The Scribes of *Flateyjarbók*,
GKS 1005 fol.

*A Study in Scribal Practice in 14th-Century Iceland*

Ritgerð til MA-prófs í íslenskum miðaldafræðum

Roberto Pagani

Kt.: 131190-3799

Leiðbeinandi: Haraldur Bernharðsson

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Abstract
This study is a comparative analysis of the language and script of the two scribes of Flateyjarbók, GKS 1005 fol., dated to c1387–1394. The importance of this manuscript for the history of the Icelandic language and script lies in the internal evidence concerning its writing, which does not rely on the language or the script. In fact, an indication of the time of writing is found in the text, and the two scribes who carried out the work are named: Jón Þórðarson and Magnús Þórhallsson. A study of the language and script of Flateyjarbók and a comparative analysis of the scribal practice of the two individuals who wrote it can thus shed light on the status of the Icelandic language and script at the time and provide valuable comparative material for the study of other manuscripts that cannot be dated independently. Furthermore, the copious amount of text contained in this monumental collection contributes to making statistical estimates more effective.

Both linguistic and palaeographic data has been extrapolated from the manuscript and analysed. The linguistic analysis shows a degree of variation between the two. Though this is not equally conclusive for all the features analysed, the results appear to suggest that the language of the first scribe is more innovative.

From the orthographic and palaeographic analysis, it emerges that the script of Jón Þórðarson is on the one hand less pronouncedly angular and uniform, but on the other also less cursive than that of Magnús Þórhallsson. From the analysis of the data gathered, it seems reasonable to conclude that it is the language of Jón that shows a more innovative character, and that of Magnús which appears to be more conservative.
Ágrip


Safnað var gögnnum í handritinu um málsögu og skriftarsögu og þau greind. Sú rannsókn leiddi í ljós ákveðinn mun á skrifurunum tveimur sem bendir til þess að nokkurð miseldri kunni að hafa verið með þeim.

1. Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to perform a comparative analysis of the language and script of the two principal scribes of GKS 1005 fol., also known as Flateyjarbók, in the attempt to trace their linguistic profile and establish whether they show differences that could offer interesting perspectives of analysis and interpretation, which should also make it possible to better frame and describe the situation of the language and the script at the time of writing.

This enterprise is justified by the fact that internal evidence allows us to safely place the writing of this manuscript between 1387 and 1394 by the hand of two scribes, who are named in the prologue: Jón Þórdarson, whose hand begins on 4v and continues with only minor interruptions down to the first column of 134v, and Magnús Þórhallsson, who wrote the prologue, the pages until 4r, and continued the work where his predecessor had stopped until the end of the book, excluding, of course, the 15th-century interpolation consisting of some 20 leaves.¹

The fact that we can so safely date the work (on which see more below in ch. 2), makes Flateyjarbók an invaluable source of linguistic data and it provides an almost unique occasion to draw a very accurate picture of the situation of the Icelandic language and scribal practice at the end of the 14th century. This is also the case because of the copious amount of text which it contains; this abundance of material would make statistical results more reliable.

Having a solid picture of the occurrence of certain features at any given period of time, based on accurately dated sources of evidence such as Flateyjarbók, makes it possible to establish a relative date for other manuscripts when they, as it is very often the case, do not contain direct and explicit information indicating their time of writing.

¹ A detailed description of the manuscript and its content can be found on handrit.is.
To carry out this task, both linguistic and palaeographic data will be extrapolated from the manuscript and analysed. Given that the work has been completed by two different hands that have worked consecutively and in a very limited timespan, it may also offer the opportunity to better understand whether a given linguistic, orthographic or palaeographic feature should be interpreted as an archaism, a sporadic innovation, or a well-established one. For example, the fact that we have two different scribes working together on the same manuscript may make it possible to avoid the risk of overestimating the spread of an innovative feature, or the retention of an archaism, by virtue of the fact that one of the two presents it much less frequently.

This, however, is not free from risks: it is important to stress that the results provided by research of this kind do not, and cannot, be used to determine the general situation of a language in past times because of a number of complicating factors, such as regional or social variations, that are difficult to pin down. In studying the status of the Icelandic language and script in the work of the two scribes of GKS 1005 fol., it is important consider that we are dealing with two individuals whose age, geographical provenance and educational background are virtually unknown. Thus, it becomes arduous to tell, for example, whether a conservative feature should be attributed to the scribe’s older age, to his regional variety, or simply to the teaching and style used in the specific scriptorium where he had been trained.

Nonetheless, the impossibility of determining the origin or raison d’être of a given feature does not diminish the value of the results if the objective is to find and describe the characteristics of the language of a particular written source. Given that written texts are both the most abundant and most important source we have to explore and reconstruct the history of the Icelandic language in the middle ages, the
data they provide is still invaluable, even though the results cannot be extended to the whole linguistic environment in which the texts were written.

It is a known fact that the linguistic situation in the middle ages was extremely complex, fragmented and unstable, possibly much more so than it is today, at least as far as the written language is concerned; no national authority establishing and enforcing an approved standard existed, and different institutions and schools would use different styles and conventions. Plus, the mobility of the clerics, the prolonged periods in which a scribe could be working on a single manuscript, and the common practice of borrowing books for copying resulted frequently, if not always, in extremely inconsistent orthography, in which old and new conventions and contrasting dialectal variations alternate in the space of a few lines or even a few words.

For these reasons, the results of this research do not claim to represent a clear picture of the status of the language at the end of the 14th century in the same way as today’s language may be presented in a contemporary descriptive work. It is however possible to describe the salient peculiar features at a particular point in time in order to understand and appreciate the way a language evolved through time but having care of understanding their general and oscillating nature. Linguistic change does not happen in the space of a fortnight; it can take several generations before it finally becomes so widespread that it is possible for us to identify it as an established property of the language, rather than a sporadic innovation or a localised variation. Similarly, changes in script and orthography probably progressed slowly from one generation of scribes to the next one. Script and orthography, unlike the language, is a craft that was passed on from a master to a scribe and required skill and training. Some masters no doubt were more conservative than others.
Due to the nature of this work, it would be impossible to examine every single relevant linguistic, orthographic or palaeographic feature exhaustively. Thus, the choice will fall on a selection of important changes which are commonly thought to have been ongoing at the time of writing of Flateyjarbók, or which are expected to appear through the analysis. It would be meaningless to look at the evidence for a change that is known to have become established more than a century earlier, unless it can be shown that there is evidence of its absence in a later text in which it is expected. As we will see the question of presence/absence of a phenomenon is never straightforward and always requires a certain degree of interpretation.

Portions of texts have been examined at random but with the care of covering the entire space of the text. Thus, although it would have not be possible for the scope of this work to thoroughly examine every single leaf, samples have been chosen from the beginning to the end of the two sections that were written by Jón Þórðarson and Magnús Þórhallsson respectively.

The features that will be analysed are:

1. The change “vú” to “vo”.
2. The fricativisation of word-final t and that of word-final k.
3. The ù-epenthesis.
4. The palaeography and, to a lesser extent, the orthography.

In the context of this analysis it may be possible to tell which of the two scribes shows a more conservative or innovative language, orthography and script, and a synthesis of the results has the potential of providing an interesting picture of the Icelandic language, orthography and script in the last decades of the 14th century. A picture made even more valuable because of the fact that it is representative of two individuals, most likely educated in different places, and thus offering a wider perspective over the situation of the language, orthography and script at the time.
2. The manuscript

*Flateyjarbók*, is the largest medieval manuscript from Iceland\(^2\), commissioned by a wealthy landowner, Jón Hákonarson, at the end of the 14\(^{th}\) century. The production was most likely carried out at Víðidalstunga in the Húnavatnssýsla district in northwestern Iceland, where the commissioner resided, or possibly at the nearby Benedictine monastery of Þingeyrar (Ashman Rowe 2005, 11), which was one of the first Icelandic monasteries to be established (in the year 1133), and remained, for a long time, an important cultural centre.

The manuscript was sold to Þorleifur Árnason when the original owner, Jón Hákonarson, died. It remained in Þorleifur’s family until 1647 when it was donated to Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson who presented it to the Danish king. It was then added into the Royal Collection, hence the shelf mark from the Royal Library in Copenhagen: GKS 1005 fol. It was then one of the first two manuscripts to be returned to Iceland on April 21, 1971 as part of an agreement made between Denmark and Iceland on the return of Icelandic medieval. *Flateyjarbók* is now stored in the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum (the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies) in Reykjavík. It is preserved in its entirety and it consists of 225 leaves of text illuminated with historiated initials. It initially comprised 202 leaves, but towards the end of the 15\(^{th}\) century, one of its owners, Þorleifur Björnsson, made an addition of three quires consisting of a total of twenty-three leaves. These will not be taken into consideration in this study as the objective is to analyse contrastively the language of the two original scribes writing at the end of the 14\(^{th}\) century.

Internal evidence allows us to date the period of writing between 1387 and 1394. The enterprise was carried out by two priests, Jón Þórðarson and Magnús

\(^2\) For a more detailed discussion on the history of the manuscript see Ashman Rowe, 2005.
Þórhallsson, both named in the preface which was added by the latter scribe to the front of the book.

Jón Þórðarson began writing in 1387 on what is now 4v, and on the following pages he copied Eiríks saga víðförla, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar and Óláfs saga helga, which he did not finish. In fact, according to the sources, he was moved to a parish called Krosskirkja, possibly in Norway (Ashman Rowe 2005, 11). Interpolated within the sagas mentioned, we also find other important texts, such as Færeyinga saga, Orkneyinga saga, Jómsvikinga saga, Grönlendinga saga and Fóstbróðra saga.

As Jón left (presumably) for Norway, the work was taken on by Magnús Þórhalls son, who continued Óláfs saga helga from where Jón had been interrupted, and wrote Noregskonungatal (List of the kings of Norway), Sverris saga, Hákonar saga gamla, some passages from the version of Óláfs saga helga by Styrmir Kárason, Einars þátr Sokkasonar, Helga þátr ok Úlfs, Játvarðar saga and annals that he compiled personally (cf. Ashman Rowe 2005, 12). He also added three leaves to the book before the section compiled by Jón, and in these he included a preface, written on 1v, followed by the poems Geisli, Óláfs ríma Haraldssonar and Hyndluljóð, an excerpt in Icelandic from the Gesta hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum by Adam of Bremen, and Sigurðar þátr slefu, Hversu Noregr byggðisk ‘How Norway was settled’, and Ættartölur ‘genealogies’. Magnús also illuminated the manuscript and added rubrics showing titles and matter of every chapter.

The work covers and summarises the story of the Norwegian kings from around 850 to ca. 1260, with the periods of reign of the two Óláfs, of Sverrir and Hákon Hákonarson narrated in full. The long texts are interpolated with numerous þættir, some of which are not found elsewhere.

As was already mentioned in the introduction of this work, from a linguistic point of view, the importance of this manuscript lies in the internal evidence
concerning the year in which its writing began. With this piece of information, it is possible to proceed with a linguistic analysis that has the potential of shedding further light on the stage of evolution of the language at the time, by analysing, comparing and interpreting the different scribal practices of the two individuals who wrote it.

The evidence that is always cited, which places the writing of the manuscript in year 1387, is to be found towards the very end of the section that Magnús added before Eiríks saga víðførla which was written by Jón. The text in question begins in 4ra12, and it consists of the Ættartölur ‘Genealogies’. Here, in 4rb49-50, we read the following:

Hann var þa konungr er sia bok var skrifud þa var lidit íra higad burd vars herra jesu cristi m.ccc.lxxx. ok vij. ar.
‘He was then king when this book was written; then was passed from the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ (a total of) m.ccc.lxxx [1380]. and vii. [7] years.’

Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2010) convincingly demonstrates how this testimony is indeed reliable, and concludes that we can confidently place the production of the manuscript between 1387, according to what Magnús reports, and 1394, when the annals closing the original book end.

Once this fundamental fact is established, it is possible to proceed to a close analysis of the language. Although this is a work whose main objective is to compare the two scribes, there are a number of works in which some linguistic, orthographical and palaeographic aspects of one of the two are discussed, and some comparative data has been presented by Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2004) in her study Die Flateyjarbók als Quelle zur Geschichte des Isländische annähernd auf halbem Wege zwischen erster Besiedlung und Gegenwart. As the title indicates, the manuscript can be used as a
source to analyse the language in a moment which is situated more or less in the middle of a hypothetical timeline between the settlement and today.

The characteristics that make this manuscript so important for linguistic studies are several; first of all the work is dated, then the fact that it was written by two contemporary scribes, who can be identified, and not least that the quantity of text contained in this book is exceptionally copious.

Thus, since it was produced at the very end of so important a century for the history of the Icelandic language, it is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of this manuscript as a testimony of the late Medieval Icelandic linguistic past. In the following chapter some of the most relevant changes that can be traced in the texts will be scrutinised.
3. Linguistic analysis

3.1 Overview
The objective of this chapter is to analyse a selection of linguistic features that may be useful in the scope of a contrastive analysis between the two scribes. In particular, the features that will be analysed are:

1. The change “vá” to “vo”.
2. The fricativisation of word-final t and that of word-final k.
3. The u-epenthesis.

3.2 The change “vá” to “vo”

3.2.1 The nature of the change
This chapter is concerned with the phonological change which affected the long low back vowel [ɔː], represented by “á” in the normalised orthography – and a variety of symbols in the medieval orthography, including, “a”, “aa”, “æ”, “a”, “â” and “ã” – which was, it seems, diphthongised to [au] in the course of the 14th century. However, the change is not reflected in the orthography, given that the old symbols indicating the long monophthong could as well be used to represent the new diphthong. The nature and development of such a change has been analysed and described extensively by Hreinn Benediktsson in his article *Relational Sound Change: vá > vo in Icelandic* (1979), which will be used as primary reference for the following discussion.

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3 The exact phonetic nature of the vowel denoted as “á” (as well as “a”, “aa”, “a”, etc.) in the medieval orthography and that of the resulting “o” (“ó”) in this environment is a matter of some debate. Hreinn Benediktsson (2002, 227-242) considers it to be initially of the same quality as the lowered mid-back vowel [o], which was then in the process of changing into [ɔ], but long. With the quantity shift of the 15th century the two would have merged completely.
This diphthongisation did not occur when the vowel was immediately preceded by \( v \). In this instance the scribes gradually changed the spelling of such a sequence into “vo”/“uo”. Thus, words such as \( \text{vágr} \) “inlet”, \( \text{svá} \) “so” or \( \text{hvárr} \) “each” came to be spelt as “vogr”, “svo” and “hvorr”. Since the diphthongisation occurred in the majority of instances, it was more economical to retain the symbol “á” (or its variants) as a way to denote the diphthong itself. Conversely, the only instance in which the old sound was retained, necessitated a new spelling. The choice of “o” (or “ó”) was justified by the similarity between the old \( á \) \([\ddot{a}]\) and the mid-back vowel, which had been lowered, already represented by “o” (or “ó”) in the orthography.

Given that the diphthongisation of \( á \) was not shown directly in the orthography, in that the old symbol(s) formerly used for the long monophthong \( á \) were retained for the new diphthong, the occurrence of the change may be revealed by the presence of the spelling with “vo”/“uo” for etymological \( vá \). In fact, it arose as a consequence of the split between the newly emerged diphthong \([au]\) and the old \([\ddot{a}]\), retained immediately following \( v \) which could not be denoted by the same symbol.

Unfortunately, the assessment of this change is made arduous by a number of complications, not least the characteristic inconsistency of medieval orthography, in which the oscillation between variants can be quite striking. For example, some scribes may be retaining an older spelling for conservative zeal, while revealing a possible sound change through new spelling scattered among a majority of older ones. Moreover, there are a number of cases which cannot be taken as evidence to support the claim of a linguistic change, because of their ambiguity.

In the case of the orthographic change “vá” > “vo”, some words whose paradigms presented a morpho-phonological alternation \( á : ̂ \dot{á} \) (later neutralised through the merger \( á + ̂ \dot{á} \rightarrow ̂ \dot{á} \)), may have undergone a different development in certain dialectal areas. Such development is testified by the existence of doublets such
as **vóru** for the preterit plural of the verb *vera*, beside the form *váru*. These forms are not suitable as evidence for orthographic change “vá” to “vo”. The sequence *vó* became ó by regular phonological development before *u* that was not syncopated. Thus the preterit plural *vóru* became ó*ru* (Cf. Noreen 1923, §235.1; 1923, §77.11). This form ó*ru* could either undergo a restoration of the initial v- paradigmatically, or lower the vowel to ó analogically, which later merged with á. Thus, there must have existed two separate dialectal forms, *váru* and *vóru* but nothing is known about their distribution.

Since the orthography is often ambiguous, with “o” loosely representing o, ó, ø or ō, the phonological nature of such forms as “uoru” cannot be ascertained. In fact, “voru” can either represent *vóru* or, alternatively, *váru* with the change “vá” to “vo”, and thus, it is impossible from the orthography alone to distinguish between the two forms. Bearing these considerations in mind, we can move on to analyse to what extent is the *vá > vo* change represented in the language of the two scribes of Flateyjarbók. In this discussion, “vá” will be used as a code for the different spellings “vá”, “va”, “uá”, “ua”, “vaa”, “uaa”, etc. and “vo” will be used for “vo”, “uo”.

### 3.2.2 “vá” > “vo” in Jón Dórðarson’s orthography

Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2003, 18) asserts that Jón uses the orthography “vá” more often than “vo” in the beginning, but after some 170–180 columns of text he uses “vo” more often.

With closer analysis, although her observation concerning the word *svá* seems to hold true, in that the scribe does appear to show a preference for the orthography “íua” only to turn more confidently to “íuo” around leaf 45 (column 174), the absolute majority of other instances of etymological *vá* show the orthography “vo” throughout the text. The orthography “íua” appears in around 90% of the instances in the first leaves of the text, only to drop to around 50% from 45r onwards; see ***Table***
3.1.1. This is also consistent with the observation by Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxxi), who writes “uo eller vo er langt det almindeligste, undtagen i adverbiet svá, hvilket Jón Þórðarson i den første del af bogen skriver næsten uden undtagelse fuldt ud ‘sua’, mens han efterhånden foretrekker ‘suo’ som til sidst bliver enerådende”, thus noticing that the word svá receives a different treatment than other words with etymological vá.

The switch from “svá” to “svo” is a gradual one, and in any case it is not abrupt enough to suggest that it may have been due to a change in the exemplar, although this is a dense section with a number of relatively short þættir in the space of about five leaves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“ívá”</th>
<th>“ívo”</th>
<th>n=33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4v-45r</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45r-79r</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>n=33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79r-130v</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>n=33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>n=99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1.1 distribution of svá and svo in Jón’s orthography

There are some very rare if not unique occurrences of orthographic “vá”, but they are either ambiguous or usually accompanied by contrasting instances in the same page or even in the space of a few lines: for example “kuamu” 8rb48, the 3\textsuperscript{rd} pers. pl. pret. of koma, which would indicate that the change has not occurred, is surrounded not only by examples showing the change such as “uopnumnum” 8ra13 for vápnunum, “uopna” 8rb22 for vápna, or “huorir” 8ra14 for hvárir, but even by its counterpart “kuomu” 8ra15, still the 3\textsuperscript{rd} pers. pl. pret. of koma.

Setting svá aside, the overall occurrence of orthographic “vá” for etymological vá in Jón’s orthography is around 1%, as shown in Table 3.1.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“vá”</th>
<th>“vo”</th>
<th>n=100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1.2 instances of “vá” and “vo” in Jón’s orthography
Given the absolute rarity of these instances throughout the text in words other than svá, it would not be amiss to suggest that the diphthongisation of á was very well advanced in the language of Jón, and that the high frequency of the “va” spellings in the word svá may be interpreted as a conservatism of the orthography, possibly facilitated by the high frequency of that word in the text.

3.2.3 “vá” > “vo” in Magnús Þórhallsson’s orthography

The situation of this change in Magnús’ orthography is quite different, in that although “vo” spellings still appear to be predominant, instances of “vá” are much more frequent than in Jón’s work, where they were almost absent. Kolbrún (YEAR, PAGE) writes that Magnús uses both variants, though “vo” more often.

The problem posed by Jón’s gradual change from “svá” to “svo” is not posed in Magnús’ orthography as he virtually always abbreviates this word by using a conventional symbol which normally stands for vá or va, “§”.

However, this is by no means the whole story, since if it is true, as Kolbrún (2003, 18) asserts, that Magnús uses the spelling “vo” more often than “vá”, it is also true that he shows way more instances of “vá” in words other than svá than Jón does; which would support the idea of Magnús being linguistically more archaic or conservative. Examples such as “tva” tvá 138vb5, “vapn” vápn 142va22, “ívafu” sváfu 142rb15 or “hvarartveggi” hvárar tveggju 137va14, 142vb26 are relatively frequent, especially if compared with their near absence in Jón’s work.

The preterit plural of the verb koma ‘come’ deserves a separate discussion: It seems to belong to the group of ambiguous forms mentioned above, which could have evolved in two parallel dialectal forms, so that it is difficult – if not impossible – to establish whether a form like “kuomu” and “kvomu” represents kvámu and is the
result of the “vá” > “vo” change, or if it comes from the side-form kómu with the v restored analogically, kvómu.

Jón in the overwhelming majority of instances uses the orthography “kuomu”, along with some extremely rare instances of “kuamu” (e.g., 8rb48), whereas Magnús used “kuomu” in all the instances that where examined. Whether this is an indication that Jón’s “vo” is more likely to be the result of the “vá” > “vo” change, is hard to tell. Thus, the instances of this verbal form, for the reasons we have seen, have not be counted in the process of assessing the percentage of occurrence, along with other ambiguous ones, such as “ván” and “von” or “váru” and “voru”.

All in all, Magnús writes etymological vá as “vo” in 72% of the occurrences examined, as shown in Table 3.1.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“vá”</th>
<th>“vo”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1.3 instances of vá and vo in Magnús’ orthography

3.2.4 Conclusion
From the data collected, it appears that Jón has a much stronger tendency to use the orthography “vo” for etymological vá than Magnús, even though this is apparently contradicted by the frequent spelling “íva” for svá. Magnús on the other hand shows more oscillation between the two, while still preferring the “vo” orthography in general. A comparison of the data gathered for the two scribes is shown in Table 3.1.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jón Dórdarson</th>
<th>Magnús Dórhallsson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>“vá”</td>
<td>“vo”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1.4 comparison of the instances of “vá” and “vo” in the orthography of Jón and Magnús
In Jón’s orthography, the feeling we get is that the spelling of the word svá should be taken *cum grano salis*, and treated separately, as the distribution of the change for this specific word does not match that of other words. It appears to be more sensible to consider it as an orthographic archaism favoured by the high frequency of the word in question. Thus, as far as this specific orthographic feature is concerned, Magnús appears to be the more conservative of the two.

### 3.3 Fricativisation

#### 3.3.1 The nature of the changes

This chapter is concerned with two separate changes, very similar in nature, that affected the stops *t* and *k* in unstressed word-final position immediately following a vowel. Their presence is rather useful for the purpose of dating medieval Icelandic manuscripts, but deducing it from the orthographical evidence can be quite problematic for a number of reasons that will be discussed.

