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Jewish Archives, Archival Practices, and Jewish-Christian Business Records in the Medieval Holy Roman Empire

Jüdische Archive, Archivpraktiken und jüdisch-christliche Geschäftsurkunden im mittelalterlichen Reich

Abstract: This paper traces the scattered proof for Jewish archival practices, both private and communal, in the medieval Holy Roman Empire. It outlines how these archival practices aimed to organize and conserve written records. I first explain why the production of records led to the need for archival practices and their organization. I then review the available sources for Jewish private and communal archives, while bringing comparative evidence from Christian record-keeping and archival practices. This contribution also demonstrates the significance of Hebrew dorsal notes on Jewish-Christian business records. These dorsal notes are closely linked to Hebrew account books and can serve as indicators of Jewish archival practices. They shed light on the economic and cultural history of moneylending and real estate business between Jews and Christians within this chronological and geographical span. To conclude, the paper discusses the social functions that such archives held in Ashkenazic Jewish communities.

Keywords: Archival Practices; Hebrew Dorsal Notes; Hebrew Account Books

Schlüsselwörter: Archivpraktiken; Hebräische Rückvermerke; Hebräische Geschäftsbücher

In more recent years, the organization of archives and the various records they contained has become an imperative topic of historical research.[1] This is thanks

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in large part to the »archival turn«, which seeks to explore how knowledge and memory have been produced and systematized through documentary collections.[2] While the archives have always held the keys to thorough historical research, the body of literature on the very creation, development, and character of archives has grown only recently.[3] Numerous studies on premodern archival practices have been conducted as a result of this trend; yet, the question of medieval Jewish archives and record-keeping has been seldom raised. Little is known about how Jewish men, women, and entire communities kept their records in the medieval period.[4] In fact, scholars have stated that »no Jewish archive from medieval Ashkenaz is extant«[5] or, more cautiously, that

> [n]o Jewish private or communal archives from medieval Northern and Western Europe exist now in their original context. The Jewish documents known today have been preserved thanks to their conservation by non-Jewish institutions.[6]

While indeed no medieval Jewish archives exist anymore, the sources that have survived from these once-existing archives (today spread across various modern archives) and documents describing them (mostly from Christian institutions) do

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2 ALBERT LLORET: Introduction: The Archival Turn in Medieval Iberian Studies. In: Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures 3 (2014), No. 1, pp. 1–10; SARAH CALLAHAN: When the Dust has Settled: What Was the Archival Turn, and Is It Still Turning? In: Art Journal 83 (2024), No. 1, pp. 74–88.

3 RANDOLPH C. HEAD: Making Archives in Early Modern Europe: Proof, Information and Political Record-Keeping, 1400–1700. Cambridge et al. 2019; FRIEDRICH, The Birth of the Archive (cf. n. 1) (both with further literature); PETER RÜCK: Die Ordnung der herzoglich savoyischen Archive unter Amadeus VIII. (1398–1451). In: Archivalische Zeitschrift 67 (1971), pp. 11–101.

4 The instructive overview by EPHRAIM SHOHAM-STEINER: The Sources. In: The Cambridge History of Judaism: The Middle Ages – The Christian World. Ed. by ROBERT CHAZAN. Cambridge 2018 (The Cambridge History of Judaism; 6), pp. 307–334, here: p. 318, mentions the importance and »the attempt to reconstruct Jewish ›archives‹ of the Middle Ages«.

5 EPHRAIM SHOHAM-STEINER and ELISABETH HOLLENDER: Beyond the Rabbinic Paradigm. In: The Jewish Quarterly Review 111 (2021), No. 2, pp. 236–264, here: p. 237, n. 3.

6 JUDITH OLSZOWY-SCHLANGER: Jewish-Christian ›Notarial‹ Encounters. The Scribes of the Hebrew Documents of Cologne and their Practices. In: Medieval Ashkenaz. Papers in Honour of Alfred Haverkamp. Presented at the 17th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem 2017. Ed. by CHRISTOPH CLUSE and JÖRG R. MÜLLER. Wiesbaden 2021 (Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden; A 31), pp. 207–225, here: p. 207.

provide precious data for reconstructing Jewish archives. A closer look into the Jewish archival practices in the medieval Holy Roman Empire, as well as a comparative study of the broader archival practices of Christian contemporaries can therefore teach us how records were kept, organized, and used among medieval Jews – even if their archives suffered destruction or disruption.

The term »archive« is used in this paper despite the discernable differences between medieval and modern collections of historical documents. Archives are understood here as the consequence of record-making and record-keeping for reasons of »management of property, goods, and relationships« as well as its »accumulation and organization in repositories«, regardless of their varying degrees of size and simplicity.[7] This definition will help shed new light on the importance that Jewish archives and their written records once held to their owners or institutions in all aspects of daily life, be those business records, real estate transactions, municipal privileges, papal bullae, or royal diplomas.[8] All of these records had to be kept for months, years, or even generations. Some written records would change hands of ownership, at times even across religious boundaries when Jews and Christians bought and sold houses or vineyards from or to one another.[9] By researching the ways said records were organized, we can trace and reconstruct the nature of these archives, their records, and their archival as well as documentary practices on both a Jewish private and a communal level. To this end, I will explore how written records were stored in the Middle Ages and how they were organized. Hebrew dorsal notes are key to this discussion. I shall first address the reasons for Jewish archival as well documentary practices in order to establish the character of these archives. I will then present proof for Jewish private and communal archives through Hebrew dorsal notes, connect the written records to Hebrew account books, and finally consider the social functions of Jewish archives and record-keeping.

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7 HEAD, Making Archives (cf. n. 3), p. 1. See also BODO UHL: Die Bedeutung des Provenienzprinzips für Archivwissenschaft und Geschichtsforschung. In: Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte 61 (1998), pp. 97–121; RICHARD PEACE-MOSES: Archives. In: A Glossary of Archives and Records Terminology. Chicago 2005, online via https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms (last accessed 13 January 2025); DIETMAR SCHENK: How to Distinguish between Manuscripts and Archival Records: A Study in Archival Theory. In: Manuscripts and Archives. Comparative Views on Record-Keeping. Ed. by ALESSANDO BAUSI et al. Berlin/Boston 2018 (Studies in Manuscript Cultures; 11), pp. 3–17.
8 See also IVAN HALVÁCEK: Juden in den Premyslidenurkunden und die Frage der jüdischen Archive in Böhmen. In: De litteris, manuscriptis, inscribtionibus … Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Walter Koch. Ed. by Theo KÖLZER et al. Wien 2007, pp. 67–78.
9 For the transfer of promissory notes, see BERNHARD KIRCHGÄSSNER: Zur Geschichte und Bedeutung der Order-Klausel am südwestdeutschen Kapitalmarkt im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert. In: Wirtschaftskräfte und Wirtschaftswege, vol. 1. Ed. by JÜRGEN SCHNEIDER. Stuttgart 1978 (Beiträge zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte; 4), pp. 373–386.

The Production of Records and the Need for Their Organization

The Late Middle Ages saw a substantial growth in the production of written records. While some regions, such as England, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, and some areas of France went through this development at least a century if not two earlier, other areas north of the Alps started producing an influx of records only from the second half of the thirteenth century.[10] Wherever this change in record-making and record-keeping began, its growth was almost exponential. Like their Christian contemporaries, Jews and their communities began keeping more and more written records. While this trend can be understood as a natural result of the increased number of written records they received and produced,[11] it can also be attributed

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10 Michael T. Clanchy: From Memory to Written Record. England 1066–1307. 2nd ed. Oxford 1993; Adam J. Kosto: Making Agreements in Medieval Catalonia. Power, Order, and the Written Word, 1000–1200. Cambridge et al. 2001 (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought; 4.51); Arnold Esch: Überlieferungs-Chance und Überlieferungs-Zufall als methodisches Problem des Historikers. In: Historische Zeitschrift 240 (1985), pp. 529–570; John W. Baldwin: The Government of Philip Augustus. Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages. Berkley, Calif. 1986; Olivier Guyotjeannin and Yann Potin: La fabrique de la perpétuité. Le Trésor des chartes et les archives du royaume (XIIIᵉ–XIXᵉ siècle). In: Revue de Synthèse 125 (2004), pp. 15–44; Harry Breslau: Handbuch der Urkundenlehre für Deutschland und Italien, 2 vols. Leipzig 1912–1931; Irmgard Fees: Eine Stadt lernt schreiben. Venedig vom 10. bis 12. Jahrhundert. Tübingen 2002 (Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom; 103); Stefan Sonderegger: Verluste. Zahlen statt Spekulationen: drei Fälle von quantifizierbaren Urkundenverlusten in der Sanktgaller Überlieferung des Spätmittelalters. In: Archiv für Diplomatik 59 (2013), pp. 433–452.

11 For instructive overviews on Jewish-Christian written records, see Verschriftlichung und Quellenüberlieferung. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Juden und der christlich-jüdischen Beziehungen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich (13./14. Jahrhundert). Ed. by Alfred Haverkamp and Jörg R. Müller. Peine 2014 (Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden; A 25); Martha Keil: Jewish Business Contracts from Late Medieval Austria as Crossroads of Law and Business Practice. In: Religious Minorities in Christian, Jewish and Muslim Law (5th–15th Centuries). Ed. by John V. Tolan, Nora Berend and Youna Hameau–Masset. Turnhout 2017 (Religion and Law in Medieval Christian and Muslim Societies; 8), pp. 353–368; Judith Olszowy-Schlanger: Hebrew Documents and Justice: Forged Quitclaims from Medieval England. In: Religious Minorities (as before), pp. 413–437; ead.: Le roi et ses juifs – les juifs et leur roi: Henri III dans les documents hébreux de l'Angleterre médiévale. In: Saint Louis et les Juifs. Politique et idéologie sous le règne de Louis IX. Ed. by Paul Salmona and Juliette Sibon. Paris 2015, pp. 153–162; ead.: The Money Language: Latin and Hebrew in Jewish Legal Contracts from Medieval England. In: Studies in the History of Culture and Science: A Tribute to Gad Freudenthal. Ed. by Resianne Fontaine et al. Leiden 2011, pp. 233–250; ead.: Hebrew and Hebrew-Latin Documents from Medieval England: a Diplomatic Palaeographical Study, 2 vols. Turnhout 2015 (Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevii. Series Hebraica; 1); Das Judenschreinsbuch der Laurenzpfarre zu Köln. Ed. by Robert Hoeniger and Moritz Stern. Berlin 1888; Benja-

Fig. 1: *Seitenstollentruhe* in the Isenhagen Monastery, around 1400 (Photo: Klosterkammer Hannover, Jörg Richter)

to the increasing trust medieval people put in the written word.[12] Such written records had to be organized and kept safe – safe from theft, water, fire, and the depredations of rats and mice.[13] The medieval world presented many potential dangers to archives and its records – and the collapse of the Historical Archive of the City of Cologne in 2009 seems to suggest that not much has changed since.[14]

MIN LAQUA: Kooperation, Kommunikation, Übersetzung: zur Anlage und Überlieferung des Judenschreinsbuches der Kölner Laurenz-Parochie. In: Verschriftlichung und Quellenüberlieferung (as above), pp. 147–171; EVELINE BRUGGER: Jüdisches Urkundenwesen und christliche Obrigkeiten im spätmittelalterlichen Österreich. In: Die Urkunde. Text – Bild – Objekt. Ed. by ANDREA STIELDORF. Berlin 2019 (Das Mittelalter. Beihefte; 12), pp. 19–40; EAD.: ›All unser brief und register‹. Zur Dokumentation jüdisch-christlicher Kreditgeschäfte im Vorfeld der Wiener Gesera. In: Das Mittelalter. Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung 27 (2022), No. 2, pp. 327–346.

