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Piracy Activities along the Eastern Black Sea Coasts in Antiquity, and a People who Made their Living by Pirating: Heniochi

Antikçağda Karadeniz'in Doğu Kıyıları'nda Korsanlık Faaliyetleri ve Korsanlıkla Geçinen bir Halk: Heniokhoi

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Abstract: Sea piracy activities in the ancient history emerged and developed with the increasing international maritime trade. Piracy in the Black Sea also increased during the Great Colonization Period (750-550 B.C.), when commerce gained significant momentum between communities, and this situation affected the region's economic and political activity. However, piracy activities in the Black Sea were never as active as piracy in the Mediterranean waters.

Modern literature has few ancient historical studies conducted on piracy activities in the Black Sea waters. These works have usually focused on the Classical and Hellenistic period Black Sea pirates and their actions. The present study first discusses the factors pushing the emergence and development of piracy activity in the Black Sea coastlines and evaluates various pirate communities in this area. Then, from the perspectives of the Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, piracy in the Black Sea and the relations of the pirates with the surrounding states are evaluated. Finally, the study focuses on how the powers that want to establish political dominance in the Black Sea benefited from the piracy activities in the Black Sea.

Keywords: Antiquity, Piracy, Black Sea, Heniochi, Trade

Öz: Deniz ticareti ve bu ticaretin uluslararası alanda büyümesi denizlerde korsanlık faaliyetlerinin ortaya çıkması ve gelişmesindeki başat unsur olmuştur. Karadeniz'deki korsanlık faaliyetleri de ticaretin önemli bir ivme yakaladığı Büyük Kolonizasyon Dönemi'nde (MÖ 750-550) artış göstermiş ve bu durum bölgedeki ekonomik ve siyasi hareketliliği etkilemiştir. Ancak Karadeniz'deki korsanlık faaliyetleri hiçbir zaman Akdeniz'deki korsan eylemleri kadar etkili olmamıştır.

Modern literatürde antikçağda Karadeniz'de korsanlıkla ilgili oldukça sınırlı sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. Bunlar da genel olarak Klasik ve Hellenistik dönemlerde Karadeniz'de korsanlıkla ilgilenen halklar ve onların eylemleri üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu çalışmada ise ilk olarak Karadeniz'de korsanlığın ortaya çıkması ve gelişmesine etki eden faktörler ele alınacaktır. Ardından Karadeniz'de korsanlıkla ilgilenen halklar ve bu halkları korsanlığa iten nedenler tartışılacaktır. Daha sonra Klasik, Hellenistik ve Roma dönemlerinde Karadeniz'de korsanlığa bakış açısı ve korsanlık faaliyetlerinde bulunan halkların çevre devletlerle olan ilişkileri değerlendirilecektir. Son olarak da Karadeniz'de siyasi hâkimiyet kurmak isteyen güçlerin Karadeniz'deki korsanlık faaliyetlerinden ne şekilde yararlandıkları üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Antikçağ, Korsanlık, Karadeniz, Heniokhoi, Ticaret

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Introduction

The history of piracy activities dates back to ancient times. Encountering piracy activities in open waters has been especially possible after the shipping technology developed and people actively used the seas. These plundering activities in the waters date back to ancient times, and one of the most important reasons for this was that the societies of that period saw piracy as a natural part of life¹. In primitive societies, piracy was accepted as a crucial source of livelihood and even a survival condition. Therefore, in the narratives of ancient writers, pirates turned into adventurers and merchants who sold principal commercial commodities from one region to another and met a great need².

When and why did this affirmative view of societies on piracy change? Undoubtedly, it is hard to determine a time frame and to put forward a specific reason for this. However, piracy activities in the seas show a parallel development process with the increasing authority gap and growing commerce. It is possible to say that this process accelerated with the *Great Colonization* movement between 750-550 B.C. and the development of maritime trade in parallel with it³. From this period, piracy became an action that affected not only the seas but also all coastal regions⁴.

Emergence and Development of Piracy Activities in the Black Sea

In ancient times, the Black Sea remained in the background in maritime compared to the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. The constant powerful storms and the giant waves in the Black Sea were the main reasons for this situation. In addition, the scarcity of harbors and islands to take shelter in the Black Sea also emerged as other geographical reasons that negatively affected maritime trade in the region. Political instability, pirate attacks, and the legendary brutality of some indigenous peoples in the region were other reasons that unfavorably affected commerce in the Black Sea⁵. Therefore, the Hellenes, who headed to the Black Sea and experienced these problems, called the Black Sea Akseinos Pontos (Ἀξεινος Πόντος) meaning “unfriendly” or “inhospitable sea”⁶. Hellenes’ definition was an actual expression of the dangers in this region.⁷

