Old Danish Romances on the Internet.
Report from a new Project under
The Dictionary of Old Danish

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Abstract

This paper will describe a new project that is being undertaken by the Dictionary of Old Danish: digital net-based publication of medieval manuscripts. As starting-point the manuscript Codex Holmiensis K47, an Old Danish paper manuscript from c. 1500, was chosen. It contains rhymed romances of chivalry. The manuscript is presented in three ways: first as a facsimile edition, then as a transliteration, and finally a translation of the text into Modern Danish. From the transliteration links are made to the relevant dictionary articles in a digitised version of the Dictionary of Old Danish. The paper deals with problems concerning all three presentations and their connections.

Presentation of the Dictionary of Old Danish

This paper describes a new project that is being undertaken by *Gammeldansk Ordbog* (GO), the *Dictionary of Old Danish*: digital net-based publication of medieval manuscripts.

First I should like to give a brief presentation of the *Dictionary of Old Danish*. It is intended to be a historical, scholarly dictionary that will describe the Danish language in the period 1100-1515. It will cover the whole territory of Denmark in this period, including texts from the present Swedish provinces of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge, as well as from the parts of Northern Germany that belonged to Denmark at that time. It is being compiled under the auspices of the *Society for Danish Language and Literature* (DSL).
It is already possible to find information about GO on the Internet at the address http://www.dsl.dk/go.html. Here can be seen a number of specimen articles, a complete list of the sources on which the dictionary is based with information about the whole body of medieval sources, a full presentation of the history of the dictionary so far and an article about the Danish language in the relevant period.
In addition to a very sophisticated semantic analysis, which also includes information about any parallel or source texts, the individual articles in the coming dictionary will also contain lists of phonological and morphological forms so that the language in this very long period - over four centuries - will be presented with as much precision as possible.
GO includes all the linguistic material that survives from the period in question. Source material in Old Danish consists in broad outline of:

- Legal sources: including law texts, documents which form the legal basis for some right or action, e.g. charters, deeds of conveyance, title deeds, wills,
- Religious texts: including bible translations, prayers, regulations of monasteries and nunneries, lives of saints,
- Medical literature: including leech books, herbals and lapidaries,
- Historiography: including annals, chronicles, the Danish Rhymed Chronicle, lists of kings,
- Proverbs
- Literary texts

While working with this very large body of texts, which is split up onto about 1.5 million slips dealing with about 32,000 lemmata, it can be very easy for an individual source, an individual text, to get lost in the maze of slips and meanings. This is an experience that most lexicographers will recognise.

Presentation of the project "Medieval romances on the internet. Digitalisation, transliteration and translation of manuscripts"

The Texts

There had long been a wish to start on a project that, while still focusing on the continued and unchanged editing of the dictionary, could both spread knowledge in general and information about GO in particular and publish medieval manuscripts to make them easier of access. The current editors of the dictionary, Marita Akhøj Nielsen and Merete K. Jørgensen, and its former managing editor, now the managing editor of the *Danish Dictionary*, Ebba Hjorth, therefore decided to cooperate on a publication project: *Medieval romances on the internet. Digitisation, transliteration and translation of manuscripts*.

