

WITCHES OF THE HIGH NORTH

THE FINNMARK WITCHCRAFT TRIALS, 1600–1692

1. ISSUES, SOURCE MATERIAL, CONCEPTS

Issues

The aim of this historical study is to discuss the witchcraft trials that took place in the seventeenth century in the area we now refer to as Finnmark County. The factors on which I shall be concentrating are: the predomination of women, ethnicity, attitudes to witchcraft, and local power structures. The female aspect will be highlighted throughout. By carefully perusing each historical chapter, I shall uncover myths that have been etched into folklore and have found their way even into recent literature.

Men, as well as women, were subjected to persecution during the witchcraft trials. In Finnmark the proportion between women and men was 7:1. This work is mainly concerned with historical witches (women). Should they be considered rebels or were they merely victims? Were they particularly exposed because of certain qualities, or did the very fact that they were women living at a time characterized by deprecation of women qualify them for persecution?

My emphasis on witches does not mean that I omit all mention of men when discussing the historical material. Nevertheless, the focus of the study as a whole will be on female practitioners of witchcraft.

Witchcraft trials are an extensive field of study. A complete discussion of the documentation should deal with a complex of economic, social, psychological and ideological factors. Using the female perspective as a point of departure, I have chosen to concentrate on the following.

The Predominance of Women

A marked predominance of women distinguishes witchcraft trials in general, not only in Finnmark but also elsewhere in Europe. Both Einar Niemi, in *Vadsøs historie*, v. 1¹⁾, and Sølvi Sogner, in her address contesting Hans Eyvind Næss's doctoral thesis²⁾, published in *Norveg* 25 (1982)³⁾, relate contemporary attitudes towards women at that time to the fact that women formed a majority amongst the accused and the sentenced. In my discussion of this aspect, I wish to deal with attitudes towards women manifested in the theological and ideological universe of the seventeenth century.

Ethnicity

The Finnmark witchcraft trials form an integral part of a European phenomenon. Nevertheless, Finnmark has distinctive traits, as compared to the rest of Europe due to its peripheral location and special ethnic conditions. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Samis were reputed throughout Europe to be well versed in the art of magic, a fact that might be associated with their ritual use of rune drums. One element in the discussion of source materials is whether these conditions might have had an effect on the trials, and whether sex ratios differ for Samis.

Popular Versus Academic Attitudes to Witchcraft

The interaction between popular beliefs about witches, on the one hand, and scholarly demonology, on the other, is a principal feature of the trials, according to witchcraft researchers such as Norman Cohn, Richard Kieckhefer and Christina Lerner. I shall be studying how these two different outlooks are reflected in the Finnmark sources, both by the accused and by judicial authorities

- a) by examining the trials in terms of the two differing legal systems underlying the proceedings;

b) by contrasting elements in the trial records that might derive from popular beliefs with others of a more demonological nature.

Power Structures

Niemi draws a dividing line between two “classes” in the Finnmark period: on the one hand the common people and, on the other, merchants and officialdom ⁴⁾. I shall examine the sources in terms of the power balance between these two classes. In particular, I shall be highlighting relevant statements from the accused women.

Presentation of the Sources

The source material on which my research is based dates back to the period 1600–1692. It comprises trial minutes gleaned from court records and the Finnmark District Court (Lagting) protocols, as well as information from the Vardøhus county accounts. The court records cover the period 1620–1692, but there are no protocols from the period 1633–1648 (void). The court records are stored in the National Archives in Tromsø. The material from the Nordland and Finnmark district court (Lagting) date to 1647–1683. They are stored in the National Archives in Trondheim. The county accounts go back to 1600–1646 and belong to Rentekammerets archives in The National Archives of Norway, in Oslo. Depending on availability of source materials the amount of information varies sharply from decade to decade, between complete documentation to periods when the court records have been lost.

The county accounts provide only scant information about trials and confessions, but they do include references to all major trials that conclude with verdicts of “sword, fire or banishment” (Sogner 1982:162). The trials are reflected in the accounts as income through fines or payments due for rent, and as expenses for the transportation or incarceration of prisoners, and for executions. Sogner points out that the county accounts have been duly kept, and are thus a reliable source, also as a supplement to the court reports.

The court records represent the bulk of the source material, although the length of trial records may vary. However, for a number of trials, biographical data has been entered together with the interrogation, the confession, and the sentence. In addition, we find considerable sociological data concerning the livelihood and living conditions of common people. The latter, in particular, is of great interest since we are dealing with the seventeenth century, when the common man and woman has no face nor colour in historical narratives.

Cases that could not be resolved in the local court were referred to the district court (Lagting) which was the highest court. Even in district court protocols the amount of information varies from case to case, but these protocols do provide a number of facts that are absent from the local court records, for instance concerning torture. Niemi directs our attention to the role played by Mandrup Schønneboel. As the presiding judge at the district court in Steigen he travelled through Finnmark contributing to the acquittal of a number of women imprisoned in Vardøhus (Niemi 1983:220).

All persons indicted for the application of witchcraft in Finnmark in my sources are listed chronologically in List 1 in the Appendix. In the following, the number references following names of people refer to this list.

Method

The material will undergo two kinds of analyses: a quantitative data-based analysis, and a qualitative analysis emphasizing ideological developments and attitudes.

I have sorted the material using 45 variables in order to draw out information, cf. List 2 in the Appendix. Some parts of the period are incompletely covered source-wise. There are no court records from the period 1633–1648. Moreover the period from 1600 until the first court protocol starts in 1620 is incompletely covered.

In addition to analysing the material along quantitative lines I shall discuss it on the basis of the philosophical and theological perspectives that were prevalent at the time. The aim of such a qualitative discussion is to collate the trials in a broader Scandinavian and European context.

There are a number of uncertainties associated with the witchcraft trials as a historical phenomenon. A combination of the two analytical methods I have chosen should throw light on the material from various angles. A quantitative analysis should give us a picture of what actually happened during court proceedings in witchcraft trials, whereas the qualitative analysis will to some degree illuminate us about seventeenth century currents; currents that implied that numerous people, particularly women, were charged with illusory “crimes”. I have chosen to present a number of individual examples by quoting from the sources, since this will enable us to relate to the persons led before the court.

The Scope of the Study

In his thesis *Trolldomsprosessene i Norge på 1500–1600 tallet*, Hans Eyvind Næss points out that the number of trials per capita was considerably higher in Finnmark than elsewhere in the country. Finnmark’s 3000 inhabitants comprised 0.8 per cent of the total population. Of all the Norwegian trials known to us, 16 percent took place in Finnmark together with 31 per cent of all death sentences (Næss 1982:32). It must be stressed that although Næss’s study covers Norwegian witchcraft trials during both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, his material from the sixteenth century does not include any trials from Finnmark. When dealing with the seventeenth century, however, Næss lists the same trials as I do. Furthermore, one of the reasons why so many of the Norwegian trials are recorded in Finnmark, as well as in Rogaland, is that the court protocols in these counties have kept better than elsewhere.

The primary sources for this study deal with 132 persons accused of exercising witchcraft and charged in Finnmark during the period 1600 to 1692. The material can be ascribed to the part of the county that is currently called East Finnmark, as is clearly evident from Figures 5 and 6 in the Appendix. Of the 132 charged persons, 110 were women, 16 were men, and 6 were of unknown gender. In other words, 83 per cent were women, 12 per cent were men and the gender is not known for 5 per cent, cf. Table 1 below and List 1 in the Appendix, where all who were charged in the Finnmark trials are listed.

Table 1: Charged persons according to gender and ethnicity. Persons whose ethnicity has not been recorded are assumed to be Norwegian.

	Number of trials	% of material
Women, non-Sami	103	78
Women, Sami	7	5,3
Women, total in material	110	83,1
Men, non-Sami	7	5,3
Men, Sami	9	6,8
Men, total in material	16	12,1
Persons of unknown gender	6	4,5

Influence of the Scribe

When interpreting sources, it is essential to bear in mind how the sources, or documents, came to be. I would like to stress the effect that the scribe might have had when recording the events. Although the scribe is unlikely to have exercised any influence on legal proceedings as such — at that time the presiding judge, the bailiff, and the jurymen would have been considerably more influential (cf. Sogner 1982:177ff) — he would have been able to set his mark on the documents which at this point in time are left to me, the interpreter.

All the protocols are phrased by a scribe. A number of phraseological conventions suggests the existence of a set of common legal terms used during the proceedings, in particular with respect to sentences that are passed. These terms have undoubtedly been correctly recorded. Nevertheless, no matter how sincerely I pursue accurate and objective data about what happened in the court room, the scribe, being a subjective agent of information, will have coloured the records in various ways. The court records can hardly be equated with stenographic reports which mirror court proceedings, since the scribe will have had to pick whatever information was to be included and ignore the rest.

Texts of the Past and Modern Interpretations

As mentioned above, any reflections about the relationship between procedural texts of the past and modern interpretations must take into account the scribe's influence on the documents. My interpretation, however, will also be tinged by attitudes and ideas that are inherent to me as a historical person. I wish to penetrate the visible layer of the text we encounter in the documents in order to grasp a piece of reality as perceived by women and men in Finnmark during the seventeenth century. In other words: I need to observe a certain distrust of the documents. All the while, I have to take into account that people living in the seventeenth century had an entirely different outlook on life than we have today, an outlook that characterizes my sources and obscures my view of seventeenth century reality. My analysis may thus be seen as a contribution to our understanding of a phenomenon, not as a conclusive solution to a problem.

The Female Perspective and Equivocal Sources

Several aspects of the sources complicate research into the condition of women. What we find in the court records are descriptions of women charged in a court of law. Men ask the questions, men write the records and men adjudicate.

The two female researchers Christine Faure and Silvia Bovenschen both draw attention to the awkward juxtaposition of an ideal goal and deficient sources. Faure has called her article "Absent from History" ⁵⁾. The title is an allusion to the near eradication of women from historical accounts, partly in view of male predominance amongst researchers and partly due to troublesome sources. Faure compares two studies on witches. In one of them ⁶⁾, she claims, the researcher's attention is excessively focused on judges as a dominant social group, whereas the accused women—their views and statements—are neglected. The other ⁷⁾ she views more favourably. This is a study where the cultural gap between judges and accused is taken into account, and a rationalized attitude to witchcraft is dismissed, so that history is dealt with "from the bottom up". Faure takes an optimistic view of the possibility to produce new and fruitful research on the basis of old sources.

Silvia Bovenschen takes an extremely pessimistic view of the source quandary. She believes that the sources merely impart the ideas and fantasies of men. In her view, there is no reason to believe that source material will ever yield scientifically founded information: "(...) research in this area must resort to speculation, unfounded text exegesis and rash cultural historical constructs" ⁸⁾.

My own view with respect to how much you can achieve at this point in time by perusing old texts about witchcraft trials lies somewhere between Faure's and Bovenschen's. Renewed study of the sources will inevitably lead to a productive encounter between the source texts and the interpreter. As such, it will have innovative value. Not least with respect to the Finnmark material, which has been subject to very limited systematic studies so far, research would be justifiable on these grounds. I believe that obtaining reliable data from the women themselves is impossible, since the setting is a trial, the women are under pressure, and their statements are summarized. The object of Faure's research — to expose hidden structures repressing women — is not easily achieved given the data in the Finnmark

material. This does not mean that the material would not benefit from a new analysis where the focus is shifted to the condition of women. In order to gain as clear as possible a picture of the Finnmark trials I believe attention should be directed to both the accused persons and the judges. They constitute opposite poles of the same entity, and should thus both be included in an analysis.

Geographical Scope

Initially, I intended to include all of Northern Norway in my study. However, I have limited the historical source material to Finnmark County, thus excluding material from Nordland and Troms, such as court protocols and data from county accounts. In Nordland we do have partially preserved court protocols from 1692–1700, but in Troms the court protocols have been lost. My reasons for concentrating on the Finnmark material are the following:

- a) Given the subject matter, comprehensive source material is to be preferred. In a Northern Norwegian scale the Finnmark material is distinguished by the continuity and detailed nature of its court protocols.
- b) One of the objectives of the historical survey is to find out what bearing different ethnic backgrounds have on the outcome of the trials. One of Finnmark's salient features is precisely the multi-ethnicity of its population, which makes the county interesting in this respect as well.

Periodicity of the Trial Era

In order to find out how the trials were distributed throughout the period 1600–1692, I have prepared Figure 1. Three shaded columns are salient, each of them representing a major chain. The concentration of trials to certain periods explain why some court protocols chronicle a large number of trials and others none. In this sense, Protocol 5 seems to be a winner and may with good reason be termed a witch cauldron. Following a major chain, we find a sharp decline in the number of trials which only gradually picks up again, with single trials or minor chains. The stochastic character of the current of trials, involving sharp shifts from very many to very few trials may be said to characterize trial eras in other countries as well, as is demonstrated by f. inst. Christina Lerner in *Enemies of God* (1981:61) with respect to the witchcraft trials in Scotland. Her outlining diagram is clearly distinguished by peaks that mushroom within a single year. Sogner, too, considers this a typical feature of witchcraft trials (Sogner 1982:163, 164).

Death Sentences in the Finnmark Material

My source material covers 132 persons charged for exercising witchcraft in Finnmark. Of these, 69 were sentenced to be burnt on the stake, 2 died under torture and 1 was killed under detention while waiting for his case to come up in Copenhagen. This brings the percentage of death sentences in the material to 54, of which 85 per cent were women, 7 per cent were men, leaving 8 percent whose gender is unknown to us. I refer to Table 2 below. In Figure 1, we see that during the peak periods in 1621 and 1663, the frequency of death sentences by and large parallels the frequency of trials.

Table 2: Death sentences in the material according to gender

	Women	Men	Unknown	Total
Burnt	58	5	6	69
Killed under torture	2	0	0	2
Killed by civilian while in detention	0	1	0	1

Witchcraft as a Concept

Witchcraft, or the practice of magic, is by no means an unambiguous concept. I have chosen to follow a functional definition of magic proposed by Ronald Grambo in his book *Norske trollformler og magiske ritualer*. “Most efforts to explain the meaning of magic tend to emphasize its main function: to force the elements to bow to one’s will” (Grambo 1979:1). For further distinctions, the main issue at stake will be as follows: How does a human go about controlling the elements? By applying forces inherent to him or her, or by applying forces that are transferred from elsewhere? With such questions in mind I shall distinguish between two major perceptions of witchcraft, or the practice of magic, that are both represented in my source material from Finnmark: the popular mythological perception, and the demonological concept of witchcraft.

The Popular Mythological Concept of Magic

One of the concepts relating to witchcraft is associated with the popular mythological understanding of the term, which in this study covers both Sami and non-Sami magic. According to such a perception of witchcraft, some people — men and women alike — have a special aptitude for applying magic and for carrying out certain acts which transcend what we understand as reason. Magic of this nature is practised individually and is directed at humans, domestic animals or natural elements. Ideas of this kind are in existence to this very day, for instance in the north of Norway, where it is commonly believed that certain people can stop haemorrhages. Here it is important to distinguish between activities of this nature and various brands of religious healing which are also commonly practised, but which are carried out with forces transferred from God to the healer; in other words, God is the healing agent, by way of an intermediary person. Special aptitudes for magic can be passed on from older to younger people, but only those who are endowed with a gift for it can be trained. I shall be adhering to the popular distinction between black and white magic with reference to beneficial or detrimental effects of the application of witchcraft, using the term “blessing” about the former and “evil spell” about the latter. The term “blessing” has no religious connotations in this context. Only individuals can be charged for exercising witchcraft of this kind.

Witchcraft as a Demonological Concept

The second interpretation of the concept witchcraft is associated with demonology. Views based on demonology were common in Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and formed an ideological basis for the European witchcraft trials. From a demonological point of view the individual obtains his magical powers through a pact with the Devil. Witchcraft of this kind can be practised individually or collectively, a fact I shall illustrate later with examples from the source material. Sorcerers who enter into a pact with the Devil may use their special magical powers to lay curses on people and animals, thus bending the elements of nature to their will. During the witchcraft trials, admissions of pacts with the Devil were regarded as extremely serious by the judicial system. In view of the dichotomy between the good Lord and the evil Satan, witches and sorcerers advisedly chose to do battle against the Lord’s realm on earth. They were filled with the spirit of the Devil in the same way the children of God were filled with the holy spirit.

As conceived in the extensive number of works published in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, demonology embodies many popular elements, while at the same time differing from popular views on witchcraft by emphasizing pacts with the Devil. In all probability, demonological interpretations were initially introduced in Finnmark by public officials, and gradually adopted by the common people.

Research on Witchcraft

Europe in General

Witchcraft scholars have suggested a number of theories to explain the European witchcraft trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of the major dividing lines between the various theories is the question whether the trials should be seen in the light of local conditions at the time, or explained on the basis of prevailing historical currents. Another dividing line concerns the nature of pacts with the Devil; were they or were they not a recent invention? In her book *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1925), Margaret Murray postulates that the custom of making pacts went back to an ancient heathen cult of the "horned god" in the Stone Ages. This cult supposedly survived in small European mountain communities, and subsequently spread throughout Europe some time before the trials started. Murray's work forms the backbone of a school of witchcraft research to which Pennethorne Hughes belongs, amongst others. The latter published "*The Witch*" in 1952. Whether or not Murray's claims will stand their ground remains to be seen, and a number of scholars⁹⁾ oppose her views, finding her documentation tenuous.

The last two decades research on European witchcraft has increased enormously. I would like to mention a number of scholars who have contributed to the study of European witchcraft, among them Keith Thomas, Christina Lerner, Lawrence Normand, Gareth Roberts, Julian Goodare, Stuart Clark, Stuart MacDonald, Ronald Hutton, James Sharpe, Edward J. Cowan, Lianne Henderson, Charles Zika, Wolfgang Behringer, Carlo Ginzburg, Eva Pochs, Bengt Ankarloo, Gustav Henningsen. A more linguistic approach represented by Diane Purkiss and Marion Gibson should also be mentioned.

Launching a theory that will explain the witchcraft trials in Europe as a whole is no simple matter, in view of the diverse ethnic and social structures particular to each country. In order to do justice to the Finnmark material, the sources should be assessed both in a general historical and local context. While maintaining distinct local particularities, the Finnmark trials have features that clearly derive from a broader European setting.

The Norwegian Witchcraft Trials

On an international level, scholars have hardly concerned themselves with Norwegian witchcraft trials. To the extent these trials have been mentioned at all, information about them has been misleading. In his book *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York 1959), R. Robbins¹⁰⁾ writes:

Witchcraft in Norway took on the air of myth and legend rather than religious heresy, and sorcery and maleficia rather than pact and sabbath became the bases of the few scattered witchcraft trials. Probably less than two-dozen witchcraft trials took place in Norway (Robbins 1959:161).

In the first place, the extent of the trials is incorrectly cited. Næss has documented 850 charges of witchcraft in Norway¹¹⁾. Secondly, the affirmation that demonological ideas virtually are absent from the Norwegian material is inaccurate, since pacts (diabolism) are a recurring theme in the Finnmark material.

Two major papers have been published about witchcraft trials in this country. In 1971, Bente Alver wrote her *Heksetro og trolldom*, an excellent introduction to European witchcraft ideologies which bears the imprint of the author's background from the field of ethnography. B. Alver presents six Norwegian witchcraft trials from various parts of the country, including Finnmark.

In 1982, Hans Eyvind Næss published his doctor's thesis *Trolldomsprosessene i Norge på 1500-1600-tallet*, a general outline of all known witchcraft trials in Norway. The sub-title of his paper was "En retts- og sosialhistorisk undersøkelse". He highlights the possible connections between witchcraft trials and criminality in general during the period, using as

his point of departure the "social-strain" theory, which I shall discuss in greater detail by way of conclusion (Chapter 10). However, he is not particularly concerned with the link between the predominance of women and contemporary intellectual currents, as pointed out by Sølvi Sogner in her address contesting his doctoral thesis ¹²⁾. Moreover, Sogner criticizes his thesis on several other counts concerning for instance his discussion of sources, his assessment of the extent of the trials, and the role attributed to rational state policies. B. Alver and H.E. Næss both include the Finnmark trials in their work, though they do not deal with the county separately. Gunnar W. Knutsen has written a master thesis about the witchcraft trials in the south eastern part of Norway, *Trolldomsprosessene på Østlandet*, published in 1998. Beyond the above mentioned, the following papers of more or less scientific character are known to me:

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| Helland, Amund:" | Brændte troldkvinder" in <i>Finnmarkens Amt</i> , second part of the series: Norges land og folk. Kristiania 1906:280–286. |
| Rutberg, Hulda: | <i>Häxprocesser i norska Finnmarken</i> in the series: Svenska landsmål och svenskt folkeliv, Sthm. 1918. |
| Bergh, Kirsten: | "Til ild og bål" in <i>Vardøhus festning 650 år</i> . |
| Niemi, Einar : | "Trolldomsprosessene" i <i>Vadsøs historie</i> , volume 1, Vadsø 1983:219–230. Another reference on witchcraft p. 346–47, p. 514 |
| Grøvdal, Ola: | "Hekser og trolddom" i <i>Varanger årbok 1983</i> , p 36–51. |
| Hagen, Rune: | Articles in Norwegian journals and newspapers 1998-2007. |
| Ellen Alm: | <i>Statens rolle i trolldomsprosessene i Danmark og Norge på 1500 og 1600-tallet</i> , 2000 [The role of the state during the witchcraft trials in Denmark and Norway during the 16 th and 17 th centuries] |

Rutberg's book contains transcripts of court records from Vardøhus. Compared with the original protocols, the transcripts are deficient; parts of trials are missing and the book is not suitable as a starting point for research. On the other hand, additions have been made to the trial of Karen Mogensdatter (Rutberg 1918:23–24) as compared to the original protocol.

Grøvdal's article and Niemis discussion of the witchcraft trials are the last papers to be published about the Finnmark material so far. Niemi links the trials to the relationship between officialdom and peasantry. I shall refer to his work in several instances throughout my analysis.

Rune Hagen has during the period 1998-2007 published several articles on the Finnmark witchcraft trials.

Ellen Alm has written her Master thesis about the role of the state during witchcraft trials in Denmark and Norway during the 16th and 17th centuries.

2. DEMONOLOGY DURING THE 15th AND 16th CENTURIES

Demonology as a science during the 15th and 16th centuries

What the 15th and 16th centuries called the science of demonology formed an ideological setting for confessions about pacts with the Devil. In demonological manuals we find convincing documentation of the deprecation of women that was common in academic circles during the period. Such attitudes to women may explain the predominance of women in witchcraft trials. Demonologists were convinced that witchcraft existed and that witches were dangerous.

In his *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* ¹⁾, R.H. Robbins defines demonology as the “scientific study of demons” (Robbins 1959:126), but adds that demonologists might just as well be called “witchologists” since they are more preoccupied by “the crimes of the witches” than by “the viles of the devils”. *Malleus Maleficarum* (from here on: M.M.), or the *Witch Hammer*, was published in 1486 ²⁾ and was considered the prime witch hunting manual, though it was by no means the only one. Prior to its publication, 14 books about witchcraft had been published in Europe; in Germany, France and Italy. Following the publication of the *Witch Hammer*, demonological manuals written by the French judge Jean Bodin ³⁾, the Italian Maria Guazzo, and the French judge Nicolas Remy were widely used. The authors of these writings were jurists or theologians, erudite men who were frequently called upon to adjudicate in witchcraft trials. An interesting feature of demonological manuals is that authors tend to reiterate each other's main points and arguments, rephrasing them only slightly. Thus we find many similarities between the *Witch Hammer* and the two other demonological manuals presented below. The essence of demonology is clearly worded by Guazzo in 1608: “Witchcraft is a form of magic whereby with the help of a Devil one man does harm to another” ⁴⁾. This principle distinguishes the demonological from the popular conception of witchcraft, and we recognize it in confessions of pacts with the Devil in Finnmark. Some works written between the end of the sixteenth century and 1720 ⁵⁾ advocate a more rational approach to witchcraft and may have been significant for the termination of the witch-hunt.

I shall here briefly present three demonological works and outline the authors' general train of thought. Apart from the *Witch Hammer* by Kramer and Sprenger, which was published in 1486, I shall present Nicolas Remy's *Demonolatri*, published in Lyon in 1595, and Francesco-Maria Guazzos *Compendium Maleficarum*, published in Milan in 1608 ⁶⁾.

