

GENOA'S STRUGGLE FOR HEGEMONY IN THE BLACK SEA (THIRTEENTH – FOURTEENTH CENTURIES)

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The treaty of Nymphaion, in 1261, opened the way of the Genoese expansion in the Black Sea. From 1261, onwards Genoa developed a colonial system which survived until 1475 when Caffa was conquered by the Ottoman fleet. This system was primarily conceived in order to create trading centers in the key points of the sea, to limit the access of rivals to these emporia¹, to get under control the maritime and land trade routes and to establish the Genoese hegemony in the entire area. The present paper will not give an exhaustive approach to the issue, but make instead an analysis of a fundamental aspect of the Genoese supremacy in the Black Sea, i.e. the maritime hegemony in the 13th – 14th centuries. The analysis of the Genoese reactions to the attempts of other sea powers, namely Venice and Pisa, to gain access to the Pontic space, points out to the concern of the Ligurian Republic to put an early end to any possible maritime competition in the Black Sea. The attacks launched by the Genoese against the fleets builded by other powers of the region (the Byzantine Empire, the Golden Horde, Bulgaria, the Empire of Trebizond) must be understood in the same way.

The fact that Genoa tried to limit and even forbid at times the penetration of other ships into the Black Sea shows a preoccupation for exerting a complete hegemony. Any other foreign ships or fleets were a potential threat to the safety of the Genoese trade. Likewise, any fleet built by the states of the region could only have heralded the emergence of a competing power in the Black Sea and, implicitly, put to question the supremacy of Genoa in this space.

Although this article will focus on the struggle between Genoa and other sea powers, one should keep in mind the strong connection between this aspect and the international relations in the whole region. For instance in can be mentioned the collaboration between Byzantium and Venice during the “Galata War” (1348-1349), when the Republic of St. Mark gave assistance to the *basileus* John VI Cantacuzenos in his attempt to build a fleet², the Genoese-Ottoman alliance

¹ For Tana see the classical study of professor Șerban Papacostea, “*Quod non iretur ad Tanam*” un aspect fundamental de la politique génoise dans la Mer Noire au XIV^e siècle, in “Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes”, 17, 1979, 2, pp. 201-217.

² Alexios Makrembolites, *Logos historikos*, in “Bisanzio nella sua letteratura”, a cura di Umberto Albini e Enrico V. Maltese, Milano, 1984, pp. 760-764; Elpidio Mioni, *Una inedita cronaca bizantina (dal Marc. Gr. 595)*, “Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi” (= Miscellanea Agostino Pertusi), 1, 1981, pp. 74, 80. Michel Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XII^e - début du XV^e siècle)*, I, Roma, 1978, p. 79.

established during the second War of the Straits³, or, later on, the Venetian project to place on the throne of Trapezunt, in collaboration with despot Dobrotici, a contender hostile to Genoa⁴.

I. *Grifus ut has angit, sic hostes Ianua frangit*: Genoese and Pisans in the Black Sea

In the “Genoese Annals” of Giorgio and Giovanni Stella a description is given of the seal of the Ligurian Republic, showing in its area a griffon pouncing on a fox with a chicken in its mouth. The heraldic riddle would have been the struggle between Genoa and Pisa, with the legend of the seal announcing the triumph of the *Superba*: “Such as the griffon strangles this fox, Genoa will crush her enemies,” (*grifus ut has angit, sic hostes Ianua frangit*)⁵. Indeed, after the Battle of Meloria Pisa ceased to be one of the maritime powers of the time. However, until the decisive triumph of 1284, the Genoese-Pisan rivalry knew a long history which began with the struggle for supremacy in the western area of the Mediterranean, to subsequently extend progressively into the territories of the Byzantine Empire and the Holy Land. In 1261, the area of the Black Sea seemed predestined to become a new area of confrontation for the two rival cities, the treaty between Michael VIII and the Genoese mentioning the Pisans as “*fideles nostri imperii*”⁶. Nonetheless, the Black Sea was not a theater for the clash between the two republics, the struggle among the three rivals – Genoa, Pisa, and Venice –, which had marked the Mediterranean in the twelfth century and the first part of the thirteenth century, becoming at the beginning of the fourteenth century a struggle between two rivals, the Ligurian Republic and the Republic of St. Mark.

I shall give in what follows a possible explanation of the special statute granted to the Pisans through the Treaty of Nymphaion, and look at how Pisa tried to take advantage of this position.

The mention of the Pisans in the Treaty of Nymphaion should not be seen as surprising. Even before 1204 the emperors had granted successively privileges to the Italian maritime republics in an attempt to maintain a balance among them. Thus the Pisans obtained such a document in 1111, by virtue of which they were granted a district, a place to distribute their commodities, and a reduction of 4

³Michel Balard, *A propos de la bataille du Bosphore. L'expédition génoise de Paganino Doria à Constantinople (1351-1352)*, in “Travaux et Memoires”, 4, 1970, pp. 448-449.

⁴Nicolae Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră. I. Dobrotici*, AARMSI, 1914, pp. 1058-1062; Idem, *La politique vénitienne dans les eaux de la Mer Noire*, ARBSH, 2, 1914, pp. 289-370; S.P. Karpov, *L'Impero di Trebisonda, Venezia, Genova e Roma 1204-1461. Rapporti politici, diplomatici e commerciali*, Roma, 1986, pp. 95-97; Idem, *The Empire of Trebizond and Venice in 1374-76 (A Chrysobull Redated)*, in “Arheion Pontou”, 35, 1979, p. 295.

⁵Giorgio et Giovanni Stella, *Annales Genuenses*, a cura di Giovanna Petti Balbi, in “Rerum Italicarum Scriptores”, XVII/2, Bologna, 1975, p. 56.

⁶Camillo Manfroni, *Le Relazioni fra Genova, l'Impero Bizantino e i Turchi*, in “Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria”, 28, 1898, fasc. 3, p. 794.

percent in customs duties for all commodities⁷. The privilege was most probably renewed by Emperor John II Comnenus in 1136, and by Manuel I Comnenus in 1170⁸. The elimination of the Venetians from Constantinople, shortly after the last *chrysobul*, created an extremely favorable situation for the Pisans. However, in 1182 it was the Pisans turn to suffer from a revolt of the population living in the Byzantine capital, instigated by *basileus* Andronicus I Comnenus. The destruction of the Pisan district on the occasion led to a break of trading relations with the Byzantine Empire for a period of ten years. The relations were resumed in February 1192, when the new emperor Isaac II Angelos granted Pisa a new *chrysobul* confirming the old privileges and increasing the town area allotted to the Tuscan Republic⁹.

