

^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- in the Hittite Laws

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The difficult word ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- is found in two different contexts. First, it appears in the Hittite laws, where it has traditionally been understood as a cutting implement. Second, it is used in a ritual context, where it appears in a list of wooden house parts. I offer another interpretation, namely that ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- is a type of horizontal wooden beam, an interpretation which brings together these two apparently irreconcilable contexts. I will begin with a review of the previous interpretations of the term¹, followed by a discussion of the difficulties they entail, and then present this new solution.

Hoffner, in his recent edition of the Hittite laws, reconstructs and translates §144/*33 of the Hittite laws as follows:

(11) *ták-ku TÚG.SIG ^{GIŠ}ha-an-za-n[i-it' ku-iš-ki túh-ša-ri]*

(12) 10 GÍN.GÍN KÙ.BABBAR *pa-a-i t[ák-ku...]*

(13) *ku-iš-ki túh-ša-ri [5 GÍN.GÍN KÙ.BABBAR pa-a-i]*

"If anyone cuts fine cloth with a *hanzan-*, he shall pay 10 shekels of silver. If anyone cuts [...], he shall pay 5 shekels of silver²".

According to Hoffner, ^{GIŠ}hanzan- is "an obscure implement with which one can cut cloth"³. In their respective editions of the Hittite laws, Friedrich⁴ and Imparati⁵ note only that ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- is a wooden object. Hoffner's interpretation of ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- is difficult for contextual reasons, both within this particular Hittite law, and in the other texts in which this

¹ A quick survey of the lexical entries for ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- reveals the following: Johannes Friedrich (HW, p. 52) glossed ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- as a (wooden) implement. This noun is distinct from the adjective *hanza-* (meaning dark or black). Heinz Kronasser (EHS I, p. 201) further specified that it is an implement with which cloth is cut, while Johann Tischler (HEG, p. 157) accepted the cutting implement gloss. Kammenhuber(-Friedrich) (HW² III, p. 13) has a single entry for ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)-, but with two distinct definitions—one as a tool, and the other as a part of a building. In his more recent dictionary, Tischler (*Hethitisches Handwörterbuch*. Innsbruck 2001, p. 40) lists the second ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- as a separate entry under ^{GIŠ}hanzataru-, (written ^{GIŠ}hanza-GIŠ-ru), meaning a part of a building. Finally, Jaan Puhvel (HED 3, p. 112) conflates ^{GIŠ}hanzan[i- with the noun *hanzana-* (meaning "strand, thread, yarn, or web"), and posits an unspecified connection between the two. Puhvel's proposal seems unlikely.

² H. A. Hoffner, Jr., *The Laws of the Hittites* (Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui 23). Leiden 1997, pp. 119-120.

³ Hoffner, *Laws*, p. 206.

⁴ J. Friedrich, *Die Hethitischen Gesetze*. (Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui 7). Leiden 1959, p. 71 n 2.

⁵ F. Imparati, *Le Leggi Ittite*. (Incunabula Graeca 7). Rome 1964, p. 141 §144 n 2.

word occurs. An important case in point is the use of the term ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- in the purification ritual KUB 7. 13, Obv. 6, which will be discussed below.

The current interpretation of ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- as "an obscure implement with which one can cut cloth" is puzzling within the context of the Hittite law itself. Although the verb *tuḫšari* (he/she cuts) is missing in the Neo-Hittite version (KBo 6.10), it can be securely reconstructed based on the older Hittite version⁶. What specific implement or implements the Hittites may have used to cut cloth is a difficult question to answer for several reasons. First, there is no Hittite textual evidence for cutting cloth outside of this passage in the Hittite laws. Second, we have no archaeological evidence for Hittite wooden cutting implements. Textual references to implements such as knives and daggers make clear that they were made out of metals such as iron, bronze, or gold⁷. The very nature of wood makes it unlikely that wooden implements would survive in the archaeological record. Although metal objects such as axe heads or knife blades, which would have been attached to a wooden handle, might survive, such objects were often melted down in order to reuse the metal. The metal would then be recast in the stone and ceramic molds (for axes, knives and other tools) which have survived⁸. However, none of these tools in the archaeological and textual record are clearly used for cutting textiles. If the Hittites had a specific implement for cutting cloth, there is no evidence of what it looked like, what it was made of, or what it was called. More importantly, regardless of what implement the Hittites may have used to cut cloth, one must also ask why the laws stipulate a penalty for cutting fine cloth with a specific (and seemingly rare) implement, wooden or otherwise.

