

## **North and West Black Sea Port Cities by the Eyes of Travelers and Geographers Between Xth and XVth Centuries**

*Coğrafyacı ve Gezginlerin Gözüyle 10. ve 15. Yüzyıllar Arasında Kuzey ve Batı Karadeniz'deki Liman Şehirleri*

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### **Abstracts**

It is known that various records have been kept about the western and northern regions of the Black Sea since ancient times. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, there is an increase in the volume of information about the region in different works. Along with the travels and geographical studies, the information obtained about the region in question also laid the groundwork for the studies of later times. Between the X and XV centuries, travelers and geographers convey information about the western and northern regions of the Black Sea for ministerial and some commercial and political reasons. The data obtained show that some port cities developed in the north of the Black Sea, especially in the Crimean Peninsula and around the Azov Sea, with the effect of trade. Over time, the capacity of maritime transportation and logistics increased and commercial networks established with other port cities in the Black Sea like Sudak, Kaffa (Feodosia), Solgat (Saryi Krym), Chufut Fortress (Kirkyer), Sarikirman (Chersonese-Sevastopol), Don. There are also cities such as Azov (Tanais), where the river joins the Azov Sea, Matrakha (Tmutorakan-Hermonassa) on the Taman Peninsula and Akkerman (Akçakirman), Costantia (Constanta-Armocastro) outside these regions. While some authors only mention the names of the cities and give information about their location or coordinates; some authors, who are mostly travelers and are in the cities, give various information about the events they have seen and heard and

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witnessed in their works. With this information, the physical features of the cities such as architecture, ports, markets, as well as their commercial structure, transportation opportunities, and some political events of the aforementioned periods are reflected.

**Keywords:** *Black Sea, Crimea, Sudak, Kaffa, Solgat, Sevastopol, Azov, Port.*

## Öz

Karadeniz'in batısı ve kuzey bölgeleri hakkında ilkçağlardan itibaren çeşitli kayıtların tutulduğu bilinmektedir. Ortaçağların sonuna doğru farklı eserlerde söz konusu bölge hakkında aktarılan malumat hacminde artış görülmektedir. Seyahatler ve coğrafya çalışmaları ile birlikte söz konusu bölge hakkında elde edilen bilgiler daha sonraki zamanların çalışmalarına da zemin teşkil etmiştir. X. ve XV. Yüzyıllar arasında seyyah ve coğrafyacılar, elçilik faaliyetleri ile bazı ticari ve siyasi nedenlerle Karadeniz'in batı ve kuzey bölgeleri hakkında malumat aktarmaktadırlar. Elde edilen veriler Karadeniz'in kuzeyinde özellikle Kırım yarımadasında ve Azak Denizi çevresinde ticaretin etkisi ile bazı liman şehirlerinin geliştiğini göstermektedir. Zamanla deniz ulaşım ve taşımacılığının kapasitesi de artacak ve Karadeniz'deki diğer liman kentleri ile ticari ağlar kurulabilecektir. Karadeniz'in kuzey ile batısında bulunan ve ayrıca çevre hinterlandta etki sahibi önemli kentler arasında Kırım Yarımadasında bulunan Sudak, Kefe (Feodosia), Solgat (Staryi Krym), Çıfıt Kale (Kirkyer-Kerker), Sarıkirman (Chersonese-Sivastopol), Don Nehrinin Azak Denizine karıştığı mevkiye bulunan Azak (Tana), Taman Yarımadasındaki Matrakha (Tmutorakan-Hermonassa) ve bu bölgelerin dışında kalan Akkerman (Akçakirman), Costantia (Köstence-Armocastro) gibi kentler yer almaktadır. Bazı müellifler sadece şehirlerin ismini zikredip, bulunduğu yer veya koordinatları hakkında bilgiler aktarırlar iken, çoğunluğu seyyah olan ve şehirlerde bizzat bulunan bir bölüm müellif ise eserlerinde, bizzat görüp duydukları ve şahit oldukları olaylar hakkında da çeşitli malumatlara yer vermektedirler. Bu malumatlar ile birlikte şehirlerin mimarisi, limanları, pazarları gibi fiziki özellikleri ile birlikte ticari yapısı, ulaşım imkânları, bahse konu dönemlerin bir takım siyasi olayları yansıtılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Karadeniz, Kırım, Sudak, Kefe, Solgat, Sivastopol, Azak, Liman.*

## **Introduction:**

Even though the Black Sea was a sea that was feared especially in ancient times, it was not a completely unknown region especially when port cities were considered.<sup>1</sup> Trade from the Black Sea to Istanbul and the port cities of the Mediterranean brought some the Black Sea port cities to the fore. We see that information about this great sea started to increase towards the late Middle Ages, after the knowledge of ancient times began to disappear in the early Middle Ages. Some travels were written due to several developing political events, religious reasons, embassy activities and commercial ventures, and it led to new and more accurate determinations in the field of geography in order to learn about the world that did not disappear. Ultimately, this situation led to significant progress, especially in the field of cartography.

Some works on travel and geography between the 10th and 15th centuries contain information about the Black Sea. The information conveyed by travelers or geographers, especially in the Black Sea cities, regarding their periods is very valuable in order to learn the history of these cities. While compiling the information about the northern and western regions of the Black Sea in the works written in that period, the important

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<sup>1</sup> Herodot (484 BC-425 BC), one of the ancient historians, gave some information about some of port cities of Black Sea and people of this geography in his famous work: Herodotos, *Herodot Tarihi*, (Trans. Müntekim Ökmen), Remzi Kitapevi, İstanbul 1991, III.94, p. 173-174; IV.12, p. 196; VII.78, p. 347; Some of information about the ancient Black Sea cities by Xenophon (431 BC-354 BC) and Strabo (64 BC-24 AD) has survived to the present day. Xenophon had reached the coast of the Black Sea by road after setting off from Cunaxa near Babylon after a battle with his army. In his work called *Anabasis*, Xenophon talks about some port cities on the southern coast of the Black Sea, starting from Trabzon: Ksenophon, *Anabasis*, (Trans. Tanju Gökçöl), Sosyal Yayınlar, İstanbul 1998, p. 7,140-199; Strabo, who originally from Amasya, also mentions to some cities that in the north of the Anatolian Peninsula and also have coast to the Black Sea: Strabon, *Coğrafya (Anadolu-Kitap: XII, XIII, XIV)*, (Trans. Prof. Dr. Adnan Pekman), Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, XII. II. 11, İstanbul, p. 13-18; Flavius Arrianus (Arrian of Nicomedia, 86-180), who made a cruise on the southern coast of the Black Sea to prepare a report to be presented to the emperor before he started his duty as the Governor of Cappadocia, to which he was appointed, also mentioned some cities in this region and the distances between cities: *Arrianus'un Karadeniz Seyahati*, (Trans. Murat Arslan), Odin Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2005; p. 3-49.

cities in the Black Sea and vicinity of the Black Sea, especially the port cities, were discussed by moving in the northwest direction and an effort has been made to convey the information of travelers and geographers about these cities.

Studies in the fields of travel-observation and geography, which increased in the late Middle Ages compared to the first and early Middle Ages, seem to have benefited from previous studies. It is understood that efforts are made to compile and collect more or less information in these fields. From the beginning of the late Middle Ages, we find that this effort was mostly made by Muslim geographers. With the influence of the Islamic conquests, some information about the new geographies reached by the borders, and also, as a result of maritime and trade activities, learned about the Far East, Indian Ocean and other countries of the Mediterranean began to be recorded. Thus, Muslim scientists served as a link in transferring the geographical knowledge of ancient times to the next centuries.

Muslim travelers and geographers convey the information they obtained about the Black Sea through the communication they established on various occasions until the 12th century. It should be noted here that trade and politics play a leading role in establishing this communication. The emergence of new Muslim authorities in the geographies where Islam spread has increased the volume of geographical information transmitted.

It is obvious that while the Christian world's appetite for recognizing distant geographies increased with the Crusades, they also benefited from the geographical accumulation that could be compiled until that time. With the 4th Crusade, which took place in 1204, while Byzantium came under the control of European armies, embassy activities gained momentum, and commercial activities in the Mediterranean began to transform in favor of European merchants. Especially, European merchant states such as Genoa, Venice and Pisa were trying to increase their profits through commercial activities, on the other hand, they were involved in efforts to establish alliances with various embassy activities between geographies. From the 13th century onwards, with the influence of the Mongol invasions, changes began

to occur in the political structures throughout the old world, and as a result of various military, political and commercial developments, as well as maritime and embassy activities, new travel books, geographical works and map studies would be made.

While the Black Sea was a known region of the old continent during the first and middle ages, it took quite some time to take place in the studies carried out in the field of geography with the entire basin of the Black Sea. Especially since the 10th century, as a result of developments in maritime, new geographies became known and more accurate maps began to be drawn in the light of the data obtained until that time. The elapsed time allows us to see more specific and more accurate Black Sea maps towards the end of the Middle Ages.

In the early years of Late Middle Ages, Ibn Khordadbeh (820-912), Mas'ûdî (896-956), Al-Maqdisî (945-991), Ibn Hawqal (d.988), Ibn Rustah (after d.913), Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani, al-Istakhri (850-957) and some other travelers and geographers gave some information about the North and West Black Sea. In addition, some data about the Black Sea were presented in the work called "*Hudûdü'l-Âlem Mine'l-Meşrik ile'l-Magrib*", which was written in 982-983 (Hijri 372) and whose author is unknown.<sup>2</sup>

Along with these, we see that the knowledge of the Black Sea and especially the old continental geography has expanded since the 12th century. Since this century, geographic information has increased more rapidly than in the past. With the advancements in the maritime field and increasing transportation opportunities, the port cities of the Black Sea have also become better known. On the one hand, while benefiting from the scientific accumulation of ancient times, progress is made in the field of geography with ongoing scientific efforts and observation studies. Thus, in the 12th century, efforts to recognize geographies began to have a more scientific basis. In these periods, the information is mostly repeated and conveyed to the next times.

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<sup>2</sup> *Hudûdü'l-Âlem Mine'l-Meşrik ile'l-Magrib*, Pre. by Viladimir Minorsky, (Trans. Abdullah Duman, Murat Ağarı), İstanbul 2008, p. IX.

As a matter of fact, starting from 12th century, with the work titled "*Nüzhetü'l-Müştâk fi'htirâkı'l-âfâk (Kitap el-Roger)*" prepared by Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Idrisi (1099-1166), we can see the level of geography knowledge of the period reached. In this work, a basis that can be a source for the works to be prepared later is presented.<sup>3</sup> Al-Dimashqi (Seyhurrabve) (1256-1327), who lived in the same century, also stated the coordinates of various countries in his work named "*Nuḥbetü'd-debr fi 'acâ'ibi'l-ber ve'l-bahr*" and conveyed some information about the Black Sea. His style is similar to that of Muhammad al-Idrisi.

In the 11th century and after, we see that some information about the eastern geography was written by western travelers with the influence of the Crusades. These include some political and economic relations as well as explaining the experiences gained during the journey and return to the holy lands. In the 12th and 13th centuries, travelers like Giovanni da Pian del Carpine (1185-1252), William of Rubruck (*Ryysbroeck*) (1220-1293), Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (1214-1287), Benjamin of Tudela (1130-1173), Petachiah of Ratisbon (d.1225), Simon of Saint-Quentin (d.1250), Hayton of Corycus (1240-1310), Marco Polo (1254-1324), and Rabban Bar Sauma (1220-1294) traveling from east to west in the opposite direction of Marco Polo conveyed some information about the Black Sea geography.

Apart from these fundamental works, Hamdallah Mustawfi (1281-1340)'s work "*Nüzhetül Kulûp (Nuzhat al-qulûb)*", a Fransiscan priest named Odoric of Pordenone (1286-1331), and Ibn Battuta (1304– 1369)'s travel books, the work named "*Takvîmü'l-buldan*" written by Abû al-Fidâ (1273-1331) Ibn Fadlallah al-Umari (1301-1349)'s and Pascal of Vitoria (d.1339)'s works contain little or much information about the Black Sea.

From the 14th and 15th centuries, we find that new works have been written about the geography in question, with the increasing contact between countries with various political developments and embassy activities. Some of these are the works of Ruy González de Clavijo (d.1412) which the King

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<sup>3</sup> İsmail Çolak, "İdrisi", *Somuncubaba Aylık İlim Kültür ve Edebiyat Dergisi*, Yıl:23, Sayı: 191, Eylül, 2016, p. 54-56.

of Castile Henri III sent to Amir Timur as an envoy and the Castilian traveler Pero Tafur (1410-1490). Johannes de Galonifontibus (Jean of Sultaniya), who was sent by Timur to Venice and Genoa in 1398, and to France and England in 1403 (after defeating the Ottoman army under the command of Bayezid I), also has some expressions about the north of the Black Sea in his works. Johannes de Galonifontibus wrote a work that depicts Timur, especially during the six months he stayed in France, which he gave as a gift to various churches in France.<sup>4</sup> Ahmad Ibn Arabshah, (1388-1450), who wrote the work "*Acâ'ibü'l-makdûr fî nevâ'ibi Tîmûr*", which provides information about the events of the Timurid period, gave some information about the Black Sea in his historical work. In order to ensure the continuity of the commercial infrastructure built by the Venetian State, some political relations were started with the eastern countries and the records of Giosafat Barbaro, Caterino Zeno and Ambrogio Contarini who went to the Aq Qoyunlu as ambassadors in this period, German Johann Schiltberger, who were taken prisoners by the Ottoman army during the Battle of Nicopolis, Bertrandon de la Broquiere, Sirâceddin Ibn al-Wardi and Afanasy Nikitin, who made a trip from Russia to India, are some of the sources we can get about the Black Sea.

Together with the information conveyed by those who traveled to the Black Sea and other geographies or as a result of geography studies, each author became a light for the activities of travelers and geographers after him, encouraged them in their studies and paved the way for the emergence of new works.

### **What Travelers and Geographers Tell About the Black Sea**

The information conveyed about the Black Sea geography is diverse, and some of the information conveyed in the same time period confirms each other. Information about this great sea, which can be navigated by covering 1170 km in width and 600 km in length, and the Sea of Azov, to

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<sup>4</sup> Sultaniyeli Johannes, *Timur'un Sarayında (Fransa'ya Gönderdiği Elçinin Kaleminden Emir Timur'un Hayatı, Devleti ve Halkı)*, (Trans. Ahmet Deniz Altunbaş), Knonik Kitap, İstanbul 2020, p. 8-9.

which this sea is connected by a strait (Kerch Strait), has also taken place in the pen of travelers and geographers. Black Sea geography has been a subject of interest since ancient times.<sup>5</sup> Although it was called '*Pontus Axeinos*' meaning 'The Inhospitable Sea' in ancient times, this name later changed to '*Pontus Euxinus*' meaning 'Hospitable Sea' and this usage was continued in the Roman period.<sup>6</sup> In different sources, expressions such as '*Mare Maius*', '*Mare Maggior*' which means big sea, or just '*Pontus*', can be found. It is understood that this word started to be used only to describe the Black Sea in time. The use of it as '*Babr Buntus*' in some Arabic sources also indicates this situation.<sup>7</sup> Abū al-Fidā noted that this great sea was referred to as '*Nithas*' in ancient books.<sup>8</sup> As a matter of fact, the word Pontus has passed into Arabic by changing its form. We see different usage forms of this word such as '*Nithas*', '*Nitus*' or '*Babr-ı Nithas*' in Arabic sources<sup>9</sup>, and the origin of these usage patterns is the word '*Pontus*'.

A traveler, Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Gharnati (1080-1169), states that this sea is called '*Babr-ı Esved*' that is, the "Black Sea", and states that the reason for this discourse is that the sea appears black from afar. However Gharnati tells, "a careful look at the water of the sea also that the color of the water is not black." On the other hand, it gives information that the water of the Black Sea is extremely salty<sup>10</sup>, and it is known that it is not saltier than the Mediterranean.

Dimashqî (1256-1327) mentions that there are three great seas in the world. These seas are the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Caspian

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<sup>5</sup> Neal Ascherson, *Karadeniz*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul 2001, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Charles King, *Karadeniz*, (Trans. Zülal Kılıç), Kitap Yayınevi, İstanbul 2008, p. 9; Hüseyin Sami Öztürk, "Karadeniz Tarihi: Konuk Sevmeyen Deniz", *Aktüel Arkeoloji*, Cilt:18, 2010, p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> King, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, *Takvîmu'l-Büldân: Ebu'l-Fidâ Coğrafyası*, (Trans. Ramazan Şeşen), Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul 2017, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> El-Mas'udi, *El-Mas'udi's Meadows of Gold And Mines of Gems*, (Trans. Aloys Sprenger), Volume I, The Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, London 1841, p. 30/\*.

<sup>10</sup> Ebû Hâmit Muhammet el-Gırnâtî, *Gırnâtî Seyahatnâmesi (Tercüme-i Tubfetü'l-Elbâb ve Nubbetü'l-A'cab)*, Pre. by Doç. Dr. Sadık Yazar, Büyüyenay Yayınları, İstanbul, 2015, p. 313.



