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Author: Hutter, Manfred  
Title: "How does a <sup>MUNUS</sup>ŠU.GI Earn her Living? "  
Published in: Economy of Religions in Anatolia: From the Early Second to the Middle of the First Millennium BCE  
Münster: Ugarit Verlag  
Editors: Hutter, Manfred / Hutter-Braunsar, Sylvia  
Year: 2019  
Pages: 39-48  
ISBN: 978-3-86835-313-6

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# How does a <sup>MUNUS</sup>ŠU.GI Earn her Living?

*Manfred Hutter*

Let me start with two well-known quotations from Mastigga's "Ritual for Domestic Quarrel" mentioning two remunerations for Mastigga:

KBo 39.8 iii 38-43

Then they round up a sheep, and she designates it a scapegoat. And the 'old woman' takes a sweet thick bread loaf of a *tarna*-measure and a single pitcher of wine. Then she presents the sheep to the sun-god, and the 'old woman' speaks thus: 'Here O sun-god! It is a scapegoat for you both, with mouth and tongue.' Then she consecrates the sheep and breaks the thick bread. But they do not kill the sheep. The 'old woman' takes it for herself (-za ... *dāi*).<sup>1</sup>

A few paragraphs later, another kind of payment of the 'old woman' is mentioned:

KBo 39.8 iv 5-8

Then the two ritual patrons kick the *huwasi*-stones with (their) feet, and s/he walks out through the fire. And they throw off the rich garments which they were wearing, and the 'old woman' takes them for herself (-za ... *dāi*).<sup>2</sup>

Both the sheep and the garments which were part of the ritual paraphernalia are given to the ritual agent as reward of her service. From this starting point I want to explore some monetary aspects of religious services in three paragraphs – some theoretical framing of compensation of work; case studies from textual references; conclusions about material income.

## 1. Compensation for work

What do we know about the economic income of people who are involved in offering "religious services" (in a broad sense) for the Hittite society or for individuals? Are they offering their services as employees of the palace or a temple? Are they obliged or coerced by the state to perform these services? Are they working as "freelancers"? Such questions already show that we have to be aware of different kinds of employment.<sup>3</sup> Some occupations are "year-round activities" while other occupations – also as a source of income – are restricted to special seasons or special situations which means that the employee had to be working in several fields to secure his or her income. In all these cases of work as producing either useful material objects or spiritual services we can see three incentives of work:

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<sup>1</sup> Miller 2004: 92f., § 36, iii 38-43; cf. Marcuson 2016: 269, 391.

<sup>2</sup> Miller 2004: 100, § 41, iv 5-8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Warburton 2007: 186.

coercion, commitment, compensation.<sup>4</sup> All three incentives of course are interdependent and even in cases of coerced work the employer has to give some kind of compensation – by providing (at least minimal) food to avoid his workers from starving, even if such a compensation is also related to the coerced workers' commitment. If they do not work in a proper way their compensation may be cut to next to nothing. To make this approach to coercion and commitment clearer – also with regard to the field of “workers in the religious field” – let me refer to a few examples:

Good examples of coerced work are HT 2 (dupl. KBo 2.31) and KBo 10.10, both texts being lists of women (CTH 235), mainly singers (<sup>MUNUS MEŠSIR</sup>) and *zintuḫi*-women. They were sent to religious centres for services by their communities and “it seems likely that in some way it was determined what number of women each province was obliged to send”.<sup>5</sup> In one of the texts it is recorded that “one woman singer is not there”,<sup>6</sup> which indicates that the obligation (or coercion) to “work” was also controlled. Ian Rutherford pointed out that we do not know if these women were only recruited e.g. for a special festival or if they had to enter coerced employment for a longer period. Recruitment of “workers” in a temple is also mentioned in a cult inventory (CTH 509.1):

KBo 2.1 ii 4-6

6 temple employees have been selected: the town puts (at disposal) 1 cook, 1 baker, 1 vinter, 1 reed-mat weaver, 1 potter, (and) 1 singer.<sup>7</sup>

As the “selected” temple employees have been placed at the disposal by the town, I think that the process of selection included coercion, at least on a low level, and not a kind of paid employment, similar to the case with the women mentioned above.