Malleus Maleficarum — The Witch Hammer

Referring to i.a. Augustine and Thomas from Aquinas, the authors of the *Witch Hammer* maintain that interaction between humans and demons is indeed possible ⁷⁾, that demons can get the better of all humans, not only of ungodly and wicked people, that the number of witches is steadily rising, and that the Devil's realm might soon dominate the world. On the basis of such views and the period's contempt of women, all women are regarded as potential witches.

The *Witch Hammer* consists of a number of questions and answers supported by references to the Bible, church authorities and works of fiction. The first part deals with the three main elements of witchcraft: “the Devil, the witch, and the almighty Lord's consent”. The authors ask why superstition is so common amongst women and why most witches are women. Their answer is that women are governed by an evil spirit, “they indulge the worst possible vices”. The authors quote Seneca who claims that when a woman uses her mind, she thinks evil thoughts (M.M. 1971:43). A reference to Terence allows them to maintain that a woman's mental capacity is that of a child. She is more a creation of the flesh than is man, and the root of all her failings is to be found in Genesis: the first woman was created from a flawed rib, “and since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives”

(M.M. 1971:44). To support their claims about woman's flaws, the authors provide examples from fiction (for instance the furious Medea) and religious writings. While undoubtedly evil, woman is also weak. She belongs to "the fragile feminine sex" and is thus unable to withstand Satan's temptations. According to Kramer and Sprenger, this accounts for the spread of the witches' dominion.

The second part of the *Witch Hammer* deals with practices of magic and protective measures against witchcraft. Witches can affect men's potency and fertility, they can control elements of nature, injure domestic animals, conjure hail and storms, direct the course of lightning, thus killing humans and livestock. In their enumerations, the authors include elements of folklore, some of which also appear in the Finnmark material. Such popular elements facilitate the assimilation of demonological precepts by the populace.

The third part is presumably meant for judges. It deals with legal aspects, arrests, interrogations and sentences.

I have found nothing to confirm or disprove that the *Witch Hammer* was actually used in Finnmark, but the main principles of the book apply also for the Finnmark material.

Nicolas Remy: Demonolatriy ⁸⁾

Demonolatriy was published in 1595 and translated into German in 1596. Remy wishes to convince the reader that witches really do exist. He mentions Circe and Medea as examples. The Devil's mark is the visible symbol of a pact. Witches who fail to do their job properly may be punished by the Devil. Sexual interaction between humans and demons does occur. At sabbaths most of the participants are women. To explain the predominance of women he refers to Fabius, Pliny, and the *Demonology* written by King James VI of Scotland ⁹⁾. Here, Philomathes asks why there are 20 women for every man amongst those who are conversant with witchcraft. Episthemon explains: "The reason is easie, for as that sex is frailer then man is, so it is easier to be intrapped in these grosse snares of the Deuill" (Remy 1970:56). These words are clearly reminiscent of the *Witch Hammer* (cf. M.M. 1971:41). The sabbath is described as an event where witches dance back to back in a ring. When demons appear before humans for the first time, they bear the likeness of a human and generally wear a long, black cape "such as is only worn by honoured men of substance" (Remy 1970:69). Then they metamorphose into animals.

Children get embroiled in witchcraft through their parents. When parents are found to be guilty of witchcraft, it is assumed for a fact that the children, too, have learned the craft. Whoever has been infected has only a slim chance of being purified. Witches use embryos in their potions. Women who use healing herbs are also in contact with the Devil. Remy opposes those who are adverse to punishment for crimes of witchcraft, with references to Plato, Olaus Magnus, the Book of Psalms and the Gospel according to St. John. Once a witch has been caught up in "the coils of sorcery", she has no chance of liberating herself from Satan "except by death". To excuse a witch on the grounds of age or gender is tantamount to allowing "mad dogs to live, although everyone knows that they are incurable, simply because it was through no fault or blame of their own that they became mad" (Remy 1970:185). When a judge writes in such a manner, no doubt from conviction, we understand more readily the numerous dramas that were enacted in Europe's court rooms during the trial periods.

Brother Francesco-Maria Guazzo: Compendium Maleficarum

Guazzo's work was published in Milan in 1608. Step by step, it gives us a detailed account of the various elements of a Devil's pact. Whoever enters into a pact with the Devil must be re-baptized and marked by the Devil, forswear Christian faith, promise to sacrifice children and pay an annual tribute to the Devil's apostle. Some of these elements are also found in the Finnmark material, though the latter doesn't conform to them all simultaneously. To support his arguments, Guazzo quotes 250 authors, amongst them Remy, who ostensibly is an authority on the subject since he has come by his knowledge directly from the witches' own confessions. Witches can practice

divination, control the elements, destroy crops, set fire to houses and towns and travel in person to sabbaths. At the sabbath the witch has her own disciple with whom she has sexual dealings. Guazzo enumerates a number of protective measures against witchcraft: the sacraments, holy water, church bells, the names of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, prayer, confession, and the sign of the cross.

The Witch Hammer's attitude to women must be termed vindictive. By her very nature woman is prone to become the Devil's tool; an empty space waiting to be filled by the evil spirit. A witch represents so great a danger that the authorities and the populace must join forces to combat and exterminate her. Although Guazzo is somewhat more indulgent than other authors, the general attitude amongst demonologists is clearly antagonistic to women.

3. COURT PROCEDURES AND TRIAL CATEGORIES

The Accusatory and the Inquisitorial System

In my analysis I shall distinguish between single and chained trials, the latter implying that an incarcerated person denounces others who supposedly also are conversant with witchcraft and who subsequently are tried. In single trials, each case is concluded without further denunciations. Bearing in mind this distinction I shall clarify the meaning of two legal principles that have bearing on interpretations of the material.

With one exception only, the major chains of trials are triggered by denunciations, cf. Table 4. Denunciation cases are tried along the lines of the inquisitorial system:

The inquisitorial system means that the judge conducts the whole process of prosecution from start to finish, including the procurement of case material (evidence), preferring an indictment and examination of the parties, experts and witnesses in such a way that the accused is treated as the object of the enquiry and not as a party to the case ¹⁾.

The court may convene even if there are no charges. In reality the court and prosecution coalesce. Inquisitorial principles are applied in witchcraft trials since witchcraft is considered an exceptionally serious offence, *crimen exceptum* ²⁾, so that demands for evidence are less rigorous than normal, as is clearly demonstrated in the Finnmark court documents. Torture is applied and denunciations and statements from children suffice to have a person committed.

In this study, cases directed along the lines of the inquisitorial principle will include:

- a) Trials where the accused has been summoned by a bailiff/ district lord / district governor because she has been denounced in another trial.
- b) Trials where the records merely affirm, by way of introduction, that the person was summoned to court by an official, but make no mention of the accusation or the name of the accusing party.

In both these cases jurisdiction and prosecution coalesce.

Studies of Danish (Merete Birkelund) and Swedish (Bengt Ankarloo) witchcraft material indicate that the inquisitorial procedural system was common in Sweden but not in Denmark ³⁾.

In seventeenth century Central Europe ⁴⁾, this procedural system replaces the accusatory system normally observed in individual cases. The accusatory system is a system of criminal procedure in which the prosecuting authority and the courts of law are strictly separated, so that the court does not act except on the application of the person entitled to prosecute, and ceases to act when the application is withdrawn. Under this system the judge shall take no part in obtaining the information and evidence necessary in the case: this is left to the parties — the prosecuting authority and the person indicted ⁵⁾.

Under the accusatory system the court cannot act without a specific accusation.

In this study accusatory trials will include:

- a) Trials where there are explicit accusations and where the accusing party is mentioned by name.
- b) Trials where a named person brings “full charges” against the accused or institutes criminal proceedings on the general grounds of “witchcraft”.

In both these cases the charge and the sentence will be served by two different parties.

The Significance of Hearsay

Rumours of witchcraft went a long way to lead a person to court. In the records of 62 trials it is explicitly stated that the person brought before the court “has a reputation” for witchcraft. This is the case for 56 women and 6 men.

During court proceedings a reputation of witchcraft or promiscuousness can be wielded against persons. For instance, the first woman known to us from the court records, Karren Edisdatter (no. 6) was said in 1620 to have “been wanton with a young man by the name of Johannis Oelßen (TF1, fol. 10b). In the trial against Marrite Edisdatter in 1626 (no. 30) considerable importance is attached to the fact that she has a reputation for witchcraft:

Thereafter Niels Knutsen inquired of the common people if there had not been rumours about her, to which the common people did reply they had always heard she had a reputation for witchcraft (TF1, fol. 117a).

Previous Indictments

Whoever has been brought before the court for witchcraft will be an easy victim of renewed suspicions. In 1652 four women are denounced by Gundill Amundzdatter (no.58) for having taken part in casting evil spells on two ships. The women deny all culpability,

whereupon the said four women, whose men were present, were given bail pending further deliberations of the case (TF37 fol. 62a).

So the husbands pay bail for the women, so they cannot be entirely destitute. Nevertheless, ere long, they are all tried again, and sentenced to the stake in 1652–1653.

In one of the later trials (1679) Kiersten Knudsdatter (no. 125) fears stigmatization after the trial. She denies all culpability,

replying they were welcome to take her life, for from this day on, she would in any case know no peace, what with the suspicions that had brought her to court, all the while resolutely claiming to be innocent (TF12, fol. 58a).

These examples are eloquent expressions of people’s fear of being branded, and of the community’s inclination to name witches.

Favourable Testimonials

Legal authorities attach great importance to favourable testimonials, as is above all demonstrated, in district court protocols.

The cases of Kiersten Michelsdatter (no. 71) and four other women (nos. 72, 73, 74, 75) are tried by the district court in 1653. All of them have been denounced by Niels Tommesen’s Bergette, who has already been burnt. In the district court the general public testifies to Kiersten’s good reputation:

(...) those of the common people who were present were asked whether they knew of any instance where she would have been cognizant of such matters, or whether any person was present who could say she had vowed or uttered evil that had since come to pass, whereupon they answered they had no knowledge of anything to reproach the said woman for, or anything to state about her other than what befitted an in every way honest and God-fearing person (LF 1647–1668, fol. 62).

Kiersten and the four other women are acquitted.

Denunciations

Denunciations are a prominent feature of chained trials and are generally taken into account by the court. In Finnmark 74 persons are brought before the court in chained trials. Of these 71 have been denounced by other women. A woman will denounce 1–8 other women for participating in the same witchcraft operation or sabbath, cf. Figures 4 and 6 which demonstrate the extreme complexity of the denunciations of the chains in 1652–1653 and 1662–1663.

In 1653 a number of women stand trial in Vardøhus having ostensibly cast evil spells on Captain Jonn Jonsen's ship. Birgitte Johannesdatter (no. 62) confesses:

furthermore, that Axell Andersen's woman Bodill, from Vadsø, persuaded her, the year before, to join her and the others in casting an evil spell on Captain Jonn Jonsen's ship, so that it ran into misadventure and was damaged at sea (TF3, fol. 110a).

Marritte Andersdatter (no. 54) denounces 8 women for taking part in the same operation.

Denunciations may also be the outcome when women confess having been to a sabbath. When Maren Mogensdatter (no. 92) denounces Maren Hemmingsdatter (no. 94) in 1662,

she confesses, and declares likewise, under oath, (...) that Olluf Søffrensen's woman, Maren Hemmingsdatter, is just as proficient in witchcraft as she, and that she was with her at the sabbath (TF5 fol. 234b).

Accusations

The material includes 32 accusatory trials. In 5 of these cases the accused is the first person in a chain of trials. The other 31 are all single trials. Twenty five of the accusations are made by neighbours, whereas 8 accusations are submitted by influential men, such as the notary public, the deputy bailiff, the bailiff, a merchant, a parson and an employer.

In the case against Kirstenn Oelsdatter (no. 83) in 1654–1655, the notary public in Vardø makes the accusation:

Then Anders Christensen, the notary public here in Vardø, stood forward and claimed that since he, eight days before Christmas Eve the year before last, unfortunately lost two of his boys and a supplier while they were fishing right here in the western bay in fairly reasonable weather, (...) a misfortune that had been perpetrated with evil magic by a woman by the name of Kirstenn Oelßdatter (...) who had confessed (TF5, fol. 11a).

In the case against Bodil Danielsdatter (no. 59) in 1652, the merchant Lauridz Braas in Vadsø makes the accusation. He was on Captain Jonn Jonsen's skip which drifted out of course in Bussesund but was subsequently salvaged. What actually happens during the chained trials in 1652–1653, is that scapegoats are found to account for the storm which led to the shipwreck. Incidentally, Lauridz Braas plays a part in several of the trials.

Accusations made by neighbours trigger 19 per cent of the material's trials. Thus, the accusatory trials in the Finnmark material do not substantiate the theory according to which conflicts between neighbours are at the root of witchcraft trials.

A somewhat extraordinary group of trials include the so-called "reversed trials". These are defamation cases when a woman has been castigated for being a witch and institutes legal proceedings against the person who has slandered her. We may well ask whether such trials strictly speaking belong to the category of witchcraft trials since it is not the woman, but the person who has offended her who is subject to prosecution⁶⁾. By including these cases amongst the witchcraft trials I wish to underscore that slander of this kind represents a serious threat. Women often have to appear in court in order to state whether or not they know any witchcraft. Abusive expressions such as "devilish witch" (trolddiefuel) and "witch hussy" (troldquinde) seem to have been readily applied. Naturally, a woman will want to clear her name of such calumny, and to let a court decision corroborate her claim that she has been defamed without reason. A woman who values her life in seventeenth century Finnmark should make sure not to have a reputation associating her with witchcraft. As an

illustration of defamation cases, I would like to quote from the trial involving Rasmus Siffuersen's Kirsten. Kirsten has been denounced by Jettmund's wife Karrj who has since been burnt on the stake. Now she has been castigated for knowledge of witchcraft.

Rasmus Siffuersen's woman Kirsten requested the court to summon Nielß Pedersenn from Vadsø, on the grounds that he had castigated her for knowledge of witchcraft, according to the court protocol. When questioned to this effect, she swore she had no such knowledge. Then Hanß Pedersenn appeared before the court and declared that Jettmund's Karrj had declared that Rasmus Siffuersen's woman Kirstj was just as capable of witchcraft as she was, and Lauridz Brasß declared he had heard her utter the very same words (TF2. fol. 127a).

A few days later it is proposed she should be tried by the water ordeal.

Then, for various reasons the district lord granted that she should go home and await the next court session (TF2, fol. 128a). Kirsten's husband is held responsible for bringing her back to court.

A case such as this one is indicative of the arbitrariness of court proceedings at the time. Had Kirsten actually been tried by the water ordeal she would probably have been sentenced to the stake.

Trial Categories

As mentioned above, I classify the material into single or chained trials, minor or major chains. I define major chains as more than four trials, and minor chains as two to four trials. Generally, inquisitorial principles are applied to chains and accusatory principles to single trials.

Single Trials

The material comprises 30 single trials, 3 of which (nos. 31, 41, 132) are conducted along the lines of the inquisitorial system, and 27 according to the accusatory system. In addition, the material includes 5 accusatory trials where the accused is the first person in a chain. Men account for 37 per cent of the accused in single trials and for a mere 2 per cent in chains, cf. Table 3.

Table 3: Trial category and gender

	Major chain	Minor chain	Single trial
Women	62	10	19
Men	0	2	11

Table 5 in the Appendix outlines trial contents. The table demonstrates that the most common charge is related to evil spells against persons, leading to disease or death. Shipwrecks and loss of lives are frequently linked, since most of the cases concerning spells against ships have been put forward due to loss of human lives at sea. Spells against domestic animals are not common. It is also clear from the table that men were the ones to be charged for applying smoke treatment, measurement blessings, Sami spells ("gand"), and for the use of rune drums. Although the material is quantitatively too scant to substantiate any clear conclusions on this count, men and women may have applied different means of sorcery. All single trials deal with witchcraft practised on an individual basis, meaning that the agent bends the elements of nature to his or her will using some inherent magic potential. None of the persons tried by the court in accusatory cases confess to having been to sabbaths; nor do they denounce others, so a domino effect is ruled out.

Chained Trials

The material comprises 4 major and 5 minor chains including a total of 74 accused persons. In the major chains, 62 women are tried. In the minor chains, 10 women and 2 men are involved. The inquisitorial principles are applied for 60 of the accused, 5 are tried by the accusatory system, and in 9 cases we do not know what system was applied, cf. Table 4.

Table 4: Trial category and applied procedural system

	Major chain	Minor chain	Single trial
Inquisitorial principles are applied	52	8	3
Accusatory trial where the accused the 1st person in a chain	1	4	0
Accusatory trial	0	0	27

The Accusatory System Applied in the First Trial of a Chain

One major and 4 minor chains are introduced by accusatory trials, cf. Chapter 5 for discussion of minor chains. The major 1662–1663 chain is introduced by the case against Dorothe Lauridzdatter (no. 87).

Chained Trials Conducted along the Lines of the Inquisitorial System

The material's major chains are distinguished by a marked predominance of women, by a scarcity of charges and witnesses, by confessions of pacts with the Devil, by denunciations, water ordeals and torture, by numerous instances of capital punishment, and by being compressed into a short time span. The focal point of these trials are pacts with the Devil. In the Finnmark material there are 49 confessions to such pacts, all of them submitted by women. Generally speaking, pacts with the Devil are not typical of Norwegian witchcraft trials, cf. Table 12 in the Appendix. In most cases the bailiff is the one to summon the woman to the court, and together with the district lord he conducts the examinations. In records of denunciation cases, introductions are usually quite similar. The trial against Maritte Andersdatter (no. 54), for instance, in Vardøhus in 1652, is one of a chain of trials against 14 women. It is introduced by the following passage:

Maritte Andersdatter, Oluff Rasmussen's woman here in Vardø, born on Røddø in Helgeland on a farm called Blocke, was then summoned to the court for witchcraft, having been denounced by Gundill Amundzdatter from Vadsø and by other executed persons from that same place, and on the basis of the information in their declarations she was asked whether she had anything to do with such activities, to which she willingly confessed (...) (TF3, fol. 102b).

The woman is summoned before the court because she has been denounced for "witchcraft". We find this inclusive, unspecific wording in no less than 50 trials in the Finnmark material.

In some trials, the woman has already unofficially confessed, "in the presence of decent people", before she is led before the court. Nevertheless, an official confession is needed before a sentence is passed. In the case of Sirri Christoffersdatter (no. 84), who is lead before the court in Vadsø in 1655, the record runs:

"since she herself has confessed and admitted what she now likewise confesses in the appropriate fashion (...) (TF5, fol. 12b).

Certain pieces of information are of greater interest to the legal authorities than others. The confession, which is the crux of court proceedings, should preferably include who taught her witchcraft and whether she has sealed a pact with the Devil. Moreover it is essential to make the woman confess about other women who have been to sabbaths with her or taken part in operations involving witchcraft.

While single trials are fairly evenly distributed throughout the period, denunciation cases are mainly confined to the chains of 1620–1621, 1652–1653, 1654–1655, and 1662–1663. There are relatively few denunciation trials in a minor chain, which typically starts with an accusatory trial, followed a couple of denunciation trials. Following the last major chain in 1662–1663, no further denunciation cases are found in the material.

Cases where the Applied Procedural System is not Known

In 28 cases, it is unclear what procedural system has been applied. The county accounts include the names of people burnt on the stake, as well as an inventory of their belongings. Public expenditures in connection with the burning are listed. The court records and district court records refer to previous trials, but information about court proceedings is deficient, and in some cases we know neither the name nor the gender of the burned persons, as in the case when they are referred to as “four wicked persons” (Lagt.prot. for Finnmark 1647–1668, 3,4). We have reason to believe that the four have been sentenced in a chain of trials, but the source material does not allow us to verify such assumptions. In the Vardøhus county accounts we find a reference to “some sorcerers and witches”, Vardø court (Lr.V. 1645–1646, bundle 6). In this case I have included two persons in my list, but there might of course have been others who were sentenced, as well.

4. MAJOR CHAINS

In my analysis of the sources, the emphasis will be on major chains which I shall discuss in detail, partly because records are extremely comprehensive and partly because these records highlight the female aspect.

The 1620–1621 Chain

Introduction

In the 1620–1621 chain, 12 women were implicated. Court records are intact for only three of the cases: Karren Edisdatter's (no. 6), Kirsten Søffrensdatter's (no. 7) and Lisebet Nielsdatter's (no. 17). The nine women (nos. 6–17) mentioned in the county accounts together with Kirsten belong to the same chain. The record of Kirsten's trial states that she has been denounced by seven witches.

At first, the women deny having any knowledge of sorcery. However, when put through the water ordeal, or threatened with it, they confess about a Devil who makes promises when they seal the pact, and who punishes them if they fail to use their witchcraft. The sentences are brief and devoid of theological elucidation. In Karen's case, it runs: "Under the given circumstances, and upon her own confession, she is sentenced to be burnt at the stake" (TF1, 12b).

Pacts with the Devil

Karren Edisdatter states that when the pact was sealed the Devil offered her a bunch of keys to use in his service, and then "you will achieve all you attempt in this world" (TF1, fol. 12a). She prefers a ribbon, though, and he gives it to her. From then on, "the Devil was always in her company, unless the parson was present" (TF1, fol. 12a).

Kirsten Søffrensdatter confesses she learned witchcraft at the age of 16 from an old woman in Helsingør ¹. Satan has visited her in the likeness of a dog and promised that "everything you touch will obey you in this world" (TF1, 27b). She must forswear the Lord and the baptismal covenant.

Lisebet Nielsdatter confesses "of her own will, without torture", having undergone the water ordeal, that she learned witchcraft from Find Karrj (= Karren Edisdatter). Satan has materialized in the shape of a grey stag, and she learns to draw milk from distant cattle. She has to forswear God and the baptismal covenant and "serve Satan with her body in this world" ² (TF1, 34b).

A common feature of the pacts in this chain is that the Devil offers return services, and harasses them if they do no evil. Karren says that he "stretched her limbs so that blood issued from her nose and her mouth" (TF1, 12b). This is an unusual element in the material, though it is known from demonological literature. The statement may be a reference to torture during imprisonment.

The Practice of Sorcery

Karren and Kirsten confess to having cast spells that lead to the loss of human lives. Kirsten has even taken part in conjuring a Christmas-Eve storm that cost many lives. Lisebet says she has been on a "distant islet" casting a spell on a ship so that several people died.

Karren's variety of sorcery is verbal: "As soon as she took offence and said, may the evil one have you, or when she invoked misfortune on someone, the evil one appeared at once" (TF1, 12b). Kirsten makes use of knots and wind-magic: "They each tied a knot on a string, and then they blew on them" (TF1, 28b).

Transmutation and Sabbaths

Kirsten and Lisebet take part in collective witchcraft. Kirsten says that one of the other women has been transformed into the “greyish shape of a cat”, and adds that she is no “admiral” for the rest ³⁾. Some of the women who have taken part in the same operation as Lisebet “were in the likeness of a goat and others in that of a cat” (TF1, 35a).

Both Kirsten and Lisebet confess having been to sabbaths. Together with the others, Kirsten has been to “parties”, and the others confess having attended sabbaths at Balduolden ⁴⁾ and Lyder Horn. Lisebet had been to a Christmas sabbath in 1619.

The 1652–1653 Chain

Introduction

From January 1652 to March 1653, 13 married women in Vadsø, Vardø, Ekkerøy, Andersby, Kiberg and Syltevik are sentenced to be burnt at the stake after having confessed about pacts with the Devil, cf. Figure 5 in the Appendix. A total of 14 women are implicated in this chain (nos. 54, 58–70). Four of them come from the West Coast or the counties of Nordland and Troms. Five are, or have been, menials. All of them are tried for witchcraft. The first of the trials is conducted along the lines of the inquisitorial system, and the other women are tried after being denounced. The intricate web of denunciations is clarified in Figure 3 in the Appendix. Eleven of the women endure lengthy imprisonment and are repeatedly brought before the court.

Torture

During interrogations, physical torture is applied. Birgitte Johannesdatter (no. 62) confesses after being subjected to the water ordeal, and when Bodill Danielsdatter (no. 59), who has confessed unofficially, refuses to repeat her confession, “an examination by torture is proscribed” (TF3, 65a). The next time she stands before the court, the records explain, “she willingly acknowledged her earlier confession” (TF3, 65b). Just how willing her acknowledgement will have been must be left to our imagination. The above wording in the court records suggests that the scribe’s entries are deliberately inaccurate, given the circumstances. Words such as “willingly” and “freely” employed in a setting involving confessions tend to arouse suspicions. Even if physical torture was not used, the women have at least been under a terrible emotional strain during their incarceration.

