

Chapter 36

Lübeck

HENRIKE LÄHNEMANN

LÜBECK in the fourteenth century was powerful, proud—and pragmatic. The *Haupt der Hanse*, head of the biggest trade organization of the European Middle Ages, produced thousands of documents and letters in Latin and Low German written by its clerks and by the town clergy.¹ None of this, as far as we can tell, may be classified as ‘literature’ in the modern sense, but one non-fictional genre that occupied a high place in the medieval hierarchy of text production is well represented: historiography. A tour through the three volumes reserved for Lübeck in the chronicle series ‘*Städtechroniken*’² leads right into the late fourteenth century, the heart of the period embraced by this project.

In 1385, according to the preface to one of the chronicles, the two Lübeck *Gerichtsherren* (Middle Low German *voghede*, i.e. sheriffs as top representatives of the city’s jurisdiction) Thomas Murkerke and Herman Langhe commissioned a continuation of the *Stades-Chronik* (city chronicle) which had been interrupted for thirty-six years—ever since the Black Death pandemic.³ The two men had been instrumental in ending the *Knochenhauer-Aufstand*, an uprising led by the butchers against the city council.⁴ That the *uprore* (‘uproar’) should be recorded with all the gruesome details of how the conspirators were put to death is given as an immediate reason for taking up the chronicle again. The hidden agenda is much more ambitious: nothing less than to secure the city history ‘an ewighe dechnisse’ (‘for eternal memory’). To this end, they ordered the writing of ‘desse coroniken vormiddelst eyne ghestliken personen, en

¹ The archive of the city, the *Trese* in St Mary’s Church, was first mentioned in 1298. Graßmann, *Beständeübersicht*, 13, gives an overview of what survived; her short introduction to the annual meeting of the *Hansische Geschichtsverein* and the *Verein für niederdeutsche Sprache* which took place in 1998 to celebrate the publication of the survey, is appropriately entitled *Wer schreibt, der bleibt* (‘He who writes will last’).

² *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, Vol. 19 (Lübeck 1), Vol. 27 (Lübeck 2) and Vol. 28 (Lübeck 3).

³ ‘Detmar-Chronik von 1101–1395 mit der Fortsetzung von 1395–1400 (zunächst bis 1386)’, in *Lübeck 1*, 189–597 (p. 195). The chronicle is quoted in the body of the text with the paragraph number and in the footnotes as *Lübeck 1* with the page number. The text follows the edition with the exception that all diacritical signs (superscribed e’s) are rendered as an acute (é etc.).

⁴ The seminal study remains Brandt, *Knochenhaueraufstände*.



FIGURE 36 A canon, a nobleman, and a physician in a Dance of Death before Lübeck (originally painted 1463, updated 1701). Detail from a lithograph by C. J. Milde following his restoration of the wall painting in 1852.

Photo: Mantels (ed.), *Der Todtentanz*, plate V.

lesemester in sunte Franciscus orden’ (‘this chronicle by the hand of a cleric, a Lector in St Francis’s Order’), i.e. the Franciscan friar Detmar.⁵ What was to be remembered in the long run was not *just* how the city dealt with those daring to rebel against its established rulers (even though insurgency against town councils was feared in all the free and imperial cities, from Nuremberg to Lüneburg), but also how the Hanseatic towns had risen above their shared anxieties to forge an effective and far-reaching network over the decades between the pandemic and 1375. Some highlights of recent civic history included the consolidation of the Hanseatic League with the first general *Hansetag* (Hanseatic Diet, or general assembly of the Hansa towns) held in Lübeck in 1356, or the visit by the Emperor in 1375.

Following this initial prompt by the civic authority, Detmar von Lübeck expanded the city history in several editions to encompass a world history from 1101 to 1395. His chronicle was continually updated, as far as 1430, and also incorporated in other accounts covering the same historical period. I will follow the historiographical account through our period, looking at three key dates and beginning with the pandemic that marks the start date of our project. The second moment to consider is the visit by Charles IV in which, famously, he listed Lübeck among the five key cities of his empire. The *Hansetag* of 1418, probably the grandest of such gatherings, will provide the focus

⁵ *Lübeck 1*, 195. Detmar held the office in the Franciscan monastery of St Catharine in Lübeck from 1368 to 1380 and is attested until 1394: see Putzo, ‘Detmar’, 519.

for the last part of this chapter. It not only coincides with the closing of its Southern German counterpart, the Council of Constance, but also marks the zenith of Lübeck's power—and links the city with thirty-nine other European places that sent their representatives to the meeting. Together, these three dates not only highlight Lübeck's central role in the Hanseatic League (and hence this 'Basel to Danzig' sequence), but also link it with our Parts V (Avignon to Naples), IX (Venice to Prague), and even VII (Cairo to Constantinople).