Another well-known text shows the relationship between employment and commitment. Several sections of the “Instruction for Temple Personnel” (CTH 264) relate to the topic of commitment – or should we rather say “little commitment” – to the priestly work:

KUB 13.4 i 60-66

Keep up in the temple everything including bread, beer and wine. Let no one leave for himself the divine thick bread (or) the thin bread of the god. Let no one pour out beer (or) wine off the libation vessel. Hand all back to the god, then, [s]ay as yourselves (this) statement in front of the god: “Whoever took out (some) of your divine thick bread (or from) the libation [vessel], let your god, my lord, be [looking] after him. Let him seize his house from bottom to top.”<sup>8</sup>

Such a warning shows the necessity of correct commitment, because not all priests seem to have been deeply involved in their jobs, as we learn from the before-mentioned cult inventory KBo 2.1. Both for the storm god of Wattara and for the storm god of Hursalassi, but also for Mount Suwaru of Maliyassa it is mentioned

<sup>4</sup> van der Linden 2011: 27-29; 2016: 307-309.

<sup>5</sup> Rutherford 2004: 381.

<sup>6</sup> HT 2 iv 16, Rutherford 2004: 389; cf. also IBoT 2.129, 17f., Rutherford 2004: 381.

<sup>7</sup> Cammarosano 2018: 194sq.; cf. also KBo 2.1. i 23-25; KUB 38.12 i 3-7; for *para epp-* („select, single out“) cf. Cammarosano 2018: 38.

<sup>8</sup> KUB 13.4 i 60-66, Taggar-Cohen 2006: 73 § 6/l.

that the priest has run away from his employment.<sup>9</sup> The inventory does not give further information why this has happened. The same text also mentions that at some places there was no priest (yet) which might also indicate that priestly commitment could have been poor sometimes.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand we can also see that “strong” commitment might lead to special compensations by the employer:

KUB 13.4 ii 32-42

Whatever (is) in the house of the gods (is) not (for you). Whatever (there is), it is only for the god. Be very much afraid! Silver (and) gold should not at all be for the Temple-Man. He shall in no way carry it on his body, and also his wife (or) children shall not make it an adornment. If, however, as his present from the palace, silver, gold, garment(s) (or) utensils of bronze they give to him, let it be recorded thus: “The king gave it to him.” Also, it should be recorded how much its weight is. Further: let it be also recorded as follows: “They gave it to him on this festival,” and let subsequently the witnesses be recorded.<sup>11</sup>

Leaving out coerced work, we will mainly ask what we know about the compensation of ritual practitioners like the “old woman” (<sup>MUNUS</sup>ŠU.GI), the “seer” (<sup>LÜ</sup>AZU) or others. Recently, Hannah Marcuson has studied various aspects of the “old woman” coming to the following conclusion: “It is clear that the Old Women were employed by the state at the highest level, to serve the royal family”.<sup>12</sup> Her results are contrasting other scholars who emphasize that the “old women” were of minor importance compared to “state employed priests” like the SANGA.<sup>13</sup> I do not think that a strict opposition of “old women” who were employed by the state or palace and held a high social status on the one hand and other “old women” who served “popular religion” or folk religion with a lower social status is fruitful as we have to reckon with both. The focus of my contribution is the question of compensation for their work and that of other ritual practitioners. Compensation is not mentioned regularly but as an exception in the texts. Looking at these examples, we want to find out in which way people who offered services in the field of religion were paid for such services.

## 2. Textual sources about payment for religious services

Although the evidence of payment of ritual practitioners is limited, there are several textual references which add to our knowledge about economy and “individual income” in Hittite society. I have already referred to the passage in Mastigga’s ritual at the beginning, and a very similar reference can be found in Ammihatna’s

<sup>9</sup> KBo 2.1 ii 31, 39, iii 33; see also Cammarosano 2018: 196sq., 200sq. and 205 (commentary).

