

## **FAITH TOURISM POTENTIAL OF KONYA IN TERMS OF CHRISTIAN SACRED SITES**

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### **Abstract**

Among the countries In the Middle East, Turkey is the second country that has the most biblical sites after Israel. It is called as “The Other Holy Land” because of this reason. The land of Turkey which is bounded by the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Seas is referred as Asia Minor or Anatolia in Biblical reference works. Asia Minor or Anatolia as mentioned in history or the present day Turkey is important for Christianity to understand the background of the New Testament. Approximately two-thirds of New Testament books were written either to or from churches in Turkey. The three major apostles; Peter, Paul, and John either ministered or lived in Turkey. Turkey’s rich spiritual heritage starts at the very beginning in the book of Genesis. Konya or Iconium as mentioned in history is one of the important cities of Turkey in terms of its historical and cultural heritage. It’s a city that has an important place both in Christian and Islamic world, even in history and present day. Although Konya is famous today because of its Muslim mosques, its theological schools and its connection with the great Sufi mystic Celaleddin Rumi; better known as Mevlana, the 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi mystic, poet, philosopher and founder of the Mevlevi order of whirling dervishes, Konya has a biblical significance since it was mentioned in the New Testament as one of the cities visited by Apostle Paul. In the first years of Christianity, St. Paul visited the city in three of his missionary voyages. Iconium, Lystra and Derbe are some of the New Testament Sites in Konya. In this study it has been aimed to reveal the religious tourism potential of present Konya in terms of its biblical significance for the Christian world. In line with this purpose, the study starts with a brief history of Konya, continues with the biblical significance of the city and gives detailed information about Christian sacred sites (New Testament sites) in present Konya. In the end of the study, the religious tourism potential of Konya has been argued.

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**Keywords:** Konya, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Kilistra, Sille

## Introduction

Christianity was born on the lands currently known as Israel and it has spread to Europe and the rest of the world through Anatolia and has lived its growth period here (Yenipinar, 2002). For this reason Turkey is the second country after Israel in the number of the biblical sites to offer to Christian pilgrims. Mount Ararat where the Noah's ark is believed to landed is a mountain in eastern Turkey. Saint Peter's first epistle addressing the suffering Christians scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia went to Turkey. Saint Paul was born here in Tarsus and most of the cities he visited during his missionary journeys are in Turkey. The Apostle John lived in Ephesus of Izmir today. Also the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus is believed to be buried in Ephesus. Christians fleeing persecution in the early centuries found shelter in Cappadocia in central Turkey. They carved the rocks and built frescos, carved archways, baptismal pools, dining tables and living quarters. Christians also set up houses in underground cities (Zoba, 1998: 43-48). The first Ecumenical Council was gathered in Iznik in 325 AD, and Christianity had been declared as the official religion of the Roman Empire by the Emperor Constantine in Istanbul (Yenipinar, 2002). After this date all the Ecumenical Councils between the IVth and the VIIIth centuries gathered in Iznik, Istanbul, Ephesus and Kadiköy. The saints who had lived in the first years of the Christianity and considered as the fathers and mothers of the Christian ideology and rituals lived in Anatolia. There are hundreds of churches in the Thrace and Anatolia. But today many of them need restoration. Christianity reached Europe after being propagated in Anatolia and it is not possible to find pieces of art and worship places of Christianity in Europe which are as old as those existing in Anatolia (Bartholomeos I, 2002). The Seven Churches of Revelation, also known as the Seven Churches of the Apocalypse or the Seven Churches of Asia are seven major churches of Early Christianity, as mentioned in the New Testament Book of Revelation are within the boundaries of Turkey. These historical data makes Turkey a center of attraction for the Christian world.

Unlike Islam, Christianity does not have a single destination for pilgrimage. For a Christian, being a pilgrim means being on the path of God. To become a pilgrim one doesn't always need to go to the Vatican or Jerusalem. Visiting the places where prominent saints, religious leaders and theologians lived is considered as sacred. Walking the roads that they walked, breathing the air that they breathed is the way of becoming a pilgrim in Christianity. Therefore bearing the footprints of many saints and leaders in its biblical sites, Turkey has an outstanding potential for Christian pilgrims (Yenipinar, 2002). The New Testament sites in Turkey with modern Turkish names are; Adramyttium (Edremit), Antioch (Antakya), Assos (Behramkale), Attalia (Antalya), Bithynia-Nicomedia (Izmit), Nicea (Iznik), Cappadocia-

Caesarea Mazaca (Kayseri), Cilicia (Kilikya), Cnidus, Colossae (Honaz), Derbe (Ekinozu), Ephesus (Selçuk), Euphrates River (Firat Nehri), Galatia, Haran (Harran), Hierapolis (Pamukkale), Iconium (Konya), Laodicea (Denizli), Lycaonia, Lycia (Likya), Lystra (Hatunsaray), Magog (Lydia?), Miletus (Milet), Myra (Kale; Demre), Mysia, Pamphylia, Patara (Ova), Perga (Perge), Pergamum (Bergama), Philadelphia (Alasehir), Phrygia, Pisidian Antioch (Yalvac), Pontus-Amisos (Samsun), Sardis (Sart), Seleucia (Samandag), Smyrna (Izmir), Syria, Tarsus, Thyatira (Akhisar), Troas (Dalyan) and Trogyllium (Turkey and the New Testament)

Iconium or the modern Konya is one of the largest cities of Turkey. It is a centre of attraction for Muslims with its mosques, theological schools (medrese), tombs and most importantly with Mevlana Museum or Mevlana Tekkesi. This is a former monastery of the whirling dervishes. Konya is an important destination of faith tourism for Muslims, not for pilgrimage but for those who want to visit the city, pray to Mevlana and watch the Sema Ceremony which is a ritual of Mevlevi order. As well as its potential of faith tourism for Muslim tourists Konya is also important for Christians because of its biblical significance.

