



**UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS PRESS**

Scribal Culture in Thirteenth-Century Iceland: the Introduction of Anglo-Saxon “f” in Icelandic Script

Author(s): Haraldur Bernharðsson

Source: *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 117, No. 3 (July 2018), pp. 279-314

Published by: University of Illinois Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jenglgermphil.117.3.0279>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jenglgermphil.117.3.0279?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



University of Illinois Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*

JSTOR

Scribal Culture in Thirteenth-Century Iceland: The Introduction of Anglo-Saxon “f” in Icelandic Script

Haraldur Bernharðsson, University of Iceland

INTRODUCTION

The study of language change and variation in Old Icelandic is, not surprisingly, dependent on the use of medieval Icelandic manuscripts as sources of linguistic evidence. Icelandic manuscripts dated to the thirteenth century exhibit several linguistic changes, not least in the phonology and the morphology, but the geographical distribution of these changes remains unknown, since generally the manuscripts cannot be localized.

Examination of nonlinguistic features, such as the diffusion of changes in the script, can provide valuable comparative material for studying the diffusion of linguistic change. It can help us understand how the thirteenth-century manuscripts that we use as sources of linguistic evidence came into being. Were these produced by solitary scribes working in many different locations across the country, isolated from their colleagues? Or are they the product of a tight-knit community of scribes working closely together in a few interconnected scriptoria?

This paper examines the introduction of the Anglo-Saxon variety of the letter “f” into Icelandic script through Norwegian influence in the thirteenth century, and how it replaced the Caroline variety of the letter. The transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” sheds an interesting light on Icelandic manuscript production and scribal culture at the time. Moreover, the diffusion of this scribal innovation offers an important insight into these manuscripts and manuscript fragments as sources of evidence for language and the diffusion of language change in Icelandic thirteenth-century manuscripts.

Parts of this research were presented at Prof. Gunnar Harðarson’s 60th anniversary symposium at the University of Iceland on December 12, 2014; at the University of Iceland Humanities Conference on March 14, 2015; at the meeting of the Research Group in Nordic Philology at the University of Bergen on January 25, 2016; and at the 11th Australian Early Medieval Association Conference at the University of Sydney on February 12, 2016. I am grateful to Gunnar Harðarson and Már Jónsson, as well as an anonymous reviewer, for their feedback on an earlier version of this paper.

Journal of English and Germanic Philology—July
© 2018 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

EARLY ICELANDIC SOURCES OF LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE

The earliest surviving manuscripts in Icelandic date to the middle and the second half of the twelfth century.¹ Most of these are fragments, in many instances only two or three leaves. Much of the material from the earliest period—the second half of the twelfth century down to the beginning of the thirteenth century—is of religious nature, often translations or adaptations of earlier Latin texts. There are homilies, such as AM 237 a fol., consisting of two leaves dated to around 1150 with fragments of two homilies; a large collection of homilies in Holm perg. 15 4to, commonly referred to as the Icelandic Homily Book, 102 leaves and by far the largest manuscript from the earliest period; as well as several other fragments of homilies in AM 673 a II 2 4to, AM 686 b 4to, AM 686 c 4to, and AM 696 XXIV 4to (a total of 10 leaves or parts of leaves). There are also several fragments containing the lives of saints: a fragment of the life of the Virgin Mary (*Mariu saga*), the life of St. Nicholas (*Nikuláss saga erkbyskups*), life of St. Silvester (*Silvesters saga*; two fragments), life of St. Erasmus (*Erasmuss saga*), and the life of St. Basil (*Basiliuss saga*) in AM 655 II–VI 4to (a total of 12 leaves or parts of leaves), as well as the Poem of St. Eustace (*Plácítusdrápa*) in AM 673 b 4to (5 leaves). Among these very earliest manuscripts there are also translations of some standard works: *Elucidarius* in AM 674 a 4to (33 leaves), *Physiologus* in both AM 673 a I 4to (2 leaves) and AM 673 a II 1 4to (7 leaves), fragments of the pseudo-Cyprian *De XII abusivis saeculi* and St. Prosper of Aquitaine's *Epigrams* in AM 677 4to A (6 leaves), and the *Homilies* and *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great in AM 677 4to B (35 leaves). *Rímbeгла*, a treatise on computation, is in GKS 1812 IV 4to (11 leaves); *Veraldarsaga*, or universal history, an Icelandic compilation of historiographical literature, in AM 655 VII–VIII 4to (4 leaves); and the earliest fragments of *Grágás*, the code of law of the Icelandic commonwealth, have survived in AM 315 d and c fol. (four leaves). The earliest entries of the inventory of the church of Reykjaholt (*Reykjaholtsmáldagi*) also belong to this period. A little over 230 leaves (or

1. For an overview, see Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script as Illustrated in Vernacular Texts from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Íslenzk handrit, series in folio, 2 (Reykjavík: Manuscript Institute of Iceland, 1965), esp. pp. 13–15; Ólafur Halldórsson, “Skrifaðar bækur,” in *Íslensk þjóðmenning 6: Munnmenntir og bókmenning*, ed. Frosti F. Jóhannsson (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Þjóðsaga, 1989), p. 68; Stefán Karlsson, “Íslensk bókagerð á miðöldum,” in *Íslenska sögugjöngið 28.–31. maí 1997. Ráðstefnurit*, vol. 1, ed. Guðmundur J. Guðmundsson and Eiríkur K. Björnsson (Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands and Sagnfræðingafélag Íslands, 1998); Sverrir Tómasson, “The History of Old Nordic Manuscripts I: Old Icelandic,” in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, vol. 1, ed. Oskar Bandle et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), pp. 793–801. In what follows, dates of individual manuscripts will be those of the University of Copenhagen's *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* [Dictionary of Old Norse Prose], under “Håndskriftregister” [“Medieval Manuscripts”], accessed January 15, 2016, <http://onp.ku.dk/>.

parts of leaves) have thus survived from this earliest period, with the work of at least twenty-five different scribes; the content material is predominantly religious in nature.²

The same genres continue to be dominant as we move further into the first half of the thirteenth century. Fragments of homilies have survived in AM 655 I 4to, AM 655 XXI 4to, and AM 655 XXIII 4to, lives of saints in AM 645 II 4to, a fragment of the life of the Virgin Mary (*Maríu saga*) in AM 655 XIX 4to, a list of priests (*Prestaskrá*) and computational notes (*Bókarbót*) in GKS 1812 III 4to, and lives of the apostles in AM 645 I–II 4to. The Book of Miracles of the Icelandic St. Þorlákr (*Jarteinabók Þorláks helga*) in AM 645 I 4to and the earliest preserved fragments of the sagas of the kings are from this period, too: *Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum* or a short summary of the history of the kings of Norway in AM 325 II 4to, as well as the Oldest Saga of St. Óláfr king of Norway in NRA 52. The document AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. LXV 1 containing the decree of the chieftain Sæmundr Ormsson concerning jetsam and stranded whales in Hornafjörður district (*Skipan Sæmundar Ormssonar*) also belongs to this period.

The earliest surviving fragments of the sagas of Icelanders date to the middle and second half of the thirteenth century: A fragment of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* in AM 162 A 0 fol., AM 162 A 7 fol., and AM 162 A 7 fol., and a fragment of *Laxdæla saga* in AM 162 D 2 fol.; a fragment of *Heiðarvíga saga* in Holm perg. 18 I 4to is dated to around 1300. The earliest fragment of the lives of the Icelandic bishops, the life of St. Þorlákr (*Þorláks saga helga*), in AM 383 I 4to, dates to the middle of the thirteenth century, and a fragment of a leech book in AM 655 XXX 4to is dated to the second half of the thirteenth century. Apart from that, the same genres as before dominate: Fragments of homilies in AM 655 XXVII–XVIII 4to; the lives of the apostles in AM 655 XII–XIII, XIV, XVII 4to, and AM 652 4to; fragments of the life of the Virgin Mary (*Maríu saga*) in AM 656 II 4to, NRA 78, and AM 240 XI fol.; the lives of saints in AM 655 X, XXII, XXVIII a, XXXIII 4to, and AM 221 fol.; the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great in AM 655 XV 4to; the life of St. Gregory and his *Dialogues* in AM 921 IV 1 4to, NRA 71, 72, 72b, 76 and 77; and *Inventio crucis* or *Kross saga* in NRA 75. In addition, the life of the Icelandic bishop Jón Ögmundarson, *Jóns saga helga*, is in AM 221 fol. A number of law manuscripts also date

2. There is bound to be some uncertainty regarding the number of scribal hands. In this earliest period, one should mention, in particular, the Icelandic Homily Book, Holm perg. 15 4to, a large manuscript consisting of 102 leaves where the estimated number of scribal hands in the scholarly literature ranges from one to fourteen; for an overview with references see Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen, ed., *The Icelandic Homily Book. Perg. 15 4° in the Royal Library, Stockholm*, Íslensk handrit—Icelandic Manuscripts, series in quarto, 3 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1993), pp. 32–35. Having worked with the Icelandic Homily Book for more than fifteen years, Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen is inclined to think it is the work of a single scribe.

from the second half of the thirteenth century, generally quite splendid books: *Grágás*, the law of the Icelandic commonwealth, in AM 315 b fol., GKS 1157 fol. (the Codex Regius of *Grágás*), and AM 279 a 1 4to (*Þingeyrabók*); *Grágás* and *Járnsíða*, the first royal code of law, in AM 334 fol. (*Staðarhólsbók*); and *Jónsbók*, the second royal code of law, in AM 134 4to. The second half of the thirteenth century also brings several stately manuscripts (or remnants thereof) containing the sagas of the kings: *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in AM 310 4to; *Óláfs saga helga* in AM 325 IV a 4to, AM 325 VII 4to, AM 325 XI 2 e 4to, Holm perg. 2 4to, AM 325 XI 2 n 4to, and AM 325 XI 2 m 4to; *Heimskringla* in Lbs. frg. 82 and AM 1056 I 4to; *Morkinskinna* in GKS 1009 fol.; *Sverris saga* and *Boglunga saga* in AM 325 VIII 4 b 4to; as well as *Jónsvíkinga saga* in AM 291 4to. In the second half of the thirteenth century, we also have *Alexanders saga*, a prose translation of Philip Gautier's *Alexandreis*, in AM 519 a 4to and AM 655 XXIX 4to; and *Karlamagnúss saga*, a prose rendering of the Old French *chansons de geste*, in NRA 61 a–b. The earliest entries in *Þingeyrabók*, AM 279 a 4to, concerning the properties of the monastery at Þingeyrar also date to the second half of the thirteenth century. Finally, the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*, GKS 2365 4to, the principal manuscript of the Eddic poetry, is dated to around 1270.

The surviving manuscripts and manuscript fragments in Icelandic from the earliest period in the second half of the twelfth century down to around 1300 are all in all the work of probably a little over one hundred scribes. But who were these scribes? Where were these manuscripts written? Whose language do the manuscripts represent?

Answers to these questions are not readily available. Apart from being in Icelandic (rather than Norwegian) and thus presumably written in Iceland, these manuscripts typically cannot be localized. The subject matter, as we have seen, is largely of religious nature. Material that can be classified as directly or indirectly religious, including homilies, lives of the apostles, lives of saints, and other theological writings, probably make up close to 60 percent of the corpus in terms of surviving leaves, with the sagas of the kings and law somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 percent each; other smaller categories include the *Poetic Edda* (GKS 2365 4to, the Codex Regius) and the translated *Alexanders saga* (in one manuscript and a fragment, AM 519 a 4to and AM 655 XXIX 4to).³

The content material, much of which is translated or adapted from foreign languages (especially Latin), certainly suggests that the texts were

3. These estimates comprise surviving manuscripts in Icelandic from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, up to, but not including, manuscripts dated ca. 1300 in the database of the University of Copenhagen's *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* [Dictionary of Old Norse Prose], accessed January 15, 2016, <http://onp.ku.dk/>. Including the manuscripts dated to ca. 1300 would no doubt give a somewhat different result, as they are quite numerous.

written by learned individuals. As sources of linguistic evidence, these texts are, therefore, subject to at least two limitations.⁴

- (1) *Textual limitation*: As the majority of the material committed to writing in this early period is of a highly formal nature, such as homilies, lives of saints, laws, or other learned texts, they first and foremost represent a fairly formal register, while other registers are underrepresented or not represented at all.
- (2) *Social limitation*: In this early period, writing was largely confined to men of higher education. Other groups—including women—are probably underrepresented or not represented at all.

What about regional variants? Do these texts represent the language as spoken across Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? As already indicated, these manuscripts typically cannot be localized, but if they were primarily the work of learned males in religious circles, then churches, especially the bishop's seats, and the monasteries immediately suggest themselves as plausible places of origin.

