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Relations between Italian merchants and the Golden Horde on the Crimean peninsula in the XIII-XV centuries

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Abstract. The XIII century marks the dawn of the commercial and political power of the Italian republics. The successful geographical location has led to the fact that maritime trade has become the main activity of Genoa and Venice. In the XIII century, Italian city-states such as Venice, Genoa, and Pisa had extensive trade networks throughout the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. These city-states actively traded with the Golden Horde. Trade relations between Italian city-states and the Golden Horde in Crimea were mutually beneficial and thriving. However, they were not always peaceful. In the XIII century, the Golden Horde raided Italian cities in Crimea and their ships in the Black Sea. Such attacks provoked retaliatory actions from the Italian city-states, which eventually led to tense relations between the parties. Nevertheless, trade relations between Italian city-states and the Golden Horde in Crimea continued throughout the XIII century, and they were an important factor in the economic and political development of the region.

Keywords: *Golden Horde, Crimea, Italian city-states, Italian travelers.*

During the XIII century, several Italian city-states, including Venice, Genoa, and Pisa, established trade relationships with the Mongol Empire. The Mongol Empire, under the leadership of Genghis Khan, had conquered vast territories that extended from China to Eastern Europe, creating a massive network of trade routes that spanned the entire continent. The historiography of the Italian colonization of the Northern Black Sea region offers two points of view. The first of them belongs to the supporters of early colonization and defends the fact that the penetration of Italians into the Black Sea region began in the X-XI centuries. Another version is the appearance of Italians in this region in the second half of the XIII century and the connection of this event with the

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foundation of the Genoese Kaffa in 1263 or 1266. These territories were of great commercial importance for Genoese merchants, which explains the presence of a small stratum of the Italian population in modern Crimea. According to Christopher Beckwith, the events taking place in Central Asia in the first half of the XIII century had a revolutionary impact on all Eurasian civilizations. The Mongol power, which turned most of Eurasia into one commercial zone, spread many new Chinese inventions and helped spread the Black Death and other diseases. The entire empire collapsed in the fourteenth century due to succession problems, unprecedented floods, and famines, exacerbated by the spread of new diseases [1]. American sociologists Thomas Hall and Christopher Chase-Dunn put forward the opinion that the Mongolosphere was a world system that contributed to archaic globalization in Afro-Eurasia [2]. It is important to note the contribution of Nicolo di Cosmo in the study of the activities of Italian merchants. In his work, di Cosmo demonstrates the trade interests of the Genoese in establishing contacts with Mongolia [3]. The Italian city-states in many ways represented the exact opposite of the Mongol Empire in terms of political structure and socioeconomic structure. It is also important that in the medieval Mediterranean of that time an active struggle for maritime domination and trade routes, mainly between Genoa and Venice. In an important early study of these merchant writers, Christian Bec showed how generically capacious pre-humanist merchant writing could be, with "marchands moralistes", "marchands contours", "marchands mémorialistes", and "marchands historiographes" producing advice books, short story (novella) collections, family chronicles, and histories [4].

Venetians traded silk, spices, wool, and other goods with the Mongols. Another important Italian city-state, Genoa, also had significant trade relations with Crimea and the Golden Horde. The Genoese traded silk, wool, spices, and other goods that were in demand in the Golden Horde. They also supplied weapons and equipment to the Crimean Khanate and its armies. After the first Crusade (1096-1099), Genoa turned into a powerful maritime power. The most serious competitor of Genoa in this was Venice [5]. The texts of contracts have come down to our days, in which the final point of the trade operation is called Soldaia (modern-day Sudak). The 14th-century Arab traveler Ibn Battuta even compares its harbor