Pandemic and (local) politics: 1346 in hindsight

Detmar conjures up Christ and Lübeck jointly to greet the reader. After having experimented with different openings in the earlier drafts of his chronicle, the preface in the last version starts with a prayer opened by '(De) Milde Cristus Jhesus'. 'The Mild Christ Jesus' is not only the highest possible patron for the chronicle, but also gives through his acronym the Roman numeral MCI, i.e. 1101 AD as its start date. The short introductory prayer ends with the etymology for 'Lübeck'. The name of the town, derived from that of a Slavic settlement, works as a greeting formula addressed to the reader, and as a mission statement: 'God be praised', it begins, 'so that the inhabitants and the foreigners [literally the 'insiders' and 'outsiders'] may rejoice in the meaning of the same name, since Lübeck in the Slavic tongue means "a joy to all people"'.⁶

The chronicle thus can be read as a commentary on how Lübeck lived up to her name, constantly juxtaposing in the process the local focus and the universal horizon. This can even be seen in the two parts of the main preface. Detmar opens with a short account of how his text came into being; this then turns into a rhymed address to the reader, full of familiar sentiments about the moral value and educational benefits of reading and writing. In the first part, Detmar names three main sources, since 'you should know that this chronicle is compiled from many different bits and pieces of information' ('Ok sal man weten dat desse coronika van vele anderen stukken is tosamende bracht'). The wider historical context is provided by Vincent of Beauvais' popular *Speculum historiale* (quoted as *speghel historiarum*), which provides 'Roman, French, English, and Spanish stories' ('vele historien sin inghesettet der Romere, Fransoyser, Engelscher, Hispanier'). Regional material is alluded to by mentioning the existing civic chronicle ('ut der stades coronican') and the *Cronica Saxorum* ('ut den Wendeschen', i.e. 'from the Slavic').⁷ When they provide conflicting information about the exact year in which an event took place, Detmar tries to reconcile the

⁶ *Lübeck* 1, 195: 'up dat de van bynnene unde van butene vrowen sych an der bedudinche des sulven namen, wente Lubeck an Wendescher tuncghen heet en vrolicheit aller lude'. Lübeck is indeed a Slavic settlement; the name is believed to derive from Liubice ('the lovely'), an old settlement near today's city.

⁷ *Lübeck* 1, 196. In the edition, additional local material, over and above what is in the *Rufus-Chronik* (ed. in *Lübeck* 2: thought to represent the existing civic chronicle), is marked by a cross; Helmold of Bosau's *Cronica slavorum* and the *Speculum historiale* are referenced in the margin.

different accounts, generally by following the *Speculum historiale* as the largest collection and the most reliable source. 'Above all else', he insists, 'what happened to the honourable city of Lübeck from its foundation to this present year, by good fortune or misfortune, that I shall not overlook' ('Boven alle stücke, wat anvalles heft ghehat de erlike stad to Lubeke van anbeghinne bet an dit iheghenwordighe jar an gudem ghevelle odder unghewelle, dat schal ik hir nicht vorgheten').

The second part of the preface, the address to the reader, gradually slides from structured prose to rhyming couplets.

So we nū lest desse jheghenwardighe scrift,
de merke andacht der ghenen, de dit besorghet hebben.
jo mach men út desser scrift menghen raat, wisheyt unde merke úttheen,
dar men dat arghe mach mede vormiden
unde gude sinne vorwerven, nóch sam to tokomenden tyden.
ok so we desse scrift lest, de mach de wile ledichghanc vordriven,
dat wedder schal syn allen guden lūden, maan unde wiven.
ok mach me darmede trurent unde sorghe vordrucken.
God sy mit uns in guden salden unde lücken. amen.

Therefore, whoever reads this account should remember devoutly those who have edited it. It is possible to draw from these writings much counsel, wisdom, and memorable things, to avoid through them evil, and to acquire sound knowledge, useful for future times. Also, whoever reads this text may drive away idleness—something that should be abhorrent to all good people, men and women. They may also distract themselves from sorrow and worries. God be with us in good fortune and prosperity. Amen.

Since the dates and names in the first part of the preface about the genesis of the chronicle are presented as a factual account, the following address to the reader has also been read as a literal statement of Detmar's personal intent.⁸ This is not necessarily so: the rhyming couplets, especially, read as if taken from some prior didactic text. Both sides—the minutiae of daily life and the literary set piece—coexist happily in late medieval chronicles. In fact, an exordial text in verse seems to have been regarded as appropriate for vernacular historiography, implicitly suggesting that the focus on local interest to follow also laid claim to greater and deeper significance. The rhyming couplets should thus be read more as a generic marker, heralding the fully fledged chronicle to come. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the preceding version of Detmar's chronicle had included the full rhyming prologue of the *Sächsische Weltchronik*, with a similar exposition on the usefulness of literature.⁹

⁸ See among others *Stadt im Wandel*, 634; Wriedt, 'Geschichtsschreibung', 422; Johanek, *Städtische Geschichtsschreibung*, 230.

⁹ *Lübeck* 1, 121–3; *Sächsische Weltchronik*, ed. Ludwig Weiland for the Monumenta Germaniae Historica series of chronicles (*Deutsche Chroniken II*, 1), 1876, 1–384. On Detmar's version and its inclusion after the rhymed prologue of an account of time from Creation to the eleventh century, see Wolf, *Sächsische Weltchronik*, 97–8.

In his close linking of regional identity with universal history, Detmar follows a greater trend that can be seen in other regions in Germany. The main examples for this are Jakob Twinger of Königshofen, with his Strasbourg historiography, and Johannes Rothe's chronicles, with their interweaving of Eisenach, Thuringian, and world history.¹⁰ Around 1400, all three authors write *Universalgeschichtsschreibung*, embedding local or regional events in terms of *space*, in the framework of international relations, and in terms of *time* in salvation history, stretching from Creation to the present day (and pointing forwards to the Last Judgement).¹¹ All three chroniclers become decidedly more pronounced in their local focus from about the time of the pandemic—which thus works as a reference point to synchronize different sources.

