

*Language change in orthography: a study about  
the Kristni saga manuscripts (AM 371 4to, AM 105 fol)*

L'articolo tratta di un problema ancora in parte inesplorato nella ricerca sulla storia della lingua islandese: il passaggio dall'antico islandese all'islandese moderno. Questo passaggio va ovviamente visto come un *continuum*, ma è largamente attestato che tra il 1300 e il 1650 una serie di cambiamenti hanno profondamente trasformato, soprattutto dal punto vista fonetico e fonologico, la lingua islandese.

Per contribuire a questa ricerca ho scelto come approccio concreto l'analisi del testo di una saga, la *Kristni saga*. Essa esiste in due esemplari di manoscritto: nell'*Hauksbók* (AM 371 4to) risalente al primo decennio del 1300 e in una copia eseguita dal reverendo Jón Erlendsson a metà del 1600 e contenuta nel manoscritto AM 105 fol. L'originale antico islandese e la sua copia secentesca si trovano ai due estremi del suddetto periodo di grandi trasformazioni. Questo è un presupposto fondamentale nel confronto/analisi di originale e copia della *Kristni saga*. Difatti la peculiarità di Jón Erlendsson come copista risiede nell'essere considerato dalla ricerca filologica contemporanea come il primo che in epoca moderna abbia tentato di riprodurre in modo fedele l'ortografia antico islandese. Questo nonostante non possedesse probabilmente alcuna educazione e alcuna tecnica di tipo filologico e la pronuncia del suo islandese secentesco si discostasse notevolmente da quella di inizio Trecento.

Alla luce di questi fatti l'obiettivo del mio lavoro è verificare se Jón Erlendsson sia riuscito a riprodurre fedelmente l'ortografia dell'originale. Per ottenere i miei risultati ho confrontato i grafemi dei tratti fonologici che hanno subito trasformazioni nel periodo 1350-1600 su due livelli: tra l'originale e la copia della *Kristni saga* e tra questi e altri manoscritti che attestano i cambiamenti fonologici nel periodo 1350-1600.

I risultati ottenuti forniscono una risposta negativa alla mia domanda, ovvero la copia secentesca mostra ampiamente l'influenza della pronuncia contemporanea. Un'eccezione è la sorprendente precisione nella trascrizione dei grafemi <y>, <ý> nonostante la loro pronuncia delabializzata in islandese moderno. È difficile capire il motivo di questa eccezione, essa potrebbe attribuirsi a una forma dialettale labializzata sopravvissuta fino a metà del 1600 e con cui Jón Erlendsson potrebbe essere entrato in contatto.

Un altro risultato importante emerso durante l'analisi è la datazione di AM 105 fol. Confrontando l'uso degli accenti quantitativi con le copie realizzate da Jón Erlendsson di un altro testo medievale, l'*Íslendingabók* (AM 113 a e AM 113 b,

1651), si può presumere che il manoscritto AM 105 fol sia stato copiato prima di AM 113 b, 1651, distinguendosi quest'ultimo per un uso degli accenti quantitativi più vicino all'originale.

*Kristni saga* describes the first 150 years of Iceland's Christian history. It begins with the chronicle of the first Christian mission to Iceland carried out by the Saxon Bishop Friðrekr on behalf of Þórvaldr Koðránsson in the years 981-985. It ends with Bishop Gízzurr Ísleifsson's death in 1118. *Kristni saga* is preserved in two manuscripts: AM 371 4to (c1302-1310 in ONP 1989: 315), contained in *Hauksbók*, and AM 105 fol (c1600-1700 in ONP 1989: 315).

The first manuscript is a part of a parchment compiled and partly copied by the Icelandic lawman Haukur Erlendsson. *Hauksbók* dates from the first decades of the 14th century and other parts of it are preserved in AM 544 4to and AM 675 4to. Scholars agree as to this dating (Brenner 1872: 2; Finnur Jónsson 1892-96: cxxxvii; Jón Helgason 1960: xxi). Stefán Karlsson tries to give a more precise range of time and he argues for the years 1302-1310 for AM 371 4to and the greater part of 544 4to (Stefán Karlsson 2000: 308). All pages in AM 371 4to are written in Haukur's own hand, but relevant parts of 544 4to and of 675 4to seem to have been copied by other scribes, both Icelanders and Norwegians (Finnur Jónsson 1892-96: xv; Jón Helgason 1960: vi; Stefán Karlsson 2000: 307).

The *Kristni saga* text in AM 371 4to is written on eight quarto membrana pages – from 15 recto to 18 verso – and each page contains 23-26 lines. The corresponding text in AM 105 fol is a transcription of 371 4to made by Reverend Jón Erlendsson. The *Kristni saga* text in AM 105 fol is written on eighteen folio paper pages – from 86 recto to 95 verso – and each page contains 23-26 lines. AM 105 fol dates from the middle of the 17th century when Jón Erlendsson (?-1672) was serving at the parish in Villingaholt, Southern Iceland (*Íslenzkar æviskrár*, b. III: 105-6). We do not know exactly when AM 105 was written, probably in the forties or in the fifties of that century (Springborg 1977: 70). In Villingaholt the Reverend copied *Landnámabók*, *Kristni saga* and *Íslendingabók* on behalf and under the supervision of Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson (Finnur Jónsson 1892-1896: vii; Haraldur Bernharðsson 1999: 32).

