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The Upper Agora of Sagalassos during Late Antiquity: Transformation of an Ideological Centre*

In Antiquity, contemporary public space was used, and that of the earlier past manipulated, as part of the construction of identities[1]. As the beating heart of the civic centre, which provided the stage for the familiar fusion of commerce, politics and cult that characterised ancient urban life, the *agora* was the space for the creation, display and perpetuation of a community's identity[2]. Urban development, as manifest in this square, was one of the tools used in this process[3]. According to the theoretical framework for the study of space proposed by Hillier and Hanson[4], the way that buildings are placed in space, their relationships as well as their architectural contexts, reflect the processes and the elements that shape society. Therefore, the study of a public space like the *agora* provides a means to understand deeper changes in the structure of ancient societies.

The establishment of the built-up landscape of ancient cities was obviously not a single event but a long-term process with shifting focal points and nodes of activity that were continuously developing and taking on new negotiated meanings, as the values and aesthetics of society changed around them. The state of the *agora*, as unearthed by archaeologists, is therefore the product of centuries of monumental accretion, making it an excellent vehicle for a diachronic study of urban development. Moreover, if we accept that the construction, preservation and erasure of monuments were wilful acts – the result of decision and compromise – we are in a position to approach the rationale behind the dynamics of urbanisation that these acts represent, as well as the identity of the community responsible for it[5]. Identity is understood here as cultural identity, »the self-conscious recognition by a group of individuals of commonalities that emerge through their conformity to similar ways of acting and being […] the possession of similar cultural traits, such as language, styles of dress, personal adornment, material objects and particular ways of behaving«[6]. Investigation of the monuments on and around the *agora*, the public signboard of the local community, should allow us to distil this collective cultural identity.

The Upper Agora of the Pisidian city of Sagalassos (Southwest Turkey) was such a dynamic space with a rich collection of images, inscribed texts and monuments that reflected and contributed to the construction of local and regional identities. It was the place where, through the use of these monuments, images and symbols, these identities were acted out in a memory theatre that served to remind the community at large of who they were[7]. Consequently, one can identify the public square as the ideological centre of the community. The current appearance of the Upper Agora was largely determined by the urbanistic developments of the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods (**fig. 1**). They rendered the settlement of Sagalassos a full-blown *polis*, assuming all the traits of a Hellenic-styled city-state, which under Roman rule became the first city of Pisidia. Like in every *polis*, the public square served as the heart of the nucleated settlement where all central functions of the city-state were represented: political meetings in the Bouleuterion, representing autonomy, and a market building for the storage and exchange of food supplies as a symbol of autarky[8]. Civic religious practice – often designated as *polis* religion[9] – was another major component of this *polis* identity. Together with the political and economic structures required for the management of the public good, multiple ritual foci were concentrated in the urban centre for the performance of the poliad cults. As a centre of public cult, the *agora* not only provided a stage for ritual purposes, like processions, banquets and sacrifices, but it was also dominated by sanctuaries, as exemplified by the Tychaion. Real and imagined history featuring mythological and historic figures,

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1 Alcock, Archaeologies.
2 Hölscher, Urban Spaces.
3 Raja, Regional Identity.
4 Hillier/Hanson, Social Logic of Space.
5 Zanker, City as Symbol.
6 Graham, Material Culture 159.
7 Talloen, Communal Identity.
8 Talloen, Communal Identity. Recent research has revealed that we are most probably dealing with a more polyvalent building, rather than one with an exclusive market function (see Poblome, Digging Markets).
9 E. g. Kindt, Polis Religion.

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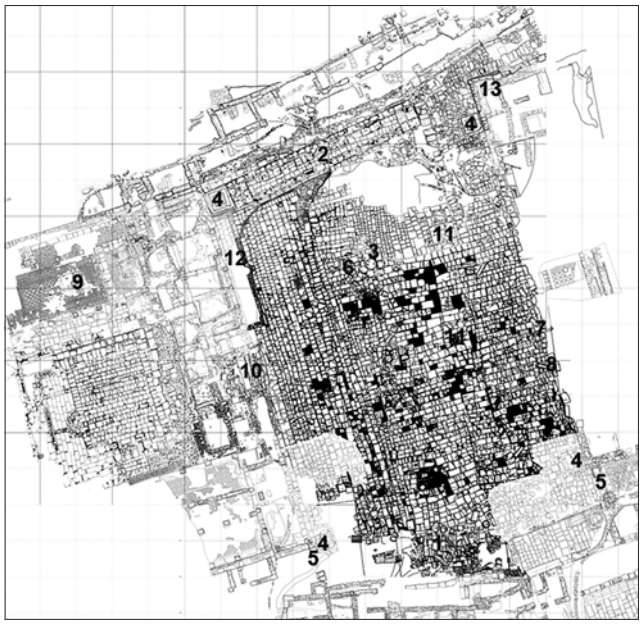

Fig. 1 Plan of Upper Agora (situation in 2016): **1** Tychaion. – **2** Antonine Nymphaeum. – **3** Perseus monument. – **4** Honorific columns. – **5** Arches of Claudius. – **6** Statue of Caracalla. – **7** Statue of Constans. – **8** Statue of Constantius II. – **9** Bouleuterion-basilica. – **10** Staircase. – **11** Dismantled stepped monuments. – **12** Byzantine fountain. – **13** North-East Building. – (Drawing by the Sagalassos Project).

as well as honorific titles given by overlords, were equally part of that identity, as will be demonstrated below.

Although the late antique Upper Agora was to a large extent dominated by monumental buildings and honorific monuments from the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial past, it was not just a museum during Late Antiquity. Susan Alcock has pointed out that »the museum« is a problematic concept for thinking about ancient spaces such as the *agora*, because it runs the risk of overemphasizing monuments and downplaying the importance of day-to-day activities[10]. How these monuments were conceived and treated during the last centuries of Antiquity is central to our understanding of the late antique *agora*.

It is commonplace that Late Antiquity can be characterised as a period of change that witnessed the metamorphosis of the classical Roman Empire into a Christian Byzantine one between the 4th and 7th centuries. This was, for a large part, the result of an ideological revolution, namely, the replacement of ancient ancestral cults by the monotheistic religion of Christianity, which also impacted on urban life: the participation in (religious) festivals and spectacles, the use of civic institutions such as the gymnasion, and so on. Consequently, Christianity and the classical city are often deemed incompatible. According to scholars like Mogens Hansen[11], the *polis*, with its omnipresent polytheistic cults, was a wholly pagan institution in which Christians could not take part. The rise of Christianity would thus imply a radical break between the pagan and Christian city, a »total overhaul of traditional culture and society« as Aude Busine recently expressed it[12].

