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Early Christianity in the Black Sea: An Examination of the Literary Evidence

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I. Introduction

Christianity became an important phenomenon in its earliest phase for the history of Anatolia. In fact, it is important to point out that the name *Christianoi* (=the followers of Christ) first emerged at Antioch, Antiochea, in the first generation of Christians. The *Acts* of Apostles offers the details of the journeys of St. Paul, who vastly travelled in the southern regions of modern Turkey (Wallace – Williams 1998). Paul's travels and the later thrust of Christianity show that the regions of Anatolia which had close connections with Syria naturally became the hot-bed of this new religion (MacMullen 1984). However, in what way can we exploit the literary evidence for the impact of Christianity in the regions which were at the edges of the original missionary areas of St. Paul? It is an important question what emphasis may be placed on the literary evidence to exploit the channels of communication in the early expansion of Christianity in the geographically distant regions of its seed-bed.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the above questions, taking the Black Sea region of Turkey into a specific consideration, because the geographical location of the region was relatively remote from the eastern Mediterranean. The paper will not only seek and examine the literary records on the presence of the Christianity, but it will also concentrate on the impact of the religious and political controversies of the early Church in the Black Sea. The past scholarship has already piecemeal touched the presence of Christianity in the region, however, a study that combines the full literary evidence is still lacking. This very factor makes such an examination necessary. Apparently it is also necessary to consider that how harmoniously worked the imperial and ecclesiastical programmes in the Christianization of the region from the conversion of Constantine to the last quarter of the fourth century, at which the chronological coverage of the paper is terminated. The methodology adopted here is to

identify the references in the pagan and Christian sources, and then to analyse them according to their nature. The Turkish archaeological field surveys, carried out by Turkish and non-Turkish scholars, are not regrettably promising to reproduce the material cultures of early Christians, because most of those field studies mainly concentrated on the pre-historic materials.[1]

II. Christianity in the Black Sea

The literary records of the Christian existence in the Black Sea can be followed from the pagan and the Christian authors of late antiquity. One of the earliest records belongs to the very beginning of the second century, when a Roman gentleman, Pliny the Younger, became the provincial governor of Bithynia-Paphlagonia. Pliny is rather famous for his exchange of letters with the emperor Trajan. In one of those letters Pliny asks the emperor how to deal with the Christians, in the Black Sea in his case. It is not certain from where Pliny wrote this famous letter, because he does not mention the city from which it was written. However, it is likely that he wrote this letter from a coastal town somewhere between Amisus and Amastris in A.D. 112 (Sherwin-White 1966: 691; Barnes 1968: 36-7; Benko 1980: 1068-76; Williams, 1990: 139-144; Wilken 2003: 8-15). The context surmised from the letter was that soon after Pliny's arrival in the city, a group of local citizens approached him to complain about Christians living in the vicinity. Pliny reports that there had been a considerable number of Christians in that city for a few decades:

> Others who were named by the informer said that they were Christians and then denied it, explaining that they had been, but had ceased to be such, some three years ago, some a good many years, and a few even twenty (Pliny the Younger, *Epistola* X.96.6).

If Pliny had not written cursorily about the dates, it can be assumed that Christianity became familiar in the region right before the close of the first century (Wilken 2003: 15-25. As Pliny was in Bithynia-Paphlagonia about A.D. 111/112, it is logical to surmise that at the end of the first century A.D. Christianity had arrived by someway at the region. Another reference on the presence of Christians in Pontus may be found in the first letter of Peter, which was written to Christians living in Pontus and Bithynia as well as other places in Asia Minor (I Peter 1.1). Peter's letter appears to address no to the local people but to the mission in the region. It was probably this reference that led Epiphanius to think that Peter had often visited Bithynia and Pontus

[1] The archaeological field surveys of the Turkish Black Sea region are regularly being published in *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* by Turkish Ministry of Culture.

(Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 27.6.6.). However it is also likely that the tales of the early missionary activities led Epiphanius to believe that some Pontic cities were visited by the Apostolic missions. In fact, the early Christian mythological traditions claims that not only the southern shores of the Black Sea but also the northern shores fell within the Apostolic missionary activities (Eusebius, *HE*, III.1.1-2).[2] According to these traditions, the apostle Andrew accompanied his brother Peter on an early mission in the Pontic cities like Sinope, Amisus and Trapezus, before turning to western Asia Minor (Phrygia, Mysia, Bithynia). Andrew returned to Pontus, where he was imprisoned and narrowly escaped death. He then went to Scythia and Thrace (Eusebius, *HE*, III.1.1).[3] The oldest foundation of such traditions, as Eusebius reports, is a lost work of Origen of Alexandria, the famous theologian of the third century (Eusebius, *HE*, III.1.1-3).

