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Was there a Jewish presence in medieval Ireland?*

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At present, the Jews of Ireland receive little coverage in published histories of the Jews of medieval Europe and this may well be because it is commonly assumed that there were no Jewish settlements in Hibernian territory.¹ This article aims to readdress the question by discussing what is known about Jewish contact with Ireland. A survey of current scholarship on the Jews in medieval Ireland will be provided and, in so doing, we will reassess a number of sources and revise many of the conclusions drawn from them by previous scholars. Most medieval Irish Chancery records of the English administration were burnt in 1304, when a fire destroyed the Cistercian abbey of St. Mary's, Dublin, where they were stored. As a result, this previous scholarship is based mainly on English records housed in London such as the Exchequer Rolls and, to a lesser degree, Gaelic

1 While a "settlement" is mentioned in a footnote in Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd edn, vol. 4 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 280, there is no mention of the Jews in Ireland in e.g. Jacob R. Marcus and Marc Saperstein, *The Jews in Christian Europe: A Source Book, 315–1791* (Pittsburgh: Hebrew Union College Press and University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015) or John M. Efron, ed., *The Jews: A History*, 3rd edn (New York: Routledge, 2019); nor in many studies focusing on England (whose titles provide a loophole that warrants the omission), e.g., Robin Mundill, *England's Jewish Solution: Experiment and Expulsion, 1262–1290* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Zefira E. Rokéah, *Medieval English Jews and Royal Officials: Entries of Jewish Interest in the English Memoranda Rolls, 1266–1293* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2000); Robin Mundill, *The King's Jews: Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England* (London: Continuum, 2010); Richard Huscroft, *Expulsion: England's Jewish Solution* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006).

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and Hiberno-Latin sources.² Joe Hillaby has expertly commented on a number of these English records.³ The present study builds on his work by covering a wider range of documentary evidence and by including fresh analysis of the Gaelic-language material. The aim of this discussion is to raise the profile of this forgotten community and inspire future research on the topic. Further work on the subject would help gain a fuller sense of the legacy of the Jews in Europe, which legacy, as will be argued, reached beyond the Irish Sea.

A brief and simplified overview of the history of Ireland is first in order: a quick word on the particulars of Gaelic versus Anglo-Norman rule there will help the reader better understand certain geographic restrictions in this discussion, as well as the different nature of the surviving historical sources associated with each government. We will then work through the records chronologically, starting first with some early literary evidence that suggests to some that a Jewish author was prolific in seventh-century Ireland; the scarce mention of Jews in early Gaelic historical sources will next be considered; and we will end by turning to the records pertaining to Anglo-Norman (or English) administration in Ireland. It is in the third group of sources that we find what is arguably the most solid piece of evidence of Jewish settlement: Henry III's grant to Peter de Rivallis (also rendered de Rivaulx, de Rivaux, de Rievaulx, and Orival), giving him wardenship over the king's Jewry in Ireland.

Historical background

Gaelic Ireland was Christianized in the fifth century and its historical sources are limited to annals, chronicles, and genealogies composed in monastic scriptoria. These sources are themselves not always purely historical: some bodies of annals and some genealogies are known to have been influenced by literary sources, and genealogies could be fabricated or tweaked in order to promote a monastery's royal patron or favourite. The vernacular legal material, which ranges from the seventh to the sixteenth

2 See most recently John L. Murphy, "Jews in Ireland", in *Medieval Ireland: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Seán Duffy (New York: Routledge, 2005), 239–40; Joe Hillaby, "Jewish Colonisation in the Twelfth Century", in *Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Skinner (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 38–9. The most detailed discussion is in Leon Hühner, "The Jews of Ireland: An Historical Sketch", *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* (hereafter, *Transactions*) 5 (1902–05): 226–42.

3 Most recently with Caroline Hillaby in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Medieval Anglo-Jewish History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 380–81.

century (original law tracts date mainly to the seventh and eighth centuries, commentaries are later), is mainly expository in nature; trial records were not kept. No specific mention of Jews is made in Irish legal material, apart from a clause in the late seventh- or early eighth-century Latin *Collectio canonum Hibernensis*, but this clause (stating that *causae*, “ecclesiastical disputes”, are not to be brought before churches or provinces which practise a different custom or religion, or before Jews) is described in the *Hibernensis* as having been drawn from Roman law (*institutio Romana*), just as most canons in this collection are drawn from Patristic, canonical, or Roman sources.⁴ Before the Anglo-Normans arrived, there were few large towns – among them Waterford, Limerick, and Dublin – and these had for the most part been founded by the Scandinavian Vikings (mainly Danes and Norsemen) who began raiding the island in the late eighth century.

Run on a self-sufficient mixed farming economy, Ireland was made up of hundreds of small rural polities or “petty kingdoms”. A hierarchy of different grades of lords and kings can be deduced from the law tracts, ranging from *aire déso* “lord of vassalry”, to *aire ard* “high lord”, to *rí túaithe* “king of a single petty kingdom”, to *rí túath* “overking of a few petty kingdoms”, to *rí ruirech* “supreme king” (to name a few).⁵ There was an intense power struggle for the highest position, that of *ard rí* “high king” (of all Ireland), and as a result this disputed position was not always filled. Many of the baser lords and kings would have been clients to a higher-ranking magnate; this system of clientship guaranteed them mutual protection, a definite boon in an Ireland composed of a medley of warring kingdoms.

It was in fact an internal power struggle that set the stage for the Anglo-Norman invasion. Upon the death of the high king Tairdelbach Úa Conchobair (O’Connor) in 1156, an overking of northern Ireland, Muirchertach MacLochlainn, assumed the high kingship from 1156 to 1166. But Muirchertach was hated among the lesser northern rulers in Ulidia (north-east Ulster) and Airgialla (Monaghan and Armagh), and he was eventually overthrown and killed in battle in 1166. His successor to the high kingship, the Connacht king Ruaidrí Úa Conchobair, was a fierce enemy of the king of Leinster, Diarmait Mac Murchada (MacMurrough), as was the king of Bréifne (Leitrim and north-west Cavan), Tigernán

4 *Collectio canonum Hibernensis* (hereafter, *Hibernensis*), xx.6; ed. Hermann Wasserschleben, *Die irische Kanonensammlung*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1885), 61–2; source for this *institutio Romana* not identified.

5 Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988), xxiii.

Úa Ruairc (O'Rourke), whose wife, the Meath princess Derbfhorgaill, Diarmait had run away with in 1152 – an extreme affront to Tigernán's honour (she later returned to her husband). The combined forces of O'Rourke and O'Connor, aided by an army from Dublin and the Norsemen from Wexford, dethroned MacMurrough and destroyed his castle at Ferns. MacMurrough sailed to Bristol on 1 August 1166 and eventually secured the aid of the Welsh-Norman lords. He invited their leader, Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, more commonly known as "Strongbow", to become his son-in-law with right of succession to his Leinster territories.

The Welsh marcher lords and their men landed at Wexford on 1 May 1169. Strongbow followed on 23 August 1170 and before long MacMurrough's rule of Leinster was restored and confirmed. He died in 1171 and his son-in-law Strongbow assumed power in Dublin; his lieutenants held Wexford and Waterford. Afraid that an independent Anglo-Norman principality might be created in Ireland and ruled by Strongbow and his marcher lords, Henry II led his own expedition to Ireland and established that Dublin and its surroundings, with Wexford and Waterford, would come under royal control – he acquired the consent of Irish prelates shortly after his arrival at the second council of Cashel (1172) and this provided a degree of legitimacy to his efforts to appropriate the territory.⁶ Henry claimed Dublin and all Irish seaports for himself. Strongbow was granted the lordship of Leinster and Hugh de Lacy that of Meath (at that time a separate province) to the north. A feudal relationship between king and barons was effected, with Gaelic peasants working the land, and in 1210, upon proclamation by King John, the common law of England became the law of Anglo-Norman Ireland.⁷

Not all of Ireland was in the area under the effective control of the Anglo-Norman government. The Dublin administration appears to have reached its maximum extent around the end of the thirteenth century but even then many parts of the north, west, and south-west of the island remained rebellious and unaffected by Dublin.⁸ Moreover, the territory of Dublin's dominion quickly began to shrink, due partly to Gaelic insurrection, partly to the Bruce campaign of 1315–18 (when Robert I, after his victory

6 For full discussion see Anne J. Duggan, "The Making of a Myth: Giraldus Cambrensis, *Laudabiliter*, and Henry II's Lordship of Ireland", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3rd ser., 4 (2007): 141.