Sea.<sup>11</sup> Abū al-Fidā counts five great seas together with the Ocean. These are the Ocean, the China Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea (Pontic Sea) and the Caspian Sea.<sup>12</sup> Hamdallah Mustawfī, on the other hand, states that the number of seas in the world is seven and mentions the Black Sea, which he wrote that the Ancient Greeks called Pontus as the fifth sea.<sup>13</sup> In the 10th century, while Ibn Rustah explains the world's seas as five parts in his work "*el-A'lâku'n-Nefise*", he states the Black Sea, which he refers to as the Pontus Sea, as one of them, and gives the coastal length as 1,300 miles and the width as 300 miles.<sup>14</sup> Again in the 10th century, while talking about the Black Sea (*Bahr Nithas*), Mas'ûdî states that this sea stretches for 1100 miles after Istanbul.<sup>15</sup> In the 12th century, Muhammad al-Idrisi recorded that the Black Sea (Pontus) was at a distance of 1,300 miles from Constantinople to the lands of Lazica, and its width varied between 300 and 400 miles<sup>16</sup>, while in the 13th century, William of Rubruck referred to the Black Sea as the Sea of Pontos or the Great Sea, and through the merchants, he gives the length of this sea as 1,400 miles, based on the knowledge he has acquired. William of Rubruck also points to the Azov Sea by mentioning that the Black Sea is almost in two parts.<sup>17</sup> The Castilian traveler Pero Tafur also refers to the Black Sea as the "*Great Sea*".<sup>18</sup> Siraceddin Ibn al-Wardî also shares the

<sup>11</sup> Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-'Abdallah Moh'ammed de Damas, Manuel De La Cosmographie Du Moyen Âge, Traduit de l'Arabe "Nokhbet ed-Dahr Fi 'Adjaib-il-Berr Wal-Bah'r", Ed. M. A. P. Mehren, Copenhague-Paris-Leipzig 1974, p. 172,175.

<sup>12</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 27,32.

<sup>13</sup> Hamd-Allah Mustawfî, *Nuẓhat al-qulûb*, Ed. G. Le Strange, The Geographical Part of al-qulûb Composed by Hamd-Allah Mustawfî, Leiden 1919, p. 229-230.

<sup>14</sup> İbn Rûsteh, *el-Alâku'n-Nefise (Dünya Coğrafyası)*, Ankara Okulu Yayınları. Ankara 2017, p. 103-104.

<sup>15</sup> El-Mas'ûdî, p. 285; Mesudî, *Murûc-Ez-Zehab (Altın Bozkırlar)*, (Trans. D. A. Batur), Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul 2004, p. 36; Mahmut Ak, "İslam Coğrafyacılarına Göre Trabzon", *Trabzon Tarihi Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, 6-8 Kasım 1998, Trabzon, 2000, Trabzon Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Idrisi, *Nuẓhat al-Mushtaq fi İktirâq al-Afaq*, Traduite de L'Arabe en Français P.A. Jaubertas Geographie d'Edrisi, 2. Cilt, Paris 1836-40, p. 405.

<sup>17</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, *Mengü Han'ın Sarayına Yolculuk 1253-1255*, ed. P. Jackson, D. Morgan, (Trans. Zülal Kılıç), Kitap Yayınevi, İstanbul 2010, p. 77.

<sup>18</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, (Trans. Hakan Kılıç), Kitap Yayınevi, İstanbul 2016, p. 65.

information that the Black Sea (*Nitbas*) extends from the Bosphorus to Trabzon in the east direction.<sup>19</sup>

Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani mentions that there are four seas on earth in the part of his book "*Kitabü'l-Buldân*" devoted to the world's seas. Even if he does not mention the Black Sea in his work, he talks about the '*Rûm Sea*'. As it is known, the '*Rûm Sea*' is the Mediterranean. '*Rûm Sea*' described by Hamadani stretches from Antakya to Istanbul and from there to the Caspian Sea.<sup>20</sup> The part of this sea from Istanbul to the Caspian Sea is the Black Sea.

Here, it is seen that there are differences in defining the Black Sea and other surrounding geography by different authors. Because, in today's sense, the method of defining the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Mediterranean Sea or the straits separately was not adopted when the time of Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani wrote his work. A tendency towards defining all of these seas as one sea is striking. It is understood from Ibn al-Faqih's statements that the Mediterranean is defined under the names such as the 'West Sea', 'Bahr-ı Magribî' or the 'Rûm Sea', including the Black Sea.<sup>21</sup>

In the works of different authors, the Black Sea is expressed with the names of some countries, famous cities or peoples in the surrounding geography.<sup>22</sup> In the work called "Hudûdü'l-Âlem Mine'l-Meşrik ile'l-Magrib", while various known regions of the world and the characteristics of these regions are mentioned, some information about the Black Sea is also given. For the Black Sea, which is generally referred to as the "Gurziyan Sea", this name means Georgia. While the Black Sea is also referred to as the Bontos

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<sup>19</sup> *Fragmentum Libri Margarita Mirabilium, Auctore Ibn el-Verdi*, Pre. by Carl Johann Tornberg'in, Pars Prior, Upsaliæ 1835, p. 53; Ak, "İslam Coğrafyacılarına Göre Trabzon", p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> Hüseyin Avni Güllü, İbnü'l-Fakih ve Eseri "Kitabü'l-Buldân", Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Unpublished MA Thesis, Van 2007, p. 35; Yusuf Ziya Yörükhan, *Ortaçağ Müslüman Coğrafyacılarından Seçmeler (Türklerin Yaşadığı ve Türklere Komşu Olan Bölgeler-İbn Hurdâzbeh, Ya'kûbî, İbn Rusteh, İbn Fâkih el-Hemedâni, Kudame b. Ca'fer, İstabri, İbn Hawkal)*, Ötüken Neşriyat, İstanbul 2013, p. 196; Rûm: This word refers to the citizenship of the Eastern Roman Empire or the elements related to this empire. The lands where Roman citizens lived are described as Bilâdu'r-Rûm by Muslim geographers. These lands include large geographies such as the Mediterranean and Anatolia.

<sup>21</sup> Güllü, p. 34-35; Yörükhan, p. 196.

<sup>22</sup> King, p. 9.

(Pontus) Sea, which is better known, it is emphasized that the Gurziyan Sea is mentioned in the work.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, in the 9th century, Yaḥyâ ibn Jabir Al-Baladhuri named the Black Sea as the "*Tarâbezünde Sea*" because of the city of Trabzon.<sup>24</sup> while Al-Dimashqî, one of the 14th century writers, also used the names "*Râm Sea* (The Sea of the Rûm, بحر الروم) " or "*Russian Sea*" together with the expression "Trabzon Sea (بحر طرابزنده)".<sup>25</sup> The expression 'Trabzon Sea' is also used by Yaqut al-Hamawi. Yaqut al-Hamawi states that this sea was known as Buntus (Pontus) by the Greeks.<sup>26</sup> Another term used by Hamevi about the Black Sea is "*Eastern Constantinople Sea*".<sup>27</sup>

The sea described as '*Crimean Sea*' or '*Pontus Sea*' by Abū al-Fidā<sup>28</sup>, '*Nithas*', 'Trabzon Sea' or '*Russian Sea*' by Dimashqî is also the Black Sea.<sup>29</sup> However, Abū al-Fidā also refers to the Sea of Azov as '*Pontus Lake*'.<sup>30</sup>

Ibn Arabşah gives the information that the Black Sea extends to Dasht (Desht-i Qipchaq, the region with wide steppes and meadows in the north of the Black Sea) and Georgia (Georgia). It essentially describes a large Mediterranean Sea that includes the Black Sea. It states that the Caucasus mountains are located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea (Kulzum Sea, Bahr-i Kulzum).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Hudûdü'l-Âlem Mine'l-Meşrikîle'l-Magrib*, p. IX,6.

<sup>24</sup> Ahmed b. Yahya el-Belazuri, *Futūhu'l Buldan (Ülkelerin Fetihleri)*, Siyer Yayınları, (Trans. Mustafa Fayda), İstanbul 2013, p. 226.

<sup>25</sup> Chems-Ed-Din Abou Abdallah Mohammed Ed-Dimichqui, *Cosmographie, Texte Arabe*, Publié d'après l'Édition Commencée par M. Fraehn, Ed. M.A.P. Mehren, St. Pétersbourg 1866, p. 23,127; Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-‘Abdallah Moh’ammed de Damas, p. 20-21, 166, 192.

<sup>26</sup> Şeyh el-İmam Şihâbüddîn Ebû Abdillâh Yâkût b. Abdillâh el-Hamevî er-Rûmî el-Bağdâdî, *Mu‘cemü'l-Büldân*, Cilt: 1, Beyrut 1977, p. 342.

<sup>27</sup> Yâkût el-Hamevî, p. 216; Bayram Arif Köse, "Ortaçağda Trabzon Limanının Tarihsel Coğrafyasının Siyasal ve Ekonomik Sonuçları", *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi*, (22), 2017, p. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 43-44.

<sup>29</sup> Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-‘Abdallah Moh’ammed de Damas, p. 165, 180, 186.

<sup>30</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 41-46.

<sup>31</sup> Ahmed Ibn Arabshah, Tamerlane or Timur The Great Amir, (Trans. J. H. Sanders), Luzac Co., London 1936, p. 76-77; İbni Arabşah, *Acâib'ul Makdûr Fî Nevâib-i Timur (Bozqardan Gelen*

Idrisi determines that the Black Sea starts from Constantinople and is connected to the Mediterranean by a channel (it reports the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles as a single channel).<sup>32</sup> Again in the 13th century, Marco Polo likened the Black Sea to a round lake, although it was a sea.<sup>33</sup> William of Rubruck states that the land indents to the sea towards the middle of the northern and southern parts of the Black Sea. He determined that the name of the recess in the north is Cassaria (the Crimean Peninsula is also referred to as Caspian or Caesarea), and the south is Sinopolis (Sinop). He states that there are capes extending to the sea in the south of the Black Sea, except for Sinop, as well as in the region from Kerson (Sevastopol) to the mouth of the Tanais River (we think that he perceives the Azov Sea as the continuation of the Tanais/Don River and here he means the Kerch Strait) in the north.<sup>34</sup>

In the 14th century, while talking about the Black Sea, Ibn Fadlallah al-Umari states that Anatolia (*Diyar-ı Rûm*) is in the south of the Black Sea, which starts from the Bosphorus, and that the surrounding of this sea is mountainous.<sup>35</sup> While Umari referred to the Black Sea as Naytaş (Bahr-i Nitaş), which is also mentioned in different sources, he also used the name "Manitas" for the Black Sea.<sup>36</sup> While the Black Sea is expressed with the names Bahr-i Nitaş or Naytaş, the name 'Manitas' recorded by Umari is a different way of saying the word 'Maeotis', which is also mentioned in different sources, which means only the Sea of Azov. A distinction may not

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*Bela*), (Trans. D. Ahsen Batur), Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012, p. 311; Although in various sources the expression "Babr-i Kulzum" was used to indicate the Red Sea, it is obvious that in here it refers the Caspian Sea: Mahmut Ak, "Osmanlı Coğrafyasında İki Yer Adı (Babr-İ Kulzum/Kurzüm) Üzerine", *İlmî Araştırmalar: Dil, Edebiyat, Tarih İncelemeleri*, 2, İstanbul 1996, p. 7-12.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 391-392; Wilhelm Heyd, *Yakın-Doğu Ticaret Tarihi*, (Trans. Enver Ziya Karal), Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2000, p. 227; Idrisi defines the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, not as they are today, but as a single strait connecting the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

<sup>33</sup> Marko Polo, *Marko Polo Seyahatnamesi II*, Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, 1976, p. 21,221.

<sup>34</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 77-78,84.

<sup>35</sup> Şihabeddin Fazlullah El-Ömeri, *Türkler Hakkında Gördüklerim ve Duyduklarım (Mesâlikü'l Ebsâr)*, (Trans. Ahsen Batur), Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul 2004, p. 131.

<sup>36</sup> El-Ömeri, p. 131,157.

have been made between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov by Umari or other writers in their own time.

Both Dimashki and Abū al-Fidā state that there is a strait in the north of the Black Sea, like in Istanbul.<sup>37</sup> This is the Kerch Strait, which connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Azov.

According to Hamdallah Mustawfī, the waters of the Black Sea, called Pontus by the Ancient Greeks<sup>38</sup>, come to the Bosphorus, pass through here and merge with the Mediterranean.<sup>39</sup>

### **Northern Black Sea Rivers and Dasht-i Kipchak**

There are many large and small rivers flowing towards the Black Sea. In the southern parts of the Black Sea, only the Bartın Stream can be used for transportation due to its smooth regime in the areas close to the coast, while many rivers in the north and west are used for transportation to the inner regions. However, these rivers, which opened to the Black Sea in the northern regions, were used for transportation purposes as well as providing convenience for the transportation of commercial products to port cities by large and small vessels. Thus, the commercial volume in the north of the Black Sea is increasing. Everything that could be traded in this area could be transported from these port cities to other port cities of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. While trade is the main factor for the existence of port cities in the north of the Black Sea, the most important reason for the formation of this commercial life is the rivers in question, which make it easy to transport commodities from the more distant countries of the north. The main ones of these rivers are Danube, Dnieper, Dniester<sup>40</sup> and Don rivers flowing into Azov Sea.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ebu'l-Fidā, p. 44; Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-'Abdallah Moh'ammed de Damas, p. 193.

<sup>38</sup> Mustawfī, p. 229-230.

<sup>39</sup> Ebu'l-Fidā, p. 43; Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-'Abdallah Moh'ammed de Damas, p. 192.

<sup>40</sup> Özhan Öztürk, *Pontus (Antikçağ'dan Günümüze Karadeniz'in Etnik ve Siyasi Tarihi)*, Nika Yayınevi, Ankara 2016, p. 51.

<sup>41</sup> Altay Tayfun Özcan, "Timur'un Elçisi Sultaniyeli Johannes ve Libellus de Notitia Orbis Adlı Eserinden Bazı Parçalar", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü*

Johann Schiltberger, one of the 14th century travellers, also describes the Black Sea as the 'Great Sea' and states that the Danube and many other rivers flow into this sea. He also emphasizes that the strait opens to the Black Sea. He knows that he can go to Kaffa, Alathene (Tana), Samsun and Trabzon from here.<sup>42</sup>

Bertrandon de la Broquiere made a trip to the Balkans through the Middle East, Cilicia, Western Anatolia and Istanbul in 1432-1433 and conveyed information about the Danube River while advancing in the Balkans. Along with the information he received from other sources, he mentions that the Danube River, which flows in the east, turns south in Budapest and reaches Bulgaria via Belgrade. However, the information source seems to have misled him by stating that the Danube flows from Montcastre (Akkerman) to the Black Sea.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the river that reaches the sea from Akkerman is the Dniester.<sup>44</sup> The Danube River joins the Black Sea near the city of Kilia. Johannes de Galonifontibus also mentioned that the Danube River flows into the Black Sea (Great Sea).<sup>45</sup>

There are many large and small rivers flowing into this sea in the wide area to the north and west of the Black Sea. Talking about this wide area, Dimashki recorded the countries located in the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus, Kerch, Sudak, the Crimean Sea (Sea of Azov) and the north of Azov.<sup>46</sup>

In addition, he conveys the claim that there is an idea that the Black Sea and the Ocean (probably the Baltic Sea) were united by passing through

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*Tarih Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, Cilt:33, Sayı:55, p. 142-143; Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 157-158; Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> Johannes Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında (1394-1427)*, (Trans. Turgut Akpınar), İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul 1997, p. 175; Alathene: In the note made by Professor Philip Bruun to the English translation of Schiltberger's travel book, this place is indicated as Tanais (Alla Tana), located on the site of the Azov city; Johann Schiltberger, *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger (A Native Bavaria, In Europe, Asia and Africa 1396-1427)*, (Trans. Commander J. Buchan Telfer), R.N., Hakluyt Society, London 1879, p. 175.

<sup>43</sup> Bertrandon de la Broquiere, *Bertrandon de la Broquiere'nin Denizâşırı Seyahati*, Ed. Ch. Schefer, Pre. by Semavi Eyice, (Trans. İlhan Arda), Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2000, p. 289.

<sup>44</sup> Bertrandon de la Broquiere, p. 289/fn. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Özcan, p. 135.

<sup>46</sup> Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-‘Abdallah Moh’ammed de Damas, p. 18.

the lands of some peoples. However, the peoples he mentions (such as Alans, Slavs, Germans) live more intensely in different geographies.<sup>47</sup> It is possible that the existence of river routes such as the Danube and Dnieper used in the Black Sea trade allowed such an opinion to form in the minds.

Dimasqî also states that there is an opinion that the Caspian Sea is a sea derived from the Black Sea.<sup>48</sup> This is another idea put forward by some geographers and whose accuracy was not clearly known in the relevant period.

In fact, the region mentioned by Dimashkî is the region called Desht-i Qipchaq (Kipchak Steppe) even in the 11th century. We can see this in the expressions of some authors. Although the Kipchaks, who are also known as Cuman and Polovets in various sources, dominated the area they settled in by establishing military superiority, they tried to live in cooperation with other communities in the surrounding area. While establishing close relations with the Russians, they also established commercial relations with the Byzantine State, which had ports on the Crimean Peninsula. The ports in this region were used intensively in the trade carried out from the Desht-i Qipchaq area to the Byzantine geography and from the Byzantine geography to Desht-i Qipchaq.<sup>49</sup>

In the 14th century, Ibn Battuta stated that this was a very wide and flat pasture known as Desht-i Kipchak. So much so that although this place is as green as possible, there is no elevation on its land. He states that in this area, which can be overcome with a six-month journey, can be traveled by car. The first three months of this journey are spent within the borders of the Golden Horde, under the rule of Ozbeg Khan (1282-1341).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-‘Abdallah Moh’ammed de Damas, p. 192.

<sup>48</sup> Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-‘Abdallah Moh’ammed de Damas, p. 165-166.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Robert Magosci, *Şu Mübarek Topraklar (Kırım ve Kırım Tatarları)*, (Trans. Ferit Burak Aydar), Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul 2014, p. 33.

<sup>50</sup> Ebû Abdullah Muhammed İbn Battûta, *İbn Battûta Seyahatnâmesi I*, (Trans. A.S. Aykut), Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, p. 463.