The fourth Crusade put a temporary end to the expansion of the Pisans in the area of the former Byzantine Empire, with the Pisan district in Constantinople being burned down. However, several years later, Pisa had her privileges reconfirmed by the Latin Emperor Henry I of Flanders. It is difficult to say whether the rather tense relations between the Emperor and the Venetians had some contribution to this, or the granting of privileges was a reward for the participation in the defense of Constantinople on the occasion of an attack by the Emperor of Niceea, Theodor I Lascaris. The text of the chronicle of Geoffroy de Villehardouin tends to give credit to the second variant. According to the chronicler of the fourth crusade, upon the launching of the attack by the Empire of Niceea, the Latin Emperor issued a general call to arms, answered, among others, by the Venetians and the Pisans: “*Et lors fait crier per tote la vile que il le sievent, à tel besoing cum por secorre ses hommes, que il les a perduz se il ne les secort. Lors veïssiez la cité de Constantinoble mult esformier des Venissines et des Pisans et d’autres genz qui de mer savoient.*”¹⁰

However, several years later, the Pisans are attested as carrying out activities in the Empire of the Lascarids¹¹ as a sign of a normalization of relations. One should assume that their special insertion into the Treaty of Nymphaion in 1261 was due to a privilege obtained from the Emperors of Niceea, previous to the agreement settled in 1261 by Michael VIII with Genoa. Hypothetically, the moment of such an agreement between Pisa and the Empire of Niceea can be placed during the reign of John III Vatatzes. He was an ally of the German Emperor Frederic II of Hohenstauffen, and even became his son-in-law. One may assume that this alliance also opened the way to a closer relationship with Pisa, an

⁷ Camillo Manfroni, *Le Relazioni*, p. 593.

⁸ Catherine Otten-Froux, *Documents inédits sur les Pisans en Roumanie aux XIII^e – XIV^e siècles*, in the collective vol. *Les Italiens à Byzance. Edition et présentation de documents*, Paris, 1987, p. 156.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 157

¹⁰ Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. by Jean Dufournet, Paris, 1969, p. 169.

¹¹ Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile; Government and Society Under the Laskarids of Nicaea, 1204-1261*, Oxford, 1975, p. 114.

Italian town which – unlike Venice and Genoa, the irreducible adversaries of the German Emperor – rallied to Frederic II in his struggle against Papacy. This tightening of relations would have been all the more useful to John III Vatatzes as all his attempts to conquer the Latin Constantinople had been repelled by the energetic intervention of the Venetian fleet.

Thus, when John III Vatatzes occupied in 1234-1235 Gallipoli¹², the doge Jacopo Tiepolo "*fu mult corocias; et sachiés certainement que il savoit cele contrée tote que il avoit este poestés en Constantinople. Il fist erraument armer XXV galies, si les dona en garde a ij. prodomes estrais de haut lignaje*"¹³. The sending over to the Levant of a fleet of 25 galleys was a consequence of the occupation of Gallipoli, considered by the doge as a first step in the Greeks' attempt to conquer Constantinople. According to Venetian chronicler Antonio Morosini, the fleet sent out by Jacopo Tiepolo wrested two victories against the ships of the *basileus*, which seems to have stopped John III Vatatzes's attacks on the Latin Empire, since, in the absence of warships, Constantinople could not be conquered ("*non posando danifichar Chonstantinopoli*")¹⁴. The Venetian chronicle attributed to Gaspare Zancaruolo, according to which the town could only be saved owing to the intervention of the Venetian fleet, bears out this assumption¹⁵. Despite the defeat of the fleet, the campaign of 1234-1235 was a success for the Empire of Niceea. The occupation of a strategic position in the area of the Straits brought about, in the years to follow, the decline of the Abydos-Sestos maritime axis to the benefit of the Lampsakos-Gallipoli axis, centers from which the *basileus* launched new attacks against the Latin Empire¹⁶. Therefore, in 1241, twenty-five Niceean battle ships

¹² For the operations undertaken by the Byzantine fleet during the same year, see v. Hélène Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VII^e-XV^e siècles*, Paris, 1966, p. 318. In addition to Gallipoli, the Empire of Niceea conquered Madytos, Sestos, the entire Chersonesus, and the Thracian littoral of the Sea of Marmara, until Selymbria.

¹³ Martin da Canal, *Les Estoires de Venise*, a cura di Alberto Limentani, Firenze, 1972, I, LXXXI, p. 82. For details on the Venetian intervention, see Donald M. Nicol, *Venezia e Bisanzio due città millenarie protagoniste della storia*, transl. Lidia Perria, Milano, 2001, p. 221. According to the Venetian chronicler Antonio Morosini, Serenissima sent the fleet to Romania at the request of Emperor Jean de Brienne and of the Venetian podesta, see *The Morosini Codex*, vol. I: *To the death of Andrea Dandolo (1354)*, edited by Michele Pietro Ghezzi, John R. Melville-Jones, Andrea Rizzi, Padova, 1999, [Archivio del Litorale Adriatico, III], p. 32.

¹⁴ *The Morosini Codex*, p. 34; the first victory seems to have been secured against 100 Niceean galleys and *saette*; the second victory was obtained by the Venetian bailo in Constantinople, Giovanni Michiel, with 14 galleys against the 60 ships of the *basileus*. Martino da Canal, *Les Estoires...*, p. 82, also believes that the naval victories were salvatory to the Latin Empire.

¹⁵ Pseudo-Gaspare Zancaruolo, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, mss. it. VII 1274-1275, f. 25 verso: "in nel primo hano de questo doxe (=Jacopo Tiepolo) el fo armado galie XXV e fo Capettanio di esse messer Marcho Guxonj e messer Marcho Querinj et ando in romania e prexe 32 fuste de saracinj de quel che gera vignudj a petticion de Vatacio imperatore et daposia i vene verso Constantinopolj et quella cittade vigoroxame<n>te i lo cons<er>vo". It is difficult to say who were the Saracens who might have sent relief to the Emperor of Niceea. Zancaruolo also mentions an additional clash between the Venetians and the Empire of Niceea in 1242.

¹⁶ Hélène Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, p. 323.

which attempted a blockade on Constantinople were defeated in the Marmara Sea by the Venetian fleet of *podesta* Giovanni Michiel¹⁷. The defeat suffered by the Niceean fleet determined Emperor John III Vatatzes to request assistance from a maritime power rival to Venice. Thus, in the given circumstances, a tightening of relations with Venice would have been fairly plausible. Having failed to secure the assistance of Genoa on two different occasions, it is all the more probable that John Vatatzes should have attempted to secure the naval assistance of the Pisans. As noted by Camillo Manfroni, the hostility between Genoa and Frederic II of Hohenstauffen prevented the settling of any agreement at the time¹⁸. One may assume that the failure of the negotiations with the Ligurian Republic is what determined the Emperor of Niceea to turn for assistance to the Pisans.

