

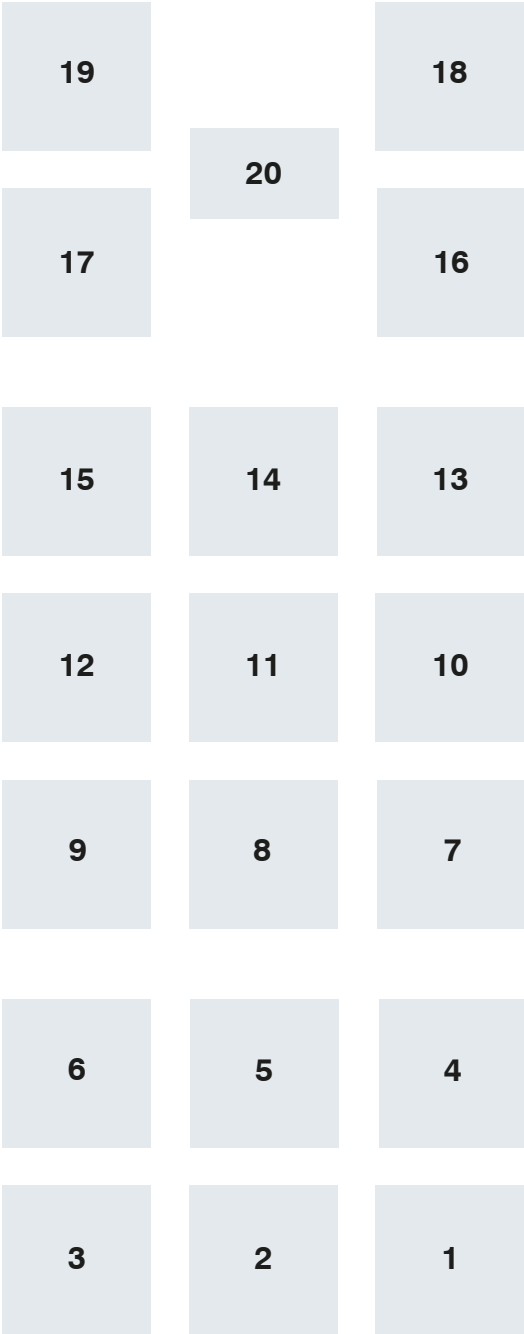


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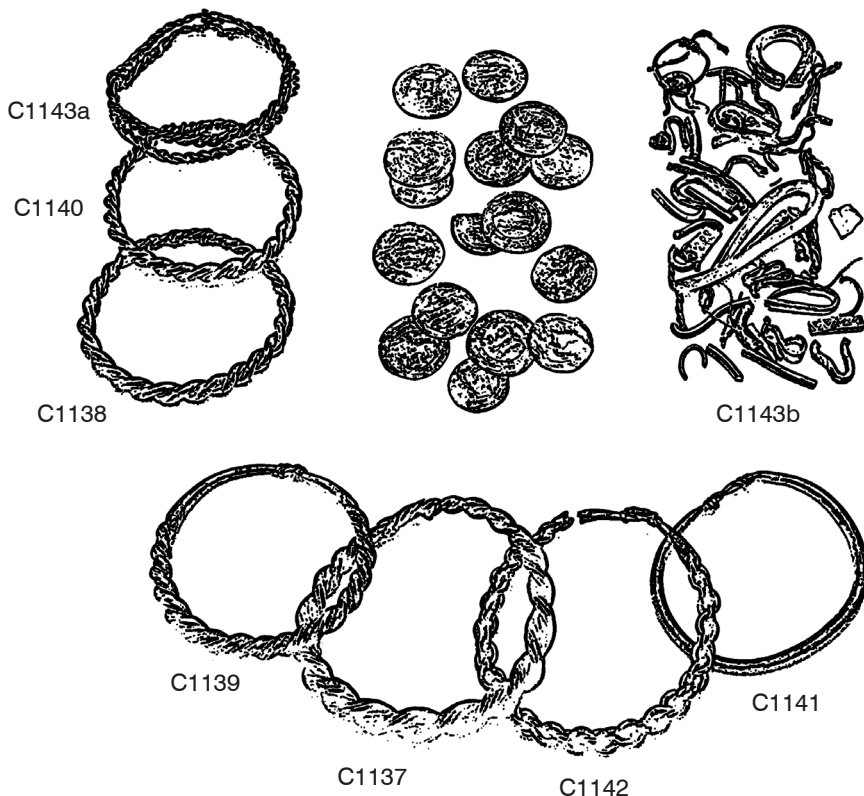
UiO : Museum of Cultural History



Entrance

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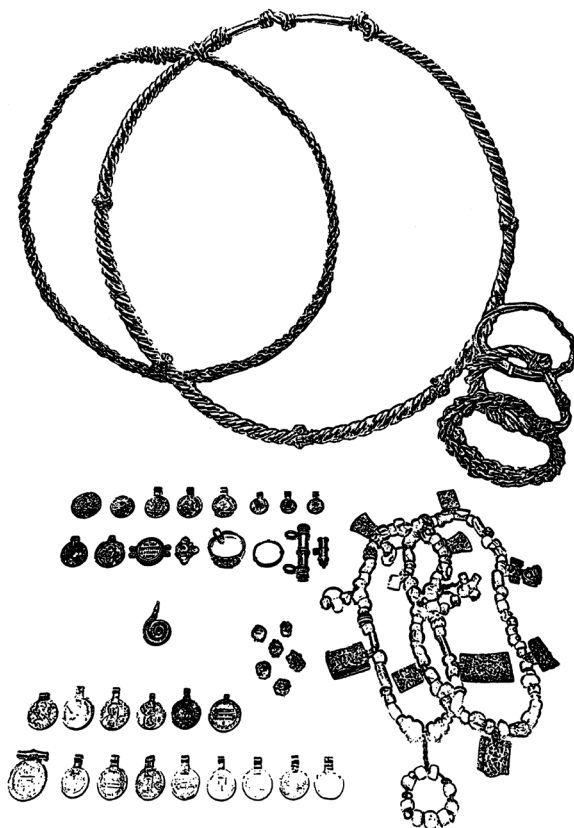


1. The Silver Route – From Bagdad to Teisen

This silver hoard from the 900s was found in 1844 at Teisen Farm in Oslo. It consists of seven silver arm rings, pieces of hack-silver and Arabian and Persian coins from areas now in Iraq and Iran. The arm rings were probably made of silver that was melted down from coins like these.

