

WESTERN IMMIGRATION IN THE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY GOLDEN HORDE: THE CASE OF VENETIAN TANA

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Abstract: *Objective:* This paper's aim is to reconstruct the Western population of Venetian Tana in the fourteenth century, the residents' perception of their condition as "migrants", and finally this population's interactions with the other communities who lived there.

Research materials: The sources used are primarily the notarial deeds of the Venice State Archive together with the vast and excellent scholarship produced in recent decades.

Research results and novelty: For over two centuries the settlement of Tana, situated in the territory of the Golden Horde, represented the easternmost outpost of the Latin *emporium* in the Levant. Here, the utilitarian concept of the Western urban mercantile class found itself confronted with a new experience. This group was a minority living in close contact with larger, cohesive communities whose cultural background was extremely diverse.

Those who emigrated east were mainly the emerging urban bourgeoisie, but also families of ancient noble origin who had nothing in common with the world of the Steppe and its traditional roots. These citizens came to the Levant, bringing with them the urban associative model. The life of the settlement at the mouth of the river Don is an ideal basis for observing the flow of people who left Venice and its surroundings on galleys and, after months of travel, arrived on the shores of the Sea of Azov.

Keywords: Venice, Tana, Mongols, History of Trade, Black Sea, Sea of Azov, Medieval History

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1. The context

As the easternmost outpost of the entire Latin system of commerce in the Levant, fourteenth century Tana was a key trading centre with the Baltic and the Far East. The settlement was situated on the Mongol trade route to East Asia that began in Crimea, turned north up to the Gobi Desert, and ended in Beijing [24, p. 92–93; 41, p. 33]¹. Despite being a lengthy route, it presented few dangers or technical obstacles compared to the two alternative central and southern routes. The latter was almost entirely a maritime route, from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, and from the Indian Ocean to China. The journey took at least two years and so was

¹ Using Pegolotti's handbook and the *Nottario di più chose*, published by Bautier, it is possible to locate the most important trading posts along this route: from Tana it took twenty-five days to reach Astrakhan, followed by a day's walk to Sarai; from Sarai it led to Urgench, then to Utrar, Almalyg, and finally to China (Quinsai and Cambaliq) [14, p. 21; 10, p. 286].

very costly. The central route was the shortest: to Persia by sea, overland from Tabriz to Mashhad in northeastern Iran, then up to Merv and on towards Samarkand; the route passed through the Pamir Mountains and the Gobi Desert, after which it reached China. This route also presented risks due to the morphology of the landscape, which proved rather hostile for the traveller.

The war that took place during the 1260s between the Ilkhanate and the Egypt of the Mamluks changed the political climate of the eastern Mediterranean region [1, especially p. 202–213]. The trade routes that led to the heart of Asia underwent modifications. Trade relations between the Latin West and the Muslim world deteriorated further following the ban on trade with the Islamic world issued by the Pope after the fall of Acre in 1291 and the consequent boycott of the port of Alexandria, the primary hub of the Mediterranean maritime system [8, p. 116]. So, while the southern route, preferable to the others in terms of time and cost, became increasingly clogged because of the closures we have just mentioned, the central one suffered from the same impediment and from the state of constant conflict between the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde. It was the safer and less expensive northern route that became the most popular. The Italian cities soon understood that the ports of the Sea of Azov could potentially become highly profitable trading bases and, from the second half of the thirteenth century, began to focus ever-increasing resources in this region.

2. *The Venetian settlement*

As early as the end of the thirteenth century, Tana was indeed a primary centre for the collection and sorting of goods heading to the Western market from both the markets of the north and those of Transoxiana [3, p. 151].

During the last two decades of the thirteenth century, Tana was regularly filled with Genoese merchants (the first Genoese consul was Ansaldo Spinola, active there in 1304) [3, p. 151]. Venice obtained the first concessions from Uzbek Khan of the Golden Horde in 1332². The treaty of the following year granted Venetians the right to live in Tana, to build houses, and to own a piece of land spanning from “behind the Church of the hospital up to river, upon which houses may be built” (“retro hospitalis ecclesiam usque ad littus Tenis fluvij locum lutosum, ut abitantes domos hedificent” [47, p. 233]). The previous year, the Venetian Consulate had been established in Tana, with the agreement expressly stipulating that the consul would receive 30 lire di grossi a year until the completion of his residence: “donec domus sue habitationis fuerit completa”. After which time, he will keep the house and his salary will be cut³ [47, p. 249–250. The date given by Thomas – 8 February 1334 – is wrong]. It appears, then, that the consul’s home was well-built, to the extent that his income was affected to the tune of 5 lire di grossi a year, or fifty ducats [47, p. 125–128].

With a resolution of 18 February 1333, the Senate approved the request of the consul and his council to reclaim and fortify a part of the land granted by Uzbek; over an area of 379 paces, 160 were permitted to be fortified, not a great deal in actual fact. During this time, both Genoa and Venice were expanding their areas in

² Scholarship on the origin of Tana is vast. For a general picture see the following: [8; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 37; 41].

³ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, hereinafter ASV, Senato Misti, XV, folios 57v and 58r.

Tana. The resolution adds that the land will be fortified (“*elevari faciat in illa altitude*”) and that stone houses will have to be built, of which one is to be used for the consul and the others to accommodate the merchants who will live there (“*qui erunt ibidem*” [47, p. 251]). It is evident, therefore, that the organisation of the mercantile community in Tana was in the planning stage.