As starting-point for our preliminary experiments we chose the manuscript Codex Holmiensis K47, an Old Danish paper manuscript from c. 1500 (rf. Fig. 1). In *Danmarks middelalderlige Haandskrifter. En sammenfattende böghistorisk oversigt* (Denmark's medieval manuscripts. A comprehensive historical survey), Lauritz Nielsen calls this manuscript: "The most important of the Danish literary manuscripts and one of the greatest literary treasures that has survived from the later part of the medieval period" (my translation) [Nielsen 1937, p. 158]. He describes it as "a large, shoddily produced paper manuscript from the period around 1500" (my translation) (ibid.), after which he lists the contents: on the one hand, the so-called Eufemiaviser, namely *Ivan Løveridder*, *Hertug Frederik af Normandi* and *Flores og Blanseflor*, on the other hand three rhymed romances of chivalry, *Dværgekongen Laurin* (The dwarf-king Laurin), *Persenober og Konstantianobis* and *Den kyske dronning* (The chaste queen). They appear in the following order in the manuscript:
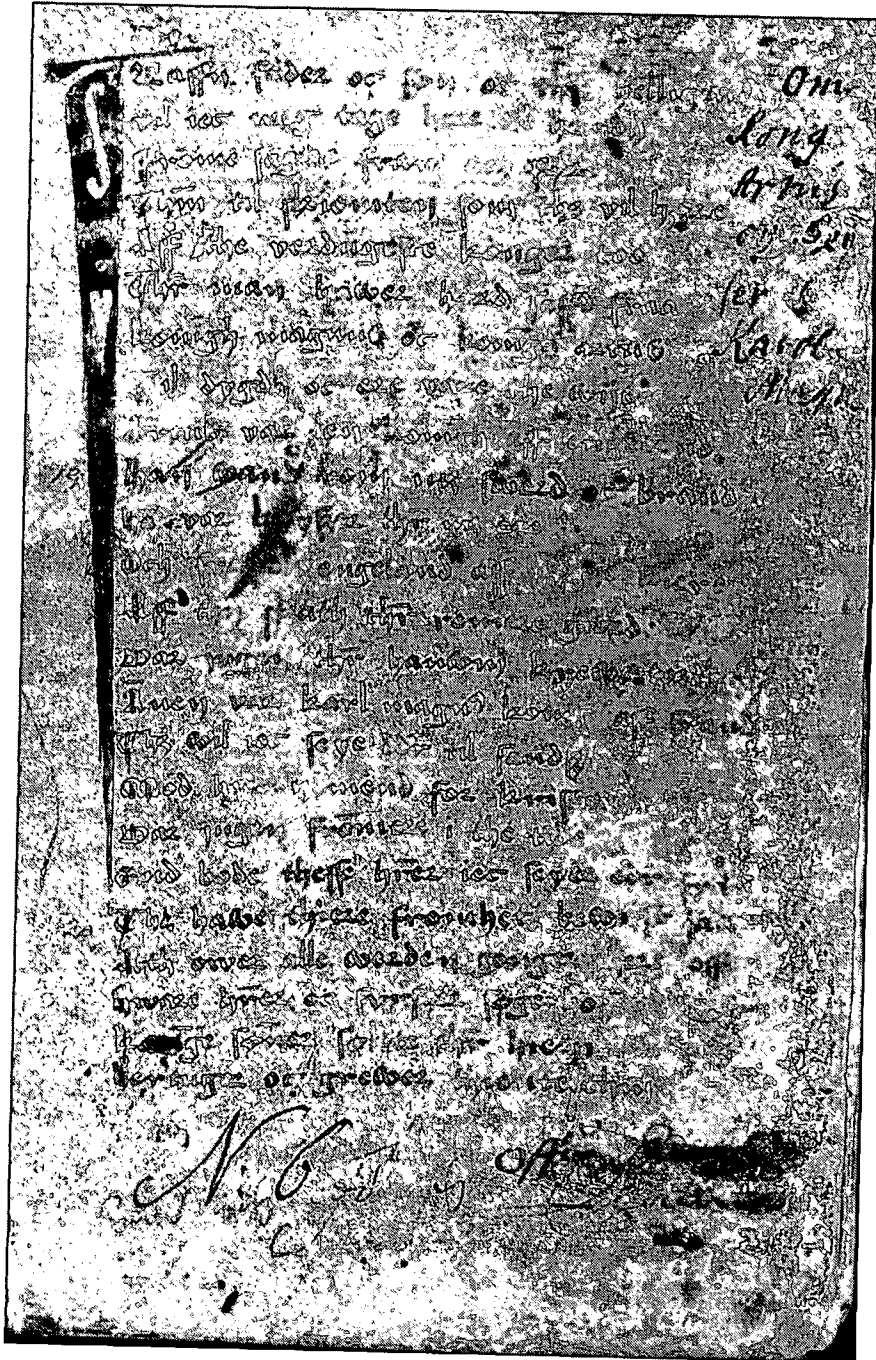
Fig. 1: Fol. 1ʳ from Holmiensis K47

1) *Ivan Løveridder*
2) *Hertug Frederik af Normandi*
3) *The dwarf-king Laurin*
4) *Persenober og Konstantianobis*
5) *The chaste queen*
6) *Flores og Blanseflor*

The Eufemia verses take their name from the German-born Norwegian queen Eufemia, who had three French sets of verses translated into Swedish in the fourteenth century. All six works have their background in European courtly verse and the translations into Danish were made at the end of the fifteenth century. The prototype for *The dwarf-king Laurin* was German, while *Persenober og Konstantianobis* has a Norwegian-Icelandic parallel. No prototype has yet been found for *The chaste queen* and it is considered to be an original Danish product.

