

# CHRONICA

## **Nomads and their Neighbours in the Middle Ages**

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# *Experiencing Alterity: Italian Merchants and the Local Population in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Venetian Azov Sea Changes and Continuity*

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## **Abstract**

After the Fourth Crusade (1204), Western merchants began to frequent the Black Sea basin. Genoa and Venice established commercial settlements in the region called *emporium*, which over time became an indispensable reference point for travelers from both Western Europe and from the East. The commercial history of the two Italian cities soon intersected with the rapid formation process of the Mongol Empire that by the mid-13th century extended from China to Eastern Europe. The constitution of a homogeneous and vast political entity facilitated communications and partly promoted them, guaranteeing Western merchants a “safer” space within which to move and cover distances previously unimaginable. In the *emporium* founded on the Black Sea – and in this context – the Western urban mercantile class encountered the local element and other migrants from substantially unknown geographical areas. This paper examines relationships between Venetian citizens and foreigners as well as the local population who lived in Tana on the Azov Sea. Tana was the easternmost settlement of the entire Latin trading system and is studied here from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the century, a period that was both politically and economically problematic and characterized by international tensions, economic crises but also extraordinary opportunities for commercial expansion and profit.

**Keywords:** Venice, Mongol Empire, Nomads, Azov Sea, Tana, Golden Horde, Eurasian trade

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### 1. The 14<sup>th</sup>-century Venetian merchant: growth, crisis, and consolidation

Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, Western Europe experienced demographic and economic growth that is traditionally associated with the concept of “commercial revolution”. This phenomenon, whose breadth varied from region to region and did not affect all social classes equally, changed western society just as much as the industrial revolution did in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> The expansive tendency was general and rearranged the social hierarchies without upsetting the order pre-ordained by divine will.<sup>2</sup> The protagonists of this new course were the Italian cities and, in particular, those that, for a number of reasons that are out of the scope of our investigation here, were better prepared to take advantage of the opportunity: Genoa, Milan, Venice, and Florence.

Genoa and Venice’s maritime power reached its acme in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. After the Fourth Crusade, both city-states established trade posts on the Black Sea coasts and their merchants regularly travelled to the Pontic regions. The two cities experienced very different historical trajectories, and their governing sought to dominate the Mediterranean and Levant maritime routes. If in Genoa the private initiative took precedence, in Venice the State supervised everything without overwhelming or depressing the capabilities of the individual by limiting their opportunities. Especially after the *Serrata del Maggior Consiglio* (February 1297),<sup>3</sup> Venice’s aristocratic government organized the market by centralizing its control. In Venice, trade was the primary source of wealth since the birth of the city. The nobility was personally engaged in commerce, but the humble classes were never entirely excluded from it. The State financed the shipbuilding industry, controlled the navigation routes, and assigned the ships to private auctions: a system called *incanto*. The State regulated the navigation calendar and managed the convoys voyages (*conserva*) to ensure the ships’ safety. The State supervised the contracts with which a company was established. The State also deterred the creation of monopolies and guaranteed high wages even to the *popular* professions. Finally, the State regulated the flow of goods in and out of Venice, from the cheapest to the most valuable merchandise.

From the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and in some areas of Europe even earlier, the dominant classes increased their prosperity and the nouveaux wealthy (*gente nova*) pushed up the demand for luxury and exotic products. The changes in the mercantile profession represented a natural outlet to this condition. Merchants specialized, professionalized, and created increasingly sophisticated tools to maximize their business profits while reducing risks. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the merchant gradually became a sedentary entrepreneur at the head of a company capable of producing profits in far regions, counting on a well-organized and consistent workforce. Accountancy and banking techniques were developed, and new forms

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<sup>1</sup> GIES – GIES 1972; LOPEZ 1976, 103ff.; LOPEZ 1955, 46–7; CIPOLLA 1980, 142–62; POUNDS 1978.

<sup>2</sup> See for example KEDAR 1976, esp. ch. 2, and SPUFFORD 2006.

<sup>3</sup> RAINES 2003, 6ff.

of association created. There was no law in Venice that excluded the individual from commercial activity. The filter consisted of the resources available. That is why the nobility represented the majority in the Venetian *emporia* of the Levant. Nonetheless, the aristocracy completely belonged to the urban mercantile class that populated all the late medieval Italian cities.

Venetian exceptionalism was also expressed in the relative closure of the city towards foreigners. In Venice, one could enter, live, and trade, but the authorities imposed strict control on the activities of non-citizens. It is not a surprise that there was a closed and well-controlled German factory (*Fondaco dei Tedeschi*) just as it is no coincidence that the first Jewish ghetto in Europe was established in Venice. Still, in the first decades of the 14th century, it was necessary to reside in the city for twenty-five years to obtain Venetian citizenship.<sup>4</sup> This rigidity was an obstacle to Venice's commercial development.<sup>5</sup> The restrictions that applied to foreigners in the Black Sea emporia were somewhat more flexible, in particular in Tana, where all those who travelled on Venetian ships and resided in the Venetian quarter were considered part of the community.

The Black Sea region was central to the Eurasian trade system. Most of the leading international transit routes, both before and after the Mongol conquest, passed through the Pontic area. However, the Mongol Empire's formation in the 13th century stretched the barycentre of international trade further eastwards. The Mongols created the conditions for the integration of the Mediterranean and Pontic (from the Volga to Tabriz) trade systems. Whether we believe in the so-called *Pax Mongolica* or not, there is no doubt that the Mongol Empire guaranteed coherent political interlocutors and an efficient and secure communication system over unprecedented distances for at least fifty years.<sup>6</sup> From the second half of the 13th century, Italian merchants penetrated deeper and deeper into Asia, and Muslim merchants from Transoxiana frequented the Pontic markets assiduously. It is also worth pointing out that goods travelled more than people, both in frequency and distance. The extraordinary experiences described in celebrated works by Marco Polo, Plano Carpini, or Giovanni di Montecorvino were exceptions and not the rule. The Black Sea ports became crucial junctions of this international trade system, which—in the face of the 14th-century downturn in the continental economy—constituted the indispensable prop of a new process of economic “bilateral” expansion. The Italian “colonization” did not have a dominant actor that imposed its rhythm on local politics, but two subjects that dialogued to exploit the commercial activity from which both drew profits.

This balance underwent a crisis starting in the 1330s and travelling over long distances became increasingly difficult. To overcome the impediments, the mer-

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<sup>4</sup> MUELLER 1992, 37–8; MOLA 1994, 36–44.

<sup>5</sup> LOPEZ 1955, 49.

<sup>6</sup> DI COSMO 2009, 99–100.

chants invested more and more in local intermediaries and transitional stages. Trade was a primary resource for the nomads both for subsistence and the reproduction of their social hierarchies. Latin and Asian merchants were the two faces of the same coin, bearers of two similar exigences that met halfway. The encounter of the Western urban mercantile class with the nomads gave life to new economic cooperation that also developed into human and social interactions.

