

## **7. SUMMARY:**

### **The Main Characteristics of the Hittite Priesthood**

The present study should be regarded as a first step towards a comprehensive description of the Hittite priesthood and cult personnel. The material gathered in the previous chapters widens our knowledge of specific types of priests among cult personnel, which we have shown to be the main types of priests in the Hittite priesthood. However, as already indicated in the introduction to this work, there were other functionaries who may be regarded as priests, and they should be studied further. In this summary my aim is to give a concise overview of the material, and to highlight the main characteristics of the Hittite priesthood.

#### **7.1 Main issues addressed**

The main issues to be addressed in the following summary are:

- a. The priesthood as part of the administrative hierarchy of the Hittite kingdom.
- b. The priesthood's obligations as specified in the text ITP, which we regarded as describing an ideal situation, in comparison with the reality arising from the rest of the material studied.
- c. The titles of the main priestly positions, and their duties.
- d. The common Hittite priestesses and the special position of the NIN.DINGIR.
- e. The changes in the titles of the priest in historical perspective.
- f. The social position and the status of the priests.
- g. Royalty as priesthood.
- h. The relations of the priests to the divine.

#### **7.2 The priesthood as part of the kingdom's administration**

The Hittite priesthood was part of the larger class of officials who served in the Hittite Kingdom during all periods of its existence. As such, the priesthood had duties and privileges endowed by the Hittite kings, like any other "civil servants" of the kingdom. This was clearly a privileged group, as reflected both in the ritual of Tunnawiya (2.4.1 p. 15) and, differently, in the group's exemption from taxes (4.1.7.1 p. 204). The priesthood's wealth was received from the palace itself by donations to the cult, and could, in certain cases, become the property of the priests' families (3.9.4.8 p. 128).

The priests were dependent upon the royal administration of which they were a part, in the sense that, in order to perform cultic duties, in the long run they had to be supported by the state even though they could have relied on the resources of their own households to a certain extent (4.1.7.1 p. 203; 4.1.7.2 p. 209; 5.2.3 p. 355). The priests, both male and female, depended on royal decrees for their appointment, although divine approval was also required (4.1.8). They were appointed and transferred to different temples according to royal decisions on the construction of new temples (KUB 12.2, see 4.1.8 p. 221; KUB 38.1 in 4.1.8 p. 222).

New priests would most likely have come from a priestly family. We have ample evidence of the existence of such families (KUB 38.37, see 4.1.7.2 p. 210), therefore we assume that the office could have been hereditary. We hear of children of both male and female priests who officiated in the cult. Yet we have no evidence on several intriguing questions: was a new priest trained in his family, or did the central administration have a system of training priests? We assume there were scribal schools in the Hittite kingdom, but were there also schools for priests? And could a person not hailing from a priestly family become a priest? In any case, unlike the biblical priesthood, there is no indication that the Hittite priesthood was restricted to a certain family or families, or that all members of that family were automatically considered part of the priestly class.

Although the priestly office was state-supported, the priests, both male and female, owned their own households, from which they supplied the cult. They were in that sense independent, and were also in charge of running their temples' affairs (ITP 3.6 §16; 4.1.7.2 p. 209).

A temple's grounds and its surroundings were under the supervision of the priests as managers of the cult procedures. In that position they were the ones to dictate the cultic provisions and ritual conduct. However, they were also under the supervising eyes of the king, as can be seen from the incident in Šamuḫa, where the priesthood dictated certain rules for the cult, while the king had others (4.3.5 p. 307). The clear dependency of the priesthood on the king is implied by the *išhiul*-texts imposed upon the priesthood in different towns. We have seen *išhiul*-texts for the priests in Nerik and Zippalanda (4.1.6.2 p. 179), as well as the above-mentioned Šamuḫa; the longest and most detailed *išhiul*-text was the one for Ḫattuša, the text we named ITP.

