The difficult word \( \text{GISbanza(n)} \) 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 \( \text{GISbanza(n)} \) 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 term, 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) \( \text{tâk-ku TÜG.SIG G1sba-an-za-n[i-it] \ ku-iš-ki tūḫ-ša-ri} \)
(12) 10 GIN.GIN. KÜ.BABBAR pa-a-i t[âk-ku...]
(13) \( \text{ku-iš-ki tūḫ-ša-ri [5 GIN.GIN KÜ.BABBAR pa-a-i]} \)

"If anyone cuts fine cloth with a \( \text{hanzan} \), he shall pay 10 shekels of silver. If anyone cuts [...], he shall pay 5 shekels of silver."

According to Hoffner, \( \text{GIShanzan} \) is "an obscure implement with which one can cut cloth". In their respective editions of the Hittite laws, Friedrich and Imparati note only that \( \text{GIShanza(n)} \) is a wooden object. Hoffner’s interpretation of \( \text{GIShanza(n)} \) is difficult for contextual reasons, both within this particular Hittite law, and in the other texts in which this...
An important case in point is the use of the term $\text{Gis} $$\text{banza(n)}$- in the purification ritual KUB 7.13, Obv. 6, which will be discussed below.

The current interpretation of $\text{Gis} $$\text{banza(n)}$- as "an obscure implement with which one can cut cloth" is puzzling within the context of the Hittite law itself. Although the verb $\text{tuh}$$\text{sari}$ (he/she cuts) is missing in the Neo-Hittite version (KBo 6.10), it can be securely reconstructed based on the older Hittite version. 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 gold. 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 survived. However, none of these tools in the archaeological and textual record are clearly 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 $\text{Gis} $$\text{banza(n)}$- is used outside of the Hittite laws, where the context is inappropriate for translating the term as "a wooden instrument that can be used to cut cloth". The word $\text{Gis} $$\text{banza(n)}$- appears in two rituals. One of these (KUB 34.78 7') is too fragmentary to suggest a precise definition. $\text{Gis} $$\text{banza(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) $\text{Gis}$$\text{kat-ta-l[u-uz]-zi-ya-a}$ $\text{Gi}$$\text{S}$.UR $\text{MES}$$\text{Gi}$$\text{S}$$\text{pa-an-za}$$\text{Gi}$$\text{S}$-ru-[...]
(7) ar-ha [ha-a$s-$ha-a$s-sha-an-zi A-NA E$\text{MES}$$\text{S}$$\text{A}$-ya-k$\text{a}$n da-[p$\text{y}$-ya-an-tu-$u$s]
(8) [...] $\text{Gis}$.UR$\text{MES}$$\text{Gi}$$\text{S}$$\text{AB}$[h]-ya ar-ha ha-a$s-$ha-a$s-sha-an-zi an-[dur-z$\text{i}$-ya-a$\text{s}$...]

---

6 See KUB 29.29, II 4-5. The relevant lines read:
(4) $\text{i$i$}$-ki tu-ub-$[s]$a-$ri$ 10 G$\text{IN}$.G$\text{IN}$.K$U$.B$\text{AB}$BAR pa-a$[i]$
(5) k[u-i$i$]-ki tu-ub$-[s]a$-$ri$ 5 G$\text{IN}$.G$\text{IN}$.K$U$.B$\text{AB}$BAR pa-a$-$i$
7 For example, a Neo-Hittite cult inventory (KBo 18.172, obv. 14) mentions 6 EME A$\text{N}$.$\text{BAR}$ 6 EME ZABAR KU.GI A$\text{N}$.$\text{BAR}$ "six blades of iron, six blades of bronze, gold and iron". See S. Ko$\text{a}$k, "The Gospel of Iron", in Kani$\text{t}$swar: A Tribute to Hans G. Gütterbock on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday. (Assyriological Studies 23). H. Hoffner, Jr. - G. Beckman edd. Chicago 1986, p. 126.
9 The surrounding text is also fragmentary. The relevant line reads: (7') $\text{a}$-$\text{ap-pa}$ $\text{Gis}$ ha-an-za-$\text{ni}$ [
“They scratch the beams of the threshold, the ħanza- ... Inside they scratch a[ll] the beams and the window”.

GISbanza(n)- appears immediately after the phrase GISkat-ta-[u-uz]-zi-ya-aš GIS.UR.MES (beams of the threshold), and before unspecified [GIS].UR.MES (beams). Coming as it does between two explicit references to "beams" in a house, the context suggests that GISbanza(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 GISbanza(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 GISbanza(n)- is, in fact, a wooden beam, how should this law be understood?

