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Scenes from the life of a rich widow (Reval in the mid-fourteenth century)

Keywords: Medieval Reval, women, city council, Aleydis van Bremen, property

Medieval Reval (now Tallinn) was, besides Narva, the northern most town in which Lübeck law was in force.¹ The town received Lübeck City Rights from the Danish king, Eric Ploughpenny, in 1248.² The rights were later confirmed by Queen Margaret I,³ who received the Duchy of Estonia as a widow's dower, and, starting from 1266, she used the title *domina Estoniae*.⁴ Although Margaret never actually visited Estonia, she became one of the greatest benefactors of thirteenth century Reval, completing the foundation of a Cistercian monastery in Reval initiated by the Danish king, Eric Ploughpenny. She confirmed the existing possessions of the monastery,⁵ granted it the right of patronage of St. Olaf's parish church in the old town,⁶ confirmed the possessions of the local Dominican friars located outside the city,⁷ and reaffirmed all the liberties

¹ For fundamental studies on the history of the medieval Reval see E. von Nottbeck, W. Neumann, *Geschichte und Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Reval*, 1. Lief. *Die Geschichte der Stadt bis zum Beginn der Schwedenherrschaft*, Reval 1896, pp. 1–100; H. von zur Mühlen, *Studien zur älteren Geschichte Revals. Gründung – Einwanderung – Bürgerliche Oberschicht*, Zeulenroda 1937; P. Johansen, *Nordische Mission, Revals Gründung und die Schwedensiedlung in Estland*, Stockholm 1951 (Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Handlingar, 74).

² *Liv-, Esth- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch nebst Regesten*, 1. Abteilung, Bd. 1 (1093–1300), ed. F.G. von Bunge, Reval 1853 – (hereafter: LECUB 1), no. 199 (1248).

³ LECUB 1, no. 395 (1266); LECUB 1, no. 435 (1273), subsequently also confirmed by Margaret's son, King Eric Glipping – LECUB 1, no. 437 (1273).

⁴ LECUB 1, no. 395 (1266).

⁵ LECUB 1, no. 403 (1267).

⁶ LECUB 1, no. 404 (1267).

⁷ LECUB 1, no. 370 (1262).

bestowed on the town by King Valdemar II a few decades earlier.⁸ She also made contributions to the construction of the city walls,⁹ confirmed the boundaries of the city district,¹⁰ issued regulations on the measures and weights to be used in the city,¹¹ and granted the residents of Reval a monopoly of retail trade in cloth.¹²

The Reval city archives, besides those of Gdańsk, contain one of the largest collections of any Hanseatic city. The collection has not been studied quite as extensively as it should be, except for a number of studies in economic history, i.e. studies on the structure and scope of trade conducted by its residents, the development of urban legislation in its various forms, including regulations on the credit market,¹³ and earlier studies on the social structure of the town's craftsmen.¹⁴ The surviving fourteenth century city records mostly consist of land and mortgage books,¹⁵ city accounts,¹⁶ customs books,¹⁷ books of safe-conducts,¹⁸ the oldest *Denkelbuch*,¹⁹ property tax records,²⁰ etc.

⁸ LECUB 1, no. 436 (1273).

⁹ LECUB 1, no. 468 (c.1280); LECUB 1, no. 469 (c.1280), LECUB 1, no. 470 (c.1280).

¹⁰ LECUB 1, no. 389 (1265).

¹¹ LECUB 1, no. 390 (1265).

¹² LECUB 1, no. 463 (1279).

¹³ C. Kardasz, *Rynek kredytu pieniężnego w miastach południowego pobrzeża Bałtyku w późnym średniowieczu (Greifswald, Gdańsk, Elbląg, Toruń, Rewel)*, Toruń 2013 (Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu, 94-2), pp. 15–473.

¹⁴ K. Kaplinsky, 'Die handwerkliche Produktion in Tallin (Reval) im 14. Jahrhundert,' in: *Gewerbliche Produktion und Stadt-Land-Beziehungen*, eds. K. Fritze, E. Müller-Mertens, J. Schildhauer, Weimar 1979 (Hansische Studien, 4), pp. 26–42.

¹⁵ *Das älteste Wittschopbuch der Stadt Reval (1312–1360)*, ed. L. Arbusow, Reval 1888 (Archiv für die Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Curlands 3. Folge – Revaler Stadtbücher, 1) (hereafter: AWB); *Das zweitälteste Erbebuch der Stadt Reval (1360–1383)*, ed. E. von Nottbeck, Reval 1890 (Archiv für die Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Curlands, 3 Folge – Revaler Stadtbücher, 2); *Das drittälteste Erbebuch der Stadt Reval (1383–1458)*, ed. E. von Nottbeck, Reval 1892 (Archiv für die Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Curlands, 3. Folge – Revaler Stadtbücher, 3); *Das Revaler Pergament Rentenbuch (1382–1518)*, ed. A. Plaesterer, Reval 1930 (Publikationen aus dem Revaler Stadtarchiv, 5) (hereafter: RPR).

