ALMANACS PRINTED IN CLUJ IN THE 17TH CENTURY

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Abstract Based on the most recent information about the old books from Cluj, we are aware of a number of sixty-two almanacs printed in this town during the 17th century. Although the look and content of these almanacs did not change significantly during these years, almost each printer tried to include something new in order to facilitate a better selling of the product. The detailed presentation of the content of these books and the highlighting of the different changes that occurred in some of the almanacs printed in Cluj can provide new information about this genre.
Keywords: almanac, Cluj, 17th century, calendar, prognostication

Almanacs can be considered a special group in the category of old books because their survival has been the most challenging through the centuries. First of all, they contained an amount of information that was only meant for a certain year and along with the passing of that year their value diminished. They were designed as small-format books (16^{o}) in order to fit easily in a pocket, so that they could be carried anywhere and thumbed through the pages. These books were intensively used by their owners they were probably lent to other family members and friends as well. This excessive usage led to a loss of pages or to the deterioration of the printing.

Nevertheless, some of these books managed to survive up to the present and because of the difficulties mentioned above they have become extremely valuable to us. Not only as old books, but also because the diverse information they provide about the former centuries. In this respect it is almost impossible to correctly appreciate their importance in history, literature, folklore, astronomy or geography. They can be approached from various angles or even interdisciplinarily and although many articles have already been published about them, they continue to reveal new things.

Analysing the almanacs has been an intriguing subject since the 17th century, when the first historical overview about the printed almanacs (including even Gutenberg`s

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astronomical calendar from 1448) was published by Ch. G. Haltaus.[1] Then, in the 19th century, Josef Strzygowski[2] tried to present the history of the Filocalus-calendar. This old calendar, which is considered to be the ancestor of the modern one, remained in the centre of attention even in the 20th century and led to the book by Michele Renée Salzman.[3] The fact that the illustrations are part of an almanac facilitated the appearance of studies that analysed its connection to the history of arts, for example J. C. Webster,[4] who presented the illustrations of the twelve months and also added to his work a detailed catalogue to be used as a reference in further studies. Similarly, Teresa Pérez Higuera[5] studied the connections between the calendars and medieval art.

Besides these general studies, some scholars tried to focus only on the almanacs published by a certain nation. Probably the most famous book was written by Bernard Capp,[6] who gave a very detailed and accurate presentation of the English almanacs. He discussed the English almanacs from various angles, providing thus a good methodology in the study of this genre.

The first articles about the Hungarian almanacs appeared towards the end of the 19th century, but these were pure bibliographic descriptions of the calendars found in different libraries. This is understandable if we think that in Transylvania scholars started to be interested in library science around the last decades of the 19th century and it was absolutely normal to start a new field of science by mapping its object of study. Later on, from the beginning of the 20th century the number of studies published on old Hungarian prints increased; among them we can find Imre Kovács` doctoral thesis[7] about the short poems which were included in the calendars. Two other names have to be mentioned for their contribution to this domain. One is László Szelestei-Nagy,[8] who studied the almanacs from the 18th century and the other is Ágnes Dukkon,[9] who compared the Hungarian and European almanacs.

[1] Christian Gottlob Haltaus, *Calendarium medii aevi* (Leipzig, 1729).

[2] Strzygowski, Josef, "Die Calenderbilder des Chronographen vom Jahre 354," In *Jahrbuch des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* (Berlin, 1888).

[3] Salzman Michele Renée, *On Roman Time. The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[4] James Carlson Webster, *The Labors of the Months in Antique and Medieval Art to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Chicago, 1938).

[5] Teresa Pérez-Higuera, *Chronos. Die Zeit in der Kunst des Mittelalters* (Würzburg: Echter, 1997).

[6] Bernard Capp, *Astrology and Popular Press. English Almanacs. 1500–1800* (London: Faber, 1979).

[7] Imre Kovács, *Régi magyar kalendáriumaink 1711-ig* (Debrecen, 1907).

[8] László Szelestei-Nagy, "Kalendáriumok a XVIII. századi Magyarországon" (Almanacs in 18th century Hungary), In *A megváltozott hagyomány* (The changed tradition), ed. Lajos Hopp et al. (Budapest: MTA, 1983), 313–363.

[9] Ágnes Dukkon, *Régi magyarországi kalendáriumok európai háttérben* (Old Hungarian almanacs against a European background) (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 2003).

In Transylvania, Elena Dunăreanu[10] published two books in which she gave a brief summary of the almanacs that were published in Sibiu [Hermannstadt, Nagyszeben, Cibinium, present-day Romania], giving a bibliographic description and shorter or longer presentations of their contents.