Word-final *t*, when immediately preceded by a vowel in unstressed syllables and function words, and word-final *k* in function words – but not lexical ones – that received little stress, both underwent fricativisation. Some sporadic evidence of this change already appears in the 13th century, but it’s in the 14th century that it appears to have become an established feature of Icelandic (Haraldur Bernharðsson 2014, 182; Stefán Karlsson 2004, 19). The two stops changed in their manner of articulation: *t* became a dental fricative and *k* became a velar fricative (the voicing likely depended on what followed).

The change in pronunciation manifests itself through a change in orthography, where “k” (or “c”) is replaced by “g”. However, the spelling “t” was more often, and for a longer period, retained despite the change to a fricative. Thus, while it is somewhat easier to ascertain the presence and frequency of *-k > -g*, through the direct
evidence of the spelling change, assessing to what extent the fricativisation of word-final -t was spread in the language of a scribe is more problematic and must more often be done through indirect evidence, such as reverse spellings. The reverse spellings are unphonetic and unetymological spellings that imitate those of other words in which such spellings are etymological but not consistent with the pronunciation anymore. It will be shown more clearly in the next section how reverse spellings work and what they can tell us about this particular language change.

3.3.2 Fricativisation of word-final -t

In Old Icelandic there existed both t and ð in unstressed word-final position following a vowel, and they could constitute minimal pairs, such as vit (dual. pers. pron.) : við (prep./adv.), farit (pret. ptc.) : farið (2nd plur.), etc. They were thus clearly distinct phonemes, but their distinction in word-final position was neutralised in the course of the 13th and the 14th century, thus making an orthographic differentiation in this position pointless. We do not know exactly the details of how the fricativisation proceeded, but it seems likely that the orthography was somewhat behind the actual change in pronunciation. Spellings with “t” thus persisted in several words, including at and þat, long after orthographic signs of fricativisation can be observed in many other words. Orthography tends to be conservative, especially in the most common function words, and the influence of older exemplar no doubt played a role: t had been much more frequent than ð in the earlier stages when the written distinction mirrored a phonological contrast in the spoken language; however, the scribes now copying from older exemplars must have noticed that in the overwhelming majority of instances the word-final ð’s of their spoken language were orthographically represented by a “t”, and assumed that this must have been an orthographic rule to which they then consciously adhered. However, in their zeal they often went so far as to write “t” even in those words that had always had a word-final fricative since the
times of Proto-Germanic, such as hǫfuð n. ‘head’. This is enormously helpful to us as it shows how t and ð had merged in this position, even if the orthographic “t” is preserved.

Of course, it is by no means sufficient to find some scattered examples pointing in the direction of fricativisation to confidently affirm that the phenomenon was an established characteristic of the language of the scribe, let alone of his time. In fact, it appears that the occurrence of fricative spellings for etymological word-final t were to a certain extent lexically conditioned. In de Leeuw van Weenen’s 2000 study of Mðruvallabók, AM 132 fol., from around 1330–1370, it is shown how the pronouns þat and hvat are consistently spelled with “t”, and the word at in all its various functions only seems to show fricativisation in six cases only out of 9,397. It remains unclear, however, to what extent this reflects the pronunciation of the scribe. It is difficult to tell whether this spelling pattern should be attributed to an established and widespread phonological change, or if it is simply the product of a certain orthographical tradition. Thus, we can only make assumptions based on the statistical occurrences we are faced with.

Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2003, 21), says that in Flateyjarbók both scribes almost always write “t”, but Magnús sometimes writes “d” when the root contains t, and that they both appear prone to using hypercorrect spellings. In the next sections this matter will be explored in more depth.

3.3.3 Fricativisation of unstressed word-final t in Jón’s orthography

At first sight, Jón does not seem to show fricativisation of word-final t at all. The conjunction, infinitive marker, and the adverb at are all nearly consistently spelt with “t” in about 94% of the instances examined. Similarly, the neuter nom.-acc. sing. ending for adjectives and preterit participles is consistently spelt “t” (“mikit”, “farit” etc.) However, with closer analysis one can encounter a number of instances of
hypercorrection, where the letter “t” is used to denote etymological δ. These include the word hǫfuð ‘head’ spelt “hófut” or “hofut” (e.g. 31rb7, 31va49, 33ra38, 47ra31 and 70vb57) which is by far the predominant spelling, in accordance with what Kolbrún maintains, kvad ‘said’, the third person plural preterit indicative active of kveda, “quat” 45rb2, and the preposition við ‘with/against’ also found with the spelling “vit” 70rb42. All these instances seem to point in the direction of a very advanced or even well-established fricativisation in the language of Jón, even if his orthography in this respect is generally quite conservative.

Concerning the word hǫfuð ‘head’ an element was observed that is worth noting: occasionally it appears spelt as “høfd” or “hófd” in Jón’s work, for example in 31va48, 37va11 and 62ra16, which appears to be a syncopated form of the accusative. The fact that this form is not an isolated case makes it difficult to dismiss as a scribal error and calls for some attempts to provide an explanation, particularly because this sort of syncope seems to be paired with the “phonological” spelling indicating a fricative. A possible explanation is that the syncopated stem of the dat. sing. and dat.-gen. plur. may have spread analogically to (at least) the acc. sing. in some dialects. In the dat. sing. and dat.-gen. sing. the loss of the second syllable in the stem hǫfuð- was triggered by the endings beginning with a vowel. This form may have occasionally slipped through in the writing (as was to be expected if it actually existed in the language), and it is a possibility that it was either present in the exemplar(s) from which Jón copied the text, or that it was a peculiarity of his own language. If so, one would naturally expect them to be spelled with a “d” rather than “t” because in the syncopated stem the dental was immediately preceded by a consonant and in such environment the t/ð alternation was not expected. In Table 3.2.1, the paradigm of the word høfuð is presented, along with the possible generalisation of the syncopated stem. No match was found for the word høfð in either the online database of Ordbog over den
norrøne prosasprog (ONP) or that of the Ritmálsskrá Orðabókar Háskólans; it is possible that this form was very rare or localised, and disappeared quite rapidly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>sing. nom.</th>
<th>acc. nom.</th>
<th>dat. nom.</th>
<th>gen. nom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hòfuð → hòfd?</td>
<td>hòfuð → hòfd?</td>
<td>hòfdi</td>
<td>hòfðs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plur. nom.</td>
<td>hòfuð → hòfd?</td>
<td>hòfuð → hòfd?</td>
<td>hòðum</td>
<td>hòða</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.2.1 paradigm of hòfuð showing the possible generalisation of the syncopated stem*

The interpretation that this would emerge as a peculiarity of Jón’s idiolect seems preferable as, in this particular case, the instances where the *u* is regularly spelled vastly outnumber those without, and it is more economic to presume that Jón, on a few occasions, would have failed to copy the form as it was presented in the exemplar, rather than suggest that he would have modified plenty of syncopated forms, which to my knowledge are a very rare – if not unique. However, it is far from certain that the exemplar would have shown the syncopated form consistently, especially if the exemplar itself was copied from yet another manuscript. Nonetheless, the instances found belong to separate texts, which decrease the likelihood of the syncopated form being the original one from the text(s) Jón copied from.

To return to the fricativisation, it has to be said that, in general, the examples of reverse spelling where “t” stands for etymological *ð*, are more numerous than those where “d” is used, and appear in a variety of words with different grammatical roles. It is, however, possible that in the language of Jón the shift from word-final *t* to *ð* may not have been complete: fricativisation may have begun earlier in some words and conversely the pronunciation with a stop may have lasted longer in some other words,
and the possibility that the conjunction/preposition/adverb/infinitive marker at was pronounced with t after t had become a fricative in several other words cannot be ruled out. It is therefore possible that Jón himself may have oscillated between the more conservative t that he acquired in his generation, and the δ which may have been slightly or definitely more prevalent in the language of younger generations.

Another simpler possibility is that in the numerous instances of at spelled “ad” he just failed to apply the erroneous spelling rule of representing δ with “t” arguably because of the exemplar, though the error may have been enforced by the fricative pronunciation.

*Table 3.2.2* below shows the percentage of instances examined in which fricativisation can be observed; T and D represent “no fricativization” and “fricativization”, respectively, while in the line “others” are included words that either through reverse spelling or through a change in spelling reveal its presence: such as the neut. sing. acc. definite article, substantives, adverbs, the conjunction við, and the preterite indicative of kveða. The word þat is usually abbreviated, but never when it is the first of a chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hvat</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þat</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj. nom.-acc. sing. neut.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pret. part. nom.-acc. sing. neut</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>93.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>n=330</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.2.2: fricativisation of word-final t in Jón’s orthography*

### 3.3.4 Fricativisation of word-final t in Magnús’ orthography

Magnús, too, at first sight shows a strict adherence to the traditional spelling with word-final “t”, but much like Jón, he betrays some confusion by means of reverse
spelling; i.e. he shows instances of hypercorrection, though apparently less so than his colleague.

We also find a number of interesting – and possibly revealing – instances of “updated” spelling, which seem virtually non-existent in Jón’s work: in 140rb39, we find “skotid” for skotit, pret. part. of skjóta ‘shoot’, and again “litid” for litit nom.-acc. sing. neut. of lítill ‘little’ in 145ra18. In general, it appears as if the choice of the “d” is governed by the presence of a root ending in t, as pointed out by Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2004, 21). Exceptions can be found, for example in 4rb50, where we read “higad” for hi(n)gat ‘hither’ and “quad” for kvað ‘said’ in 152ra11. Furthermore, and possibly because of his being prone to adjust the spelling to “d”, he tends to spell hófuð as “hofud” more than Jón.

Although the evidence provided by these orthographic innovations in the spelling of Magnús cannot be seen as conclusive, it would still suggest that the sound change in his language may have been even more present and established than it appears to be in Jón’s. However, an alternative explanation could be that the confusion in the spelling and the higher number of instances of “d” is a consequence of a less widespread fricativisation, which makes a univocal orthographic choice such as representing the word-final dental fricative ð with an orthographic “t” more difficult to follow. In other words the fact that not all the instances of word-final t were unequivocally fricativised, may have made room for a slightly more pronounced orthographic confusion, thus, the fact that the change seems less advanced in Magnús’ language than in Jón’s, would make Magnús less inclined to use a reverse spelling.

The percentage of instances in which fricativisation can be observed in Magnús are shown in Table 3.2.3.
### Table 3.2.3 Fricativisation of word-final t in Magnús’ orthography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>at</em></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hvat</em></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>þat</em></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj. nom.-acc. sing. neut</td>
<td>91.25%</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. part. nom.-acc. sing. neut</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.5 Conclusion

As we have seen, there are a number of differences in the two scribes when it comes to fricativisation. As far as word-final *t* is concerned, Jón appears, at first sight, to be the more conservative of the two, strictly applying the spelling “*t*”, although he gives himself away in a number of instances where he hypercorrects. Magnús does the same but he also uses the spelling “*d*”, albeit mostly – but not exclusively – when a word stem ends in *t*. This may be interpreted as a sign of Magnús’ more pronounced fricativisation, which would have justified his choice of “*d*”, but it is also possible that the higher frequency of “*d*”-spellings in his orthography are due to a less established fricativisation that would have left room for confusion. Thus, according to this interpretation, Magnús should be considered the more conservative. The reason why this hypothesis seems preferable is because it would match with the data gathered from other sound changes, where Magnús still appears to be more conservative than Jón. To explain his orthographic oscillations in this phenomenon with a less advanced and somewhat more confused stage of the change in his idiolect is more elegant and does not pose the problem of explaining the reason of a more pronounced innovation in a language that, in general, appears more conservative, even though it is also possible that Magnús may have spoken a variety of Icelandic that was conservative with regard to one change but very advanced in some other change. It is, after all, not
at all necessary to assume that all the different changes going on advanced at the same pace.