All these unfavorable conditions in the Black Sea caused the regional trade to develop more slowly than Mediterranean and Aegean. Since trade and piracy are two phenomena that develop in direct proportion to each other, the focus of pirates in ancient ages was usually the Mediterranean waters. Besides the limited trade activities, the Black Sea's geographical features were also a significant factor for the regional pirate movements falling behind their peers in the Mediterranean. The Black Sea was a formidable sea for piracy due to its geographical structure. As stated, in addition to the absence of any islands or harbors to take shelter in, there was only one sea route where pirates could escape in case of necessity, and that was the Bosphorus, the İstanbul Strait. This situation caused the pirates to feel uncomfortable in terms of security in the Black Sea. The climatic characteristics of the Black Sea were also among the factors that hinder the development of regional piracy. The powerful storms seen in the Black Sea allowed neither merchants nor pirate ships to travel freely across this sea. The sources grant much information about many vessels that were

¹ Sestier 2007, 13.

² Thuk. I. 5; also see Hom. *Od.* III. Ins. 69-74; IX. Ins 251-255; see also Arslan 2021, 17 ff.

³ Arslan & Önen 2011, 190.

⁴ Many literary sources of the Classical Period contain information about pirate actions. See. Hdt. VI. 5-6; Thuk. II. 69; Plut. *Per.* XVII. 1-3; Ksen. *Hell.* II. 1. 30.

⁵ Str. XII. 3. 18-19c. 549; Amm. Marc. XXII. 8. 21; Plin. *nat.* VI. 4. 11; also see Hdt. IV. 62; IV. 103.

⁶ Plin. *nat.* VI. 1. 1-2; Str. VII. 3-6; Mela I. 102; also see Işık, 2001, 1; Emir 2014, 10-14.

⁷ For negative factors and risks affecting trade in the Black Sea, see also, Arslan 2007, 6 ff.; Demir 2013, 17-22.

damaged or sunk as a result of these natural events in the Black Sea⁸.

All these factors caused the Black Sea pirates' activities to remain limited to the actions carried out by the regional indigenous communities until the end of the 1st century B.C. These actions were generally minor attacks on coastal cities or plunder of ships or shipwrecks stranded in the Black Sea coastal. For example, some tribes in the Bosphorus, Colchis, and Thrace had developed a system of "shipwreck looting". They were looting the ships that ran aground in areas where a large part of the coast was shallow.⁹ According to ancient sources, the Heniochi, Achai, and Tauroi peoples who lived in the northern and northeastern coastal regions of the sea were prominent among the peoples who carried out such actions in the Black Sea¹⁰. Especially after the Classical Period, such actions, which were an alternative livelihood source for these tribes, had become so common in the Black Sea. The ancient sources provide much data on the emerging victimizations because of such piracy actions and frequently mention the measures taken against these lootings in the region¹¹. It is known that especially during the *archonship* of Pericles, the navy was strengthened to secure the Black Sea trade, where Athens met its grain needs¹². Also, a military expedition was organized to the Black Sea to fight the pirates¹³. Again, it is understood from an epigraphic record that *strategos* Diotimos was sent to the Black Sea by the State of Athens to ensure the safety of merchant ships against pirates¹⁴. The struggles against piracy in the Black Sea continued in the later periods as well¹⁵. Even in the Roman Period, however, although pirates and looters were severely punished, the actions could not be prevented¹⁶.

The most notable one among the pirate peoples in the Black Sea was Heniochi, who lived on the northeastern shores of the sea¹⁷. Heniochi people, who were the natives of Dioskurias (Sukhumi)¹⁸ one of the important cities of the Colchis Region, were defined as the "Charioteers of the Dioscuri" in Hellenic sources. Also, a folk belief stated that the Heniochi people were descendants of Spartan Cerkius and Amphitus, who were the chariot drivers of Castor and Polydeukes who participated in the Argonauts expedition¹⁹. Aristotle thinks that Heniochi and Spartans came from the same root in parallel with the belief stated in the ancient Hellenic sources²⁰. The Heniochi tribe, defined as a very warlike and barbarian people, was frequently mentioned in the Ancient age sources due to their piratical acts and the warrior structures in the region. However, apart from the mythological stories given by Hellenic sources, there is no other concrete evidence about the origins of the Heniochi peoples.

⁸ Ksen. *Hell.* VII. 5. 12-24; *An.* VII. 5. 12; *Dem. Or.* XXXIV. 10-12; XXXV. 31; *Str.* XI. 2. 12; for archaeological and written documents on the subject, see İnan 2018, 155-182.

⁹ Ksen. *An.* VII. 5. 12; *Str.* VII. 4. 2; *Diod.* XX. 25. Tacitus reports that, in A.D. 49, several Roman ships sank off the coast of Taurica on their way back from the Bosphorus, and the indigenous tribes in the region looted all the goods on this sinking ship and killed almost all the Romans. *Tac. ann.* XII. 17. For more information on the various peoples living in the Taurica region and their piratical activities, see. Khrapunov 2008, 333. ff.

