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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Anders Poulsen—Sámi Shaman Accused of Witchcraft, 1692

Liv Helene Willumsen

Abstract

This article deals with the trial of Anders Poulsen, an old Sámi shaman who was brought before the court in a witchcraft trial in Finnmark, Norway in 1692, at the very end of a century with severe witchcraft persecution in that area. Poulsen was accused of having owned and used a shaman's drum, and he was interrogated about the drum's symbols. Through a detailed analysis of the court records, it is argued that the context of a severe criminal trial might have influenced Poulsen's explanation. His full knowledge as an experienced shaman did not come to the fore in his confession.

Introduction

The trial of Anders Poulsen in Vadsø in 1692 has for decades attracted the interest of researchers, for several reasons: first, the case is interesting as a witch-trial (Willumsen 2010, 377–95). This is the last case during the Finnmark witch-trials in which the accused lost his life. Poulsen, who was Sámi, was accused 'on the grounds that he has owned and used an instrument they call a rune drum with which he has practised that wicked and ungodly art of witchcraft' (The Regional State Archives of Tromsø [SATØ], The Archives of Finnmark District Magistrate [SF], no. 25, fol. 1r). His drum (*runebomme*) was confiscated before the start of the trial. The final verdict in the case is unknown, since a decision from Copenhagen was to be obtained by the local court and Poulsen was kept in custody awaiting its arrival. However, he was murdered by a mentally unstable person with an axe the day after the closure of proceedings. Second, his confession is intact—a very extensive document: sixteen pages with a rich amount of material. Third, the case is dramatic, as a clear element of injustice is evident, as well as the most tragic outcome imaginable.

As with any historic source, the analysis depends on interpretation. The document is interesting in light of what it reveals about Sámi shamanism. In 1993, Einar Niemi claimed that the court records from this trial are 'the most comprehensive first-hand contemporary source available on traditional Sámi religious practices, and on the use of the magic drum in particular' (Niemi 1993, 61). Niemi later adds that this is one of the most important existing sources of our knowledge on Sámi shamanism (Niemi 2018). In several articles, Rune Blix Hagen refers to Niemi's statements without

disagreement. Hagen claims: ‘As a study of Sámi shamanism, we can read the texts from the Poulsen trial as a kind of gateway to 17th-century ideas of magic’ (Hagen 2002, 326–27). Also with reference to Niemi, Hagen states that this is the best source of knowledge about Sámi shamanism in the northern part of Scandinavia (Hagen 2012, 155). Even Hagen’s *The Sámi—Sorcerers in Norwegian History* (2012), which mostly focuses on the trial of Poulsen, is based on the view that Poulsen’s explanation is credible; this is ‘one of a very small number of drums for which we have the owner’s own explanation of the drum’s symbols and figures’ (Hagen 2012, 16). Niemi and Hagen interpret the court records at face value, as documents that may provide direct insight into traditional Sámi religious practice and shamanism. In this article I wish to counter this assertion and instead ask to what extent we may trust Poulsen’s statements. Can his explanation of the drum’s symbols be accepted as true? The most reliable answer can be found in an analysis of what Poulsen himself states in his confession. Such an analysis must also take into account the context—a trial in which the accused is under heavy pressure.

The trial of Poulsen is a witch-trial. Most witch-trials follow a pattern in which the accused finally confess to what the interrogators wish to hear. Most likely, something similar happened in this case. Poulsen explains many of the symbols on the drum in terms of Christianity. He may have chosen to do so because he believed that his interrogators would perceive this as favourable and it might thus help influence the outcome of the trial. The other possibility, to include elements of Sámi religion, would have been more dangerous, as the legal officials feared traditional Sámi practice. Thus, the records do not necessarily reflect the knowledge of Sámi shamanism that Poulsen possesses. This view was put forward by Ernst Manker already in 1950: ‘Die auffallend christlichen Elemente in dieser Deutung von Poulsen weisen darauf hin, dass er die Figuren so christlich wie möglich erklären wollte, wobei er wahrscheinlich vieles über die ursprüngliche Bedeutung verschwieg’ (The conspicuous Christian elements in Poulsen’s explanation indicate that the symbols were explained as Christian as possible, while he probably kept silent about the original meaning) (Manker 1950, 43). In light of such an interpretation of Poulsen’s confession, genuine knowledge about the drum’s symbols remains secret. My analysis is based on courtroom discourse, a comprehensive international field of research that owes much to the linguistic turn from the 1990s. Such an approach will help counteract ossified textual understanding, in which written documents are only recounted at a superficial level. In the following I will discuss this problem complex in light of Poulsen’s confession, the origin of the court records, and approximately contemporary sources that describe Sámi shamanism.

Poulsen’s trial has been widely described by historians (Niemi 1999, 84; Pollan 1993, 32 and 97; 2002, 24–31; Hagen 2002, 2006, 2014; Willumsen 2008, 227–45; 2013a, 298–319; 2013b, 336–53). Earlier descriptions and analyses include the account by Niels Knag, 1694 (Solberg and Brock Utne 1938, 1–32); the ‘Instruks for helligdagsvaegtere’ (Instruction for the guardians of holy days), 1711 (Hammond 1787, 27–34; Skjelmo and Willumsen 2017, 133); and Paus’s account of 1712 (Skjelmo and Willumsen 2017, 134). In 1717, Isaac Olsen wrote ‘Om Lappernes Vildfarelser og

Overtro' (About the Sámi delusion and superstition) (Qvigstad 1910). Olsen also wrote 'Underdanigst Undrettning om Nordlandene' (Subservient report on Nordlandene) in 1718 (Løøv 1994). In addition, I would mention the Nærø manuscript, 1723; the writings of Thomas von Westen (Skjelmo and Willumsen 2017, 202–203 and 236); Jens Kildal, 1730 (Reuterskiöld 1910, 97–98); Knud Leem (Leem 1767); Jens Andreas Friis (Friis 1871); and *Major Peter Schnitlers Grenseeksaminasjonsprotokoller 1712–45* (Nissen and Kvamen 1962). All of these documents reveal a familiarity with the Poulsen trial, as do Just Qvigstad and Solberg and Brock Utne from the first half of the 1900s (Skjelmo and Willumsen 2017, 236–40). In the Nordic context, works that deserve mention include Torneus, and Henric Forbus, 1727 (Kjellström and Rydving 1988; Reuterskiöld 1910, 31–36); Sigurd Agrell (1934); Toivo Immanuel Itkonen (1946); Ernst Manker (1938, 1950); Qvigstad and Wiklund (1899); K. B. Wiklund (1983); and Lindin & Rydving (2007).