This manuscript has not been studied in depth, although Finnur Jónsson expresses a reasonably positive opinion about Jón Erlendsson's copying of AM 105 fol: "Jón Erlendssons afskrift er i det hele god og, når bortses fra retskrivningen, nøjagtig"<sup>1</sup> (1892-1896: lix). Jón Jóhannesson gives a rather positive, but cautious opinion about Jón's copying work of *Íslendingabók* in the manuscripts AM 113 a fol and AM 113 b fol, both dating from 1651<sup>2</sup> (Jón Jóhannesson 1956: xvii): "Bishop Brynjólfur must have urged the Rev. Jón to take pains in his transcription of *Íslendingabók*, and they may be considered remarkably good for that century. He has striven to retain the spelling of the vellum manuscript which he had before him, though great accuracy in this respect was then unusual. But either the Rev. Jón did not find this easy or he was in too great a hurry, for in several places he made errors. [...] and not infrequently he has used the spelling of his time quite unwittingly".

The Icelandic scholar repropose and confirms a theory about the production of AM 113 a fol and AM 113 b fol elaborated by Árni Magnússon (1956: xviii). In his notes at the end of AM 113 b fol Árni states that Jón transcribed *Íslendingabók* twice and explains the reason for his assumption (translation by Jón Jóhannesson cit. in 1956: xviii): "As regards *codex* B [AM 113 a fol]<sup>3</sup> it is my hypothesis that the Rev. Jón first transcribed it *ex membrana*, that *magister* Brynjólfur was not satisfied with this transcript (for this *codex* is less accurate than *codex* A [AM 113 b fol]<sup>4</sup>, which may be gathered from collation); the Rev. Jón then transcribed the *codex membraneus* anew, and applied himself to a closer following of the *literatura codicis membranei*, which he did not find easy, and the latter is a better copy, this *codex* A". Árni supports this hypothesis by mentioning traditions in which Bishop Brynjólfur is said to have had the *Sæmundar-Edda* copied twice (translation by Jón

<sup>1</sup> "Jón Erlendsson's transcription is mainly good and, except for the orthography, accurately done."

<sup>2</sup> AM 113 b fol. was copied from the exemplar a short time after AM 113 a fol, written according to Jón Erlendsson's notes on Monday next after *Dominica Jubilate* (i.e. 21st April) 1651. On this regard see Jóhannesson 1956: xviii. Please note that what Árni Magnússon and Jón Jóhannesson call A is officially registered and known as AM 113 b fol. And what they call B is officially registered and known as AM 113 a fol.

<sup>3</sup> ONP register: <http://www.onp.hum.ku.dk/webhtml/vk260.htm>

<sup>4</sup> ONP register: <http://www.onp.hum.ku.dk/webhtml/vk260.htm>

Jóhannesson cit. in 1956: xviii) “before he liked the transcript”. Jón Jóhannesson (1956) shares Árni’s opinion and assumption, and adds that the Rev. Jón copied AM 113 b fol. with greater accuracy than AM 113 a fol, not only in the spelling but also in the clearer and more beautiful formation of the letters. These opinions refer only to the copying of *Íslendingabók*, but they help us by providing a first outline of Jón Erlendsson’s approach to transcription work. Besides, the assumption made by Jón Jóhannesson about the role that Bishop Brynjólfur would have had in the copying work of *Íslendingabók* is relevant for the dating of AM 105 fol., a question for which a possible solution has been found through the comparative analysis of the *Kristni saga* manuscripts.

The passage from Old Icelandic to Modern Icelandic is still partly unexplored. The history of Icelandic has clearly to be considered as a *continuum*, but it is widely attested that between 1300 and 1650 a larger number of changes deeply transformed the Icelandic language, especially from the phonetic and phonological point of view. In order to contribute to the research in this field I have chosen as a concrete approach the study of these two manuscripts containing the same text and produced right before – AM 371 4to – and right after – AM 105 fol – a period of deep phonological changes. Their dating is a fundamental basis in the comparative analysis of *Kristni saga* exemplar and copy. As previously mentioned, Jón Erlendsson’s peculiarity as a scribe resides in the fact that he is considered by contemporary philologists as the first one who tried to reproduce the Old Icelandic orthography in a faithful way (Jón Jóhannesson 1956: xvii; Springborg 1977: 70; Haraldur Bernharðsson 1999: 11). He aimed at an accurate reproduction of Old Icelandic orthography although he probably did not have any philological education and technique and his 17th c. pronunciation remarkably diverged from the pronunciation at the beginning of the 14th c. Given this, the aim of my study is to understand if Jón manages to copy AM 371 4to faithfully. I argue for a negative answer and this research aims at confirming it.

This analysis is limited to phonological changes occurring in the period 1300-1650 and reflected in Jón’s orthography. It has been carried out on two levels: by comparing the copy and the exemplar as well as by comparing the manuscripts and other Icelandic sources attesting

language change from the beginning of the 14th century through to the middle of the 17th century. In this context the work of two scholars are fundamental touchstones. Haraldur Bernharðsson's study (1999) on the copying work by three 17th century Icelandic scribes of medieval exemplars – Björn Jónsson á Skarðsá (1574-1655), Þorleifur Jónsson í Grafarkoti (ca. 1570-?) and Jón Gissurarson á Núpi (1590-1648) – and Oskar Bandle's study of *Guðbrandsbiblíá* printed in 1584 (1956). For my analysis of the text I have used the photographic edition of the *Hauksbók* (ed. Jón Helgason: 1960) with the support of the transcription made by Finnur Jónsson (1892-96: 130-145). As for AM 105 fol I have used my transcription.

