

SKIRMISH WARGAME NO. 33

"The Venetian Raid on Pitane in 1347"

Struggle for Supremacy in the Aegean



A Medieval encounter between the Italian rivals

Venice and Genoa

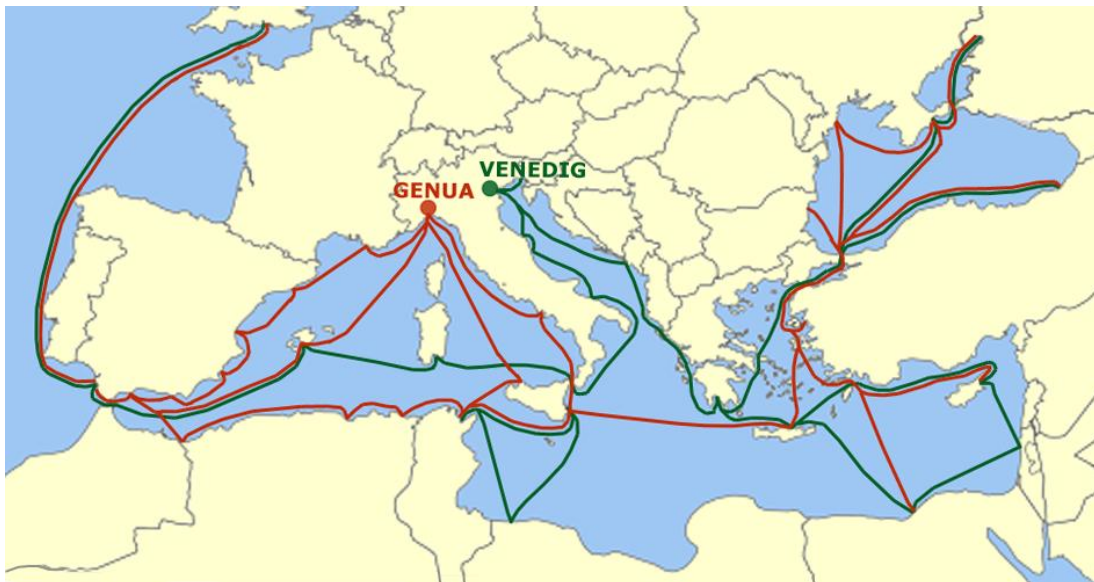
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Prologue

In March 1261, the Byzantines negotiated the Treaty of Nymphaeum with the Republic of Genoa which gave them access to the Genoese warfleet in exchange for trading rights. The treaty also functioned as a defense pact between the two states against the Republic of Venice, Genoa's main antagonist and the major supporter of the Latin Empire. On 25 July 1261, an advance force sent to scout Constantinople's environs, managed to penetrate the city under the cover of darkness and retake it from the Latins.

This was a turning point in history for Genoa. The balance of favour tipped towards the Genoese who received free trade rights and established colonies and way stations on many islands in the Aegean. Trade routes reached as far as the Crimea in the Black Sea and Genoa held up to one quarter of the territory of Constantinople (Galata). The Genoese played a major role in the slave trade and had good contacts with the Tartar Khan of the Golden Horde. Besides the slave trade from the Crimea to Mameluke Egypt, goods such as silk thread, fur, grain, wheat, salt, leather goods and alum enhanced Genoese prosperity. Soon Genoa's slogan was "*Respublica superiorem non recognoscens*" – The Republic that recognizes no superior. However, Venice and their allies the Catalans were suffering a loss of influence and decrease in trade due to the Genoese, which could no longer be tolerated and had to result in armed conflict.