¹⁰ *Hdt.* IV. 18, 103; *Diod.* III. 43. 4; XX. 25; *Str.* VII. 4. 2; XI. 2. 12; *Ov. Pont.* IV.10; *Tac. ann.* XII.17.

¹¹ Ksen. *An.* VII. 5. 12; *Dem. Or.* XXXIV. 10-12; XXXV. 31; *Str.* VII. 4. 2; XI. 2. 12; *Diod.* XX. 25; *Tac. ann.* XII. 17.

¹² *Plut. Per.* XVII. 1-3.

¹³ *Plut. Per.* XX. 5. 8. For commentary and evaluation on Pericles' Black Sea expedition, see Demir 2001, 529-540.

¹⁴ *IG II/III* 1623, 276.

¹⁵ *Diod.* XX. 25; *Tac. Ann.* XII. 17.

¹⁶ Ormerod 1924, 23

¹⁷ Ammianus (XXII. 8. 24) calls these people the "Camaritae" people because of the boats they used in piracy called the Camarae.

¹⁸ Dioskurias (Διοσκουριάς; Dioskurias), one of the most important cities of Colchis, is thought to have been founded by the Dioskuros who participated in the expedition of the Argonauts (*Str.* XI. 2. 12).

¹⁹ *Plin. nat.* VII. 5. 15; also see *Solin.* XV. 17; *App. Mith.* 111; *Aristot. Pol.* 8. 1333 B 17-18.

²⁰ *Aristot. Pol.* 8. 1338, B 17-18. For a similar view, see *Lucan. Bell. Civ.* V. III. 269-274.

We learn the most detailed information about the Heniochi people from Strabo. Strabo²¹ gives the following knowledge while talking about these people who were interested in piracy:

The coastal areas inhabited by the Achai, Zygai, and Heniochi peoples are located after Sindica and Gorgippia. Most of this place is harborless and a mountainous zone, partly forming the Caucasus. [People here] engage in looting across the sea. They have small, narrow, and unsafe ships. Such that they can only accommodate 25 people, rarely 30 people can fit in all. The Hellenes call it "camarae"... The Heniochi people prepare camaraes to sail against merchant ships, against a country, against cities. Even the authority handling the Bosphorus helps them, allocates them the anchorage point, the agora, and allows them to sell their plunders out.

For the Heniochi people, who seem to have made piracy a part of their daily life, this work was likely a seasonal source of income. Strabo states that during the seed-time, these people were landing their camaraes and cultivating the soil, and when it was time to sail, they were taking their camaraes back and carrying them to the shore²².

One of the most important reasons for the development of piracy in this part of the Black Sea, especially among the Heniochi people, was the geographical and strategic location of the region. Because this part of the Black Sea was far from political authority and very difficult to control. In addition, the territory of this country was in too mountainous topography. This geography, covered with high mountains extending to the shore and dense forests, was very suitable for escaping and hiding from enemies. As Strabo states, most of the region had no harbors and the bays to anchor were utterly shallow, preventing large navy ships from entering these areas²³. This situation allowed pirates like Heniochi to float these small boats simply to the shore and then hide in their mountainous and forested homeland region.

Another reason for the development of piracy among the Heniochi people was economic difficulties. The only livelihoods of these peoples, apart from piracy, were hunting and agriculture in primitive conditions. However, the geography was mountainous and covered with forests, and their fields were also unproductive²⁴. Climatic conditions were the main reason for soil infertility and negatively affecting agriculture in the region. The Colchis Region had a rainy climate, and heavy rains were influential most of the year, and eventually, frequent floods had unfavorable impacts on production. Excessive water prevented the product from ripening and caused the product to be of poor quality and weak²⁵. It is known that the humidity never decreased in the country in parallel with the precipitation, and Colchis was covered with swamps widely²⁶. Regarding this matter, Hippocrates states that the sudden floods and hot-dry winds in Colchis could destroy the annual crop in a few hours²⁷. Undoubtedly, these adverse conditions in agriculture had led the region's people to other alternatives, especially piracy activities, to earn their livelihood.

Another reason for the developing piracy in the region was some regional collaborations between administrators and the pirates from time to time and even assistance provided to them. Such illegal cooperations have effectively turned piracy almost into a profession in the region,

²¹ Str. XI. 2. 12.

²² Str. XI. 2. 12.

²³ Str. XI. 2. 12.

²⁴ Str. XI. 2. 12. Also see Arslan 2000, 29-31.

²⁵ Hippoc. Aer. 15.

²⁶ According to Procopius, the climate and flora of the region affected human health negatively, and goiter disease was quite common here due to humidity (see Proc. Bell. II. 29. 25).