The attention paid by researchers to the witch-trial of Poulsen has not abated during the last five decades. Here, I wish to emphasize the innovative works by Håkan Rydving (1988, 1995, 2007, 2010). Hagen's and Pollan's articles have the character of re-narration of the court records. Stein Roar Mathisen's article discusses museum collections of Sámi drums (Mathisen 2015). My own works comprise analyses of the trial as well as publication of sources with textual commentary (Willumsen 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2013b, 2013c, 2016, 203–37).

In the following I will address four material aspects of the court records: first, the trial's discourse, including Poulsen's explanation of the drum's symbolism, the court records in their context, and the value of this source as information on Sámi shamanism. Methodologically, the analysis is based on Gérard Genette's work *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* and two sequels, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* and *Fiction and Diction* (Genette 1980, 1988, 1993). Genette points out that it is possible to listen to a variety of discursive 'voices' in texts that have a narrative structure. He refers to 'judicial narratives' as texts for which an analysis of discourse may be productive. A set of court records is in its entirety regarded as a narrative penned by a scribe, and narrative structures are seen as constitutive of the text's structure at various levels. In the following, the main emphasis will be placed on Poulsen's voice and what it communicates, but the voice of the law and the scribe will also be included. In this case, no witnesses are heard.¹

The second aspect is linked to the interpretation of the drum's symbolism. Mostly, we hear Poulsen's voice, responding to questions and giving a long and detailed explanation. This was also the issue that the court authorities wanted to elucidate in particular.

The third aspect is linked to the contextual understanding of the source. I argue that, in this case, an analysis of the drum's symbolism is totally dependent on establishing an understanding of the document within the framework in which it was written—that is, a trial. A core issue is the drum's content when this framework is taken into account.

The fourth aspect is linked to what this document reveals about Sámi shamanism. This is a controversial topic. I wish to elucidate Poulsen's explanation in relation to

approximately contemporary literature that provides similar information. Such a review will throw Poulsen's account into sharp relief and shed light on elements that one might have expected to find, but that are absent.

The Trial's Discourse

Within courtroom discourse, a key research issue pertains to the scribe's possible influence. Researchers have taken different positions. Some believe that we can have a high degree of trust in the content of the court records. Others claim that the records can be regarded as a textual construction, making it impossible to relate it to a real event 'behind' the text (Macha 2005; Topalovic 2004; Rushton 2001). My opinion is that the scribe was a professional who saw it as his objective to record the proceedings of the court as correctly as possible. This view is supported by numerous researchers; in particular, the extent of orality has been pointed out (Kryk-Kastovsky 2000, 2006, 2008, 209; Doty 2007, 26, 27 and 39). The same feature has been identified in Finnmark court records (Willumsen 2013c, 295; Ong 1988, 37–45).

This notwithstanding, confessions and entire sets of court records are written documents. They occupy a special position between oral and written text, as emphasized by Elisabeth Cohen (Cohen 1993, 2007). She points out the necessity of 'double modes of reading'. On the one hand, these texts can be read as direct descriptions of the world. On the other, they can reveal complicated meanings. A close reading that includes both of these reading modes reveals a range of accents. Each voice appears distinctively (Cohen 2007, 95–96). Cohen argues for an individualization of voices and the records' complexity. My study adds to Cohen's approach by pointing to the cultural dimension entangled in Poulsen's 'voice', as it displays an encounter in the courtroom between two cultures, where ethnicity matters. Cohen's position is subscribed to by several Scandinavian researchers (Toivo 2008; Lennersand 2006; Lennersand and Oja 2001; Eilola 2009; Östling 2006). Toivo and Lennersand and Oja have focused on women accused of witchcraft and acquitted, paying attention to individual life-long studies. My study adds to a closer look at what happens in the courtroom. Eilola and Östling have written about the Swedish Blåkulla trials of 1668–76; Eilola on testimonies of child witnesses, Östling on motif analysis. This article, which is more detailed than my previous studies, adds to a broader spectrum of discourse elements and to a clearer contextualizing of the sources (Willumsen 2013a, 2015).

There are several aspects of the scribe's role that need to be taken into account. Poulsen was relieved of his drum on 7 December 1691 and interrogated the following day. The court session took place on 9 and 10 February 1692. The scribe, district recorder Niels Knag, included in the proceedings in February 1692 the interrogation of December 1691. In addition, the court used an interpreter who recounted to the court what Poulsen declared, and to Poulsen what was said in the courtroom. This means that the formulation of the court records includes several linguistic steps. Formally, the language is adapted to the style of legal records. Most likely, however, the gist of Poulsen's confession has been preserved. The scribe has made every effort

to achieve a detailed and accurate record, and has sought to capture vernacular speech in writing (Willumsen 2008, 2013b, 2013c, 2015).

An understanding of a set of court records as a possible entryway into a mental universe is shared by many researchers. Malcolm Gaskill claims that testimonies from witch-trials provide access to the popular imagination (Gaskill 2001, 56–58). He is correct in claiming that historic narratives are complex texts that permit semantic interpretation on the basis of sources underlying the documents. In narratives that are based on facts, the scribe is forced to recount the events that actually took place. Johan Tønnesson says that ‘subject-oriented prose’, or factual prose, mainly has a direct relationship to reality (Tønnesson 2008, 24). This is as true for court records as it is for all historical narratives: “‘historic worlds’ are subject to restrictions that are not imposed on the worlds of fiction’ (Doležel 1999, 247). Obvious issues of source criticism—such as who is speaking and what is the intention and motivation of the narrative in a legal framework—are crucial to any analysis of court records.

Anders Poulsen’s Voice

Through a close reading of the text—in its sense of a methodological approach—it is possible to list not only what Poulsen said, but also the questions he was asked. By uncovering so-called shadow questions, we can retrospectively demonstrate what he was asked on the basis of his answers.

It is Poulsen’s voice as it was recorded that presents the explanations of the drum’s symbolism. The drum is divided into five rows, with several symbols in each row (see Figure 1). A main question is what Poulsen’s voice communicates with regard to the symbolism on the drum.

