

1. Record Nr.	UNISA996732999003316
Titolo	Jewish Craftspeople in the Middle Ages : Objects, Sources and Materials / / Andreas Lehnertz, Maria Sturzebecher, Simha Goldin, Joseph Isaac Lifshitz
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Berlin ; Boston, : De Gruyter, , [2026] ©2026
ISBN	9783110788112
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (XII, 418 p.)
Collana	Rethinking Diaspora ; 5 Studia Judaica , , 0585-5306 ; ; 120
Soggetti	HISTORY / Jewish RELIGION / Judaism / General
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
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The role of Jews in the economic and material culture of medieval Europe has become an important focus of modern Jewish Studies. Scholars have increasingly emphasized the shared or entangled character of Jewish and Christian culture, noting that Jews used many of the same objects as their Christian neighbors. Yet these objects are generally assumed to have been produced primarily by Christian craftspeople organized in guilds. Jewish artisans, however, are also attested in a wide range of sources, although this field has thus far received insufficient scholarly attention. Although evidence for medieval Jewish craftspeople appears relatively scarce in Northern Europe, the Mediterranean regions preserve a broader and richer documentary base. Even so, sources from across medieval Europe reveal Jews working as turners, dyers, window makers, weavers, goldsmiths, armorers, dicers, belt makers, glaziers, playing-card makers, bricklayers, tailors, watchmakers, and mousetrap makers, among many other professions. These references raise important questions concerning the most common occupations pursued by Jews, their clientele, and their relationships with Christian artisans and guild structures. Bringing together an interdisciplinary range of approaches and regional perspectives, this peer-reviewed volume seeks to address these questions and to reassess the place of Jewish craftspeople in medieval European society.