<sup>10</sup> E.g. KBo 2.1 iii 6, 12, 19; cf. also the Hattian-Hittite bilingual KUB 28.1 iv 19-27 with the complaint about a “problematic” priest: „and we made him [our?] priest, and we pleased him. We arranged his land as well, but (now) he himself becomes quarrelsome, and he himself becomes crabby“, translated by Soysal 2004: 84f.

<sup>11</sup> KUB 13.4 ii 32-42, Taggar-Cohen 2006: 75 § 8.

<sup>12</sup> Marcuson 2016: 40, cf. 397.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. e.g. Taggar-Cohen 2006: 5; Benedetti 1980: 97.

ritual (CTH 471) to purify a person who was given something unholy (*marša-*). In the course of the ritual the AZU-priests treat the ritual client as follows:

KBo 5.2 iii 50-60

When the ritual client comes out of the gate (made) of reed, the AZU-priests sprinkle sweet milk and water of purity upon him. // But the AZU-priests conjure in Hurrian. // At a secret place, a tent is set up. He goes there, he pours water of purity out of a jug and he fills a pitcher and brings it into his house. He throws off the rich garments and he washes himself with water of purity. But the AZU-priest takes the garments (<sup>TÜG</sup>NÍG.LÁM<sup>MEŠ</sup>) for himself.<sup>14</sup>

Especially the last sentences correspond exactly to the quote from Mastigga's ritual. In that ritual the "old woman" gets a sheep as another payment, therefore I think that the garments can also be seen as material compensation though Rita Strauß in her study of Ammiḥatna's ritual suggests another interpretation. She thinks that throwing away the garments is an action to remove one's impurity<sup>15</sup> and the AZU takes the garments only in order to safeguard them in order that the impurity cannot harm others. For my interpretation of Ammiḥatna's ritual I further want to refer to Ḥatiya's ritual (CTH 396), the woman from Kanzapida, who performs a ritual to conciliate Wisuriyanza, the hostile female deity, and to restore a person's well-being (cf. § 2). At the end of the ritual, we read as follows:

KBo 15.25 rev. 22-29

The goddess returns to (her) shrine. When the goddess arrives at the gate, the ritual client bows before the goddess and libates beer. Then I bring the goddess into the shrine, which is her place. ... // The utensils (made) of fired clay and the utensils (made) of wickerwork, which I hold for the ritual, I take them for myself. The ritual client does not take them back for himself.<sup>16</sup>

I think that the parallelism is helpful for the correct interpretation: While the ritual client has to cover the cost of the ritual and therefore must not take back those utensils which he provided for, the ritual practitioner can make use of those materials (either clay work or fine garments) which were not used up in the course of the ritual for herself/himself to gain financial benefits from these materials. In my opinion these passages can be taken as hints of different kinds of compensation for the practitioner's services.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes this compensation is referred to only generally by mentioning the "gift", as we can learn from the 3<sup>rd</sup> tablet of Astu's ritual (CTH 490) to cure a bewitched person:

KUB 45.26++ iii 3'-6'

He takes and he puts a gift upon it. And what seems good to the ritual client, he puts upon it. And the "old woman" takes the gift (NÍG.BA) for herself.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> KBo 5.2 iii 50-60; cf. Strauß 2006: 242 §§ 62-64.

<sup>15</sup> Strauß 2006: 138f.

<sup>16</sup> KBo 15.25 rev. 22-29; cf. Carruba 1966: 6sq., Chrzanowska 2012: §§ 10sq.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Carruba 1966: 44. Another – rather fragmentary – information from the inventory text KBo 16.83+ mentions Arumura, the "chief of the old women" who receives a copper pipe for (performing) a ritual (iii 10), and the priest Sippaziti, who receives a kitchen knife after he had performed a ritual (iii 3sq.); cf. Siegelová 1986: 259, 264sq.; Košak 1982: 88.

<sup>18</sup> KUB 45.26 + KBo 27.159 + KBo 60.81 iii 3'-6'; cf. Görke 2010: 99.

