

63. Though difficulties will certainly remain,* the most probable explanation of the origin of this text seems to me to be some such hypothesis as the following:—I suppose that Polo in his latter years added with his own hand supplementary notes and reminiscences, marginally or otherwise, to a copy of his book; that these, perhaps in his lifetime, more probably after his death, were digested and translated into Latin;† and that Ramusio, or some friend of his, in retranslating and fusing them with Pipino's version for the *Navigazioni*, made those minor modifications in names and other matters which we have already noticed. The mere facts of digestion from memoranda and double translation would account for a good deal of unintentional corruption.

Hypothesis
of the
sources of
the Ramu-
sian Version.

That more than one version was employed in the composition of Ramusio's edition we have curious proof in at least one passage of the latter. We have pointed out at p. 410 of this volume a curious example of misunderstanding of the old French

* Of these difficulties the following are some of the more prominent:—

1. The mention of the death of Kúblái (see note 7, p. 38 of this volume), whilst throughout the book Polo speaks of Kúblái as if still reigning.

2. Mr Hugh Murray objects that whilst in the old texts Polo appears to look on Kúblái with reverence as a faultless Prince, in the Ramusian we find passages of an opposite tendency, as in the chapter about Ahmad.

3. The same editor points to the manner in which one of the Ramusian additions represents the traveller to have visited the Palace of the Chinese Kings at Kinsay, which he conceives to be inconsistent with Marco's position as an official of the Mongol Government. (See vol. ii. p. 208.)

If we could conceive the Ramusian additions to have been originally notes written by old Maffeo Polo on his nephew's book, this hypothesis would remove almost all difficulty.

One passage in Ramusio seems to bear a reference to the date at which these interpolated notes were amalgamated with the original. In the chapter on Samarkand (i. p. 191) the conversion of the Prince Chagatai is said in the old texts to have occurred "not a great while ago" (*il ne a encore grament de tens*). But in Ramusio the supposed event is fixed at "one hundred and twenty-five years since." This number could not have been uttered with reference to 1298, the year of the dictation at Genoa, nor to any year of Polo's own life. Hence it is probable that the original note contained a date or definite term which was altered by the compiler to suit the date of his own compilation, some time in the 14th century.

† In the first edition of Ramusio the preface contained the following passage, which is omitted from the succeeding editions; but as even the first edition was issued after Ramusio's own death, I do not see that any stress can be laid on this:

"A copy of the Book of Marco Polo, as it was originally written in Latin, marvelously old, and perhaps directly copied from the original as it came from M. Marco's own hand, has been often consulted by me and compared with that which we now publish, having been lent me by a nobleman of this city, belonging to the Ca' Ghisi."