

Silvia Hufnagel

# Title Pages in Icelandic Post-Medieval Manuscripts and Books

## 1 Introduction

Scholarly interest in post-Gutenberg manuscripts has increased considerably since the material turn in the humanities and goes in many cases beyond the focus on handwritten copies of printed books in the Western world. Several scholars focus on scribal publication. Harold Love, for example, traces the communication of ideas in 17th-century England by analyzing handwritten texts and music; authors and composers had cultural, political, and economic reasons for choosing the manuscript medium.<sup>1</sup> Social authorship is another important focus of research. Margaret Ezell, to name but one, examines manuscript production beyond print and cities; often, writers from 17th-century England living outside of major cities successfully used privately produced and disseminated manuscripts to reach their audiences.<sup>2</sup> Another focus of scholarly attention is on scribal communities. Davíð Ólafsson studied the intricate scribal network in 19th-century West Iceland.<sup>3</sup> Textual production and reproduction in light of indigenous traditions proves to be of particular importance. Meidbhín Ní Úrdail emphasizes the importance of manuscripts for Irish scholarship and culture in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly in cases where handwritten texts are the sole witnesses of textual traditions; scribes used innovative approaches to their craft and incorporated influence from both print and manuscript media, bearing witness to the reciprocal influences of the two.<sup>4</sup> Such studies are based on a wide variety of scholarly disciplines, including manuscript studies, book history, sociology, literary studies, and history and analyze agents in different geographical parts and periods of time. Their common conclusion though is that the so-called printing revolution is rather an evolution and that the division between manuscript and print is anything but clear-cut.

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1 Cf. Love 1993.

2 Cf. Ezell 1999.

3 Cf. Davíð Ólafsson 2013. Icelandic citation conventions are followed in this article, citing both the given name and patronym and listing the given names in alphabetical order.

4 Cf. Ní Úrdail 2000.

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In this article I will argue that the developments of manuscript and print in Iceland were closely connected and interdependent as well as that the old and the new media influenced each other. The surviving historical background information on Icelandic print and manuscript culture is one of the signs of the close connections and interrelationships between the two media. I will also argue that there were various strategies that Icelandic scribes of post-Gutenberg manuscripts employed and that these strategies were not necessarily dependent on the medium of their exemplar — whether the scribes copied handwritten or printed material was usually not important to them. I thereby hope to emphasize the importance and longevity of Icelandic manuscript culture and to shed further light on some of the complex developments of print culture and the long life of manuscript transmission. Although the varied and rich life of Icelandic manuscript culture is in several aspects unique, it provides an appropriate case study due to the large number of surviving manuscripts and its well-documented status and background.<sup>5</sup> The peculiar situation of print in Iceland led to a certain, but by no means absolute dichotomy between textual genres that appeared in print and handwriting and textual genres that appeared in handwriting only.<sup>6</sup>

In this study, I will focus on title pages, a true invention of the printing press,<sup>7</sup> that appear in post-Gutenberg manuscripts too. When read and analyzed perceptively, handwritten and printed title pages can reveal the underlying attitudes of early modern Icelanders towards old and new media. They also hold the key to our interpretation of the function of manuscripts.<sup>8</sup> After a general overview of Icelandic print and manuscript culture and title pages in Icelandic manuscripts from the 16th and 17th centuries, I will focus on calendars, which were transmitted in both the old medium of handwriting and the new medium of print. Calendars were among the first texts that were put into writing after the Christianization of the island in the year 1000, and they were quickly put into print after the arrival of the printing press around 1530. Calendars formed an important part of daily life in the Middle Ages and early modern period and were widely used by large and diverse groups of people. A considerable number of both handwritten and printed calendars are extant, making this textual genre valuable for a case study.<sup>9</sup>

I include non-scholarly manuscripts written in Iceland between c. 1500 and c. 1700. Each shelfmark is counted as a single manuscript, resulting in a corpus of approximately 2 000 manuscripts. Please note that I cite Icelanders by their given

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5 Notable studies of post-medieval scribal culture in Iceland include, e. g., Margrét Eggertsdóttir/Driscoll 2017.

6 To my knowledge, there is no textual genre that existed in print only.

7 Other features that are often connected with the printing press, such as running titles and graded layout, appear already in medieval manuscripts (cf. Lowe 1925). Therefore, they are less suitable for this study.

8 Cf. Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir 2011, 130.

9 Title pages of other textual genres have been analysed elsewhere, see, e. g., Hufnagel 2016, Hufnagel 2018, or Hufnagel 2021b.



names according to Icelandic tradition, and that I refer to handwritten codices as manuscripts and to printed codices as books. If not specified otherwise, title pages are on fol. 1r of the respective manuscripts; manuscript transcriptions are semi-diplomatic and translations my own.

## 2 Manuscript and Print Culture in Iceland

Icelandic manuscript culture was particularly prolific and long-lasting. Writing in the Latin alphabet and the codex form were introduced together with or shortly after the Christianization of Iceland in the year 1000, as evidence suggests. Written texts were needed for both the Church and for legal practices. The oldest extant written artifacts date to the 12th century.<sup>10</sup> The two earliest textual artifacts are Reykjavík, The Árni Magnusson Institute for Icelandic Studies (henceforth SÁM) AM 732a VII 4to, which contains an Easter table and is dated to the first half of the 12th century,<sup>11</sup> and SÁM AM 237a fol., which contains two fragments of sermons and is dated to c. 1150.<sup>12</sup> SÁM AM 315 d fol. contains the legal text *Grágás* on two fragmentary leaves and is dated to the third quarter of the 12th century.<sup>13</sup> Copenhagen, The Arnarnagðæna Collection AM 674 a 4to from the second half of the 12th century, containing the Old Icelandic version of *Elucidarius*, is considered to be the oldest extant complete codex in the Icelandic language.<sup>14</sup>

Until the end of the 12th century, it was mostly religious, computistic, and legal material that was written down.<sup>15</sup> In the 13th century, the Poetic Edda and sagas about the Norwegian kings were put into written form, and in the 14th century, even more saga genres.<sup>16</sup> Until the reformation around 1540/1550—a point in time that is commonly used to denote the end of the Middle Ages in Iceland—translations of works in English, Danish, and German appeared in manuscript form too.<sup>17</sup>

There are several reasons why Icelandic manuscript culture is exceptional: The vernacular was used for writing shortly after the introduction of Christianity, manuscripts were produced outside of ecclesiastical centers too, and the introduction of the printing press did not lead to the end of manuscript production.<sup>18</sup>

The first printing press in Iceland was established around 1530 at the seat of the episcopal see Hólar in northern Iceland at the instigation of Bishop Jón Arason (1484–

10 Cf. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2007, 245–246, 249.

11 Cf. Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 13.

12 Cf. Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, iii, no. 2.

13 Cf. Spehr 1929, 170.

14 Cf. Hægstad 1906, 10.

15 Cf. Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 13–14; Sverrir Tómasson 2002, 793–796.

16 Cf. Hreinn Benediktsson 1965, 14–15; Sverrir Tómasson 2002, 796–799.

17 Cf. Stefán Karlsson 1998.

18 Cf. Stefán Karlsson 1999; Sverrir Tómasson 2002; Hufnagel 2016, 118–119; Lethbridge forthcoming.

1550).<sup>19</sup> The first work that left the printing press was the *Breviarium Holense*, printed by the Swedish priest and printer Jón Matthíasson (d. 1567) in 1534; the breviary was deemed lost until two fragmentary leaves were found in a binding of an Icelandic book in the National Library of Sweden in Stockholm.<sup>20</sup> The two leaves bear the foliation “liij” and “liij” as well as text from the *Sanctorale* (texts for fixed feasts).<sup>21</sup> The breviary presumably contained a calendar and the Psalms, and it seems reasonable to assume that it contained the *Temporale* (texts for movable feasts) too, thus covering the whole liturgical year of the Roman Catholic church.<sup>22</sup> It is said to have followed *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, the Norwegian breviary of Niðarós (today Trondheim) from 1519, closely although perhaps it did not contain all the same parts.<sup>23</sup> It is uncertain if any other books were printed in Iceland during the time of Bishop Jón.<sup>24</sup>