An overview of the data gathered in Jón and Magnús’ works is presented in Table 3.2.4. Even if the fricativization of \( t \) in unstressed word-final position manifests itself in somewhat different ways in the scribes’ orthography, the overall percentage of spellings showing the change is fairly similar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jón Dóðarson</th>
<th>Magnús Dórhallsson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( hvat )</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( at )</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( þat )</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( adj. )</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p. part. )</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( others )</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( total )</td>
<td>93.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( hvat )</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( at )</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( þat )</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( adj. )</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p. part. )</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( others )</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( total )</td>
<td>93.14%</td>
<td>6.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( n = 350 \)

3.3.6 Fricativisation of unstressed word-final \( k \)
As already mentioned, the evidence for fricativisation of word-final \( k \) is somewhat less problematic than that of \( t \), in that the adjustment of the spelling to the new pronunciation was facilitated by the absence of a contrast between old words showing word-final \( g \) and new ones. In other words, there are no examples of reverse spelling. However, even in the case of this specific change we find several instances of conservative spelling, and some words in particular appear obstinately prone to archaism, when it comes to the spelling. The most evident example is given by the first person singular pronoun \( ek \).

Despite the resistance to updating the spelling of the first person singular pronoun, it is precisely in its cliticised form that the orthographic evidence for \(-k > -g\)
appears at the earliest date, as it was naturally unstressed, and often positioned intervocalically, an environment that facilitates fricativisation (cf. Haraldur Bernhardsson 2014, 188). However, the personal pronouns and the conjunction ok appear staunchly conservative when it comes to fricativisation, at least orthographically. Thus just like in the case of word-final t, the results cannot be taken as conclusive evidence in either direction; we can only observe to what extent the change appears to be represented in the language of the two scribes and try to interpret the results in the light of the general picture that seems to emerge.

3.3.7 Fricativisation of word-final k in Jón’s orthography

The evidence for fricativisation of word-final k in Jón is much more abundant than that of t. However, as is to be expected, there are certain words that resist an update in spelling more than others, possibly because of their frequency. Jón shows virtually no instance of orthographic representation of this fricativisation in the 1st person pronoun ek “I”; see Table 3.2.4 below. The conjunction ok ‘and/also’, however, was abbreviated with the so-called “tironian et”, with a horizontal stroke, i.e. “7”, in all the instances observed, and in Jón’s orthography it is identical to the letter “z”, also spelled with a horizontal stroke: “z”, thus it was not included in the tally.

The occurrences of the phenomenon are innumerable throughout the manuscript in the personal pronouns and in the adverb miðk ‘much’. We find “mig” for mik ‘me’ 5rb25, 47ra32, “pig” and “pig” for þik ‘you’ (second person pronoun acc. sing.), for example, in 4vb21, 5rb29/31, 45ra2, and also “sig”, “sig” for sik ‘(him/her)self’ 78va33/35, 82rb35/37. It is “miog”, “miɔg”, “miɔg” and “miɔg” for miðk ‘much’, however, that steals the scene — being nearly omnipresent (see for example 4vb39, 5rb6, 9va40, 29rb27, 43ra22, 50rb6). This agrees with Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir’s (2004, 21) findings, even though it can also — in extremely rare instances — be replaced by the form with a word-final orthographic stop “miok”,


“míok” as in 110vb26. In this perspective, it can much more confidently be considered an orthographic archaism. See Table 3.2.5 for details.

There is therefore very little doubt that the fricativisation of word-final $k$ was already at a very advanced stage in the language of Jón, when he worked on Flateyjarbók; the instances in which an orthographic stop is used are too rare to justify the assumption that there may still have been some oscillation, and his stubbornness in using “ek”, in this perspective, can be considered orthographic archaisms much more confidently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“k”</th>
<th>“g”</th>
<th>n=100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$ek$</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$mik$</td>
<td>7,5%</td>
<td>92,5%</td>
<td>n=80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$þik$</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>n=50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$sik$</td>
<td>0,5%</td>
<td>99,5%</td>
<td>n=50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$miðk$</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>n=100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>36.85%</td>
<td>63.15%</td>
<td>n=380</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2.5: fricativisation of word-final $k$ in Jón’s orthography

3.3.8 Fricativisation of word-final $k$ in Magnús’ orthography

As pointed out by Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2004, 21), Magnús is the more conservative of the two when it comes to fricativisation of word-final $k$. Just like Jón, the first person singular pronoun $ek$ is consistently spelt “ek”, while the coordinating conjunction is represented by the symbol 7, which we have already encountered in Jón’s orthography, and will not be included in the tally, but unlike his counterpart, Magnús spells $miðk$ as “míok” very frequently (see for example 135rb45, 136va9, 137ra48, 145rb30, 146va10, 157rb3), “sik” for the third person singular reflexive pronoun, is a very frequent spelling too as in 165ra55, 165rb37, 213ra18(x2)/19, though we also find an occasional instance of “sig”, as in 156v a53, and “mik” for the accusative form of the 1st person singular personal pronoun, (see 149ra49, 145rb18, 146ra52) or “þik” for the accusative of the second person singular (140ra55).
Though it is difficult to determine with any certainty to what extent the phenomenon was diffuse in the language of Magnús, it is quite evident that his spelling seems to reflect a more archaic phase of development than the other scribe’s, or – if anything, it betrays a more conservative attitude towards spelling. The data gathered is presented in Table 3.2.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“k”</th>
<th>“g”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mik</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þik</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sik</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mjǫk</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2.6: fricativisation of word-final k in Magnús’ orthography

### 3.3.9 Conclusion

The situation when it comes to word-final k fricativisation is as follows: though both Jón and Magnús are very consistent in maintaining a conservative spelling for ek and ok – whenever this is not abbreviated –, the former uses a spelling that points towards fricativisation in a much greater number of instances than the latter, who also in this case appears to be the more conservative, as can be seen from the data comparison presented in Table 3.2.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jón Þórðarson</th>
<th>“k”</th>
<th>“g”</th>
<th>n=380</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mik</td>
<td>7,5%</td>
<td>92,5%</td>
<td>n=80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þik</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>n=50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sik</td>
<td>0,5%</td>
<td>99,5%</td>
<td>n=50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mjǫk</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>n=100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magnús Þórhallsson</th>
<th>“k”</th>
<th>“g”</th>
<th>n=370</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mik</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>n=60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þik</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>n=50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sik</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>n=60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mjǫk</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>n=100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total</strong></td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2.7
To conclude, even though the evidence is much more numerous in the case of fricativisation of word-final $k$, than in that of $t$, it is Magnús who appears to reflect a more archaic stage of the language through his orthography.

3.4 u-epenthesis

3.4.1 The nature and manifestation of the change

The emergence of the u-epenthesis is a phenomenon that presumably started to make its way into the Icelandic language towards the end of the 13$^{\text{th}}$ century or around the beginning of the 14$^{\text{th}}$ (Haraldur Bernharðsson 2014, 190). It consisted of the appearance of an epenthetic vowel $u$ before a word-final $r$ when this was preceded by a consonant other than $r$ and/or followed by a consonant. It affected the substantives presenting an $-r$ ending ($armr > armur$; $skjöldr > skjöldur$, $merkr > merkur$), adjectives ($langr > langur$) and verbs ($tekr > tekur$), etc.; stem-final $r$, if postconsonantal, was subject to the insertion, too (e.g. $akr > akur$).

This is a change whose development is stretched through an extremely long period of time; in fact, although some evidence can already be found in the 13$^{\text{th}}$ century, it is only in the 16$^{\text{th}}$ century that it becomes fully established in the orthography. In cases where the conservativeness of the orthography partially or fully disguises the change, we can still find an echo of it in a number of reverse spellings, where etymological $ur$ is spelled “r”. The scribes at this point presumed that the right spelling for the sequence $ur$ must have been “r”, as their language no longer showed a contrast between the two, and the older manuscripts, from what they could tell, seemed to prefer that spelling. So much so that when they encountered instances of etymological $ur$, as in the nom. and acc. pl. of feminine $önn$-stems, such as saga/sögur, or in nom. and acc. pl. neut. and nom. sing. fem. possessive pronouns such as okkur and ykkur, they sometimes felt compelled to remove the $u$ in their copy, which to
them appeared redundant. Thus we may find “sōgr” for sǫgur, “okkr”, “ykker” and “yðr” for okkur, ykkur and yður, respectively, and so on.

As with most other sound changes that seem to pop up in medieval manuscripts, it is difficult to tell whether the inconsistencies should be attributed to the different idiolect of the scribe, his regional variety, his training, the influence of the exemplar or possibly more factors combined.

Concerning the two scribes of Flateyjarbók, Kolbrún Haraldsdottir (2003, 19) tells us that the anaptyxis – i.e. the epenthetic vowel – surfaces both in Jón and Magnús’ orthography particularly through reverse spelling, though they both generally write without using it. This indeed seems to be the case and the instances of reverse spelling are abundant. However, it may be fruitful to examine this phenomenon more in detail, in order to find out whether there are any significant differences that should not be neglected between the two scribes.

3.4.2 u-epenthesis in Jón’s orthography

Jón shows a number of examples where the spelling “r” is used for etymological -ur, and he appears to do so slightly more frequently than Magnús. He usually writes words in full, and uses either the regular “r” or the r rotunda, “ڑ”, after rounded letters, such as “d”, “o” and “ð”. Instances include “sōgr”, “sōgr” nom. and acc. pl. of saga, 5va5 and 6ra32, “fōdr”, nom., dat. and gen. sing. of faðr ‘father’, 6va21, 20va30/b50, 31vb57, 78va32, 91va13, etc.

Occasionally, it is possible to encounter some abbreviated forms in which we can assume that the abbreviation stands for ur. An example of this is found in “fioğ” 8vb29, where it stands for “fiogur” fiogur ‘four’, or “dōṭ” dōttur ‘daughter’ 35vb7, or “Siğd” Sigurð 10vb5, which is very often abbreviated in this way. The fact that this abbreviation was only observed in instances where etymological ur was expected, would exclude the possibility of it being an evidence of reverse spelling.
The instances of reverse spelling, although quite numerous, particularly for \( r \)-stem substantives like the kinship terms, appear to be in the minority, and usually the etymological \( u \) is spelled out in the acc. dat. and gen. sing., as in “modur” 32ra6/8 \( módur \), “brodur” 32ra4, 35rb13 for \( bróður \) and “dottur” 35rb8 for \( dóttur \). An instance of epenthetic \( u \) spelled out was found in “gguur” 79vb54 for gengr, 3rd pers. sing. indic. pret. act. of the verb ganga, ‘to go’.

The tables below show the percentages of occurrences that have been found, those that indicate the presence of \( u \)-epenthesis are highlighted; “+” indicates the presence of epenthesis and “−” its absence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“( r )”</th>
<th>“( ur )”</th>
<th>“( ð )”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ur )</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.3.1 Orthographic evidence for \( u \)-epenthesis in Jón’s orthography*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+</th>
<th>−</th>
<th>tot.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>( n = 102 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.3.2 Orthographic evidence for \( u \)-epenthesis in Jón’s orthography*

### 3.4.3 \( u \)-epenthesis in Magnús’ orthography

Much like his colleague, Magnús reveals the occurrence of the \( u \)-epenthesis through a few instances of reverse spelling. We find it nouns such as “systr” for systur ‘sister’ in the acc. sing., 135ra50, 141rb45. However, unlike Jón, Magnús is more prone to abbreviate the etymological word final \( -ur \).

