

95) **Did a Hittite acrobat perform a bull-leaping?** – The Hüseyindede vase, which was unearthed in 1997, and which is one of the most important recent archaeological finds in Turkey, is a beautiful example of (Old) Hittite pottery with pictorial decorations, along with the similar Bitik and Inandiktepe vases found earlier. The vase has been successfully restored and made accessible to the scholarly community by the Turkish scholars T. Yıldırım and T. Sipahi. Very soon after its discovery, the Hüseyindede vase became the subject of numerous publications.<sup>1</sup> The most spectacular features in the relief frieze of the vase are some acrobats and a bull standing close together. These features suggest *a priori* the idea of a bull-leaping scene, and the speculations about this were being circulated even before the official publication of the vase, as C. S. Lightfoot, *Minerva* 9/1 (1998) 4 wrote: “Since the vase would seem to predate the famous bull fresco found in the Minoan Palace at Knossos in Crete, the discovery provides new evidence for cross-cultural links and, possibly, for Anatolian influences on Minoan civilisation”. In later publications, archaeologists and linguists have studied the Hüseyindede vase in detail and they too have expressed similar conclusions.<sup>2</sup>

In a recent article in *Archeologia* 53, 7-20, P. Taracha dealt with the Hüseyindede vase and re-interpreted the “acrobat scenes”, taking all known archaeological and textual evidences in account. One of his observations is particularly significant, and it becomes the starting point of this study examining the viability of the “bull-leaping” hypothesis for the Hittite culture with a new critical point of view. To date it generally has been taken that the central four human figures (see fig. 1) of the Hüseyindede vase belong to a bull performance. Even it was thought that the figures in action represent bull-leaping(s) in a continuous style.<sup>3</sup> P. Taracha, however, has now convincingly shown that two acrobats on the ground behind the bull (“floor-team”) should be considered separately from those in close connection with the animal (“bull-team”). These two somersaulting men appear on the Inandiktepe vase in poses similar to those on the Hüseyindede vase, but without any direct connection to a bull figure. The “bull-team” on the Hüseyindede vase consists of one acrobat performing on the bull, and of his assistant, who is the halter attendant (see fig. 2). Despite his revision of the interpretation of the acrobat scenes, P. Taracha still sticks to the idea of “bull-leaping” on the Hüseyindede vase. For the reasons I will give below, however, I cannot now remain very optimistic for postulating Hittite bull-leaping:

1) In bull-leaping practices one usually approaches the animal frontally, sometimes grasping its horns. On the Hüseyindede vase the acrobat is using largely the rear dorsal part of the bull’s body, and he has no contact with its horns. Furthermore, the person who holds the halter and stands opposite to the bull would block every movement of the acrobat in the direction of the bull’s head.

2) The act of the Hittite acrobat does not closely resemble any classical technique of bull-leaping mentioned by T. Sipahi, *Anatolica* 27, 109 and P. Taracha, *Archeologia* 53, 11. Therefore, P. Taracha, *ibid.*, 11-12, propounds a new reconstruction for the actions of the Hittite acrobat. However, this would not seem as necessary if one has a closer look at the body shape of the figure on the bull.

3) The acrobat on the bull is clearly in a static position, while his feet and fingertips are firmly planted on the bull’s back. There is no indication of any body movement for mounting or leaving the animal’s body, leaping or landing. It seems implausible to me that the Hittite artist of the Hüseyindede vase would not have been able to depict a jumping scene, even in the simplest way. Thus, for the acrobatic act seen here one may imagine rather a “bridging” in which the acrobat first stands on the bull, holds his arms up, then slowly bends his body backwards and touches the bull’s back with his fingertips so that his body resembles a bridge shape. This final position is rendered in the frieze on the Hüseyindede vase. Even simply standing on a large and agile animal like bull or horse would require skill and courage. Thus, the acrobatic act depicted in Hittite times can be considered a brave enough presentation.