His Protestant colleagues in Skálholt, the seat of the diocese in the South, had to resort to printers abroad to publish their books, for example the New Testament printed in Roskilde, Denmark, in 1540.<sup>25</sup> Bishop Jón’s successor published a passional in 1559, which is the oldest surviving complete book printed in Icelandic in Iceland, and perhaps three other books.<sup>26</sup>

The printing press in Iceland came into markedly more use only when Guðbrandur Þorláksson (c. 1542–1627) was consecrated as bishop of Hólar in 1571. He invested a significant amount of money and energy in his printing endeavors, and during his time 100 books were printed; he was closely involved with the production of approximately two thirds of them, either as publisher, author, translator, or as the writer of prefaces.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the most important book that Bishop Guðbrandur published is the *Guðbrandsbiblía* (‘Guðbrandur’s Bible’) from 1584, often called a masterpiece of Icelandic print, with 1250 pages in folio, 29 wood-cut illustrations, numerous wood-cut initials and tail-pieces, and three title pages, one in red and black ink for the Old Testament, and the other two in black for the Prophets and the New Testament.<sup>28</sup> The impact that this Bible made on the Icelandic language, culture, and not least manuscript decoration, was felt for centuries.<sup>29</sup> Bishop Guðbrandur also printed, for the first time in Iceland, a gradual with musical notation in 1594 and the lawbook *Jónsbók*.<sup>30</sup>

19 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, i; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 3–6.

20 Cf. Collijn 1914; Halldór Hermannsson 1916, i–ii, 1–2.

21 Cf. Collijn 1914.

22 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 1–2; Hufnagel 2023, 33.

23 Cf. Collijn 1914; Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 1–2.

24 Cf. Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 573–574.

25 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, ii–iii, 2–7. The Skálholt-diocese includes the South, East, and West of Iceland.

26 Cf. Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 575–578; Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 7–17.

27 Cf. Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 584–585.

28 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 28–35; Guðrún Kvaran 1997.

29 Cf. Bandle 1956; Guðrún Kvaran 1997; Drífa Kristín Prastardóttir 2001.

30 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 45–46.

The latter was first published in 1578 and had a title page in red and black ink; this was the first book in Iceland to be printed in more than one color.<sup>31</sup> Two years later it was reprinted with a few corrections, and a new edition was published around 1620.<sup>32</sup> Apart from the lawbook, the *Morðbréfabæklingar*, three booklets that the bishop wrote for his defense in a court case, and the learned work *Anatome Blefkeniana* that his relative Angrímur Jónsson the Learned had written, all other books were of a religious nature, to be used by the clergy and parishioners, and many of them were reprinted.<sup>33</sup>

Bishop Guðbrandur's grandson and episcopal successor Þorlákur Skúlason (1597–1656) inherited the printing press and continued his grandfather's printing endeavors.<sup>34</sup> He translated, published, and republished approximately 30 books, among them the popular *Fimmtíu heilagar hugvekjur* (*Meditationes sacrae*) by the German theologian Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) in his own translation that was published nine times until 1770, as well as the much less popular *Þorláksbiblíá*, an edition of the Bible that became rather infamous due to its numerous errors, Danizisms, and overall low-quality printing.<sup>35</sup>

In 1639, Brynjólfur Sveinsson (1605–1675), a highly learned man who was particularly interested in history, was consecrated as bishop of Skálholt.<sup>36</sup> He petitioned the king to establish his own printing press and the privilege to print, among others, historical works. His colleague from Hólar, Bishop Þorlákur, however, objected strongly and intervened against the petition, arguing that Iceland was too small and poor a country for two printing presses, and the initial permission for Bishop Brynjólfur was withdrawn.<sup>37</sup> Þorlákur's son, Gísli Þorláksson (1631–1684), followed him as bishop of Hólar and had approximately 40 books printed, including a calendar by his brother Þórður in 1671 and the first edition of the so-called *Passíusálmar* ('Passion Hymns') by the most famous Icelandic Baroque poet, the Rev. Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–1674) in 1666.<sup>38</sup>

After Gísli's passing in 1684, his brother Þórður Þorláksson (1637–1697), bishop of Skálholt, inherited the printing press and brought it from Hólar to Skálholt. During his time, 62 books were printed, among them an Abecedarium in 1695 and three calendars.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the most memorable books from Þórður's printing press are historical

31 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 22–23; Steingrímur Jónsson 1997, 37.

32 Cf. Steingrímur Jónsson 1997.

33 Cf. Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 585–587.

34 There was a long dispute if Guðbrandur bequeathed the printing press to his family or the diocese. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, i–v; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 34–41.

35 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 40–46; Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 587–588.

36 Cf. Gunnar Harðarson 2009, 79–92.

37 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, vi–vii; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 42–45.

38 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 87, 117; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 46–50; Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 589–592.

39 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 100, 116–118; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 51–57; Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 593–594.

works though.<sup>40</sup> Between 1688 and 1690, six books on the history of Iceland, Norway, and Greenland were published.<sup>41</sup>

Þórður's son Brynjólfur Þórðarson inherited the printing press and brought it to his farm, Hlíðarendi í Fljótshlíð, approximately 60 kilometers south-east of Skálholt as the crow flies (and one of the locations in the famous *Njáls saga*). Although he hired a printer and had the royal privilege to print books in 1701, he sold the press to the bishop of Hólar, whence it was brought two years later.<sup>42</sup> It was damaged in a fire in 1709,<sup>43</sup> marking the end of the timespan relevant for this study.

To summarize, until the late 18th century there was only one printing press in all of Iceland, which was furthermore under the auspices of clergymen, and it was almost exclusively theological, religious, and edifying material that was printed.<sup>44</sup> Contrary to common belief, though, this material was also continuously copied by hand. The vast rest of textual material, such as chivalric sagas, annals, or medical handbooks, was transmitted in manuscript form only.<sup>45</sup> There is thus textual material that was transmitted in both manuscript and print as well as textual material that was transmitted in manuscript form only.<sup>46</sup>

Icelandic manuscript production increased considerably after the introduction of the printing press. Of the c. 20 000 surviving manuscripts and fragments, only c. 750 date to the Middle Ages.<sup>47</sup> After a dip around the Reformation, the interest of 16th- and 17th-century Danish and Swedish scholars in Scandinavian and particularly Icelandic historiography and manuscript material led to a renewed manuscript production in Iceland as well as the export of many manuscripts, both medieval and post-medieval.<sup>48</sup> The bulk of Icelandic manuscripts stem from the 18th and 19th century; copying by hand decreased towards the end of the 19th century and came to an end in the early 20th century, when affordable books and the radio became available.<sup>49</sup>

One of the reasons of the long, post-medieval manuscript transmission is the fact that texts were read aloud during the *kvöldvaka* (literally: 'evening wake'), the time during long winter evenings when people did household chores at farms, such as spinning.<sup>50</sup> The post-medieval manuscripts show signs of influence from print, such as title pages.

40 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, viii; Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 595–597.

41 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, x; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 52–54; Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 595–597.

42 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, iv–v; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 57; Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 597.

43 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, v; Klemens Jónsson 1930, 60.

44 Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, viii–xi; Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 597–605.

45 Books printed abroad were to a certain extent available in Iceland, yet only for those with the necessary funds and international networks.

46 I am not aware of any textual genre that existed exclusively in print.

47 Cf. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2007, 245–246, 249; Hufnagel 2021a, 302.

48 Cf. Springborg 1977; Jakob Benediktsson 1981.

49 Cf. Glauser 1994.

50 Cf. Hermann Pálsson 1962; Magnús Gíslason 1977.

### 3 Title Pages

Title pages are a true invention of the printing press.<sup>51</sup> They are separate pages or leaves that divide text from metatext, such as title, author, place, and year of production, and contain at least some form of title or reference to the contents of the texts they precede.<sup>52</sup> They were preceded by blank pages, so-called blank title pages, which decreased after 1485 when the number of so-called label title pages increased.<sup>53</sup> These contained only little information, such as concise information on the book's content, its author, and perhaps also the name of the printer, and were prevalent in the 1480s.<sup>54</sup> Full title pages, including a title, the author, an impressum, and the name of the bookseller, became more numerous in the following decade, and by 1500, title pages had become common features of books.<sup>55</sup> Illustrations appeared on title pages since the 1480s but only became more common after 1500.<sup>56</sup> Blank title pages were presumably used to divide text from metatext or to protect unbound books; illustrated title pages of school books and label title pages were perhaps used to enable easier identification of the books; full title pages were most likely used to advertise and promote.<sup>57</sup>

There are c. 2000 Icelandic manuscripts from the 16th and 17th centuries and the first decade of the 18th century extant, and approximately 12 percent of them contain title pages: 244 manuscripts contain 331 title pages, including 41 manuscripts that contain multiple title pages.<sup>58</sup> When there are multiple title pages in a manuscript, they usually refer to different texts in a multi-text manuscript or to different parts of a manuscript, for example to divide text from metatext.

