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MARKING-UP ABBREVIATIONS IN OLD NORSE-ICELANDIC MANUSCRIPTS

1. Introduction

The use of abbreviations is a characteristic feature of medieval Latin manuscripts and those of most European vernacular traditions.[1] The practice, which was intended both to spare the scribe the labour of writing words which, due to their frequency generally or in a particular text, could easily be understood in an abbreviated form, and in order to save parchment and ink, derives from antiquity. In Roman times there were three systems of abbreviation in use: the *notæ juris*, which were used extensively in legal documents, the Tironian *notæ*, a system of shorthand signs developed by Cicero's secretary Tiro, and the *nomina sacra*, contracted forms of the words for 'God' and the name 'Jesus Christ', a practice borrowed by the early Christians from Hebrew. The use of abbreviations in Latin manuscripts increased until the 12th century, after which it began to fall off. Latin practice was taken over more or less wholesale in manuscripts written in the vernacular languages, but in general the use of abbreviations was never as great in the vernacular as it had been in Latin. An exception to this are Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts, which both in terms of frequency and variety of abbreviations exceed even Latin practice. There were also several Icelandic innovations, such as the use of small capitals and dotted letters to indicate geminate consonants.[2]

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[1] On abbreviations in antiquity and the middle ages generally see B. BISCHOFF, *Paläographie des römischen Altertums und des abendländischen Mittelalters*, Berlin, Schmidt, 1979, pp. 202-223. The standard work on Latin abbreviations remains A. CAPPELLI, *Lexicon abbreviaturarum: Dizionario di abbreviature latine ed italiane*, Milano, Hoepli, 1961[6].
[2] On the use of abbreviations in Icelandic manuscripts see e.g. HREINN BENEDIKTSSON, *Early Icelandic script as illustrated in vernacular texts from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*, Reykjavík, Handritastofnun, 1965, pp. 85-94. A useful survey of abbreviations in Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts is found in O. E. HAUGEN, «Paleografi»,in O. E. Haugen (ed.), *Handbok i norrøn filologi*, Bergen, 2004, Fagbokforlaget, pp. 175-214 (207-210).

Abbreviations are customarily divided, with varying degrees of granularity,[3] into a number of types, generally with regard to the means through which the abbreviation is achieved. The four basic types are:

1. Suspension, where only the first letter or letters of a word are written, generally followed, and frequently also preceded, by a point or, occasionally, with a superscript stroke.
2. Contraction, where the first and last letters are written, normally with a superscript stroke, or, less commonly, a point or points.
3. Superscript letters, a superscript vowel normally representing that vowel preceded by *r* or *v*, a superscript consonant that consonant preceded by *a*.
4. Special signs ('tittles') or brevigraphs, sometimes originating in a letter or combination of letters but no longer recognisable as such.

Taken to a slightly higher level of abstraction, however, abbreviations may be said to fall into two distinct groups: in the first, either part of the word is written out and the rest omitted, the omission often, but not always, being indicated by some sign or mark, or a special sign is used to represent a particular lexical item; in the second, a superscript letter or sign is used instead of a specific combination of graphemes.[4] Abbreviations of the first type, comprising the suspensions, contractions and some of the brevigraphs, may thus be said to have a specific lexical reference, and are in practice restricted to a fairly limited number of lexical items; those of the second, comprising the superscript letters and tittles and the remainder of the brevigraphs, have a specific graphemic reference, i.e. represent the same combination of graphemes regardless of the lexical item in which they occur.

One of the most common signs of abbreviation is the superscript stroke or bar, which can be used both to indicate the suppression of one or more nasal consonants (*m* or *n*) and as a more general mark of abbreviation in suspensions and contractions. Although in appearance there is no discernible difference between the two signs, in terms of their function they are quite distinct. The letter *h* with a stroke («ħ»), for example, represents the word *hann* ('he'), but here the stroke cannot

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[3] L. A. CHASSANT, *Dictionnaire des abréviations latines et françaises*, Paris, Jules Martin, 1884[5], distinguishes between eight types, KR. KÅLUND, *Palæografisk atlas, Ny serie: Oldnorsk-islandske skriftprøver c. 1300-1700*, København, Gyldendal, 1907, between seven and CAPPELLI, *Dizionario*, between six. The four-fold division presented here derives from HREINN BENEDIKTSSON, *Early Icelandic script*, p. 85.

[4] The numerous examples where the *n* in the combination *ng* is abbreviated through the use of the nasal stroke over the preceding vowel, e.g. «þī̄g» (=þing, 'assembly'), or one half of a diphthong is abbreviated, e.g.«t̄utt» (=trautt, 'loath') makes it quite clear that they refer to graphemes, rather than phonemes.

be said to 'stand for' the characters *ann* in the same way as it stands for *n* when the same word is abbreviated «han̄», where the stroke functions in the same way as the 2-shaped sign which always stands for the combination *us*, wherever it appears. The stroke in «ħ», on the other hand, can represent other letters in other inflectional forms of the same word, for example *onu* in the dative singular *honum* ('him'), abbreviated «ħm», and *an* in the genitive *hans* ('his'), abbreviated «ħs». Finally, although less common, the barred-*h* can also represent forms of the feminine pronoun *hón* ('she'), «ħi», for example, for *henni* ('her' dat.sing.) or «ħar» for *hennar* ('hers' gen.sing.). The barred-*h* and similar characters can thus be said to function as brevigraphs, since they can represent various inflectional forms of the same or related words.

