

Aizanoi in Late Antiquity: Disintegration of Polis

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Geç Antik Çağ'da Aizanoi: Polis'in Çözülüşü

Öz

Phrygia'nın önemli kentlerinden biri olan Aizanoi, Roma İmparatorluğu'nun her noktasında hissedilen 3. Yüzyıl Krizi'yle bir dönüşüm süreci içine girmiştir. Kentin en önemli gelir kaynağı olan ve tarihini şekillendiren tapınak topraklarının gelirinin doğrudan imparatorluk hazinesine bağlanması ve merkeze bağlı bürokratların her zamankinden daha etkili hâle gelmesi, ayrıcalıklarını yitiren yerel seçkinlerin kent hayatından çekilmesine neden olmuştur. Kent meclisi işlevini yitirmiş, kent ise otonom yapısını yitirmiştir. Bu süreçte Aizanoi hem nüfus hem de yüz ölçümü olarak küçülmüş, nekropollerin kullanımı sona ermiş ve kiliselerin çevresi mezarlık alanları olarak kullanılmaya başlamıştır. Aynı süreçte ölü gömme geleneği değişmiş, mezar taşı üretim durmuş ve yazının kullanımı sona ermiştir. Aizanoi, Geç Antik Çağ'da geçirdiği bu sürecin sonunda bir Ortaçağ yerleşimine dönüşmüştür. Bu, aynı zamanda klasik kent kültürünün ve polis idealinin çözülüşüdür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aizanoi, Geç Antik Çağ, Polis, Yazı, Seçkinler

Makale Türü: Araştırma

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Abstract

Aizanoi, one of the important cities of Phrygia, had experienced a transformation by 3rd Century Crisis which was felt throughout Roman Empire. Local elites lost their economic privileges because the transferring Temple Lands income to the imperial treasury now, and their political dominance for the increasing pressure of central bureaucracy upon the provinces, so they withdrew from the urban life. Aizanoi lost its autonomy, and its council became dysfunctional. The public buildings, which are the symbols of the Greco-Roman urban tradition, were either abandoned or lost their functions. In this process, the use of classical necropoleis ended and cemeteries around new churches appeared. The burial customs changed, and tombstones were not produced anymore. Use of writing had also dramatically decreased. Finally, Aizanoi transformed to a medieval settlement at the end of Late Antiquity. It was also disintegration of classical urban culture and the ideal of Polis.

Keywords: Aizanoi, Late Antiquity, Polis, Writing, Elites

Paper Type: Research

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1. Introduction

Aizanoi, located within the borders of modern village of Çavdarhisar, was an ancient Phrygian settlement, but developed as a *polis* with the arrival of Greek and Macedon colonists in the late 3rd century BC. During the war between Pergamum and Bithynia in early 2nd Century BC, kings had donated lands to the Temple of Zeus Aizanon, chief deity of the city, and all institutions of the city and society shaped around the Temple and Greco-Roman polis tradition. The city rapidly became the core of Örencik Plain, once called as “Aizanitis”, and served as the capital of Epictetus Region which covered North-western Phrygia during the Late Hellenistic Period². (Fig. 1)

Documents show that relations between Aizanoi and Rome began with Julius Caesar. A letter which probably related with a regulation about the temple lands, is the evidence. (Wörrle, 2009, No.1) A few decades later, the city sent an embassy to meet with Tiberius during the last years of Augustus’ rule. (MAMA IX, xxiii.) Relations got intense with the games and festivals which held for emperor during the Claudius’ reign and with the establishment of the imperial cult altar in the city, and then reached its top during the reigns of the Flavians and Antonines. (Jes – Posemantr – Wörrle, 2010, 80-83) Aizanoi was one of the founder cities of the provincial cult of Asia dedicated for Domitian and had passion for being a metropolis as Ephesus and to achieve this success, first, it had to get *neokoria* of the imperial cult. The new Temple of Zeus Aizanon, which was rebuilt in the Flavian period, was dedicated to Emperor Domitian, together with Zeus. (Jes et.al. 2010, 83). With the death of the emperor, an epuration against the urban elites began and new families became visible in the history of the city. Under the reign of Antonines, it became a part and an important representative of the new panhellenic ideology which was constituted around the divine personality of Hadrian.³

Aizanoi succeeded to survive its vigour in the early 3rd Century AD. The city experienced another reconstruction and restoration process, and new public spaces were built during the period. (Rheidt, 2010, 179-180) Institutions of Polis were working, and urban life was dynamic. Although it is not as intensely as in the previous centuries, the bureaucracy between Aizanoi elites and Rome had continued during the first half of the century. The city honoured Emperors Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla; it also had an imperial cult priest of Alexander Severus. (MAMA IX, No.12, P20, P22.) Aizanoi continued to mint own coin until Emperor Gallienus’ reign. From the middle of the century, it was a part of the province of Phrygia et Caria. (MAMA IX, xxvi) However, the impact of the political and economic crisis across the empire was deeply lived at Aizanoi in the second half of the century. As a city existed on the base of agricultural production and a temple economy, it lost many of its privileges during the period and institutions of the Polis began to corrupt. Cultural decline was also fast.

This paper aims to explain the historical process of Aizanoi in the Late Antiquity through certain interrelated phenomena and to reveal the dynamics of the social transformation experienced in this process which was clearer under the light of new archaeological evidence from excavations conducted between years 2011 and 2020.

Those phenomena are,

1. the fate of the Zeus Temple and urban elites,
2. the physical conditions of the city and transformation of the city institutes,
3. decrease in the written tradition and,

² For the discussions about borders of Aizanitis, see Erdinç, 2021, 163 – 173; and see also. MAMA IX, xvii – xxii.