The earliest title pages in Icelandic manuscripts date to the 16th century; seven manuscripts with legal, rhetorical, theological, and administrative texts—mostly 'ephemeral' text and texts that existed in both handwriting and print—contain between one and three title pages. The title pages divide individual texts in the same manuscript, as well as text from metatext, ease and speed up the identification of texts, and, in one case, act as an expression of scribal devotion and edification. All the manuscripts are connected to highly learned men who almost exclusively belonged

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51 Cf. note 7.

52 Cf. Smith 2000, 15; Rautenberg 2008, 17 who gives a detailed overview of previous scholarship on title pages; Hufnagel 2021b, 304–305. On text and metatext, see Genette 1997.

53 Cf. Rautenberg 2008, 24–26, 34–36.

54 Cf. Smith 2000, 59–74.

55 Cf. Smith 2000, 91–108; Rautenberg 2008, 53–95.

56 Cf. Smith 2000, 109–121; Rautenberg 2008, 52–98.

57 Cf. Smith 2000, 16–22; Rautenberg 2008, 37–38, 48, 96–98 who convincingly refuses the argument of protection—so does Hufnagel 2018, 53.

58 According to my latest count on 22/09/2017. The numbers were certainly different originally, though, because c. 15% of the manuscripts are now damaged at the beginning, and a vast number of manuscripts were rearranged (cf. Stegmann 2017) with a possible, and in some cases known, loss of title pages.

to the upper echelons of society and who were certainly familiar with printed books and title pages.<sup>59</sup>

The number of title pages increases in the 17th century, particularly towards the end of the century and even more between c. 1700 and 1709. This rise reflects the increase of book and manuscript production in the same timeframe, although the increase of books and manuscripts is even steeper. While title pages of the 16th century were clearly connected to highly learned men, title pages and their manuscripts of the 17th century indicate a widening circle of scribes, patrons, readers, and recipients, including women. We find several female recipients and patrons, particularly in devotional manuscripts. Among readers and recipients of some prestigious hymn and prayer books we find, for example, several members of the family of the wealthy and well-educated Jón Arason (1606–1673), including his daughter Ragnheiður Jónsdóttir the Younger (1646–1715), for whom the beautifully decorated SÁM NKS 56 d 8vo was written in 1676.<sup>60</sup>

Handwritten title pages appear rarely in manuscripts with literary texts but more frequently in manuscripts with nonliterary texts, particularly in calendars and administrative, theological, religious, and edifying texts.<sup>61</sup> These were mostly textual genres that were published in print too, which corroborates conclusions about the influence of the printing press on manuscript production. In the following analysis of calendars, we will see, though, that the influence of the new medium of print on the old medium of handwriting was not as simple and linear as the numbers suggest.

## 4 Medieval Handwritten and Early Modern Printed Calendars

Medieval calendars are perpetual, i. e., they could be used every year without changes; they present the days of the months in tabular form, containing feast days and computistic and sometimes also theological notes, as well as information on zodiac signs, the length of days and solar altitude, canicular days, fatal days, etc.<sup>62</sup> Feasts include fixed and moveable feasts as well as universal, regional, and local feasts, which are often distinguished by color; local feasts are of particular importance for localizing calendars and for other historical research.<sup>63</sup> Illuminated calendars commonly depict the

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Hufnagel 2016; Hufnagel 2021b.

<sup>60</sup> E. g., Þórunn Sigurðardóttir 2017; Hufnagel 2018, 80.

<sup>61</sup> Only 4 % of manuscripts with prose literature and 12 % of manuscripts with poetry contain title pages. The latter include hymns though, a textual genre that is closely connected to private devotion, and if these manuscripts were included in the group of religious/devotional manuscripts, the percentage of title pages in poetry manuscripts would drop considerably.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Jansson 1963, col. 90–91.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Gjerløw et al. 1963, cols. 93–97. In Norway, one also distinguished between the feasts according to the fine one had to pay if one broke the peace.

zodiac and/or the most important feast or rural task of the month, the so-called Labor of the Month.<sup>64</sup> The most famous among these cycles is contained in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, the Book of Hours (c. 1412–1416) of John, Duke of Berry.<sup>65</sup> Illuminated calendars are commonly much less splendid, though, and only contain small miniatures, historiated borders, or marginal miniatures; most calendars, however, are not illuminated or illustrated at all.<sup>66</sup> Calendars are often part of liturgical books, such as missals, graduals, breviaries, and sacramentaries, and also of prayer books and law books.<sup>67</sup> Kathryn Rudy argues that the specific production method of calendars, often separately on two quires of three bifolia, may have influenced the modular production of manuscripts, where individual texts and illuminations were copied on separate quires or leaves, which were later compiled into a manuscript codex according to the wishes of the manuscript buyer or patron.<sup>68</sup>

Most medieval Christian calendars begin at either Christmas, March 25th, or Easter and are based on the solar year, which lasts 365 days, 5 hours, and 48 minutes.<sup>69</sup> Solar calendars, however, were difficult to reconcile with lunar religious observation, such as Easter, because the lunar year is slightly shorter; to solve the differences, leap days were introduced.<sup>70</sup> “According to Dionysius [Exiguus, Roman abbot and author of important Easter tables], Easter is to be celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox” unless the full moon falls on a Sunday; in that case, Easter falls on the following Sunday.<sup>71</sup> To rectify the discrepancies between the actual full moon and the computed full moon, calendar reforms were proposed, for example at the Council of Basle (1431–1445) and by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.<sup>72</sup> The Danish-Norwegian kingdom, to which Iceland belonged at the time, switched to the Gregorian Calendar in 1700, omitting 11 days.<sup>73</sup> The discrepancy between the solar and lunar year also influenced the development of annual calendars towards the end of the 15th century.<sup>74</sup>

The prognostic parts of calendars can contain information on astrology, weather conditions, agriculture, and phlebotomy; calendars originated in Germany and spread quickly to Scandinavia, where translations were printed, for example in Denmark

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Jansson, 1963, col. 92; Wieck 1988, 45.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Wieck 1988, 45.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Wieck 1988, 45.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Jansson 1963, col. 89. Even Martin Luther’s 1529 edition of his *Betbüchlein* begins with a calendar, cf. Tersch 2008, 39.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Rudy 2016, 19–25, particularly 24.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Merzbach 1983, 17–19. The Julian year lasted 365 days and 6 hours. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, the year started with 1 January in many almanacs.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Merzbach 1983, 22.

<sup>71</sup> Merzbach 1983, 22.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Merzbach 1983, 22–23.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Árni Björnsson 2000, 16.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Tersch 2008, 20.



in the 16th century.<sup>75</sup> In the 15th century, printed calendars were broadsheets, but towards the end of the century, when annual calendars emerged, printed calendar booklets were produced, providing enough space for every day of the year.<sup>76</sup>

Calendars were a secure source of income for printers, particularly after the Gregorian calendar reform of 1582, and were often aimed at urban tradesmen, merchants, and civil servants.<sup>77</sup> They were sold at fairs and markets too.<sup>78</sup> From the German speaking world we know that calendars were easily affordable in the 17th century, costing approximately one kilogram of bread.<sup>79</sup> They were, in fact, an early and particularly successful mass medium.<sup>80</sup> A multitude of calendars and almanacs have survived in the Western world. A cursory search in the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* led to three xylographic and 34 printed calendars, as well as 50 almanacs for the 15th century.<sup>81</sup> The *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* lists 499 results, most of which are broadsides from Germany.<sup>82</sup> Their survival often depends on chance, however, particularly when taking the high print runs of calendar prints into account.<sup>83</sup>

An important function of calendars and their accompanying prognostic texts was education, as well as political and religious identification.<sup>84</sup> Paul Eber produced, with the help of the famous church reformer Philip Melancthon, a perpetual calendar with exemplars in Latin, printed in Wittenberg in 1550; in the preface the author expresses his hope that young men will benefit from the educational and edifying texts.<sup>85</sup> Genevan Calvinists continued the tradition of producing calendars but substituted saints' feast days with biblical and historical dates, presumably basing their choice of profane dates on the dates that are found in Eber's calendar.<sup>86</sup> In the Low Countries, historical information was added to specific dates in calendars since the late 16th century, often

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Jansson 1963, col. 92. The signs of the zodiac were relevant for bloodletting because they were thought to influence the procedure (Wieck 1988, 46).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Tersch 2008, 20.