Hacked-up bits of silver ingots, jewellery and coins were used as means of payment in the time before coins were minted in Norway. The Vikings who engaged in international trade eastward were paid with silver coins, and large amounts of silver arrived in Scandinavia.

C1137–C1143 and coins, silver hoard from Teisen in Oslo. Dating: Deposited after 919.

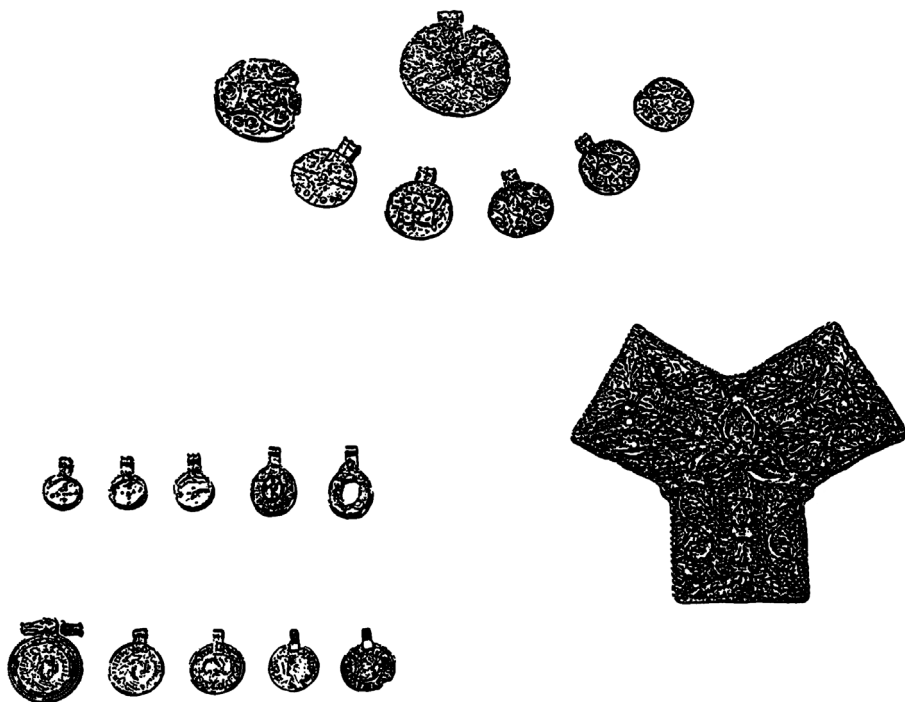


2. The Viking World in a Single Treasure

In the summer of 1834, a tenant farmer was working on Nedre Hon Farm in Øvre Eiker, Buskerud. He was digging drainage ditches when he suddenly unearthed Norway's largest gold hoard from the Viking Age.

The Hon Hoard is a unique collection of treasures: large gold rings, Frankish gold jewelry, Arabian coins, colourful beads, a Roman gemstone, and an English ring. The hoard is a reflection of Viking journeys and contacts, from the Caliphate in the east to England in the west.

From left: C719-C723, C725-C729, C738-C751, C13451-C13452, C14473-C14474, C14616-C14617 and coins, from Hon, Øvre Eiker in Buskerud. Dating: 875–900.

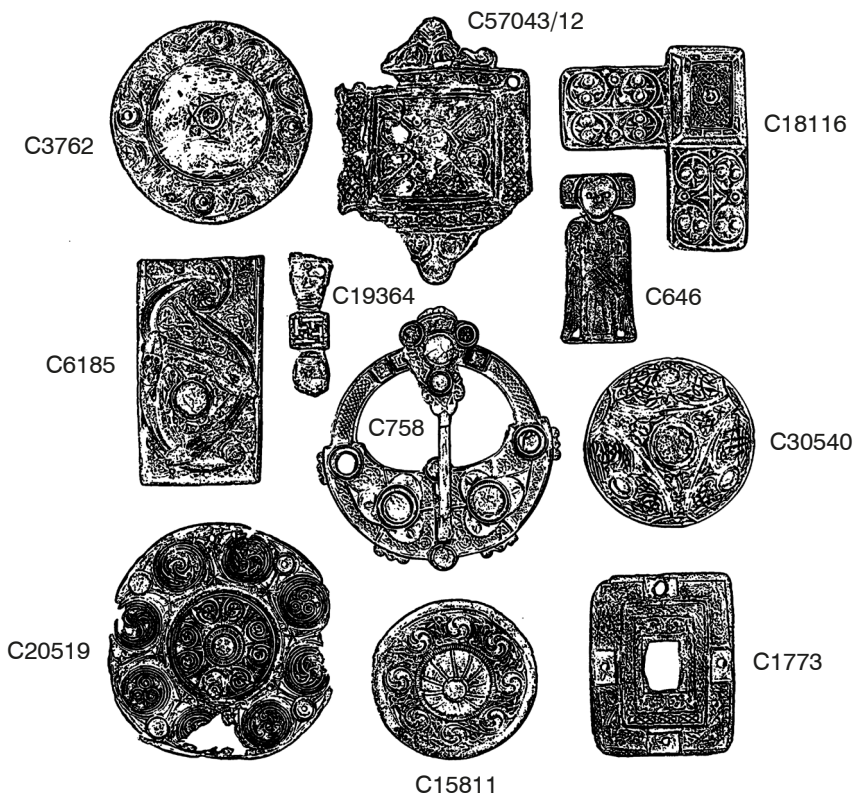


3. Treasures from Charlemagne's Empire

Several gold objects from the Hon Hoard were made in the Carolingian Empire in about 800. This large gold brooch originally adorned a warrior's sword belt, or bandolier. Its shape and exquisite craftsmanship indicate that it was once used at the Carolinian court. It was later made into a brooch in Norway.