As seen in our survey of the Hittite instructions texts, a document such as ITP, which instructs the cult personnel in all aspects of their lives and behavior, is not an exception; rather, it reflects standard royal practice. The aim was to ensure that the cult would be maintained in the way the Hittite kings thought right. The Hittite king saw himself as totally responsible for the cultic activity, and in this capacity he made sure that the temple personnel carried out his instructions, which he organized on the basis of old traditions. This way of doing things was based on the assumption that any failure in maintaining the cult would raise the anger of the gods, who would then punish the kingdom, beginning with the king himself. The texts of *išhiul* from Nerik, Zippalanda, and Šamuḫa show that the king issued the instructions personally. Taking into consideration the language of the text, we may assume that our ITP was issued by one of the Hittite kings of the New Kingdom, such as Šuppiluliuma or Muwatalli, based on earlier drafts of such instructions texts from the late Middle Kingdom.

### 7.3 ITP in light of the surveyed texts

The fact that the ITP reveals the reality of the cultic life of the priesthood in the Hittite kingdom can be clearly seen when compared with the other material presented above.<sup>1160</sup> Following are some of the similarities between ITP and other texts:

1) The types of priests mentioned in ITP were found in texts relating to the period of the New Kingdom: SANGA, GUDU, and <sup>LÜ</sup>É.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup> are indeed the most common titles of male priests appearing in the texts. The ITP, however, does not distinguish between the SANGA- and the GUDU-priests, except for the emphasis on the role of the SANGA-priest in supervising the guarding of the temple and the relations of the temple with the farmers. The texts surveyed show differences between the groups of priests, which we will return to in the following. As for the priestesses, the ITP has <sup>MUNUS</sup>AMA.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup>, which we showed to be the title, written in Sumerographic form, for the priestesses appearing mainly in texts of the New Kingdom. The NIN.DINGIR is not part of the priestly temple personnel, as clearly arises from the descriptions of her royal origin and from the fact that she is a unique priestess. Therefore she is not expected to appear in the ITP.

<sup>1160</sup> Hoffner (2002) 66 draws a similar conclusion from a comparison between the text ICBG (2.3 above p. 11), and the texts from Tapikka.

2) The purity of the priests during cultic performance is repeatedly emphasized in the ITP. This is seen also in different texts describing preparations for festival ceremonies (4.1.6.3 p. 183).

3) The duties of the priests are as follows:

- a. Care for the daily bread (4.1.6.2 p. 178).
- b. Cleaning the temple (2.4.2 p. 18; 4.1.6.2 p. 178).
- c. Care for the festivals and celebrating them on time (p. 182).
- d. Sleeping in the temple, as part of guarding it, while the priests' houses are separate from the temple (portrayed in the texts under 4.1.6.2 from p. 178 / 4.1.6.9 p. 201).
- e. Eating at the temple in front of the deity (for example KBo 23.67 under 4.1.6.5 p. 198).
- f. Receiving a fine for not providing the food to the gods (mentioned in KUB 5.7 obv. 35, p. 291).
- g. Transfer of the animals to a festival (such as 4.1.7.3 p. 211).
- h. From the oracle texts we learn of the problem of the temple personnel stealing from the temple's wealth. That stands in direct relationship to the warning of ITP §8, stating that the priests are only the guards of the gods' wealth. The inquiries of the priests and the testimonies of the priests' family members on the statues held at their houses are the proof for this (4.1.6.4 p. 189).

ITP is thus shown to be a document quite relevant to the real life of the Hittite priesthood. The text is specifically related to the city of Hattuša with its large number of temples, but we can assume that most of its instructions were relevant for priests in other locations as well. ITP is longer, however, and much more specific than similar texts of instructions, such as those from Nerik and Zippalanda. This may be an indication of the importance of the priesthood of Hattuša, and its higher status among the kingdom's priests.