The six works have earlier been published in their totality, namely in C. J. Brandt's edition *Romantisk Digtning fra Middelalderen* (Romantic poetry from the Medieval period) [Brandt 1869-70]. Since then it is only *Flores og Blanseflor*, *The dwarf-king Laurin* and *Persenober og Konstantianobis* that have been published in *Danske Folkebøger* (Danish popular literature) vol. 6 by Jørgen Olrik [Olrik 1925]. Both of these editions are today impossible to obtain and in the case of Brandt's edition it was only intended for a very restricted group of users, namely philologists and philologically-schooled historians of literature. Only *Flores og Blanseflor* has been translated into Modern Danish, by Birte Carlé, with the title *Blomst og Hvidblomst* (Flower and Whiteflower) [Carlé 1979] and this translation took its starting-point in the Norwegian-Icelandic parallel text.

There were three main reasons for the project. First of all, we wanted to experiment with methods for making it possible for everyone with access to the Internet to read and study texts from the medieval period that are otherwise very difficult of access, both because they do not exist in usable editions and because the originals are often found in distant archives. Secondly, we wished to disseminate knowledge about the language and literature of the medieval period by presenting a translation of the text parallel with a facsimile version and a transliterated reproduction. Thirdly - but in reality most significantly - we wanted to present and demonstrate the *Dictionary of Old Danish* as a modern, easily accessible reading-aid.

The digital publication on the Internet will eventually embrace several different levels: the actual manuscript is intended to be presented in three ways: first as a facsimile edition, i.e. as a photographic reproduction of the manuscript, then as a transliteration, i.e. an accurate reproduction with modern letters of the text in the manuscript in its Old Danish language-form, and finally a translation of the text into Modern Danish.

From the transliteration links will be made for words that cannot immediately be understood on the basis of a knowledge of Modern Danish to the relevant dictionary articles in a digitised version of GO, and from the individual sources that are exploited in the dictionary article, links will be made to GO's description of the sources.

The manuscript in question is found in the Royal Library in Stockholm, and the photographic unit there has been responsible for its digitisation. The manuscript was

photographed in 400 dpi, a very high picture resolution but for practical reasons it will be put on the Internet in a lower resolution. At the same time, however, it will be possible to download the pictures also at the higher resolution if the purpose of the research demands this.

The trials with the pictures have so far been very promising; at the Royal Library in Copenhagen there is a photographic reproduction of the manuscript and it has hitherto been this reproduction that we at GO have consulted during the preliminary phases of the project. The black and white photographs were on occasion difficult to read, particularly at places where the scribe has made corrections. The digitised pictures solve the great majority of these problems.

The transliteration will be carried out according to well-known and well-tried philological editorial principles. The text is printed retaining the line and page divisions of the original with a minimum of conjectures. The numbering of verses and the folio numbering that was added to the manuscript at a later date are indicated, as well as the numbering of the verses in Brandt's edition, where this differs from that in the manuscript. Symbols will not be employed in the transliteration.

The text is reproduced literally but it is adapted to fit the modern character set. This implies that both r-rotunda and r with a stem are reproduced as r, tall and round s both appear as s, sz/β are both transliterated as sz, and y, and y with single or double dots over are reproduced as y. On the other hand a distinction is made between short i and long j. The use of large and small letters in the manuscript is retained, even when this conflicts with modern practice, e.g. in proper names.

With the transliteration is associated, as in traditional text editions, a text-critical apparatus. There will be links from the transliteration to the apparatus, which will as far as possible be self-explanatory and avoid the use of symbols. It is of great importance that the apparatus should not be weighed down by unnecessarily complicated philological jargon. The coming digital edition will in every way be the equivalent of a traditional edition but it must also be usable by readers without a philological training.

The final decision has not yet been made as to which principles are to be followed in preparing the modern translation but trial translations have been made according to three different sets of principles. These translations have been read and assessed by a representative group of readers.

The trial translations range from the perfectly modern language-form, called *present-day Danish*, which puts highest priority on comprehensibility. It employs idiomatic modern Danish and modern Danish syntax. It retains verse-to-verse correspondence but does not attempt rhyme or a regular rhythm. The second trial translation normalises and modernises orthographically, morphologically and syntactically, including word order. This also puts highest priority on comprehensibility but a wider vocabulary is required of the reader by this version than by the present-day Danish one, for older Danish words and expressions are retained to a large extent. This translation also keeps to a verse-to-verse correspondence and avoids rhyme and regular rhythm. The third version, called *the poetic one*, keeps to the following principles: like the two preceding ones it aims at comprehensibility. The vocabulary, however, is modernised more than in number two, the translation, but is larger than in the *present-day Danish* one. On the other hand an attempt is made to retain the

rhymes – and new ones are made up where necessary –, just as the rhythm is also retained where possible. The orthography, morphology and to a certain extent the syntax are modernised and the verse-to-verse correspondence is retained.