¹⁶ *Die ältesten Kämmererbücher der Stadt Reval (1363–1374)*, ed. O. Greiffenhagen, Reval 1927 (Publikationen aus dem Revaler Stadtarchiv, 3) (hereafter: AKB); 'Das Revaler Kämmererbuch von 1376 bis 1380,' ed. D. Heckmann, *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 41, 1992, pp.186–247.

¹⁷ *Revaler Zollbücher und Quittungen des 14. Jahrhunderts*, ed. W. Stieda, Halle 1887 (Hansische Geschichtsquellen, NF, 5).

¹⁸ *Revaler Geleitsbuch-Bruchstücke 1365–1458*, ed. P. Johansen, Reval 1929 (Publikationen aus dem Revaler Stadtarchiv, 4).

¹⁹ *Libri de diversis articulis 1333–1374*, ed. P. Johansen, Reval 1935 (Publikationen aus dem Revaler Stadtarchiv, 8) (hereafter: LDA).

²⁰ Partly published – 'Schosslisten der Stadt Reval 1369–1372. Ein Querschnitt durch die Bevölkerungsentwicklung Revals von der Frühzeit bis zum Ende des 17.

An attempt to bring out a specific female figure from ‘the obscurity of the Middle Ages’ in order to save her from oblivion using city records, which mostly deal with men, may seem a daunting task, unless the woman in question was a member of a ruling dynasty or a celebrated saintly mystic (who, more often than not, also came from the most prominent social strata). It is true that city records provide evidence that richer women (mostly widows) often took part in economic life by borrowing or lending money. However, in most cases, they did so ‘anonymously’, since books of city records did not record their own names, but those of their late husbands.²¹ Only rarely were widows entering into some transaction or other mentioned by their first and last name. As a rule, their maiden names, let alone the names of their mothers, were never mentioned, which effectively makes it impossible to trace their family connections, which can only be inferred from the names of their legal guardians (estate managers), since, according to Lübeck law, they were usually the widow’s relatives, either in-laws or her own ascendants (father, brothers, or uncles), who, in this way, continued to exercise control over the estate, which, after a daughter (sister or niece) married, would pass into the hands of her new family.²² In this way, one can try to determine the circle of the widow’s closest relatives, but generally it is impossible to limit this circle to just a few families in order to build the widow’s family tree.

In all the surviving entries into various books of the city of Reval I have come across only one woman who is treated differently in the records. To a large extent, this must have been due to her untypical family circumstances, but there are reasons to believe that this unusual treatment also stemmed from her strong personality and ability to impose her own opinions—not that she was always careful in disposing of her possessions. She was the widow Aleydis van Bremen, a sister of Johann van Bremen, who was a member of the Reval city council (documented in this capacity in the years 1333–1346).²³

Jahrhunderts,’ ed. H. von zur Mühlen, *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands*, 48, 2002, pp. 117–218; for a list of other extant public records, including those from the fourteenth century, see H. von Hansen, *Katalog des Revaler Stadtarchivs*, Reval 1896, pp. 37–41 (Städtische Finanzen).

²¹ A. Mänd, ‘Frauen, Memoria und Sakralräume im spätmittelalterlichen Livland,’ *Forschungen zur Baltischen Geschichte*, 8, 2013, pp. 11–39, here p. 12.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

²³ F.G. von Bunge, *Die Revaler Rathslinie nebst Geschichte der Rathsverfassung und einem Anhang über Riga und Dorpat*, Reval 1874, pp. 54, 83; H. von zur Mühlen, *Studien zur älteren Geschichte Revals...*, p. 85.

It is obvious that even a very independent woman could only function in her social environment within the limits of the legal regulations by which she had to abide and which she had no power to change. The regulations required that all her financial ventures should be endorsed by the legal guardians (estate managers) appointed for her and approved by the city authorities. For this reason, no woman can be abstracted from her male milieu, and in the case of Aleydis, the most important male figure was her brother.

Johann van Bremen first appears in the sources in 1316, in an entry concerning the acquisition by him of unspecified real property somewhere in the city,²⁴ perhaps as part of an inheritance. Nothing is known about his ancestors, as the oldest surviving book of city records dates back to 1312. One could venture a guess that Thideman van Bremen, who is mentioned next to Johann, was a close relative of his, perhaps his father or brother. There are several records of Johann van Bremen's activity on the money market in later years. He granted loans²⁵ secured by mortgage²⁶ on an orchard,²⁷ bought market stalls,²⁸ took over a stone house,²⁹ and occasionally borrowed money himself.³⁰ The fact that in his later life he became a city councillor indicates that his family belonged to the city elite, held considerable property, and were deeply rooted in the local urban community. He must have been respected even before he joined the city council considering the fact that, in 1325, he was appointed the estate manager of a religious foundation set up by councillor Johann Massche,³¹ who donated 60 silver marks to establish a vicariate at St. Olaf's parish church in Reval. The holder of the vicariate had to pray for the salvation of the souls of the benefactor and all of his ancestors; in their turn, the appointed estate managers (among them, Johann van Bremen) had to ensure that the foundation would be run according to the benefactor's will; otherwise, the capital was to be used to assist the poor.³² Here we are dealing with the oldest

²⁴ AWB, no. 96 (1316) – '[...] Johannes Albus et Johannes de Bremis receperunt ista bona ex parte Thidemanni de Bremis [...] in hereditatibus et in ortis et aliis.'

