Marco Polo’s *Devisement dou monde* and Franco-Italian tradition

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Marco Polo’s *Devisement dou monde* and Franco-Italian tradition*

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**ABSTRACT**

The manuscript BNF fr. 1116 (*F*) is the best surviving witness of the *Devisement dou monde* both for the quality of its reading and because it offers the closest version to the original form of the text. The book was written by Marco Polo, who had travelled for 24 years in Asia in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, and Rustichello da Pisa, an Arthurian romance writer, while both were prisoners in Genoa in 1298. The language in which the work was first written – an Old French heavily sprinkled with morphological as well as lexical Italianisms – is considered as a representative example of «Franco-Italian». The great heterogeneity of the texts usually included within this category, however, might provide an incorrect impression as regards both the original linguistic form of the *Devisement* and the audience to whom it was originally addressed. The language of the MS BNF fr. 1116 does not display strong similarities to the hybrid language used in Northern Italy for chivalric literature, which is traditionally called «Franco-Italian» or «Franco-Venetan». Some linguistic correspondences enable us to connect the MS BNF fr. 1116 with the group of Old French manuscripts copied by Pisan scribes while incarcerated in Genoa prison, following the battle of Meloria (1284). The fragment of the *Devisement* recently discovered by C. Concina appears to be very similar to *F*. Both graphic and phonetic evidences suggest that this witness, too, has to be localised to Tuscany.

**KEYWORDS**

Marco Polo – Rustichello da Pisa – *Devisement dou Monde* – Franco-Italian – Old Pisan

1. The «Franco-Italian» version of Marco Polo’s *Devisement dou monde*

A description of the world, travel record, geographic and ethnographic treatise, book of marvels, trade manual for travellers to China and more, Marco Polo’s *Devisement dou Monde* is difficult to classify. Its singularity among medieval texts concerns not only its contents and its structure, but also its linguistic features. As is well known, the circumstance which gave rise to the book was the encounter between a traveller and a writer in prison in Genoa in 1298: Marco Polo and Rustichello da Pisa. The former had travelled for twenty-four years in Asia and especially in Mongol China in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, whereas we have little information about the latter. He had written an Arthurian romance in Old French roughly twenty-five years before meeting Marco Polo in Genoa. Around 1270-1272, he came in contact with Edward I of England, who was passing through Italy in order to take part

* Acknowledgements. Many people have helped improve this essay. I am especially grateful for the valuable comments of Craig Baker, Alfredo Hamill, Tom Roper and an anonymous reviewer.
in the crusade launched by Louis IX, king of France, in 1270. At this time, he compiled (*treslaités*) a romance from a book (*livre*) in the possession of the English monarch, as we learn from the Prologue of his romance:

> Et sachiez tot voirement que cestui romainz fu treslaités dou livre monseingneur Odoard, li roi d’Engleterre, a celui tenz qu’il passé houtre la mer en servise nostre Sire Damedeu pour conquister le saint Sepoucre.¹

Rustichello’s romance met with considerable success in Europe in the later Middle Ages². Greater still was the success of the work which Rustichello wrote on the basis of Marco Polo’s travel account. The work was first composed in Old French, a language of prestige which Rustichello wielded with little ability. It was, however, soon translated into the major vernacular languages of medieval Italy (Tuscan and dialects of northern Italy). Furthermore, it was turned into Latin several times and finally translated into various languages of Europe (Catalan, Castilian, Czech, Gaelic, German, Portuguese)³. In France, it was rewritten in a more correct Old French a few years after its original composition (1310-1311)⁴. Most of these translations enjoyed such popularity that the original version (generally called the «Franco-Italian» version) was almost completely forgotten. It is significant that only two manuscripts of the «Franco-Italian» text have survived. The manuscript Paris BNF fr. 1116 – which is usually indicated by the letter F – is the best surviving witness of the *Devisement dou monde* both for the quality of its readings and because it remains closest to the original linguistic form⁵. The fragment of four folios recently discovered by Chiara Concina⁶ and studied by Philippe Ménard⁷, designated f, appears to be very close to F⁸. The language which characterizes both F and f – an Old French heavily sprinkled with orthographic, phonological, morphological as well as lexical Italianisms⁹ – raises the issue of the relationship (especially from a linguistic standpoint) between the *Devisement dou monde* and the production of Francophone texts in northern Italy which is

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³ On the manuscript tradition, see Benedetto 1928: IX-CCXI; Casella 1929; Peretti 1930; Terracini 1933; Reichert 1992: 169-181; Barbieri 2004c; Burgio – Eusebi 2008.
⁷ Cf. Ménard 2012.
⁸ One fragmentary manuscript now preserved in London (BL. Cotton Otho D V) was considered by Luigi Foscolo Benedetto to be a second witness to the Franco-Italian redaction (Benedetto 1928: XXXI-XXXIII), but Philippe Ménard has proven that it is an Anglo-Norman redaction of the *Devisement*, independent from other branches of the tradition (Ménard 2000).
usually called the «Franco-Italian» (or the «Franco-Venetan») tradition\(^\text{10}\). We immediately come up against a problem of definition. The language of manuscripts \(F\) and \(f\) is traditionally viewed as an example of «Franco-Italian». The meaning of this term, however, is far from obvious.