It is customary in traditional scholarly printed editions to expand—or resolve, as the practice is sometime called—abbreviations, i.e. to supply the letters which have been omitted, or represented through other means, by the scribe. In some cases this is done silently, but in more diplomatic editions the supplied letters are generally typographical distinct from the others, for example rendered in italics or placed within round brackets.[5] Owing to the limitations of the printed page, however, this method can only ever succeed in making reasonably clear what has been supplied by the editor, while the actual form found in the manuscript must in many cases be left to the reader's imagination.

2. Marking-up abbreviations in electronic texts

The Text Encoding Initiative's *Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange*[6] provide mechanisms for marking up abbreviations and their expansions, allowing one both to register what is actually in the manuscript and to present this in a form more palatable to the modern reader. In previous releases of the *Guidelines* two elements were available for this purpose:

> `<abbr>` (abbreviation) contains an abbreviation of any sort.
> `<expan>` (expansion) contains the expansion of an abbreviation.

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[5] In the editions of Old Norse-Icelandic texts produced under the auspices of the Arnamagnæan Institutes in Copenhagen and Reykjavík abbreviations are generally expanded silently, with the exception of suspensions using a point, which are given in round brackets. The reasoning behind this is that there is greater degree of uncertainty as to the precise form intended with suspensions than with other types of abbreviation.

[6] The TEI *Guidelines* are available electronically online at see http://www.tei-c.org/Guidelines/P5/ (accessed 20 December 2008).

Although these two elements are, like `<sic>` and `<corr>`, regarded as mirror images of each other, so-called «Janus tags», they did not in fact come into being simultaneously. In the earliest version of the *Guidelines*, P1, released in 1990, the element for tagging abbreviations was called `<abbrev>`. There was no corresponding element for tagging expansions, but `<abbrev>` carried an optional `@full` attribute, which one could use to give the expanded form of the abbreviation, as well as a `@type` attribute, which could be used to «classif[y] the abbreviation using terms such as title, initials, acronym, degree». The example given is:

```
<propname type=person><abbrev type=title>Dr.</abbrev> <abbrev
type=initials>M.</abbrev> Deegan</propname> is the Research Officer of the
<abbrev full='Computers in Teaching Initiative' type=acronym>CTI</abbrev>
Centre for Literature and Linguistic Studies.
```

It seems clear both from this example, the only one given, and from the list of suggested values for the `@type` attribute, that the authors of the *Guidelines* were not at this point thinking of the sort of abbreviations found in ancient, medieval and early-modern manuscripts and inscriptions, but rather those commonly used in modern languages.

The `<expan>` element was introduced in TEI P2 (1992). At the same time `<abbrev>` was shortened to `<abbr>` (in agreement, possibly coincidentally, with HTML, itself then just coming into being) and the `@full` attribute replaced by `@expan`. The same example—which is still found in the *Guidelines*—now appeared:

```
<abbr type=title>Dr.</abbr> <abbr type=initial>M.</abbr> Deegan is the
Director of the <abbr expan='Computers in Teaching Initiative'
type=acronym>CTI</abbr> Centre for Textual Studies.
```

There is, in addition, another example, one taken from a medieval manuscript:

```
Ex<abbr type=brevigraph expan='per' Resp=PG>&per;</abbr>ience, thogh noon
auctoritee
```

To illustrate the Janus-like nature of the pair the same example is also given favouring `<expan>` over `<abbr>`:

```
Ex<expan type=brevigraph abbr='&per;' Resp=PG>per</expan>ience, thogh noon
auctoritee
```

Thus, from the very beginning, there were two fundamentally different ways in which these two elements could be used, depending, on the one hand, on whether one regarded the entire word as constituting 'the abbreviation' (and its expansion), e.g. «Dr.» = «Doctor», or, on the other, whether

one perceived 'the abbreviation' as consisting only of the mark or sign which indicated the suppression of one or more letters in the word, and, correspondingly, 'the expansion' as the letters supplied in the process of expansion, e.g. the symbol «p̄» = «per». Both have always been possible, and both widely practised.