Such examples show that rituals performed by male or female ritual practitioners to purify a bewitched person give some information about the benefits. In most cases this information is given towards the end of the ritual.

But this kind of reward and compensation is not restricted to such rituals only. Also in texts referring to the ceremonies carried out in the course of festivals, we find some additional information. There are references to rations which are given to cultic functionaries during a festival, but it is not always totally certain if these rations are used for offerings, to distribute as food to the participants of the festival or to provide compensation to the priests and others engaged in performing the rituals. Itamar Singer said as follows: “Obviously, the consumption of the food ration may have been preceded or accompanied by various cultic rituals. In addition, specific comestibles or animal parts were appropriated for cultic purposes. However, on the whole, these rations were intended to fill the needs of the numerous cult functionaries assembled in the capital for the celebrations.”<sup>19</sup> Such practices can be observed since the Old Hittite period – e.g. in the KI.LAM festival or in a great festival in Zippalanda (CTH 635). In Zippalanda the *ḫapi*-men and the wolf-men from Salampa, those from Katapa, and those from Kartapaha present parts of a pig e.g. to the cupbearer of the god, the cook of the god, the herald of the god and to the “old woman” of the palace.<sup>20</sup> Later during the festival, the cultic functionaries also receive different kinds of bread.<sup>21</sup> Another (NH) fragment of a festival text from Zippalanda mentions that the SANGA, the *tazelli*-priest, the GUDU<sub>12</sub>-priest and the *ḫamina*-man are rewarded for their priestly work.<sup>22</sup> In another festival in Arinna (CTH 666) various priests are allotted sheep, and also the “old woman” of Hatti and the “old woman” of Arinna are mentioned as recipients of one sheep each.<sup>23</sup> The fragmentary text does not shed light on the detailed context, therefore we do not know for which kind of religious service both “old women” (and the priests, too) have been remunerated with these animals.

Other texts are less explicit in referring to the kind of compensation as they only generally refer to the “reward” of the ritual practitioner for his or her services. In the cultic text about the “Expansion of the Cult of the Deity of the Night” (CTH 481) we read at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> day:

KUB 29.4 iii 8-11

And also inside they sacrifice for well-being before the deity. Then the ritual patron rewards (*piyannaizzi*) the deity, the SANGA-priest and the *katri*-women. The ritual patron bows, and he goes home. Day 4 is finished.<sup>24</sup>

In the text KUB 44.52, the surviving parts of which are similar to the aforementioned ritual, the ritual patron also rewards – that means “pays” – the SANGA-priest, another person engaged in the service and the “women of the deity” for the

<sup>19</sup> Singer 1983: 141.

<sup>20</sup> KBo 2.12 v 11sq.; KBo 20.3 ii 1sq.; cf. Popko 1994: 106-109, see also Marcuson 2016: 85sq.

<sup>21</sup> KBo 16.71+ iv 1ff.; cf. Popko 1994: 116-121.

<sup>22</sup> KUB 41.28 ii 12-14; cf. Popko 1994: 266sq.

<sup>23</sup> KBo 23.92+ iv 9-13; cf. Marcuson 2016: 87.

<sup>24</sup> KUB 29.4 iii 8-11; Miller 2004: 287sq. § 19.

ritual.<sup>25</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> tablet of the *allanuwašši*-ritual of Gizziya (CTH 701.c.VI), the man from Alalah, also shows the reward paid to the ritual practitioners by the ritual client. The long ritual covers several days, and on the perhaps last day we read:

KUB 45.3+ iv 23'-26'

Then at dawn of the fourth day they offer for well-being and ... The ritual client requests to eat and ... finally he rewards the AZU-priest and the singer.<sup>26</sup>

Again – as in the previous examples – there are no further details about the kind of payment, and also the fragmentary state of the text does not allow for further speculation what gifts were presented to the AZU-priest and the singer for their work.