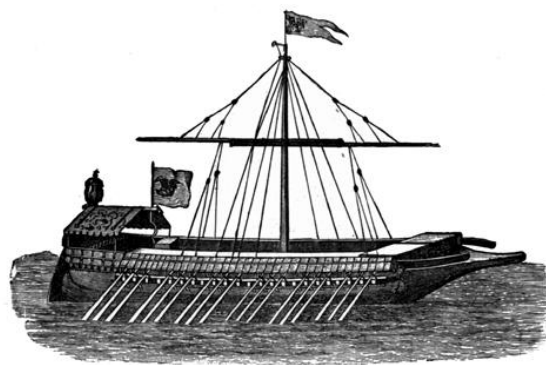
Medieval trade routes. Genoa (red) and Venice (green)

Setting of the Medieval Plot

It is late May 1347 when His Serenity Andrea Dandolo, the 54th Doge of Venice, assembles the Great Council to decide on imminent measures against the rival Genoa. The Great Council consists of only a few rich Venetian families who took control back in 1297 following the “Serrata”, the closure of the Council to the common folk and traders. The anger of the Council against Genoa is at its climax as a Venetian ship carrying Eastern spices, porcelain, peacock feathers, pearls, gems and valuable glassware has been intercepted by the Genoese pirate and mercenary Francesco Gattilusio off the coast of Lesbos. The plundering of the cargo means a severe financial loss for the Council members which calls for action against this outrageous Genoese pirate.

But Andrea Dandolo’s main concern is the loss of a green glass goblet from the Levant, which was brought to Constantinople by crusaders. This goblet is regarded as the long lost Holy Grail and was well hidden among the cargo of glassware. For the Doge it represents the treasure of Christendom. On display in the relics section of the Basilica San Marco in Venice, it would attract thousands of pilgrims who would be more than willing to donate their last belongings to catch a glimpse of the Holy Grail.

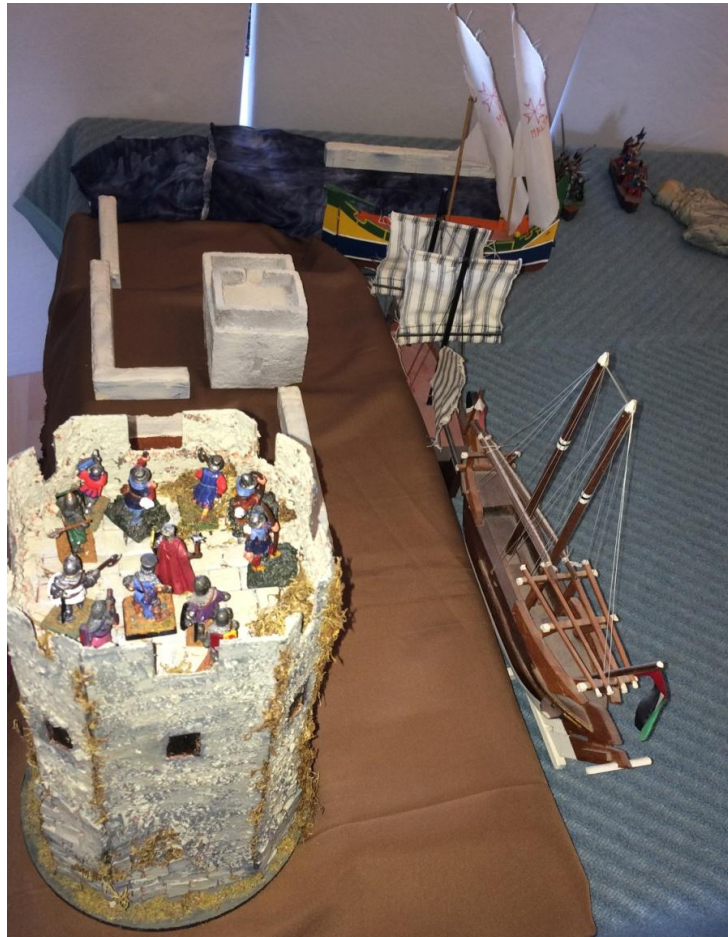
The decision is taken to send the galliot “San Gradale” for a raid on the Port of Pitane in the Eastern Aegean, which is the stronghold of Francesco Gattilusio. Captain Conte Leo di Panzutti has a raiding force of Venetian troops under his command. In addition King Peter IV of Aragon, whose Catalan subjects are in constant rivalry with Genoa, has provided a Catalan boarding party commanded by Baron Josep de Montegut. Not to forget Brother Konradius, an elderly warrior monk of the Deutschherren Order, who has the secret order to secure the right green glass goblet. It is only Konradius who can recognize the Holy Grail, as he accompanied the crusaders carrying the relic from the Levant to Constantinople almost thirty years ago. In 1319 Brother Konradius was returning from the Holy Land to his homeland Bavaria after being in exile for 20 years. *(See Skirmish Wargame No. 32)*



