**Margarete, Reynette, and Meide: Three Jewish Women from Koblenz in the 14th Century Archbishopric of Trier**

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*Abstract*

This paper explores the lives of three Jewish women in the Late Middle Ages – Margarete, Reynette, and Meide of the Bonenfant family – who lived in Koblenz, a city in the Rhineland which was part of the archdiocese of Trier. It aims to shed light on how the roles and relationships with each other and to the city changed in light of economic, political, and especially legal settings that impacted Jewish life within the borders of the archbishopric. I will argue, that these three women’s lives were centered somewhat around their hometown Koblenz. Yet, all three struggled with different economic, political, and legal obstacles. Margarete returned to her hometown to rebuild her life and the Jewish community after a pogrom; Reynette was highly mobile in and around the archdiocese by becoming a very successful businesswomen; and her daughter Meide moved between her hometown, the archbishopric, and bordering cities fighting for her legal status. Studies and methods from gender studies as well as discussions of space will be utilized along with some rather understudied archival material such as seals, Hebrew signatures, and Hebrew notes on business records to gain new insights into the lives of these three women. It will become clear, that Margarete, Reynette, and Meide were not only three different generations of the Bonenfant family, but also extraordinary figures living at times of upheaval, holding leading roles within their family.

Keywords: Medieval Ashkenaz, Jewish-Christian relations, Jewish widows, Jewish women, gender, Jewish economic life, resettlement, medieval diplomatics, Jewish seals.

Jewish life in the archbishopric of Trier (Germany) was decimated during the pogroms of 1348 and 1349 during the period of the Black Death.[[1]](#footnote-1) The first city in the archdiocese to allow Jews to resettle after the pogrom within its protective walls was Koblenz, situated in the Rhineland, north of Mainz and south of Cologne. This resettlement was at the instigation of Margarete, widow of Bonenfant, who, in 1351 petitioned the city to allow her and her family – the “basic mode of organization of medieval Jewish society”[[2]](#footnote-2) – to return to Koblenz, their hometown before the pogrom.

In 1356, only five years after the resettlement, the archbishop of Trier Boemund II of Saarbrücken (1354–1362), who had already lost much ground in his power struggle with the urban commune of Trier[[3]](#footnote-3), attempted to assert control over the Jews under his jurisdiction. With the emperor’s blessing Boemund proclaimed the sole right over privileges of settlement, property, real estate, and even the lives of “his” Jews. This resulted in a growing challenge to the Jews’s legal status. Already affected by the archbishop’s agenda was the second woman in this study, Reynette, who had married into Margarete’s family and similarly lived in Koblenz. Reynette was the most important Jewish businesswoman in the 14th century in the archdiocese of Trier. Her economic activities seem to be the result of the early resettlement of her new family that enjoyed economic growth as well as a relatively secure legal status. In contrast, Reynette’s daughter Meide, the third woman discussed in this article, struggled most with the legal challenges late 14th century Jews were facing. In light of the threat to her legal status if she were to return to Koblenz, Meide ultimately settled outside the borders of the archbishopric.

The lives of these three women from the Rhineland – Margarete, Reynette, and Meide – as well as their families[[4]](#footnote-4) will be examined with regards to their relation to the space they lived and moved within. All three women, although related to each other, had a different legal status, played unequal economic roles in their hometown as well as the larger area, and fought in different ways for their social and legal status. Their contrasting experiences pushed them to act differently within and outside of their hometown Koblenz. They serve, therefore, as an excellent case study to better understand the everyday lives of medieval Jewish women, their families, and their legal as well as social statuses within urban settings and beyond. All three women lived at times of profound disruptions manifested in pogroms and in the degradation of the legal status of Jews in the archdiocese. They played leading roles within their families and were central figures at a period of community reconstitution, economic and legal changes.

*Margarete: Returning Home*

On March 26th, 1351, Margarete and her three sons, Jacob, Joseph, and Barukh, agreed with the urban commune of Koblenz to settle within the town’s fortifications.[[5]](#footnote-5) The record is proof of one of the earliest resettlements of a Jewish family after the devastating pogroms in 1348 and 1349.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Who was this woman who played such an important role in the Jewish resettlement of Koblenz? Soon after the Jews were expelled from France by King Philip IV (1285–1314) in 1306, Archbishop Baldwin of Luxembourg (1307–1354) allowed many of them, including probably Margarete’s family, to settle in the archdiocese of Trier. In close proximity to the centralized administrative organization of the French monarchy, Baldwin studied for almost ten years (with some interruptions) in Paris, mainly Theology and Canon Law. It is likely that, during his studies at the university, he was introduced to “progressive” methods of finance and leadership, which he apparently associated with the Jews.[[7]](#footnote-7) During his rule as archbishop, Baldwin systematically enlarged his diocese by utilizing the financial power of “his” Jews to make the local cash-stricken nobility more and more dependent on him.

A record in a municipal book from Koblenz dated to 1330 is the earliest mention of Bonenfant, the late husband of Margarete.[[8]](#footnote-8) Bonenfant was referred to as a moneylender, and later Hebrew signatures by his sons give his Hebrew name as **Ḥ**izkia.[[9]](#footnote-9) His colloquial name, Bonenfant (“good child”), points to a French origin.[[10]](#footnote-10) Bonenfant’s wife Margarete is first recorded in 1342, when she is listed as paying taxes to the urban commune.[[11]](#footnote-11) By then, Margarete was perhaps already a widow since she alone – without Bonenfant – paid an annual tax of 13 marks and four pennies.[[12]](#footnote-12) In general, Jewish women appear alone in our sources only after being widowed while, prior to this, if ever, they are mentioned alongside with their husbands, oftentimes nameless and called “his (house)wife” (*sin husfruwe*). Margarete’s sons Joseph and Jacob are recorded in other sources as well, but the third son, Barukh disappears from the records after the resettlement. While it is impossible to know why, it is likely that he married and moved to another city or died early.