<sup>77</sup> E. g. Vermeesch 2019, 208–210 who also cites Jeroen Salman (1999), *Populair drukwerk in de Gouden Eeuw. De almanac als leatuur en handelswaar*, Zutphen, 165, 359–362.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Herbst 2009, 48.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Tersch 2008, 67.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Tersch 2008.

<sup>81</sup> “Kalendarium”, “Almanac” in *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, <https://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de> (accessed 01/10/2021).

<sup>82</sup> “Almanac” in *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue*, [https://data.cerl.org/istc/\\_search?query=almanac%20AND%20data.imprint.geo\\_info.imprint\\_country\\_code.orig%3ADE"%20AND%20data.dimensions.orig%3ABdsde"&from=0](https://data.cerl.org/istc/_search?query=almanac%20AND%20data.imprint.geo_info.imprint_country_code.orig%3ADE) (accessed 01/10/2021).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Bepler/Bürger 1994, 212–213, where they also comment upon the difficulties in locating and identifying calendars due to varying classifications in library systems, e. g., within astronomy or history.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Tersch 2008, particularly 23–30; Herbst 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Tersch 2008, 40–41.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Vermeesch 2019, 211–212 who cites Max Engammare (2004), *L'ordre du temps. L'invention de la ponctualité au XVIe siècle*, Geneva, 128, 133–137.

in relation to the Reformation and the Dutch revolt against the Spanish King; such calendars were often bound with Protestant hymn books and supported the circulation of political and religious ideas.<sup>87</sup> During the 17th century, so-called ‘Schreibkalender’, calendars with space for personal notes, were used not only as guides for everyday life but also as a medium of communication between learned men, particularly astronomers; astronomical information is often hidden between the more typical calendrical contents though.<sup>88</sup> During the Enlightenment, calendars were again used as educational devices for the general public, presenting scientific, meteorological, statistical and mathematical information, and advice.<sup>89</sup>

Many calendars were produced as either broadsides or codices. Notable exceptions from Scandinavia are an illustrated Leporello-fold calendar made of parchment in Denmark in 1513, measuring no more than 50 × 50mm for individual leaves with a total length of 630mm, and a parchment calendar roll from Iceland from c. 1600, measuring 1170 × 630mm.<sup>90</sup>

## 5 Icelandic Medieval Manuscript Calendars and Post-Medieval Printed Calendars

After Iceland converted to Christianity in the year 1000, calendars and the reckoning of time became necessary for establishing the dates for Easter and other moveable feasts.<sup>91</sup> In addition to time reckoning, the inclusion of information on weather, astronomy-astrology, agriculture, and medicine must have made calendars very useful and practical in the eyes of contemporaries. *Computus*, alongside reading, writing, and song, was furthermore a basic practical skill that was part of the clerical curriculum in medieval Iceland.<sup>92</sup> Calendars were used to teach Latin too; many of the extant 14th- and 15th-century manuscripts with computistic, mathematical, and astronomical texts contain both the vernacular and Latin.<sup>93</sup> The “Icelandic treatment of *computus*, calendrical lore, and related material is key evidence for bilingual educational practices”.<sup>94</sup> In the 17th century, authors of almanacs and calendars were educated

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. Vermeesch 2019. Philip Melanchton created a Protestant version of the *Cisioianus*, a mnemonic poem in hexametres to aid the memory of holy days, for Martin Luther’s 1529 Latin version of the *Betbüchlein*, cf. Tersch 2008, 39.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Herbst 2009.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Tersch 2008, 93–99.

<sup>90</sup> Copenhagen, The Royal Danish Library NKS 901 8vo; digital images available at <http://www5.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/765/dan/> (accessed 01/10/2021); SÁM AM 470 12mo; Kålund 1889–1894, vol. 2, 502; Svanhildur María Gunnarsdóttir 2015.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Zirkle 1970, 339.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Patzuk-Russell 2021, 160–167.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Patzuk-Russell 2021, 165.

<sup>94</sup> Patzuk-Russell 2021, 167.

men; even in the 18th century calendars and almanacs formed an important part of basic education, with close connections to the encyclopaedic tradition.<sup>95</sup>

And indeed, computistic material is abundant since the early days of Icelandic Christianity, with influence first from the British Isles and later from the dioceses of Bremen, Lund, and Niðarós (Trondheim).<sup>96</sup> Evidence points to the use of calendars in 1120.<sup>97</sup> The oldest extant Icelandic textual artifact is, as noted above, AM 732a VII 4to, containing an Easter table for the years 1121–1139 and is “unique, [but] impractical for gaining an overview of the [lunar] cycle” since it has 20 dates on the vertical row instead of the common 19 dates of the lunar circle.<sup>98</sup> A well-known Icelandic medieval computus is the so-called *Rím I* (‘Computus I’), contained in full or in part in at least nine manuscripts dating from c. 1200 to c. 1700; its author presumably took information from the computus by Gerlandus, an 11th-century computist who subtracted seven years from the Dionysian era.<sup>99</sup> This computus is part of the so-called *Rímbegla* (‘Computistic Bungle’), a compilation of Latin computistic texts.

The Reformation in 1541/1551 did not immediately put a full stop on feast days.<sup>100</sup> Pentecost became a major feast, and Christmas and Easter were still major feasts, though shortened to three-day feasts.<sup>101</sup> New Year’s Day, Epiphany, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday were still feast days, and so were Candlemas, Annunciation, Visitation, Ascension Day, Midsummer Night, Michaelmas, and All Saints Day; saints’ feast days were to be celebrated on Sundays.<sup>102</sup> Besides the Christian calendar, an older form of calendar was used in which the year was divided into a summer half and a winter half and into lunar months and weeks; this old calendar was used for centuries after Christianization, particularly by farmers and seamen.<sup>103</sup> In a calendar from 1662, for example, January is described as the mid-winter month *Þorri*.<sup>104</sup>

In Iceland, a calendar was presumably included in the first printed book, a breviary from 1534, as is described above, and an almanac from 1576 is sadly lost, making the calendar that was published together with a prayer book by the German theologian and reformer Andreas Musculus (1514–1581), printed in Hólar in 1597, the oldest sur-

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir 2011, 161–203.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Gjerløw et al. 1963, col. 109.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Gjerløw et al. 1963, col. 106.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Zirkle 1970, 341.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *Alfræði íslenzk*, 1–80; Zirkle 1970.