Sometimes the rituals do not specify what goods and in which way they have been given as reward. In Astu's ritual quoted above the ritual client presents a gift, but it is up to him what (and how much) he gives as remuneration to the ritual practitioner (KUB 45.26 + KBo 27.159 + KBo 60.81 iii 4'). We find a comparable situation in some other instances, too. The tablet KBo 17.65 contains a ritual regimen for pregnancy and post-parturition rites (CTH 489), which end with an offering to *Ḫebat*; after this there is a further section describing an offering with a list of materials. It is not clear how these lines refer to the aforementioned actions, so we do not know exactly whether the AZU-priest (cf. e.g. rev. 50, 57) or another ritual practitioner are active in these lines:

KBo 17.65+ rev. 61-64

[...] s/he offers as follows: one *kisri*, two *tarpala* [of ...-coloured wool], [...] of (one) *sūtu* of flour, one *mulati*-loaf of one half handful of flour, four thin loaves [...], [...] oil, a little, and one jug of wine they take. And to him/her basket[s ...], [...] whoever [perfo]rms the offering, him/her the ritual client rewards (with) whatever (seems) good to him.<sup>27</sup>

Priests who give offerings to deities in the course of festivals can be rewarded in the same way, as can be seen in a fragmentary festival text for *Teššub* and *Ḫebat* (KBo 14.13 iii 9-12) or in an example of the *ḫisuwa* festival (CTH 628).

KUB 30.40++ iii 1-10

The king rewards the SANGA-priests (with) whatever (seems) good to him. But the SANGA speaks in front of the god for the king for (his) well-being. "The storm god shall protect the king and the queen together with their children and grandchildren with well-being. And he shall fulfil (their) wish in well-being. For the storm god they celebrate the festival year by year."<sup>28</sup>

This last example – in my opinion – is interesting as it shows that also the king in special cases can give remuneration to the ritual practitioner or priest. This means that we can conclude that there are different ways and possibilities to pay people who provide religious services: They can be employees of the palace or state, or they work either as freelancers or as persons who get some remuneration in addition to their work in the temple.

<sup>25</sup> Miller 204: 426sq.

<sup>26</sup> KUB 45.3+ iv 23'-26'; Bawanypeck / Görke 2010: § 18.

<sup>27</sup> KBo 17.65+ rev. 61-64; Beckman 1983: 145sq.; cf. Fuscagni 2011: § 34.

<sup>28</sup> KUB 30.40++ iii 1-10; cf. Groddek 2011: 116.

### 3. Conclusions about the economic benefits of ritual practitioners

As we have seen from the quoted sources, ritual practitioners, priests and cultic functionaries can be compensated for their work in different ways. As the texts cover a broad range of such individuals – <sup>MUNUS</sup>ŠU.GI, <sup>LÚ</sup>AZU, different kinds of priests and members of the temple personnel, but also persons whose profession is not mentioned – we have to conclude that persons performing religious or/and ritualistic services for others could get some kind of compensation. But as is obvious, the bulk of ritual texts does not mention any compensation. From this I like to draw my first tentative conclusion.

The costs of living of ritual practitioners or cultic functionaries were – in most cases – “paid” by the institution which they were working for as “employees” of a temple. This kind of “regular income” of people engaged in religious services is not mentioned in the texts, which cover two other kinds of income. In some festival texts it is mentioned that the functionaries receive gifts like different kinds of bread or meat as seen above in the great festival of Zippalanda; maybe these gifts are not primarily “remunerations” for the services, but are just contributions to the rations for consumption during the festivals, comparable to other items in the so-called ration lists in festival texts.

There are other passages which refer to the rewarding of the priest, when the king gives some reward to the SANGA-priest during the *hišuwā* festival or when several priests, the “old woman” of Ḫatti and the “old woman” of Arinna receive sheep as payment of their services. If they had performed some extraordinary service – additionally to the regular service in the course of the festival – can only be a guess.<sup>29</sup> Such an interpretation is based on the different purposes of work: Working for (regular) compensation is one thing, but one can increase one’s compensation through strong commitment to work by offering “better” services to the ritual client who then might add some additional present as it “seems good to him”. That the ritual client can decide by himself how much he gives to the priest or ritual practitioner is mentioned several times: Astu is rewarded according to the ritual client’s own discretion, and the same is the case in the birth ritual referred to or in the king’s freedom of choice to reward the SANGA-priest in the *hišuwā* text. What “seems good” to the ritual client obviously depends on the commitment of the ritual practitioner, but may also depend on the financial possibilities of the ritual client. If s/he is poor, the ritual ingredients are small and the ritual of a “poor person” is often shortened<sup>30</sup> with the result that also the ritual practitioner earns less.

