

THE MARITIME TRADE IN THE MEDIÉVAL BLACK SEA

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ABSTRACT. *The Black Sea and the Crimean Peninsula were commercial intersections, as shown by the existence of three main maritime routes, described in travel accounts. Several types of ships were used for coastal navigation or inter-regional traffic. The author demonstrates the importance of the Cherson port, a transit center between Pontic regions, and analyzes the results of archeological surveys carried out in numerous towns along the Crimean coast.*

RÉSUMÉ. *La mer Noire et la péninsule de Crimée ont été des carrefours commerciaux, dont témoigne l'existence de trois routes maritimes principales, attestées par les récits de voyage. Plusieurs types de navires étaient utilisés, soit pour le cabotage, soit pour des trafics interrégionaux. L'auteur montre l'importance du port de Cherson, centre de transit entre les régions pontiques et analyse le résultat des fouilles effectuées dans nombre de localités de la côte criméenne.*



The Black Sea Basin is the crossroads for many nations and the economic interests of various medieval states. Byzantine expansion and domination in the Black Sea began in the 4th century. Its undisputed rule ends in the 12th century, when merchants from the Italian Republics achieved naval supremacy in the region.

The Taurica region (an ancient name for the Crimean Peninsula), among others, played an important role in these relationships due to its geopolitical situation. The reconstruction of economic processes on the Taurica coast in the 4th–11th centuries is representative of the general picture of the Black Sea region during that period. Research concerning seafaring and maritime trade deserves special attention, as their primary significance in the economic development of the majority of the aforementioned societies is clear. The research models and concepts of the commercial seafaring of the past, relying for the most part on written sources, have worked themselves out. New archaeological data can help to break the present deadlock of theoretical speculations. Recently obtained archaeological sources are bringing the historical investigation to a new, ground-breaking level.

In the middle ages mariners often sailed along ancient trade routes known from antiquity, the functioning of which depended upon the hydrological and climatological conditions of the sea. Data resulting from the active study of the environment in the 20th century, show that the main currents encircle the Black Sea, while in the central parts of the western and eastern Black Sea large currents circulations are observed.

On the Crimean coast, along the stretch comprised of capes Ayu-Dag, Sarych, Phiolent and Chersonesos, the steady south-westward current runs at speeds up to 3 knots per hour. Highly specific wind conditions are created here because of the mountains in the region. The shortest crossing between this coast and cape Sinope in Asia Minor is about 263 km.¹

In the context of the system of the currents, there were several potential ship itineraries from the Bosphorus to the shores of Taurica:

1. The South route: This route leads from the Bosphorus to Cape Karambiy – the modern cape Kerempeburnu, Turkey (about 380 km) and on to the Caucasus or to Cape Kriu-Metapon on the Crimean coast (either Cape Ayu-Dag or Sarych). A ship spent less than two days and nights, at a speed of about 5 knots, using the currents from the Bosphorus to Sinope. It would take advantage of a minor circle of the current on the last leg of the voyage.
2. The North route: This route leads from the Bosphorus to the Istros River (about 450 km), and from there on to Tauric Chersonesos. Seafarers spent about two days and nights, sailing along coastal currents to the mouth of the river, and then on to Chersonesos.
3. The Direct route: Known from the ancient times, this route takes a direct heading from the Bosphorus to Tauric Chersonesos. Often out of site of land, seafarers looked to the heavens, watching the sun and stars for guidance.

The aforementioned hydrographic features of the Black Sea basin were considered and used by ancient and medieval seafarers, as affirmed by narrative evidence and underwater archaeological findings.²

One of the best sources is the 5th century anonymous *periplus* of the Pontus Euxinus (*Anonymi Periplus Ponti Euxini*), where texts from previous *peripli* and records were combined and updated.³

Other examples of the use of these routes in the Middle Ages include a passage of the text by the sixth-century writer Menander Protector. He mentioned

¹ SIMONENKO S.V., PADAKIN D.J., GOLODOV M.F. and BORIS O.M. (eds), *Locija Chornogo ta Azovskogo moriv na vodi Ukrainy*, Kyiv: Derzhghidrografija (2009), pp. 13–37.

² BALLARD D., HIEBERT F.T., COLEMAN D.F., WARD C., SMITH J., WILLIS K., FOLEY B., CROFF K., MAJOR C. and TORRE F., 'Deepwater archaeology of the Black Sea: the 2000 season at Sinop, Turkey', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 105.4 (2001), 607–623; DAVIS D., 'Exploration and excavation of two deepwater wrecks in the Black Sea', in *The Study of Ancient Territories Chersonesos & south Italy 2006–2007*. Annual report of Institute of classical Archaeology, Austin: University of Texas (2008), pp. 76–84.

³ *Perypl Anonymnogo avtora*, trans. V.V. LATYSHEV, in *Vestnik Drevnei Istroii*, 4 (1948), p. 235.

a journey made by the Justin's envoys in the years of 569 to 571, who passed through the transit ports of Chersonesos and Sinope on swift ships.⁴

Another example is from the book *The History of Trabzon Empire*, in which the author refers to the legend about the Trabzon Patron Saint Eugenius. The story recorded how ships loaded with gifts and tributes were accidentally washed ashore off Sinope in the year of 1223.⁵

Other accounts about cabotage voyages between Chersonesos and the Bosphorus date to the 8th–9th centuries and describe a journey made by Epiphanius the Monk from Sinope to Chersonesos, where he embarked on a transit ship and went to the Cimmerian Bosphorus.⁶

Additional historical records concerning sea journeys made by officials of the Church of Cherson, are also of note. The adoption of the most famous church acts, sealed with their signatures, coincided with the months of autumn. According to the Ukrainian scholar Alla Romanchuk, this implies the use of local merchant vessels by Cherson bishops for their voyages. The ships could cross the Black Sea with cargos of new crops and other merchandise, possibly bulk shipments of salt.⁷

A route along the coast of Taurica was exploited by Slavic and Varangian guards during their military campaigns in the Black Sea in the 9th and 10th centuries. A legendary prince Bravlin, who is described in an episode of the Life of St Stephen of Surozh, raided coastal Tauric settlements between Cherson and Kerch.⁸

Given accounts support the usage of ancient trade routes in Byzantine times. The direct way from Bosphorus to Taurica was twice as fast as sailing along the coast, but added a degree of risk for seafarers.