²⁵ AWB, no. 401 (1334); AWB, no. 430 (1335), AWB, no. 566 (1343).

²⁶ AWB, no. 247 (1326); AWB, no. 570 (1343); AWB, no. 595 (1344).

²⁷ AWB, no. 516 (1341).

²⁸ AWB, no. 508 (1341).

²⁹ AWB, no. 477 (1338).

³⁰ AWB, no. 570 (1343); AWB, no. 582 (1344); AWB, no. 635 (1345).

³¹ F.G. von Bunge, *Die Revaler Rathslinie nebst Geschichte...*, pp. 54, 114.

³² *Liv-, Esth- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch nebst Regesten*, 1. Abteilung, Bd. 2 (130–1367), ed. F.G. von Bunge, Reval 1855 (hereafter: LECUB 2), no. 716 (1325);

surviving document of any religious foundation in Reval.³³ Judging by its contents, the foundation was a rather new institution for this city since the benefactor was concerned that his will might be challenged by the local bishop, canons, rectors of parish churches, or even city councillors,³⁴ and, therefore, he made provisions for an alternative solution in the form of allocating capital for alms to the poor. Johann van Bremen's involvement with the foundation shows that, at least starting from that time, he was concerned for both the future eternal salvation of himself and his loved ones and for their prosperity in earthly life (through the opportunity to employ his own relatives at the vicarage, thus providing them with a reliable source of income).

This is best illustrated by the two foundations established by Johann himself by the end of his life. In 1343, he allocated 112 silver marks to an annuity capital from which, after his death, the city council of Reval had to pay an annuity of seven marks to '[...] suis proximis consanguineis, de patre et matre eiusdem domini Iohannis de Bremen progenitis, indigentibus, quam diu eos scivimus, dividendo [...]'.³⁵ From this it can be inferred that, at that time, Johann had no living descendants of his own, since otherwise they would have been named first and foremost as the possible recipients of financial support. He, however, saw potential beneficiaries only among more distant relatives, descendants of his parents, which includes descendants of his brothers and sisters. This reasoning is strengthened by the observation that, following Johann's death, the city records of Reval show no traces of his widow or children. The only relation mentioned in the sources is his sister Aleydis and her descendants, although the latter are unlikely to have benefited from the annuity. Remarkably, payments to '[...] her Johan Broemen nottrofftigen vrunden 7 mr. to Darbte gesant [...]'³⁶ are confirmed by the account books of Reval until the introduction of the Reformation. Moreover, the annuity may well have survived

³³ The only older institution might have been the Stemmeren vicariate established as part of another foundation, '[...] Hinricum dictum Stemerem apud sanctum spiritum Revalie [...] – AWB, no. 249, which was first mentioned in 1326, so it must have been founded before that.

³⁴ LECUB 2, no. 716 – '[...] si dominus episcopus aut domini canonici vel rectores ecclesiarum in Revalia, aut domini consules ibidem has elemosinas infringere vellent quascunq; de causa vel quoquomodo impedire [...].'

³⁵ LECUB 2, no. 812 (1343).

³⁶ E.g. *Kämmereibuch der Stadt Reval* (1432–1463), H. 1–2, ed. R. Vogelsang, Köln–Wien 1976 (Quellen und Darstellungen zur Hansischen Geschichte, NF, 22/1–2), no. 827 (1450).

the creation of the so-called *Armen Kiste* in Reval (1524), in which the money from all the pre-Reformation religious foundations was accumulated to finance assistance to the poor. Considering that Johann van Bremen's foundation right from the very beginning was secular in nature and was not associated with any ecclesiastical institution, it could have continued to function just as before. One should also emphasize the connection of the foundation with unnamed relatives of Johann van Bremen from Dorpat; the connection finds repeated confirmation in the sources.

Johann's other foundation was different in nature. It follows from its founding document that Johann van Bremen, at an unspecified point in time, obtained the right of patronage of the aforementioned Johann Massche vicariate (perhaps he was appointed patron by the founder's last will). In 1346, shortly before his own death, he ordered that the vicar's position should be filled by the elder of the Hagen brothers for the term of his life should he be ordained a presbyter. Until the end of his studies, he was to receive a kind of scholarship in the amount of two silver marks (instead of the seven marks due to a vicar). Should he die before ordination, this perpetual right would be transferred to his younger brother, who also was going to become a priest.³⁷

The document bears the date of 23 February, and Johann van Bremen is mentioned as deceased already between 25 July and 15 September 1346. This is also the time when his sister first appears in the city records, referred to as 'honesta domina soror domini Johannis de Brebone memorie'.³⁸ From then on, until 1358, a number of financial transactions are recorded in the oldest book of city records that were conducted either by Aleydis herself or by her legal guardians on her behalf. She is referred to variously as 'honesta domina soror Johannis de Brebone',³⁹ 'domina de Brebone',⁴⁰ 'domina Aleydis quondam soror domini

³⁷ LECUB 2, no. 843 (1346); cf. M. Gąssowska, 'Kościół św. Olafa w Rewalu (Tallinie) w XIII i XIV w.,' in: *Ecclesia et civitas. Kościół i życie religijne w mieście średniowiecznym*, Warszawa 2002 (Colloquia Mediaevalia Varsoviensia, 3), pp. 187–200, here pp. 197–198; A. Mänd, 'Oleviste kiriku keskaegsest sisustusest ja annetajate ringist,' *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*, 20, 2014, pp. 3–50, here pp. 7–8. Henricus de Hagene, probably the Hagen brothers' father, was appointed by Johann Masche as one of the estate managers of the vicariate – LECUB 2, no. 716.