But we can go one step further: If the ritual client is free to decide the “amount of payment” we can suppose that the compensation for the ritual practitioners – at

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<sup>29</sup> The distinction of the purpose of the gifts is not always clear; KBo 9.91 rev. B 1-4 (CTH 241.5) is an inventory text that mentions several sickles distributed to the priests of Arinna, to the priest of an unnamed town, to the man from the town Hallapiya and to the one who wins the horse race during the AN.TAḪ.ŠUM festival in Arinna. Siegelová 1986: 330 thinks that these items are provided as a remuneration to those people because they were engaged in the festival; cf. also Košak 1982: 27.

<sup>30</sup> Hutter 2010: 403-405.



least to some degree – depends on the negotiation between the two parties involved in ritual encounters, especially in those rituals which are performed for an individual: The rituals of Astu, Ḫatiya, Ammiḫatna, Gizziya and of the unnamed agent in the birth ritual – irrespective of the different contents – are performed for the treatment of individuals who at the end “pay” for the services. This payment provides a material basis of income of the ritual practitioners – explicitly mentioned are sheep, precious garments, some utensils for daily life or – more generally – gifts. The evidence is too scant to deduce if such compensation was enough to cover the cost of living in Hittite society; nevertheless two observations can be drawn.

Mastigga was the recipient of a sheep just like the “old woman” of Ḫatti and the “old woman” of Arinna in the festival text. The festival text also mentions in the same context that the SANGA-priest of Telipinu, the SANGA-priest of Ištar, the SANGA-priest of Zilipuri and the SANGA-priest of a deity whose name is lost each received two sheep as payment, while both “old women” only received one sheep each (KBo 23.92+ iv 9’-13’). This inequality of payment can also be seen in other cases when female workers are paid less than male workers in Hittite society. According to Hittite Laws, wages for women (either slave or free) are only half of the wages for men (HL § 24, 150; cf. 158a).<sup>31</sup> Asking about the “monetary” value of this income, we can tentatively refer to the Hittite Laws. Mastigga and others received – as mentioned – one sheep for the services. The price of a sheep in HL § 179 is set at one shekel, which corresponds to the wage of a woman during two months of harvest (HL § 158); but we must also compare this income with the payment of a physician for treating a free man, which is three shekels (HL § 10) or two shekels for treating a slave (HL § 10). This leads to the conclusion that working as an “old woman” is clearly better paid than working as an unskilled worker during harvest time. Still the payment for this ritual service is lower than that of a professional physician. Between these two positions we can deduce that working as an “old woman” brings enough compensation to cover the cost of living, also having the possibility that by adding more commitment also higher wages can be negotiated as the ritual client can “reward as it seems good to him”. Maybe such stronger commitment to work is also expressed by those *MUNUS.MESŠU.GI* who are said to have authored several rituals like Mastigga, Tunawiya or Kuwattalla. In that case a higher “commitment” might have also raised the reputation of such women, increasing also their wages and compensations for their work. Kuwattalla who received a land grant<sup>32</sup> can be considered as a financially well-off ritual practitioner. Mastigga’s payment with a sheep and a garment would also put her – on the economic level – in the upper class. But at the same time, such an interpretation of ritual practitioners who are financially in a stable position should not automatically be taken as a secured monetary situation of all women and men performing rituals or offering religious services.

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<sup>31</sup> See further Imparati 1999: 356.

<sup>32</sup> KBo 5.7 rev. 46-48; cf. Rüter / Wilhelm 2012: 238sq.

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