

## Ballads



It was in France in the 1200s that the ballad form developed. These long, narrative songs with many verses have variants in many countries in Europe. There are indications that the old medieval ballads came to Norway from England from the time of the 1220s. French culture was highly regarded in England at that time, and there was also interest in Norway in the French narrative songs. The Norwegian kings took the initiative to translate these novels told in verse form and it is clear that the works must have been translated from Anglo-Norman, which was the English-French language that was used in the courts in England. These verses were translated as prose, without the use of rhyming at the ends of the lines. Such rhyming had not yet introduced into the Nordic countries.

In 1299, Håkon V moved the court from Bergen to Viken (medieval Oslo). It was Håkon V's Queen Eufemia who, in 1303, initiated new translations of the French verse-novels to Swedish, directly from French. End rhyming was used in this direct translation, as a characteristic feature of medieval ballads.

The flourishing cultural life in Viken and Akershus Fortress faded when Håkon V died in 1319. But many of the narrative songs lived on in the Nordic countries, both in the towns and the rural areas. The urge to sing ballads was to make the area one of the richest in the world as far as medieval ballads were concerned.



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