His Serenity Doge Andrea Dandolo orders the “San Gradale” to raid the Genoese port of Pitane in the Aegean and retrieve stolen treasures from the pirate Francesco Gattilusio.

The Game Set:

The size of the playing field is approx. 90cm x 60cm and represents the port of Pitane with few houses and three docked Genoese ships and a tower of Pitane Fortress visible in the foreground. Whether the Genoese garrison becomes aware of two Venetian-Catalan raiding boats approaching at night, remains to be seen.



Port and Fortress of Pitane in June 1347

Captain Conte Leo di Panzutti has ordered two small boats, with ten men each, to quietly row into the Port of Pitane and raid the three docked Genoese ships. The target is to board the three ships, eliminate the guards, search the cargo area for treasure and the goblet, set the ships on fire and escape before the garrison from the fortress intervenes. But the plan may not work as smoothly as anticipated, because one of the ships holds a load of slaves, who were evacuated from the besieged city of Kaffa in the Crimea. The Tartars had abandoned the siege because the bubonic plague (or Black Death) had spread throughout their camp. But before leaving they catapulted infected corpses into the city and thus spread the pandemic also to the Genoese who carried the pestilence on to Constantinople and Europe. Between 1348-50 one third of the population in Europe succumbed to the Black Death.

Rules for the Sequence of the Game:

1. Prepare three cards with the titles: "Treasure", "Goblet" and "Slaves" which shows the freight of each ship. Shuffle the cards and place them face down, one under each ship. In this way the players don't know what freight the ship holds.
2. In game move no. 1 the two small rowing boats enter the Port of Pitane. The first boat is manned by Captain Conte di Panzutti, Brother Konradius, one sergeant and seven troops. The second boat is commanded by the Catalan Baron Josep de Montegut, one sergeant and eight raiders.
3. The boats move at a speed of 30cm. To board or disembark a ship costs 10cm of a move each. When raiders are on board, throw an average dice (2,3,3,4,4,5) to determine how many guards on the ship. There is always one veteran guard on each ship (+1 combat point). Once the guards are eliminated or have surrendered the cargo area will be opened (at that moment you may turn around the card to see what the ship has loaded). If you are on the slave ship you have just been infected (-10 victory points)
4. If you have captured the treasure (chest of gold and silver bars), then it takes 10 cm to move it into the rowing boat. In case you have found the glassware, it gets a bit more difficult. Brother Konradius (late sixties) has diminished eyesight and needs to take a closer look at all the glass goblets in the cargo area. One chance per move to detect the "Holy Grail" with a 5 or 6 on a regular dice.
5. Before making a getaway the raiders need to set the ships on fire. Please refer to the Medieval Table Top Rules.
6. However, in the meantime the garrison (Francesco Gattilusio and 24 troops) may have turned up and will attack the raiders and try to extinguish the fire (see Medieval Table Top Rules)

Combat points:

Characters	Combat Points
Conte Leo di Panzutti (Venetian)	+2
Venetian Sergeant	+1
7x Venetian Raiders	0
Brother Konradius	+1
Baron Josep de Montegut (Catalan)	+2
1x Sergeant	+1
8x Catalan Raiders	0
Francesco Gattilusio (Genoese)	+2
1x Officer of the Garrison	+1
1x Sergeant of the Garrison	+1
22 x Garrison troops	0
On each of the three ships there is one veteran guard	+1
The one who holds the “Holy Grail”	+1 in addition to above points