The consul was responsible for the settlement and the safety of Venetian citizens living in Tana, who, in turn, were not permitted to reside anywhere outside of the fortification that encircled the Venetian area of jurisdiction. Stone houses appeared early on, right from the time of Uzbek’s first granting of land.

In the privilege conferred before the clashes of 1343 [for a general picture of the subject, see: 20] and signed by the Venetian ambassadors, Quirino and Pietro Giustiniani, with Janibek, the latter grant to the city and its merchants the opportunity to live in Tana and build houses for themselves, so that they “can live in Tana in complete safety” (“*possint stare et habitare secure in dicta terra Tane*” [47, p. 262–263]). The document also adds that the settlement can extend toward the hill (*versus montem*), where Venetian citizens will be able to build freely [47, p. 263].

After the clashes of 1343 and the prohibition of movement in the region imposed by the Mongols, the Venetians asked Janibek if they could return to Tana under the terms of previous agreements (“*segundo li primi comandamenti*”), but Janibek’s concession was rather more modest: only a hundred paces in length and seventy in width [47, p. 341]. The papers covering the union between Genoa and Venice for returning to Tana, which cover a relatively long period of time from February 1344 to January 1348, contain a new clause. The consul would have the right to demand 1 percent on all transactions carried out by Venetian merchants in the region. The money would go towards reparations for the clashes of 1343 and the building of new houses [47, p. 341].

After the interruption of the Venetian-Genoese war of the 1350s [34, p. 201–217; 22, p. 260–261], Venice gained the port of Provato “*o citade nova*”. During these years, the Lord of Crimea Ramadan, a Mongol official under the orders of the Khan of the Golden Horde, was the one who authorised his Western interlocutors to establish a consul in the small settlement and put house builders at the disposal of the Venetians.

The pact concluded between Venice and the new khan of the Golden Horde Berdibeg (24 September 1358) refers to the cities of the Mongol *ulus* using, for the first time, the term *citade* [47, p. 48: Needing to inform all local officials of the Tamga granted to the Venetians, Berdibeg says: “*A signori de Tumane... e ali signori dele citade, e a tutti li officiali...*”: “*To the Lords of Tumane...and to the Lords of the cities, and to all officials...*”]. A little later in the same document it states that anyone who “*fara dano, e in la riva de lo mar, e alo povolo de li Mogolli, e ali casali dali Veniciani franchi*”: “*causes damage, on the coastline, or to the Mongol people, or to the homesteads of the Frank Venetians*” [48, p. 49] would be punished accordingly. However, the use of *casale* gives rise to a degree of ambiguity in this case. The term is often used by Western sources to indicate a small centre of habitation consisting of a few dwellings and situated within larger administrative units [14, p. 22: Pegolotti also mentions this when referring to the journey from Tana to China]. We find, for example, a Mongol (most likely a Cuman, or at least of Turkish origin), Jovedi Bech di Conhabaga, “*de Casale Oleth de Cen-*

tenarius Chozerch in districtu Tane”⁴; Donna Ocholinat, the wife of a certain Dmitrij “de Casale Jusbeymammat de Rusia”⁵ and Apanas di Costa “de Casale Bosanzi Imperii Gazarie”⁶.

In these middle years of the fourteenth century, Tana was divided into different areas; the Venetian and Genoese sectors, and the Mongol one where the local governor resided. Each of these districts – a designation that we use conventionally, but that makes little sense in Tana’s case – housed communities that were highly diverse in terms of ethnicity and language. The Genoese and Venetian areas were enclosed by fortifications that were unlikely to be made of stone, but most probably consisted of wooden fences, as expressly indicated in certain documents.

The settlement was relatively small with a significantly diverse urban layout. The Venetian part had a focal point consisting of the consul’s house and the loggia, below which the notary worked⁷. The acts of the notary Benedetto Bianco indicate the presence of two Franciscan churches, St. Mary’s⁸ and St. Francis’s⁹, a church dedicated to St. James¹⁰ and one to St. Raphael¹¹. The Venetian *emporium* consisted of a good number of stone houses. Benedetto Bianco mentions twenty-one of them¹², whilst another is referred to in a will drafted by another Venetian notary, Marco Marcello, on 1 July 1366¹³. There were also areas, outside the Venetian and Genoese settlement, inhabited by distinct ethnic communities: the *contrata grecorum*¹⁴, and the *curia* or *contrata armenorum*¹⁵. In addition, there was a *contrata judeorum* where Leonardo Marino lived, who sold a Tartar slave to Ognibene di Verona, the act being drafted by the notary, Francesco di Boninsegna di Strada di Mantova¹⁶. There were, then, Venetians who lived in the Jewish quarter, and this does not appear to be an isolated case.

⁴ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/102, where centenary should be understood as the military subdivision supplying one hundred men. The register of notary Benedetto Bianco has been recently published (*regesti*) in an excellent book by F. Pucci Donati [cfr. 39].

⁵ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/125.

⁶ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/135.

⁷ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/3: *in lobio consulis veneciarum*; I/116, 119: *in lobio nostri civitatis veneciarum*; I/162: *sub lobio nostri civitatis veneciarum in Tana ad bancho mei notari*.

⁸ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, wills/4 of 21 July 1362, wills/9 of 30 July 1362, wills/11 of 1 August 1362 and wills/19 of 22 May 1363. Tana also had a cemetery dedicated to St. Mary where Paoletta, wife of Pietro di Bologna, wants to be buried (ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, Reg. II/120).

