

Marco Polo Research Past, Present, Future

This collective volume on Marco Polo's (1254-1324) travels attempts to integrate the fragmented research landscape by bringing together individual disciplines which usually work separately, like philology, comparative literature, text and reception history, Romance linguistics, as well as geography, anthropology, the history of religion, science, military, economics, etc. It is thus one of but a few works that go beyond singular aspects of Marco Polo's journey and his observations and thus shows that Polo's *Description of the World* is much more than just a travelogue.

The international contributors to this volume, who are leading scholars in their fields, make use of different, sometimes unique sources and thus help us better understand the Venetian's report and the times it was created, and also to verify and elucidate statements in the many versions and editions in which it came down to us. In addition, the essays published here are meant to be a contribution to the celebrations commemorating the 700th anniversary of Marco Polo's death.



Vogel / Theobald · Marco Polo Research: Past, Present, Future

Hans Ulrich Vogel and Ulrich Theobald (Eds.)

Marco Polo Research Past, Present, Future

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On the Way to an Integral Edition of the Book of Marco Polo: A First Attempt to Create a Digital Edition

Samuela Simion, Mario Eusebi
and Eugenio Burgio

Introduction

In this paper we will present a new scholarly digital project: the critical edition of the book of Marco Polo – more precisely, the critical reconstruction of the contents of the lost original text, presented in a hypertextual frame, in the form of a “critical translation”.¹ The project was created by Marina Buzzoni and Eugenio Burgio, and awarded a grant by Ca’ Foscari University Research Committee. Work has begun at the end of 2017, thanks to the commitment of a team of young Venetian researchers and some Italian scholars (among others, Alvise Andreose, Chiara Concina, and Giuseppe Mascherpa). The critical edition of the *Devisement dou monde* (henceforth *DM*) is the logical development of the philological work begun by Mario Eusebi and Eugenio Burgio in 2005, and of the digital experiment with the edition of Giovanni Battista Ramusio’s *Dei Viaggi* which we have completed.²

¹ We would like to thank Irene Reginato and Jo-Ann Titmarsh for their help with the translation into English. The article was written and discussed by three authors; Samuela Simion wrote paragraphs 1, 4-6; Mario Eusebi wrote paragraph 2; Eugenio Burgio wrote paragraph 3.

² Simion, Burgio (2015) (available at the following link: <http://virgo.unive.it/ecf-workflow/books/Ramusio/main/index.html>). For the intellectual framework of the “Ramusio digitale” see Burgio (2011); Buzzoni, Burgio (2014); Simion, Burgio (2016); Simion (2017a).

On this occasion we would like to present the intellectual reasons that have bolstered – and still bolster – our project, and to show a demo that illustrates its operational mechanisms.

Finally, our talk also aims to seize the opportunity to invite anyone interested in our project – philologists, historians, anthropologists, geographers and so on – to cooperate with us, in order to produce a (hopefully) authoritative tool devoted to knowledge of Asia in the European Middle Ages.

1. The *DM* Digital Edition between “Old” and “New” Philology

Over the last twenty years, digital edition projects have multiplied, creating different products with different goals and methods. For instance, the list drawn up by Patrick Sahle at <http://www.digitale-edition.de> contains more than 400 titles. Sahle’s list and literature³ suggest that the interests of editors have focused on two types of products: (a) firstly, the so-called *éditions génétiques*, which are enhanced by the ability of digital tools to represent text variance; (b) secondly, the “documentary” editions, which often include the digitization of the codex in its material form and of the transcription of texts, in order to “synchronize” ancient folios and their transcripts. The documentary edition is a necessity when we publish archive documents and *testimonia unica*, or when the main study-object is the material physiognomy of the ancient artifacts (for example, when we study the paleographic or codicological physiognomy of a manuscript). However, behind these documentary editions, we often perceive a fascination with the great historical “objectivity” of the single “document”, and some perplexities for reconstructive operations that inevitably depart from that “objectivity”. With the “new” Digital Philology once again we see the shadow of the “old” opposition between reconstruction and preservation of the text, between diachronicity and synchronicity. It seems to us that the

³ In particular, see Leonardi (2007), 65-75; Italia (2016), 246-250. For a critical balance of digital editing see Driscoll and Pierazzo (2016) (also for references); Robinson (2016).

qualities of the digital medium – ductility, interactivity, simultaneous display of data and ease of inquiry – can be exploited for more ambitious outcomes.⁴

In our case, the two main objectives of the *DM* critical edition are:

(a) firstly, to provide scholars and readers with a text based on a reconstruction hypothesis, immediately verifiable, step by step, by checking the multiple sources;

(b) secondly, to make available to scholars/readers, in every possible form – from short quotations to full text –, all the sources used and evaluated in the definition of our hypothesis, and thus to guarantee both a “free” and a contextual reading provided with a comment that “weighs” the value of the sources.

We are completely aware that it is impossible to reconstruct the linguistic form of the “original” text, as well as of any “original” text written in a vernacular language in the Middle Ages. For this reason, we intend to work on the reconstruction of the content of the *DM*, which will be presented in the form of a “critical translation”. The text – its critical reconstruction –, introduction, comments, and word list will be translated into English, and only the manuscript sources will remain in their original language. The choice of English is obviously a matter of editorial policy, in view of an international circulation of our work (the same reason, essentially, that prompted Polo and Rustichello to choose French as the language of their book).

2. The *DM* Manuscript Tradition

As Philippe Ménard and Alvisè Andreose have recalled in their articles, the tradition of Marco Polo’s book is really intricate: more than 140 manuscripts, divided into several versions, which transmit the text in different languages, with different titles, and with greatly different contents. In fact, the great interest of readers and scribes determined a high level of textual variation. The tradition is almost entirely composed of translations, often tailored to the public they were addressed to, and the time they were written

⁴ For the advantages offered by digital editions, see Buzzoni (2016), 59-61.

in. There is only one surviving Franco-Italian manuscript, ms. BnF fr. 1116, known as F; and this fact is important for any attempt to reconstruct the history of the original text.

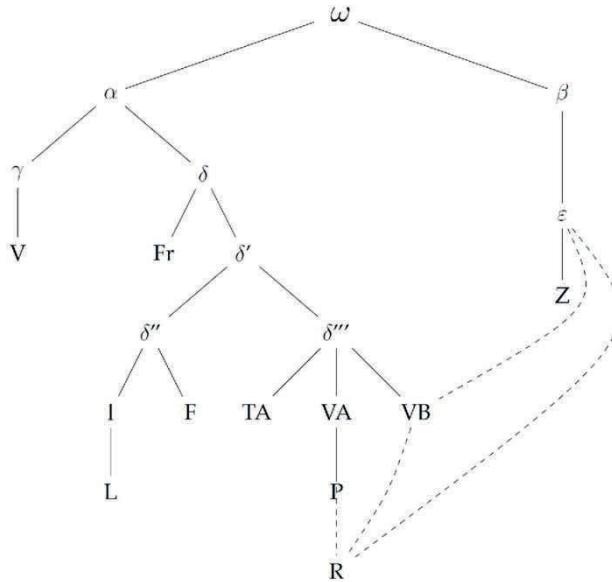


Figure 1: Burgio and Eusebi's Diagram (2008)

And equally the fact that more than one significant version, in addition to F, survives in a codex unus is important. In the case of F, the question is to decide how much of its hybrid language of French, Tuscan and Venetian is to be attributed to its authors or its copyists;⁵ but let us recall the case of the Latin version Z. As everyone knows, its codex unus (Toledo, Archivo y Biblioteca Capitulares, Zelada 49.20) contains about 200 passages that are absent in F and in some important versions. It is really difficult to evaluate if they are scribe's or redactor's interpolations, because they often provide some historical and ethnographic information that a Western

⁵ In addition to F, a fragment of four folios, f, has been recently discovered by Chiara Concina. For some analysis of their peculiar linguistic mixture see Concina (2007); Ménard (2009), (2012), 233-239; Andreose (2015a), (2015b), (2015c); Andreose and Concina (2016).

copyist could not invent without first-hand experience. These passages are partially recorded in other versions, for instance the Venetian V, the Latin epitome L and Ramusio's *Dei Viaggi*. They were first used by Benedetto 1928 and Terracini 1933, and have been more recently used by Eusebi and Burgio as evidence to hypothesize the existence of a more complete *DM* than the one attested by F and the versions named in our 2008 diagram as “ δ Constellation” (Figure 1).

On the other hand, however, the Toledan Z is very shortened in its first part, and lacks about 60 chapters compared to F; for this reason, Ménard observed that “le manuscrit Z ne mérite pas la confiance aveugle qui lui a été portée”.⁶

But the Z version should not be reduced just to the Toledo witness: we know that Ramusio read this text in a more complete codex, at that time owned by the Venetian Ghisi family. And also, some recent studies concerning some texts produced by the Dominican friars in fourteenth-century Italy reveal that version Z is more shifting than the Toledan copy lets us imagine.⁷ As a matter of fact, for their *Legendarium* and *Liber de introductione loquendi*, the friars Pietro Calò of Chioggia and Filippino of Ferrara used a Z text which was more faithful to F in terms of lexicon, syntax and content than the Toledan-Ghisi group. This evidence weakens Benedetto's hypothesis (shared by us in these years) that the Toledan Z reflected the most ancient and conservative phase of the *DM* textual history.

Actually, it seems more likely to distinguish two diachronic phases in the so-called “Z Constellation” (β in our 2008 diagram): a first phase consisting of a text that is still richer and more complete than the “ δ Constellation”, whose traces can be found in Pietro Calò and Filippino of Ferrara. A second phase, attested in Toledan Z / R, due to Polo's revision of a copy of his text, and characterized by additions and a substantial formal re-elaboration. We are aware that the strong limit of this hypothesis lies in the scarcity of evidence provided by indirect witnesses; however, it may be summarized by the diagram of Figure 2.