The aim of this paper is to re-evaluate this statement based on the results of a research project which focuses on the development of the Upper Agora at Sagalassos over the *longue durée*. The project approaches the square as an architectural mirror of the processes of urbanisation and community formation that occurred at the site. More particularly, the paper examines the life history of a collection of monuments that defined the public space of the *agora* during Late Antiquity. The attitudes towards them reflect both aspects of collective memory: i) the way society remembered its past, and ii) their function in late antique society[13]. Any radical break between the pagan and Christian city should therefore translate itself in a fundamental change of the city's square and the monuments that shaped it.

First, an overview is given of the different buildings and structures on and around the *agora* which embodied the ideological components that made up the pagan identity portrayed by the city. This is followed by a discussion regarding the impact on the *agora* of the progressive abandonment of the traditional cults and their infrastructure during Late Antiquity, causing the loss of the old identity. Finally, this paper illustrates how the Christians appropriated this ideological space and made it compatible with the practice of their religion.

Components of the Agora's Pagan Identity

In the polytheistic environment of the ancient world, cults and myths were ubiquitous. At the Upper Agora of Sagalassos they were prominently represented by installations and sculptures. The perhaps most ideologically-charged monument on the *agora* was a relatively small sanctuary (**fig. 2**), built during the early 1st century AD in the middle of its south side, following the enlargement of the Hellenistic square during the second half of the 1st century BC[14]. It was located on the axis of the two southern entrances to the square, ensuring maximum visibility and prominence. The monument had a square canopy roof with four concave sides, which were decorated with leaf motifs, carried by four columns on top of square pedestals. The interior frieze of the cornices was adorned with floral ornaments consisting of a central acanthus bush from which tendrils sprout in opposite directions[15]. The shrine housed a centrally placed base on which an effigy of the deity would originally have been located. It could be identified as a Tychaion or the temple of the goddess of Fortune, based on its representation on civic coinage (**fig. 3**)[16].

10 Alcock, Archaeologies 53-55.
11 Hansen, Polis 138. – See also Liebeschuetz, Decline 247 f.
12 Busine, Christianization 2.
13 Saradi-Mendelovici, Christian Attitudes.
14 Talloen/Poblome, Control Excavations. – Talloen, Tychaion.
15 Vandeput, Decoration 43-45, 195 f.
16 Talloen/Waelkens, Apollo 188-191. – Talloen, Tychaion.

Fig. 2 View of Tychaion from the north. – (Photo M. Waelkens).

The Tyche of Sagalassos was the symbol *par excellence* of the civic community, representing its well-being, and her shrine would have been one of the distinguishing signboards of the city, a focus of ritual activity during every civic occasion. Its construction was possibly the result of efforts to enhance local identity, an increasingly important social paradigm in the globalizing context of the Roman Empire[17]. The enduring importance of this modest shrine for the identity of the city is indicated by its appearance on civic coin issues during the 3rd century, one of only three buildings to be depicted on the rich coin production of Sagalassos[18].

On the opposite, northern side of the *agora*, the growing cultic importance of Dionysos in the city during the Roman Imperial period was underlined by the construction of the Antonine Nymphaeum, a monumental fountain consisting of a single-storey aediculated façade above a tall podium

Fig. 3 Reverse of civic bronze coin depicting the Tychaion, dating to the reign of Claudius II. – (Photo courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group: www.cngcoins.com).

17 Revell, Imperialism.

18 The coin types issued during the reign of Claudius II depict several variants of the monument housing the statue of Tyche: a tetrastyle shrine with a baldachin roof (Levante/Weiss, SNG France no. 1852) or with an arched gable (Levante/Weiss, SNG France no. 1850-1851), or a distyle shrine (Levante/Weiss, SNG France no. 1849). The other buildings featuring on the local bronze issues are an alleged shrine of the Dioskouroi and a temple of the imperial cult (Talloen, Cult 56, 176).

Fig. 4 View of Antonine Nymphaeum. – (Photo B. Vandermeulen).

Fig. 5 Statue of Dionysos and satyr from west aedicule. – (Photo B. Vandermeulen).

with a large basin in front, flanked by two lateral *aediculae* (**fig. 4**). Two colossal statue groups, representing a drunken Dionysos supported by a satyr, erected in these corner-*aediculae*, belonged to the original furnishing (**fig. 5**)[19]. That these sculptures were not purely decorative is demonstrated by the architectural decoration of the monument, including representations of the *thyrsos* – the staff of Dionysos – on the pillars of the back wall, as well as theatre masks, bunches of grapes and *kantharoi* on the cassettes of the *aediculae*. They form a coherent iconographic programme that substantiates the dedication of the building to the god of wine and fertility and places the water supply under his protection[20]. It also constituted an essential element in the identity of the community as indicated by a coin type representing the statue of Dionysos, which was probably issued for its inauguration during the reign of Marcus Aurelius[21].

A ritual installation that was frequently present on the *agoras* of Pisidia was a pillar-monument carrying an *astragalos*-oracle inscription, which served as the base for a statue of its tutelary deity, Hermes[22]. These oracles were believed to reveal the divine will through the random fall of a handful of dice. Those who wished to consult the oracle would throw five dice in the shape of astragali, the four-sided knucklebones of an animal. Fifty-six combinations were available and a verse appropriate to each combination was carved on the

19 Waelkens et al., 1994-1995 Excavations 136-162.
20 Talloen, Cult 220.
21 Levante/Weiss, SNG France no. 1774.
22 For a thorough discussion of such oracles see Nollé, Losorakel.

Fig. 6 Base with text of *astragalos*-oracle. – (Photo M. Waelkens).

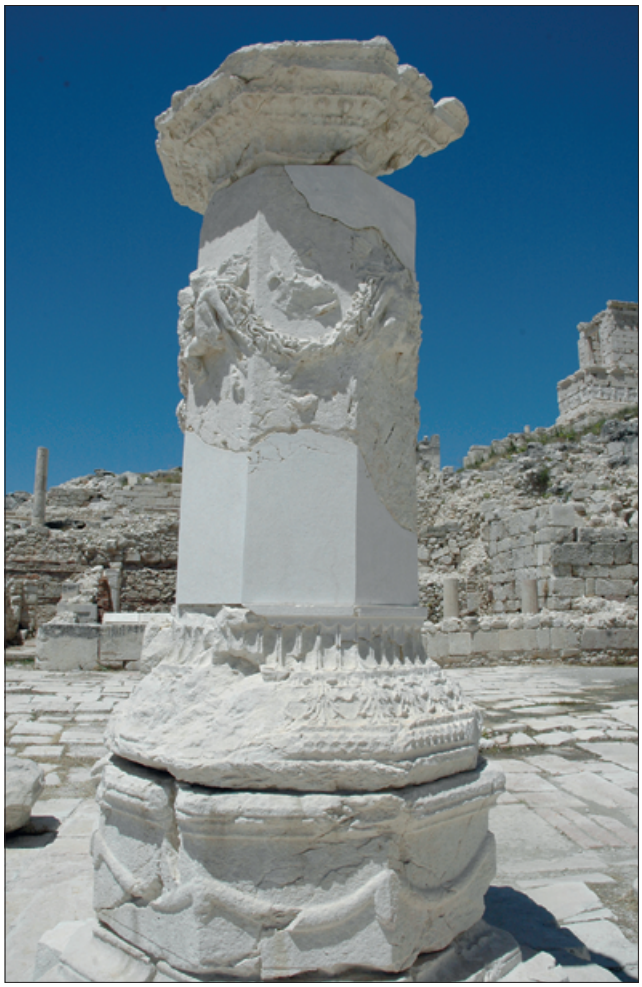

Fig. 7 Perseus monument in centre of Upper Agora. – (Photo P. Talloen).