Iconium and nearby destinations Derbe and Lystra are three of the New Testament sites mentioned above. These cities of ancient times are important for Christianity because of Saint Paul. Paul the Apostle originally known as Saul of Tarsus was an apostle (though not one of the Twelve Apostles) who taught the gospel of Christ to the first-century world. He was born at Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 21:39), of a father who was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:26-28; cf. 16:37). Cilicia was a region in southeast Asia Minor, on the Mediterranean Sea. He was a Jew, known during his early years by the name of Saul. He is considered as one of the most important figures of the Apostolic Age. In the mid-30s to the mid-50s, he founded several churches in Asia Minor and Europe. Paul's great achievement was to take Christianity from Jerusalem throughout the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and finally to the capital itself (Adcock, 2014: 4). The period of twelve years between 45 and 57 AD was the most active and fruitful of his life. It comprises three great apostolic expeditions. All of them started in Antioch and invariably ended in a visit to Jerusalem (The Catholic Encyclopaedia). Paul visited Iconium, Derbe and Lystra during these missionary journeys. For those Christians who want to seek for the footsteps of Paul and become a pilgrim, Konya is offering a potential with its New Testament sites, churches and monasteries. In this study, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe have been investigated to reveal their biblical significance, so that the potential of faith tourism in Konya for Christian world.

## **Konya in History**

In the references of ancient history the name of the city is mentioned as “Ikonion”. It is one of the cities of Asia Minor bearing the same name since time immemorial. The name Ikonion was written as Iconium in Romans, Toxovio in Byzantines, Yconium, Conium, Stancona or Cunin in several crusader references and Cogne or Cogna in some literary work. Konya is mentioned as Conie, Konieh or Konia in today's western literary work (Halici, 1984: 9-10).

It's revealed with the results of excavations Alaaddin Hill, Beysehir-Cukurkent Village Ruins and Cumra-Catalhoyuk that Konya and surroundings existed in Neolithic Age. Catalhoyuk dated to 6000 BC shows that Konya and surroundings developed in Bronze Age. The Hittite Empire established in 1900 BC dominated also in Konya and surroundings. Phrygians and then Lydians dominated in the area after Hittites. In 546 BC The Persian Empire invaded Konya and reigned until 333 BC. After then Salafi, Pergamons and in 133 BC Roman Empire conquered the city (Halici, 1984: 9-10). In Romans period Konya and surroundings was a city of Lycaonia region known as Iconium. During this period Iconium was an important city in Asia Minor. During the first years of Christianity (47-53 AD) Iconium was a city visited by Saint Paul, one of the Apostles of Jesus (Onder, 1999: 6).

In 395 BC Lycaonia region and Iconium were dominated by Byzantine Empire (East-Roman Empire). During this period (4th-11th century AD) Konya was a small and lesser known city (Onder, 1999: 6). Today there is a catacomb (underground grave) dated to Byzantine period, 5th century AD still exists in city center, near Sircali Medresa. Besides monasteries in Sille and Karadag are also dated to this period. Aya-Elenia Monastery in Sille is the most important structure that still exists today from Byzantine period (Onder, 1971: 15)

Between the years 704 and 907 AD Konya came under the domination of Emevis and Abbasids and then Byzantines recaptured the city. In the second half of 11th century Turkish invasion to Anatolia started (Onder, 1971: 16-17). In 1074 AD Anatolian Seljuk Empire established. Konya became the capital of the empire in 1097 AD and stayed as capital until the collapse of Seljuks (Halici, 1984: 10) (il turizm envanteri, 1997: 12). This period was the most magnificent times of Konya in history (1984 Sonrasi Konya, 1988: 33). Konya became a city of science and culture with immigration of scientists, poets, artists and sufi scholars from Asian countries during the period of I. Alaeddin Keykubat (1220-1237 AD). Mevlana and his father Bahaeddin Veled came to city and settled in here with the invitation of I. Alaeddin Keykubat. During the period of Seljuks

madrasahs, mosques, caravansaries, hospices and hammams were built in Konya (1984 Sonrasi Konya, 1988: 33).

In 1243 when Seljuk army was defeated by Mongols the military power of the empire was hurt and after 1260 the region came under the domination of Ilkhanid Empire. Karamanid Dynasty occupied Konya in 1327 and in 1465 Ottoman Empire annexed the city (Halici, 1984: 11). In 1867 Konya became a province of the empire and came to these days (il turizm envanteri, 1997: 13). Today it's one of the biggest cities of Central Anatolia Region of Turkey.