⁹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/162.

¹⁰ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, loose scroll no. 5 of 1361, reg. II/17 of 23 November 1362, where Andalò Basso, a Genoese *mercator in Tana*, wants to be buried, wills/3 of 23 July 1362, wills/9, of 30 July 1362.

¹¹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/136.

¹² ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/5, 6, 55, 64, 72, 75, 88, 101, 114, 141, 144, 145, 160, 187, 188, 251; wills/3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

¹³ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 117, no. 133. Also ASV, CI, Miscellanea, Notai Diversi, busta 134bis, Slave Contracts, 11 July 1366. The notary, Francesco di Boninsegna, works “in domo Bartolomeis Lonatino de Venecis”.

¹⁴ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/92, 153.

¹⁵ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/209.

¹⁶ ASV, CI, Miscellanea, Notai Diversi, busta 134bis, Slave Contracts, 11 July 1366. The agreement is drafted “in domo Bartolomeis Lonatino” of Venice.

One area of the settlement, known as the *contrata Piscis*, was inhabited mainly by indigenous merchants¹⁷. There was a road that wound through the entire inhabited area, both inside and outside of the fortification, and then ran down to the river's edge. The house of Francesco di Segna, for example, on its western side bordered the road leading down to the river ("cum viam que discurit ad flumen")¹⁸; while Niccolò Baseggio gave a proxy to Bartolomeo Loredan to sell his house situated "in Tana in territorio nostri civitatis", which, on its western side skirted the road leading to the port¹⁹.

In addition to the territory delimited by the fortification, there was another area under Venetian control outside it that the consul had not agreed to fortify, but that appears to have been reclaimed, since there is evidence that there were houses situated there. On 17 September 1359 Ambrogio di Bologna gave a proxy to Benedetto di Romagna and Costantino Greco di Candia "to build as he sees fit on his territory and in market, the gate, here in Tana, on the territory of our commune"²⁰. On 22 September of the same year, Francesco Balbo, a Venetian, sold three houses to Daniele and Andreolo Bragadin, also Venetians, in the Venetian territory of Tana²¹. To the south they bordered with the *territorio et domo* of Ser Tommaso Bon, to the north with the *territorio* of Ser Leonardo Contarini, while their western sides constituted the limit of the Venetian territory outside the fortification ("versus Ponente firmat super confines dicti territorij nostri civitatis").

On 9 September 1360, Marino Rosso and Bartolomeo Bembo, Venetians and *habitatores in Tana*, went before the notary to form a company for the opening of a tavern²². The *tabernarius* (tavern keeper) was also Ianinixium, an Alan who lived precisely *prope balneum allanorum in Tana*²³. During these years, there does not appear to have been a port in Tana; ships had to dock inland, in the widest branch of the river²⁴.

In the 1390s, Tana was attacked by the army of Tamerlane and the settlement went through a period of decline which, however, did not appear to discourage the activities of the Western merchants. From a material point of view, the settlement appears to have undergone substantial changes in the early fifteenth century. On 10 May 1408, Luca di Firenze went before the notary Moretto Bon to make a will in which he left all his property to the school of St. Anthony [11, p. 29], a building that is not found in the documentation of the mid-fourteenth century. In this early part of the century, there is also evidence of a square next to which was the home of Ottaviano Bon, while on the square itself stood that of Nicholas Dedo, who pledged it as collateral to Geronimo Bedolotto for a loan of 450 bezants of Tana

¹⁷ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/3.

¹⁸ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/6.

¹⁹ "Super via communa que discurit ad marina", ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/72.

²⁰ "hedificandi et laborandi ad omnes ipsorum libitum super quadam suo territorio et fora portam hic in Tana in territorium nostri communis et fossam aptandi et aptata vel laborata affitandi et diffitandi", ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/27.

²¹ "copertas et discopertas [. . .] loco pertinentibus et expectantibus in suprascripto loco Tane in districtum territorij nostri civitatis", ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/55.

²² ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/209.

²³ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, wills/17.

²⁴ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/42, 48, 69, 79, 108, 218, 224, 226, 247, 250; wills/10; and reg. II/35, 44. Of the same opinion Balard [3, p. 154].

[35, p. 45–46]. The public thoroughfare connected the drawbridge (“sive pontem levatorium” [35, p. 103]) and ran through the entire settlement [35, p. 54, 62–63 and 64–65]; it went past the baths and over a bridge linking the banks of the territory through which flowed a minor branch of the Don delta. Another common thoroughfare ran from the square to the heights, which sources refer to as the *monte saracenorum* [35, p. 57–58, 86–87]. The Venetian settlement had a moat that overlooked the Genoese area (“fossis et spalancato comunis quod est a parte versus territorium ianuensium” [35, p. 54–55, 64, 83, 86, 94]). On 30 June 1415, Niccolò Testa di Bologna bought two houses from Costanzo Rafanello situated “super ponte, quo itur ad portam superiorem” [35, p. 83]. The Genoese and Venetian settlements were linked by the public thoroughfare which, from the square, ran over the bridge. Along its northern edge it bordered with the house that Benedetto Emo, the Venetian consul of Tana, put up for public auction on 17 September 1415 [35, p. 86–87]. There were clear spaces where one was able to build, as in the case of the territory owned by Giorgio Giustiniani [35, p. 103–104].