⁶ Ménard (2001-2009), vol. I, 16.

⁷ Mascherpa (2008); (2009), 85-101; Gadrat-Ouerfelli (2015), 165-182; Gobbato (2015).

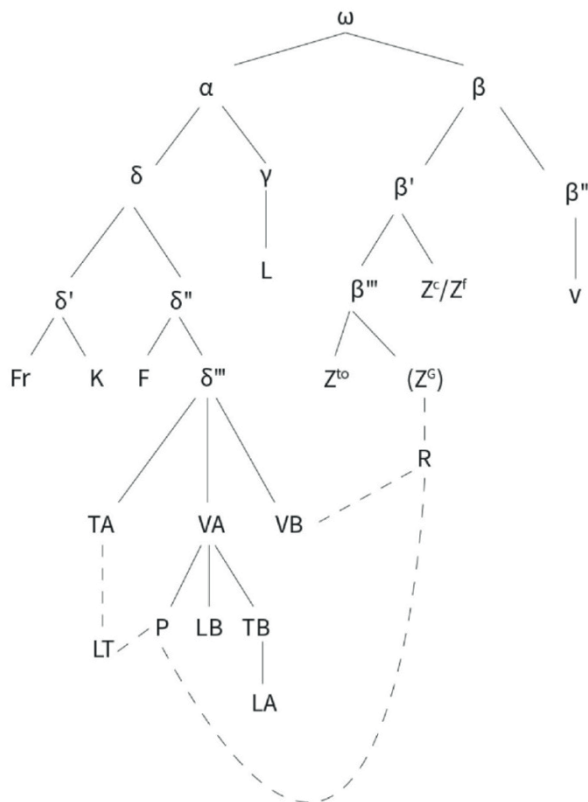


Figure 2: A New Diagram of *DM* Tradition (2017)

The Venetian version V, which shares readings and similar features with both α and β , might perhaps give answers to the transmission means and relationships between the two constellations, but is often unreliable due to a large number of mistakes in the text of the only available copy, ms. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Hamilton 424.⁸

⁸ Generally, V shares with Z “characteristic readings” (or, according to Trovato’s definition, “confirmatory readings”, “i.e. readings which characterize, besides indicative errors, a group of witnesses”; Trovato (2014), 116) rather than significant errors (or *Leitfehler*); these readings alone may not be sufficient to demonstrate relationship, because V is a translation from a Latin model: therefore, theoretically, the confirmatory readings could depend on common translation

Despite all this, it is possible to recognize some relevant traits in the *DM* tradition, such as common errors, and the presence of textual cells that have the same content in every version. These constant traits justify the classification proposal at the basis of our project. It also boosts our confidence in the possibility of going beyond the traditional groupings in the two families A and B traced by Benedetto (1928) and still used by many Polian scholars.

Our critical text will be reconstructed on the basis of the hypothesis set out in the second diagram (Figure 2), but this does not mean that we will apply it automatically: its function will be to logically support the choices we will adopt in the definition of the text, and which will be discussed in the comment (so as to allow the reader to share or reject them).

As Richard Trachsler and Lino Leonardi recently wrote about the edition of an important medieval romance, *Guiron le Courtois*, our goal is not to set up a Lachmanian edition but, simply, a critical edition.⁹

Some words about the “critical translation”. We said that this choice is a direct consequence of the impossibility of restoring the French-Italian primitive language.

As Alvaro Barbieri writes, doing a “critical translation” means choosing between several textual variants – whose variance resides in differences in content – on the basis of a reconstruction hypothesis. In this way, the translation is the result of a philological operation: it may be considered a “test bench” of a *textus restituito* which would otherwise be impossible; and, actually, choosing between two or more possible content solutions in translating is the same as reconstructing the text on the basis of conjectures concerning the readings of the witnesses. The critical translation of the *DM* is, of course, an artificial text, and the result a compromise, but it allows

choices. Nevertheless, there are a great number of agreements: it is more likely that V comes from β branch, or, alternatively, that it is a contaminated witness. Some examples of V physiognomy are presented in Simion (2017b), (2019).

⁹ Leonardi and Trachsler (2015), 71.

us to reconstruct the original content, and to present and discuss the process that generated it.¹⁰

Our edition is not an “absolute beginner” in the field of *DM* philology, and some critical translations serve as milestones: they are Benedetto’s critical texts (1928, 1931, 1932),¹¹ the English “integral” translation by Moule and Pelliot (1938), and the edition provided by René Kappler (2004). The difference between these translations and our edition is, obviously, that they were printed in a book, and did not rely on the hypertext “pages”. It is not an insignificant difference. Our opinion, in fact, is that the goal we are pursuing would hardly be achievable in the form of a printed book: a traditional book can’t account for every single step in processing the sources, nor can it explain how their manipulation has taken place. Such an apparatus would be impracticable and very difficult to handle, and even misleading.

3. A “Case Study”: The Town of Achbaluch

Chapter CV of F provides a good example of the problems raised by the reconstruction of the *DM* and by its representation on paper or on digital media.¹² This chapter establishes a connection between the “monograph” *de rebus Mongalorum* and the description of China. It also suggests the order of the geographical descriptions, divided between “Catai”, the Mongolian North, and “Mangi”, the former Song South (conquered by Khubilai in

¹⁰ Barbieri (2016), 35, writes that a critical translation is a good strategy to get out of the *impasse* caused by insurmountable textual divergences, and it consists of delegating the fusion of testimonies which are so formally different to a translation into a modern language, that it would be unreasonable to adopt the traditional comparative method (in Barbieri’s exact words: “traduzioni critiche, ossia [...] versioni in lingua moderna mediante le quali un editore dà concretezza di attuazione ad un modello di ricupero testuale che non sarebbe realizzabile nei modi ortodossi dell’ecdotica classica. Quando le attestazioni manoscritte di un’opera siano lontanissime l’una dall’altra per la diversità della *facies* linguistica o per l’estrema divaricazione del dettato e della lezione, non è evidentemente possibile procedere ad una *constitutio textus* effettuata secondo principi lachmanniani. In tali casi rimane tuttavia la possibilità di allestire un testo artificiale, un prodotto di compromesso che usi la traduzione in lingua moderna quale strategia di conguaglio per uscire dall’*impasse* d’insuperabili divergenze testimoniali”).

¹¹ See also Simion (2016).

¹² This philological case, and the “invisible city” of Achbaluch, are discussed in Burgio (2014).

1276). The text describes an *itinerarium*, marked by two places: the former is the stone bridge over the Pulisanghin – the Sanggan River, which runs through the northwestern provinces of Shanxi and Hebei –, ¹³ described in F CIV, which connects the “monograph” to the geographical description. The latter, the two roads that bifurcate near Giugiu – today Zhuozhou, Hebei Province – ¹⁴ anticipate the double series of descriptions: the one to “ponent” leads to the South-Western regions of the “Catai” (F CVI ff.) and the other, to “sciloc”, heads South-South East (F CXXXVI ff.). ¹⁵

Here is the Franco-Italian text (F): ¹⁶

Table 1: The Great City of Giogiu

[1] <i>Ci devise de la grant cité de Giogiu.</i>	<i>Here he tells of the great city of Giogiu.</i>
[2] Et quant l'en s'en part de cest pont et il est alés troynte miles por ponent trouvant toutes foies bieles erberges et vignes et chans, adonc treuve une cité qui est apelés Giogiu, grant et biele.	And when one sets out from this bridge [...] and he is gone thirty miles by the sunsetting, always finding beautiful [...] inns [...] and [...] vineyards and [...] fields, [...] then [...] he finds a city which is called Giogiu, great and beautiful.
[3] Hi a maintes abaïe de ydres; il vivent de merchandie et des ars; il hi se laborent dras de soie et doré et biaux sendal; et il hi a maintes herbergieries qe erbergient les viandanç.	There are many abbeys of idolaters [...] they live by trade and by crafts [...] cloths of silk and of gold and beautiful [...] sendals are made there. And there are many [...] inns [...], where the wayfarers lodge. [...]
[4] Et quant l'en est parti [48a] de ceste ville et alés un mil, adonc treuve l'en deus voies, que le une ala a ponent et le autre a sciloc. [5] Celle dou ponent est dou Catai et celle do siloc vait ver la grant provence dou Mangi.	And when one is departed from this town and gone one mile, then one finds two roads which the one goes to sunsetting and the other to sirocco. That of the sunsetting is [...] of Catai, and that of the sirocco goes toward [...] the great province of Mangi.

¹³ Pelliot (1959-1973), 812 nr. 318 (“Pulisanghin”).

¹⁴ Pelliot (1959-1973), 736 nr. 241 (“Giogiu”).

¹⁵ Kappler (2004), 118 n. 1.

¹⁶ The English translation is by Moule and Pelliot (1938), 256-257, without integrations from other versions.

<p>[6] Et sachiés tout voiremant qe l'en chevauche por ponent por la provence dou Catai bien .x. jornee, et toutes foies treuve l'en maintes belles cités et maint biaux chastiaus, de grant mercandies et de grant ars, et biaux chans et bielles vingnes et domescs jens.</p>	<p>And you may know quite truly that one rides by the sunseting through the province of Catai quite ten days journeys [...]. And one always finds many beautiful cities and many beautiful villages [...] of great trade and of great industry, and [...] beautiful [...] fields [...] and beautiful vines and settled people [...].</p>
<p>[7] N'i a chouses qe a mentovoir face: por ce ne voç en diron rien. [8] Et adonc laiseron de ceste maitiere et voç conteron de un roïame que Taianfu est appellés.</p>	<p>There is nothing which does to mention, so we shall tell you nothing about it. And then we shall leave this matter and shall tell you of a kingdom which is called Taianfu.</p>

Table 2 shows the layout of the contents in the corresponding chapters of the most important versions of the *DM*.