To return to our previous example, «h̄», for *hann* (using the Unicode character U+0304 for the bar or «combining macron»[7]), could always be marked up either:

```
<abbr>h&#x304;</abbr> // <expan>hann</expan>
```

or

```
h<abbr>&#x304;</abbr> // h<expan>ann</expan>
```

Recognising this discrepancy in usage as a potential problem, two further elements were introduced in TEI P5, officially released on 1 November 2007: `<am>` (for 'abbreviation marker'), which «contains a sequence of letters or signs present in an abbreviation which are omitted or replaced in the expanded form of the abbreviation», and `<ex>` (for 'editorial expansion'), which «contains a sequence of letters added by an editor or transcriber when expanding an abbreviation». At the same time the *Guidelines* now also recommend that use of `<abbr>` and `<expan>` be restricted to «the whole of an abbreviated [or expanded] phrase or word».[8] This allows for a much clearer, and more nuanced, mark-up of abbreviations and their expansions, especially when these elements are combined with `<choice>`, also an innovation in P5, the purpose of which is to serve as a wrapper for alternative encodings of the same textual feature.[9] One can now, for example, do the following:

```
<choice>
  <abbr>h<am>&#x304;</am></abbr>
  <expan>h<ex>ann</ex></expan>
</choice>
```

Here it is made completely explicit what the form of the abbreviation is, which part of it is omitted or replaced when it is expanded and what letters are supplied in the process of expansion. The addition of these new elements does not entirely solve the original problem, however, in that one can also just as easily do the following:

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[7] I am following here the recommendations of the Medieval Unicode Font Initiative; see http://www.mufi.org (accessed 20 December 2008). An alternative to using Unicode characters directly in this way would be to employ the new `<g>` element (for *gaiji*, the Japanese term for a non-standardized character or glyph); see chapter 5 of the TEI *Guidelines*, «Representation of Non-standard Characters and Glyphs».

[8] *TEI Guidelines*, section 3.5.5; cf. section 11.3.2: «The content of the `<abbr>` element should usually include the whole of the abbreviated word, while the `<expan>` element should include the whole of its expansion.» Although the wording is slightly ambiguous – what is meant by «the whole of its expansion» – the meaning should be clear enough: both <abbr> and <expan> should be used to tag whole words or phrases.

[9] See section 3.4 of the *Guidelines*, «Simple Editorial Changes». The `<choice>` element was introduced in preference to the so-called 'Janus-tag' mechanism referred to above, largely as a consequence of the abolition of attributes containing plain text.

```
h<choice><am>&#x304;</am><ex>ann</ex></choice>
```
Or, indeed, the following:
```
<abbr>h<choice><am>&#x304;</am><ex>ann</ex></choice></abbr>
```

This mark-up, it could be argued, offers the best value for money in terms of registering all the relevant information with a minimum of verbosity. It would also allow one in a very simple way to distinguish between different types of abbreviations by means of the `@type` attribute, either for statistical analysis or if they are to be treated in varying ways in their expanded forms, as is sometimes the case with suspensions, the expansions of which are placed in round brackets, while other types, if not expanded silently, are italicised.

Many a user of the TEI, not least the novice, will thus still be left wondering how best to proceed. Which of the two ways—tagging whole words or parts of them—is to be preferred? The most reasonable answer would appear to be that while both have their justification, one or the other may be more appropriate in certain cases. The mark-up employed in this last example works well in this particular case, and would work equally well in many if not most others; clearly not in all cases, however. It seems counterintuitive to treat certain types of abbreviations on anything other than the whole-word level. In English and other languages, for example, «p.» is a common abbreviation for the word «page» (Lat. *pagina* or the equivalent in other languages), but, as with the bar in ħ, the dot cannot be said to 'stand for' the letters *age*; rather we have an entire word represented by its initial letter—the *siglum* as it was known in Latin—followed by a point signalling that this is an abbreviation. The *siglum* can, moreover, be doubled to indicate the plural: «pp.». This was common practice in Old Norse-Icelandic too, particularly in kinship terms, where a point was frequently also placed before as well after the *sigla*: «.bb.» for *bræðr* ('brothers'), «.ss.» for *synir* ('sons') etc. It seems nothing short of perverse to maintain that in such a case the first letter somehow really is 'there'[10] whereas the second and attendant dot(s) are not, but are rather represent the suppressed letters. And yet this is precisely what we do when we expand such abbreviations: «.ss.», for example, would in a printed edition typically appear in expanded form as «s(yner)». Here, the new

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[10] There are other cases where there appears to be a discrepancy in the way abbreviations which involve letters are treated, i.e. whether the letters are perceived as being there or not. When expanding the tironian nota (ꝛ) or ampersand (&) – a practice for which there seems little justification in any case – the entire expansion is treated as supplied, e.g. italicised. When expanding the barred-*p*, as we saw above, all three letters, *per*, are generally treated as supplied, even thought the *p* is as palpably present as is the *h* in «ħ». A less obvious case is the sign resembling the numeral *4* (ꝗ) used to represent the termination *–rum* (both in Latin and Old Norse-Icelandic), which is in fact a round *r* with an oblique curve through the leg. Here, too, it is not uncommon when expanding to treat all three letters as supplied, even though the *r* is arguably already there. One could also argue that superscript letters representing themselves plus another letter are also actually there and do not need to be supplied.

mark-up possibilities offered by P5 would allow us to treat the abbreviation and its expansion in slightly different ways, for example like this:

```
<choice>
  <abbr>.ss.</abbr>
  <expan>s<ex>ynir</ex></expan>
</choice>
```

rather than:

```
<choice>
  <abbr><am>.</am>s<am>s.</am></abbr>
   <expan>s<ex>ynir</ex></expan>
</choice>
```

or:

```
<abbr>
  <choice>
    <am>.</am>
    <ex/>
  </choice>
s
  <choice>
    <am>s.</am>
    <ex>ynir</ex>
  </choice>
</abbr>
```

