

**Andrew Peacock**

**Sinop : A Muslim frontier city in the Middle Ages**

This paper examines the mediaeval history of Sinop through the Arabic, Persian and early Ottoman sources, with a particular emphasis on understanding Sinop's relationship with the wider Muslim world in the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Sinop's importance derived from its role as the main Seljuk port on the Black Sea and thus as one of the main routes for trade with the south Russian steppe, from which furs and slaves were brought for import into Anatolia and the Muslim world beyond. However, the Muslim sources also paint a picture of Sinop as a quintessential frontier city, a base for jihad against the unbelievers. It was from Sinop that the Seljuks launched a brief and ill-fated attempt to conquer the Crimean city of Sudak, while legend recounts it was also a base of the Muslim holy man Sari Saltuk who is attributed with converting the Crimea and Dobrudja to Islam. In the fourteenth century, Sinop, now an independent *beylik*, became famous for the activities of its ruler Ghazi Chelebi, who sank Christian ships, thereby combining jihad with the city's commercial interests which were doubtless threatened by the growing penetration of Italian merchants into the Black Sea. However, we know that Sinop was also home to a very cosmopolitan population of Muslims and Christians, Turkmen, Qipchaq Turks and Greeks. This paper suggests that throughout the mediaeval and early Ottoman periods, Sinop's strategic importance was secured by its proximity to the contested territory of the Crimea and its importance for control of the Black Sea, meriting its description as a 'frontier city'.