Table 2: The City of Giugiu in the Other Versions of the *DM*

F, cv	Fr, 105	TA, 105	VA, LXXXIV	P, II 28	TB, 47	VB, LXXIV	L, 85	V, 50, 6-10	Kc, 35 4-9
[2-3] Giugiu: Description	2-3	1-2	1-3	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	6	4
	(Ginguin)	(Giougui)	(Grogin)	(Gyn)	(Giogim)	(Cingui)	(Giogiu)	(Chuigion)	(Guingui)
[3] Manufacturing in Giugiu; Accommodations for Travelers	3	3-4	3-4	2-4	2	3-4	2	7	5
[4-5] The Two Roads	4-5	5-6	5	5	3-4	5	3	8	6-7
[6] The Road to Catai: Description of the Landscape in the First Ten <i>Journees</i>	6	7	6	6-7	5	6-7	3	9	8

[6] The Character of the Inhabitants	6	7	6	8	5	7	-	7	8
[Achbaluch]	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
[7-8] <i>Transitio</i> : Tainfu Shall Be the Object of Next Chapter	7	8	-	-	-	-	-	10	9
	(Taiamfu)	(Taiamfu)							(Camianffu)

The table indicates a macroscopic fact: all the witnesses offer the same information, and in the same order, but Ramusio adds the description of the city of “Achbaluch”, the first step of the journey West, before the reign of “Taiamfu” (Taiyuan, today capital of Shanxi),¹⁷ which is described in the following chapter.¹⁸ Here is the Ramusio text:

Table 3: Of the City of Gouza

Delle condizioni della città di Gouza. Cap. 28.	Of the city of Gouza.
[1] Partendosi da questo ponte et andando per trenta miglia alla banda di ponente, trovando di continuo palazzi, vigne et campi fertilissimi, si trova una città nominata Gouza, molto bella et molto grande, nella qual sono molte abbacie di idoli, le cui genti vivono di mercantie et arti.	After having passed this bridge, proceeding thirty miles in a westerly direction, through a country abounding with fine buildings, amongst vineyards and much cultivated and fertile grounds, you arrive at a handsome and considerable city, named Gouza, where there are many convents of the idolaters. The inhabitants in general live by commerce and manual arts.

¹⁷ During the Yuan dynasty, Taiyuan was the administrative capital of Hedong District (northern Shanxi). See Pelliot (1959-1973), 842, nr. 348 (“Taiamfu”).

¹⁸ The other versions: Kc, 36; Z, 48; V, 51, 1-6; Fr, 105; F, CVI; L, 86; TA, 105; VA, LXXXV; P, II 29; VB, LXXV; R, II 29. Quotations are from the following editions: Z = Barbieri (1998); V = Simion (2019); F = Eusebi, Burgio (2018); K = Reginato (2015-2016); L = Burgio (forthcoming); TA = Bertolucci Pizzorusso (1975); VA = Barbieri, Andreose (1999); P = interpretative edition provided by Simion on the basis of the manuscript Firenze, Bibl. Ricc., 983; TB = Amatucci (1982-1983); VB = Gennari (2010).

[2] Ivi si lavorano panni d'oro et di seda et belli veli sottilissimi, et sonvi molti alloggiamenti per i viandanti.	They have manufactures of gold tissues and the finest kind of gauze. The inns for accommodating travellers are there numerous.
[3] Partendosi da questa città et andando per un miglio si trovano due vie, una delle quali va verso ponente, l'altra verso sirocco: per la via di ponente si va per la provincia del Cataio, per la via di sirocco alla provincia di Mangi.	At the distance of a mile beyond this place, the roads divide; the one going in a westerly, and the other in a south-easterly direction, the former through the province of Kataia, and the latter towards the province of Manji.
[4] Et sappiate che dalla città di Gouza fino al regno di Tainfu si cavalca per la provincia del Cataio dieci giornate, sempre trovando molte belle città et castella, fornite di grandi arti et mercantie, et trovando vigne et campi lavorati: et de qui si porta il vino nella provincia del Cataio, perché in quella non vi nasce vino; vi sono ancho molti alberi mori, che con la foglia sua gli abitanti fanno di gran seda.	<i>From the city of Gouza it is a journey of ten days through Kataia to the kingdom of Ta-in-fu; in the course of which you pass many fine cities and strong places, in which manufactures and commerce flourish, and where you see many vineyards and much cultivated land. From hence grapes are carried into the interior of Kataia, where the vine does not grow. Mulberry trees also abound, the leaves of which enable the inhabitants to produce large quantities of silk.</i>
[5] Tutte quelle genti sono domestiche, per la moltitudine delle città poco discoste l'una dall'altra et frequentatione che fanno gli abitanti di quelle, perché sempre vi si trovano genti che passano, per le molte mercantie che si portano continuamente d'una città all'altra; et in cadauna di quelle si fanno le ferie.	A degree of civilisation prevails amongst all the people of this country, in consequence of their frequent intercourse with the towns, which are numerous and but little distant from each other. To these the merchants continually resort, carrying their goods from one city to another, as the fairs are successively held at each.
[6] Et in capo di cinque giornate delle predette dieci, dicono esservi una città piú bella et maggior dell'altre chiamata Achbaluch, fino alla quale verso quella parte confina	At the end of five days journey beyond the ten that have been mentioned, it is said that there is another city still larger and more handsome named Achbaluch, to

<p>il termine della cacciagione del signore, dove niuno ardisce di andar alla caccia, eccetto il signore con la sua famiglia et chi è scritto sotto il capitano de' falconieri; ma da quel termine innanzi può andarvi, pur che sia nobile.</p>	<p>which the limits of his majesty's hunting grounds extend, and within which no person dare to sport, excepting the princes of his own family, and those whose names are inscribed on the grand falconer's list; but beyond these limits, all persons qualified by their rank, are at liberty to pursue game.</p>
<p>[7] Nondimeno quasi mai il Gran Can non andava alla caccia per quella banda, per la qual cosa gli animali salvatichi erano tanto accresciuti et moltiplicati, et specialmente le lepori, che guastavano le biade di tutta la detta provincia; la qual cosa fatta intendere al Gran Can, v'andò con tutta la corte, et furon presi animali senza numero.</p>	<p>It happens, however, that the Grand khan scarcely ever takes the amusement of the chase on this side of the country, and the consequence is, that the wild animals, especially hares, multiply to such a degree, as to occasion the destruction of all the growing corn of the province. When this came to the knowledge of his majesty, he repaired thither, with the whole of his court, and innumerable multitudes of these animals were taken.¹⁹</p>

Things are a little more complex than suggested in Table 3. We have highlighted in bold the passage missing in the tradition (the description of “Achbaluch”), which is not the only differential element of R: we have indicated in italics two passages whose context is similar to that of F (but which don't appear in it), and whose content is confirmed by some of the witnesses mentioned here, and in particular in Chapter 47 of version Z:

¹⁹ The translation into English is by Marsden (1818), 391-392.

Table 4: Z, 47

<p>[1] Cum ab isto ponte disceditur et itum est .XXX. miliaribus per ponentem, inveniendō continue herbas, vineas et campos, invenitur quedam civitas nomine Çonça pulcra et magna valde. [2] In ea sunt multe abbatię ydolorum. [3] Vivunt quidem gentes de mercimoniis et artibus. [4] Ibi laborantur drappi aurei et de syrico, et pulcre sidones.</p>	<p>And when one sets out from this bridge and he is gone thirty miles by the sunsetting, always finding grass and vineyards and fields, then one finds a city which is called Çonça, very beautiful and great. There are many abbeys of idolaters. People live by trade and by crafts. Cloths of gold and of silk and beautiful sandals are made there.</p>
<p>[5] Et <cum> ab ista civitate discedendo itum est per miliare unum, inveniuntur due vie, per unam quarum itur versus ponentem, per aliam versus sirochum. [6] Et noveritis <u>quod a civitate Çonçu usque ad regnum Tayanfu equitatur per provinciam Cathay</u> .X. dietis, semper inveniendō multas pulcras civitates et castra de magnis artibus et mercimoniis munitas, et inveniendō vineas et campos, <i>in quibus multum nascitur syricum.</i></p>	<p>And when one is departed from this town and gone one mile, then one finds two roads which the one goes to sunsetting and the other to sirocco. And you must know <u>that from the city of Çonça to the kingdom of Ta-in-fu one rides through Katai</u> quite ten days journeys, and one always finds many beautiful cities and many beautiful villages of great trade and of great industry, and vines and fields, in which large quantities of silk rise.</p>
<p>[7] <i>Sunt omnes gentes domestice propter spissitudinem civitatum.</i> [8] <i>Et frequentantur ita vie illarum civitatum quod semper inveniuntur gentes trans-euntes, etcetera.</i></p>	<p>They are settled people <i>in consequence of the great number of towns.</i> <i>Their roads are very busy, and one may find a lot of people passing by them and so on.</i></p>

We have highlighted the passages which only appear in Z text. As often happens in the *DM*, two different structures frame the information: the first one is identified in the versions closest to F that are part of group δ ; the second one is recognizable in the Z / R texts and in some more or less close editions (V and L in particular). Let's consider them in detail.

