

Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs on Golden Gallehus Horns.

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Abstract: *this brief note draws attention to a detail of Gallehus Horns, the famous couple of golden horns found in Denmark and kept at NatMuseum of Copenhagen. The detail in object shows a bird bending over a fish grasped in its paws. This short article suggests the reading of such pictogram as a hieroglyph and particularly its exact coincidence with symbol G51 in Gardiner's Sign List. The runic inscription casted on first upper band of the Runic Horn appears not to be the only writing evidence on the famous objects.*

Subjects: Gallehus, horn, Egyptian, hieroglyph, Gardiner.

The small or "runic" Horn of Gallehus is one of a couple of similar objects, both found in the same place, Gallehus, Southern Denmark. Both horns were casted in gold, and both bear, on their surfaces, very sophisticated iconography. They definitely had to be very important objects, very challenging for the craftsman, a very experienced and skilled one, and also intended for very important people, of course.

Some scholars think that they were simply either drinking cups or trumpets.

Horns have been archaeologically dated, A.D. 400-425, during the so called Migration Period, a period of massive human migrations in Europe, involving many Germanic tribes which were displacing all around the continent

In spite of their importance, horns have long been forgotten by the scientific community, only in recent times scholars (E. Oxenstierna 1956, W. Hartner 1969, N. Vlassa 1979 and K. Horedt 1984) showed interest, particularly in one of them, the so called *runeless* horn.

Willy Hartner (1969) brilliant effort concerning the "runeless" horn is exactly in order to demonstrate that it bears an inscription too, exactly like the other horn, the runic one, called like this because of its line of runic letters (top line in Fig.1).

Hartner's reading of the encrypted inscription on runeless horn is: "*may the content of this horn, bring help to the clan*".

On the other hand, the two rows of characters of this inscription on the runeless horn show a strong resemblance with the Easter Island script. Following Erno Wiebeck (2001), "K. Horedt states, that the similarity of the characters on horn A to corresponding characters of the Easter Island script is almost attaining identity". In this interpretation not only the inscription on the runeless horn exists, but also it is neither coded nor hidden at all and it is written in Dravidian language, using glyphs found on Easter Island, Pacific Ocean, as confirmed by B. Z. Szalek to Erno Wiebeck (2001).

If the existence of an inscription, written using unconventional symbols, and its reading on the runeless horn has been debated, the investigation about the presence of writings on the other horn has never been carried forward, being limited to, and also limited by the great evidence of runic letters inscribed on its upper rim.

But the runes, the rest of pictures and symbols casted on runic horn are still considered by scholars a real rebus and no convincing interpretation about them has yet been achieved.