Substance of the Confessions

The first in the series is Gundill Amundsdatter, who “was taken to the fort for witchcraft (...) and was questioned as to what she knew of such arts and whence she learned them” (TF3, fol. 58a). She denounces Bodill Danielsdatter as her mentor, and all is set for a chain of trials. Gundill admits having cast a spell on

Jonh Jonnsønn’s ship from Bergen, which was shipwrecked and salvaged to Kiberg this past autumn, and she admitted that she as well as (...) were together casting spells on the same ship (TF3, 59ab).

Another instance of collective witchcraft is “the mighty storm that drove Captain Andreas Heef’s ship, from Bergen, off course near Bussesund where it was lost” (TF3, 106a). Yet a storm was caused by four of the women (nos. 58, 54, 65, 66) who “this past autumn conjured such a storm that the sea wrecked havoc here in Vardø. They kept the wind in a bag, and when they untied the knot, it started” (TF3, 103b). Birgitte Johannesdatter (no. 62) states that she and her mentor Kirstenn Niels Pedersen could “have what they wanted from whomsoever they wanted” (TF3, 11 Oab). A somewhat extraordinary confession comes from Anne Pedersdatter (no. 68) who:

...also admitted that she and the other person, together with someone whose name she did not know let a grid block Wardbjerg, but the fish was so plentiful (...) that some slipped through (TF3, 11 6b).

The aim of such operations is to unleash natural elements, to wreck people's livelihood, to inflict disease or to cause death amongst humans and livestock; all of which are misfortunes that have struck the local community in recent years.

Judging from the records' stereotype character, we may infer that whoever conducted the interrogation needed answers to certain questions before he was satisfied with a confession. In a number of records I have found numbers in the margin. These may have been references to special passages in the confession or references to a prepared list of questions⁵⁾.

The Pact

What enables a woman to exercise her witchcraft is, without exception, a pact with the Devil through which she gains access to forces she would not otherwise command. Sorcery is something she learns; each of the women names another as her mentor and the craft is transmitted through a "a brew she gave her to drink" (Gundill Amundsdatter, (no. 58), TF3, 59a) or, as in the case of Lisbet Poulsdatter (no. 67), a "piece of bread and butter" (TF3, 113b). Thus, there is no question of congenital faculties, but of a substance, preferably food or a beverage which, when taken in, imbues them with magical skills. We see here a striking parallel: On the one hand people partake in the holy communion to become children of the Lord; on the other a witches' repast makes a woman the Devil's child.

Two women have gone further afield to learn the craft: Maritte Andersdatter (no.54), who has found knowledge in "Sehennien Lehenn", and Giertrud Tronnsdatter (no. 70) who states she has learned sorcery in Gibostad in Tromsø County. Both have been employed as menials here and there along the coast.

Presumably, some of the women actually have practised a manifest rite, which they term "initiation" into the craft. They offer food and drink to other women who subsequently experience a physical reaction, possibly due to additives in the potion, possibly because they expect to experience a reaction.

Others are, by their own account, diffident about learning the art. Elli Sigurdsdatter (no. 60) declines "a piece of bread and butter" and "some milk to drink" from Oluff Jonnsen's woman Marrj in Eckerøe. Elli does eventually eat the bread, but refuses to drink the milk. Then Marrj tells her that "since you won't drink the milk then drink the Devil into you" (TF3, 108a). Afterwards, Elli goes to Marrj and "asked why she had done this to her and she answered, this is what you get because of Bastianß Marenn, who left me to go to you" (TF3, 108a).

The women confess about strange sensations after the intake of the witches' repast. Some scholars believe hallucinogenic herbs might have been used⁶⁾, not an unlikely conjecture in view of quotations such as "whereupon she immediately became so troubled and crazed that she didn't know where she was" (TF3, 102b, Maritte Andersdatter). Elli Sigurdsdatter felt "unwell and so strange that she could not do anything" (TF3, 108a), Baarne (no. 63) felt "so strange in her mind and had pains and imagined she flew into the air" (TF3, 67b). Such effects are mentioned only in a context of initiation, not in connection with sabbaths or the practice of witchcraft.

After the "unwell" phase and the "soaring" state, things really start happening. Before the woman, a figure appears who is termed "the evil one", "the apostle", "the evil man" or "her god". Unlike the confessions from 1620–1621 this apostle bears a name, and is thus not merely an abstract concept of evil. The apostle addresses the woman, asking her to serve him. Birgitte Christophersdatter (no. 61) sees him in "the shape of a man", whereas Elli Sigurdsdatter (no. 61) sees a "small boy with a broad-brimmed hat". The apostle is variously called Dominicus, Zocherias, Aßmudeo, Machome, Abedony, Belsebou, Ma:mo, Angel of Life, Long-Tail and Jermund. Though some of the names, such as Long Tail and Jermund, are of local origin, most are international with reference to for instance to the bible, such as Zocherias and Belsebou. In his book *The Devil in Legend and Literature*, Maximilian Rudwin lists a number of names for

Satan, some of which are relevant for the Finnmark material, such as Asmodeus ⁷⁾, Beelzebub, and Mammon. In most cases, however, the women will have heard these names from religious preachers, whereas names like Long-Tail, derive from visual fantasies.

Relations between Apostle and Woman

In her relations with the apostle, woman is subordinate. Elli Sigurdsdatter's apostle

bid her serve him, which she sometimes declined even though he pressed her hard to serve him in every way. Finally she asked him who he was and what his name was, but he told her to give herself to him (TF3, 109a).

Maritte Andersdatter is an exception, since she has two apostles and uses them in *her* service: "on the one (...) she rode, and the other she used for evil deeds" (TF3, fol. 102b, 103a).

Synnøve Oelsdatter (no. 65) has a "god" named Dominicus "who was often with her and whom she had promised to serve (...) and who could give her the shape of a spirit" (TF3, fol. 105a).

To practice their magic the women call for their apostle. Baarne Oelsdatter (no. 63) says:

When she wanted to go somewhere and do evil deeds, she was to go silently out alone to a strange place, then she took on a new likeness, and when she had called for her God she could speed away (TF3, fol. 67b).

In the concept of a Devil's pact reflected by these confessions, we see no implicit promise from Satan that the women will receive food or wealth by serving him. Satan simply turns up as an inevitable consequence of their taking in the witches' meal; he is not described as a lucrative option. True enough, Birgitte Johannesdatter (no. 62) claims that she and her mentor can take from others whatever they wish, "but nothing came of it, because their God Asmodeo immediately took it away from them again" (TF3, 100b). None of the women in this chain confess having been punished by their apostle.

Trying out the Craft

A common feature of the confessions is that as soon as they have learned witchcraft the women try it out on an animal, usually one from their own livestock. Bodill Danielsdatter (no. 59) tries it on "one of her own sheep, and immediately it burst", Giertrud Tronnsdatter (no. 70) tries it on "a little lamb to which she gave a drink and told it to burst, and shortly afterwards, it died" (TF3, 103a), and Baarne Oelsdatter (no. 69) "tried her craft first on a dog, giving it food in which she had poured something bad, and somewhat later it died" (TF3, fol. 114b).

It seems strange that the women should want to kill their own animals. In all probability, the demise of the animals have had natural causes which the women later construe as witchcraft.

Collective Operations and Sabbaths

When casting spells on ship, the women often take the shape of birds or, as in the case of Maritte Andersdatter (no. 54) when she cast a spell on Jonn Jonnsøn's ship, of "a great wave that overturned the ship and wrecked it" (TF3, fol. 103a). In her confession, Lisbet Poulsdatter (no. 67) states that she has taken on the likeness "of a swan, Gurj that of a goose, and Anne that of a falcon" (TF3, fol. 114a). Maritte Andersdatter narrates about the storm they made when they "kept the wind in a bag, then untied the knot and then it started" (TF3, 103b). Maritte explains how she puts a curse on people: She "gave it to her in a brew of beer, asking her God Machome to be in it (...) and he died straight away" (TF3, 103a).

In Baarne's confession we find a reference to sabbaths: "then they all dashed off, gathering on Wardbjerg, each in her own likeness" (TF3, fol. 167b). The social aspect of the sabbath is inconsequential since the objective is to carry out a collective operation.

Motives for Witchcraft

The women are eager to explain why they take part in collective operations. Their motives are related to

- a) conditions of life; livelihood, resources, income-relevant antagonism to the establishment;
- b) conflicts between individuals.

Income-related conflicts play a striking role. The merchant Lauridz Brass has provoked several of the women. Birgitte Christophersdatter (no. 61) reports she took part in casting an evil spell on Jonn Jonnsøns ship "because of Lauridz Brass, who was on that very ship, and who had refused to provide supplies and give credit that autumn before he sailed" (TF3, fol. 109a).

To explain her participation, Elli Sigurdsdatter says: "Her reason had been that Lauridz Brass had that year refused to supply and give credit to her brother in law, Anders Jonsen who lives in the country" (TF3, fol. 108b). Birgitte Johannesdatter (no. 62) states that her reason for casting the evil spell was that Bodill was furious at Lauridz Brass, and she had participated out of solidarity. Baarne, too, took part "because of Lauridz Brass". Synnøve Oelsdatter (no. 65) conjured the storm with the others "because of Anders Christenßen who now supplies and gives credit to her son" (TF3, fol. 105b), and she took part in casting an evil spell on Anders Hess's ship "because Mogenß Jacobsen who was first mate on that ship sold her an eighth of a kilo's worth of pepper for 40 pounds of fish" (TF3, 105a). In the last case we are dealing with a private motive, but it is clearly rooted in a division of power that allows one party to exploit the other. When the women seek to harm people who hold power, they are giving vent to the typical frustrations and resentment generated by such a power structure.

Brigitte Edisdatter's confessions (no. 66) contain references to the high prices for necessary commodities. She reports that the "first mate and the boatswain sold them dearly if they sold them" (TF3, fol. 106a). As for Gundill Amundsdatter (no. 58), she took part in casting the evil spell on Andreas Hess's ship "because they brought high prices to the country" (TF3, fol. 59b).

Maritte Andersdatter's (no. 54) confession refers to fodder for the animals. She reports having conjured a storm

because of the honourable junker's (the district lord) barn, which he bought from Anders Nilssen, and in which hay and fodder for the sheep were stacked, for which reason the peasants had not been allowed to cut as much hay as they needed this past summer (TF3, 106b).

The women's reprisals are on behalf of their husbands as much as for their own sakes. Gundill Amundsdatter has conjured disease on Oluff Nordmann "which she did because of a barren ewe which he took from her husband" (TF3, fol. 59b). Baarne Oelsdatter has cast an evil spell on the district lord's bailiff. When he went on legal business to Syltevik "she grew angry with him for the sake of her husband, whom he had quarrelled" (TF3, fol. 114b). Bodill Danielsdatter states as her reason for participating in the collective operation that she is angry with Lauridz Brass because "he was forever swearing and scolding her and her husband" (TF3, 66a).

The women are actually talking about circumstances that underlie some of the difficulties they face in life. The fact that authorities and wealthy persons should play such a prominent part in this picture must be seen against a backdrop of the supplier-system by which fishermen in Finnmark are kept in absolute dependence of the merchants and Bergen traders.

Please consult Table 8 in the Appendix for an outline of topics in the confessions in the major chains.

The Sentences

Figure 5 in the Appendix displays where the women lived prior to imprisonment as compared to where the sentences were pronounced. It is not surprising that no less than 10 sentences are pronounced at Vardøhus; the fort plays an important part in the trials. The district governor, Jørgen Friis, is present at all the trials and takes an active part in interrogations. Formally, the trials are conducted by the bailiff of East Finnmark, Hans Jensen Ørbech ⁸⁾, or the deputy bailiff in Vardø, Knud Jensen ⁹⁾. The typical sentence might have the following wording:

Since the said Brigette Ediðdatter upon questioning and according to her answers did willingly confess and admit that she the year before last, on 5 January, disavowed God and attached herself to the Devil to serve him and through his art and company undertake numerous evil actions against the Lord and people, she was sentenced, after her recorded confession, to a punishment of her body by fire and flames (TF3, 107a).

This expression of scholarly attitude to witchcraft is in complete accordance with demonological prescriptions. Moreover, the wording is highly reminiscent of the statute on witchcraft that was issued in Denmark-Norway in 1617, where “real” witches are defined as people who have “attached” themselves to the Devil ¹⁰⁾.

The formula in the sentence is pure and convincing documentation of the prevailing outlook among scholars, and it reflects their fear of witchcraft.

The phrase “upon questioning and according to her answers” is virtually farcical, since there is never any question of “answers” on the part of the women once their confessions have been obtained; the women’s fates are sealed at that point; they have no chance to sway the outcome of the trial.

The 1654–1655 Chain

Introduction

The chain involves 5 women (nos. 78, 79, 84, 85, 86), and lasts for more than a year, from February 1654 till March 1655. Confessions are very similar. Four death sentences are passed, two of them from Kiberg. Two of the sentences emphasize that the accused renounced God and turned to the Devil.

Women in this chain are menials who come from areas south of Finnmark ¹¹⁾, and three of the women confess to having learned witchcraft in areas south of Finnmark ¹²⁾. In the records of Sirj’s trial it is described how she came thus far north. “Shortly after, in the spring, she came to these parts on Christen Hansen’s ship, which sailed to the island, and found a post (...)” (TF5, fol. 12b).

The trade on Bergen and demographic ordinances ¹³⁾ explain to some extent why so many girls travel to the high North to find work. Alien women have no relatives in the community, so they are presumably more vulnerable than others when suspected of witchcraft.

Pacts and the Devil

In this chain, many women who “worked for a living together” confess having learned witchcraft from one another or from their mistresses.

There are a number of references to card games with the Devil; the loser must seal a pact with him, which may signify that the pact was not always advantageous from the woman’s point of view. Karen Jonsdatter (no. 78) describes how she rode with her step-mother to

Dovre mountain, where her mother called to the Devil for a long time before he consented to come; then they played cards with him, and her aforementioned mother won, but if she lost she had to promise to serve him (TF3, 133ab).

Sirri and Marj (nos. 84, 85) once met the evil one “in a peat bog” where they had gone to cut peat together”. Marj learned about witchcraft from Sirri by eating a piece of bread, whereupon Satan appears, “and straight away he presented a card so that they both had to play, and they lost, meaning they had to stay in his service” (TF5, 13b). The evil one bore the shape of a strange, black man with claws”.

The Profit Motive

Karen Jonsdatter is an enterprising lady who attracts considerable attention by admitting a long list of transgressions and by profiting from her witchcraft. She has shrewdly reached the conclusion that if sorcery can be used to command the forces of nature for evil purposes, it can also be of use to people, for a fee. The sources tell us that she has won quite a name for herself and a large clientele. She sells a brew “that was made of sea water, a magic potion, acid, water and pepper”, so that “they would not be lost at sea” (TF3, 134b). She also sells small magical objects that are supposed to calm the seas. She gives Peder Henningsen’s boat hand, Søffren Søffrensen,

a piece of mushroom kindling with a stone and a bit of thread attached to it, which he was to have with him at sea, so that when the seas grew rough he should throw it ahead of the prow, thrice repeating her name, and then the seas would calm down, and this he showed his master (TF3 134a).

The magic which Karen sells is attached to a very specific object: She specializes in threads. The boat hand Peder explains that “the said Karen had given them all a piece of linen thread and a woolen one, and a piece of fish to put on the table, for then they would catch plenty of fish” (TF3, 136a).

One day Karen and Marit (nos. 78, 79) are “in the mountains together, taking two garters with them; from the one they could get a strong brew, and from the other they got beer”. Karen also confesses to having cast an evil spell on a ship so that people were lost at sea. All in all, her exploits qualify her for the stake.

The remuneration Karen receives for her magical services indicate that her requirements are rudimentary, to say the least. “The farm hand gave her an old shirt which she was wearing, and Oluff’s wife gave her an old bonnet” (TF3, fol. 134b).

Oluff Oluffsen says he has “promised her a piece of stock-fish for the magic brew” (TF3, fol. 135b).

Motives for Casting Evil Spells

The only person in the material to state a sexually-related motive for casting an evil spell is Karen Jonsdatter. Together with Marit, she has cast an evil spell on a ship “because Sørenn Jennsen from Kiberg, who was on that very same ship, had slept with and had intercourse with her” (TF3, fol. 135a). However, she withdraws her statement at the following court hearing, affirming that she has lied about him. We frequently meet female dyads that carry out projects because one of the two has been offended. Marj, for instance, accompanies Sirri because the latter “came to her and asked her to cast an evil spell on her husband with her” (TF5, 13b).

All the women implicated in this chain confess having cast evil spells on ships with the result that people are lost at sea, and they all specify personal quarrels as their motives. Karen and her stepmother have cast evil spells on two boats off Andenes “because her mother was angry with some of them” (TF3, fol.133b). Together with Karen and Mette, Sirri has cast an evil spell on “Lauridz Oelsen’s boat, the reason for which she was with them, because Peter, who also was lost at sea, hadn’t wanted to play with her the other day in late Scabby-Karen’s hut, which was why she was angry” (TF5, fol. 13a).

Operations are not all successful. When the person on whom the evil spell is aimed is sustained by sufficient faith in the Lord, the magic will fail: “they were powerless, because the people there served the Lord so fervently” (TF3, 135a). Such beliefs clearly relate to

principles of religious doctrine after the reformation. Justice depends on a personal relationship with God and on faith. Only great faith can withstand the machinations of Satan.

Transmutation, Sabbaths and Pacts

All the women confess having been transformed into a seal, or a whale, a raven, seagull or cat. Karen, Marit and Sirri have attended sabbaths. Marit and Sirri

were to ride their dog to Heckell Mountain, but she could not bear heights in such weather because of her head, so she fell off at Daafur Mountain and stayed there till Sigrie returned (TF4, fol. 3b).

When sabbaths are referred to in Nordic material, certain mountains are often named. In my discussion of the 1620–1621 chain, I mentioned the mountain Lyder Horn in Bergen. In North Norway we have, apart from Domen near Vardø, the plateau mountain Tromma, on Kvaløy near Tromsø. To this very day, it is said that witches used to dance on Tromma, Domen and Bloksberg.

In her relations with the Devil, woman is always the subordinate party. Marit Rasmusdatter (no. 79) has sealed a pact with an apostle named Leur who invariably trails after her in the shape of a dog and orders her about. Sirri's apostle, Jacob, "bid her promise to serve him" (TF5, fol. 13a). The evil one comes to Sirri and Marj as they are working on the peat bog, and "asked them to enter into his service", insisting that the woman "give him her hand" (Marj, no. 85), after which he unfailingly trails after Marit to make sure she works evil deeds.

The Exercise of Witchcraft

In this chain we find a number of examples of how witchcraft is carried out in practice. I have already mentioned Karen Jonsdatter's varied use of magical threads and other tangible objects employed for her purposes. The record of Marit Rasmusdatter's trial quotes her magic formula: "her incantation was considered very powerful. It was *pretrum pratum Nestrum Nostrum*" (TF4, 15b). Marit says that

Sigrie showed her how to cast a spell on ocean-going boats. She had put two eggshells in a tub of water and asked her to go out and see if they had capsized or not, which they had not, they were merely lopsided. Soon after she went out herself and reported that it would soon happen. Once more she ordered her out and then the eggshells were overturned and full of water, so then the boat was lost (TF4, 3b).

This method of working magic is frequently referred to in later folk traditions and was presumably also used for acts of maleficia prior to the seventeenth century, just as knots were used to conjure gales.

The 1662–1663 Chain

The 1662–1663 chain involves 31 persons, all women; 6 of them are little girls, and one has not even turned one year. Seventeen of the women are married, 5 are still, or have been, menials and 2 are born south of Finnmark. A Sami woman introduces the chain, as was the case in 1620–1621. In this chain 3 of the women are said to be mentors for other women.

A common denominator with previous chains is that the implicated women live in various parts of Varanger, 7 of them on Ekkerøy, 9 in Vadsø, 6 in Vardø, 2 in Kiberg, 3 in Andersby, and 1 in Makkaur, cf. Figure 6 in the Appendix. Nevertheless, most of the trials are held in Vardøhus, 2 on Vadsø and 1 in Kiberg. Two persons are killed as a result of torture, and the death rate in the chain as a whole is 71 per cent.

All sentences convicting a person to be burnt at the stake are passed by one or more of the triumvir: the district governor Christopher Orning, the bailiff of East-Finnmark, Nils Sørensen Fiil, and the deputy bailiff, Abraham Lockert. That their outlook is fanatical should be evident when the

bailiff proposes that the children, too, should be burnt “so that they stray no further into the Devil’s snares, and so that other children should not be beguiled through them by the Devil’s machinations.” (TF5, fol. 257b).

As a rule, the sentences have a simpler wording than those of the 1652–1653 chain. A commonly recurring phrase is that they “indeed, due to their own committed evil deeds have forfeited their lives to fire and flames” (TF5, 235b).

Concepts from the intricate science of European demonology even percolate to the women’s own confessions. Such ideas include maternal child-sacrifice to the Devil, the Devil’s mark, and the idea that sexual intercourse with the Devil is implicit in the pact.

Anna Fridrichsdatter Rhodius

Anna Fridrichsdatter Rhodius and her husband Ambrosius Rhodius came from Akershus to Vardøhus as prisoners in February 1662 ¹⁴⁾. Anna Rhodius is not in the chain, having previously been accused and convicted for offences other than witchcraft. Nevertheless, she must be mentioned here, since she plays a prominent part in prison life and has considerable sway on the confessions made by the suspected women and children. What with their education and past social standing ¹⁵⁾, she and her husband must have distinguished themselves from other prisoners.

According to imprisoned women and children, Anna Rhodius was a most unpopular person amongst the prisoners. True enough, she is a prisoner herself, but she colludes with the wardens and prison authorities ¹⁶⁾. Judging from court records, she has evidently connived to make both women and children confess about pacts with the Devil.

Ragnhild Endresdatter (no. 104) confesses before the district court

that if she has said such a thing, it would have been said from fear, for the magister Ane Rodi has told her that if you fail to confess what you can, then the executioner will torment you first in the water and then on the rack and with red hot tongs (LF 1647–1668, fol. 155).

Children in the Material

There are 6 children amongst those accused of witchcraft. The only one whose age has been specified is Karen Iffuersdatter (no. 101) who is “about 8 years old”. Maren Oelsdatter (no. 98) confesses she has learned witchcraft from “her father’s sister, Maritte Michels (...) who, due to the evil deeds she has committed, has already been executed” (TF5, 245a). The other girls confess they have learned the craft from their mothers. Demonologists stress how difficult it is to get rid of the evil one, once he has found a foothold in a family (cf. Remy, ch. 3). The notion that children are sacrificed to the Devil by their mothers is found i.a. in Ingeborg Iffuersdatter’ trial (no. 97):

...since the evil spirit always was with them in the past, and they still could not get rid of him. No matter how diligently the pastors had admonished them, trying to convert them to the ways of our lord Jesus Christ, he [the Devil] will not let go of them, since they have been sacrificed to him by their mother (TF5, fol. 257b).

Worse, even, than sacrificing their children is the notion introduced by Anna Rhodius in a conversation with Ragnilde Endresdatter (no. 104). Their conversation is recounted in the district court records. Ragnilde (no. 104) must have been pregnant and given birth to a child in prison. First, Anna Rhodius will have threatened Ragnilde, evoking every conceivable form of torture. Ragnhild is said to have answered “then I must lie about myself so that my life will end when I give birth to my child. Then the answer she got from Ane M. Rodj was / your are carrying not a child but a Devil” (LF 1647–1668, fol. 155). This is the only instance where I have found any evidence in the material of the notion that the Devil has fathered a woman’s child. The fact that such an allegation stems from a woman who has frequented learned circles is not surprising.

The children’s confessions at Vardøhus are taken extremely seriously. Their denunciations lead to imprisonment and executions. Anna Rhodius manipulates the children

by tempting and threatening them. The children's cases are tried before the district court where they confess that Anna Rhodius has persuaded them to lie about their mothers and to confess about pacts with the Devil.

In other respects the children's confessions are quite fanciful. This is how Maren Oelsdatter (no. 98) describes a visit to hell:

...and says that it was quite far, and when she got there she came to a very large lake where a fire was burning, and the water was boiling and lots of people were in the water flat on their faces being boiled in the water. Whereupon the Devil blew fire out of an iron pipe he had with him, saying she would enjoy the same fate. The Devil also had a leg of ham which he dipped into the said lake so that it was cooked when he withdrew it. (TF5, fol. 245b).