The privilege granted sometime after 1241 must have been reconfirmed by Michael VIII, which would explain the Pisans being specifically referred to as “*fideles nostri imperii*” in the Treaty of Nymphaion,¹⁹ and allowed to sail into the “Great Sea”.²⁰ It is difficult to ascertain to which extent the Tuscan Republic benefited from the granted privilege. No doubt, there is a Porto Pisano on the Black Sea shore; however, this toponymic evidence can hardly throw a light on the extent of the Pisan traffic in the Pont. Moreover, the Pisans would still be attested, sporadically, in the second half of the thirteenth century and in the fourteenth century²¹. Therefore, Bethus, a Pisan, rent a Venetian ship in 1325 to transport grain from Ghazaria to Aigues Mortes²², and in 1394 Angelo de Lapo was renting from another Pisan a ship to transport wine from Tropea to Constantinople/Pera or Caffa/Tana²³.

The evidence provided in documents is too scarce to support the idea of the Pisans posing a serious threat to the Genoese supremacy, which makes all the more surprising the following rhetorical question, asked by a specialist in the history of Genoese Romania: “*L’effacement des Pisans en Orient après la Meloria ne serait-il qu’un mythe, ne résistant pas à l’épreuve des faits, c’est-à-dire de ces documents inédits heureusement retrouvés par Catherine Otten-Froux?*”²⁴ Further evidence is needed, in addition to the 16 documents published by Catherine Otten-Froux, which do not all refer to the entire area Romania-the Black Sea, to be able to conclude that the presence of the Pisans in the Pontic Basin was significant.

¹⁷ D. M. Nicol, *Venezia e Bisanzio*, p. 226; Șerban Papacostea, *La Mer Noire: du monopole byzantin à la domination des Latins aux Détroits*, RRH, 27, 1988, 1-2, pp. 66-67.

¹⁸ Camillo Manfroni, *Le Relazioni*, p. 654.

¹⁹ For the text of the agreement, see the appendix to the study of C. Manfroni, *Le Relazioni*, p. 794.

²⁰ C. Manfroni, *Le Relazioni*, p. 796: “Promisit iterum et convenit quod non permitet ire de cetero negociatum intra maius mare aliquem latinum nisi ianuenses et pisanos et eos qui defferrent pecuniam seu res nostri vestiarum quibus ianuensibus devetum non faciet eundi intra maius mare et reddeundi cum mercibus vel sine mercibus, sed libere possint ire et expediti ab omni commercio et redire”.

²¹ Catherine Otten-Froux, *Documents inédits sur les Pisans*, pp. 153-191.

²² *Ibidem*, doc. 9, pp. 177-180.

²³ *Ibidem*, doc. 16, pp. 188-191.

²⁴ The question was asked by Michel Balard v. *Les Italiens à Byzance*, p. 7.

The “myth” of the Pisans ceasing to be a great naval power after the Battle of Meloria can only be contested in terms of the contribution of this event to the evident decline of the Tuscan Republic. Documents indicate that this decline started before 1284, and occurred gradually, with the defeat by the Genoese acting in fact as a catalyst. It is quite significant that, despite the special position granted through the Treaty of Nymphaion, the Pisans were unable to take advantage of the right to navigate and trade in the “Great Sea”. The Genoese annals of Caffaro address only one episode in the rivalry between Genoa and Pisa in the Pontic area, placed in 1277. The Pisan galleys having sailed to Constantinople that year caused damage to a number of Genoese living in that town. *“Ma i Genovesi ch’erano in Peira, ciò udito, accorsero velocemente al luogo e ad alcuni dei Pisani inflissero contumelie; per la qual cosa i Pisani delle dette due galee, armata una di esse galee, pensarono din entrare nel mare maggiore e di fare offensioni ai Genovesi che ivi erano in grande quantità; ed entrati nel mare, pervennero a Sinope aspettando il tempo e il luogo di fare le offese. Allora i Genovesi ch’erano in Peira incontanente apparecchiaronsi ad armare una galea acciò che andasse dietro quella galea dei Pisani. Ma frattanto una galea dei Bancheri che veniva da Genoa carica di mercanzie, approdò a Peira; e udite le predette cose di subito prese a inseguire la detta galea dei Pisani e pervenne con venti prosperi in Soldaia. E mentre facea quivi dimora, ecco che la predetto galea dei Pisani sopravvenne, ed era il mese di agosto la vigilia della beata Maria”*. The battle which followed ended, “by the will of God”, in the victory of the Genoese²⁵. The account, albeit rather lengthy, leaves some issues unsettled. Was the episode of 1277 an isolated event or an aspect of the struggle for supremacy in the Black Sea area? Even the fact that the author devotes ample space to a minor clash might suggest the validity of the former hypothesis. By arming a galley and sailing in the pursuit of the Pisan ship the authorities of Pera were in fact trying to chase out their rivals from a sea perceived as a “Genoese lake”.

It is difficult to say whether the clash of 1277 was followed by similar ones. It is more likely that the Pisans did not challenge seriously the Genoese supremacy in the “Great Sea” in the last decades of the thirteenth century. Was this a consequence of the disaster suffered by Pisa at Meloria? Historians tend to answer in the affirmative. Other causes that contributed to the decline of Pisa, in addition to the defeat of 1284, may have been the fall of the family of Hohenstauffen – the main ally of the Republic in the Italian Peninsula – and the absence of a colonial system in the Levant. The Pisans suffered more acutely than their rivals, the Genoese or the Venetians, from loss of their positions in the Holy Land. The latter held positions in Romania or Lesser Armenia, enabling them to carry out trading activities at far distances. As a consequence, the Pisans ceased to pose a serious threat to the Genoese or the Venetians to begin with the late thirteenth century.

²⁵ *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e dei suoi continuatori*, ed. Giovanni Monleone, vol. VII, Genova, 1929-1930, p. 155.

II. Genoa *versus* Venice: *positis namque armis, odia nunquam deposuere*²⁶

The expression quoted by Marc'Antonio Sabellico epitomizes the nature of the Venetian-Genoese relations in the thirteenth – fifteenth centuries. The rivalry between the two republics continued even at times of peace, and is attested by the numerous clashes all over the Mediterranean Sea. Being the result of some private initiatives more or less acquiesced by the authorities of the two Republics, these minor clashes bred distrust and contributed to a continual deterioration of relations between Genoa and Venice. The same situation also occurred in the Black Sea area. One may even say that in the second half of the thirteenth century and throughout the fourteenth century they constituted the “bone of contention”. I shall not retell here the long history of the three “wars of the Straits”²⁷, but rather point out to the main goals of Genoa and Venice in the Pontic Basin. To make things simpler, one may say that the Ligurian Republic deemed essential the inclusion in the Treaty of Nymphaion of the clause of exclusivity of trade in the “Great Sea”, whereas the Republic of St. Mark was aiming ideally to recover its position held in 1204-1261. Owing to the existing balance of power, neither objective could be achieved. As a result, both adversaries accepted a compromise, in the hope that a change in circumstances would make possible the resuming of negotiations in the issue of the Black Sea trade.

