Manuscript Note: Master James, a papal scribe in the household of Pandulf Verraccio, papal legate to England, 1218-1221

In a study of papal influence on pre-fourteenth century English documents, Professor Jane Sayers drew attention to the hybrid writing team of Pandulf Verraccio, legate 1218-1221. He had three scribes in his household in late 1219. These were – in her view – two English scribes and one scribe of the papal chancery: Master James. Despite the attested presence of a papal scribe, she went on: “I know of no document written by him [Master James]”. She noted only one possible exception to this statement: a mandate in the Cumbria record office – Carlisle, MS DMH/10/2/7 – reproduced as plate 11C in her article. It now seems possible to confirm with palaeographical evidence that her instinct that this could be in the hand of Master James was correct, and to match it up with two other surviving letters in the same hand, now in The National Archives.

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1 Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office, MS DMH/10/2/7; Jane E. Sayers, “The Influence of Papal Documents on English Documents before 1305,” in Papsturkunde und europäisches Urkundenwesen, eds. Peter Herde, Hermann Jakobs, Archiv für Diplomatik. Beiheft 7 (Cologne, 1999), 161-99 at 168, 190. The mandate now has a different call number to that which Sayers gave. My thanks to the Cumbria Record Office for providing me with copies of the document under discussion here.
Two of Pandulf’s surviving letters – London, TNA MSS SC 1/6/37 and SC 1/1/179 – were written on 11 June 1219 at Llanthony secunda, Gloucester. Despite being written on the same day, they are in clearly different hands. SC 1/1/179 is an English documentary script (henceforth referred to as scribe A), akin to that of the contemporary royal chancery. SC 1/6/37 is a different hand (scribe B) seemingly – as discussed below – a hand of the papal chancery. In addition, SC 1/6/37 appears to be in the same hand as SC 1/6/38, another of Pandulf’s letters, written at Lichfield on 15 July 1219. It appears that SC 1/6/37-8 and the mandate Sayers found in the Cumbria record office are all in the same hand. There are three scribes known to have been members of Pandulf’s familia in September 1219: “Master James, scribe of the lord pope” and “Rusticus and John of London, scribes of the lord [legate Pandulf]”.  

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Though Sayers commented that she did not know of any letters definitely written for Pandulf by the papal scribe, she did suggest that one – the mandate in the Cumbria record office – showed a number of similarities with papal scripts. The similarities between the hand of this mandate – reproduced as plate 11C in Sayers’ article – and the hand of letters SC 1/6/37-8 suggests that these documents were all written by the same scribe.

This hand – scribe B – does look very much like a papal script. The broken-backed ‘d’ whose ascender curves forward then back; the ‘q’ with a forward looping descender; the closed, two-compartment, ‘g’ with the large flick at the bottom of the lower compartment; and the large, open, lower-case ‘a’ are just some of the similarities between SC 1/6/37-8, the Cumbrian mandate and contemporary papal documents. Such features can be seen in the facsimiles in the Acta Pontificum, fasc. III. nos 12-14, all early thirteenth century. ‘d’s of the type described can be seen throughout, as can ‘q’s. Examples of ‘g’s can be seen in no. 12b (1198) where gratia Regina (line 1) is very similar to Regis (line 2) in SC 1/6/37. The large, lower-case, vols. (Douglas, 1860-2), 2:53-7; Thomas Rymer, Foedera, conventiones, litterae, et ciuscunque generis acta publica inter reges Angliae etc, eds. Adam Clarke, John Caley, Frederick Holbrooke, 4 vols in 7. (London, 1816-69), 1, pt. 1, 156; Jane E. Sayers, Papal Government and England during the Pontificate of Honorius III, (1216-1227), Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Third Series 21 (Cambridge, 1984), 185.

open ‘a’ (SC 1/6/37, line 1: Apostolice) can also be seen in no. 13 (1207), line 12: Arnatam. Likewise similar features can be seen on other contemporary papal documents in The National Archives. SC 7/52/2, a 1215 letter of Pope Innocent III, reproduces the open ‘a’; the two-compartment, flicked ‘g’ and various other features.\(^5\)

More obviously, SC 1/6/37 – one the letters written in the papal hand, scribe B – uses phrasing familiar from papal documents: tibi...mandamus quatinus introduces the dispositio; a very similar phrase to that used in papal mandates: vobis...mandamus quatinus. In both SC 1/6/37 and 38 the intitulatio – Pandulf’s name – precedes the inscriptio – the names of the addressee(s), as in papal letters. The relative positions of intitulatio and inscriptio are reversed in SC 1/1/179, written by scribe A, the English scribe.

“Master James, scribe of the lord pope” and “Rusticus and John of London, scribes of the lord [legate Pandulf]” were the scribes of Pandulf’s familia in late 1219. Master James was, obviously, a papal scribe. John of London was, equally obviously, an Englishman, probably trained in the royal chancery. The status of Rusticus is less certain. Sayers thought that he was probably English; Nicholas Vincent has suggested that he was Italian.\(^6\) Clearly Rusticus was not a scriptor of the papal

\(^5\) London, TNA, MS SC 7/52/2. For examples of both ‘a’ and ‘g’ see Anglie (penultimate line).

\(^6\) The Letters and Charters of Cardinal Guala Bicchieri, ed. Nicholas Vincent, Canterbury and York Society 83 (Woodbridge, 1996), p. lxxxv, n. 336. If Vincent is correct, then the most likely origin for Rusticus is
chancery, because, if he had been so, he would have been given the same description as Master James: *scriptor domini papae*. Therefore an identification of scribe B – the hand which wrote SC 1/6/37-8 and Professor Sayers’ Cumbrian mandate – with Master James seems very likely. It is hence possible to link some of Pandulf’s surviving original letters with specific scribes. A close study of all of Pandulf’s surviving *acta* would probably throw up further productions of Master James.

Two letters of Pandulf written by ‘scribe B’: Master James:

London, TNA, MS SC 1/6/37:


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the Roman civic notariate. Civic notaries – and later notaries of the papal camera – composed the documents through which the papal chamberlain administered papal revenues and the patrimony, Stefan Weiß, “The Curia: Camera,” in *A Companion to the Medieval Papacy: Growth of an Ideology and Institution*, eds. Keith Sisson, Atria A. Larson, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 70 (Leiden, 2016), 220-38 at 222-6. Pandulf, papal chamberlain from 1216 to 1221, could have been accompanied by such a scribe or notary.
London, TNA, MS SC 1/6/38:


† This could be the same ring through which Pandulf invested King Reginald of Man in September 1219, *Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum*, ed. Theiner, 11.