Powerful Scandinavians were attracted to ideas and objects from many places. They sought to emulate the culture of the royal European elites.

C724, C730-C737 and coins, from Hon, Øvre Eiker in Buskerud. Dating: 875-900.



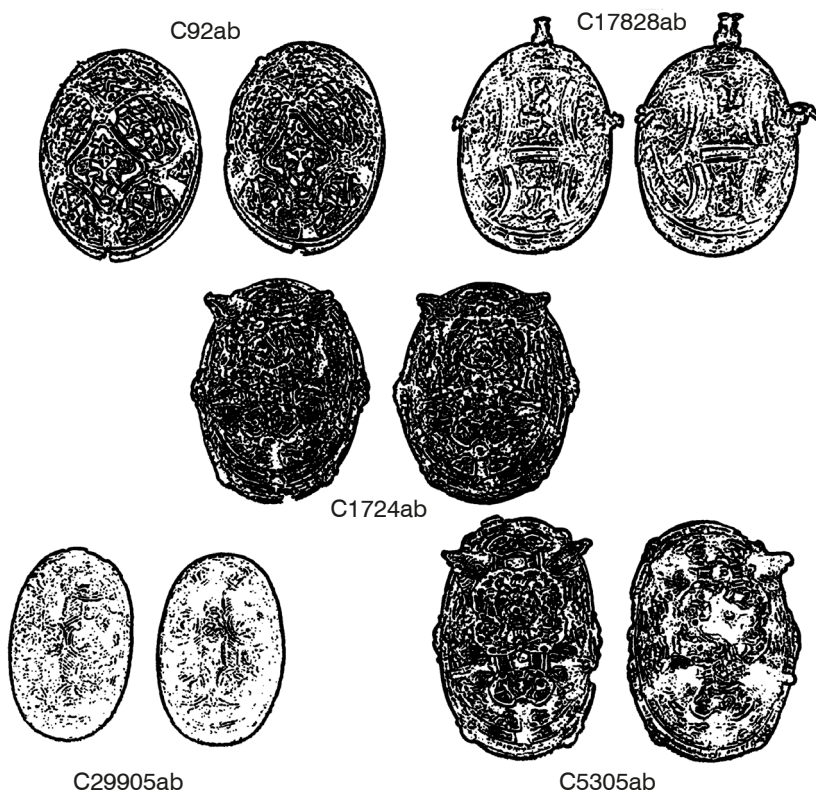
4. Long-distance Luxury

These pieces were made in the British Isles in the 700s. Many were originally used as decorative mounts on sacred objects used in churches, for instance on books and reliquaries. In Scandinavia, these types of objects are usually found in women's graves and have been refashioned into brooches.

They are evidence of the early Viking raids. When the Scandinavian Vikings first arrived in the British Isles, they attacked churches and monasteries. These places were often undefended and were easy to overwhelm.

Objects in the exhibition. All objects were produced in the British Isles in the 700s. The dates given indicate the dates of the find in Norway.

From left: C3762, mount from Øvre Eiker in Buskerud, dated to 850–950; C57043/12, mount from Larvik in Vestfold, dated to ca. 950; C18116, mount of copper alloy, Lom in Oppland, dated to the Viking Age; C6185, mount from Sunndal in Møre og Romsdal, dated to 900s; C19364, mount from Lindesnes in Vest-Agder, dated to 900–950; C758, ring-brooch from Snåsa in Trøndelag, dated to 900s; C646, mount from Oppdal in Trøndelag, dated to 900s; C30540, mount from Valle in Aust-Agder, dated to the Viking Age; C20519 a, mount from Kongsberg in Buskerud, dated to 800–850; C15811, mount from Skedsmo in Akershus, dated to 825–900; C1773, mount from Farsund in Vest-Agder. Dated to 800–850.

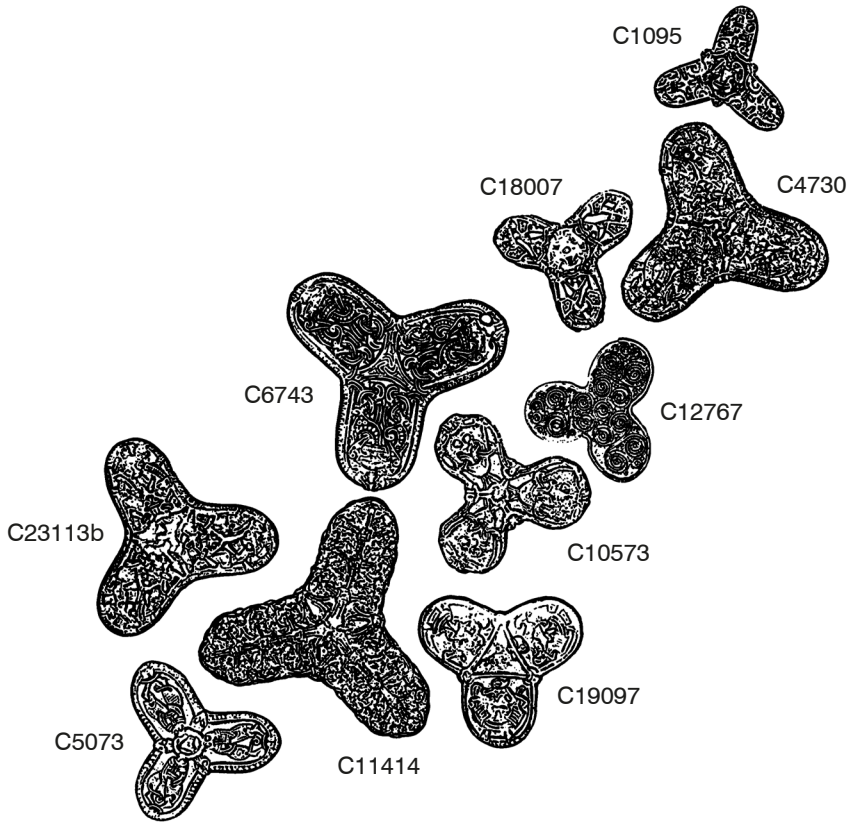


5. Oval Brooches – Typically Scandinavian

Oval brooches are the most common type of brooch from the Viking Age and are often found in pairs. They were used to fasten the straps on a woman's *suspended dress* (dress with shoulder straps), with one on each side, just below the shoulders. This is the best-known dress for Scandinavian women in the Viking Age.