The Genoese were forced to negotiate the exclusivity clause shortly after the treaty of Nymphaion. The tension in the relations with Michael VIII²⁸, the naval superiority Venice had demonstrated in the battles of Acra (1257-1258), Settepozzi, and Trapani (1264)²⁹, and the signing of an armistice between Bizantium and Venice (1268) prompted the Ligurian Republic to accept a compromise. According to the negotiations preceding the agreement settled in 1269, the Venetians were allowed to sail and trade in the “Great Sea” provided they complied with the interdiction to settle at Tana (*quod non iretur ad Tanam*)³⁰. In addition the treaty stipulated the role of arbiter assumed by emperor of Bizantium Michael VIII between the two naval powers, and stipulated in the treaty signed with Venice in 1268³¹. According to a clause in the related agreement, the subjects of the two Republics pledged not to attack one another, by land or by sea, within the territories of the Empire and in the Black Sea, the right of decision in any possible disputes being held by the *basileus*. As already noted, this clause was

²⁶Marc Antonio Sabellico, *Historia rerum venetarum ab urbe condita libri XXXIII*, in *Degli Istorici delle cose veneziane*, I, Venezia, 1718, p. 250.

²⁷Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Marea Neagră. De la origini pînă la cucerirea otomană*, transl. by Michaela Spinei, edition, foreword, notes and bibliography by Victor Spinei, Iași, 1999, pp. 347-378.

²⁸Șerban Papacostea, *La première crise des rapports byzantino-génois après Nymphaion. Le complot de Guglielmo Guercio (1264)*, in *RRH*, 27, 1988, 4, pp. 339-350.

²⁹Chronicler Antonio Morosini remarked that in the Battle of Trapani, in Sicilly, “i Veniciani iera chosi sovra de loro chomo el sparvier a la guaia”, that is like vultures seizing their prey v. *The Morosini Codex*, I, p. 58.

³⁰Ș. Papacostea, *Quod non iretur*, pp. 201-217.

³¹Șerban Papacostea, *Byzance et les Détroits sous les premiers Paléologues*, “Il Mar Nero”, IV, 1999-2000, pp. 151-160.

actually replacing the “Pontic clause” inserted seven years earlier in the treaty of Nymphaion signed with Genoa³².

This balance seems to have been preserved until the outbreak of the “War of Curzola” (1294-1299)³³. Gheorghe I. Brătianu noted that this war was sought and provoked by Venice, whose position in the Eastern Mediterranean had suffered considerably in the last decades of the thirteenth century. To the privileged position detained by the Genoese as a result of the agreements settled with Byzantium added the loss in 1291 of the last positions held in the Holy Land, which called for reconsideration of the stand taken by the *Serenissima* in the issue of trade and navigation in the Black Sea.

The clash was an expression of the harsh political approach adopted by Venice and her determination to deal the Genoese a decisive blow. The assumed naval superiority of Venice, demonstrated in the clashes of the sixth and seventh decades of the thirteenth century, was no doubt taken into consideration as well. The Venetians thus hoped to be able to renegotiate from a strong position, once the rival maritime power had been eliminated. For this reason, but also for lack of western allies interested in the “anti-Byzantine crusade”, the Republic of St. Mark embarked upon military operations exclusively against Genoa. Nonetheless, the calculations were proved wrong. First of all, by an intelligent diplomatic maneuver, the Genoese swiftly won over the support of the Byzantine against the Venetians³⁴. Moreover, the alleged naval superiority of the Venetians was disproved by the outcome of the battles of Lajazzo (1294) and Curzola (1299), which ended in the victory of the Genoese³⁵.

As remarked, the peace signed by the two maritime powers in 1299 was more likely an armistice leaving a host of differences unsolved. However, the Genoese seem to have been able to impose their point of view in the Black Sea. They not only preserved the positions secured in 1261, but strengthened them as well³⁶. It seems that the Genoese were able to impose to their rivals in 1299 the interdiction to sail their warships into the Pontic Basin, an interdiction which seems to have been operating, except in the moments of crisis, throughout the fourteenth century.³⁷ This measure was meant to protect the Genoese colonies from attacks similar with the one which had occurred during the first war of the Straits and, implicitly, to render safe the routes of maritime trade in the Black Sea.

³² Șerban Papacostea, *Byzance et les Détroits*, p. 154.

³³ Gh. I. Brătianu, *Les origines de la guerre de Curzola (1294-1299) entre Gênes et Venise*, in vol. *Mélanges d'histoire générale*, published by Constantin Marinescu, I, Cluj, 1927, pp. 87-100.

³⁴ Șerban Papacostea, *Byzance et les Détroits*, pp.158-160.

³⁵ For an analysis of the Venetian point of view on these successes, see Ovidiu Cristea, *Supremația maritimă în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIII-lea: un punct de vedere venețian*, in vol. *Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, ed. by Ionel Căndea, Valeriu Sirbu, Marian Neagu, Brăila, 2004, pp. 557-574.

³⁶ Șerban Papacostea, *Gênes, Venise et la Mer Noire à la fin du XIII^e siècle*, *RRH*, 29, 1990, 3-4, pp. 211-236.

³⁷ Ovidiu Cristea, *Rivalitatea venețiano-genoveză în Marea Neagră: campaniile lui Giustiniano Giustiniani (1323, 1328)*, “*Revista Istorică*”, XV, 2004, 1-2, pp. 89-106.

Venice's failure to impose her terms by the force of arms had as a consequence the adopting of a less rigid policy, the beginning of which can be placed in 1310³⁸. This new approach was based on reconsideration of the relations with Byzantium. The hostility which had marked the second half of the thirteenth century gave way to a rapprochement sanctioned by the treaties of 1310 and 1324. Additionally, a new policy was subsequently adopted in the issue of the competition with Genoa in the Black Sea. A series of trading privileges secured from the Empire of Trebizond, the Golden Horde, and Bulgaria enabled a balance of power between the Venetians and their rivals. This situation was further favored by the Venetian victories in the Aegean Sea, in the "crusades" against the West-Anatolian Turkish Emirates and in the Mediterranean Sea, through the reopening of the commercial traffic with Egypt, after a dispense granted by Pope Clement VI.

Faced with this large-scale Venetian offensive, Genoa took an exceptional measure: the attempt to block the access of the Venetians to Tana, and even to the entire basin of the Black Sea. The Byzantine chronicler Nikephor Gregoras noted that, after having secured the Pontic space, the Genoese tried to block any access to this sea³⁹. In their turn, the Venetian chronicles are unanimous in describing the Genoese attempt to prevent other peoples from sailing and trading in the Black Sea. Addressing the events which led to the outbreak of the second War of the straits, Lorenzo de Monacis identified as a major cause the Genoese's wish to be the exclusive beneficiaries of trade in the Pontic space: "*Ajebant etiam Gaffam et Peyram sitas alteram intra ilud mare versus Tartariam, alteram penes ostium dicti maris appropriare sibi ejusdem Dominium, quare decreverant nullam permittere aliam nationem injussu suo intrare mare predictum, praecipue Venetos, quorum culpa pulsi fuerant de la Tana.*"⁴⁰ The same chronicler notes that the Genoese, after raising the claim, started to put it into practice by attacking and capturing all ships not complying with the interdiction. When the Venetians sent our emissaries to find out the reason for which the peace was being infringed upon, the Genoese retorted that they wished to recover the damages suffered 13 years before, when they had defeated by themselves a powerful Turkish fleet having occupied the maritime space under consideration⁴¹.