#### 7.4 Titles of the priests

ITP specifies several titles or kinds of priests. The material presented in Chapters 4 and 5 confirms these titles, with slight variations (especially in the case of the <sup>MUNUS</sup>SANGA). The Hittite priesthood was a very hierarchal group. The hierarchy is evident in the titles, in the order of priests appearing in the descriptions of festivals, as well as in the roles they perform while participating in either rituals or processions. There could also have been a distinction between the priests of the Old Hittite cult centers such as Nerik, Zippalanda, and Arinna, and the rest of the priesthood. The priests

from these ancient cult centers may have enjoyed special status (4.1.7.1 p. 203), which could be noticed in the relevant festival descriptions (4.1.2.4 p. 148). It is possible that the priests from the temple of the Storm-god of Hatti in Hattuša were at the top of the hierarchy, though it is not clearly indicated in the texts.

A) The title LÚ<sup>MEŠ</sup> É.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup> stands for all members of the priesthood, male and female, and can actually be translated as "Temple-Men" (4.3.7 p. 309). This title includes under it the following priestly classes:

B) LÚSANGA: The Hittite name behind the Sumerogram was in most cases *šankunni*.

This title represents male SANGA-priests who were divided into high and low ranks and who, simultaneously, could receive titles which identified them as holding special status during rituals. The titles were: horned headware SANGA-priest, sacred SANGA-priest, and old SANGA-priest versus new SANGA-priest. These titles should be regarded as describing the status or religious state of the priest during his performance, and not necessarily his position in office. The SANGA could be an individual priest in a local shrine or one of a number of SANGA-priests in larger temples.

C) LÚGUDU<sub>12</sub>: The Hittite name of this priest is unknown.

Following the (male) SANGA-priest in rank stands the (male) GUDU-priest, who is clearly a libation priest and whose role has roots in the ancient Anatolian religious traditions, or even, more specifically, the Hattian traditions of central Anatolia. According to these Hattian traditions, it seems that in olden times he had strong ties with kingship legitimacy, connected somehow with the Hattian mythological stories he recited, and was therefore very close to the royal family. This is especially evident in rituals to the DUMU.LUGAL, who may very well be the crown prince.<sup>1161</sup> This priest appears in most of the texts either as an individual or in a group of a few priests. Besides the regular duties of a priest his special responsibilities are libation and carrying statues or staffs of the deities.

<sup>1161</sup> On the basis of the new tablets published recently, there is room for a comprehensive study of these rituals performed for and with the DUMU.LUGAL.

D) <sup>MUNUS</sup>SANGA: Hittite name unknown.

<sup>MUNUS</sup>AMA.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup>: The Hittite name was *šiwanzanna*.

The <sup>MUNUS</sup>AMA.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup> is the most common title for priestesses in the Hittite kingdom. She appears in many rituals, serving different deities, and her cultic activity is very much similar to that of the (male) SANGA-priest. As indicated above, the title <sup>MUNUS</sup>SANGA was probably the earlier Sumerogram used to designate priestesses in Hittite texts, and belongs to the old stratum of central Anatolian religious tradition. The <sup>MUNUS</sup>AMA.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup> which existed next to it, probably replaced it sometime during the last stages of the Middle Kingdom. It seems that there was not a rank division within that class of priestesses,<sup>1162</sup> and they officiated in different cult centers or shrines in all parts of the Hittite realm. It seems that small shrines did not necessarily have a priestess, however. This might suggest that their number was less than that of the male priests.

As for the title NIN.DINGIR, this title stands for only one, unique priestess; therefore she can not be regarded as a member of a class.

### 7.5 The office of the Hittite priestesses, and that of the NIN.DINGIR

The Hittite view of the harmony of life is implied in the existence of male and female in both divine and human worlds. As the god has the goddess, the king the queen, the cult of the divine includes the priest and priestess. In that sense I wish to see the Hittite NIN.DINGIR, a royal priestess, as the counterpart of the crown prince DUMU.LUGAL.

The priestesses gave the cult a feminine side, though for lack of clear evidence I cannot point out in what specific ways it was done. We may point out the fact that priestesses appear many times beside female deities, but they may also serve a male deity, and a male priest may serve a goddess with the priestess. The priestess' title, however, clearly points to her feminine role.

