MEMORANDA

SOME ENGLISH SETTLERS IN GENOA IN THE LATE TWELFTH CENTURY

It seems worth while to call attention to some evidences of a "colony" of English merchants and artisans which existed in Genoa in the period of the third crusade. The time was one in which English churchmen, students and statesmen were especially active in Italy. It was also a time when middle-class travel and middle-class "colonization" in foreign cities were commonplace matters. On principle, then, the presence of Englishmen in the Italian port need not cause much surprise. The Genoese notarial registers, however, not only reveal Englishmen present in the city but let us see something of their business affairs and family concerns. They reveal how intimate were the contacts maintained with the homeland. The material is rather interesting from the point of view of general economic and social history. Also it is probable that it cannot be matched elsewhere on the continent for this early period. These seem excuses sufficient to justify the short reconstruction of the history of this English colony that is attempted here.

In the unpublished notarial material are only a few score scattered folios dating from the year 1179 to the year 1190. In these, however, can be found four entries in which the names of Englishmen appear. In 1179 a Robert of London witnessed a contract. In 1182 he appeared again in the same capacity, and another document of the same year gives Joseph of London as a witness. The latter may have been of Jewish origin, but the name Robert, given for the first Londoner, is not Genoese and is strongly Anglo-Norman in character. The business of this Robert is suggested by his purchase from a great Genoese merchant in 1186 of pepper, one of the chief items of export to the north. Robert must have been wealthy, besides being well known in Genoa, because the Genoese took his note for the sum of £123 Genoese, which was a very large amount.¹

The complete register of one of the most important notaries, for the

¹ These names are Robertus de Lundra and Josephus de Lundra. These notes: R. Archivio di Stato, Genoa (hereafter referred to as ASG), Diversi Not. Ignoti, fol. 16v; Not. Lanfranco, reg. i., fl. 8v, 3, and 104.
year 1191, is preserved in good condition. The relative abundance of entries concerning Englishmen to be found in this register makes it certain that Robert was truly a Londoner and that he was far from alone in Genoa. This register contains most of the really interesting information on these Englishmen. The notary who filled it was especially patronized by Englishmen and Frenchmen, and it is regrettable that his cartularies for the other years of a long career have been destroyed. The want of them is the chief cause for the concentration of these notices upon the year when King Richard and a whole fleet of Londoners were present in Mediterranean waters. This fact may really have brought about the settlement in Genoa, although the present writer is inclined to doubt it. The condition of the evidence is such that we may well hold the settlement to have preceded the crusade.

The first document in this series deals with a business partnership. On May 26, 1191, John of London formed a societas of standard Genoese pattern with Nicholas FitzHenry of London. John was a mature man, for his wife and son-in-law were with him. Nicholas seems to have been sent out from London to go into business with John by his father, who, as may be seen below, remained at home. Each put ten Genoese pounds into the partnership, which was to do a general business of trading. The connection is not explicit, but it is possible that the older man really "carried" the share of the younger until late in the year, when Nicholas raised ten pounds on assets in London, as will appear below. The witnesses, by the character of their names, are clearly English or north-French. A postscript to the articles makes it possible, indeed, that all of these men may have been crusaders or in the train of the crusade. If the younger man, Nicholas, wanted to go on to Syria, the partnership was to be dissolved. The older man, John, was quite clearly fixed in Genoa, together with various members of his household. How long he had been there is not clear, but the very next document shows his wife taking a young girl apprentice to instruct in the wife's trade. The girl was part of the group, as was her father. Evidently John was in business and his wife had a trade and an apprentice. It would appear that the family had been in Genoa some time.

On September 30, 1191, a young Ralph the Englishman bound

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1 ASG, Not. Gugl. Cass., ff. 1-100v bis, by notary William Cassinensis himself. Preparation of this cartulary for publication, at present in progress, has given rise to this article.
2 ASG, Not. Gugl. Cass., fol. 32. The names of those present as revealed by this document and the next can be Englished as: John of London; Nicholas FitzHenry of London; John's wife, Basilia; her (and his?) son-in-law, Jordan (of London? Cf. Appendix III); Robert of London (note how he always leads the list of witnesses); William the Englishman; Gerard of Peronne?; the latter's daughter Adalaxina. Cf. Appendix I and II.
himself to stay for four years with a certain William de Turre.\(^1\) The
document was typical of Genoese apprenticeship agreements. Two of
the witnesses were Englishmen of the settlement, however, and William
was otherwise concerned with other members of the group and may
well have been English too.

On October 6, 1191, a Genoese and his wife sold their holding in a
house to Hugh of London, chaucer.\(^2\) Hugh may not have practised
this trade, but it seems likely that he did so. Evidently the roots of
this English colony were striking into Genoese soil.