³⁸ For the Venetian policy in the first half of the fourteenth century, see Freddy Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne au Moyen Age. Le développement et l'exploitation du domaine colonial vénitien (XII^e –XV^e siècles)*, Paris, 1959, p. 162 et sqq.; Ovidiu Cristea, *Relansarea politicii venețiene în spațiul egeeano-pontic*, SMIM, XVIII, 2000, pp. 27-44.

³⁹ Nikephor Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, I, ed. L. Schopen, Bonn, 1830, p. 877. For a commentary on the passage, see Șerban Papacostea, *Les Génois et la Horde d'Or: le tournant de 1313*, in vol. *Chemins d'outre-mer. Etudes d'histoire sur la Méditerranée médiévale offertes à Michel Balard*, Paris, 2004, p. 651.

⁴⁰ Laurentii de Monacis Veneti Cretae Cancelarii, *Chronicon de Rebus Venetis ab Urbe Condita ad Annum MCCCCLIV*, ed. Flaminius Cornelius, Venetia, 1758, pp. 207-208.

⁴¹ Lorenzo de Monacis, *Chronicon de Rebus Venetis*, p. 207: "*Januenses apud Peyram illas arcent ab introitu Bosfori et maris Pontici, nonnullas expugnant hostiliter, depraedantur et retinent, conquerentibus Venetis per legatos contra Januenses de violatis foederibus et de hac violentia; respondent vendicasse sibi damnum maris Pontici, nam ante annos XIII. debellaverunt potentissimam Teucrorum classem qui occupaverant mare praedictum*".

The same point of view is held by Antonio Morosini in his chronicle: “*Siando Zenovexi in gran cholmo zia vegnudi e masima mente loro trafegando in le parte del Mar Mazor posa i diti se levà in molto superbia, digando e contrariando a Veniciani che in quel mar i diti non intrase a navegar, per la qual chosa molto lavera per la dicta chaxiom nasiete tra uno chomun con l’altro, e la chaxion per la qual Zenovexi chontradixeva a i Veniciani iera questa, che prima mente i dixeva che quel mar iera so, zoè franchado per loro, e apreso chonzio fose che loro molte fiade contra Saraini iera andadi e a Tartari, i qual demora in quele parte e anchora dixeva che al tempo de la rota de la Tana grandano dano per chaxion di Veniciani i diti aveva abudo e che al pastuto quelli non intendeva che i Veniciani intrase dentro dal Mar Mazior, ma se le piaxese, quelli andese a Gafa che iera là uno so porto e gran reduto e li tolese marchadantie de là per le suo mane, chon altre molte parole senza chonsonanza alguna de raxion.*”⁴² One should note that Morosini’s text presents the arguments invoked by the Genoese in a different order of importance, and synthesizes the two stages embarked upon by the Ligurian Republic in her relations with *Serenissima* at the end of the war against Djanibek⁴³. Quite interesting is the fact that Morosini invokes as a first argument the conquest of the Pontic space (to be understood, “by the sword” - *quel mar iera so, zoè franchado per loro*), then the battles against the “Saracens”, and only eventually the inconveniences of hostilities launched in Tana by a Venetian.

The same point of view is held by other Venetian chroniclers. Pietro Giustiniani in his turn believed that the war of 1350 was caused by the grossly exaggerated claims of the Ligurian Republic: “*causa hec fuit, quia Ianuenses Majus Mare ipsismet apropiare volebant et Venetos navigare in Tana penitus prohibebant, eos in personis, navigiis et habere ultra modum molestando et aggravando. Que tam ignominiosa et asperima nolentes Veneti ullo modo substinere, in dicto millesimo, mense augusti, armatam nobilem galearum ad Ianuensium incomodum celeriter prepararunt.*”⁴⁴ Similar approaches are given in the texts attributed to Nicolo Trevisan⁴⁵, Gian Giacomo Caroldo⁴⁶, Pietro

⁴² *The Morosini Codex*, p. 118.

⁴³ For the conflict which opposed the Golden Horde to the two republics, see Virgil Ciociltan, *Mongolii și Marea Neagră*, București, 1998, pp. 179-180 and 186-187.

⁴⁴ *Venetiarum Historia vulgo Petro Iustiniano Iustiniani filio adiudicata*, a cura di Roberto Cessi e Fanny Benatto, Venezia, 1964, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Nicolo Trevisan, *Cronica*, B.N.M., microfilm 164 = mss. it. VII, 519(=8438), f. 85 v.: “quelo mar giera suo francade per loroconti, fusse per loro molte fiave contro saraxini et tartari”.

⁴⁶ Gian Giacomo Caroldo, *Cronica*, B.N.M., mss. it. VII, 128b (=7443) “Fra Venetiani e genovesi era nata grandissima discordia per caggione della detta navigatione di mar maggiore one fu scritto al console della Tana che andar dovesse all’Imperatore de Tartari esponendoli le novita fatte da Genovesi, li quali non volevano asentire che Venetiani navigasero alla Tana, che dovesse animare l’Imperatore contro genovesi gli fu imposto che dovesse far intendere alli mercanti Venetiani in Caffa che di la si levasero e si rimesero in loco sicuro”.

Dolfin⁴⁷, Daniele Barbaro⁴⁸, Gaspare Zancaruolo⁴⁹, and Marino Sanudo the Young⁵⁰. Each chronicler added a personal touch to the events. Thus, the action taken by the Genoese and the response of the Venetians assumes from once source to another new valences, the resulting image being extremely complex. Gian Giacomo Caroldo mentions a Venetian attempt to negotiate with Khan Djanibek. The alliance would have been employed by *Serenissima* as a means of pressure in determining her rivals to give up the project of closing up the Black Sea, whereas Gaspare Zancaruolo believes that the Genoese tried to impose the *jus stapuli* of Caffa, forcing the Venetian ships to unload their commodities in the port of Crimea.