## 2. Venice, the Azov Sea and the “levels” of interactions

The Italian frequentation of the Black Sea ports began right after the Fourth Crusade. The Venetian conquest of Constantinople of 1204 led to the Eastern Roman Empire’s dismantling, sealed in the *Partitio Romaniaae*.<sup>7</sup> Venice used the port of Sudak/Soldaia in Crimea as a trade hub, but it was only in 1261 that the Italians planned to settle on the Black Sea shores. The Treaty of Nymphaeum,<sup>8</sup> stipulated in March 1261 between Emperor Michael VIII (r. 1261–82) and the Genoese authorities, shifted the political balance in favour of the Tyrrhenian city, ensuring the possibility of exploiting the Pontic region, a centre between the Christian West and the Eastern markets. The stipulation of the treaty and the subsequent political fortunes of the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII put Venice in a condition of inferiority in relation to its rival. For decades the city tried to overcome the disadvantage. After alternating clashes, negotiations, and compromises, Venetian diplomacy concluded peace with the Byzantine emperor Andronicus II in 1310. Venice could expand in the Black Sea region once more.

Tana was located on the Don’s left bank, within the vast delta that the river forms when it flows into the Sea of Azov.<sup>9</sup> Built near the ancient Muslim Azak, the settlement was for almost two centuries the easternmost outpost of the Latin maritime cities’ entire Eastern trading system. Since the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Tana obtained extraordinary economic and strategic importance. Here, interactions between the indigenous element (Turkic-Cuman and Mongol) and the Latin merchants was constant. Tana became one of the major centres for the supply of slaves and a crucial hub for Eurasian commerce, being on the route to the major Eurasian trading centres: Astrakhan, Saray, Urgench, Bukhara, Samarkand, and of course, China.

According to the sources, the first Latin officer who worked in Tana is the Genoese consul Ansaldo Spinola, active since 1304.<sup>10</sup> The first mention of commercial galleys sent by the Venetian Senate to the Black Sea (*Galee di Romania-Mar Nero*) is in 1306.<sup>11</sup> Western merchants resided and worked in Tana from the second half of

<sup>7</sup> CARILE 1965, 129–35; CARILE 1965-6, 168–9.

<sup>8</sup> BALARD 2017, 529–32.

<sup>9</sup> KARPOV 1995, 225–8; PAPACOSTEA 1979, 205–7; BRATIANU 1969, 160-5; SKRŽINSKAJA 1968, 3–10; BERINDEI – VEINSTEIN 1976, 110–11.

<sup>10</sup> BALARD 1978, 151; LOPEZ 1986, 463.

<sup>11</sup> STÖCKLY 1995, 105.

the 13<sup>th</sup> century until 1308, when the khan of the Golden Horde, Toqta (r. 1291–1312), expelled all the Westerners from the region. In this period, Tana grew and became an important international trade centre, benefiting from a relatively peaceful international context.

Venetian Tana's history began its second phase characterized by the Genoese return to Crimea and the Sea of Azov in 1315 and continued until the 1350s Genoese–Venetian war. The Venetian Senate expressly forbade their merchants to dock in Tana as late as 1330.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Venice established its organized community on the Azov Sea coast in 1332, after a long and exhausting negotiation with Özbeg Khan (r. 1313–41).<sup>13</sup> These decades marked the culmination of the Italian presence in Tana; Genoa and Venice settled in the Northern Pontus permanently and with a stable administrative structure.

A third phase goes from the expiry of the ban to frequent Tana (*devetum Tane*), imposed by Genoa on its rival after the peace of Milan (1358), until the attack of Timur (1370–1405) in 1395. In between, there were the well-known clashes of 1343.<sup>14</sup> In these years, the Venetian galleys resumed their journeys to both the Black Sea and the Azov Sea. The frequentation of the settlements was slowly re-established, and the internal transit routes towards Transoxiana were exploited again. In the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Tana did not lose its strategic and economic importance.

Throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> century, relations between Venice and the local authorities evolved on three levels, often overlapping each other. A first institutional level consisted of dialogue at the highest state level: the Venetian Senate on one side and the Mongol Khan of the Golden Horde on the other. A second institutional level on which the local authorities, the Venetian consul in Tana, and the Mongolian governor of Solgat interacted with one another. Finally, there was a personal level of daily relations between Venetian citizens and the local population. Commercial transactions and personal ties were part of this type of relationship.

### 3. Interactions: from political to personal

On June 19, 1347, the Venetian Senate sent two ambassadors to Tana, to whom a third ambassador was added directly from the *bailo* of Constantinople.<sup>15</sup> The Venetian diplomats obtained from Janibeg (r. 1342–57), through the mediation of the Mongol governor of Solgat Sichilbey, the confirmation of the concessions made by Özbeg in 1332.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Janibeg allowed the Venetians to use a plot of land

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<sup>12</sup> STÖCKLY 1995, 106; CESSI 1937, 233.

<sup>13</sup> THOMAS 1880, 243–4; TAFEL – THOMAS 1964, 243ff.; HEYD 1913, 751.

<sup>14</sup> KARPOV 1994, 121–6; BALARD 1978, 154; PUBBLICI 2017: 25–47; DI COSMO – PUBBLICI 2022: 113–122.

<sup>15</sup> THIRIET 1958, n. 201. Janibeg agreed to let the Venetians return to Tana, but the concession was ratified only in December 1347. THOMAS 1880, 311.

<sup>16</sup> On the treaty between Venice and Özbeg, see PUBBLICI 2005, 447–8.

separate from the Genoese, where they could trade.<sup>17</sup> Janibeg confirmed the judicial prerogatives to the Venetian consul in Tana, but exclusively for the community he presided over. Any non-Venetian citizen was excluded from his jurisdiction. Judicial disputes should be held in the *curia*, where on September 9, 1363 the consul Niccolò Basilio threatened to fine the banker Pietro Bembo if the latter did not pay 1,800 besants he owed to him.<sup>18</sup>

Janibeg confirmed a large area (ca. 12 square kilometres) where the Venetians could reinstall their neighbourhood. The Mongol khan granted the Venetian community living and operating in Tana a tax reduction of 5% to 3%, while gold and silver were exempted altogether.<sup>19</sup> The consul had to manage a potentially dangerous situation due to the tensions between Venetians and the local population; maybe that is why the officer received a substantial salary increase from the 30 *grossi* in 1334 to 70. Furthermore, the Venetian Senate established that the consul should receive a 1% on commercial transactions from all Venetian merchants or those “*qui pro Venetis tractarentur*”. The levy was justified by the onerous expenses incurred for the frequent embassies that the Venetian *Comune* had to sustain in recent years and the expenses related to the restoration of damaged infrastructure and the construction of new houses.