The first row contains three symbols: a human figure ‘whom he calls *Ilmaris*. This is tempest and bad weather’; a human figure called *Diermis*, ‘This is thunder’; and ‘The figure of a wild reindeer that he calls *Gvodde*. It is a wild reindeer’ (italics in the original; SATØ, SF 25, fols. 2rv). Poulsen states that it is when God’s help is requested that the effect of the figures is achieved. It should be noted that ‘God’s help’ and similar expressions were commonplace outside the courtroom, since it was always risky to present oneself as too powerful with regard to magic. God’s name is only mentioned with reference to positive effects. About *Ilmaris*, it is said: ‘When he prays to God, this creature contains and calls back his bad weather, and he can also make bad weather, but he [Anders] says it is sinful to ask for that’ (fol. 2v). About *Diermis*, it is said: ‘When God is prayed to, *Diermis* is helpful in that when there are floods and a lot of rain, he will call back the weather, and this *Diermis* has no power unless God gives it to him’ (fol. 2v). Poulsen also confessed ‘that *Ilmaris* can cause evil and bad weather that damages ships and boats, but *Diermis* can also make good weather again and prevent mishaps when God allows him to do so’ (fol. 2v). About *Gvodde*, it is said: ‘when God is prayed to, gives good fortune in the hunt for wild reindeer. If the rune drum is beaten, and the ring will not dance for this reindeer, the one who asks for good hunting will not get any reindeer, no matter how hard he tries’



Figure 1. Anders Poulsen's original shaman's drum. © RDM-SVD/DSS/The Sámi Museum, Karasjok, Norway. Used with permission.

(fol. 2v). Poulsen frequently repeated the words 'when God is prayed to' (fols. 2rv). In the records, 'god' is mostly written with a small initial, possibly because the scribe wanted to indicate that this does not refer to the God of Christianity. However, 'God Father', 'Christ', 'God's Son', 'God's woman', 'Our Father', and 'the holy Ghost' are capitalized throughout, which indicates that the scribe has emphasized the Christian God when recording (Willumsen 2010, 381–82, 385–86, 387 and 389–90).

The symbols in the first row are thus explained as two human figures and a reindeer; they exert their effect only when the shaman prays to God. However, Poulsen emphasizes God's omnipotence and the powerlessness of the symbols as such. God is in a position to delegate power to His helpers, who are represented on the drum, but the helpers may act only on God's command. Such is the nature of Ilmaris's ability to cause foul weather to harm boats, and Diermis's ability to cause the weather to clear up and to prevent bad weather. Moreover, Poulsen told the court that it was a sin to pray for bad weather to happen (fol. 2v). This indicates a distinction between using the drum for good or evil ends. The same applies to the figure of the wild reindeer: it can bring good as well as bad luck. Poulsen's explanations are not unambiguous. On the one hand, he emphasizes the positive effects of practising the drumming ritual. On the other, he divulges that the drum can also be used with evil intent. The symbols can become effective through power

conferred by the Christian God, whom Poulsen confesses to be the God he believes in and worships. The symbols of Ilmaris and Diermis are linked to favourable weather, in general terms. More specifically, Gvodde is linked to Sámi industry, which presupposes that cultural factors of interpretation are activated.

The second row contains five figures. The first is a circle with an intersecting line: ‘He calls it *Peive*, and it is the sun’ (italics in the original; fol. 2v). When God is invoked, ‘it will yield sunny and beautiful weather and light air, particularly when the reindeer are calving and when grain and grass are supposed to grow’ (fol. 2v). The second figure is a human likeness ‘whom he calls the *child Jumal*, God’s child, or God’s son the Christ. When he is prayed to, he absolves of all sin’ (italics in the original; fol. 3r). The third figure is a human likeness ‘whom he calls *Jumal Etziem*, God the father. He castigates for all sins and, other than that, helps and supports, commands and punishes when asked to’ (italics in the original; fol. 3r). The fourth figure is a church, ‘which he calls *Dom Kirch* and which he worships because he has made it himself’. He says that therein he receives ‘absolution, peace in the soul and a Christian death. Be you dead or alive, that same church will help you’ (fol. 3r). The fifth figure is a human likeness whom he calls *Engil*, supposedly the Holy Spirit: ‘When prayed to he will absolve of all sin, so that you become a new and clean man, when he wants to help’ (fol. 3r).

Peive differs somewhat from the others in this row, since it is linked to the blessing of good weather. The sun is a symbol of nature, and is similar to the figures in the first row. Three of the figures are religious symbols with a Christian meaning. The Trinity is a key feature of Poulsen’s explanation: God the Son, Christ, forgives all sins when he is prayed to. God the Father punishes the sinful, but provides succour when petitioned. The *Engil* figure, explained as the Holy Spirit, forgives all sins when petitioned, so that those helped are renewed and purified. The last figure is a church. In general, the symbols in the second row are more strongly linked to Christian dogma than those in the first row. The figures act only when God is petitioned, and Poulsen refers to God in the singular.

Poulsen adds some comments on the God depicted: ‘The God that is worshipped, as has often been reiterated, are those figures that he has painted, which are related to the deities about whom, he says, his mother taught him’ (fol. 3r). I interpret the first part of this statement as information on the figures. The second part, however, includes an astounding piece of information: Poulsen says that it is his mother who has taught him about the persons of the deity—implicitly the Christian teaching. What emerges elsewhere in the court records about his mother’s religious convictions is that she and a Sámi man in Torne Lappmark are said to have taught Poulsen his craft—‘[they] shared the same faith’ (fol. 2r)—implying that his mother believed in the old Sámi religion, and had not converted to Christianity. Here, we see a clear contradiction between what Poulsen states here and what he says elsewhere; the demarcation he makes elsewhere indicates that he has converted to Christianity, while his mother still holds on to the old faith.

