

INTRODUCTORY (ICELANDIC) CODICOLOGY

(Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir with material from Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, Lena Liepe, Michelle P. Brown)

1. VOCABULARY

Bifolia [ísl. ‘tvinn’]: See “Conjoint Leaves”.

Codex: In the most general definition, a codex is a collection of sheets of any material, fastened together at the back or spine and usually protected by covers. Medieval codices are constructed of gatherings of conjoint leaves.

Conjoint Leaves: A piece of parchment folded in half to produce four writing surfaces.

Conjugate Leaves: See “Conjoint Leaves”.

Decorated initial: Initial where the decoration consists only of foliage or other non-figural and non-zoomorphic elements.

Duodecimo: Duodecimo refers to the size of a manuscript. A duodecimo-size manuscript is made from pieces of parchment that are cut into sixths, and then each sixth is folded in half. This divides the piece of parchment in twelve, hence the term duodecimo, from the Latin in duodecimo (“in twelfth”).

Flesh Side [ísl. ‘holdrosi’], *Hair Side* [ísl. ‘háramur’]: Parchment often retains the characteristic features of the animal pelt it was made from. The hair side of a piece of parchment is the side that was the outside of the animal, as can be seen from the hair follicles. The flesh side of a piece of parchment was the inner side of the animal’s skin.

Foliation [ísl. ‘blaðmerking’]: The system of identifying the leaves of a manuscript by giving each leaf a number and additionally specifying recto to identify the leaf’s upper side or verso to identify the leaf’s lower side. See also “Recto” and “Verso”.

Folio (1): Folio refers to the size of a manuscript. A folio-size manuscript is made from pieces of parchment that are folded in half.

Folio (2): See “Leaf”.

Gathering [ísl. ‘kver’]: A booklet made of a stack of conjoint leaves sewn together through the fold.

Gryllus: A two-legged monster with an animal or human head.

Hair Side: See “Flesh Side”.

Hierarchy: The ranking of the decorative elements in an illuminated manuscript according to formal or functional degrees of importance, from full-page miniatures to small penflourished initials or lombards. Initials are ordered in an internal hierarchy from major to minor and small, depending on how many lines they cover. The status of an initial is further distinguished by its level of decoration: (in falling order) historiated, inhabited, decorated and pen-flourished.

Historiated initial [ísl. sögustafur]: Initial containing figures or scenes that relate to the text.

Illumination [ísl. ‘lýsing’]: A picture in a codex. Illuminations may be placed anywhere on the page (e.g., in a margin, within the text area, or replacing the text entirely).

Inhabited initial: An initial that contains human or animal figures but not an identifiable narrative scene (which is a historiated initial).

Initial [ísl. ‘upphafsstafur’]: A large letter that marks the beginning of a block of text. A codex may make use of initials of different sizes to distinguish between blocks of text of different importance (e.g., the first chapter, remaining chapters). Initials are classified by their ornamentation, cf. lombard, pen-flourishing, decorated initial, inhabited initial, historiated initial.

Laid Lines: Closely-placed parallel lines visible in most papers, resulting from the wires used to string the wooden frame in which the paper was moulded.

Leaf [ísl. ‘blað’]: The single sheet of writing material that the reader turns over to progress through the manuscript.

Lombard: Plain, undecorated monochrome initial of the lowest degree.

Manuscript [ísl. ‘handrit’]: A codex made by hand.

Miniature (from lat. *miniare*, to colour red): An independent illustration that is not incorporated into another element: full-page or half-page or, if occupying (part of) a column, a column picture.

Octavo: Octavo refers to the size of a manuscript. An octavo-size manuscript is made from pieces of parchment that are cut into quarters, and then each quarter is folded in half. This divides the piece of parchment in eight, hence the term octavo, from the Latin *in octavo* (“in eighth”).

Palimpsest [ísl. ‘uppskafningur’]: A reused writing support material from which the underlying text has been erased. In the case of parchment this was usually done by scraping.

Parchment, Vellum [ísl. ‘bókfell’]: The terms parchment and vellum are often used interchangeably, but strictly speaking, parchment is a support made from sheep, goat, or other animal skin, whereas vellum is a support made from calf skin.