12 PETRA SCHULTE: ›Scripturae publicae creditur‹: das Vertrauen in Notariatsurkunden im kommunalen Italien des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts. Tübingen 2003 (Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom; 101); KATALIN SZENDE: Trust, Authority, and the Written Word in the Royal Towns of Medieval Hungary. Turnhout 2018 (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy; 41).

13 Protective stone houses were still not very common in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, and Siena even purchased a cat in 1337 to protect its communal archive from vermin. See HEAD, Making Archives (cf. n. 3), p. xii.

14 BETTINA SCHMIDT-CZAIA: Einsturz, Bergung und Wiederaufbau: das Historische Archiv der Stadt

Thus, a common way of preserving and storing written records as well as precious books, jewelry, and all kinds of other objects was the use of wooden chests and trunks (see fig. 1). The sources frequently differentiate between trunks, which were rather large, and chests, which were of smaller size. Chests would sometimes carry a single and especially important written record, while several of these smaller chests could fit into a larger trunk. An example of this is beautifully attested to in a record from 1423, when a record was kept »within the trunk in the small chest«.[15] Based on the surviving material evidence, trunks seem to have had dimensions of up to approximately 2x1x1 meters while chests were significantly smaller with about 15x40x20 cm.[16] Quite a number of these objects have survived – far more than other furniture – as a likely result of their importance, continued use, and mobility over the centuries.

Chests and Trunks in Jewish Homes

What did such archives with their chests and trunks look like in Jewish homes? The sources provide a good picture. Due to their richness, I shall start with late examples and work my way back towards the earlier centuries. An inventory list of objects found in Jewish homes from Regensburg in the year 1476 helps to illus-

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Köln. In: Stadt zwischen Erinnerungsbewahrung und Gedächtnisverlust. Ed. by Joachim J. Halbekann, Ellen Widder and Sabine von Heusinger. Ostfildern 2015, pp. 375–386.

15 Klagenfurt, Kärntner Landesarchiv, Allgemeine Urkundenreihe, AT-KLA 418-B-C 2454 St, online via https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-KLA/AUR/AT-KLA_418-B-C_2454_St/charter (last accessed 13 January 2025): *in der Truhen in der kleinen Laden.*

16 For surviving examples, see Horst Appuhn: Briefladen. In: Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch 34 (1972), pp. 31–44; id.: Briefladen aus Niedersachsen und Nordrhein-Westfalen. Cappenberg 1971; id.: Mittelalterliche Truhen in Kloster Ebstorf. In: Jahrbuch des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg 3 (1984), pp. 49–62; Chris Pickvance: Medieval Domed Chests in Kent: A Contribution to a National and International Study. In: Regional Furniture 26 (2012), pp. 105–147; Robert Schmidt: Mittelalterliche Truhen aus Niedersachsen. In: Pantheon 13 (1934), pp. 184–188. For the smaller chests, see Horst Appuhn: ›Rosa‹ und die anderen Briefladen aus dem Rathaus zu Dortmund. Zur Bedeutung der Sterne und Rosetten an mittelalterlichen Möbeln. In: Aachener Kunstblätter 41 (1971), pp. 267–274, who also concludes at p. 268 that the trunks only became necessary in the Late Middle Ages when the production of records grew, while chests were already used earlier. Records could, however, also be stored in other vessels. For some evidence of hiding pawns and possibly also records in dough troughs and under the beds, see Gerd Mentgen: Studien zur Geschichte der Juden im mittelalterlichen Elsaß. Hannover 1995 (Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden; A 2), p. 544, n. 502. It seems that the sources do not always differentiate clearly between the small chests and the large trunks.

trate the method and extent to which Jews stored records.[17] This inventory list was drawn up carefully and in no haste by a (Christian) municipal scribe after the Jewish elite of Regensburg was incarcerated due to a blood libel accusation.[18] To document Jewish goods and probably aiming to have better knowledge about what the jailed Jews owned, this inventory was a good foundation upon which to build the local municipal council's future negotiations, potential payments, and bribes.

It seems that some Jews who had not yet or only briefly been jailed – especially wives and children – were present when this inventory list was drawn up. They explained to the municipal scribe some of the objects where necessary. To give but one example: the *besamim* (spice) box in one of the homes was likely unknown to the scribe, who then asked its purpose. He recorded: »1 silver monstrance, [in the] Jewish [language] it is called a *haydesch*«,[19] i. e. *haydesch* referring *hadas* (myrtle). The record also shows that the official went from house to house to draw up his inventory. The first house was that of Mayr Schalman, whose home stored several objects, including Christian religious relics that appear to have been pawns: the *paternoster* (rosaries) with crosses or the *agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) motif, single crosses, chains with a cross, an image of Mary with a star, and a Christian prayer book. It is not always simple to discern the everyday household items from the pawns. However, as many objects were also explicitly designated as »Jewish« – a *besamim* box (see above), a Jewish ink box, a brown Jewish coat, a blue coat for Jewish women, a brown coat for Jewish women, a gilded Jewish object, Jewish books, and a black Jewish coat – the house inventory list clearly appears to be a mix of pawns and private belongings.[20]

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17 WILHELM VOLKERT: Das Regensburger Judenregister von 1476. In: Festschrift für Andreas Kraus zum 60. Geburtstag. Ed. by PANKRAZ FRIED. Kallmünz 1982 (Münchner Historische Studien. Abt. Bayerisches Geschichte; 10), pp. 115–141. This source was recently mined for Hebrew books by ILONA STEIMANN: Books in a Medieval Household: Ashkenazi Book Collecting in Its Material Context. In: Ars Judaica 18 (2022), pp. 91–109. For other house inventories in medieval Europe, see the DALME database, online via https://dalme.org/ (last accessed 6 September 2024), which also holds the Regensburg inventory with images, online via https://dalme.org/collections/jewish-households/records/?collection=24&search=regensburg (last accessed 26 January 2025).

18 MORITZ STERN: Der Regensburger Judenprozeß 1476–1480. In: Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft 20 (1929), pp. 157–179; SOPHIA SCHMITT: ›In eisernen Ketten.‹ Die Regensburger Judengemeinde unter Ritualmordanklage (1476–1480). PhD ms., München 2019; EAD.: Die Regensburger Öffentlichkeit und der Ritualmordvorwurf gegen die jüdische Gemeinde (1476–1480). In: Jüdische Lebenswelten in Regensburg – Eine gebrochene Geschichte. Ed. by KLAUS HIMMELSTEIN. Regensburg 2018, pp. 46–66.

19 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 127: *1 sylbern monstranz, judisch haist es ein haydesch.*

20 For example VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 127: *1 judisch dimpich*; p. 130: *1 prawner juden mantl*; p. 131: 1 *plaber judishen frawen mantl* [...] *1 prawn judischer frawen mantl*;

More important for our discussion, however, are the many chests, trunks, boxes, bags, and cupboards mentioned among their contents. Some of these vessels were filled with different coins, others with jewelry, books, and further trinkets. Many also contained written records. At one point the Christian scribe wrote: »All that which was written above is [stored] with many written records in a trunk«.[21] The inventory of Schalman's house allows us to follow the official through the various rooms and locate where different items were stored. The room in which said trunk was located must have been the main entryway or foyer of Schalman's house. The scribe then moved on to the bedroom, where, among »all kinds of stuff« (*allerlai gerumpl*) and »some pawns« (*ettliche pfant*), he also mentioned »1 cupboard with Jewish written records.«[22] It is very likely that »Jewish written records« refers to records written in Hebrew script here, since other records in the inventory list are not explicitly characterized as »Jewish«. In general, the scribe distinguished between »Jewish« and »Christian« whenever necessary, for example, »1 Christian prayer book, 3 Jewish [i. e. Hebrew] books, 1 trunk, and in it 12 Jewish [i. e. Hebrew] books«.[23]

For the home of Sadia Straubinger, the scribe again mentioned a vast number of other things, including: »1 small trunk with written records«; »leather sheaths with written records, also 1 small trunk with written records and some pawns, 1 chest with written records«; »chests with written records« in a cupboard; and finally »1 chest with some written records« in the small living room.[24] From Sadia's home,

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p. 134: *3 judenpucher,* [...] *1 schwarczer juden mantl.* On Christian devotional objects as pawns in Jewish hands, see also Joseph Shatzmiller: Cultural Exchange: Jews, Christians, and Art in the Medieval Marketplace. Princeton, NJ/Oxford 2013 (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World); Jörg R. Müller: Zur Verpfändung sakraler Kultgegenstände an Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich: Norm und Praxis. In: Pro multis beneficiis. Festschrift für Friedhelm Burgard. Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden und des Trierer Raums. Ed. by Sigrid Hirbodain et al. Trier 2012 (Trierer historische Forschungen; 68), pp. 179–204; Birgit Wiedl: Sacred Objects in Jewish Hands. Two Case Studies. In: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe: The Historiographical Legacy of Bernhard Blumenkranz. Ed. by Philippe Buc, Martha Keil and John Tolan. Turnhout 2016, pp. 57–77. See also Daniel L. Smail: Legal Plunder: Households and Debt Collection in Late Medieval Europe. Cambridge, Mass./London 2016, who shows how objects simply were used while being pawned. As for horses, see Aviya Doron: Pawned Horses: Risk and Liability in Fourteenth Century German Small Credit Market. In: Medieval Encounters 27 (2021), No. 4/5, pp. 387–409.

21 Volkert, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 125: *Das obgeschriben alles mit vil briefen in einer truhen.*

22 Volkert, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 125: *1 almrein mit judenbriefen.* However, there is no surety that this refers to Hebrew since such terms can vary regionally.

23 Volkert, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 134: *1 cristengesangpuch, 3 judenpucher, 1 truhl, darin 12 judenpucher.*

24 Volkert, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), pp. 127–128: *1 truchl mit brieffen* [...] *lidrein futrall mit brieffen, mer 1 klain truhl mit brieffen und ettlichen pfanten, 1 lafftl mit briefen* [...] *lefften mit briefen* [...] *1 kasten sind ettlich brief.*

Fig. 2: A Jewish man steals objects from a trunk. Above it the command »Thou shalt not steal« in Hebrew. Courtesy of The Jewish Theological Seminary, MS 8972, fol. 125r, between 1294 and 1325

it is evident how many different trunks and chests were filled with documents. The other Jewish houses in the inventory list contained similar objects, among them:

> »3 bags with written records«[25]
> »1 chest with written records, 13 packages [of written records] in a trunk«[26]
> »1 trunk with written records«[27]
> »1 chest with 9 sealed parchment records, 4 sealed paper records, 1 paper note, 2 sealed records in a leather box«[28]
> »Chests with written records«[29]
> »3 chests with all kinds of written records, another chest, also with written records«[30]
> »A chest with 4 written records«[31]
> »A chest with written records, 1 trunk with written records, also 1 decorated trunk with written records«[32]
> »1 small trunk, in it [...] some written records«[33]
> »1 trunk, in it [...] many written records«[34] and
> »1 trunk [...], in it [...] some written records«.[35]

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25 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 129: *3 seckl mit briffen.*
26 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 130: *1 ladl mit brieffen, 13 peck in einer Truhen.*
27 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 131: *1 truh mit briffen.*
28 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 132: *1 schatl mit 9 pergamen brief versigelt, 4 pappirn brief versigelt, 1 papirzetl, 2 brief versigelt in einer ledren puchsen.*
29 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 132: *lafften mit brieff.*
30 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 132: *3 lafftl mit allerlay briefen, 1 lefftl auch mit briefen.*
31 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 133: *ein schatl mit 4 briefen.*
32 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 135: *a lafftl mit briefen, 1 truhel mit briffen, mer 1 gemalt truhl mit brifen.*
33 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 135: *1 klain truhl, darin [...] ettlich brif.*
34 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 138: *1 truhen, darin [...] vil brif.*
35 VOLKERT, Das Regensburger Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 138: *1 truhen [...], darin [...] ettlich brief.*

Fig. 3: Trunks in the Hebrew manuscript *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* (»Fables from the Distant Past«), 1450. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Oppenheim 154, fol. 12v

It might seem superfluous to go through all these details of the inventory. Yet, it shows very clearly that Jews kept many chests, trunks, boxes, and even bags in their homes at that time. These were abundantly filled with an array of items – including many documents. The house inventory list also shows that even small chests could contain numerous written documents.[36]

The presented evidence is comparable to the inventories of Christian contemporaries, as they too stored their written records and precious objects in chests and trunks in their homes and institutions. Already in 1313, we see this in the will of a certain Strasbourg citizen, John Engilbert, stipulating that he had kept documents in a trunk (*cista*).[37] When the Cathedral Chapter of Trier was in a dispute with the

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36 See also WALTER R. C. ABEGGLEN: Die Lade des Steinmetz-Handwerks von Schaffhausen. In: Schaffhauser Beiträge zur Geschichte 78 (2004), pp. 223–229, with a larger craft's guild chest of 39x57x47 cm in which the stonemasons of Schaffhausen probably stored their important records as well as their corporative seal in the 17th century.