³ For foundation of the cult of Hadrianus Panhellenium see. IGR IV nos. 573, 575, 576, 564; and urban elites of the 2nd century AD see Türkan, 2021b.

4. change in burial customs.

Thus, it may be possible to reveal that the ideological, psychological, cultural, and economic dynamics to cause transformation of a young Polis rising in Western Asia Minor into a modest Christian settlement.

2. Zeus Temple, Local Elites and Countryside

2.1. Demography of Aizanoi before 3rd Century Crisis

Economy of Aizanoi was based on agricultural production in the fertile Örencik Plain, irrigated by the Penkalas River, which is known as "Koca Su" or "Kısıkboğaz" today. Wheat, barley, rye, and grapes were the main products; and livestock was an important income source. Aizanoi was also a regional commercial centre. Road connections with important cities such as Smyrna, Sardes, Kotiaieion and Dorylaion show that it is at the crossroad of trade and military routes. (MAMA IX, xvii-xviii) Documentation of property ownership in the city is limited, but Temple lands was the basis of the financial system and thus, of the production. At first, the colonists from Pergamum had settled in the lands, who called *kleroi* and soon became the ruling class of the city. The Colonists maintained their influential position in the city until the 2nd century AD, but their privileges were taken by the regulation of the temple lands held by Emperor Hadrian. (Türkan 2021a, 442.)

Under the Hadrian's reign, the lands were remeasured and shared again. Meanwhile, two groups of elites, Ulpian and Pardalas Family rose in the city. Ulpian were especially active in a regional scale and Pardalas Family held important positions among the city institutions. Also, there are inscriptions mentioning members of this family were found countryside of the city and this may imply that they were also a part of rural aristocracy. To keep their privileges, they financed the repair of public buildings and games held in the name of the emperor. (Türkan 2021b, 521-524) As Greco-Roman local elites, stable income and relations with the imperial bureaucracy were dynamics of their existence. While this system reduced the pressure of public expenses on the imperial treasury, it also allowed to control city revenues and used for the benefit of the polis. On the other hand, the imperial ideology made itself concrete and rational in this system of interests.

Besides the local elites, Aizanoi population included also Roman veterans, officers, and Latin colonists. However, had not become as visible as local elites. The strong Hellenistic tradition of Aizanoi which was supported by Panhellenic ideal of the 2nd Century AD, had resisted the Romanisation of city and its countryside even nomenclature of the century reflects syncretism of Greek, Latin and Phrygian as other cities of Asia Minor. Another reason of this resistance was probably economic and cultural power of Zeus Temple. Central position of the Temple for the society should had prevented any cultural or political effect which would be corrupt the traditional structure of the city. (Türkan 2019, 299-304)

There was also a middle class which had an important role in the city. It consisted of merchants, smiths, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and priests who were principal elements of the urban economy. (Türkan 2019, 299-304) Apart from them, the lower class or *proletarii* who worked in heavy jobs should were an important part of the population, who lived in suburbs of the city. Construction movements of the 1st and 2nd Centuries AD must had required a significant amount of labour power and therefore workers. (Üstündağ 2019, 311 – 321) There were many *threptoi* in the city, compared to the few known slaves. This class, whose economic position was not clear, took care of the daily needs of the citizens and were considered as household members⁴. However, social stratification and urban culture began

⁴ There is controversy over the social status of the *threptoi*. Although it is not possible to translate it into English exactly, the equivalents such as "foster child" is quite close. It was a common feature of *threptoi* that they were taken from another family into its own household, but these individuals did not have rights as in terms of adoption. They cannot benefit from

to disappear with the crisis of the 3rd century for the use of writing began to decline at the same period.

2.2. Temple Lands and Elites at Aizanoi in Late Antiquity

Epidemics, pressure on the borders and civil wars were at the root of the crisis that the Empire experienced in the 3rd Century AD. The smallpox epidemic, which appeared in the autumn of 165 AD, continued in waves for a long time and only ended in the 270s. The epidemics resulted in a significant reduction in both labour and taxes. On the other hand, the constant pressure of the imperial borders from the north and east increased the defensive costs. The political crisis and civil war followed the Severan Dynasty also damaged the economy. Some documents of the period from the Egypt mention that many villages were abandoned because of the tax rates remained at the same level despite the economic difficulties. Thus, many taxpayers left their lands. Standardization of taxes between regions and cities reached its peak under Diocletian but it was far from a successful economic program. (Giardina, 2007, 757-758) Finally, the crisis of the 3rd century exhausted the resources of the empire in every sense.

With the re-establishment of the political order in the empire at the beginning of the 4th Century AD, the situation of the cities also began to improve. The trend towards centralization, however, was more than in the previous century. Taxation, which was made previously in a way that would not disrupt the inner organization of the cities and the privileges of the elites, encouraged cities to be self-sufficient. (Giardina, 2007, 762 – 764) However, the services provided to the cities began to be provided by the imperial bureaucracy rather than the council members or the city elite. Membership of the council, which had important privileges on the city lands, but was now deprived of them, lost its attractiveness. The urban elites had difficulties in fulfilling their traditional obligations now. Beneficial relationship between the Empire and polis thus became dysfunctional. The financing of games and festivals, which are an integral part of Greco-Roman urban culture and organized in the name of emperors or gods, turned into a heavy load that the elites would not want to bear because they no longer had any interest in urban life. Therefore, the elites preferred to stay away from the council and offices. The disturbance on this issue must have manifested itself clearly in 409 with a decree which instructed the governors not to overspend in the games and embarrass the councillors. Then, with the Theodosian Code, an officer, or a curator, appointed by the governors, became responsible for the maintenance, repair, and public works in the cities. (Jones, 1964, 732-766)

In this process, the most unfavourable development for the Aizanoi elites was probably the Constantine I's regulation to transfer revenues of all public lands, including the temples, to the imperial treasury. The law was repealed during the reign of Julian (361-363), but soon after, under the reigns of Emperors Valens (364-378) and Valentinian (364-375), it was re-entered in force. All the revenues of the temple lands began to transfer to the imperial treasury directly. Moreover, the law explicitly included confiscating these lands as "whatever rulers had previously sold or donated them." (CTh. V.13.3; X.1.8.) As a result of this situation, Aizanoi elites, who had been enriched by the benefits they had gained from the temple lands since the foundation of the city, lost their influence.