Availability of convenient harbours at the start and end points was an essential condition of the functionality of the direct route. In the south, in the 9th century, suitable harbours were located in Herakleia, Sinope, Amastris, as mentioned in 'the Life of St John of Gothia' (AD 815–842).⁹

In the north the convenient ports were Cherson, Aluston and Gorzuviy. The towns emerged in early medieval times and were first recorded in the works of Procopius of Caesarea.¹⁰ Yalta, Lambat, Partenit, Sudak and Kerch were listed in a letter by Joseph the Khagan to Hasdai ibn Shaprut, a Spanish high-ranking

⁴ Menandra Vizantijska prodolzenie istorii Agafievoj in Vizantijskie istoriki, St Petersburg (1860), pp. 318–470.

⁵ USPENSKIJ F.F., *Istorija Trapezundskoj imperii*, Leningrad (1927), p. 51; SMIRNOV V.F., *Krymskoe hanstvo*, St Petersburg: Tipografija Imperskoj Akademii Nauk (1887), pp. 10–11.

⁶ ROMANCHUK A.L., 'Srednevekovyj Hersones, otzrazhenie v istochnikah osnovnyh funkcij goroda', in *Hersonesskij sbornik*, VII (1996), 134; BORODIN O.R., 'Rimskij papa Martin I i ego pis'ma iz Kryma', *Prichernomor'e v srednie veka*, 1 (1991), 179.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸ BOGDANOVA N.M., *Cherson v X–XV vv.: Problemy istorii vizantijskogo goroda*, Moskva: Moskovskij universitet, 'Prichernomor'e v srednie veka' (1991), p. 90.

⁹ VASIL'EVSKIJ V.G., 'Zhitie Ioanna Gotskogo', *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshhenija*, Janvar (1878), 86–154.

¹⁰ KESARIJSKIJ, 'O postrojkah', trans. S.P. KONDRAT'EV, *Vestnik drevnej istorii*, 4 (1939), 249–250.

dignitary (middle of the 10th century).¹¹ A detailed description of a coastal voyage from Cherson to the East is recorded by Muhammed al-Idrisi, an Arab scholar and traveller, who notes Dzhallita, Gkhorzuni (Gurzuf) and refers to Partenit as a small but good and advantageous town where ships were built.¹²

The diversity of voyage requirements that seafarers faced in the Middle Ages defined the necessity of building ships in various styles. The main types of ships exploited for commercial purposes can be enumerated.

The first type is a vessel of small tonnage, designed for coastal sailing. This group, comprised of small fishing boats and cargo vessels, undoubtedly comprised the majority of maritime craft. These boats were long and narrow, with a wide bottom, and were covered with planks in case of storms or high waves. They were similar to modern motor launch boats.¹³

The second type of vessel comprises sea-going ships, built to transport goods in large quantities over long distances. They were capable of undertaking long raids on the open sea at any time of day or night. Among local variants of this type, Cherson's *carabia* (ships) are mentioned in the *de Administrando Imperio* of Constantine Porphyrogenetos.¹⁴

The third type of vessel includes the *chelandia* and *dromonos* models. These types of vessels are well described in various narrative sources and modern scientific studies.¹⁵ They were developed as warships with some differences in construction and purpose. The Byzantine Empire's fleet included a great number of them; for instance 2,500 *chelandia* were equipped and sent on the campaign against the Bulgarians at the end of the 8th century.¹⁶

In the autumn of AD 655, Pope Martin I was banished to Chersonesos. He recorded that a small merchantman, a *naviculis*, called at the port with a cargo of grain from Pontic lands.¹⁷ Saint Theophanes the Confessor and Nikephoros I of Constantinople wrote about the maritime adventures of Justinian II. Sometime between 700 and 704, after his escape from Cherson, he made a sea journey on board a *galiada* – a small fishing boat, with a crew of about ten men.¹⁸ On his

¹¹ KOKOVCEV P.K., *Evropejsko-hazarskaja perepiska v X v.*, Leningrad: Nauka (1932), p. 9.

¹² BEJLIS V.M., *Al-Idrisi o portah Chernomorskogo poberezh'ja i svjazi mezhdu nimi*, Rostov-na-Donu: Gos.Ped.Institut, 'Torgovlja i moreplavanie v bassejne Chernogo morja v drevnosti i srednie veka' (1988), pp. 67–76.

¹³ A local population of Northern Black Sea regions became famous for their ability to make long journeys across the Black Sea in dugouts (other names for this type of a boat is camara, logboat or monoxylon).

¹⁴ BAGRJANORODNYJ K., *Ob upravlenii imperiej*, ed. and trans. G.G. LITAVRIN and A.P. NOVOSEL'CEV, Moskva: Nauka (1991), p. 274.

¹⁵ List of references and historical sources and detailed description can be found here: PRYOR J. and JEFFREYS E., *The Age of the Dromon. The Byzantine Navy ca 500–1204*, Leiden and Boston: Brill (2006).

¹⁶ AHRWEILER H., *Byzance et la mer: la marine de guerre, la politique, et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VII^e–XV^e siècles*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (1966), p. 91.

¹⁷ BORODIN, 'Rimskij papa Martin I i ego pis'ma iz Kryma', *op. cit.*, p. 178.

¹⁸ CHICHUROV I.S., *Vizantijskie istoricheskie sochinenija. Hronografija Feofana. Breviarij Nikifora*, Moskva: Nauka (1980), pp. 39, 63–64, 126, 155, 163.

way to the Danube the boat weathered a severe storm, which attests to its high sea-keeping capabilities and the competence of its crew.

Byzantine narrative sources contain information about ships and navigation off the shores of Taurica. At the turn of the 5th to 6th centuries the Byzantine historian Zosimus wrote of Procopius, who fled from Cherson to Constantinople on board a transit cargo ship, leaving Cherson for the Byzantine capital.¹⁹

Byzantine authors often don't offer much detail concerning ships' description. For example, in Menander's account about Justin's envoy to the Crimean shores in AD 576, the ships taken are merely described as 'fast vessels'.²⁰ Constantine Porphyrogennetos, in his account of the mission of Petronas Camaterus to Khazaria, wrote that *chelandia* were sent to Khazar chagan, but they were left at Cherson and people embarked on *karabia* (cargo ships) to continue their journey to the Tanais River.²¹

During the period between the 7th and 8th centuries, a common type of the ship was a narrow, oared galley. It carried a mast with a single lateen sail and had a sternpost rudder. Primary propulsion was provided by banks of oars, while sails served as a secondary means. At the beginning of the 11th century galleys appear in the merchant fleets of the emerging Italian maritime republics, actively reclaiming new lands and waters.