³⁸ AWB, no. 657 (1346). This entry itself is undated; however, it is placed between two entries dated in this way: AWB, no. 654, and AWB, no. 660.

³⁹ AWB, no. 672 (1346).

⁴⁰ AWB, no. 717 (1348); AWB, no. 801 (1351).

Johannis de Breme,⁴¹ ‘domina Aleydis de Breme,’⁴² ‘honesta matrona domina Aleydis de Bremen,’⁴³ and even as ‘honesta domina, domina nostra, domina Aleydis, quondam soror domini Johannis de Brema.’⁴⁴ She was treated with notable reverence, perhaps because of her kinship with a late city councillor or perhaps as the usual way of showing respect to individuals of high social and financial standing.

What can be learned about Aleydis from her mentions in the records? She was undoubtedly a widow, as evidenced by transactions made in the presence of her estate managers rather than her husband, who, under Lübeck law, would have had the power to control and approve her financial undertakings. However, the above-mentioned records contain no references to her late husband’s first name or surname, and Aleydis is identified only through her relationship with the late member of the city council of Reval, Johann van Bremen. Apparently, her late husband was not known to the local ruling elite, from which it can be inferred that he was not a resident of Reval. Surely his name was known to the city council, but the name of her brother was more important at the moment for identification, and that is why they began to describe her in this way. It is obvious that a girl from a ‘patrician’ family could not have married someone of a lower social status, who would have been completely unknown in his own hometown. One must, therefore, presume that, after marriage, Aleydis moved to her husband’s hometown, and returned to Reval after he had died. Her decision to return could have been connected to being appointed her brother’s heir.

So, where did Aleydis’ husband come from and where did she move after marrying? There are many strong reasons to believe that it was Dorpat. Unfortunately, because of the complete destruction of the city archives of Dorpat during the First Livonian War in the second half of the sixteenth century, this hypothesis cannot be verified against Dorpat sources. However, several references to Aleydis in the Reval records contain clear indications of her connection to Dorpat. As mentioned above, starting from the second half of the fourteenth century, a perpetual annuity founded in 1343 by Johann van Bremen was paid

⁴¹ AWB, no. 755 (1349).

⁴² AWB, no. 788 (1350); AWB, no. 837 (1353); AWB, no. 1004 (1358).

⁴³ LDA, no. 398 (c.1350).

⁴⁴ AWB, no. 715 (1347).

to his relatives in Dorpat.⁴⁵ Of course, one can also hypothesize that Johann's family moved from Dorpat to Reval before 1316, and that some relatives stayed behind—including Aleydis, who would have come to Reval only after becoming a widow. Unfortunately, there is no way to verify this hypothesis because of the lack of sources. Further evidence of her connections to Dorpat are found in the records according to which 'Thidemanus quondam venerabilis patris domini episcopi Tarbatensis dapifer'⁴⁶ arrived in Reval in 1347 to conclude, in the presence of Aleydis, an agreement with her estate managers (who were, at the same time, local city councillors) concerning her previous financial ventures in the city. His arrival may have also been connected with the need to appoint new legal guardians for the widow, because financial supervision could hardly be efficient at such a distance. New managers of her estate are mentioned in another letter concerning Aleydis that was sent from the city council of Reval to the city council of Dorpat.⁴⁷ One can surmise that the said Thideman (who later appears in the sources under the surname of Malchow) was one of Aleydis's estate managers in Dorpat. The records show him involved not only in Aleydis's financial affairs but also in the execution of her brother Johann's will. The fact that Johann van Bremen made a will is clearly evident from an entry in the book of city records concerning the bequest: '[...] pecunia quam dominus Johannes de Breme bone memorie in suo testamento puellis Geseken et Greteken sororibus assignavit [...]'.⁴⁸ Presumably, the girls were related to Johann van Bremen, perhaps they were his nieces, the daughters of Aleydis van Bremen. One of them is identified as Gertrude, for whose benefit Thideman Malchow handed over 60 Riga marks from Reval city councillors to Dorpat city councillors.⁴⁹ One might presume that the money

⁴⁵ For the first time, this direction of payment is confirmed for 1370 – '[...] heft entfangan 6 mc. Rig. van den almissen her Johan van Bremen behof Ghereke Wissen wif to Darbte [...]'] – AKB, p. 13.

⁴⁶ LECUB 2, no. 882 (6 XI 1347).

⁴⁷ LDA, no. 398 (c.1350) – '[...] Bertoldus de Bickinchusen, nostri consulatus socius, et Johannes Molendino, noster concivis, pro nunc honeste matrone domine Alyedis de Bremen provisosores [...]'] Bertold Bickinchusen (Vickinchusen) was a councillor starting from 1342 and mayor starting from 1353. He was dead by 1354 (AWB, no. 909) – F.G. von Bunge, *Die Revaler Rathslinie nebst Geschichte...*, pp. 54, 138.