### **Biblical Significance of Konya**

Saint Paul who is the most significant figure in early Christianity after Jesus was largely responsible for focusing the legacy of Jesus in such a way that Christianity penetrated the Roman world. According to New Testament, he was born at Tarsus in Asia Minor (Acts 22:3) and inherited Roman citizenship (Acts 22:26-28). Paul claims that he was raised in a pious family and distinguished himself as a Jew and particularly as member of the Pharisaic party (Phil. 3:5-6). His Jewish name was Saul, but as a Roman citizen he also got the name Paul (Jestice, 2004: 676)

Acts offers three accounts of Paul's conversion to Christianity (9:1-19, 22:3-21, 26:9-23). Paul regarded the early Christian movement a dangerous and heretical sect within Judaism and determined to stamp it out. However, when he was on the road to Damascus, he had a mystical encounter with the risen Christ and became convinced of the truth of the Christian message. Paul preached to the Jews of Damascus and then spent some years in seclusion after his conversion (Acts 9). He undertook three missionary journeys to Asia Minor and Greece beginning in about 45 AD (Acts 13-21) (Jestice, 2004: 676). Paul went from Jerusalem to the shores of the Mediterranean, to the middle of Anatolia and as far as northern Greece in his three long and dangerous voyages as a missionary. These were the longest and most important religious journeys made in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, covering over 20,000 miles. The largest portion of the journeys took place in Anatolia which is St. Paul's home ground (A Christian journey through Anatolia, [http://www.gatetoturkey.com/turkey\\_a\\_z\\_arkelogy/00966/](http://www.gatetoturkey.com/turkey_a_z_arkelogy/00966/)). His journeys resulted in the conversion of both Jews and Greco-Roman polytheists. He founded churches in major cities (Ephesus, Philippi and Corinth for example). He was confident that from these urban centres the gospel would penetrate to the countryside (Jestice, 2004: 676).

Iconium or Konya has an important place in the first years of Christianity, since St. Paul visited the city in three of his missionary voyages. As mentioned in Acts, Paul started his journey from Attalia (Antalya) (47-53 AD) to spread Christianity. He first reached to Antiochia (Yalvac) and then

to Iconium (Konya) (Onder, 1971: 15). When St. Paul came to Iconium and preached here during his first journey, he converted a vast number of Jews and pagans (Vailhé, 1910). In Iconium, St. Paul healed a crippled man and many people thought that he was God. When he refuted this, he was stoned, dragged through the streets and left for dead beyond the city walls (A Christian journey through Anatolia, [http://www.gatetoturkey.com/turkey\\_a\\_z\\_arkeology/00966/](http://www.gatetoturkey.com/turkey_a_z_arkeology/00966/)). Because of the violent resistance of Jews he first moved to nearby city Lystra (Hatunsaray) and then to Derbe (near Karaman). Afterwards St. Paul and his companions returned to Antiocheia (Antakya). His visits helped the spread of Christianity in this region, so the development of Iconium as an important sacred center (Onder, 1971: 15). Today, the area around Derbe-Karaman is called "1001 Churches", a testament to the success of Paul's mission (A Christian journey through Anatolia, [http://www.gatetoturkey.com/turkey\\_a\\_z\\_arkeology/00966/](http://www.gatetoturkey.com/turkey_a_z_arkeology/00966/)).

St. Paul and St. Barnabas stayed a while in Antiocheia (Antakya) and then decided to return to the cities they had visited before. But they parted their ways after a dispute. St. Paul took new companions on his second and third voyages, again starting from Antiocheia, but this time on land. Paul headed via western Anatolia to Assos and Aleksandria-Troas from Derbe. A Macedonian man came to St. Paul in a dream to ask him for help, so Paul and Silas went via Filibe, Athens and Corinth to Ephesus. They then returned to Jerusalem. The third voyage covered the same areas as the second. So he visited Iconium for the third time. During his travels from 48-56 AD, St. Paul spent the longest time (51-54 AD) in Ephesus. So It is thought that his letters to the seven churches were written here. St. Paul was expelled by pagan merchants who feared the mass conversions he inspired. Having left Ephesus, St. Paul set sail from the port of Miletos to Patara via Istandkoy and Rhodes, ultimately returning to Jerusalem. The authorities felt that Paul was causing too much unrest and had arrested him. He used his right as a Roman to be tried in Rome. His final journey took him to Rome via Caesarea, Sidon, Myra (Kale-Demre), Knidos (Datca), Crete and Malta. Paul's missionary Journeys began in 46 AD and ended with his execution in Rome in the early 60s (according to the Bible, this was on June 29, 64-the same day as St. Peter). St. Paul is accepted to be the most important Christian leader after St. Peter. His greatest achievement was to blend the then-current Hellenistic philosophy, Jewish traditions and Christ's teachings. His efforts made Christianity a religion in its own right, not just an extension of Judaism (A Christian journey through Anatolia, [http://www.gatetoturkey.com/turkey\\_a\\_z\\_arkeology/00966/](http://www.gatetoturkey.com/turkey_a_z_arkeology/00966/)).

Christianized rather early, the town Iconium was the scene of a Council in 235 AD which decreed that the baptism of heretics was invalid.

Le Quien (*Oriens Christ.*, I, 1067-74) mentions thirty-six bishops down to the year 1721. St. Amphilochius who is the friend of St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nazianzus was the best-known of the bishops. The list might well be completed and brought down to the present time, for Iconium is yet the centre of a schismatical Greekdiocese (Vailhé, 1910).