7 Hillaby, "Jewish Colonisation", 36; Paul Brand, "Ireland and the Literature of the Early Common Law", *The Irish Jurist*, n.s., 16 (1981): 95–113.

8 Paul Brand, "Local Government", in Duffy, *Medieval Ireland*, 280–81.

at Bannockburn, sent his brother Edward Bruce into Ireland to continue battling the English and the exiled House of Balliol), and partly to repeated attacks of the plague in the fourteenth century. By the fifteenth century, the area controlled by the Dublin administration was limited to the modern counties of Dublin, Meath, Louth, and Kildare, otherwise known as the Pale. It was with this Anglo-Norman rule that market towns began to be established by lords and magnates, mainly in order to sell the produce from their estates.

It is essential to note that the Anglo-Normans received some assistance in their conquest from Jewish funding in England. The claim, put forward by Joseph Jacobs, that Strongbow's venture to Ireland was largely financed by a Gloucester Jew named Josce has met many objections. It is based mainly on a Pipe Roll entry stating that someone advanced money to Anglo-Norman fighters heading to Ireland and was fined for doing so in 1170: "Josce Iudeus de Gloecestre reddit comptum de c. solidis de admerciamento pro denariis quos prestitit illis qui contra prohibitum Regis abierunt in Yberniam" ("Josce Jew of Gloucester owes 100 shillings for an amerciamento [fine] for the moneys which he lent to those who against the King's prohibition went over to Ireland").⁹ Jacobs sees in this "a reference to Strongbow's expedition in August 1170, which resulted in the conquest of Waterford and Dublin, and roused Henry's fears that Richard of Striguil [that is, Strongbow] would create an independent kingdom in Ireland".¹⁰ Scholars were quick to temper this claim by, for instance, pointing out that Strongbow is not mentioned by name in this document. Louis Hyman argued that, since this particular Pipe Roll account covers the Exchequer year from Michaelmas 1169 to Michaelmas 1170 and Strongbow only arrived in Ireland on 23 August 1170, "he could not possibly have been Josce's client".¹¹ The difficulty with Hyman's counter-argument, though, is that the finance would probably have been provided before August 1170. Had it been provided on the very day of Strongbow's departure, this

9 Pipe Rolls, 16 Hen. II, 5b m. 379; see *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Sixteenth Year of the Reign of King Henry the Second, A.D. 1169–1170*, Pipe Roll Society Publications 15 (London: Pipe Roll Society, 1892), 78 (italics denote my expansion of abbreviations); trans. in Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England* (London: Nutt, 1893), 55.

10 Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, xix, 51.

11 Louis Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland from Earliest Times to the Year 1910* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), 287–8 n. 16; also Hillaby, "Jewish Colonisation", 36 n. 74; criticism in Lionel Abrahams, "The Economic and Financial Position of the Jews in Medieval England", *Transactions* 8 (1915–17): 173; Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 14 n. 3.

would still have been more than a month before the Exchequer session of 29 September (Michaelmas), making the timing of the transaction theoretically possible. The fact that the debtors travelled to Ireland against the king's prohibition also points to Strongbow and the Welsh lords, Strongbow having received notice from royal messengers that his expedition was expressly forbidden immediately before his embarkation in August 1170.¹² Yet, regardless of whether Josce advanced money to the marcher lords or to Strongbow himself, it is clear from this record that some men who came to MacMurrough's aid in the early stages of the Conquest were funded at least in part by a Jewish moneylender. Upon the death of Aaron of Lincoln in 1186, moreover, the records of those owing him money included the "comes de Strigoil" (probably a reference to Strongbow). The amount owed, 80 marks, was no negligible sum (more than twice the annual salary of a knight) and this is held by Hillaby and Marie Therese Flanagan to be indicative.¹³

After Henry II intervened in 1171, Jews continued to finance travel to the newly acquired English territory. A Close Roll entry for the year 1225 relates that Roger Bacon had borrowed sums from a number of English Jews towards his mission on the king's service in Ireland:

Dominus Rex perdonavit Rogero Bacun usuram j. anni de debitis que idem Rogerus debet Bone que fuit uxor Mossei et Benedicto filio [illegible] et Angevin filio Bonevie et Magistro Josceo de Lincolnia et Abrahe et Pictavino socio ejus per expensis suis quas fecit in servicio nostro in Hibernia ante adventum Hugonis de Lascy ibidem et post et mandatum est Judiciariis ad custodiam Judeorum assignatis quod de usura j. anni de debitis predictis ipsum Rogerum quietum esse faciant. De residuo autem debiti sui quod eisdem Judeis debet sicut prius eis mandavit dominus Rex talem finem et tales terminos ei habere faciant : quos secundum extensionem terre sue sine gravamine et exheredatione tenere possit.

The lord the King pardons to Roger Bacon the usury of 1 year on the debts which he owes to Bona, who was the wife of Moses, to Benedict Fitz [illegible], to Angevin Fitz Bonevie, to Master Josceus de Lincoln, and to

12 Annette J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, 2nd edn (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 46.

13 Pipe Rolls, 3 Rich. I, rot. 10d, m. 1; ed. in *The Great Rolls of the Pipe of the Third and Fourth Years of the Reign of King Richard the First, Michaelmas 1191 and Michaelmas 1192*, ed. Doris M. Stenton, Pipe Roll Society Publications 40, n.s., 2 (London: Pipe Roll Society, 1926), 290; Hillaby, "Jewish Colonisation", 36; Marie Therese Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, and Angevin Kingship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 116–17 n. 14.

Abraham and Pictavinus, his associate, for his expenses incurred in our service in Ireland before and after the arrival there of Hugh de Lacy. The justices assigned to the custody of the Jews are ordered to acquit Roger of the usury of one year on the aforementioned debts. However, concerning the remainder of the debt which Roger owes those same Jews mentioned above, the lord the King orders the justices to cause him to have as great a fine and as many terms as, according to the extent of his land, he can bear without hardship or disinheritance.¹⁴

Although done posthumously and thus without his knowledge, a portion of Aaron of Lincoln's treasure, confiscated by the king upon Aaron's death in 1186, was used to help fund his son John's expedition to Ireland that same year: "Radulfus Murdach' redd. comp. de firma de Notingehamscira et Derbiscira. . . . Et pro ducendis denariis archiepiscopi Eboracensis et denariis Aaron, quos rex dedit Johanni filio suo ad eundum in Hyberniam, a Notingehama usque Stuteberi .xviii. s. per idem breve" ("Ralph Murdach renders his account for Nottingham and Derby. . . . And for carrying from Nottingham to Stutebury the moneys of the Archbishop of York and of Aaron, which the King gave to John, his son, to go into Ireland, 18s., by the King's writ").¹⁵

Knowing as we do that the Anglo-Norman Conquest was financed in part by Jewish moneylending, it seems plausible that some Jews may have relocated to Ireland years after the Conquest in order to build on this early relationship. As Hillaby has shown, the earliest colonists were dependent on old transmarine lordship networks for their support: Walter de Lacy (d. 1241), son of the first justiciar of Ireland, Hugh de Lacy (d. 1186), and Lord of Meath, for instance, had construction on his Irish holdings financed by Hamo, his personal Jew back in Hereford.¹⁶ Hillaby also appears to

14 Close Rolls, 9 Hen. III, p. 2, m. 13; ed. in *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati*, ed. Thomas D. Hardy, 2 vols (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1833–44), vol. 2, 39b–40 (italics for my expansions of abbreviations); my translation aided by Henry S. Sweetman, ed., *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office*, 5 vols (London: Longman, 1875–86), vol. 1, 196, doc. 1291; translations mine unless otherwise noted.