In addition to the two episcopal seats, Skálholt in the south (from 1056) and Hólar in the north (from 1106), there were at least seven monasteries in Iceland in the late twelfth century and in the thirteenth century: The Benedictine monasteries at Þingeyrar (from 1133), Munkaþverá (from 1155), and Hítardalur (from 1168, but abolished shortly after 1201), as well as the Augustinian houses at Þykkvibær (from 1168), in Flatey (1172–84), succeeded by the house at Helgafell (from 1184), and the Benedictine convent at Kirkjubær (from 1186); and, a little later, an Augustinian monastery was established in Viðey (from 1226).⁵

The episcopal seats at Skálholt and Hólar were centers of scholarship, teaching, and learning. Bishop Ísleifr Gizurarson (d. 1080) founded a school at Skálholt, and so did Bishop Jón Ögmundarson (d. 1121) at

4. Haraldur Bernharðsson, "Skrifandi bændur og íslensk málsaga: Vangaveltur um málþróun og málheimildir," *Gripla*, 13 (2002), 175–97.

5. Still later, an Augustinian monastery was established at Mõðruvellir in Hõrgárdalur (from 1296) and a Benedictine convent at Reynistaðr (also from 1296); sources also indicate that a monastery was founded at Keldur in Rangárvellir (twelfth century) and another at Saurbær in Eyjafjõrðr (from around 1200?), but both of them seem to have been short-lived. See Janus Jónsson, "Um klaustrin á Íslandi," *Tímarit hins íslenska bókmenntafjelds*, 8 (1887), 174–265; Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1956–58), vol. 1, 227–36; Magnús Már Lárusson, "Kloster: Ísland," in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid*, vol. 8, ed. Jakob Benediktsson et al. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1963), pp. 544–46; Magnús Stefánsson, "Kirkjuvald eflist," in *Saga Íslands*, vol. 2, ed. Sigurður Línadal (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag og Sögufélagið, 1975), pp. 81–85; Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, *Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja*, Kristni á Íslandi, vol. 2, ed. Hjalti Hugason (Reykjavík: Alþingi, 2000), pp. 212–25, 231–41; *Íslensk klausturmennning á miðöldum*, ed. Haraldur Bernharðsson (Reykjavík: Miðaldastofa Háskóla Íslands, 2016).

Hólar, even hiring two foreign instructors, as described in *Jóns saga helga*.⁶ The cathedral schools no doubt played an important role in education in Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, even if the vigor with which they were run varied from one bishop to the next.⁷ The cathedral schools had their own libraries, imported books, and very likely also produced books. The bishops were responsible for educating priests, but the cathedral schools were far from the only places where young men could receive education and training in order to become priests. The monasteries, too, were centers of scholarship, and they also offered education.⁸ The monasteries no doubt had libraries of their own, and many of them produced books for their own needs as well as by commission; moreover, Stefán Karlsson has argued that in some of the monasteries, books were produced for export to Norway, especially in the fourteenth century.⁹

Young men could also be mentored by practicing priests and learned men around the country, something that probably was necessary to meet the rising demand of priests in Iceland in the twelfth century. Centers of learning were thus established under the auspices of wealthy chieftains where young men were tutored, such as in Haukadalur where Teitr Ísleifsson (d. 1110), the son of Ísleifr Gizurarson, the first bishop of Skálholt, established a school, or at Oddi where Sæmundr Sigfússon *fróði* ‘the learned’ (d. 1133) taught. At a later date, Óláfr Þórðarson *hvítaskáld* ‘the white skald’ (1210–59) is reported to have established a school in Stafaholt.¹⁰

6. “Jóns saga ins helga,” in *Biskupa sögur*, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, *Íslenzk fornrit*, 15 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), pp. 217–18.

7. Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga*, vol. 1, 187–92; Magnús Már Lárusson, “Katedralskola: Island,” in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid*, vol. 8, ed. Jakob Benediktsson et al. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1963), pp. 353–54; Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Biskupsstóll í Skálholti,” in *Saga biskupsstólanna*, ed. Gunnar Kristjánsson and Óskar Guðmundsson (Akureyri: Bókaútgáfan Hólar, 2006), pp. 24–28, 162–67; Jón Þ. Þór, “Saga biskupsstóls á Hólum í Hjaltadal,” in *Saga biskupsstólanna*, ed. Gunnar Kristjánsson and Óskar Guðmundsson (Akureyri: Bókaútgáfan Hólar, 2006), pp. 277–83, 385–95.

8. Magnús Már Lárusson, “Námskostnaður á miðöldum,” in *Nordæla: Afmæliskevæða til Sigurðar Nordals sjötugs*, ed. Halldór Halldórsson et al. (Reykjavík: Helgafell, 1956), pp. 159–67; Hermann Pálsson, *Helgafell: Saga höfuðbóls og klausturs* (Reykjavík: Snæfellsútgáfan, 1967), pp. 145–55.

9. Ólafur Halldórsson, *Helgafellsbækur fornar*, *Studia Islandica*, 24 (Reykjavík: Heimspekideild Háskóla Íslands og Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1966); Stefán Karlsson, “Íslandsk bogeksport til Norge i middelalderen,” *Maal og Minne* (1979), 1–17.

10. Jakob Benediktsson, “Skole: Island,” in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid*, vol. 15, ed. Jakob Benediktsson et al. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1970), p. 540; Sigurður Línal, “Upphaf kristni og kirkju,” in *Saga Íslands*, vol. 1, ed. Sigurður Línal (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag og Sögufélagið, 1974), pp. 260–67; Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, “Thin on the Ground: Legal Evidence of the Availability of Priests in the 12th Century in Iceland,” in *Church Centres: Church Centres in Iceland from the 11th to the 13th Century and their Parallels in other Countries*, ed. Helgi Þorláksson (Reykholzt: Snorrastofa, 2005), pp. 95–102.

Books were, of course, a necessity for schools and other scholarly activities; books could be acquired, but their production was expensive and required considerable resources. Yet, it appears that books were to some extent produced across the country without obvious institutional backing from the bishoprics or the monasteries. Ari Þorgilsson *fróði* ‘the learned’ (1068–1148) studied at Haukadalur and went on to write his Book of Icelanders (*Íslendingabók*) sometime in the period 1122–32, possibly at Staðr in Snæfellsnes. In this work, Ari reports that it was resolved at Alþingi in 1117 that “our law should be written in a book at Haflíði Másson’s during the following winter,” presumably at Breiðabólstaðr in Vestrhóp.¹¹ The scholar and chieftain Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) studied at Oddi and later went on to write his monumental works, including *Edda*, *Óláfs saga helga*, and *Heimskringla*, in the 1220s and 1230s, presumably at Reykjaholt in Borgarfjörður.¹² Similarly, Snorri Sturluson’s nephew, the historian Sturla Þórðarson (1214–84) wrote his works, including *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* and *Íslendinga saga*, not only in Norway, but also at Staðarhóll in Dalir or later in Fagrey Island.¹³

Even if book production in Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was confined to a relatively homogeneous social group, it seems possible that it took place in several different locations around the country. In addition to the bishop’s seats, Skálholt and Hólar, there were at least seven monasteries at the time, as well as several other places where affluent chieftains may have supported the production of books. Some well-known examples were mentioned above; it is, of course, not an exhaustive list. It is impossible to tell how many of these places there were, but a dozen or so seems not an improbable estimate.

Broad geographical distribution is, needless to say, an invaluable quality for any source material used as linguistic evidence. It is, therefore, important to try to assess in some way the geographical distribution of the surviving manuscripts and manuscript fragments that are our principal source of evidence for the study of Icelandic as spoken in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

To this end, we will examine the introduction of the Anglo-Saxon variety of the letter “f” into Icelandic script in the thirteenth century and its replacement of the Caroline form of the letter. The spread of this

11. Jakob Benediktsson, ed. *Íslendingabók—Landnámabók*, Íslenzk fornrit, 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1968), pp. v–viii, 23.

12. Sverrir Tómasson, “Konungasögur,” in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. 1, ed. Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1993), pp. 366–83; Heimir Pálsson, “Formálsorð,” in *Uppsala-Edda: Uppsalahandritið DG 11 4to*, by Snorri Sturluson, ed. Heimir Pálsson (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Opna and Snorrastofa), pp. 15–35.

13. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Sturla Þórðarson,” in *Sturlustefna: Ráðstefna haldin á sjö alda ártíð Sturlu Þórðarsonar sagnaritara 1984*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir and Jónas Kristjánsson (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1988), pp. 9–36.

scribal innovation not only sheds an interesting light on Icelandic scribal culture and book production, but it is also a strictly nonlinguistic feature that provides valuable comparative material for the study of the language without running the risk of circular argumentation.

THE EARLIEST ICELANDIC AND NORWEGIAN SCRIPT

The very earliest Icelandic manuscripts, dated to the second half of the twelfth century, were written in late Caroline minuscule, but the gradual transition to Pre-Gothic script is noticeable already in manuscripts dated to around 1200. In the earliest Norwegian manuscripts, also dating to the second half of the twelfth century, the transition from Caroline to Pre-Gothic script is decidedly more advanced than in the earliest Icelandic script.¹⁴

There is, however, another important difference between the Icelandic and the Norwegian script at this earliest stage. The earliest Norwegian script shows unmistakable Anglo-Saxon features that are absent in the earliest Icelandic script. This manifests itself in the use of the Anglo-Saxon variety of the letters “v” (the Anglo-Saxon *wynn* used primarily for *v*), “f,” and “r,” as well as the Anglo-Saxon letter “ð” (a variant of the letter “ð”). None of these four Anglo-Saxon letters are used in the earliest Icelandic script, such as the homily fragments in AM 237 a fol. and the earliest entry of the inventory of the church in Reykjaholt (*Reykjaholtsmáldagi*), both dating to the second half of the thirteenth century.¹⁵ Three of these letter forms, the Anglo-Saxon “v,” “f,” and the “ð,” were, however, intro-

14. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “The Origin of Icelandic Script: Some Remarks,” in *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature—Sagas and the British Isles. Preprint Papers of the Thirteenth International Saga Conference, Durham and York, 6th–12th August 2006*, ed. John McKinnell, David Ashurst, and Donata Kick, vol. 1 (Durham: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Durham University, 2006), pp. 317–19; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “Manuscripts and Palaeography,” in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 253–57; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “The Origin and Development of Icelandic Script,” in *Régionalisme et Internationalisme—Problèmes de Paléographie et de Codicologie du Moyen Âge. Actes du XV^e Colloque du Comité International de Paléographie Latine (Vienna, 13–17 Septembre 2005)*, ed. Otto Kresten and Franz Lackner (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), pp. 87–94; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “Caroline and Proto-Gothic Script in Norway and Iceland,” in *Latin Manuscripts of Medieval Norway. Studies in Memory of Lilli Gjertlöv*, ed. Espen Karlsen (Oslo: Novus Press, 2013), pp. 199–213; Odd Einar Haugen, “The Development of Latin script I: In Norway,” in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, vol. 1, ed. Oskar Bandle et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), pp. 824–32.

15. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, plates no. 1 and 2; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, *Sýnisbók íslenskrar skrifftar* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2007), plates no. 2 and 3.

duced in Icelandic script at the end of the twelfth century and in the early thirteenth century, most probably through Norwegian influence.¹⁶

The Anglo-Saxon variety of “v” (the *wynn*) appears in Icelandic manuscripts already in the second half of the twelfth century. The earliest example is in AM 315 d fol., *Grágás*, from around 1150–75.¹⁷ The earliest instances of the letter “ð” date to the first quarter of the thirteenth century, in, for instance, the homily fragments AM 686 b 4to (remnants of five leaves) and AM 686 c 4to (one leaf) from ca. 1200–1225,¹⁸ as well as AM 655 I 4to (part of a leaf) from around 1225–50.¹⁹

The Anglo-Saxon variety of “f” appeared around the same time as “ð,” in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and in many of the same hands as use the “ð.”²⁰ In the course of the thirteenth century, the Anglo-Saxon “f” replaced the Caroline “f” in Icelandic script, as will be further discussed below. The Anglo-Saxon “f” became the standard symbol for writing Icelandic, but the Caroline “f” was relegated to an auxiliary role, used for Latin texts, as well as in individual Latin words or other foreign words within an Icelandic text.

