

Large Pictures 3 Chapter 11.3

The following pictures show scenes from the intricate wood carvings from the doorway of the Stave Church in Hylestad, Norway.

The carvings are now in the University of Oslo Museum for Cultural History.

- The church was estimated to have been built in the late 12th to the early 13th century and was demolished in the 17th century. Some of the intricate wood carvings from the church doorway were saved and incorporated into other buildings. The carvings show several scenes from the legend of **Sigurd** Fåvnesbane. There are seven scenes from the Sigurd legend carved on the two door panels, with three scenes on the first panel and four scenes on the second panel



Let's look at the scenes from the left to the right and from bottom to top. The "tale" given goes back to legend of Sigurd Fåvnesbane.

What you see (often according to Wikipedia) is:

- Left bottom:**

The first scene shows Sigurd (who wears a helmet) and Regin (who has a beard) at the forge. We have Sigurd = Siegfried and Regin = Mime or Weiland. Sigurd, described as one of the best swordsmen, was urged by Regin to seek Fafnir the dragon's treasure. Regin then forged a sword with Sigurd at his side, providing assistance by keeping the fire going and providing water to cool the blade when needed. When the sword was completed they named it Gram.
- Left middle:**

Sigurd is holding the sword. Sigurd tested the blade on a shield with Fafnir's image cutting through the shield and the horn of the anvil.

● **Left top:**

Sigurd slays Fafnir the dragon with Gram. After forging the sword, Sigurd and Regin travel to Gnitahell in order to find Fafnir the dragon and take his treasure.

There they dig a pit in the path used by Fafnir, and Sigurd crawled into it. When Fafnir came to the water pit Sigurd emerged and thrust his sword into Fafnir from below, killing him.

● **Right bottom:**

Sigurd roasts the heart of the dragon and sucks his blood from his thumb while Regin appears to sleep.

Sigurd touched the heart to see if it was cooked, but the boiling blood ran down his hand, scalding him. When he drank of the dragon's blood by sucking his thumb, he was able to hear the speech of birds. From the birds, which are depicted in the fifth scene just above, he heard of Regin's plot to kill Sigurd.

● **Right middle:**

Sigurd kills Regin. Sigurd, warned by the birds of Regin's plot to betray him and encouraged by their assertions that great wealth, knowledge, and power would be his if he killed Regin preemptively and took possession of Fafnir's treasure, kills Regin.

Below we see Grani, Sigurd's horse, carrying the treasure from Fafnir. Grani stands carrying a chest containing Fafnir's expansive treasure and two birds are depicted below Grani perched in the branches of a tree. These birds likely belong to the group whose speech Sigurd understood. This scene combines elements of the legend that took place before and after the slaying of Regin.


After killing Regin, Sigurd mounts Grani, and rides to Fafnir's lair, where he finds an enormous store of gold from which he takes many precious things including the helm of terror and the sword Hrotti specifically. Sigurd loads large chests with the treasure onto Grani, despite expecting that it would be too large a load even for a pair of horses.

● **Right top:**

The last panel shows Sigurd's brother-in-law, Gunnar, in a snake pit playing the harp with his feet in an attempt to pacify the snakes.


Fafnir's treasure is cursed. In his dying breaths, Fafnir warns Sigurd that his gold "will be the death of all that possess it." Sigurd, unfazed by this and mentions the mortality of all men. After Sigurd's death at the hands of his three brothers-in-law, Gunnar, Hogni, and Guttorm, Fafnir's treasure is hidden by Gunnar, sunk to the bottom of the Rhine. Gudrun remarries, to Atli (Atilla the Hun), who is fascinated by the treasure and seeks to own it. Gunnar refuses to tell Atli its location, insisting, "Rather shall the Rhine rule over the gold than the Huns wear it on their arms." Atli orders Gunnar to be placed into a serpent pit, with his hands bound behind his back. Gudrun sends her brother a harp, and Gunnar is able to play "so exceedingly well" with his toes that he lulls the snakes to sleep, "except for one large and hideous adder" who kills Gunnar in a single strike.

■ The picture below shows three "Migration Period Swords with Almandine Garnet Guard" offered at an auction in Jan. 2021.




East Roman Migration Period Sword with Jewelled Guard
 Estimate: GBP 10,000 - 20,000
 20 January '21

A double-edged sword with a long, slender blade, decorated with a series of small, rectangular gold and red enamel plaques along the upper edge. The hilt is wrapped in a dark material, possibly leather or wood, and features a prominent, ornate guard with a central crossbar and four curved, tapering side elements. The blade is mounted on a custom-made stand.




Migration Period Sword with Almandine Gemset Guard
 Estimate: GBP 11,000 - 14,000
 20 January '21

A sword with a long, slender blade, decorated with a series of small, rectangular gold and red enamel plaques along the upper edge. The hilt is wrapped in a dark material, possibly leather or wood, and features a prominent, ornate guard with a central crossbar and four curved, tapering side elements. The blade is mounted on a custom-made stand.



Late Roman or Gothic Sword with Jewelled Guard
 Estimate: GBP 15,000 - 20,000
 19th January '21

A sword with a long, slender blade, decorated with a series of small, rectangular gold and red enamel plaques along the upper edge. The hilt is wrapped in a dark material, possibly leather or wood, and features a prominent, ornate guard with a central crossbar and four curved, tapering side elements. The blade is mounted on a custom-made stand.



23rd February 2021

[Link to text](#)

Source: Auction catalogue