In 1415 there was a church consecrated to St. Mark [35, p. 123, 125–129] that housed a school dedicated to St. Mary and St. Anthony [35, p. 125–129, 131–132, 137–138], along with one church dedicated to St. Francis [35, p. 134–135, 140–143] and one to St. Dominic. To the latter belonged friar Antonio, of the order of Preachers, whom Lorenzo del Nieno from Vicenza, in his will, appointed to say a mass in his suffrage when he died [35, p. 121–123; the same request is made by Giorgio di Durazzo].

At this point in time, the ships docking in Tana are no longer described as being *in flumine*²⁵, but *ad pontem Tane* [35, p. 102]. The school of St. Mary and St. Anthony also appears in the will of Andrea Giustiniani, drafted in Tana in April 1424²⁶. Andrea Giustiniani was a merchant who owned a house on the Sea of Azov, and wanted to be buried in the church of St. Dominic (also present in Tana since the beginning of the century).

3. The Western population: Migrants for profit?

The documentation we have presents an unbalanced perspective. Individuals coming from Italian cities make up the vast majority. The Venetians were predominant among them, of course, but there was also a significant presence from Tuscany, Florence, Pistoia and Lucca. Other cities of the Veneto and the North Adriatic riviera were also well represented. The scarce presence of French and Catalan merchants, who were very active both before and after this period, is probably due to the fact that a large part of the documentation we are using was produced after the Venetians’ return to Tana in the wake of the war with Genoa.

Of the 777 people identified in Tana between 1359 and 1366, a total of 382 (49.16 percent) were from Venice. Three-hundred and seven of them were Venetians whose *contrada* (district) of origin is expressly indicated, a total of 80.36 percent. Not many individuals came from the territory of Venice or cities of the Veneto: there was one Giovanni from Murano, six from Padova, two from Treviso,

²⁵ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 117, no. 133. Also ASV, CI, Miscellanea, Notai Diversi, busta 134bis, Slave Contracts, 11 July 1366. The notary, Francesco di Boninsegna, works “in domo Bartolomeis Lonatino de Venecis”.

²⁶ ASV, PSM, Citra Commissarie, busta 92.

eight from Verona and a Negrello from Vicenza. Many people came from the cities of northern Italy, those that had regular trade relations with Venice: Asti, Cuneo, Pordenone, Piacenza, Cesena, Fano, Ferrara, Forlì, Bologna, and a Giovanni from Milan. Many were merchants of Tuscan origin; sources reveal seven from Lucca, whose presence is most certainly linked to the silk trade. The first Lucchese community in Venice was established in 1314. In the 1350s and 60s there was a regular increase in the production of silk in Venice [29, p. 39]. The Lucchese community of the Venice lagoon soon began to sail on the Venetian galleys of the Levant to Tana, where they could buy silk of high quality at relatively low prices [12, p. 209–210, 214–225; 25, p. 26–27 and 6].

Florentine merchants were also present in large numbers. Political and economic relations between Florence and Venice at the height of the fourteenth century were growing closer. As early as the end of the fourteenth century Venice had a *Universitas mercatorum florentinorum* with a consul at its head [on this see: 32]. The Florentine community in Venice was extensive and the citizenship rights granted *de extra* by the Venetian republic in these years fuelled economic migration.

More curious is the fact that the documentation includes seven Pistoians. In fact, since the early years of the thirteenth century, Pistoia had built a solid commercial network with the cities of northern Italy [38, p. 53–54]. In particular, there were bankers from Pistoia in Bologna who exploited the university city's international role as a seat of learning [15, p. 186–187]. There were highly developed trade relations with the cities beyond the Alps and the commercial centres of southern France, particularly Marseille and Nice. The merchants of Pistoia had to make up for the lack of an outlet to the sea with the means at their disposal, in other words, agreements with maritime cities. Pisa was the first to establish the preferred means of transport of Tuscan merchants. With the decline of Pisa's power, the merchants of Pistoia began sailing on the ships of the cities that in the fourteenth century ruled the waves of the Mediterranean: Genoa and Venice. The Pistoian presence in Tana should come as no surprise, then, nor should the fact that they had arrived on Romanian galleys of the Venetian republic. In 1363, on 6 September, one Tommaso Sismondi paid 18 sommi of debt he had with Jacopo Valaresso²⁷, showing that there was also a Pisan in Tana.

During these years, the prevailing political situation in the Italian peninsula marginalised vast areas of the south of the country, meaning that the presence of southern Italian merchants was scarce and limited to the commercial centres of the Adriatic. For example, we have a Giovanni known as *Mezzaglia de Apulia*, and Jacopo and Francesco di Fano, but nothing else²⁸.

The Venetians were allowed to return to Tana in 1358. Many Genoese came before our notaries. Trade relations between the two communities therefore resumed immediately after the expiry of the *devetum*. The political events played out on an international scale between the two republics had delayed, and perhaps insignificant, repercussions on the progress of their representatives' relationship abroad. Venetian-Genoese rivalry was rather more muted in Tana. During these difficult years, the need to re-establish a solid relationship in the face of a state of profound insecurity generated by the violent implosion of the power structure in

²⁷ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. II/20.

²⁸ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, loose sheets/5; reg. I/90; reg. II/64.

the Golden Horde prevailed over all else. The numbers are pretty clear about this: 8.19 percent of the population found in Venetian sources was of Genoese origin (sixty-two people). In addition, thirteen people arrived on Genoese ships or came from Black Sea settlements where they lived under the jurisdiction of Genoa, six from Pera, six from Caffa and one from Pavia.