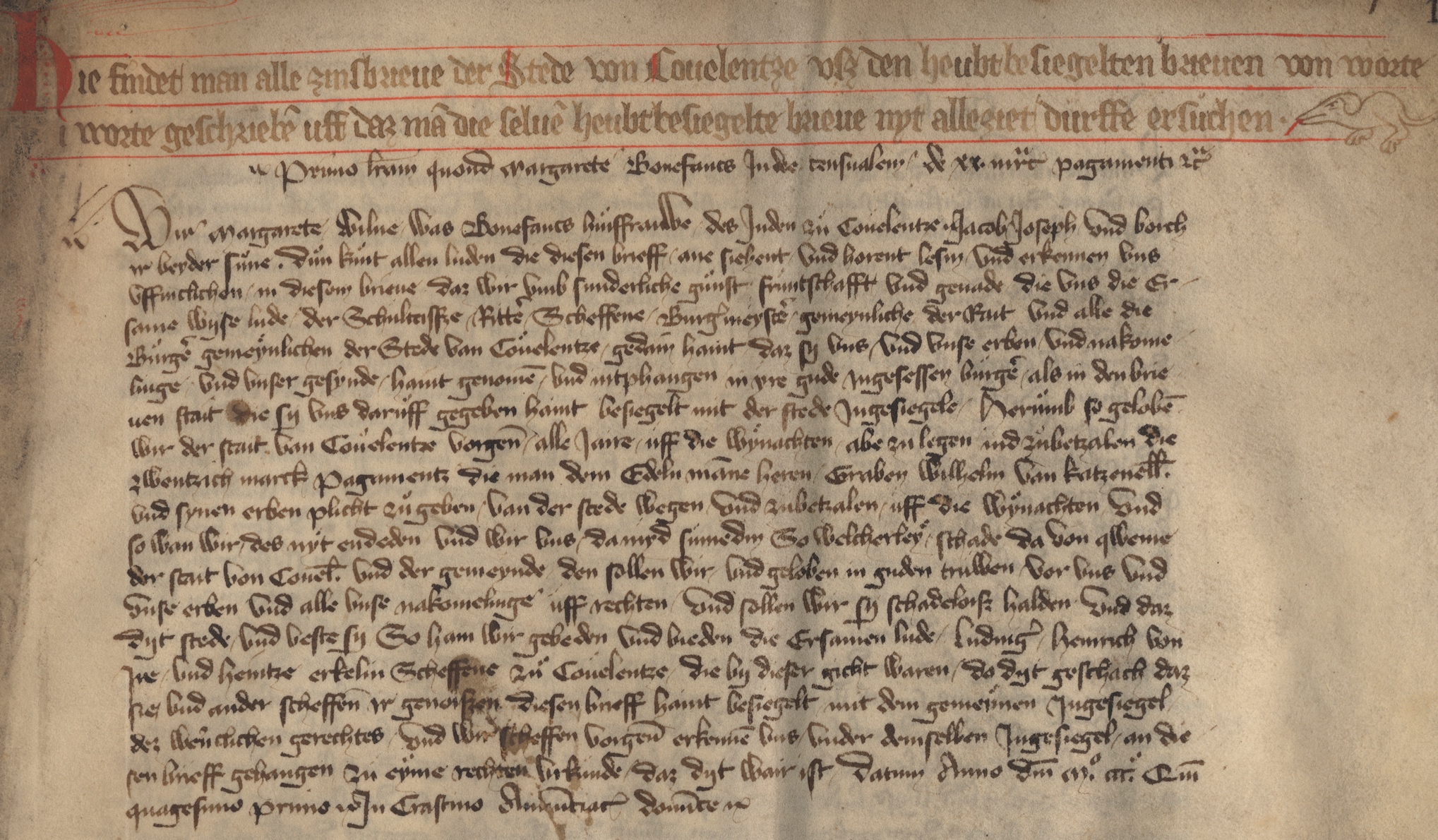


Fig. 1: Margarete’s Contract of Resettlement from the year 1351

Koblenz, Stadtarchiv, 623, no. 1006, fol. 1r

It is remarkable that Margarete, a widow in 1351, and her sons were allowed to resettle in Koblenz so quickly, given that many German cities only allowed Jews the right to return much later. Although some other earlier resettlements are known, there is yet a clear difference between resettlements and official privileges of resettlement granted by city communities, local lords, bishops, and the emperor.[[13]](#footnote-13) Why the urban commune of Koblenz decided to permit Jews to resettle within its walls is not known, although the wording of the records might provide some insight. It says “that they [i.e., the whole urban commune] have taken and accepted us and our heirs and descendants and our domestic servants as their good established citizens.”[[14]](#footnote-14) This characterization as established citizens implies a recognition of their prior status and points to a long relationship with the city and its inhabitants. It also implies that Margarete’s family had a history in their hometown already before the pogrom in August 1349[[15]](#footnote-15) since they had lived in it and therefore sought to reclaim its presence in Koblenz by asserting a place within its urban space only two years later in 1351.

How Margarete and her sons survived the pogrom in 1349 remains an enigma. It seems, however, that they were the sole survivors of the entire Jewish community of Koblenz.[[16]](#footnote-16) Although many German cities allowed Jews to acquire forms of citizenship such as that which Margarete and her sons obtained,[[17]](#footnote-17) declaring whole Jewish communities as citizens is very unusual. From this perspective, a record from Koblenz dated to 1307, in which the urban commune acknowledges the Jews living in the city as “fellow citizens” (*concives*), is of special importance. The record was drawn up at the time when the Jews were expelled from northern France and started settling in the archdiocese of Trier. By then, Archbishop Dieter of Nassau (1300–1307) was politically weak and in poor health. Perhaps as a result, in 1307 the Jews of Koblenz negotiated a contract with the urban commune and officially received the status of citizens.[[18]](#footnote-18) The charter speaks of a “Jewish administration and community in Koblenz” (*magistratus et universitas judeorum in Confluencia*). Presumably initially stored in the archives of the Jewish community, the record was at some point (probably during the pogrom of 1349) transferred to the archives of the Koblenz city council, now the municipal archive. Proof for the former Jewish archival practice is a Hebrew note *in dorso* (i.e., on the backside) of the charter, that says “From the citizens, [saying] that the Jews are citizens in the city [as well]” (*min ha-‘ironim she-ha-yehudim hem ‘ironim ba-‘ir*).[[19]](#footnote-19)

The question of why Margarete, as well as so many Jews in other cities, chose to return to their former homes is a significant one. Several different reasons are possible. Their aforementioned status as citizens was, so it seems, one good motivation for Margarete and her family to return to their hometown. Adding to this, cities generally offered better protection for Jews than more rural settlements and receiving the status of citizen came with an increased level of security both legal and social. But where else could Margarete and her family have settled to continue life? Returning to their hometown, although the memory of the attacks must have been very strong[[20]](#footnote-20), seems to have been the best option for them, especially since they were recognized as citizens. We can assume that Margarete consciously chose to return to Koblenz which was her hometown.[[21]](#footnote-21) Here, her family, who– as far as we know – was engaged in moneylending, had its customers and contacts.

Another reason why Margarete and her family moved back to Koblenz most likely was the Jewish cemetery. Since the family had lived in Koblenz before the pogrom, it is likely that several of Margarete’s relatives were buried there.[[22]](#footnote-22) This is in keeping with broader trends, which show a pattern of Jews returning after pogroms specifically to cities with a Jewish cemetery.[[23]](#footnote-23) That Margarete would have been drawn back by the cemetery is also suggested by recent scholarship that has explored evidence that Ashkenazi Jews memorized the different burial places and places of violent death of their relatives and co-religionists. In the second half of the 14th century, an anonymous Jew noted seven cities where members of his father’s or mother’s family were buried, as well as where such relatives were murdered in the Black Death pogrom.[[24]](#footnote-24) This “mental map,” to which, on a communal level, the *Nuremberg Memorbuch* with its lists of martyrs of the time between 1096 up to 1392 may be added, also points to such strategies of Jewish *memoria*.[[25]](#footnote-25)

According to the contract of resettlement from the year 1351, Margarete and her sons agreed to pay an annual tax of 20 marks to the urban commune for Count Wilhelm of Katzenelnbogen each Christmas. This is an important detail, as it matches the amount and the timing of the sum paid by the whole Jewish community in the above-mentioned contract from 1307[[26]](#footnote-26), in which instance they offered their cemetery as collateral (*de cimiterio eorundem assignandos*). Although the Jews of Koblenz had promised to pay an additional 20 marks to Count Wilhelm in August 1349 (immediately prior to the pogrom) as well as another additional 50 marks to the archbishop of Trier – both specified as annual payments – this was clearly due to their sense of impending danger.[[27]](#footnote-27) In return for the high payment, the urban commune of Koblenz promised to protect their Jews and even allowed them to dwell within the fortifications of Ehrenbreitstein castle. While this might have been how Margarete and her sons survived the pogrom[[28]](#footnote-28), it was ineffective in saving the Jewish community in general. During the same month, the pogrom against the Jews in Koblenz took place. It does seem, however, that the new individual privilege for Margarete’s family from the year 1351 was reconfirming the earlier communal privilege from 1307.

Although in 1351 only Margarete and her family returned to Koblenz, the urban commune considered them to be “the Jewish community” and demanded the same sum that had been paid by the Jewish community prior to 1349. Margarete and her sons therefore can be seen as taking upon themselves the responsibility of reorganizing the community. What did this entail and what did they do in the period that followed? Unfortunately, the paper trail they left only enables us to reconstruct part of their actions. Two aspects were crucial in re-establishing Jewish life in the city: economic stability and Jewish learning. On the one hand, Margarete’s family would have had to negotiate terms of resettlement, taxes, *kosher* slaughtering, communal buildings like the synagogue, and the use of the Jewish cemetery.[[29]](#footnote-29) On the other hand, Jewish daily life had to be organized according to the Jewish calendar and daily rituals, *kashrut*, and ideally also ongoing Torah study had to be re-established, as did regular synagogue services. Regarding Jewish learning in Koblenz, it is known that Jacob Bonenfant, Margarete’s son was a scholar who wrote glosses on *Sha‘arei Dura* as well as on *Sefer ha-Parnas*.[[30]](#footnote-30) His son Moses Bonenfant seems to have followed his steps becoming the community’s rabbi[[31]](#footnote-31) but left us no written works.