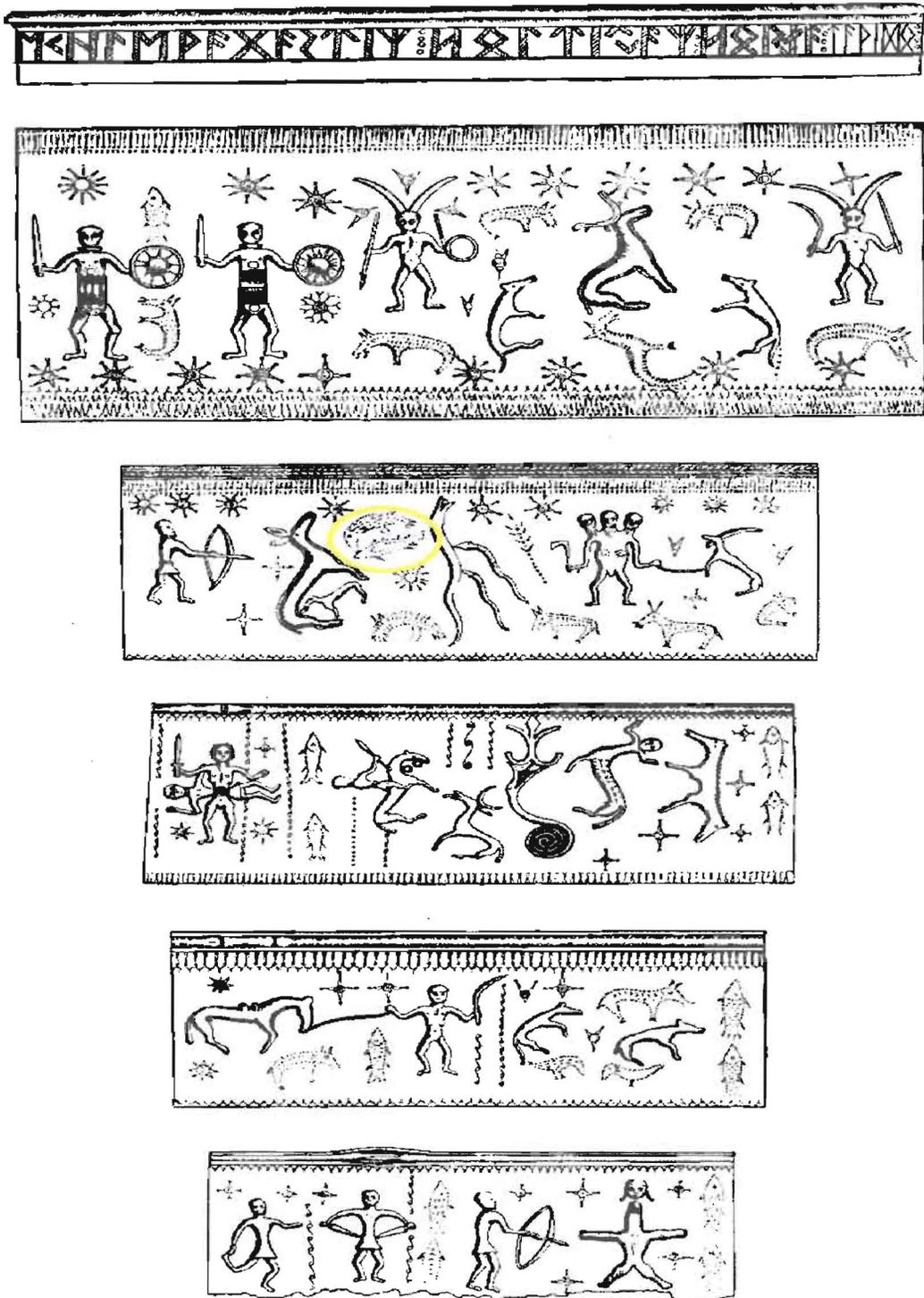


Fig. 1: Runic Horn. G51 sign, "bird grabbing the fish" symbol, is highlighted in the oval.