<sup>100</sup> In 1541 Skálholt, the southern diocese, officially accepted the Reformation by signing the Church Ordinance of King Christian III; Hólar, the northern diocese, did so ten years later. Jón Þórarinnsson 2012, ix.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Árni Björnsson 2000, 25.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Árni Björnsson 2000, 25. In 1686, *Kónigsbænadagur* (Dan. *Store Bededag*, ‘All Prayer Day’) was added to the list of holidays, but in 1770, the major feasts were shortened to two-day feasts, and several feast days were abolished.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Árni Björnsson 2000, 15–16.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. SÁM AM 465 12mo, fol. 5r.

viving calendar.<sup>105</sup> This 1597 calendar was presumably edited by Arngrímur Jónsson *lærði* (the Learned, 1568–1648) and modeled on a German calendar; it was reprinted together with Musculus’s prayer book in 1611.<sup>106</sup> A new calendar printed in 1671, again together with Musculus’s prayer book, was compiled by Bishop Þórður Þorláksson (1637–1697).<sup>107</sup> The calendar and prayer book have individual title pages, as well as one common title page, titled “Enchiridion”. A calendar that was valid only for the year 1684 was translated from Danish into Icelandic and printed in Copenhagen.<sup>108</sup> In 1687 another calendar by Bishop Þórður was printed, appended to a prayer book by the German theologian Johannes Andreas Olearius (1639–1684).<sup>109</sup> In 1692 Bishop Þórður printed a new calendar, independent from the 1671 calendar, describing his reasons for printing calendars in the preface: Namely, there is a lack of them in Iceland, even though merchants bring some for their friends, and Danish almanacs are furthermore not entirely suitable for Iceland since they lack information on Icelandic feast days.<sup>110</sup> This calendar was published together with another prayer book by Olearius, which the bishop translated into Icelandic.<sup>111</sup> In 1695, Bishop Þórður printed a broadside calendar.<sup>112</sup> A calendar for Iceland following the Gregorian calendar reform may have been printed in Copenhagen in 1700, a copy of which manuscript collector Árni Magnússon (1663–1730) owned and listed among his books, but no such book is known today.<sup>113</sup> A Gregorian calendar by Jón Árnason (1665–1743) was printed in Hólar in 1707, though,<sup>114</sup> and may be the one that Árni referred to.

All these printed calendars are perpetual, with the exception of the 1684 calendar, and several of them include a *Cisioianus* in Icelandic. Their publication in connection with prayer books is presumably a continuation of medieval manuscript tradition, where calendars formed integral parts of handwritten prayer books, liturgical books, and even law books, as was described above.<sup>115</sup> They provide furthermore no or hardly

**105** Cf. Jansson 1963, col. 93; Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 22, 55.

**106** Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 54. Digital images available at *Bækur*, <https://baekur.is/bok/26c94bac-73ac-4762-9b80-e397057c94f0/0/64>; <https://baekur.is/bok/16ec1d97-21f2-4f91-b1c0-371ce6359610/0/4> (accessed 31/05/2022).

**107** *CALENDARIVM Edur Jslendskt Rijm* 1671. Digital images available at *Bækur*, <https://baekur.is/bok/5ef81fab-b9db-49e3-b3ee-7a7af9e7c0be/0/14> (accessed 31/05/2022).

**108** Cf. Árni Björnsson 2000, 17.

**109** Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 83–84, 118.

**110** Cf. *CALENDARIVM PERPETUUM* 1692, [p. 2]. Digital images available at *Bækur*, <https://baekur.is/bok/e9fe1ea5-e4c9-491a-91ae-1d4f22b06da3/0/4> (accessed 31/05/2022).

**111** Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 84, 117–118.

**112** Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 116.

**113** Cf. Kålund, *Katalog*, vol. 2, 645, no. 379; Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 92.

**114** Cf. *CALENDARIVM GREGORIANUM*. Digital images available at *Bækur*, <https://baekur.is/bok/29d371d8-ac8a-4a74-98fa-1bb6d3691684> (accessed 01/10/2021).

**115** Despite bibliographical information of the calendar’s publication in connection with prayer books, digital images and later rebindings as separate units give the misleading impression that the calendars are ‘single’ or separate books.

any space for handwritten notes, which is in stark contrast to the development of writing calendars with ample space for handwritten texts on the European continent in the early modern period.<sup>116</sup> Why neither annual nor writing calendars emerged in the time period under scrutiny in this study remains an unsolved question. Perhaps wax tablets were still too widespread to warrant writing calendars; it is also possible that the bishops operating the printing press were not interested or were opposed to money making enterprises such as printing annual calendars or deemed it not viable due to Iceland being too small a market, not least since paper may have been too expensive or difficult to obtain for printing ephemeral texts such as annual calendars. Or perhaps the users of printed calendars and almanacs were content with creating their own ‘Schreibkalender’, as surviving print-manuscript hybrids from the 18th and 19th centuries suggest.<sup>117</sup>

The title pages of these printed Icelandic calendars are relatively similar, with the Latin word *Calendarium* printed in Antiqua and the Icelandic text in black letter, as was custom at the time.<sup>118</sup> The text is usually printed in graded letter size, and the paragraphs are centered or justified and in half-diamond indention; most calendars are printed in black ink only. There is little decoration on the title pages, which may be seen in connection with the general shortage of decoration in Icelandic prints and a very limited number of available decorated letter types of the Icelandic printing press. The title page of the 1597 calendar has a tailpiece that is found frequently in other books, though rather in the textblock than on title pages; the 1671 and 1707 calendars have a few letters that resemble simple pen-flourished initials. Only the 1697 calendar is somewhat different since its title page is printed in red and black ink and sports a printer’s device—something rather unusual for the pre-modern Icelandic printing press that commonly substituted printer’s devices with edifying and uplifting Bible verses.<sup>119</sup> The 1671 calendar may serve as typical example (see Fig. 1).

To sum up, there were indeed printed calendars and almanacs available in Iceland since the end of the 16th century. But because we do not know the print runs—print runs were presumably between 500 and 700 in the second quarter of the

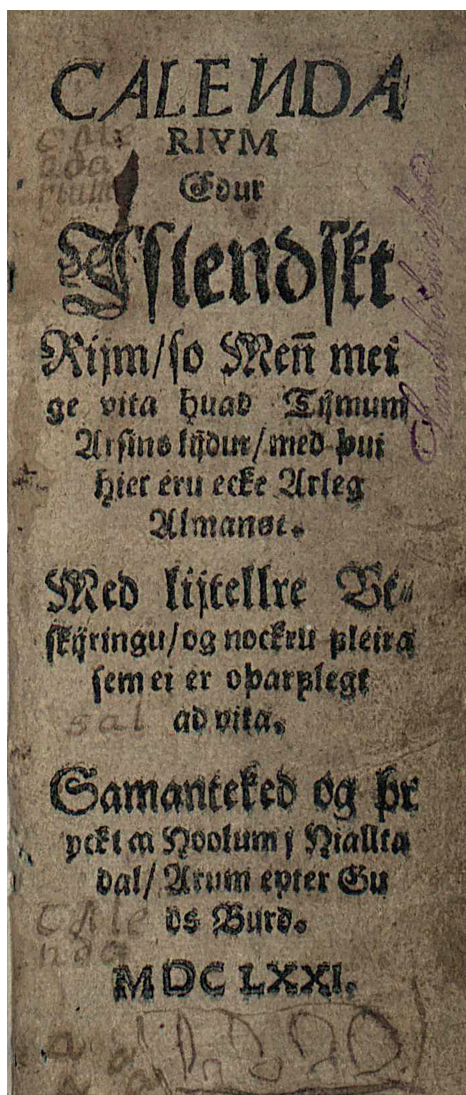
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**116** I am furthermore not aware of so-called writing tables, calendars with pages treated with gesso or gesso-like substances to provide erasable leaves, similar to wax tablets, as Stallybras et al. 2004 describe.

**117** Guðrún Ingólfssdóttir 2011, 191–192 mentions such hybrids, almost none of which were catalogued at the time of her publication. Several can be found in the online catalogue *Handrit.is* (s. d.) now, e. g. Reykjavík, National and University Library of Iceland ÍB 2 a 8vo for the years 1794–1799, “ÍB 2 a 8vo”, <https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/IB08-0002-a/0#mode/2up> (accessed 01/10/2021).

**118** Cf. Loftur Guttormsson 2014.

**119** Cf. Hufnagel 2017. Some 17th-century books contain printers’ devices, though. The 1611 calendar is excluded in the analysis of the layout because the digitised copy is defective at the beginning and complete copies were unavailable. The text of the 1611 calendar is transcribed in Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 14 though. The 1597 calendar title page does not contain an imprint.



CALENDARIVM

Edur

Íslendskt

Rijm/so Menñ mei  
ge vita huad Tijmum  
Arsins lijdur/med þui  
hier eru ecke Arleg  
Almanøc.

Med listellre Vt-  
skjringu/og nockru fleira  
sem ei er oparflegt  
ad vita.

Samanteked og þr  
yckt æ Hoolum j Hiallta  
dal/Arum epter Gu  
ds Burd.

MDC LXXI.