### **Christian Sacred Sites (New Testament Sites) in Konya**

Iconium, Lystra and Derbe are some of the New Testament Sites in Konya. Iconium (Konya) is mentioned in Acts 13:51, 14:1-3-4-19-21, 16:2; Lystra (Hatunsaray) is mentioned in Acts 14:6-8-19-21, 16:1-1, 27:5 and Derbe (Ekinozu) in Acts 14:6-20-21, 16:1 and 20:4.

Iconium is an ancient city of Asia Minor, today the modern Konya in Turkey. In history it was at various times in Phrygia, Lycaonia, Cappadocia and the Roman province of Galatia. It was visited by St. Paul and became an active Christian colony in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia).

The ancient city Lystra was a city of Lycaonia in Asia Minor. Lystra is the city where St. Paul and St. Barnabas came when they were driven from Iconium and started preaching there. The antique city Lystra is now in village of Gokyurt from Hatunsaray town of Meram district of Konya. The city is in southwest of Konya and 35 km. away from it. Very little historical ruins have remained from the city to the present day. The antique city is a mound (tumulus) today (Wikipedia- Gokyurt, Meram).

The antique city Kilistra is in 12 km west of Lystra. It has been thought to be used as a fortress of Lystra. Kilistra became a castle and shelter city with Lystra's becoming ecclesiastically important. People who lived in Lystra but escaped from the constraint of the Roman Empire settled in Kilistra. Even if Kilistra has not been mentioned in the New Testament, it has been thought that St. Paul visited the city when he was going from Lystra to Pisidia Antiocheia (T.C. Kultur ve Turizm Bakanligi).

Derbe is another ancient town of Lycaonia in Asia Minor. The acts of the Apostles relates that St. Paul and St. Barnabas fled there from Iconium (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia). Today the site is a mound (tumulus) and it is located in 3 km. north of the village of Ekinozu, which is a village of the city of Karaman. The city was a district of Konya until 1989 and it is 113 km away from Konya.

Detailed information about these sites and important sacred places in these sites are mentioned below.

### **Iconium (Konya)**

The biblical significance of Konya (Iconium) comes from the Apostle Paul, as mentioned earlier. During his first missionary journey described in

the book of Acts, St. Paul travelled through the southern region of Asia Minor and spread the Christian Faith in several cities, including Iconium (Acts 13:51-14:7). (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 229)

Although mentioned in the New Testament as one of the cities visited by Apostle Paul, the ancient city of Iconium and present-day the modern Konya is more famous today because of its Muslim mosques, its theological schools and its connection with the great Sufi mystic Celaleddin Rumi, better known as Mevlana, the 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi mystic, poet, philosopher and founder of the Mevlevi order of whirling dervishes (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 228-229).

The important sacred sites worth to visit in present Konya are as follows:

### **Konya Archaeological Museum**

The visitor to Konya will find some of the artifacts of St. Paul's day in the ancient city of Iconium in the Konya Archaeological Museum. The museum is located on Sahip Ata Caddesi. It is small but definitely worth a visit. In the courtyard there are an assortment of sculptures, sarcophagi, column heads and inscriptions. For visitors that are interested in St. Paul there are two inscribed stone monuments. One is a limestone block with the name of the city of Derbe; the other is an altar stone from the city of Lystra that mentions the city. There are also exhibits belonging to the Neolithic, Bronze, Iron, Classical, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods in the interior of the museum. The exhibits include pottery, stone and bronze sculptures, sarcophagi, jewellery and inscriptions. Particularly the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD marble sarcophagus with beautifully carved scenes from the life of Hercules, a Roman-period clay sarcophagus, a marble sarcophagus with carved garlands, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Century statue of Poseidon and a votive stele dedicated to the goddess Cybele (the Anatolian mother goddess) are noteworthy (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 230-231).

### **Church of St. Paul**

In Konya there has been a small church dedicated to the memory of St. Paul. This church was constructed in 1910 by priests "de l'Assomption" who came here to spiritually assist the families of the French community working in the region. St. Paul's Konya Church is unique to this region as it is still standing after the numbers of Christians decreased. In this church St. Thecla and St. Timothy are remembered as well. St. Thecla who is one of Iconium's very first converts to Christianity, determined to remain a virgin out of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. After suffering numerous persecutions she died in Seleucia. She is remembered in the Cathedral of Milan and her Saints Day is September 23. St. Timothy was a disciple of St. Paul's from



Lystra, who “had a good reputation among the believers at Lystra and Iconium” (Acts 16:1-2). He joined St. Paul as a companion during his journeys and later was made Bishop of Ephesus. Two of St. Paul’s letters to St. Timothy are included in the New Testament (St. Paul’s Church, Konya).

St. Thecla and St. Timothy are two of the First Century saints from Iconium. Others include Conon and his twelve-year-old son, martyrs (29/5); Terenzius, Bishop and martyr (21/6); Appolonius, crucified martyr (10/7); Marcianus martyr (11/7); Curonotus, Bishop and martyr (12/9); Trifenna and Trifosa, both disciples of St. Paul after St. Thecla’s example (10/11); Anfilochius, Bishop and companion of Sts. Basil and Gregory Nazianzas (23/11) (St. Paul’s Church, Konya).

