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Hittite Priests between the Sacred and the Profane

Introduction

By Shai Gordin (Ariel)

The four papers presented in this volume of *Archiv für Orientforschung* are the result of the Hittite presentations at the March 2018 conference “Priests and Priesthood in the Near East: Social, Intellectual and Economic Aspects”, held at Tel Aviv University; the Mesopotamian papers appeared as a special volume of JANER 2019. The conference was funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, with additional support from the Israeli Science Foundation (ISF grant no. 674/15), Tel Aviv University and the University of Vienna. My appreciation goes to all these institutions, and especially to Michael Jursa (Vienna) and Yoram Cohen (Tel Aviv), my co-organizers. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to Elizabeth Payne for language editing and to Michaela Weszeli for accepting the articles in *AfO* and for her patience during the editing process.

Alongside kings and queens, the military and the *literati*, priests are one of the most influential agents of society. For thousands of years, from the dawn of urbanism to the very last days of the major Near Eastern civilizations, priests were central figures not only in the realm of cult, but also in politics, economy and society. A variety of sources from India in the east, through Babylonia, Assyria, Anatolia, the Levant and Egypt provides us with a multifaceted view of priests. Some are known to us as family men, businessmen or entrepreneurs, others as administrators of cult and yet others as exegetes of myth and ritual. Many priests were members of elite communities, chosen on account of their physical purity. Yet, the complex nature and stratified structure of the priesthood leads to divergent definitions of its members and institutions. Therefore, a synchronic and chronological study of the literary, economic and legal output of priests and priesthood is a *desideratum*.

What makes a priest? Each religion clearly sets its own parameters, be they social, legal or ritualistic. One of the most well-known group of priests is of course that of the Biblical Kohanim (כהנים) and Leviim (לוויים), who were first organized during Israel’s exodus, in the desert. One can define them in many ways according to their activities, but the most basic identity is based on lineage: a Kohen being the male descendant of Aaron, brother of Moses, and a Levi a member of a tribe by that name. A Christian monk on the other hand was identified as *solus soli Deo vacans*, “who in solitude makes himself free for God alone” (Rufinus, 4th/5th cent. CE, Illich 1993), namely, based on the nature of his activity that makes him mediator between god and men. Such Jewish and Christian definitions stand on a spectrum of identities, all of which distil the cultural *koiné* of ancient religions. Caroline Waerzeggers (2010), elaborating on Govert van Driel (2002), stressed how Babylonian priests were first and foremost legally defined by their possession of an *isqu*, Akkadian for “share”. This term is usually translated as

“prebend”, which allowed access to the temple cult for certain privileged families and their male descendants. But priests in the Near East did not stay at their main cult centre all the time, and their migration, be it forced or voluntary, frequently had consequences for the transmission of sacrificial rites across space and time. Dominique Charpin (1986) has famously shown how this happened in southern Mesopotamia, when exiled priests from Eridu arrived at Ur during the Old Babylonian period, and Walther Sallaberger (1993) posited similar contacts between the two cult centers even earlier, during Ur III times. The latter period had a culmination of elements in city cult, which set the tone for the next thousand years in Mesopotamia, but date to the very beginnings of the priestly institution during the early third millennium BC. Even the very sources of this institution and of the city cult were recently questioned by Piotr Steinkeller (2017).

Therefore, the papers in this volume and those which already appeared in JANER 19 seek to understand more clearly the development of priestly communities across different historical and social contexts. Though limited to Hittite Anatolia, the focus of the four authors herein frequently shifts from studying priests as mediators between man and god or as representatives of temple institutions. Rather, they discuss different aspects of the life of priests: political, cultic, intellectual, entrepreneurial or personal. Michele Cammarosano investigates priestly identity and the socio-economic role of priests in the local cult setting of towns in the Hittite heartland. Moving from the heartland to the Hittite court, Stefano de Martino traces the socio-historical development of two types of Hurrian cultic officials, the *purapši*-priests and *tabri*-attendants. Amir Gilan shifts the focus to the Hittite royal family and the role played by kings and princes as priests. Finally, Piotr Taracha returns to the local cults dealt with by Cammarosano and tries to identify what kind of organizational character these priestly communities reflect. It becomes clear that all of the authors tackle the issue of how priests

did construct their individual and collective identities; either through status and personal aspirations – as integrative part of a given social, economic and religious environment – or by manipulating their environment for their own benefit or for the benefit of others or the temple.

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Local Priests in Hittite Anatolia

By Michele Cammarosano (Würzburg)

The Hittite sources contain a large body of information on rule-bound professionals who can be categorized under the label of “priests”. This article aims to offer a preliminary investigation of the role of priests in provincial towns and settlements. Following an introductory overview of Hittite priesthood, the article addresses the topic of local priests based on an analysis of a representative sample of the so-called “cult inventories”. Local priests emerge as veritable “men in the middle”, who were placed at the intersection of the social, religious, and economic spheres. Among the themes touched upon in this study, special attention is devoted to the role of priests within the cult offerings system, and to the tension between the ideal of thorough fulfillment of the prescribed rites and the reality of cultic observance.

1. Approaching Hittite Priesthood

This paper aims to offer a preliminary framework for the study of local priests in Hittite Anatolia, with a focus on their role in the Hittite society and cult management.¹ Religion is understood here as “a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”² Within this framework, priesthood can be understood as a rule-bound ritualistic and performative activity that achieves community building through an asserted intermediation between the divine and human spheres.³