(a) Group δ (F, Fr, TA, and partially K) and V close the chapter with a proleptic transition, which is typical of the *DM* structure, and often expounded by translators and compilers:

Table 5: The End of the Chapter in V and in Group ̅

V, par. 10	Or in questo luogo non sono chosse da dir et inperzò non diremo, ma diremo de altre chosse.
Fr, par. 7	Mais pour ce qu'il n'y a chose qui a conter face, ne vous en diray ore riens. Si vous conteray d'un royaume qui Taianfu est appelés.
Kc, par. 8	E al cap d'aquestes .x. jornades, troba hom un reyalme qui s'apela Canianffu.
TA, par. 8	Quivi nonn-à altro a ricordare; però ci partiremo di quie, ed anderemo ad uno reame chiamato Taiamfu.

It is reasonable to assume that this conclusion is original. One fact supports this hypothesis: the editor of Z, who omits it, retrieves the important information it contains (the next step of the *itinerarium* leads to Taianfu) by anticipating it in the body of the text (we show it in italics):

Table 6: The Way to Taianfu in Version Z

Z, par. 6	Et noveritis quod a civitate Çonçu usque ad regnum Tayanfu equitatur per provinciam Cathay .X. dietis [...]
V, par. 9	Et sapié chi chavalcha per ponente per la provinzia del Chataio ben diexe zornade [...]
Fr, par. 6	Et {quant} l'en chevauche .x. journees vers ponent par la province du Catay [...]
Kc, par. 8	E seguín lo camí del ponent, cavalca hom .x. jornades [...]
L, par. 3	qua itur versus provinciam de Chatay bene .X. dietis versus occidentens [...]
TA, par. 7	E sappiate veramente che l'uomo cavalca per ponente per la provincia del Catai bene .x. giornate [...]
VA, par. 6	Sì se chavalcha per ponente per la provinzia de Chatai ben diexe zornade [...]
P, par. 6	Per provinciam autem Cathay itur per plagam illam per dietas decem [...]
TB, par. 5	E quando l'uomo cavalca nel ponente per la provincia del Catai, va bene x giornate [...]
VB, par. 6	E chaminando per dita strada de ponente per la provincia del Chatay, per .X. çornade [...]

It should be noted that R follows Z in moving the information (because of the suppression of the final transition): “Et sappiate che dalla città di Gouza

fino al regno di Tainfu si cavalca per la provincia del Cataio dieci giornate [...]” (par. 4).

(b) Only Z partially confirms the presence of white mulberry trees in the fields on the ten-day journey (indicated by R in par. 4):

Table 7: The Detail of White Mulberry Trees along the Journey

Z, par. 6	[...] et inveniendō vineas et campos, <i>in quibus multum nascitur syricum.</i>
V, par. 9	[...] senpre va trovando [...] ezian vigne e chanpi [...]
Fr, par. 6	[...] toutes foiz trovant [...] biaux chans et belles vingnes [...]
Kc, par. 8	[...] troba [...] vies e lochs delitables e pratz [...]
L, par. 3	[...] continue per [...] per pulcros agros et vineas.
TA, par. 7	[...] tuttavia trovando [...] belle vigne e àlbori assai [...]
VA, par. 6	[...] tuta fiata trovando [...] de belli chanpi e zardini [...]
P, par. 6	[...] ubi agri multi optimi sunt et viridaria pulcra valde [...]
TB, par. 5	trovando [...]
VB, par. 7	[...] e contadi belli e ben coltivadi [...].

(c) Following (almost) all δ witnesses, the people that Polo meets during his ten-day journey are civilized:

Table 8: [...] et domescēs jens

VB, par. 7	[...] e contadi belli e ben coltivadi [...].
Fr, par. 6	[...] domescēs gens.
Kc, par. 8	[...] e gens domèstiques
L, par. 3	<i>omits</i>
TA, par. 7	[...] gente dimestica.
VA, par. 6	[...] domesticha zente.
P, par. 8	[...] domestici valde sunt et affabiles.
TB, par. 5	[...] ed èvi dimestica gente.
VB, par. 7	[...] tuta gente molto demestiga et da bene.

Only Z, par. 7-8, provides more detailed information: “Sunt omnes gentes domestice propter spissitudinem civitatum. Et frequentantur ita vie illarum civitatum quod semper inveniuntur gentes transeuntes, etcetera”: and a partial trace of this is in V, par. 9: “[...] et spesega molta zente”.

Z, therefore, agrees with R, but in a partial and not immediately evident way; the passage quoted in Table 9 explains why:

Table 9: Z and R Agreement (1)

Z (Z ^{to}), par. 7 – Sunt omnes gentes domesticæ propter spissitudinem civitatum. Et frequentantur ita viæ illarum civitatum quod semper inveniuntur gentes transeuntes, etcetera.	R, par. 5 – Tutte quelle genti sono domestiche, per la moltitudine delle città poco discoste l'una dall'altra et frequentatione che fanno gli habitanti di quelle, perché sempre vi si trovano genti che passano, per le molte mercantie che si portano continuamente d'una città all'altra; et in cadauna di quelle si fanno le ferie.
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Z is shorter than R and the presence of *etcetera* in the Toledan copy indicates that its copyist – or perhaps the copyist of its antigraph – shortened the text he was transcribing as he did on other occasions, and pointed out the abbreviation clearly. The same operation must have taken place (but without being pointed out by *etcetera*) in the case of Table 10:

Table 10: Z and R Agreement (2)

Z (Z ^{to}), par. 6 – [...] et inveniendò vineas et campos, in quibus multum nascitur syricum.	R, par. 4 – [...] et trovando vigne et campi lavorati: et de qui si porta il vino nella provincia del Cataio, perché in quella non vi nasce vino; vi sono ancho molti alberi mori, che con la foglia sua gli habitanti fanno di gran seda.
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Two observations arise from our analysis: (a) the δ versions transmit a textual state of the *DM* similar to F, which is shorter than the version which was to be contained in the Z antigraph of the Toledan codex and which can be read, like a watermark, in Ramusio's text; (b) at this moment, it is of little interest whether the shortness of F / δ is the result of the abbreviation of a longer text (reconstructable by Z / R), or if Z / R keeps the trace of a second intervention by Polo in its text, in order to enrich it and complete it. The important thing is that the R / Z text is, as in other cases, a witness of original information *not kept* in the δ versions.

And what about the final section of R? And what about “Achbaluch”, a place on the edge of Khublai’s hunting reserve?²⁰ As Hallberg noted, Ramusio’s description has no correspondence in medieval geographic knowledge of Asia,²¹ and is not present in any other versions of the *DM*, but it is not really a nonce word. “Hachbaluch”, in fact, appears in the famous map produced by the Camaldolese Fra Mauro between 1448 and 1453 in the atelier of the Venetian island of San Michele, now preserved in the Marciana National Library (Figure 3).²² The landmark (FM * 2306) can be seen in the “Catai” region, South-West of the “Ponte mirabile [...] super el qual se traversa el fiume Polisanchin” (FM *2315),²³ between the pictures representing the two cities of “Zouza” (FM *2318) and “Tainfu” (FM *2278) (Figure 3). Hallberg wrote: “cette ville est probablement la même qu’Acbaluc de Polo”,²⁴ and Pelliot drew a correct consequence from his words:

Ramusio, our only source here, writes “Achbaluch”. Now, Fra Mauro, in 1459, mentions on his map a city “Hacbaluch” near a city “Zouza” (*Zu*, 36; Hallberg, 224, 236 [...]). “Hacbaluch” is certainly a wrong form of “Achbaluch” and it cannot be an abbreviation for “Acbaluc Mangi”, since “Acbaluc Mangi” is also mentioned by Fra Mauro.²⁵ But, if we note that “Zouza” is very near the abnormal forms “Gouza” and “Çonça?” peculiar

²⁰ R, II 16 is devoted to Khubilai’s hunting parties: the game reserve lies two days’ journey away from Cambalù, towards grec (i.e. North-East), but F, XCIII 2 reading is *midi* (South), and this information is more consistent with R, II 28 6 text: “Et quant le Grant Sire ha demoré trois mois en la cité que je voç ai nomé desovre, et ce fu decembre et jenner et fevrier, adonc se part de cest cité dou mois de mars et ala ver midi dusque a la mer Hosiane, qui hi a deus jornee”. See Pelliot (1959-1973), 115-118. nr. 90 (“Caccia Modun”).

²¹ S.v. “Acbaluc” Hallberg (1906), 5, only quotes the occurrence in *DM*.

²² The *mappa mundi* is integrally reproduced by Gasparrini Leporace (1956). The most important works on this subject are Falchetta (2006) and Cattaneo (2011).

²³ Quotations are from Falchetta (2006). See also Gasparrini Leporace (1956), table XXXII.

²⁴ Zurla (1806), 36, quoted by Hallberg (1906), 237 s.v. “Hacbaluch”. See also Hallberg (1906), 224 s.v. “Giugiu”.