Victory Points:

Max. 100 points possible by the end of game move 10

1. **Per ship destroyed or saved = 10 points (max. 30 points)**
2. **For treasure chest captured or saved = 20 points**
3. **For Green Glass Goblet “Holy Grail” captured or saved = 30 points**
4. **For every Venetian/Catalan raider who makes a getaway = 1 point each (max. 20 points)**
5. **For every Venetian/Catalan raider killed or captured =1 point each (max. 20 points)**

The player with the most points at the end of game move 10 wins the match.

Medieval Table Top Rules

Sequence of the game move: 1. Shooting of missiles, 2. Movement, 3. Combat, 4. Special Rules

1. Shooting of missiles:

Bow/Crossbow

0-20 cm effective range (hit person with dice 5,6 / group* 4,5,6)

**Group is at least three figures in close formation*

21-40cm long range (hit person with dice 6 / group 5,6) Crossbow max. range 30cm.

Spear/axe

0-10 cm effective range (hit person with dice 5,6 / group* 4,5,6)

**Group is at least three figures in close formation*

11-20cm long range (hit person with dice 6 / group 5,6)

Saving throws: When figure gets hit by missile there is the chance of getting saved with a 5 or 6 (cast 6d die). One die cast each for hardcover, shield, and body armour. There is one additional saving throw for the figure which holds the "Holy Grail".

As the action is taking place at night shooting of missiles is only possible if the target is on or next to a burning ship, with the fire providing enough light to determine target.

2. Movement:

Foot 20cm

Boat 30cm

Embarking or disembarking ship equivalent to 10cm (deduct from movement)

Crossing barrier or wall equivalent to 10cm (deduct from movement)

3. Combat:

Combat takes place when bases of figures touch or they are in reach with their weapons.

For each figure in combat a regular die (6d) is cast and the personal combat points (see table above) are added to the value on the die. The total points of the combatants are compared

Draw: Combat continues to next move

+1: The loser falls back/withdraws 10cm / +2 and more: kill.

Whenever 3 figures of one side fall back in one combat, automatically a fourth figure close by will join the withdrawal. Whenever a personality/ officer/sergeant falls back, automatically one further figure close by will join.

The figure holding the "Holy Grail" will enjoy an additional +1 combat point

Whenever two figures of one side fight against an individual figure, the first combat is according to the above rules, while for the second combat the individual figure gets one point deducted (-1).

4. Special Rules:

Destruction of Ships with Fire:

A ship gets destroyed when 25 destruction points (fire) by dice have been reached. This can be achieved as follows:

To ignite a fire a 5,6 dice throw is required (max. three figure can attempt to set a ship on fire per game move). Once burning the fire will spread and a dice throw per source of fire is added per move. If the sum of all dice reaches 25 the ship is lost and sinks (Sum up all dice throws also from previous game moves). Fires may be extinguished by a counter dice throw which is then deducted from fire destruction points. Max. three figures per game move can try to extinguish fire. If the fire destruction points fall below 5, then the fire gets extinguished. To extinguish a fire there needs to be at least one figure next to the fire to do this job unchallenged during one move.

Example: Fire is started with a 6. Then a dice throw gives 5 fire destruction points.

Immediately the ship guard tries to extinguish the fire and throws a dice and gets a two. $5-2 = 3$ remaining fire destruction points. Means fire is extinguished and points drop to 0. If the fire had continued unmolested by the ship guard and another dice throw in the following move had produced a 6, then the total fire destruction points would have summed up to $5+6=11$. At the same time two more fires are started with 6 and 3 fire destruction points (i.e. a total of $11+9 = 20$). Therefore the ship is on the verge of destruction. If a ship guard now started fighting the fire with a dice throw of 3, the total destruction points would drop to 17. However the blaze continues and the fire destruction points in the next game move from 3 sources are 1, 3, 5 (i.e. 9) giving a total of 26 destruction points. The ship is destroyed. This shows that there is a good chance of extinguishing a fire unless there are several fire sources at the same time.