I what follows, I will present a study based on thirty-seven, still existing almanacs printed in Cluj-Napoca [Klausenburg, Kolozsvár, Claudiopolis, present-day Romania] during the 17th century. Its novelty is not the bibliographic description, but the detailed analysis of their content. This is the first attempt to describe and compare the almanacs printed in Cluj during the 17th century. These almanacs[11] can be found in the Special Collections of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library from Cluj-Napoca and some of them are unique copies which make them even more valuable.

Cluj is an old town situated in the north-west of Transylvania, which had a great importance in the history of printing, mainly because of its lively cultural life that was maintained even in the toughest times. Towards the end of the 17th century, Miklós Tótfalusi Kis, who was one of the greatest typographers of Europe, returned from Amsterdam and settled down in Cluj, where he printed books with high artistic value. His importance in the development of Transylvanian printing is remarkable and some aspects of his contribution are still to be clarified by scholars. Studying the different old books printed in Cluj can always widen our cultural and historical knowledge and it also helps the town to ensure its well-deserved place in the history of books. We should also not forget that the Lucian Blaga Central University Library is the owner of a few unique copies[12] of almanacs printed in this town during the 17th century.

In what follows, I will focus my study on the almanacs that still exist in our library. The first part, "Printers and Almanacs", presents the printers who worked in Cluj during the 17th century and the almanacs they published during their activity. The second part, "The Structure of the Almanacs", is a description of the content itself, emphasizing the alterations made by certain printers which changed more or less some of the almanacs. This latter allows us to see the changes that appeared in time and we can also speculate upon the cause(s) that triggered these changes.

Printers and almanacs

During the 17th century, there were eight printers who worked in Cluj. The first three of them were renters of the Heltai-print: János Makkai Nyírő (1616–1622), András Szilvási (1622–1627) and György Abrugi (1631–1651). The fourth one, Ábrahám Szenczi Kertész fled to Cluj from Oradea, which was under Turkish attack. He stayed and worked in the town from 1660 to

[10] Elena Dunăreanu, *Calendare românești sibiene* (1793–1970) (Romanians almanacs from Sibiu) (Sibiu: Biblioteca Astra, 1970). Eadem, *Almanahuri, anale, anuare sibiene* (Almanacs, annals and annuals from Sibiu) (Sibiu: Biblioteca Astra, 1971).

[11] Except for the almanac for 1635, all the existing copies or fragments can be found in Lucian Blaga Central University Library from Cluj-Napoca.

[12] We have no reliable data about the number of copies after 1670.

1662. The last four printers Mihály Veresegyházi Szentyel, Mihály Némethi, István Veresegyházi and Miklós Tótfalusi Kis were working for the Reformed Church and College.

Unfortunately, none of the almanacs printed by János Makkai Nyírő and András Szilvási survived to the present day. In their situation we can only make presumptions based on some short descriptions of the calendars made by people who had once seen those books. Unfortunately, the descriptions do not provide enough data regarding their look or content. However, they are worth being enumerated because, at least, they show the growing interest of the population in these books.

In the spring of 1616, when János Makkai Nyírő took over the printing shop, the fonts he worked with were very worn out and he spent a lot of time fixing them in order to be able to start publishing books. It was obvious that he had chosen to start his printing activity with the almanac, which was easier to sell due to its high demand. These books needed a rather small investment and a stable income was guaranteed. The account books of the town[13] provide information about the existence of the almanacs for 1617, 1618 and 1622.[14] We also have information about the one printed for 1620[15] from János Kénosi Tőzsér's manuscript bibliography written in the 18th century.[16] Furthermore, based on the printer`s period of activity, it is believed that he also published a calendar for 1621.[17]

Similar problems occur in András Szilvási`s situation where there are evidences about the almanacs for 1624 and 1625[18] in Kénosi Tőzsér`s bibliography, thus testifying their existence in the 18th century. It is presumed that he printed almanacs for 1623, 1626 and 1627[19] but they did not survive.

Finally, the last renter of the Heltai-press, György Abrugi is a more fortunate case, because he is the printer whose almanacs have not all disappeared in time and a number of them can be viewed. So we have concrete evidence, not just descriptions or allusions to them from the previous centuries. His almanacs, printed for 1631, 1632, 1633, 1634, 1641 and 1648,[20] can be discovered in the Lucian Blaga University Library from Cluj-Napoca. There is also

[13] Kálmán Tóth, "A könyvnyomtató Makai János deák" (János Makai, the typographer), In *Kelemen Lajos emlékkönyv* (Festschrift for Lajos Kelemen), ed. András Bodor et al. (Bucharest-Cluj, 1957).

[14] *Régi Magyarországi Nyomtatványok* (Old Hungarian Prints), eds. Gedeon Borsa et al. (vol. 1 [1473–1600] and 2 [1601–1635]), János Heltai (vol. 3 [1636–1655]), Judit P. Vásárhelyi (vol. 4 [1656–1670]) (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1971; 1983; 2000; 2012) (henceforth: RMNY) RMNY 1139, RMNY 1140, RMNY 1250.