oracle stone itself. The user had to read off the lines to which the dice referred him and work out the message of the verse. Such an *astragalos*-oracle was found in a secondary context near the north-west city gate of Sagalassos where it had been incorporated into the late antique fortification walls (**fig. 6**)[23]. Its original location is not known, but judging by examples from the nearby Pisidian cities of Kitanaura, Kremna, Prostanna and Termessos where such oracles have been recorded on the local *agoras*[24], the Sagalassian example most probably originated from the nearby city square. Located on the public square where the populace could consult them, these monuments to human credulity were a central feature of community life in the region during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The responses that the gods offer in the verses of the oracle are those concerning business and travel and appear to be directed at the public who frequented the *agora*.

The construct of communal identity also involved the development of foundation myths intended to reveal the city's Hellenic roots or highlight its glorious past, and provided it with distinct cultural and religious traditions. An elaborate statue base, situated in the middle of the square and dating to around AD 100, features the busts of the Greek hero Perseus and the goddess Athena, with the head of the gorgon Medusa on the sides of the shaft (**fig. 7**)[25]. Its presence demonstrates that these local mythologies and traditions were also materially translated on the *agora*. The statue that originally stood on top of this prominent monument is unknown but the images on its base suggest a link with a mythological city-founder, possibly Perseus himself, who was a popular city-founder in southern Anatolia[26], or his grandfather Lakedaimon, who was commonly depicted on local civic coinage as the ancestor of the Sagalassians[27].

23 Nollé, Losorakel 54-58.
24 Talloen, Cult 216 f.
25 Waelkens, 1992 Excavation 15. The reliefs are badly damaged but the drawings made by the Lanckoronki team in the late 19th c. (Lanckoronski, Pisidien 138) clearly allow the bust on the east side wearing a Phrygian cap and a harpa behind his shoulders to be identified as Perseus, while the helmeted figure on the west side can only be identified as Athena in view of the presence of Perseus and Medusa.
26 Fontenrose, Python 279 f.
27 For the civic bronze issues featuring the standing hero Lakedaimon wearing a helmet and a cuirass, and holding Nike/phiale and a sword/spear, see Levante/Weiss, SNG France no. 1750 (Caligula), 1755 (Nerva), 1764-1765 (Hadrian), 1779 (Marcus Aurelius), 1789 (Caracalla), 1799 (Macrinus), 1805 (Diadumenianus), 1814 (Severus Alexander), 1815 (Maximinus), 1821 (Philip II), 1823 (Etruscilla), 1841 (Gallienus).

Fig. 8 South-west and south-east gates and honorific columns. – (Photo P. Talloen).

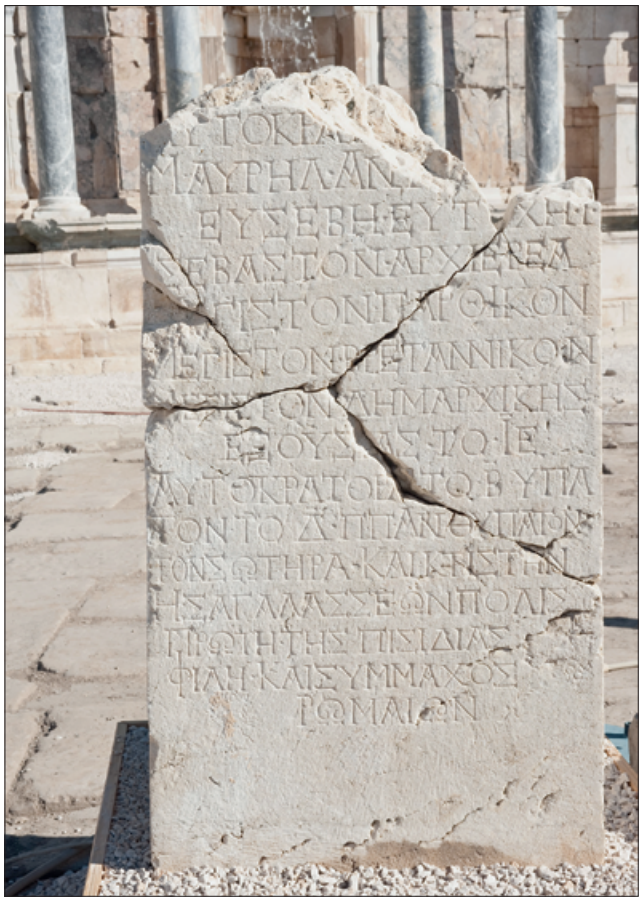

Fig. 9 Base of statue to emperor Caracalla. – (Photo B. Vandermeulen).

Monumental writing identifies local elite families as those in charge of this ideology, through their financing of constructions on and around the *agora*, which made them in fact the new founders of the city. Titus Flavius Severianus Neon was one of the city's leading citizens and was honoured by *boule* and *demos* as »founder«[28]. For this and other forms of benefaction, members of the local elite received increasingly conspicuous forms of honour in exchange, like the honorific columns erected in the four corners of the square (**fig. 8**). Thus, the *agora*, a meeting place of the popular assembly, also assumed a role as a display case for the elite, becoming a stage on which the leading members of society could compete for symbolic capital on which they relied as a source of social empowerment.

Besides numerous honorific statues for meritorious citizens, divine images were also erected on the *agora*, often to embellish the square. A statue of Eros on the Upper Agora, for example, was dedicated by the *agoranomos* Publius Iulius Diogenianus to the fatherland during the 2nd century[29].

So far, this paper has highlighted the impact of local socio-cultural developments on the monumental display of the *agora* during the Roman Imperial period. Yet, the people of Sagalassos were of course not blind to the political realities of the Roman Empire. In order to accommodate the order of power, numerous monuments were put up to emperors or their representatives, characterising the *agora* as a platform for contact with the imperial authorities. Roman power and its personification, the emperor, were most noticeably absorbed into civic life through the imperial cult with its plethora of imperial sanctuaries, images and festivals[30]. The Upper Agora was one of the main venues for this veneration as attested by the two gates in the shape of a triumphal arch that were built in honour of the emperor Claudius at the south-east and south-west entrances to the square, which carried his statue (**fig. 8**). Other imperial images erected on or near the *agora* during the first three centuries included those of Vespasian, Hadrian, and Caracalla, while provincial governors like Marcus Lollius and Sextus Frontinus were equally represented[31].

