

## THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD: A SUMMARY STATEMENT

The best short statement of the family history of the manuscripts is naturally provided by Signor L. F. BENEDETTO. His view is summed up like this: The extant manuscripts may be divided into two groups, A and B, both ultimately derived from a lost copy (O<sub>1</sub>) of the lost original (O). The archetype (also lost) of B was much more faithful to O<sub>1</sub> than the archetype of A was. Group A is represented by F (Paris, B.N., MS. fr. 1116, the best of all extant MSS.) which retains the original language, and by F<sub>1</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>3</sub> which only survive in their respective translations into Court French (sub-group FG), Tuscan (sub-group TA),<sup>1</sup> and Venetian (sub-group VA, including the most popular Latin version P). Group B is represented by a lost manuscript or manuscripts known only by RAMUSIO's printed text, and Z the Latin text which is printed in this edition. These are of the first importance for the completion and correction of the text of Group A; and there are also several other B texts which BENEDETTO was able to use in a less degree for the reconstruction of O<sub>1</sub>.<sup>2</sup>

For this restoration, in whatever degree it may be possible, of the original words of Marco Polo there are, as will have been seen above, three ancient copies of the book which are of primary importance. These are (1) the Franco-Italian text in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris (MS. français 1116), known as F; (2) the Italian version by G.-B. RAMUSIO, first published in 1559, known as R; and (3) the Latin text in the Chapter Library at Toledo, here referred to as Z.

(1) F was written in Italy in the first half of the 14th century, parchment, measuring about 292 × 205 mm., 112 leaves in twelve gatherings of 12, 10, 10, 8, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 4 leaves, two columns to a page, 34 or 35 lines to a column: fol. 1a—3d Table of chapter headings; fol. 4a *incipit* Ci comancent le lobrique de cest liure qui est appelle le deuisement dou monde (pl. 22); fol. 111c *explicit* schanpoit ausint. deo gratias amen. This text was printed *literatim* (with several errors) by the Société de Géographie as Tome I of *Recueil de Voyages et de Mémoires*,

<sup>1</sup> This includes the famous *della Crusca* MS. at Florence (TA<sup>1</sup>), on whose flyleaf is the following note: *Questo libro si chiama la nauigagone di messere marco polo Nobile Cittadino di vinegia scritto in firenze da niccholo Ormanni mio bisauolo da lato di mia madre quale mori negli anni di christo mille trecento noue quale lo porto mia madre in casa nostra del Riccio ede di me piero del riccio e di mio fratello 1458 and just below: compro per me Piero del Nero questo di 7(?) di sett: 1589* L7 BENEDETTO is content to say that we are not bound to believe the first note, written 150 years afterwards; but books were rarer and memories longer than they are now and, in the absence of palæographical or documentary evidence against it, it may at least be regarded with respect. See pl. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Marco Polo*, 1932, pp. xxi, xxii.