Hittite cuneiform tablets and archaeological finds provide an impressive body of data that are relevant to the study of priesthood, yet this material is still very underexploited. Systematic investigations of the nature and duties of specific classes of priests and other ritualists are rare, and the socio-economic relevance of “temples”, including the role of officials and workforce attached to them, is still poorly understood. As rightly stressed by J. Klinger in 2002, the current general views on Hittite priests basically reflect the plausible, but hypothetical concept sketched by A. Goetze in 1957.⁴ The monograph devoted to *Hittite Priesthood* by A. Taggar-Cohen (2006) provided a welcome contribution to the topic but has not much changed the picture, both because of intrinsic limitations of the study and of the vastness of the material

to be considered.⁵ Today, the availability of critical editions of major Hittite textual corpora and the publication of crucial archaeological complexes enables us to expand previous research considerably.⁶ The importance of such basic research (*Grundlagenforschung*) can hardly be overestimated, as it provides the necessary precondition for any progress in the understanding of Hittite religion and society. The usefulness of this kind of work increases exponentially when the output is made available both in print and in sustainable digital formats provided with metadata to optimize searchability. The project “Hittite Local Cults” aims to represent a small step in this process by providing a complete digital edition of the Hittite cult inventories as well as a related database.⁷

As far as the Hittite terminology for priesthood is concerned, it has to be stressed that a clear-cut distinction between priests in a narrow sense and professionals who are related to cult activities in a broader sense is not always possible.⁸ Hittite texts refer to priests mostly by means of the Sumerogram SANGA. This logogram will most frequently correspond to the loanword *šankunni-* and in some cases to the word *kumra-* attested as *kumru* already in Old Assyrian texts, but probably also to other terms depending on the context.⁹ The Sumerogram SANGA is sometimes preceded by the feminine determinative (MUNUS), corresponding to Hittite **šankunni-*, “priestess”.¹⁰ The most common designation for priestesses is, however, *šiwanzanna-* (^{MUNUS}AMA.DINGIR-LIM, “mother of god” or “divine mother”),¹¹ which can be considered the *pendant*

¹) This paper has been written in the frame of the project *Philologische Bearbeitung, digitale Edition und systematische Analyse der hethitischen Kultinventare* (CTH 501-530), funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Foundation, project number 298302760). I wish to express my gratitude to Yoram Cohen, Shai Gordin, and Michael Jursa for the invitation to the conference “Priests and Priesthood in the Near East”, and for the wonderful hospitality in Tel Aviv in March 2018, as well as to Stefano de Martino for useful comments on an earlier version of this article.

²) Geertz 1973: 90.

³) Thanks are due to M. Jursa for discussing this kind of approach in his concluding notes at the Tel Aviv conference.

⁴) Klinger 2002: 94-95.

⁵) See especially the critical remarks by Schwemer 2009 and Taracha 2010.

⁶) Two long-term endeavors may be singled out as an example, namely the forthcoming final publication of the archaeological remains of the Great Temple at Boghazköy and the project *Hethitische Festriviale* based at the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz.

⁷) See www.osf.io/tfzke/wiki/home/.

⁸) See Klinger 2002: 100-104.

⁹) Hoffner 1996; CHD Š 182-83; Klinger 2002: 106-108. The word *šankunni-* is likely to have reached Anatolia via Hurrian tradition.

¹⁰) CHD Š 198.

¹¹) See HEG Š 1089; CHD Š 493; Steitler 2017: 185 with n. 592.

of ^{LÚ}SANGA and possibly overlaps in some cases with ^{MUNUS}SANGA.¹² Besides SANGA-priests and *šiwanzanna*-priestesses, the principal class of priests attested in the Hittite sources is designated by means of the Sumerogram GUDU₁₂, conventionally rendered as the “anointed one”. This Sumerogram conveys in the first place Hittite *tazzeli-*, a word of Hattian origin, but probably can also cover other terms.¹³ These three classes of professionals are mentioned together in the *Instructions for Frontier Post Governors* (CTH 261) and in the *Instructions for Priests and Temple Personnel* (CTH 264), both dating back to the Early New Kingdom, and represent the standard cult personnel in the local cults as they are reported in the cult inventories of the Late Empire (§ 3).¹⁴ Still, one must keep in mind that the Sumerograms SANGA and GUDU₁₂ cover multiple terms and can also be used in a more general sense, so that the evidence must be discussed on a case by case basis.

Apart from SANGA, GUDU₁₂ and *šiwanzanna*, many other ritualists and attendants are attested who may be subsumed under the broader category of “cult personnel”. Terms referring to them include *akuttara-*, *apiši-*, *appezzi-* (ARKUTI), *haggazuel-*, *halliri-*, *hamina-*, *haliyami-*, *haliyari-*, *hapiya-*, *minalla-*, *purapši-*, *šarmeya-* (= ^{LÚ}UR.GI₇?), *zinhuri-*, the “triad” of the *palwatalla-*, *kita-* and ^{LÚ}ALAM.ZU₆, the “man of the Storm god”, the “lion-men”, “wolf-men” (*walwalla-*) and other animal-men, the ^{LÚ}AZU, the ^{LÚ}HAL (a sort of incantation priest), the ^{LÚ}IGI.DÙ/IGI.MUŠEN (augur), the ^{LÚ}NAR (singer), the feminine ritualists *hašawa-*, *šuppeššara-*, *zintuḫi*, NIN.DINGIR, *entanni-* (from Akkadian *entu*), the *hazkara-* and *katra-*women, and many others.¹⁵ Be-

¹² CHD Š 493 with literature; also in local settlements the ^{LÚ}SANGA and the ^{MUNUS}AMA.DINGIR-LIM appear often together, see, e.g., KUB 12.2+ §§ 12, 19.

¹³ Klinger 2002: 104-105 with fn. 30; Arkan 2007.

¹⁴ In CTH 261 §§ 31', 38' (Miller 2013: 226-29), the three classes of priests are mentioned alongside the “elders” (^{LÚ}.MEŠŠU.GI) and the “craftsmen” (^{LÚ}.MEŠUMMIYANUTI) respectively. In CTH 264 § 9' (Miller 2013: 254-55), the three classes of priests are mentioned together with the “temple personnel” (^{LÚ}.MEŠ É DINGIR-LIM), in § 10' (Miller 2013: 256-57; Klinger 2002: 108-109), “major priests, minor priests and anointed ones” are subsumed under the label of “temple personnel” (^{LÚ}.MEŠ É DINGIR-LIM). The comparison shows that “temple personnel” (^{LÚ}.MEŠ É DINGIR-LIM) can be used both as a general reference to the cult personnel in a broader sense (including priests and artisans bound to the temple, etc.) and in a more specific sense. Klinger (2002: 102) observes that the “triad” constituted by SANGA-priests, *šiwanzanna*-priestesses, and GUDU₁₂-priests seems to be used in some cases as a reference to the totality of the cult personnel. Sometimes, the texts mention several priests who take part in a rite or in a cult meal (see the twelve priests within the *haššumaš*-festival CTH 633, de Martino 2018, with literature), but this does not mean that we are dealing with priestly “colleges” in the proper sense of the word.