⁴⁸ AWB, no. 723 (1348).

⁴⁹ LECUB 2, no. 915 (c. 1350) – '[...] me Thydemannum de Malchowe, extra muros civitatis morantem Tarbatensis, ex parte cuiusdam puellae, Gerdrud nominatae, sororis Margarete, relicte uxoris quondam Henrici Klot, recordationis felicis, sexaginta marcas monetae Rigensis a consulibus civitatis Revaliensis in promptu recepisse, qua

came from Johann van Bremen's bequest. According to the document, Gertruda was a sister of Margaret, Henry Klot's widow. In my opinion, she can be identified as Margaret, a daughter of Aleydis van Bremen. She only appears once in the oldest book of city records, shortly after Aleydis arrived in Reval. According to the entry, the widow transferred all her movables to her daughter Margaret instead of her son.⁵⁰ Margaret must have been resident in Dorpat, since nobody of the name Klot appears in the Reval sources. From the entry we also find out that Aleydis had a son, who at that time must have been a minor, as suggested by the word *puer*. Presumably, he remained in Dorpat in his guardians' care; the guardians would most likely be his paternal relatives. In addition, Aleydis had three minor daughters,⁵¹ who also might have stayed in Dorpat. She secured for herself the lifelong right to make use of all her possessions. Under Lübeck law, her younger daughters would inherit her possessions in equal parts only after her death. Now, how does one explain the discrepancy between the number of Aleydis's daughters (three) and the number of girls named in the above-mentioned will of Johann van Bremen (two)? One simple explanation is that the third daughter may have been born after Johann's will was made. Another possible explanation is that he did not know that another niece had been born, which should not be surprising given that private contact among people living in remote towns was rather infrequent. This is especially true for northern Estonia at a very turbulent time marked by the outbreak of the anti-Christian uprising of 1343, the subsequent struggle to suppress the indigenous population, and the sale of Estonia by Denmark to the State of the Teutonic Order in 1346. Another piece of evidence is provided in a letter of recommendation for Johann Nigenhusen, addressed to the city council of Reval and signed by, among other people, Thideman Malchow. The letter was written so that Nigenhusen would receive '[...] illam elemosinam, quam constituit Iohannes de Bremen [...] quod ullus in istis partibus

in praesentia duorum honestorum consulum civitatis Tarbatensis praesentavi puellae saepedictae.'

⁵⁰ AWB, no. 672 (1346) – 'Dominus Bertoldus Bickinchusen, nostri consulatus socius [...] ex parte honeste domine sororis Johannis de Breme resignavit omnia bona mobilia que varendehave dicuntur, que dicta eodem tempore habere dinoscitur filie sue domine Margarete soli et non suo puero [...].'

⁵¹ AWB, no. 672 (1346) – '[...] Ceterum tribus filiabus eiusdem domine omnia bona sua, que predictae tres filie post obitum earum matris equaliter dividere debebunt, scilicet quamdiu ipsa domina vixerit soror domini Johannis de Breme frui debet bonis supradictis premissa omnia consentivit idem domina [...].'

propinquier et pauperior est, quam praedictus Iohannes [...].⁵² The letter bears no date, and none of its signatories is known from the Reval sources, so it can be presumed to have been written in Dorpat, where Thideman Malchow lived. It is only natural to assume that Johann Nigenhusen also came from Dorpat and, furthermore, was a close relative of Johann van Bremen.

The legal acts performed by Aleydis just after her arrival in Reval in 1346 can be interpreted as an attempt to get settled in a new urban environment through investing her capital in order to secure the means for day-to-day living. Aleydis invested 30 marks in an annuity of two marks, receiving granaries and a stone house with a garden as a security.⁵³ She also granted a loan in the amount of ten marks for three years.⁵⁴ Two years later, she conducted two more transactions, acquiring two annuities of three marks for 45 silver marks each. As a security, she received, respectively, two stalls and five *clausuras* (cellars?),⁵⁵ half of a house owned by one of the borrowers, and half of another stone house along with two more stalls.⁵⁶ In 1349, she also owned an annuity of one mark paid on the capital of 15 marks.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, the oldest book of records of the city of Reval does not provide the locations of real property involved in financial transactions, so it is impossible to determine in which part of the city Aleydis herself might have lived or where the mortgaged real estate might have been located, except for the stalls, which were probably located at the market. Only the last record concerning Aleydis, which describes her purchase of an annuity in the amount of three marks paid on the capital of 45 marks, specifies a location: '[...] in suam lapideam domum cum omnibus suis clausuris in opposito fratrum predicatorum sitam [...]',⁵⁸ that is, opposite the Dominican monastery. The monastery was located in Reval in St. Olaf's parish.

⁵² LECUB 2, no. 914 (c. 1350).