The pagan author Lucian of Samasota mentions that Christians were a considerable factor about the last quarter of the second century in the central Black Sea, the heart of the province of Pliny. According to Lucian, Christians were a disturbing threat to a local quack in Abonuteichus (mod. Inebolu in Kastamonu), an ancient Paphlagonian city. The context of the writing of Lucian was a certain Alexander, a charlatan priest of the cult of Asclepius (King 2004: 55-57). Alexander had established a centre in Abonuteichus in 150-170 A.D.

> When at last many sensible men, recovering, as it were, from profound intoxication, combined against him, especially all the followers of Epicurus, and when in the cities they began gradually to detect all the trickery and bunkum of the show, he issued a proclamation designed to scare them, saying that Pontus was full of atheists and Christians who had the hardihood to utter the vilest abuse of him; these he bade them drive away with stones if they wanted to have the good gracious (Lucian, *Alexander or the false Prophet*, 25; Benko 1980: 1096).[4]

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2 In the apostolic partition of the world, Andrew took Scythia to carry the message of Christianity. The most ancient source for the apostolic connection of the northern Black Sea is Eusebius of Caesarea.

3 In an apocryphal text, called *the Acts of Andrew*, it is claimed that Andrew appointed a certain Stachys as the bishop of Byzantion. In the early Chistian literature the name of Stachys appears in the letter of St. Paul *to the Romans* (16.9). However in that letter it is not even implied any connection between Stachys and the Apostle Andrew. Also the first church historian Eusebius does not even record Stachys' name (Peterson 1958: 49-66). This legendary connection has been exploited by the church of Constantinople in the Medieval age to claim a charismatic authority (Dvornik 1958).

4 The name of this city had been earlier recorded by Strabon *Geographika* XII.3.10. According to Lucian, the name Abonou teichos was converted to Iunopolis (hence Inebolu) at the suggestion of the false prophet. Lucian's connection with Christianity is also treated by Lane Fox 1986, 243-50.

Lucian refers Christians twice in this treatise against Alexander. In his second reference, he tells us that Alexander considered Epicurans and Christians as spies and provoked his followers against these groups.

> He established a celebration of mysteries, with torchlight ceremonies and priestly offices, which was to be held annually, for three days in succession, in perpetuity. On the first day, as at Athens, there was a proclamation, worded as follows: 'If any atheist or Christian or Epicuran has come to spy upon the rites, let him be off, and let those who believe in the god perform the mysteries, under the blessing of Heaven.' Then, at the very outset, there was an 'expulsion', in which he took the lead, saying: 'Out with the Christians,' and the whole multitude chanted in response, Out with the Epicurans' (Lucian, *Alexander or the false Prophet*, 38).

The patchy existence of Christianity in Paphlagonia may also be attested within the context of early church councils. Eusebius of Caesarea reports that at about the same period with the charlatan prophet, a small council of bishops assembled in Amastris under the presidency of its bishop Palmas (Eusebius, *HE*, V.23.3-4; Fischer 1977: 241-52). The main agenda of the synod was the paschal controversy, which was a dispute on how to settle the date of Easter. Whether Easter should be observed on a fixed day of the lunar month (April 14th) or on the following Sunday. This controversy was another symbol of the separation from Judaism, because the observance of Easter in the 14th of April was an adoption of the Jewish Passover. Although some bishops from Asia Minor insisted on the observing the April 14th, the bishops of Rome refused this and chose to celebrate the Paschal a week after. Surprisingly, Palmas of Amastris had given his support for the bishop of Rome not for the bishop of Ephesus (Frend, 1965: 76-77; Chadwick 1967: 84-85). It is clear that in this Paschal controversy, the individual connection of the bishop of Amastris went beyond the Black sea and he became a part of an interregional chain of communication, as he received and sent letters from/to Corint in Greece and Rome.

Dionysius of Corinth, who communicated with Palmas, also wrote a letter to the church of Nicomedia to urge them against the heretical views of Marcion of Sinope (Eusebius, *HE*, IV.23.4; Gamble 1995: 116). Marcion was one of the wealthy ship-owners of his home-town and his connections with Rome and Alexandria were firm (*ANF* III, 257, 653).[5] Epiphanius of Salamis

[5] The earliest source on the wealth position of Marcion is Tertullian, who identifies him as the shipmaster of the city and mentions about his connection with Alexandria.

identifies Marcion's father as the bishop of Sinope (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42.1-8). Some time between 130s and 140s, Marcion was excommunicated from the church by his father and then he went to Rome (Frend 1984: 212-17). Apparently there were some Christians in the city of Sinope in the first half of the second century. It is logically obvious that if there was a bishop in a place then there was a number of Christians. However, whether Marcion's father was the first bishop of the city we cannot say. Marcion did not only puzzle the Christians of the Black Sea, he also drew reactions from Christians all over the Mediterranean world (Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heresies* 30-44; Justin *1 Apology*, 26, 58; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.27).[6] According to Marcion, the Christian Gospel was wholly a Gospel of Love. He argued that the creator God depicted in the Old Testament had nothing in common with the God of Love revealed by Jesus. Consequently he rejected the Old Testament. It is clear that Marcion had developed a strong reactions against the Jewish elements of Christianity (Lietzman 1951: 233-47; Kelly 1977: 57 ff.).