The seventh-century Yassi-Ada wreck provides a remarkable insight into the design of an early medieval vessel. Through the extensive underwater research and excavations conducted by archaeologists and the subsequent reconstruction of the ship's hull, we now know the main characteristics of the merchantmen, their dimensions, constructions, cargo, etc.²²

According to recent investigations by underwater archaeologists at wreck sites and the subsequent analyses of the organic and other materials found on them, several different types of wood were used in the construction of the vessels, but conifer wood was the most important for the ship's primary parts (the keel, beams and frames) as well as for oars. Other wood species, for example oaks, beech, elm and ash could be used for the construction of other parts. Metal nails and treenails of different sizes were used for fastening.²³

The Rhodian sea law, a Byzantine collection of maritime regulations, offers a rich store of information concerning crew complements and other rules of maritime commercial trade and navigation.²⁴

During the journeys along the Black Sea coast, religious buildings and

¹⁹ Zosimus, *New History*. London: Green and Chaplin (1814), Book 4.

²⁰ *Menandra Vizantijca prodolzhenie istorii Agafievoj*, op. cit., pp. 318–470.

²¹ BAGRJANORODNYJ, *Ob upravlenii imperiej*, op. cit., pp. 42, 43, 171.

²² BASS G.F., VAN DOORNINCK F. JR. (eds), *Yassi Ada. Volume I: a seventh-century Byzantine shipwreck*, College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press (1982).

²³ BASS G.F., MATTHEWS S.D., STEFFY J.R. and VAN DOORNINCK F. JR. (eds), *Serce Limani: an eleventh-century shipwreck*, Vol. I: *The ship and its anchorage, crew, and passengers*, College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press (2004), pp. 73–170.

²⁴ 'Morskoi zakon', trans. M.J. SJUZJUMOV, in *Antichnaja drevnost'*, *Srednie veka*, 6 (1969), pp. 3–54.

structures may have served as navigational land marks. Examples of this exist all over the Mediterranean and the Atlantic coasts of Europe.²⁵ In some cases monks were responsible for navigational safety, maritime warning lights and sounds, and for launching rescue operations. Specific evidence of this practice on the Crimean coast does not exist for the period in question; these functions, however, should be common for any developed maritime cultures and societies.

The general picture of trade contacts in the Black Sea basin can be illustrated by the example of international and interregional trade affairs between port cities on the Crimean peninsula. Sources for the case study are historical narratives and documents, and archaeological findings from excavations including coins, everyday and luxury objects, etc. The importance of archaeological sources is their ability to show the broad picture of socio-economic relationships, while written sources illuminate single facts or events.

Up-to-date ceramalogical research is an ongoing and developing process. The swift development of interdisciplinary methods such as archaeometry, petrography, and others are allowing the field to answer questions better: about provenience, centers of manufacture and other peculiar properties of commodities production.

It is interesting to compare historical accounts with archaeological material in the given context. The large port-city of Cherson will be a good example; its convenient location facilitated development of seafaring and maritime trade both near and far. Its ships crossed the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and entered the Dnieper, Don and Danube rivers.²⁶

The first destination for Cherson's import and export trade was Asia Minor. Foremost among its imports were raw materials for domestic industry: copper, lead, mercury, etc, and agricultural produce such as grains, oil, wine were imported to the city from the ports of Asia Minor.²⁷ According to archaeological evidence, imports of table ware and bronze artwork was regular and well organized.²⁸ Part of these commodities became re-exported goods; for instance, non-ferrous metals were exported to other regions of Taurica. Cherson in its turn exported salt to Asia Minor.²⁹

The next destination of trade was the hinterland and coastal areas of the northern Black Sea region, where nomadic tribes were the main trade partners for the people of Cherson. Leathers and wax were the principal commodities of

²⁵ IVANOV A.V., 'Navigacionno-arheologicheskoe obozrenie poberezh'ja jugo-zapadnogo Kryma ot mysy Hersones do mysy Sarych', in *Morskaja torgovlja v Severnom Prichernomor'e*, ed. E.A. PARSHYNA, Kiev: Stilos (2001), pp. 222–234.

²⁶ SOROCHAN S.B., ZUBAR' V.M. and MARCHENKO A.M., *Zhizn' i gibel' Hersones*, Har'kov: Maidan (2000).

²⁷ BAGRIANODNYJ, *Ob upravlenii imperiej*, op. cit., p. 275.

²⁸ YASHAEVA T., DENISOVA E., GINKUT N., ZALESSKAYA V. and ZHURAVLEV D., *The Legacy of Byzantine Cherson: 185 Years of Excavation at Tauric Chersonesos*, Texas: Institute of Classical Archaeology, University of Texas at Austin (2012).

²⁹ Salt was and still is one of the most vital products of the Northern Black Sea region.

trade exchange in this direction.³⁰ A famous Arab author, al Istakhri, reported that honey was supplied from Russ lands to Khazaria in the 10th century.³¹ In the *Alexiad* by the Greek princess and scholar Anna Komnene certain information is given about close trade contacts between Cherson and the Cummans.³²

The Khazars and Cherson's ship journeys are mentioned in Constantine Porphyrogenet's tractate and Judeo-Khazar correspondence.³³ Al-Istakhri discusses another article of commerce in his account – glue.³⁴ In the opinion of archaeologist Svetlana Pletneva, the Arab writer meant fish glue, a very valuable raw material.³⁵

A rich assemblage of coins issued in Cherson and unearthed in Sarkel supports narrative evidence and illustrates a systematic pattern of trade between the Don Region and Cherson.³⁶ Glazed table wares from Constantinople were abundantly transported to the city, and from Cherson they went to Tamatarha and Sarkel and further afield.³⁷ Amphorae filled with oil and wine were also transported not only to Cherson, but carried *en route* to other places on the peninsula and the hinterland, to the markets of the Kievan Rus. Archaeological excavations on land and underwater have yielded a great number of amphorae;³⁸ currently, the classification developed by scholars defines sixty-three different types of vessels.³⁹ Archaeologists have also distinguished roof tiles among craft productions made in and exported from Cherson.⁴⁰

Hinterland trade was also an important part of the system of Byzantine commerce. Contacts were established between Cherson and remote settlements situated in the mountains and valleys far away from the sea. The metropolis of Doros (also known as *Mangup Kale*) is mentioned in the seventh- to eighth-century

³⁰ BAGRJANORODNYJ, *Ob upravlenii imperiej*, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

³¹ KARAULOV N.A., 'Svedenija arabskih geografov IX i X vekov po R.Hr. o Kavkaze, Armenii i Aderbejdzhane', in *Sbornik materialov dlja opisaniya mestnostej i plemen Kavkaza*, 38 (1908), 45, 49.

