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## THE NORWEGIAN MEDIEVAL BALLAD PROJECT

In 1992, the Norwegian Folk and Popular Song Archives (Norsk visearkiv) began work on reviewing all written sources for Norwegian medieval ballads, including their melodies and their lyrics. Up to 1500 sheets of music and around 5000 lyrical variations were registered and organised according to the principles in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* (TSB) catalogue.

This method of organisation means that you can find all registered Norwegian and Nordic ballads depicting the same sequence of events and using the same motif gathered under one TSB number. By using the TSB catalogue, we closely connect ourselves to other Nordic ballad editions, and we are able to compare the types of ballads in our publications with equivalent ballad types in other countries.

The catalogue sorts the ballads into six main groups, each with their own letter, and each individual ballad type within each letter group is assigned a number. There are 261 types of ballads that are classified as *Norwegian Medieval Ballads*. The ballad titles vary from source to source, from one area to another and from country to country. As part of the *Norwegian Medieval Ballad Project*, a list of standard titles has been developed that has attempted to take Norwegian and Nordic traditions, as well as previous lists of ballads, into account.

In 2016, work on a scholarly edition of the ballads was completed by the National Library of Norway, which had taken over the operation of *Norsk visearkiv*. An eight-volume series with the title *Norske mellomalderballadar* (Norwegian Medieval Ballads) has been published online on [bokselskap.no](http://bokselskap.no). Even though some of the ballad types have over 100 textual variants, we have narrowed down our selection to four variants of all types. We looked for texts that were the most complete and have also endeavoured to demonstrate variety and geographical diversity in our selection. Each type of ballad is accompanied by an introduction that includes plot summaries, references to Nordic parallels, and information on sources, use, themes and other relevant matters. The melodies have been published in collaboration with Norsk folkeminnelag and Spartacus Forlag in four printed volumes that comprise the collection *Norske middelalderballader: Melodiene* (Norwegian Medieval Ballads: The Melodies).

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Nearly 1500 ballad melodies have been transcribed and reproduced as accurately as possible, along with source information and comments from the collectors. In addition, the fourth volume contains approximately 500 unique biographies of singers and collectors as well as a detailed gazetteer of specified collection points. Both text and melody editions contain supplementary papers and title indexes.

The medieval ballads are well suited for the study of culture, language, literature and music history. Furthermore, the material has a large user base that encompasses everyone from performers to researchers, genealogists to local historians.

While the material is vast and diverse, it is still limited. Much of it resides at the National Library of Norway but some is also available digitally from the three other significant owners: the University of Oslo, the Telemark Museum and the University of Bergen.