In conclusion to the explanation of the symbols in the second row, Poulsen adds information about some staffs painted next to the persons in all of the

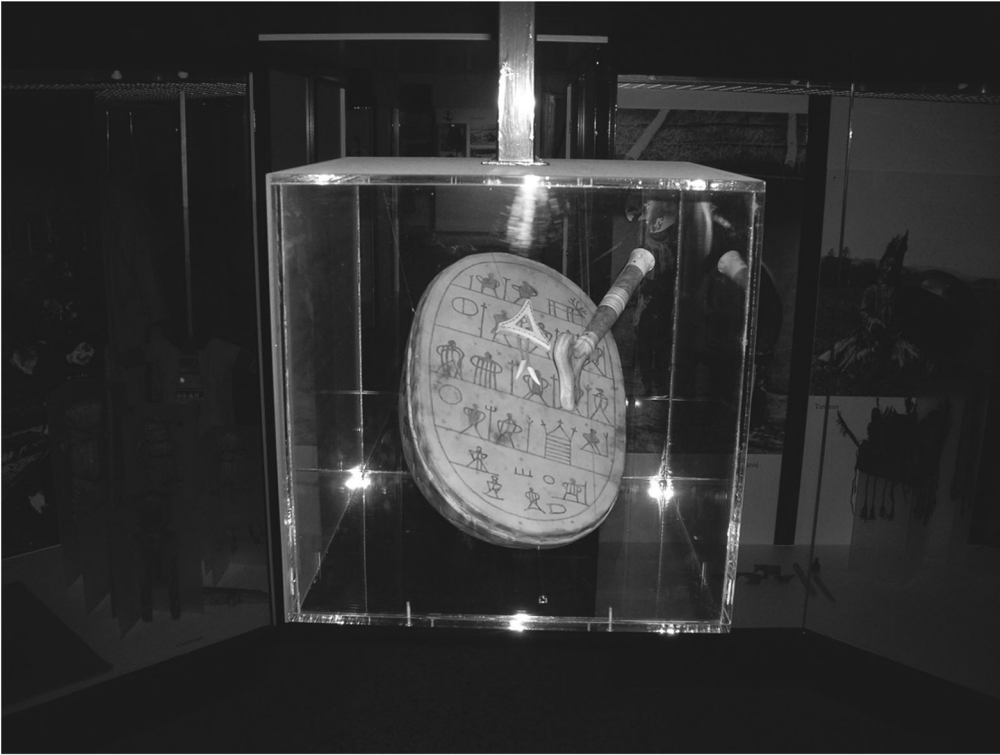


Figure 2. Copy of Anders Poulsen's shaman's drum. © RDM-SVD/DSS/The Sámi Museum, Karasjok, Norway. Used with permission.

rows: 'Moreover, each of the painted figures holds a staff which he calls *Juncher Sabbe* or *Great Master Sabbe*, which is a *Juncher's* staff or the staff of the great Lord, for he says that just as the masters on earth hold staffs, so do these persons' (italics in the original; fol. 3r). Holding a staff in one's hand is here explained as an attribute of high social status. *Juncher* (which actually signifies a young nobleman) was a title used for the supreme official at Vardøhus Fortress, and one that Poulsen most likely associated with the highest authority below the king. In Poulsen's interpretation, the figures on the drum could be likened to earthly noblemen or officials—a linkage between religious and secular authority. The significance of these staffs is linked to the symbols painted on the drum (see Figure 2).

In the third row we see five figures, and for the first time, some are explained as portraying women. First, the likeness of a woman 'whom he calls *St Anna*. He says she is *Mary's* sister who assists//*Mary* when she gives succour, but in other respects, she can do nothing unless *Mary* wants her to' (fols. 3rv). According to the Bible, *St Anne* is *Mary's* mother; so this is a deviation from Christian teaching. The second figure is also a woman, 'whom he gives various names, *Mary*, *Jumal Enne*, *Jumal Ache*. This is *Mary*, the mother of Christ, God's wife. When prayed to she will in particular help women in confinement, and she is conducive to absolution from sin, and she helps and is worshipped at God's side' (italics in the original; fol. 3v).

The interpretation of Mary as Christ's mother accords with the Bible, but an explanation of Mary as God's 'wife' is not in conformity with Christian teaching. The fact that Mary can absolve sins and is worshipped 'at God's side' gives her a very important position among the symbols.

In addition, the third row includes 'Three figures of humans whom he calls *Julle Peive*, [or] *Julle masters*. They are Christmas days or Christmas masters who rule over Christmas. *Oucht Jule Peiv* is the master of the first Christmas day, *Gougt Jule Peive* of the second Christmas day, *Gvolme Jul Peive* of the third Christmas day' (italics in the original; fol. 3v). It is essential to observe these days as holy: 'If anybody defiles these days, God will punish that person, but if somebody honours them and then prays to God for something, then these days are exhibited to God and it will be submitted that so and so has honoured the days, and God will help for that very reason' (fol. 3v). Poulsen has obviously been asked further follow-up questions, but has refrained from saying anything more. The explanation is clearly linked to Christmas as a Christian holiday and to the Third Commandment. God as blessing and punishing is a portrayal equivalent to the second row.


Five figures are painted in the fourth row: a circle representing the moon, the figures of two men going to church, the church to which Poulsen belongs, and a person coming to church from the opposite direction. Regarding the symbol of the moon, Manna, Poulsen explained: 'When God is worshipped, it shines brightly and nocturnal weather will be fine even if there is a heavy cover of clouds' (fols. 3v-4r). The court records then have the entry: 'He would confess no more', meaning that he has been asked to elaborate, but refused to say anything more. The second and third symbols in this row are 'Two figures of men whom he calls *Olmoug Mane Kirche*. These are people who go to church, and he considers them no more than images of people going to church' (italics in the original; fol. 4r). Next follows the picture of a church:


It supposedly represents the church in the community where he is staying. He says that both he and others make sacrifices to the church, offering things such as tallow candles and money. Yet, he adds, nobody sacrifices unless they receive help. The sacrifice is given to the minister of the appropriate church, of which the one depicted here is merely a symbol. Item, when somebody is ill or has reindeer problems or is afflicted in other ways, then prayers and promises are rendered to this church, and when someone is succoured, the church will be given what was promised. (SATØ, SF 25, fol. 4r)


The final symbol in this row is 'The figure of a man standing on the other side of the church. This is supposedly someone coming from the opposite direction, on his way to church' (fol. 4r). The four symbols are associated with the church building and attendance, and offerings are made on condition that prayers are heard.