(‘*Calendarium* or Icelandic time reckoning, so men may know what times of the year go by because there are no annual almanacs here. With a short explanation and some more [information] that is not useless to know. Composed and printed at Hólar in Hjaltadalur in the year 1671 AD.’)

Fig. 1: *CALENDARIVM*, printed at Hólar in Hjaltadalur, 1671, Ai, title page.

17th century<sup>120</sup>—we do not know how widespread they were. Considering the shortage of almanacs and calendars that Bishop Þórður mentions, they were doubtlessly sought-after. Beside Bishop Þórður’s statement, there is compelling evidence of a need for almanacs. As is stated on the title pages of the 1597 and 1671 calendars, they were printed because there were no annual calendars available in Iceland. The rather large

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Jakob Benediktsson 1988. The 1589 hymn book was printed in 375 copies, the 1584 Bible in 500 copies. Reykjavík, National Archives of Iceland Bps B VIII 2, fol. 111r (p. 239), fol. 6r (no pagination); J[ón] Þ[orkelsson] 1912, 19; Einar G. Pétursson 2006, 581.



number of calendar editions is perhaps further evidence that calendars were much needed. Within a timespan of c. 180 years, presumably nine calendars were printed in Iceland for a population of perhaps 50 000–70 000. In comparison, the shorter version of Martin Luther's *Catechism* was printed in five editions in the 17th century.<sup>121</sup> But either because of this shortage, or perhaps despite the availability of printed almanacs, the manuscript transmission did not break off after the introduction of the printing press in Iceland. There was a tradition of printed almanacs and calendars as well as a tradition of handwritten ones in Iceland for centuries.

## 6 Icelandic Post-Medieval Manuscript Calendars

There are at least 59 surviving 16th- and 17th-century Icelandic manuscripts containing calendars, some of which also contain other texts. Several calendars were once part of other manuscripts, though in most cases nothing is known of their provenance.<sup>122</sup> Most of them are in small formats, such as 8vo and 12mo; only four are in folio and nine in 4to.<sup>123</sup> The ratio of parchment manuscripts among calendars is surprisingly high. Only approximately one tenth of all surviving 16th- and 17th-century manuscripts are written on parchment, but 22, or more than one third, of the calendars are written on parchment. Four of them are palimpsests—a recycled parchment where previous text was scraped off and new text written on—and one is in rotulus-form instead of a codex-form, as mentioned above. The reason for this high ratio must be in connection with the age of the parchment manuscripts. The use of paper for manuscripts increased only in the second half of the 16th century,<sup>124</sup> and half of the parchment calendars are from the 16th century.

Of the 59 calendar manuscripts, 23 contain one or more title pages, three manuscripts contain two title pages, and one contains three. All 23 manuscripts are from between the early 17th century and 1706. Only six are vaguely dated to either the 17th century or the second half of the 17th century, while the rest state the year of production, the earliest being from 1633. Ten of the calendar manuscripts with title pages are in 12mo or smaller—the catalogues do not distinguish between 12mo and smaller formats—ten are in 8vo, and only two are in 4to, none in folio. Most of them are written on paper. Only three manuscripts are written on parchment, one of which is a palimpsest, and a fourth manuscript comprises a mixture of paper and parchment.

For 13 calendars, the scribes or the place of production are known, and four contain a colophon. Several of the known scribes had formal education. The Rev. Gísli Bjarnason (1576–1656), pastor at Staður in Grindavík in South Iceland, was, for exam-

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Halldór Hermannsson 1916, 15–16, 19–20; Halldór Hermannsson 1922, 63–66.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Gjerløw et al. 1963, col. 106.

<sup>123</sup> The format of two manuscripts is unknown.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Hufnagel 2023.



ple, provost, a good poet, and a very learned man, particularly in the field of astronomy-astrology; he translated a calendar from Danish and created his own calendar.<sup>125</sup> Sigurður Torfason (c. 1629–1670) graduated from the Latin school in Skálholt too and studied in Copenhagen; for some time he was pastor in Skálholt.<sup>126</sup> There, he wrote his copy of the Rev. Gísli's calendar, now SÁM AM 184 I 8vo, in 1661. Þórður Sveinsson (1623–1667) went to the Latin school in Skálholt too and worked later for Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson; he had excellent knowledge of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, mathematics, and astronomy, and he also compiled a calendar, which will be discussed below.<sup>127</sup> The autograph of his calendar, including a title page, is still extant: Reykjavík, National and University Library of Iceland Lbs 580 8vo from 1665. While it is not entirely certain that Þórður wrote his calendar for his own personal use, Sigurður certainly did, as can be ascertained from later additions in his hand. Other calendars were written for third parties, for example SÁM AM 465 12mo, described below.

Stockholm, National Library of Sweden Stock. papp. 8vo nr. 18 is a copy of the calendar printed in 1671. The text of its title page follows the printed calendar closely, with only minor orthographic differences and an adjusted scribal clause, which reads *Vppbiriad Ad Skiffastt Pann 7. April Anno. M.D.C. LXX III.* ('Begun to be written on 7 April anno 1673'). The paragraphs are written centered and in half-diamond indentation just like the printed calendar, and even the line breaks are in most cases the same as on the printed title page. The manuscript features, however, more decoration, even though the script emulates the print types, including the mirrored N. The main strokes of the capitals in the first line contain hairlines. The initial in the fourth line (J in *Jslendsktt* ['Icelandic']) has two three-piece brackets, and its pen-flourishes extend over the whole line. Initials in other paragraphs contain some sort of pen-flourishes too. Taken as a whole, this title page is more decorated than most calendar title pages and is more similar to title pages of hymn books and manuscripts and other edifying books and manuscripts.<sup>128</sup> And indeed, the second text in this manuscript, with its own visually similar title page, is the *Diarium Christianum* by the Rev. Hallgrímur Pétursson (1614–1674), a meditative work to reflect on God's daily works and to guide readers spiritually through the days of the week.<sup>129</sup> Despite the text and some features of the layout of the title page, the scribe seems to consider the medium of his exemplar secondary. By adding a high level of decoration, the anonymous scribe of this manuscript secured his calendar safely in the sphere of daily devotion and edification.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Páll Eggert Ólason 1919–1926, vol. 4, 368.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Páll Eggert Ólason 1919–1926, vol. 4, 272.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Páll Eggert Ólason 1919–1926, vol. 5, 114; Thoroddsen 1898, 71, 73–74.

<sup>128</sup> For an analysis of title pages in hymn manuscripts and books, see Hufnagel 2018; Hufnagel 2021b, 313–326, 335–337.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Margrét Eggertsdóttir 2014, 447–473.

The scribe of SÁM AM 175 8vo seems to have had different intentions. This manuscript is a miscellany written in several hands in the 17th century, containing a calendar and a medicinal text.<sup>130</sup> The title page of the calendar looks similar to the print editions from 1591 and 1611. The title, *CALENDARIUM Rym á islensku* ('Calendarium. Time Reckoning in Icelandic'), is the same as the 1611 edition, the following *So menn mættu uita huad tíjmun ärsenz líjður* ('So men may know what times of the year go by') is the same as the 1591 edition, and the remainder follows the 1611 edition with only minor variants. As in the 1591 edition, there is no information on the year or place of production. The first line of the manuscript title page is written in red ink, and the second and third lines are highlighted in green.<sup>131</sup> The paragraphs are written centered and in half-diamond indentation, or rather tapered down, the Latin title is written in Antiqua-style capitals, the third line is written in black letter-style, and the script size is graded. The text area is framed with a single line drawn in black ink. Frames on title pages were extremely rare in 16th- and 17th-century Icelandic books though. The content of the calendar adds further doubts to the possibility of a printed exemplar. To take January as example, the header in AM 175 8vo reads *Januaris habet dies XXXI* ('January has 31 days'), whereas the printed editions have headers in Icelandic. The Domincal Letters are in the second column and the column for the days of the month are in the third column in the manuscript, whereas the printed editions have the opposite order of columns. The Golden Numbers for January in the manuscript correlate with the 1591 edition, but the entries for saints' feast days do not coincide with any of the editions. Both red and black ink are used in the manuscript, but the editions, with the exception of the 1692 edition, make use of only black ink. Taking all this information together, it seems that AM 175 8vo is rooted in learned tradition and either followed no printed exemplar or modified a printed exemplar beyond easy recognition. The title page, however, gives a different impression, and were it not for the single-line frame, the title page would seem to emulate or copy a printed book. It remains unknown if this is the impression that the scribe of the title page and the calendar intended.