²⁷ Hippoc. Aer. 15.

especially among the Heniochi community.²⁸ Strabo²⁹ says that: “... *even the authorities ruling the Bosphorus [Strait of Kerch] assist them, allocate them the anchoring place and the agora, and also support them to dispose of their loots*”. This expression shows that the regional rulers were not worried about the pirate activities, conversely, they could even set alliances with them. Undoubtedly, the primary reason for this alliance was that piracy was seen as a permanent part of the Black Sea trade. Indeed, the slave trade³⁰ was a substantial livelihood in the Black Sea basin, and the chief suppliers of the slaves were pirates. Such that there were many slave markets in the Black Sea³¹. The city of Tanais was one of them, and this city was located where the Tanais (=Don) River flowed into the Maitos Sea³². This city, which was one of the biggest trade centers of the Black Sea in Antiquity,³³ was also the largest slave market in the region³⁴. Strabo³⁵ states that the regional nomads came here to sell slaves and animal hides. Also, Procopius³⁶ uses similar expressions and states that the Colchis Region people came to Tanais and here, obtained the goods they needed in exchange for slaves.

The Heniochi tribe had special boats for use in piratical actions. These boats, called *camarae*³⁷ were small but highly functional. These boats had two prows at both ends, and thus they could be sailed easily in both directions. This situation allowed them to act quickly in their maneuvers on the seas and the coasts. Another feature of the *camarae* was its roof-like closable deck³⁸. This feature protected the boats from the giant waves of the Black Sea. The pirates from Heniochi secretly went to the coastal cities with such unique boats and kidnapped the people they caught there and returned to their lands. Since these pirates did not have a suitable place to anchor in their area, they had to carry their *camarae*s on their shoulders to the depths of the forest where they lived³⁹. This arduous job actually made it difficult for them to be followed by their enemies and made it easier to hide.

The Heniochi pirates' acts were not limited to kidnapping. They were also engaged in the “shipwreck plundering”, as mentioned above. The Heniochi confiscated the goods usurped from the shipwreck in the region and took people hostage, provided that they would release them in return for ransom⁴⁰. Such actions carried out by the Heniochi people both in the seas and lands in their

²⁸ It is seen that the victims of pirate actions produced their solutions because the regional administrators supported the pirates from time to time. For example, a tablet unearthed during the excavations in Eshera, one of the prominent places of Dioskurias, gives us a significant clue in this regard. This tablet is the text of an agreement based on military aid between the people of Dioskurias and other Pontus cities. The text shows that the city administrators in the region asked for military assistance from each other. Most probably, this help request was against the pirates in the area. Tsetskhldze 2002, 11.

²⁹ Str. XI. 2. 12.

³⁰ On the slave trade in the Black Sea Region in Antiquity, see Emir 2011, 9-28.

³¹ Apart from Tanais, Amisus, Sinope, Heraclea Pontica, Teium are other important slave market places in the Black Sea. Avram, 2007, 245-246.

³² Str. XI. 2. 12-13; Polyb. IV. 38. 3-5.

³³ During the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods, amphorae filled with various wines, household goods, jewelry, and goods produced in the Pontus Region and the Eastern Mediterranean were brought to Tanais. Monachov 2005, 80-82; Grakov 2008, 107 ff; Kozlavskaya & Ilyashenko 2013, 84.

³⁴ Str. XI. 2. 3; also see, Westermann 1955, 37; Tsetskhldze 2000, 13-14; Avram 2007, 243; Tsetskhldze 2005, 26.

³⁵ Str. XI. 2. 12-13.

³⁶ Proc. *Bell.* II. 15.

³⁷ Tac. *Hist.* III. 47.

³⁸ Tac. *Hist.* III. 46-47.

³⁹ Str. XI. 2. 12-13.

⁴⁰ Str. XI. 2. 12-13. It is understood that most survivors abducted by the Heniochi, as a result of the shipwreck, were rescued with the ransom paid by the colonists from Miletus living in Phasis. A related record contains the following

territory made them one of the most dangerous peoples of the Black Sea⁴¹.

Towards the end of the IVth century B.C., the pirate activities of the Heniochi peoples in the Black Sea were interrupted. In this period, the Bosphorus Kingdom in Crimea came under the domination of the Spartocid Dynasty (438-108 B.C.). The members of this dynasty brought the kingdom to a dominant position in the Black Sea basin, subjugated all the peoples around Bosphorus and Maiotis⁴². As soon as Eumenes (309-304 B.C.) from this dynasty came to the throne, he put the entire Black Sea basin under the control of the Bosphorus Kingdom and pursued an ambitious policy⁴³. The grandest aim of Eumenes was to establish a unified "Hellenistic Kingdom" consisting of Hellenic and indigenous peoples in the Black Sea. Therefore, the king recognized all peoples provoking disturbance and harming foreign policy as the Kingdom's enemies and proclaimed war against them. The Heniochi were at the forefront of the peoples against whom Eumenes had waged war. According to Eumenes, these people were causing disturbance both in the seas and in their territory, and most importantly, they were unresting the regional Hellenic colony cities and the Black Sea trade. All the goods exported from the Crimean Peninsula and the Scythian lands in the North Peninsula were dispersing to the Mediterranean world via the Bosphorus ports, and the imported goods were coming to these ports in the same way. The Bosphorus Kingdom owed almost all of its power to this trade network.