How the Garrison is alarmed:

When the raiders board the ship an average dice is thrown to determine the number of defending guards on the ship. One of the guards is a veteran (+1 combat point). If the attackers either kill (+2) or knock out (+1) the defenders or the veteran is killed or knocked out, then there is no alarm and the garrison stays in the fortress. However, if one of the guards successfully fights back (either kills attacker +2, or forces withdrawal of attacker +1 or is still interlocked in combat 0) then the garrison is alarmed. An average dice throw will indicate after how many moves the garrison appears on the scene of combat. The garrison is immediately alarmed if a fire is ignited on any of the ships.

A Sample Game in action



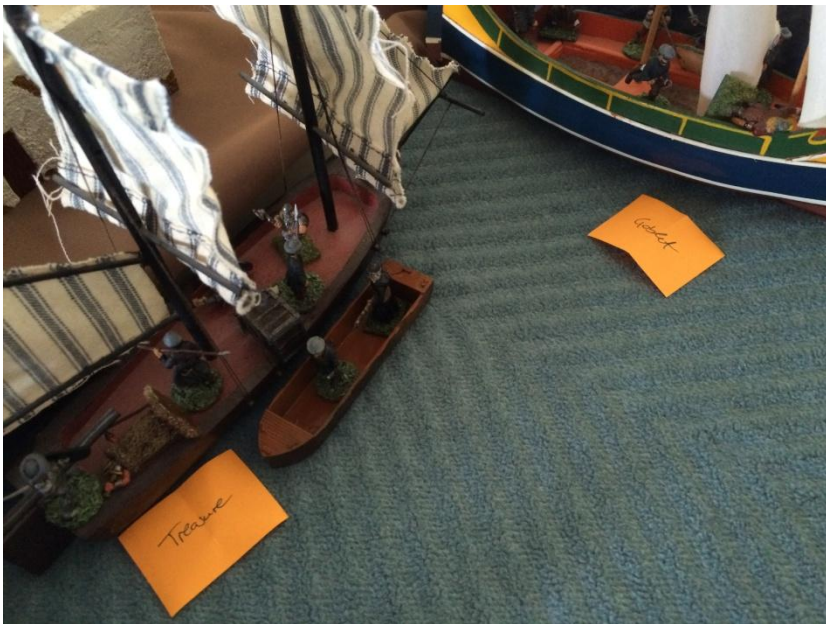
Game Move No. 1 – The Venetians move into Port of Pitane and set a boarding gang of 5 men on the docks to attack the first ship. The remainder of the Venetians move on the second ship while the Catalans row on to attack ship no. 3.



Game Move No. 2 – The Venetians board ship no. 1 which has three guards. However, they are overcome easily and no alarm is sounded. The cargo area is opened!