### *Analyzed features*<sup>5</sup>

<vá> /vɔ:/ > <vo> /vɔ/

In an article Hreinn Benediktsson illustrates how the old long back vowel [ɔ:] did not change into a diphthong when preceded by [v] (2002: 232). He summarizes this process by showing as an example the 3. pl. pret. ind. of the verb *vera* “to be”:

*óro* > *vóro* > *vóru* (by-form in Modern Icelandic)

*óro* > *vǫru* > *váru* > *voru* (standard form in Modern Icelandic)

In documents from the second half of the 16th and from the beginning of the 17th century the Modern Icelandic form <vo> is predominant in respect to the older form <vá> and the by-form <vó>: in *Guðbrandsbiblíá* (Bandle 1956: 41), in Jón Guðmundsson's AM 394 4to (Stefán Karlsson 1983: lxvi, lxx) and in Reverend Oddur from

<sup>5</sup> The older ortho-phonological form present in AM 371 4to is shown on the left side of the schema, the transcribed form in AM 105 fol is shown on the right side.

- The characters within the symbols <...> indicate the graphemes both in the exemplar and in the copy
- The characters within the symbols /.../ indicate the phonological notation
- The words in parenthesis are normalized form of Old Icelandic
- FJ refers to the transcription of AM 371 4to made by Finnur Jónsson: 1892-96
- 105 refers to AM 105 fol

Reynivellir's writings (Stefán Karlsson 1981: 259). This tendency towards an increasing preponderance of <vo> at the turn of the 17th century is confirmed by the results obtained by Haraldur Bernharðsson. He asserts that all the analyzed copyists write <vo> where the exemplars have <vá> and that there are no sure traces of the alternative form <vó> (1999: 129).

In almost all cases the Reverend Jón Erlendsson shows an accurate approach, which distinguishes him from the above-mentioned 17th c. scribes: *vagu* (*vágu*) 3. pl. pret. of verb. *vega* "to fight, to kill" (FJ 135, 8; 136, 5) > *vagu* (105 88v20; 89r1); n. sg. acc. *varit* (*várit*) "the spring" (FJ 132, 3; 136, 6; 137, 7) > *varit* (105 87r12; 89r2; 89v2); adv. *sva* (*svá*) "so" (FJ 134, 15; 139, 23.35; 140,5; 141,14; 142,4.26; 143,1.20.24; 144,15) > *sva* (105 88v12; 90v24; 91r11.18; 92r13; 92v17; 93r17.25; 93v22.25; 94v5); *vág* m. sg. acc. of *vágr* (*vág*) "bay" (FJ 133, 6) > *vag* (105 87v17); *vapnum* n. dat. pl. of *vápn* "weapon" (*vápn*) (FJ 138, 23) > *vapnum* (105 90r9); *váðum* f. pl. dat. of *váð* "clothes" (FJ 140, 2) > *vaðum* (105 91r15); *ván* f. sg. acc. "hope" (FJ 139, 37; 140, 4) > *van* (105 91r13.17).

From these examples it appears that Jón Erlendsson never uses the Modern Icelandic form <vo>, but he systematically transcribes <vá> or <va> as <va>. Beyond the accurate approach that Jón shows here, it is important to remark that the Reverend never transcribes the quantity accent.

Jón adopts in AM 105 fol <a> to express /a/ or /a:/ and adopts <a>, <aa> or more often <á> to express the diphthong /au/. Furthermore, he adopts the dieresis or the ligature also for the other long vowels. This is in line with the orthography of his time (see Stefán Karlsson 1989: 43). In fact in the 17th c. the old character <á> had almost completely been replaced by <a> or <á>, the old acute accent was no longer in use in that time either and Jón never uses it. This aspect is of particular interest if we take into consideration what Gustaf Lindblad states about the relics of the old acute accent in Early Modern Icelandic (196-197: 1952):

Förekomsten av enkelt akuttecken i äldre nyisl. källor beror, åtminstone i viss utsträckning, på slavisk kopiering av äldre (fisl.) förlagor. Betecknande är, att av de två kopior av en gammal 1200-talscodex, innehållande Ares Islendingabók [sic], vilka prästen Jón Erlendsson

1651 ástadkom (AM 113 A och B [AM 113 b fol. and AM 113 a fol.]<sup>6</sup>), är det blott i den omsorgsfullast nedskrivna (AM 113 B [AM 113 a]<sup>7</sup>), som några enkelaccenter påträffas, exv. *fóm* adj. 1v, *mól* 6r och *ór* pron. 8v. Det står klart, att Jón Erlendsson här troget följt originalets skrivsätt: något spontant bruk av enkelakuten har han inte gjort<sup>8</sup>.

As for the quantity accents in AM 105 fol Jón fully adopts the orthography of his time for the long vowels by using the ligature or the dieresis. In this respect he does not pursue the same accuracy as he does in AM 113 B. In the <vá>-cases his accurate approach is only limited to the preservation of the <a>.

In the above-mentioned cases Jón Erlendsson shows his intention to use a precise approach in copying although he does not totally attain his goal, because he does not follow the use of the quantity accents. On the other hand, there is only one single case where AM 105 fol does not seem to show an accurate attitude: the Reverend always uses *voru* when extending the contraction *V*. This implies a remark: as seen in the above-mentioned <vá>-cases Jón tries to use an accurate approach in his copying work. But he only uses a modern form when there are no models to imitate, as in the case *V̇* > *voru*.

AM 371 4to shows also a case with the form *voru* (FJ 140, 30). This is not an isolated case in a 14th century manuscript. By that time many scribes switched from <va> to <vo> but this does not mean that a phonetic change had occurred in the word *varu*. According to Hreinn Benediktsson (2002: 233) “it simply implies that ‘a’ (or ‘á’) had otherwise acquired the value of a diphthong [au] and was therefore no longer suitable as a symbol for the low back [ɔ:]. The only symbol available to replace it was ‘o’, which denoted not only the mid long *ó* but also the old mid short *o*, which was in the process of being lowered to [ɔ].”