Such notions of hell coincide with ideas that are common to this very day. Descriptions such as these may have seeped into popular beliefs through religious doctrine.

A touching expression of social distinctions is presented by the little eight-year-old, Karen Iffuersdatter (no. 101). I am tempted to believe she is describing what she has seen through a window when wealthy people are having a party.

The day after his honour and his young lady came to Vadsø (...) had been outside the door in the likeness of crows, trying to get into the house in order to harm their honourable highnesses, but since there were so many wondrous and beautiful people therein, dressed in white linen, their evil deeds were not accomplished (TF5, fol. 253a).

Torture

In this chain we find clear evidence that torture was applied. In the 1662–1663 chain, Dorette Pouelsdatter (no. 107) and Peder Krog's woman Ingeborg from Makkaur (no. 114) are tortured to death before sentence is passed. Both cases are brought before the district court where the common people are asked what has happened. It is then stated about Dorette that "on 20 March before midday, Dorte Poffuellsdatter was led to the fort, and the following morning it was rumoured that she had died" (LF 1647–1668, fol. 166). As for Peder Krog's Ingeborg "the answer was the same as for the other, without a trial, except that she was in the fort for a few weeks" (LF 1647–1668, fol. 167). Dorette is brought out and burnt together with other convicted witches, three or four days after her death. Ingeborg is "dragged out and laid down on the island near the gallows" ¹⁸⁾.

In a letter to the district governor, Fr. Skiort, signed by six people in Vardø 30 January, 1667 ¹⁹⁾, the public complains about various abuses. Apart from Dorette and Ingeborg, the letter mentions Sigrj Jonsdatter (no. 105) and Gunhild Oelsdatter (no. 106) who withdrew their confessions and were tortured to confess again. They have been executed without having admitted their guilt and without receiving the final sacrament. Sigrj cries out that she is innocent when they throw her into the flames, and Gunhild exclaims "Lord have mercy on my soul" as she expires. The fact that the common people should feel so strongly about these two can only indicate that the other women who do confess are regarded as guilty of witchcraft.

Listed instruments of torture include the rack, red-hot tongs and "sulphur on her breasts when she lay on the torture rack". Moreover the women are periodically strapped down during their incarceration. It is recorded that Ingeborg "wore the iron collar and arm chains" (LT 1647–1668, fol. 167). Margerette Jonsdatter (no. 96), too, "wore the prison on her body" (LT 1647–1668, fol. 161). The executioner is responsible for implementing torture, but Anna Rhodius also makes use of his methods to intimidate the women.

There is no evidence of torture in connection with the children. In records of their cases the importance of letting parsons admonish them is stressed.

Six water ordeals are recorded for this chain, all of them in cases where the women initially deny being guilty. Having undergone the water ordeal the women all confess.

Excerpt from the Finnmark district court protocol, 1647–1668, fol. 165, with remarks about Dorette Pouelsdatter's death. (For a translation of the excerpt please consult Notes, Ch. 4, note 17.)

The Devil's Mark

The concept of a Devil's mark is familiar to us from demonological manuals. The Devil marks those who seal a pact with him. In this chain, 11 persons confess having such marks; some of them even exhibit their marks in court. Magdalena Jacobsdatter confesses: "Finally, he bit her, leaving his mark on her right hand so that it swelled, which upon inspection appeared to be the case" (TF5, fol. 271b). Usually the evil one uses his claws to mark people. Presumably, such marks are birth marks or pigment spots. On the continent, the Devil's mark was ostensibly an insensitive spot which could be exposed in connection with trials if the woman failed to react to pin-pricks. I have found no instances of needle trials in the Finnmark material.

Anna Rhodius appears to have impressed upon the children that they bear a mark and that they have a god with his own name. The district court records state that she

took little Kirsten (...) upon her lap and asked her whether the Devil was not with her, to which Kirsten replied no. Then Ane Rodj asked Little Kirsten what was Sigrid's god's name, to which the child replied Isach, and then she again questioned little Kirsten, asking what mark was Sigrij bearing, and little Kirsten said she knew not where her mark was, but her own mark was on her right arm. Yes, said Ane Rodj to Sigrij, confess what you may, for then you will become a child of God, and my child as well. You shall be my little girl" (LF 1647–1668, fol. 163).

Sealing a Pact and Trying out the Craft

Three of the women have learned their witchcraft in southern parts, while the others have learned it in the community. Gunhild Oelsdatter (no. 106) has learned witchcraft from a woman from Ofoten now living in Senja. Dorothe Lauridsdatter (no. 87) has learnt from a beggar, a woman who was on a farm in the county of Senja, near Trondenes, on a farm called Kaaneboe" (TF5, fol. 228a). Ellen Gundersdatter (no. 102), who comes from the West Coast, has learnt witchcraft from her mistress in Gierde who "purchased it from a vagrant woman". Magic prayers, in particular, seem to have derived from vagrants.

This chain has left records that are particularly detailed with respect to pacts and the appearance of the Devil. The women are asked point blank questions. From the trial of Karen Andersdatter (no. 103) we read: "She was asked what shape he had " (TF5, fol. 256b). The record of Dorothe Lauridsdatter's trial (no. 87) refers to "their itemized confession" (TF5, 231a).

As in previous trials we find that the craft is usually transferred by way of a magic potion or food. Karen Andersdatter, however, tells us of a somewhat unusual initiation:

"Dorette Lauridsdatter (...) is said to have offered her, during her confinement after childbirth two years ago, a meal porridge prepared with milk and butter, and when she had consumed it she grew very unwell and remained so for a fortnight (...) it was a thin porridge and she saw something black in it, the size of a grain of barley, but what it was she knew not, and three weeks after she had risen from confinement, the wicked Satan came to her in the shape of a cat and examined her body from her feet and unto her very mouth where he counted her teeth, and then the wicked Satan insisted that she serve him for then she would have good fortune with her sheep and cattle" (TF5, fol. 256b).

Here the woman is the subordinate party in her relations with the evil one. Magdalena Jacobsdatter "promised him one year's servitude" (TF5, fol. 271b). The Devil makes promises to women in 11 trials; abundance of sheep, money, food or, less specifically, "you shall have what your heart desires" (TF5, 271a), whereupon the woman enters into the service of the evil one and

is branded with his mark or, as in the case of Karen Andersdatter, gives "him one of her fingers as a pledge" (TF5, fol. 526b).

The women usually report having seen the Devil when they sealed the pact; less often do they report seeing him at sabbaths. Generally, he initially appears in the likeness of an animal; a black dog, a small bird, a black cat, or a crow. After a few days, he will reappear as a man dressed in black.

As in the 1652–1653 chain, the names of the evil one may be either biblical or of a more local nature. Sammuell, Zacharias, Isach, and Jacob are all typical biblical names, whereas local names include Peder, Christen, Old-Erich, Erich, Christopher and Mortten. Some of the local names may refer to persons the women actually know in their local environment. Old-Erik is a popular name for Satan to this very day.

In some of the confessions the women state that they had to forswear the baptismal covenant when they sealed the pact (cf. Guazzo, p. 20). In 7 of the trials the Devil bids the woman "forswear her Lord in Heaven, together with her baptism and Christianity" (TF5, 276a). Thus the pact entails nullification of the Christian baptism — a negation of baptism, as it were²⁰). I have already pointed out the similarities between the witch repast and the Christian Holy Communion. Christian rites are used in the pact rites with the Devil, though the content is their antithesis.

In this chain, 15 women claim to have tried out their craft on one of their own animals. Ragnilde Endresdatter says that she "had tried her craft on one of her little lambs, giving it a little fish-broth saying as she did so, drink till you burst, which was what happened, it burst" (TF5, fol. 261b, 162a). Four women confess to having learned to draw milk from distant cattle.

Collective Witchcraft Operations and Motives for Participation

The principal collective operations confessed by the witches in 1662–1663 are driving away fish from the coast, evil spells cast on Jens Ottesen's and Marcus Erichsen's ships, and a conspiracy against the "district lord". In most cases when women confess having tried to harm ships by raising storms, they have done so while transformed into animals or birds.

Jens Ottensen's ship was destroyed by 11 women sitting out at sea on an overturned barrel. Some have had personal motives for this act, whereas Karen Oelsdatter (no. 112), for instance, is there more or less by coincidence "for the other witches would have her with them since they were wrathful against the captain" (TF5, 276b).

Eight women confess having caused "bad weather against Captain Marcus Erichsen and his ship (...) for the reason that (...) the said Barbra had not been paid in full for her trouble and for the rent" (TF5, 273b). In other words, the other women display solidarity to Barbra and join her because she feels she has been wronged. However, the women are unsuccessful with their spell upon the boat, "for God was stronger than Satan" (TF5, fol. 268a).

A lesser project undertaken by Margrette Jonsdatter (no. 96), Solve Nielsdatter (no. 100) and Preste Anders's Marie is an evil spell on the previous district governor, Jørgen Friis's, sleigh "which had been dispatched to collect wood along the Russian coast" (TF5, 260a). The motive for this evil spell is an ex-suitor who is on this sleigh. "Niels from the south had wooed her but not kept his word" (TF5, 260a). This project, too, failed, because the people "were in constant fear of God, but the sleigh was overturned" (TF5, 260a).

A collective operation which should be viewed in the light of the previous years' poor fishing, is the witches' undertaking to "drive the fish away from the coast, last Easter" (TF5, 260a). Seven of the women confess having participated in this operation which allegedly is carried out in the manner described by Margerette Jonsdatter (no. 96):

And then she denounced in detail before the court Søren Christensen's wife Giertrud, summoned from Krogen, stating that she had been there at that very time, albeit in her own real likeness, wearing clothes, to wit a black blouse, a red skirt and a red cap with gold lace, and a white scarf around her neck, and she sat on the water with seaweed in her hands and around her body. Margaret says she herself was in the shape of a seagull,

Gundle in that of a seal, Waarø Hans's wife Dorette in that of a porpoise, and Sigrij Jonsdatter was in the likeness of a sturgeon. All of them held stalks of seaweed in their hands, with which to drive the fish away from land and from all the islands by craft (TF5, 260ab).

From Giertrud's description a yearning for beauty in everyday-life is wafted to us. Giertrud has turned into a beautifully garbed queen on a throne surrounded by her subjects. Clothes such as the ones described were presumably out of reach for these women. Yet, they serve to paint a detailed picture of the ideal. The reason to participate in this operation was, for Karen Oelsdatter (no. 112) that "it annoyed them that some people should have and catch more fish than others" (TF5, 276a) and for Birgitte Ollufsdatter (no. 111) that "she was angry with her master, for he from whom everybody ordered their wares sold them dear, and kept the highest prices" (TF5, 275a).

The last witchcraft operation in this chain is an attempt to cast an evil spell on the district governor and his young lady "because he had treated them so harshly" (TF5, fol. 250b), as Solve put it.

The tale, which has been corroborated by 3 of the children, is indeed an odd one. Ellen Gundersdatter (no. 102) explains that the district governor was visiting in Vadsø, where he passed the night in the deputy bailiff's house. While he "was in the sitting room in bed with his beloved young lady", the witches would

blow on him in the name of the evil Satan. But since our good Lord Jesus and his holy angles were with and betwixt them, they were obstructed, so that their evil intention could not come to pass as they had planned (TF5, 255ab).

Other implicated persons claim they "had wanted to kill the district governor with pins" (Karen Iffuersdatter, TF5, fol. 252a). Maren Oelsdatter (no. 98) explains that "they were obstructed because the district governor was for ever reading, praying for God's mercy" (TF5, 246b). The same Maren claims that Solve and Sigrij and Margerette are to blame for the pain in the district governor's leg and arm. Solve has even brought with her "a piece of linen and some black woollen thread folded in it imbued with witchcraft (...) with which she is alleged to have wanted to cast an evil spell on the district governor" (TF5, fol. 147a). Hearing about this the district governor demands to have Solve cuffed and chained and bolted, with an iron collar, in prison (TF5, fol. 247a). Solve is said to have cast away the magic linen, but it is found and exhibited in court as evidence to prove the veracity of the little girl Maren's words.

Although we might be tempted to smile at this story, it seems clear that the district governor, who at that time still is referred to as the district lord by the women ²¹⁾, is so upset by what the women might be able to accomplish, that Solve is chained, and the children's evidence is heeded. The little girls have comprehended, as is evident from their confessions, that whoever believes in God is protected against evil spells.

What we might not consider a witchcraft operation, though it is a reunion with a common purpose, is a riotously gay party in Anders Pedersen's cellar on Christmas Eve itself. This event, probably the merriest ever experienced by these ladies, is referred to by several women in the chain. They drink beer from a ladle and "the wicked Satan was with them and had a candle in his behind with which to give them light" (TF5, 240b).

This must have been a very merry party, indeed. Ingeborg narrates that Solve and Sigrij argued

and the argument was such that they fought each other in the cellar, so that Sigrij knocked Solve to the ground, and from all that Solve had had to drink, she fell twice or thrice on the way back from whence the evil one had led them (TF5 fol. 244b).

Maybe the revelling was for real. On the other hand, maybe the women's description merely expresses their longing to let themselves go, like men, carousing and brawling all night.

The Process of Working Magic

The witchcraft as such is carried out by reciting magic formulas, particularly formulas containing the Devil's name, by offering magic brews containing visible grains to humans or animals, or by employing objects with magical powers, such as the woollen threads used by Solve. In order to be able, in future, to draw milk from a distant cow, a horn is once held under her belly.. Three of the trials have references to an "Envy Prayer": It is recited over the animal so that "others may do no harm and work no evil magic on it" (TF5, fol. 248a). Gurren from Eckerøe (no. 99) knows such a prayer. Sigrj Oelsdatter (no. 119) knows a "Blessing and Envy Prayer" which she has learnt "from a half-mad student (...) when he was travelling through the country" (TF5, fol. 238a). Ellen Gundersdatter (no. 102) knows two magical prayers which she learned on the West Coast. The one she recites over cows who refuse to yield milk, the other she uses to cast spells on sheep, cf. formulas 1 and 2 in the Appendix. One of the prayers is reminiscent of Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary.

In order to conjure storms the women each undo a knot, a method we recognize from Olaus Magnus, amongst others (cf. Ch. 7).

Denunciations and Threats

The denunciations in this chain are as ramified as those of the 1653–1654 chain, cf. fig. 4 in the Appendix. The women know that public denunciations may have serious repercussions. Yet, they denounce other women. Moreover, they bear witness against each other, and the most articulate women certainly take no pains to mute their statements. This is how Solve Nielsdatter (no. 100) bears witness against Sigrj Oelsdatter (no. 119): "You neither will nor can get out of this, for the wicked Satan is so deeply rooted in you that we cannot find the end of him with a ten yard pole" (TF5, fol. 241b).

We may well wonder why the women have so little mercy on each other. Is this just another illustration of the saying that "women are women's worst enemies"? Most probably prison conditions played an important part in forming the psychological mechanisms that are at play here. Twenty five of the women are imprisoned for various lengths of time; old and young women, and children too, are kept together, all of them terrified of being sentenced to the stake. We are tempted to interpret Solve's statement as an expression of spite: if she must inevitably end her life at the stake why should others go free? Old grudges might well be involved as well, and these could spawn accusations and denunciations, but the women's grim situation in the prison is definitely a cardinal factor. No wonder unattractive and primitive personality traits come to the fore in such a situation.

"The Witches' Hole" at Vardøhus is spoken of in the community. Margerette Jonsdatter explains why Sigrj wants her in on the witchcraft operation: "it was because of Olluf Jensen and his wife Dorette, whom he supplies and gives credit, because they had threatened Sigrij, saying they wanted to have her locked up in the Witches' Hole " (TF5, fol. 260b).

Pacts with the Devil and Sexual Services

Some of the women believe that a pact with the Devil includes sexual services. Magdalena Jacobsdatter (no. 109) is visited by a man who

wore black clothes, just as any other Christian man, and who requested her services, but she refused him then, since she had a husband so it could not be (TF5, fol. 271a).

Solve Nielsdatter (no. 100) confesses that "she from time to time went with the evil one up into the mountains and consorted with him in wicked ways" (TF5, fol. 249b).

As I see it, these statements do not imply that the women undertook sexual activities with strange men, but that notions of pacts with the Devil altered character with the passing of time.

Compared with material from the continent, the Finnmark material gives little substance to notions of sexual orgies at sabbaths.

A Confession of Incestuous relations

One confession that stands out from the others is that of Maren Hemmingdatter (no. 94). She has been denounced for witchcraft, but confesses having had incestuous relations with her two brothers on Ekkerøy 20 years earlier. She is sentenced to the stake because "she with two brothers of her own kin has sinfully carried on and, having thus offended the laws of man and the Lord, has deserved to die" (TF5, 236b).

The sentence is an interesting document of legal history. While witchcraft is conceived as an offence against God's law exclusively, incest is seen as an offence against both secular and God's law, according to contemporary legal terminology. Nevertheless, Maren must endure the same purging by fire as the witches. The sentence can hardly be understood otherwise than as a projection from witchcraft trials to other trials. No wonder this sentence is passed during a chain trial, when aberrations within legal procedures are rife.

Concerning Table 9, in the Appendix

On first reading, the confessions chronicled in the court records appear to form an uninterrupted string. Table 9 in the Appendix demonstrates that this is not the case, particularly not in the 1662–1663 chain. Only 11 of the 31 persons involved in the chain confess straight away that they have formed a pact with the Devil and maintain their confession later. In some cases, such as that of Karen Oelsdatter (no. 112), we have to scrutinize the records in order to discover that she initially refuses to confess. The wording runs as follows: "then, upon prolonged examination, she finally chose to confess truthfully" (TF5, fol. 275b).

In the 1662–1663 chain, 5 persons initially confess before the court that they have sealed a pact with Devil, only to retract their confessions later. This is the case for 3 of the children and Ragnilde Endresdatter and Magdalena Jacobsdatter. The common denominator for all five is that their cases are brought before the district court.

Eight persons initially deny and later confess that they have formed pacts with the Devil. All of these make their confessions having been subjected to the water ordeal, torture or "industrious examination".

Three persons confess matters other than Devil's pacts. Incest is punished as rigorously as witchcraft. Dorette Poulsdatter does not confess to witchcraft, but admits having received "momgot" (a potion). She is tortured to death. Sigrj Oelsdatter, who has learned an Envy Prayer is sentenced to banishment from the country.

It is evident that given a chance, the women retract their confessions, for instance if their cases are brought before the district court. This reinforces the impression that physical and psychological pressure plays an instrumental or even a decisive part in the extraction of a confession.

Summary: Every Chain has its Distinction

The chains each have their special distinctions which may, for instance, derive from the various interrogators who naturally emphasize different aspects, or from the fact that local attitudes to witchcraft change in the course of the time span covered by the material. I find that both of these factors are cardinal. Just as demonological approaches become more complex, provincial concepts evolve as time goes by.

By treating each chain separately I have been able to pinpoint particularities that are distinctive for each chain. The women from the 1652–53 chain are allegedly motivated to exercise witchcraft by a system of social differences and by their economic dependence of suppliers and the powers that be. In the case of the 1662–1663 chain, motives are of a more

private nature. Pacts with the Devil, the appearance of the Devil, practices within witchcraft, sabbaths, and transmutation — all vary slightly from chain to chain.

Table 8 in the Appendix is an outline over the various elements expressed in the four major chains. A number of women confess having attended collective operations related to local accidents at sea or to a decline in basic resources that leads to crop or yield failure.

5. MINOR CHAINS

Twelve people are indicted in five minor chains, each comprising 2–4 trials ¹⁾. Four of the minor chains take place between 1620 and 1640, and the last takes place in 1678–1679. Minor chains are introduced by an accusatory trial which is subsequently followed by one to three denunciation cases. A denunciation may well simmer without being attended to for a long time before anybody is imprisoned. Karen Mogensdatter (no. 28), for instance, denounces 6 women in 1626. Not until 1632 are three of them incarcerated (nos. 37, 39, 40) and brought before the court with reference to Karen's denunciation.

There are 8 death penalties in the minor chains.

People who are indicted in minor chains confess to the exercise of individual or collective witchcraft. Confessions in these chains yield no detailed descriptions of pacts with the devil, though the devil is mentioned on several occasions. Gundell Oelsdatter (no. 23) has seen the devil at a sabbath "a long fellow (...) in the likeness of a man" (TF1, fol. 94a). Syndewe Johannesdatter (no. 124) has seen a "handsomely garbed man on his hands and feet with extended claws" (TF11, fol. 67a). The evil one has since then helped her cast an evil spell on a cow. Karen Mogensdatter (no. 28) has an apostle whom she calls Marcus. Anders Nordmøring's woman Synewe confesses to a devil's pact of a sort: A "thing" came and spoke with her, and she "gave herself up to him" (TF2, fol. 118a). Find Thordsen (no. 21), too, confesses some kind of devil's pact. When asked who taught him the craft "he then replied, that the devil had taught him, and none other" (TF1, fol. 44a). All trials where the devil is mentioned end with a sentence of fire and flames, even if no mention has been made of pacts.

In 1621 Thorkildt Andersen's woman Ingrj sets off a chain that is to comprise three trials, by denouncing two Sami men, Rastj Rauelsen (no. 20) and Find Thordsen (no. 21). All three of them confess having cast evil spells that have cost human lives ²⁾, and all are sentenced to the stake.

A minor chain in 1625–1626 involves Gundell Oelsdatter (no. 23) and Ingeborg Jørgensdatter (no. 27). Gundell confesses that she has attended sabbaths and that she has seen "a man" with Ingeborg on Balduolden on Christmas Eve.

In 1632, Jetmund Siffuersen's woman Karj (no. 38) confesses that she can cast evil spells and also "bless by measuring limbs whomsoever is struck" ³⁾, so that he may fare better" (TF2, 117a). She explains why she has such a bold tongue: "her mother was the cause of it because she nursed her when she was no more than three nights old, and continued to do so afterwards" (TF2, fol. 116b). Thus from the lips of a seventeenth century woman from Finnmark we hear modern theories of infant psychology ⁴⁾. Anders Nordmøring's woman Synewe (no. 37) confesses in 1632 that she cast a spell that has cost lives. Moreover, she has travelled on a broomstick to Kiberg.

In the minor chain of 1678–1679, two women represent cases of individually exercised witchcraft. Syndewe Johannesdatter (no. 124) confesses she can cast evil spells on humans and animals, but she has also the power to heal. Kiersten Knudsdatter (no. 125) is accused of having exercised Sami "gand". Syndewe is sentenced to the stake, whereas Kiersten is acquitted by the district court.

The difference between confessions from major and minor chains is negligible in terms of substance matter, though suspects in minor chains usually only confess about spells that harm single persons, not about accidents that harm an entire community.

6. SINGLE TRIALS

The material comprises a total of 30 single trials, 3 of which have been conducted according to the inquisitorial system, and 27 of which are accusatorial. In this group we find no more than one confession to pacts with the Devil, cf. Table 12 in the Appendix.

In view of the principal issues I outlined by way of introduction — and they include “attitudes to sorcery” and “ethnicity” — I find a closer examination of the trials of two Sami men is called for, in particular with regard to the legal authorities’ attitudes to Sami magic. In the book *Witches, Midwives and Nurses. A history of Women Healers*, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English have suggested that the witches constitute a female health service. I shall consider their theory in the light of the source material from Finnmark.

Single Trials Conducted According to the Inquisitorial System

The Trial of Quive Baardsen in Hasvik, 1627

Quive Baardsen (no. 31) is summoned to court because he has sold too powerful a favourable wind, thereby causing the loss of a ship. He confesses that he in this manner brought death to five people. The bailiff wants to know “how they worked their magic” and he explains how the rune drum is made and what the nine rune stems painted with alder bark signify.

The first stem means their god, the other silver, the third means the moon and the others token all kinds animals that can bring luck as well as Lapp-magic with which to harm each other (TF2, 5a).

When questioned as to how often he has beaten the rune drum Quive Baardsen replies that he has attended a sabbath “where many sorcerers had gathered to beat the same drum so as to find out whose craft was the strongest”.

Although the Devil is not mentioned in the trial, it is stated in the sentence that the five persons are possessed with “those Devil’s crafts”. Quive Baardsen is sentenced to be burnt.

The Trial of Anders Poulson in Vadsø, 1692

Anders Poulson (no. 132) is summoned to court in 1692 “because he had possessed and used an instrument termed a rune drum, thereby exercising that most wicked and ungodly art of witchcraft” (TF21, fol. 1a).