Today Church of St. Paul with its French Gothic facade, offers hospitality to groups of pilgrims travelling the paths of St. Paul in Anatolia. The Church is still standing thanks to the concern and oversight of the Bishop of Izmir/ Konya and to the presence of two resident Sisters from the "Fraternity Resurrected Jesus" in Tavodo, Trento, Italy. Today’s small community of Catholic Christians gathers in the Church once a week to pray and listen to the Word of God as transmitted by the Apostles in their endless love for our Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (Endres, 2008: 25), (St. Paul’s Church, Konya)

### **Mevlana Museum, Theological Schools (Medrese) and Mosques**

The most popular site in Konya is the Mevlana Museum or Mevlana Tekkesi. This is a former monastery of the whirling dervishes, recognizable by its attractive fluted dome of turquoise tiles. The Museum is visited by tourists and by faithful Muslims who come to pray to Mevlana. The building served for several centuries as a centre for religion, art, literature and music. Today it is a museum and mausoleum containing the tombs of Mevlana, his father, his wife and children, and several important religious and civic figures. The museum contains personal items of Mevlana and various illuminated manuscripts, musical instruments, furniture, carpets and other artifacts (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 230-231). The museum is in the city centre of Konya.

In Konya there are also many Seljuk, Karamanid and Ottoman mosques, theological schools (medrese in Turkish) and tombs. Even though they have no connection to the Bible or the Biblical world they are well worth a visit. Among these the Ince Minare Medresesi (the medrese with the slender minaret) which has a fluted minaret decorated with red and blue glazed tiles and is now a museum of Seljuk wood and stone carvings. The Sircali Medrese (the glazed Medrese) was built in 1242 and now houses a museum of Seljuk, Karamanid and Ottoman tombstones. The Karatay Medresesi, founded in 1251, presently contains a large collection of beautiful

Turkish ceramics and tiles from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The Alaettin Camii is the largest Seljuk mosque in Konya, whose construction began in 1155. The Sahip Ata Kulliyesi, is a 13<sup>th</sup> Century complex consisting of a mosque, a mausoleum, a monastery and baths (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 230-231).

## **Sille**

Sille is a settlement in 8 km northwest of Konya. The history of the settlement dated to ancient times. Settlement history of the region dates to Neolithic period. According to archeological data it's thought that Sille was established 6000 years ago. Being on the Silk and the Spice Roads, Sille was a settlement center in the periods of Phrygians, Romans, Seljukians and Ottomans (Bahar,1994: 313-321).

Sille hosted the oldest structures known of early Christianity in Anatolia. During this early periods when Christians exposed to tortures in Roman Empire St. Paul and Barnabas visited Iconium and surroundings in their missionary journeys. The region became the center of Christianity. After a while Christians left Iconium and settled to northwestern mountainside to run from the pressure of Jewish community in the city. The first rock carved churches built in Sille by this means. During the periods of East-Roman and Byzantine Empires when Christianity became official religion, Sille maintained its importance with cave churches that were thought sacred due to Paul and Barnabas. The city was an important settlement on the route of Rome-Jerusalem and on the sacred pilgrimage road (Kucuk, 2001: 82-83). One of the oldest and biggest monasteries of the world, Ak Monastery (Hagios Khariton or Deyr-i Eflatun) was a structure in Sille and it offered service during 800 years approximately. The biggest church of Sille, Aya Elenia was started to built in 327 AD during a religious journey (Konyali, 1964: 1078-1079, Wikipedia-Sille).

In 1468 Sille was captured by Ottoman Empire after it was dominated by Anatolian Seljuk Empire and Karamanids. During this period non-Muslims that are called Karamanlis was a community among public of Sille. Their language was Turkish, they had Turkish names and they were evangelized Turks. So Muslim and Christian community lived together before the period of Ottoman. The population of the city rose to 18.000 (Akoz and Urekli, 1997: 193-214, Konyali, 1964: 1080-1081, Kucukdag, 2005: 73-116). The settlement was mostly inhabited by Turk Christians until the population exchange of 1924. In the notes of a Hungarian traveller Bela Horvarth which was written during a journey to Anatolia in 1913, Sille was mentioned as a settlement with 60 churches (Wikipedia-Sille).

Because of the construction of railway in the beginning of 1990s, population exchange of non-Muslim community, artists and craftsmen

leaving Sille and transformation inadequacy problems people of Sille immigrated to Konya and other cities. Houses reflecting the historical identity of Sille left unattended after these migrations and ruined over the years. The population of Sille decreased by this way. Until the first years of the republic there were 16 villages subsidiary to Sille, afterwards Sille was a municipality until 1989 and now it's a neighbourhood connected to Konya (Kapar, <http://www.sille.org.tr/index.php?p=icerik&id=89>).

Detailed information about churches and monasteries in Sille are as follows.

### **Ak Monastery / Hagios Chariton / St. Chariton**

Sille is famous for it's cave churches. The most important one of these monasteries is Ak Monastery or Eflatun Monastery or Hagios Khariton. This structure is important for Christians and Muslims, especially for Mevleviyeh.

