

THE FINAL EXTINCTION OF THE POLO FAMILY ≠ MARCO POLO  
 indisputable evidence that any member of the Polo family was on the Grand Council before the election of Nicolò of S. Geremia in 1381. However this may be, RAMUSIO himself does not mention the castellano of Verona, and the fact is that two men of the name of Marco Polo died about the year 1418. From the genealogical trees and from the documents to which reference is there made it will be seen that the last man (Marco Polo) of the S. Giovanni Grisostomo line died early in the fifteenth century,<sup>1</sup> while his sisters survived till at least 1457 and 1461 respectively in full possession of their faculties. The interest of this lies in the fact that it makes it possible that RAMUSIO, who reached Venice before 1500, had heard Polo stories from old persons who in turn had heard them direct from these last survivors of the family.<sup>2</sup>

The last passage quoted above introduced the subject of the arms of the Polo family, and about this too RAMUSIO has something special to say. "The arms of the family (that not even this thing may be passed in silence), by that which is seen carved on this tomb,<sup>3</sup> are a bend with three birds upon it, the colours of which, according to certain books of ancient histories in which all the arms of the gentlemen of this noble city are seen emblazoned, are the field azure, the bend argent, and the three birds sable, which are that sort of birds which are here vulgarly called *pole*, named by Latins *graculi*. This is the true shield of these most noble gentlemen, which I have wished to say to the end that, since many other nobles who many years later have had themselves called members of the House of Polo have taken different arms (with indeed the same sort of birds, but in other arrangement and colours), it may be known for all time from this

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It has been thought that members of the cancellation committee were always members of the Council and therefore nobles, but a minute of 21 August 1287 specifies *et possint accipi de omni loco exceptis consiliariis iudicibus proprii et petitionum et advocatoribus communis*. M.C. *Zaneta* fol. 32v<sup>o</sup> (G.O.). The exception is not repeated on 27 June 1301. cf. M.C. *Luna* reg. 12 fol. 30v<sup>o</sup>; *Pilosus* fol. 59v<sup>o</sup>; *Zaneta* fol. 35, 42, 64, 86 (?); *Magnus* fol. 15v<sup>o</sup>, (G.O.). For the use of the title "noble" see dd. 4, 50, 75, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92. (pl. 7, 8.)

<sup>1</sup> He was dead some time before 29 May 1417, d. 92.

<sup>2</sup> None of the large number of Venetian genealogies which we have been able to consult seems explicitly to recognize more than one family of Polo, namely the "Poli di Dalmazia" as Marino SANUDO the younger calls them. But the earliest which has been seen is dated 1423, when both branches of the family were already extinct in the male line.

<sup>3</sup> The tomb of Nicolò the traveller in the porch of the old Church of S. Lorenzo; see p. 30.