¹⁵ For an (as yet incomplete) overview of the attestations see Pecchioli Daddi 1982: 218-435. The literature on these pro-

sides these, one has to consider a host of musicians, bakers, cooks, guards, cleaners, etc., as well as the various workforce which was attached to temples and other cultic structures and/or was variously involved in related activities (potters, herdsmen, farmers, etc.). The frequently encountered expression ARAD^{MEŠ} É DINGIR-LIM (lit. “servants of the house of the god”) may refer to slaves as well as free subordinates of a temple or an analogous structure.¹⁶ Finally, a special place within the priestly hierarchy was taken by the king. He acted as supreme priest of the land he administered (*maniyahh-*) in the name of the gods. To his people, he was the chief spokesman for the gods and at the same time their first servant.¹⁷

Due to the nature of the extant documentation as well as to the lack of systematic studies, the hierarchical organization of the priesthood is still unclear to a large extent, and the specifics and duties of the various offices are poorly understood. Analogous considerations apply to the study of priestly attire and iconography.¹⁸

2. Ideal and Reality of Being a Hittite Priest

The characterizing occupation of Hittite priests was the care of the gods, which primarily consisted of washing, feeding, and “repairing” them, *i.e.* their cult images. Importantly, they were in charge of the “silver and gold” of the gods, meaning cult images and related paraphernalia that were kept either in temples or, as it was usual in smaller settlements, in the priest’s house.¹⁹ But the picture that emerges from a perusal of Hittite texts is by no means that of a *solus deo vacans*, a man entirely devoted to God. Hittite priests could establish a household, have wives and children, servants and possessions, and they enjoyed certain exemptions from taxes.²⁰ The most salient feature that distinguished them from ordinary people was a series of commitments aimed at ensuring ritual purity, well exemplified in the *Instructions for Priests and*

professionals is large and scattered, with no comprehensive study presently available. Besides the cuneiform sources, the hieroglyphic evidence on priests is also in need of discussion. For an overview of the evidence from the sealings from Nişantepe at Boğazköy, see Herboldt 2005a: 102-104; for the value of the sign SACERDOS₂ (L. 372) cf. below, fn. 25.

¹⁶ E.g. Hoffner 2009: 234-35.

¹⁷ On Hittite kingship, see Archi 1988; Beckman 2002; Watkins 2002: 167-69.

¹⁸ On priests’ attire, see CHD Š 192; Taggar-Cohen 2006: 423-34; Herboldt 2005b; in particular on the iconography of the Hittite king as priest, see van den Hout 1995; Beckman 2012; Hutter and Hutter-Braunsar 2017; Steitler 2017: 434, 444-51.

¹⁹ Cammarosano 2018: 60-61.

²⁰ Possessions and household: KUB 40.2 (confirmation of a Kizzuwatnean grant to a ^{MUNUS}ENTU and a ^{LÚ}SANGA, CHD Š 191 with literature); CHD Š 194-95; CTH 264 § 9’ “Eat bread and drink water, establish your household, too, but [in no case] shall you [d]o it according to a man’s wishes!” (Miller 2013: 255-57). For an example of exemption from taxes, see § 50 of the *Hittite Laws* (Hoffner 1997: 61-62, 192).

Temple Personnel (CTH 264). For example, the *Instructions* state that priests must spend the night in the temple (not at home with their wives), and the Hittite *Laws* state that sodomy by priests was not tolerated.²¹

Whereas such regulations played an important role within the religious symbolic system, they also contributed to the charisma of the office that was supposed to nourish the priests' influence and standing within the society. Normally, such charisma implies a reverential fear which laymen should feel towards clerics, and the Hittites are no exception. The *Instructions for Frontier Post Governors* state that “reverence (*naḥšaraz*) will be established for the priests, the (temple) personnel, the anointed ones, (and) the mother-deity priestesses.”²² The word *naḥšaratt-*, “fear, reverence, awe”, is equated in lexical lists with Sumerian *ĪUŠ* and Akkadian *palḫu* and is applied only to gods and priests, including the king.²³

Based on these circumstances, it is natural to assume that Hittite priests enjoyed a special relationship with the gods and therefore could act to some extent as mediators between gods and men. The assumption finds corroboration in evidence that shows that they performed oracular incubation and could speak to the gods in order to transmit messages to them.²⁴ A telling manifestation of this condition is the hieroglyphic sign denoting SANGA-priests and incantation priests, representing an ear, which may allude to their role as listeners – and interpreters – of the words of the gods, hence as intermediaries between the earthly and heavenly world (Fig. 1).²⁵ In this view, a possible connection with Hittite and Luwian *ḫazzizzi(t)-*, a loanword from Akkadian *ḫasīsu* via Hurrian *ḫazzizzi-*, as “ear” > “understanding, wisdom” deserves further investigation.²⁶

²¹) CTH 264 § 10' (Miller 2013: 256-57; Schwemer 2009: 100 *contra* Taggar-Cohen 2006: 209), *Laws* § 100a (Hoffner 1997: 157-58). Again, such data cannot be generalized *sic et simpliciter*, nevertheless it is clear that the priests were supposed to observe specific rules. On the ritual purity of priests see de Martino 2004.

²²) CTH 264 § 38' (Miller 2013: 228-29).