The Venetian families living in Tana came largely from the urban aristocracy. Some of them belonged to the Doge's sphere, others had held public office for decades, while others were still part of the newly emerging ruling class. People from lower social strata were also present in significant numbers. In the documentation, we find eighteen Contarinis, ten Cornaros, eight Veniers, six Bragadins, seven Bembos, five Morosinis, five Giustinianis, four Zenos, four Emos, four Zacharias, four Loredans, three Baseggios, two Badoers, two Faliers, three Gradonicos, two Michiels, and two Dandolos. Among the Genoese we find six Di Negros, four Piccamiglios, two Spinolas, two Stellas, two Imperiales and one Balbo. These families had a well-established presence on the Black Sea; as early as the end of the thirteenth century in Caffa the names that appeared were more or less the same [3, p. 235–236]. Different families performed different roles and occupations. Although nine out of eighteen belonging to the Contarini family bore the title of *nobile viro domino*, three of them were “only” merchants, while Jacopo, after a brief interlude as a trader, was appointed by the Serenissima as Venetian consul of Tana, replacing Pietro Caravello in 1361²⁹. The financial resources of some of the prominent families we find on the Sea of Azov are confirmed in notarial acts. On 2 September 1359, Luca Contarini and Micheletto Steno bought a ship, contributing 100 gold ducats each³⁰. In September of the same year, Luca bought three houses in Tana paying 10 silver sommi³¹. On 4 September 1359, Pietro Morosini gave a proxy to Niccolò Spinola to collect 30 silver sommi owed to him by Vittorio Pisani (the future consul of Tana)³².

Most Venetian families maintained privileged internal relations but, as already mentioned, the exchange between people of different backgrounds was a necessity. This happened not only among people who spoke the same language, but also among foreigners. We have already seen that Pietro Morosini gave a proxy to Niccolò Spinola; Jacopo Contarini did the same with Giovanni Vassallo, *civis Januae*, to recover a debt of 40 silver sommi³³. When Niccolò Baseggio sold to Coza (a Saracen) a boat (a *ziguda*) named S. Antonio – which in that moment was in the river of Tana – one of the two witnesses was Francesco di Pando³⁴, a Genoese, perhaps to guarantee impartiality in a transaction between foreign persons. On 8 November 1359, a group of three Genoese merchants went into business with Giuliano di Contrada, a Venetian from the parish of St. Agatha, thus becoming jointly and severally liable towards creditors³⁵. On 15 November of the same year, Ottobono Piccamiglio lent 42 silver sommi to Ser Jacopo Contini, a Venetian from

²⁹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/63.

³⁰ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, loose sheets/4.

³¹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/55. 10 sommi were equal to about 45 gold ducats [27, p. 225–228].

³² ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, loose sheets/5.

³³ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/63.

³⁴ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/69.

³⁵ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/79.

San Giuliano. The loan was granted for 42 *sarzarorum*. He seized 50 barrels of wine (*vini Turpie*) from the cellar (*fovea*) of Bertuzio Ziurano that were still full (*non stazados*)³⁶. Even more interesting is the act drafted by Benedetto Bianco on 30 December with which Giovanni di Benedetto – a Venetian – signed an agreement with Teodora, widow of Giorgio *Januensis* di Soldaia, according to which she was permitted to live in the same house as Giovanni and *cum omnibus suis vestibibus*³⁷. Furthermore, on 22 May 1360, Giovanni della Maddalena, a Genoese, and *burgensis Caffè*, rented his ship to Francesco di S. Giovanni Nuovo, a Venetian merchant, so that he could go to Porto Pisano (on the western coast of the Sea of Azov) with a load of 500 moggia of grain *ad modium Constantinopoli*. The Genoese of Caffa demanded a rather high rental fee (18 gold ducats) for this³⁸. There are many more examples that could be used here³⁹.

The somewhat intense business relations among “Italians” reveal a well-developed interaction between all the individuals that made up the population of the settlement. Domenico, a Florentine merchant, was very active in the slave trade. He sold them to anyone who asked and is shown to have registered a remarkable turnover; just in September 1359, he made 14,449 aspers by selling twenty-three slaves⁴⁰. Not surprisingly, we find Domenico himself lending money on 30 October 1359, flush with his recent profits⁴¹.

The social cohesion between the different Venetian families is strong, but it is generally forged among compatriots. When, on 19 October 1362, Manuele de Guarnieri made a will, the appointed witnesses and trustees were all Genoese, and the same happened with the will of Andreolo de Multa, also a Genoese⁴². But there are cases of close, even physical, connections between members of different groups; in the act in which Simone da Lione paid a debt he had with Gasparino Superanzio, present as witnesses were Teodoro di Costantinopoli, Suso di Ancona and Marco di Candia⁴³. Similarly, when Leonardo Bembo instructed his brother Bartolomeo to rent the houses he had in Tana – apart from *domo de novo hedificata* – he imposed no restrictions on who could be the tenant⁴⁴.

It is not uncommon to find members of a family doing business with others of the same lineage; but, as we have seen, this was not the rule, nor very common. In particular, in cases where the object of the act was a proxy, the subjects were often Venetians, but we also find Pietro Morosini giving a proxy to Niccolò Spinola to collect a debt; Jacopo Contarini gave a proxy to Giovanni Vassallo for the purchase of wine⁴⁵. Cases where two or more people came from other cities and did not have institutional representatives *in loco* are those where the bond of solidarity appears

³⁶ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/81.