Lorenzo Renzi proposes to distinguish an «[Old] French of Lombardy» and a «Franco-Lombard» (also called «Franco-Italian» or «Franco-Venetan»)\(^{11}\). The first denomination concerns the moderately Italianised French employed in several texts copied or written in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The second refers to the hybrid language used in north-eastern Italy especially for epic literary production during the fourteenth century. This distinction, mainly based on linguistic features, does not seem to have been very successful. The most widely used expression is that of «Franco-Italianan»\(^{12}\), which is also the most ambiguous. Several scholars apply this term to all French texts produced in Italy in the Middle Ages, and distinguish a subset characterised by specific features as regards geographical area of production (north-eastern Italy), contents (epic-chivalric literature), language (systematic hybridism between French and North Italian varieties) and chronology (fourteenth century). Other scholars distinguish this subset by labelling it «Franco-Venetan» (or «Franco-Venetian») literature\(^{13}\).

Almost every introduction to «Franco-Italian» or «Franco-Venetan» literature devotes a paragraph to Marco Polo’s work. There is, however, a certain difficulty in including the Devisement within this literary production. Luigi Foscolo Benedetto, the first scholarly editor of the text, considers it impossible to compare and confuse «affratellare e confondere» the Devisement with the other products of contemporary Franco-Italian literature, since its author shows considerable knowledge of the French language\(^{14}\). Aurelio Roncaglia claims that the linguistic hybridism of the Devisement does not reach the level which defines the «Franco-Venetan» literature in the proper sense of the term\(^{15}\). According to Lorenzo Renzi, Marco Polo’s work, as well as Martin da Canal’s Estoire de Venise, needs to be considered separately because of its

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\(^{11}\) Renzi 1976: 574. See also Morlino 2010: 36. The label of «Franco-Lombard» had already been proposed by Contini 1964: 112.

\(^{12}\) Capusso 2007: 159-160. See, for instance, Raina 1870-1872; Meyer 1885-1887; Bertoni 1907, 1921; Zingarelli 1932; Viscardi 1941; Holtus 1979a, 1979b, 1988; Holtus (et alii) 1989; Holtus – Wunderli 2005; etc.


\(^{14}\) Cf. Benedetto 1928: XXX

\(^{15}\) Cf. Roncaglia 1965: 731.
literary singularity and on the basis of linguistic considerations\textsuperscript{16}. Both texts exhibit particular phenomena of interference when compared to other French texts composed in Italy in the Middle Ages\textsuperscript{17}. Carl Theodor Gossen considers the \textit{Devisement} a «special case» within the framework of Franco-Italian literature\textsuperscript{18}. Gustav Ineichen rules out the inclusion of the French of Marco Polo and Rustichello’s book among examples of the «Franco-Venetan» language, since a substantial difference separates it chronologically and linguistically from «Franco-Venetan» literature proper\textsuperscript{19}. According to Cesare Segre and Valeria Bertolucci Pizzorusso, the \textit{Devisement} displays a very peculiar linguistic mixture of Italian and French, which proves to be much different from the artificial mixed language (\textit{Mischsprache}) known as «Franco-Italian» or «Franco-Venetan»\textsuperscript{20}. Philippe Ménard refuses the label of «Franco-Venetan» to describe the language of \textit{f}, in favour of the more general designation «Franco-Italian»\textsuperscript{21}. In Maria Grazia Capusso’s opinion, the linguistic status of the \textit{Devisement} is «indefinable and, in any case, highly original» in the framework of Franco-Italian production\textsuperscript{22}. Günter Holtus and Peter Wunderli consider the \textit{Devisement} a typical example of a Franco-Italian variety depending on spoken French of the time, and, accordingly, place it in a secondary sector of the Franco-Italian literature\textsuperscript{23}. Recently, Simon Gaunt has observed that «Franco-Italian» is in some respects a misleading designation for the language of \textit{F}\textsuperscript{24}.

A first peculiar element which distinguishes the \textit{Devisement dou monde} from other French texts composed in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is its process of elaboration: the work was composed by two authors who spoke two distinct linguistic varieties, greatly different from one another, and who decided to use in their book a third language which neither knew as a mother tongue\textsuperscript{25}. The italism in the text reflect two vernacular varieties of medieval Italy: Tuscan and Venetan\textsuperscript{26}.

The deep hybridism of the manuscripts \textit{F} and \textit{f} leads us to wonder about the specific contribution of both coauthors in the elaboration of such a composite work\textsuperscript{27}. The prevailing view among scholars at present is that Marco Polo knew French and used it to communicate his travel memories to

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. Renzi 1976: 570.
\textsuperscript{17} Ivi: 575.
\textsuperscript{18} Cf. Gossen 1975: 133.
\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Ineichen 1989: 66. Ineichen adapts to the \textit{Devisement} a concept developed by Limentani referring to \textit{Estoires de Venise} (Limentani 1972: CV).
\textsuperscript{20} Segre 1983: 10; Bertolucci Pizzorusso 2011b\textsuperscript{2}: 86.
\textsuperscript{21} Ménard 2012: 260.
\textsuperscript{22} Cf. Capusso 2007: 165.
\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Gaunt 2013: 15.
\textsuperscript{25} Cf. Gossen 1975: 133.
\textsuperscript{26} On the meaning of the term «Venetian», see note 10.
\textsuperscript{27} Capusso 2008: 268.
Rustichello, orally or in writing. Accordingly, it makes sense to think that four distinct languages interacted in the composition of the book: the French of Marco Polo and his native language, Old Venetian; the French of Rustichello and his native language, Old Pisan. The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the linguistic problem of the *Devisement dou monde* turns out to be very complex because it involves various key issues.