³² Anna Komnina, *Aleksjada*, trans. J.N. LJUBARSKIJ, St Petersburg: Nauka (1996).

³³ BAGRJANORODNYJ, *Ob upravlenii imperiej*, *op. cit.*, p. 275; KOKOVCOV P.K., *Evrejsko-hazarskaja perepiska v X v.*, Leningrad: Nauka (1932), p. 63–64.

³⁴ KARAULOV, 'Svedenija arabskih geografov IX i X vekov', *op. cit.*, p. 49.

³⁵ PLETNEVA S.A., *Hazary*, Moskva, Nauka (1986), p. 56.

³⁶ ANOHIN V.A., *Monetnoe delo Hersonesa (IV v. do n.e.–XII v. n.e.)*, Kiev: Naukova dumka (1977), p. 103; PLETNEVA S.A., 'Drevnerusskij gorod v kochevoj stepi', in *Materialy po arheologii, istorii i jetnografii Tavrii*, Supplementum, n° 1 Simferopol: s.n. (2006), pp. 148–150; CHOREF M.M., 'Monetnoe delo Hersona v pervoj polovine VIII v.', in *Materialy po arheologii i istorii antichnogo i srednevekovogo Kryma*, 2, Simferopol: s.n. (2010), pp. 192–198.

³⁷ JAKOBSON A.L., *Keramika i keramicheskoe proizvodstvo srednevekovoj Tavriki*, Leningrad: Nauka (1979), pp. 119–146.

³⁸ BUKATOV A.A., KULAGIN A.V. and REIDA R.M., 'Dosvid zastosuvannja trasernogo metodu v akvatorii Hersonesa', *Arheologija*, 3 (2013), 121–125; LEBEDINSKIJ V. and PRONINA J., 'Issledovanie beregovoj linii Hersonesa Tavricheskogo i ego hory' in *Podvodnoe nasledie 2013*, Moskva: Neptun XXI vek (2013), pp. 19–24.

³⁹ SAZANOV A., 'Les amphores de l'antiquité tardive et du moyen age: continuité ou rupture? Le cas de la Mer Noire', in *La céramique Médiévale en Méditerranée*, Actes du VI^e Congrès de l'AIECM2, Aix-en Provence, 3–18 novembre 1995, Aix-en Provence (1997), pp. 87–102.

⁴⁰ JAKOBSON A.L., *Keramika i keramicheskoe proizvodstvo srednevekovoj Tavriki*, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–70.

literature as a trade destination for goods from Cherson. People in Dory received pottery, jewelry, wine and oil.⁴¹

Raw materials were exported from Crimean markets to Constantinople and other commercial centres of the Byzantine Empire on a steady and permanent basis, unlike other commodities. Naphtha, for example, was used for many purposes in daily life in medieval society. It was used not only for medicine and lighting but also for military purposes; it was an important component of the famous incendiary concoction known as 'Greek fire'. Spectral and luminescence analyses of resin lumps excavated in the layers of the 9th–10th centuries of Cherson's port area revealed that the resin's petrolic origin is from the Kerch and Taman peninsulas.⁴²

Glass wares were imported from Balkan and Middle Eastern centers. These include ninth- to eleventh-century flasks, made of blue glass decorated with gold and enamel. They were possibly produced in Corinth, and were used as small containers for medical and cosmetic emulsions.⁴³

Archaeological data and literary sources indicate the existence of river trade routes between Cherson and Rus. Novgorod, Kiev, Smolensk, Vladimir and other Old Russian towns were connected with Crimea by the Dnieper waterway. Archaeological excavations in Cherson revealed weapons of Slavic origin from the 10th to the beginning of the 11th centuries. At the other end of this connection, in Novgorod, Kiev, Belgorodka and in many other old Russian towns, both large and small, glass bracelets of Cherson origin were found in tenth-century layers.⁴⁴

The preceding facts support the statement that Cherson served above all as a transit centre in international trade in the Middle Ages. Leathers, wax and slaves came from nomads, certain fish species and glue from Khazaria, non-ferrous metals, grain, wine and oil brought from the southern Black Sea regions and ceramic wares, textiles, and other commodities from Constantinople and other Byzantine production centers. All these articles were re-exported from Cherson to the various edges of the Byzantine world. Its international significance was conditioned by external political circumstances; it was one of the biggest cities in the Byzantine commercial, administrative and religious centre of Taurica.

The south coast of Taurica between Cherson and Alushta was densely populated. The region played an active part in interregional and international trade. Procopius, the sixth-century author and the later eleventh-century al-Idrisi both mentioned two important trading posts in their narratives – Aluston and Gorzuvity.⁴⁵

⁴¹ PIORO L.S., *Krymskaja Gotija*, Kiev: Lybid (1990), pp. 60–65.

⁴² KOSTRIN K.V., 'Issledovanie smolistogo veshhestva iz "chernosmolennyh" kuvshinov srednevekovoj Tmutarakani', *Sovetskaja Arheologija*, 1 (1967), 285–289.

⁴³ GOLOFAST L.A., 'Kompleksy stekljannyh izdelij konca VI -nachala VII vv. iz Hersonesy', in *Problemy arheologii drevnego i srednevekovogo Kryma*, Simferopol: (1995), pp. 95–103.

⁴⁴ KOLESNIKOVA L.G., 'Svjazi Hersona-Korsunja s plemenami Vostochnoj Evropy v domongol'skij period', *Hersonesskij sbornik*, 15 (2006), 129–150.

⁴⁵ KESARIJSKIJ P., 'O postrojkah', *op. cit.*, pp. 203–283; RYBAKOV B.A., 'Russkie zemli po karte Idrisi 1154 g.', in *Kratkie soobshhenija o dokladah i polevyh issledovanijah Instituta istorii*

Archaeological investigations give us consistent evidence of this trade. Excavations of settlements, towns, fortresses, fortified castles known as 'isary', monasteries and cemeteries have produced diverse data, which help to reconstruct the history of Taurica.