Pen-flourishing: Linear embellishment of geometric or foliate motifs, produced with a thin pen and either text ink or coloured inks.

Pricking: The practice of making small holes in a piece of parchment to establish where the guidelines for the writing will be drawn. See also “Ruling”.

Quarto: Quarto refers to the size of a manuscript. A quarto-size manuscript is made from pieces of parchment that are cut in half, and then each half is folded in half. This divides the piece of parchment into quarters, hence the term quarto, from the Latin *in quarto* (“in quarter”).

Quire: See “Gathering”.

Recto: The upper side of a leaf. In an open manuscript, the recto is the page on the right. In foliation, recto is abbreviated as “r”.

Rubric [ísl. ‘fyrirsögn’]: A heading at the start of a unit of text such as a chapter. Usually it consists of a few words indicating the subject of the text, and usually it is written in red, hence the term rubric, from Latin *rubrica terra* (“red earth”), the name of the colorant.

Ruling: Lines on a piece of parchment that indicate where the writing is to be put down on the page.

Singleton [ísl. ‘stakt blað’]: A leaf in a gathering that is one page in size, not half of a conjoint pair.

Support: The material (e.g., paper) used to write on.

Text Area [ísl. ‘textaflötur, skrifflötur’]: The space on a page that encloses the writing.

Text Block [ísl. ‘textablokk’]: The sewn-together gatherings of a codex.

Tipping In: The insertion of a single leaf into a gathering.

Vellum: See “Parchment”.

Verso: The lower side of a leaf. In an open manuscript, the verso is the page on the left. In foliation, verso is abbreviated as “v”.

Zoomorphic initial: An initial where the body of the letter is composed of animal forms.

2. ABBREVIATIONS OF THE NAMES OF COLLECTIONS OF MANUSCRIPTS

Access. or Acc. = Accessoria. Additional manuscripts in the Arnamagnæan Collection; these are mostly in the Arnamagnæan Collection at the University of Copenhagen but a few are at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík.

AM (Arnamagnæan / Árna Magnússonar / Arnamagnæanske) These manuscripts were collected by the Icelandic philologist Árni Magnússon (1663-1730). Some of these manuscripts are in the Arnamagnæan Collection at the University of Copenhagen, but many are now at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík.

DG or Upps. D-G The De la Gardie collection in the library of the University of Uppsala

DKNVS (Det kongelige norske videnskabers selskab) The library of the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences in Trondheim

EDV (E donatione variorum) A classification used by the library of the University of Copenhagen

GKS or Gl. kgl. sml. (Gammel kongelig samling) “The Old Royal Collection” in the Royal Library in Copenhagen. Some of these manuscripts are now at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík.

Holm or Stock or Stokkh The Royal Library in Stockholm. The manuscripts there are classified as Perg (Parchment) and Papp (Paper).

ÍB The collection of Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag (the Icelandic Literary Society, Copenhagen branch), now in the National Library in Reykjavík

ÍBR The collection of Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag (the Icelandic Literary Society, Reykjavík branch), now in the National Library in Reykjavík

JS The Jón Sigurðsson collection in the National Library in Reykjavík

KB Add. (Det Kongelige Bibliotek — Additamenta) Additional manuscripts in the Royal Library in Copenhagen. Some of these are now at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík.

KG The Konráð Gíslason collection. Most of these manuscripts are now at the Árni Magnússon Institute, but a few are in the Arnamagnæan Collection at the University of Copenhagen.

Lbs (Landsbókasafn) The National Library in Reykjavík

NKS or Ny. kgl.sml. (Ny kongelig samling) “The New Royal Collection” in the Royal Library in Copenhagen. Some of these manuscripts are now at the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík.

NRA (Norges Riksarkiv) The Norwegian State Archives in Oslo

Rask The Rasmus Rask collection in the Arnamagnæan Collection at the University of Copenhagen

Tho The Thott collection in the Royal Library in Copenhagen

UBO (Universitets bibliotek i Oslo) The library of the University of Oslo

Uld The Uldall collection in the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

3. MANUSCRIPTS WITH NAMES

Many Icelandic manuscripts have their own names, which may occur in both Icelandic and Latinized forms. The names may derive from some aspect of the book itself (e.g., *Morkinskinna* [“Rotten skin”], *Eirspennill* [“Brass clasp”]), an owner (e.g., *Hauksbók*, which was owned and largely written by Haukur Erlendsson), the place where it was owned or acquired (e.g., *Flateyjarbók*, which was acquired on Flatey), or its contents (e.g., *Kringla*, which contains a copy of *Heimskringla*).