The monastery consisted of two carved churches, hagiaσμα, monk rooms, various sections and dais. It is supposed to be founded in the 4th Century by Saint Chariton and according to its epigraph, it has been repaired two times in 1067 and 1289. The monastery was ruined in the beginning of 20th Century. Today Orthodox Christians visit the monastery in every 28 September, in the day of Saint Chariton Feast. (Mimiroglu, 2012: 55)

The monastery is analyzed by C. Niebuhr, Kyrillos IV., W.M. Ramsay, G. Bell, F.W. Hasluck and S. Eyice in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first researcher that talked about the structure was Danish Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815). He described this monastery in his book (1792) as follows when he visited it in 1766: "there is a monastery on a mountain near Konya. The main church and the rooms of the monastery is rock carved and there are a lot of gravestones one of which belongs to Mikhael Komnenos (Retrieved from: Eyice, 1966: 135).

Kyrillos IV (1750-1821) who was Konya metropolitan bishop for a while and Istanbul Patriarch between 1813-1819 gives detailed information about Ak Monastery in his book about Konya and surroundings (Retrieved from: Eyice, 1966: 136).

N.S. Rizos and J.R.S. Streett are interested in Ak Monastery and talked about it in their books. M. Levidis also talked about this monastery in his book about cave monasteries in Cappadocia region. W.M. Ramsay is another researcher that gives detailed information about Ak Monastery in his book (1903) (Retrieved from: Eyice, 1966: 137). The structure was also researched by F. W. Hasluck (1878-1920) and was talked about in his book dated 1929 (Hasluck, 1929: 56-86).

### **Aya Elenia Museum / Aya Elenia Church**

The church is also known as Hagios Mikhael or Grand Church. The structure is dated to Byzantine period. According to its epigraph over the entrance door the church was built in 327 AD by Helena, the mother of Constantine (Mimiroglu, 2012: 56). When Helena was going on Pilgrimage to Jerusalem she stopped in Iconium and saw the carved shrines dated to the early Christianity in Sille and she decided to built a church in this city. So the building was established by Helena to the name of Mihail Arhankolos. It was repaired by Ottoman Sultans Mahmut II and Abdulmecit (Konyali, 1964: 1078) (Ozonder, 1998: 105). The structure has a Greek cross plan. It is one of the first Christian shrines that was built with face stones and rubble dated to Byzantine period (Tapur, 2009: 480).

The church was renovated by the municipality. All the walls and the dome was rebuilt and the paintings of Jesus, the Virgin and the Apostles' Creed dated to late Christianity are restored. The renovation was finished in 2013 and the church is serving as a museum since than (Selcuklu Belediyesi).

### **Hizir Ilyaslik Church – Kiriakon Church**

The structure is in Subasi district of Sille. It was built between the 10th and 11th centuries and was used as a jug production factory in the 20th century. The carved church has a closed greek cross plan. There is a rectangular entrance section (narteks) in the west side of the building. The cross plan of the church consist of four sections and corner rooms. There are pendentive domes carved to rock over each section. In the east, there are half circle main apside and side apsidess in each sides. There are some places opening to a long corridor near the building. (Mimiroglu, 2012: 70)

### **Koimesis Tes Panagias - Panaya (Banaya) Church**

The structure is one of the early Christianity cave churches on the skirts of the mountain which is in the South of Sille. The building was carved on rocks around Dikili Kaya district. Some graves have been found during cleaning process in the summer of 2006. Paintings on the walls still can be seen. The falling asleep in death icon which is called Koimesis, also the name of the church is still visible. On the left side of the painting, the baby spirit of Mary in Christ's hug was illustrated and on the right side there are Saint figures with lights around their heads (Mimiroglu, 2012: 66) (Konyali, 1964: 1090-1091) (Tapur, 2009: 480-481).

### **Monastery in Salasorma District**

The monastery is in Salasorma District of Sille which is in South-west. The structure is located over the road from Sille to Takkeli Mount. It was

built as a carved structure on a rock over the western skirt. The monastery consists of a church, a grave and irregular places. It is a small building with one nave. The North side of the chapel is mostly collapsed and consists of a rectangular planned naos and an apse. In the North-west side of the naos ground, there is a niche of a grave thought to be belonging to an adult (Mimiroglu, 2012: 71)

### **Tepe Chapel – The Milk Church**

Chapel is on a hill in the southwest of Sille. It is also called as Small Church locally. According to local the mothers visit the chapel and pray for producing milk for their babies. That's why the chapel also named as Milk Church. The chapel was built from rubble and has only one nave and covered with vault. There are graves of Muslims and non-Muslims around the chapel (Mimiroglu, 2012: 74).

### **Lystra**

Lystra was an ancient city of Lycaonia in Asia Minor. The Acts of the Apostles reports that it was visited by St. Paul and Barnabas. The site was mentioned on an ancient altar found in the area of Lystra and it helped to identify the site (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia).

The ancient city of Lystra is located near today's village of Hatunsaray, approximately 34 km southwest of Konya. In 1885, about a mile north of Hatunsaray, J. R. Sitlington Sterrett discovered a stone block on a mound called Zoldera. On the stone there was the Latin inscription where we could see the name "Lustra" which is the Latinized version "Lustra" for the name of the city. The discovery of this monument, erected to honor Caesar Augustus, who founded the Roman colony of Lystra, made identification of the site of ancient Lystra possible (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 240-241).

