

RAMUSIO · THE FATE OF ALL HIS MANUSCRIPTS ≠ MARCO POLO publishing " was taken from the old Latin which he borrowed, and so we really cannot be sure that the unique passages were taken by him from the Ghisi manuscript. We can only be reasonably sure that among his "different copies" RAMUSIO had one manuscript which contained many of the peculiar passages now found in Z, and that either in that same manuscript or elsewhere he found those other unique passages which are not in Z.

The sentence quoted above about the Ghisi manuscript was published in 1559, but was silently omitted from the second and following editions of 1574, 1583, 1606 ; and it is interesting to speculate on the reason for this omission. Had the publication of this sentence caused the owner to come and ask if he might have his book back, only to learn that it had been destroyed in the fire ? Or had he perhaps merely objected to the advertisement of the fact that he owned so precious a volume ? In view of the fact that RAMUSIO was apparently employed by the GIUNTI as their editor for this collection of voyages and travels, and of the homely ways and known customs of the time, it may not be unreasonable to guess that RAMUSIO had his documents and did much of his work at the printing office, which is said by RAMUSIO himself to have been in S. Zulian ;¹ or after his death all his unpublished material may have been handed over to the printers. At any rate I cannot learn that this MS. (or any MS. containing the unique passages) has ever been seen or described after RAMUSIO's own mention of it in 1553. And so with the other manuscripts which he used, which may well have been as valuable as we guess the Ghisi one to have been. Where are they now ? Of all places in the world where one might expect to find a good copy of *Marco Polo*, Venice surely comes first ; and after RAMUSIO's day there might also have been good copies at Padua where RAMUSIO sometimes lived and where he died. In neither place does there now seem to be a copy of any value or distinction except two copies of the Venetian text, one in each place, dated respectively 1445 and 1446 (with a Latin compendium dated 1401), and these can hardly be among those which in 1553 RAMUSIO "judged" to be more than two hundred or at least one hundred and fifty (fol. 4r^o) years old. Were his copies all burnt in the fire of 1557 ? It does not seem to me to be impossible ; though GIUNTI only specifies among the "losses to students of geography" certain copy (*esemplari*) and maps which RAMUSIO had handed over to the printers not long before his death.²

¹ *Nav. et Viaggi*, 1559, Dichiaratione fol. 16v^o.

² Dr G. G. COULTON and Dr A. W. POLLARD tell me that the suggested explanation is less likely to be true in the case of a man in RAMUSIO's position than in the case, for instance,