Eventually, when considering the outbreak of the war, both Raphayno de Caresini and Andrea Navagero invoke in what one may term, employing an anachronism, the “principle of the free seas”. Caresini notes that the Genoese “*volentibus Mare Maius sibi solis indebite vindicare, captis iam, ob hanc causam, apud oppidum Caphense aliquibus venetorum navigijs, dux Andream huiusmodi iniuriam tolerare nolens decrevit, cum suis Consilijs libertatem maris summo studio summisque viribus conservare*”⁵¹, and Navagero that, “[the Genoese] *solì pretendevano la giurisdizione in que'mari; e molestano tutti i navilj che navigavano in quelle parti ritengono alcune navi veneziane che venivano dalla*

⁴⁷ Pietro Dolfin, *Cronica B.N.M.*, mss. it. VII, 2558 (=12450), f. 38 r.-v.: “Siando Genovesi in gran colmo et maxime in Mar Mazor trategando molto. I diti se levano in gran superbia, digando a Venitiani che in qual mar non intrassero a navegar; per la qual protestation intra quelli do Communi comanzar la guerra. La cazon perche Genovesi contrariar intendeva a Venitiani iera questa. Che prima dicevano che qual mar era loro cioe francado per loro; appreso perche lor molte fiade iera andasi contra Saracini turchi e tartari i quali dominavano in quelle parte. Et ancora dixevano che al tempo della rotta della tana, danno grandio per caxon de Venitiani receveno e che al [lacunã in text] non intendeva che Venitiani intrasse in Mar Mazor; ma se li piacesse andasse a Caffa che iera lo uno suo porto e reduso eli volesse le mercadantie per la so man. E siando andato plusor navilij in quelle parte i voleva andar intro de Mar Mazor e Genoessi i fo contra e prexe algune de quelle nave; et alguni feno per forza tornar in ddredo digando o forando ingiuria a quelle nave”.

⁴⁸ Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, mss. It. VII, 92 (= 8575), f. 295 v.: Il Baylo di Const[antinopo]li: scrisse alla Sig[no]ria le male parole, che dicevano Genouesi contra V[enetia]ni:, uolendo priuarli della nauigatione di mar maggiore; però fù scritto a M[esser]: Giustin[tinian]o: Giustin[iniani] Cap[ita]no della lega, comettendoli, che andasse uerso Const[antinopo]li, per assicurar le galere di Romania, et altri nauilij, che ueniavano di mar maggiore et ritornasse alla sua custodia di Modone.

⁴⁹ Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, mss. It. VII, 2570 (=12462), f. 41 r.: “Siando montado li Zenovexi in tanta superbia et roggio che li handava corzisando in le parte del mar mazor non vogiando che per algun modo Venicianj navegasse in lo mar dela Tana come senpre I haveva fatto et retigniva I soi navilij et menavalj per forza a gaffa et fevalj descargar le sue merchadantia fuora”

⁵⁰ Marino Sanudo, *Vitae Ducum Venetorum italice scriptae ab origine urbis sive ab anno CCCCXXI usque ad annum MCCCCXCIII*, in “*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*”, ed. L.A. Muratori, vol. XXII, Milano, 1733, col. 621: “[Genovesi] erarsi levati in superbia, che non volevano che I veneziani navigassero piu nel Mare della Tana come sempre aveano fatto.” One should note that in Sanudo's text the restriction only concerns the Azov Sea.

⁵¹ Raphayno de Caresini, *Chronica aa. 1343-1388*, a cura di Ester Pastorello, “*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*”, XII/2, Bologna, 1923, p. 6.

*Tana (...) Allora la Signoria, che desiderava mantenere la sua liberta solita di navigare per tutti i mari ha cominciato la Guerra.*⁵²

One should note that the Venetian sources rated absurd the claim of their rivals to turn the Black Sea into a Genoese lake and to make Caffa the privileged commercial emporium of the region. In reality, even if the measure which the *Superba* was trying to impose was drastic, arguments could be found in support of it. It seems that the Genoese gave up invoking the privilege obtained from Michael VIII Palaeologus. However, the arguments put forward by the Venetian sources had considerable weight: “freeing” (*franchado*) of the Black Sea, the struggles against the Saracens and the Tatars (and the attempt to assimilate these war effort to a crusade) and, last but not least, the damage caused to trade by the Venetian presence in the area. Similar arguments were employed by Venice to justify her hegemony in the Adriatic and the Aegean Seas. Therefore, the Genoese believed that the principles invoked by their rivals in other maritime spaces were also valid for the “Great Sea”.

All these arguments were rendered null by the launching of a new Venetian-Genoese war, the outcome of which remained unclear, such as it had happened in the previous conflict. Genoa was able to impose the interdiction to sail to Tana over several years, without achieving for that matter a complete and definite exclusion of her rivals. Venice in her turn was forced into acknowledging the Pontic preponderance of the Genoese, in exchange for freedom of trade in the Black Sea.

I have dwelt at length on the antecedents of the second “War of the Straits” as accurately reflecting the objectives of the two adversaries. Broadly speaking, these objectives remained valid until the end of the Venetian-Genoese rivalry over the Black Sea. The second half of the fourteenth century brought about no changes in the strategic interests of the two Republics, but rather in the means employed in order to attain them⁵³. A sensible change would only occur in the early fifteenth century. The rivalry with Genoa lost momentum, with Venice ever more alarmed by the increasing maritime power of the Ottoman sultans. In order to avoid the situation created during the crusade of Nicopolis, when the Ottoman fleet prevented, from Gallipoli, the crossing of the Straits, Venice included in the Peace Treaty with Suleyman the stipulation according to which no Ottoman ship was allowed to sail through the Straits without the permission of the *basileus* or of the naval league; ships not in compliance with the restriction could be attacked without

⁵² Andrea Navagero, *Historia Veneta italico sermone scripta ab origine urbis usque ad annum MCDXCVIII*, in “*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*”, XXIII, Milano, 1733, col. 1034.

⁵³ Șerban Papacostea, *De la guerre du Bosphore à la guerre de Tenedos: rivalités commerciales et alignements politiques dans le sud-est de l'Europe dans la seconde moitié du XIV^e siècle*, in “*Coloniser au Moyen Age*”, under the direction of Michel Balard & Alain Ducellier, Paris, 1995, pp. 341-352; Ovidiu Cristea, *Venezia, la politica balcanica dell'Ungheria e l'espansione degli ottomani in Europa alla fine del secolo XIV*, in vol. *Dall'Adriatico al Mar Nero: Veneziani e Romeni, tracciati di storie comuni*, a cura di Grigore Arbore Popescu, Roma 2003, pp. 41-55.

this being regarded as a *casus belli*⁵⁴. The stipulation became a fundamental clause in all the subsequent treaties with the Ottomans;⁵⁵ however, the Venetians were unable prevent through it the naval ascent of the Ottomans.

III. Ephemeral Adversaries: The Catalan Campaign, Burgundy

The emergence in the Levant, even if for a short period of time, of some maritime powers of lesser impact, caused the Genoese to react promptly and violently, which is clear indication of the determination of the Ligurian Republic to defend her grip on the Pontic Basin. Two events deserve attention: the first one, occurring at the beginning of the fourteenth century, was related to the presence in Constantinople of the Catalan company of Roger de Flor; the second one, occurring in the middle of the fifteenth century, was the crusade of Varna and the action undertaken by the fleet of Burgundy in the Black Sea, after the disaster.