In the fifth and final row there are seven figures, three of which are demons and one a demon woman. In addition, there are three symbols not in the shape of humans, but associated with hell. The first figure is 'a woman who is supposedly the wife of the shackled devil at the bottom whose name, he says, he does not know' (fol. 4r). The second figure is explained as 'The figure of a human standing next to the first one. This is, he says, a devil that kills people and who apparently is disease' (fol. 4r). The third figure is explained as 'The figure of a human just in front of the one just mentioned. This is, he says, that very devil who is on the loose now and who

rules in Hell and drifts about in the world. For him he has no name' (fol. 4r). This demon escaped when God bound the chained demon described below. The fourth, fifth, and sixth symbols are drawn in the court records:

4: A figure that looks like this , which he calls *Hilvet Tol*, the flames of Hell. This is the fire that consumes people's souls in Hell,

5: A figure that looks like this , which he calls *Hilvet Tarve Giedme*, Hell's tar cauldron. In it, people's souls are boiled in Hell,

6: A figure that looks like this , which he calls *Hilvet Haufd*, Hell's grave. All people who believe in the Devil are thrown into it, and God is the one to throw them. (italics in the original; SATØ, SF 25, fol. 4v)

The final figure is a bound demon, 'A human figure with a line drawn from his neck to a support. This he calls *Hvenaales Gvolisis*, and it is a shackled devil in chains, the one who was tied up when God created the world' (fol. 4v). It happened that 'God was wearing iron shoes when he found this one and trampled him underfoot so that he vanished in a great bog' (fol. 4r). The explanation of the various demons and of hell is coloured by the Bible and ideas about punishment in the afterlife. The souls of humans, not their bodies, are consumed by the flames of hell. The souls are boiled in a tar cauldron. This presentation deviates from the common images of boiling water in hell. Reference is made to several demons: one represents disease, one is loose, and one is bound. A connotation relating to God's creation of the world and the punishment that awaits those who believe in The Evil One is clear. The demons all feature in the fifth row, an area of fear. Danger is situated near the lower part of the drum. The presentation is very direct in terms of imagery and explanatory factors. No comments from the court officials were added, and no follow-up questions were asked.

After the explanation of the symbols, Poulsen continued by explaining how he used the drum to find answers to whatever he wanted to know. He had two hammers made of reindeer antler. One of them 'he calls *Qiaarve Vetzier*. With one of them he beats steadily on the drum when he wants to officiate' (italics in the original; fol. 4v). The other was 'a small, hollow, brass top with a brass ring on it, which he calls *Palm*. He puts it on top of the rune drum' (italics in the original; fol. 4v). Poulsen demonstrated to the court how this was done, 'raising and lowering the drum with his hand, twisting or holding it now and then, all the while beating with the hammer. He says that by means of the brass top he will learn whether this or that is true or not true' (fol. 4v). The direction in which the pointer danced was significant. If the pointer danced in the direction of the sun, 'the person he is playing for will know good fortune' (fol. 5r). If it danced in the opposite direction, the person he was playing for would not be blessed by good luck. 'If it descended so far down as to stop next to one of the figures in the fifth row, God was angry at the person he was playing for. This person had to say a lot of prayers before the pointer would move away again. In this way, God let this person see that he was sinful' (fol. 5r).

Poulsen then took up his drum and demonstrated the way he played it. First he crossed himself and then the drum before reciting the Lord's Prayer in Karelian (Finnish). Furthermore, he recited the prayer 'Ætziem, achie, ja barne, ja Engilen,

vaeche don, and other utterances that were supposed to mean God our Father, your Mother, and your Son, and the Holy Spirit, send us your help' (fol. 5r). He looked at his figures,

and the top danced up and down and he beat with his hammer and uttered these words to the gods, And you God who hath created Heaven and Earth, the sun and the moon, and the stars, all humans, and birds, and all the fishes and the sea. And he confessed his sins saying, I am a sinful human, old and unworthy, I will be better off dead if you will not help the one we are pleading for, and he promises he will never again sin, and suchlike utterances of worship. (SATØ, SF 25, fol. 5r)

The practical demonstration of the drum paves the way to an expanded understanding of the implications of the word 'god'. Poulsen's inclusion of a plural form, 'the gods', shows that his understanding of the concept of god is not as unambiguous as he has previously attempted to indicate. Although he has deliberately sought to present the one God of Christianity, his explanation here starts to waver, revealing that when he is playing his drum he is turning to multiple gods. This demonstration brings Poulsen closer to the situation he has been in during his activities as a shaman, causing his old beliefs to shine through. However, it should be borne in mind that the expression 'gods' might be the work of the scribe.

In the following, Poulsen was asked whether he was able to lift curses. He answered that 'he can lift the spell with the aid of his gods and return it so that it falls upon the one who cast the spell in the first place' (fol. 5r). Again, Poulsen refers to gods in the plural; more than one god is involved. He proceeded to demonstrate how he lifted curses by playing his drum until the ring landed on one of the demons in the fifth row. Then the curse left the person who was under it. He said that in this way he had helped many in 'Sverig lapmarch' (Swedish Lapland), but nobody in Norway. He also showed how the ring would dance if a thief should be punished. He would continue playing 'so that he withers and shrivels until he is nothing but a dry tree' (fol. 5v). This part of Poulsen's confession revolves around the shaman's ability to use his drum for purposes of divination. However, when it came to locating a thief, he emphasized that only God could mete out punishment. He also stated that by praying to God when playing his drum, he could bring good fortune to the reindeer and help women in labour (fol. 5v). Poulsen claimed that he could obtain an answer from his drum by holding it high up in the air, just as when two people speak to each other (fol. 6r).

Poulsen emphasized that he was only doing good when playing his drum, and stated that Christ had prohibited him, as well as his son, from doing anything evil. This statement implies that both Poulsen and his son were able to cause harm, but had chosen not to use this power. This admittance might indicate a low awareness of the courtroom situation and consequent ability to adjust his answers to suit the interrogators' questions. Yet his repetitive denial of having used the rune drum for evil purposes shows that he wanted to convince the court that he only had performed good deeds.

He was fearful of what might happen during the further course of the trial. A clear indication of this emerges at the end of his confession, when he declared that of all the

acts he said he was able to perform, ‘he would not admit to having officiated in or practised any of them here in this country, and he *protested* his innocence, saying he has done no harm’ (italics in the original; fol. 6r). He also stated that he had not forsworn God or his Christian faith, and when he worshipped the gods depicted on the drum, he understood them to be God in Heaven. Moreover, ‘and since he has understood that the authorities object to his using the rune drum, he will relinquish it now, *and believe in God in Heaven just like other people*’ (italics added; fol. 6r). This last sentence more than hints that in spite of his frequent assurances of having faith in the one Christian God, his real beliefs still remained with the old Sámi religion.