The surviving notarial deeds contain precious information about restoration and new construction. The Venetian community in Tana was eager for a new start.<sup>20</sup> In their neighbourhood, the Venetians constituted a stable community. They had built a hospital,<sup>21</sup> a public bath, and several churches. One of them was dedicated to Santa Maria and run by the Franciscans<sup>22</sup> and so was a church dedicated to San Francesco.<sup>23</sup> Another church was named after San Marco<sup>24</sup> and hosted

<sup>17</sup> «Luogho diviso da quello de Zenoessi, da poder far le suo mercadantie»: THOMAS 1880, 311.

<sup>18</sup> Archivio di Stato di Venezia (from now on ASV), Cancelleria Inferiore (from now on CI), Notai 181, fasc. 5, f. 68r. PUCCI DONATI 2019, 163. I have personally studied most of the documents cited. Where I did not see the original, I cite from the excellent and precious work conducted by F. Pucci Donati (2019).

<sup>19</sup> THOMAS 1880, 243; PEGOLOTTI 1936, 24: «Oro e argento e perle non pagano né commercio né tamuga né nullo diritto alla Tana». The Mongols always encouraged the commerce of precious stones and metals.

<sup>20</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 42v.

<sup>21</sup> Dedicated to S. Antonio. ASV, CI, Miscellanea Notai, 20, carta 361; Notarile, Testamenti, Testamenti 924 of 30 July 1364; ASV, CI, Notai, 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 19v.

<sup>22</sup> ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Testamenti, 361, fasc. 32°, f. 129r; ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, f. 3r-v; 5v-6v; 6v-7v; 13v-14r; 18r-19r; 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 20r.

<sup>23</sup> ASV, CI, 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, c. 31bis; Miscellanea, Notai, 22, c. 774; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 206, n. 592.

<sup>24</sup> ASV, CI, Notai, 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, f. 1r-v; 4v-5v; 9r-11r; 14v-15r; ASV, CI, Notai 117, fasc. Marco Marzella, f. 2r. PUCCI DONATI 2019, 154, n. 435; 170, n. 481 and 178, n. 487. In his testament, the Venetian Primasio di Ragusa writes that it was customary for the Venetians to

the confraternity of Santa Maria and San Antonio.<sup>25</sup> A church of San Giacomo was popular, too.<sup>26</sup> Most of the religious buildings had a *fabrica* in charge of renovations and restorations, such as the church of San Domenico.<sup>27</sup>

The church of San Marco in Tana was damaged at least until May 1363 when the merchant Benedetto di Romagna dictated his testament and left two silver sums for its restoration. He also left one sum for the *fabrica* of the churches of San Domenico and Santa Maria. On July 1364, Gerardo di Castello left the *fabrica* of Santa Maria (where he wanted to be buried) three sums.<sup>28</sup> In general, it was up to the consul to cover all the costs for the city “remittendo residuum Venecias per incantum dominio vel officialibus furmenti”.<sup>29</sup>

In the late 1340s, tension between Venice and Genoa increased. It was the prelude to the Venetian–Genoese war of the 1350s. On May 19, 1348, the Venetian Senate ordered Giustiniano Giustiniani, captain of Romania’s galleys, to take shelter.<sup>30</sup> The State auctioned the Romania–Black Sea galleys that year, but only on the condition that a prohibition to pass the straits was put in place.<sup>31</sup> All the attempts to avoid the war failed, and on August 28, 1350, the Venetian Senate ordered the consul in Tana to send a negotiator to Janibeg and warn the merchants who were still in Caffa, controlled by Genoa, to secure themselves in the areas under Venetian authority.<sup>32</sup>

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leave one silver sum to the *fabrica* of the church of S. Marco in Tana: PUCCI DONATI 2019, 179, n. 488.

<sup>25</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, ff. 7v-8v; 12r-13r; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 171, n. 482.

<sup>26</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, f. 2r-v; 7v-8v; 20r-23r; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 140, n. 413.

<sup>27</sup> PUCCI DONATI 2019, 142, n. 415 and 18, n. 489.

<sup>28</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, ff. 25r-26r; ASV, CI, Notarile, Testamenti 924, 30 luglio 1364; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 170. The sum (*sommo*) was the most diffused means of exchange among the merchants who operated in the *Ulus* of Jochi and constituted the unit of measure of monetary reference and weight. The sum was the expression of the partially monetized economy of the Golden Horde and consisted of an ingot of silver of variable weight but settled around 200 grams (at the time of Pegolotti the *sommo* weighed 206 grams). It circulated also in China and was produced by local mints. PEGOLOTTI 1936: 41. See on this MUELLER – LANE 1985: 163 and n. 6; KURODA 2009: 261.

<sup>29</sup> ASV, Senato Misti, XXIV, f. 114; THOMAS 1880, 340–1.

<sup>30</sup> ASV, Secreta, reg. B, ff. 7v e 8r; THIRIET 1958, n. 211. Tension is confirmed by another document of November 1349, in which Pietro Tagliapietra, captain of Bitici Niddo’s galley, is condemned in Venice because he had attacked the Mongols in the port of Varango (Varangolimen in Western Crimea). Tagliapietra believed that those Mongols had robbed his ship, but he was wrong (KARPOV 2000, 181).

<sup>31</sup> THIRIET 1958, n. 239.

<sup>32</sup> In August 1349 the notary Marino Grifoni was active in Tana, where he stipulated a contract between Nicoletto Gato and Bonavere Albani (ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, ff. 25.v-26r). THIRIET 1958, n. 247. On the Venetian–Genoese war see also ASV, Procuratori di San Marco, Misti, Commissarie, busta 2: it contains letters and receipts by Marco Nani. They are



The war between the two republics lasted for five years with alternating phases. After the battle of the Bosphorus, in early 1352, the two fleets met for the final clash in 1354. In Portolungo, near Modone on the Peloponnese, the Genoese admiral Paganino Doria defeated the Venetian galleys of Nicola Pisani. Genoa and Venice signed the peace treaty in Milan in 1355 (Genoa was under the Visconti rule). The Peace of Milan decreed that Venetians be expelled from the Black Sea region for three years, but Genoa proved incapable of imposing its conditions despite having won the war.

At first Genoa and Venice respected the agreement reached in Milan<sup>33</sup> and avoided sending their merchants to Tana. Nevertheless, it was too expensive for both of them. The massive investments made in the region to guarantee an infrastructural system adequate for their communities and the considerable profits from the trade with the Levant forced the two Italian republics to re-establish contact with the Mongol authorities.