³⁷ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/88.

³⁸ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/115.

³⁹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/91, 95, 103, 105, 107, 113, 118, 119, 124, 170, 198, 218, 249; wills/11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18; reg. II/18, 27, 28, 31, 36, 38, 41, 42, 48, 50, 51, 53, 57, 59, 61, 63, 84, 102, 103, 106, 109.

⁴⁰ Considering the exchange rate between the silver asper of Tana and the Venetian gold ducat is 1/43.5, one arrives at a huge amount: 413 ducats.

⁴¹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/85.

⁴² ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, wills/14 and 15.

⁴³ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/114.

⁴⁴ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/251.

⁴⁵ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/5 and 63.

to be strongest. For example, Giorgio di Trebisonda gave a proxy to Bandetto di Trebisonda⁴⁶.

A huge number of acts were signed between blood relatives: Pietro Caravello and his son Luca, Jacopo Steno and his son Marco, Giovanni Baldovino and his son Pietro, Bartolomeo Loredan and his brother Alessandro, Rizzardo De Riva and his brother Antonio, Nicoletto Superanzio and his brother Marino, Manfredi di Brizolo and his brother Giovanni, Agabito da Prato and his brother Manfredo, Francesco and his brother Nicoletto di Bora, Gerardo Barbafella and his wife Caterina, Jacopo Contarini and his wife Cristina Bon, Smeralda wife of Magistro Marco, Martina wife of Experto Cumano, and so on.

In the second half of the fourteenth century in Tana, the vast majority of inhabitants were Venetians coming from the city itself. In the 1360s, the presence in Tana of people from outlying areas or districts of Venice was scarce. This may have been due to a wide range of contributing factors, one being that the very nature of Venice's economic organisation, entirely unlike that of Genoa, concentrated commercial initiative in the hands of the state and was a system less open to the outside. This point has been debated extensively and needs no further discussion. It should, however, be remembered that the historical period we are talking about was a time of both political and economic crisis. Within this general framework, the peculiar situation of Venice should be noted. As for much of the European West, the thirteenth century was a period of development culminating in the demographic explosion and economic growth at the turn of the century. Venice also played a leading role in this process and managed to penetrate the mainland, where it firmly established the presence of some of its most eminent families. There are also cases of Venetian Podestà who served in mainland cities such as Bologna, Padua, Florence and Mantua. The expansion on the mainland was concentrated in particular in the provinces of Padua and Treviso, and in the northern part of the territory of Ferrara. This partly explains the huge presence of non-Venetians in Tana from Bologna, Florence, Padua, Verona, Ferrara, and so on. Many of these cities were located in the Po Valley and had regular contact with Venice. In fact, the decline that all European countries faced in those years also hit Venice and the documentation we are examining here – with the exception of some documents of the fifteenth century – comes out of this situation, having been written between 1359 and 1366. Finally, to this general framework, we must add a further element unique to Venice. Between the peace of Milan in 1355 and the fourth war with Genoa, Venice underwent a period of crisis in foreign policy; these were the years when it lost Dalmatia to Hungary and a number of cities in the Veneto that would not surrender to its rule. Only Treviso and Zara capitulated during the rule of Doge Andrea Dandolo (1343–1354).

4. *Building home away from home: Tana for the Westerners*

Of the 777 people identified in the Venetian documentation produced in Tana between 1359 and 1366, over 200 describe themselves as *habitor Tane*, in other words permanent residents. The acts of Benedetto Bianco show 652 people, including slaves, of whom 115 are described as *habitor Tane* [22, p. 16]. Sixty-two describe themselves as *ad presens habitator in Tana* and their city of origin is exp-

⁴⁶ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/127.

licitly indicated. The rest are regular or occasional visitors who are resident elsewhere (both in their city of origin, Venice or Genoa, and in areas around Tana, Porto Pisan⁴⁷, Caffa, Smisso, or other ports of Pontus, like Mesembria, Monemvasia and Constantinople, or the lands of the Golden Horde). It is difficult to estimate the population of the settlement as the data we have comes exclusively from Western sources and it is quite obvious that mainly Venetians used the services of Venetian notaries, while Mongols or Muslims of other origin preferred to consult people who spoke their language (or actually never used a notary). In the few surviving acts of the Venetian notary Marco Marcella, drafted in Tana between 1362 and 1367, there are eight *habitatores Tane* out of over thirty names. In this case, too, the number is not a high one.

In both Genoese and Venetian sources, there are rare cases in which a Westerner is described as *civis* or *burgenses Tane*⁴⁸, but *habitor* is the most common definition. In other words, this is a statement of fact rather than a legal status. Nor did this state of affairs change in the first decades of the fifteenth century. Even those who settled for long periods in Tana emphasised their allegiance to the motherland. So, for the Westerners who lived there, Tana appeared to represent an *emporium*, a commercial establishment and little more. The Western presence in the city on the Azov was effectively tied directly to the will of the Mongols. The dimensions attained by Caffa and its substantial political independence from the Tatars were never seen in Tana. However, there are cases that should be approached with caution in this regard. On 4 September 1359, Francesco di Segna – *civis venecianus habitator in Tana* – demanded money from Nicoletto de Toris, he too *habitor in Tana*, for a consignment of wine, with de Toris mortgaging the house he had in Tana “super marina in districtu territori nostri civitatis” to pay his creditor⁴⁹. Our notary, too, claimed to operate “in lobio nostri civitatis”⁵⁰.