²⁵ In *DM* “Acbaluc Mangi” is in F, CXII (“Acbalac / Acbalec Mangi”) = R, II 35 (“Achbaluch Mangi”); Z, 52 (“Acbaluch Mançi”); V, 54 (“Achebelach Mandi”); Fr, 112 (“Acbalet Manzi”); L, 92 (“Acbalec Mangi”); TA, 112 (“Anbalet Mangi”); VA, XCI (“Achalaie / Acbalac Mangi”); P, II 34 (“Achalech Mangy”); TB, 49 (“Acalec Mangi”); VB, LXXIX (“Abelech Mangy”). In the *mappa mundi* it corresponds to “Hachbalech de Mango” (FM *1402; Gasparrini Leporace (1956), table XXVI; Falchetta (2006), 450, clearly confuses the two toponyms).

to R and Z respectively for “Giogiu”, the inference may be drawn that Fra Mauro knew, among others, a manuscript of Polo very close to the one which gave to Ramusio his “Achbaluch” and which is also represented, in an abridged form, by Z.²⁶

Now, there is no doubt that “Fra Mauro used primarily, albeit perhaps not exclusively, a copy of the Z Latin version of the *Milione*, following it faithfully” (Falchetta (2006), 67);²⁷ the proof is the presence of the landmark “Provincia Iogoristan” on the map (FM *2442). The landmark indicates the region West of the Gobi Desert, and is only attested in Z, 33 1 (“Iuguristam quedam provincia magna est et subiacet Magno Can”), in a chapter only present in the Latin version.²⁸ And there is no doubt that in the copy at his disposal Fra Mauro could read a complete text, or at least more complete than the one transmitted by the Toledan copy. Evidence of this is the cartouche located near the picture of the bridge on the Polisanchin / Pulisanghin river:

(FM *2315) Ponte mirabile e famoso con tresento archi e siemil à imagine de lioni i qual reze tante collone con i suo capitelli a più suo ornamento, super el qual se traversa el fiume Polisanchin.

The cartouche retains a detail of Polo’s description of the bridge – the lions at the base of the pillars – that the Toledan copy omits in its abbreviation (Z, 46 2-3):

²⁶ Pelliot (1959-1973), 9.

²⁷ Like Falchetta (2006), Cattaneo (2011), 191-198, provides some comparative core samplings between Fra Mauro’s cartouches and the tradition of *DM*, handling the toponymy as pertinent trait.

²⁸ Hallberg (1906), 267-268, records only the toponym “Iugures”, which occurs in William of Rubruck’s *Itinerarium*. See also Pelliot (1953-1975), 753-754, nr. 261 (“Iuguristan”). The chapter of Z lacks in F between the chapters LVIII (*Ci devise de la provence de Camul*) and LIX (*Ci devise de la provence de Chinchintalas*), corresponding to V, 326 / 327; Fr, 58 / 59; L, 53 / 54; TA, 58 / 59; VA, XLV / XLVI; P, I 46 / 47; TB, 34 / 35; VB, XLI / XLII.

**Table 11a: The Bridge on the Polisanchin / Pulisanghin River
(Z Version)**

<p>Supra flumen istud est quidam pons lapideus valde pulcer, et raro quod sit in mundo alius ita pulcer. Longitudo eius est trecentorum passuum, latitudo vero .viiij., ita quod large posent per eum homines unus a latere alterius equitare, etcetera.</p>	<p>Over this river there is a very beautiful stone bridge: there are few of them in all the world so beautiful. It is quite three hundred paces long and eight wide, so that one horseman can well go beside the other, and so on.</p>
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but which is present in F, CIV 4 (among others),

**Table 11b: The Bridge on the Polisanchin / Pulisanghin River
(F Version)**

<p>Et desus cest flum a u' mout biaux pont de pieres, car sachiés qe pont n'a en tout lo monde de si biaux ne son paroil, et <voç mostrerai> raison comant. Je voç di qu'il est lonc bien .CCC. pas et large .VIII., car bien hi puet aler .X. chevalers le un juste l'autre; il ha .XXIII. arch et .XXIII. moreles en l'eive, et est tout de marbre bis mout bien ovrés et bien asetés; il a de chascunz lés dou pont un mur de tables de marbres et de colones si fait con je voç dirai: il est fichés en chief dou pont une colone de marbre et desor la colone a un lion de marbre et desus la colone en a un autre mout biaux et grant et bien fait, et longe de cest colone un pas et mi en a un autre toute ausi fait con deus lions, et de le une colone a l'autre est clous de table de marbre bis [...]</p>	<p>And over this river is a very beautiful [...] stone bridge [...]. For you may know that there are few of them in all the world so beautiful, nor its equal. And I shall show you the reason how. I tell you that it is quite three hundred paces long and [...] eight [...] wide, for ten horsemen can well go there the one beside the other [...] it has twenty-four arches and twenty-four piers in the water [...], and it is all of grey marble very well worked and well founded. There is [...] on each side of the bridge [...] a wall of flags of marble and of pillars [...] made so as I shall tell you. [...] there is fixes at the head of the bridge a marble pillar, and below the pillar is a marble lion and above the pillar is another one, [...] very beautiful and large and well made; and a pace and a half from this pillar [...] is another [...] one made just the same [...] with two [...] lions. [...] and from one pillar to the other it is closed in with a flag of grey marble...²⁹</p>
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and in R, II 27 3-9.

²⁹ Moule and Pelliot (1938), 255-256.

**Table 11c: The Bridge on the Polisanchin / Pulisanghin River
(R Version)**

<p>Sopra detto fiume è un ponte di pietra molto bello, et forse in tutto il mondo non ve n'è un altro simile. La sua lunghezza è trecento passa et la larghezza otto, di modo che per quello potriano commodamente cavalcare dieci huomini l'uno a lato all'altro. Ha ventiquattro archi et venticinque pile in acqua che li sostengono, et è tutto di pietra serpentina, fatto con grande artificio. Dall'una all'altra banda del ponte è un bel poggio di tavole di marmo et di colonne maestrevolmente ordinate, et nell'ascendere è alquanto piú largo che nella fine dell'ascesa, ma, poi che s'è ascreso, trovasi uguale per lungo come se fosse tirato per linea. Et in capo dell'ascesa del ponte è una grandissima colonna et alta, posta sopra una testuggine di marmo; appresso il piè della colonna è un gran leone, et sopra la colonna ve n'è un altro. Verso l'ascesa del ponte è un'altra colonna molto bella, con un leone, discosta dalla prima per un passo et mezzo; et dall'una colonna all'altra è serrato di tavole di marmo, tutte lavorate a diverse sculture et incastrate nelle colonne da lí per lungo del ponte infino al fine. Ciascadune colonne sono distanti l'una dall'altra per un passo et mezzo, et a ciascuna è sopra-posto un leone, con tavole di marmo incastratevi dall'una all'altra.</p>	<p>Over this river there is a very handsome bridge of stone, perhaps unequalled by any other in the world. Its length is three hundred paces, and its width, eight paces; so that ten men can, without inconvenience, ride abreast. It has twenty-four arches, supported by twenty-five piers erected in the water, all of serpentine stone, and built with great skill. On each side, and from one extremity to the other, there is a handsome parapet, formed of marble slabs and pillars arranged in a masterly style. At the commencement of the ascent the bridge is something wider than at the summit, but from the part where the ascent terminates, the sides run in straight lines and parallel to each other. Upon the upper level there is a massive and lofty column, resting upon a tortoise of marble, and having near its base a large figure of a lion, with a lion also on the top. Towards the slope of the bridge there is another handsome column or pillar, with its lion, at the distance of a pace and a half from the former; and all the spaces between one pillar and another, throughout the whole length of the bridge, are filled up with slabs of marble, curiously sculptured, and mortised into the next adjoining pillars, which are, in like manner, a pace and a half asunder, and equally surmounted with lions [...]³⁰</p>
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³⁰ Marsden (1818), 386-387.

It is likely that Fra Mauro and Ramusio obtained the landmark “Achbaluch / Hachbaluch” from the same text, probably the same complete copy of Z; but at present, it is more important for us to point out that, referring to Ramusio’s description, Pelliot was right when he observed that “its authenticity is beyond doubt”.³¹

4. A New “Critical Translation” of *DM*

Our analysis leads us to a discovery, which seems trivial, but which is significant for us, and which is valid whatever idea we have about the history of the text. This discovery is that neither the δ “vulgate” nor the richest text of Z / R (and V / L) *DM* witness contains all the information we can consider authentic and original; no witness maintains the original form of the text. It is no coincidence, therefore, that scholars concerned about reconstructing *DM* content adopted the “critical translation” solution: we are talking about Luigi Foscolo Benedetto, Arthur C. Moule, and René Kappler.

In 1931, Benedetto published in London *The Travels of Marco Polo* (Routledge). It was the English version – by Aldo Ricci – of the Italian “critical translation” that was printed in Milan by Treves in 1932: *Il libro di Messer Marco Polo cittadino di Venezia detto Milione dove si raccontano le meraviglie del mondo*. The subtitle is: *critically rebuilt and, for the first time, fully translated into Italian*. Thanks to the mediation of Filippo De Filippi and Aurel Stein – whose correspondence has been studied by Nico Mastropietro –,³² the volume should have been followed by a commentary by Paul Pelliot. Unfortunately, the project failed because of Pelliot’s work commitments (even if, a few years later, Pelliot was involved with Moule in an editorial enterprise very similar to Benedetto’s,

³¹ Pelliot (1953-1975), 8-9, nr. 5 (“Achbaluch”). The identification with Chengtingfu (today Zhending, in Hebei), proposed by Yule (Yule and Cordier [1902] (1929), II, 14-15), was accepted by Pelliot, and was never questioned. See also Haw (2006), 95.

³² Mastropietro (2012), 98-106, reconstructs Filippo de Filippi’s attempts to secure Benedetto and Pelliot’s collaboration through the correspondence between De Filippi and Sir Aurel Stein. See also Barbieri (2016), 38-42.

and whose results are the posthumous *Notes on Marco Polo* published by Louis Hambis, 1959-1973).

Here is told of the great city of Jonju

After crossing that bridge, one travels thirty miles towards the west, always finding fine hostelries and vineyards and gardens, and most fertile fields and excellent springs. Then one at last comes to a city called Jonju, which is both large and beautiful. It contains many monasteries of the idolaters. The people live by trade and handicrafts. Beautiful gold and silver cloths, and very fine sandals are made there. There are also many hostelries for travellers.

One mile out of this city, one finds two roads, one leading to the west, and the other to the south-east. The westerly road is that of Cathay, the other leads towards the great province of Manji.