Several of the manuscripts with title pages contain the *Computus mensium et dierum anni solaris* by the above-mentioned Rev. Gísli Bjarnason. There are at least 24 extant manuscripts that are connected to him; most of them contain texts that he penned, and half of them contain his calendar.<sup>132</sup> He first wrote a calendar in 1630 and revised and added to it in 1646, 1648, 1649, and 1655.<sup>133</sup> The title page of his 1646 autograph manuscript SÁM AM 180 8vo (see Fig. 2) reads:<sup>134</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Kålund, *Katalog*, vol. 2, 432–433.

<sup>131</sup> The green coloring may be a later addition.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Kålund, *Katalog*; Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá*.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Páll Eggert Ólason 1919–1926, vol. 4, 368.

<sup>134</sup> The Translation of the Bible verses are taken from the King James Version.

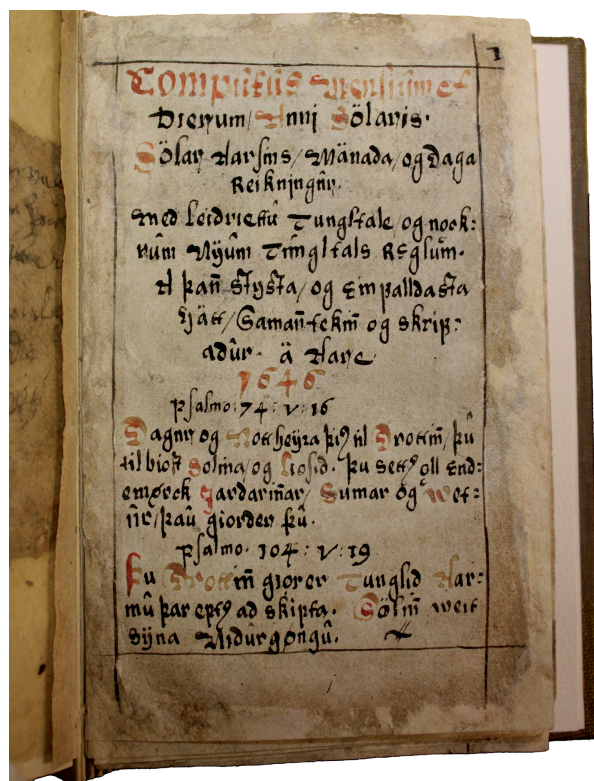


Fig. 2: SÁM AM 180 8vo, fol. 1r, title page.

Computus mensium et  
Dierum/ Annj Sölaris.

Sölar Aarsins/Mänada/og Daga  
Reiknjngur.

Med Leidriettu Tungltale/og nock:  
rum Nijum Tungltals Reglum.  
A þann stysta/ og einfalldasta  
Hätt/Samanntekinn og skrif:  
adur. ä Aare

1646

Psalmo: 74:V:16

Dagur og Nott heijra þier til Drottinn/þu  
tilbiost Solina/og Liosid. þu setter öll End:  
emörck Jardarinnar/ Sumar og Vet:  
ur/þau giorder þu.

Psalmo. 104:V:19

þu Drottinn giorer Tunglid Aar:  
inu þar eptir ad skipta. Sölinn veit  
Sijna Nidurgöngu.

(*Computus mensium et dierum, anni solaris.* Reck-  
oning of the solar year, months, and days. With  
corrected lunar computation and some new rules  
for lunar computation. Composed and written in  
the shortest and simplest way in the year 1646.  
Psalm 74, verse 16. The day is thine, the night also  
is thine: Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.  
Psalm 104, verse 19. He appointed the moon for  
seasons: The sun knoweth his going down.)

Copies of the Rev. Gísli Bjarnason's calendars are found in at least eight manuscripts with title pages. SÁM AM 732a III 4to is a copy of the earliest version of the calendar from 1630, and its title page stands out insofar as it may reveal the original title of that version.<sup>135</sup> The title starts with *DIARIUM ANNUUM Þad er Daga Tal Sier hvors ars Og Tyma Reykjningur arlegur* ('*Diarium annuum*. This is a calendar for each year and an annual time reckoning'). The rest of the title page, which is written in red, green, and black ink, is very similar to AM 180 8vo and other copies of the calendar. It thus stands to reason that this title was written onto a title page of the 1630 version by the Rev. Gísli and that this version was copied in AM 732a III 4to; the Rev. Gísli then used a different title in his revised versions. Most of the manuscript copies of the Rev. Gísli's *Computus mensium* follow the revised title closely. They usually state the author of the calendar, though often only with initials, and when he created—or, rather, edited—it, and they commonly also cite the two Bible verses that the Rev. Gísli put onto his title page. Only two of the manuscripts state when or by whom the copy was written. SÁM AM 170 8vo was written in 1661 and incidentally leaves out the Bible verses, and AM 184 I 8vo was written by the above-mentioned Sigurður Torfason in Skálholt in 1661.

The layout of these title pages is relatively uniform too. Usually the first line of the title, containing a part, but never all, of the Latin title, is written in capitals, often in red ink and often in a script similar to Antiqua. The third or fourth line, containing the part of the title in Icelandic, is often written in larger letters and in a book hand that is similar to black letters. Sometimes the first line of the following paragraph is written in the same style. If the Latin title is written in red ink, either the Bible citations or some lines of the Bible verses are written in red ink too. The paragraphs with the title are written centered and either in half-diamond indentation or tapered down. The Bible verses are often justified. Only two manuscripts, besides the author's autograph, have a single-line frame: AM 170 8vo and AM 465 12mo.

It is somewhat surprising that the layout of the handwritten calendar title pages is more similar to printed calendar title pages, particularly due to script types that are similar to black letters. SÁM AM 179 8vo may serve as an example of this, although this manuscript stands out for other reasons. A comparison of the calendar's content with AM 180 8vo from 1646 suggests that it is probably a copy of the 1646 version of the calendar with modifications.<sup>136</sup> While a few manuscripts mention when their exemplar was written, only this manuscript and AM 465 12mo mention that their exemplar was revised or corrected. Presumably, the scribe of AM 179 8vo wanted to emphasize the relevance and topicality of the calendar, thereby stressing the authority of the Rev. Gísli. The most pronounced modification of this title page is, however, the text on the title page. It reads:

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Kálund, *Katalog*, vol. 2, 157. This manuscript also contains a printed copy of the 1695 calendar in broadside-format.

<sup>136</sup> All of the examined calendars show some degree of modification, for example by additional saints' feast days or astrological information.

## CALENDARIVM

Ríjm a Jslandskv  
ad vita Huad ärsins  
tymum Lydur.

Merkelega Endurbæ  
tt og Lagfært af S. Gys  
la BiarnaSine Säluga  
profaste J Grindar vijk.

Psalmo 74:

Dagur og Nott heira þier  
Drottenn til, þu tilbiöst Solena  
og liosed þu setter øll ende-  
mørk Jardarennar Sumar  
Vetur giorder þu

(‘*Calendarium*. Time reckoning in Icelandic to know what times of the year go by. Remarkably added and corrected by the late Rev. Gísli Bjarnason, provost in Grindavík. Psalm 47, verse 16. The day is thine, the night also is thine: Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.’)<sup>137</sup>

The Bible verse is the same as on the other title pages of the Rev. Gísli’s calendar copies; however, the title and the reference to the revised version are not. The Latin title and its translation and explanation in AM 179 8vo are, in fact, an almost verbatim copy of the printed calendars, and the layout of the title page is similar to both manuscript copies and printed calendars. The scribe may have wished to emulate a book not just by emulating the typical layout of books but also by copying the title of printed Icelandic calendars that were published together with prayer books. Perhaps he or she wanted to place the calendar in the visual sphere of edifying literature. Similarly, other scribes that copied the calendar by the Rev. Gísli may have wanted to connect the calendar with printed devotional literature by using a script and title page layout similar to print types and book layouts.