The wording of the law, in particular the verb governing GISbanza(n)-, namely, tuḫš-, provides an important clue for understanding this law. Although the general meaning of the verb tuḫš- is "to cut", there is evidence that it implies the idea of separation as well. The verb tuḫš- 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 GISbanza(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 BÂD-ni LUGAL-aš KASKAL-ša ták-šu-an-zi GIS KIRI6.GESTIN-aš tuḫ-ḫu-šu-an-zi
[ŠA 1][Lo]URUDU.NAGAR
(22) na-at-ta ku-iš-ki a-ra-u-aš

Version B = KBo 6. 3, III 24-25
[ŠA Lo]URUDU.NAGAR
(25) Ü-UL ku-iš-ki a-ra-u-wa-aš

Version D = KBo 6. 6, I 30-31
(30) BÂD-ni KASKAL LUGAL pa-a-u-wa-an-zi GIS KIRI6.GESTIN tuḫ-su-wa-an-zi
[ŠA Lo]URUDU.NAGAR Ü-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 tuḫ-su-wa-an-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 mi’-aš-aš] GIS GESTIN-an ku-iš-ki kar-aš-zi kar-[a-an-da-an]
(4) [GIS GESTIN-an] a-pa-a-aš da-a-i SIG5-an-na GIS GESTIN
(5) [A-NA BE-E]L GIS GESTIN pa-a-i ta-an-za tuḫ-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)\(^\text{13}\), 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 GISbanza(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, GISba-an-za-n[i-it], but it is equally possible to reconstruct it either as a dative, GISba-an-za-n[i], or as an ablative, GISba-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 GISbanza(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 GISbanza(n)-. I propose that the law makes perfect sense if we understand GISbanza(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 Anatolia\(^\text{14}\), as well as elsewhere in the world\(^\text{15}\). 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 tūḫš-an-na-i could be translated "he will harvest it for himself", where "it" refers back to the good vine (SIG-an-na GISGESTIN). This construction is similar to the use of tūḫš- in §56. Hoffner's translation makes it clear that it refers to the harvesting of grapes.

13 KBo 6. 3, II 8-10

(8) tāk-ku-wa-an at-ta-aš an-na-aš-ša ta-me-e-da-ni LŪ-ni pī-an-z[i]
(9) nu at-ta-aš an-na-aš-ša šar-ni-in-kān-zī tāk-ku at-ta-aš-ša an-na-aš
(10) mi-im-ma-i na-an-ši-kān tu-uḫš-a-an-ṭa

"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.


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 gravity.\textsuperscript{16}

According to Barber, another option was to hang the warp directly from the rafters of the house\textsuperscript{17}, 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 textiles\textsuperscript{18}, although the Old Assyrian sources mention fractions of textiles, ranging from 1/3 to 1/6\textsuperscript{19}. In his study of the Neo-Sumerian textile industry, however, Waetzoldt argues that the Sumerian phrase, tug\textsubscript{2} giš-a gal\textsubscript{2}-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 textiles\textsuperscript{20}.

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 (14\textsuperscript{th} century B.C.E.) in northern Italy, and there are Iron Age representations of the loom from Hungary and Greece. See Barber, \textit{Textiles}, pp. 91-101.

\textsuperscript{16} Barber, \textit{Textiles}, p. 92. For a diagram of a warp-weighted loom, see Barber, \textit{Textiles}, p. 270, Figure 12.3.

\textsuperscript{17} E. J. W. Barber, \textit{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, \textit{Prehistoric Textiles}, p. 269, Figure 12.2.

\textsuperscript{18} There is one broken Ur-III text, \textit{ITT} V 9996, II' 4'-5', which mentions the size of a textile as gidd\textsubscript{2}-bi 8 kus\textsubscript{3}, dagal-bi 7 kus\textsubscript{3} (8 cubits by 7 cubits). Unfortunately, the name of the textile is not preserved. An Akkadian text, TC 3/1, 17, mentions that a "finished textile" (\textit{gamram sub\textsubscript{3}at\textsubscript{3}am}) 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, \textit{Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and Its Terminology}. Leiden 1972, pp. 92-93.

\textsuperscript{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, \textit{Old Assyrian Trade}, pp. 94-95.

The TŪG.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 TŪG.SIG is 30 GĪN KŪ.BABBAR. Thus, the penalty of 10 GĪN KŪ.BABBAR for removing an unfinished TŪG.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!anza( 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!anza( 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 TŪG.SIG with a specific implement, wooden or otherwise. Second, GIS!anza( 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!anza( 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 TŪG.SIG from the wooden beam of the loom to which it is attached, an act which would have decreased the cloth's value.