And you must know that travelling across the province of Cathay, towards the west, one finds, at ten days' journey from Jonju, the city of Taiuanfu. And all the time one comes across many fine cities and towns, with much trade and industry, beautiful fields, and splendid vineyards. The wine is taken to those parts of Cathay where it is not produced. There are also many mulberry-trees, from the leaves of which the inhabitants obtain much silk. The population is everywhere very friendly on account of the many cities, which are close to one another, while the cities themselves are so thickly populated, that along the road there is always a crowd of travellers. And this is due to the large amount of merchandise that is constantly being carried between the cities, and to the fairs that are held in each of them.

There is nothing else worth mentioning. I will only add that after travelling for five of the ten days I have mentioned, there is a finer and larger city than the others, called Acbaluc, where end, in this direction, the hunting preserves of the Great Kaan, within which no one dares go hunting except the Great Kaan himself and his servants, and those who are entered upon the rolls of the Captain of the Falconers. But beyond this limit anyone may hunt, provided he be a nobleman. The Great Kaan, however, hardly ever went hunting in those parts, and for this reason the wild animals increased and multiplied to such an extent, especially the hares, as to damage the crops of the whole province. When the Great Kaan was informed of this, he went there with all his court, and the number of animals caught was incalculable.

We will now leave this subject and tell you of a kingdom called Taiuanfu.

Figure 4a: Benedetto's English Edition (1931)

CVII. — CI DEVISE DE LA GRANT CITÉ DE GIONGIU.

Et quant l'en s'en part de cest pont, et il est alés troynte milles por ponent, trouvant toutes foies bieles erberges et vignes et chans², adonc treuve une cité, qui est apelés Gio[n]giu, grant et biele. Hi a maintes abaie de ydres. Il vivent de mercandie et de ars.
 5 Il hi si laborent dras de soie et d'ore et biaux sendal; et il hi a maintes herbergieries que erbergient les viandans.

Et quant l'en est parti ¶ de ceste ville et alés un mil, adonc treuve l'en deus voies, que le une ala a ponent et le autre a seiloc. Celle dou ponent est dou Catai et celle do siloc
 vaît ver la grant provénce dou Mangi. Et sachiés tout voiremant que l'en chevauehe por
 10 ponent³ por la provénce dou Catai bien x jornee. Et toutes foies treuve l'en maintes belles cités, et maint biaux chastiaus de grant mercandies et de grant ars, et biaux chans, et bielles vignes⁴, et domescs jens⁴. N'i a chouses que a mentovoir face: por ce ne vos en diron rien.

Et adonc laiseron de ceste maîtiere et vos conteron de un roiaime que Taianfu est appellés.

scuz les dou pont a un mur 14 opp. eu chief 14 S coloune 15 S desor la colone 16 opp. longe
 16 S ceste colone 18 aise ò punteggiato dal copista aze.

CVII. — 1 *Giongiu* è una nostra correzione congetturale; se si adotta, come sembra abbastanza sicuro, la lettura *giu* per la seconda sillaba (su in Z), il rubricario linuare ha *Ciugiù* (o *Cuigiù* o *Ciugiù*); M' *Gigui* (S *Gigui*); ma abbiamo *Giegiu* a l. 4 (confermato da L e TA) e *Giongiu* in VA confermato da Z che ha *Zouzu* (R *Gonza*) e dallo stesso F che ha *Giungia* a l. 2 del cap. CVIII 2 S *troitates* 4 S *Gioqui* 5 S *doré* 5 S *sandal* 6 S *maudaux* 11-12 S *biaux chans et biel les vignes*.

e come ha sputato lo cuopre e salva. Hanno similmente alcuni belli bolzachini di cuoro bianco, quali portano seco, e giuati alla corte se vorranno entrar in sala, che 'l Signor li domandi, si calzano questi bolzachini bianchi, e danno gli altri alli servitori, e questo per non indrattar li belli e artificiosi tapeti di seta e d'oro e d'altri colori.

CVI. — a) R: *E nell' ascendere è alquanto più largo che nella fine dell' ascasa. Ma poi che s' è ascaso si truova uguale per lungo come se fosse tirato per linea. E in capo dell' ascasa del ponte è una grandissima colonna e alta, posto sopra una testuggine di marmo. Appresso il piede della colonna è un gran leone, e sopra la colonna ve n'è un altro. Verso l' ascasa del ponte è un' altra colonna molto bella con un Leone discosta dalla prima per un passo e mezzo. E dall' una colonna all' altra è serrato di tavole di marmo tutte lavorate a diverse sculture e incastrate nelle colonne da li per lungo del ponte infino al fine.* b) R: *Et nella discesa del ponte è come nell' ascasa.*

CVII. — a) R: *campi fertilissimi.* b) Z: *et noveritis quod a civitate Zouzu usque ad regnum Tayanfu equitatur per provinciam Cathay x dietis.* — (R uguale a Z ma invece di *regnum* va forse corretto *civitatem*, perchè Taianfu in quanto città doveva già essere nominata, probabilmente a questo punto, nel testo originario; cf. OVIII, 3-4). c) Z: *inveniendò vineas et campos ubi multum nascitur syrioum.* — R: *trovando vigne e campi lavorati; e di qui si porta il vino nella provincia del Cataio, perchè in quella non ve ne nasce. Vi sono anche molti alberi mori che con la foglia sua gli habitanti fanno di gran seta.* d) Z: *sunt omnes gentes domesticæ propter spissitudinem civitatum et frequentantur ita vie illarum civitatum quod semper inveniuntur gentes transeuntes etc.* (l' etc. è in Z, prova di ulteriori particolari nel suo modello) — (Y) *et spesega molta zente* — R: *Tutte quelle genti sono domestiche, per la moltitudine delle città poco discoste l' una dall' altra e frequentatione che fanno gli habitanti di quelle, perchè sempre vi si truovano genti, che passano per le molte mercantie che si portano continuamente d' una città all' altra, e in ciascuna di quelle si fanno le fiere. Et in capo di cinque giornate delle predette dieci, dicono esservi una città più bella e maggior dell' altre chiamata Achbaluch, fino alla quale verso quella parte confina il termine della cacciagione del Signore, dove niun aràisee d' andar alla caccia, eccettuando il Signore con la sua famiglia e chi è scritto sotto il Capitano de' Falconieri. Ma da quel termine innanzi può andarvi pur che sia nobile. Nondimeno quasi mai il gran Can andava alla caccia per quella danda. Per la qual cosa gli animali salvaticchi erano tanto cresciuti e moltiplicati, e specialmente le lepore che gustavano le biade di tutta la detta provincia. La qual cosa fatto intendere al gran Can, v' andò con tutta la corte e furono presi animali senza numero.*

Figure 4b: Benedetto's Italian Edition (1928)

As shown in the Figure 4a, Benedetto elaborates in a homogeneous narration (i.e. the translation) both text F and those informative additions provided by other witnesses, whereas these additions had previously been put in the apparatus of his 1928 critical edition, the first critical edition of the book, and the philological basis for the 1932 translation (see Figure 4b: CVII, Ci devise de la grant cité de Giongiu). By placing text F and other additions together, the translation assumes responsibility for rebuilding the original content. In the 1928 edition this operation was up to the reader, who virtually had to combine the text with the additions in the apparatus.

The critical translation has a homogeneous layout, where text F and the additions are not typographically distinguished. There is no philological illustration explaining the criteria of the reconstruction. As a matter of fact, Benedetto's goal was to offer the average reader an accessible text, which was nonetheless based on the hypothesis presented in the 1928 edition.

Benedetto made a different choice when, in 1954, he started working on a new commented *DM* edition in modern French, commissioned by UNESCO. This new translation was meant to become an international reference text, but the project remained unfinished because of Benedetto's death in 1966. The UNESCO edition resumes the 1931-1932 project, but in this case the translation was accompanied by an impressive commentary, with the philological analysis of the sources used for the textual reconstruction (quoted as fragments), and the discussion of the Asian items described by Polo.³³ Ten years after Benedetto's critical edition, in 1938, Moule and Pelliot's edition followed the same path: we find text F translated into English (by Moule, we suppose), complemented by additions and variants printed in italics – in our chapter (Figure 5) they are taken from R, Z, VB, V, FB and LT, as we know from the sigla put in the margin of the page).

³³ The critical edition of this text and its commentary is being published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari. For the first volume (the critical translation) see Simion (2016).