<sup>6</sup> See notes 2, 3 and 4

<sup>7</sup> See notes 2, 3 and 4

<sup>8</sup> “The occurrence of the simple acute accent in older Modern Icelandic sources partly depends on the slavish transcription of older (Old Icelandic) originals. It is significant that out of the two copies transcribed by rev. Jón Erlendsson (AM 113 A och B [AM 113 b fol. and AM 113 a fol.]) of an old 13<sup>th</sup> c. codex, containing Ares Islendingabók [sic], only the copy written with the highest accuracy (AM 113 B [AM 113 a]<sup>8</sup>) contains some simple accents, e.g. *fóm* adj. 1v, *mól* 6r och *ór* pron. 8v. It is clear that Jón Erlendsson followed the original’s orthography faithfully. He did not use the simple accent spontaneously”.

If Jón Erlendsson in most cases extends the abbreviation  $\bar{V}$ , in the previously mentioned case he only copies *voru* from *Hauksbók* in *voru*. Although the orthography is the same, the quantity coalescence occurring in the 16th c. divides the two forms. In Haukur's time the first /ɔ:/ has a different quantity from the /ɔ/ in Jón Erlendsson's time, when the quantity is no longer an intrinsic property of vowels, depending rather on the syllable environment. This evolution is illustrated above in *óro* > *vóro* > *váru* > *voru*. *Voru* in AM 371 4to belongs to the phase *váru*, *voru* in AM 105 fol belongs to the last phase (Hreinn Benediktsson 2002: 240).

In AM 105 fol there is another word which seems to follow the same path: *von* (105, 91v1). Unfortunately, it is not possible to compare this with the corresponding word in the exemplar, because it is damaged at this point (FJ 140, 15)<sup>9</sup>. However, a few lines above in AM 371 4to we do have the same word with the graphic form *ván* (FJ 140, 4) transcribed in AM 105 fol with *van* (91r17). Despite the lacuna, it is possible to assume that the form in the exemplar was *von*. Jón Erlendsson always maintains the older former <vá> or <va> though he excludes quantity accents. He uses <vo> only on two conditions: if the form in the exemplar is a contraction such as  $\bar{V}$  = *voru* or if the exemplar uses <o> for the sound /au/ as in *voru* (FJ 140, 30 see also Hreinn Benediktsson 2002). This last condition could have been actual also for *von* (105, 91v1), then \**von* (FJ 141, 15) > *von* (105, 91v1).

Another explanation could be given for *von* in AM 105 fol. AM 371 4to could have been damaged at that point already in Jón Erlendsson's time. This would imply that the Reverend could not see whether the word in the exemplar was *van* or *von*, then he chose to insert the word as *von*, the usual form for his time.

In conclusion, Jón Erlendsson shows a rather accurate approach to the copying of <vá>. Usually he follows the exemplar both when this has <vá> (or <va>) and when this has <vo>. The only noteworthy changes are the extension of the abbreviation  $\bar{V}$  into *voru* and the elimination of the quantity accents from <vá>. The most important remark to be made in this respect is the phonological reinterpretation that occurred between <vá> and <vo>, as shown in the example *váru* > *voru*.

<sup>9</sup> The damage in the parchment is limited here: ...[von at krist]ni...



Derounding: <ý> /y:/ > <í> /i:/; <y> /y/ > <i> /I/; <ey> /œy/ > <ei> /ei/

Derounding deeply affected the Icelandic phonological system. Stefán Karlsson describes the development of the above-mentioned labialized vowels and diphthongs (1989: 7): “[...] afkringdust stutt og langt y (y og ý) og tvíhljóðið ey og féllu saman við stutt og langt i (i og í) og ei; sú breyting hófst á ofanverðri 15. öld og henni lauk á 17. öld”<sup>10</sup>. Scholars indicate more or less precisely this same period for the consolidation of this change in the greater part of Iceland: Jóhannes L.L. Jóhannesson (1924: 124-129) assumes that it prevailed between 1560 and 1600; Björn Þórólfsson (1925: xv-xvii) says that the vowels <y>, <ý> – expressing old rounded sounds /y/, /y:/ – were not replaced by <i>, <í> before 1500; Lejström (1934: 333) too indicates the 16th c. as a turning point; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (1994: 35) states that the change did not reach most of the country before 1570. According to this information it is plausible to assume that derounding was accomplished when AM 105 fol was copied (1650 ca.), excepting some areas in North Western Iceland and North Eastern Iceland where it survived throughout the 17th c. (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 1994: 80-89). The comparative study of the *Kristni saga* manuscripts brought to light only one graphic example revealing this derounding<sup>11</sup>: *leysa* “to loosen” (FJ 138, 35) > *leisa* (105 90 r, 23). In all other cases he shows accuracy when copying into AM 105 fol graphic signs that express derounded phonemes. This accurate approach partly diverges from the results obtained by Haraldur Bernharðsson (1999: 140) in his study of 17th century copyists. These examined scribes usually respect the orthography of the exemplars for these sounds, but their copies also show many “mistakes” revealing a derounded pronunciation. In fact

<sup>10</sup> “[...] the short and long y (y and ý) and the diphthong ey got derounded and coalesced with the short and long i (i and í) and ei; this change began in the last quarter of the 15th c. and was accomplished in the 17th c.”.