In the third century, the pioneer of Christians in the Black Sea was of course Gregory Thaumaturgus (=the miracle maker), the bishop of Neocaesarea in the hinterland. Gregory was born into a pagan family in Cappadocian Pontus. Intending to go to Beirut to further his legal education in 233, he instead went with his brother to study with Origen, the famous Christian teacher of the time, at Caesarea in Palestine. When he returned to his home-town, he became bishop of Neocaesarea in the 240s. In order to emphasise his missionary zeal, the late fourth century Christian hagiography claimed that there had been only seventeen Christians when Gregory became the bishop, but there left only seventeen pagans when he was dead (Mitchell 1993: II. 53-57; Lane Fox 1986: 528-39; Mitchell 1999: 99-138).[7] From this mythology we may infer that even in the middle of the third century the number of Christians in the inland Black Sea was very small. Gregory lived through frightening attacks by Goths in the mid-third century.[8] The consequences of the Gothic raids soon began to disturb the Pontic Christians, as the Goths had abducted and raped many members of the Pontic communities including Christians. In his famous canonical letter Gregory addressed to the bishop of Trapezus (Mitchell 1999: 107) and instructed his fellow clergymen on how to deal with the female

6 The fourth century Christian intellectuals, like Epiphanius and Cyril of Jerusalem, were particularly keen to warn their readers not to enter the Marcionite church.

7 This was noted by his biographer Gregory of Nyssa at the end of the fourth century.

8 Gregory wrote canonical letters to reorganise the discipline among the Christians after this Gothic attacks.

victims of the Gothic attacks (Lane-Fox 1986: 528-45; Mitchell 1993: I. 236, II. 53-57. Mitchell 1999).[9]

Gregory was not only a man of his community, but he was also a man of the ecclesiastical politics. Towards the end of his career as bishop of Neocaesarea, Gregory went to Antioch with his brother Athenadorus, who was also a bishop of a church (or churches) in Pontus (Eusebius, *HE*, VII.14.1, 28.1), to take part in the theological discussions, caused by Paul of Samosata, then bishop of Antioch between 264 and 68 (Eusebius, *HE*, VII.28.1). How Gregory and his brother were invited this meeting is not difficult to conjecture, because one of the leading spirits of that meeting was Firmilian, the bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea (Eusebius, *HE*, VII.28.1). The geographical connections of Cappadocia and Neocaesarea, and the possible friendship between Firmilian and Gregory, both were admirers of Origen, must be taken into account (Eusebius, *HE*, VI.27.1, 30.1). Although Eusebius does not specify what role Gregory took at the table of the discussion, it should be assumed that his role was not a passive one, because he had an intellectual ability as being a student of Origen.

Cappadocian Caesarea was not only a contact point for the Christians of the inland Black Sea, but it had also connections with the eastern Anatolia at that time. A close contemporary and a name sake of Gregory became Christian and a missionary for his nation at about the same time. In the east of Cappadocia Gregory 'the Illuminator', baptised at Caesarea, managed to convert the Armenian king Tiridates III (274-314) into Christianity just at the beginning of the fourth century before Constantine (Atiya 1968: 317-22). Whether this was a simple Armenian tradition or a historical fact is difficult to tell. Eusebius did not specifically include the conversion of the king in his *Church History*, but he nevertheless reports their Christianity and Maximian's expedition against this development (Eusebius, *HE*, IX.8.2; Frend 1984: 445; Braund 1994: 264).

The Church historian Eusebius or the tales of the Christian martyrs do not imply any serious sufferings of the Christians of the Black Sea in the second and third centuries. Only at the beginning of the fourth century, the impact of the persecutions against Christians became visible. Eusebius reports that Christians endured sufferings horrible to hear. Their fingers were pierced with

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[9] For an English translation of the letter of Gregory see *NPNF* II.14, 602; for the role of Gregory as church leader in taking away his community from the Gothic crisis see also important discussions in Lane-Fox 1986: 528-45; Mitchell 1993: I. 236, II. 53-57. Mitchell 1999 has an extensive bibliography for the life and activities of Gregory.

sharp reeds under their nails (Eusebius, *HE*, VIII.13.6). The context of these events was the political rivalry between Constantine (306-337) and Licinius (308-324). This rivalry led to a political disobedience among Christians of the eastern provinces of the empire at the expense of Licinius, because they looked for the success of Constantine. In these circumstances it was unavoidable for Licinius not to suspect a treasonable conspiracy on the part of Christians (Eusebius, *HE*, X.8.16). Licinius rightly took some serious measures to bring Christians under his control and began to punish them. Although it is difficult to know the degree of the new persecution, the following passage of the pro-Constantinian Eusebius shows that the Pontic Christians had been affected from the measures of Licinius.