[15] RMNY 1188.

[16] Ferenc Kanyaró, "Néhány szó régi naptárainkról" (On our old almanacs) *Magyar Könyvszemle* 5 (1897):181–182.

[17] RMNY 1223.

[18] RMNY 1292, RMNY 1313.

[19] RMNY 1269, RMNY 1340, RMNY 1367.

[20] RMNY 1477 (by mistake, in the book it is mentioned that the unique copy is in the possession of the Cluj Branch of the Romanian Academy Library but in reality this book is at Lucian Blaga Central University Library from Cluj-Napoca), RMNY 1504, RMNY 1545, RMNY 1568, RMNY 1828, RMNY 2173.

a fragment of the one printed for 1635[21] which is kept in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest. We can also read about the discovery of some fragments belonging to the calendars printed for 1646, 1650 and 1652[22] in Kanyaró`s article.[23] Unfortunately, their traces have been lost since then.

György Abrugi worked in Cluj from 1630 to 1651. Out of the 22 years of his activity we have ten almanacs mentioned above. We have no knowledge about books printed in 1643 and 1651 in Cluj, so there are very few chances to presume the existence of almanacs for those years. But there are nine years of Abrugi`s activity which can be proved with the existence of other prints. That is why we dare assume that Abrugi printed almanacs in those years too, despite the fact that none of the copies exists nowadays.[24]

The printers that rented the Heltai-press during the first part of the 17th century produced a total of 29 almanacs. We know that from 1601 to 1655 there were 88 books printed in Cluj.[25] This means that the number of almanacs represents 32.95% of the total number of books printed in Cluj for the same period. I consider that this is an excellent proof of their popularity. (fig1.)

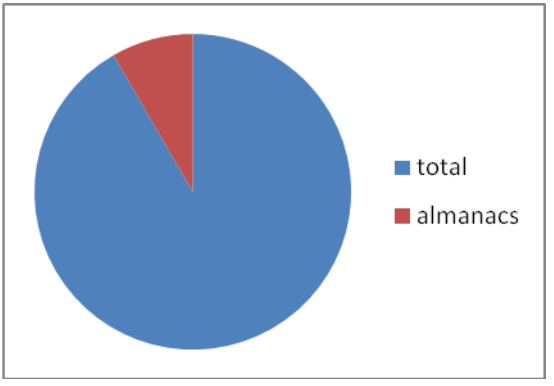

Fig.1 The number of the almanacs compared to the total number of prints from 1601 to 1654

Before ending the presentation of the Heltai-press period, I would like to mention that during my research in the Lucian Blaga Central University Library I found a fragment from the

[21] RMNY 1589.
[22] RMNY 2106, RMNY 2261, RMNY 2371.
[23] Kanyaró, "Néhány szó", 182–183.
[24] Here are the years for which it is presumed that an almanac was published and the bibliographical references in brackets: 1636 (RMNY 1616), 1637 (RMNY 1645), 1638 (RMNY 1677), 1639 (RMNY 1724), 1640 (RMNY 1769), 1642 (RMNY 1885), 1644 (RMNY 1999), 1645 (RMNY 2060), 1649 (RMNY 2214).
[25] Hajnalka Ilyés B., *Catalogul cărților vechi tipărite la Cluj între 1550–1800* (Catalogue of old books printed in Cluj between 1550 and 1800) (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2014), 49–56.

almanac for 1648. It is the 5th chapter, entitled *About the Eclipses,*[26] which was not included in the bibliographical description of the almanac; most probably, this fragment was not known then.

The printing activity in Cluj was much reduced between 1652–1667 and it practically restarted in 1668 under the guidance of the Reformed Church and College of the town. However, between 1660–1662, Ábrahám Szenczi Kertész[27] worked in Cluj for a while before he moved to Sibiu. Szenczi Kertész regularly printed almanacs in Oradea, which led to the conclusion that he might have continued to print them in Cluj as well. So it is thought that he published two almanacs in Cluj.[28]

It is regrettable that only two almanacs were printed between 1652–1667. Yet, this interval was generally marked by a very small production of books in Cluj because there was hardly any functional printing shop or printer. We know only eighteen books made in this period.[29]

The largest number of almanacs that survived during the centuries was printed in the typography of the Reformed Church and College. It seems that they printed almanacs for each year. However, their first calendar, made for 1670, cannot be found today, but the bibliographies refer to it as a formerly existing book.[30] The same problem appears with the almanac for 1672. Yet, based on the fact that we have almanacs for 1671 and also for 1673 it is pointless to think that the printing of almanacs might have been interrupted. The rest of the years present no problems because our libraries still possess those almanacs.