Detailed knowledge about the reorganization of Jewish communities is still limited. It seems that much of the legal and economic basis was communicated through privileges with the local urban communes and lords. Communal buildings and places like the synagogue or the cemetery were, in many cases, used again and did not need reconstruction or even new construction. Some of the houses in the Jewish quarter would have been repopulated.[[32]](#footnote-32) This varied from city to city. For Koblenz, we know that the cemetery was reused, and it seems that the same was true for the synagogue. The communal structures and their re-organization, however, need to be studied further. At least in the beginning of the resettlement in Koblenz, the extended Bonenfant family (with its servants) constituted the community which grew only slowly with further families moving to Koblenz.[[33]](#footnote-33)

*Reynette: Leading the Business*

It is especially striking to see the strong role of women within the Bonenfant family. Although Margarete was a widow when she relocated to Koblenz, she obviously had significant social status in the eyes of the urban commune and was able to lead the family business. When Margarete and her family returned to Koblenz, Reynette, who would later marry into the Bonenfant family, was still very young.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Reynette was likely born around 1340 – meaning she too, survived the pogroms – and died in 1396/97. Her name is derived from the French *reyne*, meaning queen, and points to her family’s French origins.[[35]](#footnote-35) Initially married to a man named Leo, Reynette was a widow for a short time before marrying Moses Bonenfant, Margarete’s grandson, around 1373.[[36]](#footnote-36) First mentioned in the sources in 1372, this Moses, referred to himself after his marriage as “I Moses, husband of Reynette” (*ich Moisse, Reynetten man*[[37]](#footnote-37)). A reason for Moses calling himself after Reynette could, alongside with her economic importance, be that she was much older than him. Some rabbis protested to the fact that young Jewish men married wealthy old women and secured their economic status by doing so.[[38]](#footnote-38) However, we know of young Jewish men who called themselves after their mothers.[[39]](#footnote-39) Cases of Jewish husbands calling themselves after their wives since the 14th century are known[[40]](#footnote-40), but very rare and our example of Moses is exceptional.

As the wife of Moses Bonenfant, Reynette was able to strengthen her economic position within the city as well as in the whole Middle Rhine region. She undertook significant business transactions, some of it alone when she was as widow, some still alone even after she had married Moses Bonenfant, and some together with Moses. It is evident that even before she married Moses, she was an active businesswoman with financial means, perhaps the result of the property she received as a widow. Before Reynette became a widow, she was almost unnoticed in the sources since her first husband Leo led the family’s business.[[41]](#footnote-41) He is the one the sources address by name, usually as “Leo the Jew from Münstermaifeld, resident of Koblenz” (*Lewe der jude van Muͤnster*[maifeld]*, wanhafftich tzuͦ Covelentze*[[42]](#footnote-42)).Like many Jewish women, Reynette appears in our sources only after she became widowed.

Reynette’s first husband Leo is possibly the same “Leo, the French Jew” (*Lewe judeus gallicus*[[43]](#footnote-43)), who settled in Vallendar (someseven miles from Koblenz) in 1333. A document from 1355 mentions Leo as living in Münstermaifeld, a town close to Koblenz,[[44]](#footnote-44) and another mentions him there together with his wife Reynette, which seems to indicate that the pair settled there in 1361. Leo had a personal seal that he used for his business. Although it has survived in only one defective impression, it is possible to read: “[...] son of R. Abraham Sho[shan Emek]” ([…] *ben Rav Avraham Sho*[shan ‘Emek]).[[45]](#footnote-45) It appears that Leo’s father Abraham and Bonenfant might have been brothers, since both were French Jews with the same family name – Shoshan Emek (meaning “rose of the valley”).[[46]](#footnote-46)

Leo, who passed away at some point before December 22nd 1366, and Reynette had several children. Only two daughters, Jutte and Meide, are known by name. Jutte married into the Gottschalk family of Montabaur, another important family of moneylenders in the archbishopric of Trier.[[47]](#footnote-47) Meide married Liezer (Eleazar) of Strasbourg (she was his second wife)[[48]](#footnote-48) who is mentioned in a contract with Archbishop Werner III of Trier (1388–1418). Liezer attempted to continue in the footsteps of his mother-in-law Reynette, claiming the business Reynette had in Koblenz as his inheritance. After she died, Liezer referred to Reynette as *ver*[[49]](#footnote-49), a respectful designation to both Jewish and Christian women, especially widows, of high social status. The equivalent term in Latin documents is often *domina* and was by no means a self-evident denomination, neither for Christian nor Jewish women.[[50]](#footnote-50)

The social and economic status of the Bonenfant family was also represented by their use of a personal seal.[[51]](#footnote-51) Owning a seal signified the legal right and economic power to close contracts. A personal seal enabled Jews (both men and women) to act in their own name rather than having to ask a Christian authority or institution to attach an official seal for them, and for which they would also have had to pay an additional fee. Seals can be understood as markers of social and economic status, bearing titles in their seal legends, and were objects indicative of wealth – especially if the crafted seal stamp was of high quality.[[52]](#footnote-52)

After Leo’s death, Reynette continued using his seal for business, and did so even after her marriage to Moses Bonenfant. This is interesting given that one would expect Reynette to use her new husband’s seal, if she used one at all. In fact, she switched between using Leo’s seal[[53]](#footnote-53), Moses’s seal[[54]](#footnote-54), and no seal at all.[[55]](#footnote-55) Inheritance of seals appears to have been a frequent practice and we know a number of cases for Jewish women as well as men, who continued using the seals of their husbands or fathers after their dead. Such a continuation of seal usage was the alternative to the destruction of Jewish seal stamps – a fact well known from Christians and also testified to by a seal stamp from the archbishopric of Trier in the 14th century, when the seal stamp was destroyed and put into the grave of the deceased Jew.[[56]](#footnote-56)

It is very likely that the changes in seal usage we see in Reynette’s business contracts are related to different business deals, and depended on whether Reynette acted alone, together with Moses as equal partners, or with Moses serving as the lead in the business transaction and therefore using only his seal. This type of differentiated seal usage appears among Christians as well. Although mostly limited to men, there are also instances of women with their own seal, or whose seal appears with that of their husband’s, or whose husband used his own seal alone, even if the women were involved in the business.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Figs. 2 and 3: Waxen seal impressions of Moses Bonenfant used in 1377 and 1384

Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, 612, nos. 839, and 840

Reynette’s strong position within the city can be seen both in her status as a Jewish citizen of Koblenz (*juden burgere zů Cobelentze*), which accords with the status of the Bonenfant family[[58]](#footnote-58), and in her possession and use of Leo’s as well as later Moses’s seal to carry out business transactions. In contrast to his wife, Moses Bonenfant seems to have been more occupied with learning than business, and in fact both Moses and his father Jacob were accomplished scholars.[[59]](#footnote-59) Moses was called Rabbi (*Mosse* *raby*) by Christians.[[60]](#footnote-60) In 1388, he was even called “Rabbi Moses” (*Raby Moysse*) by Adolf, the archbishop of Mayence (1381–90).[[61]](#footnote-61) It is likely that Moses received much of his education from his father Jacob, whom he calls “my teacher the Rabbi” (*morenu ha-Rav*) in his seal inscription. The title might indicate that Jacob had a rabbinic ordination (*semikhah*), and was a rabbi paid by the community – a development of the Rabbinate we have only proof for in Ashkenaz since the later 14th century.[[62]](#footnote-62) It is possible that Jacob or Moses were the teachers of a (by then) young anonymous Jew, who wrote in the late 14th century an autobiography in which he states that he moved to Koblenz to study in the year 1371.[[63]](#footnote-63)

While, Moses (so it seems) was learning, it was Reynette who conducted the family business.[[64]](#footnote-64) Occasionally we have proof for Jewish women enabling their husbands to study while they took care of business.[[65]](#footnote-65) Reynette lent significant amounts of money to Archbishop Adolf I of Mayence, including sums as high as 2,261 gulden.[[66]](#footnote-66) In the 1380s and 1390s, she received a portion of the taxes from the important Rhine toll of Oberlahnstein, some three miles south of Koblenz. Adolf I even ordered his officials from the Oberlahnstein toll to deliver the taxes to Reynette’s house or anywhere else within a 10 miles radius, if she were to request that they do so.[[67]](#footnote-67) As mentioned above, while Reynette took care of many of these transactions by herself, she occasionally worked with Moses, while for his part he occasionally acted alone as well.[[68]](#footnote-68)