37 GERD MENTGEN: Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden im Elsass (1373–1347). In: Corpus der Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden im spätmittelalterlichen Reich. Ed. by ALFRED HAVERKAMP and JÖRG R.

Archbishop of Trier, Otto of Ziegenhain, in 1428, they sent »a large trunk with many of [their] old bullae, privileges, and charters upriver via the Mosel to Cologne into the Cathedral«,[38] where the chest together with large parts of the Trier Cathedral's treasury was kept until the dispute had been settled. In another case, a deed of sale from 1486 confirms that »some written records in a trunk« that had been deposited in the house of the Teutonic Order in (Bad) Mergentheim and previously given to the Count of Henneberg were returned to a Christian family.[39] Likewise, in the year 1465, the heirs of the Christian woman Kunigunde went to the court of Duke Louis IX »because of the decorated trunks, in which also the written records and jewelry were kept«.[40] Jews too received chests and trunks filled with pawns, as the aforementioned house inventory list from Regensburg proves. When writing about the devastating pogroms against Jewish communities at the time of the Black Death, the Dominican chronicler Heinrich von Herford claimed that »many precious things long lost and singular, which had almost passed into oblivion, were found in their trunks [*archivis*].«[41] Frankfurt court records, where Jews summoned Christian debtors and their pawns after these debtors failed to pay back their credits, also give evidence of storage in trunks and chests.[42] In 1378, for example, the Jewish woman Pure from Trier brought a trunk (*schrin*) with jewelry and different kinds of cloth to the civic court.[43]

MÜLLER. Trier/Mainz 2014, EL01, no. 85, online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/EL01/CP1-c1-00v1.html (last accessed 20 September 2023).

38 GOTTFRIED KENTENICH: Ein Verzeichnis des Trierer Domschatzes aus dem Jahre 1429. In: Trierisches Archiv 24/25 (1916), pp. 228–231, here: p. 229: *eyn groiss Kist mit etzlichen unsern alden Bullen, Privilegien und Brieffen die Moisel abe gen Coellen in den Doyme.* For another example, see CHRISTIAN LACKNER: Des Kaisers Urkundentruhe 1456. In: Das Notizbuch Kaiser Friedrichs III. Vorträge der interdisziplinären Tagung vom 17. und 18. November 2022. Ed. by MARTIN WAGENDORFER. Wiesbaden 2024 (MGH Schriften; 83), pp. 243–254.

39 Wien, Deutschordenszentralarchiv, Urkunden 4243, online via https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-DOZA/Urkunden/4243/charter (last accessed 13 January 2025): *etlich brief in einer kisten.*

40 München, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Kloster St. Emmeram, Regensburg Urkunden 1845 (1465 Juli 27), online via https://www.monasterium.net/mom/DE-BayHStA/KURegensburgStEmmeram/001845/charter (last accessed 13 January 2025): *Umbs soliche bemelte Truhen, auch die brieve und clainet darinn ligende.*

41 Liber de rebus memorabilioribus sive Chronicon Henri de Hervordia. Ed. by AUGUST POTTHAST. Göttingen 1859, p. 280: *Clenodia diu predita et singularia multa, que jam quasi transiverant in oblivionem, in archivis eorum invenienbantur.*

42 For this, see the contribution by Aviya Doron in the second volume of this special issue.

43 DAVID SCHNUR: Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden in Frankfurt und der Wetterau (1348–1390). In: Corpus der Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden im spätmittelalterlichen Reich. Ed. by ALFRED HAVERKAMP and JÖRG R. MÜLLER. Trier/Mainz 2016, FW02, no. 1393, online via https://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/FW02/FW-c1-00lg.html (last accessed 10 September 2024): *I schrin mit cleinode und I graue duch und I mengig duch und I swarz stucke und I halb striffit duche.* In fact, the German legal terms *Schreinspfand* or *Kistenpfand* designate pawned mobile goods in a chest or trunk. See

But why so many chests and trunks? In addition to the aforementioned reasons for such chests and trunks, which often had locks attached to them, they were highly mobile. They could be moved with relative ease from one place to another – from house to house, and from town to town. Chests and trunks with their crucial written records sometimes had to be moved quickly, for example, in times of war or during a fire.[44] Without any mention of its contents, one trunk belonging to the monastery of Isenhagen was called »the travel trunk of the abbess« in 1540, pointing to its mobility and importance.[45]

That medieval Christians required the high mobility of records in boxes, chests, and trunks is dually instructive for Jewish requirements for mobility, as they were exposed to pogroms or expulsions and relocated to different towns quite frequently. The fact that Jews kept precious objects such as books in trunks and chests in their homes is already known from *Sefer Hasidim*, a late twelfth-/early thirteenth-century moral compendium from German lands.[46] As for the written records, it is not clear how many Jews had to keep and organize them. Even though several trunks, chests, and other vessels were recorded with »many« or »some« written records in the inventory list of Jewish homes from Regensburg, concrete numbers cannot be estimated from this list.

Other sources prove more instructive in terms of sheer numbers of records within the Jewish archives. After the end of the Jewish community in Erfurt in 1453/54, several probably confiscated moneylending records of its Jewish owners were kept by the municipal council. Among these were 59 business records of the Jewish family called »from Arnstadt« that have survived until today.[47] A ducal inventory of the

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Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch, Art. Kistenpfand, online via https://drw.hadw-bw.de/drw-cgi/zeige?index=lemmata&term=Kistenpfand (last accessed 25 January 2025).

44 Karin Czaja: Häuser, Truhen und Bücher. Familienarchive der spätmittelalterlichen Stadt. In: Häuser, Namen, Identitäten: Beiträge zur spätmittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Stadtgeschichte. Ed. by Karin Czaja and Gabriela Signori. Konstanz 2009 (Spätmittelalterstudien; 1), pp. 109–122, here: p. 114.

45 Appuhn, ›Rosa‹ (cf. n. 16), p. 273, n. 5. When the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna extended its compound by building new rooms around 1900, the administration of this modern archive still decided to keep the records in boxes precisely because they were more comfortable and quicker to move if one had to flee the building or even the city. See Alexander Aichinger and Kathrin Kininger: Vom Umgang mit Urkunden in der Praxis. Konservatorische und pragmatische Aspekte der Lagerung von mittelalterlichen und neuzeitlichen Urkunden am Beispiel des Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs in Wien. In: Scrinium 71 (2017), pp. 131–138, here: p. 132.

46 Sefer Hasidim (Das Buch der Frommen). Ed. by Judah Wistinetzki. 2. ed. Frankfurt a. M. 1924, §§ 640, 646, 648, 668, and 1260. Here, the word *teiva* (תיבה) is used.

47 Together with Maike Lämmerhirt, I am currently preparing a book study about this corpus. Until then, see Thomas Müller: Studien zur Geschichte der Juden in Thüringen im späten Mittelalter. M.A. thesis ms., Trier 1998; Andreas Lehnertz: Hebräische Rückvermerke an Thüringer Geschäft-

goods and belongings of the Jews from the Austrian Duchy who were murdered or expelled in 1420/21 lists »lots of notes and inventories of the [...] Jews« with »jewelry, silverworks, and [records of] debts«.[48] When Jews from Regensburg were forced to hand over their debt records to the city council in 1384, some families had numerous such documents. David and his wife Plümel even declared that they turned in »73 moneylending records«.[49] These records were still running obligations, and therefore required for submission by the Jewish couple. As much as 49 moneylending records have survived from Gottschalk Recklinghausen in Overijssel from the first half of the fourteenth century. Their owner was stripped of these files through confiscation during the pogrom at the time of the Black Death.[50] Of yet another Jewish moneylender called Isaac from Brüx (today in Bavaria) three registers with credit transactions have survived from the year 1453.[51] These three registers list 140 running obligations, and one of the three lists mentions 19 promissory notes stored »in a new chest«.[52] It seems, therefore, that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries at least some Jewish archives contained higher numbers of moneylending records.[53] While such evidence related to moneylending has survived in abundance, other types of written records would have been collected and archived as well.

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surkunden des Mittelalters: Überreste jüdischer Archive und Einblicke in Wirtschaftspraktiken. In: Jüdische Geschichte in Thüringen: Strukturen und Entwicklungen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert. Ed. by Hans-Werner Hahn and Marko Kreutzmann. Köln 2023 (Veröffentlichung der Historischen Kommission für Thüringen. Kleine Reihe; 64), pp. 65–79.

48 Eveline Brugger: ...*hat ein hebräisch zettel dabey*. Der Umgang mit jüdisch-christlichen Geschäftsurkunden im spätmittelalterlichen Österreich. In: Abrahams Erbe. Konkurrenz, Konflikt und Koexistenz der Religionen im europäischen Mittelalter. Ed. by Klaus Oschema, Ludger Lieb and Johannes Heil. Berlin/München/Boston 2015 (Das Mittelalter. Beihefte; 2), pp. 421–436, here: p. 427: *vilerlei zetlen und inventari der [...] Juden [...] clainat, silbergschmeidt und schulden*.

49 München, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Reichsstadt Regensburg Urkunden 2517 (1384 May 31): *drey und sibentzikch brif [...], di uns umb geltschulde sagen*. For historical context, see Andreas Lehnertz: Judensiegel im spätmittelalterlichen Reichsgebiet. Beglaubigungspraxis und Selbstrepräsentation von Jüdinnen und Juden. Wiesbaden 2020 (Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden; A 30), pp. 167–228.

50 Christoph Cluse: Studien zur Geschichte der Juden in den mittelalterlichen Niederlanden. Hannover 2000 (Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden; A 10), pp. 121–131.

51 Maike Lämmerhirt: Juden in den wettinischen Herrschaftsgebieten. Recht, Verwaltung und Wirtschaft im Spätmittelalter. Köln/Weimar/Wien 2007 (Historische Kommission für Thüringen. Kleine Reihe; 21), pp. 352–357.

52 Lämmerhirt, Juden in den wettinischen Herrschaftsgebieten (cf. n. 51), p. 355: *Disz sind die briffe, die mir Isagk Jude geantwort had yn eyner neyen kystin.*

53 See also Markus J. Wenninger: Das Nachlassverzeichnis der Jüdin Scharlat von Görz. In: Verschriftlichung und Quellenüberlieferung. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Juden und der christlich-jüdischen Beziehungen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich (13./14. Jahrhundert). Ed. by Jörg R. Müller and Alfred Haverkamp. Peine 2014 (Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden; A 25), pp. 97–122.

Hebrew Dorsal Notes – A Key to Organizing One's Archive

With so many written records filling these chests and trunks, one must address how they were effectively organized. The records within these trunks were diverse in content and language, ranging from vernaculars and Hebrew to Latin. Even if Jewish men and women were able to read these languages, a more efficient method of identifying each document and preserving it from material stress had to be applied.

