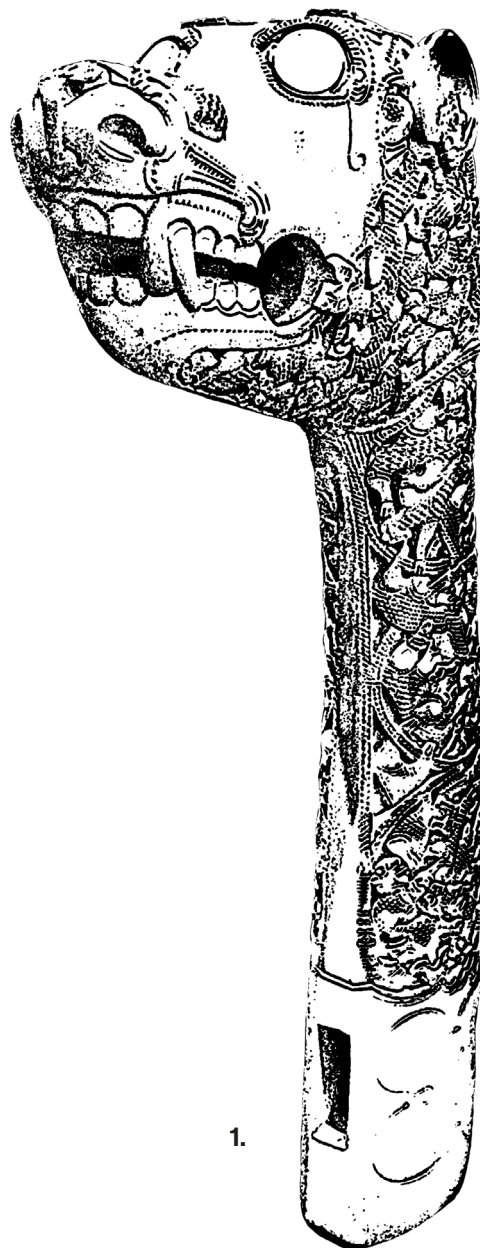




1.

12. Gripping beasts. Fabulous animals from the Viking Age

Is it a fox, or maybe a cat? In Viking Age art, we meet a little creature who likes to hold on tight – to itself and others. We call them Gripping beasts, and like acrobats, they can turn and twist around themselves, while looking at you with their big round eyes.

This is a copy of one of the animal head posts from the Oseberg burial (AD 834). The original head posts can be seen at the Viking Ship Museum on Bygdøy. The head and neck are teeming with animal bodies. At first glance, it is hard to tell them apart, but if you take a closer look, you will see faces with big eyes, noses, pony tails (or horns?), arm and legs. The skilled carver must have planned the design in great detail beforehand.

Five animal head posts were found in the Oseberg ship burial. We do not know how they were used, but each had a handle. Perhaps they were carried at processions, or used on other special occasions.

In the case

1. Copy of animal head post, made by the woodcarver Sverre G. Sundby.
C55000/173, O:1904 no.175