The typography of the Reformed Church and College had four printers in the 17th century. The first was Mihály Veresegyházi Szentyel with almanacs for 1670, 1671, 1673, 1674, 1675, 1676, 1677, 1678, 1679, 1680, 1681, 1682 and 1683.[31] He was followed by Mihály Némethi with seven almanacs (1684, 1685, 1686, 1687, 1688, 1689, 1690),[32] then came István Veresegyházi (1691, 1692, 1693)[33] and finally the famous Miklós Tótfalusi Kis.[34]

[26] "Ecclipsisekről".

[27] Ábrahám Szenczi Kertész worked in Oradea from 1640 to 1660 and in Sibiu from 1662 to1667, when he died.

[28] 1661 (RMNY 2904) and 1662 (RMNY 2980).

[29] Ilyés B., *Catalogul cărților,* 56–57.

[30] RMNY 3540.

[31] RMK I.1114, RMK I.1148, RMK I.1162, RMK I.1176, RMK I.1213, RMK I.1192c, RMK I.1221, RMK I.1233, RMK I.1245, RMK I.1259, RMK I.1285, RMK I.1299a.

[32] RMK I.1320, RMK I.1335, RMK I.1352a, RMK I.1362c, RMK I.1367e, RMK I.1372b, RMK I.1793.

[33] RMK I.1406, RMK I.1425, RMK I.1438.

[34] 1694 (RMK I.1454), 1695(RMK I.1471),1696 (RMK I.1487),1697 (RMK I.1504b), 1698 (RMK I.1525), 1699 (RMK I.1542), 1700 (RMK I.1561), 1701 (RMK I.1626a). Miklós Tótfalusi Kis printed his last almanac in 1701 (for 1702) but this 18th century almanac is not included here firstly, because I do not want to step over the given period, but mostly because this book follows exactly the pattern of the previously printed ones.

From 1668 to the end of the 17th century the town had a booming period in printing, the best in the whole century. There were 339 books[35] printed and out of them 31 were almanacs, which means 9.14% of the total production of books (fig.2). This can be considered an absolutely normal situation for a town in which only one printing shop functioned. There was no reason for this workshop to produce more than one almanac per year. But compared to the first half of the century the total book production was almost four times more.

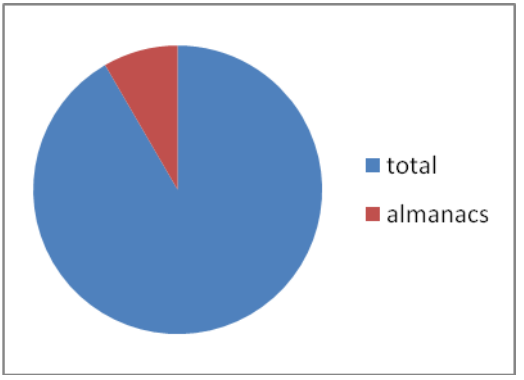

Fig.2. The number of the almanacs compared to the total number of prints from 1671 to 1700

We may still expect new copies to appear, and be aware that new data may also change some of the facts. We might be lucky to discover some almanacs for the missing years as well. Or at least some fragments can be detected, as it happened in 2007 when a fragment from the almanac for 1689 was found in the Library of Sárospatak[36] or the previously mentioned chapter from the almanac printed for 1648.

The structure of the almanacs

An almanac from the 17th century has two main parts which are clearly divided: a calendaristic and an astrological one. The latter is called *Prognosticon* and it is followed by the enumeration of the annual fairs. In the end of the almanac we can find the Chronicle. Both the calendaristic and the astrological parts are divided into smaller units, each marked with a title. This structure was kept in the almanacs that were printed at Cluj, but obviously, some changes occur from time to time, due to the fashion of the period or according to the printer's perception.

[35] Ilyés B., *Catalogul cărților,* 57–84.

[36] Ilona Pavercsik, A sárospataki könyvtár értékes töredékeiről (On the valuable fragments of the library of Sárospatak), In *Translatio Librorum. Tanulmányok az Oroszországból Sárospatakra visszaszolgáltatott könyvek kapcsán* (*Translatio Librorum.* Studies on the books returned from Russia to Sárospatak) ed. Jekatyerina Jurjevna Gernyijeva, et al. (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2007).

All the almanacs are sextodecimo and may contain 32, 36 or 40 unnumbered sheets. Both the calendar and *Prognosticon* have separate front pages, but sometimes, towards the end of the century, it may happen that the *Prognosticon* is deprived of its separate title page and it receives just a title, possibly written in red. The main front pages do not show any changes during the century. They are printed in black and red, the latter being used for highlighting the word *Kalendárium* ("Calendar"), the year and the astrologer's name. Sometimes the red is randomly used for stressing some other words, contributing thus to its decoration.