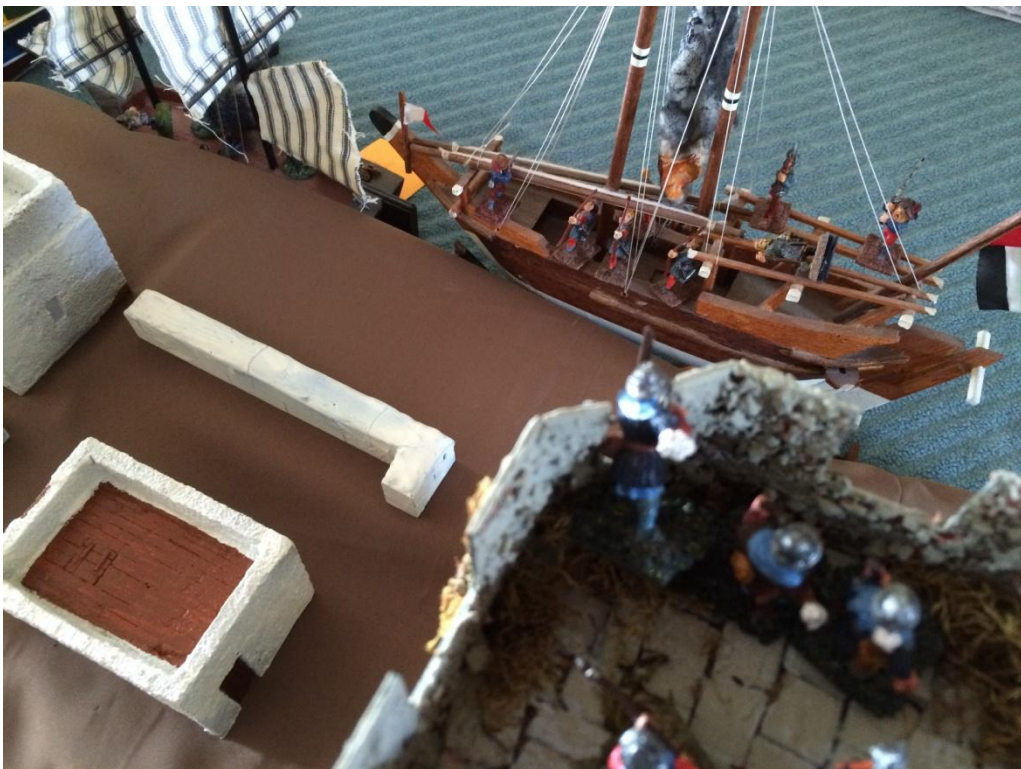
Also in Game Move No. 2 the second ship is boarded and as in the case of the first ship has three guards. They fight back and the garrison is alarmed, which throws an average dice 4 (i.e. 4 moves, already counting this one, until they arrive on the scene. Which means game move no. 5)



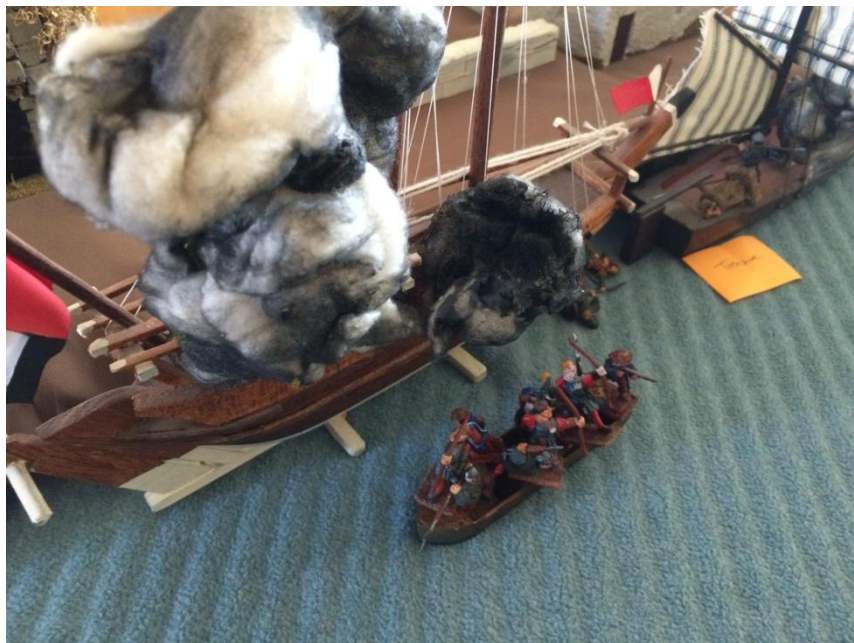
Cargo areas have been opened and goblet detected in ship no. 1 while ship no. 2 holds the treasure. Brother Konradius has to move to ship no. 1 quickly to retrieve the proper goblet.