> The deeds which he [Licinius] performed at Amasia and in the other cities of Pontus surpassed every excess of cruelty. Some of the churches of God were again razed to the ground, others were closed, so that none of those accustomed to frequent them could enter them and render the worship due to God (Eusebius, *HE,* X.8.15).

The tradition of Christian martyrology preserves the stories of the Forty Martyrs, who had suffered martyrdom under Licinius at Sebaste in Pontus. According to the tradition they were put to the death by being exposed to the cold water. The church historian Sozomenus has a separate chapter on the forty martyrs in his ecclesiastical history (Sozomenus, *HE*, IX.2). There is also an alleged testament of their martyrdom, which is regarded as inauthentic in the modern scholarship (Musirillo 1972: xlix-l, 355-61).

The earlier years of Licinius' administration in the East did not simply mean persecutions for Christians, but it was also relatively peaceful period in its earlier years. Between the edict of Milan in A.D. 313 and the great council of Nicaea, a council of bishops met at Neocaesarea perhaps under the presidency of Vitalis, bishop of Antioch (Hefele 1871: 222-30; Percival 1997: 79-86). The presence of the bishop of Antioch may lead us to conclude that this council was probably a general meeting of the bishops of Anatolia and Syria. The fact that the bishop of Antioch was trying to enforce his power through the Anatolian cities, including Black Sea may be taken as evidence that Black Sea cities were not excluded from the ecclesiastical politics, designed in the leading cities of the East.[10]

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[10] The council decreed fifteen canons to improve the moral issues of the society and the internal discipline of the church, issuing canons on points, such as marital matters (*canons* 2,3), fornication (*canon* 8), restriction of the actions of clergy (*canons* 1,7,9,10,11 and 13-15) and punishments for their misdemeanours.

The great council of Nicaea took place immediately after the victory of Constantine at Chyrsopolis over Licinius in A.D. 324. The following summer in 325, the episcopal representatives of the Christian world were invited to celebrate the victory of Constantine at Nicaea, where the Arian controversy was intensively occupied the agenda. At this council there was a weak number of episcopal representatives from various parts of the Black Sea. The council was attended approximately by two hundred and fifty bishops from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire (Eusebius, *VC*, 3.8; Theodoret, I.7) and the whole Black Sea was represented by only nine. Paphlagonia was represented by three bishops, Hesychius of Amastris, Philadelphus of Pompeiopolis and Petronius of Ionopolis (Mansi 1759: II.694; Harnack 1905: 353). Eusebius notes that there were three other bishops, Eutychianus of Amasia, Helpidius of Comana and Heraclius of Zela, from the inland Black Sea at the council (Eusebius, *VC*. III.7). The Episcopal lists preserve that Longinius of Neocaesarea, Domnus of Trapezus and Strataphilus of Pityus were other representatives of the Black Sea cities at that council (Mansi 1759: II. 694; Braund 1994: 264-65). It is very obvious that regarding the vast geography of the Black Sea, the attendance at the council of Nicaea was not very great.

III. Early Christian Groups in the Black Sea

By the time of the council of Nicaea, the presence of Christians and the established churches in the Black Sea was a factor to some degree. It is also seen that the diverse interpretations had appeared in the region. This diversity became more visible after Nicaea, because the centralising attempts of the council brought the various groups within the church into surface.

It is already seen that Sinope had been the native-town of Marcion, famous Christian heretic of the early second century. The sources tell us that Marcion founded his own church after he was excommunicated not in his town but at Rome in 140s. The Marcionite church flourished in the empire at some degree and in some places it mixed up with the main church so that in the mid-fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386) found it necessary to warn Christians not to enter a Marcionite church. This shows that Marcionite church was still a considerable factor in the eastern parts of the Roman empire. It is unfortunate that there is very little information about the geographical distribution of the Marcionite church, though almost every early Christian writer touched on the theology of Marcion (Frend 1984: 212-17). The Marcionite church organisation was found at Smyrna, Nicomedia,

Phrygia, Gortyna and at Antioch and more importantly in northern and eastern Syria (Eusebius, *HE*, IV.23.4, 15.46, 23.5, 30.1; Drijwers 1987-1988: 153-172).[11] However, what impact the Marcionite church made in its founder's home-town and in the neighbourhood the sources tell nothing.