The brooches are found throughout Scandinavia and also in areas where Scandinavians settled, from Russia in the east to England in the west. Ornamentation styles changed over time and reflect trends in jewellery design.

Oval brooches. C92 a, b (type R657), from Morstad in Oppland, dated to 850–900; C17828 a, b (type JP 23), from Bjerke in Vestfold, dated to 800–850; C1724 a, b (R655), from Tinglem in Nord-Trøndelag, dated to 950–1000; C29905 a, b (type Berdal), from Lerberg in Buskerud, dated to 800–850; C5305 a, b (type R655), from Haugen in Vestfold. Dated to 950–1000.

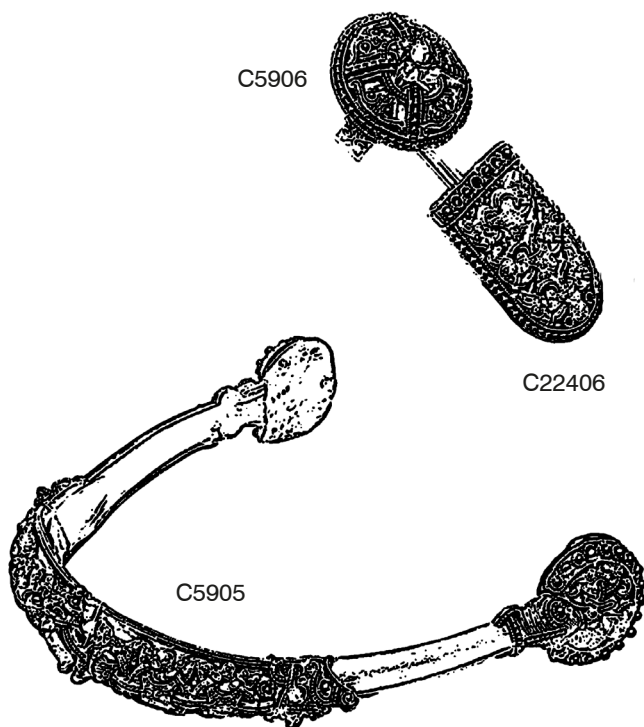


6. From Sword Belt to Brooch

Brooches with a characteristic triangular shape are called *trefoil brooches*. They were worn by women on the front of their clothing. Trefoil brooches reveal how Scandinavian craftsmen absorbed foreign impulses and incorporated them into their own visual language.

Scandinavian trefoil brooches were modelled on Frankish sword-belt mounts from the 800s. In pictures of Charlemagne's court, we see that the king's warriors had three-armed mounts on their weapon belts. An elaborate example in gold was part of the Hon Hoard (see case no. 2). The ornamentation on the brooches developed from Frankish-inspired geometrical designs to a pure Scandinavian animal-art style.

Trefoil brooches. From left: C5073, from Eidsvoll in Akershus, dated to 900–950; C23113 b, from Vadsø in Finnmark, dated to 900–950; C11414, from Nome in Telemark, dated to 900–950; C19097 (type JP 103), from an unknown farm in Hedmark, dated to 900–950; C6743 (type JP 108), from Lom in Oppland, dated to 900–950; C10573 (type JP 107), from Vågå in Oppland, dated to 900–950; C18007 (type JP 105), from Larvik in Vestfold, dated to 900–950; C12767, from Gran in Oppland, dated to 1000–1050; C4730 (type JP 98), from an unknown find spot, dated to the 900s; C1095 (type JP 90), from Elverum in Hedmark. Dated to 900–950.

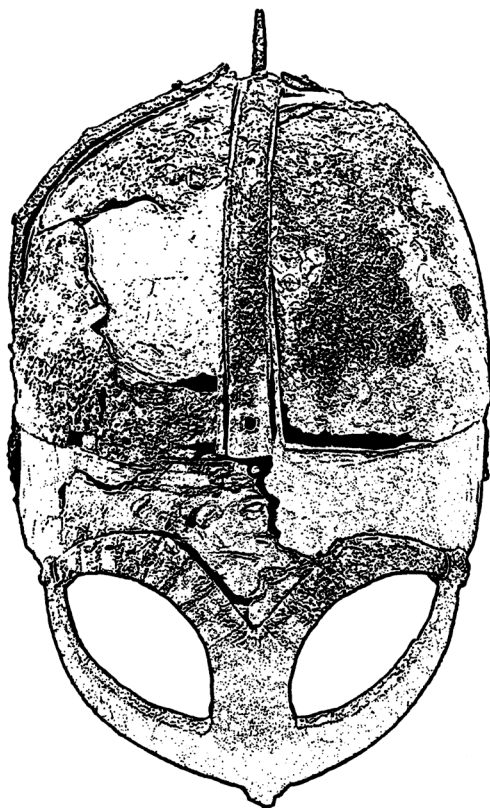


7. An Exceptional Spur

This gold spur was found in 1887 on Rød farm, during ploughing, along with a strap mount from the same spur. 30 years later a second mount was found in the same field. There were no traces of a grave or a second spur. Spurs are fastened to boots with leather straps and used to control a horse while riding.