<sup>11</sup> There is an occurrence where Jón transcribes n. sg. dat. *myklu* “much” (FJ 139,14) as *miklu* (105 90 verso, 14). Anyway this cannot be considered a reflection of the derounding because *myklu* and *miklu* were free variants already in Haukur’s time (see Hreinn Benediktsson 2002: 359). Jón writes <i> in *miklu* probably because it was the only form he was familiar with. According to the online edition of the Orðabók Háskólans there is only an example of *myklu* in 16th, 17th and 18th c. texts. It is in *Vidalínspostilla* (printed c. 1718-20). (<http://www.lexis.hi.is/corpus/leit.pl?lemma=myklu&ofl=&leita=1&flokkar=16.17.18.%F6ld&m1=myklu&l1=Leita&lmax=1>)

those three scribes often write <i> for <y> as Jón Erlendsson does once, but they often also write <y> for <i> (1999: 140, 143). This is the main difference between Jón Erlendsson's copying work and the other three scribes'. Also in *Guðbrandsbiblíá* a tendency to mix up <y>, <ý> and <i>, <í> can be identified (Bandle: 1956, 73): "Hie und da sind y, ý und i, í miteinander vermischt, so dass i (ij) für altes y, ý und y für altes i, í steht". At any rate an important distinction has to be made: Bandle points out that these examples of "wrong" orthography are extremely few given the overall length of the text (Bandle: 1956: 73-74). On the other hand, Haraldur Bernharðsson (1999: 141) says that in the analyzed 17th century copies show that the derounding can be seen in many "wrong" orthographic forms. In this respect, AM 105 fol is closer in accuracy to *Guðbrandsbiblíá* than to the three 17th century copyists. As previously mentioned, the only case emerging from my analysis is *leysa* "to loosen" (FJ 138, 35) > *leisa* (105 90 r, 23): this is the only occurrence out of nine words with the same diphthong. As far as <ey> > <ei> is concerned Haraldur Bernharðsson indicates the following results (1999: 141):

Björn á Skarðsá er greinilega hallur undir táknun með 'ey' því að hann setur oft 'ey' fyrir 'ei' en ekkert dæmi fannst um að hann setti 'ei' fyrir 'ey'. Þessara tilhneigingar gætir ekki hjá Þorleifi í Grafarkoti sem ritar stundum bæði 'ei' fyrir 'ey' og 'ey' fyrir 'ei', en Jón Gissurarson setur oftast 'eý' fyrir bæði 'ei' og 'ey'<sup>12</sup>.

There is a case showing Jón Erlendsson's awareness of his mistake: in AM 105 fol 91r1 the diphthong <eý> in the word *þreýtt* (past part. of verb *þreyta* "to dispute") apparently was first written *þreitt* and then corrected into *þreýtt*. This can be seen in the way <ý> was written: first a vertical line which originally was <i> and then a diagonal line on the left with a point on it. This <ý> is very different from the others in AM 105 fol because those usually are composed by two equally diagonal lines, where the one on the right is longer and continues downwards, in

<sup>12</sup> "Björn from Skarðsá clearly tends to use the grapheme 'ey', because he often writes 'ey' instead of 'ei', but there are no occurrences where he uses 'ei' instead of 'ey'. These tendencies cannot be found in Þorleifur from Grafarkoti who sometimes writes both 'ei' instead of 'ey' and 'ey' instead of 'ei'. On the other hand Jón Gissurarson uses 'eý' instead of 'ei' or 'ey'".

other words the usual feature for this letter at that time in Iceland (Svensson 1974: 198). Moreover Jón's trace of the second short diagonal line in *þreýtt* is lighter than the trace of the first vertical line, as they were written at two different moments.

*Guðbrandsbiblíá* presents the same feature as for <y>, <ý> and <i>, <í> (Bandle 1956: 88-89): "Die Entrundung *ey* > *ei* ist in der Sprache der GB wohl ungefähr in demselben Umfang eingetreten wie diejenige von *y*, *ý* > *i*, *í*, d.h. sie muss zwar begonnen haben, kann aber nach der verhältnismässig geringen Zahl der Belege noch nicht völlig durchgeführt sein (vgl. § 44). Die Entwicklung wird wohl überhaupt zu derjenigen von *y* im ganzen parallel verlaufen sein". *Guðbrandsbiblíá* also shows a conservative orthography in this respect.

AM 105 fol shows a surprisingly conservative accuracy towards these derounded sounds in comparison with other 17th c. sources.

Diphthongization of short <e> /e/ before intervocalic semiconsonant <g> /j/

It is assumed, but not fully established, that the velar fricative /ɣ/ turns into a palatal semiconsonant /j/ in preliterate time. From the 15th century an orthography revealing the diphthongization of <e> followed by semiconsonant <j> into <ei> appears in the manuscripts. Stefán Karlsson explains this phenomenon so (1989: 10): "[...] einkum á 15. öld, á stuttum sérhljóðum þar sem *g* varð *j* við það að *i* (eða *j*) fór á eftir: þar féllu lokuðu hljóðin *i* og *y* saman við *í* og *ý* en önnur stutt sérhljóð urðu tvíhljóð við það að þau fengu *í* á eftir sér (sbr. *daginn*, *megi*, *bogi*, *lögin*)"<sup>13</sup>. AM 105 fol contains five words with an orthography revealing this phenomenon.

*Begit* past part. n. sg. of verb *þiggja* "to receive" (FJ 139, 29) > *þeigit* (105 91r6); *feginn* adj. m. sg. nom. "glad" (FJ 143, 1) > *feiginn* (105 93r25); *segia* inf. verb "to say" (FJ 143, 28) > *seigia* (105 94r5); *segir* 3. sg. pres. ind. of verb "to say" (FJ 144, 15) > *seiger* (105 94v5).