He uses a superscript mark as in “fodur” \( fóður \) gen. sing. 146vb52, the symbol, as in “pinur” acc. pl. of \( pína \) ‘torture’, 147rb53, and “faudur” which here is in the gen. sing. (see *Fig. 3.3.3*), or even the symbol \( \sim \), which normally stands for a combination of \( a \) and \( r \) (Haraldur Bernharðsson 2014, 95). However, in Magnús’ orthography it stands for \( -ur \); we find “skuttur” 152vb8 for \( skutr \) ‘stern of a ship’, and
“mitur” for mitr ‘mitre’ which show the u-insertion, and in 147r a40, where the 12th chapter of Suerris saga can be found, we read “bzoð” (see Fig. 3.3.4)

The shape of this abbreviation is somewhat misleading as it appears to be closest to the " or " symbols, which usually stand for a combination of a and r. However, Magnús in these cases uses the symbol " – sometimes represented by ".

Moreover, there are a number of instances where this symbol " stands unequivocally for ur: in 150r a12 and in 152r b12 we find “sigurdr” Sigurdr, the proper name, where the same abbreviation is used, and again in “þfund” 150r a6, for spurði, the 3rd person singular indicative preterit active of spyrja, or the corresponding plural in 152 b17 “spurdu”, in “þurfti”, 3rd person singular preterit of þurfa ‘to have to’, which appears abbreviated in the same way as “þurfa” 155v b17, and in “nockura”, appearing twice in 150ra47. It is thus likely that it represents a variation of the more
common “”, after all the two do not differ considerably, in that they are both rounded; it may be the case that both loops are left open. Moreover, the symbol that Magnús uses to represent a combination of \( r \) and \( a \) differs considerably from this one, especially in being pronouncedly angular, as shown in Fig. 3.3.6.

![Fig. 3.3.6: “ar” abbreviation in Magnús’ hand](image)

The instance of 147ra40 which we have seen above, where the \( ur \) in bróður is orthographically marked through the abbreviation “”, is also found in 154va1 with the same word, in “Modur” móður 154vb22, gen. sing. ‘mother’, in “fodur” fóður acc. sing. ‘father’ 155ra13, in “fystur” systur acc. sing. ‘sister’, in “dottur” dóttur acc. sing. ‘daughter’ 155ra44, all abbreviated with the same symbol.

In brief, Magnús uses the same abbreviation for both etymological \( ur \) and, though more rarely, etymological \( r \), and this reveals the presence of the \( u \)-epenthesis.

The tables below show the percentages of occurrences that have been found, those that indicate the presence of \( u \)-epenthesis are highlighted; “+” indicates the presence of epenthesis and “-” its absence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“r”</th>
<th>“ur”</th>
<th>“X”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( r )</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ur )</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>tot.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>( n = 96 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3.8
3.4.4 Conclusion

The main observation that emerges from the analysis of the status of *u*-epenthesis in the two scribes is that they are both very conservative in their spelling but they also betray the occurrence of the phenomenon, mostly through hypercorrection.

There is a lack of a significant variation between the two in this specific instance, if anything, it seems that Jón uses “r” even for etymological –*ur* slightly more than Magnús does.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jón Þórðarson</th>
<th>Magnús Þórhallsson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“r”</td>
<td>“ur”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>r</em></td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 58</td>
<td>n = 53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3.9 Orthographic evidence for *u*-epenthesis in Jón and Magnús’ orthography

They both appear to employ abbreviations that are very likely to be standing for *ur* in places where etymological *u* is expected. This, leaving aside the possibility of influence from the exemplar, or that of their adherence to a scribal tradition, may indicate that in their language the epenthetic vowel was not so well established to allow them to confidently spell (almost) any combination of *u* and *r* as “r”. It appears that both scribes to some extent felt the need to use one symbol for etymological *ur* and another symbol for etymological *r*, and this may be revealing; it could indicate that, in their idiolect at least, a distinction between –*r* and –*ur* still had some relevance, that there was already tendency to insert epenthetic *u*, as indicated by the numerous reverse spellings, and that there were younger variants showing it living side by side with their older ones which did not present any epenthesis. In this scenario, words that presented an etymological *u* in a position where it could now be confused with the epenthetic one, did not have a corresponding form where the epenthesis was absent either in the living language of everyday or in the written documents, and this may
have prompted a speaker who was still living in a transitory phase of the development, to spell the etymological $u$ more confidently.

However, it is also possible that the use of the abbreviation in this position may have been present in the exemplar, and the scribes simply failed to adjust these words to the hypercorrected spelling, where it was no longer mandatory to indicate the presence of the vowel, now that it was, so to speak, taken for granted. The impact of the scribal tradition should not be underestimated: a traditional teaching in which the distinction of etymological $r$ vs. $ur$ was more rigorously observed, combined with the influence from older exemplar, may have slowed down the appearance of signs indicating the presence of the epenthetic $u$.

It should be underlined that, as Kolbrún notes in her article (2004, 19), the change took a very long time to become an established feature of the language, and the unequivocal and consistent orthographic rendering of $u$-epenthesis is seen only in the 16th century. Thus, although the evidence provided by the orthography can still be analysed in the light of the text as a whole, to establish which interpretation is more likely to be reliable, the resulting claim is too be considered a little more than an hypothesis. The following table illustrate the percentage of instances that indicate the presence of $u$-epenthesis in the two scribes; “+”indicates the presence of epenthesis and “−” its absence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jón Þórðarson</th>
<th>Magnús Pórhallsson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$+$</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$-$</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tot.</td>
<td>n =102</td>
<td>n =96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.3.10*

What seems possible, from the interpretation of the data in context, is that the epenthesis in the language of Jón may have been slightly more pronounced, to the point that it justified a more confident rendering of both the etymological $ur$
combination and that resulting from the $u$-insertion simply with the orthography “r”. The fact that in Magnús’ writing the orthographic representation of this sequence appears somewhat more confused, seems to suggest that the merger of $r$ and $ur$ was not as advanced as in Jón. However, the difference between the two scribes for this particular instance is too little to conclude with any certainty that either of the two was much more archaic than the other as far as the spread of $u$-epenthesis is concerned.
4. Palaeography and orthography

4.1 Introduction

The contrastive palaeographic and orthographic study of the two hands of Flateyjarbók is equally interesting as that of their language, not least because the differences between them appear quite evident and pronounced even at first sight. Thus, a closer comparative study of the two may offer interesting perspectives in the study of the script at a synchronic level. In fact, the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th is a period in which we can notice some interesting orthographic changes. Namely, the need to produce books more rapidly and cheaply made it so that some of the characteristics of the cursive script, which had been used since the 13th century mainly for the purpose of writing documents, began to appear even in book scripts (cf. Derolez 2003, 123).

Scriptorial traditions and styles often have a transitional character and may show more or less pronounced features that are proper of earlier or later periods. Thus, the transitional character of many script types makes their classification problematic, and introduces the need for more detailed descriptions of the salient and most characterising features (cf. Derolez 2003, 10-27). For the purpose of this analysis, the reference model for the script will be that described by Derolez (2003, 72-101) in the chapter dedicated to the so-called Northern Textualis script, in which he essentially makes use of the categorisation system elaborated by Lieftnick (cf. Derolez 2003, 73). According to the latter, there are three main features that distinguish a Textualis (or also Gothic) script:

1. The two-storey “a”.

2. The absence of loops on the ascenders of “b”, “h”, “k”, and “l” (and also on those of “þ” in the Icelandic script), which can either have a flat top, a bifurcated one, or an approach stroke from the left.
3. The letters “f” and “ſ” which stand on the line and have no descenders.

As Derolez notes, (2003, 73) these features can also be found in later Carolingian or Pregothic script. The difference lies in the fact that Gothic, being a development of Pregothic, accentuates and systematises the features that started to emerge in the latter (Derolez 2003, 73). These very general guidelines will be the starting point for the following analysis, which will be conducted separately at first, and then comparing the results that will emerge from it. Concerning the Icelandic script in particular, it has to be noted that the letter “f” appeared in the form of the so-called Insular “f”, which originated in the Anglo-Saxon script and was introduced in the Icelandic one most likely through Norwegian influence (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2005, 256). This “f” never stands on the line, but shows a descender, and the two arms appear as horizontal strokes in the earlier phase. They could also be written as two simple dots; the upper stroke, or even both of them, could also be closed (cf. Haugen 2013, 229-230). This letter shape became ‘increasingly frequent towards the middle of the 13th century and virtually universal from then on’ (Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 41) and remained widely used until the 17th century (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2005, 259)

In the case of Flateyjarbók, a description of the writing of Jón Þórðarson and Magnús Þórhallsson has been provided by Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxvi-cxxvii) and Jensen (1983, lx-lxviii) for the former, and Stefán Karlsson (1970, 287-297; 1987, xvii-xxiv), working on some specific, though sometimes quite substantial, portions of the text. These descriptions, aside from a few occasional mentions of the other scribe, do not offer a comparative perspective on the palaeography, and lack an overall comparative work on the two that goes beyond general considerations. It will therefore be attempted in the course of this chapter. Of course, because of the scope and the limits of this work, it will not be possible to describe extensively the most minute
features and present an exhaustive survey of all the peculiarities. The analysis will therefore be focused on a selection of the most salient features and those that, because of their peculiar nature, may appear to be worth discussing in this context.

4.2 Contrastive palaeographic and orthographical analysis

At a first glance, the script of Jón Þórðarson appears to adhere to the three features identified by Lieftnick: it is characterised by the presence of the two-storey “a”, the ascenders are either flat, or with an approach-stroke from the left, throughout the text, and the tall “f” stands on the line. The letter “f”, cannot be used as a criterion as it takes a different form in Old Icelandic script; it does not stand on the line but appears under the form of the so-called Insular “f”, “p”, which extends below the line and whose right part appears in the form of a 3, with the two lobes closed against the main stroke. As we have seen, however, this is the normal one for Icelandic manuscript of the period.

The most striking characteristic of this script, and particularly when it is contrasted with that of Magnús Þórhallsson, is its much less pronounced angularity, and the fact that the individual letters are not as rigidly traced as in Magnús. Concerning this, Jensen (1983, lxi) writes: “[s]kriften er udpræget gotisk, men dog mindre stiv og kantet end f.eks. Magnús Þórhalssons”. What appears to be more interesting is the fact that despite the lesser angularity and compactness, the letters are generally executed as it would be normally expected from a Gothic Textualis, and cursive traits are lacking, whereas for Magnús Þórhallsson, the opposite holds true. This peculiarity will be discussed later on. One last characteristic that has already been observed by Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxvi) is that the script is not as uniform from the beginning to the end as that of Magnús’ writing. This can be clearly observed, for example, in the variation of size and boldness in different parts of the text on 5v. A
hypothesis for a possible interpretation of this interesting fact will be provided in the conclusion.

The most salient feature in Magnús’ script is constituted by the loops: very thin hairlines that may or may not depart from the body of the letters. They are found in the ascenders as seen in Fig. 4.1. They seem to play a more calligraphic, rather than executional role; e.g., they look more like a consciously added embellishment, rather than the mere result of swiftness of execution. Many letters touch each other or are connected through small lines.

Fig. 4.1: the characteristic loops and the connections of Magnús’ script.

A description of the script of Magnús Þórhallsson has been provided by Stefán Karlsson (1970, 291-297), and it is not limited to the texts written by Magnús in Flateyjarbók, being a presentation of the scribe’s script as whole, rather than that of a text in particular. The scope of this analysis is limited to Flateyjarbók.

