

christlichen Beerdigung zu versichern, war es, sich einer religiösen Gilde oder Bruderschaft anzuschließen, die auf besagte Rituale großen Wert legten und sowohl für die begüterten als auch für die ärmeren Mitglieder sorgten.

Auch wenn die Rolle der Frauen im öffentlichen Leben im Vergleich zu derjenigen der Männer weitaus bescheidener war, war es ihnen doch möglich, durch milde Spenden zur Ausgestaltung öffentlicher, repräsentativer Räume wie der Sakralbauten beizutragen. Als typisch weiblich galt etwa die Schenkung von Kleidung, Gebetsketten, Schmucksachen und silbernen Haushaltsgeräten an die Kirche, insbesondere dann, wenn der gestiftete Gegenstand oder das gespendete Kleidungsstück für die Verzierung der Figur der Jungfrau Maria oder einer anderen weiblichen Schutzheiligen zgedacht war. In diesem Falle handelte es sich um eine sehr persönliche Spende „von Frau zu Frau“. Die von Frauen gespendeten Kelche und die übrigen liturgischen Gegenstände wurden zum Zelebrieren der Messe eingesetzt; die Buntglasfenster, Bänke und Grabsteine, die mit ihren Wappen oder einer passenden Inschrift versehen waren, hinterließen im Kirchenraum eine lang anhaltende Spur und fungierten als Träger des Gedächtnisses einer Gemeinde.

SUMMARY

Women, memoria and Sacred Space in Late Medieval Livonia

In this article, rituals of commemoration and artworks connected to *memoria* are analysed from the perspective of gender. The article focuses predominantly (though not exclusively) on the urban higher and middle strata and on lay women, meaning the wives and widows of merchants and craftsmen. First, I have explored the role of women in corporate associations: in which context guild sisters were referred to in the statutes of guilds and confraternities, how their participation was regulated in the rituals of burial and commemoration, and whether they were entrusted with some special task during these rituals. Thereafter, I have studied the strategies and opportunities of women of different social, economic and marital status for establishing their own *memoria* by, for example, endowing a chantry, commissioning a tombstone, or donating a liturgical object.

From the second half of the 15th century until the Reformation, which in Riga and Tallinn culminated in 1524, women from the urban elite were comparatively active in sponsoring memorial masses and intercessory

prayers for themselves and their ancestors. The widows of vassals and merchants, particularly the childless ones, could naturally afford to spend much larger sums on their *memoria* than for example middle-class women. They endowed chantries, donated expensive objects to the church (e.g. stained glass windows, pews, chalices, etc.), and made arrangements for their funeral ceremony and annual commemoration. They prescribed what was to be depicted on the donated objects (e.g. their patron saint and coat of arms) and where and when it had to be used. They had the act of donation recorded in documents or inscribed on the vessel. All these were means for emphasizing the high status, wealth and power of these women, for perpetuating their memory and for paving their way to Paradise.

Less wealthy women had much more limited opportunities to contribute to their *memoria*. They could join a religious guild or confraternity in order to guarantee a decent burial for themselves and to be remembered in the intercessory prayers of the confraternity members.

Unlike men, married women and widows had multiple identities: they could define themselves as a member of their natal or marital family. They could decide if they wished to be buried alongside their spouse or elsewhere, for example, in their parents' burial place. Noble widows could decide if they wanted their tombstone (or other objects) decorated with their husband's coat of arms, with their own or with both. All these decisions provide us with valuable information about the secular and religious aspirations of women and of their self-perception.

Although women played a far more modest role in public life than men, they had the opportunity to influence sacred spaces through their commemorative bequests and to some extent even to "feminise" it. Typical of their gender, women donated clothes, jewellery and household items. A particularly personal gift "from one woman to another was a rosary, adornment or dress that was meant to decorate the statue of the Virgin Mary or some other female saint. Liturgical vessels, furniture and tombstones commissioned by women or for women, and provided with their coat of arms or with a proper inscription, had a long-lasting influence on church interiors and functioned as bearers of communal memory.