·106·
 VB **H**ERE HE TELLS OF THE GREAT CITY OF GIOGIU. And when one sets out from
 LT FB VA this bridge *aforesaid* and he is gone thirty miles by the sunseting,
 FB FB R VB VA always finding beautiful *trees, villages, and inns for food & palaces* and
 VA beautiful vineyards and beautiful gardens and beautiful very fruitful cultivated fields and
 Z VB Z beautiful springs, then at the end of thirty miles he finds a city which is called Giogiu
 LT VB very great and beautiful. There are many abbeys of idolaters *priests and monks in it,*
 VB L and the people of that country are all idolaters. And however they live by trade and by crafts,
 R V V VB as for the most part do all other people. For many cloths of silk and of gold and beautiful
 VB very fine sendals are made there. And there are very many fine inns or hostels in our
 VB manner, where the wayfarers lodge, because of the multitude of merchants & strangers who
 come there. And when one is departed [48a] from this town and gone one mile then
 one finds two roads which the one goes to sunseting and the other to sirocco.
 R That of the sunseting is the road by which one goes through the province of Catai, and
 TA that of the sirocco goes toward the great sea to the great province of Mangi. And you
 may know quite truly that one rides by the sunseting through the province of Catai
 quite ten¹ days journeys from the city of Giogiu to the realm of Taianfu. And one always Z
 finds many beautiful cities and many beautiful villages, people of great trade and of VB
 great industry, and finds beautiful & well cultivated fields in which much silk is produced Z VB Z
 and beautiful vines and many trees, and they are all settled people & comfortable. LT Z VB
 and very affable because of the number of the cities little removed one from another; and the P R Z
 ways of those cities are so much frequented by the inhabitants that people are always found R Z
 passing by, because of the many goods which are continually carried from one city to the other; R
 and in each of them fairs are held. And from here the wine is carried into the province of Catai,
 because wine is not produced there. There are also many mulberry trees of which the inhabitants
 make much silk with their leaves. And at the end of five days journeys of the foresaid ten they
 say there is a city more beautiful and greater than the others, called Achbaluch, to which in
 that direction approaches the boundary of the lord's hunting, where none dares go hunting except
 the lord with his retinue and whoever is enrolled under the captain of the falconers. But from
 that boundary forward one can go, provided that he is a nobleman. Nevertheless the great Kaan
 as it were never went hunting on that side; for which reason the wild animals were so much
 increased and multiplied, and specially the hares, that they destroyed the corn of the whole
 of the said province. And when this thing was made known to the great Kaan he went there
 with all the court, and animals were taken without number. There is nothing which does
 to mention, so we shall tell you nothing about it. And then we shall leave this
 matter and shall tell you of a kingdom which is called Taianfu.

Figure 5: Moule and Pelliot's English Edition (1938)

Moule provides no explanation for his textual choices. For instance, from LT Moule takes the reading: and the people of that country are all idolaters, which was probably added later by a scribe to recover the information which in the other versions appears earlier. Moreover, the sources used for the addition are not always clearly or completely indicated: where we read from the city of Giogiu to the realm of Taianfu, the siglum indicates Z as the source (a civitate Çonçu usque ad regnum Tayanfu), but the same information can also be found in R (dalla città di Gouza fino al regno di Tainfu). As we can see, Moule and Pelliot's edition seems to be a patchwork that tells us very little about each version, and even less about the

seminal history of the text. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand Benedetto's reasons when he called Moule's text a "polpettone" (a mish-mash).

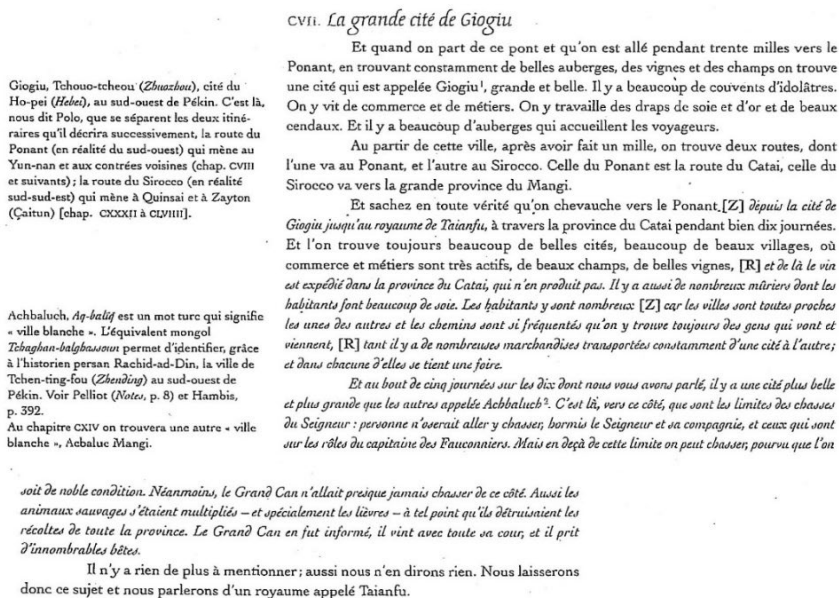


Figure 6: Kappler's French Edition (2004)

Let us talk, finally, about René Kappler's edition (2004) (Figure 6). His purpose is to make Polo's book "aussi proche que possible de son unité et de sa richesse premières". To do that, he adopts a precise textual "prophylaxis":

[...] nous avons voulu éviter la fusion qui donnerait l'illusion d'une unité sans existence avérée. Nous n'avons pas voulu "lisser" la lecture ni faire une version artificiellement intégrale qui n'aurait jamais existé sous cette forme. L'origine de chaque "ajout" sera clairement indiquée. L'italique marquera à dessein ces sutures, invitera le regard à se porter un instant "ailleurs", à changer d'angle comme dans une lecture "synoptique". [...] Nous présentons donc ici en français de notre époque

une traduction de la version la plus ancienne [...] et nous la “complétons” grâce à d’autres versions.³⁴

Actually, the “autres versions” that complete text F are mostly Z and R: Kappler renounces in principle to present those fragments of the original text, that any witness, and not only the “bon manuscrit”, may retain.³⁵

5. Diachronicity and Synchronicity

What is the price to pay for representing the “original” content of the *DM*? Kappler clearly indicates at least one thing: “l’illusion d’une unité sans existence avérée” – in other words, the sin of anachronism, which is “habituellement, [...] l’accusation portée contre les éditions qui prétendent reconstruire le texte au-delà du simple manuscrit” –³⁶ we can say, the witness itself). But there is another fact: the pitfalls hidden in the editorial form of these apparently clear and easily readable works. This second fact is implicit in the apparatus of Benedetto’s 1928 edition, whose layout does not emphasize the individuality of each version, and only ensures a mere trickle of information about the diachronic tradition. As a matter of fact, unless he has on his desk all the *codices* and editions quoted in the apparatus, the reader cannot “falsify” the editors’ hypothesis and cannot fully assess the value of each individual attestation. The paradox that troubles these editions is a lack of autonomy and individuality: their own existence is only due to the fact that they project on their pages the shadows of absent texts, which, in turn, bear the traces of a lost developmental phase.

If we adopt this point of view, we must admit that those who think that it is illusory to follow the traces of an *Ur DM*, and that it only makes sense to edit each historically existing version, are not entirely wrong. In short, it could be argued that the *DM* is a sort of ghost that gives rise to philology itself, if we understand “philology” as the intellectual practice (an *art*, said

³⁴ Kappler (2004), 7.

³⁵ See Avalor (2002), 147: “Quelle parcella di luce, frammenti dell’‘originale’ che a rigore qualsiasi manoscritto e non solo il *bon manuscrit* può conservare, in grado più o meno elevato».

³⁶ Leonardi (2016), 48.

Bédier) whose task is *to produce a text that can be read in the most verifiable way*,³⁷ and in particular “reproposer les textes du passé non seulement à une lecture érudite et antiquisante, mais aussi à la culture contemporaine”.³⁸

Any hypothesis concerning the totality of the *DM* textual history has to face the impossibility of giving it a visible and readable textual form. The question is not only practical, but it also involves a theoretical stance to which, as scholars of the Italian philological school, we do not want to give up:

Se focaliser sur la synchronie d’un seul manuscrit finit par obscurcir la diachronie dont ce manuscrit est témoin; renoncer à interpréter, par des hypothèses rigoureusement établies, les données de la transmission d’un texte dans le classement de ses manuscrits, empêche de distinguer même dans chaque manuscrit ce qui est le fruit d’une innovation de ce qui est une transmission fidèle: enfin, cela empêche d’écrire l’histoire d’une tradition, avant même de reconstruire un texte.³⁹

In the case of the *DM*, if we do not want to “renoncer à interpréter, par des hypothèses rigoureusement établies, les données de la transmission d’un texte” we must consciously accept restricting the focus of our action to contents only and to find a solution that can overcome the limits of a traditional critical translation. Only in this way will we be able to clarify our hypothesis about the contents of the *DM* and its chronology.

The experience gained with the digital edition of Ramusio’s *Dei Viaggi* confirmed the intuition that supported our project: a digital medium, and the hypertextual form, allow us to overcome the impasse produced by paper support and the traditional book form. Through the simultaneous opening of different windows in an online environment, a digital edition

³⁷ Leonardi (2007), 68

³⁸ Leonardi (2016), 50 (Focusing on the synchronicity of a single manuscript ends up obscuring the diachronicity to which this manuscript is a witness. Giving up interpreting textual transmission through manuscript classification, even with rigorous hypotheses, precludes distinguishing, even in a single manuscript, what is innovation from what is faithful transmission. Finally, this prevents not only from reconstructing a text, but also from writing the history of a textual tradition.)

³⁹ See Leonardi (2016), 45. For a definition of *edition-in-time* see also Buzzoni (2016), 61-64.

allows us to visualize (1) the text (the critical translation); (2) the comment apparatus (identified sources; analysis of their manipulation; informative glosses); (3) the complete version of the text from which the source extract is taken, also in parallel with the *DM* text.

The hypertextual solution, among other things, makes it possible to face the opposition between the “preservation” of each individual witness and the diachronic “reconstruction” of a textual dynamism from a different perspective.