The solution to this time-consuming problem was to write dorsal notes. Parchment and paper records were folded into small-sized packages, possibly to protect the waxen seal(s) which one could cautiously tuck into the folds, as hundreds of thousands of surviving medieval records show. While the text on the recto side of the written record was protected inside the package together with its seal(s), the verso side was marked with a note or short summary of the record's contents. Jews thus used dorsal notes, almost exclusively in the Hebrew language, for their record-keeping and archival practices.[54] One such example is a promissory note from 1334 (see fig. 4) that illustrates how, when folded into a package, there were two blank sides on which the dorsal notes were placed. One dorsal note is a modern archival notation, the other a medieval Hebrew inscription reading »My brother-in-law Leon Cohen« (גיסי ליאון כהן). While the text of the charter on the verso side mentions *Lewen Judeus Gallicus* – i. e. a French Jew –, the Hebrew dorsal note on the recto side informs us only about the brother-in-law Leon Cohen, who presumably was a partner in his business. One can infer from this that Leo – and not Leon – ran this business and kept the record in his archive (see fig. 4).

Information like the one quoted above is precious for the reconstruction of Jewish archives. However, it has taken many years for the subject of dorsal notes to pique scholarly interest. Dorsal notes in the Latin language written by Christians received some attention during the second half of the twentieth century, but still appear to be understudied for Christian private archives.[55] In the field of Jewish

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54 Hebrew dorsal notes are also known from outside the Empire. For example, for southern France see JUDITH KOGEL: Salomon Mossé, Juif de Toulouse: Notable, érudit et médicin. In: Revue des études juives 181 (2022), pp. 5–15. While this is not surprising, it is worth noting that Lombards – Christian moneylenders – from the same period do not appear to have used dorsal notes systematically to organize their written records and archives. Many thanks to Winfried Reichert for providing me access to his rich database.

55 PAUL STAERKLE: Die Rückvermerke der älteren St. Galler Urkunden. St. Gallen 1966 (Mitteilungen zur vaterländischen Geschichte St. Gallen; 45); ID.: Die Rückvermerke der rätischen Urkunden. In: Freiburger Geschichtsblätter 52 (1963/64), pp. 1–13; OTTO P. CLAVADTSCHER and PAUL STAERKLE: Dorsualnotizen der älteren St. Galler Urkunden: Faksimile-Ausg. St. Gallen 1970 (Urkundenbuch der
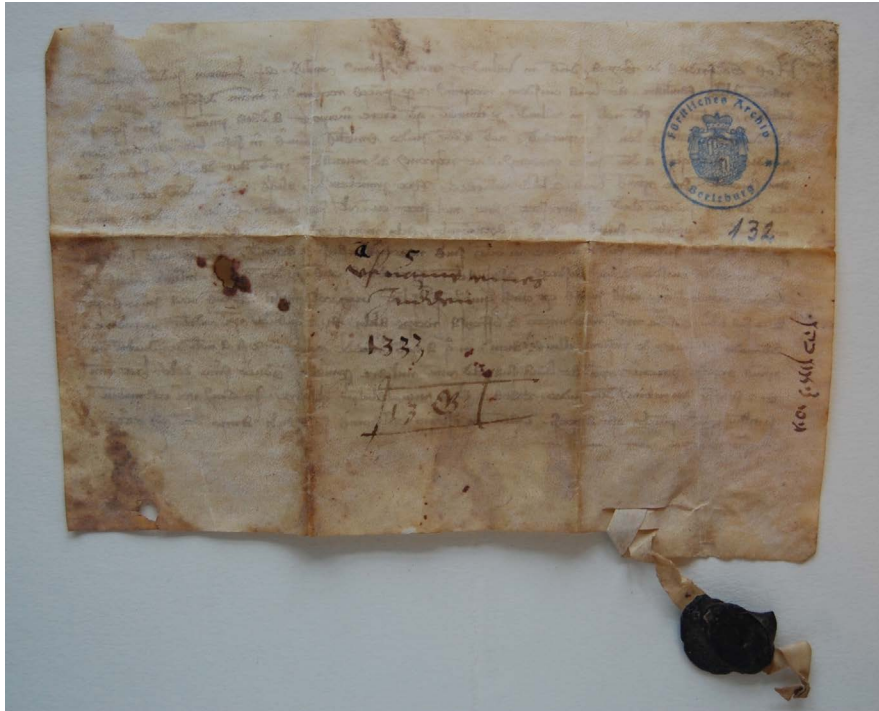
Fig. 4: Charter dating to 1334 with folding, seal, and dorsal notes. Berleburg, Fürstliches Archiv, Nr. 132v

Studies, scholars recently started exploring Hebrew dorsal notes as well as other Hebrew marginalia on records.[56] This has paved the way for current projects that collect, edit, and translate these notes on historical records related to the history

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Abtei St. Gallen; Ergänzungsheft 2); WERNER DELBANCO: Ein Leben im Verborgenen: Rückvermerke auf den Urkunden des Stifts Börstel. In: Osnabrücker Mitteilungen 103 (1998), pp. 43–70.

56 CHRISTIAN SCHOLL: Hebräische Rückvermerke als Quellen für den Historiker: Erkenntnismöglichkeiten und Überlieferung anhand Ulmer Beispiele des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts. In: HAVERKAMP/MÜLLER (eds.), Verschriftlichung (cf. n. 53), pp. 83–96; DAVID SCHNUR: Die Juden in Frankfurt am Main und in der Wetterau im Mittelalter: christlich-jüdische Beziehungen, Gemeinden, Recht und Wirtschaft von den Anfängen bis um 1400. Wiesbaden 2017 (Schriften der Kommission für die Geschichte der Juden in Hessen; 30), pp. 431–447; MARTHA KEIL: ›… und seinem Köcher Anglis.‹ Kulturtransfer, Polemik und Humor in jüdischen Geschäftsurkunden des mittelalterlichen Österreich. In: Aschkenas. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden 26 (2016), No. 1, pp. 101–116; EAD., Contracts (cf. n. 11); VERONIKA NICKEL: (Wieder-)entdeckte Urkunden aus dem Landesarchiv Tirol in Innsbruck. In: Archiv für Diplomatik 61 (2015), pp. 279–290; ANDREAS LEHNERTZ: Katavti al ha-tsetel – Aschkenasische Wörter in Quellen des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts. In: Jiddistik-Mitteilungen 51 (2014), pp. 1–15; ID.: Hebräische Dorsualvermerke. In: Zu Gast bei Juden: Leben in der

Fig. 5: Hebrew dorsal note about the debts of Peter Schertil [also: Schertul] owned to the Jew Secklin on a charter dating to 1342. Frankfurt, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Juden Urkunden 87

of the Jews in the medieval Holy Roman Empire and provide a further basis for studying Jewish archives.[57]

Hebrew dorsal notes provide crucial new details about Jewish-Christian business relations as well as Jewish documentary and archival practices. While the bulk of records with Hebrew dorsal notes stems from moneylending transactions, they are also found in relation to real estate transactions, municipal privileges, papal bullae, or royal diplomas. Those pertaining to moneylending were usually written according to a standard pattern of three pieces of information: the name of the creditor, the credit sum, and the payback date. For example, a charter from Frankfurt dated to 1342 bears the Hebrew dorsal note »Peter Schertul, 3 pounds, until Michaelmas« (see fig. 5).[58]

Although names were written in the vernacular, it is still sometimes possible to discern the writer's native tongue from the dorsal notes. For example, in 1382 Master Isaac from Tanne received a record of moneylending in the German vernacular onto which he wrote a dorsal note using several French words in Hebrew script, such as *janvier* (יינווייר) for January.[59] Isaac obviously spoke French as his native tongue. Currencies, on the other hand, were usually noted in Hebrew terms derived from the Hebrew Bible: for example, *zehuvim* (זהובים) for *Gulden*, *kesef* (כסף) for silver, or *gedolim* (גדולים) for *Grois*. However, there are also currencies not related

mittelalterlichen Stadt: Begleitband zur Ausstellung. Ed. by Dᴏʀᴏᴛʜᴇᴀ Wᴇʟᴛᴇᴄᴋᴇ with the collaboration of Mᴀʀᴇɪᴋᴇ Hᴀʀᴛᴍᴀɴɴ. Konstanz 2017, pp. 179–183; ɪᴅ., Hebräische Rückvermerke (cf. n. 47).
57 Corpus der Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden im spätmittelalterlichen Reichsgebiet, online via www.medieval-ashkenaz.org; Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter, online via http://www.injoest.ac.at/en/projects/projects-in-progress/medieval-jewish-documents (last accessed 13 January 2025).
58 Sᴄʜɴᴜʀ, Die Juden (cf. n. 56), p. 434, n. 162: פיטר שרטול ג׳ ליטר׳ עד מיצל.
59 Bern, Staatsarchiv Kanton, F. Kyburg 138 II 20.

to Biblical terms, such as *Schock* (שוק).[60] Payback dates are almost exclusively oriented towards Christian dates, often meaning Saint's and Feast days – albeit the latter was usually worded in polemical terms. Examples are *yehoram* (יחרם) – i. e. »may he be destroyed« – for St. John or *hoshekh* (חושך) – i. e. »darkness« – for Candlemas, which is *Mariä Lichtmess* in German.[61] Few Hebrew dorsal notes point to tension in business between Jews and Christians. The Erfurt-based moneylender Haim Gans received a promissory note from his Christian business partner in 1429. However, about two years later, he added a comment to his previous Hebrew dorsal note to explain that he had received parts of the given credit and that his Christian business partner was a liar (lit. »he lies«, הוא משקר).[62] Information like this helps us gain better insight into the temporality of moneylending since the credit was not yet paid back after two years and the obligation was still open. Further information provided by Hebrew dorsal notes and not known from the main text of the charters can be hidden interest rates, guarantors, and evidence about business consortia.[63] The latter remain vital for the present study, as a Hebrew dorsal note written by Heilmann from Frankfurt shows on a charter from 1344. This note proves that Heilmann's business partner and relative owed only one quarter of the credit sum/benefit: »one quarter [belongs to] my brother-in-law Fyde« – and it is safe to assume that Heilmann kept the charter because he was leading this business deal.[64] Another record of Heilmann's business from 1348 bears a Hebrew dorsal note which reveals that »half [of the capital/the benefit belongs to] my mother«.[65] It

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60 An analysis of different currencies is provided in Isidore Loeb: Deux livres de commerce du commencement du XIVᵉ siècle. In: Revue des études juives 8 (1884), pp. 161–196 and 9 (1884), pp. 21–50, 187–213.

61 Keil, Köcher (cf. n. 54). For calendars in general and the Hebrew polemical terms, see also Justine Isserles and C. Philipp E. Nothaft: Calendars Beyond Borders: Exchange of Calendrical Knowledge Between Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe (12th–15th Century). In: Medieval Encounters 20 (2014), pp. 1–37; Elisheva Baumgarten: Shared and Contested Time: Jews and the Christian Ritual Calendar in the Late Thirteenth Century. In: Viator 46 (2015), pp. 253–276; ead.: Christian Time in a Jewish Miscellany: A Hebrew Christian Calendar from Thirteenth Century Northern France. In: La cohabitation religieuse dans les villes européennes, Xᵉ–XVᵉ siècles. Ed. by Stéphane Boissellier and John V. Tolan. Turnhout 2014 (Religion and Law in Medieval Christian and Muslim Societies; 3), pp. 169–184.

62 Magdeburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Rep. U14 XLVII, no. 50.

63 Examples in Schnur, Die Juden (cf. n. 56), pp. 431–447; Keil, Köcher (cf. n. 54); ead., Contracts (cf. n. 11); Lehnertz, Hebräische Dorsualvermerke (cf. n. 56); id., Hebräische Rückvermerke (cf. n. 47).

64 Schnur, Quellen (cf. n. 43), FW01, no. 214, online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/FW01/CP1-c1-006g.html (last accessed 19 January 2021): רביעית לוידא גיסי.