The NIN.DINGIR presents a special phenomenon in the texts describing the Hittite priesthood. We have shown that she was a member of the royal family, with the rights and the power to supply for the cult in which she performed. I believe that this priestess should be further studied in light of anthropological

<sup>1162</sup> Except for once a mention of a <sup>MUNUS</sup>SANGA.GAL (KUB 34.128) above p. 333.

research in the wider context of Ancient Near Eastern religions.

### 7.6 Historical implications on the usage of the titles in the Hittite Kingdom

The titles surveyed above show some changes in usage during the years of the existence of the kingdom. It is evident that the titles <sup>LÚ</sup>SANGA and <sup>LÚ</sup>GUDU<sub>12</sub> start with the very old traditions of Anatolia and go on to the end of the Empire days, though it seems that the <sup>LÚ</sup>GUDU<sub>12</sub> lost, during the New Kingdom, some of his ancient ties to royalty and kept his main role as a libation priest. On the other hand, the <sup>MUNUS</sup>SANGA belongs to the older stratum of central Anatolian religious traditions, mainly the Hattian religion; the use of that title seems to be eclipsed, and towards the beginning of the New Kingdom the only title used for the female is <sup>MUNUS</sup>AMA.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup>, as is clear from the ITP evidence. The queen, too, during the New Kingdom, is called an AMA.DINGIR-priestess. The Hittite title for <sup>MUNUS</sup>AMA.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup>, *šiwanzanna*, already appears in a text from Old Hittite times. This may suggest that the title AMA.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup> (written Sumerographically) was introduced sometime during the Middle Kingdom, but it is not clear under what circumstances.<sup>1163</sup> At the same time, the general title <sup>LÚ</sup><sup>MES</sup>É.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup> also appeared in the texts.<sup>1164</sup> In this case, too, we see that a title written in Sumerograms is preferred over Hittite syllabic writing. We have shown that this last title appears clearly in texts from the New Kingdom.

Throughout the different stages of the existence of the Hittite Kingdom, its priesthood seems to have practiced the same cultic performances, and lived by certain priestly codes of conduct.

### 7.7 The social life of Hittite priests

Priesthood in the Hittite Kingdom was a profession. The priests were counted among the group of temple workers called either *hazziwitašši*-people, or *hílamatta*-men, both professional groups (2.5.1 p. 21). Their profession is acquired, as far as we can see, by being a member of a priestly family. It seems to me that according to the quote "worship according to the Hittite manner" (KUB 5.6 iii 3-7 p. 224), there were certain customs especially developed by

<sup>1163</sup> We may say that the combination AMA.DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup> is a Hittite invention, and that the writing of professions in Sumerograms may have brought about this usage.

<sup>1164</sup> Perhaps for the Hittite word <sup>LÚ</sup><sup>MES</sup>É*karimnalla*.

(ancient) Hittite priests, which were to be observed by the priesthood. Thus, a priest or priestess could have been appointed to different temples throughout the land with no difficulty, maintaining identical forms of cultic performance. As already noted, when we look at the rituals they seem very similar wherever they take place, with slight variations. Even the descriptions of cult celebrations in the cult inventory texts show a very similar practice of worship.

The priests were appointed by the state administration and may even have been transferred during their service from one temple to another (4.1.6.4 p. 189). The office of the priest was carried out at the temple, but this was not his place of residence. The priests and all other cult functionaries lived outside the temples. Their duty was to guard the temple, either (as demanded in the ITP) by sleeping inside of it, or (as indicated in the Nerik *išhiul*) by locking it at night and opening it in the morning (4.1.6.2 p. 179). The priest's house served as a cultic place as well and the priest may sometimes have had cultic implements in his house, possibly in cases when the temple was damaged. On the other hand, we do hear of a priest having private gods in his house, which he is obliged to worship (4.1.6.4 p. 190, 4.1.7.2 pp. 209-210, 4.1.7.5 p. 215; KUB 42.100). Such a case may indicate a situation where the priest serves in a temple not located in his home town. For priests, the temple was actually a place of work. It was not his home, it was the home for the deities, and this distinction is important (ITP: 3.6 §8:32-33 p. 75). He was obliged to show up at work on time, in a state of purity. If he was in Hattuša he may have worked in shifts, during the day or, if he was on guard duty, at night.