15 Pipe Rolls, 32 Hen. II, rot. 8, m. 1; ed. in *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Thirty-Second Year of the Reign of King Henry the Second, A.D. 1185–1186*, Pipe Roll Society Publications 36 (London: Pipe Roll Society, 1914), 102; my translation aided by Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 12, doc. 79.

16 Hillaby, "Jewish Colonisation", 37–8; Joe Hillaby, "Hereford Gold: Irish, Welsh and English Land, Part 2: The Clients of the Jewish Community of Hereford", *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club* 45 (1985): 197–217.

intimate that some Jewish creditors relocated to Ireland – a possibility to be considered more closely later. Although we can only speculate about this presence of Jewish creditors, we shall also see that documentary evidence suggests that by 1232 a community of the king’s Jews – however small and for whatever reason – had indeed established itself in the new territory.

Hiberno-Latin literary evidence

There has been much scholarly discussion about whether the seventh-century grammarian Virgilius Maro Grammaticus was a Jew and whether he was living in or native to Ireland. His writings (two surviving books – the so-called *Epitomae* and the *Epistolae* – and a fragmentary letter), written in Latin, exhibit an extremely intimate knowledge of Hebrew, much more intimate, as some argue, than would have been the norm among western scholars who learnt Hebrew for biblical study.¹⁷ This has led certain scholars to conclude that Virgilius must have been Jewish. But what would a Jew have been doing in seventh-century Ireland? Since he was writing in monastic centres, would he have been a convert? Was he a native or an immigrant? These questions are currently the subject of much debate, yet the list of compelling reasons to place Virgilius – whether Jewish or not – in Ireland is extensive. For one thing, his texts are referred to in other Latin works known to have been produced there. There are also close parallels between his works and contemporary Irish-language texts such as *Auraicept na nÉces* (“The Scholars’ Primer”). Most interestingly, some of his Latin word-coinings seem to be based on words that are unquestionably Irish.¹⁸ This was a man with strong knowledge of Irish and Hebrew, and if it is to be accepted that he was of Jewish descent and living in Ireland, then we have in him an early medieval instance of a Jew (at least ethnically) on Irish soil.

17 See authoritative edition in Giovanni Polara, ed. and trans., *Virgilio Marone grammatico: Epitomi ed Epistole* (Naples: Liguori, 1979). For scholarship on Virgilius see Michael Lapidge and Richard Sharpe, eds., *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature 400–1200* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1985), 81–2; Michael Herren, “Virgil the Grammarian: A Spanish Jew in Ireland?” *Peritia* 9 (1995): 51–71; Anthony Harvey, “Linguistic Method in his Literary Madness? The Wordcoinings of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus”, in *Linguistic and Philological Studies in Early Irish*, ed. Elisa Roma and David Stifter (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 2014), 79–104. For more common influences from Hebrew on Hiberno-Latin see Anthony Harvey, “Lexical Influences on the Medieval Latin of the Celts”, in *Influencias léxicas de otras lenguas en el latín medieval*, ed. Maurilio Pérez González and Estrella Pérez Rodríguez (León: Universidad de León, Área de Publicaciones, 2011), 65–77.

18 See Harvey, “Linguistic Method”.

Gaelic historical sources

We now move on to the historical records. Secular administrative documents from early Gaelic Ireland have not come down to us and some hold that such records were not typically produced.¹⁹ There may well have been some contact with Jewish merchants through trade along the Mediterranean over to the British Isles, but there is no written evidence to suggest that Jewish communities settled there. Instead, we have evidence of Jewish visitors being turned away.

This occurs in the *Annals of Inisfallen*, a medieval Irish chronicle which, though named after the monastery on the island of Inisfallen in Loch Léin, Killarney, was at various stages kept at a number of different Munster monasteries throughout the years that it was being compiled. These annals, under the year 1079, provide the earliest recorded instance of Jews stepping foot in Ireland: “Coicer Iudaide do thichtain dar muir & aisceda leo do Thairdelbach, & a n-díchor doridisi dar muir”²⁰ (“Five Jews came across the sea with gifts for Tairdelbach [Úa Briain], and they were expelled back over the sea”). Literally, the latter clause reads “and in their banishment [they went] back over the sea” – *díchor* is far more negative than “they were sent back again over sea [sic]”, as the often cited published translation of these annals by Mac Airt reads.²¹ The sense of the Irish is well preserved in Charles O’Conor’s Latin translation of the entry: “Quinque Judei venerunt trans mare, et donaria cum eis Tordelbacho, et expulsi sunt iterum trans mare.”²²

There has been considerable speculation concerning the motive behind the visit of these Jews to Tairdelbach Úa Briain (d. 1086). King of Munster

19 Philomena Connolly, *Medieval Record Sources*, Maynooth Research Guides for Irish Local History 4 (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002), 9. On surviving Gaelic administrative records see Máire Herbert, “Before Charters? Property Records in Pre-Anglo-Norman Ireland”, in *Charters and Charter Scholarship in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Marie Therese Flanagan and Judith A. Green (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 107–19. For more on documentary evidence from pre-Anglo-Norman Ireland see Marie Therese Flanagan, *Irish Royal Charters: Texts and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7–24.

20 Seán Mac Airt, ed. and trans., *The Annals of Inisfallen* (MS Rawlinson B.503) (1944; repr. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1951), 234–5, translation adjusted. There is only one manuscript copy of the *Annals of Inisfallen*, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

21 *Dictionary of the Irish Language: Based Mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials*, ed. E. G. Quin et al. (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1983), s.v. 1 *díchor* (o, m) (*dí* + *cor*) “banishing, expelling; getting rid of, removing”.

22 Charles O’Conor, “*Annales Inisfalenses*”, in *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores Veteres*, vol. 2 (Buckingham: Seeley, 1825), 81.

and continually engaged in military campaigns to secure for himself the high kingship of Ireland, Tairdelbach was arguably the most powerful man in Ireland at the time. Hyman suggested that these five Jews “were a delegation that pleaded to secure for their coreligionists the right of entry”.²³ Benjamin Hudson built on this by highlighting the fact that, in the late eleventh century, the largest Jewish population in north-west Europe was in Rouen, and these Jews were under the protection of William, Duke of Normandy. After his conquest of England, a colony from Rouen established itself in London and Hudson argued that these Jews were attempting to establish a settlement in Ireland as well, probably in Dublin – an important centre for trade with English merchants, as archaeological and numismatic evidence suggests.²⁴

Stanley Siev also argued that these Jews sought to establish trade contacts and possibly a settlement, yet there are a number of difficulties with his argument, based on Jacobs’s English translation of O’Conor’s Latin translation of the Irish annals, that should be addressed.²⁵ Jacobs’s translation of *trans mare* (Irish *dar muir*) reads “across the sea”.²⁶ Since “sea” is in the singular, Siev takes this to mean literally that the Jews crossed only one body of water, which would make their likely point of origin, as he sees it, either England or Normandy.²⁷ Furthermore, since England lacked a large Jewish presence in the period immediately following the Norman Conquest, he holds that these Jews would have come from Rouen, where in the eleventh century, as noted earlier, there was a large merchant class that was engaged in northern trade.²⁸ However, the lack of a definite article in the Irish *dar muir* could allow for an uncountable sense of the noun *muir*, as reflected in Mac Airt’s more recent translation, less eloquent but faithful to the Irish: “across sea”, not “across the sea”. In fact, *muir*, in the sense of both “sea as opposed to land” and “particular tracts of ocean with special designations”, is frequently used without the article, especially after a

23 Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 3.

