For the study of the Christianization of the Bosporus we have at our disposal the following groups of sources: inscriptions, objects bearing Christian symbols that are found during excavations, works of art inspired by Christian subjects, cultic objects, the remains of buildings used for religious purposes and testimony in Christian literature about the participation of Bosporan bishops in Oecumenical Councils starting with that held in Nicaea.

First and foremost we need to consider the preconditions for the adoption of the Christian faith in the Bosporus. If we look at the process of the spread of Christianity in the Eastern Mediterranean we note that the adoption of the new faith was made difficult in those places, where there existed a homogenous population, which was maintaining its traditional beliefs, a situation which in its turn was linked with stable socio-political conditions and a stable way of life stemming from them. This applies in equal measure to Greeks loyally adhering to the traditions of their poleis and to Jews preserving their traditional way of life both in Palestine and in communities beyond its borders. Most revealing in this connection is the description in the Acts of the Apostles regarding failed efforts to preach Christianity in Athens. In the region to the North of the Black Sea similar conditions obtained in Chersonesus where the process of Christianization proved most dramatic as a result.\(^1\) In areas and amongst populations, where the traditional beliefs of the polis had been undermined, there was a mixture of ethnic groups to be observed and a variety of religious cults existed side by side, we can observe the greatest successes in the spread of the Christian faith.

In the Bosporus the population had always been heterogenous ethnically speaking and in the first centuries AD the Greeks were 'diluted' to a considerable degree by the Sarmatians and representatives of other tribes: the traditional dividing lines between the Hellenes and the barbarians were becoming blurred.\(^2\)

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Institutions at *polis* level began to be suppressed as early as the era of the Spartocids by tyrannical power lorded over the *poleis*. Later during the range of Mithridates the Great self-government of the *poleis* took shape in a number of Bosporan cities and continued, according to various sources available to us today, until the 2nd century AD. Decrees issued by *poleis* in that period are known to us from Phanagoria, Gorgippia and Tanais. In the 3rd century AD and later *polis* structures had once and for all given way to the bureaucratic apparatus of the monarchy. At any rate in the 3rd-4th centuries there must have been large numbers of people, for whom the traditions of the *polis* were alien.

All the cults that had been traditional at the time of Classical religions — both Greek and eastern — and that were still in existence in the Bosporus in the first centuries AD gradually disappeared by the 3rd century AD. These were in the light of New Archaeological Research*, KSIA (Short Reports from the Institute of Archaeology), Issue 103, 1964, p. 8; D.V. Shelov, *Tanais i nizhnii Don v pervykh vekakh n.e.* (Tanais and the Southern Don in the First Centuries AD), Moscow, 1972, p. 244; A.A. Maslenikov, *Naselenie Bosporskogo gosudarstva v pervykh vekakh n.e.* (The Population of the Bosporan State in the First Centuries AD), Moscow, 1990.