It has already been mentioned that the script of Magnús is characterized by a much more pronounced angularity than that of Jón. However, quite paradoxically, Magnús shows more features that can be associated with a cursive script. In other words, at first glance, his handwriting appears more rigid and “Gothic”, and in fact Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxvi) notes that

Magnús Þórhallssons skrift er smallere, tættere og mere kantet end Jón Þórarsons; navnlig er der markant forskel på nedstregerne i alle de lave
bogstaver, undtagen t. Hos Jón er de trukket lige ned efter en lille ansatsstreg, mens de hos Magnús er af mere kalligrafisk art, nærmest som i gotisk bogskrift.

Nonetheless, on closer inspection, his script reveals a number of characteristics that are not typical of a strictly stylised Gothic script. These are mainly a series of hairline and executional features that are typical in a more fluid handwriting, in which the quill was less often lifted from the parchment than it used to be, and this usually produced a number of connective hairlines. According to Derolez (2003, 125), “The introduction of loops has generally been considered a determining characteristic of cursive script.” This however is not enough to label Magnús’ script as such. It is undeniable that despite the presence of these loops, the “feel” that one gets by looking at the page is quite clearly that of being faced with a very refined Textualis; however, these two apparently contrasting characteristics may well be found side by side in the same script, which for the sake of elegance was made into something more formally and carefully executed, when used in important books such as the one we are dealing with. When cursive scripts started to become prominent, the need was still felt to utilise a more traditional script which required a careful execution and “[t]he uncompressed character of cursive is thus combined with the opposite tendency towards compactness, a feature that may be more or less marked” (Derolez 2003, 129).

This is indeed what we see in the heavily compact script of Magnús, where loops can be observed frequently, but where the individual letters are traced individually and with meticulous care, as “complicated forms were avoided for the more formal levels of execution” (Derolez 2003, 128). Concerning the additional details of the loops in these otherwise distinctly Gothic letters, Derolez (2003, 129) notes also that “[t]he cursive letter forms, traced originally in one stroke, were now often ‘constructed’ in the same way as Textualis letters, with the additional
complication that the loops [...] often had to be added by means of separate strokes”. This seems indeed to be what we encounter in Magnús’s handwriting.

The vertical axis is still clearly prevailing over the horizontal one, and this may be a strong indication that we are faced with a Gothic Textualis script, rather than a Cursiva one; moreover, despite the presence of the loops, it still lacks the single compartment “a” and the descender of the tall “s” below the baseline, which are the defining features of Cursiva identified by Lieftnick. The fact that “f” extends below the baseline cannot be considered a cursive feature because, as we have seen, this Anglo-Saxon form was already the standard one for the letter “f” of the Gothic Textualis script in Iceland.

In spite of these considerations, there is an earlier variety of Cursiva, which can be called Cursiva Antiquior, which is akin to the full-blown Cursiva, but it still shows the two-compartment “a” (cf. Derolez 2003, 130). But even conceding that we may be dealing with a very early form of Cursiva, the lack of an “i” extending below the baseline may be a good reason to classify this script as Textualis, despite the cursive features that can be observed. Thus, it appears to be a very early transitional form of book script from Gothic to Cursiva.

The problem of classification was not posed by the script of Jón, which appears distinctly Gothic (cf. Jensen above) despite the less pronounced angularity. This apparent contradiction is bound to raise some problems in the process of interpreting the data, and will be discussed in the conclusions.

Although to a small degree, the text written by Jón showed some examples of Norwegian influence in his orthography – we saw, for example, that he uses the spelling “œi” for ei, but in Magnús’ work, Norwegianisms are more numerous and frequent than in Jón’s work.
The Norwegian influence can be seen in manuscripts from a number of orthographical and linguistic elements\(^4\), such as different spelling conventions for the same phonemes, as “gh” for intervocalic g, or spellings that betray some form of sound change which is known to have happened in Norwegian but not Icelandic, such as the loss of h before n, l, r word-initially, or again, inconsistent spellings that show an attempt to retain a distinction between two sounds that were still distinct in Norwegian, but they had merged in Icelandic. In the case of ō and ō, which merged into æ in Icelandic, as we have seen, a scribe may attempt to make an orthographic distinction of the two in his writing, but because of the lack of distinction between the two in his native language, he is also bound to show some inconsistency, error or reverse spelling, thus betraying both the language change typical of his language and his attempt to follow a Norwegian model.

However, in the second half of the 14th century, the Norwegian influence had started to decline due to a number of factors, not least the Black Death pandemic and the gradual loss of political independence that Norway faced with the union of the crown to that of Denmark (cf. Haraldur Bernharðsson 2014, 436). The declining Norwegian influence can be observed in the decrease of peculiarly Norwegian features in the writing. The fact that Magnús’ spelling is more distinctly Norwegianised could be interpreted as another indicator that he belonged to a slightly older school; it may also be attributed to his scribal tradition. Some of the Norwegianisms that can be found in Magnús’ work are:

“edr” for the conjunction eða ‘or’ as in 164ra59 which, however, can be also found in Jón’s work.

“medr” as in 172rb21. Admittedly, “med” is still the predominant form also in Magnús, but no instances of “medr” could be found in Jón’s work.

\(^4\) For a more exhaustive description of Norwegianisms, see Haraldur Bernharðsson 2014, 435–452.
“gh” for intervocalic g, as in “sagha”/“soghu”, saga/søgu, where Jón uses only g.

Whereas no instances of word initial l < hl could be found in Jón, some have been observed in Magnús: “luti” 165rb30 for hluti ‘part’ in the dat. case, or “laupa” 168ra56 for hlaupa ‘they run’.

These finding are consistent with those of Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2004, 22-23).

4.3 Individual letters

The letter “a” in Jón’s work appears mostly in a particular form called “box”-a, in which we have two vertical strokes that at their top and bottom are connected to each other forming a closed shape (the box), and this “box” is further divided in the middle by a horizontal stroke (Derolez 2003, 84), as seen in Fig 4.2 below. Such a stroke may occasionally extend beyond the body of the letter, both to the left and to the right. This form seems to be the most prevalent, although it is possible to encounter in a slightly older one, in which the top of the shaft turns to the left, takes the shape of a closed bow, “a”, as shown in Fig. 4.3 below. Length is normally not marked, as in “harfagra” 79ra24 for hárfagra ‘fairhair’, but very rarely an acute accent may appear, as in “ár” ár ‘year’ 79ra23.

![Fig. 4.2: "box"-a; “hafua” 32ra18 (Jón)](image1)

![Fig. 4.3: “a”; “var”, 30ra11 (Jón)](image2)

In Magnús’ work the letter “a” normally appears in the same form as in Jón; i.e. it is a box–a. When it denotes a long vowel, it is normally written twice, with the two letters touching each other, “ai”, as shown in Fig. 4.4.
The vowel e is always spelt as such by Jón – abbreviations notwithstanding – except for when it appears in the diphthong ei, it is written “œi”, a variation of “æi” the symbol for æ being typically “œ” in Jón’s hand, and possibly a Norwegian characteristic (see below for a more detailed discussion on the symbol). See, for example, “lœitade” 9vb45, for leitāði the 3rd person singular indicative preterit active of leita ‘to search’, or “œiði” 35rb31 for eigi ‘no/none’, “œiga” 79rb32 for eiga, ‘to own’. Writing “œi” instead of “ei” is a common orthographic Norwegianism (Stefán Karlsson 2004, 47–48) Long é is not normally marked orthographically with a different symbol. Magnús occasionally denotes long é with “ee”, as in “meeli” 146rb14.

“i” stands for both the vowel and the semivowel in both scribes. The distinction between the two was very rarely marked in the orthography at this time (cf. Stefán Karlsson 2004, 42). It is mostly spelt as “j” word-initially or at the end of a series of minims in Roman numerals (he letter “j” shows several variations in detail, these have already been described satisfactorily by Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxvii))]. In Jón’s work when it stands for the preposition í it is usually embellished with a small horizontal stroke in the middle, to the left, and a looping stroke on the top right as shown in Fig. 4.5. Very frequently an acute accent is found over the minims that constitute the i: “í” as shown in Fig. 4.6. This is intended to help the reader in identifying the letter, particularly in a long series of minims attached to one another, and it is not an indication of length.

Fig. 4.4: “a”, 174vb4 and “añ”; 141ra3 (Magnús)
In Magnús’ work, much like in that of Jón, “i” appears as a simple minim, occasionally with a superscript acute accent. Word-initially it can be written as “j” and be slightly bigger, particularly when it stands for the preposition í. In these instances, it shows a bifurcated top and a side-stroke on the left. The curved descender may also fade into a hairline which joins the ascender at the top, thus creating an oval shape, as in “jula” 140rb1 for jóla “of Christmas” (see Fig. 4.7), or in several other instances on the same page where it stands for the preposition.

The letter “u” is used for both the long and the short vowel and the consonant v by both scribes. Particularly in initial position, the consonant may be spelt as “v”, but not consistently: in Jón’s text we find “uillde” for vildi in 5vb6 for the 3rd person singular indicative preterit active of vilja ‘he wanted’, “vm” for the preposition um in 5vb13 and “ueg” for veg ‘way’ in 5vb17. In Magnús’ work we find that the spelling “v” is used more often word-initially, much like in Jón’s, and aside from the standard forms typical of Textualis, it sometimes takes a peculiar shape for which the right part curves horizontally to the left in the shape of a hairline and cuts through the left stroke, or is connected to it by a separate horizontal stroke, while the left stroke, in turn, extends to the top and then curves down to touch either the right one or the horizontal hairline, as shown in Fig. 4.8.
“γ” is consistently written with a dot above by both scribes, as it was customary since Carolingian times (Derolez 2003, 95), see, for instance, 48v a8 for Jón. Occasionally Magnús uses the superscript accent marks, “˘”, as in “ryd” 140r a27, where it may indicate length.

The vowel æ represents the merger of etymological ĺ and ǿ, which began to make its way into the language in the middle of the 13th century (Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 67-68, Haraldur Bernharðsson 2014, 141; Stefán Karlsson 2004, 11). Both Hreinn Benediktsson and Stefán Karlsson also explain (ibid.) how symbols representing the older ǿ were sometimes used to represent the new sound, and accordingly.

Jón most often uses a symbol that has the appearance of a ligature of “a” and “e”, i.e. “œ”, to represent the vowel resulting from this merger, as shown in Fig. 4.9. However, this is at odds with what Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxviii) maintains in his article, namely that “æ skrives som ligatur af enetages a og e”. Moreover, Hreinn Benediktsson (1965, 72) notes that the symbol “œ” was characteristic of Norwegian script and was “virtually unknown in Icelandic writing” (Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 30).
This would seem to make the case for the reading of the symbol as “œ” difficult to defend, but there are some considerations to be made: Hreinn Benediktsson (1965, 30) explains how in certain cases, “the neck [of the two-storey ‘a’] may almost disappear”, and “in the ligature of ‘a’ and ‘e’ or ‘o’, the neck of the ‘a’ may be reduced to the extent of making it hard to decide whether the letter is ‘æ’ or ‘ε’ or ‘α’ or ‘φ’” (Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 45).

This does not seem to be the case in Flateyjarbók for three reasons: first, despite the fact that two symbols such as “æ” and “œ” are very similar to each other, and that the shape of “a” in this case may just be a variant justified by the greater ease of execution, it must be remembered that the one-storey “a” was introduced with the developing of the Cursiva script, and it is not proper of Textualis (Derolez 2003, 84-86), except for a very specific subtype called Littera Parisiensis which differs in a too great number of aspects from Jón’s script (Derolez 2003, 100). Moreover, Jón never uses a single-storey “a”, and the shape of the left half of the ligature never resembles “a” at all, which would imply distribution between single-storey “a” in the a+e ligature and a two-storey “a” elsewhere.