In the chapter in Ibn Arabshah's work, in which Desht-i Kipchak is described, it is reported that this is Kipchak lands<sup>51</sup> and that the Black Sea and the Kulzum Sea (Caspian Sea) are located in the south of Desht-i Kipchak, it is also mentioned that the Caucasus Mountains (expressed as the Mountain of the Circassians) are between these two seas. Ibn Arabshah states that the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea do not meet because of the Caucasus Mountains.<sup>52</sup> According to Ibn Arabshah's account, when moving north from the Mediterranean Sea (He referred to it as the Sea of Alexandria), it is seen that the lands approach at two points (Istanbul and Çanakkale Straits). It specifies the distance between these two points as approximately three days. When these regions are passed, the Black Sea is reached, and Ibn Arabshah states that from this point where the sea expands, it is possible to reach Dasht (the territory of the Golden Horde of the time, the Crimea, Azov Sea area), Georgia (Georgia) and the Caucasus (Cherkessia). He also conveys the information that there is no other way to cross from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea by sea.<sup>53</sup>

Giosafat Barbaro (1413-1494) says that the Black Sea is in the southern part of the land belonging to the Golden Horde State and successor khanates, which he defines as the Tatar country. He added that this southern part of Tatar land was the land of the Cumans, Khazars and Alans, and was also located around the Sea of Azov (Tabacche-Azac Sea-Tabachi).<sup>54</sup> Umari tells that the sailors set out to sea from Sinop in order to go to the Caspian,

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<sup>51</sup> İbni Arabşah, p. 131.

<sup>52</sup> İbni Arabşah, p. 135; Ahmed Ibn Arabshah, p. 76-77.

<sup>53</sup> İbni Arabşah, p. 312; Ahmed Ibn Arabshah, p. 185; We can see that the expression " Sea of Alexandria" was used in Anna Komnena's work called "Alexiad" to express the sea which is between Cyprus and Cilicia (between Alanya and Iskenderun): Anna Komnena, *Alexiad: Anadolu'da ve Balkan Yarımadası'nda İmparator Aleksias Komnenos Dönemi'nin Tarihi Malazgirt'in Sonrası*, İnkılâp Kitapevi, İstanbul 1996, p. 25; According to Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani's definition, 'Sea of Alexandria' is a part of 'The Sea of the Rûm' (Mediterranean).

<sup>54</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, *Anadolu'ya ve İran'a Seyahat*, Yeditepe Yayınevi, İstanbul 2016, p. 5; Josafa Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini, *Travels to Tana and Persia*, (Translated from the Italian by William Thomas and by S. A. Roy), Edited by Lord Stanley of Alderley, Hakluyt Society, New York 1873, p. 4.



Kipchak, Russian and Bulgarian countries around and even beyond the Azov Sea.<sup>55</sup>

According to Hayton of Corycus at the end of the 13th century, there is Desht-i Qipchaq (Cumania) to the west of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. He also states that the Desht-i Qipchaq land is surrounded by Russia from the north and the Volga River from the south.<sup>56</sup>

Schiltberger states that the territory of the Golden Horde State, which is expressed as the Tatar Kingdom, can only be covered with a 3-month journey. This land is Desht-i Qipchaq. Schiltberger adds that neither a tree nor a stone can be found on this land with all grass and bushes.<sup>57</sup> Hayton of Corycus mentions that the majority of the land of this region consists of plateaus and there are no trees except in the immediate vicinity of some cities. People live in tents. Hayton of Corycus states that people who live here burn dung instead of wood, probably because there are no trees in the area.<sup>58</sup>

Priest Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, who was one of the envoys sent to the Mongols by the Vatican in the 13th century, when the Mongols reached Europe, also mentions the Dnieper and Don Rivers flowing into the Black Sea. Pian del Carpine describes the region he passed through in 1245-1246 as the Cuman country and states that it is a flat, very wide and long field.<sup>59</sup> After the 13th century, Hayton of Corycus speaks of Desht-i Qipchaq as the 'Land of Cumans'.<sup>60</sup> The Priest Giovanni da Pian del Carpine states

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<sup>55</sup> Yaşar Yücel, *Anadolu Beylikleri Hakkında Araştırmalar: Çoban-Oğulları Beyliği, Candar-Oğulları Beyliği, Mesaliki'l-Ebsar'a Göre Anadolu Beylikleri, I*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1991, p. 196; El-Ömerî, p. 163.

<sup>56</sup> Korykoslu Hayton, *Doğu Ülkeleri Taribinin Altın Çağı*, (Trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan), Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul 2015, p. 38.

<sup>57</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 120; Fadime Okay, *Schiltberger'in Hatıratı*, (Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Tarih Ana Bilim Dalı, Yayınlanmamış Yüksek lisans Tezi), Afyonkarahisar 2009, p. 64.

<sup>58</sup> Korykoslu Hayton, p. 38.

<sup>59</sup> Johann de Plano Carpini, *Moğol Tarihi ve Seyahatname*, (Trans. Ergin Ayan), Trabzon 2000, p. 110-114.

<sup>60</sup> Korykoslu Hayton, *Doğu Ülkeleri Taribinin Altın Çağı*, (Trans. Altay Tayfun Özcan), Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul, 2015, p. 38.

that a total of four rivers flow in this area, together with the Don and the Dnieper. However, although the other two rivers [Idil (Volga) and Yayik (Ural)] empty their water into the Caspian Sea, Carpine erroneously gives the information that these four rivers flow into the Black Sea. He also states that these rivers are quite large rivers with plenty of fish in them. While describing the Cuman (Kipchak) country, he refers to the south of this country as "*Alan, Circassian, Kbaçars, Greeks, Constantinople, Georgia, Armenia, the Turkish country, the Burtachs who shave their hair completely, and also the land of the Zic*"<sup>61</sup> can be specified as such. The Black Sea geography and communities, which were our subject in the mentioned period, can be summarized in this way. Barbaro also refers to the Desht-i Qipchaq region as the 'Land of Cumans'.<sup>62</sup>

However, Marco Polo, who wrote his notes towards the end of the 13th century, recorded that Mongols (Tatars) ruled the region instead of Cumans.<sup>63</sup> A similar record was kept by William of Rubruck. William of Rubruck states that the Cumans lived in the northern regions of the Black Sea before and that they took tribute from some castles and cities in the region. However, according to what was conveyed to him by a merchant, with the arrival of the Mongols, the Cumans fled towards the coasts and even ate each other from hunger.<sup>64</sup>

The Jewish traveler named Petachiah of Ratisbon, on his journey to the Islamic world between 1170 and 1187, after crossing the Dnieper River, entered the land in the north of the Black Sea, which he called "The Lands of Kedar", and where communities ruled by princes without their kings lived.<sup>65</sup> The mentioned region must be Desht-i Qipchaq. It is seen that Petachiah of Ratisbon used the word Kedar to name these regional communities in the

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<sup>61</sup> Johann de Plano Carpini, p. 109, 110, 113.

<sup>62</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup> Marko Polo, *Marko Polo Seyahatnamesi II*, p. 221.

<sup>64</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem p. 85.

<sup>65</sup> Tudela'lı Benjamin ve Ratisbon'lu Petachia, *Ortaçağda İki Yahudi Seyyahın İslam Dünyası Gözlemleri*, (Trans. Nuh Arslantaş), Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2009, p. 136.

north of the Black Sea, which also lived as nomads, in reference to a Bedouin Arab tribe that lived near Palestine and adopted a nomadic lifestyle.<sup>66</sup>

Even in the 14th century, Schilberger described the region to the north of the Black Sea as "Desht-i Qipchaq".<sup>67</sup> Umari stated that Muslims were dominant in the lands where the Kipchaks were located. He considers these lands as a part of Turan land.<sup>68</sup> The Kipchak Khanate he described extends to the east and reaches Yarkent, which is today in the Chinese-dominated Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Kipchak Khanate also includes Khwarezm, Sgnak (Sunakata/Kazakhstan), Cend (Kazakhstan), Sarai (Saray), Hungarian, Azov, Akcakerman (Akkerman), Saksin (near Astrakhan/Russia), Lak (Dagestan Region), Bulgar (in Tatarstan, Idil River) On the coast), Bashkir (Bashkir), Culman (Kama River, which starts from Perm Krai in Russia and crosses the Udmurtia region and joins the Idil River in Tatarstan), Ibir-Sibir and Sudak, which is located on the Crimean Peninsula, reaches its borders as far as Kaffa.<sup>69</sup> He states that the Kipchak country (Desht-i Qipchaq) stretches from the Ceyhun River to the Danube River. He also notes that, like the Ceyhun River, the Seyhun, Volga (İdil), Yayık (Ural), Don and Dniester (Turla) Rivers irrigate the Kipchak country. According to Umari's account, the distances between these rivers in the Kipchak country are as follows;<sup>70</sup>

Between Idil/Volga-Don Rivers: 1 month road

Between Don-Turla/Dinyester Rivers: 10 day road

Between Turla/Dinyester-Danube Rivers: 1 month road

Between Ceyhun/Amu Darya-Seyhun/Syr Darya Rivers: 15 day road

Between Seyhun/Syr Darya-Yayık/Ural Rivers: 15 day road

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<sup>66</sup> Osman Karatay, "Ratisbonlu Petahya'da Türkler ve Yurtları Hakkındaki Bilgiler", *Ege Üniversitesi Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi*, Cilt: IX, Sayı 1, İzmir 2009, p. 76-77.

<sup>67</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 96.

<sup>68</sup> El-Ömerî, p. 26-27.

<sup>69</sup> El-Ömerî, p. 122.

<sup>70</sup> W. De, Tiesenhausen, *Altın Orda Devleti Tarihine Ait Metinler*, (Trans. İsmail Hakkı İzmirli), Maarif Matbaası, İstanbul 1941, p. 378-379; El-Ömerî, p. 123.

### Between Yayık/Ural-Idil/Volga Rivers: 19 day road

Umari states that the Kipchak country, whose borders are as far as China in the east, has the lands of the Saklaps (Sekalibe-Sakalibe-Slavs) in the north, Khorasan in the south, and a gulf from the Rûm Sea (Mediterranean) to the Crimea in the west (Aegean, Bosphorus and Black Sea until Crimea).<sup>71</sup> When Kaffa is reached by crossing the Black Sea, one reaches a place closer to Desht-i Qipchaq.<sup>72</sup>

In the 13th century, Petachiah of Ratisbon must have reached the northern regions of the Black Sea in the early years of his journey. At the aforementioned time, it is seen that the most influential political authority in the said region is the Kievan Principality.<sup>73</sup> As a result of his journey for sixteen days in this flat land, which Petachiah of Ratisbon states that there are no mountains, he reaches a gulf separating the lands of Kedar and the lands of the Caspian<sup>74</sup>, the place he refers to is probably the "Kerch Strait".

Abū al-Fidā also mentions the Danube, Dnieper (Özi River) and Don Rivers that pour their waters into the Black Sea. It is determined that the Danube River flows into the sea from the north of the city of Isaccea (Sakci). He explains that the volume of this river is greater than the combined size of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. The Dnieper River flows into the Black Sea between Sarikirman (Chersonese–Kerson-Sevastopol-Akyar) and Akçakirman (Akkerman). The Don River, on the other hand, comes from the north and flows into the Azov Sea from the western part of the Azov city. Further east is the Volga River.<sup>75</sup> The Castilian traveler Pero Tafur also went to see the Don River while he was in Kaffa. He also shares an erroneous

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<sup>71</sup> El-Ömerî, p. 123.

<sup>72</sup> Yaşar Yücel, p. 197.

<sup>73</sup> After the Russian Emperor Yaroslav I (The Wise) (1019-1024) divided the lands he owned among his sons while he was alive, towards the end of the 12th century, the most important and largest of the principalities formed was the Kievan Principality. The head of this principality was known as the "Great Knez/Velikiy knjaz". Apart from the Kyiv Principality, Chernihiv, Novgorod, Polotsk, Turov-Pinsk can be counted among other important principalities; Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1999, p. 34-42.

<sup>74</sup> Tudela'lı Benjamin - Ratisbon'lu Petachia, p. 137.

<sup>75</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 71.

information conveyed to him that the river traverses Iran and India and empties its waters into the Azov and Caspian Seas.<sup>76</sup> While Johannes de Galonifontibus states that the Don River empties into the Sea of Azov and then into the Black Sea, he also incorrectly states that this river is one of the branches of the Volga River.<sup>77</sup> Mas'ûdî also made a similar mistake and wrote that a branch of the river (Don River) that came to the city of Atil (İtil), which was the capital of the Khazar Khaganate, from the lands in the north that belonged to the Turks, also flows into the Sea of Azov.<sup>78</sup> This is a mistake found in Byzantine sources as well.<sup>79</sup>

The Don River is one of the rivers used for transportation. Pero Tafur, presenting his observations of the Don River from the 15th century, states that this river was used for the transportation of commercial goods. Pero Tafur notifies that a large amount of goods were transported over the Don River to the field opening to the Black Sea (Kerch Strait).<sup>80</sup> In this respect, the river resembles the Nile River. However, this river freezes in winter. Johannes de Galonifontibus states that the Don River keeps ice for a long time of the year and it is possible to travel across the ice between its two shores.<sup>81</sup> With this aspect, it is seen that transportation in the Don River is restricted by boats or ships during the winter months.

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<sup>76</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 157-158; Another sea, in which he wrote that his name was Ryxabaque and that the waters of the Don river flow, could be the Sea of Azov or the Black Sea.

<sup>77</sup> Özcan, p. 142-143.

<sup>78</sup> El-Mas'ûdi, p. 406; Mesudî, p. 67-69,75: It is the city that gave its name to the Idil River. In the 10th century, Ibn Fadlan and Mas'udi state that this city was located on both sides of the Idil river. Ibn Rusta gives the name of one of them as Serashen (Sarı'shen) and the other as Hanbalık (Heb'nal). Ibn Fadlan tells that there were Khazar Khan and his entourage on one side and Muslims on the other side. Mas'udi, on the other hand, tells that Jews, Christians and pagans lived in the city along with Muslims; İbn Fadlan, *İbn Fadlan Seyahatnamesi*, (Trans. Ramazan Şeşen), Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul 2013, p. 47; Mesudî, p. 68-69; İbn Rüsteh, p. 158; Mihail İllarionoviç Artamonov, *Hazar Tarihi (Türkler, Yabudiler, Ruslar)*, (Trans. Ahsen Batur), Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul 2019, p. 506-507.

<sup>79</sup> El-Mas'ûdi, p. 406/fn.

<sup>80</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 158.

<sup>81</sup> Özcan, p. 143.

Al- Mas'ûdî, who we stated that he shared an erroneous information that the Don River is a branch of the Volga River, also states that the Don River sometimes freezes during the winter months. When the river freezes, the peoples living in the vicinity cross the river with their horses and attack each other's lands. However, in the summer months, it is not possible to cross the street as the ice is thawed.<sup>82</sup>

Abū al-Fidā refers to the place where the Dnieper River flows, on which he mentions that there are many Turkish and Bulgarian settlements, as Lake Thaumā (?). There are also many settlements, mostly Bulgarians, around Lake Thaumā.<sup>83</sup> This lake was probably the site of what is known today as the Dniprovskā Bay.

Abū al-Fidā refers to a place he describes as "the country of boxwood" (Şa'ra'l-buks), probably due to its abundance on the Black Sea side, in the south of the location he specified as Lake Thaumā (he also mentions that this product was taken to different geographies) and also in the east of this place. He wrote the Matrakha (Tmutorakan or Hermonassa), which is often mentioned by different geographers.<sup>84</sup>

### **Black Sea Cities in the Northwest Direction From the Bosphorus**

While describing the northern and western port cities of the Black Sea, we stated that we would endeavor to follow the coastline in the northwest direction starting from the location of the Bosphorus opening to the Black Sea. In the 12th century, Muhammad al-Idrisi counts the Black Sea cities of the period along the coast from Istanbul to Matrakha, located on the Taman Peninsula in the north of the Black Sea, in the direction we have mentioned, and specifies the distances between the cities. In his work (*Nüzhetü'l-Müştâk fi'htirâkı'l-âfâk*), after the Bosphorus, in the northwest direction, Abloughis, Midia (Midye-Kiyiköy), Agathapolis (Akteboli–Ahtopol), Wasiliko (Vasiliko), Sizeboli (Sozopol), Akhiolou ( Pomorie–

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<sup>82</sup> El-Mas'udî, p. 416-417; Mesudî, p. 75.

<sup>83</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ. p. 182-183.

<sup>84</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ. p. 183.

Ahioli) and Cap Eminèh [Emona, Emoha, Emine Cape, Hoc ЕМИНЕ (within the borders of Bulgaria)] and states that there is a distance of 25 miles between these cities.<sup>85</sup> He introduces the city of Nissa (Nessebar), which he refers to after the cities he mentioned, Agathopolis, Wasiliko and Sizeboli, as a city where meat, fish, dairy products and fruit are plentiful. Cap Eminèh is described as a resource-rich trading town.<sup>86</sup>

Muhammad al-Idrisi states that there is a bay with a width of 13 miles and a perimeter of 20 miles between the cities of Sizeboli and Akhiolou (Ahioli).<sup>87</sup> This is Burgas Bay.