The Hittite textual evidences supporting a bull-leaping hypothesis are not conclusive either. The most likely text passage for this, in the Ištanuwan cult text KUB 35.132 III I,<sup>4</sup> is mutilated, so that the reconstruction of two incomplete sentences [...] *’wa’lukuzi nu ANA GU<sub>4</sub>.MA[H]* could also be something different from “bull-leaping”.<sup>5</sup> In his very last scholarly study “Bull Jumping in a Hittite Text?”<sup>6</sup> H. G. Güterbock mentioned this passage as favorable to the idea of bull-leaping, but he also expressed the caution: “Unfortunately, the Hittite passage just quoted does not prove that the text speaks of bull jumping...” As a second possible textual source for bull-leaping, A. Gilan, in: *FsHaas* (2001) 117 n. 33, pointed out the festival description KBo 23.55 where various martial games take place. The phrase in I 23’-26’ is of particular interest: *EGIR-ŠU = ma’al / LU.MEŠ GÉŠPU QĀTAMMA tianzi EGIR-ŠU = ma tarpa tiy[anzi] / 4 UDU.ŠIR.ḪI.A tarpa tiy[anzi] & EGIR-ŠU = ’ma x GU<sub>4</sub>.MAḪ.ḪI.A<sup>1</sup> tarpa tiyanzi* “Next, the first fighters enter (the stage) likewise. Afterwards they st[art] to tarpa. Four rams start to tarpa. Next .... (a number) bulls start to tarpa”. Although the meaning of *tarpa tiya-* has not yet been determined with certainty, from the context above it is obvious that here a technical expression of fight game terminology is meant.<sup>7</sup> However, A. Gilan’s assumption that *tarpa tiya-* is related to bull-leaping (*ibid.*, 117 n. 33) is not convincing, because the act of *tarpa tiya-* in this text also includes the rams (I 25’). On the other hand, from the textual narration in I 23’-26’ it is not always clear if the *tarpa tiya-* action occurs among the fighters, between the fighters and animals, or, among the animals as well. If one considers the scenes on the south wall of Egyptian Middle Kingdom tomb 29 at Beni Moustafa mentioned by P. Taracha,<sup>8</sup> *Archeologia* 53, 16-17 (there fig. 9 and 10), all these possibilities are shown

there : Men are struggling with a bull to capture it (here fig. 3, top line), two bulls are butting each other (fig. 3, second line), various animals are fighting each other (fig. 3, bottom line), men are wrestling together (fig. 4, fourth line). O. R. Gurney, *JRAS* 1977, 207 and A. Ünal, *Belleten* LII / 205 (1988) 1497 w. n. 160-161, take *tarpa tiya-* as the animal act "to butt (each other)". Another expression that contains the same lexeme is *tarpa tarna-* "to release to *tarpa* in the conjuration KUB 17.15 III 9'-10', where the subjects and objects of *tarpa tarna-* are not preserved. The sign combination [...].x.TUR in III 9', however, would again suggest an animal. Although the question is still open as to whether the *tarpa tiya-* action is peculiar to humans (struggling), or to animals (butting each other), or even to both, it is clear that it indicates a reciprocal aggressive behaviour or violent act, as it appears in the context of contest in KBo 23.55 I 23'-26'. My colleague Th. van den Hout has called my attention to the Hieroglyphic-Luwian idiom *tarpali ta-* (CRUS) which has recently been discussed by I. S. Yakubovich<sup>9</sup>. This expression sometimes occurs alone, but mostly employs the determinative "CORNU" (L. 108), or "PES<sub>2</sub>.PES" (L. 96) or SCALPRUM (L. 268). All the Hieroglyphic-Luwian occurrences denote an aggressive act against persons and property<sup>10</sup>. If both cuneiform and hieroglyphic expressions are the same, or at least comparable,<sup>11</sup> then the hieroglyphic determinative "CORNU" "horn" may now meaningfully indicate a link (to the act of) a horned animal (like ram and bull in KBo 23.55 I 25'-26'), and PES<sub>2</sub>.PES "to step / stand against" to (the act of) a rival (like combat sportsmen *ibid.* I 24').<sup>12</sup>

It is not the aim of this short notice to deny the possibility of bull-leaping being practiced among the Hittites (or in ancient Anatolia) at all, but what the graphical descriptions on the Hüseyindede vase depict (a bull-dance or bull-acrobatics) cannot be considered as good evidence for the existence of a cult tradition in Hittite times that can be compared with the bull-leaping in Minoan areas. Moreover, it necessitates a certain caution and reservation to detect "a new evidence for cross-cultural links and for Anatolian influences on Minoan civilization".

1. A complete bibliography given by P. Taracha, *Archeologia* 53 (Warszawa, 2002) 7 ff.; to be added now: T. Yıldırım, *AnAr* 16 (2002) 591-603.