The final aim of the linguistic analysis is to distinguish the respective responsibilities of the two coauthors and to shed new light on the process of drafting (*mise en écrit*). Such a result, however, cannot be obtained without first clarifying which, among the significant linguistic features of \( F \) and \( f \), might stem from the original, and which ones might be attributed to scribal intervention. In this regard, it must be noted that at least three linguistic strata combine in the extant manuscripts of the «Franco-Italian» version: the Marco Polo language layer (Venetian or maybe French with Venetian traits); the Rustichello language layer (a literary French permeated with western Tuscan traits); and the scribe’s (or more likely, the scribes’) language layer. This peculiar linguistic situation requires a global approach to the problem. In order to answer the question about Marco’s and Rustichello’s roles in the process of elaboration, one must first address two distinct and complementary issues here. Firstly, we need to tackle the problem of the relationships between the orthographic and linguistic characteristics of \( F \) and \( f \) and those of the other work composed by Rustichello, his Arthurian compilation. Secondly, we will have to consider whether the hybridism of these manuscripts reflects the characteristics of the original version, or if it has been modified by the work of scribes.

2. Marco Polo, Rustichello da Pisa and the Pisan-Genoese scriptorium

An important factor in the linguistic problem of the *Devisement dou monde* is represented by the context in which the work was created. It is well known that the book was composed in Genoa prison in 1298. Since the 1990s, several studies on the circulation of Arthurian prose romances in Italy (*Tristan*, *Lancelot-Graal*, *Guiron le Courtois*) have identified a group of over thirty French manuscripts copied by Italian scribes which date back to the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, and can be localised in Genoa on the basis of material features (script, parchment and decoration). Furthermore, a few linguistic peculiarities which can be found in the notes for the illuminator written in the margins of some manuscripts allow us to say that

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this group of French manuscripts was copied by Pisan scribes. These considerations lead to the hypothesis that all these manuscripts were produced by Pisan prisoners while incarcerated in Genoa. In fact, several sources confirm that quite a number of writers and scribes were held in the Genoese prison following the battle of Meloria (1284): Nerio Sanpante, Bondìe Testario, Rindolfi Ridolfi Pungolini, Baccia meo di Baccone and a Taddeo. The Devisement’s prologue enables us to add Rustichello’s name to the preceding list:

Le quel [= Marco Polo] puis, demorant en la charchre de Jene, fist retraire toutes cestes chouches a messire Rustaciaus de Pise, que en celle meissme chartre estoit, au tens qu’il avoit .MCCXCVIII. anç que Jeçucrit nesqui (Prologue 4).34

Arthurian prose romance is the most favourite genre among the works contained in the Pisan-Genoese French manuscripts, but other types of text are also found: «Matter of Rome» romances, universal and ancient history, hagiography, didactic literature, moral philosophy, allegorical and encyclopedic literature.35 The results achieved by recent research demonstrate the vital role played by Pisa in the reception and diffusion of French medieval literature in Tuscany and northern Italy in the late thirteenth century.36 This was the cultural milieu in which the Devisement dou monde was probably conceived and composed. The problem of its language requires first the analysis of the scripta used in the Pisan-Genoese manuscripts, since it appears necessary to establish which ones – among the «Italianising» features of F and f – are reflected in the texts copied in the Genoese scriptorium.37

It is significant that the most ancient and important witness to Rustichello’s Arthurian romance, the MS Paris BNF fr. 1463, usually designated by the letter A, belongs to the group of French manuscripts copied by Pisan prisoners in Genoa.38 Paul Meyer was the first scholar who noticed linguistic similarities between this codex and F.39 Additional correspondences between the two manuscripts were pointed out by Luigi Foscolo Benedetto. He aimed to demonstrate that the «maistre Rusticiaus de Pise» who signs the Arthurian compilation at its beginning is the same as the «messire Rustaciaus de Pise» mentioned in the first lines of the Devisement dou monde. Accordingly,

34 We follow the edition of F by Eusebi 2010. See also Benedetto 1928, Ronchi 1982. For more on the prologue, see Bertolucci Pizzorusso 2011d.2
40 Cigni 1994: 233 [1 3].
41 Eusebi 2010: Prel. 4.
his analysis was mainly focused on the style and phraseology of both works, rather than on orthographic and linguistic phenomena. Today, thanks to the critical edition of Rustichello’s romance by Fabrizio Cigni, it is possible to confirm the similarity between $F$ and the MS $A$ (Paris BNF fr. 1463) also from the point of view of spelling and language. However, at this stage of the research, we cannot say with certainty whether such specific characteristics reflect the usus scribendi of Rustichello or are to be attributed to the scripta used in the Genoese scriptorium. Only a linguistic study of the whole group of French manuscripts copied by Pisan copyists will allow us to address these issues more specifically. So far, the analysis has only considered a small number of texts, and the data in our possession does not permit even an approximate generalisation.

The ultimate objective of the comparison is to isolate the peculiarities that distinguish Rustichello’s works from one another. Previous analyses of the Devisement’s language have identified a significant set of differences between $F$ and the MS $A$, which concern first vocabulary, then morphology (especially verbal morphology) and finally phonology and spelling. As shown by several scholars (Benedetto, Terracini, Kaiser, Gossen, Ineichen, Capusso), MS $F$ appears to be characterised by a considerable number of Venetisms. The problem is whether they stem directly from Marco Polo himself, or have been inserted in the text by a Venetan copyist. This is where the second dimension of the linguistic problem of the Devisement dou monde comes in: namely the localisation of the «Franco-italian» manuscripts $F \& f$.