Apart from these cities in the Western Black Sea Region, Idrisi mentions the names of Atrowa, Neocastro (Novgrad or Novograd), Armocastro (Byzantium Costantia-Constanza in the Byzantine period), Ackerman (Akçakirman-Akkerman).<sup>88</sup> Among these cities, Armocastro is defined as an ancient city, located on a beautiful hill overlooking the sea, with fertile land and a vibrant and profitable commercial life. These cities are on the Black Sea coast. It is stated that it is located on an extremely fertile and perfect plain for Akli (Kilia or Akla) on the tributaries of the Danube River, a little further inland from the coast. Idrisi mentions the settlements, most of which are in the inner parts of the Balkan Peninsula and in Thrace, together with the cities located in the hinterland of the Black Sea port or port, such as

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<sup>85</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 385-386,394-395; Abloughis (Philopatium, Philopation): The hunting garden outside the walls of Istanbul. The emperor would go to this place every year for hunting and stay here for a long time; Suriçi İstanbul, Pre. by İlber Ortaylı, Fatih Belediyesi, İstanbul, 2017, p. 85,154; In different sources, 'Moules' is referred to as Kherson (Cherson), which is located at the location where the Dnieper river joins the Black Sea. According to this, the city of 'Caria', located between Kili and Moules, is a city near Akkerman or Odessa. 'Seknimil' is also referred to as 'Calamila' in different sources, which must be today's Chernomorske, where the ancient city of 'Kalos Limen' is located; *Mappae Arabicae, Arabische Welt-Und Länderkarten*, II. Band, Die Länder Europas und Afrikas Im Bilde Der Araber, Mit Beiheft: Islamatlas Nr III Magreb und Nr IV Ägypten, Herausgegeben von Konrad Miller, Stuttgart 1927, p. 151; Joachim Lelewel, *Géographie Du Moyen Age*, Tomes III et IV., Bruxelles 1852, p. 169; Midia: Midye, Kıyıköy.

<sup>86</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 382-387.

<sup>87</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 385.

<sup>88</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 383-389.

these cities. Among them are cities and towns such as Filipe, Edirne, Rîbnița, Gradishte and also Abydos (Çanakkale).<sup>89</sup>

In the 14th century, the German traveler Schiltberger states that there are three countries called Bulgaria, one of which is located where the Danube River flows into the Black Sea and its capital is the city called Kallaterka.<sup>90</sup> This city that Schiltberger mentions is probably the city of Galati in Romania, as it is at the location where the Danube River empties into the Black Sea. In addition, there is a possibility that the city of Galata, one of the neighborhoods of Varna city in Bulgaria, or Kaliakra, which is located in the north of Varna, is also the city that Schiltberger mentioned, even though they are not at the place where the Danube flows into the sea.

Leaving Istanbul on a galley to return to his hometown, Schiltberger first goes to Kilia (Kili, Gilly), one of the western ports of the Black Sea. We understand from his narration that this city was included in the borders of the Byzantine State and that the emperor had a palace here. It states that the Danube River empties into the sea from where this city is.<sup>91</sup> Although it is located on the delta where the Danube River flows, the city of Kilia is not on the Black Sea coast. The bird flight distance to the Black Sea is about 30 km. This part of the Danube, like many other places, is suitable for water transportation due to its smooth regime.

Idrisi states the distance between Cap Eminèh and Varna as 50 miles, and between Varna and Armocastro (Constanta) as 25 miles. He conveys the distance from Armocastro to the Danube as 3 miles, which is essentially about 30 miles. Kilia (Akliba) is a 1-day drive away. He gives a distance of 1 mile from Kilia to the Dniester River, where the distance is close to 80 miles. It was also recorded in his work that there was a distance of 50 miles between the cities of Kilia and Caria (Carta) and later Moules. After this, it reaches the mouth of the Dnieper River. The next city is Seknimil. The

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<sup>89</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 382-387.

<sup>90</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 100.

<sup>91</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 214.



distances between the Dnieper River and Moules and Seknimil are not specified.<sup>92</sup>

Another place mentioned before reaching the city of Akçakirman in the west of the Black Sea in the 14th century sources is Sari Saltuk (the city of Babadag in Romania, where Sari Saltuk Baba's tomb is located) where Ibn Battuta passed while he was walking in the direction of Istanbul. This place is not on the Black Sea coast, but is 20-30 km away from the coast. It is located between the cities of Constanta (Armocastro-Costantia) and Kilia. After passing through Sari Saltuk (Babadag), Ibn Battuta reached Mehtûli, which he introduced as the first Byzantine castle on the border, by making an eighteen-day journey on an empty land to the Byzantine lands. From here, the distance to Istanbul can be covered by crossing mountainous lands and gulfs in twenty-two days.<sup>93</sup>

Akçakirman (Akkerman) and Sakçi (Isaccea) are other cities that Abū al-Fidā mentioned. It is necessary to travel a distance of 15 days in order to reach Akçakirman, which is located in the west of Sarikirman (Sevastopol). Akçakirman is located on the Black Sea coast. Some of the people of Akçakirman, whose land is flat, are Muslims. The Dniester River (Torlu–Turla–Thorlu) empties into the Black Sea from a place close to this city. The majority of Isaccea (Sakçi) inhabitants are Muslims. Sakçi is on the line where the Danube River empties into the sea, in the southwest of the river. This city is also on a flat land and is located twenty days from Istanbul and five days from Akçakirman by road.<sup>94</sup>

We mentioned what Schilberger mentioned about the city of Kilia. Another city he visited after Kilia was the city he stated to mean "White City"

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<sup>92</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 385-386,394-395.

<sup>93</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 498-499; To the west of the Tundzha River should be the city of Matochina on the Bulgarian side of the Turkish-Bulgarian Border; He mentions three gulfs, probably two of them are Büyükçekmece and Küçükçekmece.

<sup>94</sup> Aleksei Frolov-İrina Konovalova, "Reconstruction of the Black Sea Map in the Geographical Work of Abū al-Fidā", *e-Perimetron*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2018, p. 56-59; Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 44-45, 71, 180, 189-191.

(Weißensstadt-This city is Akkerman) in German. He noted that Akkerman was a city in the Principality of Wallachia (Walachei).<sup>95</sup>

Abū al-Fidā states that Istanbul was the capital of the Rûms (Eastern Rome). There are fourteen provinces (region-thema) attached to the capital. One of these themes is Macedonia and the other is Sakci (Isaccea).<sup>96</sup> Ibn al-Wardi also mentioned this city.<sup>97</sup>

As we have mentioned before, Bertrandon de la Broquiere Akkerman was mentioned in the 15th century, but he made a mistake that the Danube River joined the sea from this city.<sup>98</sup> The river that flows into the sea from Akkerman is the Dniester, not the Danube.<sup>99</sup>

The cities that Ibnu'l-Verdī mentions while describing the Black Sea are Istanbul and Isaccea, as well as Ereğli (Heraclia), Trabzon (Trabesendæ–Trabitsendeh), which he states to be in the south of the Black Sea, and also Crimea.<sup>100</sup>

### **Crimea, Taman Peninsulas and Cities**

The narratives of travelers and geographers about the Crimea in particular and the Northern Black Sea region in general should not be considered independently of the political conjuncture of the periods when the books were written. The Crimean Peninsula, with its ports and cities in the interior regions, is the region that has had the most importance in the history of the Northern Black Sea. There is more than one important city on this peninsula, which was also known in the Middle Ages, and most of these cities were port cities. It is important to evaluate the information coming

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<sup>95</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 214; Hans Schiltbergers, *Hans Schiltbergers Reisebuch (Nach Der Nürnberger Handschrift Herausgegeben)*, Des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, Tübingen 1855, p. 111.

<sup>96</sup> Ebu'l-Fidā, p. 189-190.

<sup>97</sup> Ibn al-Vardi, *Fragmentum Libri Margatira Mirabilium (Kharidat al-aja'ib wa-faridat al-ghara'ib)*, (Translation of fragments by Corolus Johannes Tornberg), Excudebant Regiæ Acedemicæ Typographi, Uppsala 1835, p. 53.

<sup>98</sup> Bertrandon de la Broquiere, p. 289.

<sup>99</sup> Bertrandon de la Broquiere, p. 289/fn. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn al-Vardi, p. 48,53.

from these sources chronologically, as the cities in the Crimean Peninsula have been discussed from place to place by travelers and geographers. Because from the 10th century, different elements and states dominated the region. Although the Khazar Khaganate was able to maintain its existence as an effective power in the region until the 10th century, Russian Prince Svyatoslav I. broke his power by capturing some important cities of the Khazar Khaganate. In some parts of the 10th and 11th centuries, we see that Turkish tribes such as the Kipchaks (Cumans) from the 11th century, together with the Pechenegs, Oghuzes and Berendis, established dominance in the Crimea region. It is known that the Byzantine State was also involved in some activities in the Crimean Peninsula during these times.<sup>101</sup> Thanks to its bases in some cities on the coast, the Byzantine State was able to obtain intelligence about the developments in the large lands in the north. In terms of Byzantium, the city of Sevastopol (Chersonese) on the Crimean Peninsula played a primary role in these activities.<sup>102</sup>

However, in the 13th century, it is understood that the Byzantine State could not adequately control the Crimea. When the capital of the Byzantine State came under the rule of the Latin State during the Crusade IV, which took place in 1204, changes would begin to occur in the political conditions of the cities subject to Byzantium on the coasts of Crimea. Nevertheless, it is known that Crimea was not included in the division made by the new administration in the Byzantine lands after Istanbul came under Latin control. However, it is seen that the Trabzon State, which made its presence felt after 1204, was in an effort to have a say in the management of the southern coastal cities of Crimea, starting from Sevastopol.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Magosci, p. 33-37.

<sup>102</sup> Donald M. Nicol, *Bizans ve Venedik (Diplomatik ve Kültürel İlişkiler Üzerine)*, Sabancı Üniversitesi, İstanbul 2000, p. 21.

<sup>103</sup> Aleksandr Aleksandroviç Vasiliev, "Trabzon İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluşu (1204-1222)", (Trans. Murat Keçiş-Murat Hanar), *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi*, Cilt:13, Sayı:47, Bahar 2018, p. 280-281.

As a matter of fact, the Anatolian Seljuk Turks, in their campaign to Sudak, will find Trabzon forces, not Latins, as rivals.<sup>104</sup> As a result of this expedition carried out by Husameddin Çoban, the Chief Governor of Aleaddin Keykubat in 1225 or 1226, we see that the Anatolian Turks took a step towards establishing sovereignty in the region.<sup>105</sup> By the time of Andronikos I (1222-1235), it is understood that the State of Trabzon did not have any dominance in the coastal cities of Crimea.<sup>106</sup> On the other hand, the Anatolian Seljuk administration in Sudak must have continued until the II. Kipchak Expedition to take place in 1237.

Undoubtedly, Venice, which is the active element of the Crusade IV that will result in the occupation of Istanbul, will begin to act more comfortably in its commercial activities in the Byzantine field after this event. However, we do not think that Venice had full control over the Black Sea trade in this period, despite some raids to Crimea (in 1206 and 1232).<sup>107</sup> In addition, the brothers Nicolo, the father of Venetian Marco Polo, and uncle Matteo Polo, also came to Istanbul for trade purposes in this period (1260). In fact, their paths cross the Black Sea and reach the Crimea, Idil tribes and Bukhara.<sup>108</sup>

During the times of the Seljuk Turks from the south of the Black Sea, the Trabzon State and the Latin occupation in Istanbul, partly Venice had commercial and political activities towards the Crimean Peninsula, and Mongolian raids in the wide area in the north of the Black Sea were intensified. Even before the expedition of the Seljuk Turks to Sudak, the Mongol army under the rule of Cebe and Subutay in 1223 defeated the Kipchaks (Cumans) in the war near the Kalka River, and captured the city of Sudak on the Crimean coast. During this time, the people of Sudak had to

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<sup>104</sup> Emine Uyumaz, *Sultan I. Alâeddin Keykubat Devri Türkiye Selçuklu Devleti Siyasi Tarihi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2003, p. 34.

<sup>105</sup> İbni Bibi, *Farsça Muhtasar Selçuknâmesinden Anadolu Selçuklu Devleti Tarihi*, (Trans. M. Nuri Gençosman), Uzluk Basımevi, Ankara 1941, p. 118-119; Uyumaz., p. 34-38; Magosci, p. 37.

<sup>106</sup> Vasiliev, "Trabzon İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluşu", p. 295.

<sup>107</sup> Nicol, p. 171/fn. 32.

<sup>108</sup> Marko Polo, *Marko Polo Seyahatnamesi I*, p. 7-8

migrate to different places, especially to Seljuk lands.<sup>109</sup> In 1237, together with the Kipchak Expedition II conducted by Batu Khan, the Founder of the Golden Horde, Tatar tribes participating in the mentioned expedition were settled in the lands of the Crimea.<sup>110</sup> As a result of this and subsequent raids, the Golden Horde State will emerge, and this state will play an active role in the organization of commercial relations to be realized with the eastern world and especially Central Asia through the Black Sea route, together with the merchant Mediterranean states. In the establishment of this commercial organization, the control provided especially over the cities on the coast of Crimea has a great impact. After this time, the Golden Horde and successor khanates would have claims on the commercial and political relations with the Crimean cities and the surrounding region.

In 1261, when Michael VIII Palaiologos was the Emperor of the Iznik State, he would accelerate his attempts to take Istanbul from the Latins. For this purpose, a treaty was signed between the Genoese and Byzantium on 13 March 1261 in *Nymphaiion* (near Nif-İzmir/Kemalpaşa). With this treaty, Genoa would provide weapon support to Byzantium against the Venetian rule in Istanbul. In return, they obtained tax and customs exemption on the trade they would carry out in the Byzantine Empire. Following the capture of the city by Michael VIII Palaiologos, the privileges belonging to Venice will be taken over by the Genoese and Genoa will begin to play a dominant role instead of Venice in the execution of commercial activities in the area of Byzantine sovereignty.<sup>111</sup> This power was strengthened by establishing trade colonies in different ports of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean by the Genoese<sup>112</sup>, and competition increased in order

<sup>109</sup> İbnü'l Esir, *İslam Tarihi (İbnü'l-Esir el-Kâmil Fi't-Tarih Tercümesi)*, (Trans. Ahmet Ağırakça-Abdülkerim Özaydın), Bahar Yayınları, c. XII, İstanbul 1987, p. 341-342; Aleksandr Yuryevich Yakubovskiy, *Altın Ordu ve Çöküşü*, (Trans. Hasan Eren), Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2000, p. 24-25; Uyumaz, p. 34.

<sup>110</sup> Kemal Özcan, Kırım Hanlığı'nın Kuruluş Süreci: Yarımada Tatar Hâkimiyetinin Tesisi, *Karadeniz Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Sayı:5 (Bahar 2005), p. 27.

<sup>111</sup> Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2006, p. 415.

<sup>112</sup> Genoa had trade colonies in the north of the Black Sea, especially in Kaffa, Sudak and Balaklava; Aldo Gallotta, "Ceneviz", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt:7, İstanbul

to have a larger share in the trade with Venice in the Black Sea. There are wars between the two states and sometimes agreements are made, including the Byzantine State. According to the agreement made between the Byzantine State and the Genoese in 1267, the Genoese would gain the right to free trade throughout the empire, and they would settle in the Galata location of the capital.<sup>113</sup>

With the IV.Crusade that took place in 1204, Istanbul's coming under the control of European powers increased the struggle for commercial superiority that took place in the region and mostly between Italian city-states such as Venice and Genoa. With the establishment of the Palaiologos administration in the Byzantine center in 1261, we see that the Genoese began to play a more active role in the Black Sea trade. In addition to establishing good relations with Byzantium, it is seen that the Genoese also strengthened commercial relations with the Golden Horde State in the north of the Black Sea. Because some land was given to the Genoese in Kaffa in 1266 by Mengü Timur the ruler of the Golden Horde of the period. This situation gave the port city of Kaffa an important place in the Black Sea trade and in the great trade network of the Genoese.<sup>114</sup> The Genoese, who started to settle in Kaffa under the control of the Genoese central government, also benefited from the turbulent politics of the Golden Horde State and succeeded in establishing bases in different places on the Crimean Peninsula.<sup>115</sup>

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1993, p. 363; Serdar Çavuşdere, *Orta Çağ'da Venedik, Papalık ve Türkler 1243-1353*, Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul 2017, p. 40-41.

<sup>113</sup> However, the Byzantine Emperor Mihail Paleologos VIII. signed an agreement with the Venetians a year later. Because the policy of balance is being pursued. However, as in the agreement signed between Venice and Genoa in 1299, it will be witnessed that the two merchant states came to an agreement among themselves in the future. Diplomacy on mutual agreements will also be carried out in later times; Ostrogorsky, p. 420,452.

<sup>114</sup> Özcan, p. 141/fn. 116; Yücel Öztürk, "Altınordu İmparatorluğu'ndan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na Bir Doğu Avrupa Başkenti Kefe", *Crimean Historical Review (Крымское Историческое Обзорение)*, No:1, Kazan-Bahçesaray, 2019, p. 46; Pero Tafur states that the Genoese settled in Kaffa with the permission of the Golden Horde State and held the city in their hands: Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 152.

<sup>115</sup> Öztürk, p. 46,47.

Another community that existed in the Crimean Peninsula during the mentioned periods is the Goths (Ostrogoths). Starting from Northern Europe, they reached the northern regions of the Black Sea towards the end of the 2nd century. The Goths began to migrate west from here due to the Hun raids in the 4th century and other different reasons. The Goths in Crimea are the remnants of them. After this period, they settled further inland of the coastal part. They also established relations with the Byzantine State and received support from Byzantium from time to time. At the beginning of the 5th century, the Crimean Goths were religiously attached to the Church of Constantinople. Thanks to this policy of the Byzantine state, the Crimean Goths became a part of the Byzantine world politically. The center of the Goths was Mangup Kale (Theodoro-Doros-Dory) and a bishop was appointed here. The Goths also ruled in several surrounding cities. Thus, a system was established to protect the Byzantine port cities against nomadic invasions from the north.<sup>116</sup> As a matter of fact, it is known that in the 14th and 15th centuries, the Goths seized a land in the southern part of the Crimean Peninsula, including port cities such as Sevastopol (*Chersonese-Kerson*) and Grasui (*Gurzuf-Hurzuf*). By maintaining their presence in this region, they had a role in the trade in the region. They existed in this region until the annexation of Crimea to Ottoman rule by Gedik Ahmet Pasha in 1475.<sup>117</sup>

In the same period, besides the Goths, the Genoese, with their colonial ports, also took place as actors in the political and commercial history of the region. After the Mongol raids in the 13th century, while the Golden Horde State emerged in the north of the Black Sea, the activities of European merchant states such as Venice and Genoa, which had the courage to learn different geographies with the Crusades, became more frequent. During this time, the region's contact with Byzantium has always been close. In the 15th century, when the Golden Horde began to lose its power, the Crimean Khanate was formed and held the administration in most of the peninsula. Towards the end of this century, the Ottoman Empire, as a

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<sup>116</sup> Magosci, p. 27-29.