The priest was responsible for the proper maintenance of the temple. Since it was not his own house, he might neglect it, or steal from it. These are indeed the issues stressed by the ITP. It is a great temptation to use the wealth of one's work place for one's own benefit! On the other hand, the priest is responsible for providing for the cult from his own house, at least according to the cult inventory texts that come from places outside the large cult centers. In this case the priests, both male and female, had a household with servants and property, which again shows that they belonged to the wealthier classes of society. In times when they were appointed to a certain temple by the state administration, they were allocated some land, houses, and workers to provide for the cult. In this context the SANGA-priest was responsible for the

allocation of seeds to the farmers; he had an economic role within the cult.

Was the Hittite priesthood considered a sacred office? It is quite clear that the texts do not speak of the priests as sacred persons. They were people who had to undergo certain purification rites before serving the deities, but in essence they were not holy. On the other hand, there were some kinds of cultic prerequisites for becoming a priest. They are forbidden to have had any sexual contact with animals (such as a horse or mule, 4.1.6.3, 3.9.4.4 pp. 123-124, 135), and they had to be physically intact since mutilated people were forbidden to enter the temple and were regarded impure (4.3.2 pp. 290-291).

On a daily basis they were to be pure at work. We have encountered the definition of the "sacred SANGA-priest", which refers to a group of priests who deserve a special festival according to the ITP: 3.6 §4: 42 p. 72. Since these priests (always male) are mentioned next to regular SANGA-priests during ceremonies, we must assume that the sacredness is a state into which certain priests entered during or just before the ceremonies or rituals, and that otherwise they were simply SANGA-priests. Yet it may be that in order to attain such a position, one had to undergo special training.

The priesthood was responsible for the well-being of the gods, a function which also extended outside the temple when, for example, any impurity or harm was done against the deities. They were in this sense the ones who ensured the divine protection and prosperity of their town, such as in the text presented above in 2.4.2 p. 18. The classes of priests which we have surveyed, however, have no relation whatsoever with magic or with medical care.<sup>1165</sup>

The priests had a certain administrative contact with farmers, cowherds, and shepherds, but otherwise we don't have data on their involvement in the lives of ordinary people. This may be a result of the fact that our material comes from royal archives, such that the rituals conducted by priests for a "sacrificer" (EN.ŠISKUR) are typically performed for the royal family. But originally these rituals may well have been performed for any person, or at least, any who could pay for it. The priests did not function as teachers to the vast population. We do read, however, that during the festivals the population participated as spectators, dancing or even singing

<sup>1165</sup> When we hear of the queen Tawananna using witchcraft (6.1.5 p. 381) she was probably employing professionals, for she does not engage in it as part of her priestly office.

during rituals and processions conducted by the priests.

Regarding appointment to priesthood, we have information only on the male priests but we may assume a similar process for the priestesses. Appointment was conferred by the state administration, and the king himself may have been involved.<sup>1166</sup> But the appointment had to receive divine consent through oracular means or by the use of lots, or both. There is clear evidence that when a new priest was installed in a town, it was done by lots, though when a priest was to be sent by the Hittite king to serve in a vassal country, there was need for oracular approval. The priest's installation was carried out in a ritual, but there is no mention of anointment before or during such a ritual.

Once a priest was appointed to a certain temple, he was to serve the deity to which he was appointed. This appointment could also have been to the service of a deity from countries outside the Hittite lands, such as Aššur or Marduk. After such deities were adopted they became part of the Hittite's pantheon, and the priests would worship them in the Hittite manner (KUB 12.2, 4.1.8 p. 221). The priest or priestess can be identified by their deity, but they could also worship other deities during rituals conducted at the temple of their own deity.