### 3. The language of $F$ and $f$

3.1. Previous analyses on the language of $F$ (Paris BNF fr. 1116) have not led to a definite conclusion. Two alternative hypotheses have been proposed in literature. Some scholars localise $F$ in central Italy and more precisely in Tuscany. Others suggest that the manuscript was copied by a north Italian, perhaps Venetan scribe.

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42 Cf. Benedetto 1928: XIX-XXVII.
45 Cf. Bertoni 1928; Bertolucci Pizzorusso 2011c: 113-114; Capusso 2008: 270.

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The first opinion on the date and localisation of F was advanced by Benedetto47. According to him, F is the most ancient extant manuscript of the Devisement, dates from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and was written by a copyist originating from central Italy. It should be stressed, however, that this localisation is not based on a systematic study of the matter. First of all, Benedetto draws attention to a marginal note on folio 82r, which might confirm the central Italian provenance of the manuscript: «qui diviça quine uve lo chor di sancto tomeo» ('Here it is explained where Saint Thomas’ body lies')48. Then he points out two orthographic and phonological features which could be attributed to a Tuscan scribe: the lengthening of the initial consonant after certain words ending in a vowel (e.ssez, e lla, a celui, a chief, etc.) – the so-called «raddoppiamento sintattico»; and the sporadic use of the grapheme ∞ representing [z], which is, instead, typical of the north Italian scripta.

Benedetto’s deductions were accepted by Carl Theodor Gossen49. His analysis, based on the dissertation of his student Elgrid Kaiser50, mainly focuses on the vocabulary. He identified a small number of Tuscanisms in the language of F, and a much more consistent amount of Venetisms51. Gossen does not draw any conclusion from this, but seems to ascribe the Venetan terms to the direct contribution of Marco Polo. He does not specify whether the Tuscanisms are to be attributed to Rustichello or to the copyist of F. Elgrid Kaiser, too, agrees with Benedetto’s localisation, but her view is more nuanced52. She considers the typically Venetan spellings found in F as proof that Rustichello translated into French a Venetian original (namely Marco Polo’s travel notes), but does not rule out the possibility that the manuscript might have been copied by a Venetan scribe53.

Valeria Bertolucci Pizzorusso, too, concurs with Benedetto’s opinion and believes F to have been written in central Italy or, more specifically, in Tuscany54. A considerable agreement with this position is expressed in a recent study by Maria Grazia Capusso, who notices the clearly Italian traits contained in the rubrics of the manuscript55. It should be noted that the previous analysis conducted by Capusso on verbal morphology almost thirty years earlier (1980), did not provide any useful evidence for the localisation of F. This study substantially confirmed the results of the analysis conducted by Kaiser and Gossen on vocabulary. At the morphological level, the cases of hybridism

47 Cf. Benedetto 1928: XI, XXVII.
48 Ivi: XI.
53 Ivi: 174-175.
attributable to the influence of Venetan or northern Italian are far more numerous than the hybrid forms due to the influence of Tuscan.\footnote{Cf. Capusso 1980: 35-36. See also Capusso 2008: 271.}

The theory sustaining the northern localisation of $F$ is mainly based on codicological evidence. Some material peculiarities (especially the pen-flourished decoration) have allowed Marie-Thérèse Gousset to date the manuscript to the beginning of the fourteenth century (1320-1330), as Benedetto had proposed. Unlike Benedetto, though, she localises the origin of $F$ in Veneto rather than in central Italy. Gousset manages to decipher a barely readable note on folio 1 recto, which could refer to an owner of the manuscript («quelque riche bourgeois italien, peut-être un marchand lui-même intéressé par l'Orient»). The annotation, written by a non-professional thirteenth-century hand, seems to display northern Italian linguistic features: «Pogio andrea Zorgeb»\footnote{Gousset 1996: 354.}. An analogous localisation of $F$ has recently been suggested also by Mario Eusebi. On the basis of some linguistic forms contained in the rubrics and in the text, he suggests that the manuscript was copied in northern Italy, perhaps in Venice or more likely in Padua.\footnote{Cf. Eusebi 2010: XII.}

From this short review it may easily be seen that no analysis has been particularly focused on the problem of localising $F$ and $f$ until now. The research project I have recently undertaken aims to fill this gap. In this section I will briefly summarize the most important results of the investigation.

My analysis will focus on the formal features of the text which appear to be most susceptible to the influence of scribe’s usage and, hence, may offer interesting indications on his provenance: spelling and phonology. I will leave out phenomena relating to more abstract levels of grammar which are generally less affected by scribal habits, namely vocabulary, syntax, morphology. As mentioned above, previous analyses in these fields have not provided evidence useful for the localisation of $F$.\footnote{Cf. Kaiser 1967; Gossen 1975; Capusso 1980; Ineichen 1989.}