It is generally assumed that the introduction of these Anglo-Saxon features in the Icelandic script occurred through Norwegian influence. Cultural and political ties between Iceland and Norway were manifold in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Cultural influence came not least through the church, which was prominent in learning and bookmaking in the period. The Icelandic church belonged to the archdiocese of Niðarós, established in 1152–53, and the Norwegian archbishop consecrated the bishops of Skálholt and Hólar. In 1236, the two Icelandic candidates nominated by Icelanders to be bishops of Skálholt and Hólar were rejected, and instead two Norwegians were consecrated: Sigvarðr Þéttmarsson, a Norwegian who had been abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Selja, became a bishop of Skálholt in 1238 and held office for thirty

16. Harald Spehr, *Der ursprung der isländischen schrift und ihre weiterbildung bis zur mitte des 13. jahrhunderts* (Halle (Saale): Max Niemeyer, 1929), pp. 28–29, 37–38, 63–66; Didrik Arup Seip, *Palaeografi B: Norge og Island*, Nordisk kultur, 28 B (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers, 1954), pp. 8–13, 43–48; Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, pp. 18–40; Haugen, “Development of Latin Script I: In Norway,” pp. 826–30; Stefán Karlsson, “The Development of Latin Script II: In Iceland,” in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, vol. 1, ed. Oskar Bandle et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), pp. 833–36; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “Caroline and Proto-Gothic Script in Norway and Iceland,” pp. 199–200.

17. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, plate no. 3; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, *Sýnisbók íslenskrar skriftar*, plate no. 4.

18. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, plates no. 15 and 16.

19. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, plate no. 35.

20. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, pp. 18–40; Stefán Karlsson, “Development of Latin Script II: In Iceland,” pp. 833–36; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, “Caroline and Proto-Gothic Script in Norway and Iceland,” pp. 199–200.

years.²¹ Bótólfr, a Norwegian who had been a brother in the Augustinian monastery Helgisettr (Elgeseter) in Trondheim, became a bishop of Hólar in the same year. Four years later Sigvarðr assumed his responsibilities, as Bótólfr returned to Norway where he died in 1246. In the following year, Heinrekr Kársson, who probably was a Norwegian, became a bishop of Hólar where he served until 1260.²² In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there were several Norwegian bishops in Iceland, some of whom were known for their literary activities, such as Jón Halldórsson, the bishop of Skálaholt 1322–39.²³ The ties with Norway were further strengthened in 1262–64 when Icelanders swore allegiance to the Norwegian king.²⁴ In the following decades, great political and administrative changes took place in Iceland, progressively increasing the leverage of the Norwegian king; these included the adoption of the royal law code *Járnsíða* in 1271, which was subsequently superseded by a second royal law code, *Jónsbók*, in 1281.²⁵

Steadily increasing Norwegian political and cultural influence in Iceland in the thirteenth century undoubtedly brought a growing number of Norwegian books to Iceland. The Norwegians consecrated as bishops of Iceland were probably accompanied by Norwegian clerics, scholars, and scribes who may have become influential in the cathedral schools at Skálaholt and Hólar, as well as in the monasteries. Royal emissaries, too, probably brought books and scribes with them as part of the Norwegian political and legislative effort in Iceland. As a result, Norwegian script and orthography had a lasting impact in Iceland.

WRITING THE DIFFERENT SHAPES OF “F”

In contrast to the Caroline “f,” which stands on the baseline and extends above the headline (like “f” in most modern typefaces), shown in Figure 1 below, the Anglo-Saxon variety of “f” descends below the baseline, but does not extend beyond the headline, as shown in Figures 2–5 below. The shape of the Anglo-Saxon “f” in Icelandic script varies somewhat, as shown in Figures 2–5. In thirteenth-century script, it can have either two arms or

21. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Biskupsstóll í Skálholti,” pp. 34–35.

22. Magnús Stefánsson, “Kirkjuvald eflist,” pp. 139.

23. Sverrir Tómasson, “Trúarbókmenntir í lausu máli á síðmiðöld,” in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. 2, ed. Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1993), pp. 276.

24. Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga*, vol. 1, 321–38; Björn Þorsteinsson and Sigurður Líndal, “Lögfesting konungvalds,” in *Saga Íslands*, vol. 3, ed. Sigurður Líndal (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag og Sögufélagið, 1978), pp. 34–40.

25. Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga*, vol. 2, 14–44; Björn Þorsteinsson and Sigurður Líndal, “Lögfesting konungvalds,” pp. 41–51.

two dots barely or not at all connected to the stem, or perhaps one arm and one dot. The descender may be straight, but in a great many hands it has a left curve at the tail end. In the first half of the fourteenth century, the upper arm sometimes curves as far down as to connect with the lower arm, and later on the lower arm, too, curves down, ultimately joining the descender. This “two-bowl” variety of the Anglo-Saxon “f,” shown in Figure 5, became predominant in the second half of the fourteenth century, first in charter script and then also in book script.²⁶

The process by which the new Anglo-Saxon “f” was adopted into the Icelandic script is not known. Thus it remains uncertain if this change was imposed on Icelandic scribes, perhaps by Norwegian authorities, such as a bishop, an abbot, or a master scribe, or if it was a voluntary adoption on their part of a trending feature introduced by a growing number of books from Norway. The scribe’s work depended on a number of different elements, including his training, institutional affiliation, and the requirements of his patron and readership. Scribes trained in Norway probably continued their scribal mannerisms after moving to Iceland, and the “house style” that they brought with them from Norway may, consciously or subconsciously, have influenced the work of the practicing scribes they joined in Iceland, perhaps as master scribes. Moreover, the opinion of the patron or other institutional authorities from Norway may also have had a sway if they wished to have books produced in the script that they were familiar with (see further discussion below).²⁷

The practicing Icelandic scribe may have identified two advantages to writing the Anglo-Saxon “f” *vis-à-vis* the Caroline “f.” First, unlike the Caroline “f,” the Anglo-Saxon “f” was easily distinguishable from the tall “f.”²⁸ Second, by virtue of not extending beyond the headline, the Anglo-Saxon “f” could accommodate a superscript abbreviation symbol, which was particularly useful for abbreviating high-frequency function words such as *fyrir* ‘for’, *frá* ‘from’, and *fram* ‘forward’.

26. Spehr, *Der Ursprung der isländischen Schrift*, pp. 60–66; Seip, *Palæografi B: Norge og Island*, pp. 45–46, 92, 139; Gustaf Lindblad, *Studier i Codex Regius af Äldre Eddan* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954), 24–25; Stefán Karlsson, “Development of Latin Script II: In Iceland,” pp. 836; Haraldur Bernharðsson, “Skrifari Skarðsbókar postulasagna. Nokkrar athuganir á skriftarþróun,” in *Handritasýrpa: Rit til heiðurs Sigurgeiri Steingrímssyni sjötugum 2. október 2013*, ed. Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, 2014), pp. 216–18.

27. Erik Kwakkel, “Decoding the Material Book: Cultural Residue in Medieval Scripts,” in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, ed. Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 60–76.

28. It is not certain if medieval scribes generally attached any importance to this, even if the modern reader may do so, but there are clear cases where medieval scribes confused the Caroline “f” with the tall “f”; see de Leeuw van Weenen, ed., *Icelandic Homily Book*, p. 37.



Figure 1.
“af”
GKS 1812 IV
4to
(26vb9)
c1192

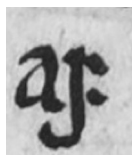


Figure 2.
“af”
GKS 1157
Fol.
(21v35)
c1250



Figure 3.
“af”
AM 383 I 4to
(1v2)
c1250

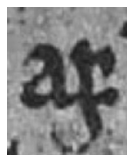


Figure 4.
“af”
AM 519 a 4to
(2v15)
c1280



Figure 5.
“af”
SÁM 1 fol.
(5va24)
c1350–1375

It is difficult to tell how the Anglo-Saxon “f” was received by the scribal community in Iceland. Unless the change was in some sense imposed, for which there is no direct evidence, experienced scribes may have simply ignored this new and trending Anglo-Saxon “f” and continued writing the Caroline “f,” which was part of the script that they learned in the beginning. Other practicing scribes may have been more welcoming toward this innovation and ventured to try out the new Anglo-Saxon “f,” not least in instances where a superscript abbreviation symbol was called for.

Yet, it must have been a challenge for an experienced scribe with many years of practice to suddenly change his inventory of symbols by replacing the Caroline “f” with the Anglo-Saxon “f.” Handwriting is a fine-motor skill that relies heavily on muscle memory (or motor memory). A high level of automaticity and accuracy of movement is developed through constant repetition, ultimately allowing the trained scribe to execute the handwriting rapidly and with minimal conscious effort.²⁹ For the experienced scribe, replacing the Caroline “f” with the Anglo-Saxon “f” would have required considerable conscious effort or attentional control of the handwriting movement that would have significantly impaired handwriting automaticity.³⁰ First, it would slow down the handwriting and thus reduce productivity, which probably would have discouraged professional scribes from adopting the new letter form.³¹ Second, as the execution of

29. Rosemary Sassoon, *The Art and Science of Handwriting* (Oxford: Intellect, 1993), pp. 103–4, 129, and elsewhere; Oliver Tucha, Lara Mecklinger, Susanne Walitza, and Klaus W. Lange, “Attention and Movement Execution during Handwriting,” *Human Movement Science*, 25 (2006), 536–52. We rely on motor memory for a variety of frequent activities in our modern life, including the typing of keywords and PIN codes.

30. On experiments demonstrating the detrimental effect of attention control on handwriting automaticity, see Oliver Tucha, Lara Tucha, and Klaus W. Lange, “Graphonomics, Automaticity and Handwriting Assessment,” *Literacy*, 42 (2008), 145–55.

31. In modern terms, this could perhaps be likened to a professional typist switching from the QWERTY keyboard he has used for a long time to the quite different Dvorak keyboard.

the Caroline “f” had been consolidated as long-term motor memory by years of practice, it seems almost inevitable that at least an occasional Caroline “f” would have slipped from the scribe’s quill, despite his intention to adopt the new Anglo-Saxon “f.” The change in writing practice by an experienced scribe would therefore most likely have resulted in a mixture of the old Caroline “f” and the new Anglo-Saxon “f.”

The reverse challenge can be observed, at a much later date, when Rev. Jón Erlendsson of Villingaholt, a seasoned scribe, was in 1651 entrusted by Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson of Skálholt with making an accurate copy of a now lost manuscript of Ari’s *fróði’s Íslendingabók*. The exemplar, probably not much younger than from around 1200, evidently had the Caroline “f,” which Jón sought to reproduce in his transcript in AM 113 a fol., but he repeatedly fell back on the seventeenth-century two-bowl Anglo-Saxon “f” to which he was accustomed. A second transcript by Jón, AM 113 b fol., also commissioned by Bishop Brynjólfur, apparently wanting an even more accurate reproduction of the old manuscript, is clearly closer to the original, but still not completely free of the typical seventeenth-century two-bowl variety of Anglo-Saxon “f.”³² It seems not unlikely that the effort by experienced thirteenth-century scribes to replace the familiar Caroline “f” with the new Anglo-Saxon “f” would have seen similar results.

By contrast, young apprentices who were introduced to the Anglo-Saxon “f” as soon as they began learning the craft of writing would adopt it as a fixed part of their graphemic inventory right from the beginning, and, as their handwriting skills developed, they would use it automatically and consistently in their work. It would therefore in all likelihood have taken a generation shift to successfully change the script; only the scribes of a new generation would have consistently used the new Anglo-Saxon “f.”

The Caroline “f” never fully disappeared; it lingered on in an auxiliary role. The new generation of scribes who used the Anglo-Saxon “f” right from the beginning of their career were trained to master an additional skill compared to their predecessors: they were digraphic with regard to the letter “f.” They used the Anglo-Saxon “f” when writing Icelandic, but, in foreign words within an Icelandic text and full texts in Latin, they used the Caroline “f.” The introduction of the Anglo-Saxon “f” thus brought with it a graphemic dichotomy between Icelandic on the one hand and Latin (and other languages) on the other; this contrast was new in Icelandic

32. See the facsimiles reproduced by Jón Jóhannesson, ed., *Íslendingabók Ara fróða. AM 113 a and 113 b, fol.*, Íslensk handrit—Icelandic Manuscripts, 1 (Reykjavík: University of Iceland, 1956). The shape of the Anglo-Saxon “f” in Jón Erlendsson’s copies of *Íslendingabók* is typical of seventeenth-century script; any occurrences of Anglo-Saxon “f” in the old exemplar would have had a different shape, probably something like the letters shown in figures 2–3 above. Consequently, the Anglo-Saxon “f” in Jón’s copies cannot be traced back to his exemplar.

scribal practice. The consistency with which this division was upheld probably varied from one scribe to the other; their skill at this “code switching” may naturally have differed.

