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## 16. and 17. The Bear: King of the Animals, Animal of the Kings

The bear is big, strong and dangerous. It is also the wild animal that most closely resembles humans. It can stand on two legs, swinging its arms as it walks, and has a round head, just like us. The bear was animal of kings and chieftains – a lonely and majestic figure with enormous strength. When a bear is angry, it can ravage everything and everyone around it. The bear was the fylgia, the companion animal, of the greatest heroes. The berserks or bear warriors, were Odin's own warriors.

The remains of real bears are sometimes found in graves from the Early Iron Age. Finds of fur and claws indicate that the dead person may have been wrapped in a bearskin.

### In the case

Lower right:

This special little bear was carved from a piece amber by a skilled and clever craftsman. It may have been used as a pendant; a "good-luck" bear that brought its owner strength, as well as delight.

1. Bear of amber. Øvre Haugsten, Råde, Viken (Østfold). C4033

Top:

Two lively amber animals chase their own tails; the artist has captured their boundless energy. These amber figurines were probably made sometime in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Amber is fossilized tree resin that has washed up from the sea, especially along the coasts of Denmark and the Baltic. Amber was prized for its color and beauty, but also for its magical powers. If you rub it, amber becomes electrically charged. Small, light objects are drawn to it "just like magic".

2. Amber figurine. Inderøy, Trøndelag (Nord Trøndelag) C315

3. Amber figurine. Aurskog Høland, Viken (Akershus) C3081

Lower left:

Traces of actual bears are found in graves from the Early Iron Age. Fur and claws tell us that the deceased may have been laid to rest in a bear skin. If the deceased was cremated, we may find bear claws among the burnt bones from the cremation fire.

4. Bear claws from Hunn, Borge, Viken (Østfold). C28986 c- g.

### Case 17.

Amber bear; copy. The original is seen in Case 16. Carved by Morten Kutschera.