
NOTES

*The Early Jewish Settlements in Austria: A Chapter of Economic History**

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By 1974 we will have had documentary evidence for the existence of a Jewish settlement in Carinthia and Styria, named Judendorf, for 900 years. The early settlements of Jews in Austria and their geographical dispersion pose a number of interesting questions for the economic historian. The present paper attempts to answer some of these questions in a way different to that hitherto attempted.

The earliest evidence for a « Jewish presence » in Austria is the Customs Ordinance of Raffelstätten (near Mauthausen) of 904/6, issued by the Emperor Lewis III, the Child, to Margrave Aribio of the Ostmark. But this ordinance evidently refers to Jewish merchants passing through what became Austria, but not necessarily settled there.

It is only from the twelfth century that we have documentary evidence for the permanent presence of Jews in the countries which in due course were to form Austria as it is known today.

It was in 1156 that the Duke of Babenberg, then ruling over what is now Lower and Upper Austria, received from Emperor Frederick the right to keep Jews in his territories. This edict probably gave legal form to a situation which already existed. While the Jewish settlement of Vienna may have originated at that time, such settlements already existed at Judenan near Tullen on the Danube (1155)¹ then the Babenberg's capital, and in Enns, Steyr and Wells (on the way from Linz to the Salzkammergut) at about

* The writing of this paper has been stimulated by the recent publication of the memorial volume by Dr. HUGO GOLD (ed.), *Die Juden in Österreich*, Tel Aviv, 1971, and the various chapters therein, devoted to the different communities.

that time. In his travelogues Benjamin of Tudela mentions a Jewish community in Mautern on the Danube, which can thus be dated to 1160 or before. In nearby Krems, in fact, their presence was recorded in 1136.

By the end of the century we see the Jew Schlom as mintmaster of Duke Frederik I (1194-1198). Some years later (1226) the Jew Teka with the title Comes (count) was mintmaster and head of the financial administration under the Dukes Leopold V (1198-1230) and Frederik II (1230-1246).

These Jewish settlements in Austria are said to have resulted from persecution in Germany and Bohemia in the wake of the Crusades (First 1095-99, Second 1146-48), but the *pull* of the commercial opportunities in the Danube Valley may have proved stronger than the *push* of persecutions.

More intriguing, however, than the appearance of Jews along the Danube, which like the Rhine had been one of the main trade-routes since Roman times and even earlier, was their emergence in the twelfth century in an area endowed with pastoral and mining resources rather than obvious mercantile attractions. From the turn of the eleventh century, one Judendorf after the others seems to have sprung into existence in the duchies of Carinthia and Styria. Although they adjoined the Babenbergs' dominions, these provinces were still under the rule of their own dukes, with the exception of the districts of Friesach and Villach, then still fiefs of the Archbishop of Salzburg and the Bishop of Bamberg respectively. The iron deposits near Leoben, still the centre of Austria's steel industry, had already been exploited in Roman times and claim for the trade-mark « Made in Austria » for the nails used in crucifixions in Palestine in Jesus' time has been made by some historians, as they considered this the main, if not the exclusive source of iron in the Roman Empire. Lead at Bleiberg, and gold and silver in the Tauern mountains were other sources for this region's prosperity. We do not know when the exploitation of these and other resources started and at what rate it progressed. But to judge from the construction of numerous noteworthy ecclesiastical and feudal buildings in the twelfth century (for instance St. Lambrecht 1103, Rein Abbey 1129 and St. Marein Abbey and the Cathedral of Gurk 1140, Castle of Frankenstein 1174) there was enough wealth about to meet these considerable expenditures. Even if some of this money came from « abroad », from, say, the Archbishop of Salzburg, its expenditure in the country added to local purchasing power. (However Lopez's view that luxury construction was a sign of waning prosperity, a kind of unemployment relief, must be kept in mind.)

¹ The dates quoted usually refer to the first documentary evidence of the existence of such settlements, and not to their probable earlier establishment.

² The writer drew his information of these provinces from a) E. MARBOE, *The Book of Austria*, Vienna 1948; b) V. GROSMAYER, *Österreich, Landschaft and Kunst*, 5th ed., Vienna/Munich 1959.