65 Schnur, Quellen (cf. n. 43), FW02, no. 37, online via https://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/source/view/2125 (last accessed 14 January 2025): חצי אמי.
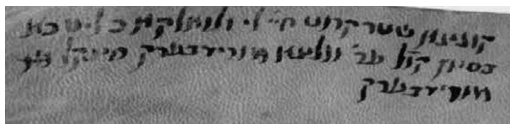
Fig. 6: Handwriting of the Jewish woman Fromut on a record from 1346. Frankfurt, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Juden Urkunden 138

shows that it was Heilmann, who archived this written record and added an archival note – and not his mother.

Even though evidence of Jewish men and their record-keeping has been central to the discussion thus far, it is important to emphasize that Jewish women kept records as well. Some of the Hebrew dorsal notes prove that these Jewish women read and wrote their own notes. To give just one example: A record from Frankfurt dating to the year 1346 was issued for the Jew Falk of Münzenberg as well as for the Jewish woman Fromut zum Spessart. The Hebrew dorsal note testifies to this record having been kept in Fromut's archive. Consequently, it was she who wrote the following note: »Kunze Starkrut [i. e. the Christian debtor] owes me and Falk 20 pounds.«[66] This proves that Fromut not only kept the record in her archive, but also wrote the Hebrew dorsal note herself for the sake of her own organization (see fig. 6).

Beyond the rich information preserved on the backs of promissory notes, further data regarding how Jewish communities preserved important written records can be provided from the dorsal notes on papal bullae, royal diploma, and municipal privileges. For example, a record issued by Pope Gregory X from 1274, which inserted a bull of his predecessor Pope Innocent VI, exonerates the Jews of the Holy Roman Empire from blood libel accusations. The Jewish community of Cologne received a copy of this record. Its Hebrew dorsal note reads »So that one shall not believe in the eating of the Christian boys [lit. the impure]«.[67] Records of such high significance must have been kept in some sort of communal archive by the Jewish community. Similarly, the Jewish community of Frankfurt received copies of papal bulls for the same reason, and both have the Hebrew dorsal note »This is the record

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66 SCHNUR, Quellen (cf. n. 43), FW01, no. 250, online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/FW01/CP1-c1-018m.html (last accessed 21 January 2021): קונצא שטרקרוט חיי' לי ולואלקא כ' ליט'. For other examples see KEIL, Contracts (cf. n. 11), pp. 364–365; EAD., Köcher (cf. n. 54), p. 107. For the Jewish women Reynette in Koblenz, who seems to have written Hebrew dorsal notes in the second half of the fourteenth century as well, see ANDREAS LEHNERTZ: Margarete, Reynette and Meide: Three Jewish Women from Koblenz in the 14th Century. In: Jewish Studies Quarterly 28 (2021), No. 4, pp. 388–405, here: p. 400.

67 BENJAMIN LAQUA: Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden in der Stadt Köln (1273–1349). In: HAVERKAMP/MÜLLER (eds.), Corpus (cf. n. 43). Trier/Mainz 2016, KO01, no. 3, online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/KO01/CP1-c1-02tk.html (last accessed 15 January 2021): שלא להאמין לאכילת שקצים.
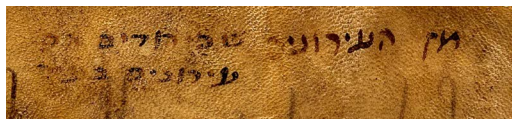
Fig. 7: Hebrew dorsal note on a record from Koblenz dating to 1307. Koblenz, Stadtarchiv, Best. 623, Nr. 46v
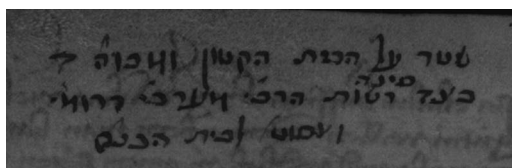

Fig. 8: Hebrew dorsal note on a record from Ulm dating to 1420. Ulm, Stadtarchiv, A Urk 1132

from [the] Pope because of the Christian boys [lit. the impure]«.[68] Another record from 1274, this time for the Jews of Regensburg, was issued by King Rudolf confirming all privileges the local Jews had gained from his predecessor King Frederick II in 1216. Its dorsal note summarized this as »The King Rudolf confirms all privileges [lit. ›laws‹] of [the] earlier kings«.[69] Likewise, from Koblenz in the year 1307, a record has survived granting its Jews the right to be ›co-citizens‹ (*concives*) of this town. Its dorsal note reads »From the citizens. That [also] the Jews are citizens in the town«[70] (see fig. 7).

Even the geography of the Jewish quarter may be discerned if Hebrew dorsal notes are used on real estate records. Christian Scholl was able to reconstruct the Jewish quarter in Ulm with the help of such Hebrew dorsal notes. These notes provide proof that in Ulm, the Jewish community organized their fourteenth- and fifteenth-century records of real estate at some point, adding Hebrew dorsal notes to quickly identify the houses mentioned in the record. For example, one Hebrew dorsal note on a record from 1416 reads »Written record about the small house and the mikveh on the side of the corner to the public yard, which borders on the western, southern, and northern side of the synagogue«[71] (fig. 8). These practices may further suggest some form of a Jewish communal archive.

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68 Schnur, Quellen (cf. n. 43), FW01, no. 4, online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/FW01/CP1-c1-021d.html (last accessed 18 January 2021): זה הכתב מן אפיפיור עבו׳ שקצים. This source is lost today.

69 Germania Judaica vol. 2: Von 1238 bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts. Ed. by Zvi Avneri. Tübingen 1968, pp. 682 and 688, n. 23: המוליד [!] רודולף קיים כל החוקים של מלכים קדמונים.

70 Christoph Cluse: 1307 – Die Koblenzer Juden werden Bürger. In: Quellen zur Geschichte des Rhein-Maas-Raumes. Ein Lehr- und Lernbuch. Ed. by Winfried Reichert, Gisela Minn and Rita Voltmer. Trier 2006, pp. 115–132: מן העירונים שהיהודים הם עירונים בעיר.

71 Scholl, Hebräische Rückvermerke (cf. n. 56), p. 88, n. 28: שטר על הבית הקטן ומכוה בצד פינה רשות הרבי׳ מערבי׳ דרומי׳ וצפוני׳ לבית הכנס׳.

While all these Hebrew dorsal notes can provide many details, they also provide crucial information regarding the reconstruction of Jewish private and communal archives, as seen in the previous example. At this point, therefore, a closer look into the Jewish private and communal archives is instructive.

Jewish Private and Communal Archives

The foremost information Hebrew dorsal notes provide to its readers is that their written records were once kept in the hands of Jewish private owners or Jewish communities. These records were all stored in Jewish archives. However, in all known cases, knowledge about records with such Hebrew dorsal notes results from the fact that these records ended up, for different reasons, in Christian archives. Their preservation in these Christian archives allowed for their survival.

In addition to providing proof for Jewish archival practices, Hebrew dorsal notes can also offer a window into private or communal organization.[72] Hebrew formulations like »he owes me« (חייב לי)[73] or »they owe me« (חייב׳ לי),[74] »record [about] my house« (כתב בית לי),[75] »half [of the sum] is mine« (לי חצי),[76] »I wrote on the slip [of paper/parchment]« (כתבתי על הציטיל),[77] »I have received« (קבלתי),[78] or »I have calculated« (חישבתי)[79] provide evidence for private archives since the information about the business is preserved in the first person singular. One can safely assume that such records were thus labeled and stored by individuals in their homes. Servants or private scribes who would assist in these tasks of writing Hebrew dorsal notes, letters, and in organizing the archive were, so it seems, not common before the Early Modern period. The Jewish scribe Asher, who worked for the wealthy businessman David Steuss (*Aschier Iudeo, scriptori Steussonis*) in the

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72 For Jewish communal archives see below.

73 David Schnur: Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden in Frankfurt und der Wetterau (1273–1347). In: Haverkamp/Müller (eds.), Corpus (cf. n. 43). Trier/Mainz 2011, FW01, no. 272, online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/FW01/CP1-c1-0130.html (last accessed 15 September 2021).

74 Christian Scholl and Michael Schlachter: Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden im Bistum Konstanz (1273–1347). In: Haverkamp/Müller (eds.), Corpus (cf. n. 43). Trier/Mainz 2020, KN01, no. 169, online via https://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/KN01/CP1-c1-013l.html (last accessed 5 September 2024).

75 Lehnertz, Hebräische Dorsualvermerke (cf. n. 56), p. 180.

76 Schnur, Quellen (cf. n. 43), FW01, no. 2, online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/FW01/CP1-c1-021c.html (last accessed 18 January 2021).

77 Lehnertz, Katavti (cf. n. 56), p. 8.

78 Erfurt, Stadtarchiv, 0-1/6-3.

79 Magdeburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Rep. U14 XLVII, no. 41.

1360s in Vienna appears to have been one exception to this observation.[80] Especially business records of members from David's family have Hebrew dorsal notes and additional Hebrew marginal notes on the seals' tags, mentioning the owners of these seals as well as partial debts of single individuals.[81]

Aside from documents related to moneylending, other important written records were also kept in Jewish private archives. When the Jews Salemann and Gotsmann received a privilege of settlement in the city of Coesfeld through Bishop Ludwig of Münster in 1323, their written record mentions that this was »according to the right of the Jews and to enjoy all the rights of citizens« (*iure Judeorum et perfrui omni iure civium*) that had been granted to them. The dorsal side of the record has the simple Hebrew note »written record of citizenship«.[82] While we have seen several examples of records kept in the homes of one business partner – such as in the case of Heilmann or Fromut from Frankfurt –, it remains unclear who wrote this dorsal note from Coesfeld and archived the record.

Even though Jews kept large amounts of records in their homes, the designation of private archives, indeed the terms »private« and »public«, are not without certain limitations.[83] Yet, the distinction helps to show how written records were kept for private, familial, or even syndicated business in a house by one family that organized them. A look into the Jewish house inventory list from Regensburg from the year 1476 also gives us another special note: For Simon of Worms' house, the scribe recorded »2 iron trunks, 1 wooden trunk. She says it belongs to the [Jewish] community«.[84] The woman mentioned by the scribe most likely was Simon's wife, who did not follow Simon into incarceration. Simon therefore kept at least three different trunks in his home that belonged to the Jewish community of Regensburg.

It should not be surprising to see Jews keeping records for their community in their homes. Christian patricians and city councilmen frequently did so as well. A case from the Hanseatic town of Stralsund in northern Germany during the fourteenth century illustrates this well, where vital records – usually charters with priv-

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80 Eveline Brugger and Birgit Wiedl: Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter, vol. 3: 1366–1386. Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen 2015, p. 61–52, no. 1235; Brugger, Urkundenwesen (cf. n. 11), pp. 29–30.

81 Brugger/Wiedl, Regesten 3 (cf. n. 80), no. 1196, 1483, 1507, 1599, 1789, and 1858.

82 Westfalia Judaica. Urkunden und Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Westfalen und Lippe, vol. 1: 1005–1350. Ed. by Bernhard Brilling and Helmut Richtering. Stuttgart et al. 1992 (Studia Delitzschiana; 11), p. 88–89, no. 75: ‏כתב של העירנות‎.

83 Peter von Moos: Die Begriffe ›öffentlich‹ und ›privat‹ in der Geschichte und bei den Historikern. In: Saeculum 49 (1998), pp. 161–192.