Second, Hoffner's interpretation is troublesome in light of the way ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- is used outside of the Hittite laws, where the context is inappropriate for translating the term as "a wooden instrument that can be used to cut cloth". The word ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- appears in two rituals. One of these (KUB 34.78 7') is too fragmentary to suggest a precise definition⁹. ^{GIŠ}hanza(n)- also appears in a much better preserved ritual, KUB 7.13 Obv. 6, which deals with the purification of a house. The text reads as follows:

(6) ^{GIŠ}kat-ta-l[u-uz]-zi-ya-aš GIŠ.ÛR^{MEŠ} ^{GIŠ}ha-an-za GIŠ-ru-[...]

(7) ar-ḫa [ḫa-aš-ḫ]a-aš-ša-an-zi A-NA É^{MEŠ} ŠÀ-ya-kán da-[pí-ya-an-tu-uš]

(8) [... GIŠ].ÛR^{MEŠ} ^{GIŠ}AB^{HI.A}-ya ar-ḫa ḫa-aš-ḫa-aš-ša-an-zi an-[dur-zi-ya-aš ...]

⁶ See KUB 29. 29, II 4-5. The relevant lines read:

(4)]-iš-ki tu-uḫ-[š]a-ri 10 GÍN.GÍN KÙ.BABBAR pa-a-[i]

(5) k]u-iš-ki tu-uḫ-[ša]-ri 5 GÍN.GÍN KÙ.BABBAR pa-a-i

⁷ For example, a Neo-Hittite cult inventory (KBo 18. 172, obv. 14) mentions 6 EME AN.BAR 6 EME ZABAR KÙ.GI AN.BAR "six blades of iron, six blades of bronze, gold and iron". See S. Koşak, "The Gospel of Iron", in *Kaniššumar: A Tribute to Hans G. Güterbock on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*. (Assyriological Studies 23). H. Hoffner, Jr. - G. Beckman edd. Chicago 1986, p. 126.

⁸ A. Müller-Karpe, *Altanatolisches Metallhandwerk*. Neumünster 1994, Plate 34.

⁹ The surrounding text is also fragmentary. The relevant line reads: (7')] a-ap-pa ^{GIŠ}ha-an-za-ni [

“They scratch¹⁰ the beams of the threshold, the *hanza*- ... Inside they scratch a[ll] the beams and the window”.

^{GIŠ}*hanza(n)*- appears immediately after the phrase ^{GIŠ}*kat-ta-l[u-uz]-zi-ya-aš* ^{GIŠ}ÛR^{MEŠ} (beams of the threshold), and before unspecified [^{GIŠ}ÛR^{MEŠ}] (beams). Coming as it does between two explicit references to "beams" in a house, the context suggests that ^{GIŠ}*hanza(n)*- in this ritual should also be understood as a part of the house, specifically, another type of wooden beam. I would further suggest that this definition fits the Hittite law as well, and that there is only one ^{GIŠ}*hanza(n)*-, rather than two. If this proposal is correct, the translation and interpretation of this Hittite law, as reconstructed by Hoffner, needs to be revisited. If ^{GIŠ}*hanza(n)*- is, in fact, a wooden beam, how should this law be understood?