24 Benjamin Hudson, “William the Conqueror and Ireland”, *Irish Historical Studies* 29, no. 114 (November 1994): 153–4; Henry G. Richardson, *The English Jewry under Angevin Kings* (London: Methuen, 1960), 1–2; William of Malmesbury, “*Gesta regum Anglorum*”: *The History of the English Kings*, vol. 1, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, Rodney M. Thomson, and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 562–3.

25 Stanley A. Siev, *The Celts and the Hebrews*, educational booklets 4, rev. edn (Dublin: Irish Jewish Museum, 1995), 12.

26 Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 255.

27 Siev, *Celts*, 10.

28 *Ibid.*, 10–12; Richardson, *English Jewry*, 1–2.

preposition.²⁹ In view of this ambiguity, one is safest to follow Mac Airt in treating *muir* as a mass noun rather than base an argument about the origin of these Jews on it.

Siev's limited knowledge of Irish leads him to commit another error when he states, again based on an English translation of the Inisfallen annal entry, that Tairdelbach accepted the gifts and gave the Jews hospitality: "At that juncture in history, people who were considered enemies, dangerous, hostile, were often taken captive or killed and their goods taken as spoil. Seeing that the 'five' were 'sent back again'[,] that is the phrase, they must have been merchants of some prestige and influence and it is probable that Turlough O'Brien recognized this and accepted the gifts which were brought by them."³⁰ As was seen earlier, the Irish in this entry states that the king repudiated the Jews. Siev's claims, informed by a theoretical approach to historical studies and based on an imperfect understanding of the annal entry, must be regarded with caution – a point that must be made since his arguments continue to be referenced in modern scholarship (Siev's linguistic arguments for a link between the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, "folk of [the goddess] Danu", and the biblical Dedan, male descendant of Abraham, are similarly problematic).³¹ Jacobs appears to have been the first to highlight this annal entry in 1893 and he rightly paraphrases it as the Jews being repulsed.³² Hyman similarly states that the record "points to a cold reception".³³

Despite the misrepresentation of the Irish annal entry, the theory that this Jewish delegation was spurred by a desire to further trade is hardly improbable. Anthony Candon also suggested this, drawing on archaeological evidence of foreign trade in Dublin ports.³⁴ In addition (supporting Candon, Hudson, and Siev's arguments), while overlord of Dublin, governed on his behalf by his son Muirchertach Ua Briain from 1075 to 1086, Tairdelbach also controlled Limerick and Waterford: the latter was the principal port of the south of Ireland and excavations carried out there have shown it to be a site of heavy trade with Anglo-Norman

29 *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, s.v. *muir*, col. 193, ll. 44–6.

30 Siev, *Celts*, 12.

31 *Ibid.*, 13–14.

32 Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 255.

33 Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 3.

34 Anthony Candon, "Muirchertach Ua Briain, Politics and Naval Activity in the Irish Sea, 1075 to 1119", in *Keimelia: Studies in Medieval Archaeology and History in Memory of Tom Delaney*, ed. Gearóid Mac Niocaill and Patrick F. Wallace (Galway: Galway University Press, 1988), 398.

Britain and with the north-west of France (including Rouen) in the late eleventh century.³⁵

Alternatively, Donnchadh Ó Corráin asked whether these Jews had come to finance Tairdelbach in his campaign to secure and maintain the high kingship of Ireland and there are many reasons that lend weight to this suggestion.³⁶ No doubt, Tairdelbach's constant need to assert his hegemony over the island – and especially over the troublesome northern Uí Néill dynasty – could have been seen as a window of opportunity for these visitors. We know that he employed a number of stratagems to secure his control and acquire, in the words of Seán Duffy, “international recognition” that would enhance his pre-eminence over his rivals for the high kingship. Most notably, he earned the support of the Church through his involvement in the election of Patricius (Gilla Pátraic), a monk at Worcester, to the bishopric of Dublin in 1074, thereby promoting ties with Canterbury and Archbishop Lanfranc in particular. The new bishop was consecrated by Lanfranc himself and a laudatory letter from Lanfranc addressed to Tairdelbach shortly thereafter describes him as “magnificent king of Ireland” (“magnifico Hibernie regi Terdeluaco”).³⁷ Granted, he also calls Guthric, the ruler of the Norsemen in Dublin who had submitted to Tairdelbach, “glorioso Hiberniae regi Gothrico”, but the letter to Tairdelbach is distinct in including the powerful statement that Tairdelbach's kingship over the peoples of Ireland was divinely ordained: “Quod populis Hiberniae diuinitus tunc collatum fuisse prudens inspector intelligit, quando omnipotens Deus excellentiae uestrae ius regiae potestatis super illam terram concessit” (“The wise observer knows that [peace, justice, and Christianity were] providentially granted to the peoples of Ireland when almighty God gave your excellency royal authority over that country”).³⁸ This panegyric statement is loaded: Lanfranc's message is that divinely ordained kings must ensure that God's laws are followed in their kingdoms, and Tairdelbach should therefore repudiate marriage

35 Seán Duffy, “‘The Western World's Tower of Honour and Dignity’: The Career of Muirchertach Ua Briain in Context”, in *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century: Reform and Renewal*, ed. Damien Bracken and Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006), 59, 64; Maurice F. Hurley, “Gateways to Southern Ireland: Cork and Waterford in the Twelfth Century”, in *ibid.*, 37–8; Hudson, “William the Conqueror”, 153.

36 Donnchadh Ó Corráin, personal communication, 2013.

37 Lanfranc of Bec, *The Letters of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. Helen Clover, trans. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 70–73, doc. 10, l. 2.

38 *Ibid.*, 66–9, doc. 9, ll. 1–2; 70–73, doc. 10, ll. 9–11 (translation of *super* as “in” altered).

practices in Ireland that were contrary to Scripture and canon law. The support evidenced in the closing blessing on Tairdelbach – that the King of kings may quell Tairdelbach’s enemies: “rex regum . . . hostes conerat, pacemque uobis in hoc seculo stabilem . . . concedat” – was probably granted conditionally, after the king’s reform of uncanonical marriage practices in Ireland.³⁹ Nevertheless, the fact that these negotiations were undertaken with Tairdelbach reveals the power that outsiders believed he wielded in Ireland.

Pope Gregory VII (in office 1073–85) addressed him in an undated letter as *Terdeluachus inclitus rex Hiberniae* – no doubt another instance of strategic flattery in an effort to urge him to support Church reform.⁴⁰ The full salutary rubric of this letter, addressed to all Christian inhabitants of Ireland, names Tairdelbach first, as the pre-eminent ruler: “Gregorius episcopus seruus seruorum Dei Terdeluacho inclito regi Hiberniae archiepiscopis episcopis abbatibus proceribus omnibusque christianis Hiberniam inhabitantibus salutem et apostolicam benedictionem” (“Gregory, bishop servant of the servants of God, to Toirdhealbhach, the illustrious king of Ireland, to the archbishops, bishops, abbots, magnates, and to all Christians who dwell in Ireland, greeting and apostolic blessing”).⁴¹ This letter is one of the only two surviving papal letters addressed to an Irish king in the twelfth century prior to the Anglo-Norman invasion (the other letter, dated c.1163, is from Pope Alexander III to an unidentified *rex Hibernorum*).⁴² In addition to the proof of Tairdelbach’s correspondence with the pope and with the archbishop of Canterbury, it is suspected that he was in contact (or in league, as Hudson has argued) with a pre-eminent neighbour, William the Conqueror.⁴³ No doubt, Tairdelbach was making use of powerful friends and external influences to secure his dominion.