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It was during this period that Jewish settlements were recorded all over the country. They included, in historical sequence:

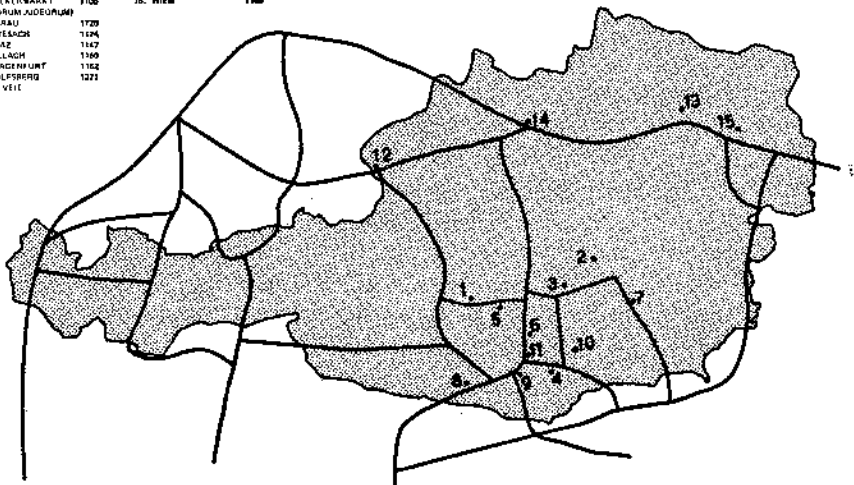
- 1074 (1130-35) The Taurach Valley (Lungau), i.e. Tamsweg.
- 1074 Judendorf near Leoben.
- 1103 Judenburg.
- 1105 Forum Judeorum (Völkermarkt) till 1126.
- 1120 Judendorf n. Murau.
- 1124 Judendorf n. Friesach.
- 1147 Judendorf n. Graz (Graz established in 1130).
- 1160 Judendorf n. Villach.
- 1162 Judendorf n. Klagenfurt.
- 1371 Judendorf n. Wolfsberg.
- ? Gratwein n. Graz.
- ? St. Veit.

(Names like Judenfurt (1275), Judenhof, Judenweiss, Judenleithen also occur; the location and dates of their foundation are unknown to the author).

Mapping these names, the pattern of the settlements becomes obvious: they are nearly all located on old Roman trade-routes, and usually on the sites of Roman settlements. The Roman roads may have fallen into disrepair, and were not more than horse-tracks.

EARLY JEWISH SETTLEMENTS ALONG
THE ANCIENT ROMAN ROADS IN AUSTRIA

JUDENDORF NEAR			
1. TAMSWEIG	1074	13. SALLZBURG	1074
2. LEBEN	1074	14. TULLN	1137
3. JUDENBURG	1103	15. ENNS	1158
4. VÖLKERMARKT (FORUM JUDEORUM)	1105	16. WIEN	1160
5. MURAU	1120		
6. FRIESACH	1124		
7. GRAZ	1147		
8. VILLACH	1160		
9. KLAGENFURT	1162		
10. WOLFSBERG	1371		
11. ST. VEIT			



Coming up from the Venetian plain to Osoppo, the road forks off to the west to Lienz and Bozen (Bolsano), and to the east via Pontebba-Spittal to Villach-Klagenfurt. From here one route leads east, via Bleiberg and Völkermark to what now is Yugoslavia, the other north to Friesach and Judenburg. Three routes open up here, the eastern to Vienna, crossing the Semmering, the central one along the Enns river towards the Danube at Linz, via Steyr toward Enns, already mentioned, and in the west via Murau, Tamsweg and the Taurach Valley over the Tauern pass to Salzburg-Regensburg. From Judenburg, too, a road leads via Graz to the Hungarian east.

(Incidentally, the Roman road, starting at Aquilea on the Adriatic shore, seems to have been important also as a salt route, as does the stretch Steyr-Enns-Linz, previously mentioned).

Carinthia, in fact, located between the two mountain ranges in the north and south, was a natural ideal resting place for travellers in either direction, after crossing one mountain range and before crossing the other.