The above-mentioned examples show that the diphthongization of <e> appears quite clearly in AM 105 fol. In fact they are the greater part of all words containing this phonological change. There is only one

<sup>13</sup> "especially during the 15th c. *g* preceded by shorter vowels turns into *j* when followed by *i* or (or *j*): the closed sounds [vowels] *i* and *y* coalesced with *í* and *ý* and the other short vowels became diphthongs by acquiring *í* after them (see *daginn*, *megi*, *bogi*, *lögin*)".

occurrence where the diphthongization <egi> > <eigi><sup>14</sup> does not appear in orthography: *segia* (FJ 142, 16) > *segia* (105 93r5).

The three copyists studied by Haraldur Bernharðsson (1999: 132) write <ei> for <e> preceding <gi><sup>15</sup>. Thus, they all show a diverging attitude in relation with the orthography in the exemplars. In his study of Oddur from Reynivellir's orthography, Stefán Karlsson states that the diphthongization of <e>, <i> and <y> before <gi> and <gj> is generalized (1981: 259): "Á undan *gi* og *gj* er að öllum jafnaði skrifað 'ej', 'i' og 'y' fyrir eldra *e*, *i* og *y*"<sup>16</sup>. The first mentioned case corresponds exactly to the examples we have from Jón Erlendsson.

The same phenomenon also appears clearly in *Guðbrandsbiblía* (Bandle 1956: 46-47). The Old Icelandic sound group /ejl/ is usually written <eig>, exactly as in AM 105 fol. However Bandle remarks that exceptions of the old orthography <egi> "sind allerdings nicht ganz selten" (1956: 47).

In this respect the orthography of AM 105 fol is in line with other contemporary copies of Old Icelandic exemplars. An explanation for this similarity could be found in a wide acceptance of this orthography by the scribes of that time, even among those who aim at a more conservative transcription work.

#### Shortening of <rr>, <R> /r:/ > <r> /r/

Old <rr> or <R> [r:] was shortened in final position first in 14th c. in unstressed endings and preceded by a long vowel and when <r> was part of the stem (*Einarr* > *Einar*, *stórr* > *stór*). Later – around 1500 – it was shortened also after a short stressed vowel (*knörr* > *knör*) (Björn Þórólfsson 1925: xxx; Stefán Karlsson 1989: 16).

In AM 105 fol the orthography reveals this change, but not in a generalized way. In some occurrences Jón Erlendsson uses an orthography adhering to the exemplar, in other occurrences he copies, revealing the change. The cases with shortened <r> prevail, but there are also examples where he preserves <rr> or <R>, which shows Jón's

<sup>14</sup> Or <egj> > <eigj>.

<sup>15</sup> Or <gj>.

<sup>16</sup> "Normally, before *gi* and *gj* 'ej', 'i' and 'y' are used instead of the older forms *e*, *i* and *y*".

insecure approach to the transcription of old <rr>, <R> /r:/. There are actually some examples that clearly show this: *ferr* 3. pers. sg. pres. of verb *fara* “to go”, “to travel” is transcribed twice with old <rr>: *ferr* (FJ 131, 25 and 140, 21) > *ferr* (105 87r9 and 91v7). But in another case <rr> in *ferr* is shortened: *ferr* (FJ 132, 18) > *fer* (105 87v6). There is only occurrence where *berr* 3. sg. pres. ind. of the verb *bera* “to bear”, “to carry” is transcribed as *ber*: *berr* (FJ 138, 3) > *ber* (105 89v12). <rr> or <R> is always shortened in the adjectives: *annaR* (FJ 142, 2, and 143, 17) > *annar* (105 92v14, and 93v17) and *sundfoR*<sup>17</sup> (FJ 139, 14) > *sundfer* (105 90v15). Also the frequently occurring names *GizuR* and *þorgeiR* are usually shortened.

Although the words with shortened <r> prevail in number, the variation between the two forms is undeniable, examples such as *ferr* > *fer* or *ferr* show it very well. Despite Jón’s accurate approach and the model offered by the exemplar, this phonological change influences AM 105 fol’s orthography.

This situation is very interesting when compared to other contemporary scribes. In fact the three 17th c. copyists analyzed by Haraldur Bernharðsson do not show this variation, but they fully adapt their orthography to the accomplished shortening of <r>. As a consequence of this phonological change he states that (1999: 161): “Stytting ‘rr’ á myndanskilum er alger í uppskriftum þeirra þótt óv íða sjáist í forritum”<sup>18</sup>. On the other hand, *Guðbrandsbiblíá* shows an orthography closer to AM 105 fol. In fact Bandle (1956: 99) states that <rr> is shortened “teilweise nach (ursprüngl.) kurzem vokal”. Among the examples he gives there are sg. ind. pres. forms of strong verbs such as *fer* and *ber*, which are the same verbal forms shortened in AM 105.

In this respect the orthography in AM 105 fol is much closer to the orthography in *Guðbrandsbiblíá* than to the orthography of the three 17th c. copyists.

<sup>17</sup> The character <ø> in *sundfoR* is a norwegianism. Finnur Jónsson (1892-1896, xxxix) states that in AM 371 4to the i-umlaut of ó is usually distinguished from the umlauts of á and it is written œ, which obviously is a norwegianism. In other words for Haukur it was not possible to adopt the right orthography: there are quite a lot oscillations and exceptions. Jón Erlendsson transcribes <ø> as <æ>, as in this case.