The city of Lystra appears in the Bible when Paul and Barnabas visited the city on their first missionary journey, from Cyprus to the southern area of Asia Minor. When they visited Pisidian Antioch and Iconium they encountered resistance there and traveled to Lystra (Acts 14:5-20). In Lystra they healed a crippled man and impressed the inhabitants of Lystra. The people mistakenly believed that Barnabas and Paul were Zeus and Hermes in human form. This misidentification of Barnabas and Paul recalls a legend popular that told how Jupiter and Mercury (equated by the Romans with Zeus and Hermes) appeared in human form to various villagers. After that some Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived Lystra and turned the people against Paul and Barnabas and they stoned Paul. He was dragged outside the city and left for dead. The following day Paul and Barnabas traveled to Derbe, then passed through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch again as they reversed their travels to head back to Antioch of Syria (Acts 14:21). During

Paul's second missionary journey he revisited the cities in southern Asia Minor, including Lystra (Acts 16:1–3). When he left Lystra, he took Timothy with him. He was son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Timothy was probably born in Lystra (2 Timothy 3:10, 11). Two letters in New Testament have the name of Timothy. Paul visited Lystra again on his third missionary tour (Acts 18:23). (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 242), (<http://www.biblecharts.org/biblelandnotes/Lystra.pdf>)

There are very few monuments and a mound survived until today in Lystra, that can help to imagine the status of Lystra during the years Saint Paul visited here. There are not much visitors that go for the ancient site of Lystra today. Because it's an unexcavated mound that offer enticement mostly to the visitors or pilgrims seeking to trace the route of the Apostle Paul (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 242).

### **Kilistra**

The ancient city of Kilistra is located within the boundaries of today's village of Gokyurt. Village of Gokyurt is on the 16 km southwest of village of Hatunsaray (Lystra) (Ozkan, 2001: 166). It is thought that when Lystra became an important city of Lycaonia in Asia Minor, Kilistra was used as a castle city and refuge area. People of Lystra who became Christian and escape from the Roman pressure settled here (Wikipedia- Gokyurt, Meram).

The name of the city Kilistra was mentioned on an epitaph found in Konya and belonging to 4th century AD. Besides, on a excavation and cleaning work in 1998 another epitaph belonging to 1st century AD was found on which the name of Kilistra was mentioned. In the excavations of Kilistra some seramic pieces dated to Hellenistic period were found and it is though that history of ancient city Kilistra goes to that period (Ozkan, 2001: 166-167).

The ancient city of Kilistra is on the ancient Royal Road-Via Sebaste of Roman period. One of the Anatolian cities that the Apostle Paul visited during his journeys mentioned in Bible, Lystra is also on Via Sebaste like Kilistra. Kilistra was not mentioned in Bible as a city that was visited by Paul. But it is thought that during his journeys between Iconium and Pisidia Antiocheia (today's Yalvac) Paul could stopped in Kilistra. The area around Sumbulini Church is called as "Paulonu" by locals and this is an evidence that the name of St. Paul still lives here (Ozkan, 2001: 166-167), (T.C. Kultur ve Turizm Bakanligi).

Kilistra was discovered by scientists at the beginning of 1990s. The first of the travelers who visited the region since the 19th century was W. M. Ramsay in 1880s. The researcher determined the name of the region as Kilistra from an epitaph he found in Konya. Between the years 1883-1884

Prof. Sterrett visited the region and indicated that there were lots of rock carved structures in the city. Gertrude Bell visited the city in 1907 and 1908 with W.M. Ramsay and he gave place to his research findings of Kilistra in his book “The Thousand and One Churches” (Ramsay, 1909: 302, 349,560).

Today the ancient city of Kilistra is a rock carved settlement that is carved to lava composition rocks like Cappadocia Region. The centre of the city is on the lava composition plato where the village Gokyurt exists. It is certain that there is an underground city beneath this mound (Ozkan, 2001: 166-167) (Mimiroglu, 2006: 154). The excavation and cleaning studies in the region revealed rock carved chapels dated to 7th and 8th centuries AD. The other ancient structures in the city are; Royal Road-Via Sebaste, Sumbulini (Paulonu) Church, cross plan Sandikkaya Chapel, rock carved chapels, graves, wineries, water cisterns, observation tower and ceramic ateliers. Sandikkaya Chapel is an uncommon structure since it is one-piece rock carved and dated to 8th century AD. Within the Chapel there are three graves carved to bedrock. (Mimiroglu, 2005: 1) (Ozkan, 2001: 166-171).

## **Derbe**

The ancient city of Derbe was located southeast of Iconium (Konya) in Lycaonia which was an ancient region of south-central Asia Minor. Several sites have been proposed for the precise location of Derbe, most of them located near Karaman (Ancient Laranda). Karaman is a city of today’s Turkey and 110 km away from Konya. It was a town of Konya till 1989 and became a city in this year. The location that has the strongest claim to being the ancient site Derbe is the mound “Kerti Hoyuk” which is near the village of Ekinozu (Asiran). Ekinozu is 20 km away from Karaman (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 175-176).

