



**Staatsbibliothek  
zu Berlin**

Preußischer Kulturbesitz

## **Department of Early Printed Books**

### **Secular and Sacred Songs from the Meusebach Collection**

In 1850 the library of the baron Karl Hartwig Gregor von Meusebach (1781-1847) was purchased by the Royal Library for 40,700 talers with the support of the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Meusebach was a lawyer and a member of the Prussian civil service. In the course of his life he compiled a library which was of considerable significance for the history of German literature and for which he sacrificed his entire fortune. His family was forced to sell it after his death. Bettina von Arnim was particularly instrumental in persuading the king to buy it.

Meusebach's library encompassed 25,000 works in 36,000 volumes, above all, German literature of the 16th and 17th centuries. They were regarded as the nucleus of a German national library by contemporaries and thankful users such as the Brothers Grimm, the philologists Karl Goedeke and Karl Lachmann or the poet Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben.

Only the secular songs (folksongs and historical songs) and the sacred songs in single copies, primarily from the 16th century, were put up by the Royal Library as a separate collection. Since these works were of a short-lived, ephemeral character, today they are very rare. The collection of secular and sacred songs comprises about 2,200 printed works; only a few volumes were lost during the War. It is therefore believed to be the most comprehensive collection of its kind in the German speaking countries.

For this reason the State Library has published in cooperation with researchers a bibliography of song pamphlets printed up until 1650. This effort has revealed that about 80 per cent of the copies in Berlin are very likely to be unique specimen.

### **Further reading**

Berliner Liedflugschriften : Katalog der bis 1650 erschienenen Drucke der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz / bearb. von Eberhard Nehlsen. Hrsg. von Gerd-Josef Bötte. - Baden-Baden : Koerner, 2008

Bibliotheca bibliographica Aureliana ; 215

Band. 1: Katalog 1: Signaturengruppen Hymn. 3 - Yd 9994

Band. 2: Katalog 2: Signaturengruppen Ye 1 - Slg. Wernigerode Hb 4380

Band. 3: Register

Berliner Liedflugschriften: Addenda und Corrigenda | Stand 2015