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Migrants for Profit: Western European Trade Immigration in 14th Century Mongol Azov Region

The Mongol conquest of the Caucasus and especially the northern shores of the Black Sea opened a completely new market for Western European trade potential. Genoese and Venetians in particular gave birth to a complex commercial system made of settlements that became the arrival point for new waves of migration.

The history of these settlements – called *emporia* – is a well-studied topic. However, the immediate outcomes of this massive installment of people, who were mostly traders, on the coexistence of different ethnic groups, are still largely uninvestigated.

Particularly in the Azov Region, widely diverse ethnic groups cohabited, and the outcomes of this coexistence were very complex. The predominant utilitarian ideological approach of the merchants thus confronted peoples whose cultural background was extremely varied.

We can agree with V. Fumagalli that “The big cities of Communal Italy were the spearhead of the West in the elaboration of a new ethic, aimed to profit and founded on the cultural premise that men have the right to intervene in nature, modifying it”. (Fumagalli 2003). The encounter of this new ethic system was particularly profitable in those peculiar realities whose ethnic and cultural diversity were more accentuated.

In particular, the perception of “otherness” and the subsequent dynamics of coexistence, as a direct effect of the massive migration of traders in the Latin emporia on the Azov Sea, is the main object of this paper. It aims to reconstruct this phenomenon through the investigation of primary and narrative sources.