The wording of the law, in particular the verb governing ^{GIŠ}*hanza(n)*-, namely, *tuhš*-, provides an important clue for understanding this law. Although the general meaning of the verb *tuhš*- is "to cut", there is evidence that it implies the idea of separation as well. The verb *tuhš*- is used in two other contexts in the Hittite laws. First, in §56 (KBo 22. 62 + KBo 6. 2, III 21; KBo 6. 3, III 24; KBo 6. 6, I 30)¹¹ and §113/*13 (KUB 29. 24, I 3-5)¹² it refers to harvesting

¹⁰ Although the precise meaning of the verb *hašhaš*- is also debated, this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. In any case, my interpretation of ^{GIŠ}*hanza(n)*- does not depend on understanding the exact meaning of this verb.

¹¹ Hoffner, *Laws*, p. 68, reconstructs and translates this law as follows:

Version A = (KBo 22. 62 + KBo 6. 2), I I I 21-22

(21) *e-ki BÀD-ni LUGAL-aš KASKAL-ša ták-šu-an-zi* ^{GIŠ}KIRI₆.GEŠTIN-aš *túh-šu-šu-an-zi*
[ŠA^{LÜ}URUDU.NAG]AR

(22) *na-at-ta ku-iš-ki a-ra-u-aš*

Version B = KBo 6. 3, III 24-25

(24) *A-NA BÀD-ni KASKAL LUGAL [ták]-šu-wa-an-zi* ^{GIŠ}KIRI₆.GEŠTIN *túh-šu-u-wa-an-zi*
[ŠA^{LÜ}URUDU.NAGAR]

(25) *Ú-UL ku-iš-ki a-ra-u-wa-aš*

Version D = KBo 6. 6, I 30-31

(30) *BÀD-ni KASKAL LUGAL pa-a-u-wa-an-zi* ^{GIŠ}KIRI₆.GEŠTIN *túh-šu-wa-a[n-zi]*

(31) *ŠA^{LÜ}URUDU.NAGAR Ú-UL ku-iš-ki a-ra-u-wa-aš*

“None of the coppersmiths is exempt from ‘making’ ice, a fortification, and royal roads, or from harvesting vineyards”.

The phrase “harvesting vineyards” must refer to the harvesting of grapes from the vineyards. The word *túh-su-wa-a[n-zi]* “harvesting” could be more fully translated as “gathering fruit from”, as Hoffner, *Laws*, p. 108, does with a similar construction in §113/*13.

¹² Hoffner, *Laws*, p. 108, reconstructs and translates this law as follows:

KUB 29.24, I 3-5

(3) [*ták-ku mi²-an²-da²-a*]n² ^{GIŠ}GEŠTIN-an *ku-iš-ki kar-aš-zi kar-š[a-an-da-an]*

(4) [^{GIŠ}GEŠTIN-an] *a-pa-a-aš da-a-i SIG₅-an-na* ^{GIŠ}GEŠTIN

(5) [*A-NA BE-E*]L ^{GIŠ}GEŠTIN *pa-a-i ta-an-za túh-ša-an-na-i*

grapes (i.e. a process that involves both cutting and taking away). Second, in §28 of the Hittite Laws (KBo 6. 3, II 8-10)¹³, it refers to the separation of a married couple, using the dative to indicate the husband, from whom the wife is separated. Thus, when the TÚG.SIG is cut in §144/*33 of the Hittite laws, the implication is that the TÚG.SIG is not merely cut (as into pieces), but separated from something (as perhaps from a bolt of cloth or some physical object to which it might be attached).

One difficulty in understanding the term ^{GIS}hanza(n)- arises from the fact that the ending of this word is broken in the Hittite law. Therefore, its grammatical role in the sentence cannot be reconstructed with absolute certainty. Hoffner reconstructs the ending in his edition of the Hittite Laws as an instrumental, ^{GIS}ha-an-za-n[i-it], but it is equally possible to reconstruct it either as a dative, ^{GIS}ha-an-za-n[i], or as an ablative, ^{GIS}ha-an-za-n[a-az]. Either of these endings could denote separation. The sign traces in the copy are consistent with either reading.