The most important of these routes, and the one preferred by the traders of Regensburg — one of Germany's leading commercial centres until Nuremberg took its place in the thirteenth century — was that via Salzburg, the Tauern Alps, Tamsweg and Villach to Venice. Jews had lived in Regensburg since the tenth century, if not earlier; they occupied a quarter in this town and had had an organized community there since 1120. They were, we may safely assume, largely engaged in trade with Venice. The denial of anchorage in this harbour to (probably German) Jewish owned or captained vessels by the Doge in the early tenth century, together with the prohibition on Venetian vessels in 945 from carrying Jewish passengers, and fifty years later, also Jewish owned merchandise, also indicate the strong, if not predominant share the Jews had in the trade with Byzantium and the East which the Venetians desired for themselves. The Venetian Jews were partly Levantine, partly German. It was via Venice and the Alpine passes rather than via the Danube valley that goods from the East reached Central Europe.³

It is interesting to note in this connection that with the development of trade between Salzburg and Carinthia an important market developed in the frontier area of the Lungau, so that in 1217 King Frederik II gave the charter for a market, now known as Mautersdorf, and Salzburg building a fortress for its protection. And it is from this region that we have the first evidence of a Jewish presence, i.e. 1074, the same year in which the Judendorf near Leoben is mentioned; and in 1103 we hear of Judenburg, the only name which has been preserved till today — both in the iron-mining district. Did the Jewish merchants come here then as buyers of iron products or as sellers to a market, with a purchasing power above average resulting from its mining wealth?

³ H. KLEIN, *Mediaeval North-South Connections* in «Verkehrswege durch Österreich», Notring Jahrbuch, Vienna 1969.

Two years later, in 1105, Forum Judeorum — toward the south-Slav frontier and not far from the Hungarian frontier — is mentioned; its present name, Völkermarkt, indicates its importance as a market where the members of many nations met.

In 1124 we hear of the Judendorf n. Friesach, and the oldest Jewish tombstone preserved dates from that time (1130), indicating the existence of a Jewish regional cemetery to which those deceased in Hungary were also brought.

Other places mentioned are Murau (1120), Tansweg (1130), i.e. westward on to the Tauern, Graz, 1147, on the way to Hungary. And in 1162 we hear of the two southernmost settlements, Klagenfurt and Villach.

This historical sequence would indicate a north to south movement. This does not necessarily contradict the more prevalent view that the Jewish merchants, i.e. settlers, coming into this region were of Italian origin, but does lay it open to question. (In any event, what were the Italian Jews at that time, if not largely German, as the names Luzzatto (Lausitz), Marpurgo (Marburg), Minzi (Mayence) tend to indicate. The Levantine Jews of Venice were probably more active in the trade with the East).

Little is known about the pattern of the trade of these Jews or the goods they traded in. As is known, the Jews were frequently suppliers of gold and silver to the mints and thus their presence near the mines in the Tauern is significant. (An important mint existed in Friesach). Also, in a largely pastoral area like this, the Jews probably bought wool and skins for export to the cloth manufacturers of Lombardy and leather workers of Florence, in Italy, paying for them with the proceeds of the goods they brought up there (piece goods, spices, etc.). As two stretches of the road may have been salt-routes as well, this kind of trade is not excluded.

Thus, these Jewish « villages » may have been trade depots, collecting and distribution centres, apart from being rest-camps for the caravans of the overland trade from north and south. One could imagine them, too, as a meeting and exchange place where merchants coming from the south exchanged their loads with their partners from the north, each thus halving his absence from the business at home. Here a wide field is open for research into an interesting chapter of mediaeval commerce in general, and Jewish economic history in particular. But the most fascinating, still unanswered, question concerns the cause of the sudden emergence of these Jewish villages or trade-stations in the documents of the twelfth century, which, with very few exceptions, seem to have disappeared after a relatively short existence.

Claims that the Judendorfs were settlements of refugees from the pogroms in the Rhineland in 1095 have been effectively refuted by Popelka⁴

⁴ FRITZ POPELKA, *Der Name Judendorf in den östlichen Alpenländern und seine Handelsgeschichtliche Bedeutung*, « Blätter für Heimatskunde », No. 13/1935.

and Neumann,⁵ who rightly hold the view that these settlements probably date back to the tenth century. They were pre-market merchant settlements, usually a short distance from where the market towns were subsequently to rise. In the 12th century we find the Jews settled within the walls of these new towns, and the « Judendorf » in non-Jewish occupation. This view seems to be confirmed by linguistic historians, who showed that all the names of localities in Carinthia with the suffix « ... dorf » indicate a date of origin before the year 1100. And the absence of any documentary evidence before the twelfth century is explained by the general scarcity of historical records before this time.

As the terms « Jews » and « mercatores » were practically synonymous in those days, a sceptic may suspect that these Judendorfs were just trading posts without there being necessarily Jewish traders; but Jewish tombstones dated 1103 from Pettau in Styria and 1130 from St. Stefan in Carinthia indicate the existence of Jewish regional cemeteries attached to some of these settlements.