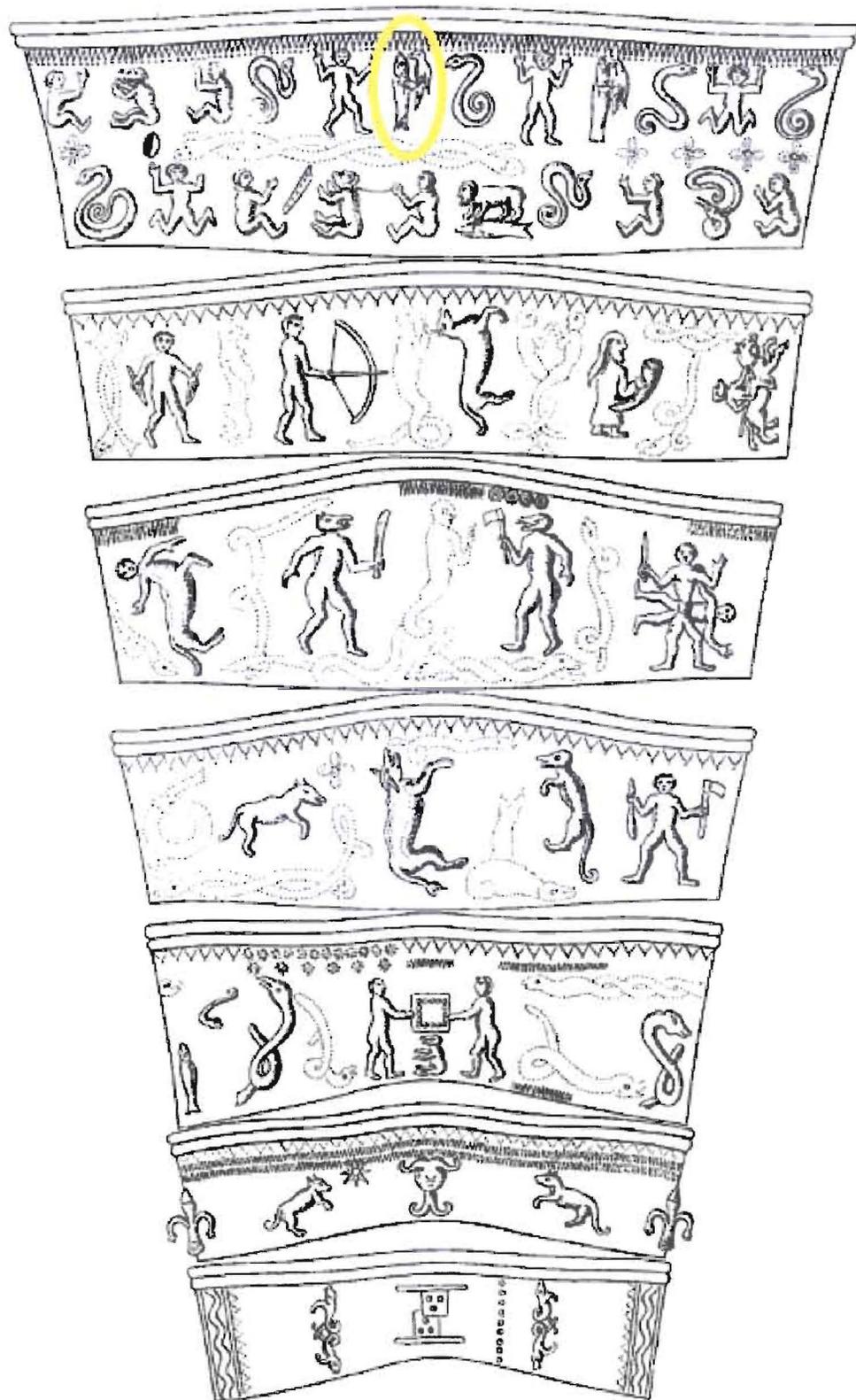


Fig. 2: Runeless Horn. G51 sign, the "bird grabbing the fish" symbol, is highlighted in the oval.

This analysis will focus the attention on the sixth glyph, from upper left, of the inscription on Runeless Horn, a fish grabbing a bird in its paws (Fig.2 highlighted in the oval and detail in Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: detail of "bird grabbing the fish" symbol on Runeless Horn.

It is easy to notice that this symbol is repeated twice on the same line; it occupies also the ninth position of the row, always starting from upper left corner.

The sign is part of the inscription casted on the horn.

Hartner (1969) interpretes it as letter "n", but we will skip, in this note, any issue concerning the transliteration of the inscription, and it is scarcely necessary to mention the translation, following Z. Salek, that refers to a God-Bird: "Offering to the almighty Bird-God".

What we want to highlight here is the simple fact that the symbol is used as part of an inscription, that makes of it a pictorial drawing used for writing, pretty much the same manner of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system. This way we can immediately appreciate the exact correspondence between the symbol in Fig. 4 and sign G51 in Gardiner's Sign List of Egyptian hieroglyphs (Fig. 5).

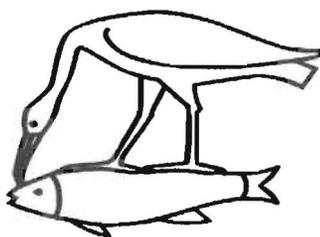


Fig. 4: symbol G51, Gardiner's Sign List of hieroglyphs.

One of the meaning of sign G51 in Egyptian writings is "turn around", that seems to fit perfectly with the position of the drawing on a vase from Susa, as shown in Fig. 5.



*Fig. 5: vase from Susa, end of 3rd or beginning of 2nd millenium BCE.
Source: Willy Hartner (1969, pag.30)*

It seems possible that the picture on the vase was meant to act as an etiquette, showing symbols indicating instructions, like *dos and don'ts* printed on modern freight boxes: "(do not) turn upside down" or "(careful when) turning around" or, may be ironically, "(please) turn (me, the vase) the other way around", all good instructions for beer drinkers. We can only suppose this about the meaning of the pictogram on the vase from Susa, exactly like we can only suppose that the horns were meant to be simple ritual drinking cups. What is for sure, if we do not drink too much beer, is that we can detect the presence of the same pictorial drawing of a "bird grabbing a fish" (Fig. 1, circled in yellow, and same detail in Fig. 6) on the other golden horn, the runic one.

The sign is placed between the symbols of a lactating deer and one combining three snakes together, on the third band of the horn counting from top and including the band with runes.



Fig. 6: detail of "bird grabbing the fish " symbol on Runic Horn.

Once again the resemblance between pictorial drawing of Fig. 6 and sign G51 (Fig. 4) from Gardiner's List of hieroglyphs is surprisingly evident.

Thus, to conclude, we have runic letters and at least one Egyptian hieroglyph on the runic horn, while the runeless one bears evidence of dravidian writings and the same Egyptian hieroglyph, repeated twice.

This all seems to support the idea that the craftsmen which created the horns were very confident with writing's techniques, capable of using both alphabets and pre-alphabetical symbols, like proper Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Since the sign G51 is used on the Runeless Horn as element of a text, we should expect that the "non-runic" part of the other horn contains as well some more writings, such as comments or a set of instructions, hidden behind the rest of pictorial glyphs.

References:

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