On July 28, 1355, Venice sent an ambassador to the Mongol *noyon* Ramaḍān, who supervised the region's affairs. The Venetian diplomats asked to return to Soldaia, and also for the confirmation of the commercial taxes at 3%, and the liberation of two Venetian merchants arrested by Ramaḍān.<sup>34</sup> Janibeg was cold in the response and granted only the small port of Provato, west of Tana and too close to Caffa to represent a gain on the Venetian side.<sup>35</sup> However, the Venetian ambassadors had no other choice but to accept, and the captain of the galleys was entrusted with controlling the territory of Provato where the Venetian emporium would rise. It was a situation still in evolution, and the Senate forbade the galleys of Romania-Black Sea, auctioned in May 1357, to cross the straits.

Venice and Genoa returned to Tana only in 1358, after the expiry of the *devetum*. Both cities benefited immediately from the problematic political situation within the Golden Horde. Janibeg had died in 1357, and his successor was his son Berdibeg (r. 1257–9) who was well disposed towards Westerners.

Berdibeg confirmed to the ambassadors Giovanni Quirino and Francesco Bono the concessions made by Özbek and Janibeg and renewed them,<sup>36</sup> but increased taxation on commercial transactions to 5% for everyone. Equally, the 5% tax remained in force for all goods to the weight (*per cantaro*). Every ship entering the port had to pay three silver sums to the Mongol governor.<sup>37</sup> To avoid further problems with the Venetian community Berdibeg reduced the judicial prerogatives of

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very interesting because Nani, a merchant with a prevalence of interests in Cyprus, was captain of Pancrazio Giustiniani's galley during the war.

<sup>33</sup> F. THIRIET 1953, 219–45; THIRIET 1959, 176–7; BALARD 1978, 85–6.

<sup>34</sup> THIRIET 1958, n. 273; THOMAS 1880, 24.

<sup>35</sup> THIRIET 1958, n. 299; the concession is dated March 1356. Ramaḍān confirms to the Venetian the port of Provato «che a nome Citade Nova»; see also THOMAS 1880, 25.

<sup>36</sup> THOMAS – PREDELLI 1899, 47–51; BALARD 1978, 154; THIRIET 1958, n. 311.

<sup>37</sup> THOMAS – PREDELLI 1899, 50.

the consul who, in case of a conflict, had to consult first with the Mongol governor of Solgat ("lo signor de la tera e lo consolo insembre"). In May 1358, the Senate auctioned Romania's galleys that this time were allowed to cross the straits and enter the Black Sea. It was the first time after almost a decade.<sup>38</sup> The captain of the galleys sent to the Black Sea in September 1359 was Giovanni Priuli.<sup>39</sup>

The new consul in Tana was most likely Leone Bembo<sup>40</sup> who was replaced in the next year by Pietro Caravello. The Venetian consul in Tana worked with his *familia*<sup>41</sup> and a modest military garrison capable of guaranteeing the consular prerogatives, among which the administration of justice and public order were prominent. The *familia* consisted of an interpreter, a *cellarius*<sup>42</sup>, one or more *bastonarii*<sup>43</sup>, one or more *famuli*, a council,<sup>44</sup> a nuncio (*commandador*),<sup>45</sup> and a doctor (*phisicus*).<sup>46</sup> The interpreter was a crucial function in Tana as the consul needed to communicate with the local population. In 1359, the function was performed by Guglielmo Bon.<sup>47</sup>

The communities living in Tana had their own living quarters, with the Venetians and the Genoese having a fenced or fortified area under the consul's authority. In the 1360s, in Tana there were a Jewish, Armenian, and even an Alan neighbourhood.<sup>48</sup> Merchants from other regions were allowed to settle in the Venetian

<sup>38</sup> THIRIET 1958, n. 328. This time the *incanti* were expensive, more than 160 liras of grossi, while the average was rarely above 50 liras in 1348). Maybe the Venetian merchants participated in the auction because the Mongol concessions had generated optimism.

<sup>39</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, ff. 4r of 16 September, 5v of 19 September and 6r of 20 September 1359.

<sup>40</sup> ASV, CI, Notai, 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 5r of 18 September 1359.

<sup>41</sup> One of Caravello's *famuli* in December 1359 was Giacomo Furlan, son of Francesco di Valvasone who was related to the consul. Giacomo replaced Marco Grimani, a Greek from Crete, and received a salary of 130 aspers. ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 14r.

<sup>42</sup> In 1359, this important task was carried out by Francesco de'Garfaldi di Bologna. ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, fol. 12r of 30 October 1359. In 1383, the interpreter of the Venetian *Curia* in Tana was Pietro detto Gata (ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 184.

<sup>43</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 5r of 18 September 1359.

<sup>44</sup> In 1359, the Council consisted of eight nobles: Giacomo Contarini, Giovanni Bembo, Nicolò Renier, Bartolomeo Loredan, Leonardo Falier, Andreolo Bragadin, Luca Contarini, and Guglielmo Bon, who was also the interpreter. ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 13v of 14 December 1359.

<sup>45</sup> In 1360, the *nuncio* of the Venetian *curia* in Tana was Benedetto di Romagna.

<sup>46</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 181, fasc. 5, f. 66bis; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 159.

<sup>47</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 4v; 7v; 8v and 12v.

<sup>48</sup> In September 1360, the *tabernarius* Ianixinum lived near the Alan bath (ASV, CI, Testamenti 17). The Alan bath is also mentioned in the testament of the Genoese Andalò Basso, drafted in Tana in November 1362 (ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, ff. 20r-23r.). A *contrata iudaorum* is mentioned in a document from July 1366. ASV, CI, Miscellanea, Notai Diversi, busta 134bis, Contratti di schiavi, Notaio Francesco di Boninsegna di Strada di Mantova and PUCCI DONATI 2019, 174, n. 485. A *contrata arminorum* is mentioned in two documents: ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 36r and PUCCI DONATI 2019, 158, 441.

neighbourhood. In September 1360, Ser Marco di Ser Viviano sold a house in Tana for an exuberant amount of money: 24 sums. The property bordered an Armenian's house. Coza Azillyas, *Saracenus*, gave for rent a plot of land with a cellar (*fovea*) to Niccolò Cornaro. The property was next to Azillyas's house.<sup>49</sup>

Consul Caravello travelled to Tana with his son Luca.<sup>50</sup> It was customary for the Venetian merchants to travel with their sons and teach them the profession they would have inherited from their fathers. On September 25, 1364, Lucia Zabacha entrusted her son Andrea to Giacomello Marino to teach him the mercantile profession. Giacomello undertook to provide the young man with food, accommodation, clothes, and footwear for ten years.<sup>51</sup> The Florentine merchant Brandaia di Brandaia, Venetian resident and living in Tana, made a testament on August 7, 1359. He wanted his two sons Cristoforo and Domenico to frequent the *scholae gramamticae*, to learn how to read, write, and do accounting.<sup>52</sup>