I have tried to put forward on a previous occasion⁵⁶ the hypothesis along which the hiring of the Catalan mercenaries by *basileus* Andronic II was not made with the only purpose to repel the Ottoman Turks, but also in order to regain control over the Straits, with the help of a naval power, and the restore Byzantium to the position of arbiter between the Venetians and the Genoese. One may identify three stages in the Catalan involvement in the issue of the Straits. A first stage coincided with the arrival of Roger de Flor's men, and was followed by a violent clash with the Genoese of Pera. The second stage, whose beginnings can be placed at the end of the campaign into Asia Minor and after the establishment of the *Almogavars*⁵⁷ at Gallipoli, is characterized by tense relations with the Genoese and a gradual worsening of relations with Byzantium, culminating in the break which followed the assassination of Roger de Flor in April 1305. The third phase can be

⁵⁴ Georg Martin Thomas, *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum sive acta et diplomata res venetas graecas atque Levantis illustrantia a. 1300-1550*, New York, 1965, republishing of the edition, Venice, 1880, II, doc. 159, p. 292: "Item che algun mio navlio, che vuogaremi non possa insir fuora de le Boche, ni de sora ni de soto, senza parola de lo imperador e de tuta la liga, e si per aventura algun insisse e fosse trovato, e fosseli fatto danno, che elj se ne habia lo dano e che le paxe romagna sempre ferma." The stipulation only concerned warships ("with oars"); without any direct arguments, I believe that the Ottoman warships, in fact, were not allowed to sail from the port of Gallipoli. My assumption is founded on the treaties signed by the Venetians with the Catalans of the Duchy of Athens, who could have a war fleet, but were not allowed to sail from the gulf of Athens, see Elisabeth Zachariadou, *The Catalans of Athens and the Beginning of the Turkish Expansion in the Aegean Area*, in Eadem, "Romania and the Turks" (c.1300-1500), Variorum Reprints, London, 1985.

⁵⁵ *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum*, II, doc. 172, pp. 318-319 (the treaty of 6 November 1419); doc. 182, pp. 343-345 (4 September 1430); doc. 198, pp. 366-368 (25 February 1446); doc. 209, pp. 382-384 (1451). An analysis of the clause of the Straits in the Venetian-Ottoman agreements was recently made by Anca Popescu, *Strictum-ul (Clauza Strâmtorilor:1403)*, in vol. *Istorie și diplomație în relațiile internaționale. Omagiu istoricului Tahsin Gemil*, ed. by Daniel Flaut, Iolanda Țighiliu, Constanța, 2003, pp. 79-90; mention should be made that I do not subscribe to all the points of view expressed in the aforementioned study.

⁵⁶ Ovidiu Cristea, *Strâmtorile la începutul veacului al XIV-lea: episodul catalan (1303-1329)*, in vol. *In honorem Ioan Caproșu. Studii de istorie*, Iași, 2002, pp. 72-94.

⁵⁷ For the meaning of the term "almogavari" see Ferran Soldevila, *Gli almogavari*, in "Nuova Rivista Storica", 51, 1967, 1-2, pp. 41-43.

placed in 1311, after the conquering of the Duchy of Athens by the Catalans. A sensible change would occur then in the policy of the company. The relations with Genoa and Byzantium would tend to become normal, whereas the relations with Venice would begin to worsen, with the Catalans perceived as a serious threat to the colonial empire of Venice.

The historiography of the South-East European adventure of the Catalan mercenaries is quite consistent and I shall not dwell on it any further⁵⁸. I shall merely point out to the extremely violent reaction of the Genoese upon the arrival of the Catalans in Constantinople. According to chronicler Ramon Muntaner, the Genoese of Pera were irritated by the arrival of the mercenaries, the settling of the newcomers in the Empire being seen as a threat to the possessions and honors they were enjoying. The chronicler further adds that the Genoese saw the new allies of the Empire as intruders into a space exclusively theirs⁵⁹.

After the Catalans had taken up quarters at Gallipoli and a worsening could be seen in their relations with Byzantium, the Genoese offered military support to Andronic II. The establishment of the mercenaries in an area from which they could intercept ships sailing through the Dardanelles posed a threat much too serious to be disregarded by the Republic. Thus, in 1306 a Genoese fleet led by Antonio Spinola⁶⁰ attacked Gallipoli, at a time when the Catalans, for their most, were out of town⁶¹. Even if the attempt failed, one may see that the elimination of the hostile Catalan presence from this area enabling control of the maritime route leading into the Black was rated imperative.

⁵⁸ For a detailed bibliography, see S. Tramontana, *Per la storia della "Compagnia Catalana" in Oriente*, in "Nuova Rivista Storica", 46, 1962, pp. 58-95, and Kenneth M. Setton, *The Catalans in Greece, 1311-1380*, in Harry W. Hazard (ed.), *A History of the Crusades*, III, Wisconsin, 1975, pp. 167-224; Idem, *Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311-1388*, Variorum London, 1975. Among other works addressing the expedition of the Catalans I shall quote Nicolae Iorga, *Ramon Muntaner et l'Empire byzantin*, RHSEE, 4, 1927; G. Schlumberger, *Expedition des Almogavars ou routiers Catalans en Orient de l'an 1302 à l'an 1311*, Paris, 1924; Ignatius Burns, *The Catalan Company and the European Powers, 1305-1311*, in "Speculum", 29, 1954, pp. 751-771; Ferran Soldevila, *Gli almogavari*, in "Nuova Rivista Storica", 51, 1967, 1-2, pp. 41-78. More recently, Michel Zimmermann, *Orient et Occident dans la chronique de Ramon Muntaner. A propos de l'expédition de Romanie*, "Le Moyen Age", 94, 1988, 2, pp. 203-235; Zdravko Pljakov, *Die bulgarisch-byzantinischen Beziehungen Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts (1300 bis Mitte 1305)*, in "Bulgarian Historical Review", 18, 1990, 3, pp. 33-45 (especially pp. 41-45 devoted to the Catalan impact on the Byzantine-Bulgarian relations), and Senen A. Garcia, *The Territorial and Economic Expansion of the Crown of Aragon in Romania, and Venetian Response to Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311-1331*, "Medievalia" (Barcelona), 11, 1994, pp. 9-31; Geo Pistarino, *L'impero greco tra Genovesi ed Almogaveri*, in Idem, "I Signori del mare", Genova, 1992. For an ampler analysis of the eastern policy of the Aragon Kingdom, see Francesco Giunta, *Aragoneses y catalanes en el Mediterraneo*, Barcelona, 1989, chapters I-V.

⁵⁹ Ramon Muntaner, *La spedizione dei Catalani in Oriente*, a cura di Cesare Giardini, Milano, 1958, p. 94: Antonio Spinola demanded that the Catalans in Gallipoli "should get out of their garden, that is the Empire of Constantinople, which was <called> the garden of the commune of Genoa."

⁶⁰ *Acta Aragonensia. Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen zur kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II. (1291-1327)*, ed. Heinrich Finke, Berlin-Leipzig, 1922, II, p. 687.

⁶¹ Ramon Muntaner, *La spedizione*, p. 90 believes that the Catalan army had set out against the Alans, who in the meantime had deserted Andronicus II and sided with Theodor Sviatoslav, the Tsar of Bulgaria. For the Genoese attack, see *Ibidem*, pp. 94-97.