Through such responses to external stimuli, the square was geared up to establish the city as the regional centre. The success of Sagalassos in this strategy is reflected by the titles

28 Waelkens et al., City of Dreams 97.
29 Talloen, Cult 216 and n. 401.
30 Talloen/Waelkens, Apollo.
31 Eich et al., Inschriften.

it received from Roman officials: *proteia* as first city of Pisidia and the title *neokoros*, pointing to its status as temple warden of the imperial cult[32]. Much vaunted on its monuments and coinage, they allowed it to assert its primacy over the other cities of the region. They are proclaimed, for instance, on the base of the effigy of Caracalla erected on the Upper Agora in 212 by »the city of the Sagalassians, first of Pisidia, friend and ally of the Romans« (**fig. 9**), possibly linked to the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, which granted Roman citizenship to all free men in the Roman Empire[33].

Through this overview, it is clear that traditional religion was part and parcel of the physical environment of the *agora*. Together with monuments for local notables and distant rulers, it served to create an identity for the city as a democratised *polis* with a glorious past, pious towards its gods, with a beneficent ruling elite, and enjoying imperial privileges which made it the most prominent city of the region. The conversion of this ideological space into a Christian one will have required a substantial and protracted effort by the city officials, as demonstrated in the next section.

Gradual Loss of Old Identity

The beginning of the 4th century marked the start of an age of change for the identity of the civic community as displayed on the Upper Agora, one in which Christianity came to play an increasingly important role. It was during the early 4th century that Sagalassos lost its prominence in the region, being replaced by Pisidian Antioch, the capital of the newly-founded *provincia Pisidia*[34]. The propagation of its *proteia* and *neokoros* titles well into the 4th century suggests that the city was trying to hold on to its former glory as centre of the Pisidian *koinon* and regional seat of the imperial cult after this demotion[35]. Yet these titles no longer featured after the middle of the 4th century, indicating that Sagalassos had to give up its status as first city of the region and centre of emperor worship. This loss of centrality in administrative and religious matters must have had a profound impact. Quite apart from the prestige, these titles made a real difference to the city's legal position and tax status[36]. However, there are some hints that it received a kind of consolation prize with the status of metropolis. The Upper Agora features honours for the emperors Constantius II and Constans in the form of two statue bases which were set up by the »metropolis of the Sagalassians« along the east side of the square (**fig. 10**)[37].

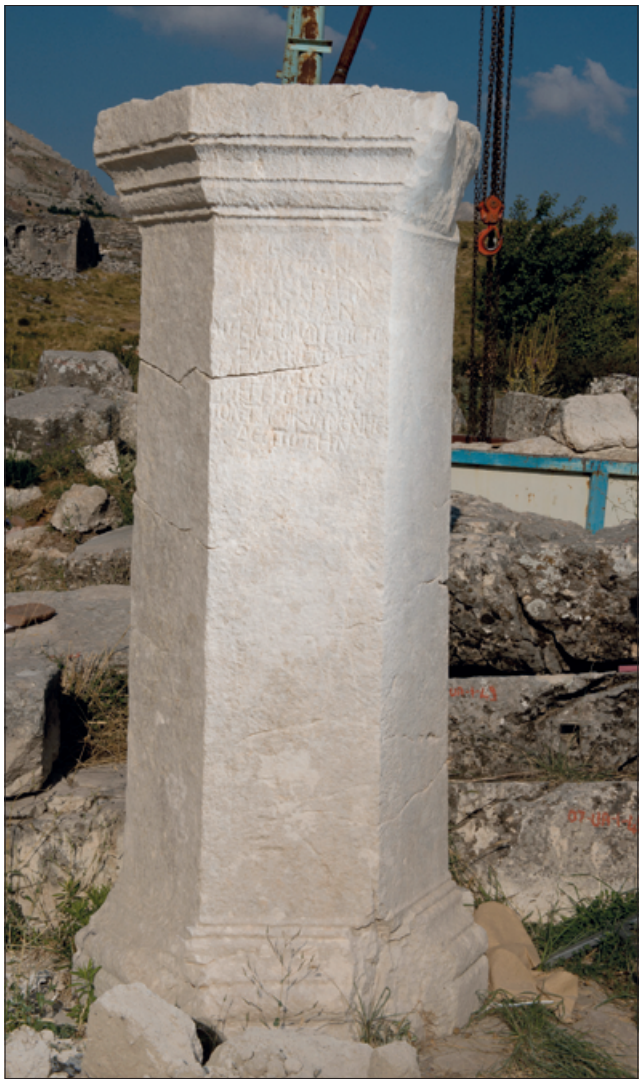

Fig. 10 Base of statue to emperor Constans. – (Photo B. Vandermeulen).

Metropolis was originally an honorary title, singling out a city from among the many that might aspire to pre-eminence within the province. As such, a single province could have more than one metropolis[38]. Since Sagalassos did not use this title previously, these instances of imperial veneration may indicate the city's continuing policy of »rewarding« the emperor's grant of privileges through the erection of a monument. Another honouring act that can perhaps be seen in this light is the rededication of the south-west honorific column. Originally erected in one of the four corners of the *agora* for a local benefactor (see above), an inscription on its pedestal in-

32 Talloen, Cult 314-317.
33 Talloen, Cult 172 f.
34 Christol/Drew-Bear, Antioch.
35 Sagalassos is one of the latest-dated neocorate cities of the Empire, attested as »twice neocorate« on milestones renovated in the early reign of Constantius II (Burrell, Neokoroi 268, 303). The continuing vigor of the imperial cult in the Christian empire of the second Flavian dynasty still permitted the foundation of new temples to the cult, as seen at Hispellum in Umbria. This makes it unlikely that the use of the city's neokoros title on the monuments of this Christian emperor could have struck people as inappropriate. It demonstrates that there was still a connection felt between a city's political expression of loyalty to the regime and the imperial cult (Milner, Oinoanda 197).
36 See above n. 33.
37 Devijver and Waelkens amended Kōnstan on the north base to Kōnstan[tion] (Devijver/Waelkens, Inscriptions 117 no. 3). There are, however, no letters missing on the line. Moreover, Kōnstan is an accusative case-form of Kōnstans, as attested for example at Corinth (Kent, Inscriptions no. 510). This would mean that we are dealing here with a statue base for Constans and one for Constantius II, rather than two bases for the latter.
38 Roueché, Metropolis 577.

dicates how it was rededicated to the emperor Constantius II and undoubtedly came to carry his effigy[39]. It was to be the first of a number of rededications of existing monuments to address the needs of a changing world.