The Electronic Texts

The marking-up of the three versions of the text is done according to the XML-standard (eXtensible Markup Language) and according to TEI-standard (Text Encoding Initiative). XML is a tool for marking parts of the text in such a way that computers can manipulate them. The text is split up into parts and tags are inserted in the electronic representation of the text, in order to mark the textstructure and other textual features of interest in such a manner that they are unambiguous identified. Using the TEI-standard one is provided with means to represent features of a text which need to be identified explicitly in order to facilitate processing of the text by computerprograms. After treatment in a parser the text can be employed in different ways; among others things the marking-up is designed to ensure a one to one relationship between the three forms of publication. It will thus be possible to see and change between the three different forms: original, transliteration and translation.

In the database-prototype in which we are working at the present moment is it only possible to view two out of the three different displays (facsimile, transliteration, translation) at a time, but one can choose freely between them; this is to avoid a confused display. The facsimiles are marked up in such a manner that it is possible to search both the recto and the verso of each folio, and the transliteration and the translation has in addition to that a marking-up of verses so that they become searchable as well.

At the present time we are still working on the DTD (Document Type Definition), so it is not possible to bring it here as an illustration. The elements that are tagged are – in addition to vocabulary – references to the text-critical apparatus, to later additions, to the folio- and verse-numbering, capital letters and expanded abbreviations. The marking-up concerning the text-critical apparatus, the later additions and links to GO together with capital letters and expanded abbreviations are only performed on the transliteration. It must be emphasised that the marking-up is done in such a way that it will always be possible to add additional tags to the text for use in specialised investigations, e.g. syntactical and semantic marking-up.

Allow me to illustrate the linking-possibilities with a single example taken from fol. 30^v (rf. Fig. 2): in vv. 1749-1750 we read: *the ridder rende hordeligh sammen / thet gik herre keye tha aff gammen"*. Among several other things the last word in v. 1750 will be tagged, i.e. there is a link to an article in the dictionary. The link will take the reader to the article *gamen*, sb., and to the sub-meaning where the occurrence in v. 1750 is explained: the normal sense of the word *gamen* is 'pleasure, amusement', but here the sense is 'to be unhappy'. It is the wording from *Ivan Løveridder* that is cited here. This will not, of course, be the case very often.

Fig. 2: Fol. 30ᵛ from Holmiensis K47; the quotation is found in v. 1749-1750.
"the ridder rende hordeligh sammen / thet gik herre keye tha aff gammen"

> **gamen** sb. (58).
> n. a-st.
>
> .
>
> .
>
> **2** *særl. forb.* - **2.1** thæt gar noken af/uten gamen *man bliver ked af
> det* · *thet gik alt hanum vden gamen / och fryctede saaræ *Lavrin*
> (*RomD*.2:29,838) · *The ridder rende hordeligh sammen, / thet gik
> herre Keye tha aff gammen *ILøverid. HolmK47* (*RomD.1:56,1751*).
> - **2.2** gøre gamen af/at *gøre near af* · Hwi vil thw giøra gaman af mek
> *SjTrøst* (*Holm*).77,7 [dara *fsv.*] · *thu giør aff hanum bodæ spoth ok
> gammen *Dyrerim.61,8* · *The jomfrwer giorde ath hinnæ gamen / och
> lowe ath hinnæ *Flor.* (*RomD.1:331,1405*).
>
> .
>
> .

Fig. 3: Part of the article 'gamen' with the quotation from Holmiensis K47 in meaning 2.1

The source reference is to Brandt's edition and hence the variation in the verse numbering. From the source reference it is possible to move on to the article about the source (rf. Fig. 4), which provides information about the manuscript relationships, dating, parallel and source texts, information about utilisation and where relevant references to literature on the topic are to be found.