The fate of the local elites was to withdraw from or adapted to the new urban life across the Empire and the second was more concerned with the emergence of the Christian elites. The rapid collapse of cities in the west part of the empire and in isolated geographies in the east caused emergence of church leaders as a new elite class. (Rich, 1999, 11-12) Migrations of elites to their lands

inheritance, but they can have tombstones made for their household members See Cameron, 1939; Riel, 2005, 145 – 166. Mitchell also suggested that *Threptoï* intensely existed in the region because the slavery was not welcomed by natives especially in Phrygia; MAMA IX, lviv – lxxvi.

in the countryside caused a demographic transformation. The increase in the number of villas on the peripheries of the cities and in the countryside during the 4th and 5th Centuries in the east of the empire was an indicator of this phenomena. This was followed by the migration artisans and intellectuals to the countryside. These groups were dependent on the urban population; they were also elites or had business relations with the elites. (Jones, 1964., 762-763) Therefore, the weakening relationship between elites and the city, was the sign of the same fate for them. However, another point to consider is that elites may have lost their richness in the process. Transformation of the urban elite naturally tied with the imperial administration could only take place with the support of the current emperor and dynasty. So, some aristocrats who could not find this consensus environment may have been impoverished or eliminated from the urban life in Late Antiquity.

The process experienced in Aizanoi had local differences, but at the same time it was parallel with the whole empire. Archaeological findings show that there was a population increase in the Aizanoi countryside between the 4th and 7th Centuries AD. Most of the architectural remains are belong to churches and were found in twenty-two settlement areas, mostly in Örencik, Ortaca, Kargın, Yalnızsaray and Pınarbaşı. Also, numerous pottery findings dated between 5th and 7th Centuries AD indicate this population change. (Niewöhner, 2010,144ff, Abb.146.) However, it is not possible to make a clear idea about the demography of the countryside and the status of the lands with current information. Considering regional variations in the empire on this manner, large landownership and leasing of small-sized lands may be fundamentals of the land management in Late Antiquity. It should be noted that small landownership was more common in the east than the west, and there was also the use of seasonal labour rather than agricultural slavery. (Giardina, 2007., 751-752) Of course, Asia Minor offers important historical exceptions in this sense. In the neighbouring areas of Aizanoi, the Upper Tembris and Hermus Valleys, and Simav Lake Basin, large landownership was quite common. These lands belonged to the elite, mostly Hellenic and Latin colonists, or was directly imperial property. Landowners managed their lands personally or through various officers. The imperial lands were managed by procurators, some of whom were freedmen. The lands were leased to farmers, called *colonus*, and there were *conductores* who mediated between the procurator and the farmers as a third party.⁵ (Mitchell 1995, 158-464) There is no trace of imperial property in Aizanoi. However, epigraphic documents rarely provide evidence that hints at large landholdings in previous centuries. In an inscription dated to the 1st century; It is seen that the expenses of the games organized for the cult of the emperor were provided by the income of lands in the village called Paloks which were belonging to a citizen. (MAMA IX, No.16) In this case, at least some of the Aizanoi elite may have migrated to their rural lands in Late Antiquity. This can be shown as one of the reasons for the population increase in rural areas. However, leasing of temple lands was the base of land using in Aizanoi if we consider the historical process experienced by the city. This system was related with holding local offices mentioned above. So, it may be said that because the changing of imperial land system in the 4th Century AD, the most of local elites in Aizanoi experienced a catastrophic decline together with the city. Weakness of domestic remaining in the countryside also supports this.

Niewöhner claims that there was a climatic optimum between the 4th and 6th Centuries AD and that this was the one of the main reasons for the population increase. (Niewöhner, 2010, 152-153) Climate analysis partly affirm this claim. In the 4th Century AD, the rate of drought and frost was considerably higher than in previous centuries in the east. This situation decreased in the 5th century AD and increased again in the 6th century AD. There was also an increase in epidemics during this

⁵ For the imperial properties and Christianity in the Upper Tembris Valley, Simav Lake Basin, Kadoi and Emet, MAMA X, xxxiii-xxxvi; and for 3rd and 4th Century emperors mentioned in the region MAMA IX, Nos. 114, 157, 227, 228, 258, 317, 429, 445, 481.

period. One of the reasons for this situation is thought to be population growth⁶. So, growing population of the countryside may have reached its peak point in the 6th Century AD following the fertile 5th Century. As a result, the land depression and decline in agricultural production, caused by the dramatic decline in population during 3rd century, were reversed in Late Antiquity. As often seen in history, the growing population was needed for more labour, and more labour was needed to feed the growing population. So much so that in pre-industrial societies, the organization and efficient use of labour was the constant dynamic of the economy.⁷ (Kehoe, 2015, 88-107.)