At the same time, however, in the case of abbreviations with a graphemic reference, where there is generally a one-to-one correspondence between the abbreviation sign and its expansion, this correspondence is lost, or at least blurred, if treated on the whole-word basis, not least where there is more than one abbreviation within a single word. Consider the following mark-up for the word *konungarnir* ('the kings'), written «konūgarn̂»:

```
<abbr>konu<choice><am>&#x304;</am><ex>n</ex></choice>garn<choice><am>&#x035
B;</am><ex>ir</ex></choice></abbr>
```

As opposed to the following:

```
<choice>
  <abbr>konu<am>&#x304;</am>garn<am>&#x035B;</am></abbr>
  <expan>konu<ex>n</ex>garn<ex>ir</ex></expan>
</choice>
```

While in some ways perhaps neater, the latter encoding, in addition to losing the connexion between the abbreviation and its expansion,[11] also requires the repetition of eight characters which are otherwise unchanged. As the expansion of abbreviations of this type essentially entails the substitution of one set of characters for another it is arguably more logical to place within <choice> only those characters which are involved in the substitution, and not those which remain the same— a choice between two identical options is no choice.

3. A typology of abbreviations

In what follows I should like to propose a typology of Old Norse-Icelandic abbreviations and suggest ways of encoding them in light of the discussion above. As with the TEI generally, there may be wrong ways of encoding things, but there is no single right way, so those presented here should not be taken as prescriptive. Where appropriate I give examples of both the 'basic' encoding using the elements `<abbr>` and `<expan>` wrapped in `<choice>` and the alternative encoding suggested above.

A. Abbreviations with a lexical reference

A.1. Suspensions.

A.1.1 The first letter or letters of a word are written out and the remainder omitted, this omission being indicated by means of a point (or colon) set after, or both before and after, the letter or letters. This method was used both for a number of generally common words, *k.* for *konungr* ('king'), *d.* for *drottinn* ('lord') or *dóttir* ('daughter'), *s.* for *sonr* ('son') or *segir/sagði* ('says/said') etc., and also for words, especially proper names, which appear repeatedly in a text and are thus only understandable in context. Whole phrases, for example legal formulae, if frequently repeated, could also be represented by the first letters of each word.

k.	k(onungr) 'king'	```<choice>` ` <abbr type="A.1.1">k<am>.</am></abbr>` ` <expan>k<ex>onungr</ex></expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="A.1.1">k` `<choice><am>.</am><ex>onungr</ex></choice>` `</abbr>```

---

[11] One could, of course, make the connexion explicit by using the global linking element `@corresp`.

O l.	Ol(afr) 'Ólafr'	``` <choice> <abbr type="A.1.1">Ol<am>.</am></abbr> <expan>Ol<ex>afr</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="A.1.1">Ol <choice><am>.</am><ex>afr</ex></choice> </abbr> ```

A.1.2 The first letter or letters are written on the line and the remainder omitted, a superscript stroke, sometimes with a curl, indicating the omission. This form of abbreviation is largely restricted to certain common words.

ħ	h*ann* 'he'	``` <choice> <abbr type="A.1.2">h<am>̅</am></abbr> <expan>h<ex>ann</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="A.1.2">h <choice><am>̅</am><ex>ann</ex></choice> </abbr> ```
ſk̄	sk*al* 'shall'	``` <choice> <abbr type="A.1.2">sk<am>̅</am></abbr> <expan>sk<ex>al</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="A.1.2">sk <choice><am>̅</am><ex>al</ex></choice> </abbr> ```

The letter thorn (þ) with a stroke through the descender was used in manuscripts from the mid-13th century onwards to represent *þeir* ('they'), or occasionally *þess* ('its') but came increasingly to be used for *þeim* ('them').

þ̲	þ*eim* 'them'	``` <choice> <abbr type="A.1.2">þ<am>̲</am></abbr> <expan>þ<ex>eim</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="A.1.2">þ <choice><am>̲</am><ex>eim</ex></choice> </abbr> ```

Particularly in younger manuscripts, the word *þess* ('its')is frequently abbreviated using a double stroke through the ascender. This is probably a development from the ligatured contractions mentioned below.