<sup>18</sup> “The shortening of ‘rr’ is complete in their transcriptions [the copyists’], even though its occurrence appears rarely in the originals”.

U-epenthesis between consonant and final <r>: <C + r> > <C + u + r>

The first examples for this phonological change date back to the beginning of 14th c., that is when *Hauksbók* was written. Although this change began to emerge in an early period, it took a very long time to establish itself in the Icelandic phonological system and orthography. According to Stefán Karlsson (1989: 11) and Jón Þórkelsson (1863: 31-32) this change was complete all over the country by the first part of the 15th century, but the old orthography with <C + r> persisted until the 17th century: “En í rjettritun er þó hið gamla og nýja haft jöfnum höndum fram um 1600”<sup>19</sup> (Björn Þórólfsson 1925: xxiv). In the *Hauksbók* text of the *Kristni saga* there is only one case of u-epenthesis: *sigvr* (FJ 143, 3), copied as *sigur* in AM 105 fol 93v2. All the other cases have <C + r>. Otherwise Björn Þórólfsson’s statement fits perfectly with Jón Erlendsson’s approach to this phonological change: in fact in AM 105 there is a strong variation between the two forms. The older form with <C + r> prevails especially in the first part of AM 105, but the new form with u-epenthesis increases considerably after fol. 89v and prevails some pages onward. Jón gradually gains independence from this exemplar. The cases showing the new form are approximately a third of the total words with this feature (158 words, abbreviations are not taken into consideration) in Jón’s manuscript. It is nearly impossible to detect a pattern for the transcription of this feature because there are examples for both orthographies for the same nouns, personal names, adjectives, strong verbs in 3rd pres. sg. ind. and weak verbs declined in past part. m. sg. The only frequent word which shows nearly always the same orthography is the personal name *Þangbrandr*. It is written with <C + r> in 20 cases and just in one case with u-epenthesis (105 90v13).

Jón’s orthography is suspended between the new and the old forms. We cannot even see here an attempt at archaization, as the majority of <C + r> can probably only be attributed to the influence of the exemplar. If Jón intended to keep an archaic form for his orthography the number of words attesting the modern form would have been much more modest: one third of all cases cannot be explained as some occasional deviations from a previously decided approach.

<sup>19</sup> “But in the orthography the old new and the old [way to write the u-epenthesis] coexisted throughout the 17th c.”

This variability distinguishes Jón from other contemporary copyists and writers. In fact the three 17th c. copyists analyzed by Haraldur Bernharðsson use the u-epenthesis without exceptions, writing <ur> or <ʀ> (r rotunda). They always express this phonological change in orthography, even though their exemplars show very few occurrences of u-epenthesis (1999: 158). In *Guðbrandsbiblíá* the use of u-epenthesis prevails (Bandle 1956: 156) “In der GB wird der Zusammenfall von altem r und ur abgesehen von wenigen Ausnahmen konsequent zum Ausdruck gebracht: beide werden entweder mit ur oder mit ʀ (r rotunda) wiedergegeben. [...] Ausnahmen von dieser Regel sind verhältnissig sehr selten und deshalb ohne Belang”. Also in Oddur from Reynivellir’s orthography the u-epenthesis prevails, although old and new forms appear in some cases (Stefán Karlsson 1981: 262-263).

In this respect Jón Erlendsson’s orthography differs considerably from the other sources taken into consideration. He is actually the only copyist who uses the older form and does not prevalently mark the u-epenthesis. On the other hand the presence of words with <-ur> is rather strong, one third of the total: with an increment from the middle of AM 105 fol. At the beginning Jón tries to follow the exemplar by writing <-r>, but after a few pages he abandons this intent. We do not know the reason why this happens. This could be explained as an attempt to speed up the transcription, but we do not find the same pattern in the transcription of the other features.

Mediopassive suffix <z> [ts] > <-st>, <-zt> [st]

Stefán Karlsson describes concisely and clearly the sound change in the mediopassive suffix (1989: 25): “Um 1300 er hætt að nota miðmyndarendinguna -sk (-zk) sem -z hefur smám saman leyst af hólmi.”<sup>20</sup> This first change can be clearly seen in AM 371 4to where all the mediopassive forms have <-z> or in some rare cases <-sz> (*lysasz* FJ 140, 27; Finnur Jónsson 1892-1896: xlii). Stefán Karlsson uses these words to describe the change that occurred in the time between the two manuscripts (1989: 25):

<sup>20</sup> “At the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> c. the use of the mediopassive endings -sk (-zk) ceases, gradually replaced by the mediopassive ending -z”.

-z er ríkjandi miðmyndarending í handritum fram af 14. öld og lifir fram á 15. öld en á 14. öld komu upp endingar -zt og -zst og á 15. öld varð -zt smám saman einráð ending að kalla. Jafnframt -zt bregður -st fyrir stöku sinnum, einkum á eftir l-i og r-i (*dvelst, berst*) en sú ending verður ekki algeng fyrr en á 16. öld þegar z hefur í öðrum samböndum misst sjálfstætt hljóðgildi (ts)<sup>21</sup>.

The orthography of AM 105 fol follows completely the phonological change. In the 17th c. manuscript there are no traces of the old form <-z> present in AM 371 4to. However, it is possible to observe a variation within the orthography of the mediopassive suffix in AM 105 fol. Jón Erlendsson uses the two orthographic forms <-st> and <-zt> for this morpheme in equal measure. As with the u-epenthesis, there is no pattern for this. In fact the scribe does not follow the rules named by Stefán Karlsson.