Game Move No. 3 – The Venetians have loaded treasure chest in rowing boat which is on the way to ship no. 1 together with Brother Konradius. Two remaining Venetians set the ship on fire.



Game Move No. 4 – The Catalans have easily boarded the 3rd ship and eliminated the four guards. One can see that the ship is already burning while the garrison shoots arrows at the raiders. No need to open the cargo area as we know it can only mean Black Death.



Game Move No. 5– The garrison attacks but is too late. Ship no. 3 is burning severely and reaches a fire destruction of 26 after three consecutive moves of fire and is lost. The 2nd ship has already reached a fire destruction level of 13. The garrison needs to hurry to extinguish the fire. Meanwhile Brother Konradius is unsuccessful in finding the right goblet (doesn't get a 5 or 6 dice throw)



Game Move No. 6 – The garrison quickly advances and boards ship no. 2 and starts extinguishing fire while the attackers are ready to make a getaway. Brother Konradius could still not find the goblet and therefore the Venetians decide to abandon mission and set ship no. 1 on fire.



Game Move No. 7 – The raiders are back on the way to the “San Gradale” without suffering any casualties. They captured the treasure and set three ships on fire, while they could not find the goblet. Had they stayed on and fought the garrison to give Brother Konradius more time, it could have been a very close run.

The outcome of the game:

The garrison moved in quickly and was lucky enough to extinguish the fires on ships 1 & 2 by the end of game move no. 10. Ship no. 3 and the treasure chest were lost.

Therefore we have a clear draw:

Venetians/Catalans: 10 points for ship no. 3 destroyed, 20 points for treasure chest and 20 points for all raiders returning safely. Total 50 points.

Genoese: 20 points for saving ships no. 1 & 2 and 30 points for save guarding the goblet. Total 50 points

Epilogue

I was inspired to write this game following a visit to the Fortress of Candarli (formerly known as Pitane) during my last summer holidays at the Turkish Aegean coast. This is quite a formidable fortress and I was surprised to read that the fortress was built by the Genoese in the early 14th century.



While resting at the beach and looking at the walls and towers of the fortress I wondered what the Genoese were doing here in the Medieval period. With WiFi available at the local tea garden, I discovered that the Genoese set up colonies and fortifications along their trading routes. They were surprisingly quite prominent in the slave trade. The rivalry between Venice and Genoa was ongoing and I imagined how this could have led to an armed clash at the time of the climax of their conflict in the middle of the 14th century.



View from one of the five towers of Candarli (Pitane) Fortress last summer.

The plot of this game is fictitious but the personality Francesco Gattilusio existed. He became ruler of the close by island of Lesbos in the early 1350s. So perhaps he was in Pitane at some stage. Andrea Dandolo was Doge of Venice from 1342-54. Whether he assembled the Great Council in 1347 is not known, but certainly he was rather upset with the Genoese. Therefore a Venetian-Catalan fleet under the command of Niccolo Pisani was dispatched to fight the Genoese in Constantinople in 1350. The episode of the Tartars sending corpses of pestilence victims over the walls of Kaffa by catapult is true and contributed to the Black Death reaching Constantinople and Europe via Genoese ships in the period 1348-50.

Allegedly Genoese crusaders brought home a green glass goblet from the Levant which the Genoese long regarded as the Holy Grail. Whether the Venetians were envious of this relic has never been recorded, but it brings an element of suspense into the game with Brother Konradius trying to retrieve it. Of course this warrior monk never existed in history but was only one of the protagonists of my previous Skirmish Wargame no. 32 “The Carmina Burana” – A Game of Royal Feud and Medieval Heresy set in Bavaria in 1319 – who made a re-appearance in 1347 as promised.

Enjoy the Game!

Oliver

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