3. Physical Condition of Aizanoi in Late Antiquity

At the end of the 2nd Century AD, Aizanoi had lived the glorious period in terms of landscape and architecture. The Temple of Zeus, the bouleuterion, two city baths, one was also used as a palaestra, colonnaded street, heroon, agora, macellum, theatre, stadium, and monumental bridges connecting the two banks of Penkalas elegantly exhibited the physical appearance of a Greco-Roman polis. Studies showed that the most intensive use of buildings at Aizanoi was from the 2nd Century till the middle of the 3rd Century. Under the Severans, the small bath of the city was built, and some repairs and additions were made in the theatre building. (Rohn 2007, 213,223) By the 3rd Century Crisis, architectural development stopped. In the second quarter of the 4th Century, another construction movement began, and, in this process, many public buildings lost their function or abandoned.

3.1. Conversion of Public Buildings

One of the earliest physical traces of change in the Late Antiquity is observed in the city's stadium. The monumental west gate of the building was converted into a house in the middle of the 4th century AD and was used the late 5th century AD. Next century, this place was converted into a chapel. (Hoffman 1993, 455-459) Bath which was built in Severan Period, also began to be used as a church from the middle of 5th century as well. A colonnaded street was built in the 4th Century AD. Building elements of monumental structures, mainly of the Temple of Artemis which was built in 1st century AD, were used as spolia. Inscribed acroter blocks belonging to the temple and a stone block with deer relief placed on the floor of the columned street are remarkable in this sense. (Rheidt 1995, 699-710, Abb. 14 – 17) (Fig 2)

After the repair and restoration of building under the Severans, theatre and stadium of Aizanoi had undergone a second restoration in 4th and 5th Centuries AD. They lost their functions and began to be used for out of purpose. Excavations in orchestra conducted in 2020 showed that marbles of the floor were removed, and a compressed red coloured soil was applied on the floor. Findings from the site are mostly belonging to 4th and 5th Centuries AD. (Özer – Türkan – Erdinç, 2022, 23 – 27) (Fig.3) Another repair was made in the ima-cavea of the theatre. A space with two rooms was built just across the *scene*. Rooms have water system; it may show that the Late Antique building was a residence as in the west gate of the stadium which converted into a domestic area at the beginning of the 4th Century AD and after a chapel at the end of 6th Century. (Hoffman, 1993, 457-459) On the other hand, its location (and position in the location) also hints that it could be a workplace as well. (Fig.4) Thus, it can

⁶ For a climatological analysis of the Roman History see McCormick et.al. 2012, 169-220; and also for climate change and agriculture in Late Antiquity Huntington, 1917, 173-208; and for epidemics see Stathakopoulos 2004, 177-307.

⁷ Although there is no evidence for the Aizanoi example, another reason for the population increase may be immigration from the west parts of the empire, where the crisis was more severe. In the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, a migration process was experienced, and the middle class and intellectual population in the eastern lands migrated to the Romanized and urbanized western lands mostly for commercial concerns. It is an understandable development that it was reversed for the eastern provinces had a higher level of welfare and security in Late Antiquity. There are data indicating that the rural areas in the west have decreased in population, unlike the ones in the east: Alcock, 2008, 678.

be said that the Aizanoi theatre lost its main function in the 5th Century AD. If we consider this change in the theatre together with the change in the stadium, change in these two important public building shows that the urban culture in Aizanoi experienced a rapid change right after the 3rd Century Crisis.

The bouleuterion of Aizanoi has three building phases. The first coincides with the period when the building was constructed and used as a council building in the 1st century AD. In the second half of the 3rd Century, additions were made, and it began to be used as an odeion. The building, which preserved this function until the 5th and 6th centuries AD, was converted into a water reservoir after the 8th Century AD. (Taşkıran, 2018, 440-443) The intensive use of the Agora and its surrounding residential areas ended in the late 4th century AD. The Palaestra building also lost its main function in the second half of the 3rd Century AD. (Naumann 1979, 14 – 25; Rheidt, 2002, 247 -254; Rheidt 2010, 184.) In addition, the circular structure in the macellum, where Diocletian's Decree on Maximum Prices of the Goods was placed, was converted into a church at the end of the 4th century AD, which may be the earliest church in the city. (Naumann - Naumann, 1973, 26-27) Beside all those changes, the Temple of Zeus Aizanon continued its function until the 5th Century. The use of this area was interrupted in the 5th Century AD. With the conversion of the temple into a church in the 7th or 8th century AD, the temple courtyard had been settled until the Çavdar invasion in the 11th Century. (Naumann 1979, 26 – 27)

3.2. Necropoleis

One of the most significant changes in the physical structure of the city took place in the necropoleis. Aizanoi was surrounded by four necropoleis which were identified as northern necropolis expanding eastward on the hilly terrain on which the theatre building rests; the western necropolis adjoining the western border of this necropolis and descending towards the south; the eastern necropolis located at Yalakkaya district; and the south necropolis located around the Meter Steunene Sanctuary. The earliest burials found in the city were in the western necropolis. Five graves, which were discovered here during archaeological studies conducted in 2013, are dated to a wide period from the beginning of the 3rd Century BC to the 2nd Century AD. (Özer 2015, 163 – 164) In the eastern necropolis, two graves, one of them is a bricked cist grave and other is a simple earth grave, were discovered in 2013: They were dated 3rd century AD. (Fig.5)

Studies conducted in the northern necropolis between 2012 and 2017 showed that burials had made intensely between the 2nd Century BC and the 3rd century AD. Burials of women, children and men from various classes were found here. Local officials, soldiers, and workers were buried here in simple earthen tombs, sarcophagi, or poorly constructed burial chambers. Graves dated to Late Hellenistic – Early Imperial Period are cremations; and graves belonging to 2nd and 3rd centuries AD are inhumations. (Özer 2017, 287-300; Özer 2015, 160 – 161) This difference reflects a demographic change in the 2nd Century AD. The city became more cosmopolitan and the rate of rural to urban migration increased in this period.

