

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s THE FRENCH PROLOGUES
THE PROLOGUE TO FA¹

HERE BEGIN THE RUBRICS OF THIS BOOK WHICH IS CALLED THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD, WHICH I GRIGOIRES COPIED¹ FROM THE BOOK OF MASTER MARC POL THE MOST EXCELLENT CITIZEN OF VENISSE BELIEVER IN CHRIST. (*Here follows the Table of Rubrics or Chapter Headings.*) To know the pure truth of the different regions of the world, take then this book and cause it to be read. So will you find there the very great marvels which are written there of the great Hermeine, . . . And therefore he thought that it would be too great evil if he did not cause to be put in writing that which he had seen and heard for truth, so that the other people who have not seen or heard it may know it by this book. And I tell you too that to know this he stayed in those strange places quite twenty-six years. The which book afterwards when he was staying in the dungeon of Jenes (Genoa) he had recounted in order by Master Rusta the Pisan who was in that same prison. . . .²

THE PROLOGUE TO FB⁴

SEE HERE THE BOOK which my lord Thiebault knight, lord of Cepoy, whom God absolve, asked that he might have the copy of it of Sir Marc Pol, citizen and inhabitant in the city of Venise. And the said Sir Marc Pol, as most honourable and well experienced in many lands and well mannered, and himself desiring that what he had seen should be known through the whole world, and for the honour and reverence of the most excellent and powerful prince, my lord Charles son of the king of France and count of Valoiz, handed and gave to the above-said lord of Cepoy the first copy of his said book after he had made it. And

¹ *contrescris*. B. thinks that by this word *contrescris* (which he read *contrefais*) is meant more than simply transcribed, so that, in his opinion, we may suppose that the unknown GRIGOIRES was the translator of the original into the Court French of the FG group of manuscripts. See pl. 24.

² In the Prologue to TA³ we read: "He said to himself that it would be too great evil if he did not put in writing all the wonders which he had seen, so that those who did not know them might learn them by this book. And I tell you too that he stayed in those lands quite thirty-six years. Who afterwards being in the prison of Gienova caused all these things to be put into writing by Master Rusticho of Pisa." And in VA³: "And this is the reason why he was moved to have this book written, because it seemed to him that it would be great evil and great blame that so great and strange things and wonderful should not be told and known of the people through the different parts of the world and should not be put in perpetual memory. To know these things he stayed in those parts of the world quite twenty-six years. And being in prison at Zenova, then he had this book written by Master Ristazo of Pixa who was prisoner like himself; he reduced it to writing (*lui loidusse inscritura*). And this was in the year of the Lord 1298." It seems to be clear that the "afterwards" or "then" has reference to the time spent abroad, and not, as has been suggested, to a previous attempt on Marco Polo's part to write the book himself.