39 *Ibid.*, 70–73, doc. 10, ll. 42–8.

40 For discussions of this letter see Aubrey Gwynn, “Pope Gregory VII and the Irish Church”, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 58 (1941): 98–100; Flanagan, *Irish Society*, 7–55; and Martin Holland, “Dublin and the Reform of the Irish Church in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries”, *Peritia* 14 (2000): 111–60. See also letter from Gregory to Lanfranc on the need for reform in Ireland in Lanfranc, *Letters*, 64–7, doc. 8.

41 Pope Gregory, *The “Epistolae vagantes” of Pope Gregory VII*, ed. and trans. Herbert E. J. Cowdrey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 138–41, doc. 57.

42 Marie Therese Flanagan, *The Transformation of the Irish Church in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 4.

43 For full discussion see Duffy, “Muirchertach Ua Briain”, 60–61, 64–5; Hudson, “William the Conqueror”.

Returning to Ó Corráin, his hypothesis led him to ask a rather amusing question: would Irish history be different if Tairdelbach had taken these five Jews up on their offer and not listened to his clerical advisers?⁴⁴

Of course all these theories are speculative. The content of the Inisfallen annal entry does not make clear whence these Jews arrived, nor does it indicate their motive for approaching the Úa Briain king. All we know is that, according to the annals, this king sent them away without a warm reception (literally, “in their banishment”). This entry for the year 1079 is the only mention of Jews in Ireland in the Gaelic historical sources.

Anglo-Norman sources

Ambiguous entries in a modern calendar of documents

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Henry Savage Sweetman and his team compiled a five-volume calendar of the documents relating to Ireland that were housed in the Public Record Office in London (now in the National Archive, Kew) and that span the years 1171 to 1307. In this calendar, Jewish names appear scattered throughout, especially in entries concerning 1171 to 1179.⁴⁵ Although the place of residence of these Jews is not usually mentioned in these calendar summaries, they were probably English Jews since the transactions listed in these documents are mainly financial payments concerning Ireland such as the scutage (a levy imposed to cover the expenses of war) or loans made to those on the king’s service in Ireland.⁴⁶

Similarly, a Pipe Roll entry for 1171 mentions a “Joseph the Doctor” whom Leon Hühner takes to be a Jew: “in view of the name and profession (particularly at the date mentioned) it is not unreasonable to suppose that he was of Jewish race.”⁴⁷ The description in the Roll offers little information about this doctor except that he was involved in a transaction sending spices and electuaries (medicinal pastes) into Ireland; it does not

44 Ó Corráin, personal communication.

45 Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. I, 8, doc. 49 (Pipe Rolls, 24 Hen. II, rot. 9, dors); 9, doc. 51 (Pipe Rolls, 25 Hen. II, rot. 2) on the scutage; 12, doc. 79 (Pipe Rolls, 32 Hen. II, rot. 8); 196, doc. 1291 (Close Rolls, 9 Hen. III, p. 2, m. 13); 309, doc. 2079 (Close Rolls, 18 Hen. III, m. 33) on loans, with entries concerning the years 1185/86, 1225, and 1233 respectively; list not exhaustive. Relevant entries reproduced in Hühner, “Jews of Ireland”, 227 n. 4, 230 n. 3.

46 Hühner, “Jews of Ireland”, 227.

47 *Ibid.*, 227–8.

state that he was himself located in Ireland.⁴⁸ Moreover, as the Pipe Rolls consist of an account of the king's sheriff's expenditures in his shire – in this case, an account of the archdeacon of Poitier's expenditures in the See of Winchester – it is almost certain that Joseph the Doctor would have lived in Hampshire and that he would simply have supplied the materials that were ultimately sent to Ireland.

Memoranda Rolls of the King's Remembrancer (Exchequer)

In Memoranda Rolls of the King's Remembrancer (Exchequer) 4 Henry III, membrane 14, there is a document dated 1219 or 1220 to which Mary D. O'Sullivan referred, based on Sweetman's calendar summary, to argue that Jews were "firmly established in Ireland" during the early Norman period.⁴⁹ The calendar summary reads: "Respite till the close of Easter for Geoffrey de Mariscis, justiciary of Ireland, touching the demand against him./ Norfolk: – Mandate to the sheriff to respite Geoffrey de Marisco, justiciary of Ireland, till the octaves of Easter, touching the debts demanded by the Exchequer, and those exacted from him by the Jews within his bailiwick."⁵⁰ The difficulty with O'Sullivan's claim is that Geoffrey de Marisco's respite was ordered in Norfolk, so his Jewish creditor would have been in Norfolk since the sheriff of Norfolk had no jurisdiction in Ireland. Such respites were common for officials on the king's service outside the territory, and Geoffrey was stationed in Ireland at this time. Any respite for Jewish debts in Ireland would have been sent to the Irish justiciar, who, as the calendar states, was Geoffrey himself.⁵¹ This record therefore does not attest to a community of Jews in Ireland during the early Norman period.

Hamo of Hereford and local Jewish financiers

Hillaby may have insinuated that English lords and magnates in post-Conquest Ireland benefitted from local Jewish financiers: "To such [Jewish financiers in England] Marshal and de Lacy would have looked for

48 Pipe Rolls, 18 Hen. II, rot. 6, dors; ed. in *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Eighteenth Year of the Reign of King Henry the Second, A.D. 1171–2*, Pipe Roll Society Publications 18 (London, 1894), 86; trans. in Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 5, doc. 29.

49 Mary D. O'Sullivan, *Italian Merchant Bankers in Ireland in the Thirteenth Century* (Dublin: Figgis, 1962), 101 n. 1.

50 Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 138, doc. 924 (corresponding Latin Memoranda Roll entry not published).

51 I owe this point to Dr. Colin Veach. On the Irish justiciar's position see Connolly, *Medieval Record Sources*, 23–6; Henry G. Richardson and George O. Sayles, eds., *The Administration of Ireland, 1172–1377* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1963), 29–38.

much of their credit, but both would have had to have another, more local, source in the marches of Wales and Ireland.”⁵² He does not specify that the financiers in Ireland would have been Jewish, but the question is intriguing.

After the death of John I in 1216, while his successor Henry III was still a minor, the Council of Regency which ruled in the interim was dominated by the *rector regni* William Marshal, lord of Striguil (in modern-day Wales) and later lord of Leinster, the “caput” of which was in Kilkenny. This Council of Regency, as Hillaby explains, was well aware of the economic benefits that arise from kind dealings with Jews and they “took immediate measure to revive the English Jewry”: “Sheriffs were ‘to proclaim throughout your bailiwick that we have assured the Jews of our peace’. Civic leaders were held responsible for the safety of the persons and property of the provincial Jews from molestation by ‘crusaders’ or others. The privilege of local communes was confirmed and Jewish immigration encouraged.”⁵³ We have already seen that Walter de Lacy’s Irish initiatives were financed in large part by a private Jew, Hamo, whom he had persuaded to take up residence in Hereford in order to serve the financial needs of his shrievalty of Herefordshire from 1216 to 1223. William Marshal and Walter de Lacy worked quickly in Ireland to found villages and monasteries and to create new infrastructures on their Irish lands that would increase economic productivity and promote immigration. Lacy’s Irish holdings were manorialized by 1222 and generated large surpluses of grain for export. Creditors would have been furnishing these men with the resources necessary for these agricultural and infrastructural initiatives; it was common practice for lords and magnates to obtain loans from private, often Jewish, financiers.⁵⁴

Wealthy magnates such as the Lacys continued to maintain land and economic ties back in England and could have continued to be financed directly from England. In 1233, for instance, Lacy still owed money to

52 Hillaby, “Jewish Colonisation”, 38.

53 *Ibid.*, 37; see also D’Blossiers Tovey, *Anglia Judaica* (Oxford, 1738), 77; *Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III Preserved in the Public Record Office*, vol. 2 (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1903), 157 (Patent Rolls, 2 Hen. III, m. 3), 180–81 (Patent Rolls, 2 Hen. III, m. 6); Paul Brand, “Jews and Law in England, 1275–90”, *English Historical Review* 115 (2000): 1138–9; Hardy, *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, vol. 1, 354, 357, 359.