The gold spur is the only one of its kind from Viking-Age Scandinavia. Its intricate ornamentation is made of gold filigree and soldered granules and depicts animals and patterns in the Borre style. It was probably made by a Scandinavian goldsmith in the latter half of the 900s.

C5905, C5906, C 22406, gold spur and strap mounts from Rygge in Østfold. Dated to the 900s.

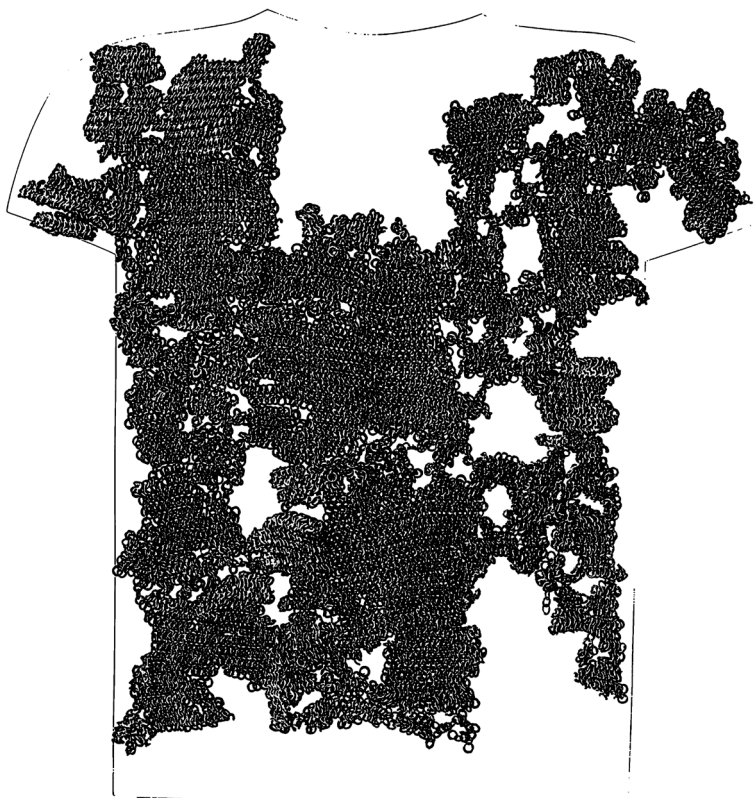


8. The Gjermundbu Helmet

This helmet from Gjermundbu Farm is the best-preserved Viking helmet in the world. It was found in a well-furnished man's grave that also contained a chain-mail shirt (Showcase 9), a sword, two spears, two axes, a shield, riding gear, gaming pieces and equipment for making food. The man who was buried had belonged to an elite group of equestrian warriors.

The helmet was deliberately destroyed in connection with the funeral – it was pierced with the spears that lay in the grave – one stab from each.

C27317 k, iron helmet from Gjermundbu, Buskerud. Dated to the latter half of the 900s.

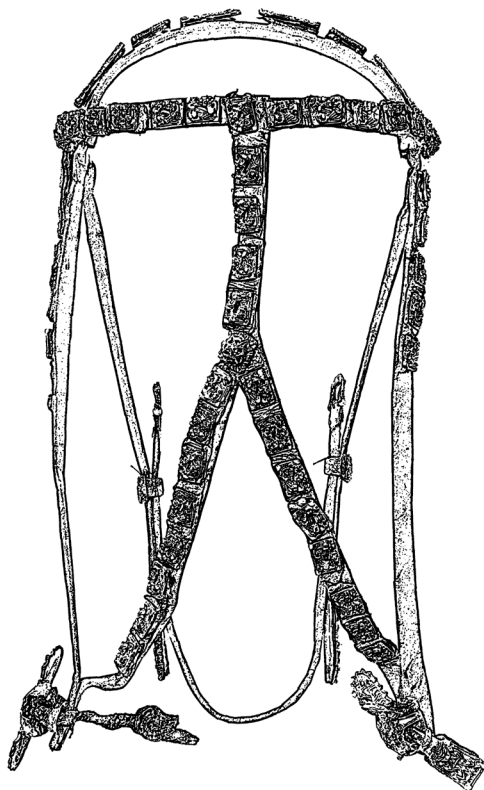


9. Chainmail from Gjermundbu

This chainmail comes from the same grave as the Viking helmet (Showcase 8). It was found in many small pieces and only some fragments are displayed here. About 25,000 metal rings survive. This corresponds to the better part of the original shirt, which would have weighed between 8 and 10 kg.

The process of making chainmail was time-consuming and could take up to half a year. One chainmail shirt cost as much as a shield, spear, sword and helmet combined. This type of armour was reserved for professional warriors and other elites in the Viking Age.

C27317, iron chainmail from Gjermundbu in Buskerud. Dated to latter half of the 900s.

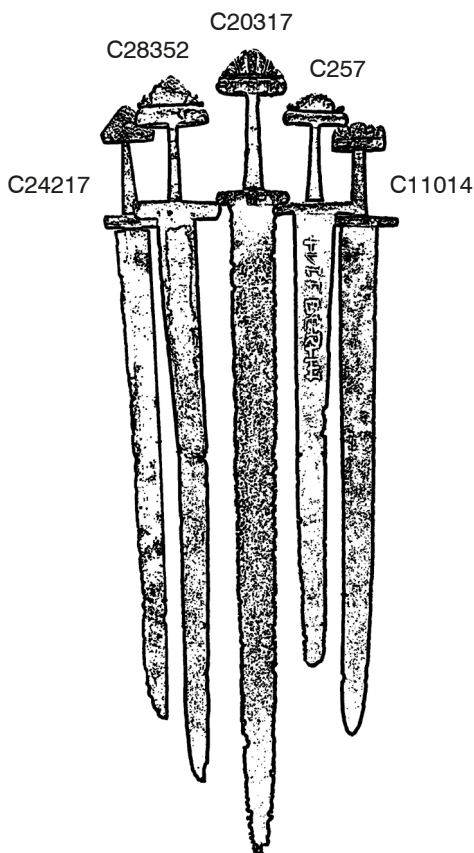


10. Horse and Warrior

This uncommonly fine horse bridle comes from a rich ship grave from the early 900s that was found in 1851 at Borre in Vestfold. The deceased man was also buried with other pieces of riding equipment and three horses. Horses had high status in the Viking Age.