84 Volkert, Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 134: *2 leysne truhen, 1 hulczen truhen, sagt sie, es sei der gemain.* The word *leysne* should be read as *eysne* (i. e. »iron«), as Volkert suggested.

ileges – for the city council were kept in the homes of several of its councilmen.[85] These written records were stored in chests and trunks,[86] and at least for some period, the keys to these vessels were again kept in the homes of further council-men. From the year 1322, a similar practice is known from Cologne, where a »trunk belonging to the city of Cologne« (*cista civitatis Coloniensis*) with its important records was kept in the house of a lay judge.[87] Often, such practices arose from the reality that many cities lacked their own council halls or space to store and archive pertinent records (the latter was the case in Stralsund). Thus, as a precautionary measure to keep these records safe from theft, forgery, and fire, the urban elites sometimes kept them in their homes, which were usually made of stone. Guild masters also often kept important records of their guilds in their homes.[88] It should be noted here that both people as well as institutions like communes and guilds and even royal chancelleries decided frequently to have at least some of their records stored safely in churches or monasteries (also made of stone).[89] In some cases, this was also the parish church of the institution in question, meaning that, for example, a certain guild would donate candles and other objects to this church while the church stored the guild's records in return.[90] The same appears true among elite

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85 Peter Pooth: Die Dokumentenladen des Stralsunder Rats im 14. Jahrhundert. In: Hansische Geschichtsblätter 62 (1937), pp. 89–115.

86 For yet another example, see Mentgen, Studien (cf. n. 16), pp. 282–283.

87 Klaus Militzer: Entstehung und Bildung von Archiven in Köln während des Mittelalters. In: Archivprozesse. Die Kommunikation der Aufbewahrung. Ed. by Hedwig Pompe and Leander Scholz. Köln 2002 (Mediologie; 5), pp. 27–37, here: p. 31.

88 Militzer, Entstehung und Bildung (cf. n. 87), p. 34.

89 For example, see Matthias F. Kluge: Die Macht des Gedächtnisses: Entstehung und Wandel kommunaler Schriftkultur im spätmittelalterlichen Augsburg. Leiden/Boston 2014 (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions; 181), pp. 230–234.

90 Antjekathrin Grassmann: Von der Trese, der Schatzkammer des lübeckischen Rats. In: Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde 54 (1974), pp. 87–93; Marc von der Höh: Zwischen religiöser Memoria und Familiengeschichte. Das Familienbuch des Werner Overstolz. In: Haus- und Familienbücher in der städtischen Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit. Ed. by Birgit Studt. Köln/Weimar/Wien 2007, pp. 33–60. A source from 1581 shows how the priest Henry Stoedt kept many records in his parish church and organized them with dorsal notes. In that year, a notary came and drew up an inventory of Henry's written records. It took the notary five days to complete his task. The inventory list was drawn up by going from room to room – exactly as it was done in the Jewish homes in Regensburg in 1476. More than 400 records dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries were briefly summarized in the notary's list, revealing that the priest kept his parish records in boxes, chests, and trunks. Many of them were bound into small packages because they came from the same issuers or dealt with the same content – see also the Regensburg inventory, where in one Jewish home had 13 packages of records in a (most likely larger) chest. On top of these packages, notes explaining their content were placed. The dorsal notes on the single records, however, were utilized by the notary to draw up his list. This is made even

families in many towns. The Overstolz family from Cologne kept a book with stories about their family over generations. Hidden within the cover of this book were one of two keys to a trunk which purportedly contained important records concerning the family's donation of an altar to a parish church in the first half of the fifteenth century. In this case, the book became the key safe for the trunk containing the most important written records owned by this elite family.[91]

These archival practices in homes do not rule out communal archives. The Stralsund example shows that even after the town hall was enlarged in 1317, the councilmen continued storing essential records in their homes until the early fifteenth century. The municipal books were kept and archived in the new town hall. Here, it seems, the tradition of maintaining records in private houses was so strong and well-established that there was little reason to change it. In mid-fourteenth century Cologne, written records stored in the lay judge's house were transferred into another stone house to protect them better against fire. It was only after the construction of the city council's tower was completed in 1414 that the records were brought there, where they were stored long into the modern period. At least 38 trunks and chests with written records were kept in this tower.[92] There is evidence from other cities that council halls and affiliated towers were used for the storage of archival records. The written records in the town of Soest were kept in a municipal chest (*cista burgensium*) as early as 1272.[93] A fine example for ecclesiastical archives with records in chests and trunks is a record from 1423 for Bishop Frederick of Bamberg that bears the contemporary German note »The correctly sealed record of the copy lies in the vault of the chancery, in a trunk in the small chest.«[94]

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more evident by the fact that some of his entries explicitly mention that the records were not opened and scrutinized, but that the dorsal note was considered sufficient for the inventory list. See DIETER SCHELER: Haushalt und Archiv eines Pfarrers: Das Inventar des Heinrich Stoedt von Harpen. In: Pro cura animarum: mittelalterliche Pfarreien und Pfarrkirchen an Rhein und Ruhr. Ed. by Stefan Pätzold and REIMUND HAAS. Siegburg 2016 (Studien zur Kölner Kirchengeschichte; 43), pp. 183–194.

91 VON DER HÖH, Zwischen religiöser Memoria und Familiengeschichte (cf. n. 90), pp. 42–44. For a certain Jew, who gave a (presumably Hebrew) record (*judenbrief*) to the Gurk Monastery to keep it safe there in 1414, see MARKUS J. WENNINGER: Art. Straßburg in Kärnten. In: Germania Judaica vol. 3: 1350–1519, pt. 2. Ed. by ARYE MAIMON, MORDECHAI BREUER and YACOV GUGGENHEIM. Tübingen 1995, pp. 1433–1434, here: p. 1432; EVELINE BRUGGER and BIRGIT WIEDL: Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter, vol. 5: 1405–1418. Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen 2022, p. 157, no. 2534.

92 MILITZER, Entstehung und Bildung (cf. n. 87), pp. 31–32.

93 APPUHN, ›Rosa‹ (cf. n. 16), p. 268.

94 Klagenfurt, Kärntner Landesarchiv, Allgemeine Urkundenreihe, AT-KLA 418-B-C 2454 St, online via https://www.monasterium.net/mom/AT-KLA/AUR/AT-KLA_418-B-C_2454_St/charter (last accessed 14 January 2025): *Der recht versiegelt Brief der Copey liegt im Gewölb in der Kanzlei in der Truhen in der kleinen Laden*. This note is no dorsal note but instead written underneath the charter's text.

As for the Jewish community of Regensburg, at least some – and perhaps even all – written records were kept in the three trunks in Simon's house in 1476. Yet, this is not proof *e silentio* against a communal archive, as the Stralsund example suggests. Like municipal councils or civic communes and guilds, Jewish communities also must have had archives to store important written records, such as the privileges they received, regardless of whether the written records were kept in private houses or in communal buildings like the synagogue. A record from Freiburg im Breisgau dating to 1338 holds a similar significance for its local Jews. On the dorsal side of the document, in which the counts of Freiburg grant privileges to its Jews, one can read the Hebrew note of summary: »Record of protection of the [Jewish] community.«[95] A larger number of written records archived, scrutinized, and used in legal disputes by the Jewish community of Regensburg have survived from the fifteenth century. Veronika Nickel has demonstrated how this Jewish community worked with privileges and other written records, such as commissioned copies of *vidimus* charters.[96] These documents also often bear Hebrew dorsal notes. The note made by a certain municipal scribe in a municipal book provides further proof for a Jewish communal archive in Regensburg and its storage via chests and trunks. He noted that in 1462 the Jewish woman Pewrl persuaded the municipal council to withdraw a written document and describes how »the Jews have a communal chest with a note in it«.[97] Pewrl tried to convince the Christian authorities to make the Jewish community release or perhaps destroy her written document, which was stored in the Jewish communal chest. Yet another Hebrew dorsal note on a written record of moneylending dates to Erfurt in the year 1447 and states that it »belongs to the [Jewish] community« (של קהל).[98] In its text, the debtor declared, »[I] give it [i. e. this written record] to the communal leaders [*parnasim*]« (*gebe sij den parnoßen*). Evidence for a Jewish communical archive can be found in Erfurt, when the local Jews were able to prove their real estate belongings before the municipal council, via »old privileges« (*alde freyheyt*) in 1436.[99]

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95 Germania Judaica vol. 2 (cf. n. 69), pp. 254 and 256, n. 5: שטר בטחון של הקהל.
96 Veronika Nickel: Widerstand durch Recht: der Weg der Regensburger Juden bis zu ihrer Vertreibung (1519) und der Innsbrucker Prozess (1516–1522). Wiesbaden 2018 (Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden; A 28). See also Halvácek, Juden in den Premyslidenurkunden (cf. n. 8).
97 Sophia Schmitt: Höre meine Stimme – Verteidigungsstrategien der Regensburger Juden gegen reichsstädtische Gewalt. In: Reichsstadt und Gewalt. Ed. by Eveline Timpener and Helge Wittmann. Petersberg 2021 (Studien zur Reichsstadtgeschichte; 8), pp. 107–138, here: p. 101, n. 22: *das dy judischait in der püchsen ir gmain ain zetl haben.*
98 Magdeburg, Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Rep. U14 XLVII, no. 25.
99 Reinhold Ruf-Haag: Juden und Christen im spätmittelalterlichen Erfurt. Abhängigkeiten, Handlungsspielräume und Gestaltung in einer mitteleuropäischen Stadt. PhD ms., Trier 2006, pp. 291–297.

The Jewish court of law (*beit din*) served as an important institution of larger Jewish communities. Did this institution keep the records it produced? Arguments for and against the record-keeping of the *beit din* have been brought forward in recent studies.[100] The private as well as communal record-keeping does beg the question whether archival practices of the *beit din* existed in Ashkenaz – especially since this institution left us with a large number of records in the Mediterranean area, as testified by the Cairo Geniza.[101] At times, there were other systems to archive records, such as the Cologne *Judenschreinsbuch*, a collection of records in both Latin and Hebrew that was kept in a trunk (*schrein*) of the local parochial church, around which most of the Jews of Cologne lived. These records were drawn up between the thirteenth and mid-fourteenth century. The Jewish court was involved in the production of the Hebrew versions.[102]

Hebrew Account Books – Another Piece of the Archival Puzzle

While Hebrew dorsal notes can provide vital information about various aspects of Jewish-Christian business and Jewish private as well as communal archives, medieval record keepers could not rely solely on such dorsal notes to organize their archival material sufficiently. This is especially evident for the high volume of moneylending records. Although privileges and other written records were not necessarily in need of constant monitoring, records of moneylending were long in use. Without adequate organization, owners of such written records would have had to open their trunks time and again, thumb through the records, and read the dorsal

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100 RACHEL FURST: Striving for Justice. A History of Women and Litigation in the Jewish Courts of Medieval Ashkenaz. PhD ms., Jerusalem 2014, pp. 52 and 65, n. 183, argues – with good reasons – from the silence of the sources, while OLSZOWY-SCHLANGER, Jewish-Christian ›Notarial‹ Encounters (cf. n. 6), p. 211, sees hints for its record-keeping. An excellent study on Jewish archives according to the Cairo genizah in Fustat is JUDITH OLSZOWY-SCHLANGER: Les archives médiévales dans la *genizah* du Caire: registres des tribunaux rabbiniques et pratiques d'archivage reconstituées. In: Afriques. Débats, méthodes et terrains d'histoire 7 (2016) [not paginated].
101 FURST, Striving (cf. n. 100), p. 53.
102 BENJAMIN LAQUA: Kooperation, Kommunikation, Übersetzung: zur Anlage und Überlieferung des Judenschreinsbuches der Kölner Laurenz-Parochie. In: HAVERKAMP/MÜLLER (eds.), Verschriftlichung (cf. n. 43), pp. 147–171; ID.: Einleitung. In: HAVERKAMP/MÜLLER (eds.), Corpus (cf. n. 43), online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/quellen/1273-1347/ks01/einleitung.html (last accessed 1 February 2021); FURST, Striving (cf. n. 100), p. 55, n. 139; OLSZOWY-SCHLANGER, Jewish-Christian ›Notarial‹ Encounters (cf. n. 6).

notes to figure out, for example, when payback dates were due, who was currently in debt to them, how much credit and interest was to be expected from their debtors, etc. Considering the significant number of ongoing open debts to be repaid at any given time, as the above example of David and Plümel's 73 records may suggest, one had to uphold sound organization for records related to moneylending.