A chamber tomb which is dated to 3rd Century AD and built by using gravestones of 2nd century AD as spoliae, was also found in the northern necropolis. This early architectural conversion clearly shows that not in 4th century but in the 3rd century AD, urban transformation of the city began at the expense of damaging the social memory of previous centuries and continued increasingly during the next two centuries. (Fig.6)

The northern necropolis seems to have expanded toward the east over time. In surveys conducted in the field in 2017 and 2018; it was seen that the amounts of the door-shaped tombstone remain, including in-situ findings, increased towards the east. These must belong between the late 2nd Century AD and the first quarter of the 3rd Century AD. In addition, doorstone bases over the surface suggest that the stelai were carried and used as spolia during the next centuries. The Northern Necropolis may

had been used by polytheists and the Christians together for a period. (Fig.7) In a rescue excavation, which was conducted after an illegal excavation in this area in 2018, an opened sarcophagus was found. No grave findings were found in the area. However, sarcophagus is dated to 3rd Century AD⁸ and it may be assumed that it belongs to a Christian considering the inscription on the cover where cross-shaped letters were used. (Fig. 8)

The date range of burial activities in the southern necropolis is the same with the northern necropolis. But former was reserved only for elites. Closeness to Meter Steunene Sanctuary, one of the main cults of the city together with Zeus Aizanon, and its location which was visible from a possible ceremonial route related with the cult made the southern necropolis privileged. The remains of monumental tombs can be seen even on the surface. (Fig.9) In addition, the findings from excavations conducted in this area in 1990, 1991 and 2014 confirmed this. The site was reorganized as part of the construction program that took place during the Antonines in the 2nd Century AD, and the burial architecture reflects the stylistic features of the other public buildings of the city, which were built during the same period. The well-crafted marble burial chambers with dromos and podiums, and sarcophagi clearly show the class difference when compared with the tombs of the same period in the northern necropolis. The site continued to be used as a necropolis in the 3rd Century AD, but after is uncertain. It is only known that a chapel was built in the 11th century here (Taşkıran 2019, 112 – 119) and there was a burial site connected to this building. (Fig 10.) It may be said that while the burial ends in the southern necropolis, which was built around a sanctuary and used by city elites, northern necropolis, which was used by middle or lower class and closer to the city centre, continued to be used for a while in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.

From the 5th century AD, the burial sites seem to have expanded towards the city centre and it clearly indicates that the city centre had shrunk. The simple earthen tombs placed east-west direction on the cavea around the western gate of the stadium, which was converted into a church in the 6th century AD, are probably related to this building and dated to the Byzantine period. In the excavations carried in Macellum and its surroundings, grave sites, dated to 5th and 6th Centuries AD were found and as similar with 3rd century chamber tomb in the northern necropolis, the door-shaped grave steles of the 2nd century were used as spolia. (Naumann - Naumann, 1973, 28) Chamber tombs belonging to the 7th and 8th century AD were also found around Zeus Temple, which was converted into a church in the same period. Materials of 2nd and 3rd Centuries AD were also used as spolia in these tombs. (Naumann, 1994, 303 - 308; Niewohner, 2017, 58) These examples show that Aizanoi, developed around the Zeus Temple during his history shrank towards to the temple in Late Antiquity. The temple mount was fortified by Çavdar Tribes in 11th Century AD, but it transformed a settlement around a church in 7th Century AD at the latest. (Fig.11)

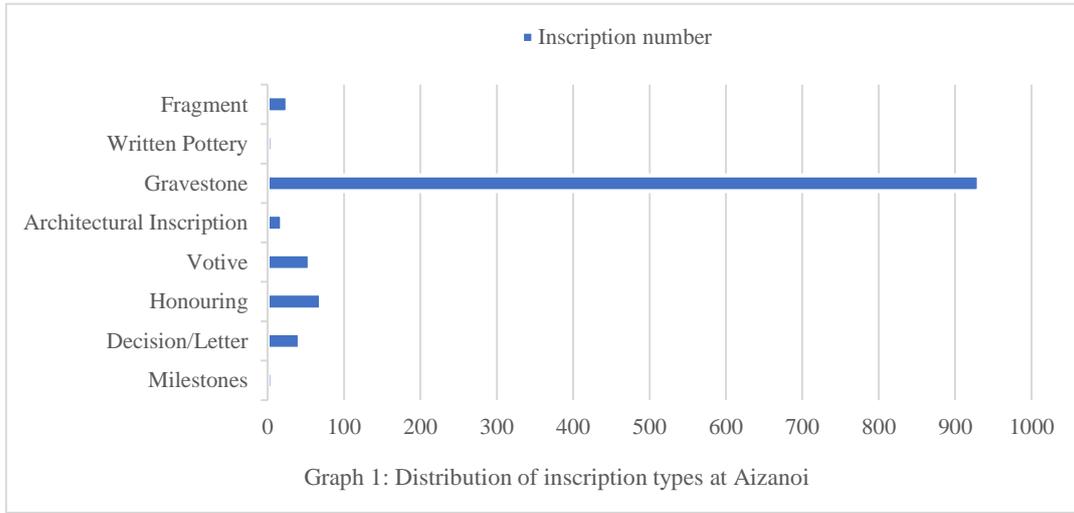
4. Decrease in Written Tradition at Aizanoi

Transformation of institutions, the status of the elite and, of course, the culture led to the decline in written tradition in Late Antique Aizanoi. Most of the public inscriptions in the city are the honorary made by the city council for the emperors or the elites and correspondences between the city and Rome. Private inscriptions consist of gravestones and votives. The decrease in the usage areas and density of the writing started to show itself in the second half of the 3rd Century AD in Aizanoi. The

⁸ Sarcophagus consists of the techne and its cover. Techne of the sarcophagus is broken up to the moulding profile. The cover is saddle-shaped and has a ridge beam. Although it is not a commonly used cover type in Phrygia and Aizanoi. The edges of the short face pediments of the cover have intertwined moulding profiles. One of the short sides has a 3-line Greek inscription. On the other short pediment façade, a round rosette motif is embroidered in relief. In such motifs, if the protrusion is deep and not like a protome, it means that it was processed decoratively or apotropically, not to contribute to the carrying of the cover.

main reason for the decrease of public inscriptions was the change in the structure of the imperial bureaucracy and local government, and thus the political dysfunction of the elites. On the other hand, the decrease in private inscriptions was closely related to the Christianisation, the decline of the urban middle class together with urban elites, and the change in the burial customs.