The same neuralgic spot prompted the Genoese to intervene again, almost 150 years later. Upon learning that in the negotiations preceding the crusade of Varna the port of Gallipoli had been promised to the Venetians⁶², the Genoese of Pera decided to place their ships at the disposal of Sultan Murad II, for transportation of troops from Asia Minor into Europe. The Genoese hostility became manifest once more, after the defeat of the Crusaders on land, when the Burgundian fleet sailed into the Black Sea. In addition to the squadron of Wallerand de Wavrin, whose activities are well known in the Romanian historiography, another squadron, led by Geoffroy de Thoisy, headed for Colchida, in the attempt to retrace the route taken by the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece,⁶³ and with the wish to cause as much damage as possible to the infidels. If Wavrin succeeded in conquering some fortresses, Thoisy's expedition only caused more tension in the relations between Genoa and Burgundy. After a failed attempt to conquer the port of Poti, Thoisy headed for the Black Sea and indulged himself in looting activities in the Azov Sea until the end of the month of June. On 14 July 1445, the Burgundian returned to Constantinople, from where he sailed back home. Two ships were left behind to ensure the protection of the Byzantine capital. One of these was captured by the Catalans, and the other one remained in service until 1450⁶⁴.

To the looting activities of Geoffroy de Thoisy added the less successful ones carried out by Jacques de Ville. Commanding a galiote, the latter seized several Moslem vessels in the Sea of Marmara, after which he sailed into the Black Sea and intercepted several Genoese ships. He was captured by a ship of Caffa, jailed, and sentenced to death, the sentence being subsequently commuted⁶⁵. He

⁶² For this issue, see Șerban Papacostea, *Gênes, Venise et la croisade de Varna*, in "Balcanica Posnaniensia", 8, 1997, pp. 27-39. One should nevertheless note that 13 years earlier, the Genoese had assisted in the same way Murad II, against contender Düzme Mustafa, see SMIM, XIX, 2001, pp. 320-321.

⁶³ The Romanian historian Constantin Marinescu has the merit of having pointed out to the symbolic character of Thoisy's itinerary in *Les Origines de la Toison d'Or et du Voeu de Faisan (1454)*, in "Le Flambeau", pp. 382-384. Since this journal is almost unknown, I shall reproduce Constantin Marinescu's conclusions entirely: "Si Geoffroy de Thoisy débarqua dans un pays chrétien et non musulman comme la Mingrèlie, c'est qu'il s'agissait, dans ce cas, de l'ancienne Colchide, de la contrée de la Toison d'Or. Son maître, Philippe Le Bon, venait de créer, quelques années auparavant, l'ordre fameux du même nom, et, si l'on pense à la psychologie des chevaliers du Moyen Age, imitateurs, assez souvent, des héros de l'antiquité, Grecs, Romains ou Juifs de l'Ancien Testament, il n'y a rien de surprenant de constater que l'entreprenant écuyer bourguignon avait mis à profit ses randonnées en mer Noire pour fouler, comme un Jason du XVe siècle, les bords du fleuve Phase. Mais le Phase nous fait penser au phasianus, à l'oiseau originaires de ces rives, au Faisan. C'est ce qui explique, je crois, pourquoi les retentissantes "festivités" qui se déroulèrent à Lille en février 1454, furent mises sur le signe du Faisan, auquel prêtèrent serment Philippe Le Bon, chef de la Toison d'Or et puis une centaine de nobles dont-je l'ai dû dit – Geoffroy de Thoisy lui-même."

⁶⁴ Armand Grunzweig, *Philippe le Bon et Constantinople*, in *Byzantion*, 24, 1954, p. 49.

⁶⁵ Jacques Paviot, *La piraterie bourguignonne en mer Noire à la moitié du XVe siècle*, in *Horizons marins. Itinéraires spirituels (V^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, vol. II, *Marins, Navires et Affaires*, collection of studies by H. Dubois, J. Cl. Hocquet, A. Vauchez, Paris, 1987, pp. 203-214, p. 206.

was set free only after the last Burgundian ships returning from their campaign on the Danube had sailed out of the Black Sea.

One may note that the sailing of Philip the Good's ships into the "Great Sea" raised the discontent of the Genoese, who reacted all the more violently as the safety of the trading routes had been seriously put at risk in 1445. The Genoese authorities resorted to military measures, aiming to punish the perpetrators of "piracy acts", as well as diplomatic measures, memoirs being thus addressed to the Duke of Burgundy. A complaint of 7 August 1448 was incriminating especially the activity of Thoisy's ships in the Black Sea, an area seen by the Genoese as exclusively theirs: "*Est preterea hic injuria major, quod universum mare ponticum tutele defensionique Januensium supra annos centum commendatum est, quibus seculis ita est nobis custoditum ut vel nunquam vel raro admodum predones ulli illo usque penetrare aussunt.*"⁶⁶

All the abovementioned episodes point out to an essential aspect of the Genoese Pontic system in the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries: the elimination of all maritime competition. Based on one of the clauses of the Treaty of Nymphaion, this principle made one of the corner stones of the system created by the Ligurian Republic in the "Great Sea". The Genoese took measures in order to control the navigation both of commercial ships (merchants of other ethnical origins often being forced to load their merchandise on ships sailing under Genoese flag) and of warships (seen as a form of brutal interference in a space over which the Genoese held exclusivity). Even if unable to ensure the observance *ad litteram* of the clause of the Black Sea stipulated in the Treaty of Nymphaion, the Genoese succeeded in the long run to impose the rules for navigation in the Black Sea. The competition of the Pisans, as the fiercest adversaries of the *Superba* in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, was eliminated after Meloria, and the Venetians were forced to comply with the interdiction to sail their warships into the Black Sea, and, at times, to respect the restriction of trade at Tana.

The Genoese also managed to eliminate any attempt by the Black Sea powers (Byzantium, the Golden Horde, the Despotat of Dobrotici, the Empire of Trebizond, the Emir of Sinope) to create a fleet that might have threatened the safety of trade routes in the Pontic Basin. These principles of the Genoese policy continued to operate until the mid-fifteenth century, when, as illustrate in a recently published document, the Ottoman merchants managed to create a break in the Pontic system set afoot by the Genoese⁶⁷. On an ever more unfavorable economic and political backdrop, and given a lack of means unconceivable in the previous period, the Genoese gradually lost hegemony in the Black Sea. The crisis, quite apparent in the months preceding the fall of Constantinople, ended in the conquering of Caffa by the expeditionary corps led by Gedik Ahmed Pasha.

⁶⁶ Nicolae Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir a l'histoire des croisades au XV^e siècle*, III, p. 203.

⁶⁷ Ștefan Andreescu, *Un act genovez din 1453 sau despre limitele metodei cantitative*, SMIM, XXI, 2003, pp. 139-149.