Robert of London, first met in our earliest surviving entries in 1179,
and shown to be well off by his purchase of pepper in 1186, seems to
have been the chief personage in the group. Late in 1191 he or his
family contributed to the history of the colony. On December 6 his
son Thomas entered into partnership to trade in shop with the nephew
of one of the most prominent native Genoese cloth-dealers or draperii.\(^3\)
A Genoese business man put £40 into the venture as sleeping partner.
The young Genoese contributed £22 and Thomas put in £6. It has
the appearance of being Thomas' maiden venture. The business in
boteca was to be carried on as long as the chief partner was satisfied,
and upon dissolution the two young men were to have two-thirds of the
profits to divide between them, evidently on the basis of their respective
capital investments.

December 22, 1191, was a day of activity for most of the members
of the settlement, if two documents then drawn are any evidence. One
of these was simple enough. It was a reciprocal marriage settlement
in best Genoese style. In it Robert of London helped endow his niece
Margaret with £40, a fine sum. Robin Goldsmith of London, the
groom, responded with an antifact of £35.\(^4\) The intent of the couple to
live on under Genoese law seems demonstrated by the notary's inclusion
of the standard phraseology that Margaret was to hold her antifact
"pro more et consuetudine civitatis Janue."

\(^1\) ASG, Not. Gugl. Cass., fol. 60v. It may well be that William Tower (of
London!) is dealt with here. On January 31, 1192, a Genoese with a house and
grown daughter was married for a second time to a young woman who was
under this William's guardianship. Both Robert and John of London stood
witnesses of the marriage contracts, which increases the chances that William
was also English, ASG, Not. Gugl. Cass., fol. 83v. Undoubtedly the connection
is stretched, but it seems of interest, since the English Lovell or Luvell family
is also represented in Genoa at this time (see below), to point out that in 1205
John confirmed a Thomas Lovell in the former holdings in London of a certain
Jordan de Turri (see Rot. Chart., I, pt. i, p. 155). But de Turre was no un-
common name in Italy. Cf. Appendix III.


\(^4\) ASG, Not. Gugl. Cass., fol. 75v, Appendix V.
The other document drawn that day may interest alike those concerned with English land transfers and those concerned with problems of credit and exchange. The document is not of standard Genoese form, nothing exactly like it having yet come to my notice in the registers. It would appear that the Englishmen concerned had devised it and were satisfied that they knew what they were doing, the Genoese notary taking their word for it. Incidentally, the whole matter shows how close the contacts with London were; by the following Pentecost, May 25, just over five months later, word of the agreement had to reach London, its provisions had to be carried out, and notice to that effect had to be returned to Genoa. The document reveals the interesting mechanism whereby Nicholas FitzHenry raised ten pounds Genoese, perhaps to fill out his share of capital in the partnership with John of London set up the previous May. It is worth giving in English:  


"Nicholas son of Henry of London admits that he has received ten Genoese pounds from Richard Lovell, it being agreed that Henry his father should make out to Odo Lovell a charter of security of sale for his house which he has in London according to the usage of the land of London. And if this be done, the aforesaid Nicholas and his father may be quit of the ten pounds. And if the aforesaid security be not made, the same Nicholas promises to return the ten Genoese pounds to Richard by next Pentecost. Under double penalty in his own goods (if he defaults in the terms of this agreement). (Done) in the house of Ingo Longo, that day (noted in the preceding document)."

These documents do not complete the series of entries which continue into the thirteenth century and show the members of the colony to have flourished in Genoa. Scattered among the very fragmentary remaining cartularies are stray scraps of information. On March 17 Otto, archdeacon of Genoa, delegate of the archbishop in the matter, had it recorded that he had dissolved the matrimonial relationship between Eustace the Englishman and Mary de Pinu, giving each the right of remarrying at will at the end of one year.  

In 1200 John of London agreed to submit his differences with a Genoese to two elected arbiters, both of them Genoese; in 1201 he witnessed a large contract entered into by three wealthy cloth traders from Arras. In 1201 an artisan, John the Englishman, took five pounds from an investor from Douai.

1 ASG, Not. Gugl. Cass., fol. 75, Appendix IV.  
John was to work with the sum for a year. William the Englishman took a modest £5 dower offered by his bride Dulcy and bestowed a like amount upon her as antifact.\(^1\)

In looking back over this material it seems clear that a well-to-do Londoner, Robert, was established in Genoa, with a grown family by 1191. He seems to have been the foremost member of a colony chiefly drawn from London. His own interests seem to have been commercial. A group of shopkeepers and craftsmen, perhaps led by John of London, his wife Basilia, and his son-in-law, Jordan of London, stood next after Robert and his kin. If their names truly indicated their crafts, we can identify several Chaucers and Goldsmiths. Gold-beating was to be a notable industry in Genoa for centuries to come, and it is interesting to see that English skill in the craft was a factor in its early development. Casual visitors and apprentices completed the colony.

