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## **Margarete, Reynette and Meide: Three Jewish Women from Koblenz in the 14th Century\***

*For Lukas Clemens  
on the occasion of his 60th birthday*

**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, 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 legal settings that impacted Jewish life. I argue, that these three women's lives were centered around their hometown and that all three struggled with different economic, political and legal obstacles. Methods from gender studies as well as discussions of space will be utilized along with understudied archival material such as seals, Hebrew signatures and notes on business records to gain new insights into the lives of these three women. It will become clear, that these three women were extraordinary figures living at times of upheaval, holding leading roles within their family.

**Key words:** Medieval Ashkenaz, Jewish-Christian relations, gender, resettlement, Jewish seals.

### **Introduction**

Jewish life in the archbishopric of Trier (Germany) was decimated during the pogroms of 1348 and 1349 during the period of the Black Death.<sup>1</sup> The first city in the archdiocese to allow Jews to resettle after the pogrom within

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1 Cf. Alfred Haverkamp, “Die Judenverfolgungen zur Zeit des Schwarzen Todes im Gesellschaftsgefüge deutscher Städte,” in *Zur Geschichte der Juden im Deutschland des späten Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp and Alfred Heit (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981) 27–93; F. Graus, *Pest – Geißler – Judenmorde: Das 14. Jahrhundert als Krisenzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1994); 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.