

## THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD'S LANGUAGE & STRUCTURE

(2) R is a printed Italian version of which there is no manuscript; and its origin,

*postea librum in vulgari Gallico composuit quem librum mirabilium cum pluribus similibus penes nos habemus.* This may perhaps only show that John had a copy in French; and it may be thought that "quite certain" is too strong an expression to apply to the accepted belief that the book was first written in French. PIPINO's Latin, the only old version of whose history we know any detail, was made from a Lombard text which in Marco Polo's lifetime was thought to be the original; TA may just as well be translated from a translation as we commonly assume Pipino to be; Z is free from actual French words (though there are several un-Latin words and phrases which may suggest a French not less than an Italian source), has an occasional Italian word (*che* for *que*, *cauodoio*), and shows Venetian influence in the proper names; and so it might possibly be argued that the original form of F was a version made by Rustichello in his characteristic Franco-Italian dialect, and with embellishments especially in the battle stories, from an Italian original. But on the one hand F has not been shown to betray any sign of being a translation, and on the other hand the occurrence in all the other texts, French, Venetian, Tuscan, or Latin, of many and different sentences which reproduce F word for word leaves an irresistible impression that a text in the language of F is the mother of them all. It may be remarked here that BENEDETTO seems to have changed his opinion with regard to Rustichello's share in the work. In 1928 he devoted many pages to Rustichello's part, though the facts must of course have come from Marco; but in 1932 this part is "a very small thing", nothing more than the translation (*trascrivere*) into the language of romance of the book of which Marco Polo was "the true and only author". Others (including ORLANDINI) have suggested that the form of the book and all the stories, including perhaps the embassy to the Pope, are Rustichello's work, though no one now ventures to suppose that the descriptions of places and customs are not genuine reports of what Marco Polo had seen and heard.

It is still too early to make a positive statement about the way in which the book was composed, but it seems to be likely that it was to a great extent compiled from written documents, and there are some things which seem to support this *a priori* probability. In the first place RAMUSIO, reporting presumably a tradition which he may have heard at second-hand from the survivors of the Polo family, says that Marco Polo sent from Genoa to his father at Venice for "his writings and memoranda which he had brought with him" (see d. 95 p. 586 below), and there seems to be no need to doubt the tradition. Then there are several places where Qubilai is described as the great Kaan "who now reigns", while in c.19 we are told that the travellers heard of his death, and this suggests the use of documents of various dates; although incidentally it is surprising that the contradictions in the book are as few as they are. Again, in the first thirty or forty chapters, which deal with the Moslem lands of West and central Asia, "the people worship Mahomet", but in the interspersed stories—the capture of Baudac, the miracle of the Mountain, the Old Man of the mountain, the Church of Samarcand—it is always "Saracens". In the few mentions of Moslems in the chapters on Cambaluc, Catai, and Mangi they are generally "Saracens", but in Caragian "they worship Mahomet". In the stories such as the death of St. Thomas, Adam's Peak, the king of Abasce, or the wars of Argon and Acmat, it is always "Saracen", and when we  
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