For the Venetians, it was necessary to dialogue with a "coherent" interlocutor. The assassination of Beridibeg in 1359 opened a political crisis within the Golden Horde, culminating with the coup of Nawrūz in February 1360.<sup>53</sup> The Venetian authorities became concerned and worked to obtain guarantees from the Mongols on the settlement's safety. In December 1359, the consul's council nominated two nobles, Giacomo Contarini and Giovanni Bembo, as representatives to Taydula Khatun, grandmother of Berdibeg.<sup>54</sup> Contarini and Bembo were charged to address the empress to obtain guarantees on the settlement's security and the annulment of the penalty imposed as a condition to return to Tana.<sup>55</sup> In September, Giacomo Cornaro is mentioned as ambassador to "the Tartar khan".<sup>56</sup>

Despite the difficult political situation, the Venetian return to Tana in the late 1350s revived trade. The volume of business set up by the merchant communities in Tana and the growing difficulties of travelling East of the Volga required the exploitation of local resources and collaboration became inevitable. The notarial deeds produced in Tana contain numerous cases of contracts stipulated between Latin merchants and locals or Muslim merchants, likely from Transoxiana and the Ilkhanate. The latter were the majority, together with the Armenians. On July 31,

<sup>49</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, carta sciolta.

<sup>50</sup> ASV, CI, 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 7r of 21 September 1359 and f. 9r of 22 September 1359. On the same day, Luca nominated his father procurator of all his business (*omnia sua negotia*) in Tana. *Ibid.*, f. 9r. In 1362, the new consul was Giacomo Contarini. ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, f. 20-23r.

<sup>51</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 15r.; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 189-90, n. 528.

<sup>52</sup> ASV, CI, Notarile, Testamenti, Testamenti, 361, fasc. 32°, f. 129r.

<sup>53</sup> KARPOV 2018, 532.

<sup>54</sup> Taydula was Özbek's wife. THOMAS - PREDELLI 1899, 47-50; DE NICOLA 2017, 149; FAVREAU 2016, 45.

<sup>55</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 13v.

<sup>56</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 43r.

1360, the *Avar* Corthoha del fu Manzar from *casale Balgima in imperio Gazarie* was sold to the forty-five-year-old Paduan Michele Coperi.<sup>57</sup> On August 25, 1360, Coza Mansuth *Saracenus* sold to the Venetian Pietro Penzi 870 “salted” and 348 dried cowhides.<sup>58</sup> As we have seen above, on September 13, 1360, Coza Azillyas *Saracenus* and *habitor in Tana* rented to Niccolò Cornaro a house, a cellar (*fovea*), warehouses, and a plot of land. Among others, the property bordered with another Muslim merchant’s home, Coza Monsafil, whose land “is not cultivated”. Another Muslim, Coza Mansuth, received a share of the income generated by the property.<sup>59</sup> On September 18, 1360, the Venetian Giovanni di Pistoia purchased some fabric from Urgench (*Organza*) from Muslim merchants who were selling it in a public bazaar.<sup>60</sup> On September 21, 1360, Ziachmach Thoulu, *Saracenus* and *habitor in Tana*, sold to Pietro Bembo a twelve-year-old Tatar slave.<sup>61</sup> In his will, the Genoese merchant Andalò Basso nominated an Armenian from Solgat, Gabrieto Balochzi, as his partner.<sup>62</sup> On September 13, 1363, Macometh Coza, *Saracenus*, sold to Niccolò Basilio a big property consisting of a non-cultivated land and a bath in Tana’s Venetian neighbourhood.<sup>63</sup>

On July 21, 1365, Costanzo di Lodi di Candia dictated his last will and testament to the Venetian notary Nascimbene Scarena in Tana. He had a credit of 50 aspers with Tolach and Mansafir *Saracenos* for some cowhides.<sup>64</sup> In August 1365, an Alan named Satalario received a loan of 100 sums from Pietro della Fontana, Venetian consul in Tana, to purchase merchandise.<sup>65</sup> On August 14, 1365, Usuf *Saracenus* sold a cellar (*fovea*) to the Venetian Giovanni.<sup>66</sup> Naturally, cases of solidarity between people with a common ethnic background were frequent. On August 12, 1365, a Jewish man called Thomas nominated his procurator Calli Bila, another Jew, to collect 100 aspers from a certain Anastasio Pangalo, his debtor.<sup>67</sup> On September 12, the same Anastasio Pangalo gave a loan of 3 sums to Mosé Calazi; both were Jewish.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>57</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 29v. Pucci Donati 2019, 65.

<sup>58</sup> *Cuoia salate* and *vaccine*. ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 34r.

<sup>59</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, carta 36bis.

<sup>60</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 37v.

<sup>61</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 38r.

<sup>62</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, ff. 20–23r.

<sup>63</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 181, fasc. 5, f. 68v.; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 164. Basilio bought the property for a total of 130 sums and sold it almost immediately (22 September) to the Venetian consul in Tana Pietro della Fontana for the same amount: ASV, CI, Notai 181, fasc. 5, f. 69r; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 165.

<sup>64</sup> ASV, Notarile, Testamenti, Testamenti, 924, 21 luglio 1365; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 172 n. 483.

<sup>65</sup> PUCCI DONATI 2019, 160 n. 451.

<sup>66</sup> PUCCI DONATI 2019, 161 n. 454.

<sup>67</sup> PUCCI DONATI 2019, 161, n. 452.

<sup>68</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 181, fasc. 5, f. 68v; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 164 n. 464.

Intermediation among merchants of diverse origin and cooperation was frequent not only for buying commodities but also for renting facilities. On April 28, 1360, Ser Grava di Stanzi, from Samsun, gave his boat with 21 sailors for rent to the Venetian Giovanni Bembo. Giovanni needed the boat to go to the charger port (*caricatoio*) called Aziachon to load 460 *moggia* of grain and trade them in Pera.<sup>69</sup>

Trade between Latins and local merchants was widespread, but non-Venetians preferred to have a fellow citizen or coreligionist in front of the notary. On July 22, 1360, Marino de Ruosa agreed to pay the loan he had with Eza Aly *Saracenus*. Two Venetians and three *Saracenos de Tana*: Adula, Coza, and Azibey were witnesses to this act.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, the friction between Venetians and the local population did not completely go away. In the testament she dictated to the notary Benedetto Bianco on August 11, 1360, Elisabetta Alban destined two sums for the liberation of her son Giovanni, indebted to certain *Tartari* who had captured him.<sup>71</sup>

In 1363, the commercial activity in Tana focused more and more on slave sales. In particular, the sales of slaves by locals to Venetian merchants intensified. On August 17, Donna Erda, widow of the Tartar Bephrmir, sold to the Venetian merchant Sandro Lovato, a twelve-year-old slave. The next day, the Jewish merchant Burdoch del fu Nodin sold a twelve-year-old Tartar slave on behalf of Ser Giovanni Selvaggio to Lovato. On the same day, the Tartar Brunach del fu Zerzi sold a Tartar slave to a Venetian merchant whose name is not readable in the document.<sup>72</sup> On August 20, 1363, the *Tartarus* Chonach del fu Chotluboga sold his twelve-year-old daughter to Sandro Lovato.<sup>73</sup>