Detmar draws from the earlier chronicles for his plague description, but just before reporting the cataclysmic event he includes, in the final paragraph (§642) under the year 1345, news of a bad portent, thus setting the scene, through a local event, for international disaster. On 21 December, he tells us, the night of St Thomas's feast, in the Margraviate 'there appeared a bright shining blue cross in the sky, just below the full moon, several metres high, and it was said that it betokened future misfortune'.¹²

1346 then opens with several items of local and national importance (§643–52) before introducing the topic of the plague as a pandemic reaching Germany from the 'pagan' countries: 'In the same year began the great plague of mankind by sudden death, firstly in the countries of Jerusalem overseas and confined to the heathen, who by 50, 60, 100, 1,000, and numbers too great to tell fell down and were dead' (§653). This was justly visited upon them because of their idolatry, as he states: 'That is not to be greatly lamented, since they are God's enemies'.¹³ But then problems arise when 'the same great plague reached Christian countries'.

The account goes on to outline the course of the pandemic through Europe; the list taken over by Detmar mentions, in somewhat idiosyncratic order, Apulia, Hungary, Sicily, Avignon, and Marseille, and then Flanders. Here, once the plague has reached the Hanseatic region, Detmar's account becomes more systematic and reliable: we follow the plague's course from Flanders to Norway and Sweden, then from Sweden to Denmark, to North Jutland and upper Sealand, and then to Prussia, where there was 'grot sterven' ('great mortality') in Königsberg and Melbing. For the Franciscan editor the cause of all this is clear. This was a Jewish conspiracy: more specifically, a conspiracy of baptized Jews ('ghedoften joden') who, while disguised as Christians, poisoned those whom they met while begging. The source used by Detmar claims that

¹⁰ Rothe's *Eisenacher Chronik*, his *Thüringische Landeschronik*, and his *Weltchronik* all share the same material, presented with differing focus: see Schubert, 'Rothe', 439.

¹¹ Tersch, *Unruhe*, 35.

¹² Lübeck 1, 501: 'Dat cruce was under den manen, de do vul was, unde was wol ses vadem lank, unde betekende, als men sprack, tokomende ungheluke'. Literal translation of the height of the cross would be 'six fathoms', *Faden* also being used in German navigation; that would make it well over 10 m (1 fm = 1.8288 m).

¹³ Lübeck 1, 505: 'dat stund nicht sere to claghen, wente se Godes viande sint'.

they confessed, while being burned at the stake, that they 'wanted to be kings and lords over all of Christianity'.¹⁴

It might seem puzzling that nothing is said at this point about the effects of the plague—which reached Lübeck in 1350 in passing through the Hanseatic region, *en route* for Prussia. But this reflects the 'copy and paste' style of Detmar's annalistic reporting. Further written sources, of local import, are dropped in only after the end of the old civic chronicle has been reached, and the plague is only connected to Lübeck once it is quantifiable: on the single day of 10 August 1350, 2,500 people are said to have died (§681). A Lübeck-related item (§654) does immediately follow the initial account of the pandemic, but is not connected to it: Lübeck had made international headlines when Waldemar of Denmark came to the city on 19 December 1346 to raise forces 'for fighting the heathen'. Waldemar travels first to Lithuania and then proceeds straight from Prussia 'over mer' ('overseas') to Jerusalem, to be made a 'ridder vor deme hilghen grave' ('Knight of the Holy Sepulchre'). In this way, the chronicle continually criss-crosses between the minutiae of city life and the international stage. There are three more pieces of news concerning northern German skirmishes and other incidents before Detmar adds, under the heading *Dese ding de scheghen ok* ('These things also happened'), a cluster of four further items from 'overseas'. The scene thus changes from places like the castle in Stegen, Schleswig-Holstein (§655), to the countries 'dar de peper unde inghever west' ('where pepper and ginger grow'), with marvels of the East reported, such as a castle floating on the water (§657).¹⁵

The pattern of Detmar's historiographical work becomes clear: by interweaving world historical events with local stories, the chronicle builds up, by annalistic juxtaposition, a network of significant places and moments in history which see Lübeck emerge as a key player.

The glory of the empire: the imperial visit of 1375

Imperial visits are highlights for any chronicle. Königshofen (Jakob Twinger) reports the visit of Charles IV to Strasbourg in 1365 to show the proximity of city and emperor. The presence of the emperor and the splendour of the local city as a centre of power for all the empire form a unity.¹⁶ The same applies even more to the imperial visit to Lübeck. In 1375, Charles IV was the first emperor since Frederick Barbarossa to come to the city,¹⁷ perhaps as part of his wider strategy to integrate the northern and eastern

¹⁴ Lübeck 1, 505: 'wolden nú koninghe unde heren worden sin over al den cristendom'.

¹⁵ Lübeck 1, 506. The same tales are told in several other medieval chronicles, such as the *Neuberger Annalen* by Franz von Prague, and in the *Oberrheinische Chronik*. The country 'where the pepper grows' originally meant India but has become in German folklore the term for a place as far away as possible (and the place where you would wish your enemy to be).

¹⁶ Tersch, *Unruhe*, 269, points out that each author reports only imperial visits made to their home town, not to any other city.