In spite of its honours for militant Christian emperors like Constantius II and Constans, the city must still have been officially pagan with thriving traditional sanctuaries, as suggested by the statue erected for a governor of Pisidia during the second half of the 4th century. This reused statue base, found along the eastern edge of the square, carried in its second use a statue of a governor named Panhellenios[40]. The epigram is as follows: »The *Boule* and the *Demos* have placed you, governor Panhellenios, there, where the *temenos* of all the gods is located. Not only the gods, but also the Tyche of Sagalassos, who is watching you, friend of the blessed, from nearby, rejoice in this«.

This epigram refers to the »*temenos* of all the gods«, possibly a kind of pantheon that has not yet been located on or in the immediate vicinity of the *agora*. Moreover, it locates the honorific statue of the governor in the vicinity of the Tyche of Sagalassos underneath the baldachin shrine on the south side of the public square. These references not only imply the continuing existence of both sanctuaries at this time, but also testify to civic pride of these shrines; something that would not have been the case for derelict and abandoned buildings. Therefore, the traditional ritual foci continued to be points of reference for the civic community into the second half of the 4th century.

Notably, a few years later, probably in 378[41], the Tychaion was converted into an imperial honorific monument. Its altar was then removed, and a reused statue base, which was rededicated consecutively to two empresses, replaced the original base and the divine effigy it carried. The first was most likely Constantia (374-383), daughter of the emperor Constantius II, and the second was Aelia Eudoxia (395-404), wife of the emperor Arcadius. The two pedestals carrying columns on the north side had honorific inscriptions for the emperor Gratian (367-383), husband of Constantia, and his co-ruler Valentinian II (375-392)[42]. The small shrine could easily have been dismantled but instead the authorities opted to reuse it, not only making use of its prominent location but also its ideological connotations: the personages honoured there were responsible for the well-being of the city. An empress now replaced the original protector of the city, the goddess Tyche. Furthermore, the reuse of the Tychaion to display portraits of contemporary rulers confirmed the continued importance of the *agora* as the representational centre of the city.

Even if this »usurpation« of the Tychaion was not a large-scale project, only involving the removal of the altar and replacement of the cult statue of Tyche by that of an empress, as well as carving three short inscriptions – all of which could be achieved very rapidly – it was a big deal! The conversion of one of its most prominent sanctuaries – the signboard of the city – constituted a decisive moment in the history of Sagalassos, signalling the official abolishment of its pagan character and the rise of Christianity. It was to be the starting point for a process of de-sacralisation involving several pagan shrines in the vicinity of the square and elsewhere in the city. The nearby Doric temple, for example, was converted into a watchtower and incorporated into the new city fortifications[43].

Another ritual installation that was reused in the newly-built fortifications was the *astragalos*-oracle, as indicated by its find spot near the north-west city gate[44]. Along with the ban on sacrifice, laws were issued in the course of the 4th century that prohibited the practice of divination[45]. The ritual installation may then have been removed from the *agora* and its blocks reused in the late antique walls. Two sides of the inscription were erased at the time by masons who re-cut the block for use in the late antique fortifications, perhaps to ensure that nothing could be read from it, thus terminating the use of this symbol of human credulity.

Furthermore, the imperial authorities who ordered the closure of sanctuaries also decreed that the statuary present in those shrines should be reused elsewhere to embellish the cityscape[46]. Statues are likely to have been brought into the square mainly from disaffected temples, a phenomenon of »cultural salvage« of civic property explicitly attested by epigraphy elsewhere. This sort of activity, above all others in Late Antiquity, made large amounts of religious statuary available to the civic authorities for reuse.

Such reuse of pagan sculpture in the urban landscape is attested at the Antonine Nymphaeum, where a series of statues related to cultic activities was found that does not belong to the original sculptural decoration of the monument. They comprise three associated statues; one of Asklepios, another of his mother Koronis, and a third figure, possibly Apollo, of which only the feet remain. They were probably brought there at the end of the 4th century, when the sanctuary that originally housed them went out of use[47]. Although Christianity rejected the use of statuary to express its conception of the divine, Christians often shared the pagan belief that deities inhabited their images and could act through their representations. By desecrating the divine representations through decapitation or carving crosses in them, people made sure that the gods or demons would have no means of harming them[48]. This fate may have befallen the statues of the Asklepios-group, as they miss their heads and other body

39 Waelkens et al., City of Dreams 84.
40 Waelkens/Jacobs, Theodosian Age 98.
41 Waelkens/Jacobs, Theodosian Age 100 f. – Talloen, Tychaion.
42 Devijver/Waelkens, Inscriptions 118 f. no. 5-6.
43 Talloen/Vercauteren, Temples 361.
44 See above n. 20.
45 Cod. Theod. 9.16.2 and 6; 16.16.4.
46 See the edicts collected in Cod. Theod. 16.10.
47 Waelkens et al., Late Antique city 225.
48 Saradi-Mendelovici, Christian Attitudes 54-56.

Fig. 11 »Agathe Tyche« inscription on north pillar of south-east gate. – (Photo P. Talloen).

parts, contrary to other statues displayed at the *nymphaeum*. The question arises, of course, what the meaning of such fragmented pagan statues would have been to contemporary viewers. Were they monuments of historical and artistic value, or part of the visual narrative of Christian triumphalism, a potent symbol reminding viewers of the defeat of pagan cults?

Yet, not all mythological imagery had to deal with such blatant Christian hostility. It seems that statues from cultic contexts were especially prone to Christian violence. Other pagan sculptures continued to function as decoration of the cityscape, often after having been »updated«. The statues of Dionysos from the *nymphaeum*, for example, had been ritually mutilated by removing the genitals. The genitals of a marble statue found in a series of debris deposits filling the lower floor of the so-called Market Building to the east of the Upper Agora in 2015 were most probably also the result of such mutilation, which would indicate that this occurred during the second half of the 4th century. This type of disfigurement, which was widespread in Late Antiquity for re-used naked pagan statues, was responding to a new set of Christian ideas about the body, sex and morals[49]. These minor interventions rendered them objects that could be appreciated by Christians for their historical and artistic value. The statues of Dionysos may have been retained in the cityscape as symbols of conviviality, reflecting the enduring appeal of Dionysiac festive culture in Late Antiquity, just as the god and his circle formed part of the decoration appropriate to private dinner parties[50]. In the case of Dionysos, the growing economic importance of viticulture at late antique Sagalassos may also have played a role in his »survival«[51].