Of the 1152 inscriptions discovered and published within the borders of Aizanoi, six are milestones, forty-two are letter of decision from the emperor or provincial government, seventy are honouring by the decision of the city council, fifty-two are votive steles, eighteen are architectural inscriptions and a hundred fifteen are tombstones. The number of inscriptions that are certain to had been made by Christians is only twenty. Of these twenty inscriptions, three are prayers, one is the construction inscription, and the rest are tombstones. Apart from this, there are six written ceramics. 26 of them are fragments whose type is not determined exactly⁹. (Graph 1)



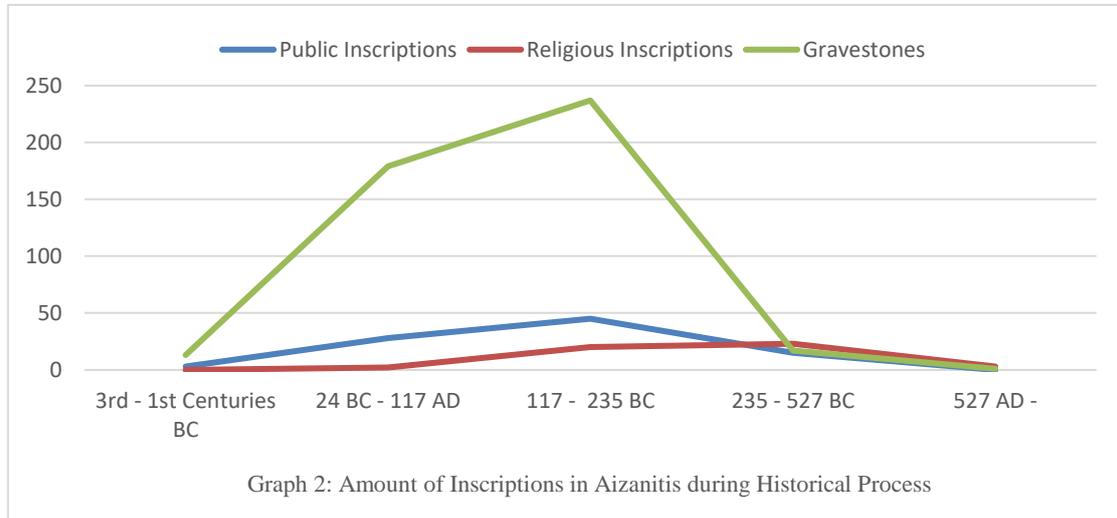
Although there are few inscriptions with date, more than half of the sum are dated by typological and stylistic analysis. The distribution of the datable inscriptions according to their types is presented in Graph 2¹⁰ and it is quite explanatory about the fate of the written tradition at Aizanoi. (Graph-2)

The use of writing at Aizanoi, which started in the 2nd Century BC and reached its peak in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, decreased dramatically from the second half of the 3rd Century. There was only a partial increase in the votive stela in the 3rd and 4th Centuries, as a reflection of the 3rd Century Crisis and economic difficulties, but these inscriptions disappeared from the 5th Century AD as Christianity

⁹ Publishing and catalogues, used to calculate inscription number: MAMA IX, No.1-587, P1 – P332; Wörrle 2011, 357 – 376; Wörrle 2009, 409-444; Wörrle, 1995, 65-81; Wörrle, 1992, 337 – 371; Gunther, 1975, 351-357; Türktüzün, 2016; Özer, 2015.

¹⁰ Since it is difficult to chronologically distribute the inscriptions, whose dates can be figured out stylistically or typologically by centuries, limiting the date ranges to the critical moments of the imperial history will enable to reveal the status of the written tradition in this context. The categorization of the historical process in which the city lived outside the Hellenistic and Roman Republican Periods was made with this concern. The periods of Julius – Claudians and the Flavians, when the use of writing in the city began to increase, and the periods of Trajan and Nerva, when there was a relative silent in the history of the city about relations with Rome, were discussed together. The periods of Emperor Hadrian and Antonine Dynasty, when the city lived its golden age, indicate an uninterrupted rise period. The third date range is due to the continuation of the institutions under the rule of the Severus Dynasty, the restoration and renovation of public buildings, and the written tradition continuing with almost the same intensity; It covers the period from the accession of Emperor Hadrian to the assassination of Alexander Severus and the beginning of the anarchy period. The period from the beginning of the third century crises to the accession of Justinian to the throne is considered as a separate date range.

became dominant. Aizanoi epigraphy ran almost parallel to the epigraphic tradition throughout the empire.



