

13. The snake

The snake or serpent was a popular figure in Animal art. Slithering serpent-like animals are found everywhere; on weapons and jewellery, in textiles designs and in carvings decorating ships, furniture and houses.

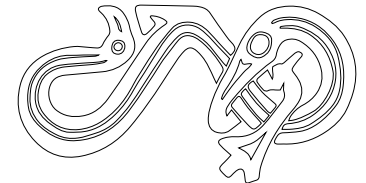
The snake can slither underground, swim, climb, and slide through cracks and small openings. It sheds its skin twice a year, making it the ultimate shape-shifter. It also swallows other animals whole, thus becoming two animals in one – a hybrid.

In Norse mythology, the snake has close ties to Odin. Odin is a great shaman and shape-shifter who could change himself into animals or humans. The most famous serpent was the Midgard Serpent, who encircled the earth and held it together by biting its tale.

In the case

Gold «serpent rings» like this were Iron Age finger-bling. We find them in the graves of rich and powerful people from the 200-300s. The ring may have signaled that those who wore them belonged to a small exclusive group.

1. Efteløt prestegård, Kongsberg, Viken (Buskerud). C779
2. Kjørstad Søndre, Sør-Fron, Innlandet (Oppland). C4163
3. Braaten, Ringerike, Viken (Buskerud). C2878
4. Bringsværd, Grimstad, Agder (Aust-Agder). C7331a



Serpent-birds or bird-serpents? This decorative mount is teeming with fabulous ribbon-shaped animals. Copper alloy. Date: 700s

5. Blakstad, Bærum, Viken (Akershus). C29928

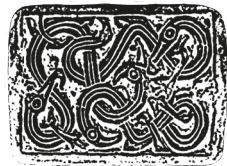
S for snake. Small, elegant snake brooches were in fashion in the 600s. S-shaped brooch of copper alloy.

6. Englaug østre, Løten, Innlandet (Hedmark). C10695

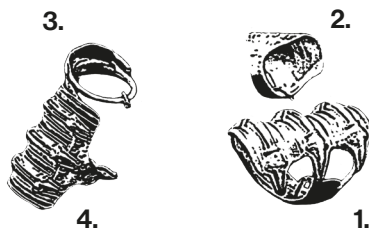
7. Nordgården, Seljord, Telemark and Vestfold (Telemark). C17428

This large round silver brooch from the Viking Age hides at least three intertwined ribbon-shaped animals.

8. Rollag, Tråen, Viken (Buskerud). C28158a



5.



3.

2.

4.

1.



6.



7.



8.