<sup>117</sup> Aleksandr Aleksandroviç Vasiliev, *The Gots In The Crimea*, The Medieval Academy of America, Massachusetts 1936, p. 52-56, 235-249.

political and commercial actor, will take part in activities towards the Crimea.<sup>118</sup> Apart from the Crimean Khanate, Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates emerged on the land under the domination of the weakened Golden Horde State in the north of the Black Sea, and there would be a power struggle between these khanates in the same region.<sup>119</sup>

Although different actors have played a role in the political structures of the Crimean Peninsula and the surrounding regions such as the Taman Peninsula over time, it is observed that more than one authority is in an effort to establish sovereignty at the same time. This situation will be reflected in the pen of travelers and geographers. In the same period, while one of the Northern Black Sea port cities was under the domination of one of the above-mentioned authorities, another state may have established superiority in another port city. It is striking that there is a tendency for the different elements that own the Black Sea and Mediterranean ports to carry out maritime transport primarily between their own ports. The capacity of the trade that took place, the prosperity of the cities and the attitudes of the large and small communities living in the cities determined which side the city would take in the imperial struggle experienced according to the period and shaped this role. We see that this struggle increased towards the 15th century and more actors began to play a role.

### **About the Crimean Peninsula, Cities, Politics and Trade**

William of Rubruck, who reached the Crimean peninsula from Istanbul between 1253-1255, records that this region was called Cassaria (Hazarya-Caesarea-Gazzaria). The part that he stated to be in the form of a triangle in the west of this land must be the southern part of the peninsula. Emphasizing the cities of Kerson (Sevastopol-Sarikirman-Chersonese-Akyar) in the west of this section and Soldaia (Sudak), which he stated to be in the middle of the south section, William of Rubruck states that this city is facing Sinop (Sinopolis). Further east of here, the place he refers to is Matrica (Matrakha-Tmutorakan or Hermonassa), located on the Taman peninsula, on

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<sup>118</sup> Magosci, p. 33-47.

<sup>119</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. IX.



the other side of the Kerch Strait. The entrance to the Tanais Sea (Sea of Azov) is here.<sup>120</sup> According to Rubruk's explanation, the Cassaria region, where these three cities (Kerson-Sudak-Matrica) are located, is surrounded by seas on three sides.<sup>121</sup> In addition, Giosafat Barbaro also refers to the coastal areas of the Crimean peninsula as Gazzaria (Cassaria-Caspian).<sup>122</sup>

In the 12th century, Idrisi gave these measures about the Crimean Peninsula; 80 miles from Seknimil (Kalos Limen) to Kerson (Sevastopol-Chersonese), 30 miles to Djalita (Yalta-Galita), which he refers to as the land of the Cumans, and from there to Gharzouni (Gurzuf) 12 miles, from Gharzouni to Bertabiti (Partenit) 10 miles. Idrisi describes the city of Berbaiti as a small town where ships were built. He states that it is 8 miles from Berbaiti to the beautiful city of Lebadha (Kuscuk Lambat), and 10 miles from Lebadha to an important town by the sea, Chalousta (Alusta). Soldadia (Sudak-Soudak) located close to the sea from Chalousta, and then Boutra, indicates the distance between the mouth of the Don (Tanais) River, which he refers to as the Russian River, and Matrakha, as 20 miles each.<sup>123</sup>

Giosafat Barbaro also mentions the names of different places in the Crimean Peninsula. The city of Cherz (Kerch), located in the "Strait of Kerch", called the "Cimmerian Strait" (Bospforo Cimerio) by the Venetians, is one of them. Others are Capha (Kaffa-Feodosia), Saldaia (Sudak), Grasui (Gurzuf-Hurzuf; A coastal city in the southern part of the Crimean Peninsula), Cymbalo (Cembalo-Baliklava-Balaklava: the bay and the historical castle in the southwestern part of the peninsula), Sarsona [Chersonese-Sevastopol and Calamita (Kalamita: the place with the historical castle near Inkerman)].<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 78,80.

<sup>121</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 80.

<sup>122</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 29.

<sup>123</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 385-386,394-395; According to its location Boutra (Butar, Bouter) should be Kaffa (Feodosia); *Mappae Arabicae, Arabische Welt-Und Länderkarten*, p. 151; Lelewel, p. 169,196-197.

<sup>124</sup> Barbaro-Ambrogio, p. 27; Josaphat Barbaro, p. 29.

In the 14th century, Dimashki recorded that the cities of Sudak and Kaffa on the Crimean peninsula were in the Sea of Azov.<sup>125</sup> If we consider that the Azov Sea is separated from the Black Sea by the Kerch Strait, these two cities are the cities that have a coast to the Black Sea in the southern part of the peninsula, although they are located on the Crimean Peninsula. Abū al-Fidā says that together with Sudak and Kaffa, the cities of Solgat (Saryi Krym-Old Crimea) are like a trivet. These cities are two days apart from each other.<sup>126</sup>

### **Sudak (Sugdak)**

Sudak is one of the cities on the Crimean Peninsula that has been addressed by travelers and geographers. According to the explanation of William of Rubruck in the 13th century, the city of Sudak was the center of the trade in the northern region of the Black Sea. Likewise, Rubrukuklu Willem mentioned that all the traders stopped here in the commercial flow that took place from the Anatolian peninsula, which he described as *Turkia* (Turkey), to the north of the Black Sea and in the opposite direction. It is understood that the main product for the trade from the northern geography of the Black Sea to Turkey (Anatolia) is fur. In addition, large amounts of fabric (cotton, silk and bombazine) and spices are also traded.<sup>127</sup>

In the 14th century, Abū al-Fidā states that Sudak, located on the Black Sea coast on the Crimean Peninsula, was a city frequented by traders. He states that Sudak is the size of the city of Kaffa. The mountain at the foot of the city surrounded by walls is stony.<sup>128</sup> In the same century, Ibn Battuta says that there were watery gardens around Sudak.<sup>129</sup> Hamdallah Mustawfi

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<sup>125</sup> Shems Ed-Dīn Abou-‘Abdallah Moh’ammed de Damas, p. 193.

<sup>126</sup> Ebu’l-Fidā, p. 180.

<sup>127</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 78; William of Rubruck mentioned squirrel fur and minever (a white fur worn as an ornament to formal dress in the Middle Ages), which are the main traded furs; Bombazine: It is a kind of fabric that is a mixture of fiber and silk.

<sup>128</sup> Ebu’l-Fidā, p. 191.

<sup>129</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 498.

informs that the people of Sudak are immigrants and their livelihoods are horses and cattle.<sup>130</sup>

Abū al-Fidā stated that Sudak was located opposite Sinop. Sudak, which has commercial relations with Istanbul, is a port city frequented by traders.<sup>131</sup> Umari, another writer who talks about Sinop, states that ships went from Sinop, which he stated to be in the Kastamonu Principality, to the city of Sudak, located on the northern coast of the Black Sea. Likewise, the city closest to Sinop in the north is Sudak.<sup>132</sup> Sinop is one of the leading ports to depart from the Anatolian peninsula in order to go to the Caspian, Kipchak, Russian and Bulgarian countries, which are further north than Sudak.<sup>133</sup>

Ibn Battuta wrote that the port of Sudak is perhaps one of the most beautiful ports in the world, in addition to being a large port.<sup>134</sup> Dimashki also mentions Sudak and underlines that Sudak is one of the cities that merchants visit to sell their goods. Slaves, furs, girls, clothes and miscellaneous items are bought and sold in the markets set up in this city. Some of the Kipchaks had went as far as Syria and Egypt.<sup>135</sup> It is a known fact that the Kipchaks, who were transported as slaves via Sudak and other ports of the Black Sea, were well organized by forming the Mamluk class in Egypt, and were organized in the administrative and military field over time and became the founders of the Mamluk State (1250-1517).

Ibn Battuta underlined that the people of Sudak are talented and professional people.<sup>136</sup> It is seen that the city of Sudak, where five different languages are spoken, such as Trabzon and Sinop, is also a city subject to international trade, along with others. The result of Dimashki's statements; The most important junction points of the commercial mobility in the Black Sea are Trabzon, Sinop and Sudak.

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<sup>130</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 498.

<sup>131</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 191.

<sup>132</sup> El-Ömerî, p. 163; Yaşar Yücel, p. 196.

<sup>133</sup> El-Ömerî, p. 163; Yaşar Yücel, p. 196.

<sup>134</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 498.

<sup>135</sup> Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-'Abdallah Moh'ammed de Damas, p. 382.

<sup>136</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 498.

In addition to these, Abū al-Fidā (1273-1331) wrote that the people of Sudak were Muslims. However, the 13th century writer Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribi (1214-1287) states that the people of the city belong to different races and religions and are under the rule of Christians.<sup>137</sup> The period when Abū al-Fidā stated that the people of the city were Muslims is the period when Sudak was conquered by the Seljuks in 1226 and came under the rule of the Golden Horde after the Mongol invasions. It is understood that within a century, changes occurred in the demographic structure of the Crimean Peninsula together with Sudak. Ibn Battuta, who came to Sudak in 1334, states that although there was a large Greek community in the city during these years, they were under the domination of the Turks. Due to the conflicts between the Turks and the Greeks, in which the Turks were victorious, the city was smaller and worn out compared to the past. Houses are wooden. The Turks had turned the demographic structure in their favor by removing many Greeks living in the city.<sup>138</sup>

### **Kaffa/Feodosia**

One of the important trade centers in the Crimean Peninsula is Kaffa (Feodosia). Abū al-Fidā states that Kaffa is a port city built on flat land. Its walls are of adobe. Merchants stop by to trade.<sup>139</sup> In the 15th century, the Castilian traveler Pero Tafur states that the city of Kaffa was on the coast of the Sea of Azov.<sup>140</sup> We know that it is located in the south of the Crimean Peninsula, close to the Sea of Azov.

While Ibn Battuta and his ship were trying to go to Kerch after Sinop, when they approached the port of the city, upon warnings, he turned back and landed in a port near Kaffa. Departing from this port, he reaches Kaffa by a horse carriage rented from the Christian Kipchaks.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Ebu'l-Fidā, p. 191.

<sup>138</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 498.

<sup>139</sup> Ebu'l-Fidā, p. 191.

<sup>140</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 154.

<sup>141</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 463.

Ibn Battuta reports that the big bazaars in Kaffa are quite rich and crowded. He finds the port of the city quite orderly. He states that the port, which he wrote was in size to accommodate two hundred large and small warships or cargo ships, is one of the most famous ports in the world.<sup>142</sup> However, the Castilian traveler Pero Tafur, in his work describing his journey to the east between 1436-1439, states that the winter season in Kaffa is very cold. Therefore, during the winter months, the ships in the port freeze and cannot move.<sup>143</sup>

Again, the Castilian traveler Pero Tafur mentioned that the City-State of Genoa had the city of Kaffa. He also emphasizes that Kaffa is as big as Sevilla, maybe even bigger than Sevilla.<sup>144</sup> He states that the population of Kaffa is twice that of Seville.<sup>145</sup> Giosafat Barbaro, who visited the region at the same time as Pero Tafur, shares the information that there is a Genoese consul in Kaffa.<sup>146</sup>

Ruy González de Clavijo mentioned the Genoese ships coming from the port of Kaffa (Feodosia) in the north of the Black Sea, that he left Istanbul with one of these ships on his return to his hometown.<sup>147</sup>

### **Kaffa and Its Surroundings as a Commercial City**

Along with the cities of Kerch and Tanais, the city of Kaffa is one of the last points of the trade route from Central Asia to the north of the Black Sea. Fur is the first among the products transported by this road.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 463-464.

<sup>143</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 161.

<sup>144</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 64-65.

<sup>145</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 155.

<sup>146</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 29.

<sup>147</sup> Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Narrative of The Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo to The Court of Timour at Samarcand (A.D. 1403-6)*, (Trans. Clemens R. Markham), Hakluyt Society, London 1859, p. 199; Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, *Anadolu Orta Aya ve Timur (Embaja a Tamor Lan)*, (Trans. Ö. Rıza Doğrul), Ses Yayınları, İstanbul 1993 p. 207; Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane (1403-1406)*, (Translated from the Spanish by Guy le Strange), Broadway House, Carter Lane, London 1928, p. 337.

<sup>148</sup> Heyd, p. 13-14,542.

According to the statement of Johannes de Galonifontibus in the 15th century, merchants from all over the world came to the city of Kaffa. He describes the city as a favorite of Christians. The reason for this must be that the city was in the hands of the Genoese, who had a large commercial network in the Mediterranean. Undoubtedly, he emphasizes that the city is a source of commodities, with merchants from all over the world and the commercial goods they brought with them. The city has skilful craftsmen working in silk, chamalotto (camlet: a fabric made from buff or goat hair), and other different crafts.<sup>149</sup>

From the explanations of Pero Tafur, we deduce that the city of Kaffa was a commercial city in the 15th century. In fact, commercial activities are the basis of the existence of the city. According to his explanation, a large amount of commercial goods come to this city through the Azov and Caspian Seas. Goods that are subject to trade are transported to the city from Iran and India by road. During this transportation activity, Azov and Caspian Seas together with the highway form a part of the transportation network.<sup>150</sup> In addition, it is understood that the commercial goods coming from the Iranian geography were brought to the port of Kaffa via the Black Sea. Commercial commodities are first brought to Trabzon port, located in the south of the Black Sea, from the Iranian geography, and then transported to Kaffa from there. Because there is also a Genoese port in Trabzon, and the most important destinations for the north-south directional trade in the Black Sea via Iran are Kaffa and the Genoese port in Trabzon.<sup>151</sup>

In the city of Kaffa, as in Sudak, slave trade is carried out. It is known that the slave trade has an important place in the commercial activities in the city. Bertrandon de la Broquiere mentions that while he was in Damascus, a

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<sup>149</sup> Özcan, p. 141.

<sup>150</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 156-157.

<sup>151</sup> This Genoese port was Leoncastron (The Lion Castle) and was located in today's Ganita locality; Fatih Aksoy, *Osmanlı Öncesi Dönemde Trabzon Şehri*, (Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tarih Ana Bilim Dalı, Yayınlanmamış Yüksek lisans Tezi), Elazığ 2009, p. 126-127.

Genoese named "*Gentil Emperial*" was sent to the port of Kaffa to buy slaves.<sup>152</sup>

From what Pero Tafur told during his travels between 1436-1439, we learn that there was human trafficking in the city. So much so that, due to human trafficking, which seems to have taken place in an intense amount, the surrounding countries have come to interfere in each other's internal affairs. While the Golden Horde Emperor will be able to take Kaffa back under his control, the notables of different countries and the people of the city do not want this. Because, Pero Tafur mentions that fathers sold their sons and brothers sold their brothers in the city, and that there were also thefts and great evils.<sup>153</sup>

It is understood that Kaffa also functions as a large manpower supply center for other countries of the known world. The slaves procured from the north of the Black Sea were brought to the ports in Crimea. However, it is understood that the city of Kaffa came to the forefront in the slave trade compared to other port cities. Because this form of trade, which was understood to bring good income, was mostly carried out by Genoese merchants who held the administration of the city of Kaffa. Especially at the beginning of the 14th century, the Genoese were selling their slaves to Egypt, using Kaffa as a base. The income they obtained went into the purses of the merchants.<sup>154</sup> The role of slaves (mamluks) taken from the north of the Black Sea in the formation of the political and military presence of the Mamluk State in Egypt is known.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Bertrandon de la Broquiere, p. 152.

<sup>153</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 155; Pero Tafur refers to the Emperor of the Golden Horde as the 'Tatar Emperor' or 'Great Khan'. The Khan he is talking about must have been Ulugh Muhammad Khan (?-1445) or Kichi (Küçük/Younger) Muhammad Khan (ruled 1427-1445), who had a struggle between them in this period. It is also possible that he is talking about the founder of the Crimean Khanate, Hacı I Giray (1397-1466), who besieged Kaffa but could not take it in 1434; Ahmet Mutu, "Hacı Giray I", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt:14, İstanbul 1996, p. 474-475.

<sup>154</sup> Yakubovskiy, p. 68.

<sup>155</sup> İlyas Kamalov, *Moğolların Kafkasya Politikası*, Kaknüs Yayınları, İstanbul 2003, p. 52-53; Bahattin Keleş, *Bahrî Memlûkler İktisadî ve Ticarî Hayat (1250-1382)*, Siyer Yayınları,

From the narratives of Pero Tafur, we reach the conclusion that the center of the slave trade in the known world of that day was the city of Kaffa. Because Pero Tafur also emphasizes that the city where the most slaves are sold in the world, male or female, is Kaffa. Especially the Sultan of Egypt (Mamluk Sultan) procured slaves from the region through his intermediaries in Kaffa and had them brought to Cairo. According to his narration, some Christians obtain a letter from the Pope, which is prepared to prevent Christians of different nationalities from being captured by Muslims as slaves and converting their religion. This letter allows Christians to be bought and kept in their hands regardless of a period of time by the people who own the letter.<sup>156</sup> Pero Tafur, who bought a male and two female slaves in Kaffa, makes some statements about the sale of slaves.<sup>157</sup>

In the 14th century, Schiltberger stayed in Kaffa for 5 months and had the opportunity to observe the city during this time.<sup>158</sup> Schiltberger states that silk was brought to Kaffa from the Iranian city of Shirvan. According to him, the origin of silk woven products sold in the markets of Kaffa and some other cities is Şirvan.<sup>159</sup> In addition, Josaphat Barbaro states that the salt obtained from Kaffa<sup>160</sup> was taken as far east as Megrelia.<sup>161</sup>

Fur is at the forefront among the products traded in Kaffa. Furs come here from everywhere. Perhaps because of the excess supply, Pero Tafur states that their prices are lower than in other countries. Apart from fur, commodities such as gold and other precious stones, pearls and spices are also traded.<sup>162</sup> Pero Tafur expresses that wine fruit and even bread are scarce in Kaffa. Even these are usually brought by traders, although they can

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İstanbul 2018, p. 355-356; Zübeyde Güneş Yağcı, "16. Yüzyılda Kırım'da Köle Ticareti", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Sayı: 8 (Kış 2005), p. 12-13.