Reynette was active throughout the Middle Rhine region, but her main source of wealth was from her business with the urban commune of Andernach, some six miles north-west of Koblenz. Evidence for these extensive business activities can also be traced through other members of the Bonenfant family, such as Jacob and Joseph[[69]](#footnote-69), and it is clear that one of the reasons their business was so successful is their almost immediate return to Koblenz after the pogrom. Particularly in the 1350s and 1360s, the Jews of Koblenz (specifically the Bonenfant family) were one of the very few communities who could lend the high sums the city of Andernach needed. This business relationship went on for decades. It is also clear, however, that it was under Reynette that the business grew substantially.[[70]](#footnote-70) In fact, in 1372 the urban commune of Andernach owed Reynette some 8,000 gulden.[[71]](#footnote-71) This debt was so high, city officials agreed to pay Reynette in goods as well as money. In 1373, for example, she received an enormous quantity of wine, equivalent to the sum of 1,000 gulden. Earlier, in 1367, Daniel of Langenaue, burgrave in Lahneck (some three miles south of Koblenz), also paid Reynette with wine, which he had to produce “according to her law” (*zů yre ee gemaycht*), i.e., *kosher*. This interesting fact raises the question of how he might have achieved this task and what Reynette did with so much *kosher* wine.[[72]](#footnote-72) She may have secured her own community’s supplies this way. Since her hometown Koblenz as well as Andernach and Daniel’s residence on Lahneck were somewhat situated in the center of the Rhineland viticulture[[73]](#footnote-73), the trade of wine to other Jewish communities, single Jews or even Christians would have been a plausible option. In the Middle Ages, too, wine could be stored for at least a year, because it is not perishable, and therefore function as a stock, although one would need enough space for storage.[[74]](#footnote-74)

A good number of Jewish women are known to have run significant businesses in moneylending and property in medieval Ashkenaz.[[75]](#footnote-75) Like many of them, Reynette seems to have possessed a certain measure of Hebrew skills for business, as indicated by her Hebrew charter notes. Records she received from Christian business partners have short Hebrew “summaries” and we can assume that Reynette herself wrote these notes.[[76]](#footnote-76) This is supported by the fact that in 1367, Reynette was a widow and ran her business alone.[[77]](#footnote-77) One record from this year, for example, refers to her as “Reynette, the wife of the deceased Leo” (*Reynette wylne Lewen hůysfraůwe*). On the same record is a Hebrew note *in dorso*, likely written by Reynette herself[[78]](#footnote-78) since it says that there is a pawn “for me” (*li*) involved in the contract she made with her clients. This record was attached to a second contract dated to 1379 which again has a Hebrew note *in dorso* with the words “I have received” (*qibalti*).[[79]](#footnote-79) This adds further proof to the assumption that Reynette was able to do much of her business alone. The reason we still have her Hebrew charter notes is that the records were given back to the debtors after the debt was paid back.

Fig. 4: A Hebrew note on a business record, probably written by Reynette, from 1379

Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 107, no. 18

Reynette and her family lent money to archbishops, noblemen, and urban communes. But they also invested in the real estate market. This is true not only in their hometown of Koblenz but also in the city of Trier, the capital of the archdiocese of Trier, located some 80 miles from Koblenz. A recently found register of real estate interests from this city covers the years 1347 to 1406. It demonstrates that Reynette and Moses purchased significant properties there in the 1370s and were active relatively far from their core region around Koblenz.[[80]](#footnote-80)

Reynette and her family owned property in other cities of the archbishopric as well. At least two houses in Koblenz belonged to Reynette and two more she rented from the archbishop of Trier. From the resettlement of Jews in Koblenz in 1351 until their expulsion from the city in 1418, we know of 13 houses Jews owed in the *Judengasse* of Koblenz as well as at least two more in other streets of the city.[[81]](#footnote-81) One of Reynette’s houses was located next to the synagogue but we cannot estimate how many of these 13 Jewish houses in the *Judengasse* were owned by members of the Bonenfant family in total.

*Meide: Fighting for the Legal Status*

Like Reynette, her daughter Meide[[82]](#footnote-82) was also a moneylender, although not as successful as her mother. In 1394, for example, she lent the rather small sum of 130 gulden to Conrad II of Weinsberg, archbishop of Mayence (1390–1394), and received a gilded silver double-cup as collateral.[[83]](#footnote-83) Meide acquired a house in Bingen, which was later sold by her husband Liezer in 1393.[[84]](#footnote-84)

Meide was probably born in the early 1350s, i.e., soon after the pogroms. This can cautiously be assumed by the year of her initial wedding plans: In 1366, documents show that Meide was planning her wedding to Jacob Bonenfant, i.e., the father of the Moses Bonenfant who later married Meide’s mother Reynette. It is very likely that Meide by then was in her mid-teens, at a presumed age of 13 to 16.[[85]](#footnote-85) Meide and Jacob had different legal statuses: She was born free but Jacob “belonged” to the archbishop, a legal status prevalent in the archbishopric of Trier during the second half of the 14th century (*erbe juden*)[[86]](#footnote-86), although his mother Margarete as well as his son Moses were, it seems, free Jews[[87]](#footnote-87). In 1356 Archbishop Boemund II obtained from Emperor Karl IV (1346/1354–1378) the privilege of considering the Jews within his territory “as other property” (*als ander eygen gut*).[[88]](#footnote-88) This privilege, procured a mere five years after resettlement, led to a significant decline in the legal status of Jews within the archbishopric. Jews were – at least theoretically – no longer allowed to own houses but had to rent them from the archbishop.[[89]](#footnote-89) Furthermore, community institutions, such as the cemetery and the synagogue, also became the property of the archbishop according to this privilege. During this period, in which Boemund consolidated his power over the Jews, he appears to have been losing power over the urban communes, who carried out uprisings that severely challenged his authority and ultimately led to him leaving Trier and moving to Koblenz.[[90]](#footnote-90) Thus, his move to aim consolidate his power over “his” Jews can be seen as possibly a response to these larger pressures.

In 1366, when Meide and Jacob Bonenfant were preparing for their wedding, Boemund’s successor Archbishop Kuno II (1362–1388) tried to profit from it by forcing them to sign a contract degrading some of their future children’s legal status. According to the agreement with the archbishop, the status of their children would alternate; the first would “belong” to the archbishop, the second would be free, etc., in acknowledgment of the different legal statuses of the two parents.[[91]](#footnote-91) This system might also have been the reason, why Jacob Bonenfant had a lower legal status than Meide.

The marriage never took place and in 1370 Meide, whose freedom of movement was not restricted, settled in the territory of the Count Palatine, outside the archbishopric. In other words, the free born Jew Meide left the territory of the archdiocese and sought to rebuild her life in a new city. It seems that the main reason for this change of plans was the (sudden?) death of Leo, Reynette’s husband, who must have passed away before December 22nd 1366, the same year and probably just weeks after the marriage agreement between Meide and Jacob had been made with the archbishop. Already a year later, Reynette is mentioned a widow in Christian sources. Likely soon after but according to the sources at the latest in the year 1373[[92]](#footnote-92), Reynette married Moses Bonenfant, the son of Jacob, and thus secured her own status.

In 1387 Meide returned in closer proximity to the archbishopric of Trier, moving to Bingen, a city south of Koblenz and close to Mayence, where she signed a two-year contract with Adolf I, the archbishop of Mayence.[[93]](#footnote-93) We already learned that Reynette was extremely mobile.[[94]](#footnote-94) Meide too moved around freely. By 1389 at the latest, she appears to have married Liezer from Strasbourg. A year later the couple settled in Oberwesel, some 12 miles south of Koblenz in what was part of the archbishopric of Trier. The impetus for the move was apparently the need to manage the family business interests in light of Reynette’s increasing age, who died in 1397. Reynette’s husband Moses Bonenfant is not present in records after 1388. Perhaps he died before Reynette since he apparently played no role in the negotiations between Liezer and Meide on the one hand and the archbishop on the other.

This period could not have been an easy time for Meide and Liezer. In addition to having to cope with their increasingly degraded legal status, King Wenceslaus (1376–1400) declared massive “Jewish debt cancellations” in 1385 and again in 1390. This would in any case have had a negative impact on the Jews in the archdiocese of Trier, but their effect was further compounded by Archbishop Werner III, who was only too happy to profit from the declaration, causing the economic ruin of many Jewish moneylenders in his territory.[[95]](#footnote-95)

In 1390, Meide and her husband Liezer were in the midst of negotiations with Archbishop Werner over their right to be acknowledged as the heirs of Reynette, who was still alive at the time.[[96]](#footnote-96) These negotiations might have been overshadowed by the debt cancellations during the same year. Since both, Meide and Liezer, were free Jews, Werner wanted to change their status to that of belonging to the archbishopric as “inherited Jews,” which they were reluctant to do. The archbishop obviously feared the couple could leave his territory once they inherited Reynette’s property and business. The negotiations about the inheritance were initially unsuccessful and Meide moved away from the archdiocese to Cologne in 1391. A Cologne record states, rather remarkably, that Meide was accepted into the city but her husband was not (*ir man nyet*).[[97]](#footnote-97) She worked in Cologne and is registered as paying taxes – first 80 gulden, then 40 gulden per annum[[98]](#footnote-98) – there in the years 1391/92. Clearly, Meide preferred her status as a free Jew and was not willing to be subordinate to the archbishop of Trier.