²³) For the lexical lists, see Scheucher 2012: 476, 696-97, partly correcting CHD L-N 343. According to HED N 11-12, Hittite *naḥšaratt-* derives from **naḥšarai-* and can be plausibly connected to *Olr. nár* “noble, modest”, cf. Gk. *deisidaimonia*, Lat. *divom metus* (HED N 9). The *locus classicus* for the “reverence” due to the king is KUB 29.1 ii 50-51, see Marazzi 1982: 156-57.

²⁴) For oracular incubation, see CHD Š 190 and Taggar-Cohen 2006: 201; for priests “speaking” with gods, see, e.g., KUB 30.40 iii 2-4 (quoted in CHD Š 188: the priest mentions the king in a favorable way [*aššuli*] to the deity).

²⁵) The “ear”, SACERDOS₂ (L. 372), corresponds both to ^{L1}SANGA and ^{L1}ḪAL, see Hawkins *apud* Herbordt 2005a: 307-8 with previous literature; note that late SACERDOS (L. 355) might represent a stylized form of the ear (so Hawkins 2000: 81-82).

²⁶) For these terms, see BGH 141, HW² Ḫ 547-48, HED Ḫ 284-86 with literature. On the relevance of ears and hearing in the communication with the gods, see recently Dardano 2014.

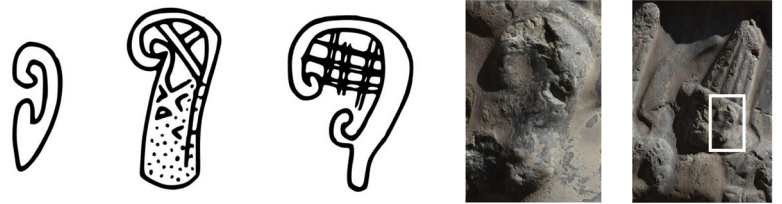


Fig. 1: Hittite ears. Variants of the hieroglyphic sign SACERDOS₂, L. 372 (from Herbordt 2005a: 418), and a mirror image of an ear from the so-called procession of underworld gods at Yazılıkaya, Chamber B (photo by L. Repola).

So far this is the ideal picture. In practice, priests often did little to earn *naḥšaratt-* from the population and even showed themselves little *naḥšaratt-* towards the gods they were supposed to serve. Indeed, their role as guardians of the gods' riches placed them in front of an irresistible temptation, and no doubt they noted that the gods themselves did not seem to get particularly angry when a priest failed to accomplish all the annoying prescriptions he was subject to. Texts like the *Instructions for Priests and Temple Personnel* arise precisely from the tension between the gleaming ideal (*šakuwaššara-*, “complete”) and the sad reality (*šakuwantariya-*, “to be neglected”). As Miller (2013: 244) recently stressed, “these instructions to the temple personnel hint at a rich repertoire of inventive tricks that presumably must have been attempted from time to time, as it was certainly suspected that they might be.” Faults and misdeeds ranged from selling cult provisions instead of delivering them (§ 4') to swapping a fattened cow meant for the gods with a haggard one (§ 7') or a god's prosperous field with a failed one (§ 16', referring to the temple ploughmen); from misappropriation of cult provisions (§§ 5'-6'), of silver, gold, clothes and jewelry of the gods (§ 8'), of harvest (§ 16', referred to the temple ploughmen), and livestock (§ 17'-19', referred to keeper of plough oxen and cowherds and shepherds), to taking payment from individuals in exchange for turning a blind eye on the timely celebration of festivals (§ 9'), and so on. As noted by Miller, the composition does not stop at forbidding such practices but also makes some attempts at anticipating the psychological justification for such misdeeds and at providing arguments against any such devious thoughts. Thus, a priest should not think that “because he is a deity, he will not say anything and he will not do anything to us” (§ 7'), because gods know how to wait and strike “at some day” (§§ 7', 9').²⁷

²⁷) Miller 2013, 244, 252-55; note also the idea of collective punishment used as a deterrent in the same composition, § 3'. Incredulity of course was not restricted to priests, see, e.g., the reference to someone who “is in no way fearful in the matter of the gods” in KUB 49.3 ii 2-3 (quoted in CHD L-N 340-41, also KUB 36.18 and KUB 24.3 ii 55 quoted *ibidem*). Perhaps more efficient were punishments of the kind attested, e.g., in the oracle report KBo 14.21, where a priest who omitted celebration of certain festivals receives a fine (*zankilatar*) that doubles the offerings he must provide (Taggar-Cohen 2006: 182).

The picture gained from a prescriptive and highly “ideological” composition like the *Instructions for Priests and Temple Personnel* can be complemented with evidence from administrative texts, oracle reports, and cult inventories, most of which date back to the Empire Period. Both genres provide a rich body of information on the state of the cult in the capital as well as in provincial settlements, each one from its own perspective. They frequently show a desolate picture of shrines and cult images, thus in some way confirming the preoccupations expressed ca. two centuries earlier by the authors of the *Instructions*. For example, a recently discovered cult inventory reports that in the temple of Šawuška in Šamuḫa “they have stripped the (precious) stone(s) from the statues which stand in front (of the shrine); the garment of the [cloth]-maker, of gold, is turned inside out,” while in the shrine of the Storm god and Ḫēbat of Aleppo “there is no *nirni*-woman, [there is n]o ‘daughter of the temple’ (...) the *ḫekur*²⁸-building of the Storm God is kn[ock]ed down, the inner gate [in the] *arki[u]*-building is detached (...) as for the festival of Kantuzili’s vow, the [first p]art has been celebrated, but the second part has been neglected,” and so on.²⁸ Similarly, an oracle report states: “There is no water-carrier. They make no presentation (to) the deceased ones in the bathhouse. (As for) the *ḫagguratu*, the afterbirth, milk and fresh breads – this (is) year three, since they have been omitted. (As for) the festival of churning milk and the festivals of the grain piles – this (is) year three, since they have been omitted.”²⁹

Klinger (2002: 108) notes that we know near to nothing about the position of priests within society, how priests were chosen and installed, or whether priesthood was a permanent office or a career path. As mentioned above, several texts hint at the fact that priests could have a household and a family.³⁰ What is very poorly known are the methods of choice and installation of new priests. Taggar-Cohen argues that priesthood seems to have been hereditary, and certainly this is plausible and even likely, but conclusive evidence is lacking.³¹ Apparently, priests

²⁸) *KpT* 1.39 (Kp 15/7+) obv. i 1-25, see Cammarosano 2018: 404-405.