Christian Appropriation of the Agora

Remarkably, the 5th century saw no major interventions on the square after the de-sacralisation measures of the late 4th century. The first positive signs of Christianity were very modest contributions to the urban landscape in the form of inscribed crosses and acclamations. It was probably at this time that the south-east gate dedicated to the emperor Claudius received a new »Agathe Tyche« or »Good Fortune« inscription with an explicitly Christian character, as indicated by the centrally-placed cross (**fig. 11**), to place the passage of those frequenting the *agora* under the protection of the

49 Smith, Defacing 307. – On the new Christian attitude towards the human body and sexuality, see Brown, Body.

50 Parrish, Dionysos. – Lavan, Talismans 442.

51 Talloen/Poblome, Specialisation.

Fig. 12 Half-column with dedicatory inscription of *Hagnai Theai* sanctuary and *Eis Theos* formula. – (Photo M. Waelkens).

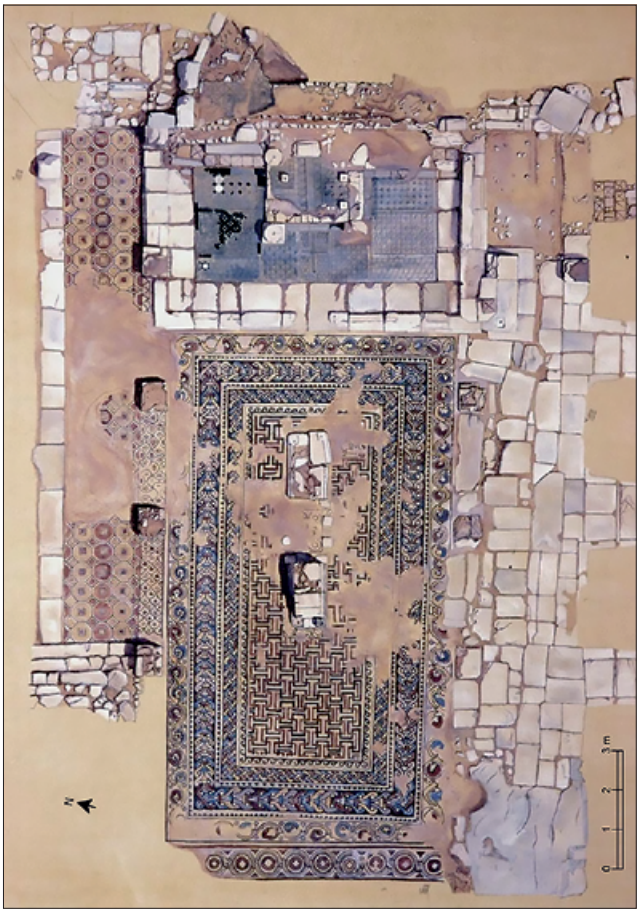

Fig. 13 Plan of Bouleuterion-Basilica. – (Drawing by the Sagalassos Project).

Christian God. The fact that an arch, a structure that expressed power and triumph, was given a Christian character is a sign of the victory of Christianity. The same gate also carries »Eis (Theos)« graffiti on the south face of the north pier of the gate that may date to the same period. It is often questioned whether the formula is in opposition to the traditional gods or to some Christian doctrinal formulation[52]. The instance of the formula on a half-column with a dedicatory inscription and mutilated relief for the *Hagnai Theai*, Demeter and Kore (**fig. 12**) – most probably related to a de-sacralisation process at their sanctuary[53] – which was reused as the cover stone of a water channel, suggests the former interpretation for at least some of the instances on the Upper Agora. These religious symbols and acclamations on monuments and pavements provide valuable clues about conflicts and tensions; they suggest that the square had become an arena for religious competition between the Christian congregation and the segment of the population which had not yet converted.

The construction of a church within the early Roman Imperial council hall or Bouleuterion was the next important development in the ideological history of the *agora* (**fig. 13**). The Bouleuterion retained its function as the seat of the local city council or *boule* at least until the late 4th century when it was considered to have been partly spoliated for building materials to be used in the construction of the nearby late antique fortifications[54]. Sometime after this event, the complex was reused for the establishment of what is thought to have been the first early Christian basilica of the city. While the former council hall itself became an open-air courtyard or atrium, its original forecourt came to house a two-storied tripartite basilica with a semi-circular apse at its eastern end. This conversion was originally dated to the early 5th century, based on stylistic analysis of the mosaics covering the floor of the basilica's nave and north aisle[55]. Recent excavations, however, have established that this conversion did not occur until the first half of the 6th century[56]. As the position of the Church was becoming increasingly powerful, Christian

52 Trombley, Hellenic Religion 313-315.
53 Talloen/Vercauteren, Temples 352-354.
54 Waelkens et al., 1996-1997 Excavations 231-240.
55 Waelkens et al., 1998-1999 Excavations 163-166. – Waelkens et al., Late Antique city 220f.
56 Talloen/Poblome, Control Excavations.

Fig. 14 North wall of North-East Building including reused elements of honorific monuments. – (Photo P. Talloen).

officials looked at available buildings for the creation of new places of worship in an existing urbanised landscape. With the declining importance of the *boule*, council halls were falling out of use in the later 4th and 5th centuries and offered structures with a large internal space that answered ideally the Christian liturgical demands[57]. However, this reuse was more than simple opportunism. The location of churches in settlements related not only to religious ideas but also to social and political realities[58]. By converting the Bouleuterion, the Church not only obtained a conspicuous site located in the very heart of the city, it also assumed the patterns of authority related to it. The conversion confirmed the supremacy of Christianity and established the Church as the new power in control of the city. This transformation of the political centre was part of a major building programme, which also involved the construction of a monumental staircase leading to the atrium of the church[59], which *de facto* made the square into a giant forecourt for the ecclesiastical complex. The centre of the city now came to serve as an architectural backdrop for the power-display of the local bishop.

It was also at this time that the *agora* witnessed a major clean-up operation through the removal of numerous honorific monuments, which were »littering« the square during the Imperial period. As already noted by Lavan[60], the number of civic honorific bases found *in situ* on the *agora* was surprisingly small, while its surface had revealed quite a lot of emplacement traces of statue bases, suggesting a clean-up. Traces on the pavement of the *agora* and on the *stylobate*s of the porticoes around it indicate that only a fraction of the monuments originally populating the square remained *in situ* at the end of Late Antiquity[61]. A general lack of spoliation of statue bases prior to the 6th century suggests that the preservation of ancient bases (and their statues), rather than their reuse, was the rule on the Upper Agora. This was to change from the 6th century onwards. The architectural members of several such monuments were now visibly reused in new constructions on and round the square, such as the fountain basin built in front of the western portico, and the North-East Building at the northern end of the east portico (**fig. 14**), both of which could be dated to the early 6th century[62]. The removed bases of these monuments were reused displaying their inscribed sides. This suggests a strategy not to forget about the elite past, but to display that it was no longer relevant for the purposes of the present, when the bishop and leading class of the *proteunontes* were in full control of the city. In the same ideological light, we should probably see the

57 Talloen/Vercauteren, Temples 375 f.
58 Turner, Christianity 955 f.
59 Waelkens et al., 1998-1999 Excavations 162 f.
60 Lavan, Agorai 325.
61 Lavan, Agorai 316-324. – Talloen/Poblome, Control Excavations.
62 Lavan, Agorai 318-320.