If my suggested interpretation that ^{GIS}hanza(n)- is a wooden beam is correct, one might ask why the Hittite laws would stipulate a penalty for cutting TÚG.SIG (fine cloth) **from** a ^{GIS}hanza(n)-. I propose that the law makes perfect sense if we understand ^{GIS}hanza(n)- to be a very specific kind of beam, namely, the beam of a warp-weighted loom, to which the warp was attached. Such looms are widely attested in Bronze Age Anatolia¹⁴, as well as elsewhere in the world¹⁵. Elizabeth Barber, in her book *Prehistoric Textiles*, describes the warp-weighted loom as follows:

“[If] anyone cuts down a [fruit-beari]ng(?) vine, he shall take the cut-down [vine] for himself and give to the owner of the (damaged) vine (the use of) a good vine. (The original owner of the cut-down vine) shall gather fruit from it (i.e. the good vine)”.

The phrase *ta-an-za tuḫ-ša-an-na-i* could be translated “he will harvest it for himself”, where “it” refers back to the good vine (SIG₅-an-na ^{GIS}GEŠTIN). This construction is similar to the use of *tuḫš-* in §56. Hoffner’s translation makes it clear that it refers to the harvesting of grapes.

¹³ KBo 6. 3, II 8-10

(8) *ták-ku-wa-an at-ta-aš an-na-aš-ša ta-me-e-da-ni LÚ-ni pí-an-z[i]*

(9) *nu at-ta-aš an-na-aš-ša šar-ni-in-kán-zi ták-ku at-ta-aš-ša an-na-aš*

(10) *mi-im-ma-i na-an-ši-kán tu-uḫ-ša-an-¹ta¹*

“If the father and mother give her to another man, the father and mother shall make compensation. If the father and mother refuse, they shall separate her from him”.

Hoffner, *Laws*, p. 38, elaborates that the compensation goes “(to the first man)”. He also clarifies that the refusal is “(to do so)”, presumably, to make compensation.

¹⁴ E. J. W. Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages*. Princeton 1991, pp. 166-167.

¹⁵ The warp-weighted loom appears to have reached Egypt by the middle of the Neolithic Period, and spread to India and the Sudan. The earliest clear archaeological evidence for the warp-weighted loom is a set of loom weights (which were lying in rows, where they had fallen from the loom) from Early Bronze Age Troy. (There is highly suggestive evidence, however, for a warp-weighted loom from early Neolithic Hungary and late Neolithic Switzerland, consisting of holes where the upright posts would have been, plus

This loom stood more or less upright (usually at a slight angle); had its warp hung from a single top beam, the cloth beam; and used weights instead of a beam at the bottom to pull the warp taut. The weights were usually of clay or stone, and were attached by cords to bunched groups of warp threads. The weaving started at the top, and the rows of weft had to be packed upwards, against gravity¹⁶.

According to Barber, another option was to hang the warp directly from the rafters of the house¹⁷, that is, from horizontal cross-beams.

Putting everything together, we see that the Hittite law addresses the crime of removing cloth which was in the process of being woven from the wooden beam to which it was attached. It remains for us to assess the severity of the penalty in relation to what we know about the value of textiles of various qualities and in varying stages of production. That unfinished or shorter lengths of cloth were less valuable than completed or full-sized woven goods is confirmed by common sense and by the much earlier Sumerian and Old Assyrian sources. There is very little evidence for the actual size of completed or full-sized textiles¹⁸, although the Old Assyrian sources mention fractions of textiles, ranging from 1/3 to 1/6¹⁹. In his study of the Neo-Sumerian textile industry, however, Waetzoldt argues that the Sumerian phrase, tug₂ giš-a gal₂-la, a phrase which literally means "the cloth which is present on the wood", refers to cloth which is still on the loom. Waetzoldt demonstrates that such items are consistently listed with the least valuable textiles, even if the finished products would ordinarily be considered the most valuable textiles²⁰.

what appears to be loom weights.) Loom weights from the Bronze and Iron Age are found all over Europe and Anatolia. The earliest depiction of a warp-weighted loom is a Late Bronze Age carving (14th century B.C.E.) in northern Italy, and there are Iron Age representations of the loom from Hungary and Greece. See Barber, *Textiles*, pp. 91-101.