The centenary magician from Torne Lappmark clarifies the meaning of a number of runic signs on the drum for the court. The drum which has been confiscated is exhibited in the court room. He explains that some of the figures are depicted in “the likeness of Man (...) God’s son Christ, the Lord Father, somebody resembling a man whom he calls Angel is supposedly the holy ghost” (TF21, fol. 3a). The terminology used by Anders Poulson is reminiscent of language used in Christian contexts: “God’s son (...) releases (...) from all sins”, the Lord Father “castigates for all sins and also gives succour and support” (TF21, fol. 3a). Moreover, a “woman likeness “ is to be found on the drum, “Mary, mother of God, God’s woman, who, when she is worshipped helps especially women in labour” (TF21, fol. 3b.)

Some of the symbols can be related to Sami lifestyles. Wild reindeer give us “luck when we shoot wild reindeer” (TF21, fol. 2b), and when we worship God, the symbol of the sun will “yield good sunshine, gentle air and fair weather, especially when the deer are calving and when grain and fodder grows” (TF21, fol. 2b). In addition, symbols of weather and thunder have the power to harm ships and small boats or to improve the weather.

Yet a female figure “is said to be she who is betrothed to the Devil”. There are two symbols representing the Devil on the drum, the one meaning disease, the other “he who is now abroad and rules in Hell and glides through the worlds” (TF21, fol. 4a). The flames of

Hell, a hellish grave, and a hellish cauldron are all depicted on the rune drum, and the symbols are reproduced in the court rolls ¹⁾.

This blend of interpretations of the symbols on the rune drum, derivative both of nature-worship and Christianity must, in my opinion, be understood in the light of Anders Poulson's precarious situation. He finds himself obliged to echo elements of Christian doctrine ²⁾.

According to court records, he claims "that since he senses antagonism from the authorities towards his use of the rune drum, he is now willing to forsake it, and to believe in God in the Heavens, like other people" (TF21, 6a). After the Reformation, the use of images for the purpose of worship was prohibited.

Anders Poulsen affirms he has knowledge of sorcery and can punish thieves.

According to the provisional sentence that is passed, he is to be kept in custody pending a final decision from Copenhagen ³⁾. The day after his trial, he is murdered with an axe.

Comparison of Quive Baardsen's and Anders Poulson's Trials

A comparison of these trials is interesting, both because of their different substance matter and because they demonstrate that the authorities have altered their position to witchcraft in the course of the time span separating them.

The interrogations in court go a long way to explain why the trials are so unlike each other. In the case of Quive Baardsen, the court primarily emphasizes the black magic he wields when selling favourable winds; how he uses the drum is merely subsidiary. In Anders Poulsen's case, use of the drum is the principal object of the court's attention. While the trial of Quive Baardsen stresses the effects of the wind he has sold — the harm — the fact that five people were lost at sea, the trial of Anders Poulsen concentrates to a great extent on the act, as such, of using runes, since he has not put his craft to harmful use.

By 1692 the legal authorities' approach to sorcery has grown less emotional than it was in 1627. Whereas magic in the 1620s was considered so dangerous that it had to be exterminated, it is, albeit still ungodly in 1692, not quite as ominous. The authorities' fear no longer dislocates all reason. In a case where a death sentence at the stake would be virtually inevitable in 1620, there is room for reflection as to the actual effects of sorcery in 1693.

In my opinion, the fact that Anders Poulson is remanded in custody indicates that as the witch-craze tapers off, Sami magic is still considered inexplicable. Towards the end of the seventeenth century non-Sami people are still wary of Sami religious practice, and before long, ambitious missionary programmes amongst the Samis are to be implemented by the power society.

Olluff Nielsen's Wife: Lisbett, a Wise Woman

Old-Lisbett, Olluff Nielsen's wife (no. 41) is the only person in the material who might be called a "wise woman". She has been to court before, in connection with a quarrel, when she and Kaa Anne (no. 34) accused each other of casting evil spells. Now she is summoned together with three other women (nos. 37, 39, 40) who have been denounced previously. The district lord, Hans Cunningham, sends for Lisbett who is asked whether she knows anything about "blessings, evocations or measurement" (TF2, 129a), which she denies. She does, however, admit that she is familiar with bloodletting procedures and other tricks of medicine. She learnt them from an itinerant barber by the name of Master Gregorius whom she worked for in Woge, in the county of Salten, "she couldn't help it" (TF2, 128ab). The court record ends here, indicating that the case might not have been concluded.

Judging from this record, being a wise-woman is not illegal as such, but "blessings and measurement" must be punished, cf. the 1617 statutes: "About witches and their accomplices" (Jacobsen 1966:172-173).

The Material in the Light of Theories Proposed by Ehrenreich and English

In the Finnmark material as a whole there are only a very few health workers. We hear of women who look after women in confinement, but they are only mentioned in the court records if they have offered magic brews to their patients.

The material gives no substance to the theory proposed by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English who claim that the aim of the witchcraft trials was to purge society of a set of wise women and women health workers. A scattered female health service probably existed in Finnmark in the seventeenth century, and the women involved undoubtedly played an important role in their communities. However, my analysis indicates that these women were not generally caught up in the web of suspicions. The demarcation line between popular and scholarly medicine was not conspicuous during the trial period, if for no other reason, because no formal health service had as yet been developed. If women were considered dangerous it was in view of their affiliations with the Devil, not because they cooked herbs and tended the ill.

The Finnmark chains are confined to limited periods and usually affect groups of women. Health services, that is the ministrations offered by wise women, are not organized group-wise, but carried out by individuals in the community. The individuals found in the material are basically accused of casting evil spells not of laying blessings, cf. Table 5 in the Appendix.

The magic potions referred to in the records may contain herbs. However, they are exclusively used for sealing pacts with the Devil, in a magic not a therapeutic context. The material yields no evidence linking wise women who practice herbal medicine with witch mentors who serve magic potions.

Single Trials Conducted According to the Accusatorial System

Introduction

The 27 single trials in the material are fairly evenly distributed throughout the period from 1620 on, except in the 1640s and 1660s⁴⁾. Please consult Table 7 in the Appendix for a chronological list of all single trials conducted according to the accusatorial system, together with the places where sentences were passed.

Records from single trials conducted according to the accusatorial system differ in several ways from records of chained trials. As a rule, single trials and trial records are shorter, and less attention is paid to biographical data than is the case in chained trials. Only a few of the accused are imprisoned for any length of time. We also find greater geographical scope amongst single trials than for instance within the last major chain in 1662–1663, cf. Table 7 in the Appendix. The district lord attends five of the trials, all at Vardøhus or Vadsø, but in small fishing villages trials are presided over by the bailiff or deputy bailiff. In a number of trials in small communities, the deputy bailiff presides over the court alone. Little use is made of torture in single trials.

The Sentences

The sentences indicate that single cases conducted according to the accusatorial system are considered fairly innocuous, as compared to chained trials conducted according to the inquisitorial system. Three women are sentenced to death at the stake, and an additional death sentence by fire is passed in an accusatorial trial conducted according to the inquisitorial system (no. 31) Nine men are fined, one woman is banished from the country, one man is sentenced to the pillory as well as to banishment from the country. Six women are acquitted, and the outcome of the rest of the trials is unknown, cf. Table 13 in the Appendix.

One of the women sentenced to death at the stake in an accusatorial trial is Marrite Edisdatter (no. 30) who is convicted of incest in 1626 and has been tried on two previous occasions ⁵⁾. In this case she is charged of casting an evil spell that has caused illness. A woman whom Marrite has sworn would suffer claims "having had internal pains, and many illnesses (TF1, fol. 117a). Marrite denies having used magic, but having undergone the water ordeal she confesses that she "consorted with her own brother, Oluff Edißen, when they were alone together at home in his youth" (TF1, 117b). This case illustrates that with the water ordeal confessions are extracted that would otherwise never surface. Marrite is sentenced to the stake ⁶⁾.

Kirsten Oelsdatter (no. 83) who is in the 1654–1655 chain is also sentenced to the stake. She is accused by the notary public in Vardø, Anders Christensen, of having directed an evil spell at a boat "so that two of the deck hands and supplier are lost" (TF5, 11a). Kirsten confesses that she learnt witchcraft from a woman on Senja and that she has directed evil spells at several boats in Nordland, but she does not confess having sealed any pact with the Devil. However, several men bear witness against her, also on behalf of their wives: "Lauridz Oelsenn and Peder Christensen on behalf of their wives, Aane Brigitte and Kirsten Christensdatter, since they are feeble " (TF5, 12a).

The third woman to be sentenced to the stake in an accusatorial single trial is Maritte Michels (no. 89).

Accusatorial Trials of Men Resulting in Fines

Nine men are fined, cf. Table 13 in the Appendix.

Three men (nos. 24, 25, 26) are accused of using a "smoke and measurement" treatment in 1625. This treatment has allegedly been applied to Jacob Pedersen who tells the story: "Oluff Mogens lit a piece of mushroom kindle and slipped it under his shirt so that he felt better for a little while, and Torben Oelßen measured him" (TF1, fol. 96b, 97a). Those who have practised the craft, as well as Jacob, "who has consented to the use of it, are sentenced to pay a fine, pursuant to his Royal Majesty's published decree thereupon" (TF1 97a).

In 1650, the district court at Loppa imposes a fine on Peder Swendsøn (no. 57) because he has been accessory to the practice of witchcraft. He has been ill and is convicted "because he in this manner sought to have his disease cured by illegal remedies" (LT 1647-1669, fol. 41).

In 1654 Oluff Oluffsen, his wife Inger, and the boy Peder (nos. 80, 81, 82) are all accused of having accepted a magic potion from Karen Jonsdatter (no. 78). They acknowledge having accepted the drink, but try to mitigate their case by claiming "they did not know there was anything wicked about it, since they did not know she was a witch, or that she at the time was reputed for such things" (TF3, fol. 137b). The court sentences them to "confess publicly and to pay fines to his Royal Majesty to the utmost of their ability" (TF3, fol. 137b). So this magic potion is considered less of a menace than the potion administered to the women when they enter into a pact with the Devil.

A fine is imposed on the Finn Peder Gundersen (no. 127) in a case where Karen Clemmitzdatter (no. 126) is accused of having directed an evil spell at their mutual master, Peder Gabrielsen. While Karen is acquitted, Peter Gundersen is sentenced to pay a certain amount of silver "which his master, the said Peder Gabrielsen promised to pay for him" (FL 1671-1683, fol. 85b). The master has played a part in the accusation of Karen so he takes upon himself to pay the fine.

Some of the Accused are Sentenced to "Corporal Punishment"

Three men in the material are given corporal punishments. One of them is Mogens Zarasen in Loppa, who is accused in 1672 by the pastor Torben Reiarsen because he has "held God's word in contempt and desisted from the Sacrament at the Altar" (TF8, 79a). Subsidiarily, he is "ascribed matters of sorcery" (TF8, fol. 79a). He is said to have directed Sami magic ("gand")

against a woman for not giving him food, and to have cast a spell on a man who wouldn't let him buy his boat. Zarasen is sentenced to the pillory and to banishment from the country.

In 1672, Nils Laas ⁷⁾ is sentenced to corporal punishment by the Hammerfest court. He is also to pay his servant girl, Maritte Gundersdatter, a year's wages ⁸⁾ for having accused her of bewitching his animals. She has denied all culpability and is acquitted, whereas he himself is sentenced. At this late stage of the witchcraft trial period, in 1672, the accusing party must undergo examination, and if the accused is acquitted he risks being punished.

Gunder Tommersen (no. 128) is accused by Hammerfest Court in 1685 of being able to lift curses, in other words of healing those who have become ill due to sorcery. His case is brought before the district court ⁹⁾, but we do not know the final outcome. He is temporarily sentenced to the "pillory and nine lashes, two of each" (TF16, 31a).

A New Kind of Punishment: To Give "Meal to the Homeless"

The punishment imposed on Marite Nielsdatter (no. 131) in Vadsø in 1690 stands out in the material. She is sentenced to give flour to the poor in the parish. This sentence indicates not only that witchcraft has ceased to be regarded as a menace, but that the approach of legal authorities to social problems has altered. Hitherto, fines have been payable to the king. The charge against Marite involves *kogleri*, meaning she is able to "repeat"; by means of a thread and a book, she can find out who has stolen something. She is also accused of casting spells leading to illness. The deputy bailiff in Vadsø, Olle Andersen, has summoned her. The judges are evidently at a loss as to what sentence to pass for "these tricks and ruses, taking the names of deceased saints in vain and swearing by them" (TF19, fol. 187b). However, since her mischief is an "abomination for others, although there really is no mention of it in the Law, it cannot be dismissed and must be punished" (TF19, fol. 187b).

Not only must she pay a flour fine, she is to be taken charge of by pastors in confession. Marite gets away with a slight punishment because the effects of her tricks are questioned. Bearing in mind the offences for which women were burnt only a few decades previously, this is indeed a striking change of course in the legal authorities' approach to witchcraft.

Acquittals and Suspensions

Particularly after 1670, we find a number of acquittals in single trials, and some trials are suspended.

The Sami woman Maritte Gundersdatter (no. 122) is acquitted in 1672 "since he cannot prove it according to the law, and since she for her part determinedly denies and dismisses it, under oath" (TF8, 71b).

In 1679, Kirsten Knutsdatter (no. 125) is accused of having cast Sami spells ("gand") on several persons. She denies all culpability. Interrogation by torture and a sentence to the stake are proposed, but her case is deferred to the district court.

In 1688, Karen Nilsdatter (no. 129) is charged of having sworn that Lauridz Brass's helper would suffer. Several people bear witness against her. According to the sentence, 12 people must answer for her until such time when "greater clarification can be obtained" (TF17, 116a) about her case.

In Vadsø in 1689, Birgitte Erichsdatter (no. 130) is accused of having directed a spell at the daughter of the deputy bailiff Olle Andersen. She denies all culpability, claiming that nobody can prove anything. Her case is suspended "since the public's principle fisheries are now under way, so that the court cannot be detained any further" (TF19 fol. 5a). These examples demonstrate a level-headed attitude to witchcraft towards the end of the trial period.

Single trials deal with blessing or being accessory to blessing, with magic tricks ("kogleri"), and with threats. This kind of witchcraft does no harm to people, animals or boats.

Please also consult the Tables 5 and 6 in the Appendix for an outline of the substance of accusations and confessions in single trials.

Defamation Trials

Reversed or “opposed trials” have already been discussed in chapter 3. The material includes 6 such cases (nos. 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 26).

In these cases, which all date to the period 1626–1631, the defamed person is invariably a woman. In three instances the woman’s husband is the one who files a case against the slandering party. In the other cases the woman herself attends court sessions. Thomis Willumsen’s wife, Giertrud (no. 36), “narrated that some time ago, Peder slandered her, calling her a Devil’s witch in the late Hans’ cottage” (TF2, 103a). In some instances, two women call each other witches. This applies to Kaa-Anne (no. 34) and Olluff Nielsen’s wife, Lisbett (no. 41). The women have clearly understood the peril involved in having a reputation for witchcraft, and wield their accusations reciprocally when implicated in rows between neighbours.

Quarrels which under normal conditions would never lead to more than a little nasty gossip, seem to spiral endlessly. Calling a person a witch invokes new ideas according to which the Devil has secret accomplices. People who have lived and acted in their community, for good or for worse, on the basis of old ideas about magical forces, get caught in a mesh of far more subtle dimensions. They become pawns in a game where two powerful forces are assumed to be battling for world sovereignty.

7. ETHNICITY

Historians' Attitude to Samis and Sorcery in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

In this chapter I shall present various ideas about Samis and sorcery that we find in historians' texts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On the basis of information available to us from the trials, I shall also discuss the role played by the Samis as an ethnic entity in the Finnmark trials.

In his *Finnmarkens amt*, Part I, Amund Helland lists a number of historical and topographical texts about Finnmark that deal with Sami particularities. I shall briefly present the views expressed by three of the authors, the historians Olaus Magnus, Peder Claussøn Friis and Johan Schefferus.

Olaus Magnus

Olaus Magnus's book *Historia des gentibus septentrionalibus* was published in Rome in 1555 ¹⁾. Volume 111, Ch. 16 deals with "Masters of witchcraft and sorcery amongst the Finns". He writes:

It should particularly be noted that during heathen times, these inhabitants of the far North, the natives of Finland and Lapland, were so well versed in the art of magic, that the Persian Zoroaster himself could have taught them the accursed craft (O.M. 1982:159).

The Samis sold favourable winds to traders by means of three charmed knots on a string "and woe be those who contemptuously doubted the power of the knots" (O.M. 1982:159).

Sorcery is incompatible with Christianity. Whoever is guilty of aberrations of witchcraft, be it a woman or a man, must be punished on the stake (O.M. 1982:164). For Olaus Magnus, Sami sorcery is associated with men. In the chapter "On women with knowledge of sorcery", he deals with the power of women who use herbs. However, such women are not necessarily associated with Finnmark. Here the Witch's companion is highlighted: "For it is indeed foolish to renounce the creator of life in order to serve the author of death" (O.M. 1982:158).

Peder Claussøn Friis

In his book *Norriges Beskriffuelse* [A description of Norway] which was published in 1632 ²⁾, Peder Claussøn Friis explains that ocean Finns and Mountain Finns "are also called Gann-Finns because of the sorcery they use, which they call 'gann'" (Friis 1881:399).

In the chapter "On the Finns' beliefs and religion", Friis mentions 'gan'-flies, favourable winds, the ability to leave one's body and take on different likenesses, carved images in the forests and wind magic. The author has no doubts as to the Samis' magic powers which he attributes to evil forces. By way of conclusion, he writes vehemently: "It pains me to write in such a manner about these evil people, and it is far from my intention to judge anyone except Satan who is a master of a thousand tricks and who has great power over these people of weak faith".

He stresses that the craft is hereditary "so that some clans command fiercer and more powerful sorcery than others, and the Lapp-Finns are much fiercer in this respect than the ocean-Finns" (Friis 1881:400). Friis believes, as will Schefferus, that in order to cast an evil spell, the sorcerer must know the name of the victim's father ³⁾.

Johan Schefferus

Johan Schefferus's book *Lapponia* was published in 1673, in Frankfurt am Main ⁴⁾. According to Schefferus, the Devil is at large in Lapland. Sami ideas are described as magical and diabolic.

Schefferus describes his book *Lapponia* as an ethnographic dissertation that will dislodge all lies that have been told about Lapland by other historians. He views Sami religion as an antithesis to Christianity and regrets that Christianity has such a limited following in Lapland, maybe due to the enormous distances, or possibly because Samis tend to be superstitious and respect their forebears. Magic skills are inherited, and even small children master them with the help of the Devil.

Schefferus describes the symbols on rune drums and speaks of wind-magic and 'gand' (Sami magic). He refers to Petrus Claudius who maintains that 'gand' resembles a fly, but is actually a demon. The Norwegian Finns master this craft; they keep their flies in leather pouches, sending a few of them abroad every day to do the Devil's work. He also describes a round ball made of hair or moss which is used for evil spells⁵⁾. Schefferus gives us a detailed account about sacred Sami mountains and lakes.

Summary

The books mentioned above, in addition to a number of comparable books, demonstrate that the Samis were described as exotic infidels for the reading public of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the world seemed to be rapidly expanding beyond recognition. During the seventeenth century a growing interest in so-called primitive societies could be noted. Travelogues from the northern hemisphere gave rise to fanciful conjectures about the people living there, and in this sense the Samis were a novelty, as were "wild" peoples in other parts of the world.

A common feature shared by the authors I have mentioned is the notion linking Sami magic with the Devil. In the article "Heksetro og hekseprossesser i Europa" in *Om verden full av djevlar var ...* edited by Inge Lønning, Nils E. Bloch-Hoell writes: "The fact that Finnmark, the most sparsely populated county, stands out in this respect can be explained by the common view that the Samis, or the Finns as they often were called, were highly skilled in sorcery" (Lønning (ed.) 1979:102). I shall look for a possible correlation in the material between trial intensity and the Samis' alleged magical skills.

Sami Ethnicity Reflected in Names

Only rarely can Sami ethnicity be detected from names found in seventeenth century sources. What allows us to identify the Samis in the material is the epithet "find" or "findekone" (Finn-woman) added to the name. Most probably, no source study on public documents will bring to light the original Sami names, since the names presumably were adapted to Norwegian or Danish.

Instances of references to Samis in source material from the witchcraft trials in Finnmark are "Peder Gundersen find", "Find-Karrj" and "Ragnild findekone". Only those whose ethnic Sami identity can be determined in the source material are included in my category of Samis, so there may be more, but they can not at present be identified with any certainty. In several trials of Samis, such as Kari Edisdatter's and Ragnild Clemmidsdatter's, it is not directly stated in the court record that they are Samis. Information about their ethnicity is derived from references to them in other records; Karren Edisdatter, for instance, is called Find-Karri by her neighbours.

Sami Men in the Material

Introduction

Sixteen men are indicted for witchcraft in Finnmark, nine of which, 56 per cent, are certainly Sami. It is interesting that only 7 per cent of the women are unquestionably Sami. Thus the

material indicates that being a Sami man involves a greater risk of being charged with sorcery than being a Sami woman. This may be because the “noiades” traditionally were men.

One of the Sami men in the material stands trial in Vardø, and one in Vadsø. The rest stand trial in various minor courts.

This group reflects changes in criminal procedures during the period. During early stages of the period, men are subjected to the water ordeal (nos. 20, 21) and sentenced to the severest of punishments, whereas offences of sorcery are judged with greater leniency further on in the period.

Four Sami men are sentenced to death, all of them before 1630, the others are fined, banished from the country, sentenced to the pillory or have their cases brought before the district court.

A wider range of penal instruments are implemented for men than for women. About half of the men are fined, for instance, whereas none of the women are given such sentences.

Characteristics of Trials of Sami Men

Typical accusations against Sami men are that they sell favourable winds, wield Sami magic, and use the rune drum. The craft of writing runes is referred to in Quive Baardsen's (no. 31) and Anders Poulsen's (no. 132) trials, as discussed above in this chapter⁶⁾. “Gand”, the use of Sami magic, is mentioned in four trials (nos. 31, 123, 128, 127). In Gunder Tommersen's trial (no. 128) in 1685, “gand” is vividly described as an object that can be seen. Peder Gundersen “find” (no. 127), who is charged in 1680, produces “gand” by reciting formulas over two spoons of liquor. He describes the spell (“gand”) cast by Kristen Knudsdatter (no. 125) as having “the size of a mouse and a head on both ends, a trick learnt from the Eastern Lapps” (LF 1671–83, fol. 74b).

Whoever commands the craft of making “gand” may exercise both white and black magic, and may alter the progress of illness. However, this is not the case when elements of nature are involved. If a sorcerer has sold too favourable a wind, he cannot check a gale even when he sees he has unleashed stronger elements than he had intended. The concept of “favourable winds” is mainly referred to in the early trials.

Sami men exercise their sorcery on an individual basis and confess neither to having entered into pacts with the Devil nor to attending sabbaths. Their trials do not evolve into chains.

Sami Men Playing Minor Roles in Trials

Apart from Sami men who actually are indicted, there are some who are implicated in other people's trials.

During the trial of Thorkildt Andersen's wife Ingrj (no. 19) in 1621, they asked “a Finn by the name of Oluff Oelsen from Leritzfjord whether he still held what he had maintained about Thorkildt Andersen's wife Ingrj the preceding winter” (TF1, fol. 42a).

Troublesome mothers-in-law are no modern invention. Knud Nielsen's wife in Øyfjord is charged for having “purchased the services of a Finn to cast a spell on her mother-in-law, though nothing happened” (LrV 1624–1625).

In Johanne Torchildsdatter's trial (no. 56) a Finn is said to exercise blessings. Peder Swensøn (no. 57) has apparently accused Johanne of being an accessory in matters of witchcraft, so he seeks out a Finn from Uldøy by the name of Olluff Kierrildsøn in order to undo the witchcraft.

Summary

Sami men do occur in the material, if only to a limited extent. A number of local Samis exercise blessings and cast spells on a more or less professional basis, for a fee. Men's confessions differ widely from those of women. Unrealistic elements, such as transmutations and sabbaths are virtually absent from men's confessions. When men are tried the trials take no unexpected turns,

whereas both indictments and confessions tends to undergo changes during women's trials. Sami men who exercise sorcery play minor parts in three trials.