²⁹) KUB 18.16 obv. ii 1-5, translation after Hoffner 2004: 338.

³⁰) CHD Š 194-95, but add a seemingly unique reference to a “father of the priest” in the cult inventory KUB 56.39 ii 27', who supplies the festival of the grain piles in Šuwarzapa with one sheep “from his household” (Cammarosano 2018: 250-51); for the households of priests referred to in KUB 42.100+, see Cammarosano 2018: 335-57. *KuT* 49 is a telling example of a complex oracular inquiry carried out in relation to the illness of a “son of the priestess” (DUMU^{MUNUS}SANGA), see Hoffner 2009: 265-67.

³¹) Taggar-Cohen 2006: 215-16, 436; on the interpretation of LÚ / LÚDUMU SANGA vs DUMU LÚSANGA, see now also Hoffner 2009: 206 on HKM 57 11, observing that LÚ DUMU SANGA stands for Akkadian *mār šangē* “member of the priestly class”. Although Kaštanda of HKM 57 is a slave, he has influ-

could be appointed by means of different processes. One of these involved lot-casting, as is most famously attested in a cult inventory reporting on a local festival of the town Guršamašša, perhaps to be located in the western districts.³² Still, the text does not say by which criteria one was an eligible candidate as a new priest. Another cult inventory, probably pertaining to an area in central Cappadocia, refers to the installation of new priests by means of the expression LÚSANGA *tīya-*, “to set a priest”, without further details on the process.³³ The oracle report KUB 16.32, dating back to the Late Empire, refers to the process of identification of a new priest by means of the verb *ḫandae-* (SI×SÁ), “to ascertain, to establish”, which usually implies an oracular procedure but may also be used in a nontechnical sense;³⁴ Šuppiluliuma I “made” (*iye/a-*) his son Telipinu SANGA-priest in Aleppo.³⁵ While the evidence is far from having been exploited exhaustively, it seems plausible that different methods of appointment were in place, even at the same time, across different regions and depending on context and settlement scale, a situation that is comparable to other historical contexts.³⁶

3. Local Cults and Local Priests

The geographical settings of the Hittite “local cults” are the northern and central districts that formed the core of the kingdom between the sixteen and the thirteen century BCE.³⁷ The ethnic and linguistic composition of this

ence and standing because he is the slave of a “son of a priest”. In the summary on p. 444, Taggar-Cohen 2006 states, “Appointment was conferred by the state administration (...) But the appointment had to receive divine consent through oracular means or by the use of lots, or both,” but it is unclear how she arrives at this generalization.

³²) KUB 17.35 obv. i 17'-37', see Taggar-Cohen 2002 and now Cammarosano 2018: 168-69 with commentary on obv. i 18'. On the possibility that the expression LÚSANGA=*kan wāt-kut* “the priest fled/jumped” in *KBo* 2.1 may refer to lot-casting and not, as usually assumed, to priests who had fled, see van den Hout *apud* Cammarosano 2018: 205, commentary on obv. ii 31.

³³) KUB 38.1+, see Cammarosano 2018: 306-19.

³⁴) KUB 16.32 ii 8'-13', edited in van den Hout 1998: 57; similarly in KUB 5.6, see Taggar-Cohen 2006: 223-24.

³⁵) For this and analogous cases as well as for the question of an alleged political influence of priestly groups, see Klinger 2002: 98 and Imparati 2003; for royal installations of priests, cf. also Taggar-Cohen 2006: 222-23, 225-28.

³⁶) In early medieval Bavaria, the *Lex Baiuvariorum* lists two ways of becoming a local priest: either the bishop ordains a priest or deacon into a parish, or the *plebs* chooses a suitable candidate (Kohl 2016: 66 with references). A general tendency in history, which may be plausibly assumed also for Hittite Anatolia, is that the local communities exert some influence on the choice of priests at local level, whereas the installation of priests at higher levels is strongly dependent on the decisions of the political (and/or religious) rulers.

³⁷) Cammarosano 2018: 1-5, with literature.

area must have been quite complex; but in broad terms, we can say that the settlements we are dealing with were predominantly composed of Hittite and Luwian speakers. As is well known, the administrative-governmental structure of the kingdom was three-tiered, with the central government at Ḫattuša and dozens of minor settlements gravitating towards a small number of regional governmental centers. Equally well-known are the “Hittites’ pronounced focus on fulfilling the every need and desire of their numerous deities and their ever-present fear that failing to do so would result in incurring their wrath.”³⁸ Such an obsession required a branched system of cult management, including a network of priests and temple personnel. Indeed, the *Instructions for Frontier Post Governors* state, “In whatever town the governor of the post drives back to, he shall count the *ritualists*, the priests, the anointed ones and the mother-deity priestesses (...) For whatever deity there is no priest, mother-deity priestess (or) anointed one, they must immediately appoint one.” Temples, cult images, paraphernalia, and cults which are neglected have to be restored; the Frontier Post governor “shall make a record of the paraphernalia of the deity, and he shall have it brought before <His> Majesty.”³⁹

A corpus of approximately 500 tablets has survived, which constitute precisely that sort of report on local cults which is referred to here. These texts, called cult inventories, represent a unique body of evidence of the customs and cults of dozens of minor provincial settlements in a Bronze Age superpower, reporting on virtually all aspects of the local cults – shrines, cult images, festivals, offerings, and personnel.⁴⁰

