

# Re-using the gods: a 6th-c. statuary display at Sagalassos and a re-evaluation of pagan mythological statuary in Early Byzantine civic space

Ine Jacobs and Lea Stirling

In 2009, a set of under-lifesized statues was discovered on top of the pavement of the main N–S colonnaded street of Sagalassos. Their particular find contexts suggest that they had been on display along the street on top of statue brackets in its final phase. These statuettes not only survived in the cityscape into the 7th c. A.D., they were part of a large-scale renovation of the lower town datable to the second quarter of the 6th c. This exceptionally late example of displayed pagan mythological statuary provides information on what pieces of statuary were still available and considered suitable for re-use in the Early Byzantine period. In addition, the collection's composition can inform us about the preferred appearance of a bustling urban thoroughfare and something of the values and beliefs of the population at that period, since "whereas the common folk [...] did not read Homer and Pindar, everyone — the butcher, the candlemaker, and the lower-class saint — could and did look at these statues".<sup>1</sup>

We will give a short description of the town in the 6th c., before analyzing the statuettes themselves. After a description and discussion of the separate items, we will suggest that they were re-interpreted at the time of their re-display in the street. An overview of other small-scale statues found at Sagalassos will aid in tracking down the origin of the street statuettes, and give some indications of the greatly under-rated movability of statues. Indeed, our inability to reconstruct the entire life-history of a statue is highly problematic; without epigraphic or literary evidence to the contrary, it is often assumed that a statue must have been intended for the location where it was later found. Finally, we attempt to reconstruct the appearance of the 6th-c. display by analysis of the find circumstances of the statuettes and through a comparison with other statues known to have been placed on brackets.

## Sagalassos and the colonnaded street in the early 6th c.

Sagalassos is located on the S-facing slope of a mountain crest in the western Taurus, at altitudes between 1490 m and 1600 m (fig. 1). It was a wealthy, medium-sized town and a pottery production centre whose total inhabited area has been estimated at c.30 ha. The town's regional importance was highlighted, amongst other things, by it being named twice *neokoros* and "first city of Pisidia".<sup>2</sup> Interdisciplinary research since 1990 has been able to reconstruct the general process of urbanization from Early Hellenistic to mid-Byzantine times and a particularly detailed picture of what was happening in the course of the 6th c., which (as at many sites in Asia Minor) was the last period of large-scale occupation. After a devastating earthquake in the early 7th c., the town centre shifted towards a new fortified hamlet constructed on a promontory to the south, with other small-scale

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1 C. Mango, "Antique statuary and the Byzantine beholder," *DOP* 17 (1963) 55.

2 M. Waelkens, "Hadrian and the 'Neokoria' of Sagalassos," in A. Metin *et al.* (edd.), *Pisidian essays in honour of Haci Ali Ekinici* (Istanbul 2015) 177-214.