¹⁷ Recorded by Arnold of Lübeck, *Arnoldi Chronicon Slavorum*, ed. Pertz, II, 21, 65.

parts of his empire.¹⁸ It confirmed Lübeck's status as 'Queen of the Hanseatic League', by far the largest and most powerful member of the trade organization. This outstanding event fell while Detmar was occupying the highest academic office at the Franciscan monastery; he would have been in the solemn procession of civic and clerical worthies greeting the emperor. Omitting any criticism of the emperor (which may be found elsewhere in his clerical prose), he accords the event pride of place in his account for 1375. The visit actually took place fairly late in the year (10 to 20 October), but is presented as that year's first item (§756, *Lübeck* 1, 551). It is noted that Charles IV, with his fourth wife Elizabeth of Pomerania and the archbishop of Cologne, came with great honour ('mit groter ere') to Lübeck. The impression created is that of a large festive crowd; after mentioning Marcgrave Jost of Mähren and Duke Albert of Lüneburg, 'who there got his land from the Emperor', Detmar comments that there were also 'many lords of the lands and cities, furthermore innumerable foreign people' ('ok quemen dar vele heren van landen vnde van steden, unde vromedes volkes sunder taal'). The third edition of the revamped chronicle by Korner of 1423 adds drily that this proved to be quite an expensive stay¹⁹—while the town clerk of Wismar, where Charles IV stayed immediately afterwards, claims that the emperor liked Wismar better than Lübeck because their city council paid all his expenses.²⁰

The scenario Detmar then goes on to describe is a ceremonial staging, in several steps. In 1377, Charles IV was to visit Dortmund in much the same sequence (as reported in greater detail in the Latin chronicle by Johannes Nederhoff, *Cronicon Tremoniensium*).²¹ However, the address directed by the emperor to the Lübeck city council was such as any of the cities in that period could only dream of; I quote it in full by way of showing how imperial power was staged at a local level in a very diverse empire.

The meeting of the imperial group with the representatives of the city starts off with the imperial couple using a chapel outside the city gate as a changing room:

do de keiser mit siner vrouwen quam vor de stad, do ghink he mit er an de capellen sancte Gertrudis; do toch he an mit er sin keiserlike wede. em quam enjegen de processio der papen unde geistliker lude, vrouwen unde manne; dat hillichdom, dat men droch na der processien, dat kusten he unde se mit groter innicheit.

¹⁸ Hoffmann, 'Besuch Kaiser Karls IV.', 75.

¹⁹ 'Mansit autem dictus imperator in urbe per 10 dies in magnis civitatis expensis' ('The emperor remained for 10 days in the city, at great expense to the city', Mantels, 'Kaiser Karls IV. Hoflager', 314). All sources for the visit were collated by Mantels in 1874; even if his triumphalist continuation of the series of imperial guests with the visit by William I as the third after Barbarossa and Charles IV might seem incongruous (p. 290), his synopsis remains valid. He edited all four Latin versions of Korner's *Chronica novella* (1416, 1420, 1423, 1435) and the Low German version based on that from 1438, where the passage reads 'Desse keyser lach 10 dage to Lubeke unde dat koste der stad untellik gud' (p. 315). Korner might have had access to additional sources for this and similar details.

²⁰ *Hanserecesse*, I, 2, nos. 117, 120.

²¹ See *Dortmunder Chroniken* 1, ed. Roesse.

When the emperor with his lady approached the city, he went with her to the chapel of St Gertrude; there he put on his imperial garb. He was met by the procession of the priests and clerics, women and men; the relic which was carried at the rear of the procession was kissed by both he and she [emperor and his lady] with great devotion.

The importance of this event is such that the chapel is later referred to as *Kaiserkappelle*, after the imperial visitor. It lay outside the castle gate because it had been founded as a funeral chapel for those killed by the plague; it was dedicated to St Gertrude, as patron of foreigners and pilgrims, and to St Thomas Becket. The city council had taken it over in 1373. In 1375, during Charles's visit, Lübeck ambassadors were busy trying to secure, via Hanseatic connections, a relic of Thomas Becket in London for the chapel—a process that proved successful just two months after the imperial visit. It is not specified which relic the city would be carrying in the procession, but it needed to be the best they could muster, since the emperor set great store by relics.²² Two years later, in Dortmund, he was similarly met by the procession from the city and shown the head of St Reinhold in a silver shrine, one of the chief relics of the city. He was subsequently given some of the bones of the saint, which he duly donated to the cathedral treasury in Prague, the transfer of relics being another measure to show alliance and build up networks.

There then follows a description of the route of the procession through the city, concentrating on what was on display. The first things mentioned are the city keys. The Latin version specifies that this was to symbolize submission to the emperor, emphasizing that the emperor took the keys in ceremonious fashion only to return them to the councillors. But in this way the city keys are registered at the same level as the regalia, the sword, and the orb carried in the procession. Since Wenceslaw, elector of Saxony, was the imperial sword bearer, his nephew Albert, duke of Lüneburg, was allowed to carry in his stead the *Reichsschwert*; the bishop of Cologne was keeper of the orb, the so-called *Reichsapfel*. Emperor and empress prepare to ride:

dar mede setten se sik malk up en grot ros; sin ros ledden twe borgermestere unde er twe raatlude; veer juncheren drogen sin paulun, unde ander vere ere paulun, dar se under reden. vor em rét en raatman unde vürde up eme staken de slotele der stad, dar negest de hertoge van Luneborch mit sime tekene. vor der keiserinnen rét de bisscop van Kolne mit eme guldenen appele. de vrouwen der stad stunden tusschen beiden doren wol ghesiret mit eren besten klederen. aldus was de processio formeret.