2. A. Ünal, *The Hittites and Anatolian Civilizations* (1999) 241 (who speaks, however, of a "bull dance"), T. Sipahi, *IM* 50 (2000) 81-83 and *Anatolica* 27 (2001) 107-125.

3. A. Ünal, *The Hittites and Anatolian Civilizations*, 24; T. Sipahi, *Anatolica* 27, 112 f.

4. A. Ünal, *The Hittites and Anatolian Civilizations*, 241; T. Sipahi, *IM* 50, 83 and *Anatolica* 27, 115.

5. For instance, one may suggest a temporal clause for restoring the broken part in III 1 as well, since the line in question is the beginning of a new paragraph. The predicate *watkuzi* is reminiscent of the commonly used time phrase "when (on the evening of that day) a star leaps (i. e. "rises")" in various rituals with its shorter and longer forms: *māḥḥan = ma MUL-aš watkuzi* KBo 34.72 + KBo 24.49 rev. 14', KUB 29.7 + KBo 21.41 obv. 59, KBo 24.43 I 3'; *māḥḥan = ma ... MUL-aš watkuzi* KUB 29.6 + KUB 32.68 + KBo 34.79 II 16'; *māḥḥan = ma nekuz MU[L(-) ...? waṭkuzi* KUB 9.22 III 38; *māḥḥan = ma (/ GIM-[an = ma]) nekuz meḥur kišari* MUL *watkuzi* KUB 9.22 II 46-47 (/ *māḥḥan = ma (/ GIM-[an = ma]) nekuz meḥur kišari* MUL *watkuzi* KUB 9.22 II 46-47 (= Bo 4876 :7'); *māḥḥan = ma ... nekuz meḥur MUL-aš watku(z)i* KUB 29.4 II 28-29, IV 31; *nekuzza meḥur = ma ... māḥḥan = ma MUL-aš watkuzi* KUB 29.7 + KBo 21.41 rev. 21; cf. *CHD* Vol. 3 Fasc. 3 (1986) 240 (sub b. 2'. b'. 2'') and *CHD* L-N Fasc. 4 (1989) 435 (sub 1. a. 2' and 1. b. 1'. b'), 436 (sub 1. b. 2'). Thus, I would like alternatively to reconstruct KUB 35.132 III 1-5 as follows: "[When a star] rises, they [c]all out [... (Luwian words?)] to the bull. And [the Lallu]piya[-men] call out [... (Luwian words?)] to the cupbearer. [The cupbearer ...?] gets up".

6. Now to appear in *FsHoffner* (2003).

7. See H. A. Hoffner, *BiOr* 35 (1978) 247, who interprets this as "ram- and bull-wrestling (?)".

8. With reference to an article of L. Morgan in *Ägypten und Levante* 7 (1998) 17 ff. (esp., pp. 20-23).

9. In: *Anat. Lang.*, AHL Studies in the Science & History of Language 6 (2002) 202-208 with anterior literature.

10. J. D. Hawkins, *CHLI* Vol. I, Part 2 (2000) 487.

11. As already suggested by M. Poetto, *Studia Mediterranea* 3 (1981) 50 (*tarpali ta-* "venire contro").

12. I. S. Yakubovich, *ibid.*, differently interprets CORNU as "hoof" (p. 207) and (PES<sub>2</sub>.PES) *tarpali ta-* (CRUS) as "to sample (on), tread" (p. 203), but without discussing the cuneiform idiom *tarpa tiya-* in KBo 23.55 I 24' ff.