Scribes who had two different types of “f” in their graphemic inventories and used both regularly, albeit in different contexts, were probably more likely to be influenced by external factors than scribes who only had a single type of “f” in their graphemic inventory. A scribe belonging to a generation of digraphic scribes who used Anglo-Saxon “f” for Icelandic but Caroline “f” for Latin was probably more prone to be occasionally influenced in his choice of “f” by the exemplar he was copying than was a scribe of the previous generation who only used the Caroline “f.” Scribes of this new generation of digraphic scribes setting out to copy a text in Icelandic immediately after having completed copying a long text in Latin using the Caroline “f” may have dropped an occasional Caroline “f” into the Icelandic text instead of the expected Anglo-Saxon “f.” In general, we are probably justified in assuming that the more the scribe wrote in Latin, the greater risk of him making a mistake when writing in Icelandic.

A somewhat comparable change in script took place at a later date when the letter “ð” was abandoned and its role assumed by the letter “d.” This is a change that began in the late thirteenth century but was not fully completed until the first quarter of the fifteenth century.³³ During that long period, especially during the second half of the fourteenth century and the first quarter of the fifteenth century, the use of “ð” varied greatly from one scribe to another. Judging by the shift from “ð” to “d,” one might expect that the change from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” took at least a century, gradually spreading from one scriptorium to the other.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ANGLO-SAXON “F”: THE CORPUS

An overview of the transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” in Icelandic thirteenth-century hands is presented in Table 2 below. It is based on an examination of manuscripts and manuscript fragments in Icelandic preserved from the second half of the twelfth century down toward the end of the thirteenth century.³⁴ The dates are those of the *Ordbog over det*

33. Stefán Karlsson, “Development of Latin Script II: In Iceland,” p. 835; Aaron Russell, “The Decline of the Letter “ð” in Medieval Icelandic Script: A Study in Paleography and Orthography” (master’s thesis, University of Iceland, 2014).

34. The study aimed to include all surviving manuscripts and manuscript fragments in Icelandic from the twelfth century and down to around 1300; accidental omissions may have occurred, but these cannot be many. It should be kept in mind that the surviving manuscripts and manuscript fragments are probably only a small part of the manuscripts produced at the time.

Table 1: Five categories of scribes according to the level of usage of Anglo-Saxon “f” in the manuscripts in Table 2.

1	Only Caroline “f”; no instances recorded of the Anglo-Saxon “f.”
2	Sporadic use of Anglo-Saxon “f”; Caroline “f” predominates, but Anglo-Saxon “f” appears only sporadically, in no more than one third of occurrences (33%).
3	Substantial use of Anglo-Saxon “f” (34–66%) alongside the Caroline “f.”
4	Anglo-Saxon “f” predominates; Caroline “f” appears only sporadically, in no more than one third of occurrences (33%).
5	Anglo-Saxon “f” established as the principal “f” symbol; the Caroline “f” only appears in a very restricted auxiliary role (see below).

norðne prosasprog (*Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*), University of Copenhagen; the description of the contents is, by necessity, much abbreviated.³⁵ The scribal hands in Table 2 have been divided into five different categories according to the frequency of occurrence of Anglo-Saxon “f” in the script following the classification scheme shown in Table 1.³⁶

The data was gathered by examining images of the manuscripts and manuscript fragments, but the most voluminous manuscripts were sampled systematically. The images were generously provided by the Árni

35. *Ordbog over det norðne prosasprog* [*Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*], <http://onp.ku.dk/> (under “Håndskriftregister” [“Medieval Manuscripts”]). These dates should, of course, not be taken literally; they are predominantly estimates based on a variety of criteria, including the script, orthography, and language, and should be understood to include a margin of ± 25 years; see Stefán Karlsson, “The Localisation and Dating of Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts,” *Saga-Book*, 25 (1999), 146. The presence or absence of Anglo-Saxon “f” may have been a factor for dating some of the manuscripts, but always along with several other features; it is therefore unlikely that the presence or absence of Anglo-Saxon “f” alone was a determining factor for establishing a date. For the content material, see especially *Katalog over den Arnemagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols., ed. Kr. Kålund (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1889–1894); *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter i det Store kongelige bibliotek og i Universitetsbiblioteket*, ed. Kr. Kålund (Copenhagen: Kommissionen for det Arnemagnæanske Legat, Gyldendalske boghandel, 1900); Vilhelm Gödel, *Katalog öfver Kongl bibliotekets formländska och fornnorska håndskrifter* (Stockholm: Kungl. boktryckeriet, P.A. Norstedt & soner, 1897–1900); as well as the online manuscript catalog *Handrit.is*, <http://handrit.is/>.

36. AM 655 X 4to is written in two distinct hands, A and B, according to Ole Widding, “Håndskriftanalyser: En eller flere skrivere,” in *Opuscula* 1, Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana, 20 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1960), 84–85. Two additional hands, C and D, may have written five and two lines, respectively, according to John Tucker, “Scribal Hands in AM 655 4to X,” in *Opuscula* 6, Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana, 33 (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Boghandel, 1979), 108–25; all four use only Anglo-Saxon “f”. The hand of AM 655 XXXIII 4to has been identified as identical to hand B in AM 655 X 4to by Hreinn Benediktsson, “Tvö handritsbrot,” *Íslenzk tunga*, 5 (1964), 139–49.

AM 310 4to, by some earlier scholars considered Norwegian, is now considered written by an Icelandic scribe. The main hand (A) probably also wrote the fragments AM 655 XII–XIII 4to and AM 655 XIV 4to; see Ole Widding, “Et fragment af Stephanus saga (AM 655, 4° XIV B), tekst og kommentar,” *Acta Philologica Scandinavica*, 21 (1952), 143–71; Stefán Karlsson, “Om norvagsmer i islandske håndskrifter,” *Maal og Minne* (1978), 92–95.

Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík and the Arnarnag-næan Institute in Copenhagen.

EARLY ADOPTERS OF ANGLO-SAXON “F”

The Caroline “f” is universal in all the earliest surviving manuscripts in Icelandic dated to the second half of the twelfth century; these fall into Category 1 in the classification scheme in Table 1, but for reasons of space they have not been included in Table 2. The Caroline “f” is also the sole “f” type in all the manuscripts dated to around 1200, numbers 1–9 in Table 2, as well as in half of those dated to the first quarter of the thirteenth century, numbers 10–19; these, too, belong to Category 1. This, of course, does not warrant the assumption that scribes belonging to Category 1 were not familiar with the Anglo-Saxon “f”; all we know is that they did not use it.

The Anglo-Saxon “f” made its first appearance in Icelandic script in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, as shown in Table 2.³⁷ In that period and around 1225, three hands tested the water with sporadic use of Anglo-Saxon “f,” while the Caroline “f” still remained the principal symbol. See also Table 3: [16] AM 677 II 4to with approximately 4% Anglo-Saxon “f”; [19] AM 696 XXIV 4to with approximately 2% Anglo-Saxon “f”; and [24] AM 325 II 4to, hand C, with approximately 10% Anglo-Saxon “f.”

The scribes of Category 2 can be regarded as pioneers in the use of Anglo-Saxon “f.” They were probably practicing scribes, perhaps with many years of experience (nothing in their handwriting suggests they were novices), when they ventured to try out a new type of the letter “f.” At first, the use of the Anglo-Saxon “f” was largely conditioned by the environment as the scribes, accustomed to the Caroline “f,” took advantage of the positioning of the Anglo-Saxon “f” below the headline, employing it primarily where a superscript abbreviation symbol was needed. This is particularly clear in AM 677 II 4to, consisting of 35 leaves, where the Anglo-Saxon “f” appears almost exclusively with the superscript abbreviation symbol “*ω*” (denoting *ra* or *rú* as in the frequent preposition/adverb *frá* ‘from’) or with a superscript vowel symbol. While AM 696 XXIV 4to and AM 325 II 4to, hand C, afford much less text, consisting of only two very damaged leaves and a single leaf, respectively, indications of a similar pattern can

37. Note that the dates presented are, as already mentioned, rough estimates and, moreover, there are no means to order the manuscripts chronologically within each time period, such as ca. 1200–25. In the absence of better criteria, the manuscripts are presented in alphabetical order by shelf marks, except that hands that are believed to be closely related or perhaps identical are, as far as possible, grouped together.

Table 2. An overview of Icelandic thirteenth-century manuscripts and manuscript fragments categorized according the level of use of the Anglo-Saxon “f” in accordance with the classification scheme in Table 1. Transitional hands (categories 2–4) have been shaded

No.	Manuscript shelf number	Date	Contents	Category
1	Holm perg. 15 4to	ca. 1200	The Icelandic Homily Book	1
2	AM 655 III 4to	ca. 1200	Nikuláss saga erkibyskups	1
3	AM 655 VII 4to	ca. 1200	Veraldar saga	1
4	AM 655 VIII 4to, hand A	ca. 1200	Veraldar saga	1
5	AM 655 VIII 4to, hand B	ca. 1200	Veraldar saga	1
6	AM 673 a I 4to	ca. 1200	Physiologus	1
7	AM 673 a II 4to, hand A	ca. 1200	Physiologus	1
8	AM 673 a II 4to, hand B	ca. 1200	Homily	1
9	AM 673 b 4to	ca. 1200	Plácítusdrápa	1
10	AM 315 c fol.	ca. 1200–1225	Grágás	5
11	AM 655 II 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Maríu saga	1
12	AM 655 IV 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Silvesters saga	1
13	AM 655 V 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Erasmuss saga and Silvesters saga	1
14	AM 655 VI 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Basílfuss saga	1
15	AM 677 I 4to	ca. 1200–1225	De XII abusivis saeculi and Prosper’s Epigrams	1
16	AM 677 II 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Homilies and Dialogues of St. Gregory	2
17	AM 686 b 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Homilies	5
18	AM 686 c 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Homily	5
19	AM 696 XXIV 4to	ca. 1200–1225	On the Penitential Psalms	2
20	AM 655 XXI 4to	ca. 1200–1250	Homilies	1
21	AM 645 I 4to	ca. 1220	St. Þorlák’s Book of Miracles and Lives of Saints	3
22	AM 325 II 4to, hand A	ca. 1225	Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum	1
23	AM 325 II 4to, hand B	ca. 1225	Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum	1
24	AM 325 II 4to, hand C	ca. 1225	Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum	2
25	NRA 52	ca. 1225	The Oldest Saga of St. Óláfr	5
26	AM 645 II 4to, hand A	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	3
27	AM 645 II 4to, hand B	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	4
28	AM 645 II 4to, hand C	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	4
29	AM 655 I 4to	ca. 1225–50	Homily	1
30	AM 655 XIX 4to	ca. 1225–50	Maríu saga	5
31	AM 655 XXIII 4to	ca. 1225–50	Homily	1
32	GKS 1812 III 4to	ca. 1225–50	Prestaskrá, Bókarbót	5
33	AM Dipl. Isl. Fasc. LXV 1	ca. 1241–52	Skipan Sæmundar Ormssonar	5
34	AM 655 XXVII 4to	ca. 1200–1300	Homilies	5
35	AM 162 A 0 fol.	ca. 1250	Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	5
36	AM 315 b fol.	ca. 1250	Grágás	5
37	AM 325 IV α 4to	ca. 1250	Óláfs saga helga	4
38	AM 383 I 4to	ca. 1250	Þorláks saga helga	5
39	AM 655 XVII 4to	ca. 1250	Páls saga postula	5
40	AM 656 II 4to	ca. 1250	Maríu saga	5
41	GKS 1157 fol., hand A	ca. 1250	Codex Regius of Grágás	5