Arnarbælisbók (AM 135 4to): second half 14th c.; laws.

Belgsdalsbók (AM 347 fol): second half 14th c. or ca. 1400; laws.

Bergsbók (Stock. perg. fol. nr. 1): second half 14th c.; Óláfr sagas.

Bæjarbók (AM 73b fol): third quarter 14th c.; Óláfs saga helga.

Codex Frisianus: See “Fríssbók”.

Codex Regius (GKS 2365 4to): ca. 1270; the Poetic Edda.

Codex Scardensis (SÁM 1): ca. 1350-1375; apostles’ sagas. Not to be confused with *Skarðsbók* (AM 350 fol), for which see below.

Codex Uppsaliensis (Upps. D-G no. 11): c. 1300; *Snorra Edda*.

Codex Wormianus: See “Ormsbók”.

Eirspennill (AM 47 fol): first half 14th c.; kings’ sagas.

Fagrskinna: Now known only in 17th c. copies; kings’ sagas.

Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol): 1384-1395; kings’ sagas and much else.

Fríssbók (AM 45 fol): ca. 1325; kings’ sagas.

Gráskinna (GKS 2870 4to): ca. 1300; *Njáls saga*.

Gullinskinna (AM 325 VIII 5 c 4to): ca. 1400; kings’ sagas.

Hauksbók (141 of the original 200 leaves are preserved in AM 371 4to, AM 544 4to, and AM 675 4to): ca. 1300; *Landnámabók* and much else.

Helgastaðabók (Stock. perg. 4to nr. 16): ca. 1400; *Nikulás saga*.

Hrokkinskinna (GKS 1010 fol): first half 15th c.; kings’ sagas.

Hulda (AM 66 fol): ca. 1350; kings’ sagas.

Jöfraskinna (now preserved only in fragments): ca. 1325; kings’ sagas.

Kálfalækjarbók (AM 133 fol): ca. 1300; *Njáls saga*.

Kollsbók (Wolfenbüttel 42.7 Aug. 4to): ca. 1480; *rímur*.

Konungsbók (GKS 1157 fol): second half 13th c.; *Grágás*.

Kringla (Stock. perg. fol. nr. 9 [all but one leaf of this manuscript burned in the Copenhagen fire in 1728]): second half 13th c.; *Heimskringla*.

Króksfjarðarbók (AM 122a fol): third quarter of 14th c.; *Sturlunga saga*.

Morkinskinna (GKS 1009 fol): second half or last quarter 13th c.; kings’ sagas.

Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol): first half 14th c.; family sagas.

Ormsbók (AM 242 fol): second half 14th c.; *Snorra Edda*.

Reykjabók (AM 468 4to): ca. 1300; *Njáls saga*.

Reykjarfjarðarbók (AM 122b fol): fourth quarter 14th c.; kings’ sagas; *Sturlunga saga*.

Skálholtsbók eldri (AM 351 fol): second half 14th c.; laws.

Skálholtsbók yngri (AM 354 fol): ca. 1400; laws.

Skálholtsbók yngsta (AM 81a fol): 15th c.; kings’ sagas.

Skarðsbók (AM 350 fol): ca. 1363; laws. Sometimes called “*Codex Scardensis*”, but see above for another manuscript (SÁM 1) of that name.

Skinnastaðarbók (AM 136 4to): end of 15th c.; laws.

Staðarfellsbók (AM 346 fol): first half 14th c.; laws.

Staðarhólsbók (AM 334 fol): 1260-80; laws.

Svalbarðsbók (AM 343 fol): first half 14th c.; laws.

Tómasskinna (GKS 1008 fol): ca. 1400; sagas of Thomas Becket and St. Óláfr.

Vatnshyrna (AM 564a 4to [all but seven leaves of this manuscript burned in the Copenhagen fire in 1728]): ca. 1400; family sagas.