



BRILL

MEDIEVAL ENCOUNTERS 27 (2021) 360–386

Medieval
Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture
Encounters
in Confluence and Dialogue
brill.com/me

Dismantling a Monopoly: Jews, Christians, and the Production of *Shofarot* in Fifteenth-Century Germany

Andreas Lehnertz | ORCID: 0000-0001-9276-7644

Postdoctoral Fellow, Martin Buber Society of Fellows in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel
andreas.lehnertz@mail.huji.ac.il

Abstract

This essay presents a case study from Erfurt (Germany) concerning the production of *shofarot* (i.e., animal horns blown for ritual purposes, primarily on the Jewish New Year). By the early 1420s, Jews from all over the Holy Roman Empire had been purchasing *shofarot* from one Christian workshop in Erfurt that produced these ritual Jewish objects in cooperation with an unnamed Jewish craftsman. At the same time, two Jews from Erfurt were training in this craft, and started to produce *shofarot* of their own making. One of these Jewish craftsmen claimed that the Christian workshop had been deceiving the Jews for decades by providing improper *shofarot* made with materials unsuitable for Jewish ritual use. The local rabbi, Yomtov Lipman, exposed this as a scandal, writing letters to the German Jewish communities about the Christian workshop's fraud and urging them all to buy new *shofarot* from the new Jewish craftsmen in Erfurt instead. This article will first examine the fraud attributed to the Christian workshop. Then, after analyzing the historical context of Yomtov Lipman's letter, it will explore the underlying motivations of this rabbi to expose the Christian workshop's fraud throughout German Jewish communities at this time. I will argue that, while Yomtov Lipman uses *halakhic* explanations in his letter, his chief motivation in exposing this fraud was to discredit the Christian workshop, create an artificial demand for *shofarot*, and promote the new Jewish workshop in Erfurt, whose craftsmen the rabbi himself had likely trained in the art of *shofar* making.