In these years, the Muslim merchants appear to be the most active as intermediaries in the sales of slaves. On September 26, 1362, Chalil Charchaulli Choicholba, *Saracenus*, sold a Circassian girl to Lorenzo Querini.<sup>74</sup> Zarubey del fu Emin, *Saracenus*, sold an eleven-year-old Tartar slave to the Venetian merchant Stefanello Bonfiglio.<sup>75</sup> On September 4, Assam del fu Audul, *Saracenus*, sold a seven-year-old Mongol slave (*genere mongalorum*) to the merchant Francesco del fu Bruzese from Rimini.<sup>76</sup> Ramadan del fu Cusma, *Saracenus*, sold a whole Mongol family – father, wife, and a six-year-old child – to the Venetian merchant Giovannino Bembo.<sup>77</sup> On September 6, Adia, widow of Audul, *Saracenus*, sold a thirteen-year-old Tartar

<sup>69</sup> The freight is established in 940 *perpers* payable within twelve days from the arrival of the grain in Pera. ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 18r.

<sup>70</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 27v.

<sup>71</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, carta 31bis.

<sup>72</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 1r.

<sup>73</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 36r.

<sup>74</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 117, reg. Marco Marzella, f. 2r.

<sup>75</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 1v.

<sup>76</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 4v.

<sup>77</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 4v.

slave to the Venetian merchant Niccolò Barbo.<sup>78</sup> On September 8, Cheder del fu Azo *Saracenus* sold a sixteen-year-old slave to Enrico Barbarigo, who was a Venetian.<sup>79</sup> On September 9, Baziman del fu Bachomuth, *Saracenus*, sold a ten-year-old Tartar slave to the Venetian merchant Fantino Zorzi.<sup>80</sup> On September 10, Adia, widow of Charchibas, *Saracenus*, sold a fourteen-year-old slave to Marco Carlo; the same day, Besboga del fu Siaban *Saracenus* sold a fifteen-year-old slave to Pietro Bon.<sup>81</sup> On September 11, Jaylmis del fu Hachboga, *Saracenus*, sold a ten-year-old boy to Ser Tommaso Falier.<sup>82</sup> On September 17, Macometh del fu Ozi *Saracenus* sold an eleven-year-old Tartar boy to Giovanni di Vidor. The same day, Abdura Coman del fu Mamussia *Saracenus* sold four slaves, two girls and two boys, in four separate documents to the Venetian merchant Niccolò Baseggio, for a total sum of 1,375 aspers.<sup>83</sup> Chotur del fu Chozuboga, *Saracenus*, sold an eleven-year-old boy to Bonaccorso di Vanni.<sup>84</sup> On September 18, Monsafor del fu Azibey, *Saracenus*, sold a twelve-year-old boy to Niccolò Baseggio.<sup>85</sup> On September 19, Hachboga del fu Siansadin, *Saracenus*, sold a fifteen-year-old girl, a ten-year-old boy, and a fourteen-year-old girl – all *Tartari* – to Niccolò Baseggio.<sup>86</sup>

Venetian merchants and local people often came into contact during the sale of slaves not only with professional traders, but with families in the necessity to sell their children to alleviate the hardship they lived in. In notarial documents the cases are numerous. On June 3, 1360, a Russian woman, Ocholino, married to Dmitrij (*de casale Insbleymamat de Rusia*), sold her fifteen-year-old daughter to the Venetian merchant Bertolino Magnamoto.<sup>87</sup> On June 29, Apanas, a Tatar woman, sold her thirteen-year-old sister to Marco Contarini.<sup>88</sup> On July 2, Anecoza, a Tatar who lived in the *Tuman Melicheli* just outside Tana (*in districtu Tane*), sold a fourteen-year-old son to Marco Zaccaria.<sup>89</sup> Bech del fu Thuboga sold his fourteen-year-old niece to Albertino de'Conti.<sup>90</sup> Donna Cotlucaton del fu Zaccaria di Tabriz and Sarchi del fu Cherin sold their twelve-year-old son to Giorgio Colito from Thessaloniki.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>78</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 5r.

<sup>79</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 6r.

<sup>80</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 7r.

<sup>81</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 7v.

<sup>82</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 8v.

<sup>83</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 14v and 15r.

<sup>84</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 15v.

<sup>85</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 16v.

<sup>86</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 18v, 19r, and 20v.

<sup>87</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 21v.

<sup>88</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 23r.

<sup>89</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 23v.

<sup>90</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 17r.

<sup>91</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 12v.

The Venetians who were established for a longer period in Tana bought servants. They generally “rented” the services of a young boy or girl from locals in need of money. For example, on October 16, 1359, Anchau and Daniele, both defined as *Alani*, received 300 aspers from Giovanni Bembo for a young person who was described as being “protected” by Anchau for the time Giovanni would stay and work in Mongol Crimea (*in imperio Gazarie*).<sup>92</sup> Elya, *Alanus*, received from the Venetian merchant Andrea Armino a 300 aspers loan for which he left his fifteen-year-old son as a pledge. The boy had to stay in service in Andrea’s house until the loan was repaid.<sup>93</sup>

Mixed marriages were not too frequent but occurred in Tana and all over the Latin settlements in the Black Sea region. The Genoese Giorgio, resident in Soldaia, married Teodora, who was Greek.<sup>94</sup> Francesco di Bonavere Alban, Venetian citizen, married Cotlu.<sup>95</sup> On April 14, 1385, an Armenian named Antonio declared that he had received the entire dowry of his wife, Bartolomea di Graziano from Treviso.<sup>96</sup> On October 21, 1385, Domenico Balta affirmed that he had received the entire dowry of his wife, whose name is Beymolich.<sup>97</sup>

The mouth of the Kuban river and the entire area around the Kerch Strait had been of fundamental importance since the time of the Greek colonies.<sup>98</sup> For centuries, Kievan Rus’ exploited the fluvial arteries (the Dnepr above all) for international trade with the Byzantine Empire to the south and the Baltic markets to the north. For the Georgian kingdom, the Black Sea outlet was, together with the land routes to Persia, a formidable instrument for commercial development.

The area around Solgat was known for wine and the Venetian merchants purchased it in Tana from local producers or intermediaries and resold it in Venice. On December 14, 1359, Perino d’Ognibene bought two barrels of wine *mosti de sorcati* from Coza Macomuth di Sadradin, from Solgat.<sup>99</sup> On March 2, 1360, the Greek Giorgio di Enno agreed to pay back a loan of 220 aspers within three months

<sup>92</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 12r.

<sup>93</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 23v.