Several characteristics are typical of Tuscan (and central Italian) scripta, and rule out the northern varieties. The most significant are:

\begin{itemize}
\item \begin{enumerate}
\item the retention of final /-e/ in the infinitive: \textit{ballere} LVIII-7; \textit{conbatere} CCXXVI-3; \textit{contere} CXV-7 etc. (11 instances); \textit{core}CCI-8, CCVIII-4; \textit{crever} XLI-4; \textit{dure} CXCI-17; \textit{entere} CXCII-16, CXCVI-6; \textit{fauler} CXXIX-6; \textit{jungere} XXV-8; \textit{laver} LIX-12, CCXXVI-3; \textit{mandere} XLI-4; \textit{mangere} XXIV-13; \textit{oc(o)ire} XXV-10 etc. (19 instances); \textit{parlere} LVI-12, LXV-11; \textit{passere} XXII-5, LVI-5; \textit{passere} XXII-4, CXCII-20; \textit{pecher} XXVI-11, XXVI-11, CLXXVI-22; \textit{reco}er CXCVIII-26; \textit{returnere} X-6; \textit{revelere} LXXXIV-5; \textit{servere} CLXXXVII-8; \textit{sonere} CXCVIII-22; \textit{tovere} CXCVIII-18; \textit{vincer} CC-4, CC-9; \textit{vivere} XXI-5 etc.
\end{enumerate}
\end{itemize}
the raising of /e/ to /i/ in unstressed position: dismiçureemant XXXIV-7; divient CXCI-12; divisarai XLV-14, divise XLIII-1, LXXV-1, LXXXVIII-1, divise LVII-5, LXXXVIII-20, XCVIII-6, divisee XXXV-7, diviser CXIX-25, divisera LXXXIII-26 etc. (5 instances), diviseron CLXXXIII-3, diviisse CLIX-15, divisement CXC-16; in I-3 etc. (22 instances); inavrés CCXXXI-6; incantaman XLVIII-3, XLVIII-3, XLVIII-3, LXXXVIII-1, divisé LXVII-5, LXXXVIII-20, XCVIII-6, etc. (5 instances), diviseron CLXXIII-3, CLXXV-19, etc. (5 instances);

the high-mid vowel raising in blocked syllable before [ŋk] and [ŋg] (the so-called «anaphonesis»): vincere CC-4, CC-9, vincre LXVI-5 etc. (5 instances); lunc CXIV-8, CXXXVIII-9, CLIII-11; lunge XLV-6; ungent CLVI-8 (also ungle CXCVIII-8, CCXII-2, CCXII-4);

the prothesis of /i/ before initial /s/ followed by a consonant: iscriure CLVI-17, iscrivre CXXXVIII-14; ysnellemant CXCVIII-15;

the frequent consonant lengthening in forms corresponding to Tuscan words with gemination: abbaïes CLI-11; abbee CLVII-4; accater CLXXII-6; accer XXXVIII-5; accbatent CLXXVI-6; becche CLXXIV-11, becches CLXXIV-12; bacoç CXCVI-6; cacciar XCIII-21; occir XXVIII-5 etc. (5 instances), occire XXV-10 etc. (14 instances), occiren LXI-9, CXIX-9, occi XLI-13 etc. (17 instances), occis LXI-9, ocist CCXXVIII-2, occistren CCVIII-8, occit LXIX-22; pecchiés LXI-13; sece LXIX-20, seccete CXXXVIII-5, secbéte XXXIX-2; succar CLIV-18, CLIV-18, CXCIV-3, succare CXXXV-6; tocbast LXVI-8; etc. affer VI-1, CXXXII-5; affere CXXXII-6; ballere LVIII-7; belle(s) XVIII-15, etc. (86 instances), bielle(s) XVII-5 etc. (31 instances), bolle LXXXIV-3, boller LXIX-28; campanelle CXXXIV-5; canelle CLXXIII-8, cannelle CXVI-14, CXVI-17; castelle CXCII-15; etc.

the retention of intervocalic voiceless stops: vite XXVI-6, XXVI-9, LXXXVII-5, CXCII-6 ‘life’;

the lengthening of a word-initial consonant after unstressed monosyllables e ‘and’, a ‘to’, qe ‘that’ (Tusc. chè) and the stressed monosyllable qui ‘who’ (Tusc. chè): e lle mer de Rocelle CLX-15, e lles greingnor montonz don monde CLXXIV-14, e sez neven LXXXV-5; a celui point II-3, a lles u/sajes LXIX-24, a lles qelz ydules CLXXIII-53, de lloc a llonc CIV-4, a sez hones LV-11, a sez filz LXIX-4; qui lle tient XCVIII-7; tant tôt qe lle malaide CLXXV-4;

the gemination of final /n/ in the preposition en ‘in’ (Tusc. in) before a vowel-initial word: ala enn este LXIX-13; por metre en escripture LXIX-36; des quelz qe en conterai en avant XXI-7;

the use of the graphemes şg and şg (both representing the phoneme /dz/) in words which originally contained the phoneme /dz/: giannis
XXI-8, XXXV-8 ‘camel’ (OVen. /dζ/- < OFr. /ʃ-/, giambelot LXII-6, LXII-6, giambelot CXV-5 ‘camlet’ (OVen. /dζ/- < OFr. /ʃ-/, geb(b)eline(s) XCI-28, CCXVII-2, CCXVII-4 ‘sable’ (from MHG *żebelē < OSlv. *sābelē).