On 10 February 1692, the trial continued:

The above Anders Pouelsen [*sic*] was called and, when asked, replied that when he learnt the rune drum craft from his mother, it happened because he wanted to know how people were faring far away, whether they were enjoying good fortune, and he wanted to know whether travellers will be in luck, and he wanted to help people in distress, and with his art he wanted to do good, and his mother said that she would teach him such an art. He himself had not asked to learn. He was questioned further at length, and he abided by his previous confession and did not change it in any way, nor would he confess more about his activities than that this was an art of playing the drum with which he had done no harm. (SATØ, SF 25, fols. 6rv)

The verdict included a review of the main elements in Poulsen’s explanation, ‘His immensely godless and devilish art’ (fol. 7v). It is confirmed that he had learned from his mother ‘and about her he says she was not of the right faith in God in Heaven like other people, something he also says about his son Christopher’ (fol. 7v), and that his son can speak ‘with stones’ and obtain answers, just as he himself can, from his drum. It is also emphasized that his son ‘was wild and reckless when he was learning, [which] *is highly outrageous, particularly in such desolate areas as these, where a great many people are unenlightened as to the true faith and worship of God*’ (italics added; fol. 8r). The remote location of Finnmark is the reason why the inhabitants are not enlightened, and also why people turn in misguided and sinful directions: ‘many of them, when subjected to something, are far more prone to seek advice from such witch people than to turn to God in prayer and invocation’ (fol. 8r). This is a difficult case to rule on, however, and a final decision cannot be made in Vadsø:

Hence it was highly necessary to make a hideous example of such godlessness, so as to promote the right way of invoking God. Now, since such acts of worship of false gods as Anders Pouelsen has voluntarily confessed to having practised and depended on, is not referred to in the statutes as punishable acts (seeing that no complaints have been levelled at him for loss of life, health or property), the illustrious Regional Governor has *decided*, in observance of recommendations, after my having *consulted* with His Honour about the matter, that this *case*, which is indeed a most unusual one, requiring due consideration from superior authorities, be deferred until such time as a reply from superior authorities in Copenhagen be forthcoming about the matter. In the meantime, the *records* should be written and sent down [*to Copenhagen*], and Anders Pouelsen should be kept in secure custody. His property shall be delivered to the deputy bailiff unless he can produce as adequate a guarantee or bail for his person and his belongings as the deputy bailiff will be content with in accordance with the laws. (italics in the original; SATØ, SF 25, fol. 8r)

An overview of Poulsen’s and his wife’s means and assets was read out in court. In total, his estate had a value of thirty-two *våger* and twelve *mark*.

The court reconvened in Vadsø on 22 February on the matter of a murder. Poulsen had been killed. The murderer was Villum Gundersen, a mentally unstable person. Poulsen's heirs demanded a life for a life, but the court ruled 'that Villum Gundersen [sic], who had taken leave of his senses when he committed this killing, should not be punished with loss of life but that out of any belongings he possesses or may yet possess, he should pay the full fine for a man's life' (SATØ, SF 25, fol. 15r).

Content and Context

Contextualization is necessary. All of Poulsen's statements were made during a trial in which he was accused of witchcraft and could expect a severe sentence. The trial was conducted in the late 1600s, after a century of intense persecution of witches in Finnmark with frequent death penalties. All new accusations of witchcraft invariably signalled a serious outcome. This provides the framework within which Poulsen's confession must be understood.

The explanation of the symbols is presented through Poulsen's voice as it has been recorded in the court records. Poulsen explains four of the symbols as referring to nature: sun, moon, storm, and thunder. A further figure is described as symbolizing a wild reindeer. All of the remaining symbols, which account for most of the images on the drum, are permeated by Christianity. The drum's language as a religious language appears to have been flexible, since new content and new approaches have facilitated new interpretations of the figures painted on the drum (Pollan 1997, 24).

The ambiguity of Poulsen's explanation applies to several aspects, including the intent behind the use of the drum. He emphasizes the blessings granted by God through the figures on the drum—the positive effects of the performance of his drumming. Yet he also reveals that the drum can be used for evil ends, especially if the demons are activated.

An inconsistency appears also with regard to the identity of his teacher; he vacillates between naming his mother and a Sámi man. Based on the wording of Poulsen's answers, we can infer the kinds of questions he was asked. He was asked what kind of god he worshipped. He answered that the god he worshipped was those likenesses and figures he had painted of the persons in the deity, 'about whom, he says, his mother taught him' (fol. 3r). At the same time, he states that his mother did not share the Christian faith. Thus, we must assume that she had taught him the symbols in accordance with the Sámi religion, while he explains the same symbols to the court in light of Christianity. It would also be possible to interpret the statement about the mother in the way that she shared Poulsen's own misconceptions about the Christian faith. This is not likely because it is repeated several times that the mother did not have the right faith in God in Heaven like other people (Willumsen 2010, 390). Inconsistencies in terms of the interpretation also appear when Poulsen explains the persons with staffs likened to earthly noblemen or officials.

The reliability of Poulsen's confession can be questioned. Mostly, it is a narrative rendered in indirect speech, providing information about his life and about the drum. The biographical information is most likely correct, but the same can hardly

be said about the work of a Sámi shaman. To be sure, some elements are convincing, such as his practical demonstration of how the drum was played. This was a shaman with long experience, and who showed emotion: with tears streaming down his cheeks he lifted the drum into the air and played it, for everybody in the court to see.² In addition, he most likely gave a correct account of the occasions when the drum would be used. As a source of knowledge about Sámi shamanism, however, his confession presents some problems (Niemi 1993, 61; 1999, 84; Rydving 1995, 35–42; Hagen 2012). It might be correct about nature symbols and reindeer husbandry, hunting, and other aspects of the traditional Sámi way of life in the North. It is questionable, however, whether Poulsen's confession as a whole can be deemed reliable. Poulsen attempted to adapt the content of his confession to the doctrines of the Protestant church, the details of which were unknown to him. On the one hand, he repeated standard Christian phrases. On the other, his confession was made inconsistent by his sudden veering between professing his belief in one God and declaring faith in multiple gods. Especially, his final remark about how from now on he would believe only in the true, Christian God, indicates that he had belonged to the traditional Sámi religion all his life.

Poulsen's interpretation of the symbols on the drum is disparate, and we need to take a closer look at the way in which he describes the various figures in order to assess his interpretation. He constantly emphasized that God helps those who turn to Him in prayer and declared that he used his drum for good ends. In the court, however, he faced a situation where he needed to convince the officials of his Christian faith. Nature symbols were easy to interpret within a framework that he knew well from his daily life. The figures that signified the Holy Trinity he could also explain in light of Christian teaching. The same went for the drum's ability to cause harm by using the image of a God who punishes as well as blesses. The same applied to the figures that signified churches and people going to church. However, Poulsen seems to have painted the symbols of the churches long before the trial; so they might also denote that Poulsen went to church, as Sámi culture had coexisted with Christianity for a long time.