Different solutions to this problem existed in the Middle Ages. By the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, towns and monasteries increasingly used cartularies, i. e. direct copies of records into a single volume to keep track of one's records.[103] Indeed, there are many records that have survived to the present day as a result of these compilations and the copies they contain. A member of the town of Koblenz rationalized the necessity for one late fourteenth-century cartulary, recording how it was made »so that one shall not time and again search for these records!«[104]

Another method, well-suited for various forms of moneylending and trade business, was that of account book-keeping. Although there is only scarce proof for Jewish book-keeping, three Hebrew account book fragments have survived from the Holy Roman Empire. The first is from Bavaria dating to the first half of the fourteenth century (fig. 9), the second is from the Constance region dating to the second half of the fourteenth century, and the third dates to the first half of the fifteenth century from the Dresden area (fig. 10).[105] These fragments prove that differ-

103 Constance B. Bouchard: Monastic Cartularies: Organizing Eternity. In: Charters, Cartularies, and Archives: the Preservation and Transmission of Documents in the Medieval West. Ed. by Adam J. Kosto and Anders Winroth. Toronto 2002 (Papers in Mediaeval Studies; 17), pp. 22–32; Brigitte Bedos-Rezak: Towards an Archaeology of the Medieval Charter: Textual Production and Reproduction in Northern France Chartiers. In: Charters, Cartularies, and Archives (as above), pp. 43–60. For the earliest known cartulary of a Jewish community, see Moritz Stern: Ein Copialbuch der jüdischen Gemeinde zu Worms. In: Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland 1 (1887), pp. 272–280. This 62-folio cartulary was in use from the second half of the fifteenth century, and while most of its copies date from this period, two charters from the mid-fourteenth century are also included.
104 Koblenz, Stadtarchiv, 623, no. 1006, fol. 1r.: *uff daz man die seluen* […] *brieue nyt alleziet durffe ersuchen.*
105 Abraham David: An Unknown Fragment of a Money Lending Ledger from Dresden Municipal Archive. In: European Genizah: Newly Discovered Hebrew Binding Fragments in Context. Ed. by Andreas Lehnardt. Leiden/Boston 2020 (Studies in Jewish History and Culture; 63/European Genizah. Texts and Studies; 5), pp. 43–51; Michael Toch: Geld und Kredit in einer spätmittelalterlichen Landschaft. Zu einem bisher unbeachteten hebräischen Schuldenregister aus Niederbayern (1329–1332). In: Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters 38 (1982), pp. 499–550; Wolfgang von Stromer and Michael Toch: Zur Buchführung der Juden im Spätmittelalter. In: Wirtschaftskräfte und Wirtschaftswege. Festschrift für Hermann Kellenbenz, pt. 1. Ed. by Jürgen Schneider. Stuttgart 1978 (Beiträge zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte; 4), pp. 378–412 (with bibliography on contemporary Christian account books); Annegret Holtmann: Jewish Moneylending as Reflected in Medieval Account Books: The Example of Vesoul. In: The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries). Ed.
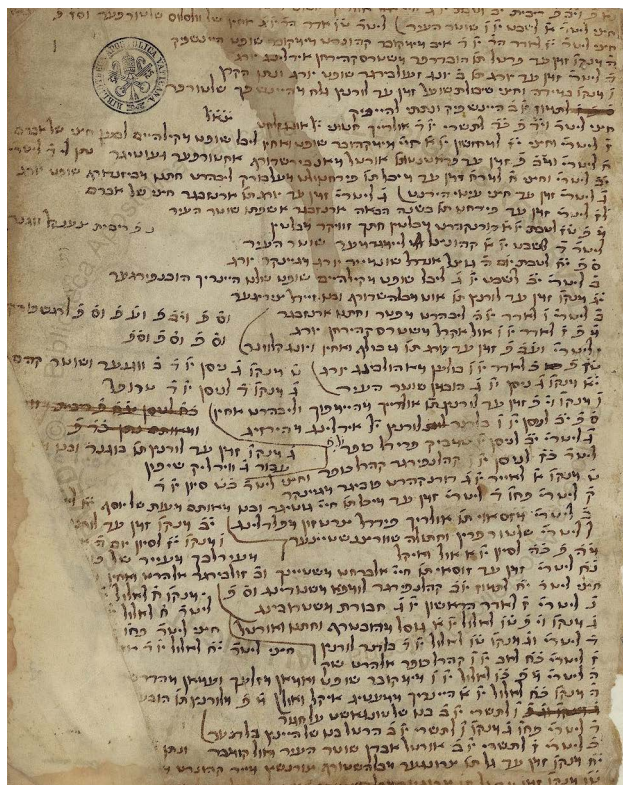
Fig. 9: Page from a Hebrew account book fragment from Bavaria. Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. ebr. 148, fol. 1r

ent credit transactions were collected in the same book. They contain credits with pawns and no written records, credits with guarantors and no written records – also without pawns[106] –, and credits recorded by means of promissory notes. The latter form of promissory notes is the less common form here.

In addition to the fragments of Hebrew account books, we have Christian administrative sources testifying to the importance and legal value of Hebrew account books in the Holy Roman Empire. For example, after the imprisonment and subse-

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by CHRISTOPH CLUSE. Turnhout 2004 (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages; 4), pp. 305–315; EAD.: Juden in der Grafschaft Burgund im Mittelalter. Hannover 2003, pp. 155–182; EAD.: Medieval ›Pigeonholes‹: The Jewish Account Books from Vesoul and Medieval Bookkeeping Practices. In: Wirtschaftsgeschichte der mittelalterlichen Juden. Fragen und Einschätzungen. Ed. by MICHAEL TOCH. München 2008 (Schriften des Historischen Kollegs. Kolloquien; 71), pp. 103–120.

106 It is worth stressing here that many credit transactions and other business dealings must obviously have taken place without any sureties or written proof, but »on good faith« – an interesting point when discussing Jewish-Christian relations.

quent execution of a certain Jew in Fribourg in 1428, the city council paid another Jew from Bern to read and translate the Hebrew account books the executed Jew had left behind.[107] Help in translating these documents must have been available to Konrad of Weinsberg, who was sent by the Emperor to negotiate and collect taxes from the Jews throughout the Empire. Jews in the Wettinean dominion were subsequently made to take oaths for setting up their tax values by showing and scrutinizing their Hebrew account books in the first half of the fifteenth century.[108]

Christian courts of law accepted the information from Hebrew account books, obviously with the help of translators such as Jewish converts to Christianity. Hebrew account books, therefore, could serve as proof when trying to gain back debts even when the parchment records were lost – for example after expulsions and pogroms, but also if written records were damaged or lacking seals. Regardless of how precious Hebrew account books appear to have been, they could also be problematic. In Frankfurt, a Christian woman lost her temper towards her Jewish creditor Kirson in 1343 and »committed a lesser offense against the aforementioned Jew by spitting in his [Hebrew account] book«, in which her debts were likely recorded.[109]

The surviving Hebrew account book fragments illustrate how entries were made strikingly similarly to Hebrew dorsal notes. For both account books and dorsal notes, usually the names of the debtor(s), the sum, and the payback date are recorded. Likewise, the date of agreement, interest rates, guarantors, pawns, and other details are often provided.[110] This raises the question of how these two archival mediums are

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107 Germania Judaica vol. 3: 1350–1519, pt. 1. Ed. by Yacov Guggenheim, Arye Maimon and Mordechai Breuer. Tübingen 1987, p. 402, n. 28.
108 Germania Judaica vol. 3: 1350–1519, pt. 3. Ed. by Yacov Guggenheim, Arye Maimon and Mordechai Breuer. Tübingen 2003, p. 2066. In a privilege of settlement from the year 1364, Meinhard, Count of Görz-Tirol, granted a certain Jewish man named Pessah/Paskul and his family the right to prove the value of a pawn he received both by an oath and by presenting the entry in his Hebrew account books. See Eveline Brugger and Birgit Wiedl: Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter, vol. 2: 1339–1365. Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen 2010, pp. 300–301, no. 1071. In Trier, some Jewish financial experts working in the service of Archbishop Baldwin in the first half of the fourteenth century even appear to have kept Hebrew account books. At the end of the year, they – together with Christian officials – then translated and transferred the relevant entries into the account books of the archbishopric. This is suggested by an entry in the Latin accounts from 1336–1341, which states that some funds were noted »in the Hebrew book and they were not put into the Latin [book]«. Karl Lamprecht: Deutsches Wirtschaftsleben im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen über die Entwicklung der materiellen Kultur des platten Landes auf Grund der Quellen zunächst des Mosellandes, vol. 3. Leipzig 1885, p. 423, n. 291: *erant in libro ebraico et non fuerunt positi in latino.*
109 Schnur, Die Juden (cf. n. 56), p. 716: *Eadem excessum minorem ex parte predictii Iudei, quod ipsa sputavit in librum ipsorum.*
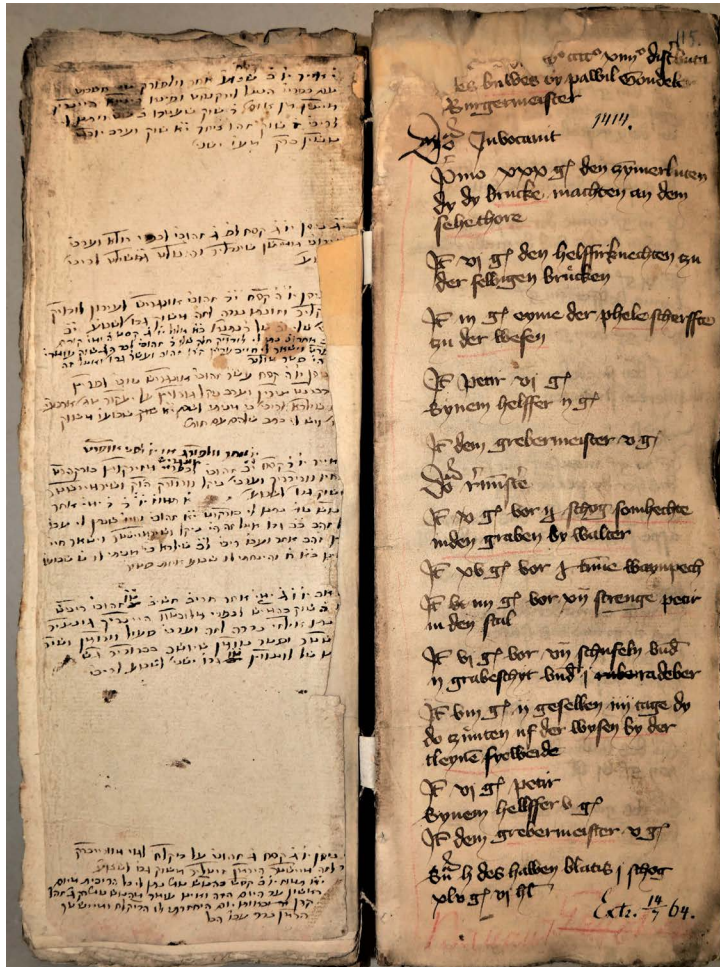**110** Schnur, Die Juden (cf. n. 56), pp. 431–447.

Fig. 10: Page from a Hebrew account book fragment reused as book binding in a Christian adminis-
trative record. Dresden, Stadtarchiv, Bestand 2.1.1 Ratsarchiv, A XVb-11 (Bände), Bauamts-Rechnungen
1400–1423, fol. 114v

related to each other. Account books were kept updated on all running businesses.
Written records with seals attached to them were noted in these account books. This
means that the entries in Hebrew account books would refer to the single written
records of parchment kept in chests and trunks, and which had Hebrew dorsal notes
corresponding to the Hebrew account book entries. For example, a recently discovered
account book fragment from the first half of the fifteenth century, currently housed
in the Municipal Archives of Dresden, consists of an entry saying that »I have a writ-

ten record from them [i. e. the debtors] with a seal«,[111] referring to the year 1408/09. A second example may be found in a Hebrew account book from fourteenth-century Bavaria, in which one entry speaks of the debt being »on her seal«,[112] insinuating that the Jewish creditor received a promissory note with a seal that recorded the debt of his Christian debtor. As the known Hebrew account book fragments only rarely mention sealed records, one can surmise that the bulk of credits were given without the expensive documentary measures of seals.[113] This would explain why Hebrew account books were important before courts of law. They appear to have become the main reference system for business organization.