The almanacs from Cluj are not famous for their illustrations.[37] Their decoration is simple, we can only notice the use of different typefaces, tailpiece, coat of arms (of the town of Cluj and the Apafi family). In very few situations, some small illustrations (allegorical presentation of planets, the Moon or the Sun) are included at the end of the book.[38]

The first item, *The Year Is Counted*[39] is a part which tells how many years have passed since certain past events. The years are counted from either a real historical event (e.g. "The beginning of the Roman Empire") or from a biblical event (e.g."After the Flood"[40]). Obviously, in the latter situation the counting is not really convincing. Mihály Veresegyházi Szentyel introduces the counting of the years from the foundation of different towns, for instance, in his Almanac for 1681 it is written that Cluj was founded 503 years ago, Sibiu 521, Braşov [Brassó, Kronstadt, Corona, present-day Romania] 451 and so on. He is also the first printer who considers important to say how many years have passed since printing was discovered. Mihály Némethi, forced by the current historical events,[41] mentions some events related to the Habsburg Empire and this will be kept in the following years as well, even by Miklós Tótfalusi Kis.

At the bottom of this page there is some common information like the dominical letter (A to G),[42] the golden number (usually indicated by Roman numerals from I to XIX),[43] the date of the Carnival, the number of weeks between Pentecost and Advent and the number of eclipses for the given year. All of the events are both presented according to the "Old" and "New"[44] calendar. In 1633 we can witness a unique approach to this because the printer arranges the facts in two columns. One stands with the Hungarian names and dates according

[37] There are only two books which contain illustrations at the end of the book. It is the almanacs for 1631 and 1632, where two woodblocks are used from the former Heltai-press.
[38] This can be noticed only in the case of the calendars for 1632 and 1633.
[39] "Az esztendő számláltatik".
[40] It tries to tell how many years have passed since the biblical story in Genesis 6:9–8:22.
[41] In 1687 Leopold I sent his army to Transylvania, in 1690 the famous *Diploma Leopoldinum* was issued and Transylvania was integrated into the Habsburg Empire.
[42] Each day of the month is marked by a letter, starting with the first of January as "A". The dominical letter indicates the day on which Sunday falls. In leap years two letters were used.
[43] The golden number gives the position of the new moon.
[44] The so-called "New calendar" refers to the Gregorian calendar while the "Old calendar" is the Julian calendar.

to the Gregorian calendar while the other column contains the dates of the "Old" calendar with the corresponding Latin names.

The next page is split between three units. The *Legend of Planets and Symbols* occupies about two third of the page while the remaining part is divided between *The Seven Planets*[45] and the *Twelve Star Signs.*[46] The information is distributed under different titles, but all of them are in fact the explanation of the symbols that are used in the book. It is a sort of legend. These conventions are quite stable and common, they preferred not to change them in order to avoid confusion, especially of semi-illiterate readers. Some of the conventions can be found in all the almanacs: a black circle indicates the new moon, a red circle the full moon, a black crescent is the sign for the moon in the first quarter, while a red crescent stands for the last quarter. Towards the end of the century their numbers are increasing and new ones appear. For example, at the beginning of the century, only a red coloured clover is used for marking the days that are good for planting. A few decades later the red coloured clover stands for the days which are good for planting in wet soil and a black coloured clover stands for the days when you can plant in dry soil.

These signs stood for a number of words that would have been impossible to print in one line, so they gained space by using them. Beside this, it was also very important that through these symbols the almanacs could thus address a popular market whose literacy was functional or minimal. In this way, even the semi-illiterate people would spend their money on almanacs because they represented the only readable book for them.

The *Calendar* section contains the twelve months, each month covering two pages. In most cases a blank page is included after each printed one. The blank page was suitable for taking notes or mentioning important events by the owners. Today, these notes can provide some information for cultural history or it can be used to reconstruct a period from somebody's life, especially if we have more than one almanac that belonged to the same person.[47] Every month is presented with two names: the Latin-based as well as the old Hungarian ones ("Januarius" = "Boldogasszony"). There are examples for almanacs made for the same year with or without containing blank pages. The printer was conscious of the needs of the different customers so he made two models. The one without extra blank pages was better for the semi-illiterate groups and these were probably sold cheaper.[48]

The days of the month are listed in vertical columns, adding next to each of them the religious feast (if there is any on that particular day), the saints' names, the corresponding

[45] They enumerate the followings: Saturn, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, the Sun and the Moon.

[46] Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces (the symbols and the names).

[47] There are several almanacs in the possession of the Special Collections of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library from Cluj-Napoca that belonged to the historian Mihály Cserey (1667–1756) and they were already used for reconstructing periods from his life.