No.	Manuscript shelf number	Date	Contents	Category
42	GKS 1157 fol., hand B	ca. 1250	Codex Regius of Grágás	5
43	AM 279 a 1 4to	ca. 1250–75	Pingeyrabók of Grágás	5
44	NRA 61	ca. 1250–75	Karlamagnúss saga	5
45	AM 279 a 2 4to, hand A	ca. 1250–75	Skipti á Spákonuarnfi	5
46	NRA 75	ca. 1250–75	Kross saga — Inventio Crucis	5
47	AM 921 IV 4to + NRA, hand 1	ca. 1250–75	The Life of St. Gregory and his Dialogues	5
48	AM 921 IV 4to + NRA, hand 2	ca. 1250–75	The Life of St. Gregory and his Dialogues	5
49	AM 921 IV 4to + NRA, hand 3	ca. 1250–75	The Life of St. Gregory and his Dialogues	5
50	AM 921 IV 4to + NRA, hand 4	ca. 1250–75	The Life of St. Gregory and his Dialogues	1
51	AM 921 IV 4to + NRA, hand 5	ca. 1250–75	The Life of St. Gregory and his Dialogues	4
52	AM 921 IV 4to + NRA, hand 6	ca. 1250–75	The Life of St. Gregory and his Dialogues	1
53	AM 655 XII–XIII 4to	ca. 1250–75	Lives of the Apostles	5
54	AM 655 XIV 4to	ca. 1250–75	Jóns saga postula and Stefáns saga	5
55	AM 310 4to, hand A	ca. 1250–75	Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar	5
56	AM 310 4to, hand B	ca. 1250–75	Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar	5
57	AM 655 X 4to, hand A	ca. 1250–75	Máritúss saga and Plácíduss saga	5
58	AM 655 X 4to, hand B	ca. 1250–75	Máritúss saga and Plácíduss saga	5
59	AM 655 XXXIII 4to	ca. 1250–75	Lives of Saints	5
60	AM 1056 I 4to	ca. 1250–1300	Heimskringla	5
61	AM 162 A ζ fol.	ca. 1250–1300	Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	3
62	AM 162 D 2 fol.	ca. 1250–1300	Laxdoela saga	5
63	AM 325 XI 2 e 4to	ca. 1250–1300	Óláfs saga helga	5
64	AM 325 VII 4to, hand A	ca. 1250–1300	Óláfs saga helga	5
65	AM 325 VII 4to, hand B	ca. 1250–1300	Óláfs saga helga	5
66	AM 325 VII 4to, hand C	ca. 1250–1300	Óláfs saga helga	5
67	AM 652 4to	ca. 1250–1300	Lives of the Apostles	5
68	AM 655 XV 4to	ca. 1250–1300	Dialogues of St. Gregory	5
69	AM 655 XVI 4to	ca. 1250–1300	Pétr's saga postula and Páls saga postula	5
70	AM 655 XVIII 4to	ca. 1250–1300	Homilies	5
71	AM 655 XXII 4to	ca. 1250–1300	Stefáns saga	5
72	AM 655 XXVIII a 4to, hand A	ca. 1250–1300	Klements saga	5
73	AM 655 XXVIII a 4to, hand B	ca. 1250–1300	Ambrósiuss saga byskups	5
74	AM 655 XXX 4to	ca. 1250–1300	A leech book	5
75	Holm perg. 2 4to, hand A	ca. 1250–1300	Óláfs saga helga	5
76	Holm perg. 2 4to, hand B	ca. 1250–1300	Óláfs saga helga	5
77	NRA 78	ca. 1250–1300	Maríu saga	5
78	Lbs. frg. 82	ca. 1258–64	Kringla ms. of Heimskringla	5
79	AM 334 fol. 1, hand A	ca. 1260–70	Staðarhólsbók of Grágás	5
80	AM 334 fol. 1, hand B	ca. 1260–70	Staðarhólsbók of Grágás	5
81	AM 334 fol. 2, hand C	ca. 1271–81	Staðarhólsbók of Járnsíða	5

No.	Manuscript shelf number	Date	Contents	Category
82	AM 334 fol. 2, hand D	ca. 1271–81	Staðarhólsbók of Járnsíða	5
83	GKS 2365 4to	ca. 1270	Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda	5
84	GKS 1009 fol., hand A	ca. 1275	Morkinskinna	5
85	GKS 1009 fol., hand B	ca. 1275	Morkinskinna	5
86	AM 279 a 2 4to, hands B–D	ca. 1275–1300	On the properties of Þingeyrar monastery	5
87	AM 162 A γ fol.	ca. 1275–1300	Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	5
88	AM 221 fol.	ca. 1275–1300	Jóns saga helga and Ágústínuss saga	5
89	AM 240 XI fol.	ca. 1275–1300	Maríu saga	5
90	AM 291 4to	ca. 1275–1300	Jómsvikinga saga	5
91	AM 325 VIII 4 b 4to	ca. 1275–1300	Sverris saga and Þoglunga saga	5
92	AM 325 XI 2 n 4to	ca. 1275–1300	Óláfs saga helga	4
93	AM 519 a 4to	ca. 1280	Alexanders saga	5
94	AM 655 XXIX 4to hand A	ca. 1280	Alexanders saga	5
95	AM 655 XXIX 4to hand B	ca. 1280	Alexanders saga	5
96	AM 134 4to	ca. 1281–94	Jónsbók	5
97	AM 325 XI 2 m 4to	ca. 1300	Óláfs saga helga	5
98	AM 162 B δ fol.	ca. 1300	Njáls saga	5
99	AM 162 D 1 fol.	ca. 1300	Laxdæla saga	5
100	AM 162 A δ fol.	ca. 1300	Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	5

Table 3. Scribes of Category 2 with sporadic use of Anglo-Saxon “f”

16	AM 677 II 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Homilies and Dialogues of St. Gregory	2
19	AM 696 XXIV 4to	ca. 1200–1225	On the Penitential Psalms	2
24	AM 325 II 4to, hand C	ca. 1225	Ágrip af Noregs konunga sǫgum	2

be observed. The scribe of AM 696 XXIV 4to uses the Anglo-Saxon “f” only once, in the preposition/adverb *frá* ‘from’ written out in full (2v3), but the scribe may have chosen the Anglo-Saxon “f” in anticipation of a superscript abbreviation, even if he then decided to write the word out in full. Hand C in AM 325 II 4to uses the Anglo-Saxon “f” five times; once in the prep./adv. *frá* with a superscript abbreviation symbol (24va1), once in the prep./adv. *af* (24vb2), and twice in the prep./adv. *of* (24vb5, 24vb16). The use of the Anglo-Saxon “f” in function words, especially *af* where it forms a ligature with “a,” can be observed in other later hands as well.

Two scribes in the first half of the thirteenth century show substantial use of the Anglo-Saxon “f”—more than one third of occurrences, but less than two thirds (approximately 34–66%)—alongside the Caroline “f,” as shown in Table 2: [21] AM 645 I 4to with approximately 51% Anglo-Saxon

Table 4. Scribes of Category 3 in the first half of the thirteenth century with substantial use of Anglo-Saxon “f” (approximately 34–66%) alongside the Caroline “f”

21	AM 645 I 4to	ca. 1220	St. Þorlákr's Book of Miracles and Lives of Saints	3
26	AM 645 II 4to, hand A	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	3

Table 5. Scribes of Category 4 in the first half of the thirteenth century and around the middle of that century: Anglo-Saxon “f” predominates; Caroline “f” appears only sporadically in no more than one third (33%)

27	AM 645 II 4to, hand B	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	4
28	AM 645 II 4to, hand C	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	4
37	AM 325 IV α 4to	ca. 1250	Óláfs saga helga	4

“f,” and [26] AM 645 II 4to hand A with approximately 37% (see also Table 4). Despite currently being bound together under the shelf mark AM 645 4to, the two parts, I and II, originally belonged to two distinct codices.³⁸ These two scribes fall into Category 3 in the classification scheme in Table 1; a third scribe belonging to this category, probably working in the second half of the thirteenth century, will be discussed below.

The scribes in Category 3 are more advanced in their use of Anglo-Saxon “f” than their colleagues in Category 2. Yet, the two symbols do not appear in free distribution. The scribe of AM 645 I 4to, now consisting of 42 leaves, uses the Anglo-Saxon “f” frequently to accommodate a superscript abbreviation symbol, but also very often in the prep./adv. *af* where the Anglo-Saxon “f” forms a ligature with the preceding letter “a.” Merely one page with hand A in AM 645 II 4to has survived, providing only a small body of examples, but a similar pattern emerges. The Anglo-Saxon “f” appears frequently with a superscript symbol and forms a ligature with the preceding letter “a” in both prep./adv. *af* (43r19, 43r28) and *hafa* ‘have’ (43r19).

In three hands from the middle and third quarter of the thirteenth century, the Anglo-Saxon “f” has risen to become the predominant “f” symbol: [27] AM 645 II 4to, hand B, with approximately 69% Anglo-Saxon “f”; [28] AM 645 II 4to, hand C, with around 70%; and [37] AM 325 IV α 4to, with approximately 84% (see also Table 5).

38. Anne Holtmark, ed., *A Book of Miracles: MS No. 645 4to of the Arna-Magnæan Collection in the University Library of Copenhagen*, Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevii, 12 (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1938), pp. 5–6.

The two hands in AM 645 II 4to, hands B and C, show a very similar use of the two varieties of “f.” In both hands, the ratio varies somewhat from one leaf to the next, but systematic sampling of 350 tokens in each of the two hands yielded essentially the same result for B and C, 69% and 70% Anglo-Saxon “f,” respectively. The third hand in AM 645 II 4to, hand A, as noted above (see Table 4), uses the Anglo-Saxon “f” much less, or in approximately 37% of instances. As already mentioned, the manuscript AM 645 4to now consists of two originally distinct codices, referred to as I and II, even if they may have been written in the same scribal milieu. In her introduction to the 1938 facsimile edition of AM 645 4to, Anne Holtsmark noted a change in style in the writing of part II of the manuscript and expressed her opinion that it was “not impossible” that it was written by three hands; Hreinn Benediktsson also maintained that it was the work of three different hands.³⁹ By contrast, C. R. Unger, in his 1874 edition of the lives of the apostles, stated that part II was written by a single hand.⁴⁰ More recently, a graphemic and phonographemic analysis by Odd Einar Haugen indicated that, despite a difference in the general appearance of the script, part II of AM 645 4to may have been written by a single scribe, perhaps over a period of time.⁴¹ This accords well with the fact that the presumed shift in hands coincides with a change of texts.

The practically identical levels of use of Anglo-Saxon “f” by hands B and C, 69% and 70%, respectively, support the notion that these are in fact the same hand. If not only B and C but also A are all one and the same hand, then the much more restricted use of Anglo-Saxon “f” by hand A, approximately 37%, would have to be accounted for. If the part attributed to A was written considerably earlier than the other two parts, the difference in use of the Anglo-Saxon “f” could reflect different stages in the adoption of the new variety of “f” by the scribe. It is, moreover, important to note that the part attributed to A only consists of 29 lines (43r1–29), while B is credited with little over 12 leaves (43r30–55v23), and C a little over 11 leaves (55v24–66v30); the difference may, therefore, be due to the drastically different amount of data available from the three parts.

The fragment AM 325 IV a 4to now consists of two conjoint leaves with a discontinuous text on St. Óláfr, king of Norway. The overall ratio of Anglo-Saxon “f” is around 84%, but there is a considerable dissimilarity between the two leaves: On leaf 1, Anglo-Saxon “f” is practically universal,

39. Holtsmark, ed., *Book of Miracles*, p. 13; Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, p. xx.

40. C. R. Unger, ed., *Postola sögur* (Christiania, 1874), p. x.

41. Odd Einar Haugen, “Between Graphonomy and Phonology: Deciding on Scribes in AM 645 4°,” in *Papers from the Tenth Scandinavian Conference on Linguistics, Bergen, June 11–13, 1987*, ed. Victoria Rosén (Bergen: Department of Linguistics and Phonetics, University of Bergen, 1988), 1, 254–72.

98%, with only two instances of Caroline “f,” whereas on leaf 2, Caroline “f” is much more frequent and the use of Anglo-Saxon “f” is only around 60%. The text on leaf 1 is closely related to that of the *Legendary saga of St. Óláfr* and the miracles incorporated there (DG 8 II). Leaf 2, on the other hand, contains an account of a miracle attributed to St. Óláfr that is different from the *Legendary saga* and instead is closely related to the miracles of St. Óláfr included in the *Norwegian Homily Book* (AM 619 4to); the miracles related on leaf 1, by contrast, have no parallel in the *Norwegian Homily Book*.⁴² The text preserved on each of the two leaves appears, thus, to have sprung from two different sources, suggesting that they may have been copied from two separate exemplars. Even if the two leaves are almost certainly written in the same hand, there is a clear difference in the general appearance of the script, suggesting that some time may have elapsed between their writing. Differences in orthography between the two leaves can also be detected. Of particular interest is the spelling of the middle-voice morpheme, which on leaf 1 is always spelled “z” (11 examples), consistent with the second half of the thirteenth century, while on leaf 2, the earlier form “sc” (6 examples) is as frequent as the younger “z” (6 examples).⁴³ The different levels of Anglo-Saxon “f” on the two leaves may therefore in all likelihood be attributed to both a different time of writing and different exemplars; moreover, the higher proportion of the old Caroline “f” to the younger Anglo-Saxon “f” on leaf 2 accords with the more archaic spelling of the middle-voice morpheme on leaf 2, indicating that it may have been copied from an older exemplar than leaf 1.

The scribes discussed in this section, belonging to Categories 2–4 in the classification scheme in Table 1, all use two types of the letter “f”: Caroline “f” and Anglo-Saxon “f.” They were probably already practicing scribes, accustomed to the Caroline “f,” when they became early adopters of the Anglo-Saxon “f.” As already indicated, adopting a new shape of the letter “f” and thus changing the graphemic inventory no doubt required considerable effort and determination for a professional scribe with perhaps years of practice writing the Caroline “f.” This is probably reflected in the different levels of use of the Anglo-Saxon “f” by the scribes in Categories 2–4.