ꝥ	þ*ess* 'its'	``` <choice> <abbr type="A.1.2">þ<am>̿</am></abbr> <expan>þ<ex>ess</ex></expan> </choice> ```

		`<abbr type="A.1.2">þ`
		`<choice><am>̿</am><ex>ess</ex></choice>`
		`</abbr>`

A.1.3 Only the initial letter is written on the line, and the letter immediately following it is written superscript. This form of suspension is essentially also restricted to certain common words, in particular the two shown here. Superscript letters used in this way should be distinguished from those which refer to a specific combination of letters, discussed below in section B.1.2.

t^i	t*il*
	'to'
		`<choice>`
		`  <abbr type="A.1.3">t<am>ͥ</am></abbr>`
		`  <expan>t<ex>il</ex></expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="A.1.3">t`
		`<choice><am>ͥ</am><ex>il</ex></choice>`
		`</abbr>`

h^o	h*on*
	'she'
		`<choice>`
		`  <abbr type="A.1.3">h<am>ͦ</am></abbr>`
		`  <expan>h<ex>on</ex></expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="A.1.2">h`
		`<choice><am>ͦ</am><ex>on</ex></choice>`
		`</abbr>`

A.2. Contractions.

A.2.1 The initial and final letters of a word are written on the line, but some or all of the intervening letters are omitted, the omission being indicated by means of a superscript stroke or bar, either straight or with a curl, which is set over short letters and generally passes through the ascenders of any tall letters. Points are also possible—following, preceding and, very rarely, between the letters—but are less common.

h̄m	h*onu*m
	'him'
		`<choice>`
		`  <abbr`
		`type="A.2.1">h<am>̅</am>m</abbr>`
		`  <expan>h<ex>onu</ex>m</expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="A.1.2">h`
		`<choice><am>̅</am><ex>onu</ex></choice>`
		`m</abbr>`

ſl̄	s*ka*l
	'shall'
		`<choice>`
		`  <abbr`
		`type="A.2.1">s<am>̅</am>l</abbr>`
		`  <expan>s<ex>ka</ex>l</expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="A.1.2">s`
		`<choice><am>̅</am><ex>ka</ex></choice>`
		`l</abbr>`

Note that in some cases the letters supplied in the process of expansion come before, or both before and after, the abbreviation mark. In these cases there will not be a one-to-one correspondence between the <am> and <ex> elements, and so the alternative mark-up in which these two are wrapped in <choice> tags is less appropriate.

m̄li	mælti 'spoke'	`<choice>`
		`  <abbr type="A.2.1">ml<am>̅</am>i</abbr>`
		`  <expan>m<ex>æ</ex>l<ex>t</ex>i</expan>`
		`</choice>`

kк̄ia	kirkia 'church'	`<choice>`
		`  <abbr type="A.2.1">kk<am>̅</am>ia</abbr>`
		`  <expan>k<ex>ir</ex>kia</expan>`
		`</choice>`

Certain genitive forms, in particular *konungs* ('king's'), *hans* ('his')and *þess* ('its'), are sometimes abbreviated in such a way that the first and last letters are combined as ligatures (*k* plus tall *s* etc.), with a bar to indicate that they are contractions:

к̄	konungs 'king's'	`<choice>`
		`  <abbr type="A.2.1"><am></am></abbr>`
		`  <expan>k<ex>onung</ex>s</expan>`
		`</choice>`

A.2.2 The initial letter is written on the line and the final letter is written superscript (a practice still common with ordinal numbers, «1st», «2nd» on so on). This type is especially common with forms of the word *maðr* ('man') and the verbs *fara* ('go'), *hafa* ('have'), *taka* ('take') and *vera* ('be').

u°	uoro '[they] were'	`<choice>`
		`  <abbr type="A.2.2">u<am>ͦ</am></abbr>`
		`  <expan>u<ex>oro</ex></expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="A.2.2">u`
		`<choice><am>ͦ</am><ex>oro</ex></choice>`
		`</abbr>`

mᵃ	manna 'men' (gen.pl.)	`<choice>`
		`  <abbr type="A.2.2">m<am>ͣ</am></abbr>`
		`  <expan>m<ex>anna</ex></expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="A.2.2">m`
		`<choice><am>ͣ</am><ex>anna</ex></choice>`
		`</abbr>`

A.3. Brevigraphs with a specific lexical reference:

A.3.1 The *nomina sacra*, i.e. *Ihc* for *Jesus* and *Xpc* for *Christus*. Originally the *nomina sacra* are contractions: in *Ihc* for *Jesus*, for example, the Latin letters reflect the form, but not the phonological value, of the original Greek uncials *IHC* (=*IES*). Other inflectional forms are also found: *Ihm* for *Jesum*, *Ihu* for *Jesu* etc.

Jħc	*Iesus* 'Jesus'	```<choice>`` `` <abbr`` ``type="A.1.2"><am>Jh̅c</am></abbr>`` `` <expan><ex>Iesus</ex></expan>`` ``</choice>```

A.3.2 The Tironian *nota* for *et*, probably the most common of all abbreviations (although entirely absent from some early manuscripts); it had various forms, the earliest resembling a *7*.

⁊	*ok* 'and'	```<choice>`` `` <abbr type="A.3"><am>⁊</am></abbr>`` `` <expan><ex>ok</ex></expan>`` ``</choice>```

A.3.3 Runic letters. The *f*- and *m*-runes are occasionally used to represent the words *fé* ('cattle, wealth') and *maðr* ('man'), their names in the runic alphabet. The latter is frequently found with a superscript (Latin) letter indicating an inflectional ending, *i* for *manni* ('man' dat.sing.), *a* for *manna* ('man' gen.pl.) etc.; this corresponds entirely to contractions mentioned in section A.2.2.

