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Der vollkommene Pferdekenner, 1764: Jewish Horse Traders in the Margraviate of Brandenburg-Ansbach and their Language at the Threshold of Modernity

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Abstract

Der vollkommene Pferdekennner ('The Complete Horse Connoisseur') is a comprehensive equestrian guide that was published in 1764 by the southern German nobleman Baron Wolf Ehrenfried von Reitzenstein. In a Jewish context, it is interesting because of a language appendix consisting of thirty-six pages of Western Yiddish phrases and words, mainly of Hebrew origin, that were used by Jewish horse traders in the eighteenth century. This appendix includes a collection of five lively sample dialogues between Jewish horse traders. Through this appendix, non-Jewish customers and traders were provided with a tool to understand the trading language used by Jewish horse traders at that time.

The language appendix of *Der vollkommene Pferdekennner* gives insights into the everyday life and socio-economic circumstances of German Jews in a rural setting in the Margraviate of Brandenburg-Ansbach in southern Germany in the eighteenth century. It provides glimpses into the world of horse-trading as a specific public space where paths between Jews and non-Jews crossed at the threshold of modernity in the rare absence of an anti-Jewish agenda.

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