⁵³ AWB, no. 657 (1346) – '[...] pro antedicta pecunia [...] domos in quibus annona deponitur dicta kornhaus et domum suam lapideum cum orto ratione pignoris obligavit.' Perhaps the rent received by Aleydis in 1352 was for the same real estate (AWB, no. 914 (1352)) since in both cases the amount of the capital (30 marks), the amount of the rent, and the mortgaged estate are the same '[...] domos ante in quibus annona deponitur dictas kornhus et domum suam lapideam cum orto ratione pignoris [...],' albeit with a different owner.

⁵⁴ AWB, no. 661 (1346).

⁵⁵ AWB, no. 716 (1348).

⁵⁶ AWB, no. 717 (1348).

⁵⁷ AWB, no. 755 (1349).

⁵⁸ AWB, no. 1004 (1358).

Moving to Reval did not mean that Aleydis no longer had any financial ties to Dorpat. This is evident from correspondence concerning her affairs that was conducted by the city council of Reval with the city council of Dorpat around 1350. In one of the cases discussed in the correspondence, Thidemann Malchow, who has been mentioned here on several occasions, twice prevented the payment of rent owed by residents of Dorpat to Aleydis van Bremen⁵⁹ (we know about his stay in Reval in 1347 and 1348; maybe that is when he personally delivered money to Aleydis⁶⁰). It follows from the letter that there had been a conflict between Thidemann and Bertold Bickinchusen, a city councillor and one of Aleydis' estate managers, in connection with the rent she had to be paid. There is not enough evidence that would allow one to determine when the dispute arose. Moreover, it is known that earlier they had been on good terms, and that there had been complete mutual understanding, as evidenced by an agreement concluded between, on the one part, Lodwik Hamer⁶¹ and Johann de Molendino,⁶² managers of Aleydis' estate in Reval, and, on the other part, Thidemann. The agreement was concluded with the widow's consent to confirm the gifts they had received from her.⁶³ As if in passing,

⁵⁹ LDA, no. 398 (c.1350) – '[...] dominis consulibus Tharbatensis, consules civitatis Reualie [...] domine Alyedis de Bremen provisors, conquerentes redditus eiusdem domine Aleydis de Bremen per Thidemannum Malchowe in vestra civitate esse iterum arrestatos. Amiramus valde, secundum quod nobis vestra littera demandastis, quod omnes discenciones ac discordie inter predictum dominum Bertoldum Bickinchusen ex una parte et dictum Thidemannum Malchowe parte ex altera, ratione reddituum dicte domine Alyedis habite, mediante vestro consilio, composite fuissent et unice favorabiliter et amice, ita quod Thidericus Malchowe predictus redditus sue domine predicte in vestra civitates existentes, ultra non deberet ea vivente arrestare nec in aliquo occupare [...].'

⁶⁰ His stay in Reval in those years is confirmed by entries in the book of city records – LECUB 2, no. 882 (1347) and AWB, no. 723 (1348).

⁶¹ Ludwik Hamer is documented as a Reval councillor in 1337–1352 – G.F. von Bunge, *Die Revaler Rathslinie nebst Geschichte...*, pp. 54, 100.

⁶² Johann de Molendino (Mühlen) is documented as a common burgher starting from 1347, as a councillor starting from 1367, and as the mayor in 1389–1391 – G.F. von Bunge, *Die Revaler Rathslinie nebst Geschichte...*, pp. 55, 116.

⁶³ AWB, no. 715; LECUB 2, no. 882 (6 XI 1347) – '[...] nos unanimi consensu et bona voluntate in hunc modum amicabiliter et plenariter concordasse, quod omnia et singula bona, sive in hereditatibus aut bonis mobilibus, dictis varende have, seu prompta pecunia, vel aliis quibusquocunque bonis existant, quae honesta domina nostra, domina Aleydis, quondam soror Iohannis de Brema, consulis Revaliensis, bonae memoriae, rite et legaliter unicuique nostrum, uni maius et alteri minus, in praemissis assignaverat, possidere et tenere, sine aliqua inpeditione et absque ullo impedimento perpetuo debeamus. Supradicta concordia tractata et facta est in praesentia praefatae dominae Aleydis [...].'

at the very end of the document, following the date of signing, they suddenly recollect that perhaps the widow should not be deprived of all means of living and add that she has the lifelong right to make use of all the rents that are payable to her and that she can make further donations from the income thus derived.⁶⁴ One of the persons ratifying the agreement was councillor Bertold Bickinchusen, referred to above. The content of this agreement is nothing less than astonishing; what we have here are estate managers, the very persons who should act in the best interests of the widow in their care, enriching themselves at her expense not only from her movable property but also from unspecified real estate that she owns! Maybe the external political situation in Northern Estonia at that time as mentioned above also prevented her from properly managing her wealth outside the city walls. It is also known that Aleydis distributed her property unequally (*uni maius et alteri minus*). Perhaps this is what caused the ensuing conflict between the Reval councillors and the envoy from Dorpat. When Thidemann Malchow arrived in Reval again in 1352, he entered into another agreement with Aleydis van Bremen's estate managers; this time, the agreement concerned the money (40 Riga marks) for four units of land (*uncos*) located in the Rapla parish to the south of Reval that were to be paid to Aleydis within two years. It follows from the contents of the document that she was also entitled to other possessions, which were still to be inventoried and evaluated by her former and current estate managers.⁶⁵ It was also agreed that Aleydis retained the right to donate the rents she was owed to Ludwik, Thidemann,

⁶⁴ AWB, no. 715; LECUB 2, no. 882 – '[...] Insuper idem domina frui debet diebus vitae suae redditibus suis universis, de quibus libere dare posset, quibus vel cui vouerit, quantum ei placet, uni magis et alteri minus.'