Such a rigorous distribution is very difficult to find in a medieval script. If indeed there existed an orthographic variant in the form of a one-storey “a”, we may expect the scribe to use it independently on some occasion, as it is frequently the case, for example, in AM 420b 4to, a text from between 1361 and 1392, where the scribe mostly uses the two-storey “a”, but occasionally also the one-storey variant (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2007, 60-61) with no clear pattern and an apparently random distribution of the two types. In similar fashion, we may expect to find some examples of two-storey “a” in some ligatures, but such instances could not be found in the portions of text that were examined, and the only orthographic variant which was encountered is represented by a different symbol altogether, “ε”.
What seems more plausible is that Jón had this symbol clearly in mind as either
a ligature of “o” and “e”, or an altogether different symbol which is no longer
recognised as a ligature, and this would have prevented him from oscillating between
the two alleged varieties of “a”. Last, and perhaps more importantly, the first half of
the symbol is executed in the same way as “o”, i.e., with two semi-circular strokes
with very slight shading at the bottom and top, where they join, see Fig. 4.10. This is
not universally the case, as sometimes there can be observed a slight angularity at the
top, as in “rœiddíft” 9ra7 for reiddisk ‘got angry’ but it appears to be just a slight
executorial variant, and indeed it can be observed in “o” itself when it stands alone,
as in “fœn” 9r b4, or “dœttur” 9rb7, see Fig 4.11 below, or 26vb5 whose “o” indeed
look much like one-storey “a”, having a slightly pointed top and the left stroke very
straight and extending slightly below the juncture with the other.

It is of course very hard to tell how a scribe living in the 14th century
interpreted and understood the symbols he used; in other words, it is impossible to tell
whether he was or not aware of the fact that he was writing a ligature and, if so, which
combination of letters he was using, but it is nonetheless possible to draw more
confident conclusions in analysing the way symbols were executed, and it appears
rather evident that the left part of this symbol was written in a similar fashion as the
letter “o”. Examples are “frœgíligf” 79ra25/26, “œtludu” 80ra3. Occasionally, as it
was mentioned, it can also be represented by “ɛ”, as in “kirkiubɛ” 56rb23 for the
dative of Kirkjubór (place a name), shown in Fig. 4.10 in “næsti” 30rb31, for næsti
‘next’, or in “bœndr” for bóndr 80ra16, nominative plural of bóndi ‘farmer’.

An example of a manuscript in which two separate symbols can be safely
identified is Skardshók, AM 350 fol., from around 1363, where we clearly see that the
two symbols “œ” and “æ” are used (sometimes with two superscript acute accents),
although rather interchangeably (see, for example, in 26vb21/22), possibly testifying
to a transitional period in which both symbols were used to represent the same sound, before – at least in Jón’s work – one of the two was dropped in favour of the other.

The idea of the existence of a one-storey a in the ligature is nonetheless worth of a more comprehensive analysis that should touch several more manuscripts from this period. Being outside of the scope of this work, it will not be discussed further.

In Magnús’s script, “æ” is more obviously a ligature of a two-storey “a” and “e”. The “a” is not of the box type, in that the upper part is left open: “a” (see Fig. 4.12). Thus shape of the first part of “æ” is quite different from the shape of the regular “a”; in “æ” there is a very much slanted stroke whereas the regular “a” is practically straight-backed.

The letter “b” in Jón’s work may appear capitalised as an abbreviation for personal names, as in “Beorn” 35rb48/52, for Bjorn. In these instances, the letter is written as a small-capital “b”, with an additional upper lobe which is larger than the lower one. Magnús’ letter “b” can present a loop that starts from the top of the ascender and goes down to the right to join it, as shown in Fig. 4.3.
The orthographic representation of the stop $d$ and the fricative $ð$ in Jón’s work presents some problems. Jensen (1983, lxii) maintains that in the pages of *Eiriks saga víðförla* “$ð$” does not occur, and Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxix) writes that “[f]or den dentale spirant i ikke-initial stilling ($ð$) skrives $d$” in his analysis of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in mesta*, naming a single exception, and Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2003, 20) asserts that “beide schreiben stattdessen immer ’d’”. This view has been challenged by Russell (2014, 56–62). Despite the fact that it may appear to be appallingly inconsistent, there seems to be a certain distribution of “$d$” and “$ð$”. Russell identifies four different of the letters “$d$” and “$ð$” two of which are more likely to stand for the stop $d$, with the other two appearing more frequent where a fricative is expected, although there exists a certain degree of overlapping between the two. These variants can be seen in Fig. 4.14, 4.15, where we have what Russell (2014, 57) calls “$d_1$” and “$d_2$”, while in Fig. 4.16 and 4.17 what Russell calls “$ð_1$” and “$ð_2$” are shown. This appears to be the case, though another possible palaeographic variant of the one shown in Fig. 4.16 was identified, in which a diagonal stroke lays on the top of the ascender; see Fig 4.18.

In Fig. 4.14 an example of the overlap between the two is shown, as we find what Russel describes as “$d_2$” for the word *loðbrókar*. This overlap calls for an interpretation: the voiced [ð] and voiceless [b] were allophones of the same phoneme, /þ/, and in word-internal and word-final position such phoneme was very rarely contrasted with the phoneme /d/. The loss of the letter “$ð$” consequently did not
cause major difficulties in spelling. When scribes stopped regarding “ð” as a separate symbol with its own value and started instead viewing it as a variant of the letter “d” (“d” with an ornamentation), then they could of course use them interchangeably without any reference to the phonology (i.e., without any regard to whether they represented a stop or a fricative).

In this perspective, what seems more plausible is that the different letter forms are just another example of Jón’s orthographical irregularity, and they do not carry any relevant phonological distinction. Although there seems to be some preponderance of “ð” for the fricative, this should perhaps be attributed to the exemplar Jón was copying from. The scribe of an earlier exemplar may have used the letters “ð” and “d” regularly to represent the fricative and the stop, respectively. Jón, who occasionally used “ð” amongst his predominant “d”, may have been influenced by the exemplar. The partial regularity in the use of “ð” in Jón’s writing, which Russell observed, may thus be a reflection of the exemplar, rather than his own distinction.
In Magnús’ orthography as well, “d” is used for both the stop d and the fricative ð. It can be a simple “d” rotunda, but very often it shows a stroke to the top of the ascender that may continue into a loop to the right and touch the body of the letter, as shown in Fig. 4.19.

In both scribes, the letter “f”, as it was mentioned, always appears in a later form of the Anglo-Saxon type, “þ” with two closed lobes, which was the standard form in Icelandic manuscripts from this period, as it was mentioned above, as shown in Fig. 4.120 and 4.21.

Concerning “g” in Jón’s script, Ólafur Halldórsson simply notes that it has “en lukket underlænge, spids nederst mod venstre” (2000, cxvii). This is by no means sufficient to describe the properties of this letter; in fact, it appears in two variants: one which appears closer to the so-called 8-shaped g, shown in Fig 4.22, in which the left section of the upper lobe and the right one of the lower are written with a separate
stroke and \( g \) ‘with a back’, shown in Fig. 4.23 where the right part of both lobes is constituted by the same stroke (cf. Derolez 2003, 88). Both can be found throughout the manuscript, although the latter seems the most common, and sometimes they can even be found in the space of two words, as in 11ra9. Jón doesn’t generally make an orthographic distinction between the stop and the fricative. When he does, the spelling used is “gh”, as in “doghum” 11rb4 \( d̈ogum \) dat. pl. of \( dagr \) ‘day’. Thus, we usually find “fōgu” or “fōgu” for \( sōgu \) (in the singular cases of the word \( saga \) other than nominative), as in 48vb45, 77rb4/5, 69va26. The spelling “gh” appears often in the rubrics, which were added later by Magnús, as shown in Fig. 4.24. Long \( g \) is quite often spelt as a single “g” with a dot above, see 69vb10.

Fig. 4.22: 8-shaped \( g \); “fagðe”, 11va1 (Jón)

Fig. 4.23: \( g \) with a back: “kumungi”, 62vb13 (Jón).

Fig. 4.24: “gh” spelling; “foghú”, 90ra22 (Magnús)27rb3 (Jón); indicated by an orthographic “e”.

Fig. 4.25: \( g \) with a back; “fogðu” 143va1 (Magnús)

In Magnús’ work, “\( g \)” always has a straight back (see Fig. 4.25), the 8-shaped variant used by Jón is not used. When \( g \) is intervocalic, it is often written “gh”. Occasionally the long one is represented by a small capital with a dot above as in “goggliða” 144rb4.

In the work of both scribes, “\( h \)” has the right stroke extending below the baseline (see Fig. 4.26 and 4.27). This was a development of the Gothic script, and it was introduced to avoid any confusion with the letter “b” (Derolez 2003, 89–90). In
both scribes this stroke can either be a hairline or a somewhat bolder stroke, resembling the lower part of “i”, “y” or “r” rotunda as well in Jón’s, given that the latter does not show a descender in Magnús’ script (cf. Ólafur Halldórsson, 2000 cxvii). It is occasionally, but not predominantly, omitted in the hl cluster. In the portions of text that were examined, it lacked more frequently in Magnús’ parts than in Jón’s. See, for example, “laupa” 168ra56 for hlaupa ‘they run’.

“k” in both scribes shows two closed loops on the right, much like those we find with the “f”. Jón’s “k” is shown in Fig. 4.25. In Magnús’ work, “k” is much like that found in Jón’s, but it often shows loops (see Fig. 4.26). kk is mostly spelt as such in Jón, though a few instances of “ck” can be found – these being virtually the only ones in which the letter “c” may be seen –, as in 79r a17, where we find “nockuru”, and it can also be abbreviated with a superscript dot, while the spelling “ck” for kk is the most common one in Magnús’ work. Occasionally Jón’s orthography shows no indication of length, as in “fek” 70ra12, the 3rd person singular preterit of the verb fá ‘to get’, “gek” 70ra27, 71ra10 the same form of the verb ganga ‘to go’.

“l” shows no peculiar trait in Jón’s work, but it presents the same loop as “b” and “k” in Magnús’, and when it is double, it is usually the first one that shows the loop, while the second one doesn’t.

“n” does not show any peculiar trait in either scribe, being simply represented by two subsequent minim s. When it stands for a long consonant, it is normally accompanied by a superscript dot.
In Jón’s text, an instance of “q” was found in “quad” 35rb28 for kvāð, ‘he said’. Here, the symbol used to abbreviate the verb is the same as the er/ir (see below). In Magnús’ work it is more frequently used to represent kv, as in “quædiz” 153ra45 for “kvæðisk” ‘is said’.

The shape of “r” in Jón’s work, in its most frequent form consists of a minim and a curved stroke towards the right that becomes increasingly thinner as it gets more distant from the minim. However, a vertical airline is also present, and it departs from the smaller stroke running perpendicularly from it and parallel to the minim, to which it is joint by a low-lying horizontal stroke, (see Fig. 4.29 ). Examples are “hrani” 79ra17 (a proper name) or “tekr”, 81ra2, which is the 3rd person singular indicative present of the verb taka, ‘to take’. Sometimes the hairline curves and joins the minim at the bottom, as in “fídar” 80ra2 ‘later’, or “konungr” 89rb1 ‘king’, this slight difference seems more likely due to a quicker and less careful execution, and it does not represent a meaningful palaeographical variation, but it is nonetheless interesting as it brings the letter shape closer to a v-shaped r, in which the horizontal line is detached to the minim and connected to it through a diagonal hairline, as shown in Fig. 4.27 (this letter form is most common in Magnús’ script).