The culture of the coastal settlements was rather different from the culture of Cherson's population in the early medieval period. This is indicated by pottery excavated from coastal settlements and cemeteries at Suuk-Su and Chufut-Kale.⁴⁶

Gorzuviy was a well-known medieval settlement on the southern coast of Taurica. The size of the settlement was significant; it had a large cemetery and the high walls of the Byzantine fortress erected here in the 6th century.⁴⁷ Abundant ceramic fragments were found inside the fortress, with dates ranging from the 6th to the 10th century.

Two more settlements and a fortified castle 'isar' of the 8th–9th centuries were situated on the very short line between the mountain Ayu-Dag and Gorzuviy. High in the mountains there was a single ancient tract that linked the coastal settlements. Moreover, an ancient local sanctuary was discovered by archaeologists in the 1980s.⁴⁸ The population density, a single sanctuary for the whole region, a large number of settlements on a very short coastal stretch; all these show that the region played an extremely important part in trade relationships in the Black Sea basin.

In the coastal waters between Alushta and Gurzuf underwater archaeologists from Kiev University conducted underwater surveys in 1995–1996. Several shipwrecks of ancient and medieval origin were potentially found. *Amphorae*, *pithoi*, and table and kitchen pottery, together with anchors and mill stones of medieval origin were discovered. Most of the material lies on the eastern side of the Adalary rocks.⁴⁹

Partenit is the next important coastal settlement and Byzantine trading post lying east of mount Ayu-Dag. It was mentioned in medieval narratives, patriarchal acts, travelers' diaries and portulan charts. According to the text of 'the Life of the St John of Gothia' and archaeological data, a city market place occupied the large coastal area along the Partenit lowland. It was a big, flourishing and wealthy town. In its early period it was possibly a centre of the Metropolitanate

material'noj kul'tury, XLIII (1952), 18–19; TYMOSHENKO M., 'Navigacijno-arheologichnij ogljad portovoï infrastrukturi Pivnichnogo Prichornomor'ja u seredn'ovichnij period', in *Materiali V Mizhnarodnoï naukovoï konferencii molodih uchenih*, n° V, chap. 7 (2012), pp. 26–28.

⁴⁶ DOMBROVSKIĬ O.I., 'Srednevekovye poselenija i "Isary" Krymskogo Juzhnoberezh'ja', in *Feodal'naja Tavrika*, Kiev: Naukova dumka (1974), pp. 5–55.

⁴⁷ KESARIJSKIĬ, 'O postrojkah', *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁴⁸ JAKOBSON A.L., 'Razvedochnye raskopki srednevekovogo poselenija Gorzuviy', *Kratkie soobshhenija o dokladah i polevyh issledovanijah Instituta istorii material'noj kul'tury*, 53 (1954), 109–120; FIRSOV L.V., *Isary Juzhnogo berega Kryma*, Novosibirsk: Nauka (1990); NOVICHENKOVA N.G., 'Svjatilishhe Krymskoj jajly', *Vestnik Drevnei Istarii*, 2 (1994), 59–86.

⁴⁹ ZELENKO S.M., *Podvodnaja archeologija Kryma*, Kiev: Stilos (2008), pp. 94–103.

of Gothia.⁵⁰ In the 11th century, al-Idrisi wrote in his the *Tabula Rogeriana* about Bartaniti (Partenit) as a small flourishing town where ships are built.⁵¹

Archaeological excavations and surveys gathered abundant and diverse findings for further study of the history of Partenit. The archaeological collection from the site comprises pottery, glass and metal artifacts, building ceramics, small finds and jewelry. Archaeologists unearthed building constructions, parts of walls and farmstead remains. The site had a long period of occupation, from the 7th to the 18th centuries.⁵²

Amphorae and amphora-jars of the 6th to the 11th centuries are prevailing finds. They comprised both local products and imports. Many of them bear graffiti. The similar containers are commonly spread throughout the Mediterranean and Black Sea. They have analogues in Mangana, a quarter of Byzantine-period Constantinople, in Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and Russia.⁵³

Byzantine glazed impressed and painted pottery was very popular among medieval people. It was found in large quantities at Partenit. The production of glazed white wares in Constantinople has been proven by chemical analyses. The dating of the glazed pottery ranges from the 9th to the 12th centuries. Glass finds take a significant place among other artifacts from the site. They are divided into two main groups: glass ware and adornments (beads and bracelets). They were made mostly of blue glass, although single samples were of green or brown glass. All types of bracelets were widely spread in the towns and settlements of the Northern Black Sea in the 9th to 12th centuries.⁵⁴ Building ceramics were present in the form of roof tiles (flat slabs, cover and ridge cover tiles, etc.) and bricks. Construction parts can be confidently dated to between the 8th and 14th centuries through the accompanying coins and *amphorae* finds.⁵⁵ Metal objects are presented by iron forged nails, fragments of key locks, door hinges, bronze or copper alloy rings, hooks and other small objects of identified function; earrings, finger rings, lead seals (*molivdovul*), pectoral crosses-engolpia, coins of the 10th–11th centuries. Among these finds a small quantity of one-handled pots were uncovered. They possibly served as containers for oil or resin. Ceramic spindle whorls, fragments of glass and coins of the 9th century were also found on site.⁵⁶

Archaeological data obtained during excavations have allowed scholars to

⁵⁰ VASIL'EVSKIY V.G., *Zhitie Ioanna Gotskogo*, op. cit., pp. 86–154.

⁵¹ RYBAKOV B.A., op. *Russkie zemli po karte Idrisi 1154 g.*, op. cit., pp. 18–19; LATYSHEV V.V., *Sbornik grecheskih nadpisej hristianskih vremen iz juzhnoj Rossii*, St. Petersburg (1896).

⁵² PARSHINA E.A., 'Torzhishhe v Partenitah' in *Vizantijskaja Tavrika*, Kiev: Naukova dumka (1991), pp. 64–100.

⁵³ PARSHINA E.A. and SOZNIK V.V., 'Amphornaja tara partenita (po materialam raskopok 1985–1988 gg.)', in *1000 rokiv vizantijs'koi torgivli (V–XV st.)*, Kyiv (2012), pp. 7–42; ROMANCHUK A.I., SAZANOV A.V. and L.V. SEDIKOVA, *Amfory iz kompleksov vizantijskogo Hersona*, Ekaterinburg: Ural'skij universitet (1995).

⁵⁴ KROPOTKIN V.V., 'O proizvodstve stekla i stekljannyh izdelij v srednevekovykh gorodakh Severnogo Prichernomor'ja na Rusi', in *Kratkie soobshhenija o dokladah i polevykh issledovanijah Instituta istorii material'noj kul'tury*, 68 (1957), 35–45.