While reporting that Eumenes gave importance to the Black Sea trade and declared war against the pirates who threatened this trade, Diodorus⁴⁴ states as follows:

On behalf of those who sailed to Pontus, he waged war against barbarians like the Heniochi, Tauri, and Achai, who were accustomed to dealing with piracy, and ultimately cleared those pirates from the seas. Not only in his kingdom but throughout the inhabited world—the message of his magnanimity spread among the merchants—he received the highest meritorious award: Praise. He also conquered the borderlands inhabited by the barbarians and made his kingdom even more famous.

Diodorus attributed the reason for Eumenes' direct war declaration against these peoples and then occupation of their lands to their piracy activities in the Black Sea and eventually their damages on maritime trade. However, this reason is not enough to justify a land invasion, and it is a fact that not all Heniochi, Tauri, and Achai peoples could be held responsible for these piracy actions. The phrase above, "He conquered the borderlands inhabited by those barbarians and made his kingdom much more famous", actually reveals Eumenes's true purpose. The reason for Eumenes' war declaration on peoples such as Heniochi and Achai was to realize his dream of founding a "Black Sea Kingdom", and he would justify the land occupations in this way. In fact, as a representative of civilization, describing a people as a bandit, cannibal, or pirate was always the most practical propaganda to justify war, slavery, or occupation⁴⁵. Moreover, the fact that Eumenes, whose intention was to establish a Hellenistic kingdom in the Black Sea, declared war on pirates for the interests of the

statements: "From the beginning, the Heniochi people dwelt in Phasis, [they] loved to eat human flesh and skin them. Later, the Miletus [came], [they] were hospitable. Such that they provided provisions to the shipwrecked people and released them by giving them three minas" *FRHist* II. 2018; For a review on the subject, see, Hind 2012, 105-108.

⁴¹ The Heniochi have a terrible reputation in Hellenic sources, besides their piracy. Regarding this, Aristotle (*Pol.* 8. 1338 B 17-18) uses the following expressions for them: "...There are many tribes among people who enjoy slaughtering people and eating their flesh. For example, the Achai and Heniochi peoples of Pontus and some mainland tribes. Some are better, and some are worse. They may be invaders but have no courage".

⁴² Vinogradov 2007, 146 ff.; Vlassopoulos 2013, 16.

⁴³ Hind 2008, 495.

⁴⁴ Diod. XX. 25. 2-3.

⁴⁵ Asheri 1998, 275.

Hellenes, would have earned him a considerable reputation in the Hellenic world as the representative and protector of the Hellenes in the Black Sea. Therefore, it is possible to say that the real reason behind Eumenes' struggle against pirate activities in the Black Sea was to gain prestige and legitimize his actions.

Today, Eumenes' struggle result is unknown because the sources have insufficient information on this subject. However, after Eumenes' rule, it is seen that the Bosphorus Kingdom weakened gradually and correspondingly lost its regional authority. On the other hand, especially the Northern Black Sea Scythian's attacks on the Kingdom territory and the conflicts between the local peoples had been influential on this situation as well⁴⁶. Although the names of the indigenous peoples who rebelled were uncertain in the sources, the Heniochi, one of the biggest enemies of the Spartacid dynasty, might have contributed to these rebellions. From the end of the IInd century B.C., the Scythians' pressure on the Bosphorus Kingdom was intense. Realizing that they could not eliminate this pressure on their own, the Hellenic cities in the Bosphorus Kingdom region sought the help of Pharnaces I (ca. 197-159 B.C.), the king of the Mithradates Dynasty, which became a powerful kingdom in the Southern Black Sea. Pharnaces I, who did not refuse this offer of help, signed a friendship treaty and alliance with the colonies against the Scythians⁴⁷. Thus, the role of protector of the Black Sea basin passed from the Bosphorus Kingdom to the Mithradates Kingdom. During the reign of Mithradates Eupator VI (123-63 B.C.), the most forceful dynasty member of the Mithradates Kingdom, almost all the peoples of the Black Sea basin, especially the Heniochi tribe, came under the wings of the kingdom⁴⁸. Having such firm support, Mithradates VI started a great war that would last for many years against Rome, which he saw as his greatest enemy. In this struggle, which went down in history as the Mithridatic Wars (89-63 B.C.), the Achai and Heniochi tribes were among the most important allies of Mithradates VI, along with the Scythian and Sarmatian peoples⁴⁹.