Judging from the evidence of these texts, the cult personnel of provincial towns and villages are almost invariably limited to the ubiquitous local “priest”, the *šiwanzanna*-priestess, and an unspecified number of *ḫazkara*-women. The cult inventories regularly refer to the local priest by means of the Sumerogram ^{LÚ}SANGA (rarely ^{LÚ}GUDU₁₂), but of course it is likely that this standard label covers several local variants that may have been denoted by other nouns than Hittite *šankunni*-. Sometimes the texts specify the personal names of priests and priestesses.⁴¹ The *ḫazkara*-women represent a class of female

‘multipurpose’ cultic assistants. Typically, they are said to care for the transport of the gods back and forth on the occasion of the processions, to prepare wreaths, attend rites, sing, and take part in the “rejoicing” during the celebration. Sometimes they appear together with the “lion-men”, which represent a class of low-level cultic attendants as well.⁴² Besides priests, priestesses, and *ḫazkara*-women, other professionals involved in rites are sporadically mentioned, among them are the ritual crier (^{LÚ}*palwatala*-), the singer (^{LÚ}NAR), the “lion-man” (*walwala*-), the “tongue-woman” (MUNUS.EME), the “men of the rite” (^{LÚ}.MEŠ*ḫazziwyaš*), and a variety of attendants and ancillary personnel sometimes collectively referred to as “temple personnel” (^{LÚ}.MEŠ É DINGIR-LIM) and “temple employees” (^{LÚ}.MEŠ*ḫilammatta/i*-, etymologically “gate keepers”). As expected, the greatest scope and variety of cult personnel is found in major cult centers like Nerik, Šamuḫa, and Karahna.⁴³

In the cult inventories, local priests are dealt with as celebrants of festivals and suppliers of offerings (see § 4), as part of lists of cult personnel, and as informed persons in reports on inventorying activities. But local priests were likely active also as ritualists, to be hired on demand in the most various occasions, and more generally as ‘experts’ in many businesses. Unfortunately, textual sources are mostly mute on this point. Among the hints at local priests as ritualists are short prayers recited on the occasion of festivals, like in the case of a spring festival for the Storm god of Rain in Ḫakmiš (northern Anatolia) referred to in KUB 25.23+:

“(The priest pours beer on the ground, and speaks concurrently:) ‘O Storm god, my lord, make rain plentiful! And make the dark earth satiated! And, O Storm god, let the loaves of bread become plentiful!’”⁴⁴

Again we can compare this with the situation in other cultures: the manuscript Vat. Pal. Lat. 485, a sort of “liturgical manual” used by secular clergy in early medieval Europe, contains an elaborate set of very short prayers intended to influence weather, for instance asking for more rain, or for less rain, or for a thunderstorm to stop.⁴⁵

³⁸) Miller 2013: 244.

³⁹) Excerpts from CTH 261 §§ 31' and 34', quoted after Miller 2013: 227; see also Klinger 2005: 642: “Nach den Instruktionen für die Provinzverwalter zu schließen, war der Staat auch dafür verantwortlich, daß Tempel und Kultstätten außerhalb der Hauptstadt versorgt wurden und entsprechende Kultfunktionäre bzw. Priester vorhanden waren (KUB 13, 2 ii 26ff., 45f.). Teilweise ist das Personal einzelner Orte auch in den sog. Kultinventaren erfaßt, allerdings läßt sich danach bisher kein spezifisches Bild zeichnen. Einzeluntersuchungen, z.B. zu spezifischen Kultorten [...] oder zu Unterschieden zwischen regionalem und staatlichem Kult, fehlen noch weitgehend.“

⁴⁰) On this text genre, see Carter 1962; Hazenbos 2003; and Cammarosano 2018.

⁴¹) See, e.g., *KBo* 2.1, KUB 42.100+, KUB 12.2.

⁴²) On the *ḫazkara*-women see Carter 1962: 187-88; Hoffner 1998: 37-40; Röbke 2004; Torri 2006; Soysal 2010; on the lion-men, see Soysal 2010b: 342 with fn. 11 and Weeden 2011: 287-89. A systematic analysis of the local cult personnel as it emerges from the cult inventories is planned in the frame of the *Hittite Local Cults* research project.

⁴³) See for Nerik e.g. KUB 42.100+ (Cammarosano 2018: 335-57), for Šamuḫa e.g. *KpT* 1.36, *KpT* 1.39 (Kp 14/95+, Kp 15/7+, Cammarosano 2018: 384-415), for Karahna e.g. KUB 38.12 (Cammarosano 2018: 416-32) and KUB 25.32+ (McMahon 1991: 53-82).

⁴⁴) KUB 25.23+ rev. iv 57'-58' (Cammarosano 2018: 374-75).

⁴⁵) Patzold and van Rhijn 2016: 8 fn. 23.

4. Socio-economical Relevance of Priests in Local Cults

The principal task of local priests was, as has been said, to assure the care and worship of the local gods. We read, again in the *Instructions for Frontier Post Governors*, that “reverence (*naḥšaraz*, see above § 2) for the deities shall be maintained; for the Storm god, though, reverence shall be *firmly* established”;⁴⁶ deities must be venerated in a timely fashion, the sanctity of forests must be assured (CTH 261 § 34’); local cult stelae, springs, rivers and mountains must be attended to and venerated according to the traditional rites and customs of that place (CTH 261 §§ 35’-36’), and “they (*i.e.* the local community) must even come up to visit regularly any spring for which there is no offering regimen.”⁴⁷

The “offering regimen” referred to in the *Instructions* basically means the regular offerings and festivals traditionally celebrated for specific deities in specific places. Festivals constitute those rituals where the symbolic power of actions is most strongly perceived, and therefore occupy the most prominent place in the cult. Within festivals, the priest plays a crucial role, insofar as he performs the offering to the gods, an act expressed in Hittite through the verb *š(i)pant-*. And since a larger part of the community took part in the local festivals, and relevant quantities of food were consumed at the occasion of the cult meal, priests were placed at the intersection of the social, religious, and economic spheres. Such an interaction peaks in the cult meal, where the men meet their gods and the cohesion of symbolic and material power is realized in the ritualized consumption of food and drink, as well as in the manifestations of sheer “joy” which follow as a natural and necessary consequence.⁴⁸

A section of the cult inventory KUB 17.35 exemplifies well the typical setting of a local cult as reported in these texts, also highlighting the bipartition of offerings in a smaller portion “at the altar” (consecrated to the gods and presumably subsequently consumed by the cult personnel) and a larger portion of “provisions” (presumably consumed by the other participants, *i.e.* the local community or a part of it).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ CTH 261 § 33’, see Miller 2013: 226-27, the translation “firmly” corresponds to Hittite *mekki* (see Miller 2013: 382 fn. 408), cf. the special reverence for Ištar (Šawuška) of Šamuḫa established by Ḫattušili III, KUB 1.1 rev. iv 88-89 (Otten 1981: 30-31).