ᛘ	*maðr* 'man'	```<choice>`` `` <abbr type="A.3"><am>ᛘ</am></abbr>`` `` <expan><ex>maðr</ex></expan>`` ``</choice>```

B. Abbreviations with a specific graphemic reference

B.1. Supralinear letters and signs (tittles)

B.1.1 Supralinear signs (tittles). These are normally written over another character, or sometimes, depending on their shape, slightly to the right. They cannot occur word-initially or, for the most part, in pairs.

The nasal stroke, indicating the suppression of one or more nasal consonants; it can occur both medially and finally.

hān	han*n* 'he'	```<choice> <abbr type="B.1.1">han<am>̅</am></abbr> <expan>han<ex>n</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.1.1">han <choice><am>̅</am><ex>n</ex></choice> </abbr>```
þīg	þi*n*g 'assembly'	```<choice> <abbr type="B.1.1">þi<am>̅</am>g</abbr> <expan>þi<ex>n</ex>g</expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.1.1">þi <choice><am>̅</am><ex>n</ex></choice> g</abbr>```

The *pi-* or *omega*-like sign (originally a superscript *a*), representing *ra* or, less frequently, *va*, *ja* or *ar*.

β̃	f*ra* 'from'	```<choice> <abbr type="B.1.1">f<am></am></abbr> <expan>f<ex>ra</ex>s</expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">f <choice><am></am><ex>ra</ex></choice> </abbr>```

The *2*-like sign, representing *ur* (or its mutated form *yr*); it sometimes resembles the infinity symbol (∞).

ꝼaᵹ̃t	fag*ur*t
	'beautiful'
		`<choice>`
		`  <abbr`
		`type="B.1.1">fag<am></am>t</abbr>`
		`  <expan>fag<ex>ur</ex>t</expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="B.1.1">fag`
		`<choice><am></am><ex>ur</ex></choice>`
		`t</abbr>`

A sign resembling the numeral *9*, used to indicate *us* (or its mutated form *ys*); it is principally used finally, in which case it can appear on the line, but can also be used medially.

magn⁹	magn*us*
	'Magnús'
		`<choice>`
		`  <abbr`
		`type="B.1.1">magn<am></am></abbr>`
		`  <expan>magn<ex>us</ex></expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="B.1.1">magn`
		`<choice><am></am><ex>us</ex></choice>`
		`</abbr>`

The zigzag-shaped sign, representing *er* or *ir*, occasionally also *re* (esp. with *p*), *eir* (esp. in the word *þeir* 'they'), or simply *r* (esp. with *e* to represent the 3rd person sing. form of the verb 'to be'); it is sometimes also used as general mark of abbreviation in suspensions, particularly where one of the suppressed letters is an *r*.

úa	u*er*a
	'[to] be'
		`<choice>`
		`  <abbr type="B.1.1">u<am>͛</am>a</abbr>`
		`  <expan>u<ex>er</ex>a</expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="B.1.1">u`
		`<choice><am>͛</am><ex>er</ex></choice>`
		`a</abbr>`

þ́ra	þ*eir*ra
	'their'
		`<choice>`
		`  <abbr`
		`type="B.1.1">þ<am>͛</am>ra</abbr>`
		`  <expan>þ<ex>eir</ex>ra</expan>`
		`</choice>`
		`<abbr type="B.1.1">þ`
		`<choice><am>͛</am><ex>eir</ex></choice>`
		`ra</abbr>`

B.1.2 Supralinear letters

Pretty much any letter, including accented characters and ligatures, could appear superscript as an abbreviation, normally representing itself preceded by *r* or *v* if a vowel, or by *a* if a consonant. Some of the more common ones are listed here:

Superscript a, representing *va*.

a͛s	s*va* 'so'	```<choice>` ` <abbr type="B.1.2">s<am>ͣ</am></abbr>` ` <expan>s<ex>va</ex></expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="B.1.2">s` `<choice><am>ͣ</am><ex>va</ex></choice>` `</abbr>```

Superscript e, representing *re* or *ve*.

d͛pa	d*re*pa '[to] kill'	```<choice>` ` <abbr` `type="B.1.2">d<am>ͤ</am>pa</abbr>` ` <expan>d<ex>re</ex>pa</expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="B.1.2">han` `<choice><am>ͤ</am><ex>re</ex></choice>` `pa</abbr>```

Superscript i, representing *ri*, *ir* or *vi* (esp. in the word *því*, 'because').

oꝥd	of*ri*d 'strife' (lit. 'un-peace')	```<choice>` ` <abbr` `type="B.1.2">of<am>ͥ</am>d</abbr>` ` <expan>of<ex>ri</ex>d</expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="B.1.2">of` `<choice><am>ͥ</am><ex>ri</ex></choice>` `d</abbr>```
þat	þ*vi*at 'because'	```<choice>` ` <abbr` `type="B.1.2">þ<am>ͥ</am>at</abbr>` ` <expan>þ<ex>vi</ex>at</expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="B.1.2">þ` `<choice><am>ͥ</am><ex>vi</ex></choice>` `at</abbr>```

Superscript o, representing *or* or *ro*.