Serious problems arose when Poulsen came to the fifth row and the demons. He explained that if the ring stopped there, it showed that the person being played for was a sinful person who therefore would receive punishment. The authorities regarded this as devil-worship. The various elements in Poulsen's confession should be differentiated. Some interpretations explain the drum's potential to answer questions, reliable in light of the old use of the drum. Other interpretations are linked to Protestant Christianity and explain the symbols within this frame of reference. These are problematic in light of his use of the drum as a shaman. His confession is characterized by multiple explanatory strategies. Since we may question the reliability of Poulsen's confession, his description is unlikely to present a complete picture of the knowledge and insight of an experienced shaman.

The reason for this is the particular framework around his confession. Poulsen was interrogated by officials of the law in a criminal trial. The outcome of the case was unknown, but negatively charged. He would have had good reason to be

apprehensive. He did his best to convince the officials that he obeyed the Ten Commandments and went to church. He was in a difficult situation, since he obviously had lived in conflict between his own Sámi background and Norwegian culture. The voice we can hear in Poulsen's confession is not consistent. He veers between different 'truths'. He is unclear about the use of the drum, and insists on the positive effects when God is turned to in prayer, but is evasive on the issue of who is the helper when the drum is used for evil ends. Most likely, the interpretation of the symbols on the drum would have been different if made in a context other than a trial.

The Voice of the Law

The voice of the law is heard most distinctly at the beginning and end of the court records, while the entire middle is devoted to Poulsen's narrative. The drum was displayed on the court table. The deputy bailiff, Olle Andersen, wanted the confession that Poulsen had made in the presence of himself, the judge, and 'Finne lensmannen'—the local police constable—to be read out and confirmed. He 'assumed' that this confession would testify to Poulsen's sorcery and abuse of God's holy name, and 'claimed' this should not go unpunished (SATØ, SF 25, fols. 1rv). This reveals that Andersen himself regarded Poulsen's use of the drum as ungodly and as a punishable offence. The choice of verbs shows Andersen's attitude. Previously, words such as 'diabolical' and 'ungodly' were used when referring to Poulsen's mother (fol. 7v). Such phrases reappear towards the end of the trial with an even stronger wording, when the verdict is about to be announced.

The drum was again referred to. Previously, Poulsen had confessed that the drum presented in court had been made by himself. Then he denied this, and said that it had become worn from constant use (fol. 2r). Thus, on 8 December 1691 Poulsen had admitted to having made the drum, but on 9 February 1692 he retracted this admission. The court nevertheless appears to believe that he had made the drum and that the retraction was made to mitigate the crime of which he was accused. However, Poulsen changed his story again on 9 February: 'In the first row are, *now* that he has admitted to having made the drum himself' (italics added; fol. 2r).

The voice of the law can be heard in specific words or expressions added to the records. For example, in the description of the Engil figure in the second row, a formulation is added to establish distance from Poulsen's explanation: 'The figure of a human, whom he calls Engil, supposedly the Holy Spirit' (fol. 3r). 'Supposedly' most likely reflects the scribe's doubts. The same expression is used about the interpretation of a figure in the fourth row, a circle, which he referred to as Manna: 'It is supposedly the moon' (fol. 3v). A circle could quite obviously also invite other interpretations; so this distancing formulation is called for.

Traces of the questions asked during the interrogation can be noticed throughout the confession, in brief references to what had been asked. These echo the voice of the law, albeit indirectly. When Poulsen had finished his description of the Christmas days in the third row, he was obviously asked whether he had something he wanted

to add, but ‘He would say no more about the days’ (fol. 3v). The phrase recurs after the description of the moon: ‘He would confess no more’ (fol. 3v). The last trace of a question can be found in the part of his confession that concerns the lifting of curses: ‘*When asked*, he says that when a Sámi spell has been cast on someone, he can lift the spell with the aid of his gods’ (italics added; fol. 5r). The questions asked indicate that the officials wanted to know as much as possible about the symbols, and therefore requested Poulsen to elaborate on his previous confession. They were especially interested in Sámi sorcery; for example, how to lift a curse that had been cast on someone. Moreover, they were interested in learning about the darker aspects of the art of the shamanic drum, such as what would happen when the drum failed to provide answers indicating happiness and good luck, which Poulsen was reluctant to divulge: ‘But on no terms would he tell us how the gods reply when the top moves otherwise than in the same direction as the sun’ (fol. 5v). The men of the court were sincerely interested in hearing Poulsen’s voice, more than in showing off their own eloquence. In this way, they demonstrate a more open, attentive attitude to the accused person than is traceable in court records dating from the 1660s.

Towards the end of the trial it becomes clear what the interrogators have sought to find out. The entire confession is made subject to a new review and some elements are emphasized, especially how Poulsen’s craft was of a diabolical nature: ‘we have learnt how exhorted creatures, represented by figures on his rune drum, induce him to believe, at the Devil’s whim, the acts and signs he asks about and looks for’ (fol. 6v). The fifth row is described thus: ‘In the fifth row, he has a number of devils and the oldest devil’s woman and the *instruments* presumed to be in hell. In particular, there is a devil who is supposed to represent disease, and he says it can kill humans, and he worships many of these figures and symbols’ (italics in the original; fol. 7r). The court found that his acts were highly deserving of punishment, especially because he depicted the persons of the Holy Trinity, ‘which God will judge, [he] so grievously profanes, scorns, desecrates and outrages’ (fol. 7v). Reciting the Lord’s Prayer while playing the shamanic drum was also a reason for punishment, as was making the sign of the cross over himself and his drum before starting to play. The same also applied to how he placed his images instead of God, ‘and, finally, the fact that he paints Hell and the devils, and he is particularly reluctant to explain the nature of his dealings with them’ (fol. 7v).

The court emphasized Poulsen’s reluctance to provide details on those figures that represented the Devil. These were considered to represent his godless and diabolical craft that he had learned from his mother. A distinction was established between Sámi who profess the Christian faith, and those who do not. Poulsen himself emphasized that he professed Christianity. The court found that Poulsen rather sought advice from *witch people* (*Troldfolch*) than to turn to God (fol. 8r). Here, the term ‘witch people’ is used for the first time during the trial, and it is affirmed as necessary that it ‘was made (blef *statuerit*) a hideous example of such godlessness, so as to promote the right way of invoking God’ (italics in the original; fol. 8r). However, such acts and idolatry that Poulsen confessed to having engaged in were not mentioned in the law, thereby permitting the court to pass an appropriate sentence.

