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Francesca Pucci Donati. *Ai confini dell'Occidente. Regesti degli atti dei notai veneziani a Tana nel Trecento. 1359–1388.*

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[Francesca Pucci Donati. *At the Borders of the West. Summaries of Venetian Notary Deeds Drawn Up in Tana during the Fourteenth Century. 1359–1388*]

Medieval Tana, at the mouth of the Don, in the northeastern part of the Sea of Azov, was the most distant trading post of the Genoese and Venetian colonial system in the Levant.<sup>1</sup> This settlement, built along the so-called Mongol Road that linked the Lower Danube with Beijing through Central Asia, began to be visited by Italian merchants starting in the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> A multi-ethnic population formed by Westerners—above all Venetians and Genoese, but also Florentines—and Orientals—Tatars, Greeks, and Armenians—inhabited its different quarters. In the fourteenth century, the Venetian quarter was characterized by the presence of several stone houses, including that of a consul, a loggia under which the notary worked, two Franciscan churches (St. Mary's and St. Francis's), and at least two other churches, St. James's and St. Raphael's.<sup>3</sup>

The physiognomy of medieval Tana can be reconstructed based on written sources conserved not only in the archives of Italian cities like Venice and Genoa, as one might think, but also elsewhere; for example, in the collections of the Saint Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as Sergey Pavlovich Karpov pointed out in his article “Documents on the History of the Venetian Trading Post at Tana in the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century” (1991).<sup>4</sup> Among these sources, mostly unpublished, the notary deeds are of particular importance. They provide details of the town's social life, economic structures, trade exchanges, colonial administration, ethnic origins of inhabitants, and urban development.

With her book *At the Borders of the West*, Francesca Pucci Donati makes available to scholars the summaries of 592 deeds—primarily commercial agreements, but also powers of attorney and wills—drawn up in Tana and its surroundings by seven Venetian notaries: Benedetto Bianco, Marco Marzella, Nascimbene Scarena, Francesco di Boninsegna di Strada di Mantova, Vittore Scaliperio, Niccolò Natale, and Andrea Scapazio. They succeeded one another, working at the service and under the supervision

of Venetian consuls, between 1359 and 1388. The original documents are conserved in the State Archives of Venice. For each deed, Pucci Donati provides essential information such as date, content, name and residence of all persons present (including witnesses), and places mentioned in the text. The summaries are listed chronologically in seven sections, one for each notary. An index of names completes the book.

Most of the commercial agreements concern the slave market. A much smaller number relate to wine, fish, caviar, hide, and the silver trade. Very few regard salt, cloth, iron, and wheat, and only one concerns wax. On the whole, they call attention to the highly commercial role of Tana and to its functioning as a trading post between East and West.

Although the attention of scholars has already been attracted by the slaves bought and sold in this settlement,<sup>5</sup> there is still much to say about wine and other products. With regard to wax, for example, the contract drawn up in Tana is similar to ones closed in the Genoese colony of Kilia, at the mouth of the Danube, around the same time. On 11 April 1360, before the notary Benedetto Bianco, the brothers Rizzardo and Antonio di Riva, Genoese citizens living in Tana, promised to deliver wax and other goods for a value of 30 silver bars (*sommi*) to the Venetian merchants Giacomo Giuntini and Giuliano de Grazia; more precisely, Rizzardo and Antonio undertook to provide a quantity of goods equal to 10 bars by the following 10 May and the rest by 20 June.<sup>6</sup> As in Kilia, the suppliers needed an interval, between agreement and delivery, to look for wax and carry it home. Unfortunately, as in most of Kilia's contracts, the place of origin of the wax is not mentioned. Nevertheless, the geographical position of Tana seems to suggest a Russian or Crimean source. In any case, a single agreement regarding this commodity does not allow us to determine if the wax market was monopolized by Westerners in fourteenth-century Tana, as in thirteenth-century Caffa, or was also open to Orientals, as in fourteenth-century Kilia.<sup>7</sup>

As this example shows, the Venetian documents summarized by Pucci Donati are extremely useful and increase our knowledge not only of the history of Tana and of the slave trade, but of all aspects of the social and economic history of the Black Sea region in the late Middle Ages—especially if integrated with similar sources, like the Genoese deeds drawn up in Kilia and in other colonies of the Pontic basin.<sup>8</sup>