<sup>156</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 155.

<sup>157</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 156.

<sup>158</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 211.

<sup>159</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 89.

<sup>160</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 28

<sup>161</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 27; Mingrelia (Megrelia-Samegrelo), Historical region on the Black Sea coast of Georgia.

<sup>162</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 157; Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*, (Trans. and Ed. Malcolm Letts), George Routledge and Son Ltd, London, 1926, p. 134.



be found in the city. However, because they are expensive, theft has become common.<sup>163</sup>

It is understood that the most important role in the great trade in Kaffa belongs to the Genoese. Trade in the city is organized by the Genoese. Pero Tafur depicts that the Genoese acted as a catalyst in trade with the statement "*If the Genoese were not there, apparently these people would not have any partnership with us*".<sup>164</sup> It can be seen that the city of Kaffa is actually a big market. Foreign merchants who came to the city to do business with the people engaged in trade in the region could find an environment to shop in the city.

Afenasy Nikitin, who came to Trabzon via Tabriz to reach his hometown of Russia on the way back from his journey between 1474 and 1478, wanted to arrive in Kaffa (Feodosya) on the Crimean Peninsula after leaving Trabzon. In order to reach Kaffa, he first had two unsuccessful attempts with the sailor he agreed with. In the first one, he goes as far as Vona (today's Ordu Province, Persembe District), but he has to return to Trabzon due to the unsuitable weather conditions. He stays in Platana (Akçaabat-Polathane) for fifteen days. Nikitin, who was caught in a storm in his second attempt, goes to the Crimean Peninsula from Balaklava (Balıklava -a port town of Sevastopol) in his third attempt.<sup>165</sup> It is known that Johannes de Galonifontibus, who was sent to this city by Emir Timur as an ambassador to Europe, was appointed as the deacon of Cimbaliensis (Balaklava) in 1410.<sup>166</sup> From Balaklava, Afenasy Nikitin arrives at Gurzuf (Hurzuf), another coastal city of the Crimean Peninsula, where he will stay for 5 days, and then the city of Kaffa.<sup>167</sup> After leaving the geography of

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<sup>163</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 157.

<sup>164</sup> Pero Tafur, "*Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*", p. 134.

<sup>165</sup> Afanasiy Nikitin, *Üç Deniz Ötesine Seyahat*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2018, p. XIX-XX,25,29-30.

<sup>166</sup> Özcan, p. 130; Sultaniyeli Johannes, p. 22.

<sup>167</sup> Nikitin, p. 30; Muhammad Idrisi shared the information about Gurzuf (Gharzouni) that it was a flourishing town on the seaside in the 12th century; Al-Idrisi, p. 395.

Crimea, he will continue his journey in the north direction and reach Russian lands.<sup>168</sup>

Castilian traveler Pero Tafur first reached Sinop and then Trabzon by departing from the south of the Black Sea in order to reach the city of Kaffa after Istanbul, which was on his travel route.<sup>169</sup> Afterwards, he left Trabzon with his entourage, headed to the north of the Black Sea, and reached Kaffa. He states that, in addition to being a city belonging to the Golden Horde State, known as the 'Tatar Empire', the Genoese settled in this city with the permission of the Golden Horde Emperor. He stands on the fact that the city of Kaffa was in the hands of the Genoese. From what they tell, it is understood that the Genoese settled here with a dense population and gained political supremacy. Because he mentions that a larger Genoese population came to this city than the Tatars had anticipated.<sup>170</sup>

Pero Tafur states that the city of Kaffa is surrounded by ordinary walls. Although the ditch around the walls is small, it is in a good condition for defense with various ammunition.<sup>171</sup> In the 14th century, Abū al-Fidā stated that the city walls were made of mud brick.<sup>172</sup> Again in the 14th century, Johann Schiltberger recorded that Kaffa, located on the Black Sea coast, was surrounded by two walls and that there were six thousand houses in one of the walls, where Genoese merchants, Greeks and Armenians lived. He describes this place as a real city. There are eleven thousand households within the second walls, which are further out, and people from various Christian denominations, such as Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Armenian and Syrian, live in these houses. Schiltberger stated that there were four thousand households outside the two walls.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Kerami Ünal, "15. Yüzyılda Rus Tüccar Afanasıy Nikitin'in "Üç Deniz Ötesine Seyahat" Notları, The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies, International Journal of Social Science, Volume 5, Issue 6, 2012, December, p. 537-538.

<sup>169</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 152.

<sup>170</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 152.

<sup>171</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 156.

<sup>172</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 191.

<sup>173</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 118-119.

There are 3 dioceses in the city of Kaffa, which are Greek (Orthodox), Roman (Catholic) and Armenian (Gregorian) churches. Muslims also live in the city, who also have their own temples. Pero Tafur, on the other hand, talks about a Christian monastery.<sup>174</sup> Pero Tafur, who had the opportunity to visit the city and meet with the administrative staff during his time in Kaffa, states that he went to the San Francisco Monastery in the city and listened to the sermon.<sup>175</sup>

Ibn Battuta, on the other hand, wrote that the people of Kaffa were also Christian Kipchaks in the 14th century. According to him, Kaffa is a rectangular planned city and is by the sea. Although he says that his people are completely Christian and are inhabited by many people of Genoese origin, he also states that he has “*qadis*” elsewhere in the city to which Muslims are affiliated.<sup>176</sup> This shows that Muslims also lived in the city during his time.<sup>177</sup> In the 15th century, Pero Tafur also describes the people of Kaffa as quite cosmopolitan. According to him, there are Orthodox and Catholic Christians in the city, as well as people from other nations of the world.<sup>178</sup> In this case, Pero Tafur describes it as a miracle that the plague was not seen in the city.<sup>179</sup> However, Pero Tafur states that the people of Kaffa are wild and diseased. Because of this, or maybe without waiting for the winter season to come, he would leave the city and go to Istanbul.<sup>180</sup>

Schiltberger describes the city of Kaffa (Feodosia) as a magnificent city. From his narration, we understand that the people of the city, who belong to six different religions, have a cosmopolitan structure.<sup>181</sup> Johannes de Galonifontibus also states that the city of Kaffa was a crowded city in the 15th century. He says that he has identified 35 different languages in the city of Kaffa, where he states that all of the Eastern languages can be

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<sup>174</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 118-119.

<sup>175</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 154-155.

<sup>176</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 463.

<sup>177</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 462-464.

<sup>178</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 155.

<sup>179</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 158.

<sup>180</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 161.

<sup>181</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 211.

encountered.<sup>182</sup> One of the groups living in Kaffa is the Jews. Bertrandon de la Broquiere makes one of his observations about this situation by stating that he met a Jew from Kaffa in Damascus, which he stopped during his travels in 1432-1433. This Jew helped him by giving him some information to use during his journey.<sup>183</sup> Another information that Jews lived in Kaffa is conveyed by Schiltberger. According to him, there are two separate Jewish communities in Kaffa, and their Synagogues are also different from each other.<sup>184</sup>

Along with these, Johann Schiltberger noted that there were four other cities connected to Kaffa on the Black Sea coast.<sup>185</sup>

Although he did not specify which of these cities they were, it is known that the Genoese had colonies in the north of the Black Sea along with Kaffa, in the ports of Sudak, Balaklava (Cembalo), Kerch (Vosporo) and Kalamita (Inkerman).<sup>186</sup> Likewise, the city of Kerch was used as a base for Italian merchants such as Genoese, Venetian, and Pisa on their journeys to the northern regions of the Black Sea.<sup>187</sup>

By the 15th century, Northern Black Sea production would increase and the merchant states operating in this region would have more bases. Castilian Pero Tafur, who will come up to the Don River during his journey during this period, will state that there are two Genoese fortresses on the shores of the river in question for the purpose of storing commercial goods.<sup>188</sup> Genoa is active in the coastal part and these cities determine the dominance area of Genoa. Genoa will experience the consequences of not

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<sup>182</sup> Özcan, p. 141.

<sup>183</sup> Bertrandon de la Broquiere, p. 148.

<sup>184</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 118-119.

<sup>185</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 118-119.

<sup>186</sup> Öztürk, p. 46,47; Gallotta, p. 363; Gülşen Abbasoğlu, "Bizans Dönemi'nde Kherson", Çanakkale On sekiz Mart Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Erken Hıristiyanlık ve Bizans Sanatları Anabilim Dalı, Sanat Tarihi Bilim Dalı, Unpublished MA Thesis, Çanakkale, 2015, p. 36,265.

<sup>187</sup> Heyd, p. 63-64.

<sup>188</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 158.

being able to show its effectiveness in the inner parts of the coast with various events that took place over time.<sup>189</sup>

In the 15th century, Giosafat Barbaro says that the Tatars received an annual tax from the city of Kaffa.<sup>190</sup> He also states that the Kaffa region was under the rule of Tatars (Golden Horde) and (Vlubi) Ulugh Muhammad Khan.<sup>191</sup> Ulugh Muhammad, the Khan of the Golden Horde State, also had Sorgathi (Solgat-Staryi Krym-Sorhathi) and Cherchiarde (Kirkyer-Chufut Kale) whose castles were not very strong, apart from Kaffa, in Gazzaria (Caspian-Caspian Land).<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, Johannes de Galonifontibus gives the information that the Goths settled near Kaffa.<sup>193</sup>

In the 15th century, the Ottoman Empire will begin to feel its influence in the Crimean Peninsula. Successor rulers of the Golden Horde in the north of the Black Sea and the rulers of the Ottoman Empire are struggling for power over the city of Kaffa.<sup>194</sup> After the Otlukbeli War, which took place in 1473 between the Ottoman State Ruler, Fatih Sultan Mehmet and the Aq Qoyunlu Ruler Uzun Hasan, which resulted in the definitive victory of the Ottoman State<sup>195</sup>, Uzun Hasan decided to seek help from the European countries against the Ottoman State. He sent the Venetian ambassador, Caterino Zeno, to Europe by writing letters for this purpose. Zeno, who set out on the road, planned to open to Europe via the Black Sea, and by moving to the north of this sea, he first went to Sevastopol, then left here and went to Kaffa, disguised as a sailor. However, he did not convey information about these cities. It is only mentioned that Kaffa was a place affiliated to the Ottoman State and paid taxes to the center. Meanwhile, a Genoese person who heard that the Venetian ambassador had come to Kaffa from Uzun Hasan wanted to capture him and take him to Fatih Sultan

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<sup>189</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 156.

<sup>190</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 29.

<sup>191</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 28.

<sup>192</sup> Barbaro-Contarini, p. 27; Josaphat Barbaro, p. 28-29.

<sup>193</sup> Özcan, p. 139.

<sup>194</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 29-31.

<sup>195</sup> Ali Sevim, Yaşar Yücel, *Klasik Dönemin Üç Hükümdarı (Fatih-Kanuni-Yavuz)*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1991, p. 72.

Mehmet.<sup>196</sup> This is one of the struggles for market capture in the Black Sea between Venice and Genoa. In some periods, when the tension between the two merchant states increases, there are actual conflicts. Ruy González de Clavijo mentions one of these conflicts in the Black Sea at the beginning of the 15th century. According to Clavijo's account, they reached Finogonia (Finogia-Kefken) from the Genoese ports after sailing to the Black Sea. Clavijo mentions that the Pera administration (the Genoese administration in Galata) sent two ships here, and he also states that one of these ships was in the port. According to Clavijo's statement, the purpose of these ships was to capture and seize Venetian ships loaded with goods from the Sea of Azov and to take their crews prisoner.<sup>197</sup>

Even before the conquest of Istanbul, the Genoese tried to establish relations with the Ottoman Empire as well as with Byzantium in order to continue their commercial activities on the Black Sea and the surrounding geography.<sup>198</sup> Of course, they will do this by considering the political conjuncture of the period, and with the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottoman Empire, this conjuncture will enter the process of change.

In the ongoing trade wars in competition with Venice, the Genoese elements establish good relations with the powers holding the market ownership. It also takes some steps to protect the current conjuncture in its favour. Likewise, the Venetian State is seeking to play a greater role in the market. Especially after the conquest of Istanbul, it seeks to cooperate with the rival powers of the Ottoman Empire. In this direction, the struggle between the cities of Venice and Genoa, which has commercial rivalry in the background, can be reflected in the political field in different ways.

In 1474, the Venetian ambassador Ambrogio Contarini was going to the Aq Qoyunlu Ruler Uzun Hasan as ambassador, and he would come to the north of the Black Sea via Germany and Poland. Contarini, who would

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<sup>196</sup> *Uzun Hasan-Fatih Mücadelesi Döneminde Doğu'da Venedik Elçileri, Caterino Zeno ve Ambrogio Contari'nin Seyahatnâmeleri*, (Trans. Tufan Gündüz), Yeditepe Yayınevi, İstanbul 2006, p. 38-39.

<sup>197</sup> Clavijo, *Anadolu Orta Asya ve Timur*, p. 60.

<sup>198</sup> Gallotta, p. 364-365.

reach Kiev here, crossed the Dnieper River and large and small rivers after Kiev and reached Kaffa (Feodosia). Contarini, who did not leave the house in order not to be caught during his stay in Kaffa, does not make much statement about the city. He only mentioned that Kaffa, located on the coast of the Black Sea, is a rich city with a large population of all kinds of nationalities and an intense commercial activity.<sup>199</sup> On the return of his journey, in July 1475, when he wanted to come back to Kaffa via Fasso (Poti), located on the eastern shores of the Black Sea, he learned that this city was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and he would turn his direction to the Caspian Sea and later to Moscow.<sup>200</sup> Because in the same year, Gedik Ahmet Pasha, one of the commanders of Fatih Sultan Mehmet, captured the city of Kaffa with the Ottoman navy and subsequently established dominance in the Azov castle in the north of the Azov Sea.<sup>201</sup> Thus, the Ottoman Turks in the north of the Black Sea will make their presence felt as the most influential political actor.

As a matter of fact, as mentioned by Giosafat Barbaro, towards the end of the 15th century, sovereignty was established in Kaffa, Sorgathi (Solgat-Staryi Krym) and Cherchiarde (Kirkyer) by Ulugh Muhammad Khan, and again by Giosafat Barbaro in the same period it is stated that Cherz (Kerç), Calamita (Kalamita- İnkerman), Cymbalo (Balaklava), Grasui (Hurzuf) and Saldaia (Sudak) [or Sarsona (Sevastopol)] are also under Turkish administration.<sup>202</sup>

### **Solgat (Staryi Krym)-Chufut Kale (Kirkyer)**

Although they are not port cities, it is necessary to mention two important cities in the Crimean Peninsula. One of them is Solgat (Staryi Krym) and the other is Chufut Kale (Çifit Kale–Çufut Kale–Kirkyer–Qirqyer).

<sup>199</sup> *Uzun Hasan-Fatih Mücadelesi*, p. 77-79.

<sup>200</sup> *Uzun Hasan-Fatih Mücadelesi*, p. 104-127.

<sup>201</sup> Sevim-Yücel, p. 84.

<sup>202</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 28-29; Barbaro-Contarini, p. 27-28.

In his notes on the Crimean Peninsula, Schiltberger describes this region as a part of Tatarstan and says that it is called Kipchak (Kopetzach) and its capital is Vulchat<sup>203</sup> (Solchat<sup>204</sup> -Sorgathi-Solgat-Staryi Krym-Sorhathi), where all kinds of grains are grown.<sup>205</sup>

The city from which the Crimean Peninsula takes its name is Solgat (Staryi Krym). Although it is not a port city, it is one of the important cities of the peninsula. Abū al-Fidā emphasizes that Solgat is the capital of Crimea and that this is the city mentioned when Crimea is mentioned. The distance to the beach is half a day.<sup>206</sup> The distance between Solgat and Azov cities is about 15 days walk (konak).<sup>207</sup> The city that Ibn Battuta visited after Kaffa during his journey was Solgat. He describes this place as a very beautiful city connected to the Uzbek Khan (Golden Horde State). When Battuta arrived, the administration in Solgat was under Tülük Timur Bey, one of the orders of Ozbeg Khan. There were separate judges of Hanafi and Shafi'i sects and Muslim jurists in this city, and Battuta had the opportunity to meet with some of them and Tülük Timur.<sup>208</sup> Considering the qadi in Kaffa, whose population is mostly Christian, this should be an indication of the institutional structure of Islam in the region.

One of the settlements mentioned by William of Rubruck in the 13th century is the place known today as Chufut Kale (Çifit Kale-Çufut Kale). The name of this place in the Middle Ages is expressed as Kirqyer (Qirqyer). However, William of Rubruck erroneously tried to explain this place as 40 different settlements (*quadraginta castella*). In the following centuries, Giosafat

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<sup>203</sup> Johann Schiltberger, *The Bondage and Travels*, p. 49.

<sup>204</sup> Schiltbergers, *Hans Schiltbergers Reisebuch*, p. 63.