ƀg	b*or*g 'fort, castle'	```<choice>` ` <abbr type="B.1.2">b<am>ͦ</am>g</abbr>` ` <expan>b<ex>or</ex>g</expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="B.1.2">b` `<choice><am>ͦ</am><ex>or</ex></choice>` `g</abbr>```

ábͦtt	ábrott 'away'	``` <choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">áb<am>ͦ</am>tt</abbr> <expan>áb<ex>ro</ex>tt</expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">áb <choice><am>ͦ</am><ex>ro</ex></choice> tt</abbr> ```

Superscript c, representing *ik(k)* or *ek(k)*.

gͨ	geck 'went'	``` <choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">g<am>ͨ</am>pa</abbr> <expan>g<ex>eck</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">g <choice><am>ͨ</am><ex>eck</ex></choice> </abbr> ```

Superscript d or ð, representing *eð* or *uð* (the latter especially in the word *guð* 'god').

mͩ	med 'with'	``` <choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">m<am>ͩ</am></abbr> <expan>m<ex>ed</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">m <choice><am>ͩ</am><ex>ed</ex></choice> </abbr> ```

Superscript m, representing *um*.

tignͫ	tignum 'noble' (dat.pl.)	``` <choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">tign<am>ͫ</am> </abbr> <expan>tign<ex>um</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">tign <choice><am>ͫ</am><ex>um</ex></choice> </abbr> ```

Superscript n, representing *in(n)* or *an(n)* (particularly in forms of the enclitic definite article).