It is not clear how the Heniochi people supported the king Mithradates VI against Rome. The sources do not declare whether the king benefited from this people's naval (piracy) experience or used them as infantry in land wars. However, it is known that during the Mithradates Wars, the king received help from pirates, especially in the battles at sea, and even supported them when they plundered the coasts of Asia Minor⁵⁰. At the times of these wars, the number of pirates located in the Cilicia and Lycia regions increased remarkably⁵¹. Therefore, Heniochi pirates also fought other pirate communities during this period. However, they were supported by the king in these struggles, and in return for this support, the Heniochi had the opportunity to move more comfortably both in piracy at sea and in the geography they settled in. This situation makes us think that, after the Spartacid period, the Heniochi were active in pirate actions in the seas thanks to the intimate relations with the Mithradates Kingdom.

Mithradates VI allied with the Heniochi not only to take advantage of their maritime activities but also to establish a land connection between the southern shores of the Black Sea and the Bosphorus Kingdom in the north. The northeastern coast of the Black Sea connecting these two regions was not very safe under his rule. Therefore, keeping a stable relationship with the regional indigenous peoples such as Heniochi, Achai and Zygai was one of the critical foreign policies of

⁴⁶ Hind 2007, 1027.

⁴⁷ *IOSPE* 12. 402; also see, Sherwin-White 1984, 43; Højte 2005, 137 ff; Romançhuk 2008, 273 ff.

⁴⁸ *App. Mith.* 13, 15; *Iust.* XXXVIII. 3. 6-7; *Cass. Dio.* XXXVI. 9. 3.

⁴⁹ *App. Mith.* 13, 69; *Iust.* XXXVIII. 3. 1-6; *Memnon* 30. 3. For evaluation and comment on the subject, see, Arslan 2007, 310; Olbrycht 2009, 170.

⁵⁰ *App. Mith.* 63; 92; 119; *Plut. Pomp.* XXIV. 1; also see, McGing 1986, 139 fn. 28; Arslan 2003, 106 ff.; Arslan & Önen 2011, 191.

⁵¹ Arslan 2007, 268.

Mithradates VI.

It is understood that the intimacy and alliance between the Heniochi and the Mithradates Kingdom continued until the death of Mithradates VI and the kingdom's collapse. Because when the king was defeated by the Roman general Pompeius at the end of the Third Mithridatic Wars (74-63 B.C.), he had to pass through the Heniochi lands to take refuge in the Bosphorus Kingdom ruled by his son. The Heniochi welcomed him and helped him, even though many tribes fought him as the king advanced through these lands that no army had been able to pass before⁵². However, the price of this alliance was quite heavy. During his Caucasian campaign to follow Mithradates, Pompeius invaded Colchis, the last vassal of the kingdom, and captured all the kings of the Colchis Region who resisted him⁵³. After the death of VI Mithradates Eupator and the collapse of his kingdom, Pontus and Colchis regions were donated to the vassal kingdoms of Rome as a result of the political arrangements made by Pompeius⁵⁴. According to this, the Colchis Region, including the Heniochi, was given to the administration of Aristarchus⁵⁵. However, the peace in the region did not last long. Pharnakes II (63-47 B.C.), son of Mithradates VI, who was brought to the head of the Bosphorus Kingdom as an ally of Rome, rebelled against Rome and attacked Colchis in 48 B.C., and captured it⁵⁶. The fact that many local people in the region, especially the Heniochi, took the king's side had been effective in Pharnakes II's Colchis Region capture. Although the Heniochi started to be active in this geography in this authority gap, this situation could not last long after Iulius Caesar defeated Pharnakes II in the Zela Battle (47 B.C.), and Roman authority was re-established in the region⁵⁷.

Shortly after Caesar's death, the Colchis area was granted to Polemon I (26-8 B.C.), one of Marcus Antonius' close friends. Thus, the Polemon dynasty ruled the region until the reign of Emperor Nero⁵⁸. However, stability could not be achieved in the Black Sea and its eastern coasts due to the lack of sufficient domination on the indigenous peoples, the constant regional internal rebellions, and particularly the increasing pirate actions⁵⁹. Thereupon, the western parts of Pontus and Colchis regions were included in the Galatia Province under the name *Pontus Polemoniacus* (Polemon's Pontus) by emperor Nero in 64 A.D.⁶⁰. Emperor Nero established a navy known as *Classis Pontica* in the Black Sea to end the piracy actions in the Black Sea and ensure a safe maritime trade, and placed this navy at the Trapezus harbour⁶¹. Then he built castles in the Heniochi and Achai territories in the Colchis Region⁶². Jewish historian Iosephos emphasized that the Heniochi, Colchi, and other peoples on the coasts near the Black Sea, who had recognized no authority before, were ruled peacefully thanks to the military force deployed during the reign of Emperor Nero⁶³.