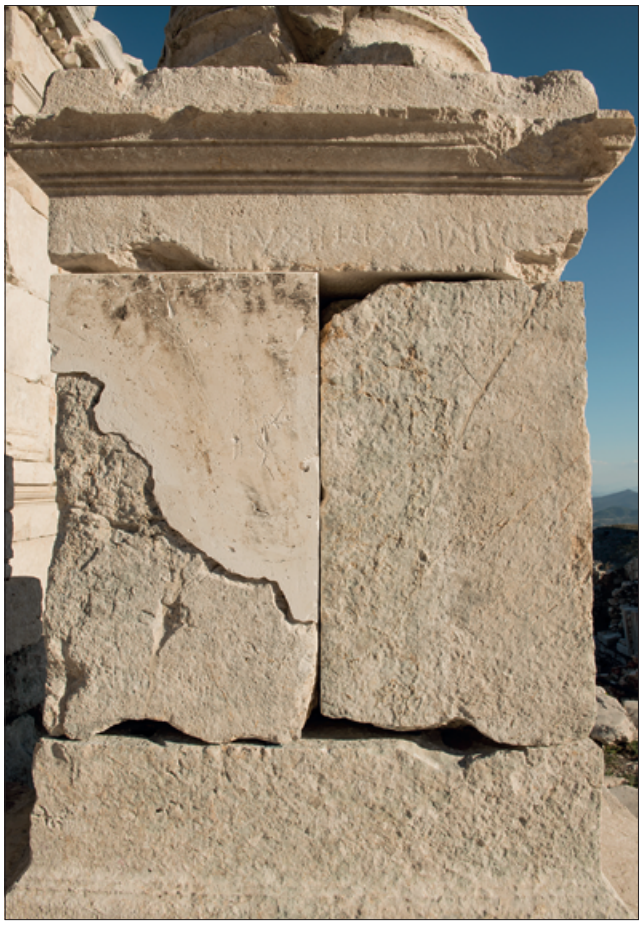

Fig. 15 Acclamation of the *Michaelitai* on pedestal of south-east honorific column. – (Photo B. Vandermeulen).

removal of a stele inscribed with a Hellenistic law-code, referring to several *polis* institutions, which must originally have been displayed on the *agora*, but was now also reused in the North-East Building[63]. Equally, the removal of a signboard of the *polis* constitution can be seen as signalling the end of the city-state, or at least, of the will to preserve its material and immaterial heritage.

There are also some indications that attitudes toward the remaining pagan imagery hardened at this time. Tuff blocks with inscribed crosses were found in the vicinity of the corner *aediculae* of the Antonine Nymphaeum housing the effigies of Dionysos. They have been interpreted as remnants of walls sealing off the *aediculae* and hiding the statues from the public gaze sometime during the 6th century[64], though the evidence is inconclusive. Furthermore, a defaced head of Aphrodite was found buried between a 6th century sewer and an early Imperial period *exedra* on the east side of the square, while a head of Eros-Harpokrates was retrieved from between the stones of the *stylobate* of the eastern portico, which had been rearranged during the same period[65]. Corroborating such a tougher stance on pagan imagery is the fact that it was also disappearing from the decorated pottery of Sagalassos at this time, as it was replaced by iconography of purely Christian motifs[66].

That said, not all images were removed and their public prominence negates the possibility of accidental survival. The persistence of statue bases for several emperors, governors and heroes on the square indicate that some historical monuments were still considered significant by the Christian community. The image of the heroic founder Perseus, for example, remained welcome as a testimony of the city's glorious past which was still evoked by Christians[67]. Emperors that were important for the city, such as Claudius, who first gave Roman citizenship, Caracalla, who granted Roman citizenship to all, and Constantius II, who may have been responsible for the metropolis title, equally survived the clean-up. Even after the promotion of Christianity, the imperial image remained ubiquitous and homage was paid to them. They provide further instances of how selected monuments of the past were employed to create and uphold communal identity. This selection was the result of communal decisions and consensus, hence its characterisation will allow us to explicate the kind of memory that Christian Sagalassos was propagating.

Other than the basin of the north-west fountain, no new constructions were built on the *agora*. What is more, the clean-up operation mentioned gave back to the *agora* much of its original character of the Hellenistic period as an »open« square. Evidence, such as *topos* inscriptions[68], suggests that the newly created open space was used for commercial, social and religious gatherings. One group that is particularly well attested on the square are the *Michaelitai* or adherents of Saint Michael the Archangel, a saint whose cult was very popular in the region[69]. Their presence took the form of a number of ceramic plates which carried the acclamation »May the fortune of the *Michaelitai* be victorious in the city and its territory«. They were found in the western portico and can probably be related to dining activities in the vicinity. The same acclamation was also carved on the pedestal of the south-east honorific column (**fig. 15**), which suggests a rededication of the monument, possibly now carrying a Christian image like a cross. The members of this religious association undoubtedly gathered in the square on special occasions like the nomination of a new bishop, ecumenical festivals such as Easter, or the *panegyris* of a local saint. From the square, processions of Christian followers moved through the city, chanting prayers and spreading incense. They turned traditional civic spaces

63 Vandorpe, Akra.
64 Waelkens et al., 1994-1995 Excavations 151, 162. The mentioned blocks may also have belonged to structures above the nymphaeum which collapsed together with the fountain as a result of a 7th c. earthquake (Waelkens et al., 1994-1995 Excavations 173).
65 Unpublished excavation reports of 2008 and 2012.
66 Talloen, Pagan to Christian 599-601.
67 Busine, Conquest 224. Foundation myths of Perseus were still in use in the 5th c. as Nonnos testifies in the case of Tarsus (Nonnos, Dionysiaca XVIII 293-294).
68 For an overview see Lavan, Agorai 333.
69 Talloen, Pagan to Christian 588-590. – Huttner, Lycus 303.

like the *agora* into »places filled by the presence of the Holy Spirit« as intended by the processions organised by John Chrysostom at Constantinople[70]. Thus, the *agora* became devoted entirely to the practice of the Christian religion.

This was the state of the square during the late 6th / early 7th century when it was gradually being abandoned, prior to a massive earthquake which would leave everything in ruins and meant the end of its function as an *agora*[71].

