in Iceland but also among other Teutonic nations.

Soon after the union with Norway, important changes were wrought in the laws of Iceland. The '*Járnsíða*', a complete code for the country, was, at the king's request, sanctioned here in 1271—1273. This code, mostly compiled from Norwegian laws, did not long remain in force, and in 1281 it was replaced by a new code, the '*Jónsbók*', which had been prepared with greater care than the *Járnsíða* and with more regard to the old laws of the country. The *Jónsbók* was later altered in a few minor points, and some additions made to it by the so-called Amendments of the Law (*Réttarbætur*) of 1294, 1305, and 1314. In 1275 was adopted a new code of church laws, prepared by Árni Thorláksson, bishop of Skálholt. This code bore a closer affinity to the general laws of the Catholic Church than had been the case with the older Icelandic church laws.

The greater part of *Jónsbók* remained in force till the eighteenth century, though, of course, some changes necessarily followed from the judicial practice observed in the country; from royal decrees; and from legislation by Althingi. But on the whole these changes were