⁵⁵ PARSHINA, 'Torzhishhe v Partenitah', op. cit.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

confidently conclude that Partenit's significance in international trade was very high, at a level similar to Cherson, Aluston and Sudak. Indeed the import to Partenit was much larger than the import to Laspi, Simeiz, Gurzuf and the Sotera.

Underwater archaeological explorations were also conducted off the shores of Partenit. The oldest Byzantine archaeological material was found in the waters near the Cape of Plaka, which is situated near the harbour of Partenit. A concentration of large fragments of medieval *amphorae*, two of which were complete, was found between the rocks. A fragment of lead sheathing was also recovered. Archaeologists believe that these are remains of wreck sites.⁵⁷

The first shipwreck was discovered on the eastern side of the Cape, at a depth of 10m. It carried a cargo of *amphorae*, mainly of two types: LRA1 and carrot *amphorae* of the Sinopean type. Chemical analyses for both types were made at the Ceramological Laboratory in Lyon (France) by Dr. Y. Waksman. The shipwreck has been dated to the 7th century AD according to ceramic evidence. The analyses obtained from the Ceramological Laboratory do not rule out a Sinopean origin for Plaka's 'carrot' *amphorae*, and Plaka's LRA 1 group shows a fairly good match with *amphora* from Rhosos/Arsuz, in south-eastern Turkey.⁵⁸

The second shipwreck was discovered to the west of Cape Plaka, lying on the sea bed at a slope ranging from six to ten meters. It consisted of sixty *amphora*-jars, in fragments, of the 9th to the 11th centuries. Some of the upper parts retained traces of cork stoppers. The assemblage was comprised of two types of pottery. The first, considered to be of Taman production, is quite common in the Black Sea and was transported all over the region. They possibly held naphtha and served as containers for its transportation. The second type of *amphora* found on site is a local vessel, called the Prichernomorskii type.⁵⁹

Archaeological excavations of medieval Alushta (Aluston) of the 6th–15th centuries also provide valuable historical information. Narrative sources are extremely scarce. They contain only marginal information concerning life and fortifications in Alushta in its early and late periods. Archaeological investigations are again a primary source for scholars on the matter.

The first evidence about Aluston is found in the works of Procopius of Caesarea.⁶⁰ In the time of Justinian I (AD 527–565) the two fortified settlements of Aluston and Gurzuviy were built on the south coast of Taurica. The succeeding

⁵⁷ ZELENIKO S.M., 'Raboty podvodno-arheologicheskoy ekspeditsii Kievskogo universiteta imeni Tarasa Shevchenko na Juzhnom beregu Kryma v 1991–1995 gg.', *Vita Antiqua*, 1 (1999), 65–70.

⁵⁸ WAKSMAN Y., MOROZOVA I., ZELENIKO S. and ÇOLAK M., 'Archaeological and archaeometric investigations of the *amphorae* cargo of a late Roman shipwreck sunk near the Cape of Plaka (Crimea, Ukraine)', in *Proceedings of 4th Conference on Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae, Thessaloniki, 7–10 April 2011, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, LRCW 4*, BAR International Series 2616 (I) 2014, vol. 1, pp. 919–929.

⁵⁹ ZELENIKO S.M., 'Raboty podvodno-arheologicheskoy ekspeditsii Kievskogo universiteta', *op. cit.*, pp. 67–68.

⁶⁰ KESARIJSKIY, 'O postrojkah', *op. cit.*, p. 249.

account of the 1060s placed Alust among other towns belonging to Khazar khagan Joseph.⁶¹ An Arab geographer and traveler, al-Idrisi, wrote about Shalusta as a big, beautiful city, situated by the sea.⁶²

Among various finds, glazed pottery and *amphorae* sherds prevail. *Amphorae* belong to diverse types, widely distributed all over the Mediterranean and Black Sea world.⁶³ Important information is acquired through studying amphora stamps, which were dug up in Alushta. The regular stamping of medieval *amphorae* is dated to the end of the 9th to the 10th centuries and correlated with the increase in handicraft industries and the development of their organization in various centers of the Byzantine Empire.⁶⁴

Another large port-city in south eastern Taurica was Sudak. It had several large centers of ceramic production. Local *amphorae* and *pithoi* containers were produced here in great quantities. The kilns were functioning from the 8th to the 10th century. At the beginning of the 10th century the region was defeated by the Khazars and ceramic production ended.⁶⁵

Written sources are not sufficient for the history of the city for the period of time from the 10th to the beginning of the 13th century. Archaeological data provide the missing information to finalize the picture.⁶⁶

Imported *amphorae* of the 10th to the 12th centuries are the primary and largest group of finds retrieved from both land and underwater excavations. The common finds are vessels with a ridged spherical or oval body, very short or with no neck and a rounded bottom, and two handles attached at the mouth. Complete examples were excavated at Cherson and Constantinople in tenth-century layers. They originated, most probably, from the vicinity of Constantinople. The following type of amphora could be a hallmark of Byzantine imports and commerce. It is a ridged pear-shaped vessel with a rounded bottom; large handles are attached at the neck directly under the rim, then align with or even rise above the collar. This type was widely distributed throughout the Mediterranean and the Black Sea basin. Most researchers date it to the second half of the 10th century and the beginning of the 12th century.⁶⁷ Examples of both types were found at a shipwreck site discovered during underwater archaeological exploration off the shelf area in the western part of the bay of Sudak. Many of the vessels found on

⁶¹ KOKOVCEV, *Evropejsko-hazarskaja perepiska v X v, op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁶² BEJLIS, *Al-Idrisi o portah Chernomorskogo poberezh'ja i svjazi mezhdu nimi, op. cit.*, pp. 67–76.

⁶³ MYC V.L., 'Rannij jetap stroitel'stva kreposti Aluston', *Vizantijskij Vremennik*, 57 (1998), pp. 187–203.

⁶⁴ TESLENKO I.B., 'Srednevekovye amfornye klejma iz raskopok kreposti Aluston', in *Morskaja trgovlja v Severnom Prichernomor'e*, ed. E.A. PARSHINA, Kiev, Stilos (2001), pp. 123–129.

⁶⁵ PARSHINA E.A., TESLENKO I.B. and ZELENKO S.M., 'Keramicheskoe proizvodstvo Tavriki v VIII–X vv', in *Morskaja trgovlja v Severnom Prichernomor'e*, ed. E.A. PARSHINA, Kiev: Stilos (2001), pp. 52–81.