> *Gammel kildeforkortelse:*
> **RomD.I. .. (Iv.K47v**
> *Ny kildeforkortelse:*
> ILøverid. HolmK47 (RomD.1:
> *Kilde:*
> lvan Løveridder efter K 47
> *Håndskrift:*
> Cod.Holm.K47
> *Håndskriftdatering:*
> ca. 1500
> *Tekstoplysninger:*
> Noreens rettelser af Brandts læsninger (i Studier rörande
> Eufemiavisorna bd. 2 og 3) er indført i teksten uden bemærkninger,
> medmindre uoverensstemmelsen er væsentlig; i så fald skrives
> Noreens form også i teksten, men efterfulgt af [Noreen; xxx udg.].
> Den danske tekst er oversat efter svensk forlæg, jf. Noreens udgave

Fig. 4: The source-article concerning *Ivan Løveridder*

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Udgave:
Brandt, C.J. (red.): Romantisk Digtning fra Middelalderen, 1, s. 1-204. København 1869
Seddelindretning:
Varianter fra Iv.K4, forlægstekster fra 4 svenske tekster påført
Paralleltekst:
Cod.Holm.K4, fol.; ca. 1500
Forlægstekst:
Sv.A = Cod.Holm.D4; 1430-50
Forlægstekst:
Sv.B = Cod.Holm.D4a; ældre end 1457
Forlægstekst:
Sv.C = Cod.Holm.D3; 1476
Forlægstekst:
Sv.D = Cod.Skokloster 156, fol. (nu i RA); ca. 1450 eller noget senere
Litteraturhenvisning:
Noreen, Erik (red.): Herr Ivan. SSFS 164-166. 1931; Noreen, Erik: Studier rörande Eufemiavisorna 3. Textkritiska studier över herr Ivan (Skr. utg. av Hum. Vetensk.-Samf. Uppsala 26,1) ; Noreen, E.: Studier rörande Eufemiavisorna. Bd. 1-3. 1923-29 (HVSU. XXII:2 og 7, XXVI:1); Noreen, E.: "Små bidrag till fornsvensk ordforskning". ANF 45, s. 221-28 og ANF 46, s. 279-86; Jansson, V.: Eufemiavisorna (UUÅ. 1945:8)

Fig. 4: The source-article concerning *Ivan Løveridder* (*continued*)

In addition to facsimiles, transliterations with associated critical apparatus and a modern version, other elements will also be accessible on the Internet: a literary historical introduction, a description of manuscripts with information about the scribal hands, provenance and other relevant factors; a special document in which later additions are transcribed and explained and, as earlier explained, a possibility for downloading the facsimiles at a very high resolution.

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the aims of the project is to present GO as the scholarly and up-to-date dictionary that it is. The innovative focus for the project is therefore the linkage to articles in GO, articles that will also be made accessible on the Internet.
The editing of GO will in the immediate future therefore be a matter of "applied editing". The old romances have been read through once again and words and expressions that are difficult to understand have been selected. These words will be edited first so that they can be made accessible on the Internet and linked together with the edition of the romances of chivalry.

It is important to emphasise that the dictionary articles will not be edited according to changed principles as a result of this project. The editorial principles, as these are described in the manual from May 2000, will still be in force after the process of "applied editing" has come into action.

Concluding remarks

As already mentioned, a subsidiary aim of this digital publication project is to present and demonstrate the Dictionary of Old Danish as a modern, easily accessible tool. It is no secret that many years will pass by before the GO is completed. The current size of the dictionary staff (two editors and a student assistant working for ten hours per week) does not make it possible to plan for a traditional publication of dictionary volumes in the immediate future. The project as described here will help to make GO known among potential users outside the narrow circle of professional philologists and will present both texts and edited articles more quickly and conveniently than would a traditional publication in book-form.

The project is not intended to be brought to an end with the presentation of Codex Holmiensis K47. Other sections of the text corpus of Old Danish could be published in this way. The medieval legal documents, the charters, are already in process of publication as part of a different project under the auspices of the *Society for Danish Language and Literature, Diplomatarium Danicum*. There are many other texts that cry out to be edited according to modern, scholarly principles, e.g. large parts of the religious and medical literature.

The ultimate goal is to publish the entire GO and make the entire corpus of Old Danish texts available on the Internet, with links from (all !?) words in (all !?) Old Danish texts to the relevant articles in GO. It is unlikely to be the present editors, however, who will see this vision for the future brought to a successful conclusion.

DSL has traditionally worked on two fronts: in part with the editing of dictionaries, in part with the publication of texts in the widest sense of the concept. The present project unites the two main aims of the Society.

References

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