54 Hillaby, “Jewish Colonisation”, 37–8; Hillaby, “Hereford Gold”, 197–217; Aryeh Grabois, “Les écoles de Narbonne au XIIIe siècle”, in *Juifs et judaïsme de Languedoc, XIIIe siècle–début XIVe siècle*, ed. Marie-Humbert Vicaire and Bernhard Blumenkranz (Toulouse: Privat, 1977), 141–57.

Hamo, though the funds could have been borrowed much earlier.⁵⁵ Yet, slightly lower in the social scale, by the second or third generation, a large proportion of knightly families in Ireland no longer held land in England. One of Hugh de Lacy's household knights, Adam de Feipo, for example, was close to landless before Hugh raised him to the status of baron of Meath in the 1180s – a move which granted him his own vassals, a castle, and enough wealth for him to serve as a benefactor to a number of religious houses.⁵⁶ Such a man would have required a local financier. The knights having been among the Jews' best customers, it would make sense for a small community to have been established in Ireland.⁵⁷

Again, in his statement that Lacy and Marshal would have been turning to local financiers as an additional source of credit, Hillaby does not specify that these financiers would have been Jewish. There is moreover no reason why, at this early stage after the Conquest, another Jew or another magnate in England could not have been funding these Irish expenditures (or, perhaps, Italian merchant bankers, as O'Sullivan would suggest⁵⁸). Nevertheless, by the mid-thirteenth century, at which stage a fair portion of the Anglo-Norman ruling class had begun to lose its ties to land and financiers back in England, a stronger case can be made for the presence of Jewish financiers in Ireland – though this, again, remains speculative.

Grant to Peter de Rivallis

While there is thus no explicit evidence of any Jew alighting in Ireland in the 150 years after 1079, by 1232 it appears that a Jewish community had established itself there and that it was large enough to justify the appointment of a royal official responsible for them.⁵⁹ Our sole indication of this is found in a corpus of documents concerning a grant made by Henry III to Peter de Rivallis (d. 1262) on 28 July 1232 and confirmed on 2 September 1232 that names him, for his lifetime, warden of the Irish Jewry:

55 Close Rolls, 18 Hen. III, m. 33; *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III Preserved in the Public Record Office*, 14 vols (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1902–38), vol. 2, 352; Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 309, doc. 2079. For full discussion of the Lacys, see Colin Veach, *Lordship in Four Realms: The Lacy Family, 1166–1241* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

56 Robert Bartlett, "Colonial Aristocracies of the High Middle Ages", in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 37–41; Veach, *Lordship in Four Realms*, 29–30.

57 A suggestion which I owe to Dr. Colin Veach.

58 O'Sullivan, *Italian Merchant Bankers*, 101–10.

59 Roth, *History of the Jews*, 92.

“Concessimus etiam eidem Petro, pro nobis et heredibus nostris, quod habeat toto tempore vitae suae custodiam Iudaismi nostri Hiberniae, ita quod omnes Iudaei Hiberniae sint ei intendentes et respondententes, tanquam custodi suo, de omnibus quae ad nos pertinent”⁶⁰ (“We further grant to the same Peter, on behalf of us and our heirs, that he shall have for his entire lifetime custody of the king’s Judaism in Ireland. All Jews in Ireland shall be attentive and accountable to him as their keeper in all things touching the king”). In the full text of this grant, only a snippet from which is cited here, Rivallis was vested with a variety of offices and privileges, including Treasurer and Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer. To be clear, however, as Cecil Roth pointed out: “That there was a branch of the Jewish Exchequer in Ireland, as usually stated, is not the case, though Peter de Rivallis was appointed in 1232 to custody of the Irish Jews, who were instructed to be ‘intendent and respondent’ to him.”⁶¹ The Patent Rolls moreover state that the king sent a letter to all Jews established in Ireland, instructing them to be attentive to him or his appointed representative: “Et similiter scribitur omnibus Judeis per Hiberniam constitutis, quod eidem Petro vel assignato suo de omnibus etc. sint intendentes etc.”⁶² One can deduce from this statement that the community already had an appointed representative to whom Henry III would have written to communicate this message to all the Jews in Ireland.

The grant names Rivallis as the Treasurer and Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer and gives him the king’s prisage (duty) of wines imported into Ireland, custody of the Irish Jewry, custody of the king’s ports and coasts of Ireland, custody of wards and escheats in Ireland, custody of the exchange in Ireland, and custody of vacant episcopal sees there as well. It also grants him the castles of Athlone, Drogheda, and Rinndown as well as the five

60 Walter Waddington Shirley, ed., *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores (Rolls Series)* 27 (London: Longman, 1862), vol. 1, app. 3, “Grants made to Peter of Rivaulx, between July 16 and September 18, 1232”, 518–20, doc. 6 (Patent Rolls, 16 Hen. III, m. 3); also ed. in *Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, 493–4; summarized in Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 293–4, doc. 1970. Further details in a royal letter, also dated 28 July 1232, preserved in Charter Rolls, 16 Hen. III, m. 3, summarized in Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 293, doc. 1969; these documents cited and discussed in Hühner, “Jews of Ireland”, 229 n. 1.

61 Roth, *History of the Jews*, 112 n. 4. On the role of the Exchequer of the Jews (*staccarium iudeorum*) see Richardson, *English Jewry*, 135–60; Paul Brand, “The Jewish Community of England in the Records of English Royal Government”, in Skinner, *Jews in Medieval Britain*, 73–83; Paul Brand, ed., *Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews*, vol. VI: Edward I, 1279–81 (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 2005), 1–51.

62 Patent Rolls, 16 Hen. III, m. 3; ed. in *Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, 494.

cantreds of Connacht. (The grant states that he can appoint a deputy regarding the prise of wine and the custody of the Irish Jewry and seaports). On 2 September 1232, the king issued a lengthy confirmation of all privileges in the original grant (with the exception of the custody of vacant episcopal sees), reinforcing the validity of its contents for the historian.⁶³ The confirmation closes with directives to Maurice Fitzgerald, justiciar of Ireland, ordering him to allow Rivallis to administer the aforementioned bailiwicks freely and without hindrance. He later also received the castles of Limerick and Cork and of the territories of Decies and Desmond.⁶⁴

These privileges were not the first to be showered on Rivallis: on 11 June 1232 he had been granted, among other things, custody of the wardrobe and the chamber and was appointed the Treasurer of the king's household for life; on 15 June he was granted custody of the king's small seal for life; and on 28 June he was granted the office of King's Chamberlain in London and appointed the buyer on the king's behalf at all markets and fairs. Honours continued to be dispensed to him after these Irish titles were issued as well. For instance, he was appointed the Treasurer of the English Exchequer on 6 January 1233, and he had been made the sheriff of twenty-one counties and constable of numerous royal castles in England and in the Welsh Marches (he surrendered the sheriffdoms by Michaelmas 1233). Rivallis and his ministers abused these powers and the English Jews under their charge, and he was dismissed by Henry III in 1234 but pardoned in 1236.⁶⁵ Many have remarked on the scope of the honours and the speed at which they were conferred; no one has questioned the validity of the numerous privileges conferred on one man.⁶⁶

Henry III's letter of 28 July 1232, in its extensive list of privileges

63 Close Rolls, 16 Hen. III, m. 4; ed. in *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. 2, 102; summarized in Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 295, doc. 1976.

