



Copy of the Gjermundbu Helmet, dated 900s, found in Haugsbygd in Ringerike.  
OWNER OF THE ORIGINAL: MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, OSLO



Copy of the Snartemo Sword, dated 500s, found in Hægebostad in Vest-Agder.  
OWNER OF THE ORIGINAL: MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, OSLO



Copy of the Blakar Chair, dated 1200s, from Lom in Gudbrandsdalen.  
OWNER OF THE ORIGINAL: MUSEUM OF CULTURAL HISTORY, OSLO



Gold ring, dated AD 300-600, found in Rennesøy in Rogaland.  
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## SNORRI AND THE LORD OF THE RINGS

NASJONALMUSEET

# POWER & MAGIC

## SNORRI AND THE LORD OF THE RINGS



Did Norwegian saga illustrations inspire the filming of *The Lord of the Rings*? There are numerous similarities between the film and the drawings in the 1899 edition of Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla. History of the Kings of Norway*. Some similarities are visually striking; others are related to motif, content and atmosphere. Welcome to a new world where the Viking Age meets present-day Fantasy!

THE ILLUSTRATIONS were drawn by Erik Werenskiöld, Halfdan Egedius, Gerhard Munthe, Christian Krohg, Wilhelm Wetlesen and Eilif Pettersen. The drawings are all done in pen on paper, and produced in the period from 1895 to 1899. The majority of the drawings are found in the Collection of Prints and Drawings at the National Museum, Oslo.

The book, *History of the Kings of Norway*, written by the Icelander Snorri Sturluson in the 1220s, played a very important role in Norway's fight for independence and democracy in the 1900s. The book also greatly inspired J.R.R. Tolkien's writings. A university professor in Old Norse, he was a specialist on Snorri, our main source of knowledge of the Norse sagas.

"Tolkien based so much of his story on the Norse sagas"<sup>1</sup>, says Peter Jackson, creator of the film *The Lord of the Rings*. The traces of influence from Snorri are noticeable in Tolkien's book in several ways, including in the text which can be linked to the actual illustrations in Snorri, which Tolkien must have been highly familiar with. Tolkien's book has thus created an indirect connection between the film and the Snorri illustrations.

In addition, the film team clearly must have had direct contact with the illustrations. During the film's production the film designers were given access to large amounts of old images related to the different cultures touched on in the film. Because the Snorri illustrations have to such a

large extent defined the visual image of the Viking Age, it is natural that these illustrations were sought out for inspiration.

Filmmakers are commonly inspired by art history, consciously or subconsciously. Moreover, Jackson wanted to create a visual presentation of an epic text, just like the Snorri illustrators before him. What, then, is more natural than to seek impulses in their solutions?

Earlier research on Snorri's influence on Tolkien has not addressed the connection between the illustrations and *The Lord of the Rings* (i.e. book or film trilogy). This exhibition therefore sets out to highlight a previously unexplored area. In focus is the often forgotten magical aspect of these illustrations – tying them to our present-day Fantasy culture: a highly global, contemporary culture, which has been, and continues to be, influenced by the illustrations.

The exhibition gives insight into the way creative processes extend and transform sources of inspiration. We see how new art builds on older expressions. And how images cite each other.

1) Peter Jackson: A Filmmakers Journey, Brian Sibley (2010).

THE FILM IMAGES are from the trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, which consists of: *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003). The films are based on J.R.R. Tolkien's books of the same titles, published in 1954 and 1955. The director of the films is Peter Jackson. The film team included approx. 200 illustrators and designers.