The scribe of AM 465 12mo, however, may have had several intentions when penning the manuscript. This manuscript, which was written in 1662 for Sæmundur Oddsson (1633–1687), contains the Rev. Gísli’s *Computus* on 57 parchment leaves.<sup>138</sup> Sæmundur studied at the University of Copenhagen and, upon his return to his native Iceland, worked two years for Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson and two years for the magistrate (*fógeti*, the most senior representative of the king) Tómas Nikulásson; he then lived for a while with his parents, before he received the vicarage at Hítardalur in West Iceland in 1671.<sup>139</sup> He came from a rich family, his father Oddur Þorleifsson being nicknamed *ríki* (‘the Wealthy’),<sup>140</sup> and presumably also an influential family, since he

<sup>137</sup> SÁM AM 180 8vo, fol. 1r. Translation of the Bible verses taken from the King James Version.

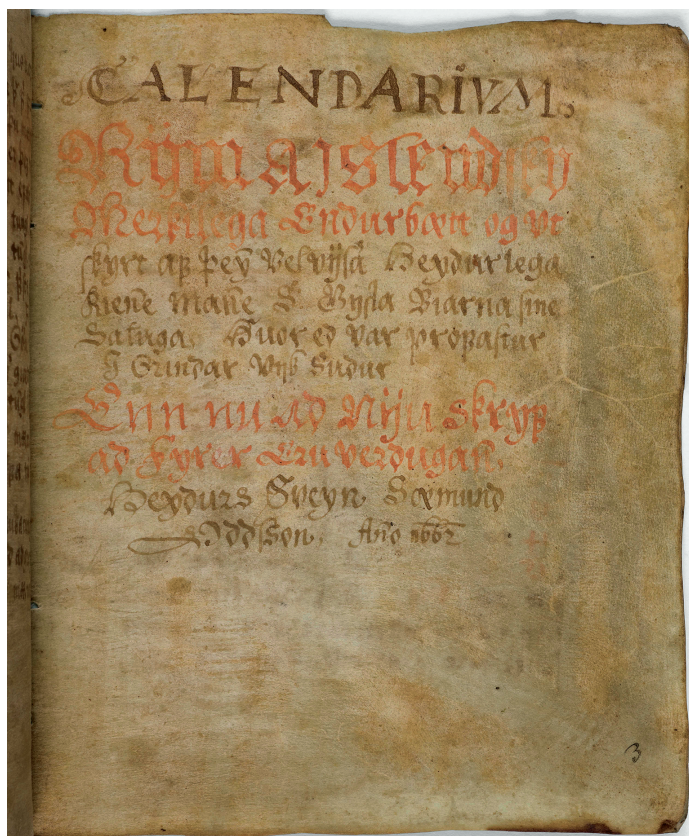
<sup>138</sup> Cf. Kålund, *Katalog*, vol. 2, 500. Digital images are available at “AM 465 12mo” in *Handrit.is*, <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/is/AM12-465> (accessed 01/10/2021).

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, vol. 4, 385–386. His eulogy is found in Reykjavík, National and University Library of Iceland JS 400 8vo.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, vol. 4, 24.



worked for people who held some of the highest ecclesiastical and administrative-political positions of the country: a bishop and the magistrate. AM 465 12mo contains not one but two title pages. On fol. 2r we find a title page in red and black ink that is very similar to the other *Computus*-title pages, apart from its single-line frame in red ink. On fol. 4r, after the introduction, we find the second title page (see Fig. 3), which reads:



**Fig. 3:**  
SÁM AM 465 12mo,  
fol. 4r, second title  
page.

CALENDARIVM.  
Rijm a islendskv  
Merkilega Endurbætt og vt  
skyrt af þeym Velvijsare Heydurlega  
Kiene Manne Sera Gjysla Biarnasine  
Saluga. Huor ed var profastur  
J Grindar Vijk Sudur

Enn nu Ad Niju skryf  
ad Fyrer Eru Verdugastan  
Heydurs Sveyn Sæmund  
Oddsson Anno 1662

(‘*Calendarium*. Time reckoning in Icelandic. Added and explained in a remarkable manner by the very wise teacher, the late Rev. Gísli Bjarnason, who was provost in Grindavík in the South. And now again written for the worthiest man of honor Sæmundur Oddsson, Anno 1662.’)

While the first title page on fol. 2r positions the calendar within edifying and uplifting religious literature, the second title page on fol. 4r serves several functions. First, by its position between the preface or introduction and the calendar itself, it divides text from metatext. Second, it uses the title page to laud both the author of the calendar and the patron of the manuscript. In this sense, this title page is perhaps also used to promote and advertise with the hope of ‘increasing sales’ or, rather, to increase the scribe’s chances of further employment and work.

## 7 Conclusion

The arrival of the printing press did not lead to the end of manuscript production in Iceland—or elsewhere—and handwritten textual transmission increased in post-medieval times well into the 19th century. Icelandic manuscript and print culture were closely connected, and this connection goes far beyond the commonly assumed linear development of manuscript → print → handwritten copies of prints, as this study has shown. Post-Gutenberg Icelandic manuscripts show influence from the printing press, for example by containing chirographic title pages. The existence of manuscript title pages is per se an indication of influence from the printing press. This influence becomes more tangible when the age of manuscript title pages is taken into account, for example when analyzing handwritten and printed calendars. The first printed calendar was produced as late as 1534, with more having been printed since the late 16th century; however, the manuscript calendars featuring a title page are all from the 17th century. Calendars printed in Iceland during the 16th and 17th centuries were perpetual and usually printed in connection with prayer books or other devotional books. This Icelandic printing tradition seems to be a continuation of the medieval tradition, where handwritten prayer books contained perpetual calendars in their first part.

The manuscript calendars from the same timeframe seem to be perpetual too—at least the ones with title pages that were analyzed in this study. However, their connection to devotional literature is in most cases unknown. Many manuscripts were altered, divided up into single parts, and combined with other codicological units after their production, which obscures their possible origin; several of them could have preceded manuscripts containing prayers or hymns, alas, this remains uncertain. More clear, however, is the connection between calendars and learned people. Most of the calendar authors, as well as the known scribes of handwritten calendars, had some type of formal education, and in several cases university education and a deep understanding and interest of astronomy. This can surely be expected at a time when reading and writing abilities were not universal and when authors of calendars on the European continent were often highly learned too.

In this study it has become clear that there is no ‘separate’ manuscript calendar tradition in the sense that handwritten and printed calendars follow separate developments. On the contrary, it seems that both printed and handwritten time reckoning



continue medieval traditions in some, albeit different, ways. Manuscript calendars are continuously created and copied throughout the early modern period, and many of them seem to follow their own scribal tradition, for example the manuscript copies of the Rev. Gísli Bjarnason's calendar. The manuscript title pages, however, are often similar to the layout of printed calendar title pages. Based on the known scribes and their educational backgrounds, calendars belong to the sphere of learning, even though computistic knowledge was essential for the general public too. Only in a few instances is it known that manuscript calendars are connected to devotional literature. Both manuscript and printed calendars are perpetual. Printed calendars were created by learned men too; however, they are certainly closely connected to devotional literature.

Even though the existence of chirographic title pages is per se a sign of the influence of print on manuscript tradition, this influence is limited. A variety of functions of title pages as well as diverse scribal intentions can be detected. Very often title pages serve as a division between text and metatext, as well as a short introduction of the text that follows; in some cases, the author or patron is mentioned. Some scribes seemed to wish to emulate books with their handwritten title pages, others presumably wished to place their calendars in the sphere of private devotion and edification by employing a specific layout, and still others used the title page as a place of praise for the author and patron, of validating the authority and correctness of the text, and also of advertisement or self-advertisement. By praising the author, the authority of the author is emphasized. By praising the patron, the scribe hoped perhaps for future employment.

The analysis of handwritten title pages in calendar manuscripts demonstrates the long and varied life of Icelandic manuscript transmission. It also proves the Icelanders' willingness to take up features of new media into existing media and their ability and creativity to adapt these new features. With this analysis we gain an additional, more nuanced insight into the cultural past of Iceland and into the complex and long-lasting relationships between manuscript and print.

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- Lbs 580 8vo

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SÁM: Reykjavík, The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies:

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- AM 732 a III 4to
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Fig. 3: *SÁMAM* 465 12mo, fol. 4r, second title page. © The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies with friendly permission.