One of the earliest Christian groups that appeared in the Black Sea landscape was the Montanist prophecy, a Phrygian milleniaristic movement, first emerged towards the last quarter of the second century (Trevett 1996: 95-104; Tabbernee 1997). Eusebius tells us that the Priscillian branch of Montanism caused a disturbance among the Christians of Thrace. Aelius Publius Julius, bishop of Debeltum, a Roman colony founded by Vespasian, (*Colonia Flavia Pacensis Deultum*) and Sotas of Anchialus attempted to root out the Montanism, however, the opposition of the locals did not allow them (Eusebius, *HE*, V.19.3-4; Trevett 1996:51). The presence of Christians in the colonies may also lead us to observe that the Romanization prepared the way for the expansion of Christianity in the western Black Sea. It is clear that the Roman influence among the inhabitants of western shores of Black Sea was an important factor in the second century, especially after the conquests of Trajan in Dacia in the beginning of that century (King 2004: 50-52).

Another Christian group was the Novatians (the followers of Novatus) in the Black Sea, particularly in Paphlagonia. This group was a symptom of the Decian persecution (A.D. 249-51). Its leader, Novatus, was arguing that those Christians who compromised with paganism during the persecution must have been deprecated any form of concession. There was probably a strong political base in the controversy, because, when Novatus lost the election for the bishopric of Rome, he was ordained by some other bishops as an alternative bishop of Rome (Frend 1984: 351-53). The group found followers all over the Roman world and survived into the fifth century maybe later. The fifth century ecclesiastical historian Socrates tells us that numerous Novatians lived in Paphlagonia and especially in the city of Mantineion, near modern Bolu (Socrates, *HE*, II.38.). He also produces an interesting explanation why Novatianism was so substantial in Paphlagonia. According to Socrates, when Novatus separated from the church of Rome, he began sending letters to all churches that 'they should not admit to the sacred mysteries those who had sacrificed; but exhorting them to repentance, leave the pardoning of their offence to God, who has the power to forgive all sin'. However, Cornelius, rival

11 Eusebius reports (*HE*, IV.30.1) the works of Bardesanes the Syrian against Marcion, whose ideas were already abounded in Mesopotamia.

of Novatus, had taken a milder course and sent letters promising indulgence to delinquents after baptism. These two different attitudes to those who compromised had divided the Christians of the third century. Socrates observes that as the Paphlagonians and Phrygians were more temperate than other nations and they were not prone to sensual pleasures or swearing, they assented to the letters of Novatus (Socrates, *HE*, IV.28.). Socrates' observations were probably true about the Paphlagonians, because, in the middle of the fourth century, when Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople (346-360), attempted to convert the Novatians into his own orthodoxy through the imperial military force, the Paphlagonians resisted fiercely and a severe conflict occurred between the imperial troops and the Novatians of the region at the city of Mantineion. It is reported that both sides gave very high loses (Socrates, *HE*, II.38; cf. Mitchell 1993: II.97.).[12]

One of the controversial figures of the Pontic Christianity in the fourth century was Eustathius, the ascetic bishop of Sebaste (mod. Sivas) (Basil, *Letter,* ccliv.9 (NPNF II.8: 288).[13] According to Basil of Caesarea, sometime a close friend of Eustathius, he was educated at Alexandria and became a disciple of Arius. However, when Eustathius returned home he was threatened with excommunication, because of his Arian beliefs by Hermogenes, then the bishop of Caesarea (Basil, *Letter*, cclxiii.3).[14] One of the earliest wounds in Eustathius' career was his exile from Constantinople even by an Arian champion, Eusebius of Constantinople. According to Socrates, Eustathius was excommunicated by his own father the bishop Eulalius, for dressing in a way unusual to a cleric (Socrates, *HE*, II.43.).[15] Eustathius was most likely appointed to the bishopric of Sebaste before the council of Ancyra in 358, where his name first appeared in the ecclesiastical politics. Eustathius became an active member of the Semi-Arian church party between 358 and 65. He was an associate of Basil of Ancyra in the delegation to Constantius after the mentioned council in 358. Constantius appointed Eustathius, Basil and Eusebius of Emesa to examine Liberius, bishop of Rome (Sozomenus, *HE*, IV.15). In 359 Eustathius, a member of the council of Seleucia (Socrates, *HE*, II.39),

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12 The ancient Mantineion is located in the wooded valleys east of mod. Bolu

13 Basil of Caesarea, in his letter to a Cilician bishop, accuses Eustathius and his group of signing the every creed they were asked for.

14 Socrates has a different account at this point. He notes that Eustathius was first deposed by his own father, Eulalius the bishop. A certain Eulalius was among the participants of the council of Gangra, Probably Eulalius whom Socrates meant was the same with this one.