Liezer appears to have agreed to change his status to that of an “inherited Jew” and this was apparently the reason he was not accepted in Cologne, because the urban commune was reluctant to get dragged into a possible conflict with the archbishop of Trier to which he “belonged.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Proof of Liezer’s downgraded legal status is only given in a contract after his mother-in-law Reynette’s death in 1397.[[100]](#footnote-100) At that point, Liezer had to negotiate again with the archbishop over her estate. The record of agreement mentions a daughter he had with Meide named Treine, who settled with Liezer in Koblenz. Treine’s name is French and probably a diminutive of Catherine.[[101]](#footnote-101) She could have been the fourth woman of this article if she had only left us records. Treine was still underage in 1397 (*noch under yren mundigen jaren*) and the contract with the archbishop stated that a separate agreement over her legal status would be discussed when she came of age. It seems that she was supposed to choose between the status of an “inherited Jew” who would have to remain in Koblenz or being a free Jew who would be obliged to move away or pay higher taxes to the archbishop. This contract between Liezer and the archbishop from 1397 has survived as a copious record only. Originally it was sealed and signed in Hebrew by Liezer and two more well-known Jews from the archbishopric.[[102]](#footnote-102)

In the aftermath of the agreement between Liezer and Archbishop Werner, Meide might have divorced Liezer, since they are recorded as living in different cities and having different legal statuses. Her legal status as a free Jew allowed Meide a freedom of movement that seems to have been extremely important to her. This is particularly clear after her mother’s death, when rather than giving up her freedom in order to take over the family business, shed opted to relinquish the inheritance. Meide’s link to her family and her hometown Koblenz probably were strong but her desire to stay free was stronger. Leaving Cologne at some point, Meide is next recorded as living in Speyer, where she is last mentioned in 1404 and might have died soon after. The last record of her name is in a document from 1407, which described the purchase of a house in Speyer by her son Jacob. Here, the traces of the Bonenfant family and their women vanish.

*Concluding Remarks*

This paper has followed the lives of three Jewish women from the Bonenfant family: Margarete, Reynette, and Meide, who lived in and around the archbishopric of Trier in the 14th and early 15th centuries. We know of more Jewish women from that period in Ashkenaz, who appear to have been economically successful and clearly had a high social status. Around the year 1320, a contemporary of Margarete and a Jewish businesswoman named Plume owned a castle in Klosterneuburg (some six miles north of Vienna). She lived in this castle with her family and even set up a synagogue in it.[[103]](#footnote-103) Kendel of Regensburg, a widow living around the mid-14th century, collected taxes from her community for the urban commune, negotiated settlement conditions with new Jews in town, and died during a holdup murder in her house.[[104]](#footnote-104) Another contemporary of Reynette was Rachele, who lived in Erfurt and had flourishing business relations with Gerhard of Schwarzburg, bishop of Würzburg (1372–1400). Rachele even owned a personal seal and seems to have written Hebrew notes on her business records.[[105]](#footnote-105) Dislaba, another contemporary in Regensburg, like Kendel, negotiated settlement contracts with new Jews in her city and had two personal seals.[[106]](#footnote-106) In the late 14th century we learn of Zorline (Sarah) in Frankfurt am Main, a contemporary of Meide. She was able to give huge credit sums to her clients and one of these Christian clients respectfully called her a “honorable woman”. For some time Zorline was a widow, married three times (she divorced from her first husband), owned several houses in Frankfurt, and moved to Treviso in Italy in the year 1399 where her third husband set up a Latin testament at the moment of his death in 1401.[[107]](#footnote-107) Zorline even took oaths for herself and her husband – usually husbands took oaths for their wives and not *vice versa*.[[108]](#footnote-108) At about the same time, we know of Ricke from Frankfurt. She owned a personal seal that has not survived.[[109]](#footnote-109) These women command authority, many have personal seals, they are referred to with respectful designations and achieved central roles in their communities and as contact people with the Christian urban commune. Moreover, some of these women seem to have played a somewhat more important role than her husbands.[[110]](#footnote-110)

Margarete, Reynette, and Meide are all prime examples of such women. Each had her own personal life circumstances and challenges. Surviving the devastating pogroms, resettling and rebuilding the community, being economically active in a successful way, and fighting for their legal status are only some of the deeds we saw. The archbishopric of Trier in general and particularly the city of Koblenz were the focal points of their lives during the 14th and early 15th centuries. In 1418 the Jews were expelled from the archbishopric of Trier, including from Koblenz.[[111]](#footnote-111) They did not return to the city for over a century.

