Extraction of 16th Century Calendar Fragments

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The extraction of the calendar fragments required a careful disassembly of the old bookbinder's glue and a meticulous detachment of each calendar leaf. For documentation, each leaf is being photographed by the conservator of Odense City Museums. The 1580 book has an outer cover of parchment made from a reused and possibly medieval manuscript leaf. The inside of this parchment, containing writing, is being photographed as well. The calendar fragments are made from paper with woodcut illustrations. A well-preserved title leaf makes it possible to easily identify the fragments, whereas other fragments may require extensive use of Big Data and other forms of analysis in order to be identified. Usually, the university library prefers not to remove the fragments from their "fragment carriers." In order to read fragments that are only partially visible or invisible, any technology may be deployed at the Cultural Heritage & Archaeometric Research Team, SDU. Upon finding medieval manuscript fragments in the university library's special collections, scholars at the Center for Medieval Literature are consulted. In most cases, digital pictures of the finds will circulate in the international community of medieval scholars. Thousands of 16th and 17th Century books are stored in the University Library of Southern Denmark. One out of five of these books is expected to contain medieval manuscript fragments or fragments of rare prints, e.g. incunabula.

The "fragment carrier": A relatively small book, bound in parchment, containing a copy of Institutiones Iuris Civilis by Theophylactus [et alii], Lyon 1580. Format: 24mo

Fragments in the binding: 21 calendar fragments were fitted in the binding of the book. The fragments were part of the permis' padding. Format: 16mo

The "Zodiac Man": In the middle ages and early modern period, astrological signs were seen as connected with different parts of the human body. This in accordance with the ancient belief of the microcosm connected with the macrocosm.

The extraction of the calendar fragments made it possible to initiate further analysis, and at the same time make rare material available for historians. In the process, it soon became clear that the German astronomers Regiomontanus and Johannes von Gmunden were not the authors of the calendar in question. As documented by the remains of the calendar's title leaf, the author is Lucas Bathodius (the younger) of Phalsbourg. He was a follower of the works of Renaissance philosopher, physician and astronomer, Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim, 1493-1541). Lucas Bathodius was famous for his astrological and prognostic works in the second half of the 16th Century, using the following epithets: „Medicus & Astronomiae Studiosus zu Pfalzburg“ & „Fürstlicher Pfalzgräflicher Medicus zu Simmern“.

The "framend kalendem" fragments clearly demonstrate the great potential of finding other well preserved astronomical/astrological works inside the binding of 16th and 17th Century books. In this case, the 1580 book seems to have been repaired, possibly shortly after 1590, by using the calendar pages to stiffen the permis. A bookbinder's repair would explain why the fragments are younger than their carrier. From a historical perspective, the university library fragments may shed new light upon the details of Lucas Bathodius' calendar production (as far as we know, starting 1554 for the year 1558) at the publisher Nicolas Wald am Kornmarck in Strasbourg. The fragments may constitute the oldest known version in existence of the Schreibkalender in the 15mo format. Lucas Bathodius Argetinensis provided the users of his work with a practical tool for writing daily observations and/or noting events of cyclical importance. One can assume, that such calendars were published for the literate elite in society. In particular, the prognostic and medical elements of the calendar were meant to guide the reader and help them take necessary precautions throughout the year of 1591.