The data from various centres of the empire also show that there was a decrease in the number of inscriptions in the second half of the 3rd Century AD. This decrease stopped for a short time with the establishment of order in the empire in the first half of the 4th century AD, then continued in the 5th and 6th Centuries AD. (Roth, 2016, 17-18) As a result of a research conducted in seven centres in Africa, it was found that most of the 4000 tombstones examined belong to the period of the Severan Dynasty. This is the heyday of the epigraphic tradition that steadily rose under Flavians. However, after the abdication of the Severan Dynasty, there was a rapid decline in the number of inscriptions¹¹. Another well-studied example is Aphrodisias. The number of inscriptions from the 1st and 2nd centuries that have been identified so far in this city reaches 1500. The number of inscriptions dated between 250-550 BC is 250. In Aphrodisias, the council and local authorities lost their function in the 4th Century. (Liebeschuetz, 1999, 4 – 6) The same condition was also true for Aizanoi. However, in greater cities such as Ephesus, where the city organization was rooted and intricately socialized, or in some centres in Africa which were less affected by 3rd Century Crisis, this decline was spread over time. This is related to the sustainability of urban life in a cosmopolitan structure for a while, adaptation to Christianity and the level of welfare. The cities in the east of the empire were able to resist this process better than the west, and the metropolises in the east than to the inner cities. (Antonopoulou 2002, 169-178)

Reused inscriptions are rare at Aizanoi and spoliae are more common in Late Antiquity and Byzantine buildings. Most tombstones are door-shaped and are not as suitable as bomoi, pedestals, or pillars to reuse in writing. Bomoi in the city are dated to between the end of the 2nd Century AD and the first half of the 3rd Century AD; and are gravestones or votives. There are few traces of reused statue bases in the city consisting of *damnatio memoriae* or office change.

The reuse or use as spoliae of inscriptions is characteristic of Late Antiquity epigraphy and architecture. At the end of the 3rd Century AD, many statues in Rome were removed from public spaces and their pedestals were used on behalf of different people in the 4th and 5th centuries. In fact, a new local office, *curatorum statutorum*, was appointed to control this reuse process. The need for this office

¹¹ Ramsay MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire", *American Journal of Philology*, Vol.103, No.3, 1982, pp. 242-243

may be understood from that 243 of the 710 statue bases which were included in the catalogues until 2016 and were found outside of Rome in Italy were reused or spolia. (Machado, 2017, 329-330) Moreover, when considering this state control, use of spolia or reuse of inscriptions was not only an economic but also an ideological phenomenon.

There are examples in this sense. Many monuments belonging to Antonine Period in Leptis Magna were used as spolia during 3rd Century Crisis and then in political instability during Diocletianus' Reign. (Bigi - Tantillo, 2010, 255 – 280) A statue base in Tuscia, located in the Umbria Region of Italy, is important in terms of showing the intensity and ideological side of spolia use. The base, which was used for the first time in the Augustus period, then used for Tacitus in 275/6, for Carinus in 283 and for Diocletian a few years later. (CIL XI, Nos.4956 – 4957) These examples reflect the effects of the ideological structure and the understanding of local government on the urban landscape.

The construction history of the quay and protection walls of the Penkalas River (Kısıkboğaz / Kocasu/ Bedir), which divided the city into two sides and had vital importance, provides clues about spolia use at Aizanoi. Archaeological studies conducted at various times around this area showed that construction activities had been realized in this area at various times. The first phase of the building was completed in the second half of the 2nd Century AD. (Rheidt, 2010, 489-491) In the studies conducted in the years 2019 and 2020, detailed findings related to later repairs had been reached. (Fig. 12) These findings show that the walls underwent two different repairs in the 4th and 5th centuries AD and later in the 19th century. The 19th century repair was applied with rubble-added mortar. The repair of the building in the Late Antiquity was made by using various architectural elements, bomos and grave steles from different buildings as spolia. (Fig 13) (Özer - Özcan, 2022, 20-22)

The use of gravestones from a few centuries ago in the Late Antique restoration may be a sign of cultural and ideological breakdown as in the Italy example. Writing had preserved its place as an indispensable communication mean but lost its intensive use both in daily life and bureaucracy. Former is related to the change in the burial custom. Sudden disappearance of the gravestones, which consisted majority of Aizanoi epigraphy, is an indicator of this. If it is true that the change of burial customs was the main factor in the decrease of the written tradition in Aizanoi, another question arises that needs to be answered. Why are there more tombstones from Late Antiquity in the surrounding Christian centres than in Aizanitis?

5. Conclusion

The cause of the social transformation at Aizanoi was not religious but the class structure which disintegrated and transformed together with the Polis. This is the dynamic underlying catastrophic decrease in written tradition and shrink of the city centre of Aizanoi. As mentioned above, while classical urban traditions and its institutions were changed, the urban middle class of artisans, intellectuals, and merchants must have tended to migrate to the countryside or just lost their influence following the elites. Most of the gravestones were part of the burial tradition of this class. The monumental tombs in the southern necropolis of Aizanoi reveal this difference of tradition. The burial site of the middle class in northern necropolis where more gravestones exist, is also evidence for this difference. Thus, the change in burial tradition was not only religious but also class. This may explain the rapid fall of an imperial cult centre and one of founding cities of Panhellenium compared to cities of the same status.

The fact that bureaucrats and landowner senators took the place of elites in regions where Romanization and imperial bureaucracy manifested itself more on a local scale and where imperial properties or garrisons were concentrated, ensured that both the urban culture and the written tradition continued for a while. Aizanoi was organized around the Temple of Zeus, which rose on the ideological and cultural foundations of Hellenism and kept its cultural resistance for a long time, but

because of this organization, it was deprived of elements such as Christian urban elites and Roman bureaucracy that would support a Late Antique city. In addition, the psychological effect of the Temple of Zeus is so intense that while similar ones were converted into churches in the 5th Century AD, it took the 7th century AD to transform it into a church.