⁶⁵ '35 Regesten und Urkunden zur Gütergeschichte Harrien-Wierland (Harju-Virumaa) im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert,' ed. P. Johansen, *Sitzungsberichte der Gelehrten Estnischen Gesellschaft*, 1930, pp. 1–46 (here no. 14, pp. 14–15) '[...] inter discretos viros dominum Lodwicum Hamer et Thidemannum Malchowe, parte ex una, et dominum Bertoldum Bickinchusen et Johannem de Molendino, parte vero ex altera, in hunc modum placitasse [...] quidem predicti, dominus Bertoldus de Bickinchusen et Johannes de Molendino, certificare debent quatuor uncas in villa Cappele situs pro quadraginta marcis argenti Rigensibus secundum exigenciam iuris civitatis Reualiensis, ita quod dicte 40 mr. arg. infra duos annos evenire debeant ad manus honeste domine, domine Aleydis, domini Johannis de Bremen, bone memorie, sororis et suorum heredum verorum. Item alia capitalia bona, que cum antiquis et novis provisoribus computare potuerit et que adhuc non sunt certificata, debet antedictus dominus Bertoldum Bickinchusen cum Johanne de Molendino ad manus prefate domine Aleydis de Bremen et suorum heredum certificare [...]'. On the identity of the village of *Cappele* – P. Johansen, *Die Estlandliste des Liber Censur Daniae*, Kopenhagen, Reval 1933, p. 403.

and Johann, and that Bertold Bickinchusen would not object thereto.⁶⁶ At the same time, it was stipulated that Bickinchusen could provide advice to Aleydis and Johann de Molendino, should they want to obtain other benefits, so that they would do it without detriment to mutual friendship.⁶⁷ Remarkably, this time there is no mention in the document of Aleydis's consent to any of the actions it concerns—as if everything was done without her knowledge or presence, and she herself was nothing but an object of the signatories' actions. Once again, the same narrow circle of people secures the right to derive profit from her estate or provides for such a right in the future.

It seems that, again contrary to her own interests, Aleydis agreed that one of her estate managers would pay an allowance to some orphaned children from the interest on a loan he had received from her late brother rather than from his own capital.⁶⁸ In view of these facts, one must admit that Aleydis was not able to take care of her own estate properly, and that managing it was problematic for her. Maybe this is why she decided to arrange for an annuity as early as 1350. She handed over all her rents to Johann de Molendino, one of her estate managers, and his wife. In exchange, Johann de Molendino was to provide her with an annuity in the amount of six and a half marks and to cover her expenses, including maintenance of a maidservant. Should the arrangement no longer suit her, Johann was to pay her an annuity of 13.5 marks instead.⁶⁹ Three years later, Johann gave

⁶⁶ 35 *Regesten*, no. 14 '[...] Item, si prefata domina aliqua de suis redditibus, sed non de capitali pecunia prenotata, domino Lodowico, Thiderico et Johanni sponte dare voluerit, hoc libere potest sine contradictione domini Bertoldi sepedicti [...].'

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*. '[...] Si eciam aliqua de prelibata domina et Johannes de Molendino cum iure exigere potuerint, de quibuscunque bonis fuerint, in hiis amicitia inter eos non sit amissa, sed prescriptus dominus Bertoldus in premissis ad iustitie eorum adiuuare potest eos complementum [...].'

⁶⁸ AWB, no. 801 (1351) – '[...] notandum quod de sex mc arg et 1 fertone in quibus dominus Hermannus Morum domino Johanni de Brema bone memorie obligatus tenetur ex consensu domini Bertoldi Bickinchusen ex parte domine de Brema et provisoribus eius eidem dominus Hermannus Morum cum provisoribus puerorum Hinrici Molenstrate concordavit, ita quod predictus dominus Hermannus Morum de dicta pecunia [...] dare debet pueris Hinrici Molenstrate supradictis.' Hermann More is documented as a common burgher in 1314, as a councillor starting from 1333, and as mayor in 1340–1351 – F.G. von Bunge, *Die Revaler Rathslinie nebst Geschichte...*, p. 115.