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with that of Alexandria [6]. In 1238, peace was concluded between Genoa and Venice, according to which the republics pledged to support each other against any third party and, by mutual agreement. The treaty also contained an attempt to delineate spheres of influence in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Considering the maritime rivalry between the Genoa and Venice, the A. Muzarri writes that the conflict between the two maritime powers was based not only on trade rivalry, which was the main engine of clashes. Each of the parties tried to establish its growing hegemony, tried in any way to show the world its own superiority: this is the superiority of the trade turnover, and the welfare guaranteed by the Mediterranean and Black Sea markets [7]. It was the Venetians who were the first to establish themselves on the Black Sea and on the Crimean Peninsula. The Venice republic has been influencing former Byzantines since the Byzantine-Venetian Treaty of 1082 [8]. But after the sack of Constantinople in 1204, Venice opposed the Nicaeans and even used their massive fleet to prevent the Nicaeans from retaking Constantinople. According to Nicol Venetian's fleet was far superior to Nicaen [9]. Later, their dominant positions were intercepted by the Genoese. For Genoa, the treaty had a major impact as it laid the foundations for their commercial empire in the Near East [10]. The exploration of the "Great Sea" by Genoa (as the Italians called the Black Sea) was initiated by the Treaty of Nymphaeum of 1261 with the Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus. On March 13, 1261, a trade and defense agreement were signed, whereby Genoa agreed to ally with the Nicaeans in the event of war [11]. According to the agreement, for military assistance against the Latin Crusader Empire, the Genoese received a monopoly for the passage to the Black Sea and the right to establish trading posts, offices, and churches in many Nicaen and later Byzantine cities. The Genoese also received the right to travel in the Black Sea without any property or personal taxation. In addition, the Byzantine emperors gave them all the rights of the Venetians. The military assistance that the Genoese could give was not needed, but the treaty became a prologue to the power of Genoa for more than 200 years [5]. Since the Fourth Crusade, Byzantine emperors continued to favor Genoa as a trading ally, rather than Venice. Because of this, by 1291, Genoa had the institutional power within the Byzantine Empire to blockade Venetians from passing the Bosphorus Strait, completely

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barring their access to the Black Sea [12]. With the strengthening of Genoa's monopolization of the Black Sea communications after the signing of the Nymphaean Treaty, the process of creating warehouses and market areas accelerated. In 1266, Mangu Khan gave Kafa (modern Feodosia) to Genoans, which later became the center of their colonies. In 1292, a seven-year war for spheres of influence began between Venice and Genoa, in which the Venetian Republic was defeated. The Genoese became the sole owners of the sea communications of the Northern Black Sea region and the Crimean Peninsula. By 1365, the Genoese had ousted the Venetians from Soldaia (modern Sudak). In 1357, Genoa acquired Cembalo (modern Balaklava), and in 1365 - Soldaya, displacing the Venetians from there. There were also new colonies of Genoa: Cerco (the territory of modern Kerch), Tana (in the riverbed of the Don), Ginestra (the territory of modern Odesa), and others. Their agencies were in the cities of Matrega (modern Taman), Kopa (modern Slavyansk-on-Kuban), and others. The Genoese colonies in the Crimea and the Black Sea region were established during a time of political upheaval and conflict in the region. The Mongols, who had conquered the region in the XIII century, controlled the area and allowed the Genoese to establish their colonies. In exchange the Genoese paid tribute to the Mongol rulers. Genoese merchants conducted intermediary trade through their strongholds in the Black Sea region. They sold grain, salt, leather and fur, wax, honey, wood, fish, and caviar from the Black Sea regions, fabrics from Italy and Germany, oil and wine from Greece, spices and spices, precious stones, musk from Asia, and ivory from Africa. One of the routes described by Pegolotti, for example, takes a merchant (or, more likely, his agents and goods) from the Italian colony of Tana (today Azov) to Khanbalik - capital of the Yuan Dynasty (Beijing), around 6000 kilometers away [13]. An important place was also occupied by the trade of prisoners (Slavs, Circassians, Alans) bought from Tatar khans and Turkish sultans. Slaves of Slavic origin are mentioned in the XIV century in the notarial acts of some Italian and Southern French cities. The famous poet Francesco Petrarca also mentions the Scythian slaves in his letter to Archbishop Guido Sette of Genoa [14]. As the researcher Willis emphasizes, in the confrontation with the Genoese colonies in the Black Sea, the Mongols even used "biological weapons" and contributed to the spread of the black death in Europe [15].

