

Sanctuaries in remote areas are commonly typified as ‘extra-urban’ or ‘frontier’, indicating a peripheral status in relation to an urban core. Yet many sanctuaries in thinly populated areas were themselves centers of either local communities or much wider, more regionally bound political bodies, such as federations or ethnoi. This paper discusses how two such sanctuaries, the local cult of Hekate at Lagina and the regional cult of Zeus Karios at Panamara were drawn into the orbit of the polis of Stratonikeia in Karia to become linchpins in building civic identity. Although these distant sanctuaries were vital to the territorial integrity of the expanding polis, I will argue that it was the ability of these cults to engage the communities that identified with them, as much as their strategic location, that inevitably led expanding Stratonikeia to embrace them as her very own tutelary deities. At the same time a wide variety of sources show that these cults underwent major changes as their own identity became intertwined with that of the polis.

Stratonikeia, described as a Macedonian settlement by Strabo (XIV.2.25), rapidly began to develop in the mid-second century after it was freed from Rhodian domination. Studies of the demotics have shown the polis to be a composite of five indigenous villages (Şahin 1976 and Debord 1994). Lagina, located in the largest of these, hosted initially only a modest cult for Hekate. Yet by the mid-second century BC this goddess had already come to represent the polis: it is she who is depicted on the first coins minted by the free polis (Meadows 2002), it was her sanctuary that was monumentally transformed by the end of the second century (Baumeister 2007), and it was here, not in town, that a cult for Rome was established after the Mithridatic Wars (*I.Stratonikeia* 505, 507-508). At the opposite end of the spectrum, Zeus Karios at Panamara was from the beginning a well-known god with a Karian-wide public. Stratonikeia however grew more and more involved with this cult as her interests began to lean towards the south and the sea (Van Bremen 2004), until she finally assimilated the sanctuary into the polis. Zeus appeared, together with Hekate, on the first coins issued by Stratonikeia (Meadows 2002), and his epithet was significantly reduced to the neutral toponym Panamaros. Both cults were the objects of the major festivals of the polis and were connected to the urban center by processional routes that (unusually) drew them into town.

These facts and several others underscore the importance of these two distant sanctuaries for Stratonikeia’s developing identity as a major polis. Modern theory on rural, or ‘extra-urban’, sanctuaries should help us better understand the way civic identity was established in the remoter regions of a polis’ chora. Yet while many of the models now current, e.g. ‘frontier’ (de Polignac 1995), ‘passage’ (Sinn 1993), ‘centripetal/centrifugal’ (Graf 1996), go a long way to show the value of strategic location and social network, their focus on territory and boundaries tends to assume a static situation that can hardly explain the internal dynamics in cult and community that clearly took place here. In this paper, I will argue that the evolving relationship between Stratonikeia and the sanctuaries at Lagina and Panamara demonstrates the need to understand these processes over time, not just space. By focusing on the transfer of identity, we will be able to better interpret what these sanctuaries meant to their public, identify agents of change, and explain how religion was instrumental in the transformation of communities.