Certain features exhibited by F are specific to western Tuscany (Pisa, Lucca), particularly to Pisa:

[A] the change of the Latin consonant cluster /ps/ to /ʃ/ in the form cascie LVII-19, cassie LVII-18 = cascia ‘chest’ [Pisa, Pistoia]60;

[B] the change of Late Latin [tj] (< lat. -TĬ-) to [s]: contenanse LXXX-11, creense LXXII-6, creence LXXII-6, mension CXCI-14, renonse XVI-1, renunse XVI-2, semense CLXVIII-5, usanse CLXVII-8, usanse LXIII-12 [Pisa, Lucca]61;

(Less certain but still probable is the change of Late Latin [tj] to /ss/ in ahatasion XLVII-12 etc. (5 instances); incarnation(z) IX-2 etc. (16 instances), incarnation XXV-3, CXCVII-14; benediction XII-3; condition CLXIII-8; destruction CCXXXI-2; generation Prol-2 etc. (7 instances); generations LXXIV-26, generation LXXV-9, LXXIX-7, LXXII-7, generations LXXXIII-13; generation(s) Prol-1 etc. (9 instances), generation CLXVII-14; habitation XXXIII-5 etc. (6 instances), habitation XXXVII-14, XXXIV-10; nacion LVII-16; oraison(z) LXXXVI-5 etc. (4 instances), oraison LXXXVIII-12; resurrection XCI-35, XCIII-41) [Pisa, Lucca];

[C] the use of the grapheme ‹ç› representing [z]: aaiçemant CLVII-5, aiiçogne XCVII-4, aiiçognit CXXXVII-5, aiiçogne LXIX-9, VIII-2, CXCI-3; aplaçir CCII-6; beçant XCI-28, etc. (6 instances), beçant CXIII-17, beçant CXIV-7, beçant LXVII-14, biçant XCV-9, XCV-12, biçant LXIX-34; beçognables LXXXIII-6, XCVII-2, beçon(d)gne(s) LXXXI-10 etc. (11 instances), beçogent CVI-3, beçognes CLVI-10, beçogne XCIV-5, beçognables LXXXVIII-9, beçognables XCVII-19, beçogene(s) LXIII-10 (7 instances), beçologne CXIX-7, beçogent CX-7, beçogne CXVII-19, beçognit CXIV-15, beçognes CXVII-19 etc. (4 instances), beçognes CXIX-6, beçognables XVIII-12, biçogne XLI-2, LXIX-9, biçonge LXVIII-12, biçonges(s) XVI-5, XVIII-10; cuiçinz CXCVIII-14; deçert XLVIII-11, XLIX-16, deçert II-11 etc. (22 instances); deviçon CLXV-12; dismiçureemant XXXIV-7; dou(e) XXI-11 etc. (11 instances), douce XLIX-2, eçowie LVI-12; façon CXV-5, faïçain LXVI-17, LXVI-19; faïçon CLXV-13, CCXVII-5, CCXXI-3, faïçon CX-3; fisionem CLXXIII-47; fréquis XX-5, XXII-3, fréquis CCXVIII-2; feuçiret(s) Prol-4 etc. (6 instances); Jèruselem X-5, Jëruselem X-4; maiçonnet CXIII-14; meçen XXX-10; meçure XXXV-8, CXCIVII-29; oço

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61 Ivi: 295.
LXXXIV-12, oçoit CLXXVII-8, oïcent CLXXIII-36; oïcelle LXXIII-25; poison CXVI-12, CXCI-9; preçent LXXXVIII-15, preçentent XIV-4; roç LXXXIII-32; saraçin XXV-3 etc. (14 instances), saraçins XXV-5, LI-3, LI-8, saraçins LI-13 etc. (8 instances); têçor XXIV-10 etc. (4 instances), têçor(s) XXIV-7 etc. (23 instances); uçance LIV-8 etc. (12 instances), uçance(s) XXXIV-7, LXI-24, CLXXIII-41, uçançe CLXVIII-8; uçent XXXVI-11 etc. (5 instances), uçis CCXXIII-3; vaiselemant LXXXV-14; veneiçon CXXXIV-2 [↩ Pisa, Lucca]\(^{62}\);

[D] the use of the adverb of place *u* 'where': XIII-1 etc. (10 instances) [↩ Pisa, Lucca, but also Siena, Arezzo] \(^{63}\).

On the contrary, the characteristics of spelling and phonology which may be considered as typical of northern Italy, are rather few:

[i] the use of the graphemes ő, φ or qφ instead of the French illé (= /j/): meravoie XXXI-2, LXVIII-5, mervaie XXII-9, mervoie IX-5 etc. (29 instances), mervoies LXXV-2, moiere LXIX-3, CCXVI-3; paie CCXVI-10; recoire LVII-7, recoire CXCIII-3, rogogent XVIII-5\(^{64}\);

[ii] the use of the graphemes ow or ow instead of the French òch (= /ʃ/):  
*baçaler* XV-5, CCXXVII-2; blançe LXXXII-28; çaitif CXVI-7; çambelloit LXXIII-9; çascun XCVII-2; ïeçar CLXXIII-26; trençant CCVIII-6;

[iii] the use of the graphemes ow or ow instead of the French φ/φe (= /ʒ/) or the Tuscan g(i) (= /ʒ/): borçois CLI-33; chaçoient CXXXIII-3; çir XXII-9; pois CX-7; deçinnoit XXVI-9; legnaçe XVIII-6; liçançamant CXCIII-3; longe XXVI-9; sorçe XXI-8\(^{65}\);

[iv] the use of the grapheme ő representing [z]:  
caxon XXII-4; exbaïes XCVII-2; exleu XCV-10; uxance CLI-25 etc. (5 instances), uxant CLXXXVI-18.