[48] This is similar to the fact that some of the almanacs were sold unbound, which also reduced costs. All these things are revealing some aspects related to the selling process of the books, the printer's ingenuity to cover a wide segment of possible buyers by modifying the look and the price.

symbols (discussed previously) and a short weather forecast and a syllable. Each day of the year has an equivalent syllable and by reading them together, words and sentences are formed which usually do not have any logic, but they rhyme. These verses were learnt by heart and helped the person identify the days by combining the syllables according to their order in the text with a day of the month.[49]

At the end of each month two or four lines are displayed in distichs,[50] containing some sort of advice or prediction related to weather, health, farming etc. Its origin can be traced back to 4 AD, but slowly they made their entrance into the Christian culture of the Middle Ages and then they were translated into different languages. Towards the end of the century, from 1687, they appeared as short texts in plain sentences, but they still kept their shortness and promptness.

In the almanac for 1667, printed in Trnava [Nagyszombat, Tyrnau, Tyrnavia, present-day Slovakia] these verses appeared for the first time together, in a collection named "Prognostica Perpetua." Soon enough other printing offices followed this example and in Cluj it was introduced in 1680. Yet, it is interesting to see that in Cluj, in 1641 Abrugi already gathered these predictions under a common title ("Poems for the Months")[51] and placed them at the end of the calendar section. His method was quite similar to what was started in Trnava. Unfortunately, it did not have any continuation in Abrugi's workshop, it remained just an isolated case.

These predictions are part of the popular culture: they are based on ordinary people's wisdom that evolved through many centuries. Some of them are still known and believed, especially by the elderly generation or in the countryside. For example, there is a prediction referring to 8 June, the name-day of Medard. People believe that the weather on that day will be the same for the next 40 days. This is a deeply rooted belief in Hungarian culture. It is like getting a 40 day weather prediction by simply observing if it is sunny or rainy on 8 June. Here is an example from 1631: "The weather you see on Medard`s day / Will be the same when you are harvesting" or another from 1696 "The weather you see on Medard`s day / Will be the same for the next forty days".[52] The repetition of the same predictions, eventually using different words but definitely with the same content, are a good proof that these have been part of the popular culture ever since. Probably the more often they were used the more credible they were and vice versa.

Another common topic often present in these verses was health. It was undisputedly important for 17th century people to be provided with various advice in order to keep one's health under different circumstances or seasons. It may look funny to a reader from the 21st

[49] They derived from the former "Cisiojanus", a medieval composition of 24 hexametrical verses with a syllable for each day in the year and its purpose was to memorize the most important feasts. (Circumcision, January, Epiphany etc.).

[50] A couplet consisting of a hexameter and a pentameter.

[51] "Az hónapokra való versek".

[52] "Az minémű időt Medardus napján látz/ Aratásban osztán ollyan időt várhatsz" (1631) and "A minemű időt Medardus napján látsz/ Negyven napig osztan ollyan időt várhatsz" (1696).

century, but they do not deserve to be laughed at because they reflect somehow the level of medicine from those times. It was a serious business to tell people what to eat or drink in different months in order not to harm their health condition. It was also crucial to know which were the auspicious or inauspicious days for bloodletting or taking medicine. Some of these beliefs have their origin in ancient times, for example the moderation in eating and drinking during the "dog days" ("dies caniculares")[53] dates back to the Roman Empire when this period was linked to the prevalence of diseases. All the calendars have similar "warnings" for this period of the year. For example, in July 1633 we can read "I will not bath, I will not drink too much wine, I will not ask for a doctor", in 1671 "The heat of the Sun will hurt your body".[54] People's health condition was not the only concern, animals or crops could also be affected during this period of the year "If the dog star awakens during the daytime your vineyard will suffer of a terrible disease"[55] (1685).

The astrological part of the almanac, the *Prognosticon*, is a mixture of science and superstition, Christianity and paganism. It was something that the people of those times really believed in. Famous astronomers and mathematicians of those times contributed to the compilation of the almanac, the major part of the work was theirs and less of the printers', because it was astronomy that underpinned the various information in these calendars. Although it had a realistic side, they never forgot mentioning the possibility of God's intervention. Astrologers taught that God was the first cause and defined the stars as secondary causes which were always operating by divine permission. They believed in God's omnipresence and in the possibility of changing His mind, according to different happenings, especially people's misbehaviour. But in the same time this was a kind of insurance in case their prognostications turned out not to be true. They could not afford to lose their credibility so the idea that God's will is unpredictable has to be constantly restated. Even the brightest mind of the society accepted that one could not foresee God's will. People did not experience any conflict between the two systems of supernatural explanation, they were convinced that both God's will and the position of stars had an influence on people. The astronomer's name whose work contributed to the birth of the calendar was also printed on the front page and a famous astrologer's name could help the printer sell his almanacs.[56]

The *Prognosticon* is divided in different chapters, dealing with the analyses of the four seasons (each of them taken separately), eclipses (of Moon and Sun), wars and peace, diseases

[53] The Romans associated this period (second half of July-first half of August) with the star Sirius, which they considered to be the "Dog Star" because it is the brightest star in the constellation Canis Major. Romans used to sacrifice a brown dog at the beginning of the Dog Days to appease the rage of Sirius and to be protected by the unwanted consequences of the hot weather on people's lives.