This system of simple account books was highly effective. Marks of wear and tear on surviving exemplars suggest their practical portability,[114] while the records remained safely stored at home in chests and trunks. Thus, written records were taken out only if needed. The Hebrew account book fragment from Bavaria with entries dating from the years 1329 to 1332 measures only 31x24 cm.[115] Even though the dimensions of the Hebrew account book fragment from Dresden are more difficult to estimate due to evident cuts, the fragment is currently bound into a book measuring 29.5x11 cm. The account book fragments were therefore smaller than today's DIN A4, suggesting their contemporary use as a *vademecum*.[116] It also appears that these account books were no thick codices of heavy parchment but rather small booklets made of paper sheets.

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111 David, An Unknown Fragment (cf. n. 105), p. 48: ‏ויש לי כתב שלהם עם חות׳‎.

112 Toch, Geld und Kredit (cf. n. 105), p. 547: ‏על חותם שלה‎. The Hebrew term *hotam* was also used for a sealed record in general and not just to designate a seal.

113 In the Frankfurt court records, only approximately 1 % of all entries refer to such sealed records. For this, see the paper by Aviya Doron in the second volume of the present special issue. Throughout the Middle Ages, other forms of documentary practices were used as well. One method was to use tally sticks. See Olszowy-Schlanger, Hebrew and Hebrew-Latin Documents (cf. n. 11); Tanja Skambraks: Tally Sticks as Media of Knowledge in the Context of Medieval Economic and Administrative History. In: L'economia della conoscenza. Innovazione, produttività e crescita nei secoli XIII–XVIII. Ed. by Giampiero Nigro. Firenze 2023, pp. 139–158.

114 It remains unclear, however, if this wear and tear stems from the usage as an account book or if it was caused later when the fragments – only fragments have survived! – were already reused in book binding.

115 Toch, Geld und Kredit (cf. n. 105), p. 501.

116 For comparison, regular Hebrew *mahzorim* prayer books, which were brought from the home to the synagogue and back, measured about 20–30x30–45 cm. See Meyrav Levy: Ashkenazi Illuminated Mahzorim as Generators of an Affective Experience. PhD ms., Münster 2024, p. 3.

Jewish Archives – Their Content and Social Function

Some of the mentioned chests and trunks were not the property of the Jewish homeowners. Such was the case for »one trunk, which belongs to Hackl of Regenstauff«,[117] as well as the aforementioned three trunks in Simon's house that were said to belong to the Jewish community. It is therefore important to finally consider who was allowed to open these chests and trunks of both private and communal archives that were housed in different homes.

The example of the Jewish woman Fromut in Frankfurt quoted above exemplifies that only one business partner could store the written record of a consortium in his or her archive. Yet, it remains unclear if the trunks and chests in which such records were stored could simply be opened by only one of the business partners. What appears to be a sensitive matter between business partners (and even members of the same family) is even more of a question for communal archives.

Since it was common practice among Christians that multiple keys had to be used to open the chests and trunks with several locks attached to them, there is little reason to think that Jews acted any differently.[118] When the municipal scribe in Regensburg inventorised Jewish homes in 1476, he recorded a number of chests and trunks that were locked while others presumably were not. The contents of unlocked trunks and chests was not mentioned in the inventory. Instead, the scribe noted, for example, »underneath the trunk is a small, sealed trunk«,[119] »put into this trunk is a small, sealed trunk, as well as another small, locked trunk«,[120] and even »a desk, which is sealed inside«.[121] Admittedly, it is possible that none of these sealed chests, trunks, and bags contained any written records – the sealed trunks kept their secret from us as well. Still, it is clear from the case of the Regensburg inventory how many records Jewish houses possessed in chests and trunks, some of which were locked. There also seems to be no difference between those trunks and chests used for written records and those for all kinds of goods.

Another case from Regensburg dated by Raphael Straus to the year 1490 describes a dispute within the Jewish community over tax collection for the Christian authorities. The dispute arose over the question who was allowed to collect these

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117 Volkert, Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 136: *1 truhen, die gehort dem Hackl von Regenstauff.*
118 For examples see Pickvance, Medieval Domed Chests (cf. n. 16).
119 Volkert, Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 127: *undter der truhen ist ain klein verpettschaaft truhl.*
120 Volkert, Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 141: *in die truhen geseczt 1 truhl verschlossen, mer 1 klains truhl verspert in die truhen geseczt.*
121 Volkert, Judenregister (cf. n. 17), p. 128: *Ein schreibtisch ist innen verpettschafft.*

taxes and how the taxes were to be kept in a chest. The Christian authorities tried to mediate and suggested that »the chest should be kept by the shammash as a neutral person while the keys to [the chest] should be kept one by Straubinger, the other by Saeltman – both Jews and tax collectors«.[122] The suggested solution for said dispute, which obviously arose out of trust issues among members of the Jewish community, would ensure no one opened the chest with the money on their own. Cases of breaking the locks of chests and trunks are known in both Jewish and Christian contexts. For example, a responsum by Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg (d. 1293) already mentions a chest that was protected by a lock, but the lock was purposefully broken (פותחת של תיבה) to remove the valuables.[123] The breaking of the lock caused a dispute brought before Rabbi Meir. In fact, many responsa discuss how Jewish moneylenders should store pawned objects, stating that these need to be kept locked, in chests or trunks, underground, to protect them from possible theft or deterioration. Proper storage was crucial not only for keeping the objects, but also for protecting the moneylender from legal liability if anything did in fact go wrong.[124]

Therefore, one reason why these trunks in the houses of the Jews from Regensburg were not opened appears to be the lack of keys for the locks. The imprisoned Jewish homeowners could have kept the keys. Alternatively, multiple keys were needed and given to business partners or other members of the Jewish community in Regensburg. Access to the keys was essential, and it is quite interesting to see that none of the seals or locks of these trunks and chests were broken by the municipal officials for the scribe to scrutinize and record their contents. At least in this regard, one might argue that the Jews' property was respected to some extent.

To open trunks and chests was often a ritualistic act among communes, fraternities, guilds, and – no doubt – also among Jewish communities. When the municipal council of Reval [Tallinn] received a trunk with precious goldsmiths' works from the local Dominican Order in 1426, there were two locks attached to it and the keys distributed to two councilmen in order to keep it safe from being opened eas-

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122 Raphael Straus: Urkunden und Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Juden in Regensburg 1435–1738. München 1960 (Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen Geschichte; NF 18), pp. 200–201, no. 588: *dy puexsen sol der Schuelklopfer als ain gemainer man haben, und die schlussel darzu sol ain der Strawbinger, den andern Saeltman, bait Juden und stoirer* [haben].
123 Alon Brand, Rachel Furst and Sophia Schmitt: RE-MR01 [Meir of Rothenburg, Jerusalem Ed., No. 86]. In: Haverkamp/Müller (eds.), Corpus (cf. n. 43). Mainz/Trier (forthcoming), online via http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/quellen.html (last accessed 26 December 2024). Many thanks to Rachel Furst for this reference.
124 Many thanks to Aviya Doron, who explores this field in her forthcoming PhD thesis »Trust thy Neighbor? Risk and Trust in Economic Interactions between Jews and Christians in the German Empire c. 1280–1420«.

ily. Instead, both members had to be present – most likely together with the entire municipal council – to open said trunk.[125]

Municipal seal matrices and their usage are a good example for such ritualistic openings of chests and trunks. In Cologne, like in so many other cities and towns, the municipal seals were stored in a locked chest with several keys kept by different councilmen.[126] Universities – like other institutions – also kept their seals and written records locked in chests and trunks while multiple keys were distributed to different high-ranking members of these institutions.[127]

How did Jewish communities handle their communal seals, which have survived in wax impressions from Regensburg and Augsburg as well as in a seal matrix from Rothenburg ob der Tauber? Were these seal matrices stored in chests and trunks with several keys in the hands of the communal leaders? How did they deal with chests and trunks full of communal records? Who opened these trunks and chests and when, and how did the ritual happen? Even the chests and trunks themselves could represent symbols of power in ritualistic settings. For example, several chests representing the city's laws and rulings were placed in the city hall in Dortmund from the 1340s/50s for every session of the councilmen's meetings.[128] We can only speculate that these vessels embodied a similar social function within Jewish communal settings, with ritual use of key-keepers, locks, the opening of chests and trunks, ultimately symbolizing communal cohesion among those they bound together.

Conclusions

The communal – as well as private – archives were, to some degree, keepers of knowledge and power. They had to be organized, opened (sometime in ritualistic settings), and scrutinized in order to claim privileges, gain back payments, protect communal rights, or sue someone before court. These archives needed organization. Like their Christian contemporaries, Jews developed archival systems based on their need to organize their business records and other written documents.

This article has sought to highlight how these archives worked, were organized, and functioned within their social surroundings while still in use. The sources

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125 Tallinna Linnaarhiiv, Tallinna Magistraat TLA.230.1-I.579, online via https://www.monasterium.net/mom/EE-TLA/TallinnaMagistraat/TLA.230.1-I.579/charter (last accessed 26 January 2025).

126 Toni Diederich: Die alten Siegel der Stadt Köln. Köln 1980 (Aus der Kölner Stadtgeschichte).

127 Andrea Stieldorf: Verschließen und zugänglich Machen als Ausdruck korporativen Selbstverständnisses: zum Umgang mit Urkunden und Siegeln in den mitteleuropäischen Universitäten des Spätmittelalters. In: Archiv für Diplomatik 63 (2017), pp. 233–252.

128 Appuhn, ›Rosa‹ (cf. n. 16), p. 268.

gathered shed a new light on the extent to which the rise of documentary practices and record-keeping led to the growth of organization and archival practices in the late Middle Ages among Jews as well as Christians.

Despite the efforts of Jews to keep track of the steady influx of their records by organizing them with the help of account books, dorsal notes, and separate chests and trunks, they were by no means always well organized. While many records went missing, others were insufficiently inventoried and described in the account books and the dorsal notes. After having lost her late husband's debt records from Count Rudolf of Sachsengang in 1314, the Jewish widow Weichsel and her six sons and five daughters ultimately had to settle and negotiate with the Count in Vienna.[129] This must have been a source of major inconvenience for both parties involved. Also, the account book fragment from the first half of the fourteenth century from Bavaria mentioned above reveals a problem in organization and book-keeping. Among the entries that frequently mention the pawns received by the creditor, the scribe admitted that »I don't know what« a certain pawn even was.[130]

While scholars have made different assumptions about the lack of medieval Jewish archives today, the objective of the present discussion was to demonstrate the existence and organization of such archives. The degree of organization matched the number of documents that could still be kept in order by using trunks and chests, dorsal notes, and account books.

129 Eveline Brugger and Birgit Wiedl: Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter, vol. 1: Von den Anfängen bis 1338. Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen 2005, pp. 188–189, no. 193; Eveline Brugger: Adel und Juden in Niederösterreich. Die Beziehungen niederösterreichischer Adelsfamilien zur jüdischen Führungsschicht von den Anfängen bis zur Pulkauer Verfolgung 1338. St. Pölten 2004 (Studien und Forschungen aus dem Niederösterreichischen Institut für Landeskunde; 38/ Schriften NÖ Wissenschaft; 151), p. 84.
130 Stromer/Toch, Zur Buchführung (cf. n. 105), p. B, no. 16: איני יודע מה.