⁶⁶ BARANOV I.A., *Tavrika v jepohu rannego srednevekov'ja*, Kiev: Naukova dumka (1990); BARANOV I.A. and MAJKO V.V., 'Raskopki v portovom rajone Sudakskoj kreposti', in *Arheologicheskie issledovanija v Krymu v 1993 godu*, Simferopol: Tavrija (1994), pp. 43–47.

⁶⁷ ROMANCHUK A.I., SAZANOV A.V. and SEDIKOVA L.V., *Amfory iz kompleksov vizantijskogo Hersona*, Ekaterinburg: Ural'skij universitet (1995), pp. 66–68.

the seafloor were still sealed with stoppers. The coins of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus III Botaneiates (1078–1081) found on site can provide a *terminus post quem* as the 11th century.⁶⁸

The next type is a small amphora (45–50 cm) with a high narrow cylindrical neck and elongated body ending in the rounded base. The date of this type is from the 11th to 12th centuries; it was rarely found in Kiev and Novgorod, in Turkey, Israel or Serbia.⁶⁹

Amphora-jars are common for the whole Black Sea region, and Sudak is no exception. The internal surfaces of all recovered jars were covered with a thick solid layer of petroleum resin. It is suggested that naphtha from the Tamatarha and Zygii oil fields was transported in these containers to the Crimean peninsula of the day. They are considered to be of Taman origin, and are dated to between the 9th and 11th centuries.⁷⁰

At the beginning of the 11th century Sudak became one of the biggest trade centers of eastern Taurica, possessing strong fortified walls and harbor constructions. According to recent archaeological data the total space within the fortress was not less than 20 hectares.⁷¹

Excavations within the city walls, in the port area and city cemetery, retrieved a collection of the table and kitchen wares of north Caucasian provenance, fine glazed pottery of Byzantine origin with analogues in Cherson and Constantinople of the 10th to 12th centuries, hand-made pottery similar to that found in Sarkel – Belaia Vezha (White Tower) and in burials left by the Pechenegs.⁷² The recovery of one complete and one fragmented clay paschal-egg (an Easter egg) in a burial of the 11th–12th century city necropolis demonstrates contacts between Sudak

⁶⁸ ZELENKO S., 'Shipwreck of the 9th–11th centuries in the Black Sea near Soldaya', in *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de Cerámica Medieval en el Mediterráneo*, Ciudad Real-Almagro del 27 febrero al 3 de marzo de 2006 (2009), I, pp. 235–244.

⁶⁹ PLETNJOVA S.L., 'Srednevekovaja keramika Tamanskogo gorodishha', in *Keramika i steklo Mutarakani*, ed. B.A. RYBAKOV, Moskva: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR (1963), p. 56; IVAKIN G. and STEPANENKO L., 'Raskopki severo-zapadnoj chasti Podola v 1980–1982 gg.', in *Arheologicheskie issledovanija Kieva v 1978–1983 rr.*, Kyiv (1985), p. 103; KOLCHIN B.A., HOROSHEV A.S. and JANIN V.L., *Usad'ba novgorodskogo hudozhnika XII v.*, Moskva: Nauka (1981), Ris. 40; POPOVIC M., 'Importation et production locale de céramique à Ras', in *Recherches sur la succes céramique byzantine*, ed. V. DÉROCHE and J.M. SPIESER, Bulletin de correspondance hellénique, Supplément 18 (1989), p. 129; AVISSAR M. and STERN E.J., 'Pottery of the Crusader, Ayyubid, and Mamluk periods in Israel, Jerusalem, Israel Antiquities Authority' in *Israel Antiquities Authority Reports*, 26 (2005), p. 105.

⁷⁰ PLETNJOVA S.A., 'Keramika Sarkela – Beloj Vezhi', in *Materialy i issledovanija po arheologii SSSR*, 75 (1959), 249; ZELENKO, 'Shipwreck of the 9th–11th centuries', *op. cit.*, pp. 235–244.

⁷¹ TYMOSHENKO M., 'Materiali do rekonstrukcii dijal'nosti portu Sugdeï u vizantijs'kij period (VII–XII st.)', in *Arheologichni doslidzhennja L'vivs'kogo universitetu*, 14–15 (2012), 69–80.

⁷² PLETNJOVA S.A., 'Keramika Sarkela – Beloj Vezhi', in *Materialy i issledovanija po arheologii SSSR*, 75 (1959), 234; STANKO V.N., 'Detskoe zahoronenie kochevnika', *Zapiski Odesskogo Arheologicheskogo Obshhestva* (1960), 231; ROMANCHUK A.I., 'Keramicheskij kompleks XI–XII vv. iz raskopok portovogo rajona Hersonesu', *Antichnaja drevnost' i srednie veka*, 1–2 (1975), 15; BORISOV B., 'Diadovo', *Tokay*, 1 (1986), 222; BARNÉA, I., 'Ceramica de import', in *Dinogetia I*, 1 (1967), Fig. 169–170.

and Rus.⁷³ Crafted Easter eggs were made in Kiev, where century molds for eggs were found. Fragments of Byzantine textiles with painted designs and shreds of silken gold and silver-thread embroidery were excavated in the burial grounds.⁷⁴

The preceding data and archaeological materials firmly assert that Sudak had large steady trade contacts with other trading ports in the Black and Mediterranean Seas and with the lands of the Kievan Rus.

The next settlement is situated on the Tepsen Plateau (modern Koktebel) in the eastern part of the peninsula. It was a large trade and craft centre.⁷⁵ The assemblage of pottery of the 9th–10th centuries from the settlement has analogues at many medieval sites in the Black and Mediterranean regions. This fact indicates certain relationships with the Byzantine Empire. Underwater exploration of coastal areas near the plateau helped to gather research data on the submerged part of the settlement as well as archaeological materials. Moreover, signs of a shipwreck site with fragments of medieval ceramics and anchors have been discovered off shore during underwater surveys conducted by archaeologists from Kiev University.⁷⁶

Archaeological research of this settlement shows that in the middle of the 10th century a discontinuity of material culture takes place in East Taurica. Most of the early medieval Saltovo settlements perish, the influence of the Khazar Khaganate stops completely and the region finally goes under the Byzantine control.

In recent decades of the 20th century, archaeologists discovered dozen of medieval sites in eastern Crimea, particularly in the south-eastern part of the Kerch Peninsula.⁷⁷ Excavations of rural settlements and towns of Nymphaion and its chora, Tyritake, Kerch and Myrmekion, located along the eastern coasts of Crimea are of great importance for studying problems of international trade contacts in the Black Sea.