Other contemporary sources use those two orthographical variants for the mediopassive suffix, but they do not show any traces of the old form <-z>. However, none of those sources show such a balanced distribution of the two variants. In *Guðbrandsbiblía* <-st> greatly prevails over <-zt> (Bandle 1956: 175-176). The orthography of the scribes studied by Haraldur Bernharðsson diverges even more from AM 105. In fact they all write <-st> regardless of the form in the exemplar (Haraldur Bernharðsson 163: 1999). Kjartan Ottósson pointed out in his work on the mediopassive voice (1992: 121-125) that <-st> replaces <-zt> in the middle of the 16th century. This means that Jón Erlendsson continues to use both a new and an old form, he does not follow the replacement of <-zt> by <-st> attested in *Guðbrandsbiblía* and in the three 17th century copyists. It is possible that the massive use of the older form <-zt> depends on the influence of the exemplar where <-z> is always used as mediopassive suffix. However, this does not change the fact that Jón Erlendsson uses both forms interchangeably.

In this respect AM 105 fol shows a very peculiar feature in comparison to other contemporary sources. In fact it is the only work

<sup>21</sup> “-z is the most common mediopassive ending in the manuscripts from the 14th c. and until the 15th c. But in 14th c. the endings -zt and -zst appear and in the 15th c. -zt gradually became the ending of common use. At the same time -st begins to be used by side of -zt, especially after l and r (*dvelst, berst*), but this ending becomes of common use only in the 16th c., when in other contexts z loses its independent phonetic value (ts)”.



whose amount of the two orthographical variants of the mediopassive suffix is nearly equal. Moreover Jón Erlendsson uses the two variants interchangeably and does not follow any rule in choosing between them.

### *Conclusions*

My analysis shows that Jón copies most of the analyzed features more faithfully than the copyists studied by Haraldur and the editor of *Guðbrandsbiblíá*. What Jón Jóhannesson states is widely confirmed (See p. 2). Despite this attempt at accuracy, Jón Erlendsson is far from fulfilling what Bishop Brýnjólfur Sveinsson requested: an accurate and faithful reproduction of *Hauksbók*. In fact the results give a rather contradictory outline of Jón's copying work. It is true that the Reverend shows a surprising accuracy when transcribing the old rounded vowels <y>, <ý> and <ey> as <y>, <ý> and <ey>, in spite of the common habit to interchangeably use <y>, <ý>, <ey> and <i>, <i>, <ej> (Stefán Karlsson 1989: 45). But this is the only feature with such a high degree of accuracy. This phenomenon could have a geo-linguistic explanation: the derounding of /y/ and /y:/ was accomplished in the middle of 17th c., but the archaic rounded pronunciation had survived in some parts of North-Western Iceland and Eastern Iceland throughout the first decades of the century (*Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson*, 1994: 80-89). Given this, it is possible that Reverend Jón heard this pronunciation during his long life. He was from Southern Iceland but he could have been in contact with somebody from these areas, for example a clergyman. We do not know so much about Jón's life, but we cannot exclude this assumption taking into consideration the network of acknowledgements that a priest used to have.

This accurate transcribing is a remarkable exception. In fact, if we look at the results which emerged from the other analyzed features, the situation changes considerably: this accuracy is often replaced by contradictory and unsatisfactory transcriptions.

As for the <vá>-cases we realize that the lack of knowledge in Old Icelandic does not allow an accurate reproduction of the feature in AM 371 4to. More specifically, Jón does not know the form *varu* and always transcribes the contraction *Ǫ* as *voru*. Besides, he writes <va> leaving out the quantity accents.

This lack of accuracy in the transcription can be seen more clearly in other features such as <C + r> > <C + u + r> and <rr> > <r>. In both cases the older and the modern orthographic form coexist in AM 105 fol even though the older forms were no longer in use in the 17<sup>th</sup> c. The form <C + r> is gradually abandoned during the copying work in favour of <C + u + r>.

As for <eg> > <eig> and <-z> > <-st>, <-zt>, Jón Erlendsson almost always uses the common orthography of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. (Stefán Karlsson 1989: 42, 25. See also p. 12) which is considerably divergent from the exemplar. The only influence of the exemplar onto the transcription is the massive use of <-zt> next to <-st> and the isolated occurrence of the old orthography *segia* (105 93r5). In these last two cases it is clear that an aim at accuracy does not even come into question.

The question posed at the beginning of this article can now be answered. Jón cannot faithfully transcribe *Kristni saga* because he does not have the necessary knowledge and technique. The high accuracy level in the transcription of derounded vowels could find a geo-linguistic explanation, such as the contact with one or more speakers still using the archaic rounded pronunciation.

Another important matter has been analyzed and given an answer: when AM 105 fol was copied. Although there are not written sources about the dating of AM 105 fol, it is known that AM 113 a fol and AM 113 b fol date back from 1651. On account of what has emerged about the use of the quantity accents in AM 105 fol, it is possible to date this manuscript more precisely. The use of the quantity accents in AM 105 fol reflects the 17<sup>th</sup> c. orthography – e.g, the use of <æ> or <ǣ>. In fact Jón uses the acute accent only in AM 113 b fol – as G. Lindblad observed (see p. 5) after being exhorted by Bishop Brynjólfur who requested a more accurate copy of *Íslendingabók*, since the transcription made in AM 113 a fol was not satisfactory for the Bishop. This implies that Jón's orthography changes in this respect only after AM 113 a fol and before AM 113 b fol. AM 105 fol belongs to the period when Jón did not use the old acute accents, which means certainly before AM 113 b.

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Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog: [www.onp.hum.ku.dk](http://www.onp.hum.ku.dk)