

## **The Skaldic Project — [abdn.ac.uk/skaldic](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic)**

An international project to edit the corpus of medieval Norse-Icelandic skaldic poetry

Full URL: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/>

REF login (for subscriber access to volume I content): [refpanel](#); password: [l07h6qtzr](#)

Editorial board: Margaret Clunies Ross, Kari Ellen Gade, Guðrún Nordal, Edith Marold, Diana Whaley and Tarrin Wills.

Database editor: Tarrin Wills

First accessible: 18 November 2008 (Volume VII; Volume II was published in 2009 and Volume I in 2012)

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### **About the database**

Skaldic poetry refers to a type of poetry produced in Scandinavia, particularly Norway, Iceland and other Norwegian settlements, between the 9th and 14th centuries. It is generally attributed to named poets (skalds), composed using highly intricate metrical forms (especially *dróttkvætt*) and complex poetic diction (especially kennings). The poetry tends to be preserved piecemeal in medieval manuscripts of prose narratives (sagas) and scholarly treatises — although there are significant exceptions to all these generalisations. The Skaldic Project uses a broad definition of the term, as described in the General Introduction in vol. I of the series; there are around 40,000 lines of poetry in the corpus.

The Skaldic Database is an online resource designed to do two things: to make this extremely complex poetry accessible to as wide an audience as possible, and to build the editorial and commentary process into a single interconnected system. This system allows a seamless transition for the end-user between the material record of the poetry, the poetry itself, and its language, analysis and description. Producing the database has involved a fundamental reconception of textual structures as a relational data model and implementing this model as a networked database with a web interface.

Since 2008 this has involved the author (Tarrin Wills) writing or reviewing some 10,000 lines of programming code (PHP) for the web interface and 20,000 lines of database queries (SQL). The author has also provided a considerable amount of the content in addition to some of the editions themselves, including lexicographic materials (linking dictionary headwords to over 100,000 words); categorisation and analysis of poetic diction (kennings and *heiti*); metrical analysis; and analytical queries to produce maps, graphs and statistical data on the corpus (see the 'reports' table).

The database represents the complex relationships between the text, diction, metre, lexicon, manuscripts/inscriptions and interpretative apparatus (implemented using the SQL language and MySQL software). Entering and editing this information is achieved through a web interface for editors and other contributors to the project. The interface produces semantic encoding and linking of connections between the various phenomena (implemented through

the PHP programming language for interfacing between MySQL and the web application). The contents of the database are largely publicly available through the same web interface.

The system for managing virtually all stages of the editorial and publication process has been generalized by the author to include other projects such as teaching resources, sources for pre-Christian religions, a rune dictionary and aligned textual editions (see [abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/bm.php?357](http://abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/bm.php?357)).

## Database contents (TW)

The following is not an exhaustive list of the database contents, but covers some of the main contributions to the online resource.

Contributing editors have produced the following materials (they are credited individually), overseen by the volume editors and board: skald biographies; Introductions to poems, sagas and some individual stanzas; edited text of stanzas, prose word order and translations; notes and prose context descriptions; variant apparatus, previous editions and other textual and critical apparatus information.

Volume editors and the editorial board have produced: volume introductions; other volume front matter; and the *Editors' Manual*. In addition they have reviewed all material in the published editions.

Assistants, contributors and others have supplied: transcriptions of stanzas in manuscripts; bibliographic information; and indexing information.

The database editor has produced the following: database structure and design; *Skjaldedigting's* structure of the corpus; digitising manuscripts; lemmatising of the corpus (ongoing); documentation for the database; and linking of bibliographic references.

In addition to materials produced by the project, the database incorporates the following data sets. All material is either publically available or has been supplied with permission to the Skaldic Project. Material for which the project does not have permission to republish is restricted to members of the project.

- *Skjaldedigting's* corpus of poetry (B text supplied mostly by Eysteinn Björnsson, contents, headings and other data by TW);
- The Jón Helgason-commissioned skaldic card index's manuscript references (courtesy of the Arnarnagnaean Collection in Copenhagen);
- Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog (ONP) Registre data on prose works and their manuscript locations (courtesy of the Old Norse Dictionary project in Copenhagen);
- ONP Registre data on mss and ms collections;
- Saganet data on mss and their contents;
- Samnordisk Runtextdatabas data on runic inscriptions (imported when this database did not assert copyright);
- Oslo University's Dokumentasjonsprosjekt electronic text of *Fritzners Ordbog* (references linked by TW);
- Eysteinn Björnsson's partial text of *Lexicon Poeticum*;
- Scanned manuscript photographs from the Arnarnagnaean Institutes in Copenhagen and Reykjavík (mostly TW);
- Verse contents of prose works from various editions (mostly by TW);
- Digital photographs from SÁMÍ, Riksantikvarieämbetet and other sources (institutions credited individually);

- Scanned inscription photographs from the Oslo Rune Archive (courtesy of the archive and James Knirk);
- Scanned out-of-copyright printed works by TW and from Saganet and other sources (credited individually);
- Transcriptions of mss by VEP and others;
- further indices based on the new edition: lemmata (TW) and metrical forms (TW) and line types (TW, in progress).