42. Gustav Storm, ed., *Otte brudstykker af den ældste saga om Olav den hellige* (Christiania [Oslo]: Det norske historiske kildeskriftfond, 1893); Jonna Louis-Jensen, “Syvende og ottende brudstykke. Fragmentet AM 325 IV a 4to,” in *Opuscula* 4, *Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana*, 30 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1970), 31–60; Jónas Kristjánsson, *Um Fóstbræðrasögu* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1972), pp. 156–61. In the earlier scholarship, the text of AM 325 IV a 4to was considered part of the *Oldest saga of St. Óláfr*, deriving from the manuscript now surviving in the fragments in NRA 52, but this view has been refuted by Jonna Louis-Jensen.

43. Louis-Jensen, “Syvende og ottende brudstykke. Fragmentet AM 325 IV a 4to,” pp. 40–45.

THE FIRST SCRIBES OF A NEW GENERATION

The scribes of [10] AM 315 c fol., [17] AM 686 b 4to, [18] AM 686 c 4to, and [25] NRA 52 (see Table 6), presumably all working in the first quarter of the thirteenth century or around 1225, appear to be the earliest Icelandic scribes to fully embrace the Anglo-Saxon “f.” These may have been among the first scribes of a new generation of Icelandic scribes adopting the Anglo-Saxon “f” already at the outset of their scribal training, thus making the Anglo-Saxon “f” their primary “f” symbol from the beginning of their career, while at the same time being familiar with the Caroline “f” from Latin writings and even using it occasionally under certain circumstances.

The fragments in AM 315 c 4to consist of the remains of two leaves from *Grágás*, the law of the Icelandic commonwealth, presumably from a manuscript that in its original state must have been quite impressive.⁴⁴ The text on what little remains of these two leaves is admittedly very limited, but the 30 or so discernible occurrences of “f” are all of the Anglo-Saxon type. The fragments in AM 686 b 4to (two leaves and parts of three leaves) and AM 686 c 4to (a single leaf) contain homilies written in a script that is so similar that they might be written by the same scribe.⁴⁵ In these fragments, the Anglo-Saxon “f” is almost universal. In AM 686 b 4to there are around 150 reasonably legible instances of Anglo-Saxon “f” (98%) against 3 of Caroline “f”; in AM 686 c 4to around 75 occurrences of Anglo-Saxon “f” can be discerned (97%) against 2 of Caroline “f.” Three of these five occurrences of Caroline “f” are capital letters in word-initial position (“Fyrst” 2v1 in AM 686 b 4to; “Fylleþ” 1v14 and “Fra” 1v22 in AM 686 c 4to). The scribe of the *Oldest saga of St. Óláfr* in NRA 52, of which now only parts of six leaves remain, uses the Anglo-Saxon “f” almost exclusively, in a very even and neat hand.⁴⁶ Against a little over 230 instances of Anglo-Saxon

Table 6. The first scribes of Category 5 in the first quarter of the thirteenth century and around 1225: Only Anglo-Saxon “f”; the Caroline “f” does not appear except in a very restricted auxiliary role

10	AM 315 c fol.	ca. 1200–1225	Grágás	5
17	AM 686 b 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Homilies	5
18	AM 686 c 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Homily	5
25	NRA 52	ca. 1225	The Oldest Saga of St. Óláfr	5

44. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, plate no. 23.

45. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, plates no. 15 and 16.

46. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, plate no. 32.

“f” (99.6%), there is a single occurrence of a Caroline “f” appearing as a word-initial capital letter in a personal name (“Fiðr” 6v7).

The scribes of AM 315 c fol., AM 686 b 4to, AM 686 c 4to, and NRA 52 are thus the first full-fledged Icelandic users of the Anglo-Saxon “f”, showing the practice that was to become the norm in Icelandic script for centuries to come, where Anglo-Saxon “f” is the predominant symbol, but the Caroline “f” only appears in a very restricted auxiliary role.

THE CAROLINE “F” IN AN AUXILIARY ROLE

The Caroline “f” never fully disappeared from Icelandic script. After it had been replaced by the Anglo-Saxon “f” as the primary “f” symbol, the Caroline “f” continued to be known by Icelandic scribes as a standard symbol in Latin writings and occasionally also used by Icelandic scribes under certain circumstances. In the Icelandic script dominated by the Anglo-Saxon “f,” the sporadic appearance of Caroline “f” can for the most part be categorized as follows:

(1) Caroline “f” may appear in Latin texts written by an Icelandic scribe or individual words in Latin (or other foreign languages) as part of an Icelandic text. For example, in [59] AM 655 XXXIII 4to, four leaves containing lives of saints in a script with almost universal Anglo-Saxon “f,” “*Salvum me fac deus*” (1r28) appears in the same hand with Caroline “f.” In the leech book in [74] AM 655 XXX 4to, the word “*feniculo*” (4v4) appears in a script otherwise dominated by Anglo-Saxon “f.” In the life of St. John the apostle in [67] AM 652 4to, “*effeso borg,*” or the city of Ephesus, occurs several times written with Caroline “f” in a hand that otherwise employs only the Anglo-Saxon “f.” Words in Latin or other foreign languages are, however, not consistently written with the Caroline “f.” Thus the scribe of the leech book AM 655 XXX 4to also writes “*feniculum*” twice (2r9, 4r9) with an Anglo-Saxon “f,” and the scribe copying the life of St. Paul the apostle in [39] AM 655 XVII 4to wrote the names *Felix* and *Festus* several times with the Anglo-Saxon “f.”⁴⁷

(2) The Caroline “f” may appear as a capital letter in word-initial position (sometimes slightly enlarged), usually to mark the beginning of a new sentence, as in AM 686 b 4to, AM 686 c 4to, and NRA 52 mentioned above or, for example, “*Forum*” (2r14) in [57] AM 655 X 4to, hand A; “*Firir*” (1r17) and “*Firir*” (1r31) in [53] AM 655 XII–XIII 4to; “*Fyr*” (1r14) in [72] AM 655 XXVIII a 4to, hand A; or “*Fello*” (2r27) and “*Fam*” (2r31) in [100] AM 162 A δ fol. The Caroline “f” also occasionally appears in

47. On Icelandic books in Latin, see Áslaug Ommundsen and Gisela Attinger, “Icelandic Liturgical Books and How to Recognise Them,” *Scriptorium*, 67 (2013), 293–317.

rubrics, as, for instance, in [55] AM 310 4to where rubrics starting with the word *frá* ‘from, of’ frequently are written with a Caroline “f” in a hand that otherwise uses the Anglo-Saxon “f.” These capital letters sometimes descend below the baseline and can occasionally be described as hybrids sharing features from both the Caroline “f” and the Anglo-Saxon “f.”

(3) The Caroline “f” may appear in fixed abbreviations or phrases adopted from an earlier exemplar, as in *Grágás* in [79] AM 334 fol. where hand A very often writes the ubiquitous abbreviation for the legal term *fförbaugsgarðr* (the lesser outlawry)—usually “f.b.g.” accompanied by abbreviating diacritics—with a Caroline “f” while using the Anglo-Saxon “f” elsewhere. The Caroline “f” in this fairly standard abbreviation can very likely be attributed to an earlier exemplar predating the introduction of the Anglo-Saxon “f,” even if many scribes have updated the abbreviation with an Anglo-Saxon “f.” Hand B of *Grágás* in AM 334 fol. also frequently writes this same abbreviation with a Caroline “f,” but in addition this hand occasionally uses the Caroline “f” elsewhere, especially in the conjunction *ef* ‘if’ when written with a capital letter. This combination, the capital “E” and Caroline “f,” may be a fixed unit lifted from an earlier exemplar predating the introduction of the Anglo-Saxon “f.”

(4) The Caroline “f” is occasionally used as a fallback measure in correcting certain scribal errors. For example, a tall “f” mistakenly written instead of an intended Anglo-Saxon “f” could conveniently be changed to a Caroline “f.” Thus, for example, the Caroline “f” in “af fumri” (71va5–6) in hand B in AM 334 fol. may have started out as the tall “f” under the influence of the immediately following word “fumri.” Similarly, the Caroline “f” appears three times in [83] GKS 2365 4to, the *Codex Regius* of the *Poetic Edda*, as a correction, but elsewhere the scribe uses the Anglo-Saxon “f.”⁴⁸

(5) The Caroline “f” may occasionally slip into a text in Icelandic due to external influence. As already mentioned, scribes accustomed to writing Latin were probably more prone to letting an occasional Caroline “f” slip when writing in Icelandic than scribes who wrote Icelandic only. Occasional use of Caroline “f” by the Latinist scribe writing Icelandic may occur through external influence of at least two types: (a) influence from an exemplar with Caroline “f” or (b) immediately following the transition from extensive writing in Latin to writing Icelandic. A few isolated instances of Caroline “f” in hand A in [64] AM 325 VII 4to and hand B in [76] Holm perg. 2 4to could thus possibly be attributed to the exemplar. The occasional Caroline “f” in hand B writing *Grágás* in [80] AM 334 fol.,

48. Ludv. F. A. Wimmer and Finnur Jónsson, eds., *Håndskriftet Nr. 2365 4to gl. kgl. Samling på det store kgl. bibliotek i København (Codex regius af den ældre Edda) i fototypisk og diplomatisk gengivelse* (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1891), pp. xxxiii–xxxiv; Lindblad, *Studier i Codex Regius af Ældre Eddan*, pp. 24–25.

mentioned above, might indicate that hand B had extensive experience in writing Latin.⁴⁹ The use of Caroline “f” in one of the earliest diplomas in Icelandic may perhaps also be attributed to the influence of writing in Latin.⁵⁰

MASTERING THE CURRENT SCRIBAL NORM

Medieval Icelandic scribes probably spent much of their career copying other manuscripts. Sometimes they would copy a text from a recent manuscript, perhaps from the same scribal milieu, but at other times they would use a more dated exemplar or an exemplar from a different area with different linguistic and scribal norms. One of the many challenges facing the young apprentice scribe was learning the current scribal norm, both as regards the script and the orthography. While the experienced professional scribe with a fully developed sense of the current scribal norm would apply it without much conscious thought when copying a text from a decades- or century-old exemplar, the novice scribe, not yet having fully mastered this norm, would tend to rely to a much higher degree on his old exemplar, consciously or subconsciously adopting from it features of both the script and the orthography.

The eight fragments in [47–52] AM 92 1 IV 4to and the eight fragments in NRA 71, 72, 72b, 76 together make up the remains of seven leaves from a single manuscript containing the Life of St. Gregory the Great and his *Dialogues*, dating to the third quarter of the thirteenth century, as demonstrated by Hreinn Benediktsson in his 1963 edition.⁵¹ The remaining fragments of this manuscript show the close collaboration of probably six different scribes taking turns copying the text. These six scribes are, it seems, at different stages in their scribal careers and can be divided into two groups.

On the one hand are scribes 1, 2, and 3, skilled professional scribes who wrote the lion’s share of the manuscript, approximately 93% of the

49. His colleague, hand A in AM 334 fol., Staðarhólsbók of *Grágás*, and hand B in GKS 1157 fol., as well as in the Kringla fragment, Lbs. frg. 82, is known to also have written books in Latin, as his hand has been identified in two Latin fragments. See Stefán Karlsson, “Daviðssálmur með Kringluhendri,” in *Daviðsdiktur sendur Davíð Erlingssyni fimmtugum 23. ágúst 1986* (Reykjavík, 1986), pp. 47–51 (reprinted in Stefán Karlsson, *Stafkrókar*, ed. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 2000), pp. 274–78).

50. Diploma written June 23, 1311, at Reykir in Tungusveit; see edition and facsimile by Stefán Karlsson, ed., *Íslandské originaldiplomer indtil 1450*, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ A7 (Tekst), Suppl. vol. 1 (Faksimiler) (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), no. 6.

51. Hreinn Benediktsson, ed., *The Life of St. Gregory and His Dialogues: Fragments of an Icelandic Manuscript from the 13th Century*, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, B4 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963).

surviving text. All three use the Anglo-Saxon “f” as their main “f” symbol. Scribe 1 uses the Anglo-Saxon “f” exclusively in around 21 legible occurrences. Scribe 2 once uses a Caroline “f” as a capital letter in word-initial position at the beginning of a new sentence (Gv19) (as well as in the Latin name *Felix* in Gv17), but otherwise Anglo-Saxon “f” is his principal “f” symbol, appearing at least 110 times. Scribe 3 writes the Anglo-Saxon “f” at around 66 times, with 2 instances of the Caroline “f.” Scribe 2 also wrote the fragment [46] NRA 75 with *Inventio crucis* or *Kross saga*, remnants of a single leaf that may originally have belonged to the manuscript with the Life of St. Gregory the Great and his *Dialogues*, as well as [45] AM 279 a 2 4to (hand A) with *Skipti á Spákonuarfi*.⁵² In both of these works, the scribe only uses the Anglo-Saxon “f.”