Sami Women in the Material

Introduction

Of the 8 Sami women in the material, 3 are sentenced to death, 4 are acquitted and the fate of one is unknown ⁷⁾. Two of the death sentences were passed early on in the trial period, in 1620–1621, and the third was passed during the major chain in 1662–1663. Of the women who were sentenced to death, there were two confessions of pacts with the Devil. Three of the acquittals apply to cases which were brought before the district court. Most charges against Sami women involve evil spells that have led to illness or death. Two of the Sami women are subjected to the water ordeal, but no other torture has been mentioned in connection with this group.

Sami Women in the Chains

Three Sami women are found in the chains; Karen Edisdatter (no. 6) who starts the 1620–1621 chain, Ragnild Clemmidsdatter (no. 91) who is denounced in the 1662–1663 chain, and Finde-Berette (no. 73) who is denounced in 1653.

Ragnild Clemmidsdatter's role is that of a mentor to the other women. Like the other mentors, she forms a link between the woman who "learns" witchcraft and the Devil. As for her own initiation, Ragnild claims having been so young that she cannot remember who taught her the craft.

Some of the Sami women hold a key position amongst the women in locale witchcraft circles. This applies to Karren Edisdatter (no. 6), Finne-Ellen (no. 120), Ragnild Clemmidsdatter (no. 91) and Karen Clemmidsdatter (no. 126). Several of the accused call them mentors and they are denounced on more than one occasion.

In the district rolls we find one Sami woman belonging to a chain; Finde-Berette (no. 73) is one of five women who is spoken well of by the common public at the district court in 1653, and she is acquitted.

Sami Women in a Sami Environment

Three Sami women are accused together with Sami men or by Sami men. One possible reason for this is that both white and black magic is liberally practised in Sami communities, which may well give rise to both accusations and retaliations amongst practitioners of sorcery.

The maid servant Maritte Gundersdatter (no. 122) is accused in 1672 by her master Nils Laas Find of casting an evil spell on his sheep. She denies all culpability and is acquitted.

In 1679, Kiersten Knudsdatter (no. 125), who belongs to a Sami environment, is accused of casting evil spells which allegedly have harmed the parish clerk's wife and children. Two Sami men admit having cast the spells ("gand"). Kiersten, however, denies culpability, and the case is brought before the district court where she is acquitted ⁸⁾.

In the trial of Karen Clemmidsdatter (no. 126) in 1680, Peder Gundersen Find is involved. Karen has been denounced for having cast a spell on their common master, and Peder Gundersen has been asked to lift the spell. Karen swears she is innocent of the charge: "in the name of the Lord who rules above, she had not done this" (LF 1671.83, fol. 85a). The general public speaks well of her, and she is acquitted ⁹⁾.

A Sami Woman with a Subordinate Role in a Trial

I have mentioned Sami men who are named in a trial without being indicted. The same applies to one Sami woman, Ellen Oelsdatter. In the trial of Synnøve Johannesdatter (no. 124) she is summoned to a child's sick-bed:

And seeing that the child lay there and was so ill, she said that Albricht's late wife Syndewe was surely the cause of the child's ailment and had harmed it. When the said Find woman had disclosed this, the child's health shortly improved and it became quite well again (TF11, fol. 65a).

Ellen is able to wield Sami magic; people send for her if they suspect that an illness has unnatural causes. In other words, her activities are of a therapeutic nature

Conclusion of Discussion on Ethnicity

Figure 2 shows the relationship between charges of Sami and non-Sami persons during the witch-trial period in Finnmark. The number of Samis is highest towards the beginning and the end of the period. In my view, Figure 2 indicates that less attention is paid to traditional magic during the years when chains are prominent. In calm periods, traditional sorcerers are again subjected to accusations.

There are relatively few Samis in the material. Nor are Samis always tried even if their names crop up in court. When non-Sami women are referred to as mentors, they are always said to have been burnt. This is not the case for Sami women who obviously play a prominent part in local circles practising witchcraft. In the seventeenth century, the Sami population is large and vital whereas the non-Sami population is waning and people tend to move away. The non-Sami population is, moreover, burdened by heavy debts at this time, which might explain why the authorities are reluctant to subject Samis reputed to be able magicians to legal persecution.

Casting spells and lifting spells, using "gand" and runes are what Sami women and men are tried for. The Samis represent an old form of sorcery while the trials for diabolism are restricted to a limited time span. Like an undertow, Sami beliefs are there throughout the entire period and after the worst "attacks" are over, Sami beliefs still lead to trials where spells and not diabolism are at the heart of the matter.

8. THE LEGAL BASIS

In order to understand the sources in their legal context, we must consider what legal basis they had in laws and ordinances at the time. I shall outline legislation pertaining to witchcraft from the eleventh century till the end of the seventeenth century, and relate the various provisions on witchcraft to the Finnmark material.

Legislation Pertaining to Witchcraft

The Oldest Norwegian Provisions about Witchcraft

We find the oldest known Norwegian prohibition of witchcraft in Landskapslovene (ancient regional laws) ¹⁾. In an article on witchcraft, “On Divination and Magic Chants” in the Gulating Law (a written code of customary law), Christianity challenges heathendom for the very first time in Norwegian legislation. In “Eldre Borgartings Kirkerett” (early ecclesiastical law), Finnmark is mentioned as a place where people go “to ask for prophecies” ²⁾.

In the Gulating Law’s section on Christianity, it is stated that six witnesses must decide whether a woman suspected of sorcery is guilty. The penalty for sorcery is death. A person may repudiate suspicions of witchcraft with an oath confirmed by twelve people of his own social standing.

Spreading rumours of witchcraft about another person is tantamount to defamation, and action may be taken against “whomsoever calls a freeman serf, demon or sorcerer”.

King Magnus Lagabøte’s National Code

What with King Magnus Lagabøte’s national code (1274) and city code (1276), all parts of the country are subject to uniform legislation. Witchcraft is mentioned in connection with other serious crimes: “...for murder and consorting with spirits, for every kind of divination, for out-sitting [the practice of leaving one’s body] to raise demons, and thereby the advancement of heathen practices (...)” ³⁾. Whoever is guilty of sorcery or commensurate crimes has “forfeited his livestock, peace, all real property, and all his belongings”. No significant changes are made to Magnus Lagabøte’s national code until Norway enters into a union with Denmark in 1387.

The Denmark–Norway Union (1387–1537)

Legal Principles before the Reformation

During the Denmark–Norway union, Danish Law gains a foothold in Norway despite the union treatise stipulation that each country should be governed in accordance with its own legislation.

Notable legal concepts in the period preceding the reformation include “church jurisdiction” and “canon law” ⁴⁾, legal principles advocated by the Catholic church. Remnants of church jurisdiction are maintained after 1536–1537 in cases which are exempted from civil prosecution and subject to specially instituted ecclesiastical courts ⁵⁾. The approach to witchcraft as a *crimen exceptum* is confirmed by Danish Law as early as in 1521–1522, in King Christian III’s Ecclesiastical Law. Torture is now permitted in witchcraft trials. However, the enactment is somewhat relaxed in Christian III’s *Københavnske Reces* in 1558 ⁶⁾.

Norway, a Danish Province

In 1604, law codes are revised, in Christian IV *Norwegian Laws*. In the material we find that several of the earlier Danish laws are still adhered to by officials in Finnmark way into the seventeenth century.

In one of the two incest cases in the Finnmark material (no. 94), the court distinguishes between secular and ecclesiastic law, according to principles followed before the reformation ⁷⁾.

To illustrate that the king's proclamations ("reces") are applied subsidiarily in the Finnmark courts, I refer to the use of articles 18 and 19 of the 1588 *Koldingske Reces* ⁸⁾. Article 18 states that evidence given by thieves and witches about other people is not to be relied upon. Article 19 states that nobody must be subjected to torture before being sentenced to death.

Article 18 was applied by the district court in 1653 when 5 women were acquitted. The court explains the acquittal with these words:

...since C 3 Reces 18 explicitly disclaims evidence or any other statements given about a person by wicked people, or others charged with devious actions, such as thieves, traitors, sorcerers and sorceresses (LF 1647–1668, fol. 62).

Article 19 was applied i.a. in the trial of Gundell Oelsdatter (no. 23) in 1625. She was tortured after having been sentenced.

Letters to District Governors in Norway in 1593 and 1594

In 1593 a letter about "evocations and blessings", was sent to the district governors in Norway. They are admonished to have the letter read aloud and proclaimed in all district and county courts. In 1594, the same letter, with a slightly different wording, was again issued. Both letters start with precisely the same words about defilement of the Lord's name, but they differ slightly in terms of punishments. While the 1593 letter demands in general terms that the practice of blessing must be discontinued, the 1594 letter decrees that whoever "either seeks or carries out such ungodly actions of witchcraft shall be punished by death without mercy".

These letters indicate that the judiciary's approach to witchcraft becomes more intransigent just before the turn of the century. Indeed, the trial material from Finnmark illustrates that witchcraft trials are intensified early in the seventeenth century.

Christian IV's Norwegian Code of Laws from 1604

The development of criminal law in Denmark–Norway during the seventeenth century is characterized by a growing emphasis of Mosaic Law.

In *Christian IV's Norwegian Code of Laws*, witchcraft is placed in the same category as serious crimes and "such people shall be shown no mercy, whether they are killed by the king's representative or by others whom they have transgressed against" ⁹⁾. Witches are outlawed as they were according to Magnus Labøte's National Code.

Christian IV also deals with witchcraft elsewhere in his legislation. In a letter from 1609 to Claus Gagge in Vardøhus, he discusses witchcraft in connection with Finns and Laps "who by nature are particularly apt to use magic". Witches "shall by judgement and sentence be executed without mercy". Whoever is suspected of witchcraft shall be turned out of the district. Here the term witchcraft is related to Sami practices of magic. In this context, it should be mentioned that Christian IV travelled to the Kola Peninsula in 1599 ¹⁰⁾, and might have heard about Sami magic on his trip.

Decree about “Witches and their Accomplices” in 1617

In 1617, Christian IV issues a decree about “Witches and their Accomplices” that is used both in Denmark and Norway. Real witches are people “who have attached themselves to the Devil or who consort with him”.

In the Finnmark courts this decree is referred to on several occasions, the earliest of which is in 1620. In this decree, the concept of witchcraft is — for the first time in Danish–Norwegian legislation — related to a connection with the Devil. Blessing is to be punished with banishment and “forfeiture of real property”.

Accomplices must also be executed. In the Finnmark material, Peder Swendsøn and his wife are said to be accomplices and their case is brought before the district court. Peder is sentenced “to confess before the public and to pay his royal majesty a fine” in silver (LF 1647–1668. fol. 41)¹¹⁾.

Christian V’s Norwegian Code of Law

In 1682 a commission is set up to adjust *Christian V’s Danish Code of Law*, from 1683, to Norwegian conditions¹²⁾. The commission systematically compares the two codes. There are no differences between their provisions on witchcraft.

Christian V’s Norwegian Code of Law (NL from here on) offers many an example of increasing viciousness in sixteenth and seventeenth century criminal law. We find several instances of qualified death penalties whereby the convicted person must undergo inconceivably cruel torture before being executed. In the witchcraft provisions, for example, we find the following description of a qualified death penalty¹³⁾:

whoever has assuredly held the Lord in contempt or defiled His hallowed name, his word and the sacraments shall, while still alive, have his tongue cut out and thereafter his head cut off and mounted together with his tongue on a pole (NL,6–1–7)¹⁴⁾.

Nevertheless, the Finnmark material suggests a certain disparity between legal code and judicial practice. Sentences in witchcraft trials are moderated after the middle of the seventeenth century.

Earlier versions of *Christian V’s Code of Law* were applied before 1683. The penalty for blessing was loss of real property and “banishment from the King’s lands and country” (6–1–12). This is the penalty for Magdalena Jacobsdatter when she is tried in 1671. There are many complaints on her count and her neighbours speak ill of her; she is sentenced to “banishment from the country” (TF8, fol. 8a).

In 1672 Mogens Zarasen is sentenced to banishment, or as the sentence runs, he shall be “bodily sentenced to the pillory and afterwards to banishment, as a memorable example for other such ungodly and stubborn people” (TF8, fol. 79b). Failing to leave within six weeks, he shall be “beheaded without mercy”. The latter clause suggests that people tended to remain where they were after banishment.

General Legal Principles During the Period

The reformation meant that the part played by the church in legal matters changed significantly. The Protestant church did not acknowledge a system based on canon law. Reformist theoreticians considered the church a purely spiritual institution which in secular issues recognized the powers instated by God. They took their cue from St. Augustine, according to whom there were two realms, the one spiritual and invisible, and the other, to which Christians must defer for all matters temporal, secular and visible. We find the following in *Dansk rettshistorie i hovedpunkter*:

Thus the secular authorities had to provide a new legal foundation to supplant the void that had arisen when canon law ceased to apply in Protestant countries, and ensure the implementation of criminal law ¹⁵⁾.

In the development of criminal law the retributive principle continued to be observed. In his thesis *Humanitet och rationalism*, Erik Anners writes ¹⁶⁾:

Under the tribal system, criminal law had favoured private vengeance and at the same time provided the means to satisfy the need for retribution. When powerful parties undertook to maintain peace, they also had to satisfy claims for vindication and retribution (Anners 1965:18).

The deterrence theory had many followers. The deterrence effect could rid society of criminals. This principle had been known to Nordic judicial circles even in the early Middle Ages, but continued to gain ground as criminality increased. Death alone would not generate and maintain a deterrence effect. Penalties had to escalate continually — a vicious circle. This was where qualified death penalties came into the picture, and horrendous varieties of physical torture seemed called for.

The Mosaic influence is evident in criminal law as it was practised at the time. In his article "Den gamle danske strafferett og dens udvikling indtil slutningen af det 18. århundre", Stig Iuul writes that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — the orthodox period — people dared not challenge God's law, even if criminal law seemed harsh ¹⁷⁾. The influence of Mosaic law particularly applies to homicide, sexual crimes, homosexuality, incest and witchcraft. A widely quoted and famous passage from Exodus, 22,18 runs: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live".

From a religious point of view Medieval man considered life on earth a trial period before eternal life. The main objective was salvation of the soul, not personal happiness on earth. Even for a convicted criminal awaiting his execution, salvation was possible. "He made up for his guilt towards humans by being punished. If he repented his crime and sought forgiveness through the church for his sins, God's mercy would apply to him, too" (Anners 1965:19). From this perspective we understand more readily why it was so imperative that a person who was sentenced to death should receive the sacrament before the sentence was effectuated ¹⁸⁾.

By the same token, we can understand how torture was conceived as a weapon against the Devil. Torture drove the Devil away, thus paving the way for mercy. Anners believes that the only way modern-day man can come to terms with the extensive use of torture in European criminal law at the time is by bearing in mind that temporal suffering was considered insignificant compared with the salvation of souls.

The need for constant vigilance against witches — the Devil's accomplices — is clearly expressed in the witchcraft articles in King Christian V's Norwegian Law: "In the case where a sorcerer or sorceress is found to have forsworn the Holy Baptism and Christianity and promised allegiance to the Devil, he or she should be thrown alive into the flames and burnt." (NL, 6–1–9).

To what extent do these conditions apply to Finnmark during the period covered by the material? The viciousness of criminal law that appears to characterize legal practices in general during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries leaves clear traces also in the Finnmark material, as evinced by the use of for instance the water ordeal, torture, whipping at the pillory and mass executions. How were such practices introduced in Northern Norway? Presumably higher officials were acquainted with legal practices on the continent. Finnmark's location, far away from central authorities that might have curbed excesses, may also have been significant.

9. The Role of the Church

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that demonologists tended to show women in an unfavourable light as prone to witchcraft. In this chapter I shall take a closer look at seventeenth century ecclesiastic literature and the part played by the church in witchcraft trials. The religious literature of the period was shared by Denmark and Norway, so I shall concentrate on general features of its history. I shall raise a few questions that may shed some light on the issue whether or not the church had any influence on the trials, either directly, through the clergy's actions, or indirectly, through religious literature:

a) What sort of religious literature do we find in Finnmark during the seventeenth century? What attitudes to witchcraft and to women were expressed in religious doctrine?

b) To what extent does my source material substantiate the allegation that parson were directly implicated in interrogations and "preparation" of witchcraft suspects?

Religious Literature in Finnmark

Literature Belonging to the Church

Old church accounts make fascinating reading for anybody who wants to find out what kind of literature existed in Finnmark in the seventeenth century. We have church accounts dating back to the end of the 1680s, in other words from the end of the trial period. Entries from the end of the century tell us quite a lot about the period in question since religious literature is only infrequently renewed ¹⁾. Most religious literature was owned by the church at the time. Entries such as "1 new and faultless hymnal" as opposed to 2 old "books of homilies that have quite fallen apart" are evocative of the diligent use to which the books were put.

Hans Tommesen's hymnal (1589) and Thomas Kingo's hymnal (1689) are both mentioned in church accounts from Finnmark. Tommesen's hymnal was sanctioned after the Reformation and used in all Danish churches. Kingo was given a 20-year "privilege" by a royal decree in 1690 to publish his hymnal. All parish churches were ordered to buy a copy, and several churches had purchased the hymnal after the turn of the century ²⁾.

Powel Andersen, Niels Hemmingsen and Jesper Brochmand's books of homilies are mentioned in church accounts from the end of the seventeenth century.

Powel Andersen and Poul Andersen Medelby are one and the same person. However, posterity has not counted him as one of the significant theologians ³⁾. In 1614 he published his *Ungdomspostil* [=book of homilies for young people] which presumably is the one found in many churches in Finnmark at the end of the seventeenth century ⁴⁾.

Niels Hemmingsen's book of homilies was published in 1561 ⁵⁾. He is the most prominent of the Danish post-reformation theologians belonging to the so-called Filippian School. This movement deviated from pure Lutheran doctrine on issues such as the Eucharist and predestination.

Jesper Brochmand earned quite a name for himself within Lutheran orthodoxy in Denmark at the end of the seventeenth century. In 1635 he published his book of homilies containing sermons for all the Epistles and Gospels ⁶⁾. He follows a tradition according to which the Scriptures are fundamental. To their very last detail, the Scriptures are the word of God and inspired by the Holy Ghost.

The fact that books of homilies and bibles were used in Finnmark after being outdated in Denmark may be a result of a certain inertia which particularly affects peripheral regions. In central areas, the church presumably renewed its literature with greater alacrity.

Theologian literature is interesting from my perspective to the extent that it reflects and expresses attitudes to witchcraft. I shall deal with it in greater detail in the following sub-chapter.

Hemmingsens og Brochmand's Views on Witchcraft

I have already demonstrated that various theological movements were represented in religious doctrinaire literature in Finnmark, notably in Hemmingsen's and Brochmand's books of homilies. What attitudes to witchcraft do these theologians advocate?

In 1575, Hemmingsen published his *Admonitio de superstitionibus magicis vitandis* (= Admonishment to shun witchcraft) where he maintains that witches are able to cast evil spells on humans, injure animals, and destroy seeds on the ground. Therefore, whoever collaborates with the Devil must be burnt, for "it is better that one person is lost than a whole society". Hemmingsen believes that the Devil has "invented" witchcraft. Witch-people as such cannot achieve anything with images, chants and wax figures of children ⁷⁾; it is the pact with the Devil which gives them their power. Using witchcraft to heal is as sinful as using it to injure. Passages in the scriptures prohibiting witchcraft ⁸⁾ are also directed at womankind, "for at all times and in every country, woman has been more prone to sin in this manner than man, and so it is in this country too" ⁹⁾. Hemmingsen rejects the water ordeal and the idea that women can fly.

According to Hemmingsen, people who believe they can exorcize the Devil must also be considered witches. So is anybody who seeks relief against illness in humans or livestock. Thus Hemmingsen's definition of witchcraft is highly comprehensive: "denial or forswearing of the true Lord, impure heathen or devilishly false sanctity, distortions of the Gospels, pacts with the Devil, denial or forswearing of the Christian faith" ¹⁰⁾. The conclusion is that witch-people "must, according to Mosaic law and imperial law, and indeed by our own Danish law, in short, even according to common popular custom, be executed" ¹¹⁾.

Jesper Brochmand represents elaborate European demonology to a greater degree than Hemmingsen. He has no doubts about witches' travels through the air or about sabbaths. Brochmand maintains that he who doubts "that witches and witch-masters can be transported through the air with marvellous speed to far-away places for their gatherings, where they dance and carry on with people of their kind" knows little about the Devil ¹²⁾. More than his elder contemporaries he emphasizes in his massive doctrinaire *Systema universæ theologia* (1633), that such is the realm of the Devil.

For both theologians the Devil plays a prominent role in witchcraft. Of the two Brochmand is the more conformist from an academic demonological position. He believes witches have ritual gatherings and unlimited scope of action. From such a perspective it is only to be expected that they carry out collective operations, and this in turn calls for denunciations and chained trials. Hemmingsen's position, that witchcraft is practised on an individual basis, can be related to the old popular understanding of evil spells that do not necessarily stem from a pact with the Devil. We find that Hemmingsen's and Brochmand's views are both represented in the Finnmark material. Brochmand's ideas about gatherings and collective witchcraft allow for chains. Hemmingsen's comprehensive definition of witchcraft form an ideological basis for legal persecution of individuals who practice blessings.

Orthodox Attitudes to Women

When studying attitudes to witches in the seventeenth century, we must bear in mind orthodoxy's approach to women. As background material for my discussion, I refer to an article by Helge Fæhn, "Ortodoksiens kvinnesyn", in *Kirke og kultur* 5, 1975.

Luther's attitude to women is coloured by a positive reassessment of matrimony and of woman's role as a wife and mother. Yet, the principle of her subordination is virtually undisputed. Because of mankind's fall from divine grace, woman must defer to her husband and lead a retired life as a "persona privata", according to the Scriptures, i.e. the Lord himself.

The idea that woman is subordinate to man is diffused throughout the populace by means of “house rules”, catechisms, sermons, and collections of sermons. According to the church ordinance of 1539, parsons are required to devote half an hour after the service to the elucidation of the catechism. During the seventeenth century such elucidation of the Catechism as well as the “house rules” undoubtedly contributed to people’s religious understanding ¹³⁾. The “house rules” in Luther’s *Small Catechism* contain a reference to the 1. Epistle of Peter 3,1: “Wives should be in subjection to their own husbands, just as Sara obeyed Abraham and called him lord”.

“Subordinate” and “obedient” are household words in orthodoxy’s attitude to women, and the witches were neither one nor the other ¹⁴⁾.

Literature Owned by Private Parties

In Finnmark, the largest private collections of books in the seventeenth century belonged to bailiffs, merchants, and trade comptrollers ¹⁵⁾. As might be expected, privately owned collections are considerably more assorted than stores of homilies and bibles belonging to the churches. Information gleaned from probate court protocols indicate that private collections of religious literature included hymnals, bibles, parts of bibles, homilies, prayer books and funeral sermons ¹⁶⁾. Whether or not the privately owned books were used as diligently as those owned by the church must, however, remain a matter for conjecture at this late date.

Role of the Clergy during the Witchcraft Trials

In this sub-chapter I shall discuss the material’s data on the clergy’s role during witchcraft trials in Finnmark. Parsons are referred to in 11 of the trials records, and they have various functions in relation to the witchcraft suspect.

Good and Evil in Combat

In the material, Good is represented by Jesus, the parson, or a strong faith, whereas Evil is represented by the Devil or his “apostle”.

The oldest existing record from a court protocol in the Finnmark material deals with the trial of Karren Edisdatter (no. 6) in 1620. Here the conflict between parson and Devil is described as a tug of war to decide who will rule over a person: “had not Master Mogens pushed her back in the door, the Devil would have tugged her into the sea so that people would not know what had become of her” (TF1, fol. 12a).

This conflict between the forces is also reflected in the idea that the parson or strong faith can cancel the effect of Evil. The record of the above-mentioned Karren’s trial runs: “the Devil was always in her company, unless the parson was present” (TF1, fol. 2a). We find the same notion expressed in Maren Oelsdatter’s trial in 1663: “Indeed, the child confesses that Solwe had injured the foot of the parson’s wife, Karen Rasmusdatter, but as long as her husband was near no harm came of it” (TF5, fol. 242b, 247a).

We find variations of this idea reflected in trials where witches admit that their spell over a ship was ineffective because the captain or his crew had too much faith in the Lord.