### Database structure (TW)

The structure of the database is generalised as far as possible to include skaldic, Old Norse and other material from other databases that share the same broad database structure but is distinguished at different levels. The basic structure of the text in the database is a tree of one-to-many relationships. These and other phenomena are linked using a relational data model:

- Author ('skalds' table): an identifiable individual responsible for composing one or more textual outputs. Poets (skalds) are distinguished by the 'skaldic' (boolean) column. May also be used for convenient groupings of anonymous texts (sagas, eddic poems, etc.). Anonymous groupings are distinguished by the 'person' (boolean) column.
- Text ('text' table): an identifiable separate textual work, such as a saga, poem, compilation or group of stanzas, with the same author(s) throughout. The 'type' (prose/poetry/other) column distinguishes poetic texts from prose works. Compilations are distinguished by the 'compln' (y/n) column. Texts within compilations are identified by a link to an entry in the same table ('text\_id') to the work that the particular text forms part of.
- Segment ('verses' table): a first-level division of a text: a chapter, stanza, text segment or other division. There is no nesting within this table; if a larger division is used (e.g. chapter) then this should be used to divide the whole text without mixing with smaller-level divisions (stanzas or segments). If smaller segments are used, these should be used throughout with headings occupying a single segment. The type of division is indicated by the 'inclusion' column (full [stanza], refonly [stanza], xref [stanza], eddic [stanza], runic, prose [teaching text segment], chapter, heading, segment, picture, other). This table can include a full text and translation of the segment but these are analysed in more detail below.
- Line ('line' table): a second-level division of a text. The type is defined by the segment to which it is linked. For stanzas, this is a line in the stanza but may also be accompanying prose before or after the stanza (defined in those cases by the 'type' column); for runic inscriptions it is a physical side of the inscription; for other segment types this is generally redundant but included to complete the structure; future applications may be for second-level divisions of texts such as paragraphs.
- Word ('word' table): a linguistic word or word element. Compound words are links of words in this table that are stored in a separate table ('compound'). The word table links different text versions that could also be stored in a separate table occupying a sixth level in the tree. Three versions of each word are stored in this table: the main text, a reordered text if necessary and a translation into English. For each there are columns for the word, preceding and following punctuation and ordering.

Other tables linked to this structure include:

- Collections, manuscripts, manuscript references, images of ms. pages;
- Orderings of stanzas in prose works, versions of stanzas;
- Interpretative notes, textual variants;

- Bibliography (works, journals, authors);
- Lexicon, kennings, compounds, *heiti*;
- Index of people, places and mythological references;
- Interface information tables; and
- Documentation.

The Database can be accessed at [abdn.ac.uk/skaldic](http://abdn.ac.uk/skaldic)

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages database. At the top, it indicates the user is connected as 'University of Aberdeen 2' and provides fields for login and password. A navigation menu includes links for home, database, skalds, poems, texts, manuscripts, editors, words, search, index, and bibliography. The main content area features a grid of images showing manuscript pages and stone inscriptions, with accompanying text in Old Norse and English. A search bar is available for skalds, poems, texts, and manuscripts. On the right, there is a section for 'The Skaldic Project' with details about the editorial board and funding. Below this, there are buttons for 'The Skaldic Database', 'The Skaldic Database for mobile devices', 'About the database', 'List of editors', and 'Stanza of the day'. A box on the right lists 'Access to Edited Volumes' with links to Volume 1, Volume 2, and Volume 7. At the bottom, a box lists 'Volumes in print' with links to Volume I, Volume II, and Volume VII.

**Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages** connected as University of Aberdeen 2 | login:  password:  stay logged in:  [log in](#)

[home](#) [database](#) [skalds](#) [poems](#) [texts](#) [manuscripts](#) [editors](#) [words](#) [search](#) [index](#) [bibliography](#)

**Vitt lét Vǫrsa dróttinn**  
varð skjótt rekinn  
(hús sveið Hǫrða r  
Halland farit brand  
brendi buðlungr  
blés kastar hel fast

**Men will want to**  
cover up the springs  
that cause death for  
most people, but all  
that men carry to  
the water will turn  
to something other

**Háttar form enn h**  
hefjaz láttu nú til s  
þinnar mæðr ok h  
hreinlifastr mekt  
[Stev] Ynnilig ber  
æru ok þrís af dro

**Still it pleases me**  
to ask about the  
young prince, the  
praises often  
conveyed from the  
east out of Russia

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**Search for skalds, poems, texts and mss (names and sigla):**

**The Skaldic Database**  
**The Skaldic Database for mobile devices**  
**About the database**  
**List of editors**  
**Stanza of the day**

**Access to Edited Volumes:**  
**Volume 1: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1**  
**Volume 2: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2**  
**Volume 7: Poetry on Christian Subjects**

**Volumes in print (Available directly from Brepols or through other distributors, including Amazon):**  
**Volume I: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035 (2012)**  
**Volume II: Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300 (2009)**  
**Volume VII: Poetry on Christian Subjects (2007)**