On the other hand are scribes 4, 5, and 6, writing only a very insignificant part of the manuscript, or around 7% of the remaining text. Scribe 4 appears to have written only three lines in what remains of the manuscript, scribe 5 eleven lines, and scribe 6 only a little less than two lines.⁵³ The general appearance of these three hands suggests that they may have been less skilled scribes than their three colleagues, perhaps even novices trying their hand at copying. Two archaic orthographic features in the work of these three latter scribes stand out. First, scribes 4, 5, and 6 denote the unstressed vowels primarily with “e” and “o,” instead of “i” and “u”; second, scribes 5 and 6 use “þ” instead of “ð” (or “d”) to denote the dental fricative in word-medial and word-final position. These archaic orthographic features may, as suggested by Hreinn Benediktsson, derive from an earlier exemplar through slavish copying by the inexperienced scribes.⁵⁴ Interestingly, these archaic orthographic features in the short passages copied by scribes 4, 5, and 6 go hand in hand with their use of the Caroline “f”: Scribes 4 and 6 use only Caroline “f” (3 and 4 occurrences, respectively), and scribe 5 writes Caroline “f” twice against 4 instances of Anglo-Saxon “f.”

The fragments in AM 921 IV 4to and NRA 71, 72, 72b, 76 thus seem to show a remarkable collaboration of six alternating contemporary hands at different stages in their careers. Three were skilled professional scribes, adhering to the scribal norm prevalent in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, thus using the Anglo-Saxon “f” as their primary “f” symbol. Among these professional scribes, there were also three seemingly inexperienced scribes who tried their hand at copying, and, as they had not mastered the current scribal norm, they relied heavily on their old

52. Stefán Karlsson, “Inventio Crucis, cap. 1, og Veraldar saga,” *Opuscula* 2.2., Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana, 25.2 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1977), 116–18; Stefán Karlsson, “Islandsk bogekspert til Norge i middelalderen,” p. 8.

53. Hreinn Benediktsson, ed., *Life of St. Gregory and His Dialogues*, pp. 18–20.

54. Hreinn Benediktsson, ed., *Life of St. Gregory and His Dialogues*, pp. 45–46.

exemplar. Nothing suggests that the frequent shift of hands can in every instance be correlated with a change of exemplar; instead the shift of hands reveals different command of the current scribal norm.⁵⁵

The dependence on an early exemplar can also be witnessed at a later date in AM 623 4to containing the life of St. John the apostle and lives of saints. The script and orthography in this 31-leaf manuscript, written in a single hand except for five lines, now dated to around 1325, is a curious amalgam of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century features. In addition to archaic linguistic and orthographic properties, the extensive use of Caroline “f,” especially in the first part of the manuscript, alongside the Anglo-Saxon “f,” is most probably attributed to a slavish copying of an early exemplar.⁵⁶

LATE ADOPTERS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON “F”

The new scribal norm featuring the Anglo-Saxon “f” as the primary “F” symbol, relegating the Caroline “f” to an auxiliary role, appears to have gained almost universal acceptance in the Icelandic scribal community around the middle of the thirteenth century. Apart from scribes 4, 5, and 6 in [47–52] AM 921 IV 4to and NRA 71, 72, 72b, 76, surviving manuscripts from the second half of the thirteenth century were written by scribes whose principal “f” symbol was the Anglo-Saxon “f.” There are, however, two notable exceptions seen in Table 2 and repeated in Table 7.

The fragment [61] AM 162 A ζ fol. consists of 4 somewhat damaged leaves containing *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*.⁵⁷ In the *Dictionary of Old Norse*

Table 7: Substantial use of Caroline “f” in the second half of the thirteenth century

61	AM 162 A ζ fol.	ca. 1250–1300	Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	3
92	AM 325 XI 2 n 4to	ca. 1275–1300	Óláfs saga helga	4

55. As indicated above, scribe 2 has also been identified as the scribe of NRA 75 and as hand A in AM 279 a 2 4to, the latter of which has strong ties to the Benedictine monastery at Þingeyrar; see Stefán Karlsson, “Íslandsk bogekspört til Norge í middelalderen,” p. 8. Consequently, the monastery of Þingeyrar is bound to come to mind when searching for a scribal milieu where the six scribes could have carried out their work.

56. Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, plate no. 56; Finnur Jónsson, ed., *AM 623, 4°. Helgensagaer* (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1927). In the earlier scholarship, AM 623 4to was dated to the thirteenth century, but now it is dated to ca. 1325; see Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, p. xxxvii; *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog [Dictionary of Old Norse Prose]*, <http://onp.ku.dk/> (under “Håndskriftregister” [“Medieval Manuscripts”]).

57. See a transcription, facsimiles, and an introduction by Alex Speed Kjeldsen, ed., “AM 162 A ζ fol (Reykjavík),” *Opuscula* 12, Bibliotheca Arnamagæana, 44 (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 2005), 154–82.

Prose, it is dated to ca. 1250–1300, but Alex Speed Kjeldsen has made a compelling case for the narrower date ca. 1275–1300.⁵⁸ The scribe uses the Caroline “f” as his primary symbol alongside the Anglo-Saxon “f,” the latter of which appears only in about 39% of occurrences. [92] AM 325 XI 2 n 4to is likewise a fragment, a badly damaged leaf and a small bit of a second one, containing *Óláfs saga helga*. Even if the Anglo-Saxon “f” is his primary “f” symbol with approximately 78% occurrence, this scribe, too, makes substantial use of the Caroline “f.”

The strong appearance of the Caroline “f” in these two hands most probably working in the last quarter of the thirteenth century is quite striking. While some relatively archaic linguistic features can be identified, such as the predominant middle-voice morpheme *-sk* in AM 162 A ζ fol., a linguistic innovation like the merger of the long vowels *é* and *ø* manifest in the orthography of both fragments makes it highly improbable that they should be assigned a date any earlier than the second half of the thirteenth century.⁵⁹ These two scribes were clearly not oblivious to the new and trending Anglo-Saxon “f,” but, compared to the rest of the Icelandic scribal community, as manifest in the surviving manuscripts from the second half of the thirteenth century, they appear late in adopting the new scribal norm; they still adhered partly to an earlier norm. Why did they not better conform to the current norm? Were they isolated in some sense? Were they perhaps on the outer fringes of the scribal community?

The use of the Caroline “f,” it emerges, is not the only remarkable feature of the script that makes these two scribes stand out among scribes in the second half of the thirteenth century. Instead of writing the Uncial variety of the letter “d” with a leftward slanting ascender, these two scribes write the Half-Uncial “d” with a straight vertical ascender. The scribe of the *Egils saga* fragment AM 162 A ζ fol. uses only the Half-Uncial “d,” and it is the most frequent “d” type in the *Óláfs saga* fragment AM 325 XI 2 n 4to.⁶⁰ The Half-Uncial “d” with the straight vertical ascender is practically universal in some of the very earliest Icelandic manuscripts from the late twelfth century and around 1200, but already around 1200 the Uncial “d” with the leftward slanting ascender appeared alongside the Half-Uncial “d.” Several early thirteenth-century hands use both types, but, for most of the thirteenth century, the Uncial “d” is practically universal with only

58. *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog [Dictionary of Old Norse Prose]*, <http://onp.ku.dk/> (see under “Håndskriftregister” [“Medieval Manuscripts”]); Kjeldsen, ed., “AM 162 A ζ fol (Reykjavík),” pp. 166–68 (with references).

59. Kjeldsen, ed., “AM 162 A ζ fol (Reykjavík),” pp. 162, 166; Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason, eds., *Den store saga om Olav den hellige* (Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet and Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1941), pp. 963–64.

60. Kjeldsen, ed., “AM 162 A ζ fol (Reykjavík),” p. 155; Johnsen and Jón Helgason, eds., *Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, p. 964.

sporadic occurrences of the Half-Uncial type.⁶¹ The extensive use of the Half-Uncial “d” in these two hands in the second half of the thirteenth century or, more likely, the last quarter of the thirteenth century is therefore very much out of the ordinary, just as their substantial use of the Caroline “f.”

In addition to these two exceptional features of the script, the two scribes also seem to have shared a rare linguistic trait. Their orthography shows signs of the stopping of a voiced bilabial or labiodental fricative immediately following *r* or *l*, as indicated by the words *arfi* (dat. sing.) ‘inheritance’, *þarf* (3rd sing.) ‘needs’, *silfri* (dat. sing.) ‘silver’, *sjálfr* ‘self’, and *Kálfr* ‘calf (also personal name)’ spelled with “rb” and “lb” instead of “rf” and “lf,” respectively.⁶² Orthographic signs of the pronunciation of a bilabial stop instead of a fricative immediately following *l* or *r* can be found as early as the end of the twelfth century, and this pronunciation persisted dialectally in Icelandic into the nineteenth century, predominantly, it seems, in northwestern Iceland.⁶³ Evidence for this pronunciation in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is, however, very sparse. Apart from the two fragments AM 162 A ζ fol. and AM 325 XI 2 n 4to, orthographic signs of this pronunciation have at present been recorded in the work of only four other scribal hands before ca. 1300:⁶⁴ (1) GKS 1812 IV 4to, containing *Rímbe gla*, a treatise on computation, dated to ca. 1192; (2) GKS 1157 fol., hand A, containing *Grágás*, dated to ca. 1250; (3) AM 655 XXVII 4to, containing homilies, dated to ca. 1200–1300; and (4) GKS 2365 4to, Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*, dated to ca. 1270. The earliest one, GKS 1812 IV 4to, was written prior to the introduction of the Anglo-Saxon “f,” but in the other three, the Anglo-Saxon “f” is the primary “f” symbol (see Table 2).⁶⁵

61. Spehr, *Der Ursprung der isländischen Schrift*, pp. 75–79; Seip, *Palæografi B: Norge og Island*, pp. 49, 92; Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, pp. 45–46; Stefán Karlsson, “Development of Latin Script II: In Iceland,” p. 836.

62. Kjeldsen, ed., “AM 162 A ζ fol (Reykjavík),” p. 164; Johnsen and Jón Helgason, eds., *Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, p. 964.

63. Björn K. Þórolfsson, *Um íslenskar orðmyndir á 14. og 15. öld og breytingar þeirra úr fornaldinu. Með viðauka um nýjungar í orðmyndum á 16. öld og síðar* (Reykjavík: Fjölágsprentsmiðjan, 1925), p. xxvi; Jón Helgason, ed., *The Saga Manuscript 2845, 4to in the Old Royal Collection in the Royal Library of Copenhagen*, Manuscripta Islandica, 2 (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1955), p. xi; Ásgeir Bl. Magnússon, “Um framburðinn rd, gd, fd,” *Íslensk tunga*, 1 (1959), 9–25; Kristján Arnason, “Conflicting Teleologies: Drift and Normalization in the History of Icelandic Phonology,” in *Historical Linguistics 1987: Papers from the 8th International Conference on Historical Linguistics*, ed. Henning Andersen and Konrad Koerner (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), pp. 21–36; Kristján Arnason, *Hljóð. Handbók um hljóðfræði og hljóðkerfisfræði*, Íslensk tunga, 1 (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 2005), p. 351; Kristín Eik Gústafsdóttir, “Hálb er öld hvar. Um lokhljóðun [v] á eftir *l* og *r*,” *Mimir*, 45 (2007), 8–14.

64. Lindblad, *Studier i Codex Regius af Áldre Eddan*, pp. 216–19.

65. NRA 58A, a fragment of *Konungs skuggsjá*, now consisting of the remains of three leaves, dated to ca. 1260, deserves a mention in this context. The scribe has been considered

The combination of these three rare characteristics—(a) the substantial use of Caroline “f,” (b) the use of the Half-Uncial “d,” and (c) orthographic signs of a dialectal pronunciation with a stop in the clusters *rf* and *lf*—shared by the scribes of the fragments AM 162 A ζ fol. and AM 325 XI 2 n 4to sets them apart from their fellow scribes in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. While the use of the Caroline “f” and the Half-Uncial “d” could be regarded as conservative if not outright archaic features, the merger of the long vowels *é* and *ó* places the scribes quite firmly in the second half of the thirteenth century as opposed to the first half. The rare orthographic signs of the dialectal pronunciation with a stop in the clusters *rf* and *lf* suggest they may have spoken a variety of Icelandic not shared by the vast majority of Icelandic thirteenth-century scribes, perhaps in the northwestern parts of the country. These two late adopters of the Anglo-Saxon “f” were, it seems, not central in the scribal community at the time and therefore adhered to a scribal norm that was slightly different from the rest.

