

Raising a sceptre: confession-narratives from Lydia and Phrygia

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Among the 700-odd published inscriptions relating to the religious life of Lydia and immediately adjacent areas during the Roman period are some 120-30 *stelae* bearing what have traditionally been termed 'confession-texts'.¹ Their overt function is to record in writing an intervention by a god or gods into human life, often on the occasion of a religious fault or sin committed by the person by whom, or on whose behalf, they were set up. As such, many, if not indeed all, seem originally to have been erected in the vicinity of rural or small-town temples, dedicated to Anaitis, the Mother, Men/Meis in his various aspects, 'Apollo', Zeus (Sabazios), and a variety of other divinities.² Within New-Testament studies and the older comparative history of religions, particularly with regard to the history of confession, some of them have long been familiar.³ Over the past quarter-century, however, the group has been re-discovered by epigraphers and by social and religious historians of Anatolia. The documents from the Middle-Upper Hermus valley, the main centre, were conveniently collected by P. Herrmann in *Tituli Asiae Minoris* V.1 (1981); a quantity of important new texts appeared in the late 1980s and early 1990s; G. Petzl has produced an admirable, illustrated edition of the entire corpus;⁴ and the wider religious context in Lydia has now been fully documented by M. de la Paz de Hoz.⁵

This notable epigraphic effort has already stimulated a considerable amount of synthetic work: on apparently analogous institutions known from Hittite documents, such as the 'confes-

- 1 Terms such as 'confession-texts', *vel sim.* are modern; the texts themselves speak simply of the act of writing, most explicitly on a *stela* (στηλλογράφειν). To avoid wearying the reader with circumspection, I continue to use the by-now traditional term.
- 2 The clearest examples seem to be the texts from the *temenos* of Apollo Lairbēnos in the *chōra* of Motella in Phrygia, mostly published by W. H. Buckler *et al.* in *MAMA* IV (1933) nos. 279-89 (with a map and plan on p. 98), and those from the temple of Anaitis and Men Tiamou at Kula; but several others were certainly or probably found in *temenē*. A brief account of the early trade in such *stelae*, which were caught up in the Turkish antiquities-fever triggered by the 'rape of Myrina' by Pottier and Reinach in 1882-83, is provided by I. Diakonoff, "Artemidi Anaiti anesthesen. The Anaitis dedications in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden at Leyden and related material from eastern Lydia. A reconsideration," *BABesch* 54 (1979) 159 f. The illegal trade in Lydian *stelae* continues unabated.
- 3 F. Steinleitner, *Die Beicht in Zusammenhange mit der sakralen Rechtspflege in der Antike: ein Beitrag zu näheren Kenntnis klein-asiatisch-orientalischer Kulte der Kaiserzeit* (Munich 1913); R. Pettazzoni, *La confessione dei peccati* (Rome 1929-36) vol. 3, 90-116; P. Frisch, "Über die lydisch-phrygischen Sühneinschriften und die 'Confessiones' des Augustinus," *EpigrAnat* 2 (1983) 41-45; a good comparative analysis by H.-J. Klauck, "Die kleinasiatischen Beichtinschriften und das Neue Testament," in H. Cancik *et al.* (edd.), *Geschichte — Tradition — Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Tübingen 1996) 63-87.
- 4 G. Petzl, *Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens* (= *EpigrAnat* 22 [1994]) [hereafter *BI*], with the two new texts and brief supplement in "Neue Inschriften aus Lydien, II," *EpigrAnat* 28 (1997) 69-77. He omits one or two closely-related texts, such as *CIG* 4142 = *SEG* 47.1751; M.-L. Cremer and J. Nollé, *Chiron* 18 (1988) 203-5 no. 2 (A.D. 188/9); H. Malay, *Researches in Lydia, Mysia and Aiolis* (Ergänzungsbände zu *TAM* 23 = *Denkschr. Öst. Akad., phil.-hist. Kl.* 279, 1999) 102 f. no. 112 fig. 113. Note also Petzl's recent essay, "Die Beichtinschriften im römischen Kleinasien und der Fromme und Gerechte Gott," *Nordrhein-Westfälische Akad. Wiss., Geisteswissenschaften, Vorträge* G 355 (Opladen 1998). Petzl's awareness of the physical appearance of the *stelae* and their reliefs is especially to be welcomed.
- 5 M. Paz de Hoz, *Die lydischen Kulte im Lichte der griechischen Inschriften* (Asia Minor Studien 36, 1999). Unless otherwise stated, I cite the texts by their numbers both in Petzl's and de Hoz's corpora, e.g., 'Petzl 44 = de Hoz 63.33'. In view of the accessibility of these publications, except where the Greek is indispensable I cite a translation only.