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Taking advantage of their dominance in the markets of the Black Sea region, Genoese merchants set extremely inflated prices for goods, extracting huge profits from trade with the local population. Moreover, high prices, for example, for such an important product as salt, were also set at the expense of regulatory import. Genoese imposed their terms of trade, setting extremely low prices for the products of the labor of the local population and high prices for imported goods, including coarse cheap consumer goods that the common people bought. The difference in prices was perhaps the main source of enrichment for the Italians. Trade in colonial goods in the region was predominantly of an exchange, (natural) nature, which was associated with the peculiarities of the subsistence economy and the weak development of market relations. So, the Circassians of that time did not have a merchant class, and this mission was carried out by the Greeks and Armenians living here. The unit of exchange was the bokassin, a measure of fabric for sewing a men's shirt. Until 1453, Kafa did not yet have the right to mint its coin, such a right was obtained after the transfer of rights to manage the Genoese colonies of the Northern Black Sea region to the bank of San Giorgio [16]. In the books of the Massaria for 1469, there is an "assayer of the mint of the city of Kafa". On asprah XV century. the word "Caffa" and the initials of the consul were minted with the image of the Genoese portal and on the reverse side the Tatar tamga. Along with asprs, sommi were in circulation in the Black Sea colonies - originally silver bars of a certain weight and corresponded to from 150 to 200 asprs [17]. Merchants concluding a contract for the purchase of goods indicated sums of money in asprs - "barikats" (a silver coin named after the Crimean Khan Berke), which was in circulation in the Crimea, this amount for barter items [18, p. 96]. Speaking about the role of the Genoese in the history of Crimea, they most often recall that the Genoese were very successful merchants, but they forget that Christian missionaries arrived in the colony with the Genoese, mainly from the Franciscan order. The Franciscans conducted missionary activities among the local Turkic-speaking population. They translated the Bible into the Tatar (Kipchak) language and compiled a well-known landmark of the Kipchak language - the Codex Cumanicus, a Latin-Cuman dictionary. It reflects the diversity of the then Turkic dialects. The close ties between the Genoese trading colonies and the points of the order's missionaries are visible if one makes a map of

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the Franciscan missions. In 1318, Pope John XXII founded the Catholic Diocese of Kafa, headed by a Franciscan Custodian. Further dioceses were created in Vosporo, Chersonese, Chembalo and Soldaia [19]. The nature of the connections between the Genoese merchants and order missionaries can be judged from the Genoese notarial deeds and reports of the Custodians of the Eastern vicariates and the abbots of the monasteries founded by the Franciscans and Dominicans in the Crimea. In the acts of the Genoese notaries in Famagusta, Peri, and Cafe, agreements with the monks of the Franciscan and Dominican orders were repeatedly recorded. At the turn of the XIV-XV centuries, the contradictions of the Italians with the mountain population intensified. Exorbitant taxes, fraud in trade deals, the imposition of Catholicism, the seizure and sale of people – all this irritated the local population. To consolidate Genoese influence in the colonies, lucrative deals were concluded, including marriage unions of representatives of the colonial administration and the Adyghe nobility. Representatives of the top of the Adyghe society specially organized raids for "live goods". In 1330, some Circassian princes were converted to Catholicism. The Adyghe prince Millen (Verzacht) was a Catholic. The Pope maintained contact with him from 1329 to 1333 [20]. Johannes de Galonifontibus is the author of the Book of Knowledge of the World (Libellus de notitia orbis), written in 1404 in corrupted Latin and an important source on the history and ethnography of the Crimea, Caucasus, Asia Minor, Iran and other regions [21]. It also contains data on the activities of the Dominicans and Franciscans in these countries. In his descriptions, John was based both on his own travel experiences and on information received from other travelers, mostly merchants. So far, three manuscripts of the work of Archbishop John have been preserved. He described the conversion of certain Circassians to Catholicism and was a Genoese bishop in Soldaia. Over time, the Genoese colonies in Crimea and the Black Sea region became wealthy and powerful. They established a network of trade routes that extended across the region and into Asia, and they played an important role in the economic and cultural life of the region. Until the first decades of the XIX century, goods were transported along it to Transcaucasia and the Caspian Sea, and slaves were driven back into captivity. It is believed that in the Middle Ages, about 3 million people were sold through the slave markets of Crimea [22]. In 1344-1345, the troops of the

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Khan of the Golden Horde Janibek tried to capture Kaffa, but failed. In 1347, Janibek made peace with the Genoese, confirming the presence of the lands of Genoa in Crimea. And although the khans attacked the colonies more than once, the Genoese maintained diplomatic and trade relations with the Golden Horde, and in 1380 the Genoese infantry took part in the Battle of Kulikovo on the side of Mamai [23]. After the army of Mamai suffered a crushing defeat on the Kulikovo field, Khan Tokhtamysh returned to the Genoese 18 settlements adjacent to Soldaya, as well as the coastal strip from Chembalo to Lusta (Alushta). On this territory, the so-called Captaincy of Gothia was formed by the Genoese. As for the relationship between Italian merchants and the Golden Horde, it should be noted that the Horde needed resellers who could constantly sell captured slaves and all the loot that the Mongols-Tatars brought from their campaigns. The Genoese colonies in the Crimea became such intermediaries.

In conclusion, it should be noted that in the Northern Black Sea region in the XIII-XV centuries. a kind of connection has developed that allows contact between two different civilizations that have existed for almost a thousand years and have their own distinctive signs of development.

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