64 Patent Rolls, 16 Hen. III, m. 3; in *Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, 495–6; *Charter Rolls*, 16 Hen. III, m. 3; in *Calendar of the Charter Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office*, vol. 1: Henry III, A.D. 1226–1257 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1903), 166–7.

65 See Michael Adler, "The Testimony of London Jewry against the Ministers of Henry III", *Transactions* 14 (1937): 141–85; more recently, Nicholas Vincent, *Peter des Roches: An Alien in English Politics, 1205–1238* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 446–55.

66 Privileges listed and discussed in Thomas F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England*, vol. 1 (1920; repr. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937), 214–32; Mabel H. Mills, "The Reforms at the Exchequer (1232–1242)", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., 10 (1927): 111–33; more recently studied by Benjamin L. Wild, "A Gift Inventory from the Reign of Henry III", *English Historical Review* 125, no. 514 (June 2010), 531, 543; Benjamin L. Wild, "Royal Finance under King Henry III, 1216–72: The Wardrobe Evidence", *Economic History Review* 65, no. 4 (2012): 1380–402.

extended to Rivallis, should therefore not be considered spurious or taken as suspiciously, uncharacteristically generous; the Crown's favour towards Rivallis is corroborated in other, separate letters of privilege. Also, why would the king offer and later confirm privileges that were untenable, much less fabricate a Jewish community in Ireland? Rather, his actions are in keeping with what David A. Carpenter described as an initiative to introduce financial reform and an effort to entrust a large part of the financial administration of the country to Rivallis,⁶⁷ or with what Nicholas Vincent has more recently described as a political effort to concentrate all government in the hands of Peter des Roches (Rivallis's uncle) and his allies.⁶⁸ While there has been some disagreement among scholars as to whether it was the king or his ministers who governed England between 1232 and 1234, the validity of the honours conferred on Rivallis has not been questioned in these discussions.⁶⁹ The grant to Peter de Rivallis should therefore be accepted as our strongest piece of evidence for a Jewish community in thirteenth-century Ireland.

Land grant from the Dublin White Book

The next relevant document is a land grant dated 1241 and preserved in the Dublin White Book. The grant, from the mayor of Dublin, Johannes la Warre, to Maurice Fitzgerald, contains a prohibition against transferring land to Jews: "Et quod non liceat dicto Mauricio, nec heredibus nec assignatis suis, predictam terram totam nec partem alicui vendere, invadiare, alternare, vel in Iudaismo ponere, nec domui religiose conferre"⁷⁰ ("And that it is not permitted to said Maurice, nor to his heirs nor his deputies, to pledge, exchange, or sell the aforementioned land, whether whole or in part, to anyone, or to place it in the hands of Jews, or to bestow it to a religious house"). Although often cited as evidence of Jewish settlement

67 David A. Carpenter, "The Fall of Hubert de Burgh", in *The Reign of Henry III* (London: Hambledon, 1996), 51. For Roger of Wendover on the motive behind these reforms, see Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry R. Luard, vol. 3 (1876; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 219–20. For discussion of this period see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*.

68 Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, esp. 344, 357, 458.

69 Michael T. Clanchy, "Did Henry III Have a Policy?" *History* 54 (1968): 203–16; Carpenter, *Reign of Henry III*, 51–5, 63–9, 75–106; Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, 8, 283, 455–65.

70 Dublin, Representative Church Body Library, MS C6/12 (*Liber albus*), fol. 48; ed. in John T. Gilbert, *Historic and Municipal Documents of Ireland, 1172–1320: From the Archives of the City of Dublin, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores (Rolls Series) 53* (London: Longmans, 1870), 493.

in Ireland,⁷¹ this document does not present any proof whatsoever of a Jewish presence. Rather, the prohibition that land is not to be alienated to another religious house or to the Jews is part of a common formula that is regularly employed in English deeds.⁷² Since, though written in Ireland, the deed was drafted in an Anglo-Norman milieu, the prohibition could have been reproduced blindly as a common exclusion clause, whether or not Jews were present.

Penal transportation to Ireland

In the Middle Ages, Jews tended to abide in places where they could benefit from royal protection and, according to Hühner, “The unsettled condition of the country during the Middle Ages, the arbitrary power wielded by the Norman adventurers, probably kept Jews from establishing themselves in Ireland in greater numbers. Their preference during that period was generally for those countries where there existed a strong central power, and where, at all times, they could enjoy the royal protection.”⁷³ Whether or not one agrees with Hühner’s remarks – some might argue that after King John’s expedition in 1210, the English colony experienced strong enough royal control around Dublin to protect a community there – it is clear that deportation to Ireland was imposed as a form of punishment. This threat of deportation and imprisonment was used by Henry III in 1245 to enforce the payment of a tallage:

De Judaismo. – Mandatum est baronibus de Scaccario et justiciariis ad custodiam Judeorum assignatis quod omnem diligenciam quam poterunt apponunt ut quatuor milia marcarum, que regi debent Judei ad hoc festum Sancti Michaelis, tunc omnibus modis solvantur thesaurario et camerariis ad faciendum inde quod rex ei injunxit, et si forte in solutione eorundem iiiij. milia marcarum defecerint ad terminum predictum, tunc capiant aliquot de ditioribus Judeis et corpora illorum mittant ad regem usque Gannok, non omittendo illud pro aliquo custo; et rex illos liberari faciet justiciario Hybernie ducendos in Hyberniam et ibidem in prisona detinendos.⁷⁴

71 E.g. Murphy, “Jews”, 240; Hühner, “Jews of Ireland”, 229.

72 See e.g. Philippa Brown, ed., *Sibton Abbey Cartularies and Charters*, Part 2 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1986), 140–41, docs. 183, 184 (both dated 1243–45). This caveat has previously been intimated in Joseph Jacobs and Leon Hühner, “Ireland”, in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–6), 614b; more recently in Hillaby and Hillaby, *Palgrave Dictionary*, 381.

73 Hühner, “Jews of Ireland”, 229.

74 Close Rolls, 29 Hen. III, m. 2; ed. in *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, vol. 5, 339.

Concerning the Jewry. – The barons of the Exchequer and the justices appointed for the protection of the Jews are ordered to apply all the diligence that they can so that the 4,000 marks, which the Jews owe the king on this [coming] feast of Saint Michael [29 September], are by all means paid by that date into the treasury and to the chamberlains to do from there that which the king enjoined regarding it. And if, perchance, they should be wanting in the payment of the same 4,000 marks by the aforementioned deadline, then [the barons and justices] are to seize some of the wealthier Jews and send the bodies of those men to the king in Gannok [in Wales], without releasing anyone for any price, and the king shall hand them over to the justiciar of Ireland, and have them taken to Ireland and detained in prison there.

Accounts of the tallage in question vary in a number of aspects – including amount and purpose – in secondary sources. For our purposes I simply note that, though John L. Murphy, following Hyman, relates that “deportation to Ireland was threatened for any Jew that opposed the royal levies raised by Henry III for his war against the Welsh”,⁷⁵ Roth rightly stated that only the wealthiest of Jews who opposed the levy would be dispatched to Ireland for imprisonment (“capiant aliquot de ditioribus Judeis”).⁷⁶

Aaron de Hibernia, Judeus

Aside from the corpus of documents concerning the 1232 grant to Peter de Rivallis, it seems that the next most solid and by far the most entertaining evidence of a Jew in Ireland is found in the records concerning Aaron of Ireland (Aaron de Hibernia), tried in 1283 for, among other things, trying to sell a silver plate made of coin clippings.⁷⁷ According to the account in the Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews, this Aaron, son of Benjamin of Colchester,⁷⁸ was arrested and jailed in Bristol Castle after trying to sell the plate to Robert Arras, goldsmith, in his shop in front of many Christians. On weighing the piece, Arras remarked that it was fused from parings

75 Murphy, “Jews”, 240; Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 4.

76 Roth, *History of the Jews*, 46.

77 James M. Rigg, ed., *Select Pleas, Starrs, and Other Records from the Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews A.D. 1220–1284*, Selden Society 15 (London: Quaritch, 1902), 120–21, 127. For discussion of these records see Michael Adler, “The Jews of Bristol in pre-Expulsion Days”, *Transactions* 12 (1928–31): 168–9; see also Hillaby, “Jewish Colonisation”, 38–9.