CV

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1. Cf. Alfred Haverkamp, “Die Judenverfolgungen zur Zeit des Schwarzen Todes im Gesellschaftsgefüge deutscher Städte,” *Zur Geschichte der Juden im Deutschland des späten Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp and Alfred Heit (Stuttgart; Hiersemann, 1981), 27–93; František Graus, *Pest – Geißler – Judenmorde: Das 14. Jahrhundert als Krisenzeit* (Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 31994); Theresa Finley and Mark Koyama, “Plague, and Pogroms: the Black Death, the Rule of Law, and the Persecution of Jews in the Holy Roman Empire,” *Journal of Law and Economics* 61 (2018) 253–277. Work was funded by a post-doc fellowship at the Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem in the project “Beyond the Elite: Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe” (since 2018). This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 681507). Drafts of this paper were discussed with Elisheva Baumgarten, Eyal Levinson, Jörg Müller, Christoph Cluse, and Michael Schlachter. I thank Fray Hochstein for her work on the English and the two anonymous peer review readers for their thoughtful comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Elisheva Baumgarten, “The Family,” *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. 6*, ed. Robert Chazan (Cambridge; Univ. Press, 2018), 440–62, here 441. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For the loss of archbishopric power resulting in the relocation of the archbishopric residency as a trend see Enno Bünz, *Residenzen der Mainzer Erzbischöfe im späten Mittelalter. Mainz – Aschaffenburg – Steinheim – Eltville* (Eltville; Burg-Verein, 2009), 7. Boemund’s successor Kuno II had even stronger arguments with the urban commune of Trier in 1377; cf. Alfred Haverkamp, “‘Zweyungen, Zwist und Missehel’ zwischen Erzbischof und Stadtgemeinde in Trier im Jahre 1377,” *Kurtrierisches Jahrbuch* 21 (1981) 22–69. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On Jewish families see Elisheva Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children. Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe. Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Univ. Press, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Koblenz, Stadtarchiv, 623, no. 1006, fol. 1r. The charter has survived as 14th century copy only. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Jörg R. Müller, “Selbstgestaltung und Fremdbestimmung: Die Reorganisation jüdischer Gemeinden im Westen des Reiches nach den Pestverfolgungen,” *Von der mittelalterlichen ‘Kuhstadt Speyer’ bis zur Dom-Restaurierung 1957/61*, ed. Armin Schlechter, Joachim Kemper, and Anja Rasche (Ubstadt-Weiher; Regionalkultur, 2018), 55–85; Michael Schlachter, “‘Iudei… reversi sunt’: Zur Reorganisation jüdischen Lebens in Aschkenas nach 1350,” *The Jews of Europe around 1400. Disruption, Crisis, and Resilience*, ed. Lukas Clemens and Christoph Cluse (Wiesbaden; Harrassowitz, 2018), 31–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. Franz-Josef Heyen, “Balduin von Luxemburg. Versuch einer Zwischenbilanz,” *Balduin von Luxemburg. Erzbischof von Trier – Kurfürst des Reiches 1285–1354*, ed. Franz-Josef Heyen (Mainz; Gesellschaft für Mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, 1985), 597–608, here 598; Alfred Haverkamp, “Erzbischof Balduin und die Juden,” *Balduin von Luxemburg, Erzbischof von Trier – Kurfürst des Reiches 1285–1354*, ed. Franz-Josef Heyen and Johannes Mötsch (Mainz; Gesellschaft für Mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, 1985), 437–84; Franz-Josef Ziwes, “Reynette – eine jüdische Geldhändlerin im spätmittelalterlichen Koblenz,” *Koblenzer Beiträge zur Geschichte und Kultur* 4 (1994) 25–40, here 26; Franz-Josef Ziwes, *Studien zur Geschichte der Juden im mittleren Rheingebiet während des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Hannover; Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1994), 181–93. The French Jews were recalled by Philip’s successor Louis X. (1314–1316) in 1315. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. Ziwes, *Studien*, 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See a record from the year 1360 with his son Jacob’s Hebrew signature as “Jacob Jeḥiel Jona, son of R. **Ḥ**izkiah Shoshan Emek” (*Ya’aqov Yeḥiel Yonah ben Rav* ***Ḥ****izqia Shoshan ‘Emeq*); cf. Edmund E. Stengel, ed., *Nova Alamanniae. Urkunden, Briefe und andere Quellen besonders zur deutschen Geschichte des 14. Jahrhunderts, Vol. 2, Pt. 1* (Berlin; Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1930), 672–75, no. 1029. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. A. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names. Their Origins, Structure, Pronunciation and Migrations* (Bergenfield; Avotaynu, 2001), 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. Ziwes, “Gemeinde,” 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For Jewish widows involved in business see Cheryl Tallan, “The Economic Productivity of Medieval Jewish Widows,” *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division B, Vol. 1*, ed. David Assaf (Jerusalem; WUJS, 1994), 151–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. Müller, “Selbstgestaltung,” 56. There is, for example, a resettlement privilege from Wroclaw from 1350, while in Nuremberg records show Jews being accepted as citizens again in 1349/50 but the earliest resettlement privilege is dated only to 1352. See Michael Toch, “Siedlungsstruktur der Juden Mitteleuropas im Wandel vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit,“ *Juden in der christlichen Umwelt während des späten Mittelalters*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp and Franz-Josef Ziwes (Berlin; Duncker & Humblot, 1992), 29–39. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Daz sy uns und unse erben und nakomelinge und unser gesynde hanit genomen und intphangen in yre gude ingesessen bürgere*. Translations from medieval German to English are mine. The term *gesynde* is not specific and could include unmarried brothers and sisters. It alludes to a number of servants in the house of the family as well as further family members. Some Jewish families employed large numbers of domestic help, such as maidservants and teachers etc. Since the family would have needed a quorum of ten male Jews to form the *minyan* necessary to establish a synagogue service, we can cautiously assume that in addition to the three sons there perhaps were likely at least seven additional male Jews. The positive declaration of the relationship between the Christian urban commune and the Jews as good established citizens who lived among them for long periods of time can be found in other cities as well. In Regensburg, a Jewish family declared in a record from 1384 that the city council pardoned them because “they have realized that we were born in their city and have always been here and have lived among them” (*si haben angesehen, das wir von ir stat geborn sein und von alter mit in her komen und gewont haben*); cf. Andreas Lehnertz, “Hafturfehden von Juden in der Stadt Regensburg (14. bis 16. Jahrhundert). Städtische Autonomiebestrebungen zwischen Wandel und Kontinuität,” *Die Stadt des Mittelalters an der Schwelle zur Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Inge Hülpes and Falko Klaes, 134–72, here 144, accessed December 11, 2018, <https://mittelalter.hypotheses.org/15761>. In 1441, a Jew in Spoleto returned to his city which he called his “hometown” (*patria*); see Alfred Haverkamp, “Jews and Urban Life: Bonds and Relationships,” *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries)*, ed. Christoph Cluse (Turnout; Brepols, 2004), 55–67, here 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Franz-Josef Ziwes, “Die jüdische Gemeinde im mittelalterlichen Koblenz – *Yre gude ingesessen burgere*,” *Geschichte der Stadt Koblenz, Vol. 1*, ed. Ingrid Bátori, Dieter Kerber, and Hans Josef Schmidt (Stuttgart; Theiss, 1992), 247–57, here 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Very few Jews are known to have survived the pogroms of 1349 within the diocese of Trier; cf. Haverkamp, “Erzbischof,” 439–40. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Cf. Alfred Haverkamp, “*Concivilitas* von Christen und Juden in Aschkenas im Mittelalter,” *Jüdische Gemeinden und Organisationsformen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Robert Jütte and Abraham P. Kustermann (Vienna; Böhlau, 1996), 103–36. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Dieter died on November 23rd 1307. Baldwin was elected on December 7th 1307, and the status of citizenship was issued on April 20th 1307. Cf. Christoph Cluse, “1307 – Die Koblenzer Juden werden Bürger,” *Quellen zur Geschichte des Rhein-Maas-Raumes. Ein Lehr- und Lernbuch*, ed. Winfried Reichert, Giselsa Minn, and Rita Voltmer (Trier; Kliomedia, 2006), 115–32, who posits that Dieter must have been weak, politically and in his health, and therefore the Jews of Koblenz as well as its urban commune in all probability acted without too much concern over an interfering archbishop. In 1306, with Dieter losing power, Baldwin was serving as provost of the Trier Cathedral, where he was responsible for foreign affairs. The settlement of the French Jews would therefore have been within his competence. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Cf. Cluse, “1307.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. On Jewish personal and communal memory cf. Christoph Cluse, “The Jews of Medieval Ashkenaz: Topographies of Memory,” *Rostros judíos del occidente medieval*, ed. Government of Navarre (Pamplona; Fondo de Publiciaciones del Gobierno de Navarra, 2019), 137–65; Lucia Raspe, “Sacred Space, Local History, and Diasporic Identity: The Graves of the Righteous in Medieval and Early Modern Ashkenaz,” *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition*, ed. Raanan S. Boustan, Oren Kosansky, and Maria Rustow (Philadelphia; Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 147–63. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Cf. Müller, “Selbstgestaltung,” 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. This would count for those died before the pogrom because the victims of the pogrom in Koblenz were burned to death – and not buried. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Cf. Müller, “Selbstgestaltung,” 56, 63–64. About the high importance of cemeteries for Jews see Alfred Haverkamp, “Jüdische Friedhöfe in Aschkenas,” *Die Welt des Mittelalters: Erinnerungsorte eines Jahrtausends*, ed. Johannes Fried and Olaf B. Rader (Munich; C.H. Beck, 2011), 70–84; Cluse, “The Jews,” 146–56. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Cluse, “The Jews,” 153–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Siegmund Salfeld, ed., *Das Martyrologium des Nürnberger Memorbuchs* (Berlin; L. Simion, 1898). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Cf. Ziwes, “Gemeinde,” 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Cf. Amir/ Kober, “Art. Koblenz,” 409. Especially in the second half of the 14th century, resettlement was often linked to individual instead of communal taxation. Such a changed system led to huge sums that single families had to pay; cf. Eberhard Isenmann, “Steuern und Abgaben,” *Germania Judaica, Vol. 3, Part 3*, ed. Arye Maimon, Mordechai Breuer, and Yacov Guggenheim (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 2208–81. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. On Jews taking refuge in castles see Jörg R. Müller, “Juden und Burgen im Mittelalter – Eine nur scheinbar marginale Beziehung,” *Die Burg. Wissenschaftlicher Begleitband zu den Ausstellungen ‘Burg und Herrschaft’ und ‘Mythos Burg*,’ ed. Georg U. Großmann and Hans Ottomeyer (Dresden; Sandstein, 2010), 110–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The synagogue recorded in the sources of the second half of the 14th century seems to be the same building as before the pogrom; cf. Franz-Josef Heyen, “Art. Koblenz,” *Germania Judaica, Vol. 3, Part 1*, ed. Arye Maimon (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 624–32, here 624. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cf. David Deblitzky, ed., *Sefer Sha‘arei Dura im ha-ḥiburim ha-nilvim alav bi-shenei kerakhim* (Bnei Brak, 2016), 3, 25 (Hebrew); David Shalmon, ed., *Sefer ha-Parnas ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem; Machon Yerushalayim, 2014)*,* 34, 39 (Hebrew), with his acronym *Yash‘a*; I thank Simcha Emanuel for these references. Both books served as significant halakhic authorities in the 14th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See for this further down. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Cf. Müller, “Selbstgestaltung,” 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Cf. Heyen, “Art. Koblenz,” 627. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Scholars have written already about Reynette; cf. especially Ziwes, “Reynette – eine jüdische Geldleiherin;” Franz-Josef Ziwes, “Reynette von Koblenz: Jüdisches Frauenleben im späten Mittelalter,” *Porträt einer europäischen Kernregion. Der Rhein-Maas-Raum in historischen Lebensbildern*, ed. Franz Irsigler and Gisela Minn (Trier; Kliomedia, 2005), 138–46; Ziwes, “Gemeinde.” Much of my information is taken from these articles. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Cf. Beider, *Dictionary*, 556–57; Ziwes, “Reynette,” 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Bonn, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, S1571, fol. 71v. For Jewish widows see Etelle Kalaora’s article in this JSQ volume; Cheryl Tallan, “The Position of the Medieval Jewish Widow as a Function of Family Structure,” *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division B, Vol. 2*, ed. David Assaf (Jerusalem; WUJS, 1990), 91–98; Cheryl Tallan, “Medieval Jewish Widows: Their Control of Resources,” *Jewish History* 5 (1991) 63–74. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ziwes, “Reynette – eine jüdische Geldleiherin,” 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See for this Eyal Levinson, *Baharut u-gvariut be-hevra ha-yehudit be-Ashkenaz bi-yamei ha-binayim* (Ph.D. Diss.; Bar-Ilan Univ. 2018), 128–30 (Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Martha Keil, “Hendl, Suesel, Putzlein. Name und Geschlecht am Beispiel des österreichischen Judentums im Spätmittelalter,” *L’Homme* 20 (2009) 35–52, here 40–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Cf. Erika Timm, *Matronymika im aschkenasischen Kulturbereich. Ein Beitrag zur Mentalitäts- und Sozialgeschichte der europäischen Juden* (Tübingen; Max Niemeyer, 1999), 19–27. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. For the status of Jewish women see also Simcha Goldin, *Jewish Women in Europe in the Middle Ages. A Quiet Revolution* (Manchester, New York; Manchester Univ. Press, 2011), 90–120. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See, for example, Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, 612, no. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. For this and more examples of French Jews in the archbishopric of Trier see Ziwes, *Studien*, 181–93; Haverkamp, “Erzbischof,” 459–60; Friedhelm Burgard, “Zur Migration der Juden im westlichen Reichsgebiet im Spätmittelalter,” *Juden in der christlichen Umwelt während des späten Mittelalters*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp and Franz-Josef Ziwes (Berlin; Duncker & Humblot, 1992), 41–57. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Cf. Ziwes, “Reynette,” 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Cf. Andreas Lehnertz, “Judensiegel in Aschkenas 2 (1348–1390),” *Corpus der Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden im spätmittelalterlichen Reich*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp and Jörg R. Müller (Trier, Mainz; Mainzer Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur, 2015), no. 14, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS02/JS-c1-000r.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Hebrew family names were rare in 14th century Ashkenaz and it seems they were not utilized by the Christians in the records. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Cf. Burgard, “Migration.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Cf. M. Schmandt, *Judei, cives et incole: Studien zur jüdischen Geschichte Kölns im Mittelalter* (Hannover; Hahnsche, 2002), 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, 1 C 6, no. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Such titles can be found frequently. See, for example, the Jewish widow Guta of Überlingen who was designated as *domina* in the year 1304 (Karl-Heinz Burmeister, *Medinat Bodase. Zur Geschichte der Juden am Bodensee 1200–1349, Vol. 1* [Constance; Universitätsverlag Constance, 1994], 98–99), or the Jewish widow Minna of Zurich who was called *vro* in the year 1329 (*Quellen zur Zürcher Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Von den Anfängen bis 1500, Vol. 1*, ed. Werner Schnyder [Zurich, Leipzig; Rascher, 1937], 57, no. 115). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Personal seals of the Bonenfant family that have survived include that of Leo (see above), Moses (see further down), and Joseph whose seal reads “Joseph, son of R. **Ḥ**izkiah Shoshan Emek” (*Yosef ben Rav* ***Ḥ****izqiah Shoshan ‘Emek*); cf. Lehnertz, “Judensiegel 2,” no. 11, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS02/JS-c1-000q.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Cf. Andreas Lehnertz, “Two Seals of Muskinus the Jew (Moshe b. Yeḥiel, d. 1336), the Archbishop of Trier’s Negociator,” *A Companion to Seals in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laura Whatley (Leiden et al.; Brill, 2019), 242–63. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Cf. Lehnertz, “Judensiegel 2,” no. 14, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS02/JS-c1-000r.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Cf. Lehnertz, “Judensiegel 2,” no. 23, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS02/JS-c1-0020.html>. The seal legend reads “Moses, son of our teacher the Rabbi Jacob Shoshan Emek” (*Moshe ben morenu ha-Rav Ya‘aqov Shoshan ‘Emek*) and S(IGILLVM) MOYSE. A record signed by Moses bears his Hebrew signature as “Moses, son of Rabbi Jacob Shoshan Emek, the righteous shall live in his faith” (*Moshe ben ha-Rav Ya‘aqov Shoshan ‘Emek tsv’’i*); cf. Stengel, *Nova Alamanniae*, 672–75, no. 1029. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. In the latter case, Reynette was mentioned through Moses’s seal alone; cf. Lehnertz, “Judensiegel 2,” no. 21, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS02/JS-c1-000s.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Cf. Lehnertz, “Two Seals of Muskinus the Jew.” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Cf. Paul D.A. Harvey, “Personal Seals in Thirteenth-Century England,” *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to John Taylor*, ed. Ian N. Wood, and Graham A. Loud (London et al.; Hambledon, 1991), 117–27, here 123. Seals of citizens in medieval Germany are not well studied but appear to have had a parallel to the English evidence. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See StA Wü, MIB 10, fol. 260v, *Die Regesten der Mainzer Erzbischöfe für die Zeit nach 1374/75*, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/409>. We also see the term *judynnen burgerszen zů Cobelentze*; cf. StA Wü, MIB 11, fol. 209v [01], *Regesten* (see above), accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/3134>. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. For Jacob see footnote 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. See Heyen, “Art. Koblenz,” 627. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. See StA Wü, MIB 11, fol. 158r, *Regesten* (see footnote 63), accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/19>. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Cf. Israel J. Yuval, *Scholars in Their Time: The Religious Leadership of German Jewry in the Late Middle Ages* (Jerusalem; Zalman Shazar, 1988), 11–20 (Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Cf. Israel J. Yuval, “A German-Jewish Autobiography of the Fourteenth Century,” *Jewish Intellectual History in the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph Dan (Westport; Praeger, 1994), 79–99, here 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. According to William Ch. Jordan, “Women and Credit in the Middle Ages: Problems and Directions,” *The Journal of European Economic History* 17 (1988) 33–62, Jewish women were especially active in small loans. There is some doubt that this was the case in 14th and 15th century Germany. For examples of higher loans see Martha Keil, “Mobilität und Sittsamkeit: Jüdische Frauen im Wirtschaftsleben des spätmittelalterlichen Aschkenas,” *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der mittelalterlichen Juden. Fragen und Einschätzungen*, ed. Michael Toch (München; Oldenbourg, 2008), 153–80. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Cf. Judith R. Baskin, “Some Parallels in the Education of Medieval Jewish and Christian Women,” *Jewish History* 5 (1991) 41–51, here 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Cf. Heyen, “Art. Koblenz,” 625. For comparison, a house of a patrician at that time in the German Kingdom would have had a price of about 800 gulden; cf. E. Pies, *Löhne und Preise von 1300 bis 2000* (Wuppertal; Brockhaus, 2008), 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Cf. StA Wü, MIB 10, fol. 260v, *Regesten*, <http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/409>; StA Wü, MIB 11, fol. 209v [01], *Regesten*, both accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/3134>. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. See StA Wü, MIB 11, fol. 142v [02], *Regesten*, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/3050>. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Barukh, the third son of Margarete, is not mentioned in other sources. Joseph Bonenfant is recorded as a moneylender; see Ziwes, “Kapitalmarkt,” 61. Another son of Jacob Bonenfant was Kaufmann Bonenfant, who lived in Andernach in 1411, probably in order to coordinate some of the family business; cf. Burgard, “Migration,” 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Reynette’s first husband Leo had business relations with the city of Andernach and was able to take an interest rate of up to 72,2 % annually from this city; see Ziwes, “Reynette,” 31. The common rate was 43,3 %. Reynette, who joined Leo’s business, was able to build upon this relationship after Leo’s death. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. See Ziwes, “Reynette,” 30–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Cf. Ziwes, “Reynette,” 32–33. We have proof for the preparation of *kosher* wine for Jews in Christian sources; see, for example, Berthold Rosenthal, “Art. Endingen,” *Germania Judaica, Vol. 2,* ed. Zvi Avneri (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 1968), 209–10, here 210, footnote 3 (where the wine shall be made “Jewish” [*jytschen*], i.e., *kosher*); 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; Verlagsdruckerei Schmidt, 2017), 57, mentioning “Jewish wine” (*judenwin*). I thank Gerd Mentgen for these references. On *kosher* wine in the Middle Ages see Haym Soloveitchik, *Ha-Yayin be-yeme ha-Benayyim: Yeyn Nesekh – Pereq be-Toledot ha-Halakhah be-Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem; Zalman Shazar, 2008) (Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Cf. Haym Soloveitchik, “‘Halakhah’, Taboo and the Origin of Jewish Moneylending in Germany,” *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries)*, ed. Christoph Cluse (Turnout; Brepols, 2004), 295–304 (with a map). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. I thank Karl-Heinz Faas and Lukas Clemens for this confirmation. Sources clearly testify to “old” (from the year before) and “new” wine; cf. Lukas Clemens, *Trier, eine Weinstadt im Mittelalter* (Trier: Kliomedia, 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. To mention only a few studies, see Avraham Grossman, *Pious and Rebellious. Jewish Women in Medieval Europe* (London et al.; Brandeis Univ., 2004); Martha Keil, “Maistrin (Mastress) and Business-Woman: Jewish Upper Class Women in Late Medieval Austria,” *Jewish Studies at the Central European University* 1 (2000) 93–108; Victoria Hoyle, “The Bonds that bind: Money Lending Between Anglo-Jewish and Christian Women in the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews, 1218–1280,” *Journal of Medieval Jewish History* 34 (2008) 119–29. Recent studies on Jewish women of other regions provided fascinating comparative material. Cf., for example, Rena Lauer, “Jewish Women in Venetian Candia: Negotiating Intercommunal Contact in a Premodern Colonial City, 1300–1500,” *La cohabitation religieuse dans les villes européennes, Xe–XVe siècles*, ed. Stéphane Boissellier and John V. Tolan (Turnhout; Brepols, 2014), 293–309; Renée Levine Melammed, “Women in Medieval Jewish Societies,” *Women and Judaism. New Insights and Scholarship*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York; Univ. Press, 2009), 91–115; Oded Zinger, “‘She aims to harass him’: Jewish Women in Muslim Legal Venues in Medieval Egypt,” *AJS Review* 42 (2018) 159–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See two charters that are addressed to Reynette alone by the urban commune of Andernach: Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, 612, nos. 451–52. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. On Jewish widows taking over the business cf. Rachel Furst, *Striving for Justice: A History of Women and Litigation in the Jewish Courts of Medieval Ashkenaz* (Ph.D. Diss.; Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem, 2014), 113–57. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. On the education of Jewish women in the Middle Ages cf. Baskin, “Some Parallels,” 41–51; Elisheva Baumgarten, “Towards a History of Medieval Jewish Women’s Lives,” *A Conference in Honor of Professor Avraham Grossman on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem; IASH, 2018), 95–113, here 95–98 (Hebrew). Occasionally we do have proof and hints of Jewish women’s writing in Hebrew notes or confirmations with signatures on record; cf. *Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter, Vol. 4*, ed. Eveline Brugger and Birgit Wiedl (Innsbruck, Wien, Bozen; StudienVerlag, 2018), with many examples of notes speaking in the first person singular. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 107, no. 18. It is, of course, possible that Reynette dictated the note to someone else and not writing it herself. Yet, for Hebrew notes on business records by men, the question never comes up if they wrote these notes or dictated them. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Cf. Christoph Cluse, “Aus dem wiederentdeckten Trierer Zinsregister von 1347–1406,” *Aschkenas* 26 (2016) 69–90, here 85–87. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Cf. Heyen, “Art. Koblenz,” 624–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Her name, meaning “maiden,” does not recall a French origin; cf. Beider, *Dictionary*, 540–41. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. See StA Wü, MIB 12, fol. 234v [01], *Regesten*, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/3781>. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. See StA Wü, MIB 12, fol. 196v [01], *Regesten*, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/3654>. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Scholarship in general assumes that Jewish women were married off at such an age; cf. Jacob Katz, “Marriage and Sexual Life Among the Jews at the Close of the Middle Ages,” *Zion* 10 (1945) 21–54 (Hebrew); Baumgarten, “The Family,” 446, who states that even underaged marriage, that is under 12 1/2 years, is frequently attested. The *Judenbuch* from Erfurt, a late-14th to early 15th century city book recording taxes of Jewish inhabitants, makes clear that Jews – at least for the Christian officials – reached their legal age when they became 13; cf. Reinhold S. Ruf-Haag, *Juden und Christen im spätmittelalterlichen Erfurt. Abhängigkeiten, Handlungsspielräume und Gestaltung jüdischen Lebens in einer mitteleuropäischen Großstadt* (Ph.D. Diss.; Trier Univ., 2009), 153–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Jacob is clearly designated as inherited Jew of the archbishop (*erffeygen*) in 1375; Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, 1 C 5, no. 362. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Moses Bonenfant was, together with his wife Reynette, later in the year 1384 called “Jewish citizen of Koblenz” (*juden burgere zuͦ Covelentze*; see Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, 612, no. 840) and Reynette in another record from 1389 “Jewish citizen of Koblenz” (*juden burgersen zuͦ Covelentze*; see Koblenz, Landeshauptarchiv, 612, no. 540). [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Cf. Ziwes, “Reynette,” 30; Ziwes, “Gemeinde,” 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Cf. Heyen, “Art. Koblenz,” 624–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. See Haverkamp, “‘Zweyungen’”. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Cf. Ziwes, “Reynette,” 36–37. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. See Bonn, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, S1571, fol. 71v. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. See also Schmandt, *Judei*, 235–36. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. For the high mobility of Jewish women in medieval Germany see Judith R. Baskin, “Mobility and Marriage in Two Medieval Jewish Societies,” *Jewish History* 22 (2008) 223–43; Keil, “Mobilität.” [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. See Friedhelm Burgard, “Christlicher und jüdischer Geldhandel im Vergleich: Das Beispiel der geistlichen Herrschaft Trier,” *Shylock? Zinsverbot und Geldverleih in jüdischer und christlicher Tradition*, ed. Johannes Heil and Bernd Wacker (Munich; Fink, 1997), 59–80, here 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Cf. Ziwes, “Reynette,” 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Cf. Schmandt, *Judei*, 108–09. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Cf. Schmandt, *Judei*, 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. This is particularly convincing since the city of Cologne was already dealing with similar problems with other lords during this period; cf. Matthias Schmandt, “Jüdische Migration in den mittelalterlichen Rheinlanden. Wege, Motive, Schicksale,” *Völkermühle Europas: Migrationen an Rhein und Mosel*, ed. Michael Matheus (Stuttgart; Franz Steiner, 2018), 76–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. See Ziwes, “Reynette,” 37–38. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Cf. Beider, *Dictionary*, 585–86. A French *Siddur* (prayer book) dated to the years 1395–1398, for example, testifies to the name *Trine* (Treine) as well; see Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. ebr. 324, fol. 325v, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://digi.vatlib.it/mss/detail/Vat.ebr.324>. I thank Eyal Levinson for this source. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Cf. Andreas Lehnertz, “Judensiegel in Aschkenas 3 (1391–1440),” *Corpus der Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden im spätmittelalterlichen Reich*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp and Jörg R. Müller (Trier, Mainz; Mainzer Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur, 2016), no. 16, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS03/JS-c1-0029.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Cf. Müller, “Juden und Burgen,” 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Cf. Keil, “Mobilität,” 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. See Lehnertz, “Judensiegel 2,” no. 20, accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS02/JS-c1-000x.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. See Lehnertz, “Judensiegel 3,” no. 5 accessed December 11, 2018, <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS03/JS-c1-0019.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Cf. Schnur, *Die Juden*, 1017–22, no. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Cf. Gundula Grebner, “‘Der alte raby hat eyn gemeyn buche in syner hant gehabt…’ Jüdische Eidesleistungen in und um Frankfurt am Main (14.–16. Jahrhundert). Eine Phänomenologie,” *Die Frankfurter Judengasse. Jüdische Leben in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Fritz Backhaus et al. (Frankfurt am Main; Societäts-Verlag, 2005), 145–60, here 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Cf. Isidor Kracauer, “Ein jüdisches Testament aus dem Jahre 1470,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 60 (1916) 295–301. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. For further examples see Goldin, *Jewish Women*, 223–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Cf. Heyen, “Art. Koblenz,” 628. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)