15 The other ecclesiastical sources do not mention about the excommunication of Eustathius by his own father.

held to promote an ecclesiastical unity in the empire simultaneously with the council of Ariminum in Italy. As an active promoter of the semi-Arian theology, Eustathius conflicted with the radical theology of Aetius, who supported by Eudoxius of Antioch in the presence of Constantius II in Constantinople in 359 (Theodoret, *HE*, II.23). However Eustathius lost against Eudoxius and deposed from his bishopric with other semi-Arian bishops at the court council of Constantinople in 360 (Sozomenus, *HE*, IV.24; Basil, *Letter*, cclxiii.3).[16] We hear that Eustathius was representing the eastern semi-Arian bishops in Rome, after the council of Lampsacus in 364 or 365 (Basil, *Letter*, cclxiii.3). Eustathius was also criticised by supporting the Sabellian ideas in Sebaste (Basil, *Letter*, cclxv.2 ; Kelly 1977: 119-123).[17]

Eustathius was not only a controversial figure in terms of Christian theology and the ecclesiastical politics, he was also a disappointing friend of Basil the Cappadocian, bishop of Caesarea between 370-79. They went to Egypt together to examine the Egyptian monasticism, then organised monastic foundations in Cappadocia and Pontus. Basil and Eustathius soon separated, because the asceticism of Eustathius began to become controversial (Rousseau 1994: 233 ff). In order to response the crisis that Eustathius created a council of bishops met at Gangra, (modern Çankırı), a Paphlagonian city some time after 360s and discussed his and his followers' ascetic practices (Socrates, *HE*, II.43; Sozomenus, *HE*, III.14). Eustathius' extreme asceticism did also include violent behaviours, because Basil reports that when Eustathius travelled through Paphlagonia he overthrew the altars of Basilides of Gangra (Basil, *Letter*, ccli.3). Gangra was created as second metropolitan city in the province about the middle of the fourth century. The bishops at Gangra published a set of twenty canons, where they firmly opposed to the monastic innovations of the Eustathians (*NPNF* II.14, 92-101). In the synodical letter of this council thirteen names appear, at least seven of whom had signed the encyclical letter of the eastern bishops in the council of Serdica in 343 (*NPNF* II.14, 91; Mansi 1759: III. 138-40).[18] In the meantime, Epiphanius of Salamis associates the

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16 Sozomenus notes that Eustathius was deposed six times at the church meetings in various cities, Caesarea, Constantinople Neocaesarea, Gangra, Melitene, Antioch, prior the council of Constantinople in 360. On the other hand, Basil of Caesarea, a contemporary and an old friend of Eustathius, notes that the main charge against Eustathius at Constantinople was his previous deposition by a council of bishops at Melitene some time before 359 and he also reports the other depositions of Eustathius.

17 Sabellius, a third century Monarchianist theologian, defended that the Son (Christ) was a different mode of the Father rather than a different person.

18 These were as follows: Eulalius of Amasias, Prohaeresius of Sinope, Bitinicus of Zela, Theodulus of Neocaesarea.

name of Eustahius with a further charge, which was made by a certain Aerius, an ex-pupil of Eustathius. Aerius' accusation was the maladministration of the church property (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 75). One of the most important source for Eustathius is apparently the letters of Basil, which, however, neither mentions about such an accusation, nor he makes allusion to the name of Aerius.

Eustathius' important associate in the semi-Arian theology was another Paphlagonian, Sophronios of Pompeiopolis (nearby mod. Taşköprü), who was one of the active bishops at the church councils during the reign of Constantius II. When he supported the party of Basil (of Ancyra) and Macedonius (of Constantinople) at the council of Seleucia in 359, he was deposed at the council of Constantinople in 360 (Sozomenus, *HE*, IV.24). According to Sozomenus, the ostensible reason behind the deposition of Sophronius was his greediness, because he was accused of selling some offerings presented to the church for his own benefit. When he was summoned before judges he refused to appear, when induced he denied the judges (Sozomenus, *HE*, IV.24). Sophronius was certainly one of the leaders of this group, because he was thought to be spokesman of the party of Basil (Socrates, *HE,* III.10). After the deposition at Constantinople in 360, Sophronius became a strong supporter of Macedonius. He was one of the semi-Arian (or Macedonian) bishops who petitioned to Jovian in Antioch in 363 after the death of Julian. Among this group of bishops, apart from Sophronius, there were at least three other representing the Pontic cities; Pasinicus of Zelae, Leontius of Comana, and Callicrates of Claudiopolis (Socrates, *HE*, III.25).[19] They opposed both the Arianism of Aetius, which emphasised the unlikeness of the Father and the Son and *homoousios* (of the same essence), the key word of the council of Nicaea, which refused every distinction between the Father and the Son. All these show that the city of Pompeiopolis in Paphlagonia was a stronghold of the Macedonian form of Christianity, which were later called as *pneumatomachoi* (=spirit fighters).