Conclusion

This paper has characterised the Upper Agora of Sagalassos as a square permeated with monuments that attested to the power and presence of the old gods, founding heroes and contemporary rulers, and which constituted the identity of the city; pagan cult was an intricate part of this identity.

Political developments of the early 4th century had delivered the first blow to the communal identity of Sagalassos, resulting in the loss of regional prominence, but the major turning point was the conversion of an emblematic monument, the Tychaion, into an imperial honorific monument, signalling the start of the de-sacralisation process of the *agora* and the city at large. This de-sacralisation process was carried out selectively and deliberately: only the elements that were considered dangerous were removed, such as ritual installations and cult statues. Generally speaking, public monuments were stripped of ritual characteristics and re-branded as harmless ornaments of city life. Interestingly, while the religious identity of Sagalassos was fundamentally altered, its historical identity was allowed to persist.

After the de-sacralisation of the *agora*, which severed the old link between city identity and pagan cult, there was no immediate Christian take-over of public space but rather small-scale appropriations occurred. As a space deprived of its traditional ritual installations and not yet harbouring any Christian ones, the square therefore appears to have become a kind of neutral terrain, a secular space used by Christians and pagans alike, at least for a while.

Once Christianity became the dominant player, the Christian community of Sagalassos set about the creation of its own sacred space. It combined the demise of local paganism with the contemporary decline of civic political institutions – *boule* and *demos* – to establish itself as the power in control of the city by converting the Bouleuterion into a church. As with the conversion of the Bouleuterion, the contemporary removal of statues erected to members of the local elite signalled the end of the bouleutic regime and the »democratised« city.

Consequently, the resulting image of the late antique *agora* of Sagalassos is not a radical break from its past, but a palimpsest in the shape of a monumental landscape. Its original meaning, as the centre of a *polis* or a civic community with glorious origins, guided by the gods and under their protection, was gradually rewritten with a new Christian meaning through the modification of existing structures.

While reuse may have been initiated partly due to the modest municipal funds available for construction activities, the examples of the Upper Agora clearly demonstrate that the authorities also sought to recuperate their meaning. The reuse of the Tychaion, for example, not only ensured visual continuity at a dominant location in the cityscape but also allowed the intricate meanings of the monument – fortune and protection of the community – to be recuperated. This made Christianity relevant to the cultural matrix it was trying to convert.

It goes without saying that Christianity drastically changed the ideological character of the square: from a space used for the gathering of citizens that participated in the social, political and religious activities of the *polis* to one used by the Christian congregation. Nevertheless, the incorporation of the Upper Agora into the symbolic Christian landscape of Sagalassos allowed it to continue as the centre of the urban community, contrary to cities such as Ephesos and Hierapolis which handed their main public squares over to decay and redevelopment as residential and artisanal quarters. Thus, the Upper Agora of Sagalassos remained a centre of collective ideology, albeit now a Christian rather than a civic pagan one.

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Zusammenfassung / Summary / Özet

Die Obere Agora von Sagalassos in der Spätantike: die Transformation eines ideologischen Zentrums

Die Obere Agora der pisidischen Stadt Sagalassos war ein dynamischer Raum mit einer reichen Ansammlung von Bildern, eingeschriebenen Texten und Denkmälern, die die Konstruktion lokaler und regionaler Identitäten widerspiegelten und dazu beitrugen – kurzum das ideologische Zentrum der Gemeinschaft. Die spätantike Verwandlung des klassischen Römischen Reiches in ein christlich-byzantinisches war zum großen Teil das Ergebnis einer ideologischen Revolution, nämlich der Ersetzung der alten Ahnenkulte durch die monotheistische Religion des Christentums. Dies wirkte sich auch auf das städtische Leben aus und bedeutete nach Ansicht einiger Wissenschaftler einen radikalen Bruch zwischen der heidnischen und der christlichen Stadt. Das Ziel dieses Artikels ist es, diese Aussage auf der Grundlage der Ergebnisse eines Forschungsprojekts neu zu bewerten, das sich auf die Entwicklung der Oberen Agora bei Sagalassos über die *longue durée* konzentrierte. Das Projekt näherte sich dem Platz als architektonischer Spiegel der Urbanisierungs- und Gemeinschaftsbildungsprozesse, die auf dem Gelände stattfanden. Insbesondere untersucht dieser Beitrag die Lebensgeschichte einer Sammlung von Denkmälern, die den öffentlichen Raum der *agora* in der Spätantike definiert haben.

The Upper Agora of Sagalassos during Late Antiquity: the Transformation of an Ideological Centre

The Upper Agora of the Pisidian city of Sagalassos was a dynamic space with a rich collection of images, inscriptions and monuments that reflected and contributed to the construction of local and regional identities; in short, it was the ideological centre of the community. The late antique metamorphosis of the classical Roman Empire into a Christian Byzantine one was, for a large part, the result of an ideological revolution, namely, the replacement of the ancient ancestral cults by the monotheistic religion of Christianity. This also impacted on urban life and implied, according to some scholars, a radical break between the pagan and Christian city. The aim of this paper is to re-evaluate this statement based on the results of a research project focussed on the development of the Upper Agora at Sagalassos over the *longue durée*; the project approached the square as an architectural mirror of the processes of urbanisation and community formation that occurred at the site. More particularly, the paper examines the life history of a collection of monuments that defined the public space of the *agora* during Late Antiquity.

Geç Antik Dönem Boyunca Sagalassos Yukarı Agora: İdeolojik Bir Merkezin Dönüşümü

Pisidia kentlerinden olan Sagalassos'taki Yukarı Agora, zengin bir görsel koleksiyonuyla, yerel ve bölgesel kimliklerin oluşumunu yansıtan ve katkıda bulunan yazılı metinler ve anıtlarıyla; kısacası toplumun idelojik merkezi olmasıyla oldukça dinamik bir yerdi. Klasik dönem Roma İmparatorluğu'nun geç antik metamorfozunun, büyük ölçüde bir Hristiyan Bizansına dönüşmesi ideolojik bir devrimin, yani eski atalarından kalma kültlerin tek tanrılı Hristiyanlık diniyle yer değiştirmesinin bir sonucuydu. Bu başkalaşım, kent hayatının üzerinde etkisi olduğu gibi, bazı bilim insanlarına göre pagan ve Hristiyan kenti arasında radikal bir mola olarak anlaşılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bahsi geçen ifadeyi Sagalassos Yukarı Agora'nın gelişimi üzerine odaklanmış araştırma projesinin sonuçlarına dayanarak, *longue durée* üzerinden yeniden değerlendirmektedir; ayrıca proje *agora* meynanına toplumsal ve kentsel oluşumun mimari bir aynası olarak yaklaşmıştır. Daha da önemlisi makale Geç Antik Dönem boyunca *agora*nın kamusal alanlarını tanımlayan bir anıt koleksiyonunun tarihsel geçmişini ele almaktadır.