<sup>94</sup> It is not surprising that the witnesses of the document are all Greek: Marco Grimani from Crete, Giorgio Colito from Thessaloniki, and Sana di Caraboga Paraschiva from Trebizond. ASV, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 14v.

<sup>95</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, c. 31bis; PUCCI DONATI 2019: 69. The woman was likely baptized, since here name changed into Elizabetta.

<sup>96</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 15v; PUCCI DONATI 2019: 193.

<sup>97</sup> ASV, CI, Notai, 130, fasc. /B, f. 17v; PUCCI DONATI 2019: 201. They had a daughter named Culmelich.

<sup>98</sup> From October 2 to 15, 1362, the Venetian galleys were docked in the port of Kuban, where the notary Marco Marcello drafted seven documents: ASV, Notai 117, reg. Marco Marzella, ff. 2v–3r; 3v; 4r and 4v.

<sup>99</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 13v.

to Teodoro, a merchant from Solgat, for a certain quantity of wine he had bought.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the difficulties and the scarce convenience of long journeys some merchants went further and settled deeper into the Golden Horde, entrusting on intermediaries the purchase of merchandise farther East. Marco dell'Orsa was a very active merchant in Tana, but lived in Saray.<sup>101</sup> On September 24, 1360, Giovanni Barozzi declared in front of the notary Benedetto Bianco that he had left precious goods in Saray at the merchant Coza Azi, who was a banker. Among the commodities, there were silk, pearls, and jewels.<sup>102</sup> On May 22, 1362, Benedetto di Romagna dictated his will to notary Benedetto Bianco on the occasion of his journey to Saray.<sup>103</sup> In August 1378, Niccolò d'Arpino – a Venetian merchant active in Saray – sold honey and slaves for a total value of 840 besants to Marco Nani, Venetian as well, who was supposed to sell it in Tana. Marco had paid only 251 besants, but never paid the rest to Niccolò. The consul, after having evaluated the case, condemned Marco to the payment of all his debts and expenses for a total of 689 besants.<sup>104</sup>

It was uncommon for the Venetian merchants to travel farther than the capital of the Golden Horde. Nonetheless, in the 1380s they still had business in the Volga area and used intermediaries to transport their merchandise. In his will drafted in Tana on May 14, 1384, the Venetian merchant Primasio di Ragusa arranged for a consignment of carobs to be sent to Astrakhan with the first available caravan.<sup>105</sup> In March 1383, the Venetian merchant Giovanni Servodio resided in Astrakhan.<sup>106</sup> Another interesting case is that of the Venetian merchant of Florentine origin Domenico, who purchased and sold a lot of slaves. One slave, an eleven-year-old girl, was from China (*genere cataynorum*).<sup>107</sup>

Sometimes things went wrong and merchants could lose everything. On September 23, 1359, Ser Micheletto Emo, merchant in Tana, appointed as his procurator Ludovico da Molin, his fellow citizen. Ludovico had to manage the seizure of Micheletto's goods, who had lost everything in the shipwreck of the galley of Ser Nicoletto Bernardo.<sup>108</sup> In his rich testament, the Genoese merchant Andalo Basso mentioned a bottomry stipulated for 50 sums with Cosma *dello Levante*, likely a Greek shipowner. The ship charged to transport the commodities to Constantino-

<sup>100</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 16r.

<sup>101</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 24r-v.

<sup>102</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 40r.

<sup>103</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, ff. 25r-26r.

<sup>104</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 189, n. 5, 24 aprile 1380; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 176 n. 486.

<sup>105</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 19v.; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 179, n. 488.

<sup>106</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 13v.; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 184, n. 505.

<sup>107</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 3r.

<sup>108</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 9v.



ple shipwrecked and all the cargo was lost.<sup>109</sup> On September 18, 1363, Ser Marco Mariga nominated Pietro Morosini as his procurator to recover all his goods from the shipwrecked cog named *Dolfina*.<sup>110</sup> According to the document mentioned above, the Muslim banker Coza Azi Aza had to guard Giovanni Barozzi's goods (silk, pearls, and jewels) and transport them from Saray to Tana, but during the trip he was robbed of everything for a total value of 50 sums.<sup>111</sup>

The political difficulties within the Golden Horde affected the life of the communities living in Tana. The Mongol defeat at Kulikovo in 1380 at the hands of coalition of Rus' principalities marked the beginning of a process of internal weakening that did not stop in the years to come. The Mongols gradually lost the regular inflow of money from the tributes paid by Russian princes. Yet, as we have seen from notarial documents in the 1360s, the Venetian community in Tana along with the others who used to interact with it was still well organized and lively. The situation changed, however, in the following decade.

After the expulsion of all the Westerners from Tana by Janibeg in 1343,<sup>112</sup> the navigation in the Black Sea was interrupted; in this period the problems accumulated after the war between Genoa and Venice in the 1350s. When, after 1358, the voyages resumed, the average price of the *incanti*, after an initial enthusiasm, was maintained on an average level (about 60 liras), but already in 1363 it increased considerably (with more than 94 liras on average for each galley).<sup>113</sup> In 1368 and 1369, the galleys directed to the Black Sea diminished from 6 to 5, and the following year from 5 to 4, which were eventually auctioned.

The central power of the Horde, led in these years by Mamai, imposed a 4% tax on merchandise to the Venetians, whereas the Genoese paid 3%. On June 3, 1369, the Venetian Senate sent the consul of Tana to the Mongols asking for fair treatment.<sup>114</sup> To deal with the political instability, the Venetian authorities in Tana increased their defence expenses. In July 1370, the Senate decided to send arms and money to the consul to have the *lobia* repaired and the fortifications restored. Furthermore, he was given 36 sums to pay for an interpreter.<sup>115</sup> Between 1374 and 1376, the entity of the *incanti* collapsed; the news of poor security within the borders of the Golden Horde had probably reached Venice and the participants in the auctions.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 3, ff. 20-3r.

<sup>110</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 4, f. 18r.

<sup>111</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 19, fasc. 7, reg. 1, f. 40r.

<sup>112</sup> PUBBLICI 2017: 25-47.

<sup>113</sup> THIRIET 1958, n. 540 and 561; STÖKLY 1995, 110-11 and 371-4 / tables); KARPOV 2000, 91.

<sup>114</sup> THIRIET 1958, n. 476.

<sup>115</sup> THIRIET 1958, n. 488.

<sup>116</sup> KARPOV 2000, 102; for a general description of events, see KARPOV 1978, 102-9.