After the assassination of Nero, it is seen that the order collapsed again, and the authority weakened in the Pontus and Caucasus regions during the civil wars breaking out in Rome in 68-69 A.D. In this period, a freed slave named Anicetus started a great rebellion by provoking the Pontus

⁵² App. *Mith.* 102.

⁵³ Plut. *Pomp.* XXXIV. 5; Cass. Dio XXXVII. 3. 1; on this subject, see also, App. *Mith.* 114; Flor. I. 40. 28; Vell. Pat. II. 40.

⁵⁴ Syme 1995, 111; Kallet-Marx 1995, 326; Arslan 2007, 490-493.

⁵⁵ App. *Mith.* 114; Eutr. VI. 14. 4; also see, Str. XII.3.1; Sherwin-White 1984, 226-227; Gamkrelidze 2012, 27.

⁵⁶ Cass. Dio XLII. 45; also see, Minns 1913, 589; Vinogradov & Goronçarovskiy 2008, 243.

⁵⁷ Caes. *Alex.* 74-77; Plut. *Caes.* 50; App. *Civ.* II. 91; see also, Dodge 1997, 604 ff.; Canfora 2007, 224 ff.; Goldsworthy 2014, 504.

⁵⁸ App. *Civ.* V. 75; Cass. Dio XLIX. 33. 2; LIII. 25; also see, Huzar 1978, 183; Gamkrelidze 2012, 153 ff.

⁵⁹ Braund 1989, 31.

⁶⁰ Suet. *Ner.* 18; Eut. VII. 14; see also, Mitchell 1995, 63; Jones 1998, 171.

⁶¹ Starr 1941, 126-127.

⁶² Cumont 1923, 112; Mitford 1980, 1179.

⁶³ Ioseph. *Iud.* II. 363-368.

and Caucasian peoples in favor of Vitellius (24 October 15-22 December 69)⁶⁴. Heniochi and Colchis' indigenous peoples losing their activity and interests due to the Roman dominance in the region also joined the rebellion of Anicetus⁶⁵. During this revolt, while the Heniochi attacked the Hellenic colonies in the Colchis Region, on the other hand, they started their piracy activities at sea again⁶⁶. Tacitus states that Anicetus' attack on Trapezus and the burning of the Roman navy (*Classis Pontica*) encouraged Heniochi pirates. Thus, they sailed to the Black Sea with their *camaraes* and engaged in banditry and pirates on the seas⁶⁷.

This authority gap in the Colchis Region ended with the accession of Vespasianus (69-79 A.D.) to the Roman Imperial throne. In the first years of his empire, Vespasianus took some military measures to strengthen the Roman dominance in the Pontus and Caucasus regions. Vespasianus, who suppressed the rebellion initiated by Anicetus in the Pontus Region, then increased the military and logistical forces of Rome here⁶⁸. The emperor established a Roman garrison consisting of five *cohorts* in Apsarus (Gonio), where Heniochi was intense and had a *castellum* (castle) built there⁶⁹. He also had a fortress built with 400 warrior soldiers on a strategic point in Phasis, which was not far from Apsarus and also within the borders of Colchis⁷⁰. Here, the most striking point is Rome's failure to prevent the pirate activities carried out by a small group in the Black Sea. Despite a large navy in the Black Sea during the reign of Emperor Nero, the continuation of pirate actions in this sea is very intriguing. Here, perhaps Roman rule ignored or indirectly supported pirate actions for a while to create unrest in the region in line with their interests, and after creating the desired social environment, tried to gain prestige by identifying the pirates as enemies⁷¹. Or it can be thought that they used the threat of piracy and banditry against his rivals in the region who did not accept the patronage of Rome or did not want to ally with them and turned a blind eye to pirate actions against these communities. Rome is known to have used such actions as a political maneuver from time to time to provide allied support in geographies where it had difficulty in establishing dominance because of distance, logistics, geographical conditions, and enemy resources. Using these policies, Rome always created an artificial instability in those regions, settled in as a deterrent power, and eventually made the relevant regional peoples dependent on themselves⁷². Thus, Rome had prepared a legitimate ground for the military and administrative structures to be built in the region. Indeed, it is seen that Rome created a permanent military power in the Pontus and Colchis regions during the periods of Nero and Vespasianus, using this regional authority gap and unsafe environment as an excuse. Through this Trapezus-centered military power, Rome not only expanded its dominance from the Black Sea coast to the Daryal Pass but also established political authority in

⁶⁴ Tac. *Hist.* III. 47-48; also see, Bosworth 1976, 68ff; Sherk 1980, 995.

⁶⁵ Silogav & Shengelia 2007, 36.