One might think that the northern Italian traits are due to the scribe, and the Tuscan ones stem from the original version. In fact, many of the characteristics listed under [1-9] and [A-D] are also displayed by the MS A (BNF fr. 1463) and other manuscripts belonging to the Pisan-Genoese group\(^{66}\). It should be noted, however, that it is very unlikely that a northern Italian scribe reproduced so faithfully the spelling and the phonology of his exemplar and inserted in it few features of his own language. So it seems more plausible to suppose that F was copied by a scribe originating in Tuscany and, more

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\(^{63}\) Ivi: 291, 320, 359, 431.

\(^{64}\) Cf. Kaiser 1967: 175.

\(^{65}\) Ibid.


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precisely, in Pisa, and that the northern Italian traits listed under [i-iv] stem directly from the original.

There exists another piece of evidence that may support this latter hypothesis. The early circulation of F in western Tuscany (or among western Tuscan readers) is proved by a marginal note on folio 82r. As stated above, there is a note written in a hand contemporary or almost contemporary with the copyist’s near the section devoted to the relics of Saint Thomas the Apostle67: «qui diviça quine uv’è lo chor di sancto Tomeo»68. This short sentence exhibits two traits typical of the western Tuscan scripta: the grapheme ç to represent the phoneme /z/ (diviça) and the adverb of place uve (uv’è). Conversely, it seems reasonable to exclude the possibility that the barely readable owner’s note on folio 1 recto is by a northern hand. Apart from the fact that the form Zorgel proposed by Gousset is far from certain69, it must be noted that spellings like çò (Pogio) and çò (Zorgel? Pagel?) are foreign to the fourteenth-century Venetan scripta.

It may be said, in conclusion, that the hypothesis attributing F to a Tuscan scribe, probably originating in Pisa or Lucca, is the most plausible of all explanations. Nevertheless, the possibility that the manuscript was copied by a northern Italian copyist cannot wholly be ruled out. This issue requires further research.

3.2. The analysis of f does not provide much evidence for its localisation. The few extant passages show a language very close to F’s. Like F, f is both characterised by Tuscan ([1], [2]) or western Tuscan features ([3]), and by Venetan ones ([4])70:

1. gire (= F CXIII-3), Mangi (= F CXII-2, CXII-7);
2. pinte (= F CXIII-14), pinture (= F CXIII-14);
3. oïçellant (≈ boïçellant F XCI-41), bœçgne, bœçgne (≈ beçgne, beçognne F XCVI-4), beçognnes (≈ beçognnes F XCVI-8), beçognables (≈ beçognables F XCVI-15), beçognables (= beçognables F XCVI-2), beçant (≈ beçant F CXII-17), beçaigne (≈ beçagne F CXVI-15) [resiresion ≈ resuresion F XCVI-41]
4. çaitif (= F çaitif CXVI-7).

It is significant that f displays Tuscan ([A]-[E]) and western Tuscan traits ([F]-[G]) where F exhibits French forms ([B]-[G]) or a Latinate spelling ([A]):

[A] gengebre (≠ çengibre F CXII-5);

67 Marco Polo, Le devisement dou monde, ch. CLXXV.
69 Cf. Eusebi 2010: XI.
70 Forms are cited after the edition of f by Concina 2007 and Ménard 2012.
This evidence suggests that the manuscript in question was likely also written by a western Tuscan scribe.

4. The composition of the Devisement dou monde

The localisation of F and f in western Tuscany must be verified by a more detailed study. If this hypothesis were supported by further data, one should exclude the possibility that the various Venetisms contained in the "Franco-Italian" manuscripts could be due to the scribes, and assume, conversely, that they were already present in the original version. The question now is whether this supposition is compatible with what we know or can realistically imagine about the book's drafting.

Various scholars (Adolfo Bartoli, Charles Victor Langlois, Albert t'Serstevens etc.) have supposed that Marco Polo dictated his travel memories in Venetian to Rustichello, who translated them into French and put them in writing at the same time. Such a process of composition would explain the significant amount of non-French and half-French words contained in the text. Since Rustichello was unable to translate all the words Marco Polo dictated, he would either reproduce them faithfully or adapt them approximately to French morpho-phonology. The incoherencies, repetitions and confusions contained in the text would be a reflection of orality. But this hypothesis has not found widespread acceptance. Most scholars believe that Rustichello's translation relied on written texts made by Marco Polo himself. Some even think that the sole responsibility of Rustichello would have been to embellish and turn into a literary language a set of notes taken by Marco Polo during his stay in Asia. Opinions differ, however, with regard to the language of these notes.

71 Cf. Benedetto 1928: XXX.
72 Cf. Bartoli 1863: XLVIII-XLI; Langlois 1921: 249; t'Serstevens 1955: 11-13. Several authors (Guillaume Pauthier, Paul Vidal-Lablache, Henry Yule, Leonardo Olschki etc.) affirm that Rustichello wrote the book from an oral account by Marco, but do not specify the language used by the traveller. See Pauthier 1865: LXXXVI-LXXXVIII, XCI; Vidal-Lablache 1891: 11; Yule 1903: I 53; Olschki 1957: 128-129.
Benedetto thinks that Marco Polo made available to Rustichello some notes written in a «colonial» French, namely the Old French spread throughout the Levant in the period of the Crusades. Owing to the lack of an alternative international language, French was widely used as lingua franca throughout the Latin Orient. As Niccolò and Maffeo Polo (the traveller’s father and uncle) had been residing in Constantinople for some time prior, it is likely that Marco Polo too had a fair knowledge of Levantine French. Gustav Ineichen concurs with this view and argues that the basis of Marco Polo’s French should be an oral and colloquial French that was used in the Mediterranean and also in Venice.