Nymphaion was a significant centre of the Bosporan Kingdom, but was a small village and perished in the 6th century AD. Land excavations and underwater surveys at its chora allowed research into trade contacts by studying patterns of Byzantine *amphorae* circulation among eastern Crimean rural settlements.⁷⁸

Abundant archaeological material was retrieved from the excavation of

⁷³ FRONDZHULO M.A., 'Raskopki v Sudake', in *Feodal'naja Tavrika*, Kiev: Naukova dumka (1974), p. 149; SAGAJDAK M.A., *Davn'okiivs'kij Podil*, Kiev: Naukova dumka (1991), p. 107.

⁷⁴ BARANOV I.A., *Tavrika v jepohu rannego srednevekov'ja*, Kiev: Naukova dumka (1990), pp. 80, 107.

⁷⁵ MAJKO V.V., 'Arheologichni doslidzhennja na plato Tepsen' u 1998 r.', in *Arheologichni vidkrittja v Ukraïni 1997–1998 rr.*, Kyiv: IA NAN Ukraïny (1998), pp. 110–111.

⁷⁶ ZELENKO S.M., 'Perspektivnist' pidvodnih arheologichnih doslidzhen' u shidnomu Krimu', *Visnyk Kiïvs'kogo universitetu imeni T. Shevchenka, 'Istorija'*, 43 (2000), 76–80.

⁷⁷ JAKOBSON A.L., 'Rannesrednevekovye poselenija vostochnogo Kryma', *Materialy i issledovanija po arheologii SSSR*, 85 (1958), 458–501; AJBABIN A.I., *Etnicheskaja istorija rannevizantijskogo Kryma*, Simferopol: DAR (1999).

⁷⁸ ZIN'KO V.N., 'Pogrebal'nye komplekсы s hory Nimfeja', *Materialy po arheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii*, 6 (1998), 173–185; SHOLL T. and ZIN'KO V.N., *Archaeological map of Nymphaion (Crimea)*, Warszawa (1999).

the Tyritake settlement. It existed till the 11th century. A large, ancient town, Panticapaeum turned into a settlement after several periods of destruction by nature and nomads. Under Byzantine rule a new town was built and became known as Bosphorus. Its revival is evident from the fact that a splendid church of John the Baptist was built near the port area in the 8th century. During the excavation remains of the eighth- to ninth-century citadel were unearthed near the church.⁷⁹ In this period a small rural Khazar settlement was built on the remains of the ancient Greek town of Myrmekion.

A pottery assemblage from the aforementioned sites is represented by fragments and complete forms of early Byzantine red slip vases, flasks, jars and pitchers, Bakla type *oenochoi*, Saltovo type kitchen and table pottery, Byzantine glazed and plain pottery, large and small ceramic containers (amphora-jars, *pithoi*, pots, jugs, etc) as well as imported and local *amphorae* of different types. Dates of the material range from the 4th to the 12th centuries.⁸⁰

Farming, cattle raising and fishing were principal occupations of the local population of small rural settlements. Proximity of trade routes crossing the Strait of Kerch facilitated the exchange of local products and goods not only in the region but also all over the Black, Azov and Mediterranean seas.

The article has been restricted chronologically to the period between the 4th and 12th centuries, and geographically to the northern Black sea shores. This is not only on account of limited article space, but mostly because I would like to show the significance of the sea exemplified by one single region for one particular period of history, in which we can detect the general pattern of maritime trade for the whole Black Sea market.

Byzantium, for many of these centuries, held a monopoly in the Black Sea. It would be no exaggeration to say that system-based maritime trade was vital for the Empire's economy existence. During this period of history the sea, as before remaining a landlocked basin connected with the Mediterranean world through the Bosphorus, was an area of constructive interregional cooperation rather than confrontation. It gave a sense of belonging to the pan-Christian world, and allowed the circulation of the Christian culture with inclusion of other religious cultures.

The stability and peaceful commerce of this period inspired the rise of new trade centers and the flourishing of existent ones, effectively supporting the economic recovery of Taurica.

The appearance, however, of the Mongol Empire from the east and an expansion of the Italian maritime republics from the west in the 13th century changed not only the direction of the main trade routes, but completely changed the map of the Greater Black Sea Region as well.

First of all, it must be noted that the initial Greek colonization of Taurica came

⁷⁹ AJBABIN A.I., 'Hazarskij sloj v Kerchi', *Materialy po arheologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii*, 7 (1999), 168–185.

⁸⁰ I.B. ZEEST, 'Keramicheskaja tara Bospora', *Materialy i issledovanija po arheologii SSSR*, 83 (1960); JAKOBSON, 'Keramika i keramicheskoe proizvodstvo srednevekovoj Tavriki', *op. cit.*

from the sea. The further development of commercial shipping took a place of the utmost importance in the life of towns and settlements in the region. These centers of civilization appear to have been 'mediators' between the East and West. Commodities were delivered, initially, to the shores by overland routes, to facilitate shipping them further by sea. The inventory of commodities were continually changed by the addition of new articles. The Crimean Peninsula thus became an area for the exchange of commodities between nations and tribes. Coastal locations allowed residents to extract and sell salt, a high-priced product. Fish were plentiful, and salting furnaces fostered the development of fisheries and the export of final piscine products to Byzantine markets. This, in turn, accrued funds sufficient for not only the subsistence but the prosperity of the local population. To this must be added the employment of the coastal population in rigging and maintaining sea transports and the management of cargo and passenger operations on the peninsula. The resulting financial stability was established as one of the components of the political independence of the region within the boundaries of the Empire. This granted resources not only of mercantile or monetary value, but of influence as well, for example upon pretenders to the throne in certain periods of Byzantine history. In the iconoclastic period, Taurica was a suitable place for the banishment or asylum of political opponents of Constantinople, who arrived here by the only possible and relatively sound way: by sea.

Marine themes were reflected in local arts, crafts and everyday objects, for example in the ornamental designs of ceramic and metal vessels depicting ships and marine life. They brought new agricultural plants with them on their ships, including grapes. In the middle ages winegrowing stimulated the development of agriculture on the mountainous coast of the southern Crimea, which was of little use for farming.

Summarizing narrative and archaeological evidence from terrestrial and underwater excavations on the Crimean peninsula, one can draw confidently the conclusion that the Black Sea played a principal part in the economic life of coastal counties and nations both now and always.