<sup>205</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 118.

<sup>206</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 191; Solgat is on the Crimean Peninsula and it is inland from Sudak, 35 km and from Kefe, 25 km.

<sup>207</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 192; Konak, merhale or menzil. 1 konak is equivalent to approximately 24 km: Mustafa Enes Kaan Kılınc, "X. Yüzyıl Müslüman Seyyahların Gözünden Mısır (Tarih, Ekonomi, Kültür, Toplum ve Din)", Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Unpublished MA Thesis, Karaman, 2019, p. 33.

<sup>208</sup> Tahsin Koçyiğit, "İbn Battuta'nın Karadeniz Seyahati Üzerine Bazı Mülahazalar", *Din Bilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, IX., sayı 4, 2009, p. 66.



Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini expressed the name of this settlement as 'Cherchiarde' according to the phonetics of their own language.<sup>209</sup>

We also mentioned that Ulugh Muhammad Khan (Vlubi), whom Giosafat Barbaro described as the Khan of the Golden Horde in the 15th century, owned Sorgathi (Solgat-Staryi Krym-Sorhathi) and Cherchiarde (Medieval Kirkyer or Qirqyer-Chufut or Çifit Kale) together with Kaffa.<sup>210</sup>

We see that the Genoese became an effective authority in the region by gaining much power in Kaffa, where they settled after the permission they received from the Golden Horde emperor.<sup>211</sup> This situation must have caused them to feel the need to test their strength over time. As a matter of fact, in the 15th century, Pero Tafur reports that the Genoese of Kaffa, who took action to seize Solgat (Staryi Krym-Çorçate), known as the center of the Crimean Tatars, were defeated when he was in the city of Kaffa. So much so that as a result of the response they gave to the Genoese, the Tatars advanced enough to capture Kaffa and went up to the walls of the city. The attack of the Tatars could only be stopped within the walls of Kaffa. Thus, the Genoese in Kaffa came to the conclusion that they could not show the success they had at sea while on land.<sup>212</sup>

Giosafat Barbaro reports that Solgat is also referred to as Incremin.<sup>213</sup> We do not see that this city is called Incremin in any other source. Due to the similarity of the name, it may be confused with the city of Inkerman, near Sevastopol.

Pero Tafur went to the city of Solgat (Stary Krym-Çorçate) while he was in Kaffa. Here he stopped by the military-market belonging to the Great Khan. He defines military-market as a place where goods are bought and sold, resembling a big city. This place and another place established for the

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<sup>209</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 84, fn. 42; Barbaro-Contarini, p. 27; Alan Fisher, *Kırım Tatarları*, Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul 2009, p. 22.

<sup>210</sup> Barbaro-Contarini, p. 27; Josaphat Barbaro, p. 28-29.

<sup>211</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 152.

<sup>212</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 156.

<sup>213</sup> Barbaro-Contarini, p. 27.

same purpose are managed by the responsible persons named 'Great Kadir'.<sup>214</sup>

Abū al-Fidā gives a more specific geographical definition about Kirkyer (*Kerker*). He describes Kirkyer as a solid fortress on a large flat field on the top of a mountain. He added that it is difficult to climb this mountain. Kirkyer does not have a coastline, but there is a very high mountain named Çadirdağı next to it, which means that it can be seen from the sea. The people of Kirkyer are known as "As". Kirkyer is north of Sarikirman (Sevastopol), a day's drive away.<sup>215</sup>

Another city Schiltberger mentioned in Crimea is Karkeri.<sup>216</sup> This must be the Kirkyer mentioned by William of Rubruck, Abū al-Fidā and Giosafat Barbaro.<sup>217</sup> There is no other city suitable for phonetics.<sup>218</sup> This castle is near Bahçesaray. Kirkyer is located in the north of Sarikirman (Chersonese-Kerson-Sevastopol-Akyar), which is mentioned by Abū al-Fidā, and is 1 day away from this city.<sup>219</sup> Schiltberger also mentions the city of Sarikirman as "*Seruchermann*" and states that this name is used by Muslims.<sup>220</sup>

### **Sarikirman (Chersonese-Sevastopol-Akyar)**

This is the center of the Byzantine State in Crimea. The city of Chersonese, which was fortified by Justinian I. in the 6th century, is located

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<sup>214</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 159; Military-markets are markets established in order to meet the various needs of the soldiers in places close to the headquarters or on the transit routes of the armies that go on a temporary expedition; Cengiz Kallek, "Pazar", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt:34, İstanbul 2007, p. 195.

<sup>215</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 190-191.

<sup>216</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 119.

<sup>217</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 190-191; Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 84, fn. 42; Barbaro-Contarini, p. 27; Josaphat Barbaro, p. 28; Different uses such as Qırqyer, Karkar, Kerker, Cherchiarde, Chufut or Çıfıt Kale, Kırk Kale are seen in the sources.

<sup>218</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 119.

<sup>219</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 191.

<sup>220</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 119; Johann Schiltberger, *The Bondage and Travels*, p. 50; Okay, p. 63; Schiltbergers, *Hans Schiltbergers Reisebuch*, p. 63.

within the borders of today's Sevastopol city. Since then, it continues to function as an important port city.<sup>221</sup>

According to Abū al-Fidā 's explanation, when one proceeds westward along the southern coast of the Crimean Peninsula from Sudak, the route first turns to the south and comes to Sarikirman (Chersonese-Kerson-Sevastopol-Akyar) at the point where the sea enters the land towards the east. This place is about five days away from Sudak and Solgat (Staryi Krym) and is located opposite Sinop like Sudak. There is Kerker (Karkar–Chufut Kale–Kirkyer) at a distance of 1 day from here and to the north. Akçakirman (Akkerman) is located at a 15-day distance to the west of Sarikirman.<sup>222</sup>

According to Giosafat Barbaro, the rulers of the Mengrelia (Megrelia-Mingrelia-Samegrelo) region to the east of the Black Sea are called Bendian (Bediani-Dadiani), and Sevastopol, one of the cities on the Black Sea coast, belongs to them, and there are also other castles and cities.<sup>223</sup>

In the 15th century, when the Ottoman Empire had a say in the politics of the region with the lands it seized in the north of the Black Sea, the Golden Horde State was living its last days. Power struggles continued between the Crimean, Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates, which would emerge in this period and claim the political legacy of the Golden Horde.<sup>224</sup> Josaphat Barbaro states that the Ottomans already had a base beyond Keefe. These bases are on the Black Sea coast, close to Alan and Goth territory, and on the Montecastro (probably Moncastro-Akkerman) road.<sup>225</sup> He stated that the lands of the areas were located around the Azov Sea and in the south of the

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<sup>221</sup> Donald M. Nicol, p. 21; Magosci, p. 27.

<sup>222</sup> Frolov-Konovalova, p. 56-59; Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 44-45, 71, 180, 189-191.

<sup>223</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 27; Bendian, Bediani or Dadiani is a military title or a dynastic name given to people who ruled around Georgia, Abkhazia, Mingrelia, Guria since the 12th century. It is possible that it is used to mean 'Great', 'Military Chief' or 'Chief of Justice'; Marie F. Brosset, *Gürcistan Tarihi (Eski Çağlardan 1212 yılına Kadar)*, (Trans. Hrand D. Andreasyan), Note/Publ: Erdoğan Merçil, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2003, p. 10/fn. 58,344.

<sup>224</sup> Magosci, p. 43-44; Josaphat Barbaro, p. IX.

<sup>225</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 31-32.

Tatar country, and in line with this information<sup>226</sup>, according to Giosafat Barbaro, the Ottoman base should be located in the west direction from Kaffa and in the region up to Akkerman along the coast. Sevastopol or Balaklava (Balıklava) must be from these bases. However, it is known that the Ottoman navy under the command of Gedik Ahmet Pasha captured the Azov Castle in the north of the Azov Sea after conquering the city of Kaffa in 1475.<sup>227</sup> Thus, the Ottoman Empire began to play a more active role in the political and commercial field in the Azov Sea and the other coastal part of the Northern Black Sea.

### **Azov Sea and Azov/Tanais City**

In the 13th century, William of Rubruck mentions the Black Sea as the Pontos Sea or the Great Sea and gives the length of this sea as 1,400 miles, based on the information he obtained through traders. William of Rubruck also points to the Azov Sea by mentioning that the Black Sea is almost in two parts.<sup>228</sup>

Dimashki calls the Azov Sea as '*Sudak Sea*', '*Saksin Sea*' or '*Kipchak Sea*'.<sup>229</sup> Abū al-Fidā, on the other hand, stated that the Sea of Azov was also mentioned as "*Pontus Lake (Mayintis)*" in ancient sources, and there are those who mention similarly from different geographers.<sup>230</sup>

As a matter of fact, about the Azov Sea, Muhammad Idrisi gives the information that this sea is 300 miles wide.<sup>231</sup> and 100 miles long in an east-

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<sup>226</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 5.

<sup>227</sup> Sevim-Yücel, p. 84.

<sup>228</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 77.

<sup>229</sup> Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-'Abdallah Moh'ammed de Damas, p. 191; It is notable that name Sakşın is used for this place. Because Sakşın (Sarışın) is the name given to the eastern part of the city of Atıl (İtil), the capital of the Khazar Khaganate. It is not near the Sea of Azov. The city is located on the part of the Volga (İtil) River where it empties into the Caspian Sea, near present-day Astrakhan. The city of Atıl was severely destroyed in 965 by the army under the Kyiv knezi Sviatoslav I, Grand Prince of Kiev. After this attack, the Khazar Khaganate collapsed in a short time: Artamonov, 547-550.

<sup>230</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ. p. 43,310.

<sup>231</sup> Al-Idrisî, p. 391.

west direction, which can be completed in a maximum of 6 days.<sup>232</sup> The Azov Sea (Maeotis) is conveyed as one of the salty lakes in "Hudûdü'l-Alem", and the length of the Azov Sea is given as 100 miles like Idrisi. Its width is stated as 30 parasang (fersah). It is mentioned that the surrounding of this sea is in ruins. According to the work, the Sea of Azov, which connects with the Black Sea via an estuary (Kerch Strait), is located on the border of the Slavs towards the north. The Black Sea joins another estuary (Bosphorus) and the western sea (Mediterranean).<sup>233</sup>

Ibn Rustah referred to the Sea of Azov as '*Mayutis-Maeotis-Mavtiş'*. Ibn Rustah rightly stated that the Sea of Azov was thought to be a small sea but actually a large sea. According to his explanation, the Sea of Azov is 300 miles long in an east-west direction while its width is 100 miles.<sup>234</sup> However, he erroneously stated that Istanbul was built around the Sea of Azov, and while describing the Sea of Azov, he wrote that there is a strait flowing like a river near Istanbul in this sea. He tells that the water of this strait, which he states is 3 miles wide, also flows into the Mediterranean.<sup>235</sup> We think that the factor causing this error is the existence of a strait like the Bosphorus (Kerch Strait) between the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. Ibn Rusta either confuses the two straits (Istanbul and Kerch Straits) or he thinks that the Bosphorus is a waterway extending to the Sea of Azov.

One of the cities located in the northeast of the Crimean Peninsula is the city of Azov. It is located in the delta of the Don river. It was founded by the Genoese or, in earlier times, by Greek colonists.<sup>236</sup> Abū al-Fidā also mentioned the city of Azov, which is located in the north of the Azov Sea and in the area where the Don (Tanaïs) River joins this sea. According to

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<sup>232</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 391,405.

<sup>233</sup> *Hudûdü'l-Alem Mine'l-Meşrik'ile'l-Mağrib*, p. 6; Parasang (Fersah): A unit of measure corresponding to 1 mile or 1 nautical mile. It was used at varying rates, corresponding to between 4.445 km and 7.066 km, according to the usage patterns of different societies in different periods; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, "Fersah", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt:12, İstanbul 1995, p. 412.

<sup>234</sup> İbn Rüsteh, p. 104.

<sup>235</sup> İbn Rüsteh, p. 104.

<sup>236</sup> Martin Bronevskiy, *Kırım*, (Trans. Kemal Ortaylı), Ege Matbaası, Ankara 1970, p. 11.

him, the Kerch Strait widens to the north and west after Taman and resembles a lake. Proceeding in the east direction, the city of "*Shakrak*" (al *Shaqrāq-Cokrak*) is encountered. The city of Azov is further north.<sup>237</sup> This city, which is close to the city of Azov, is located on flat land. There is the sea to the north of this city, and the large steppe land to the south and west. Its population includes both Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>238</sup>

Dimashqi states that Turks, Khazars, Alans, Bordjans and Kelabians lived on the shores of the Azov Sea. Alans from these tribes live in the north of the Azov Sea. He mentions that there is a silver mine in their land and that the silver extracted from it is unique in the world.<sup>239</sup>

Johannes de Galonifontibus emphasizes that Azov city is a port of Don river. Also, Johannes specifies the city of Azov as a port of the city of *Sicie*, which separates Asia from Europe.<sup>240</sup>

According to Pero Tafur's account, the people around the Don River wear silk woven dresses, which are the products of the region. The area he is

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<sup>237</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 44; Frolov-Konovalova, p. 60; It should be the city of 'Sarkel', which is designated as Shakrak. The city of Sarkel was started to be built by the Khazars in the 9th century as a border post to protect their lands against the dangers that may come from the west: Artamonov, p. 383-385; It means 'White Castle' or 'White House' in Chuvash; J. Özlem Oktay Çerezci, Hazar Dönemi Sarkel Şehri, Kalesi ve Bir Kısım Arkeolojik Buluntu Örnekleri (Orta ve İç Asya Türk Sanatı Bağlantıları), *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, Sayı: 28, 2019, p. 3; Today, there is a settlement named Sarkel (Саркел) near the city of 'Tsimlyansk' in the Rostov Oblast region of Russia. However, the historic city of Sarkel and some of its surrounding areas were flooded in 1952 during the opening of the Volga-Don Canal and the construction of the Tsimlyansk Dam.

<sup>238</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 310.

<sup>239</sup> Shems Ed-Dîn Abou-'Abdallah Moh'ammed de Damas, p. 194; Kelebia is a lowland in southern Hungary. Although it is not certain, there are studies that describe the Kelabians as Lithuanians and the Bordjans as Proto Bulgarians: Veselin Beşevliyev, 'Proto-Bulgar Dini', *Bellefen IX*, (Trans. T. Acaroğlu), Sayı:34, Ankara 1945, p. 241; Arnolds Spekke, "Arabian Geographers and the Early Baltic People", *Baltic and Scandinavian Countries*, Vol:4, No:2 (9), Riga 1928, p. 157.

<sup>240</sup> Özcan, p. 141-142; The place referred to as the 'City of Sicie' by Johannes should be the 'Circassian country', which was mentioned under different names in various sources. The region referred to as '*The Land of Zic*' by Johann de Plano Carpin, '*Zik Island (Zichia)*' by Fazlullah el-Ömerî, '*Starbas*' by the obligatory German traveler Schiltberger, and '*Arkeessye*' by Ebu'l-Fida this is it.

talking about is the region where the city of Azov is located. Men wear kaftans made of felt, which have no seams. These felt garments are as beautiful as the dress. The weapons of these people are machetes, arrows and sticks.<sup>241</sup>

While describing the city of Tanais, Giosafat Barbaro; He says that in the north and west of the city is the Azov Sea (called the Tabachi-Tabacche Sea), and in the east is Mengleria (Megrelia-Mingrelia-Samegrelo).<sup>242</sup> It is observed that Barbaro places the city of Tanais in a central position in his narratives and tries to describe the surrounding geography from this point of view. It conveys some information about the Phaso (Phasis-Rioni) River and the city of Vathi (Batumi-Vathy Limen-Bathus Limen) to the south of this river in this region, which is reached by passing through the Caucasus Mountains in the east of Tanais.<sup>243</sup>

After mentioning the cities of Sarai and Bolgar on the Volga River, Schiltberger deals with the city of Azov (Tanais) located on the banks of the Don River. As it is known, this city is located at the point where the Don River joins the sea. Schiltberger reports that a large number of animals were raised in the city of Azov. According to him, large quantities of fish are brought to Venice and Genoa from here.<sup>244</sup>

According to Giosafat Barbaro, a part of the Sea of Azov reaches the Black Sea, while another part reaches the river known as 'Elice', which is 40 miles from Kaffa (Feodosia). He states that this river flows towards Akkerman (Moncastro).<sup>245</sup> However, the distance between Kaffa and Akkerman are both by sea and by road is over 300 miles. Although there is no river named Elice 40 miles or close to Kaffa, the city that flows in the

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<sup>241</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 159.

<sup>242</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 26; Barbaro-Contarini, p. 25.

<sup>243</sup> Barbaro-Contarini, p. 26; Josaphat Barbaro, p. 27; Phaso: Historical Phasis or Rioni River as it is known today. It flows into the Black Sea from the city of Poti in the Mingrelia-Upper Svaneti region of Georgia.

<sup>244</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 118.

<sup>245</sup> Barbaro-Contarini, p. 4-5.

direction of Akkerman and joins the Black Sea from there is Dniester (Turla). The river he refers to with the name Elice must also be the Dniester.