Parson and Devil under the Same Guise

A somewhat extraordinary use of the parson’s title is found in the trial of Sigrj Oelsdatter (no. 95) who has been working for Sigrj at Stensland, whose “god” Ole wears the garb of a parson. He is courteous when he enters the house: “...greeted the woman with a handshake, wearing his parson’s dress, a cassock, and sat down beside her in the high chair at the end of the table”

(TF5, fol. 237b). The rest of the description is far from clerical; the evil one himself is there with "two great big glowing eyes like a cow's (...) and besides, his hands were very strange, and his breath was like the flames of a fire" (TF5, fol. 237b).

I interpret this coupling of parson and Evil as an indication of people's conception of the Devil as a wily creature, one who could even make use of a parson's guise to outsmart the women before revealing his true identity. We know from other trials that the Devil at first sight may appear to be a respectable person. The Devil's ability to appear respectable is also mentioned in demonological works.

The Parson's Duties as a Witness

The parson is considered a reliable witness if the woman has confessed before the trial starts. The parson Hans Pedersen Bang has overheard Margerette Jonsdatter's confession (no. 96). It is important that she confirms the confession in court.

Our honourable district lord then asked the said Margrette Jonsdatter whether she acknowledged what she had previously told the late district lord, the pastor rev. Hans Pedersen and the bailiff (TF5, fol. 225b).

In a trial implicating Jacob Thommesen's wife Ragnild (no. 32), the parson Hanns Hansen is ascribed the task of being a reliable witness together with "Nielß Storup, a citizen from Bergenn" (TF2, 6b, 7a).

The spiritual advisor recommends that Marite Nielsdatter (no. 131) should be acquitted: "Her spiritual advisor and many others interceded in her behalf" (TF19, 187b). While the establishment's task had been to make offences known, the spiritual advisor now enters the scene: "Martte Nielßdatter's offence warranted that her spiritual advisor should hear her confession" (TF19, 187b).

The Parson's Preparatory Tasks

The Parson's duties as a spiritual advisor for prisoners is above all evident from the records of trials of little girls. While they were imprisoned the parson has given them religious instruction and tried to convert them.

since they had been brought to the fort and conscientiously kept there by the district lord and dutifully admonished every day by the parson who would have them converted to the ways of the Lord in Heaven from the evil ways of the Devil, but to no avail since they by their own account still stayed with the Evil Spirit and could not be free of him (...) no matter how much the parsons exhorted them and tried to convert them to our Lord Christ, he will not release them since they have been sacrificed to him by their mothers (TF5, fol. 157ab).

The parson's task in relation to the children is to lead them onto the ways of the Lord. When religious instruction apparently has no effect on the girls, they are considered obdurate. The parson presumably hopes to convert them because they are so young. In the preliminary sentence it is pointed out that they have never received the sacrament.

The theological rationale for burning witches is that burning is a purifying ritual and the only way to salvage their souls. From this perspective the parson's preparatory tasks have indeed been important.

Pacts with the Devil

In the court records of witchcraft trials in Finnmark, the judiciary's rationale in a number of cases may be termed religious. This applies above all to interrogations concerning pacts with the Devil, a crucial component of confessions in parts of the Finnmark material. Many of the sentences would seem senseless unless the convicted women were considered lost souls because of their relationships with the Devil. Confessions about pacts with the Devil are so typical of the trial

period in the seventeenth century that we cannot equate conceptions of witchcraft that were used prior to, during, or after the period. It must be pointed out, however, that confessions of pacts with the Devil distinguishes the Finnmark material from documented witchcraft trials that are known to us elsewhere in Norway and Scandinavia.

The crime of witchcraft was considered exceptional (*crimen exceptum*). Consequently, the courts had a different approach to it than to other offences with regard to evidence, procedure and sentences. This is clearly revealed by the current study and by other studies of Norwegian witchcraft trials.

The atmosphere of terror in local communities, which contributed to denunciations and chained trials in Finnmark during the seventeenth century, may be explained by a compound of factors. My view is that church doctrine and the attitude taken by the church plays a certain part although it can probably not be maintained that this part was the sole or even the dominant cause.

Witchcraft Trials from a Norwegian Ecclesiastical Historical Perspective

Carl Fr. Wisløff writes in *Norsk kirkehistorie* 1 (NK1, from here on): “Superstition celebrated its greatest and most devastating triumph with the belief in witches” (NK1, 1966:476). (Underscored by me). No mention is made of the views on witchcraft held by prominent theologians at the time. The fact that the church raised fears of the Devil is by-passed in silence, as is the fact that superstition was incorporated into a system that was sanctioned by the clergy and judicial authorities.

In his presentation, Wisløff gives two examples of witchcraft trials in Norway: that of Anne Absalon Pedersdatter and that of the wife of Bishop Foss. In the latter case it is stated that her husband, Bishop Anders Foss “was involved in a dreadful business, for his wife was charged with witchcraft” (NK1, 1966:439). She was the object of suspicions for two years until her name was cleared. In other words, the two women mentioned to illustrate the persecution of witches are both married to high-ranking clergymen. They are clearly not representative of the numerous women from lower social orders who were convicted for witchcraft.

Moreover, *Norsk kirkehistorie* is inaccurate in its description of the Norwegian trials with regard to both scope and system. The trials are explained on the grounds that the accused women were insane or the accusing men were abnormal. This rationale is highly inadequate. Insanity has always been a tempting concept to fall back on to when people fail to fit the system. Believing in witchcraft will not as such cause accidents. Only when such beliefs are put to systematic use and exploited by the establishment can they prove to be disastrous.

Conclusion

The part played by the church in the Finnmark witchcraft trials must be understood in terms of prevalent religious doctrines during the period. What distinguished orthodoxy was the added emphasis on woman’s subordination to man, her role as a wife and mother, and her aptness for witchcraft. Fear of the Devil, which was typical for the period and contributes to lay a basis for the trials is clearly voiced in Luther’s work ¹⁷⁾.

Part of the theoretical foundation for the seventeenth century witchcraft trials is religious. Witchcraft is an offence against God and obstructs the spread of his realm. The fact that the material also includes a number of cases where the charge is “blessing”, in other words beneficial magic, is in my view due to a tidal wave effect. Magical practices that do not involve pacts with the Devil are termed “devilish tricks” and are also dealt with by the courts. People’s inherent magical abilities are found to be dubious; their magic potential must derive from evil forces.

The material indicates that the clergy exerted its influence not only from the pulpit and in religious literature, but also through direct involvement in some of the trials. The parson’s

task was mainly to prepare imprisoned and sentenced women for death and to persuade them to acknowledge previously submitted confessions.

10. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Economic Conditions in General

In the chapter "Fra ekspansjon til stagnasjon" in *Vadsø's Historie* Vol.1, Einar Niemi discusses economic and demographic conditions in Finnmark during the period 1500–1650. Whereas the sixteenth century is described as a productive period with a significant population influx, the following century is seen as a time of general decline, and many non-Sami people moved from Finnmark. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the trade on Finnmark was regarded as unprofitable by Bergen merchants. The supplier system involved a number of risks for the numerous debt-holders who depended on their suppliers. Many were rejected by suppliers altogether, though this did not necessarily mean their conditions deteriorated. Niemi believes that the many Samis who were abandoned by their suppliers did not in effect need a permanent supplier because their economic conditions were fairly satisfactory. Finally, seventeenth century Finnmark was harassed by yield failures in the fisheries and disastrous accidents at sea.

Complaints in Court

Complaints were repeatedly being voiced before the courts: due to failed fisheries and poverty, people were unable to pay their taxes.

In 1657 the common people in Omgang were relieved of their tax burdens "since fisheries within this court's jurisdiction are currently very poor" (TF5, 38a).

In 1660, the common people in Hasvik asked to have their tax burdens alleviated, having "plaintively narrated about their distressing conditions and opportunities due to poverty, weakness and the poor fisheries this year" (TF5, fol. 71a). Their taxes were reduced.

In Alta, in 1661, the people submitted their "plaintive complaint (...) that a number of them had almost starved to death this year, from hunger, for this reason: that the fish utterly and completely has disappeared (...)" (TF5, fol. 100b, 101a).

In 1662 fishermen from Vardø complain about the poor fishing in May. In July the same year, complaints arrive from Hammerfest, and in September, they come from Omgang. Everywhere people are saying they cannot pay their taxes. In Vardø people lament because they now "hardly even have a pot in which to boil their water soup" (TF5, fol. 120b).

The above quotations indicate that the end of the 1650s and beginning of the 1660s have seen poor yields for fisheries in a large part of Finnmark. The question is then: can the outset of the major chain in 1662–1663 be linked with the region's harsh economic conditions immediately preceding it.

Connection between Economic Conditions and Trials

Season after season, the fisheries fail, presumably giving rise to a strained atmosphere in the afflicted communities. A steadily deteriorating economy may have left its mark on the intermittent single trials and minor chains throughout the period.

However, poverty, as such, cannot account for the major chains, though there may have been a cause–effect relationship between important ship-wrecks and large chains. Accidents at sea were disasters for the involved communities, and women were often accused of having instigated them ¹⁾. The women themselves explained collective witchcraft operations as a form of rebellion against people such as the first mate who sold his wares at an unreasonable price. The fact that officialdom feared aggression from the populace is evident from the fact that -people were charged of conspiring against the district lord. No wonder scapegoats were needed in communities where conditions were uncompromising when people were subjected to the added strain of accidents at sea or inexplicable deaths. I

believe the major chains may have been triggered by such additional burdens on the communities.

"The Social strain" Theory

To what extent could profound changes in the social texture have contributed to the witchcraft trials? This question forms the basis of a theory according to which "social strain" was the cause of the persecutions. The theory was initially introduced by Marwick in 1965 ²⁾ about conditions in England, and later followed up by Thomas and Macfarlane ³⁾ in studies of English trials. The essence of the theory is that accusations of witchcraft are linked with profound changes in the social texture. When applied to English conditions from 1550 to 1650, it is argued that agricultural developments generated larger numbers of destitute people; the economy was shifting from subsistence to cash economy; Elizabethan legislation on poverty involved a growing bureaucracy and a transition from individual to state responsibility, from neighbourly morality to commercial morality. These changes caused tensions. Vagrants were dismissed in large numbers by the wealthy who in turn feared retaliation in the form of evil spells from the have-nots. These fears then materialized as accusations and purges.

In order to find out whether such a theory might apply to Norwegian conditions we have to study what changes were introduced in public management in the period immediately preceding the witchcraft trials. We must even question whether a theory developed for English conditions can be applied to source material from an area with altogether different forms of trade and business. In his thesis, Næss uses this theory. My Finnmark material has not substantiated the supposition that responsibility for the have-nots has been shifted during the period at hand. The fact that the district lord occasionally had to interfere by providing food simply because he alone was in a position to do so does not mean that the principle of neighbourliness had been abandoned.

11. CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, I shall start by summarizing the results of the study in terms of the issues presented in the introduction. Then I shall go on to outline in brief what characterizes the historical Finnmark witches, and what distinguishes them in a European context.

Discussion of Causal Connections

Economic and Social Conditions

Næss explains the onset of witch trials in Norway in terms of economic and social conditions at community level.

The accused were frequently married and had children. This means that the underlying cause of witchcraft accusations may be rooted in their families' economic circumstances, and in the social isolation which particularly affected elderly people. Neither hatred of womankind nor isolation of women, but economic tensions between poor families can explain what triggered the witch trials (Næss 1982:314).

This conclusion is interesting since it reflects not only Næss's explanatory model, but also how he accounts for the predominance of women in the trial material.

The position that those who are most affected by the witchcraft trials are "the poorest of society's subjects" is not substantiated by the Finnmark material. Admittedly, there are persons in the material who live in penury, such as menials. But as I have pointed out, we also find persons who are released on bail, and married women who keep domestic animals¹⁾. In other words, people from various social levels are accused of witchcraft. Næss explains the trials in terms of tensions between poor families.

Information gleaned from the sources about the balance of economic power has to do with dividing lines between the common people and the Establishment, which embraces merchants. Women state that their motives for witchcraft operations are to hurt men who hold powerful economic positions. Moreover, the merchants and bailiffs contribute to keeping the cycle of trials going, a fact that is vividly illustrated by Lauridz Brass's role in many a trial.

I believe Næss's rationale is too limited. He directs his attention to one of the social classes but refrains from examining it in a broad context. In order to understand the trials within the framework of a socio-economic system we must include other social classes in our analysis. Poverty is only one of many factors in the causal mesh underlying the witch trials. The ensemble of social structures at community level will have contributed to the labelling of sorcerers and witches, as will the demonological doctrine. Without a superimposed demonological ideology, and judicial and theological consensus on such an ideology, people would never have ended their lives in flames on such flimsy grounds as the ones we find in the material. Without a multitude of misfortunes and difficult economic conditions in the communities, there would have been no urgent need of scapegoats. In a comprehensive analysis of witch trials, various aspects of the social texture must be considered — people's relationship with nature, their attitudes to magic, ethnic relations and psychological reactions. In the following paragraphs, I shall discuss issues related to people's outlook. .

Relationship with Nature

In the seventeenth century, people had a perspective of nature and of their own capacity to influence natural processes which is alien to modern-day man. In his book *The World of the*

Witches, Julio Caro Baroja stresses the existence of an outlook where the dividing line between physical reality and the imagined mythical world was obscurer than it tends to be today. "Between what physically exists and what man imagines, or has in the past imagined to exist, there lies a region in which the evidently real and the imaginary seem to overlap" (Baroja 1965:13). This was the setting for sorcerers' and witches' activities. The confessions in the Finnmark material are fantasy. How come people believed in allegations about what was physically impossible? By directing our attention to a relationship with nature that was prevalent in the seventeenth century, we might find an answer.

In his book *The Idea of Nature*, R. G. Collingwood presents three different kinds of relationships between man and nature in the western world: that of the Greeks, that of the Renaissance, and that of our time. In his view, the transition between Greek and Renaissance perspectives, each of which is relevant for my source material, takes place some time in the sixteenth century.

The Greek perspective of nature is organic, based on an analogy between man and nature. Man is microcosm, nature is macrocosm. Nature is alive and in constant motion and, since it is an intelligent organism, organized. Nature is permeated by spirit which is an integral part of it, not a separate entity. Such an outlook evokes the likelihood that we can manipulate nature by means of magic. Man's spirit may in theory control that of nature. The sixteenth and seventeenth century interest in magic and astrology demonstrates that an organic outlook lingers even when a more mechanistic and naturalistic outlook has long since started to supplant it. The confessions from the witchcraft trials serve as examples of this.

Judicial authorities reflect views that coincide with a Renaissance perspective of nature. Body and soul are separate entities. This applies equally to man and to nature. A central precept of the sixteenth and seventeenth century cosmological movement is that laws of nature reflect an intelligence that is detached from nature: that of the holy creator and lord. Since witches and sorcerers defy God and ally themselves with the Devil, disasters descend upon the world to punish us, through God's will.

Extermination of witches and sorcerers will placate the Lord. Judicial authorities insist on the women's confessing about their pacts with the Devil, for by means of their alliance with evil forces, women are able to manipulate the universal ruler and through him also elements of nature.

This transition from one perspective of nature to another is prerequisite to the new academic concept of witchcraft. Seventeenth century officialdom has implicitly accepted the new outlook, whereas the common public still retains its old relationship to nature.

Conceptions of Witchcraft

One of the issues presented in my introduction was how various conceptions of witchcraft are reflected in the sources. In my analysis of the material I have already demonstrated the following points:

- a) The popular conception of witchcraft is most clearly reflected in single trials which are conducted primarily according to accusatory principles. Individual magical aptitude is stressed. Confessions deal mainly with evil spells and blessings.
- b) The demonological conception of witchcraft is most clearly reflected in the major chains, which are largely conducted according to inquisitorial principles. Magic powers are mainly obtained through a pact with the Devil. The practice of witchcraft is collective.

The women's confessions during major chained trials reflect a conception of witchcraft which embodies elements of folk-mythology and novelties such as pacts with the Devil and sabbaths. In my opinion, this indicates that old popular beliefs have been influenced by new attitudes to witchcraft and even partially incorporated them.

My theory is that two kinds of witchcraft are practised in Finnmark during the period:

On the one hand magical practices are linked with tradition and based on ritual, recitation of formulas and magic prayers. In this category I include both Sami and non-Sami professional practices. Please consult "Formulas and Prayers" in the Appendix. Prominent religious figures are referred to in these prayers which make no mention of the Devil. The formulas may be used for beneficial or nefarious purposes. Ellen Gundersdatter (no. 102) explains that she has often "been asked to cast evil spells on sheep" with one of the prayers she knows (TF5, 254a). Examples of Sami magical practices are "gand" (spells) and wind-magic.

On the other hand, some kind of local witchcraft milieu in which the Devil plays a central part presumably does exist. Women get together in groups to carry out rituals they believe have a magic effect. The material does provide substance for such a theory, in view of the rapport between different women's detailed accounts of the Devil's appearance, of the ritual when they enter into the pact (including, for instance, a game of cards) and of the rituals around magic practices. The similarities within each chain indicate that the women have either actually carried out the rituals or discussed their notions in detail before being brought before the court. Such activities may be comparable to modern-day divination practices ²⁾.

More than any previous chain, that of 1662–1663 seems to betoken the existence of a circle of female witches. Both Karen Andersdatter (no. 103) and Karen Oelsdatter (no. 112) have been initiated during confinement after birth. The latter was given a porridge "called confinement food or childbearing porridge, but it was indeed by her own will and acceptance" (TF5, 276a) by Boedel Klausdatter. Dorette Lauridsdatter was the one to watch over her in confinement. Women who act as midwives suggest a connection between magical skills and health workers, though there very few examples of this type in the Finnmark material.

Demonological works provide detailed insight into academic notions of witchcraft. To unearth popular ideas, however, we have nothing to go by other than confessions in the court records. Although such confessions cannot be taken at face value, they are an important source about conceptions of witchcraft. The suspects' popular notions are modified through a process of examination during the trials until the confession turns into an expression of academic European conceptions of witchcraft.

Although there most probably were active witchcraft circles in the local communities in Finnmark, they cannot entirely account for the magnitude of the legal persecution nor for the diabolical element. Prominent persons within the judicial system have presumably had some influence on the trials. Suspicions tended to crop up in local environments, but a suspicion could not have brought about a witch trial unless it was recognized and acted upon by the judicial authorities.

Ethnicity

The issues referred to by way of introduction included ethnic relations and sex ratios in the Sami part of the material. The latter issue can fairly easily be resolved: There are clear differences with regard to gender amongst the Samis. Of all the men in the material, 56 per cent are Sami, whereas amongst the women 7 per cent are Sami.

What effect ethnic relations have had on the trials can not easily be determined. The discussion about ethnicity in Chapter 7 concludes that the singular ethnic conditions in Finnmark have had an effect on the trials. I shall discuss this matter in greater detail here.

The authorities' views on Sami magic are ambiguous. On the one hand, Sami magic is labelled as dangerous at an early stage of the period from which time it is severely punished. On the other hand, practitioners of magic are to some degree tolerated in Sami circles; we find several named Sami sorcerers in the material who are not subjected to legal persecution. Later, as the fear of diabolism subsides towards the end of the seventeenth century, Sami sorcery prevails and it is still held to be dangerous and forbidding.

The Sami element in the material is relatively small, cf. fig. 2. Samis are usually indicted in single trials. The men confess mainly to Sami practices such as the use of runes, the sale of

favourable winds, "gand" (evil spells), and counter-spells. Sami women usually confess having cast spells. Some Sami women are central figures in locale witchcraft circles attended by both Sami and non-Sami women. The remark, "King's bailiff! We preach no evil" (LF 1671-1683, fol. 85a.) indicates that Sami practitioners do not perceive their art as pernicious. Their magic was rendered suspicious by the authorities who considered it evil even when spells were cast for beneficial purposes.

The material demonstrates that wind magic has been used also by non-Samis, which suggests that the distinctive ethnic conditions in Finnmark have indeed left their mark on witchcraft practised by non-Samis.

The Sami element in the material is clear, whereas prejudices on the part of officialdom against Sami magic can not directly be established. Thus it is impossible to ascertain just how much weight ethnic conditions carried during the trials, though we can safely maintain they have been of consequence.

The Psychoanalytical Explanatory Model

The post-Freudian Ernest Jones interprets the women's confessions during witch trials in terms of a psychoanalytical perspective. In his book *On the nightmare* (London 1949), he presents a theory linking the latent — dreams — with what is exposed — confessions. Just as nightmares reflect an intense mental conflict of an incestuous nature, confessions express the women's suppressed sexual conflicts. Dreams influence our waking thoughts. Jones believes that since the church emphatically preached that sexuality was sinful and undesirable, thoughts of this kind would never surface unless the women were subjected to extreme pressure, as in an interrogation. He stresses that men's fear of women's sexuality is reflected in demonological works. The conviction that witches could cause disease and death was related to men's dread of impotence at a deeper level. Jones believes that the church viewed confessions about pacts with the Devil as expressions of the women's sexual desires, and this could not be tolerated. He interprets details such as airborne journeys to sabbaths, and transformations into animal shapes as expressions of underlying sexual conflicts. By pointing out what part the church has played, Jones incorporates historical aspects in his model.

Fear of female sexuality is no doubt a prerequisite to demonological tenets about witchcraft. The loathing of and antagonism against women which marks the intellectual climate during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reflects very basic conflicts between the sexes. Such antagonisms rise to the surface when both clerical and secular law encourages manifest harassment of women. Demonological arguments may merely be a smoke screen to mask the real issues at stake: a power struggle based on the dichotomy between the sexes. However, witches' sexual fantasies are not as pronounced in the Finnmark material as they are, according to Jones, in the continental material.

A psychoanalytical explanatory model may tell us a good deal about the fundamental conflict between the sexes which is evinced by the witch trials, but it cannot fully account for why the persecution of witches was a temporary phenomenon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here Jones, too, must have recourse to historical factors.

Jones believes that women who were extraordinary and hysterical, those who would have been soothsayers had they lived earlier, were the ones to become witches in the seventeenth century. Such an approach is shared by others, but it hardly fits the set of women in the Finnmark material. I shall not discuss whether or not confessions in the Finnmark material are expressions of women's deep-seated sexual conflicts.

Predominance of Women

The predominance of women in the Finnmark material is striking. On a national scale the female preponderance is 80 per cent, and the entire European witch mania is indeed largely centred on women. Women are more severely punished than men. In my source material 85 per cent of

capital punishments are passed against women whereas other punishments, such as fines, whipping in the pillory, and banishment are levied on men.

The women in the material represent a cross-section of various social groups. During the most intense chains of trials, all women are objects of suspicion regardless of their social status, and whether or not they carry a reputation for witchcraft. Figures 3 and 4 in the Appendix outline the intricate denunciation patterns of the two largest chains. Executions must have generated no end of terror and insecurity in the involved communities and distress for the remaining family members.

How do we explain this predominance of women? Næss takes a reserved view of theories explaining the predominance of women in terms male hatred of women. Instead he believes the division of labour between the sexes is significant in this context. "It was woman's duty to run over to the neighbour to borrow or beg. Woman had to procure the food which man, after all his toil was unable to provide." (Næss 1982: 332). The Finnmark material does not confirm that women held a mendicant role. The material's women work in peat bogs, cut grass for hay or do other outdoor chores. Although men are mainly preoccupied with fisheries, it is unlikely that differences between male and women's radii of action should be the cause of so marked a predominance of women in the material. So the crucial question, why poor women rather than poor men become the victims of witch trials, is not resolved by Næss.

On the one hand, attitudes towards women during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are condescending: Women are evil, feeble creatures that easily fall prey to the Devil. On the other hand, written works at the time reflect fear of woman's cyclical powers. Bovenschen believes that the female cyclical potential generates a number of taboos concerning the female body. She also points out that Church teachings during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are ambivalent with regard to women. This period when Maria-worship is at its apogee, embodies the most ferocious phase of persecution of womankind in the history of Europe. Attitudes fluctuate between devotion (Maria) and terror (the witch).

Europe's attitudes to women during the witch trial era are shared also by people in Finnmark. Antagonism to women permeates seventeenth century cultural history, and sets its stamp on demonological and clerical written works as well as on public rules, regulations, and judicial practices.

The trial material draws attention to women who are charged with having violated social standards. We may ask just what were the standards of well-adjusted women, those who were not indicted? For some reason or other, these other women were considered harmless by the male-dominated power structures. However, the Finnmark source material does not provide data that can enlighten us in this respect.