The Arian form of Christianity was not represented by only the above two bishops in the Pontic cities in the fourth century. The Pontic bishops took part in the church councils of the century mostly among the Arian group of bishops. At the council of Serdica in A.D.343 at least six bishops came from the cities of Paphlagonia (Wickham 1997:

19 Sozomenus (*HE*, VI.4) records only Sophronius' name in this group.

38-41).[20] However, only one bishop from the whole Pontic area attended (or at least listed) in the second general council of Constantinople, Pantophilus, the bishop of Iberia (Mansi 1759: III.572). This second council passed a canon that left the management of the Pontic bishops' matters to their own solution (Jonkers 1954: 107-111). The most cities of the eastern Roman empire were ecclesiastically administered by the Arian bishops until the arrival of Theodosius in 379, because many Nicene bishops had been exiled by some way under the reigns of Constantius II (337-61) and Valens (364-78). When Valens was killed at Adrianople (modern Edirne), Gratianus published an edict of restoration for the exiled bishops (Socrates, *HE*, V.2; Sozomenus, *HE*, VII.2). This new situation produced a further disorder in the congregational level. Sozomenus reports in favour of the Nicene bishops that some Nicene bishops did not attempt to seize their sees not to divide the church again, and preferred to share the episcopacy. The bishopric of Amasia was an example of this kind. When the Nicene bishop Eulalius returned to Amasia, he met that the city became almost Arian. Although he had to share the bishopric some time, at the end Eulalius was deserted by his own people, thus the Christians of Amasia had been fully converted to the Arian belief (Sozomenus, *HE*, VII.2).

The most important church leader in the mid fourth century-central Anatolia was no doubt Basil the Cappadocian, bishop of Caesarea between 370-79. Basil himself was a product of the Pontic Christian milieu, because his family was originally from Pontus and he had family estates there. Basil was successively educated in Caesarea, Constantinople at the feet of Libanius of Antioch, and at Athens, where he became a fellow student to Julian, emperor between 361 and 363. Basil, as an active bishop in the church politics and in the theological controversies, began to engage in church affairs from 360s, as he was ordained a priest in 365. An examination of the evidence related to Basil and his circle is beyond the reach of such a limited paper and it is also a painstaking work, because the magnitude of the contemporary documents related with Basil and his friends (the Cappadocian Fathers; Basil, his brother Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, their friend Gregory, bishop of Sasima, known as Gregory of Nazianzus as his father was bishop of Nazianzus) are almost uncontrollable, especially their letters tell us much about life in Cappadocia, Pontus and elsewhere. The modern scholarship has also a wide range of secondary literature on the Cappadocian Fathers.

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20 The cities of Black Sea were represented by at least six bishops at Serdica: Eulalius of Amasias, Bitinicus of Zela, Philetus of Juliapolis, Theodulus of Neocaesarea, Olympius of Doliche in Euphratensis, Proairesius of Sinope.

IV. Conclusion

In the conclusion of this literary survey for the ancient Christianity in the Turkish Black Sea region, first of all, it must be emphasised that the nature of the available source material on the arrival of Christianity in the Black Sea differs throughout the centuries. Secondly the references are not always direct and precise for the spread of Christianity in the Black Sea in the first century. As for the second and third centuries, the references are patchy and individual, however they provide a glimpse on the patchy existence of Christianity in the region. The weak presence of Christianity before the fourth century is also confirmed with the evidence on persecutions. From the second and third centuries onwards Christians suffered local or empire-wide persecutions in the Roman Empire, however the Christian martyrologies of the pre-fourth century did not list martyrs in the Black Sea. Although Christianity had arrived to the cities of Pontus very early within the first century through missionary activities, the evidence presented so far shows that before the Christianization of the Roman Empire, the expansion of Christianity was very thin in the region. If we can catch the historical element in the tale about Gregory of Thaumaturgus, the conclusion must be that even in the middle of the third century there were still very few Christians around the inland Black Sea. In the third century, regardless the relative remoteness to Syria, the Pontic cities were comparatively less represented at church meetings with the other regions. It may also be asserted conveniently that almost none of the great heresies of the pre-Constantinian age did any impact on the Christians of the Black Sea. This was also closely linked with the relatively scanty urbanisation in the Black Sea. The fourth century differs, because the imperial and ecclesiastical agendas were organised together to integrate the Roman Christian communities more closely to the imperial system. On the one hand the centralising effects of the imperial intervention into church matters obviously brought the Christian sectarian conflicts into surface, on the other hand the representation of the Black Sea cities began to become a considerable factor in the church politics.