Hittite priests were appointed in vassal countries according to at least one text, as reported in regard to Aštata (4.1.8 p. 224). Other appointments were of princes in Kizzuwatna and Ḫalap (6.1.3 pp. 373-377). From the Aštata case and the mention of the king going there to make offerings in a Hittite manner, it seems that the Hittite king administratively controlled, in some degree, the cultic activity of conquered countries; they thus became parts of Ḫatti-land.<sup>1167</sup>

### 7.8 Royalty as priesthood

To sum up what was presented above, we may make divisions between male and female in the cult: between king and queen, prince and NIN.DINGIR. The king and the queen were the highest

<sup>1166</sup> The fact that the Tawananna was deposed by the king, following an oracular answer, shows that the king had authority even over this most lofty position (6.1.5 p. 380).

<sup>1167</sup> The obligations and rights of Kurunta, king of Tarḫuntašša, decreed by Tudḫaliya IV in regard to the cult, may serve as an example of royal control over the cultic activity of vassal kings (see 3.9.4.1 pp. 113-114, and 4.1.6.10 p. 210).

priests of the kingdom of Ḫatti. The royal couple was responsible before the gods for all cultic activity in their domain. In that capacity the king imposed the *išḫiul*-obligations upon the priests, and was also responsible for allocating fields, animals, houses, and such to the cult, all the provisions needed for the gods' cultic worship. They prided themselves on providing for the needs of the gods, and repeatedly announced it before them in their prayers.

The king and queen were the direct priests of the Storm-god of Ḫatti and the Sun-goddess of Arinna, the top deities of the kingdom's pantheon. Both of these deities granted their approval of a ruling king. The divine world was perceived by the Hittites in terms of male and female, and the king and queen were the gods' counterparts on earth. As such they were the top SANGA-priest and the AMA.DINGIR-priestess during the New Kingdom period. As priest and priestess they conducted rituals to the gods, especially during the festivals, but in this role they were not regarded as divine. They were human beings, if indeed humans with a special status of purity. This idea is revealed in two instances. First, a sexually defiled person is forbidden to come near the king, for his impurity may harm the king (4.1.6.3 p. 183). Second, the ITP decreed who was authorized to cross the threshold of the temple, indicating (3.6 §6/2, 7 p. 73) that only a man who "usually crosses the threshold of the gods and of the king", is allowed to enter the temple. The threshold of the king and of the gods is considered the same in this text, which means that the king's residence has the same status as the deities' abodes. This does not imply that the king is divine, but rather that the king is in a state of purity similar to one officiating within a temple. Nor is the king identified as sacred. He is just as pure as one is expected to be visiting at the deity's house.<sup>1168</sup>

The king and queen as representatives of the deities on earth were portrayed similarly to the divine entities iconographically. As we have illustrated in regard to the king and prince, they even dressed themselves in the deity's clothes, yet we may assume that this applies to the queen as well. It may mean that when dressed like the gods they acquired some special contact with the divine, and the good will of the gods was bestowed upon them.

<sup>1168</sup> In this regard we should also mention the story of Zuliya the water drawer, who brought the king unclean water (3.9.4.9 p. 131).

### 7.9 The relations of the priesthood and the divine

The priests and priestesses were in very close relationship with the divine. Although they only touched the statues representing the gods on earth, being in the house of the deity put them in close proximity to the divine. In the rituals we surveyed, we noticed that female as well as male priests, and especially the NIN.DINGIR, played parts in some kind of dramatized rituals. These include KUB 20.88 (5.1.3 p. 320), the KILAM festival (5.2.2 p. 338), the festival for Tetešhapi (KBo 21.90), as well as the mythological story of the god Zaliyanu's family (4.2.4.4 p. 252). In these stories the priests and priestesses seem to represent the divine on earth, and in a sense this is like the king and queen representing the Storm-god of Hatti and the Sun-goddess of Arinna. The description on a KILAM-festival fragment (4.1.2.5 p. 153) indicating that the *kurutaanza*-priests do not bow back to the king while other functionaries do, may very well be explained in this way. And, in their appearance, the horned headware priests from Arinna and Zippalanda represented the gods.