While the case for dating the origin of these Jewish settlements in the tenth century is convincing, a change did however take place in their economic character and function over the period under review. Originally they were rest-places, caravanserais for the itinerant Jewish merchants on their way to cross the Alps. Except for purchases of food for man and beast they had no connection with the local economy, and little attention was paid to them. Their population probably consisted primarily of inn-keepers and service personnel.

In due course these itinerant merchants recognized the economic potential of the countries they passed through as producers of important raw materials, wool, hides, and speik (Valeriana root), as well as iron and other metals, welcome « return freight ». Soon what had been simply restplaces became storage centres and resident buyers increased their hitherto sparse population.

But trade rarely remains one-sided for a long time. The traders who had brought the peasant into the market as a supplier, soon made him a buyer as well. And thus the settlements fast became rudimentary market organizations, pre-markets where the arrival of the caravans may have been mini-fairs.

The Judendorfs had thus become fully integrated in the economic life of the country and were, as such, a welcome source of revenue. It is from this moment on that they are mentioned in documents, usually in connection with taxes and the transfer of revenue rights from one authority to another. The institution of the « Juden Regal » in 1236 no doubt added to this interest.

⁵ WILHELM NEUMANN, *Zur Frühen Geschichte der Juden in Kärnten, « Carinthia »*, No. 153/1962.

The next phase in this development, the incipient formation of towns and markets, and the « Commercial Revolution » of the thirteenth century, spelled the end of these settlements as mercantile organizations. Their inhabitants, both itinerant and resident, moved to the nearby new market towns. The Judendorfs became inhabited by local peasant, and often retained the old place name for some time.

There may, however, have been a factor connected with the Crusades which helped to make the Tauern route, and thereby also the Judendorfs, more conspicuous in the twelfth century, i.e. an increased flow of trade, as the Jewish and other traders may have avoided the Danube route, along which the Crusader hordes moved towards Constantinople. And the Venetians used their participation in the Crusades to increase their trade with the Middle East, with a correspondingly increased flow of goods to their northern markets.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century the pattern of commerce was affected by the change from itinerant to sedentary commerce, the « Commercial Revolution » (de Roover), which has however to be understood in the context of urban growth and the strengthening of the guilds, which may also have contributed to the disappearance of the Jewish villages of Carinthia and Styria, whose final end came with the expulsion of the Jews from the Hapsburg territories in the fifteenth century.

THE SECOND STAGE

It is only in the fourteenth century that we can detect a change in the pattern of Jewish settlements in Austria. We see a chain of such settlements springing up along the Leitha river, i.e. the Hungarian frontier, i.e. Zisterndorf (1319), Loimersdorf i. Marchfeld (1321), Marchegg (1342), Bocfliess (?), Bruck a.L. (1360).

It is from about that time that we have also the first information about individual Jews in Tyrol. They seem to have come from Friul (Italy) and Carinthia, and served the count as customs officials, mintmasters and, in the fifteenth century, as bankers. In 1308 Isaac of Luntz (i.e. Lienz) is mentioned as mintmaster at Meran (Merano). In 1298 he was known as a man of great wealth, the creditor of the reigning prince, of bishops and monasteries, and as partner in trading ventures with Jews and Christians. (Here we see the transition from the Jew as merchant to the Jew as loan-banker). In 1318 we learn of one Nicolo, a Jewish tax collector, who was permitted to settle in Bolzano (Bozen). And in 1403 two Jews received the bishop's permit to settle in Bressanone (Brixen). We also hear of Jews in Innsbruck after the middle of the fourteenth century.

Until the early thirteenth century the Brenner route had been the most important trade-route from Italy to the Rhine and Flanders; but with the

opening of the St. Gotthard the route Milano-Bodensee-Strassbourg had become a serious competitor.⁶ Were the Jews brought in to revive the flagging economy of that district?

Here is another point for research which, together with those previously mentioned, may lead to a new reading of the history of the Jews in Austria.

It was at Raffelstätten, near Mauthausen, that documents indicated the presence of Jews in Austria in 904/6. And it was in Mauthausen, among other concentration camps, that the history of Jews of Austria ended over a thousand years later.

⁶ JOS. KULISCHER, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, Vol. I, München-Berlin 1928, p. 233.