Interestingly, AM 623 4to from around 1325, exceptional in its time of writing for its extensive use of Caroline “f,” as discussed above, also has several orthographic signs of stopping in *rf* and *lf* clusters.⁶⁶

A TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY OF SCRIBES

In this study of Icelandic thirteenth-century manuscripts and manuscript fragments, three types of scribes have emerged:

First, there are the scribes in Category 1 (according to the classification scheme in Table 1 above) in whose work there are no recorded instances of the Anglo-Saxon “f.” These scribes worked in the late twelfth century and the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and even if they never used the Anglo-Saxon “f,” we cannot, considering the strong political and cultural ties between Iceland and Norway in the period, assume that they were unaware of the existence of the Anglo-Saxon “f.” On the contrary, it seems probable that books and documents written in Norway in Norwegian script featuring the Anglo-Saxon “f” had made their way to Iceland in the late twelfth century and early thirteenth century. Consequently, we must allow for the possibility that at least some of the Icelandic scribes in Category 1 had indeed been exposed to this way of writing “f.”

Norwegian by many scholars, but, as pointed out by Stefán Karlsson, his script and orthography has several distinctly Icelandic features, one of which is the orthographic signs of the Icelandic dialectal pronunciation with a stop in the clusters *rf* and *lf*. See Stefán Karlsson, “Íslandsk bogeksport til Norge i middelalderen,” pp. 9–10. The scribe of NRA 58A uses the Anglo-Saxon “f” as his main “f” symbol.

66. Lindblad, *Studier i Codex Regius af Äldre Eddan*, p. 218.

We can only conjecture as to why the scribes in Category 1 did not adopt the Anglo-Saxon “f,” had they in fact been introduced to it. As discussed above, it would probably have been a considerable challenge for practicing scribes with many years of experience to all of a sudden change their graphemic inventory in this way. That alone may have made them resist the change, but perhaps there was also a lack of motivation or absence of prestige associated with what was presumably regarded by the Icelandic scribes as “the Norwegian way” of writing “f.”

Second, there are the scribes in Categories 2–4 who have a *mixed practice*: they use both the Caroline “f” and the Anglo-Saxon “f” in different proportions. These may have been experienced practicing scribes when they were introduced to the Anglo-Saxon “f.” They ventured to try it out and adopted it with varying degree of success. The more conservative scribes used the Anglo-Saxon “f” sparingly and almost exclusively where they could take advantage of its ability to accommodate a superscript abbreviation symbol. Others used it more extensively and, it seems, in free alternation with the Caroline “f.”

The scribes in Categories 2–4 evidently got sufficient motivation to adopt a new way of writing “f,” even if they were already seasoned scribes. Clearly “the Norwegian way” of writing “f” had now gained new currency, probably through increased Norwegian cultural and political influence, perhaps culminating in the inauguration of two Norwegian bishops over Iceland in 1238. Whatever the catalyst, the partial adoption of the Anglo-Saxon “f” on the part of the scribes in Categories 2–4 effectively made them the agents of the change among Icelandic scribes, legitimizing the practice and paving the way for a new generation of scribes who would use the Anglo-Saxon “f” as their main “f” symbol from the beginning.

Third, there are the scribes in Category 5 where the Anglo-Saxon “f” has been established as the main symbol, and the Caroline “f” appears only in an auxiliary role. These scribes probably belonged to a new generation of scribes who used the Anglo-Saxon “f” from the outset. The scribes of the previous generation, scribes of Categories 2–4 or perhaps even Category 1, were no doubt involved in their training, but these young apprentices were also exposed to new ideals brought in by new books and documents used as models and probably also Norwegian scribes or Icelandic scribes trained in Norway who themselves had used the Anglo-Saxon “f” from the beginning of their career. This new generation of scribes ushered in a new scribal norm in Iceland. The transition was complete.

The actual transition thus manifests itself in the work of the scribes of Categories 2–4 who use both the Caroline “f” and the Anglo-Saxon “f”—the scribes with *mixed practice*. These are only eleven, as shown in Table 8 below. As indicated earlier, there is reason to believe that hands A, B, and

Table 8. The scribes showing the transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f”

16	AM 677 II 4to	ca. 1200–1225	Homilies and Dialogues of St. Gregory	2
19	AM 696 XXIV 4to	ca. 1200–1225	On the Penitential Psalms	2
24	AM 325 II 4to, hand C	ca. 1225	Ágrip af Noregs konunga sögum	2
21	AM 645 I 4to	ca. 1220	St. Þorlákr’s Book of Miracles and Lives of Saints	3
26	AM 645 II 4to, hand A	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	3
27	AM 645 II 4to, hand B	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	4
28	AM 645 II 4to, hand C	ca. 1225–50	Lives of the Apostles and Lives of Saints	4
37	AM 325 IV α 4to	ca. 1250	Óláfs saga helga	4
51	AM 921 IV 1 4to + NRA, hand 5	ca. 1250–75	The Life of St. Gregory and his Dialogues	4
61	AM 162 A ζ fol.	ca. 1250–1300	Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar	3
92	AM 325 XI 2 n 4to	ca. 1275–1300	Óláfs saga helga	4

C in [26–28] AM 645 II 4to may, in fact, be a single hand. If correct, this would bring the number of transitional hands down to nine. Moreover, scribe 5 in [51] AM 921 IV 4to and NRA 71, 72, 72b, 76 appears to have been only an ancillary hand, writing merely eleven lines in what little there is left of the manuscript, and it remains uncertain if he was a professional scribe.

It has been argued, as noted above, that the *Egils saga* fragment [61] AM 162 A ζ fol. should be dated not to the second half of the thirteenth century but more narrowly to the last quarter of that century. The scribe of the *Egils saga* fragment along with the scribe of the *Óláfs saga* fragment [92] AM 325 XI 2 n 4to are thus somewhat behind the rest of the scribes in the adoption of the Anglo-Saxon “f.” These two aside, the main transitional period, manifest in the work of perhaps as few as six or seven scribes with mixed practice, may have been no longer than twenty-five years.

Research indicates that innovations tend to have an S-shaped rate of adoption. At first, only a few individuals adopt the innovation, but, when the diffusion reaches a critical mass of individuals within society, the curve climbs rapidly; eventually, the rate of adoption slows down as fewer and fewer individuals remain who have not adopted the innovation.⁶⁷ The scribes in Category 2, especially [16] AM 677 II 4to and [19] AM 696

67. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003), p. 23.

XXIV 4to, may have been among the first adopters, cautiously trying the Anglo-Saxon “f” where it had an advantage over the Caroline “f.” By contrast, the two late-comers, [61] AM 162 A ζ fol. and [92] AM 325 XI 2 n 4to, are at the tail end of the curve, perhaps as much as three-quarters of a century behind the early adopters.

Any assessment of the rate of the transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” will inevitably depend on the point of reference. The transition when the letter “ð” was replaced by the letter “d” in Icelandic script is perhaps somewhat comparable, as already mentioned, even if it took place at a later date. It began in the late thirteenth century but was not fully completed until the first quarter of the fifteenth century. In comparison, the transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f”—manifest, apart from two late adopters, in perhaps only six or seven scribal hands over a period that may have been as short as a quarter of a century—must be considered swift. The shift from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” is also quite different from the gradual transition from Pre-Gothic script to full-fledged Textualis and then from Textualis to a more cursive book script. Both of these latter changes in the script progressed slowly through several generations of scribes without a clear dividing line; in comparison, the transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” appears abrupt. Consequently, the question is bound to arise as to how it was possible to adopt the Anglo-Saxon “f” and implement a new scribal norm in thirteenth-century Iceland in such a swift and effective manner.

First, it was essential that the innovation—the Anglo-Saxon “f”—be communicated to all members of the scribal community. The swift adoption of the Anglo-Saxon “f” suggests that Icelandic thirteenth-century scribes formed a relatively dense network with channels of communication that were effective in spreading information and thus conducive to the successful diffusion of innovations. This alone does, of course, not provide any direct evidence about the geographical distribution of Icelandic thirteenth-century scribes and book production. A network with effective communication channels is, however, much more likely, generally speaking, to be sustainable with a large concentration of scribes in few geographical locations than with solitary scribes working in many different locations far and wide over the country. More specifically, the relatively swift and effective transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” in Icelandic script seems to indicate that the surviving thirteenth-century Icelandic manuscripts and manuscript fragments are by and large the product of a close collaboration of scribes or groups of scribes working together in a few tightly interconnected scriptoria. The two late adopters of Anglo-Saxon “f,” the scribes of the *Egils saga* fragment AM 162 A ζ fol. and the *Óláfs saga* fragment AM 325 XI 2 n 4to, may have been on the

outer fringes of the scribal community in social or geographical sense or perhaps both.

Second, the decision-making process must have been conducive to the swift adoption of the Anglo-Saxon “f.” As observed earlier, it must have been a challenge for experienced professional scribes to change their graphemic inventory. What was it, then, that impelled them to exert the effort to adopt a new type of the letter “f”? Increased visibility of the Anglo-Saxon “f” through a growing number of newly imported books and documents may have served as a stimulus. The scribes may also have identified increased functionality, as the Anglo-Saxon “f,” unlike the Caroline “f,” could easily accommodate a superscript abbreviation symbol. The fact that some of the early adopters of Anglo-Saxon “f” used it primarily in connection with a superscript abbreviation symbol, as discussed above, shows that functionality was indeed a matter of consideration, and that partial adoption was regarded as an option by some of the scribes. The swift transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” also points to a scribal community with a hierarchical structure and influential opinion leaders capable of exerting their influence over other members of the community on the same level and the level below. The decision to adopt the Anglo-Saxon “f” appears not to have been made by individual scribes independent of the rest of the scribal community; this would probably have resulted in far greater variation among individual scribes extending over a far longer period of time than manifest in the surviving manuscripts. Rather, the swift transition indicates that this may have been a collective decision by the scribal community or perhaps even a decision made by a centralized authority. In order for the transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” to be carried out so effectively, it must have been championed by someone in a position to impact the opinion and work of others, perhaps Norwegian or Norwegian-trained master scribes or religious authorities commissioning books for the cathedral schools or monastic libraries.⁶⁸

In a scribal community that invested this much attention and effort in scribal norm and penmanship, the language and the orthography would probably not have been passed over without consideration and discussion. The replacement of the Caroline “f” by the Anglo-Saxon “f,” it must be remembered, was part of a broader wave of Norwegian influence and evidently belonged to a larger contest of ideas in book production within the scribal community in Iceland, affecting other features of the script, introducing not only the Anglo-Saxon “f” but also the letter “ð” and (slightly earlier) the Anglo-Saxon “v” (the *wynn*). It seems not improbable that the

68. For a discussion of the different types of innovation decisions, see Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, pp. 28–30.

language itself may also have been the subject of a normalizing effort. In a community that was capable of implementing changes in the handwriting norm this effectively, an effort to establish and maintain a written linguistic standard is likely to have been quite successful.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of Anglo-Saxon “f” in Icelandic thirteenth-century script and its replacement of the Caroline “f” is, apart from two late adopters, evidenced in the work of probably only six or seven scribes in a period that may have been no longer than twenty-five years. This seems to suggest that the Icelandic manuscripts and manuscript fragments surviving from the thirteenth century are the product of the close collaboration of scribes or groups of scribes working together in a few tightly interconnected scriptoria where information and innovations could spread quickly. The swift transition from Caroline “f” to Anglo-Saxon “f” seems also to suggest that the decision to adopt the Anglo-Saxon “f” was not made independently by individual scribes, but, rather, that it was a collective decision or perhaps even a decision made by a centralized authority.

These thirteenth-century Icelandic manuscripts and manuscript fragments seem thus to represent the language of a relatively homogeneous group of scribes working closely together, with very similar training, and a proven record of adhering to a common scribal norm. Consequently, these manuscripts are not likely to contain a very diverse language replete with different social and regional linguistic variants. Instead, the language of these manuscripts more likely reflects a written norm created by a relatively small circle of learned scribes working closely together. The Anglo-Saxon “f,” an innovation adopted as part of the scribal norm, diffused, as we have seen, quite rapidly. Similarly, a linguistic innovation, once accepted by the scribes as part of the written linguistic norm, would probably also have diffused rapidly in the written sources now available to us.