[54] "Nem firidem, nem iszom sok bort, nem hivatok orvost" (1633), "Napnak melegsége testedet megbántja" (1671),

[55] "Az eb csillag ha most nappal feltámad / Bizony a szőlőkre nagy ártalom ragad." (1685).

[56] The almanacs printed in Cluj were compiled based on the following astrologers' and mathematicians' works: David Herlicius, Johann Habermann (Latin Avenarius), Gáspár Simonfi, David Frölich, Gergely Lemki, Christoph Neubart and Janus Neubart.

and farming. These chapters preserved more or less the same titles, only small changes can be noticed during the ages. From time to time new ones were also added, for instance, in 1641 there was a chapter which contained predictions for pregnant women. Another example was the chapter about mining in the almanacs for 1632 and 1633. In a way these provided novelties for the reader, a diversification of the look.

Although the appeal of the almanac did not lie in any literary value, we have two printers, Mihály Veresegyházi Szentyel and Miklós Tótfalusi Kis, who tried to raise the standard of their almanacs even by including different stories or anecdotes and turn them into some sort of artistic works. An example for this is the 1678 almanac, where the printer provided such kind of extra material after each chapter, except the one about the diseases. For experiencing the style of these stories I present here the English translation of the one called *About a Pregnant Woman: "*While a nobleman's wife was giving birth to her baby, her husband together with the other children went in the garden. There the father told his children to pray together for their mother to have an easy delivery. Soon a servant arrived and told them that the baby was born. The father happily rewarded the servant with a coin and went back to his children asking them to continue their praying. Soon after, the servant appeared again with the news of the second baby. In that moment the nobleman went to his children and told them: Stop praying because you fill my house with children*".*[57]

The next part in the almanac, the monthly enumeration of the places and times of the fairs, plays a very practical role. Its style did not change, only a growth in the number of the fairs could be noticed. Yet, this part bears importance from an economical geographic point of view and from this respect it may give accurate information for scholars.[58]

At the end of the almanacs stands the Chronicle, which relates the events that happened from a given past time up to the present in a strict chronological order. The starting point was usually the birth of Jesus or a later event and they finished around the summer events of the year when the almanac was printed. For example, in the case of the 1631 Almanac the last event was from the late spring-early summer of 1630 because in autumn they had to start the printing of the almanac for being able to finish it in time. The further the event was from the printing date the shorter its presentation was. The closer the events were the more detailed descriptions appeared. All in all, they were a mixture of different information. One could read about local and European historical events, natural disasters from various

[57] (title) "Egy gyermekágyas asszonyról": (text) "Midőn egy fő ember felesége gyermekszülésbe gyötrődnék az ura a többi gyermekivel a kertbe mené és inté őket a könyörgésre, hogy Isten annál könnyebben az ő anyjukat megszabadítaná, azomba a szolgaló hírt hoz, hogy Isten az asszonyt immár megszabadította, kit egy tallérral megajandékoza az úr és gyermekeit ismét hálaadásra inté, de ahogy imádkoznának ismét jővé a szolgáló illy hírrel: hogy az asszonya még egyet szült vala. Mondá az úr a gyermekeknek: hagyjátok már a könyörgést, mert a ti könyörgésetekkel egész házamat megtöltitek gyermekekkel."

[58] An interesting study in this respect is written by Pál Binder, "Régi kalendáriumok az erdélyi és partiumi vásárokról vagy sokadalmakról" (Old almanacs on fairs in Transylvania and the Partium) *Néprajzi Látóhatár* II (1993): 111–124.

regions, astronomical events and other interesting things. Because of these characteristics I dare call these Chronicles the ancestors of the first newspaper. They helped in developing people's interest to be informed about the latest events and despite of their yearly appearance, they definitely changed people's mentality. The majority of the events are historical ones, but since there is little chance of finding new things, nowadays they are more interesting as curiosities and less valuable as primary sources.

The events related to the different periods were generally repeated year after year. Sometimes no changes occurred, but in other situations smaller or bigger parts were changed by the printer. This was either the way the printer reflected his own way of thinking about some events, or simply he had to save space and so he skipped some data. The printer usually changed the word order, he added or omitted information, or even changed the date.