⁴⁷ CTH 261 § 35’, quoted after Miller 2013: 229.

⁴⁸ On the “rejoicing” within Hittite festivals, see Cammarosano 2018: 127-29 with literature.

⁴⁹ See Cammarosano 2018: 150-55. The quantity of flour serving as “provisions” in the quoted passage corresponds to approximately 64 liters, which gives approximately 30-40 kilos of bread. This helps us to get an idea of how many people may have participated in the meal.

“When spring comes, (and) they hear the thunder, (...) they open the pithos of the Sun Deity of the Water with the (wheat to make) loaves of bread. 3 loaves of 1 handful (of flour), 1 jug of beer (as offerings). They grind (and) mill the (wheat of the) pithos.

The next day they take up the deity from the altar, and they carry the deity to the stela. They present loaves of bread of the pithos before the deity. The *ḫazkara*-women stand behind. They wash and anoint the stela. They place the deity in front of the stela, and the priest offers 1 bull and 1 sheep to the Sun Deity of the Water. They slaughter (them) at the stela, place the meat (there), (and) break loaves of bread of the pithos. (...).

6 loaves of *dannaš* bread, 6 loaves of *gaḫari* bread, 6 loaves of sweet bread, 1 KA.GAG-vessel (of beer), 1 vessel of beer at the altar. (...) 1 *PARĪSU*-measure (and) 2 *BÁN*-measures of flour, 4 vessels of beer (are) the provisions.

They eat (and) drink. They provide the cups. The *ḫazkara*-women bring fruit. They put a wreath on the deity; also on the priest they put a wreath. They rejoice over the deity. They step into a wrestling fight; they throw the stone (*i.e.* a shot put contest takes place). When evening comes, (...) the *ḫazkara*-women bring the deity away to the shrine. They place the deity upon the altar and place liver before the deity. They break 1 loaf of one handful (of flour); (the priest) offers beer.

The next day is the day of the liver. They make a *šiyami* dish out of the meat; they place (it) in front of the deity. (...)

Total: 1 bull, 1 sheep, 2 *PARĪSU*-measures (and) 1/2 *BÁN*-measure of flour, 1 KA.GAG-vessel (and) 5 vessels of beer, 1 jug (of beer), 2 festivals – 1 autumn festival and 1 spring festival. The town regularly suppl[ies (the offerings)].⁵⁰

The final specification of who provides what is a very important point, as it defines on whom the burden of contributing food and drink falls. While here it is the town, elsewhere it is the local priest, or an officer, for example the frontier post governor, or professional groups, for example shepherds, cooks, military troops, and so on, or, finally, various kinds of “palaces”. A systematic analysis of the detailed lists of offerings related to dozens of provincial settlements contained in the cult inventories is potentially relevant not only to the understanding of the role of priests, but also to the study of Hittite economy in general.⁵¹

A preliminary perusal of ca. 200 texts from this corpus reveals that local priests happen to be the providers of offerings in only approximately 10% out of 250 cases where the relevant information is given, which is approx-

⁵⁰ KUB 17.35 §§ 12”-13” (ii 12’-29’), quoted after Cammarosano 2018: 171-73.

⁵¹ Cammarosano and Lorenz 2019.

imately the same share as individuals and professional groups; whereas the greatest part of the burden falls on local communities, as exemplified in Fig. 2.

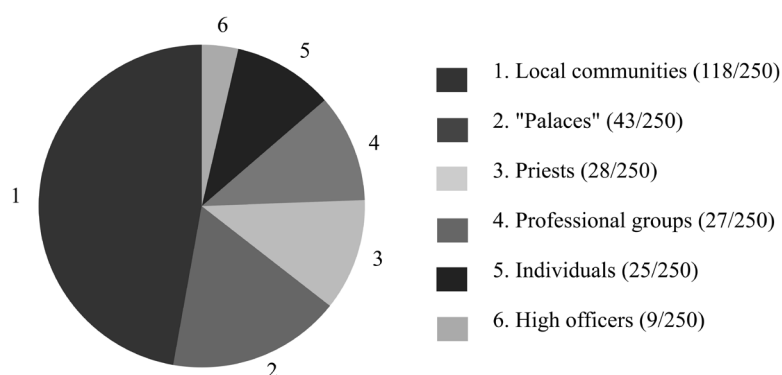


Fig. 2: Persons and institutions who appear as responsible for the regular delivery of offerings in a sample of 200 cult inventories (250 identifiable cases).⁵²

The priest's obligation to supply offerings is commonly expressed by means of the formula "the priest regularly gives so and so from his house" or by the label "from the priest's house" appended to the list of offerings. The "house of the priest" refers to the local priest's household, to which also a certain number of "transportees" could belong (Hittite *arnuwala-* from *arnu-* "to make go"). These were a class of people representing a sort of civilian prisoners used as workforce and to repopulate selected areas, and who were forcibly settled on specific parcels of land.⁵³ The cult inventory *KBo* 12.53+ represents a good example of how contingents of transportees could be assigned to the households of local priests:

"[In the to]wn Uwalma, for the gods, His Majesty instituted the following: 1 household, composed of 10 transportees, [belonging to] the TUKUL.GÍD.DA(-men). 1 household, composed of 16 transportees, belonging to the highlanders. 1 household, composed of 10 transportees, servants of Mr. Innara. 1 household, composed of 4 transportees, belonging to the priest. 1 household, composed of 10 transportees, weavers of the king. Total: 4 (*read*: 5) households, composed of 50 transportees. 50 sheep are in place since of old. The king of the land of Tumanna supplies 14 oxen, of which 4 are plough-oxen."⁵⁴

An interesting case for the study of the local priests' contribution to the festival supplies is represented by the cult inventory *KUB* 12.2(+), which reports on the cults of at least four different towns likely located on the middle course of the Kızılırmak.⁵⁵ In this text, the structure tends to be homogeneous within the inventory of one town,

⁵²) For a list of the examined texts and selection criteria, see Cammarosano 2013: 65.