Of course, in these few Englishmen we have to do with a few swallows, not a whole summer. This colony was not very large nor were its members notable figures in the world. The whole affair in itself is not of great importance. Nevertheless, beyond what the material says for itself, it would seem that some more may be said. First, it is not likely that Genoa was the only Italian city known to Englishmen so intimately. And even if it were, it is clear that many families of London citizens were in close touch with one of the leading centres for the development of business and political institutions in Italy in the generation before 1200. What that may have meant in a period when London was aspiring to form a commune may have been little, only it is worth noting that the horizon of the London townsman was not restricted to Middlesex.

Then it would appear likely that we need not attribute entirely to Italians settling in England the opening of commercial contacts with Italy and the introduction of more advanced forms of commercial activity. Londoners with business experience gained in Italy were not entirely lacking. Henry of London may have ordered his son Nicholas to go off to Genoa with an eye to learning the arts of commerce from the experienced John of London only as a preliminary to a business life in London. It is distinctly possible.

One last essay of interpretation is possible. Does this signify that London's commercial activity was such that outposts as far as Italy were desirable? If so, the enterprise of the city deserved commendation. It is a possibility, of course. Arras was clearly in need of active negotiators of her business in Genoa in this period. Or does a much less flattering appraisal need to be given? Were these Londoners attracted by the bustle and chance for gain offered by the

great cosmopolitan port in the south, so that they were pulled into
the stream of fortune-seeking Frenchmen, Lorrainers, Catalans,
Sicilians and Jews that was pouring into Genoa in the period?

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APPENDIX

I


Johannes de Lundrex et Nicola filius Enrici de Lundrex iussu sui
patris contrahent societatem in qua quisque eorum ponit lib. x, causa
negociandi et operandi communiter, bona fide, usque ad Pasca Re-
surrectionis proximam. Et non debent facere expensas super his preter
in furnire res. Et ita alter eorum promittit alteri consignare proficuum
et capitale, bona fide, sub pena vicissim stipulata. Et Johannes
facit hanc societatem Nicole iussu Enrici patris eius. In domo Johannis
Boleti, ea die. Testes: Robertus de Lundrex, Willelmus Anglicus,
Gerardus de Perona, et Jordanus gener Basilie. Ita tamen quod
Nicola non teneatur tenere hanc societatem si transiret Ultramare.

II

Ibid.

Gerardus de Perona dat Basilie suam filiam Adalaxinam ad standum
et serviendum ei a Purificatione Sancte Marie transate ad annos yi
proximos, et promittit ei quod non auferet per se nec per alium pro se.
Et si contrafecerit vel ipsa non steterit, promittit ei penam sol. c, rato
manente pacto, in suis bonis, que omnia ei pignori obligat. Et Basilie,
consilio et voluntate sui mariti Johannis et consilio sui generi Jordani,
promittit ei tenere eam secum et dare victum et vestitum et docere eam
de suo officio, bona fide, preter quod Gerardus debet vestire eam istos
duos proximos (annos) et preter si puella facerit tale quod non videtur
patiendum in arbitrio bonorum hominum, sub pena sol. c, rato manente
pacto, in suis bonis. Ea die et loco et testibus.

III


Jurat Ragul Anglicus se stare cum Wilielmo de Turre usque ad
annis iii et servire ei bona fide de omnibus serviciis que sciat facere,
sine fraude, et salvare et custodire res eius et res sibi commissas et non
defraudare per annum ultra sol. v (sic). Et jurat non stare a termino
inde in Janua cum aliquo faciente officium predicti Wilielmi se Wiliel-
mus voluerit tenere taliter, qui Wilielmus teneatur dare ei medietatem
quod potuerit habere ab aliquo alio, sine fraude. Et ut supra jurat attendere et contra non venturum. Et Wilielmus promittit ei tenere secum usque ad dictum terminum, et dare ei victurn et vestitum convenire et docere eum de suo officio bona fide, et in capite termine dare sol. xx, sub pena dupli. Sub volta Forinariorum, die ultima Septembris. Testes: Gerardus Barberius, Jordanus de Lundrex, Alen de Ultramare, Amirigus de Costa.

IV


Testes: Robertus de Lundrex, Wilielmus Anglicus, Germanus Batifolium, Otto Baxadonna, Jacomus filius Bernardi Calegarii, Jordanus de Lundrex.

Confitetur Nicola filius Enrici de Lundrex se cepisse lib. x denario-rum janiensium a Rizardo Lovello, tali pacto, quod Enricus suus pater debet facere cartam securitatis de venditione de domo sua quam habet in Lundrex, Oddoni Lovello, ad usum terre de Lundrex. Et si hoc factum fuerit, predictus Nicola et pater sint quieti de lib. x. Et si securitas predicta facta non fuerit, idem Nicola promittit Rizardo reddere lib. x den. jan. usque ad Penteconsten proximam, sub pena dupli in suis bonis. In domo Ingonis Longi, ea die.

V