²² Mantels, 'Reliquien der Rathskappelle', 327, shows himself deeply disapproving of such imperial and civic interest in relics. His critical stance is taken over by the first full English account of the Hanse (which proved highly influential for the Anglo-American perception of Hanse history), namely Helen Zimmern's 1889 study for the 'Story of the Nations' series. Both Mantels and Zimmern point out that Geoffrey Chaucer was superintending customs at the port of London when the Lübeck emissaries exported the Becket relics: the Lübeck men should have read the *Canterbury Tales*, and learned from the *Pardoner's Tale* (Zimmern, *The Hansa Towns*, 75).

With this, each of them mounted a big horse; his horse was led by two mayors and hers by two councillors; four young noblemen carried his canopy, and another four her canopy, under which they were riding. In front of him rode a councillor and carried on a staff the keys of the city,²³ then followed the duke of Lüneburg with his insignia. In front of the empress rode the bishop of Cologne with the golden apple. The ladies of the city stood between the two city gates, beautifully decked out in their best clothes. In this way, the procession was formed.

The route then passes on through the city to the cathedral, where a special liturgy is sung. For this, the Introit for Epiphany, which speaks about the arrival of the king and his power, is combined with the beginning of Psalm 72, calling that the king should be endowed with good judgement. Musical celebration then continues, modulating into festive illumination of the city:

se treckeden langes de stad bet an den dóm; dar sank men: 'Ecce advenit', 'Deus judicium tuum'; do dit gescheen was, do treckeden se langes de koninkstraten boven sunte Johanne in ere herberge. dar weren rowich nummer pipen edder bungen.²⁴ des nachtes weren de luchten bernde ut allen husen, unde was so licht in der naht als in deme dage.

They went across the city, up to the cathedral; there they sang 'Behold the king comes' and 'Give to the king thy judgment, O God'; when this had been done, they went along the Royal Street as far as St John's Church, to their quarters. There pipes or drums never stopped. During the night, all the lights were shining from the houses, and it was as light in that night as during day.

The magnificent display of beautiful clothes, solemn singing, and splendid illumination builds up the tension for the finale that will place Lübeck firmly on the world map. The most important moment of the imperial visit comes as the emperor joins the meeting of the city council:

de keiser was do mit den borghermesteren in eneme (p. 553) rade der stad; dar het he se: 'heren'; se spreken van otmodicheit, se en weren nyne heren. aldus hadde he se vakene heten in der stad to Lubeke unde in vorjaren in der stad to Norenberghe. do sprak de keiser: 'gi sint heren; de olden registra der keiser wisen dat ut, dat Lubeke is en der vif stede, den van keiseren unde ereme rade is de name der herscop ghegheven, dat se mogen gan in des keisers raat, wor se sin, dar de keiser is'. de vif stede sint Roma, Venedie, Pisa, Florentie unde Lubeke.

When the emperor joined the mayors in a meeting of the city council, he called them 'lords'; they said out of humility that they were not at all lords. In the same way he had addressed them often in the city of Lübeck and, in previous years, in the city of Nuremberg. Then the emperor said: 'You are lords; the old records of the

²³ Compare *Lübeck* 1, 552: 'deferens claves civitatis in pertica pendentes in signum subjectionis imperialis majestatis' (Mantels, 'Kaiser Karls IV. Hoflager', 316).

²⁴ The edition (*Lübeck* 1, 552) reads here with later explanatory glosses: 'nummer hord me pipen edder bungen, mer godesdenst' ('no pipes or drums were heard, only divine service'). This seems at odds with the preceding and following passages; I have therefore followed the text under erasure; this also accords with the account by Korner (Mantels, 'Kaiser Karls IV. Hoflager', 316).

emperors prove that Lübeck is one of the five cities endowed by the emperors and their council with the name of dominion in order that they might enter into the emperor's council if they are at any place which belongs to the emperor.' These five cities are Rome, Venice, Pisa, Florence, and Lübeck.

What the chronicle is referring to as precedents for this honour are two particular acts by Charles. In Nuremberg he had confirmed, on 29 November 1355, the privileges of the city of Lübeck and, on 16 April 1361, gave its merchants exemption from taxes in Mainz and Frankfurt am Main. In Berlin on 23 March 1374, Charles gave the mayors of Lübeck the right to act as 'our and the Holy Roman Empire's deputy, steward, and protector' ('unser und des heiligen Romischen reichs . . . vicarien, verweser und pfleger') in all his dominion, allowing them to pursue crimes even outside their own territory. There are thus good reasons for Detmar to emphasize this, since the transferral of imperial stewardship to the Lübeck mayor as a matter of principle effected a hitherto unheard of concentration of power in the hands of a civic representative, comparable only to that granted to Florence in 1355.²⁵ This was done mainly to secure the peace of the region, since Lübeck was no longer confined by territorial boundaries when supporting the emperor. The emperor thus effectively deputized his jurisdiction for northern Germany to Lübeck, recognizing that it had developed effective means to control the Hanseatic sphere through its trade links and agreements; he was thus free to deal with the unruly southern German cities.

The staging of this scene in Detmar's chronicle is elaborately achieved. The right of representation and vicarious power had, in fact, been bestowed upon Lübeck a year before the imperial visit, but a simple charter lacked the necessary impact. Representational language and systems of signs work by oral proclamation. By having the emperor proclaim the rights of the city as part of a ceremonial visit, their status is imbued with the dignity of age-old law that 'restores' the good old order, orally and publicly. Certainly, there were other ways to commemorate imperial favour: by renaming the Chapel of St Gertrude as *Kaisererkappelle*, and by painting a mural in the city hall (now lost).²⁶ But ultimately it is literature, the historiographical narrative, that codifies fully the link between international act and local setting. By figuring the triumphant entry into the city, with all its ritual gestures, as prelude to the announcement, the full significance of Lübeck's new status is vividly realized.