78 Murphy (“Jews”, 240) and Hyman (*Jews of Ireland*, 4) have Aaron born in Colchester but the Latin word order suggests that it was Benjamin who was born there: “Aaron de Hibernia, Judeus, filius Benjamin de Colecestria, imprisonatus fuisse”: I therefore follow Rigg, *Select Pleas*, 127 and Hillaby, “Jewish Colonisation”, 38 here.

from royal coinage. Aaron then snatched the plate and made a run for it, followed by the Christian onlookers from the shop, and, when he reached a bridge crossing the River Avon, threw the plate into the water, thereby disposing of the evidence. The uproar made by the Christians who watched him do this brought a nearby constable on the scene and Aaron was arrested. The documents include discussion of how Aaron was released from prison after finding two Jewish mainpernors (sureties who, under the old writ of mainprise, guaranteed his appearance at court on the day of his trial), how he did not appear on the day of his trial so the mainpernors (Cresse le Prestre, son of Isaac, and Abraham Honprud) were arrested along with Aaron and had to pay a fine and explain themselves to the king, and how Aaron tried to acquit himself by stating that the charges were brought by persons with grudges against him and that he wanted leave to acquit himself by Jews alone and not Christians. Since Aaron refused to be tried by the customary mixed court, he was sent to Hereford jail until the following February, when he liberated himself by paying a fine of 3 bezants by pledges and 8 shillings of rental income from property in Colchester. He was ordered not to enter Bristol again without a special mandate from the king.

Aaron had been caught during King Edward's campaign to rectify the state of the currency, which was suffering in part due to coin clipping and the introduction of base coinage such as *croccards* and *pollards*. After the coin-clipping arrests of 1278–79, many Jews and, to a lesser extent, Christians continued to be accused and condemned for coinage offences.⁷⁹ Interestingly, in this alleged fraudster Aaron, we have a Jew with familial ties to Colchester but who, we presume, would have spent enough years in Ireland to acquire the sobriquet *de Hibernia*. Yet one can only speculate, sad to say, that this is the reason for his most intriguing name.

After 1290

Mention of Jews in entries concerning the last quarter of the thirteenth century and the turn of the fourteenth – that is, after the 1290 expulsion of the Jews from England – in the *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland* seems limited to the names of Italian merchants trading to Ireland whom Hühner

79 O'Sullivan, *Italian Merchant Bankers*, 92–3; Zefira E. Rokeah, "Money and the Hangman in Late Thirteenth-Century England: Jews, Christians, and Coinage Offences Alleged and Real: Part I", *Transactions* 31 (1988–90): 83–109; Part II, *Transactions* 32 (1990–92): 159–218; Mundill, *England's Jewish Solution*, 104–5; Robin Mundill, "Edward I and the Final Phase of Anglo-Jewry", in Skinner, *Jews in Medieval Britain*, 61–2.

has identified as potentially Jewish, for example Ramucius Jacobi, Coppus Joseph, Coppus Cotenué.⁸⁰

It is likely that Edward I's 1290 edict of expulsion banished the Jews of Ireland as well as their English coreligionists. Certainly, some Jews would have escaped expulsion by converting, which has lead scholars to look carefully at surnames suggestive of Jewish origin such as Jew and Abraham (or MacAbraham). The latter appear in Ormond deeds of the fourteenth and fifteenth century and in other records concerning Cloyne and Cork, but it has been argued that such names in Ireland are seldom of Jewish origin: MacAbraham is more likely to be a corruption of Mac an Bhreitheamhan ("son of the judge"), first anglicized as MacAbrehan; Jacob and Jew are held to be of Anglo-Norman stock.⁸¹ Ireland did not harbour Jews again until the expulsions from Spain and Portugal in the late fifteenth century and the persecution of *conversos* in the sixteenth.⁸²

Conclusion

While historical sources from Gaelic Ireland are extremely limited, restricted mainly to annalistic records, we are fortunate enough to find one single, often cited annal entry mentioning contact with Jews on Irish soil. The content of this entry has been misrepresented in some published discussions: as this study has shown, recourse to the original Irish of the entry in the *Annals of Inisfallen* indicates that the Irish king Tairdelbach rejected the five Jewish visitors of 1079.

As it stands, the only two arguably sound bodies of evidence attesting to Jewish presence in Ireland pertain to the thirteenth century and the Anglo-Norman realm: documents related to Henry III's 1232 grant entrusting Peter de Rivallis with the custody of the Jews of Ireland and, to a far lesser extent, records describing the trial of Aaron de Hibernia in 1283. However, the *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland* does not provide an exhaustive list of all extant records: as its full title suggests, it is only a calendar of records at the time stored in the Public Record Office in London. Nor is *Historic and Municipal Documents of Ireland, A.D. 1172–1320* an exhaustive compilation. There are a range of different types of sources, housed in

80 Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 2, 300, doc. 1527 (12 Feb. 1279; Patent Rolls, 7 Edw. I, m. 24); Sweetman, vol. 5, 23, doc. 56 (Easter 1301–02); Hühner, "Jews of Ireland", 231 n. 2.

81 Edward MacLysaght, *The Surnames of Ireland*, 6th edn (Dublin: Irish American Press, 1997), I, 168; Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 5.

82 Hyman, *Jews of Ireland*, 5–7.

archives throughout Ireland, that have not been included in Sweetman's calendar and there may thus be further mention of Jews in Ireland that have gone unnoticed. Although a great effort would be required, and the results are not guaranteed, the more laborious, curious, or tenacious among us might endeavour to browse through these additional records. Fortunately, the task is not so daunting when armed with resources such as Philomena Connolly's detailed guide to medieval records relating to Ireland, or the CIRCLE Project's searchable online database of all known surviving fragments of the medieval Irish Chancery.⁸³

The Pipe Rolls attest to the reliance of the Welsh marcher lords and possibly Strongbow himself on Jewish creditors to help finance their initial endeavours in Ireland. Close Rolls moreover show that those who, like Roger Bacon, later went to Ireland on the king's service similarly received funding from English Jews. Infrastructure developed by the lord of Meath, Walter de Lacy, in the 1220s is believed to have been financed by his personal Jew, Hamo, back in Hereford. It is thus clear that, at an early stage in conquest, Jewish creditors were located back in England. But by 1232 it is quite possible that lords were financed by Jews who moved to Dublin. The strengthening of royal control – offering them protection in the new territory – may have enticed them to establish a Jewish community in Ireland, as may have the growing number of knights and lesser barons who were looking for finance but who, being lower on the social scale, did not hold lands in England. Furthermore, it seems that this community had a representative to whom Henry III would have written in 1232: the Patent Rolls state that, when Rivallis was granted custody of the Irish Jewry, “scribitur omnibus Judeis per Hiberniam constitutes”.

83 See n. 19 above; see also Richardson and Sayles, *Administration of Ireland*; most recently, Robin Frame, “Rediscovering Medieval Ireland: Irish Chancery Rolls and the Historian”, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Section C 113C (2013): 193–217; “A Calendar of Irish Chancery Letters c. 1244–1509”, <https://chancery.tcd.ie> (accessed 17 Oct. 2019).