All the evidence points to the fact that *nostra civitas* in the sources is Venice and not Tana. The settlement on the Sea of Azov is therefore never called *civitas* by those contemporaries whose written memory is the subject of our investigation. Those who lived there felt part of a community, they were *habitatores Tane*, but they had an image of the place that did not extend to citizenship. It appears from the sources examined that this was the result of an ambiguous perception that acknowledged a collective power, whose authority stretched across the entire community (the consul), although it was severely limited by another power from outside that community (the Mongol governor). The sovereignty of the Khan of the Golden Horde was indisputable in the region, but it was expressed, *more mongalorum*, through the local officials, who exercised power on behalf and in the name of the Khan. This authority was theoretically the same for all foreign communities; the sense of collective belonging remained based in the citizenship of the motherland even when far away from it (a Genoese in Tana was still Genoese and saw Venetians as Venetian).

⁴⁷ This, of course, refers to the area on the right bank of the Don, near Tana. Today it is Siniavka.

⁴⁸ One of the few cases in which the attribute *burgensis* appears is that of Domino Giovanni Testa, originally from Pistoia, who is described as *civis venecianus, burgensis Tane et mercator in dicto loco* (ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/182).

⁴⁹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/6.

⁵⁰ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19, reg. I/116; 119; 121; 162.

From the mid-fourteenth century, the residence of Western merchants reached a relatively stable level. Describing oneself as a *habitor* demonstrates this and shows, in my opinion, an increased familiarity with the place. It constituted a supportive community for them, to which they felt they belonged, but with which they above all shared the status of immigrant – albeit temporarily – far away from the reality in which they were *cives* in all respects. For the commercial establishments of the Levant we cannot, I think, use the category of *habitor* or *civis* in terms of the exclusive privileges they were granted; the tax breaks enjoyed by Venetian and Genoese merchants in the trading settlements were directly dependent on the will of the Khan, so if Venice signed a treaty with the Khan of the Golden Horde, its provisions applied to all Venetian merchants in Tana, as well as those who, though not Venetian, sailed on Venetian ships. We must bear in mind that, in the Western settlements of Tana, the population consisted largely of merchants, people whose presence was instrumental to a smooth operation, and all infrastructure was functional to that context. So the consul's duties were strictly tied to the needs of a community of merchants whose presence in the *emporium* was often of short duration. The powers granted to the official for the maintenance of public order were kept to a minimum. We do not have sufficient documentation to look further into this, but we can imagine that such a close presence of the Mongol governor severely limited the powers of the Venetian or Genoese authorities *in loco*.

The condition of *habitor* was, as we said, a de facto status alongside the legal term *civis*. Many names whose origins can be identified come before Benedetto Bianco. As well as the obvious predominance of Venetians, there is a huge presence from Tuscany (Florence, Pistoia and Lucca), Piacenza and the Veneto (Verona, Padua and Treviso). All are described as *cives venecianos* but, whereas the border town, contrada and city parish of origin are indicated for native Venetians, this is clearly not the case for the others. Maffeo Morosini was a *civis venecianus de confinio S. Canciani*⁵¹, but Domenico di Firenze was simply a *civis venecianus*⁵². Nicoletto di Giusto was a Venetian citizen *de confinio S. Baxilii*⁵³, while Neto di Verona was a *civis venecianus habitator in Tana*⁵⁴. Pietro di Badellis of Bologna described himself as *nunc habitator Tane*⁵⁵; Marco de Bora stated he was *de confinio Sancti Severi de Venecis* and added *nunc Tane habitator*⁵⁶, and there are many more such examples. The status of *civis venecianus* appears to be temporary for non-Venetians and to have been assumed by everyone who came to live in the settlement under the authority of the consul and became part of the community. But if we refer back to the studies on Venetian citizenship conducted by Reinhold C. Muller and Luca Mola, we realise that things were not quite so. In actual fact, during these years Venice was granting citizenship rights using very “broad” criteria. While at the beginning of the fourteenth century the parameters for gaining the status of *civis venecianus* were selective and rigorous⁵⁷, things

⁵¹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/1.

⁵² ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/7, 13, 15, 24, 31.

⁵³ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/5.

⁵⁴ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/35.

⁵⁵ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 117 of 1 October 1362.

⁵⁶ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 117 of 23 October 1362.

⁵⁷ In 1305, one became a citizen after ten years of residence with the privilege *de intus*, which granted the freedom to move and trade within the borders of the Venetian Republic and

changed after the terrible plague years: everyone who enrolled in the register of the “Provveditori di Comun” by 11 August 1350 became a citizen *de intus*, even if they had never resided in the city, and, ten years after registering, they became a citizen *de extra*. In the years immediately preceding those we are looking at, these privileges extended even further [32, p. 39]. So, it is perfectly understandable that people from Florence, Lucca or Verona describe themselves as *cives venecianos*, and rightly so.

In some cases, those who described themselves as *habitor Tane* or *habitor in Tana* owned their own house⁵⁸. On the other hand, those who rented their home described themselves as *mercator Tane*. This is a common trend, but it does not appear to be the rule. Ser Pasquale di Bartolomeo, *civis venecianus habitator in Candida et mercator in Tana* gave a proxy to another resident of Candida for the rental of one of his houses in Tana; the dwelling was taken by Ser Giovanni Dicunti, *mercator in Tana*⁵⁹.