The peak of power: the *Hansetag* in 1418

In *effigy*, Charles IV had a presence at the third event of the period under inspection, since the *Hansetag* of 1418 took place in the Lübeck city hall featuring the mural commemorating his visit. The meeting took place after a period of local unrest. The old

²⁵ Tersch, *Unruhe*, 269.

²⁶ Mantels, 'Kaiser Karls IV. Hoflager', 311.

city council had been deposed in 1408 and had only regained power in 1416.²⁷ The town rulers therefore wanted to use the return of the Diet to Lübeck, where the very first of the meetings had taken place in 1356, to show that everything was back to normal, if not even better. A Hanseatic Diet allowed full display of civic authority, since sole responsibility for how to organize the meeting, settle disputes unanimously, and bring the whole meeting to a satisfactory close lay with the host city. The Diet was 'the supreme authority within the community. It decided, in principle without appeal, all important matters of concern to the whole community: the ratification of treaties or commercial charters, negotiations with foreign towns or rulers, the dispatch of embassies, questions of peace, war or blockade, financial and military measures, economic regulations of all kinds, the exclusion or admission of members, mediation in disputes between Hansa towns, and so on.'²⁸

For the duration of the Diet, the local mayor practically assumed the role of supreme ruler of the whole Hanseatic region. He led the discussion and, through his summary at the end, defined what had been decided. If there were no further disagreements, conclusions were noted in the *Rezesse* (ordinances)—but that was only part of the documentation going on.²⁹ The surviving papers consist of *Vorakten* (pre-meeting records), the Recess (ordinance), *Beilagen* (attachments), *Korrespondenz* (letters during the Diet with Holstein, Denmark, Frisia, Flanders, and Scotland, Bergen, Soest, England, and Greifswald, Wiborg, Holland, Hamburg, and Ermbeck), *Gesandtschaftsberichte* (reports by the ambassadors), *Anhang* (appendix), and *Nachträgliche Verhandlungen* (follow-up negotiations with Tondern, Bremen, Dortmund, Bruges, and Cologne).

During the Diet, there was no counting of votes; unanimity had to be reached. This was achieved partly by means of a carefully designed seating order that showed the power and influence of each party concerned. We can picture this staged show of differing degrees of influence by considering the order in which the delegates were seated in the *Hansesaal* in Lübeck in 1418. *Ratssendboten* (representatives of the city council) of thirty-four cities were present. They had to be leading figures in their city, and it was forbidden to send administrators and clerks on their own. Minor members of the Hanse tended to ask a neighbouring city, more powerful in terms of finance and personnel, to represent them. This meant that only the major players would come to Lübeck for the Diet that started on 24 June 1418 and lasted well over a month. Lübeck, presiding, sat at the north end, with nineteen cities placed on the right-hand side in descending order of importance: Cologne, Bremen, Rostock, Stralsund, Wismar, Brunswick, Danzig, Visby, Riga, Dorpat, Reval, Stettin, Anklam, Osnabrück, Stargard, Stade, Buxtehude, Salzwedel, Stendal; and the rest on the left-hand side: Hamburg, Dortmund, Lüneburg, Greifswald, Münster, Kolberg, Nijmegen, Deventer, Zutphen, Zwolle, Harderwijk, Elburg, followed by the city clerks from Magdeburg and Minden,

²⁷ Wehrmann, 'Aufstand', 101.

²⁸ Dollinger, *Hansa*, 92.

²⁹ All documents for the 1418 Diet in Lübeck are recorded in Vol. 6 of the *Hanserecesse, Recesse und andere Akten der Hansetage*.

one sworn member of the city council of Soest and one from the Kontor (trading post) in Bruges.³⁰ Extraordinary representatives were the two 'emissaries from King Sigismund, plus one each from the Teutonic Order, the archbishop of Bremen, and the dukes of Schleswig and Mecklenburg.

At the end of the *Hansetag*, when signing the *Tohopesate* (literally 'together set', i.e. the draft document sealing the military and political league for the coming twelve years), Lübeck was formally asked by the assembly to take charge of the interests of the community, in association with the other cities of the *Wendischer Städtebund*. This alliance of the leading German cities on or near the Baltic Sea had grown out of an initial agreement in 1259 between Lübeck, Kiel, Wismar, Rostock, and Stralsund, aimed at securing trade routes on land and sea—one of the foundational ideas for the development of the Hanse. The idea with which Lübeck had set out in the thirteenth century had now come full circle, for in signing the *Tohopesate*, the city became factual as well as symbolic *Haupt der Hanse*, taking not only *lübisch* but also *hansisch* decisions in the name of the whole league.

Lübeck thus staged the apogee of its own regional and international importance just a few months before delegates began making their way up the Rhine to Constance, to meet in its *Konzilgebäude* (actually a warehouse built for the use of merchants, 1388–91). We might make an end here by considering, briefly, what happened to Lübeck and its literary cultures after 1418.