On the other hand, Ibn Battuta, on his journey by horse-drawn carriage, proceeded to the city of Azov from the northwest direction of the Sea of Azov, and after crossing a river, some of which is almost swampy, in one day and another in half a day, he arrived by advancing for three more days.<sup>246</sup>

In the letter written by Priest Pascal of Vittoria to his priest friend during his journey to the city of Sarai (Saray) in 1338, it is stated that he reached Tana by crossing the Black Sea, which he said was "bottomless", starting from Istanbul.<sup>247</sup>

According to Abū al-Fidā 's explanation, the city of Azov, located on the northern coast of the Sea of Azov, is a port city frequented by traders.<sup>248</sup> The city's port was well known among merchants. The buildings in the city were wooden.<sup>249</sup> The city is built on a flat land. Battuta describes the city as an orderly and perfect city. There is intense trade. It is flooded by traders from many nations, especially the Genoese. Especially horse trade is very common. Battuta stated that there are many horses in this geography and their prices are very reasonable. He wrote that the herds of horses could be even more than the herds of sheep in his country. Horse trade is mostly done with India. Caravans are made up of around six thousand horses and there are between one hundred and two hundred horses per trader. From the city of Azov, he will continue his journey to Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde State, by passing some cities in order to visit the Ozbeg Khan.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Koçyiğit, p. 68, İbn Battûta, p. 468; It is possible that the rivers it passes through are the Obyrichna, Berda or Kalmius rivers.

<sup>247</sup> Pascal of Vittoria, *A Missionary Franciscan In Tartary, To His Brethren of The Convent of Vittoria, 1338, Cathay And The Way Thither: Being A Collection Of Medieval Notices Of China*, Volumes III, (Translated and Edited: Colonel Sir Henry Yule and Henry Cordier), Hakluyt Society, London 1914, p. 81.

<sup>248</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 43-44,71.

<sup>249</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 192.

<sup>250</sup> İbn Battûta, p. 468-474.



Giosafat Barbaro witnessed the struggles between Ulugh Muhammad Khan (d.1445) and his rival Kichi (Küçük/Younger) Muhammad Khan in the Golden Horde State.<sup>251</sup> During this period, he had a meeting with Kichi Muhammad Khan, who came near the city of Tanais (Azov), and shared information about what this army saw while passing by Tanais.<sup>252</sup> As a matter of fact, chaos prevails in the region at this time. Johannes de Galonifontibus mentions that Azov was not a place to live because of the wars at this time.<sup>253</sup>

The reason behind the confusion mentioned by Johannes de Galonifontibus must be the struggles between Emir Timur and Tokhtamysh. In 1395, the army of the Golden Horde under the rule of Tokhtamysh was defeated by Emir Timur in the battle near the Terek River. Emir Timur first determined Timur Qutluq as Khan. However, in this period, Edige Mirza (Edigu) came to the fore in the Golden Horde state administration and played a role in the appointment of the state ruler on behalf of Timur. Edige Mirza, after Timur Kutluk's death in 1400, ensured that different khans were appointed in his place. Thus, he remained the absolute ruler of the Golden Horde until 1419.<sup>254</sup> In his work, Johannes de Galonifontibus explained that emissaries were sent to Edige Mirza by Emir Timur in 1401. She states that the capital of Edige Mirza is Sorcate (Sudak) and that there is a distance of 18 miles between this city and the city of Capha (Kaffa).<sup>255</sup> During this time, the city of Azov was almost evacuated. He reports that the city of Azov was destroyed by Timur and many prisoners were taken. It also informs that the well-to-do people of the city have their sons, women and animals taken from them and sold to merchants.<sup>256</sup>

However, the city of Azov (Tanais) under the rule of the Golden Horde was a very important city especially for Latin merchants. Because grain production was being made in the Golden Horde lands in a quantity

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<sup>251</sup> İlyas Kemaloğlu, *Altın Orda ve Rusya*, Ötüken Neşriyat, İstanbul 2015, p. 117.

<sup>252</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 6.

<sup>253</sup> Özcan, p. 141-142.

<sup>254</sup> Serkan Acar, *Kazan Hanlığı-Moskova Knezliği Siyasi İlişkileri (1437-1552)*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2013, p. 65-66.

<sup>255</sup> Sultaniyeli Johannes, p. 81.

<sup>256</sup> Özcan, p. 142.

exceeding the consumption many times over, and Azov was the most important port city in the export of this production, especially to the Mediterranean market.<sup>257</sup> The Azov city of this time was a preferred city for transition to cities in the Mongolian territory further north, such as Sarai. We see this in letters written by the Christian monks of the time. One of these monks, the French Priest Giovanni de Montecorvino, who is known as the founder of the Catholic Missions in Rome together with India, in a letter dated 1305 sent to the Pope, points out the route passing through Tanais as the shortest and most reliable way to get to the geography in question. It states that it can be taken monthly. This route was traversed in eight months by the Florentine merchant Francesco Balducci Pegolotti (1290-1347), who traded in the Black Sea on behalf of the "Bardi Company" (Compagnia dei Bardi) of Florence origin.<sup>258</sup> Likewise, in the work named "Pratica della Mercatura", which was prepared by Pegolotti to write a guide for those who will travel to the Far East for commercial purposes, we come across commercial information about Tanais.<sup>259</sup> He states that it is possible to reach Gintarchan (Astrakhan) from Tanais in 25 days by ox-cart and 12 days by horse-drawn carriage.<sup>260</sup> Pegolotti, who does not provide information about the city, recommends that the merchants who will come to the city first find an interpreter for themselves, as well as two more people who speak the Cuman language. He also stated that the trip from Tanais to the Far East is safe.<sup>261</sup> It also provides information about some weight and length

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<sup>257</sup> Serdar Çavuşdere, *14. Yüzyıl İtalyan Kaynaklarında (Zibaldone Da Canal, Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, Pignol Zucchello) Türkiye Ticaret Tarihine Dair Kayıtlar*, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Unpublished MA Thesis, Kahramanmaraş 2007, p. 45.

<sup>258</sup> Montecorvino, *Cathay And The Way Thither: Being A Collection Of Medieval Notices Of China (Letters and Reports of Missionary Friars From Cathay and India)*, Volumes III, (Translated and Edited: Colonel Sir Henry Yule and Henry Cordier), Hakluyt Society, London 1914, p. 150-154.

<sup>259</sup> Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, *La Pratica Della Mercatura*, Ed. Allan Evans, The Medieval Academy of America 24, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1936, p. 23-25.

<sup>260</sup> Pegolotti, *La Pratica Della Mercatura*, p. 21-22; Pegolotti, *Cathay And The Way Thither: Being A Collection Of Medieval Notices Of China (Notices of the Land Route to Cathay and Asiatic Trade in the First Half of Fourteenth Century)*, Volumes III, (Translated and Edited: Colonel Sir Henry Yule and Henry Cordier), Hakluyt Society, London, 1914, p. 150-154.

<sup>261</sup> Pegolotti, *Cathay And The Way Thither*, p. 146.

measurements used in Tanais and the products traded. Moreover, it indicates some products entering Tanais with or without customs duty.<sup>262</sup>

From what Giosafat Barbaro told in the 15th century, we learn that there were Venetians residing in Tanais (Azov).<sup>263</sup> On the other hand, we mentioned that Barbaro informed us that there was a Genoese consul in the city of Kaffa as well.<sup>264</sup> It is known that the people living here are generally merchants, and the element that forms the basis for the establishment of consulates and representations is commerce. Although the port cities in the region seem to be shared by Venice and Genoa, commercial competition continues. Different actors, such as the Ottoman Empire, are also in an effort to play a role, which will result in success before the 15th century is completed.

In the 15th century, Pero Tafur of Castile wrote that there were Genoese fortresses in the Sea of Azov and in Turkey (Anatolia).<sup>265</sup> He reports that there are two castles on the coast of the Don River, one belonging to the Venetians and the other to the Genoese. Trade goods are stored in these forts.<sup>266</sup> These castles are located in the city of Azov, and by the 16th century it is known that the number of castles in the city was three.<sup>267</sup>

Ruy González de Clavijo states that in the 15th century, due to the struggles between the Genoese and the Venetians, which sometimes caused great conflicts, the Genoese were organizing cruises for observation purposes in order to seize the Venetian ships coming from the Sea of Azov. Clavijo

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<sup>262</sup> Some of the products that Pegolotti noted were traded in Tana were: Beeswax, iron, tin, copper, spices (blackpepper, ginger, saffron and other spices), cotton, cheese, linen and oil, honey, caviar, amber rosaries, furs and skins (ermine, foxes, sable, skunks, martens, wolves, deers), silk or gold pieces, pearls, tails, ox, horse and pony, wheat, corn and legumes, Greek wine and all Latin wines are sold as they come in casks; Pegolotti, *Cathay And The Way Thither*, p. 157-158.

<sup>263</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 6.

<sup>264</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 29.

<sup>265</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 64-65.

<sup>266</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 158.

<sup>267</sup> Mustafa L. Bilge, "Azak", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Cilt:4, İstanbul 1991, p. 300; Venetian, Genoese and Toprak Castles.

mentions that there was a Venetian ship captured by the Genoese in the port of Finogonia (Finogia, Kefken), located on the southern coast of the Black Sea, that the Genoese were taking the crew captive by confiscating the goods on this ship.<sup>268</sup>

As it is known, the Don River flows into the Azov Sea from the west of the Azov (Tanais) city.<sup>269</sup> Giosafat Barbaro states that he was fishing around the city of Azov. Especially for its caviar, moroni (codfish) fish were hunted, this fish and its caviar were salted.<sup>270</sup> Pero Tafur of Castile, who went to the city of Kaffa at the same time and made a trip to the vicinity of the Don River while he was here, also mentions the fishing on the banks of the Don River and cod fish. According to Pero Tafur's account, the most caught fish is 'sturgeon' and is transported by ships. He saw that this fish, which he stated could be consumed fresh or in brine, was exported to Castile and Flemish Region.<sup>271</sup> In addition, Pero Tafur mentions that the peoples living in the Don River are fishing for a big fish called "cod". The eggs (caviar-havyar) of this fish are sent to the whole world, especially Byzantium and Turkey (Anatolia), after being filled in barrels after some processes.<sup>272</sup>

Abū al-Fidā records that the water of the Azov Sea, which freezes in winter, is drinkable because it is less salty.<sup>273</sup> Proceeding from here, one reaches the strait again from the west coast of the Sea of Azov, and the city of Kerch, located on the opposite shore of Taman city. Abū al-Fidā wrote that the city of Kerch is opposite Taman. This city is a small city located between the cities of Azov and Kaffa, at the entrance of the Sea of Azov. Its people are non-Muslim Kipchaks. From here, again, following the sea and

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<sup>268</sup> Clavijo, *Anadolu Orta Asya ve Timur*, p. 33,60.

<sup>269</sup> Ebu'l-Fidā, p. 71.

<sup>270</sup> Josaphat Barbaro, p. 14; Codfish is a larger sized species of sturgeon.

<sup>271</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 158; Flemish Region: The region located in the north of Belgium.

<sup>272</sup> Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur Seyahatnamesi*, p. 158-159.

<sup>273</sup> Ebu'l-Fidā, p. 192.

proceeding in the southwest direction, you first reach the port city of Kaffa (Feodosya), which is opposite Trabzon, and then Sudak.<sup>274</sup>

### **Taman Peninsula - Matrakha (Tmutarakan or Hermonassa)**

When crossing the Kerch Strait to the opposite coast, you also pass from the Crimean Peninsula to the Taman Peninsula. The most important place in this region towards the end of the Middle Ages is Matrakha (Tmutorakan or Hermonassa). Idrisi states that Matrakha is a very old city. The name of its founder is unknown. It is a productive place. It is surrounded by crops and vineyards. The city is under the control of Abkhaz forces. These forces are warlike and zealous. Thanks to its administrators, it has a strong city position compared to the surrounding region.<sup>275</sup>

William of Rubruck states that Matrakha is to the east of the city of Sudak.<sup>276</sup> He states that the Tanais River (Don) flows into the Black Sea with a 12-mile-wide estuary from here<sup>277</sup>, which he indicates is the Kerch Strait, the width of this strait varying between 9.5 miles and 20 miles in places, although it is 12 miles at some points.

The name Matrakha may be used to refer to a city or the western regions of the Taman peninsula bordering the Kerch Strait. If it is used for the city, it must be a domiciled city where the present city of Taman is located.

Matrakha is a place where many people from surrounding countries and distant countries of the world come and trade. It is crowded and continues to flourish in the 12th century. Bazaar and fairs are established for commercial purposes in Matrakha.<sup>278</sup> It is one of the ports where traders come from Istanbul. The traders who came here with their boats then cross the Azov Sea and proceed to the Don River (Tanais-Tana) in order to get the

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<sup>274</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 44-45,191-192.

<sup>275</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 394-395.

<sup>276</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 78.

<sup>277</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 80.

<sup>278</sup> Al-Idrisi, p. 395.

necessary commercial goods.<sup>279</sup> This is one of the journey stops of the Hungarian Julian, who was a priest like Pian del Carpine and was traveling east at the same time. But Reverend Julian's purpose is different from Carpine's. Within the framework of his missionary activities, he seeks 'Greater Hungary', where his Hungarian ancestors lived.<sup>280</sup> Despite this, he went north from the Black Sea and when he came to Volga, he learned that the Mongols came from the east and put pressure on the surrounding geography, and he wrote a report to explain the issue in his country. Julian's report was probably the first to report of Mongol invasions.<sup>281</sup> Information about his journey can be obtained from Ricardus, who is a Priest like himself. Although Priest Ricardus is not involved in Priest Julian's journey, he provides information about his itinerary and adventure.<sup>282</sup> According to this, Julian, who came to Istanbul in about thirty days by road from Hungary, passed from here to Matrakha by sea in 1235-1236. From here on, the priest, who went to more northern regions by means of the Volga River in the hope of finding Greater Hungary, is limited to this short route information about the Black Sea cities<sup>283</sup>, and his work includes some information about the activities of the Mongols and the Hungarians, Bulgarians and Russians.<sup>284</sup>

Dimashqi states that the Caucasus Mountains extend to the west towards Trabzon in the direction of the Black Sea and as far as Matrakha, which is located in the north-east of the Black Sea, and also to the south in the west of the Caspian Sea.<sup>285</sup>

After the part of Abū al-Fidā 's work, in which Sukhumi is located in the east of the Black Sea, he deals with the Kerch Strait. After stating that this place is like the Bosphorus, the first city he mentioned was Taman

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<sup>279</sup> Ruysbroeckli Willem, p. 80.

<sup>280</sup> Sinor Denis, "Le Rapport Du Dominicain Julien Ecrit En 1238 Sur Le Peril Mongol", *Comptes rendus des seances l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 146. annee, N.4, 2002, p. 1156.

<sup>281</sup> Özcan, p. 89-90.

<sup>282</sup> Sinor Denis, p. 1158;

<sup>283</sup> Sinor Denis, p. 1159.

<sup>284</sup> Özcan, p. 89-99.

<sup>285</sup> Shems Ed-Din Abou-'Abdallah Moh'ammed de Damas, p. 20-21, 166, 192.

(Matrakha). He states that this city is located in the east of the place he refers to as "the country of boxwood" (Şa'ra'l-buks) and has a separate administrator.<sup>286</sup>

This place is at the beginning of the borders of the Golden Horde, the country of Berke Khan, and was under the rule of Özbek Khan during the time of Abū al-Fidā.<sup>287</sup> Taman is a large city located on a flat land to the east of the strait. The people here are not Muslims.<sup>288</sup> To the east of Matrakha is the Avar Land.<sup>289</sup>

Stating that there is a Circassian country (Starchas) in the Black Sea<sup>290</sup>, the place mentioned by Schiltberger should be the regions that have a coast to the Black Sea in the eastern direction starting from the Taman Peninsula, in which case he probably means the land that he called Abkhazia in the southeast direction starting from the city of Anapa.

### **Conclusion**

The information about the Black Sea geography and cities related to the period, which is our subject, should be handled from different aspects. Because in the 10th and 15th centuries, it is seen that other European powers are in an effort to establish effectiveness in the Black Sea geography together with the Byzantine, Seljuk, Golden Horde, Ottoman, Genoese, Venetian and Crusader campaigns. The political structure changes frequently and this situation causes changes in social structures and the course of trade. In this period, when the Crusades, whose influence was felt in geographies such as the Mediterranean and the Middle East along with the Black Sea, had intense effects on the political structure, the effect of the raids carried out by the Mongols in large areas in the north of the Black Sea is also known. It is seen that different elements such as Russians, Alans, Goths and Circassians from time to time made their presence felt in the Black Sea. As a matter of fact,

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<sup>286</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ. p. 183.

<sup>287</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 44,310.

<sup>288</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ, p. 310.

<sup>289</sup> Ebu'l-Fidâ. p. 183.

<sup>290</sup> Schiltberger, *Türkler ve Tatarlar Arasında*, p. 119; Johann Schiltberger, *The Bondage and Travels*, p. 50; Okay, p. 63; Schiltbergers, *Hans Schiltbergers Reisebuch*, p. 63.

among the information given about the Black Sea and its cities in the works of travelers and geographers, there are records of different countries and communities. Some sources are the records that the travelers kept during their embassy activities between these countries. With this aspect, we can have information about the political conjuncture of the region in different periods.

It is seen that the underlying element of the existence of the Black Sea port cities is trade. The importance of these port cities emerges in the transfer of commercial goods coming from the northern regions of the Black Sea, especially river routes such as Danube, Dniester, Dnieper, Don and Volga, to other Black Sea cities, Istanbul and other port cities of Europe. Over time, the changes in the political structure caused different port cities to come to the fore.

The authors benefited from the works written before them in the information they conveyed on geographical issues. As a result of the accumulated knowledge, a clearer definition of the Black Sea has begun to be made geographically over time. In particular, progress has been made in portolan maps showing port cities. When it comes to the 15th century, it is understood that there is more information about the geography of the Black Sea than in the past. Due to the political conjuncture of the period, the increase in embassy activities and travels with them is important in terms of seeing the ties between the Black Sea cities and other cities and countries in their hinterland.

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## Pictures



Pic 1: Some Crimean Cities Mentioned by Travelers and Geographers



Pic 2: Sudak Castle



Pic 3: Ruins of the Ancient City of Chersonese (Sevastopol)



Pic 4: Kaffa Genoese Castle



Pic 5: Balaklava Port