CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF THE TWELVE GODS
THE NEAR EAST AND GREECE TO CA. 350 B.C.

Anatolia (Asia Minor)

A group of twelve Hittite gods is known from a cuneiform text as well as from the rock carvings of Yazilikaya (Yazilikaya 1-2). The Twelve appear twice at Yazilikaya: In the larger chamber (A), they walk at the end of the procession of gods which is led by Tešub, the ‘Weather God’ \(^1\) (figure 123). In the smaller chamber (B) they are shown by themselves, walking in procession (figure 122). The Hittite Twelve are all male, all dressed alike in a kilt and a high, pointed hat, and apparently all armed with a sickle-shaped sword which each carries over his right shoulder.

The text prescribes a ritual to be performed at a crossroads. \(^2\) Other gods are named, Nergal twice, the Sun God, and the ‘Weather God’, but the connection of these with the Twelve Gods is not clear.

The Hittite Twelve are an anonymous group of armed gods without individual distinguishing characteristics. Their position at the end of the procession marks them as minor divinities. In these respects they are quite different from the Twelve Gods of Greece and Rome. They do have possible descendants in the Lycian Twelve depicted on a series of votive reliefs of Roman Imperial times (Komba 1-25). \(^3\)

At the end of the fifth century B.C., a precinct of the Twelve Gods of the Agora or marketplace existed in the center of Xanthos in Lycia, where the Pillar of Xanthos (actually a Lycian pillar-tomb) stood. \(^4\) In

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O. Weinreich also included without endorsement a group of twelve gods which G. Furlani excerpted from a treaty of Suppiluliuma: *Zwölfgötter 822 E 81*; Furlani, *Religione degli Hittiti*, Bologna 1936, 50. These are named gods unlike the Twelve of Yazilikaya.

\(^3\) The two sets were connected long ago by O. Weinreich, *Zwölfgötter 795 B 51*; K. Bittel, *Yazilikaya*, Leipzig 1941, 52 and note 3.

\(^4\) The Pillar, also known as the Stele of Xanthos, was discovered in 1838 by C. Fellows, who copied and published the inscriptions: TransRSL 2nd series 1 (1843) 254-72. Its sculptures are now divided between the British Museum in London and the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. O. Benndorf’s publication in ÖJh 3 (1900) 98-120 is now superseded by P. Demargne, *Les piliers funéraires* [= Fouilles de Xanthos I], Paris 1958, 77-105, figs. 9-16, pls. 25-44. Cf. also P. Demargne, REA 62 (1960) 41-47; ILN 243 (1963) 512-13; *EEA* 7 (1966) 1226-28 sv. *Xanthos*. 
Roman times, the Pillar was situated to the north of the agora, separated from it by a portico. How the area was laid out when the pillar was erected, the French excavators could not determine because of the extensive Roman and Byzantine building activities, but they postulated that it might simply have been an open space.⁵

The Pillar is dated to the end of the fifth century B.C. by its Lycian texts, which refer to Artaxerxes (II) who became ruler of Persia in 405 B.C. and to Tissaphernes who died about 395 B.C.⁶ At this time Xanthos was the chief city of western Lycia.⁷

The inscriptions on the Pillar commemorate in Lycian and in Greek a local dynast, either Kheriga (Gergis) or Kherei, the son of Harpagos.⁸ In the Greek text (T 1) the dynast claims that no other Lycian has dedicated such a stele to the Twelve Gods of the Agora in their temenos and boasts of the victories he has won with the aid of Athena (not the Greek goddess but her Lycian equivalent Maliya) and the trophies he has set up to Zeus. The two Lycian texts, which occupy the rest of the pillar’s faces, apparently recount his achievements at greater length.⁹ E. Laroche has recently proposed that the Lycian words restored as ûte mahânaha tusfiti in line a 12 might be the equivalent of Dodeka Theoi (the Twelve Gods) in the Greek text.¹⁰

The pillar tomb itself is a native Lycian form of burial monument.¹¹ According to P. Demargne, the Pillar of Xanthos once supported a portrait of the dynast enthroned between lions.¹² Below this, at the top of the shaft, was the burial receptacle, the sides of which were decorated with

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⁵ Demargne, Les piliers funéraires, 81-82, fig. 9.
⁷ J. Zahle in Actes du Colloque sur la Lycie Antiqué [ = BIFEA 27], Paris 1980, 45. The cities of Lycia have been the subject of a recent survey by W.W. Wurster and M. Wörre: W.W. Wurster in Actes du Colloque, 29-36.
⁹ For the current understanding of the Lycian texts see W.A.P. Childs, AnatSt 31 (1981) 63-65; E. Laroche, Actes du Colloque sur la Lycie Antiqué 1-6 (names of deities).
¹⁰ In Actes du Colloque sur la Lycie Antiqué, 1-2.
¹¹ For a general discussion of Lycian tomb types and their distribution see J. Zahle in Actes du Colloque sur la Lycie Antiqué, 29-36.