mͫa	manna 'men' (gen.pl.)	``` <choice> <abbr type="B.1.2">m<am></am>a </abbr> <expan>m<ex>ann</ex>a</expan> </choice> ```

		``` <abbr type="B.1.2">m <choice><am></am><ex>ann</ex></choice> a</abbr>```

Superscript r, representing *ar*.

u^r	u*ar* 'was'	```<choice>` ` <abbr type="B.1.2">u<am>ͬ</am></abbr>` ` <expan>u<ex>ar</ex></expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="B.1.2">u` `<choice><am>ͬ</am><ex>ar</ex></choice>` `</abbr>```

Superscript t, representing *at* or *it*, or, later, *að* or *ið*.

dyr^t	dyr*it* 'the animal'	```<choice>` ` <abbr type="B.1.2">dyr<am>ͭ</am>` `</abbr>` ` <expan>dyr<ex>it</ex>pa</expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="B.1.2">dyr` `<choice><am>ͭ</am><ex>it</ex></choice>` `</abbr>```

B.2. Linear brevigraphs:

B.2.1 A semicolon-like sign used to represent *ed* or *eð*; the later cursive form can resemble the numeral *3* or the letter *z*. In Latin writing it could also stand, with *b*, for the ending *-bus* and with *q* for the enclitic *-que*. Its use in Old Norse manuscripts is for the most part restricted to the word *með* ('with') although the sign is sometimes also used with the letter *s*, representing the Latin word *sed*; in a text otherwise in the vernacular this is normally expanded *heldr*.

m;	m*ed* 'with'	```<choice>` ` <abbr type="B.2.1">m<am></am>` `</abbr>` ` <expan>m<ex>ed</ex></expan>` `</choice>` `<abbr type="B.2.1">m` `<choice><am></am><ex>ed</ex></choice>` `</abbr>```

B.2.2 A sign resembling an inverted *c* or sometimes the numeral *9* (in which case it is identical to the superscript sign for *us*) which stands for *con* and (in Latin) *com*. In Old Norse, as in Latin, it is

found only in initial position. It is most commonly used in Latin loan words, but can also be found in native words as well, in particular *kona* ('woman') and *konungr* ('king').

ɔa	*kon*a 'woman'	```<choice> <abbr type="B.2.2"><am>ͻ</am>a</abbr> <expan><ex>kon</ex>a</expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.2.2"> <choice><am>ͻ</am><ex>kon</ex></choice> a</abbr>```

B.2.3 A sign resembling the numeral *4* (in fact a round *r* with a oblique curve through the leg) used to represent the termination *-rum*; it is especially common after the letters *ð*/*d* and *o*. In Latin this mark could also function as a general mark of abbreviation, but such use is rare in Old Norse manuscripts.

od⁊	od*rum* 'others' (dat.pl.)	```<choice> <abbr type="B.2.3">od<am></am> </abbr> <expan>odr<ex>um</ex></expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.2.3">od <choice><am></am><ex>rum</ex></choice> </abbr>```

Note that here, and in the following example, one can treat the abbreviation and the expansion slightly differently—in keeping with the idea that the *r* in this case and the *p* in one below actually are present and therefore do not need to be supplied—using the first method but not the second, where there must be a direct correspondence between the two.

B.2.4 The letter *p* with a straight stroke through the descender indicates *per*, while a curved stroke or flourish extending through the descender represents *pro*, and *p* with a superscript bar *pre*; although occasionally found in native words, these are most commonly used in Latin loan words such as *prófeti* ('prophet').

pſar	p*er*sar 'Persians'	```<choice> <abbr type="B.2.4"><am></am>sar </abbr> <expan>p<ex>er</ex>sar</expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.2.4"> <choice><am></am><ex>per</ex></choice> sar</abbr>```

B.3 Small capitals and dotted letters were used in Icelandic manuscripts to indicate geminate consonants. It is not standard practice to expand small capitals (although some editors have done so), while dotted letters normally are treated like other abbreviations.

hoġr	hoggr '[he] strikes'	``` <choice> <abbr type="B.3">hog<am>̇</am>r</abbr> <expan>hog<ex>g</ex>r</expan> </choice> <abbr type="B.3">hog <choice><am>̇</am><ex>g</ex></choice> r</abbr> ```

4. Conclusion

It is, as has been mentioned, customary to expand abbreviations in scholarly editions of medieval texts; this can either be done silently, i.e. with no distinction between the letters supplied by the editor and those present in the manuscript, or the supplied letters can be kept distinct from the rest, usually being rendered in italics or placed within round brackets. While certainly preferable to the former, the latter practice, in attempting to do two things simultaneously, unfortunately succeeds fully in neither.

Although it is often presented as a fairly straightforward matter, the expansion of abbreviations involves a good deal of interpretation, not to say guesswork, on the part of the editor. The common verbs *segja* ('say') and *mæla* ('speak'), to take the most obvious example, are frequently represented through suspensions, with no indication as to whether the present or preterit forms are intended. Both are usually perfectly possible, and it is not unlikely that, if asked, the scribe wouldn't have known—or wouldn't have cared—which form the abbreviation stood for either, but the editor must decide. There are many other cases where it may be far from certain how an abbreviation should be expanded.

It is standard practice when expanding abbreviations to do so in keeping with the normal orthographic practice of the scribe in question.[12] Thus, if the scribe normally uses *e* to represent the unstressed front vowel /I/, rather than *i*, the zigzag-shaped tittle (ˊ) will be expanded *er* rather than *ir*. If the scribe uses both forms, as most scribes do, the editor will normally expand consistently using the form which most frequently occurs when the word is written in full. The situation can thus easily arise where a scribe has written *er* three times and *ir* twice, but otherwise used the tittle. This

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[12] Cf. e.g. R. I. PAGE (ed.), *Gibbons saga*, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ B.2, Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1960, p. xxxii: «Abbreviated forms are expanded as far as possible in accordance with the scribe's normal spelling.»

would then be expanded, perhaps several hundred times, to *er*, giving an entirely false impression of the distribution of the two forms in the resulting text.

Expanding abbreviations can also result in impossible forms, or at least forms the scribe would not have used had he written the word in full. To take a simple example: from the earliest times the round *r* (ꝛ) was used after *o* and, gradually, other round letters, especially *d* (ð), *ð* and *þ*,[13] and it is customary in more diplomatic editions to reproduce the round form where it occurs. If the scribe writes the word *þeir* ('they') in abbreviated form using a round r after the þ («þꝛ»), as was common, the expanded form would be «þeiꝛ», which the scribe would never have written, as *i* is not a round letter. Another example is the word *síðan* ('later'), written «siþ», where a scribe, the better to attach the superscript stroke, might use *þ* instead of *ð* (or *d*), which, if the manuscript was from anytime after the mid-13th century,[14] is what he would presumably have written had he not chosen to abbreviate. The expanded form «siþ*an*» would, therefore, be misleading at best; the form «siþan» a direct falsification.

Editors have, of course, been aware of this. R. I. Page comments in the introduction to his edition of *Gibbons saga* that the silent expansion of abbreviations (other than suspensions employing a dot) «may give a to some extent false impression of a text, a type of falsification not detectable from the present edition». Half a century earlier, in his edition of *Rómverjasaga*, Rudolf Meissner chose not to indicate the expansion of the many abbrevaitions, as they «nur eine palæographische Bedeutung haben», with the exception of the ending *ir/er*, «weil in den augeschriebenen Form ein fast regelloses Schwanken herrscht». To choose one or the other of the forms, he says, «würde ein falsches Bild von der Orthographie der hs. geben».[15]

Generally, where justification is given at all, abbreviations are said to have been expanded as 'a service to the reader'. As with other services, one would like at the very least be aware when one is being done one, and also have the option of declining. The mechanisms for encoding abbreviations and their expansions described here allow one, for the first time, to do precisely that.

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[13] Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic script*, pp. 47-49

[14] Stefán Karlsson, *The development of Latin script II: in Iceland*, in Oskar Bandle et al. (edd.), *The Nordic languages: An international handbook of the history of the North Germanic languages*, Berlin/New York, De Gruyter, 2002, pp. 832-840 (835).

[15] R. Meissner (ed.), *Rómverjasaga (AM 595, 4°)*, Berlin, Mayer & Müller, 1910, pp. 2-3.