¹⁶ Barber, *Textiles*, p. 92. For a diagram of a warp-weighted loom, see Barber, *Textiles*, p. 270, Figure 12.3.

¹⁷ E. J. W. Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years*. New York 1994, p. 83. A much later Etruscan bronze pendant from ca. 600 B.C.E. illustrates weaving hanging from a beam on a balcony. See Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, p. 269, Figure 12.2.

¹⁸ There is one broken Ur-III text, *ITT V 9996*, II' 4'-5', which mentions the size of a textile as gid₂-bi 8 kus₃, dagal-bi 7 kus₃ (8 cubits by 7 cubits). Unfortunately, the name of the textile is not preserved. An Akkadian text, *TC 3/I, 17*, mentions that a "finished textile" (*gamram šubātam*) should be 9 cubits by 8 cubits. These sizes are problematic, however, as their widths are much wider than any attested loom. See K.R. Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and Its Terminology*. Leiden 1972, pp. 92-93.

¹⁹ There is some debate, however, about whether these were actual fractions of textiles, or whether they were simply accounting conventions, as they are mostly mentioned in terms of taxes which were owed to the local Anatolian rulers. Nevertheless, since fractions of textiles could be "paid" in silver, it is clear that their monetary value is proportionately less than the value of a full textile. See Veenhof, *Old Assyrian Trade*, pp. 94-95.

²⁰ H. Waetzoldt, *Untersuchungen zur Neusumerischen Textilindustrie*. Rome 1972, p. 148.

The TÚG.SIG referred to in the Hittite law could not subsequently be lengthened, since it was cut from the loom; therefore its value would be correspondingly lower. §182/*67-68 (KUB 13.14, I 8) of the Hittite laws, which contains a list of prices, states that the price of a TÚG.SIG is 30 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR. Thus, the penalty of 10 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR for removing an unfinished TÚG.SIG seems reasonable in light of its reduced value.

This new interpretation of the law also makes sense in the context of the surrounding laws. The law immediately preceding the law dealing with ^{GIS}hanza(n)- in §144/*33 deals with the penalty for a barber's associate who ruins a copper object, perhaps a set of shears, which belongs to a barber. The general theme for this section, then, is the stipulation of penalties for damaging or destroying someone else's property, in particular property which is part of the means for securing a livelihood.

This analysis brings us to the conclusion that the identification of ^{GIS}hanza(n)- as "an obscure implement with which one can cut cloth" is difficult for several reasons. First, it is difficult to identify Hittite cloth cutting implements because of the absence of such instruments in both the archaeological record and in the textual record. More importantly, it is difficult to explain why a penalty would have been stipulated for cutting TÚG.SIG with a specific implement, wooden or otherwise. Second, ^{GIS}hanza(n)- as a wooden instrument for cutting cloth does not make sense in the context of the purification ritual KUB 7. 13, Obv. 6, where it appears between the beams of the threshold and some other unspecified wooden beams. This proposed interpretation of ^{GIS}hanza(n)- as a type of horizontal wooden beam rather than as a wooden instrument for cutting cloth, not only fits the context of the Hittite law better, but also takes into account its use in the context of a purification ritual. The issue at stake in this law, then, is the removal of an unfinished TÚG.SIG from the wooden beam of the loom to which it is attached, an act which would have decreased the cloth's value.