

atmosphere and scenery of the Badakhshan plateaux (i. p. 158), and of the benefit that Messer Marco's health derived from a visit to them? In this version alone again we have an account of the oppressions exercised by Kúblái's Mahomedan Minister Ahmad, telling how the Cathayans rose against him and murdered him, with the addition that Messer Marco was on the spot when all this happened. Now not only is the whole story in substantial accordance with the Chinese Annals, even to the name of the chief conspirator,\* but those annals also tell of the courageous frankness of "Polo, assessor of the Privy Council," in opening the Kaan's eyes to the truth.

Many more such examples might be adduced, but these will suffice. It is true that many of the passages peculiar to the Ramusian version, and indeed the whole version, show a freer utterance and more of a literary faculty than we should attribute to Polo, judging from the earlier texts. It is possible, however, that this may be almost, if not entirely, due to the fact that the version is the result of a double translation, and probably of an editorial fusion of several documents; processes in which angularities of expression would be dissolved.†

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\* *Wangcheu* in the Chinese Annals; *Vanchu* in Ramusio. I assume that Polo's *Vanchu* was pronounced as in English; for in Venetian the *ch* very often has that sound. But I confess that I can adduce no other instance in Ramusio where I suppose it to have this sound, except in the initial sound of *Chinchitalas* and twice in *Choiach* (see II. 364).

Professor Bianconi, who has treated the questions connected with the Texts of Polo with honest enthusiasm and laborious detail, will admit nothing genuine in the Ramusian interpolations beyond the preservation of some *oral traditions* of Polo's supplementary recollections. But such a theory is out of the question in face of a chapter like that on Ahmad.

† Old Purchas appears to have greatly relished Ramusio's comparative lucidity: "I found (says he) this Booke translated by Master Hakluyt out of the Latine (*i.e.* among Hakluyt's MS. collections). But where the blind leade the blind both fall: as here the corrupt *Latine* could not but yeeld a corruption of truth in *English*. Ramusio, Secretarie to the *Decemwiri* in *Venice*, found a better Copie and published the same, whence you have the worke in manner new: so renewed, that I have found the Proverbe true, that it is better to pull downe an old house and to build it anew, then to repaire it; as I also should have done, had I knowne that which in the event I found. The *Latine* is Latten, compared to *Ramusio's Gold*. And hee which hath the *Latine* hath but *Marco Polo's carkasse* or not so much, but a few bones, yea, sometimes stones rather than bones; things divers, averse, adverse, perverted in manner, disjoynted in manner, beyond believe. I have seene some Authors maymed, but never any so mangled and so mingled, so present and so absent, as this vulgar *Latine* of *Marco Polo*; not so like himselfe, as the Three *Polo's* were at their returne to *Venice*, where none knew them. . . . Much are wee beholden to *Ramusio*, for restoring this *Pole* and Load-starre of *Asia*, out of that mirie poole or puddle in which he lay drowned." (III. p. 65.)