It was in 1463 that the artist Bernt Notke created a new form of *danse macabre* for St Mary's Church in Lübeck, combining the dancing with a portrayal of the contemporary cityscape. The most prominent section shows how the mayor, the dean, the nobleman, and the doctor are dragged to dance in front of the silhouette of the Hanseatic hub, with detailed portraits of all the churches, monasteries, towers, town gates, and even the cemetery (appearing appropriately enough between Death and the doctor). This shows the city still at the height of its powers, resolutely at the centre of the Hanseatic trade. The chapel with its paintings burned down in 1942, but several copies preserve the design and the Middle Low German verses. This *danse macabre* is itself a piece of composite European intellectual history: the type of illustration was developed in Paris in 1424/25, and the accompanying text composed in the Netherlands, then adapted for the Lübeck dialect, and then later copied and adapted by Bernt Notke for a retake of the topic for the St Nicholas Church in Tallinn. In Lübeck, the Mohnkopf press printed two different vernacular expansions of the monumental *danse macabre* (1489 and 1520); these were traded, together with other goods, across the Hanseatic area whose lingua franca was Low German.

³⁰ A drawing of the *Hansesaal* in the town hall from 1819 by Ernst Christian Krüger (illustration in Hammel-Kiesow et al (eds), *Hanse*, 85) shows the hall (destroyed in 1818) as an oblong hall with 14 deep windows. The mayor of Lübeck would sit at the raised end of the room, with 18 emissaries on his right-hand side and 15 on his left.

This suggests that the trends seen developing during our crucial period were here to stay. Lübeck does not earn its place on a literary map of Europe in the late Middle Ages by virtue of its authors and writers, but through developing *pragmatische Schriftlichkeit* ('pragmatic literacy'). In literary terms, Lübeck was not the head but the hub of the Hanse, disseminating ideas, selling manuscripts, and thus promoting literature through trade. This is seen, for example, in the extent to which the works of Birgitta of Sweden were distributed from Lübeck—to such an extent that when the earliest Low German presses were set up, all of Scandinavia read Birgitta in Lübeck prints. When UNESCO declared what remained of Lübeck's old town a World Heritage Site in 1987, it recognized the city specifically as a symbol of the Hanse. What was honoured in this act was not just a union of tradespeople, however powerful, but rather a singular medieval phenomenon, a supra-regional culture.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arnoldi *Chronicon Slavorum*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 14 (Hanover, 1868).
- Beiträge zur Lübisches-Hansischen Geschichte. Ausgewählte historische Arbeiten von Wilhelm Mantels (Jena, 1881).
- Brandt, Ahasver von, 'Die Lübecker Knochenhaueraufstände von 1380/84 und ihre Voraussetzungen. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte Lübecks in der zweiten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts', in *Lübisches Mittelalter. Festgabe zum 800jährigen Bestehen Lübecks. Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 39 (1959), 123–202.
- Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert, Vol. 19 = Die Chroniken der niedersächsischen Städte, Vol. 1: Lübeck 1; Vol. 26 = Lübeck 2; Vol. 28 = Lübeck 3, ed. Karl Koppmann (Leipzig, 1884, 1899, 1902).
- Dollinger, Philippe, *The German Hansa* (1970; originally published in French, 1964), new edn, as part of *The Emergence of International Business 1200–1800*, Vol. 7 (London, 1999).
- Dortmunder Chroniken, I. Des Dominkaners Io. Nederhoff Chronica Tremoniesium, ed. Eduard Roes (Dortmund, 1880).
- Ehbrecht, Wilfried, "... uppe dat sulck grot vorderfenisse jo nicht meer enscheghe." Konsens und Konflikt als eine Leitfrage städtischer Historiographie, nicht nur im Hanseraum', in Johanek (ed.), *Städtische Geschichtsschreibung im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 51–109.
- Freytag, Hartmut, 'Gedanken über Literatur in der Stadt Lübeck während des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit', *Niederdeutsches Jahrbuch*, 122 (1999), 7–24.
- Freytag, Hartmut, *Der Totentanz der Marienkirche in Lübeck und der Nikoliakirche in Reval (Tallinn). Edition, Kommentar, Interpretation, Rezeption*, Niederdeutsche Studien Band, 39 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 1993).
- Graßmann, Antjekathrin, "Wer schreibt, der bleibt". Zur historischen Quellenüberlieferung des Archivs der Hansestadt Lübeck', *Niederdeutsches Korrespondenzblatt*, 105 (1998), 1–4.
- Graßmann, Antjekathrin (ed.), *Beständeübersicht des Archivs der Hansestadt Lübeck*, Veröffentlichungen zur Geschichte der Hansestadt Lübeck, Reihe B Band, 29 (Lübeck, 1998).