The 1370s were also marked by tensions between Venice and the Empire of Trebizond, the other fundamental port for the Venetian Black Sea trade.<sup>117</sup> A new conflict between Genoa and Venice worsened the situation. The war, known as the war of Chioggia, lasted from 1376 to 1381 and ended with the peace of Turin.<sup>118</sup> In this period, navigation in the Black Sea was almost completely interrupted. In June 1377, only 3 galleys were auctioned in Venice. Only two of them were assigned, but on August 7 the Senate decided not to let them leave because it was considered too dangerous.<sup>119</sup> Nonetheless, Venice maintained its community in Tana whose consul in April 1380 was Donato Moro.<sup>120</sup> According to the agreements signed in Turin, Genoa and Venice imposed a blockade of navigation in the Black Sea for three years,<sup>121</sup> but already in 1382 the ban was broken by Venice, which sent two armed galleys across the Straits. The trips to Tana resumed regularly only from 1383.<sup>122</sup>

On July 24 of that year the Venetian doge sent two ambassadors to the Tartar Governor of Crimea (“*excellentissimum dominum Imperatorem Tartarorum*”) to ask for confirmation of the agreements still in place formally. The diplomats had the order to obtain a reduction of the *commerchium* to 3% and if this was not possible, to fix it at maximum 5%.<sup>123</sup>

Relations between Venetian merchants and the local community in the 1380s were regular, with a marked prevalence of the buying and selling of slaves. In December 1383, Karomerot, *habitor in imperio Gazarie*, sold a Russian girl to Pietro Premarin.<sup>124</sup> In July 1384, Caterina Alana was hired by the Venetian merchant Giovanni Vettori as his servant.<sup>125</sup> Giovanni wanted to open a tavern and put Caterina there to work. Venetians and locals continued to collaborate for many diverse businesses. On September 5, 1384, Francesco Catalano from Barcelona rented his boat (*grippo*) to three Circassian merchants—Giorgio Laterano, Sgromalio, and Caloiano—for 70 perpers. According to the deal, once the caravan with caviar and salted fish arrived in Tana, they had to load 200 *foschi* of caviar on Francesco’s ship (*grippo*) within ten days.<sup>126</sup> On January 16, 1385, the Circassian Reboga and a Tartar

<sup>117</sup> KARPOV 1986, 99–101.

<sup>118</sup> See the *Chronicle* of Daniele Chinazzo: CHINAZZO 1958, in particular 200–35.

<sup>119</sup> THIRIET 1958, nn. 588, 589 and 593. The previous year, the galleys of *Romania* had to be escorted to Tana by the galleys of Marco Giustiniani, who then waited for their return to Constantinople; between September and October 1376, the *casus belli* that would cause the war of Chioggia was being created: CHINAZZO 1958, 19–20.

<sup>120</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 189, n. 5, documento del 24 aprile 1380; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 176.

<sup>121</sup> CHINAZZO 1958, 209–10.

<sup>122</sup> ASV, Senato Misti, XXXVIII, f. 34v; THIRIET 1958, n. 649; KARPOV 1986, 101.

<sup>123</sup> THOMAS – PREDELLI 1889, 188–90.

<sup>124</sup> ASV, CI Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 13vr; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 184, n. 502.

<sup>125</sup> ASV, CI Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 14r; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 187, n. 518.

<sup>126</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 14v.; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 188–9, n. 524.

merchant whose name is illegible in the document signed a contract to deliver to Matteo Bugari from Crete five thousand *maghrebi* (salted fish) for 15 aspers per one hundred. The payment is divided into two parts: half now and half in a month.<sup>127</sup> On January 16, 1385, Sich Achsicoza and Assan, both Tartars, sold 2000 *maghrebi* to Matteo Bugari of Candia. The price was 15 aspers per 100. Temir Colunzach and Bonzos, both Tartars, sold to Matteo Bugari of Candia 2000 *maghrebi* for 15 aspers per 100. On May 15, 1385, Cozichar, son of Susut, and his brother Ianbas sold to Giovanni de Besagna a relative of theirs as a servant for seven years.<sup>128</sup> On August 16, 1385, the Florentine merchant Matteo bought a property from Donato di Porto, a Venetian. The property was located outside the Venetian district in Tana, by the moat, and it bordered, among others, with the homes of Chotulboga, evidently a Mongol.<sup>129</sup> In 1386, the consul was Francesco Bragadin and the interpreter Pietro Gata. The service of Bragadin ended in the summer of 1386.<sup>130</sup>

The analysis of the documents shows a progressive localization of relations in the 1380s. Interactions between Venetians and Mongols continued to be steady and fruitful on a personal level but became increasingly complicated on an institutional one. In these years the trips of the galleys were regular, and the amount of the *incanti* confirm a lively interest in trade with Tana. Timur's attack on the settlement in 1395 disrupted everything again, but did not discourage the Western merchants who rebuilt their area and continued to frequent Tana until the Ottoman invasion of 1475.

## Conclusions

The encounter of the “new ethical system” of the Italian medieval mercantile class was particularly fruitful with those peculiar realities whose ethnic and cultural diversity was more accentuated, for example, in Spain, where “the Islamic world... was mediator between Christianity and Judaism”.<sup>131</sup> The dominant culture of Christian-Roman Europe was both the source and the limit of the new mercantilist tendencies. In the Pontic region, a hinge between cultures, where an ethnic complex coexisted, the consequences were even more differentiated. The merchant's utilitarian conception, a predominant element of Western emigration to the East, was faced with peoples whose cultural background was extremely fragmented. The nomadic element coexisted with the Muslim merchant from Central Asia; the Minorite and the Dominican lived in convents in the heart of the Steppe, etc.

The Western merchant was confronted with this stratification. It was mainly the emerging urban bourgeoisie—in Venice, often families of ancient noble origin—

<sup>127</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 15r.; PUCCI DONATI 2019, 191-2, n. 537.

<sup>128</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 15v.

<sup>129</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, f. 16v.

<sup>130</sup> ASV, CI, Notai 130, fasc. 7/B, ff. 17v and 18r.

<sup>131</sup> FUMAGALLI 2003, XII.

who emigrated to the East, and they had nothing in common with the steppe peoples and their traditional roots. In the Levant came the *cives*, citizens, with their urban associative model.

Nomadic solidarity – based on the clan – found itself in front of a new associative principle in turn based on the city of origin. Western merchants, representing the urban growth of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, gathered around the consul (or *podestà*) as the representative of that collective power in which they identified themselves and drew the synthesis of their status as *cives*. In comparison, in the nomadic model there was a heterogeneous social fabric in which the “unstable” dynamic element was closely linked to that of the atavistic bond of descent; in both cases, it was a constructed model.

The merchant of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was professionally prepared and equipped to live away from home. The Eurasian nomads knew the trade well. The establishment of the Mongol Empire brought Asia closer to Christian Europe and attracted new capitals from the East. From the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Asian trade system, with its western centre of gravity in the Black Sea region, became increasingly integrated into the Mediterranean trade system. The construction of *emporia* on the coasts of the Black Sea and the travels of Venetian merchants to distant lands brought people with different histories and cultures into contact. Communities lived together peacefully, traded, met, married, fought, and widened each other’s horizons. After the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Eurasian continent would never be the same again.

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