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## NOTES

1. Elena Č. Skržinskaja, “Storia della Tana,” *Studi Veneziani* X (1968): 3-47.
2. Șerban Papacostea, “‘Quod non iretur ad Tanam.’ Un aspect fondamental de la politique génoise dans la mer Noire au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue des études sud-est européennes* XVII (2) (1979): 201-217, republished in Șerban Papacostea, *La mer Noire, carrefour des grandes routes intercontinentales 1204-1453* (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2006), 132-156; S. P. Karpov, “On the Origin of Medieval Tana,” *Byzantinoslavica* LVI (1995): 227-235; Virgil Ciocîltan, “Expansiunea mongolă și axele comerțului eurasiatic,” *Analele Universității “Dunărea de Jos” Galați, Seria 19, Istorie* VI (2007): 33-44.
3. Lorenzo Pubblici, “Venezia e il Mar d’Azov: alcune considerazioni sulla Tana nel XIV secolo,” *Archivio Storico Italiano* CLXIII (3) (2005): 435-483.
4. С. П. Карпов, “Документы по истории венецианской фактории Тана во второй половине XIV в.” // *Причерноморье в средние века*, под редакцией С. П. Карпова (Москва: Издательство Московского университета, 1991) [S. P. Karpov, “Documents on the History of the Venetian Trading Post at Tana in the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century,” in S. P. Karpov (ed.), *The Black Sea Region in the Middle Ages* (Moscow: Moscow University Press, 1991)], 191-216, republished in С. Карпов, *Средневековый Понт* [S. Karpov, *Medieval Pontos*] (Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 397-426. In this article, Karpov edits and translates into Russian three Venetian notary deeds regarding Tana. One of them is conserved in the State Archives of Venice and the other two in the Archives of the Saint Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, among the manuscripts collected by the academician Nikolay Petrovich Likhachev (1862-1936).
5. On the slave trade in Tana, see especially Charles Verlinden, “La colonie vénitienne de Tana, centre de la traite des esclaves au XIV<sup>e</sup> et au début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Studi in onore di Gino Luzzatto*, 4 voll. (Milan: Giuffrè, 1949-1950), II, 1-25; Charles Verlinden, “Esclaves alains en Italie et dans les colonies italiennes au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 36 (2) (1958): 451-457; Bernard Doumerc, “Les Vénitiens à La Tana (Azov) au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 28 (1) (1987): 5-19; Sergej Pavlovic Karpov, “Schiavitù e servaggio nell’economia europea. Secc. XI-XVIII,” in Simonetta Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Schiavitù e servaggio nell’economia europea. Secc. XI-XVIII/Serfdom and Slavery in the European Economy. 11th-18th Centuries. Atti della “Quarantacinquesima settimana di studi”, 14-18 aprile 2013* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2014), 4-10; Ievgen A. Khvalkov, “El Mercado de esclavos en la región del Mar Negro, siglos XIV y XV,” *Historia Social* 87 (2017): 89-110; Lorenzo Pubblici, “Some Remarks on the Slave Trade in the Heart of the Golden Horde (14th Century) in the Wake of Ch. Verlinden’s Research,” *Golden Horde Review* 5 (3) (2017): 566-576.

6. Francesca Pucci Donati, *Ai confini dell'Occidente. Regesti degli atti dei notai veneziani a Tana nel Trecento. 1359-1388* (Udine: Forum, 2019), 47, doc. 104. At that time, silver bars were commonly used as currency in the Black Sea region. Cf. Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, "La monetazione degli insediamenti genovesi nell'Egeo e nel Mar Nero," in Lucia Travaini (ed.), *Il patrimonio artistico di Banca Carige. Monete, pesi e bilance monetali* (Genoa: Banca Carige and Fondazione Carige, 2010), 48-59.

7. Marco Cassioli, "Mobility and Wax Trade in the Black Sea Region: The Merchants of Kilia, 1360-1361," *Hiperboreea* 7 (1) (2020): 1-16.

8. Geo Pistarino, *Notai genovesi in Oltremare. Atti rogati a Chilia da Antonio di Ponzò (1360-61)* (Bordighera: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 1971); Michel Balard, *Gênes et l'Outre-Mer, I: Les actes de Caffa du notaire Lamberto di Sambuceto 1289-1290* (Paris: École Pratique des Hautes Études and Paris, La Haye: Mouton & Co, 1973); Giovanna Balbi and Silvana Raiteri (eds.), *Notai genovesi in Oltremare. Atti rogati a Caffa e a Licostomo (sec. XIV)* (Bordighera: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 1973); Gabriella Airaldi, *Studi e documenti su Genova e l'Oltremare* (Bordighera: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 1974), 9-110; Michel Balard, *Gênes et l'Outre-Mer, II: Actes de Kilia du notaire Antonio di Ponzò 1360* (Paris, La Haye, New York: Mouton Éditeur and Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1980).