The small mounts fastened to the leather straps are made of bronze covered with a thin layer of gold. The rich ornamentation, with mythic animals, face masks and braided patterns, is in the Borre style, a name derived from these particular finds. The style is typical for Viking art from the end of the 800s and throughout the 900s.

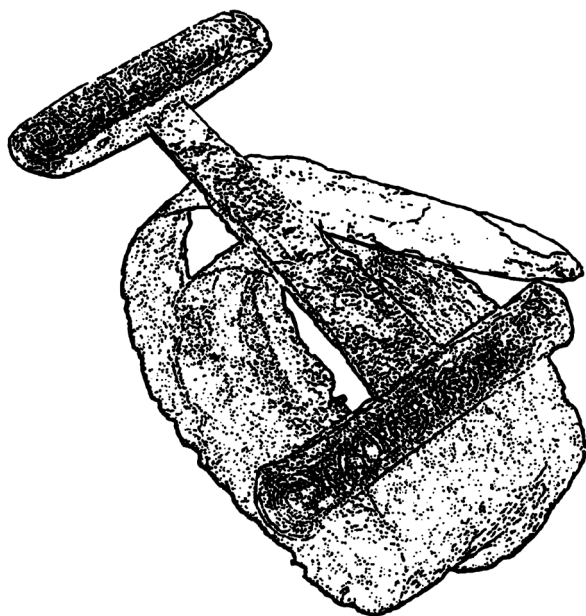
Object in the exhibition: C1804, bridle from Borre in Vestfold. Dated to the 900s.



11. The Sword – Warrior's Jewellery

Some swords from the Viking Age are especially elaborate. Over 3,000 swords from the Viking Age have been found in Norway, and most were discovered in graves along with other weapons. The swords vary from simple home-forged blades to foreign-made ornated blades with intricate patterns and hilts decorated with precious metal. Swords with the inscriptions VLFBERHT or INGELRIL probably came from workshops in southern Germany. The inscriptions could be like trademarks. The Old Norse myths tell of swords made by dwarves and which possessed magical power. The sagas tell of mighty swords passed down from one generation to the next.

From left: Swords. C24217 a (type C), from Risvold in Telemark dated to 800-850; C28352 a (type T), from Momrak in Telemark dated to 950-1000; C20317 a (type 1), from Steinsvik in Nordland dated to ca. 800; C257 (type R), from Hedmark dated to the 900s; C11014 (type K), from Kilde in Hedmark. Dated to the 800s.

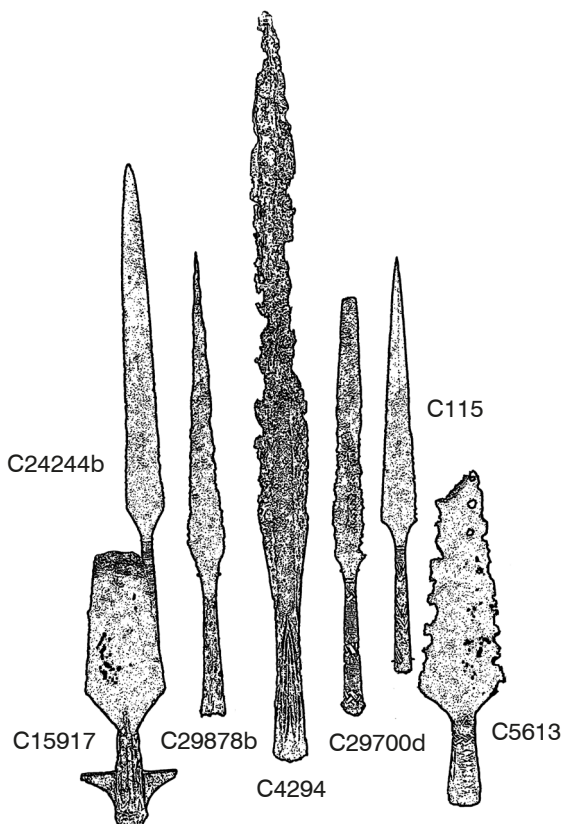


12. The Broken Sword

This sword was bent and destroyed before being buried as a grave gift. It is not a unique case. Many swords found in Viking Age graves are broken, bent or folded together and show signs of being subjected to hard blows and other violent damage. The destruction was deliberate.

Viking burial rituals reflect complex ideas about life, death and the afterlife. Perhaps 'weapon killing' was part of a ritual connected to the transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead, where the dangerous power of the sword had to be destroyed?

C15888, sword (type R), from Vold in Hedmark. Dated to 900s.



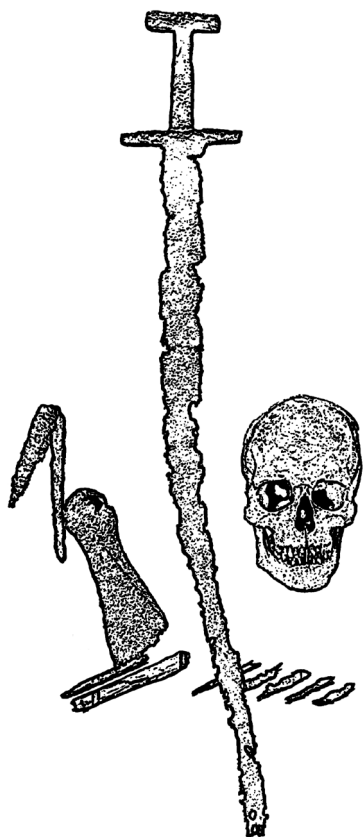
13. Spears for Battle

The spear was one of the warrior's most important weapons. Spears vary in both form and size. Most spears found in Viking Age graves were used for stabbing, but some slim and light spears may have been thrown.