Witches and Social Structures

The court records give us some indication that a number of the witches and sorcerers may have drawn attention to themselves in their local environment, through quarrels with neighbours or because of conspicuous behaviour. However, information of this kind is fragmentary. People who are labelled as witches are both Sami and non-Sami; some of them are destitute and some possess domestic animals, some are young and some old, some married some unmarried. During its most intense stages, persecution affected far more than those with extraordinary skills or who were conspicuous in any way. All women were at risk. Thus we lack a uniform concept, in terms of social background, of the Finnmark witch.

Some of the persons in the material are salient, for good or for worse. They may possess special "knowledge" that attracts visitors, or they may be local gossip-mongers or masters of repartee. The latter quality distinguishes them in court if they are rude to the bailiff or district lord. Only a very few distinguish themselves by refusing to confess altogether. If we are to consider any of the persons in the material as dissidents, this could only apply to women who explicitly express antagonism to the powers that be. These women are symbols of stubbornness, strength, stamina, and courage. Nevertheless, they also end their lives at the

stake. I cannot consider historical persons from the Finnmark material otherwise than as victims of social forces that confront them from various sources and that converge during the seventeenth century due to coinciding cultural and material factors. The material reveals contradictions at various levels; between Sami and Norwegian cultures, between upper and lower social classes and, not least, between the sexes.

Husbands' Function

What part have the indicted women's husbands played? Have they accepted the imprisonment and sentencing of the women, or have they tried to protect their wives? The environment's patriarchal structure is evident from the wording in the material which stresses that a woman belongs to a man, e.g. "Oluff Nielsen's Lisbett" and "Oluf Rasmussen's woman".

No uniform picture of the husband's role springs from the material. A husband defends his wife in court in some cases (for instance that of Birgitte Erichsdatter) or issues a summons at court against the party who has accused his wife (Kirsten Knutsdatter's trial). In one of the chains the husbands pay bail for their wives. In one case the records state that the husband has succeeded in having the wife and daughter's cases brought before the district court (Karen Nielsdatter and Sigrj Pedersdatter).

Other instances demonstrate that husbands may become convinced of their wives' guilt in the course of interrogation in court, and when a wife has confessed a husband voices the opinion that she deserves to be burnt at the stake (no. 125).

Information in the material about division of labour between the sexes indicates that men and women work together for their livelihoods. Thus it would seem reasonable, in my view, that concepts such as "woman-hatred" and "contempt of women" should mainly apply to academic circles during this period.

Witches in Finnmark and European Witches

Do witches in Finnmark distinguish themselves from witches elsewhere in Europe? To cast light on this question I shall outline the main conclusions of three written works about witch trials, one of them dealing with Europe as a whole, the other focusing on Scotland, and the third on Denmark.

In the book *The World of the Witches*, Julio Carlo Baroja gives an account of what people thought continental witches were capable of doing (Baroja 1964:39-40). They can take the shapes of animals, leave their bodies, fly by night, produce storms, inflict disease upon humans and animals, make philtres and witch's-unguents in which new-born babies figure amongst the ingredients. They attend sabbaths with sexual orgies at special locations. Procedural practices in Europe are mainly inquisitorial and the witches confess to pacts with the Devil.

In *Trollkvinden og hendes anklagere*, Merete Birkelund presents an outline of Danish witchcraft trials. In a number of ways Danish witches differed from their continental contemporaries. Trials were accusatory rather than inquisitorial, witches were indicted for casting evil spells and counter-spells, not for entering into pacts with the Devil, and they practice their witchcraft individually. Danish witch assemblies are described as fairly mundane events, not as bacchanals.

The Scottish witches are described by Christina Lerner in *Crime and the Law*. These witches enter into pacts and attend relatively innocuous sabbaths. A fairly common trait is the witches' mark symbolizing a personal relationship with the Devil. The effects of witchcraft are considered an alternative expression of God's wrath, and serve as explanations of epidemics and financial disasters.

Witches in Finnmark tend to resemble their Scottish colleagues, but similarities can also be found with continental and Danish witches. If Danish provincial witches and continental witches each represent opposing extremes, in terms of a set of characteristics, witches in Finnmark are situated somewhere near the middle, depending on the type of trial. There are

similarities between the chained trials in Finnmark and the Scottish and continental mass trials, whereas single trials are reminiscent of Danish practices. There are other similarities as well between the chained trials and trials in the continental material: subordination to the Devil on the basis of a pact, witches' marks, denunciations, sabbaths, collective operations and transmutation. However, witches in Finnmark are more puritan than their continental counterparts as to how they behave at sabbaths. Sexual aberrations and cannibalism do not occur in the material from Finnmark.

What definitely distinguishes the Finnmark material from all other European sources is the link between spells and Sami magic, "gand". In single trials both men and women are accused of exercising "gand". Trials of this kind are not unlike trials in the Danish material with respect to the substance of the witchcraft: spells on humans or animals leading to disease or death. What distinguishes the Finnmark variety is the method used, since "gand" is incorporated as a potent element. As I have pointed out in my discussion of the material, accusations referring to the exercise of Sami magic apply equally to men as to women. In this sense, it would be more appropriate to speak of "witch people" rather than of "witches" in Finnmark.

Thus my conclusion is that witches in Finnmark are not distinctive in a European context. They clearly share many features with witches in Scotland and some with witches in Denmark. But if the "witch people" in Finnmark are regarded as an entity, they are distinctive in a European context because of the element of Sami magic.

NOTES

WITCHES OF THE HIGH NORTH. The Finnmark witchcraft trials, 1600-1692

Chapter 1 Introduction

- 1) Cf. Einar Niemi: *Vadsøs historie*, vol. 1 (1983:220).
- 2) Hans Eyvind Næss: *Trolldomsprosessene i Norge på 1500-1600-tallet* (1982).
- 3) Sølvi Sogner: "Trolldomsprosessene i Norge på 15-1600-tallet", *Norveg* 25 (1982:176).
- 4) Niemi: *Vadsøs historie*, vol. 1 (1983:228).
- 5) Christine Faurè: "Absent from History", in *Signs*, Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1981, vol. 7, no. 1.
- 6) Robert Mandrou: *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII siècle - une analyse de psychologie historique*, (Paris 1968).
- 7) Carl Ginzburg: *Les Batailles nocturnes*, (Paris 1980).
- 8) Silvia Bovenschen: "The Contemporary Witch, the Historical Witch and the Witch Myth", in *New German Critique* 15/1978:101.
- 9) Caro Baroja 1964, Macfarlane 1970, Thomas 1971, Norman Cohn 1975, i.a.
- 10) Rossel Hope Robbins: *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*, New York 1959.
- 11) Næss (1982:503-567).
- 12) Sogner (1982:174-176).

Chapter 2 Demonology during the 15th and 16th Centuries

- 1) Rossell Hope Robbins' encyclopaedia was published in New York in 1959.
- 2) My references apply to the 1971 edition: *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*. Translated with an introduction, bibliography, and notes by the Reverend Montague Summers (John Rodker 1928 /New York 1971).
- 3) Jean Bodin's *De la Demonomanie des sorciers* was published in French in 1580, in Latin in 1581. By 1604 there were ten editions of the book.
- 4) Robbins (1959:546)
- 5) Amongst them, Samuel de Cassini, Johan Weyer, Reginald Scot, Hermann Witekind, Cornelius Loos.
- 6) *Compendium Maleficarum*. Collected in 3 books from many sources by Brother Francesco Maria Guazzo. Edited with notes by the Reverend Montague Summers. John Rodker 1929 /London 1970.
- 7) According to the learned church fathers, demons could take on any number of shapes. An extraordinary theory about fertilization from incubi and succubi was developed.
- 8) The references apply to Remy: *Demonolatry*. John Rodker 1930 / London 1970. The book appeared as a number of pamphlets on witchcraft edited by the Reverend Montague Summers.

- 9) In 1603 King James became James I of Scotland and England. He published his demonology in Edinburgh in 1597. Towards the end of his life he took a sceptical approach to witchcraft.
- 10) Guazzo belonged to a local Milanese order, Ambrosiana.

Chapter 3 Court Procedures and Trial Categories

- 1) Definition by Egil Gulbrandsen: *Juridisk ordbok* [Dictionary of Law] (Oslo 1980:95).
- 2) Christina Larnier, amongst others, discussed: "Crimen Exceptum? The Crime of Witchcraft in Europe" in Gatrell, Lenmann and Parker: *Crime and the Law. The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500* (London 1980: 49-75).
- 3) According to Birkelund, there never were any real mass trials of witches in Denmark, since accusatorial principles continued to be observed there; cf. Birkelund 1983:14. In his dissertation *Trolldomsporsesserna i Sverige* (Stockholm 1971:246f), Bengt Ankarloo affirms that inquisitorial principles were applied in major chains of trials during the seventeenth century.
- 4) Cf. Merete Birkelund: *Troldkvinden og hendes anklagere* [The Witch and the Prosecutors] (Århus 1983:14).
- 5) Gulbrandsen: *Juridisk ordbok* (Oslo 1980:21).
- 6) In her article in *Norveg*, 1982, Sogner chooses to exclude the so-called «reversed trials» from the witchcraft trial category.
- 7) Cf. O. Rygh: *Norske Gaardnavne*, vol. 17, p.168, nr. 52 Block 1610, 1614, 1661, 1723.

Chapter 4 Major Chains

- 1) The age reference must be understood with reservations, but it may well be that she actually is Swedish or has been in Sweden in her youth.
- 2) The expression "to serve Satan with her body in this world" need not imply sexual services, but merely that she must serve him.
- 3) In her article "Til ild og bål" in *Vardøhus festning 650 år*, Kirsten Bergh points out that the term "admiral" derives from Scotland. The district lord at the time was the Scottish Hans Kønningham.
- 4) According to Alver (1971:114), the origin of the word "balduolden" is unknown, though it may derive from the Norse "bolva", in the meaning "to curse". Reichborn-Kjennerud compares it with "bol" meaning "harm", the English word "bale" meaning misfortune and the Anglo-Saxon "balewa" meaning "evil one".
- 5) Birkelund (1983:16) points out that numbers in the margin suggesting that a questionnaire was used have been found on drafts of court records, for instance in Alsace from 1620. In the final copies, however, records are written out as an unbroken entity.
- 6) Amongst them Einar Niemi, in *Vadsøs historie*, vol. 1.
- 7) Rudwin (1973:86) notes that Asmodeus is called "the Dandy among the Demons". According to demonologists, Asmodeus, who originally was a resplendent angel in the Heavens, was regarded after his fall as one of the most prominent personages in Hell. In the Middle Ages he was called the "Prince of Demons".
- 8) For Ørchech, please consult Henning Sollied's article in *Norsk Slektshistorisk Tidsskrift*, vol. 1, page 230 and the following pages.
- 9) Knud Jensen presides over three trials in Kiberg which all end with death penalties.

- 10) The 1617 decree: On Witches and Sorcerers and their Accomplices, Jacobsen 1966:172-173.
- 11) Places of birth include Senja, Sunnmøre and Bergen.
- 12) They have learnt witchcraft in Senja, Andenes and Stensland, either the Stensland in South Varanger, cf. Rygh NG19, p. 293, or the Stensland at Trondenes, cf. Rygh NG18, p. 13.
- 13) For demographic ordinances, please consult i.a. Roger Tronstad: *Finnmarkshandelen i 1680-åra* (1981:198 and the following pages) Secondary Degree historical thesis, Oslo University.
- 14) In his book *Ambrosius Rhodius, en til Finmarken forvist læge i det 17de aarhundrede* (Kirkenes 1920:21), A.B. Wessel notes that a royal writ from Ivar Krabbe pronounced that they should be imprisoned in Vardøhus fort, having previously been kept in Akershus fort.
- 15) The doctor and astrologist Ambrosius Rhodius must have been one of the most erudite people in Finnmark at the time.
- 16) Anna Rhodius may have sought to win favours from the district lord and his bailiff, but we cannot exclude motives of religious zeal. A.B. Wessel (cf. note 14, above) believes Anna Rhodius had an “unstable disposition”.
- 17) “On 26 June the following took place. Zacharias Anderßen appeared before the court and asked those who were present how Doarette Poffuelsdatter had lost her life. He was answered by the bailiff Niels Söffren who said she had been on the torture rack without a trial”. Excerpt from the District Court Protocol for Finnmark 1647-1668, fol. 165.
- 18) Cf. A.B. Wessel: *Old Letters as Documents of Finnmark's History* (Kirkenes 1980:18).
- 19) Wessel: *Old Letters*(1980:19).
- 20) The wording in the devil's bidding coincides with passages in witchcraft articles in the *Danske Lov* [Danish Law] of 1683, cf. vol. 6, Ch. 1, §9. A previous edition of this act must have been used in Finnmark and influenced the wording of the records.
- 21) Change of title from “district lord” to “district governor” in 1661.

Chapter 5 Minor Chains

- 1) Minor chains include nos. 19, 20, 21, 23, 27, 28, 37, 38, 39, 40, 124, 125.
- 2) Rastj Rauelsen's confession strongly resembles Quive Baardsen's in 1627. Both men have conjured favourable winds that were so fierce as to cause shipwreck.
- 3) The term “mot” [translated here: struck] must be the word Ivar Aasen refers to in his *Norsk Ordbok*, 1873. The definition that seems to fit here is: “a sudden onset of illness,” or more specifically, “paralysis, cramps, something akin to stroke; considered in the past as a consequence of meeting a spectre or a spirit”. I have repeatedly run into this word in the source material in a context suggesting sudden illness at sea.
- 4) Her explanation coincides with theories according to which aggression is generated at a very early age in children due to problems caused by early separation from their mothers.

Chapter 6 Single Chains

- 1) The flames of Hell, a hellish grave, a hellish cauldron.

- 2) Anders Poulsen's confession also have catholic elements such as references to the Virgin Mary and a comment about sacrificing to the church "candles, money and other things".
- 3) When the interrogation is over, Niels Knag proposes that an abominable example be made of such ungodliness, but it is pointed out that no mention is made of rune drums in the law, and it is decided that a decision from Copenhagen should be awaited (Niemi 1983:247).
- 4) The fact that the 1640s are not represented may be due to a void in the court record material. I link the absence of accusatory trials in the 1660s with the major chain of 1662-1663, which was so intense that minor cases in the period following it may have been overlooked.
- 5) Marrite Edisdatter has been brought before the court in 1617 on Hjelmsøy and also earlier in the year of 1626, because she has sworn evil upon another woman.
- 6) The wording of the sentence indicates no distinction between secular and ecclesiastical law, unlike the other incest case in the material.
- 7) Since he is not sentenced for witchcraft, Nils Laas is not included in my lists.
- 8) A year's wages for her consist of "a Lapp dress and a pair of Lapp boots, and in other respects what is paid to Lapp menials" (TF 8, 71b).
- 9) In Table 13, Gunder Tommersen is listed together with accused persons whose cases are deferred.

Chapter 7 Ethnicity

- 1) Olaus Magnus was a Swedish prelate, a cultural historian, and a cartographer. His writings were first published in Swedish in 1909, 1912, 1916 and 1925. The quotations derive from a Swedish edition from 1982.
- 2) I refer here to a 1881-edition, published by Den norske historiske Forening, ed. Dr. Gustav Storm.
- 3) To this very day the need for certain biographical data in order to heal or stop haemorrhages is a recurring trait in folk medicine.
- 4) Johan Schefferus from Strasbourg was a professor of law and rhetoric at Uppsala University. In a preface to the Swedish 1971-edition, the editor emphasizes that Schefferus had a certain flair for what the public wanted, i.e. exotic narratives about Samis. His work enjoyed great popularity in Europe and was translated into English as early as 1674. The chapters about Sami magic, in particular, were so popular that they were translated into German and Dutch.
- 5) In traditional folk medicine such an object is called a witch-cat ("trollkatt").
- 6) Material from these two trials was used by eighteenth century and more recent writers to convey impressions about Sami religious practices, for instance by Knud Leem.
- 7) The unknown fate is Finne-Ellen's (no.120) who is imprisoned with Magdalena Jakobsdatter and brought to Vardøhus. She is never tried. It may be that she dies during imprisonment. Information about her in the trial records gives no complete picture of what has happened.
- 8) In her case the water ordeal is not allowed by the district court, though it was a commonly practised method of extracting confessions just a couple of decades earlier.
- 9) Karen has been chained by the deputy bailiff on imprisonment, and she claims damages for injury and shame.

Chapter 8 The Legal Basis

- 1) The old Gulating Law was written down during the eleventh century, and the articles concerning witchcraft were re-edited in the middle of the following century.
- 2) In the Eldre Borgarting Kristenrett (Ecclesiastical Law) we find in two different places that "Furthermore, it is an irreparable crime if a person goes to Finnmark to seek prophesies" (from *Norges Gamle Lov*, Vol. I:362). The other instance is in NGL, Vol. I:372.
- 3) From *Magnus Lagabøtes Landslov*, Mannhelgebolken, Ch. 4, On Outlawry. Taranger 1970.
- 4) Canon law: "a set of legal instruments that were established by the Catholic church" (Gulbrandsen 1980:101).
- 5) This applied to trials of church and school officials and in litigation between the clergy and parishioners.
- 6) Cf. Ankarloo (1971:65) who refers to *Samling af gl. da. Love IV*, p. 224 and *Den Koldingske Reces* 1558, p. 262.
- 7) Used by King Christian II, i.a., according to Ankarloo (1971:65) who refers to *Samling af gl. da. Love IV*, p. 42.
- 8) Articles 8 and 17 in the 1547 Copenhagen Reces are reiterated as articles 18 and 19 in the 1588 *Koldingske Reces*.
- 9) From *Kong Christian den fjerdes Norske Lovbog av 1604*, publ. by Fr. Hallager and Fr. Brandt, Chr. 1885.
- 10) An article about this journey was published in (ed.) G.I. Willoch: *Vardøhus festning 650 år* (Oslo 1960).
- 11) The penalty is similar to that found in King Christian V's law from 1683, 6-1-13.
- 12) The commission's work has been published in *Forarbeidene til Kong Christian den Femtes norske Lov*.
- 13) From Vol. 6, Ch. I "On False Doctrines, Blasphemous Speech and Witchcraft" in *Kong Christian den V's Norske Lov*. From the Johannes Boppenhausen edition (1768). All references apply to this edition.
- 14) We find a similar example in the witchcraft articles in Vol. 6, Ch I, § 8 in *Kong Christian den V's Norske Lov* (1687): "Whoever has used his hand to defile the Lord in any way, should loose the hand while still alive, and his head shall be nailed to a pole". From the Johannes Boppenhausen edition (1768).
- 15) Ditlev Tamm and Ulf Jørgensen: *Dansk rettshistorie i hovedpunkter*, part II.
- 16) Erik Anners: *Humanitet och rationalism*. Rättshistorisk bibliotek, Vol. 10.
- 17) Stig Iuul's article "Den gamle danske strafferet og dens udvikling indtil slutningen av det 18. århundrede" is in Beckman and Petersen (ed.): *Kampen mod Forbrydelsen*, Vol. 1, Copenhagen, 1951.
- 18) The public felt very strongly about executions when the convict had not received the final sacrament, see for instance Chapter 4, the trials against Dorette Poulsdatter, Peder Krog's wife Ingeborg, Sigrj Jonsdatter, and Gunhild Oelsdatter.

Chapter 9 The Role of the Church

- 1) Part of the religious literature found in churches was published during the sixteenth century. In the 1689 inventory for Vadsø church, for instance, we find that King Fredrik

- II's folio bible from 1589 is listed, together with the note: "j Bible by Fr.:II is very old, needs to be rebound and repaired" (F.pr.r. 1689-1699, fol. 2b). The churches in Skjødning, Hammerfest and Loppa also have Fr.II's folio bible.
- 2) Kingo's hymnal is listed in church accounts for Makkaur and Vadsø.
 - 3) According to *Dansk bibliografisk leksikon*, he lived 1557-1632. He was a parson in Copenhagen and Visby and, for a period, superintendent in Gulland. Towards the end of his life, he was the vicar in Odense. In 1597, he published *En liten Børneforklaring over vor Herres Jesu Christi Pines og Døds Historie*, which was widely used.
 - 4) P. Andersen's homily is listed in the church accounts for Stappen and Hammerfest.
 - 5) Several editions were published of Hemmingsen's *Postilla sen Enarratio Evangelorum* (= homily or exegesis of the gospels). According to Carl S. Petersen's *Illustrert dansk litteraturhistorie* (MCMXXIX:313,314) it contains no "real sermons, but outlines of the like, intended to spur ministers of the church to deep contemplation of the Scriptures."
 - 6) Brochmand's homily *Sabbato Sactificatis. Det er: Guds Betænkning og kort forklaring over alle Evangelier og Epistler* is conceived as a series of lessons. It concentrates on the essence of Luther's doctrine, i.e. justification by faith alone. The homily is listed in Sverholt, Kjølvik, and Vardø before 1700, and in Makkaur shortly after the turn of the century. For 200 years it was used in prayer meetings, and it was last republished in 1862. Brochmand's influence in doctrinaire questions in Scandinavia was considerable with his instruction manual, *Epitome*, which for more than a century was used by Danish parsons.
 - 7) In Denmark, for instance, it was common practice to make wax figures of children and have the parson baptize them. These wax children could then be used for witchcraft.
 - 8) Commandments 1 and 2, Leviticus 19,20, Deuteronomy 18, and Exodus 22,18.
 - 9) From J.C. Jacobsen: *Danske Domme i Trolddomssager i Øverste Instans* (Cbh. 1966:146).
 - 10) Jacobsen 1966:146.
 - 11) Jacobsen 1966:146.
 - 12) *Kbh. Universitetet 1479-1979*, Vol. V, Det teologiske fakultet (Kbh.1980:137).
 - 13) Fæhn refers to the Swedish church historian Hilding Pleijel who calls the 1600-1850 period the "house-rule-period" because of the concept of the three classes which permeated society down to the smallest detail: the scholars (church and clergy), the defence (officialdom, police and military establishment) trade (farmers, businesses, married couples, producers).
 - 14) After the Reformation the marriage ritual emphasizes woman's subordination to man, and we consistently find segregation of the sexes in churches.
 - 15) According to information in *Finnmark Sorenskr. Skifteprotokoll No. 1 1686-96*, private collections included mainly religious and legal literature, and a spattering of geography, entertainment and historiography. Most of the books were in Danish, a few were in German and Latin.
 - 16) On the basis of information in FS Sk. No. 1 1686-96:
 Hymnal: (German) Jacob Glirup (fol. 72b)
 Dominicus Lauridzen, (fol. 42a, fol. 83b)
 (German) Niels Fransen (fol. 281b)
 Bible: Maren Jensdatter, David Jacobsen's widow (fol. 106a)
 Homily: Dominicus Lauridzen, (fol. 83b)
 Niels Fransen (fol. 281b)
 Maria Lem (FS sk. No. 3., fol. 65a).

- 17) A German dissertation about Luther from 1912 discusses his approach to superstition; E. Klinger: *Luther und der Deutsche Volksaberglaube*. Palaestr LVI (Berlin 1912). Luther explains why women are in majority amongst witches in terms of the Bible: "The Devil attacks humans where they are at their weakest, through the female sex" (from Sogner 1982:176).

Chapter 10 Economic and Social Conditions

- 1) A famous example of women accused of causing accidents at sea is the big Copenhagen trial in 1590 when a number of city women were accused of having cast an evil spell on Frederik II's naval fleet which was to have carried the king's daughter, princess Anna, to Scotland to her waiting suitor King Jacob VI (cf. *Vesten for Sø og Østen for Hav*. Trolddom i København og Edinburgh 1590, by Bering Liisberg. Cph. 1909).
- 2) and 3) Cf. Chr. Larnar: "Crimen Exceptum" in *Crime and the Law*: ed.: Gatrell, Lenmann, Parker, London (1980:81).

Chapter 11 Conclusion

- 1) In his study of the Swedish Mora trials during the 1660s and 1670s, Bengt Ankarloo finds that witchcraft accusations did not mainly implicate the have-nots but people from higher social strata.
- 2) The expression "to move the glass" is a reference to spiritualist activities practised in Northern Norway and elsewhere in the country, involving the use of a ouija board. The group sits around a table with a glass upon a large sheet of paper on which the letters of the alphabet are written. A glass is moved by supernatural means from letter to letter, so that words are formed, giving answers to questions posed by participants who lightly touch the glass with their finger tips. This kind of spiritualism has nothing to do with black magic.