According to an alternative hypothesis, dating back to Paulin Paris (1838), Rustichello da Pisa would have reworked notes taken by Marco Polo in Venetian, his native language. A few scholars (Giotto Dainelli, Elgrid Kaiser) go so far as to say that Marco Polo’s notes were accurate and complete, and Rustichello only translated them into French. If he did not know the corresponding French word, he either left the original expression, or gave it a French form. The economic historian Franco Borlandi assumes the existence of a primitive version of Marco Polo’s report, structured as a trade manual («manuale di mercatura»), which originally would have circulated independently from the French version. Other scholars (Benvenuto Terracini, Maria Grazia Capusso), finally, consider the possibility that Marco Polo wrote his travel notes in the so-called «colonial Venetian» («Veneziano de là da mar», according to the definition of Gianfranco Folena), a variety spread throughout Venice’s maritime and overseas possessions, largely infiltrated by French features and elements.

The process of the making of the text is destined to remain unknown to us. It seems appropriate, however, to draw attention to some data that might shed new light on the problem. It is very likely that there existed a set of travel notes written by Marco Polo, which served as a starting point for Rustichello’s work, but it should be noted that the concurrence of internal evidence seems to prove that the traveller also contributed orally to the composition of the text. Borlandi remarks that Oriental names and words contained in the Devisement are not transcribed according to the Old French orthographic

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74 Cf. Benedetto 1928: XXVI-XXVII, XXX-XXXI.
77 Cf. Dainelli 1941: 198-200 (see also Gallo 1955); Kaiser 1967: 29.
system, but according to the Italian one. Consequently, this evidence would
demonstrate that Rustichello used an exemplar written in a medieval Italian
vernacular for his translation. To this, however, we must add that several
Oriental words are written in an orthographic system that reflects Tuscan
pronunciation, rather than Venetian: e.g. giambellot LXXII-6, LXXII-6, giambelot
CXV-5 ‘camlet’ (OVen. /dʒɛt/ < OFr. /ʃɛt/), giamiaus XXI-8, XXXV-8 ‘camel’
(OVen. /dʒɛt/ < OFr. /ʃɛt/)\textsuperscript{83}. The treatment of initial palatals proves the
phonetic realisation of these words. The use of the Tuscan digraph ⟨gi⟩
(representing the phoneme /dʒ/) instead of the Venetan grapheme ⟨z⟩ (= /dʒ/)
ensures that we are not dealing with purely orthographic phenomena here.
This leads us to suppose that Rustichello adapted to his phonologic system
words which he had heard pronounced in Venetian or in a French spoken by a
native Venetian speaker. Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish with
certainty whether these Tuscan spellings were either present in the original
version or were inserted by scribes. The comparison with the \textit{B} branch of the
tradition\textsuperscript{84} does not yield sufficient evidence to settle the question\textsuperscript{85}.

Another fact deserves to be mentioned. Gossen notes that various
hybrid forms of the \textit{Devisement} are the same as the ones which occur in so-
called «Franco-Venetan» literature\textsuperscript{86}. Capusso, too, identified in the \textit{Devisement}'s
language lexical elements typical of epic texts composed in north-eastern Italy
in the fourteenth century\textsuperscript{87}. These observations may give rise to two different
interpretations. One is that Marco Polo’s French was also influenced by literary
models\textsuperscript{88}. The other is that there was an original contiguity between the French
which would become the means of expression of the «Franco-Venetan»
literature in the fourteenth century and the «colonial» French which, according
to Benedetto’s and Ineichen’s opinion, would have been used by Marco Polo
in his travel notes. It is important to remember in this regard that some
orthographic and phonological features found in «Franco-Venetan» suggest
«spoken use of the language, in conversation or at least in reading»\textsuperscript{89}. At any
rate, our current knowledge of the French \textit{scripta} of north-western Tuscany is
not such as to enable us to say with precision which French forms are
exclusive to north-eastern Italy and which are common to both areas. The
reasonable thing to do, then, is to suspend judgment.

\textsuperscript{83} Cf. Burgio – Mascherpa 2007: 144-145.
\textsuperscript{84} Cf. Benedetto 1928: CLVIII-CLXX.
\textsuperscript{86} Gossen 1975: 142.
\textsuperscript{88} Cf. Gossen 1975: 142.
\textsuperscript{89} Renzi 1976: 572.
5. Conclusions

The Mischsprache of the Devisement dou monde is very peculiar, and must be distinguished from the mixed language of other French texts composed in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Its typical hybridism arose in a contact situation involving two languages which were already composite. Rustichello’s French, learnt from chivalric romances, was characterised by various Italianisms and a few Pisan elements. Marco Polo’s language, which was either a Levantine French or a colonial Venetian, should also be a mixed system. The result of their collaboration then passed through the hands of an indefinite number of scribes, who were each distinguished by different speaking and copying habits. The exact contours of this complex linguistic situation are not ascertainable at this time, and maybe they never will be. However, what we can say with certainty is that the label of «Franco-Italian» appears to be unfit to designate a language stemming from a process of elaboration and transmission which must be considered as extraordinary, and in fact, unique.

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