Because of the scarcity of ancient literary references to the city and the absence of any archaeological excavations at the site not much is known about the history of Derbe. Scattered fragments on the surface of Kerti Hoyuk indicates that the site was occupied at least as early as the Hellenistic and the Roman periods. The Greek geographer Strabo (1<sup>st</sup> century AD–1<sup>st</sup> century BC) mentions Derbe as the headquarters during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC of a local chieftain named Antipater Derbetes, who also controlled the nearby city of Laranda. (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 175-176)

The city has a biblical significance since it was one of the cities visited by Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey. It sat on a major route connecting Iconium to Laranda and was about 60 miles from Lystra. Paul and Barnabas fled to Derbe and Lystra on his first missionary journey when city officials of Iconium plotted to stone them (Acts 14:6-21). Paul does not mention suffering any persecution in Derbe (2 Tim 3:11) <http://www.bibleplaces.com/derbelystra.htm>. They preached the good news

in Derbe and were very successful. They made many converts and disciples in that city. After this, Paul and Barnabas travelled back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening and encouraging the disciples in each city to continue in the faith. <http://unbound.biola.edu/acts/index.cfm?lang=English&item=derbe1>. Acts 14:20-21 briefly describes their visit to the city after they had preached in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. Acts 16:1 simply mentions that Paul visited the city, without giving any details of what took place during the second visit. During this third journey, one of Paul's travelling companions was a native of Derbe, a man named Gaius (Acts 19:29, 20:4). (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 175-176)

The ancient Derbe has almost vanished today. A few inscriptions, coins and literary references and an unexcavated mound stand (Fant and Reddish, 2003: 174). Derbe Church is one of the Christian churches that was first built in the world. It was built 13 years before the Church of Virgin Mary in Ephesus (built in the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD). The ruins of Derbe Church, which was built by Paul and Barnabas, are still underground the Kerti Hoyuk today (Bingol, 2007: 468).

## **Conclusion**

Cultural tourism can be defined as the making of ancient or contemporary cultures a product for tourism. With faith tourism this time ancient or contemporary religions, the lifestyles, places and all rituals over worshipping connected with these belief systems will be products for tourism. Since religions are one of the most important aspects of cultures, faith tourism is naturally counted within cultural tourism.

Believers of different religions visit holy places of their religion to become a pilgrim or to see the magical places where the events described in sacred texts have occurred. By this way they are able to fully comprehend and see through the tenets in their holy books. Visits made with these instincts are the starting points of the faith tourism movement. Turkey, with its wealthy cultural legacy of different religions, is one of the outstanding destinations of these holy visits.

There is no doubt that Turkey has an outstanding potential in terms of sun, sea and sand tourism. But these three elements of tourism are also abundant in the entire Mediterranean region. Turkey needs to use its cultural and faith tourism potential as competitive tools to make a difference. Tourism efforts need to be focused on this area.

Konya, hosting Mevlana Museum, theological schools, mosques, churches and footprints of Saint Paul has an important faith tourism potential both in terms of Islam and Christianity. Christian pilgrims are visiting Konya



to experience biblical sites of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Even though Derbe is not within the provincial borders of Konya, it is a nearby destination.

Today there are not many structures standing from the times of Saint Paul in Konya, Derbe and Lystra. There are very few monuments and an unexcavated mound in Lystra. The ancient Derbe has almost vanished today and ruins of the city are still underground the mound. Monasteries and churches of early Christianity in Sillye are destroyed and little has been standing from those times. Nevertheless this situation doesn't change the biblical significance of these places. They are still holy and believers are visiting these places to breathe the spiritual atmosphere here. But the number of these visits is not in sufficient number compared to their biblical significances. One of the reasons of this case is the lack of standing structures of early Christianity as mentioned above. Another one is the lack of presentation. And the lack of information about the biblical history of these places is also another problem.

Konya has a capacity of accommodation in sufficient number. Even though there aren't direct international flights, with its airport Konya has an advantage of transport by airline for international connecting flights. Gathering its advantages of transportation and accommodation with its potential of biblical sites can be a starting point to make Konya a destination of faith tourism for Christian tourists. Suggestions can be specified as follows;

- Excavation and rescue works can be conducted or ongoing ones can be accelerated to uncover hidden richness of Derbe and Lystra,

- Existing churches and monasteries can be restored such as Aya Elenia Museum,

  - Ruins of churches and monasteries can be protected,

  - Roads connecting Konya city centre to biblical sites can be improved,

  - Books and other documentary can be published to gather the information about history of Konya in terms of its biblical significance,

  - These printed materials can be used as a promotion tool both for suppliers of faith tourism and for visitors,

  - Guides must be given enough training and information,

  - Since there are not many structures standing today; films, animations and slides can be prepared to animate the atmosphere of ancient times of Iconium and the travels of Saint Paul,

  - Exhibition centres can be constructed in Lystra, Kilistra, Sillye and Derbe to display both printed and visual materials,

  - Konya must be included into package tours of faith tourism that are themed of travels of Saint Paul,

  - Tourist who visit the holy Christian places also want to pray sometimes in the antique churches. Konya has an advantage to meet this

desire. Even though its not antique the Church of St. Paul in Konya city centre and Aya Elenia Church in Sille can serve to Christians who want to pray during their visits. But these places can be increased in number by restoring antique sancturies,

Researches show that there is a direct proportion between participation in faith tours and age. Faith tourism can be planned in coordination with the tourism of the third age group. Members of this age group can be channelled into faith tourism and services can be provided by taking into consideration the special conditions of this age group,

Culture of tolerance to other cultures and faiths must be instilled to locals.

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