When armies clashed and frontlines stood face-to-face on the battlefield, spears were the weapons of choice. With a length of over two metres, they had a greater range than swords and axes.

In Old Norse mythology, spears are associated with the war god Odin. When his spear *Gungnir* is thrown, it never misses its mark.

From left: C15917, spear (type D2/G), from Garder in Akershus, dated to 950–1000; C24244b, spear (type F), from Argehovd in Telemark dated to 825–950; C29878 b, spear (type M), from Bøen in Telemark dated to 975–1075; C4294, spear (type E,) from Kaupang in Vestfold, dated to 825–925; C29700 d, spear (type K), from Maarem in Telemark, dated to 900s; C115, spear (type K), from Ås in Hedmark dated to 900; C5613, spear (type G), from Alsøy in Nordland. Dated to 950–1000.



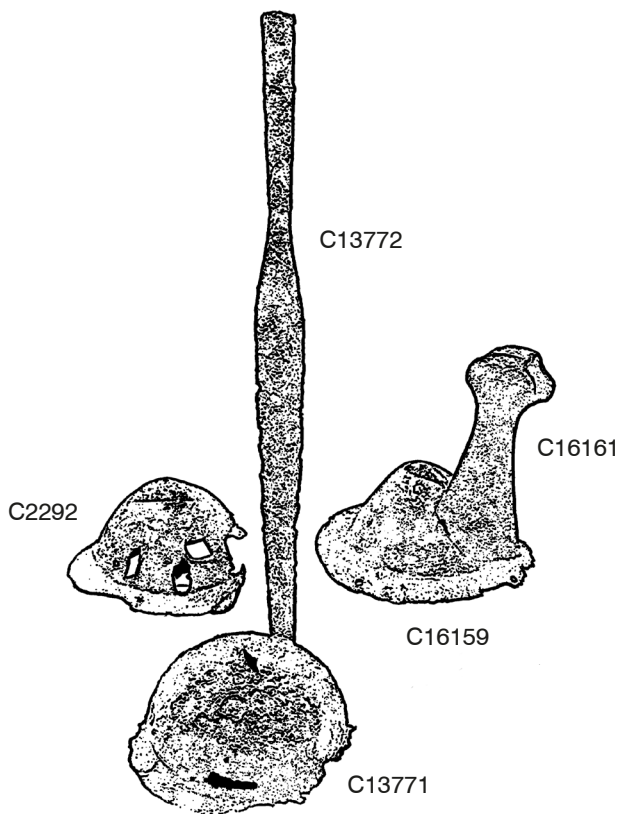
14. A Female Warrior?

This woman was buried with a sword, spear, battle axe and arrows at Nordre Kjølén Farm in Solør. Her skeleton shows that she was about 155 cm tall and 18 or 19 years old when she died.

When archaeologists find graves with weapons, they usually assume that the people buried in the graves are men. But few graves have preserved skeletal material that can reveal a person's sex, so this assumption is difficult to prove or refute.

The woman from Solør could have been a female warrior, but the weapons could also have been symbols of her role in the family or local community.

C22541 a–g, grave finds from Nordre Kjølén, Solør. Dated to the latter half of the 900s.



15. 'Murdered' Weapons

The shield bosses shown here were hacked with axes and pierced with spears. They were deliberately 'killed' before being burned and buried with the dead.

The idea of destroying weapons at a funeral could be compared with sacrificing animals. The Vikings may have understood it as a process of liberation that ensured that the dead and their grave goods entered the afterlife (see also Showcase 12).

C2292, shield boss from Bleken in Oppland, dated to 975–1025; C13771 and C13772, shield boss and spear from Ås in Akershus, dated to 850–950; C16159 and C16161, shield boss and axe from Teige in Buskerud. Dated to 975–1000.

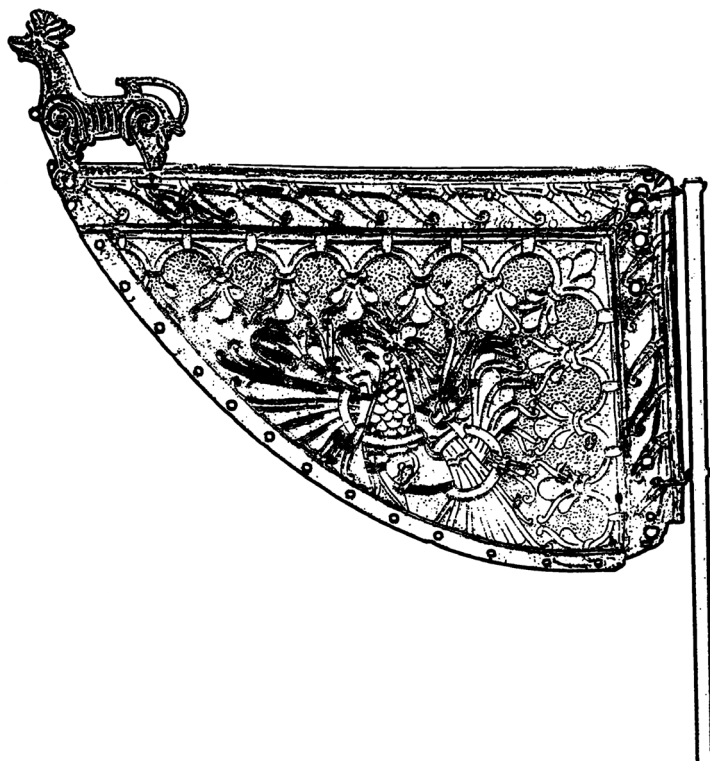


16. The Sword from Langeid

This ornate sword from the first half of the 1000s bears witness of the time when the Vikings' world was ending and the Christian Middle Ages were beginning. It was found at Langeid Farm in Aust-Agder.