- Hammel-Kiesow, Rolf, Puhle, Matthias, and Wittenburg, Siegfried (eds), *Die Hanse* (Darmstadt, 2009).
- Historische Commission bei der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), *Die Recesse und andere Akten der Hansetage von 1256–1430*, Series I, Vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1872) and Series I, Vol. 6 (Leipzig, 1889).
- Hoffmann, Erich, 'Der Besuch Kaiser Karls IV. in Lübeck im Jahre 1375', in Werner Paravicini (ed.), *Nord und Süd in der deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters: Akten des Kolloquiums veranstaltet zu Ehren von Karl Jordan, 1907–1984* (Sigmaringen, 1990), 73–95.
- Johanek, Peter (ed.), *Städtische Geschichtsschreibung im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Städtetforschung A 47 (Cologne, 2000).
- Mantels, Wilhelm, 'Kaiser Karls IV. Hoflager in Lübeck' (1874), reprinted in *Beiträge zur Lübisches-Hansischen Geschichte* (Jena, 1881), 287–323.
- Mantels, Wilhelm, 'Die Reliquien der Rathskapelle zu St. Gertrud in Lübeck' (1873), reprinted in *Beiträge zur Lübisches-Hansischen Geschichte*, 325–340.
- Mantels, Wilhelm (ed.), *Der Todtentanz in der Marienkirche zu Lübeck* (Lübeck, 1866).
- Meier, Jürgen, and Möhn, Dieter, *Spuren der Vergangenheit für die Gegenwart. Hundert niederdeutsche Texte zwischen dem 9. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Bremen, 2009).
- Putzo, Christine, 'Detmar von Lübeck', in R. Graeme Dunphy (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), 519.
- Sandfuchs, Thomas, 'Detmar von Lübeck', in *Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd edn, Vol. 2 (1980), 68–9.
- Schubert, Martin, 'Johannes Rothe als didaktischer Chronist', in Henrike Lähnemann and Sandra Linden (eds), *Dichtung und Didaxe. Lehrhaftes Sprechen in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Berlin and New York, 2009), 439–50.
- Stadt im Wandel: Kunst und Kultur des Bürgertums in Norddeutschland 1150–1650*, Landesausstellung Niedersachsen, ed. Cord Meckseper (Stuttgart, 1985).
- Tersch, Harald, *Unruhe im Weltbild: Darstellung und Deutung des zeitgenössischen Lebens in deutschsprachigen Weltchroniken des Mittelalters* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar, 1996).
- Wehrmann, Carl, 'Der Aufstand in Lübeck bis zur Rückkehr des Alten Rathes 1408–1416', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 2 (1878), 101–56.
- Wernicke, Horst, *Die Städtehanse 1280–1418. Genesis—Strukturen—Funktionen*, Abhandlungen zur Handels- und Sozialgeschichte, 22 (Weimar, 1983).
- Wolf, Jürgen, *Die Sächsische Weltchronik im Spiegel ihrer Handschriften: Überlieferung, Textentwicklung, Rezeption* (Munich, 1997).
- Wriedt, Klaus, 'Geschichtsschreibung in den wendischen Hansestädten', in Hans Patze (ed.), *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußsein im späten Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1987), 401–26.
- Zimmern, Helen, *The Hansa Towns, The Story of the Nations*, 20 (London 1889).

INTERNET RESOURCES

The websites of the Verein für Lübeckische Geschichte und Alterthumskunde (<http://www.vlga.de/>) and of the Hansischer Geschichtsverein (<http://www.hansischergeschichtsverein.de/>) provide extensive material; all digitally available texts are listed on the wikisource page 'Archiv_der_Hansestadt_Lübeck'.

The Monumenta Germaniae Historica series of chronicles (*Deutsche Chroniken*) are digitally available via *dMGH*, an internet portal run jointly by the MGH with the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (<http://www.bsb-muenchen.de/>).

Manuscript descriptions with literature for all versions of the *Detmar-Chronik* are listed under his name in the *Handschriftencensus* (<http://www.handschriftencensus.de/>).

The full text of the chronicles is available online (<http://www.archive.org/>, search for 'Chroniken' and 'Lubeck').

Henrike Lähnemann: Chapter 26 'Lübeck', in: *Europe: a Literary History, 1348-1418*, ed. by David Wallace, Oxford: OUP 2016, 596-610.

Chapter 37

Vadstena

ROGER ANDERSSON

ONLY a few days after the death of her husband Ulf Gudmarsson in 1344,¹ Birgitta Birgersdotter (c.1303–1373), for us better known as Saint Birgitta (or Bridget), received a vision from God. She was commissioned to become the 'bride and channel' (*sponsa et canale*) of Christ, which means that she was given a prophetic vocation and an explicit role in the midst of a world plagued by mistrust and disbelief.² Shortly after this remarkable event, she began to receive large numbers of revelations. One of the most crucial was given to her in 1346: the first version of a rule for a monastic order, what was later to become the Birgittine Order, the Order of the Most Holy Saviour (*Ordo Sanctissimi Salvatoris*). The establishment of this order, and the immense success it enjoyed from the very beginning, would scarcely have been possible without the famous will issued in May 1346 by the Swedish king Magnus Eriksson and his spouse, Queen Blanche of Namur. In this impressive document the king and queen express their wish to be buried in a monastery that was to be constructed at the royal manor of Vadstena, situated on Lake Vättern in the province of Östergötland. In order to secure a future monastery on this location they made a remarkable donation: large, partly ruined buildings, normally referred to as the palace of the Folkungar dynasty. Birgitta Birgersdotter wanted to establish a new religious order there; it is possible that the king was familiar with this wish, or that Birgitta had succeeded in winning him over. Birgitta had served as mentor (*magistra*) to Queen Blanche, so she was already well known to the king. However, it was not until 1370 that Pope Urban V passed the first confirmation of the Rule of the Order, and not until 1384, eleven years after the death of Birgitta, that the solemn inauguration of the new monastery took place (Fig. 37.1). Birgitta had left Sweden in 1349 and, since she died in Rome in 1373, never had the opportunity to see her long-desired plans finally come to fruition.³

Sweden was severely afflicted by the Black Death in the autumn of 1350, so Birgitta just managed to evade the most ferocious ravages of the plague in her home country. Instead she arrived just in time for the Jubilee Year which was being celebrated in 1350,

¹ See Gejrot (ed.), *Diarium Vadstenense*, 116 (§1), and Gejrot (ed.), *Vadstenadiariet*, 32–3 (§1).

² Hollman (ed.), *Reuelaciones extrauagantes*, ch. 47, pp. 162–3.

³ Recent accounts in English of the life and works of St Birgitta include Morris, *St Birgitta of Sweden*, and Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden* (see esp. ch. 1).