The most common of them is the change of the word order. An example of this could be found related to the events of 1618 about which the almanac for 1634 wrote: "A big meteorite could be seen in autumn".[59] While in the almanac for 1641 it was the following: "In autumn it appeared a big meteorite".[60] About the events of 1620 it was written "In Transylvania there was a big earthquake"[61] in 1634 and in 1641 "There was a big earthquake in Transylvania".[62] So, basically we got the same information and the small changes were insignificant, but proved that the printer somehow got involved in the writing, he did not simply copied.

The 1631–32 Hungarian peasants' rebellion was mentioned in every almanac. But while in 1634 it was written "And their leader was cut in four"[63] in 1684 more information is added: "And their leader Péter Császár was cut in four in Košice".[64] The additional information included not just the leader`s name but also the place where the action took place. Another example would be that in 1631 it was just mentioned that Prince Gábor Bethlen married a princess from Brandenburg but in 1634 they call her Catherine of Brandenburg.

In the part dealing with the rebellion from 1631–32 we also have an example of the German influence upon the Hungarian language. In the sentences written in 1634 the nouns were written with small letters, but in 1684 the nouns were started with capital letters, exactly as in German spelling; for example the word "peasants" appeared "*parasztok*" in 1634 and "*Parasztok*" in 1684.

An example of using different dates was the case of the meteorite from 1618. In reality the meteorite was discovered on 25 August in Hungary and two days later it was seen by Kepler near Linz. But in the almanacs for 1631, 1632 and 1633 it was written that it appeared in December and starting from 1634 they changed it by saying that it appeared in the autumn. Nevertheless the exact date was never mentioned.

[59] "Nagy üstökös csillag láttatik *ősszel*"
[60] "*Ősszel* nagy üstökös csillag támad"
[61] "*Erdélyben* nagy földindulás"
[62] "Nagy földindulás *Erdélyben*"
[63] "A hadnagyok pedig néggyé vágattatott"
[64] "Az ö Hadnagyok penig Császár Péter Cassán [Košice, Kaschau, Kassa, Cassoviae] fel-négyeltetett"

Besides the historical events we can also find plenty of other types of reports. In order to comprehend their importance, I tried to sum up the events that took place in the 17th century, but had no direct connection to history. The majority of them regarded local (Cluj) and Transylvanian events, but some European ones were also included, like the earthquake from Germany (1691) or the tsunami that affected Sicily in January 1693. There were many writings about the extreme weather conditions like flood, drought, hail, storm, long rainy periods, hard frost and others. Another serious event was the fire that affected the different towns. Sometimes they presented only the damages, but in a few situations, even the cause was presented (lightning, explosion of a gunpowder warehouse). The mice, maybeetle and locust invasions that destroyed all the plants and crops were also reported, but here only the surrounding places were included. The meteorites that could be seen during the 17th century were also mentioned and of course the plague and periods of serious dearth when people died as a consequence of these disasters.

The last change that occurred in the 17th century took place in 1699 when as a response to the population's new needs, a new utilitarian chapter was included, which was dealing with the mail, presenting its schedule and the exact route and stops from Vienna to Sibiu.

The separate discussion of the different chapters of an almanac from the 17th century showed that these books tried to fulfil various needs of the population. They were not just simple calendars showing the passing of time, they had many other functions. They provided information related to the weather, health, lifestyle, different works, fairs, mail and past events. They could be used as diaries or just simply read for learning or entertainment. Different kind of people could use the almanacs and for various reasons. All these characteristics provided them popularity and secured income for the printer.

Although we do not have exact data about the number of almanacs printed by each typographer we can estimate about one thousand copies made for each year.[65] If we consider that other books were published in 50 to 300 copies and sometimes not even those were sold, we can easily realize the benefits of printing almanacs. The printer could print much more copies and at the same time he was confident that all of them were bought by the readers.

It is very interesting that the almanacs printed in Cluj did not contain illustrations, although this was one of the major characteristics of this genre. If we think that at the beginning of the century the printers did not really had money to invest too much in repairing typefaces or buying new woodblocks we can understand this lack of using illustrations. Later on the situation did not change too much. Transylvanian printers had a hard life and they had to struggle all their lives in order to provide a more or less decent lifestyle. So it is understandable somehow that they did not invest in woodblocks because they considered that they can make their almanacs interesting without illustrations.

[65] *Tótfalusi Kis Miklós mentsége,* ed. György Haiman (Budapest: Helikon, 1987), 83.

It is also interesting to find in the almanac for 1641 the precursor of the “Prognostica Perpetua”. But because it was not continued in the following years, maybe it was a change that was not ready to be used till towards the end of the century.

The study of the almanacs does not stop here. They can still provide a great variety of information and data to those who are interested in history and history of culture, literature and folklore, astronomy or geography. Even the history of the book will take advantage of them if new fragments or copies are found in the future. They are small books, but they may be invaluable for science.