The decoration on the hilt is partly made of gold edged with copper wire, and partly of silver. Silver wire is wrapped around the grip. The inscription in Latin letters is difficult to interpret, but could be an abbreviation of a verse from the Bible or a prayer. The crosses on the hilt are also Christian motifs. This sword, loaded with Christian symbolism, was laid in a pagan grave.

C 58882/3, sword (type Æ) with inlays of gold, silver and copper, from Langeid in Aust-Agder. Dated to first half of 1000s.

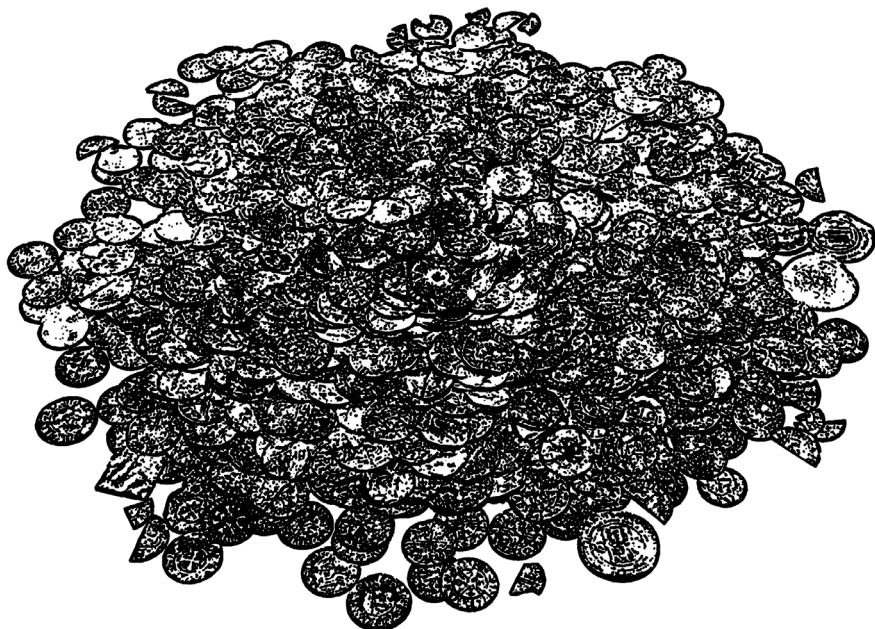


17. From Ship's Prow to Church Spire

This weathervane from Heggen Church had an earlier life as a decoration atop a ship. There are only four such weathervanes preserved in Norway. This is the oldest, made in the mid-1000s.

The Old Norse sagas tell of golden weathervanes mounted on the prows of warships. When people saw them glinting in the sunlight, they knew a chieftain or a king was approaching. The weathervanes were later removed and placed on medieval churches.

C23602, ship's vane, gilded copper alloy, from Heggen Church, Buskerud, Dated to 1000–1050.



18. A Royal Coin Hoard

In 1836 this hoard was found by a farmer under a large stone at Årstad Farm, near Egersund. The stone hid over 1,900 coins and coin fragments, many from the time when Canute the Great was king of England.

In 1028 the Anglo-Danish king paid powerful Norwegian chieftains large amounts of Anglo-Saxon silver coins in return for their support in fighting against King Olav Haraldsson at the battle of Stiklestad in 1030. The Årstad Hoard could be part of this payout.

Objects in the exhibition: Silver coin hoard from Årstad, Rogaland. Buried after 1028.



C60592

C60421

C52517/
2458

C21858e

C59393

C13216

C2076

C5454 - 5463

C57025/1-8

C36000f

C59443

C2930

From top left: C59717, silver Thor's hammer from Hovin, Akershus; C60421, silver Thor's hammer from Gislevold, Akershus; C52517/2458, Thor's hammer, from Kaupang, Vestfold; C60592, silver Thor's hammer from Eidanger, Telemark; C21858 e, silver Thor's hammer from Tråen, Buskerud; C13216, Thor's hammer from Huse, Hedmark; C59393, silver Thor's hammer from Ven, Hedmark; C2076, copper cross from Vardø, Finnmark; C5456–C5457, C5461 pendants and beads from Værdal, Nord-Trøndelag; C2930, silver cross from Kroken, Aust-Agder; C59443, copper cross from Erstad, Oppland; C57025/1–8, silver cross and beads from Kaupang, Vestfold; C36000 f, pendant of gold from Slemmedal, Aust-Agder. Dating: ca. 800–1100.



20. Gunnvor Built a Bridge

"Gunnvor, Trydrik's daughter, made the bridge in memory of her daughter Astrid. She was the handiest maiden in Hadeland."

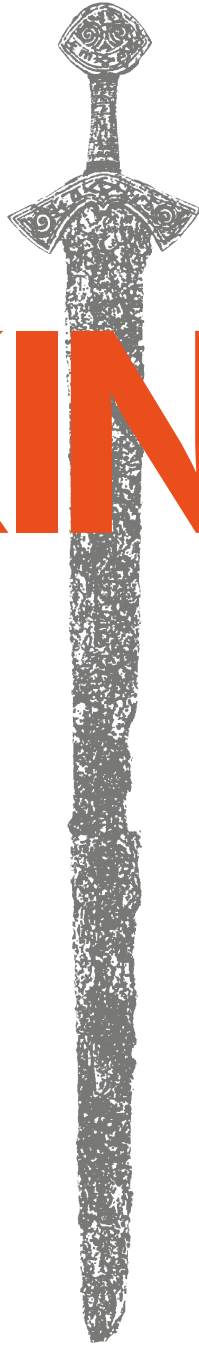
This is the meaning of the inscription on the runestone from Dyne in Oppland. The stone is from the mid-1000s and testifies to Norway's transition from paganism to Christianity. The motifs are clearly Christian, but both the style and the practice of raising monumental stones have deep roots in pre-Christian times.

The front of the stone is engraved with motifs from the New Testament. We see the three wise men following the star of Bethlehem to the stall where they find Mary and the baby Jesus.

C9909. Runestone made of Ringerike sandstone, from Nordre Dynna, Oppland. Dated to 1040-1050.



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