Preparing the Ramusio edition, our choice was motivated by empirical reasons: we looked for an editorial solution that would provide a satisfactory answer to the problem of showing both the text (in this case an existing text, and not a reconstructed one) and its genetic development simultaneously. However, during the work for the digital edition, between 2011 and 2015, it was already very clear to us the paradox that troubled many Digital Philology products:

Sul piano della *constitutio textus*, la virtualità della pagina *on line*, la sua natura ontologicamente non definitiva, e forse addirittura la minore fisicità del supporto, dovrebbero – avrebbero dovuto – facilitare e ancor più legittimare la tendenza a proporre ricostruzioni, a sperimentare congetture, a realizzare in forma di testo quelle ipotesi che tradizionalmente la rigidità e la dimensione univoca della carta stampata impedisce di formulare se non in nota. Inoltre, sul piano della *recensio*, l’incomparabile aumento di capacità e funzionalità offerto dall’informatica alla registrazione e alla visualizzazione di numeri anche elevati di attestazioni manoscritte, per di più presentabili non solo in forma di trascrizione, ma anche con il corredo della riproduzione fotografica, dovrebbe – avrebbe dovuto – potenziare enormemente le ragioni e le modalità stesse della collazione, e quindi quella dimensione comparatistica e diacronica intrinseca al modello genealogico-stemmatico. In realtà, per quello che ho potuto vedere, è vero il contrario: nella maggior parte delle edizioni digitali, anche quelle che non si limitano a dar conto di un solo testimone, l’attenzione è molto più focalizzata sulla

riproduzione, diciamo pure sull'edizione, di ciascun singolo manoscritto [...] che non sulle potenzialità di un confronto approfondito sul piano testuale tra le diverse unità testimoniali.⁴⁰

We only need to consult the *Sahle repertoire* mentioned above to broadly confirm Leonardi's remarks. On the other hand, the purpose of our Ramusio edition was twofold: first, to take advantage of the potential of the digital medium to "proporre ricostruzioni", "sperimentare congetture", and to display multiple testimonies; second, to provide an oriented and non-relativistic interpretation of the materials provided, which would take a position.

In doing this, we wanted to avoid the temptation of becoming a mere "digital archive", in which every witness is on the same level as the others, without any possibility of finding a hierarchy or a key to read and reconstruct the text.⁴¹

At the end of the work, we had in our hands an object that simultaneously offered the individual edition (certainly in the form of a philological, critical text) and the analysis of the genetic dynamics of the text (proposing for *each paragraph* a hypothesis about the sources used by Ramusio, and the ways he manipulated them). In this way, the reader has full freedom to use all the materials made available, and even to trust our philological hypotheses, if they really find them convincing.

⁴⁰ Leonardi (2007), 66-67 (As regards the *constitutio textus*, the virtual nature of the online page, its ontologically undefined essence, and perhaps also its immaterial support, should make – or should have made – easier and more legitimate the tendency to propose reconstructions, to test conjectures, and to write in the text the hypotheses that are traditionally put into footnotes because of the rigid and univocal dimension of the printed paper. As to the *recensio*, the incomparable increase in capacity and functionality offered by information technology in recording and displaying larger numbers of manuscripts both in transcriptions and in photographic reproductions, should – or should have – greatly enhance the potential and the modalities of the *collatio* itself, thus highlighting the comparative and diachronic dimension intrinsic to the genealogical-stemmatical model. Actually, as far as I can see, the opposite is true. Most digital editions, even when they do not limit themselves to a single witness, focus much more on the reproduction, let us even say on the edition, of every single manuscript [...] than on the potential of a thorough textual comparison of the different witnesses.)

⁴¹ See Leonardi (2007), 69: "[...] ogni attestazione risulta sullo stesso piano dell'altra, senza la possibilità di istituire relazioni o tanto meno gerarchie, cioè senza una chiave di lettura possibile per la ricostruzione". See also Robinson (2005) and Sahle (2007).

6. The Integral Edition of *DM*

The digital project of the *DM* critical edition shares the same intellectual framework as the Ramusio edition. The assumption that justifies and supports it, is that it is possible to reconstruct Polo's text, not so much in its linguistic form as in its content, assessing, by "falsifiable" hypothesis, the contribution provided by each witness (that is, by every version coming from the translation or manipulation of the original Franco-Italian text or, in some cases, by a subsequent translation).

The new edition will have the same inquiry procedures than the Ramusio edition, but it will be based on a different technology; indeed, thanks to Marina Buzzoni, who coordinates the digital section of the project, we have developed a customised version of EVT (Edition Visualization Technology) to publish our edition. EVT is an open source software for the visualisation of digital scholarly editions and was developed by a team coordinated by Roberto Rosselli Del Turco (University of Pisa). All our data, including the website (which is under construction), are hosted by an institutional server provided by the Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities (VeDPH), directed by Franz Fischer.⁴²

The demo we produced, based on a part of chapter CV, will clarify this point.

(a) The minimal unit of text is the chapter; the textual access point is a page divided into two columns: on the left hand side – the most important one – there is the critical translation, divided into paragraphs; on the right hand side, as many as two further versions may be visualised and scrolled simultaneously (Figure 7a).

⁴² Elisa Cugliana and Chiara Martignano developed the intellectual frame of the edition and the software, tailoring it in such a way as to fit the requirements of the project; Giulia Fabbris, Tiziana Mancinelli, and Silvia Marsili coordinate a team of scholars and students who are working on the text encoding. The website, developed by Giacomo Cerretini, is available under <http://mizar.unive.it/dedm/>; for the digital section of the project see also: <http://mizar.unive.it/dedm/about/about-digital-edition/>.

(b) Each paragraph (including the chapter heading) is marked using the TEI (Text Encoding Initiative). Marking allows the reader to access the discussion (in English) of the different versions of that paragraph provided by the other witnesses of the text taken into consideration (Figure 7b).

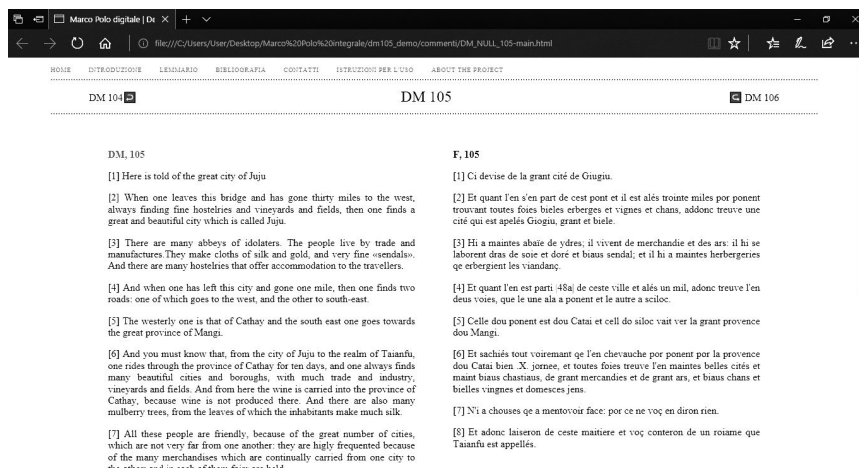


Figure 7a: Critical Translation and F Text

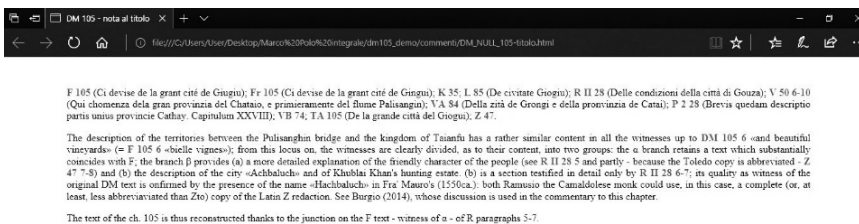


Figure 7b: Tradition of Chapter *DM*, 105: General Commentary

This corpus of witnesses, in fact, does not include all the Vernacular and Latin editions that make up the *DM* tradition. We only take into consideration the editions that literature and our reconstructive hypothesis regard as the most relevant to its history (and therefore not necessarily the most copied during the Middle Ages). These editions are: the vernacular versions Fr, K, TA, TB, V, VA, VB; the Latin versions Z and P (P often offers a better VA source than the one attested in vernacular *codices*); finally,

epitome L. For each version we will use well-established editions or new, specially prepared-editions.

(c) The edition will give full access to all the different versions. By marking the quotations contained in the commentary of each paragraph it will be possible to move to the single chapters and / or to the full text; each version will also be accessible from the home page menu. The reader can then “enter” a text directly, avoiding the “guide” of the commentary, or he can rely on this guide for access to the *DM* tradition; they can have multiple versions of the same chapter simultaneously, or just the complete text. In short, the reader will enjoy the same freedom that distinguishes “surfing” in hypertexts, and which has often been celebrated as a tool to deconstruct the text-form. On the contrary, if readers want to know the reasons for the editors’ choices in the critical translation, they can rely on the General Introduction and on the commentary of each chapter (Figure 7c).

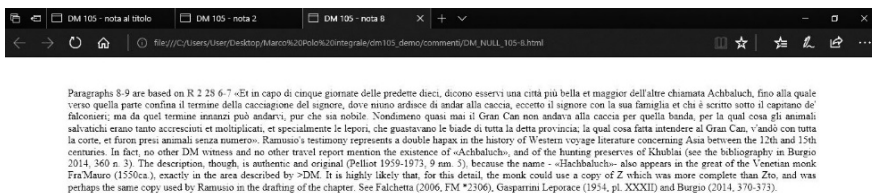


Figure 7c: *DM*, 105, par. 8: Commentary

(d) In addition to the paragraphs and headings, the TEI language will also mark some particular lemmas, namely: personal names, toponyms, and lemmas referring to the most significant items in *DM* description. All these names and lemmas will have their own commentary. Again, the edition imitates the Ramusian hypertext, but with a major difference. When preparing the commentary to the lemmas of Ramusio’s text (especially to those concerning China) we could not always rely on first-hand contributions and thus not all the items are completely accurate. In this case, on the contrary, our goal is to involve scholars with direct experience of Asia’s historical cultures and languages.

The choice of English as a lingua franca for the *DM* complete commentary betrays an ambition that perhaps would not have displeased Marco

Polo: to provide scholars with a reconstructed text on a digital platform where everyone can deposit the most up-to-date results of the historical and cultural research on Marco Polo's Asia. In conclusion, we would like this paper to be a call to arms.

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