It is also understood from the fact that the strong fortifications appeared in the cities of the Roman Empire since the 3rd century are not seen in Aizanoi, that the city institutions and public spaces have lost their function and the city centre has shrunk. The burial areas around the Temple of Zeus seem to have reached the temple hill, which is the dominant point of the plain. Most probably, the limited population being still in the city in the 6th and 7th centuries was organized as neighbourhoods around the sheltered temple, which was now converted into a church. Therefore, it is difficult to say that Aizanoi changed from a polis to a castron. Instead, it can be said that it turned into a smaller settlement that did not need strong walls.

However, in the next period, Aizanoi preserved its regional influence, albeit limited. It sent representatives to councils until the 9th Century AD but was never represented as a metropolis. It was first governed under the metropolis of Laodicea and then Hierapolis and was listed after Tiberiopolis in the first and Kadoi in the second. Considering that Tiberiopolis was a katoikia and Kadoi had many imperial properties, it becomes clearer that the problems of land system, property, and social stratification discussed above were the causes of Aizanoi's weakening in Late Antiquity. This defenceless settlement came under the rule of Germiyanogulları after occupation of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204. Then, during the Mongol raids, it faced the occupation of the Çavdars. The fortification on the temple hill was built during this period. This situation also proves the argument suggested above that the city shrank towards the temple hill.

Ethical Approval

The authors state that there is no need for an ethics committee report in this study.

Contributions of the Authors

The author contributed fully to this study.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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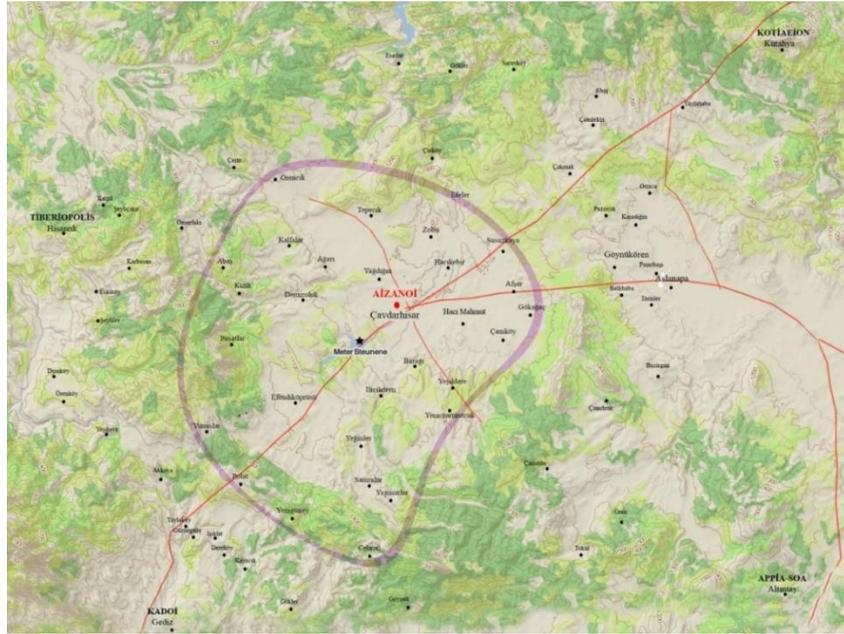


Figure 1: Borders of Aizanitis

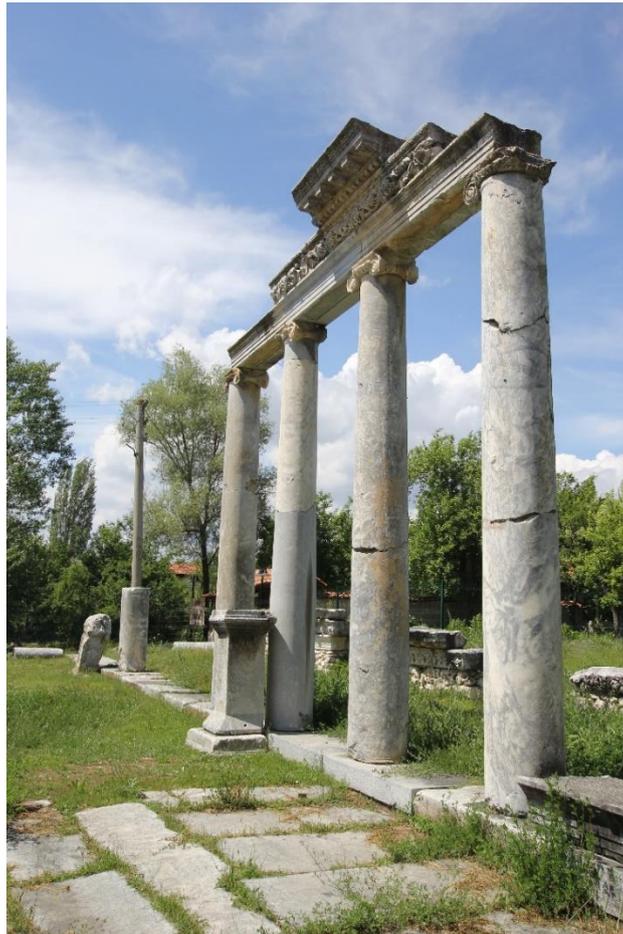


Figure 2: A Section of Columned Street of Aizanoi (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 3: Proscenium and Orchestra of Aizanoi Theatre (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 4: Late Antique Structure in Aizanoi Theatre (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 5: Graves from Yalakkaya District (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 6: Chamber Tomb from Northern Necropolis (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 7: General View from Northern Necropolis (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 8: 3rd Century Sarcophagus from Northern Necropolis (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 9: Base of a Monumental Tomb in the Southern Necropolis (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 10: A Late Earth Grave from Southern Necropolis (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 11: Excavation Area (Section L6A) on the Temple Hill (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 12: Penkalas West Wall (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)



Figure 13: Penkalas - Use of Spoliae (Photo: Aizanoi Excavation Archive 2011 – 2020)