⁶⁶ Plinius reports that the Heniochi people plundered settlements in the South Caucasus, especially Dioskurias and Pityus. Plinius also stated that Dioskurias, which was a crucial and wealthy city in the past, lost its importance because of these attacks and turned into a ruined city. Plin., *nat.* VI. 5. 16.

⁶⁷ Tac. *Hist.* III. 46-47.

⁶⁸ Vespasianus strengthened the walls of a fortress near present-day Tbilisi within the borders of the Kingdom of Iberia, which controlled the Daryal Pass and sent a military unit to the region. In addition, the emperor established new border outposts on the eastern Black Sea coast and the Caucasus regions, and in A.D. 75, sent a group of Roman soldiers to the major outpost of the Iberia Kingdom, Harmozike, in the just south of the Daryal Pass. Levick 1999, 169; Gamkrelidze 2012, 155-156.

⁶⁹ Arr. *periplus* VI. 1-2. According to Plinius, this castle was being actively used during the reign of Vespasianus. Plin. *nat.* VI. 12; also see, Kakhidze 2008, 333.

⁷⁰ Arr. *periplus* IX. 3-4. This castle, probably built during the Vespasianus reign, was strengthened and restored with baked bricks, probably during the time of Traianus. Mitford 2018, 414.

⁷¹ Arslan & Önen 2011, 191.

⁷² Demir 2019, 233-234.

the region⁷³. Rome, using this military power, could prevent attacks directed to Anatolia through the Caucasus for a long time, and it also discovered alternative routes to ancient trade routes to the far East, passing through the lands of its biggest enemy, the Parthians⁷⁴. Moreover, it created an exit gate to the lands of Central Asia with his troops extended to the Daryal Pass. All acts show that Rome's military and administrative existence in the region was part of a much more complicated plan than the measures taken against the pirate actions or the rebellious peoples in the territory.

After the arrangements made in the region with the periods of emperors Nero and Vespasianus, many communities declared their loyalty to Rome, and especially the Heniochi became one of the most loyal allies of Rome during this period. Emperor Traianus accepted Anchialus,⁷⁵ the king of the Heniochi people, in Satala/Sadak⁷⁶, where he made his final preparations before embarking on the Parthian Expedition in 114 A.D.⁷⁷. Anchialus, who came to Satala as an ally of Rome, was assigned to ensure the safety of the supply routes reaching Satala from the coasts of Pontus and Colchis by Traianus' order. Arrianus reports that Anchialos was the king of the Maclelones and Heniochi during the reign of Hadrianus (117-138 A.D.) as well⁷⁸. However, no significant information exists about Heniochi and their actions in Roman sources after this date.

Conclusion

The ancient Black Sea piracy activities have been observed not to date back to older times compared to the Mediterranean waters. The most substantial reasons for this were the fact that the Black Sea was not a suitable sea for piracy activities in terms of its climatic and geographical features, and the commercial activities here developed more slowly than other seas. Another significant point regarding the piracy activities in the Black Sea was that such illegal activities generally were specific to the eastern shores of the Black Sea. The living standards of the people living here were too low due to the negativities brought by the climatic and geographical conditions. These conditions led some regional peoples to seek new alternative livelihoods to survive. This situation has been an incentive for the development of piracy here. Especially the Heniochi among these peoples were prominent by turning the unfavorable geographical conditions into an advantage for their piracy actions. The fact that the administrators around the Black Sea from time to time supported piracy activities made piracy even more legitimate in the region. The piracy activities in the Black Sea have been understood not to be actually large-scale actions that would threaten the dominance of the political forces in the region. These actions have been observed to be generally regional and mostly limited to banditry activities in coastal areas. Detecting such pirate actions in the Black Sea carried out by different peoples with similar methods even in the post-Ancient era revealed that such activities never affected the commercial and political activity in the region. Moreover, piracy activities in the Black Sea were seen as a part of the trade in particular periods. However, with the powerful political structures in the Black Sea from the end of the IVth century B.C., the perspective on piracy has also changed. The political powers that wanted to take the Black Sea under their dominion tried to legitimize their presence in the region by introducing these small-scale pirate actions as large and dangerous organizations trying to establish a sovereignty area on the Black Sea.

⁷³ Braund 1989, 32-33; Gamkrelidze 2012, 154.

⁷⁴ Emir & İnan 2018, 66 ff.

⁷⁵ Arrianus reports that Achialus, the king of the Maclelones and Heniochi people, resided in a royal palace near Prytanis=(?) (Fırtına Deresi). Arr. *periplus* VII. 2; XI. 2.

⁷⁶ It is in Sadak village, 26 km southeast of Kelkit district of Gümüşhane. For more information on the Satala Garrison, see, Çiğdem 2012, 106-121.

⁷⁷ Cass. Dio LXVIII. 19. 2; also see, Chaumont 1976, 133.

⁷⁸ Arr. *periplus* XI. 2.

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