Tana was a settlement of modest size in both the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; it was a centre of population with two fortified and distinct areas, the Genoese one and the Venetian one, which, in my opinion, was the larger. The merchants who lived there never saw themselves as citizens of Tana, and did not perceive it as a *civitas*. They were foreigners in a foreign land, temporary immigrants whose length of stay was directly linked to their commercial activity.

The demographic aspects largely confirm what we have managed to observe from a political point of view, that Tana is a somewhat paradoxical case. While the fourteenth century documentation describes a settlement that, despite being in profound crisis, is growing, at the beginning of the next century it falls into line with most other international contexts.

5. Conclusions

On the basis of the data analysed for the years 1359–1366, we can say that life in Tana consisted of a constant exchange of people and goods. Here ethnicity was of relative importance. Western immigration in the lands of the Golden Horde increased significantly in the fourteenth century thanks to a highly efficient and stable Genoese and Venetian trading system, despite the ongoing rivalry between the two Italian cities.

By virtue of its location, Tana was inhabited by merchants, craftsmen, professionals, mainly men, but also women, who followed their husbands and sometimes took over the management of the family business. Latins and Greeks, Armenians and Mongols, Alans and Arabs, lived in close contact with one another in a truly multi-ethnic context. The Venetian community in Tana was not closed or impenetrable, but, on the other hand, it would have been difficult for the opposite to happen in an area where Westerners were always in the minority. The sources do not

the right to hold certain public offices, and after twenty-five years with the privilege *de extra*, which granted the right to trade abroad. In the early years of the fourteenth century, citizens with the privilege *de intus* could not trade with merchants from Germany (the “Fondaco dei Tedeschi”), while those with the privilege *de extra* could not have a shipping fleet greater than that entered in the estimate when they registered [22, p. 29–60, and www.retimedievali.it, library, cit. p. 37–38; 39, p. 36–44].

⁵⁸ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/6, 72, 145, 251.

⁵⁹ ASV, CI, Notai, busta 19/160.

report any cases of xenophobia, nor any particular restrictions on the operations of merchants of different origin. The general context is one of interaction functional to trade, so Venetians went into business with Genoese and Armenians, Genoese with Saracens, and so on. The documents show a high level of slave trading, which encouraged this phenomenon. There are cases, of course, where solidarity among compatriots is evident. Westerners stayed in Tana for relatively short periods, always intending to return home. Merchants went to the city at the mouth of the Don to make a profit and the required condition for this was peace. These two requirements “obliged” different communities from different, and often very distant, lands to co-exist and cooperate, and then to get to know each other.

In Tana more than anywhere else, and just like in the great Genoese colonial cities of Crimea, the meeting between West and East was a concrete fact. Ethnic integration, perhaps never fully achieved, was for a long time a condition in the making that fell apart only after the collapse of the entire Italian trading system following the consolidation of the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the fifteenth century. Not even the rapid political and ethnic changes occurring from the middle of the fourteenth century in the lands of the Golden Horde had any significant impact on the relations between the inhabitants of Tana. The settlement was affected by the wars between Genoa and Venice, the conflicts with the Mongols and the violent incursion of Tamerlane at the end of the century.

Notably, the Timurid onslaught did not inflict on Tana the same level of damage seen in other cities attacked by the Mongol conqueror (such as Sarai or Astrakhan). It was the pre-existing situation that enhanced its effects and rendered the recovery of the fifteenth century a minor, non-structural occurrence in a context of political instability that affected the whole of the Mongol empire and the Golden Horde in particular. At the same time, the effects could be felt of the devastation wrought by the armies of Tamerlane in Chorasmia and the countries of the Caucasus. A state of war existed on a large scale in areas where commercial contact was most frequent and fruitful. Tamerlane compromised the stability of the so-called *pax mongolica*, and all the centres of strategic importance that were part of the trading system in Eurasia felt its effects more or less directly leading to a decline which, for Tana, culminated in the Ottoman conquest of 1475.

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ЗАПАДНАЯ ИММИГРАЦИЯ В ЗОЛОТОЙ ОРДЕ ЧЕТЫРНАДЦАТОГО ВЕКА: ВЕНЕЦИАНСКАЯ ТАНА

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Цель исследования: автор настоящей статьи реконструирует состав населения венецианской Таны в четырнадцатом веке, восприятие этим населением своего статуса «мигрантов», как и его взаимодействие с другими сообществами, там проживавшими.

Материал исследования: использованные источники в основном представлены нотариальными документами из Государственного архива Венеции, как и многочисленными и превосходными исследованиями, появившимися в последние десятилетия.

Результаты и новизна исследования: на протяжении более двух веков поселение Тана, расположенное на территории Золотой Орды, представляло собой самый восточный форпост латинских факторий Леванта. Здесь представители западного городского торгового класса оказались в совершенно новых условиях. Эта группа являлась меньшинством, жившим в тесном контакте с более крупными, сплоченными сообществами, чье культурное происхождение было чрезвычайно разнообразным.

Те, кто эмигрировал на восток, были в основном представителями зарождавшейся городской буржуазии, а также семей древнего знатного происхождения, не имевшими ничего общего с миром Степи и его традициями. Эти граждане прибыли на восток, принеся с собой модель существования городского сообщества. Жизнь поселения в устье Дона предоставляет идеальную возможность для наблюдения за потоком людей, которые покинули Венецию и ее окрестности на галерах и, после месяцев путешествий, прибыли на берега Азовского моря.

Ключевые слова: Венеция, Тана, монголы, история торговли, Черное море, Азовское море, средневековая история

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