The presence of this hairline is interesting as per se it could be considered an embellishment belonging to a cursive book type, and it appears rather out of place in the otherwise distinctively Textualis writing of Jón. In fact, this is a characteristic that is more commonly found in the 15th and 16th centuries (cf. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2007, 74-93). However, much more rarely, there is no hairline at all, as in “byr” 82ra6. The upper horizontal stroke may be attached to the hairline but detached from the minim. When it represents a long consonant, the letter is still normally spelt as a single “r”, but with a dot above, as in “fídar” 79rb15. It can be
spelt “rr” in stressed syllables in final position, when it is preceded by a long vowel (cf. Jensen lxvi).

In Magnús “r” is consistently v-shaped (see Fig. 4.30), it can be closed or open at the top.

\[ r \]

r rotunda is found after “b”, “d”, “o” and “ó”, in both scribes. In Jón’s work it does not appear in the same shape throughout. Especially in the earlier part of the manuscript, (see Fig 4.31) it lacks the descender that we find later on, which is akin to the one we have encountered with the letter “h” (see Fig. 4.32). Unlike in Jón, “r” rotunda in Magnús’ work never extends below the baseline, as shown in Fig. 4.33.

In some columns more than others, see for example 56rb, Jón writes r as a small capital word–initially, or uses it on its own with a superscript i as an abbreviation for the word “riki”, ‘kingdom’ (see Fig. 4.34). When spelt as such, the letter is formed by a minim which presents a very evident approach stroke, two looping lines departing from the extremities and converging towards the middle, almost like in capital “B”. It is divided in two compartments through a bold horizontal stroke, with the loop enclosing the lower compartment becoming almost a hairline as it approaches the
horizontal stroke (see Fig. 4.35). It can be written as a small capital accompanied by a dot above when it stands for a long consonant as in “fyrr”147ra6.

The tall “ſ” stands on the line in both scribes. Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxvii), compares the upper part of that found in Jón’s work to a circumflex accent; in his words: “den øverste del ligner tit en accent cirkumfleks højre om den øverste spids af nedstrangen”. In fact, the upper part appears to be executed with two clearly visible separate strokes, one thin (hair)line moving from the ascender and going upwards, from which, in turn, departs a bolder stroke moving downwards is (see Fig. 4.36). Sometimes these two appear to be executed in one single swift movement, and the hairline may not be visible at all, so that the bolder descending stroke seems to be attached to the ascender. The latter may or may not have an approach stroke from the left (see Fig. 4.37). It also appears as a capital, with personal names, either written in full, as in “Sigurdr” 79rb32, or abbreviated with a dot following it, such as in “Sigurdr” 30ra41. The word svá may be abbreviated with a capital “s” and a superscript “a”, as in 55rb27, though the word appears more often spelt “fuo” on the same page.
“t” in Jón’s work is not taller than the other “short” letters, it is normally flat-topped, although the shaft occasionally slightly projects above the headstroke (see Fig. 4.39). This feature becomes increasingly common in the course of the 14th century (Derolez 2003, 93). Such “t” resembles a “c”, but this does not constitute a problem for the reader as the “c” is almost never encountered, as it was mentioned above. Double “t”’s are sometime united by an upper hairline in the shape of a bow, as in “kvitt” 9v b13, or “attu” 80r a21. In Magnús “t” can show a loop starting from its foot and reaching the top touching the outer extremity of the horizontal line (see Fig. 4.40). It is not flat-topped as the minim extends above the horizontal line itself.

![Image 1](image1.png)  
*Fig. 4.39: “uilltu” 55rb9 (Jón)*  
*Fig. 4.40: t; 165rb20 (Magnús)*

“þ” often presents a horizontal line under the lobe in Jón’s work (see Fig. 4.41), which may be connected to the following letter in the space of the same word, as in “þess” 26ra4 or simply stand alone as in “þeir” 26r a6. The same does not hold true for Magnús, whose “þ” does not show this line (see Fig. 4.42)

![Image 2](image2.png)  
*Fig.4.41: “þrandr”, 16va55 (Jón)*  
*Fig.4.42: “þat”, 141rb8 (Magnús)*
4.4 Fusions and symbols

A number of fusions can be observed with some regularity, particularly in Jón’s script.

“a” and “e” in Jón’s script are typically attached to a preceding “d”, see “daudr” 26ra19, or “hafde” 26vb15.

When long k is spelt “kk”, the vertical stroke of the second one frequently but not always overlaps with the right strokes of the first.

The tall “f” is virtually always connected with a following ascender in both hands, typically with “k”, “l” or “þ”. When it is followed by “t”, the latter is executed with a tall ascender just as high as the tall “f”, which in turn is connected to it.

In Jón’s script, two t’s can be connected at their tops by a bow-shaped hairline as in “Skattgilda” 7rb45, or “nottina” 26r a3.

Several letters can be connected by thin lines with no apparent regularity in Jón’s work (see fig 4.41). In these cases the connections must be interpreted as the result of a swift writing movement, for which the quill would be lifted from the parchment less frequently. Examples are “þegar” 26vb15, in which the body of the “þ” is connected to the following “e” through a thin line, or “fellr” 26r b13, in which a tiny hairline departs from the lower lobe of the Anglo-Saxon “f” and connects it to “e”, which in turn touches the following “l” both at the top and at its bottom; and “þess” 26v b2.

In Jón’s text horizontal stroke of “t” is very often blended with horizontal strokes of following letters, or it is simply attached to the following minim.

The shape of the symbol for ir/er is shown in Fig. 4.43. Jón writes it as a small superscript minim, sometimes with an approach line from the left, from which a curved thin line departs to the right and curves downwards becoming suddenly bold, and then increasingly less so as it goes down.
In Jón’s script, the abbreviation π is occasionally used for ra as in “fram” 26v b8 or “fealfræ” 39v a1 for sjálfræ 'self', but normally a superscript “r” is used instead, as in 26v b27, and several other examples in the same column; var (the 3rd person singular preterit indicative of vera) is often spelt as a “v” (more rarely “u”) with a superscript r. In Magnús’ work, is the preferred abbreviation for the combination ar, which is also sometimes abbreviated with a superscript v-shaped r.

r rotunda is also occasionally used as a superscript abbreviation in Jón’s text. It seems to be the preferred choice for etymological -ur, being very frequently used to abbreviate words such as “dottur” (see several examples in 35r b). However, on “osuifræ dottur” is used also for etymological -r, and, in fact Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1860, 266) transcribes it as such. The fact the etymological -ur and -r appear confused in the space of two adjacent morphemes may be a reflection of the emergence of u-epenthesis (see Ch. 3.3 for further details). Magnús uses the symbol for ur, as mentioned in Ch. 3, and this symbol often appears with both loops open to the top.

4.5 Conclusion
A preliminary statement that has to be made in relation to the two scribes is that it seems implausible that the two were educated in the same place, and this is bound to be reflected in multiple features of the text, both on a linguistic and on an orthographical level. In this regard, Ólafur Halldórsson (2000, cxvi) writes that:
Det er en så betydelig forskel på Jón Þórðarsons og Magnús Þórhallssons skrift at det må antages som tvivlsomt om de er uddannet i den samme skole eller i det samme scriptorium.

It is nevertheless impossible to fathom the extent to which the variations are due to educational background, rather than to dialectal or social differences, and the possibility that an age difference may play a role cannot be excluded. However, a comparison of the elements gathered so far may offer the possibility of inferring which of the two scribes belonged to a slightly older, or less innovative, tradition.

On a merely palaeographical level, it may not be too farfetched to suggest that part of the reason why Magnús’ writing is so much more calligraphic than that of Jón may be a consequence of his superior artistic skills. As it was mentioned in Chapter 2, it was Magnús who was responsible for the illustrations, the initials and the rubrication. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, this may also be due to a difference in the length of their respective professional experience. As it was mentioned, despite the overall conservative aspects of Magnús’ script, such as the more rigid and angular look of it, the widespread presence of loops and letter connections is indicative of a more secure hand, particularly because this swiftness does not come at the expense of uniformity and elegance (see Fig 4.44).

On the contrary, despite the absence of loops and the more distinctively Textualis appearance of the script, the writing of Jón lacks uniformity, and the typical angularity that is normally associated with the Gothic script is not very pronounced (see Fig. 4.45).
Concerning the orthography, the more widespread presence of Norwegianisms in Magnús, such as the spelling “gh” for intervocalic g, that of “a” for á, and the occasional “l” for etymological hl-, which were also noted by Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir (2004, 22-23), would indicate that he consolidated his writing at a time when the Norwegian influence was still felt on a cultural level. Thus, according the interpretation of the orthographical and palæographic information that was examined, Magnús’ work appears to be the less innovative of the two.
5. Conclusions

In the course of this analysis, some linguistic, orthographical and palaeographic aspects of the two scribes who compiled *Flateyjarbók* have been discussed. The value of a comparative studies of this kind lies in the uniqueness of the manuscript; in that it can be dated thanks to internal evidence, that it was written by two individuals whose name are indicated within the text itself, and that it is a monumental work with abundant material that can offer significant results for the purpose of statistical analysis. *Table 5.1* summarises the findings that emerged from the portions of the text that have been scrutinised.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jón</th>
<th>Magnús</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vá &gt; vo</td>
<td>Plenty of evidence in words with different grammatical roles</td>
<td>Still plenty of evidence but less than in Jón</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t &gt;ð</td>
<td>Very little evidence</td>
<td>Very little evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k &gt; g</td>
<td>Plenty of evidence</td>
<td>Very little evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-ep.</td>
<td>Little evidence</td>
<td>Little evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.1: comparison of the results*

Despite the fact that we have no way to know whether and in what proportion these differences are due to scribal tradition, age, or dialectal variation, it is still possible to use them to show which orthography reflects an older stage of the language. Of course, the differences cannot be expected to be extreme, given than the two scribes were contemporaries, but their presence is still a useful tool to shed some light on the development of the language and that of the scribal practices in the end of the 14th century.

The evidence for the “vá” > “vo” change has been found very frequently in both scribes, but much more so in Jón’s orthography than in Magnús’. Both showed little signs of fricativisation of word-final *t*, but Jón showed a very high incidence of fricativisation of word-final *k*, unlike Magnús. Concerning *u*-epenthesis, both Jón and Magnús showed some reverse spellings or even “ur” spelling for etymological *r*, but
these where extremely rare in the scripts of both in the portions of text that have been analysed.

The variation between the two is too little to tell without any shade of doubt which of them was the older, but the linguistic data gathered appears to suggest a slightly more pronounced conservative character in the language and of Magnús, as can be inferred from the lower incidence of the “vá” > “vo” change and the very little evidence for fricativisation of word-final k.

The palaeographic and orthographical analysis, attempted to provide a description of the two scripts that could cover the majority of their most significant aspects. Particularly in case these should prove useful for the purpose of establishing if any of the two shows a more innovative or conservative script.

From the analysis, it seems reasonable to suggest that Jón Þórðarson may have been the younger scribe, or at least that his language and script are slightly more innovative. The contrasting facts that Jón’s script is on the one hand less pronouncedly angular and uniform, but on the other also less cursive than that of Magnús could be interpreted as being a symptom of his lesser experience: a younger scribe, may have worked more scholastically than a more experienced one such as Magnús, whose superior skills not only produced a more uniform script, but may have also provided him with the necessary confidence to write with swifter movements, thus giving the cursive features, without jeopardising the overall elegance and uniformity of the book script. Furthermore, Magnús’ scripts show a higher number of Norwegianisms, which can also be interpreted in the light of a more conservative scribal practice during a time in which Norwegian influence was fading away. In this perspective, the loops and the curls that abound in Magnús would not contrast with the rest of the linguistic and palaeographic data, but they would rather be a further indicator that this scribe may have been older, or perhaps more experienced. From the
data gathered and the parts of the text that have been examined for the purpose of this work, it seems reasonable to conclude that it is the language of Jón that shows a more innovative character, and that of Magnús which appears more conservative.
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