The connection between the Black Sea cities and the hinterland behind them must have been important in the communication of the church leaders and missionaries. The slow traffic of ecclesiastical communication between the cities of Bithynia, Paphlagonia and Pontus were still relatively few even after Palmas' exchange of letters and the travels of Gregory. In the eastern side, the Cappadocian Caesarea worked as an apparent central base for the inland Black Sea and in the east of Anatolia and became an important transition

point in the expansion of Christianity into inland Pontic cities. However it became a factor only in the third century, and more in the fourth, as seen in the cases of Firmilianus, Gregory, Basil and Eustathius. The Pontic bishops of the fourth century were aware of the high church politics of their period because we have seen them, from the council of Nicaea to the Second General council of Constantinople in A.D. 381, attending in the great church councils, at which those high politics were designed. Naturally the close awareness of the church politics brought the different forms of Christianity into the Black Sea cities. It is obvious that the politicisation of the church leaders of the Black Sea cities did not only produce the different forms of Christianity in their region, but this politicisation no doubt contributed to integrate the peoples and the state more closely through the representation of the cities in the church council or in the imperial court. Whatever the political consequences of the church councils, it must be emphasised that the Black Sea cities joined the other Roman cities through those meetings, and the Christianization of the Black Sea became possible with touch of the state's hand especially after the conversion of Constantine about the beginning of the fourth century.

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Yazılı Kaynaklara Göre Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde Erken Hristiyanlık

Bu çalışmanın temel konusu erken Hristiyanlığın Karadeniz bölgesine gelişine ilişkin yazılı kaynaklarda yer alan kayıtları incelemektir. Çalışmamızın kronolojik sınırları, miladi I. yüzyılın sonlarından başlamakta ve IV. yüzyılın sonuna kadar gelmektedir. Bunun temel nedeni, kaynakların ilk defa birinci yüzyıldan itbaren bu konuya ilişkin veri sunmaya başlamasıdır. IV. yüzyılın sonunun *terminus quem* olarak seçilmesinin nedeni ise, devlet eliyle Hristiyanlaştırmanın bu dönemde hız kazanmasıdır. Kullanılan kaynaklar arasında en önemli olanı kuşkusuz Kaisareia piskoposu Eusebius'un yazdığı *Kilise Tarihi*'dir. Bu eserin önemi şuradadır: Eusebius ilk Hristiyan tarihçi olması nedeniyle, Hristiyanlar hakkında mevcut bütün malumatı kaydetmeye gayret etmiştir. Dolayısıyla Karadeniz bölgesinde Hristiyanların mevcudiyetine ilişkin en sağlam veriler Eusebius'da bulunabilir. Çalışmamız iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde, yazılı kaynakların sağladığı verilerin durumu, ikinci bölüm ise, faklı Hristiyan grupların Karadeniz bölgesindeki mevcudiyetleridir. Bu çalışmada ulaştığımız sonuç ise şöyle ifade edilebilir. Kaynaklarda bölgede I. yüzylın sonundan itibaren Hristiyanların mevcut oldukları söylenebilirse de, bu mevcudiyet çok yaygın değildir. Roma İmparatorluğu'nun IV. yüzyılda Hristiyanlaştırılmasından önce, Karadeniz bölgesinde Hristiyanların çok zayıf oranlarda mevcut olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Bunun en önemli delili, ikinci ve üçüncü yüzyıllarda Hristiyanlar bölgesel veya imparatorluk sathında kovuşturmalara tabi tutuldukları zaman, Karadeniz bölgesinin bundan fazla etkilenmemiş olmasıdır. O dönemlere ilişkin Hristiyanların efsanevi nitelikli kahramanlık hikayelerinin coğrafyası içerisinde Karadeniz bölgesi yer almamaktadır. Sadece dördüncü yüzyılda bölge Hristiyanları kovuşturmaya tabi tutulmuşlardır, bu da, Hristiyan oldukları için değil, daha çok siyasal karakterde olup, Licinius'un idaresinde bulunmalarına rağmen, Constantinus tarafına temayül göstermeleri nedeniyledir. Bölgede Hristiyanlığın kökleşmesi sadece devlet politikası ile mümkün olmuştur. Devlet politikası da özellikle kilise konsillerinde kendini göstermiştir.

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21 The following abbreviations are used throughout this work: ANF: *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (The collection of the writings of the church fathers before the council of Nicaea, 1996); ANRW: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, H. Temporini –Haase, W. (eds.), Walter de Gruyter, Berlin; HE: *Historia Ecclesiastica* (a conventional abbreviation for the church histories of the fourth and fifth century writers like Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomenus, Theodoret, Philostorgius); NPNF: *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (The collection of the works of the ecclesiastical writers lived after the council of Nicaea, T & T Clark, Edinburgh); VC: *Vita Constantini* (=*The Life of Constantine*).

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