⁶⁹ AWB, no. 788 (1350) – '[...] recognovit rite et legaliter domina Aleydis de Brema omnes et singulos suos redditus, ubicunque fuerint, diebus vite sue Johanni de Molendino sueque uxori ac veris heredibus resignasse in hunc modum, quod ipse Johannes de Molendino dare debet predictae domine Aleydi 6 ½ mc arg. [...] et ipsam dominam cum una

Aleydis half of his stone house and half of another house, in which he himself lived, as a security for a loan of 10 marks.⁷⁰

The exact date of Aleydis' death is unknown. However, judging by the frequency of her name appearing in the book of city records, one would assume that she died shortly after 1358, when her last activity in the credit market was recorded.⁷¹ On the other hand, she might be connected with a religious foundation that was first mentioned in the sources not sooner than 1389.⁷² This would mean that she had a very long life, given that her brother first appeared in the sources as early as in 1316. On the other hand, she might have been considerably younger than her brother. The fact that a daughter of hers became a widow in 1350 does not in itself mean that Aleydis was already an age-old woman in today's terms. Under Lubeck law, the age of majority was established at 12 years of age. A thirty-year-old widow could well have had minor daughters as well as a widowed one. Of course, one has to explain the long lack of any mention of Aleydis after 1358. It is possible that, having achieved an adequate standard of living thanks to an annuity that even provided for a maidservant, she no longer was interested in financial operations. And, thirty years later, feeling that her life was coming to an end, she decided to establish a perpetual almsgiving in the amount of 60 Riga marks, with an annuity of three marks, of which the town council of Reval had to pay two marks to the Cistercian nuns at St. Michael's monastery, and the third mark had to be divided among the patients of St. John's hospital, located outside the city walls, in exchange for prayers for the salvation of the soul of the benefactor and her ancestors.⁷³ This foundation is mentioned in two entries in one of the books of city records; one in Latin⁷⁴ and the other in German.⁷⁵ The contents

ancilla tenebit in expensis, si vero eadem domina secum in expensis esse noluerit, extunc prefatus Johannes de Molendino dabit 13 ½ mc arg annuatim domine supradicte [...].'

⁷⁰ AWB, no. 837 (1353) – '[...] recognovit [...] Johannes de Molendino, se decem mc arg domine Aleydi de Breme et eius heredibus pertinentes sub se habere, pro quibus decem mc arg. [...] dimidiam lapideam suam domum et domidiam domum in qua habitat eidem domine Aleydi et suis veris heredibus ratione pignoris obligavit.'

⁷¹ AWB, no. 1004 (1358).

⁷² RPR, no. 158; RPR, no. 1467.

⁷³ '[...] ob salutem anime sue ac progenitorum suorum [...]' – RPR, no. 1467.

⁷⁴ RPR, no. 1467 (1389).

⁷⁵ RPR, no. 158 (1389).

of the two entries do not coincide in every detail.⁷⁶ What interests us most, though, is the way the benefactor is presented. The German entry talks of '[...] van der erliken vrouwen wedewen Albrecht Hoyniges toe Darbte saligher dechnisse [...]',⁷⁷ and the Latin text commends '[...] honesta domina Alheydis, relicta quondam Alberti Hoyngis, ciuis Tharbatensis, felicis recordacionis [...]'.⁷⁸ In this way, Aleydis finally regained her 'married identity.' She was the widow of Albert Hoyngis of Dorpat, of whom there is no other record in the Reval sources. Why was she not referred to as 'Aleydis van Bremen'? After all, this is how she was perceived by those who knew her late brother, by his close acquaintances, and members of the city council of Reval in the mid-fourteenth century. Here one must realise that, by the end of the fourteenth century, out of this entire group of people, only Johann de Molendino was still alive.⁷⁹ For the new city authorities, her kinship with Johann van Bremen was immaterial, and she herself must have been using her late husband's name.

It is worth mentioning that it was the first foundation in perpetuity to be established in Reval by a woman using her own capital. This is another illustration of her exceptional position in the city. Another case of this kind did not occur before 1508, at the very dawn of the Reformation, when a rich widow, one Katherine Potgersche, founded a perpetual vicarage at St. Barbara's chapel outside the city walls.⁸⁰ In establishing the foundation, Aleydis might have followed the example of her late brother, who had established perpetual almsgiving for his needy relatives in Dorpat. She decided to entrust her eternal salvation to the prayers offered by the nuns and the sick rather than simply to invest in a vicariate, an instrument of the church associated with its ecclesiastical structures. Notably, she only made arrangements for her own salvation, and not that of her late husband's (it is possible, though, that a similar foundation dedicated to her husband's eternal salvation might have existed in Dorpat itself). She clearly believed that she had the same right as the men to arrange for perpetual

⁷⁶ While the German entry specifies an allowance of three marks and refers to both beneficiaries: sisters Cistercians and patients from St. John's hospital, the Latin text only mentions that part of the allowance that was assigned to sisters Cistercians in Reval.

⁷⁷ RPR, no. 158.

⁷⁸ RPR, no. 1467.

⁷⁹ Documented as mayor in the years 1389–1391 – F.G. von Bunge, *Die Revaler Rathslinie nebst Geschichte...*, p. 116.

⁸⁰ A. Mänd, 'Frauen, Memoria...', p. 21.

remembrance in prayers as long as she had enough money to finance such an undertaking.

As a final note, it is my hope that I have managed to show that Aleydis van Bremen was the second woman, beside Queen Margaret I of Denmark, about whom something more can be said than a mere statement that she existed. Of course, her significance and contribution to the history and the development of medieval Reval cannot be compared to that of the queen. Still, in her actions, Aleydis manifested a degree of independence that was remarkable for those times. Perhaps she was not particularly prudent when disposing of her wealth, but then she had not had an opportunity to learn how to do it, and she was surrounded by men who tried to enrich themselves at the expenses of the inexperienced widow.