

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s THE TRUE POLO SHIELD
 our account what was the true badge of these honoured and valiant gentlemen.”¹
 RAMUSIO is very emphatic about this shield and though, as has been seen, his
 information is not always exact I have found no reason to dispute it in this case.
 The arms quoted on p. 19 n. 1 just above ([*argent?*] between four *pole* two and two
 [*sable*] a bend *azure*) were those of the S. Geremia branch early in the fifteenth century.
 With the arrangement which, when RAMUSIO wrote in 1553, was still visible on the
 shield said to have been set up by Marco Polo himself on his father’s tomb c. 1300,
 two blazons different from that given by RAMUSIO are found, namely *gules* on a
 bend or three *pole sable*,² and the same with the bend *argent*.³ There is, however,
 nothing, as far as I know, to show that these shields with the field *gules* even
 profess to be those of the San Giovanni Grisostomo branch of the family in the
 thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The birds *pole* may be, as YULE thought,
 jackdaws, but are perhaps more probably choughs, especially as they are sometimes
 shown or described with red legs and beaks.⁴

¹ RAMUSIO *Navig. et Viaggi*, II. 1559, Pref. fol. 7v^o: d. 95, p. 587.

In the second (1574) and later editions the words *accio che . . . cassone* and *Questa è la . . . si
 conosca* were omitted. The second passage may have given offence to the “many other
 nobles”; but the omission of the first sentence in 1574 is strange, since the Church of
 S. Lorenzo was not destroyed till after 1590.

² Fitzwilliam Museum, MS.301, dated 1 Feb. 1423/4; M. BARBARO as above on p. 17
 note 1. Dr H. BUCHTHAL thinks that in spite of the absence of direct proof this shield
 is very possibly correct, especially because RAMUSIO’S blazon appears in none of the early
 books of genealogy or heraldry, of which he has consulted more than two hundred. The
 two references to the arms in the inventory (d. 69) make it clear that the Polo family had
 a shield early in the 14th century.

³ Venice, Archivio di Stato, Coll. Misc. 925, fol. 226. Other forms are *or* between four *pole
 sable* a bend *azure*, and *argent* three *pole*, two and one, *sable* beaked *gules* (*Y.*, I, pp. 7, 8), etc..

⁴ *Brit. Mus. Kings* 150, 3, fol. 252v^o (arms of Pollini, a family which may have been related
 to Polo—cf. dd. 2, 6a, 18a); *Y.* I. p. 8. *Pollo* (as the family name was very often written)
 means a chicken, or the young of any animal or bird. One elderly gentleman at Venice in
 1934 was familiar with the name *pola*, but described a black and yellow water or wading
 bird; and one of the attendants in the Natural History Museum in the Fondego dei Turchi
 at Venice professed to know the name as applied to the chough; but the evidence that the
 name *pola* really survived or was understood in Venice seemed to be unsatisfactory. The
pola is said in BOERIO’S Venetian Dictionary to be the same as *tacola* or jackdaw (*monedula*);
 in Italian dictionaries to be *mulacchia* or *cornacchia*. cf. Aristotle *De An. Hist.*, I (=9). 24
 (ed. Teubner p. 381); Dante *Paradiso*, XXI. 34-39.