⁵³) Cammarosano 2018: 272-73, with literature.

⁵⁴) *KBo* 12.53+ § 10' (obv. 31'-35'), quoted after Cammarosano 2018: 281.

⁵⁵) *KUB* 12.2 {A1} (+) *KUB* 59.14 {A2} (+) *KUB* 38.16 {A3}. The analysis offered here is based on a critical edition

but differs from that of other towns. In the inventory of Town 1, the text specifies the names of priests and priestess and the number of the bread loaves to be offered. In the case of Towns 2 and 3, the names of priests and priestess are not specified and the bread offerings are mostly said to be provided by the "town", *i.e.* by the local community, with the quantity of bread or flour left unspecified. In all cases where the quantity of bread offerings is specified, there is no remark on the "town" as supplier, showing that the pattern is meaningful (kindly pointed out by J. Lorenz). We can assume that in these cases the bread is provided by the local priest along with sheep and beer. That the priest was by default responsible for the supply of sheep and beer is corroborated by the numerous cases where the bread offering is marked with the adversative or "topicalizing" particle =*ma*: "one sheep, one vessel of beer, *but* they supply the (loaves of) thick bread from the town."⁵⁶ In one instance, the town has to contribute beer as well (ms. A1 iii 17). The structure of the inventory of Town 4 is again different, consisting of a mixture of the two patterns seen for Town 1 and Towns 2-3: namely, the names of cult personnel are regularly made, but the bread is mostly provided by the local community (and hence its quantity is left unspecified).⁵⁷

The admittedly provisional data presented in Fig. 2 can be considered from different yet complementary perspectives. On the one hand, the predominant role of the "town" in supplying the offerings hints at the large participation of the village communities in the local festivals and is evidence for the social function of these rites (primarily the cult meal) as a crucial cohering and defining factor in the construction of the local communal identity.⁵⁸ On the other hand and with some oversimplification, the priest emerges as the highest-ranked actor in the festival, but the food and drink which he dispenses are mostly

of the text (forthcoming on the *Hethitologie-Portal Mainz*), in which the subdivision of the text's sections is as follows: Town 0 (possibly identical with town 1): *KUB* 38.16; Town 1: *KUB* 12.2 i 1'-27' (possibly up to col. ii 4', in this case town [Šarp]aenta?); Town 2: *KUB* 12.2 ii 5' - iii 25 (town Ḫašu-...); Town 3: *KUB* 12.2 iii 26-29, probably continuing with *KUB* 59.14 1'-19'; Town 4: *KUB* 12.2 iv 1-25. For previous editions and studies, see Carter 1962: 74-89 (*KUB* 12.2); Rost 1961: 205-208 (*KUB* 38.16); Collins 2006; Taggar-Cohen 2006: 355-58. Another cult inventory, *KBo* 49.205, is closely related to this text.

⁵⁶) See the formulation of the offering lists in *KUB* 38.16 (ms. A3) and in the paragraphs pertaining to Town 4.

⁵⁷) Another interesting feature of this tablet concerns the quality of the offerings. A study by B. Collins demonstrated that piglets tend to be offered to deities with a chthonic character, although the minor "costs" as compared to sheep seems to have also played a role at least in some cases (Collins 2006: 44).

⁵⁸) On these aspects, see Cammarosano 2018: 103-105 (social dimension of festivals), 155-58 (participants); for a revealing study on the comparable situation in Late Bronze Age Emar, see Sallaberger 2012.

provided by others – a pattern typical in so many cultures all over the world. Were we to discover more on Hittite popular wisdom, it would be no surprise to find proverbs similar to the following ones from Sicily:

Nun cc'è festa nè fistinu Ch'un cc'è un monacu o un parrinu (“Whether it’s a party or a feast, be sure you’ll find a monk or a priest!”);

‘N tempu di disgrazii, parrini beddi sàzii (“When times are bad, priests are well fed!”).⁵⁹

5. Conclusions

Hittite local priests were the custodians of the gods’ shrines, cult images, and possessions, they were primary actors in the religious festivals of their settlements, dispensed food and drink to the local community on the occasion of cult meals, and acted as intermediaries between the divine and the earthly world through their institutionalized role as worshippers of the gods and likely also as ritualists for the local population. In a word, they were veritable “men in the middle”.⁶⁰ How did they interpret and fulfill this role? Surely, in a variety of different ways depending on place, time, personal attitudes, and contingencies. But with a look at the picture of them that emerges from instructions, oracles, and cult inventories, one may suspect that at least some despicable guy in the Kingdom of Ḫattuša would have very much agreed with the definition of “priests” provided by Baron d’Holbach:

“*Prêtres*. Dans toutes les religions du monde ce sont des hommes divins, que Dieu a lui-même placés sur la terre pour y exercer un métier très utile; il consiste à distribuer gratuitement des craintes afin d’avoir le plaisir de distribuer ensuite des espérances pour de l’argent. C’est un point fondamental sur lequel tous les prêtres du monde ont toujours été parfaitement d’accord.”⁶¹

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⁵⁹) From Pitré 1880: 438.

⁶⁰) This is the title of a recent volume on local priests in the Middle Ages, see Patzold and van Rhijn 2016.

⁶¹) D’Holbach 1768: 182-83.

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