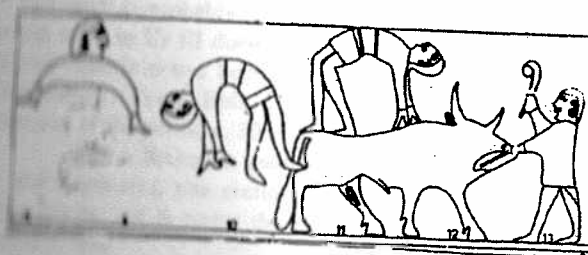


Fig. 1

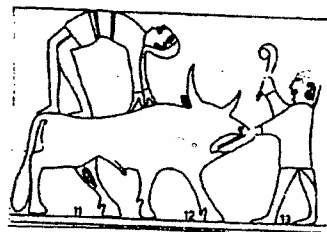


Fig. 2

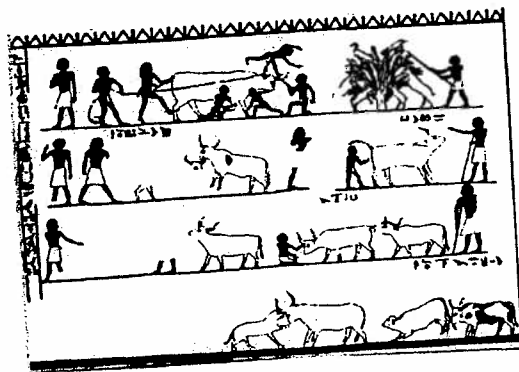


Fig. 3

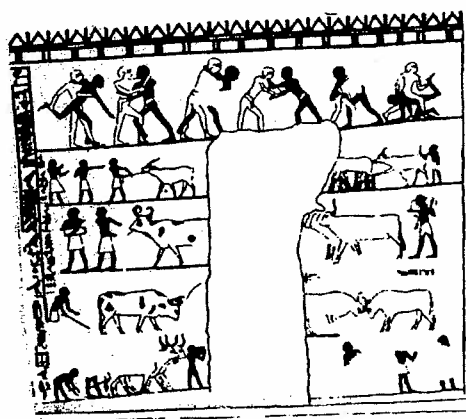


Fig. 4

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96) The Etymology of the name Nissaba – In JAOS 103 (1983) 65 I argued that this name is NIN+saba+ak “Lady of (the place) Saba”. In the article on this goddess in RLA IX 7/8 (2001) 576 P. Michalowski replies: “Unfortunately there is no other evidence for \*Sab(a) in Sumerian and it is equally possible that the name is very old and, like other divine names, was eventually altered to look like other divine names beginning with en- or nin-.” The presentation in RLA fails to mention that already in the time of Uru'inimgina of Lagaš this name was construed as a genitive composition: <sup>d</sup>NAGA-ke<sub>4</sub> (E. Sollberger, *Corpus*, Ukg. 16 ix 1, with ergative -e), and that everywhere the Emesal writing of the name prefixes the sign GAŠAN to ŠE+NAGA presuming a pronunciation Gašassaba and the etymology “Lady of Saba”. So at least from the middle of the third millennium B.C. the ancient scholars understood the name in this way.

Michalowski is correct to say that no place Saba is so far attested, but a place Sabu(m) is attested, once in an inscription of Sargon of Akkad (RIME II p. 24 caption 14: sa-<sup>l</sup>bum<sup>ki</sup>), often in the Ur III administrative documents (RG 2 pp. 159-161: sa-bu-um<sup>(ki)</sup>), and occasionally in OB documents (RG 3 p. 198: sa-bu-um<sup>(ki)</sup>, s[a-b]u, URU sa-bi-im<sup>ki</sup>). The place in the Ebla list of cities, MEE III p. 239 285: URU sa-bù<sup>ki</sup>, URU sa-mù<sup>ki</sup> is probably the same place, so somewhere in western Iran. Since most or all of the officials of Sabum cited in Ur III documents bear Semitic names, the place-name was then clearly taken for Semitic. The earliest Semitic nouns borrowed in Sumerian have an -a ending and place names in Syria suggest the same phenomenon: Terqa, Ebla, Qatna. Thus it is entirely possible that the town in west Iran was known in the Sumerian of the period c. 3000-2500 B.C. as Saba.

That a Sumerian goddess could be “Mistress of Saba/um” is confirmed from an unlikely source. II R 60 and duplicates, one section only of which concerns the *aluzinnu*, begins with a list of deities and their home towns, but it seems that the compiler deliberately mixed up deities and their towns. The unpublished lines 6-7 read

<sup>d</sup>nin-lil šar-rat gír-se-eki  
<sup>d</sup>ba-ba<sub>6</sub> be-let sa-a-biki

Girsu belongs to Baba of course, so Sabu belongs to Ninlil. That it is Ninlil not Nissaba is no serious problem. Ninlil is the daughter of Nissaba in well known Sumerian myths, so mother and daughter have a claim on the place. Ninlil was more important than Nissaba in the later Babylonian pantheon, and this text is