The county governor decided that ‘after my having *consulted* with His Honour (*Hans Velbårenhet*) about the matter’ (italics in the original; fol. 8r), this was an extraordinary case that needed a recommendation and judgement from the highest authorities in Copenhagen.³

The Voice of the Scribe

The voice of the scribe remains largely neutral and subdued, with one exception: as noted in the earlier quote, the scribe Niels Knag appears in the first person, ‘my having *consulted*’, something that occurs very rarely in such documents. The court records give no indication that the scribe disagrees with the assessment of Poulsen’s use of his drum as idolatry.

One method that the scribe uses to establish distance from the story told by Poulsen is to provide a description of him while he is playing his drum. Poulsen looked at his figures, ‘beat with his hammer and uttered these words to the gods ...’ (fol. 5r). The sight of a shaman at work has for a brief moment distracted the scribe from only recounting what was being said. Instead, he provides a glimpse of the situation in the courtroom, which seen through the scribe’s eyes must have been astounding.

What Does the Document Reveal About Shamanism?

Is it true that this case is the best source of information on Sámi shamanism? If we base our review on Poulsen’s statements during the trial, the most significant elements that could tell us the nature of a shaman’s activities are missing. Poulsen does not mention any male or female deities, nor any sacrificial sites—this despite the fact that Sámi religion included a large number of those. Poulsen states that his son speaks ‘with stones’, which may implicitly refer to sacrificial sites, but he denies doing so himself. Since these three essential elements are omitted, this source has material defects in terms of information on shamanism.

Other sources have provided some knowledge of Sámi shamanism. A number of bibliographies of literature on Sámi religious history and literature have been published, in which considerable space is devoted to the *noaide* (shaman) and his activities (Rydving 1993; Qvigstad and Wiklund 1899). For the Swedish areas, Wiklund (1983) provides some information on drumming and worship. Moreover, Håkan Rydving’s comprehensive study *The End of Drum-Time* (1993) describes significant elements and refer to numerous male and female deities; similarly, Hans Mebius (2003, 63 and 132).

While the trial against Poulsen was taking place in Vadsø, the trial of the Sámi Lars Nilsson from Piteå Lappmark was unfolding in Arjeplog, Sweden. Nilsson used a rune drum and wooden figures. He was sentenced to be burned at the stake, and his drum and figures were burned first (Granquist 1997). Another trial in the Finnish Sámi areas involved Aikie Aikiesson from Kittka in Kemi Lappmark in 1671, who was charged with using a shamanic drum and *joik*, a special Sámi way of singing. Aikiesson was sentenced

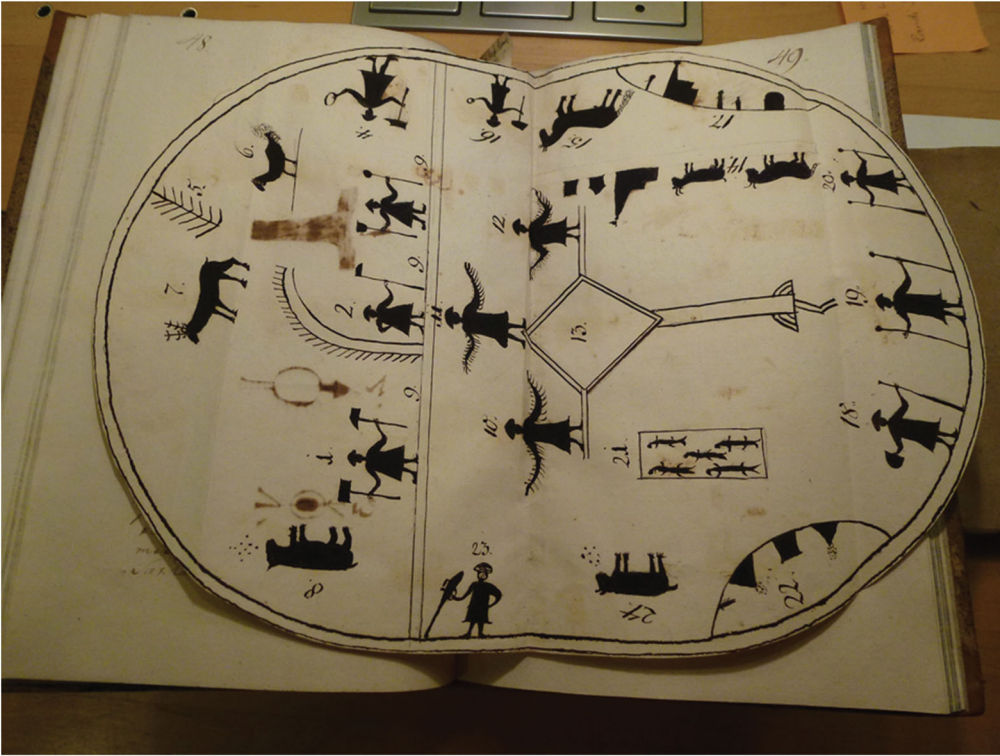


Figure 3. Drawing of a shaman's drum, 1723. The Royal Library, Copenhagen. Thott, 1569, 4°. Photograph by author.

to death by the local court, but died on his way to the place of execution, allegedly due to witchcraft (Fellman 1910, 383–86). Information on other shamanic drums is provided by Rendick Andersen from Folldal, who described a rune drum to Thomas von Westen 1723 (Jørkov 2000); von Westen's drawings of drums with explanation of symbols have been preserved (Skjelmo and Willumsen 2017, 206–10) (see Figure 3). There are also some descriptions of drums from more recent periods (Manker 1965; Leem 1767; Friis 1871; Qvigstad 1903; Agrell 1934; Itkonen 1946).

Existing knowledge about 'the paganism of the Norwegian Sámi' around 1700 mainly stems from 'relations' (reports). Some symbols on Poulsen's drum can be linked to gods of nature, described by Henric Forbus in 1727 (Hammond 1787, 27–34; Reuterskiöld 1910, 31–36) and Rolf Kjellström and Håkan Rydving (1988). The symbols that Poulsen explains as lords of Christmas are also mentioned elsewhere (Olsen 1910; Qvigstad 1910; Skanke 1945, 247).

Sámi deities are not referred to in Poulsen's explanations. However, these are described during the first decades of the eighteenth century, first by Isaac Olsen, and then by Jens Kildal in 1730 in 'Afguderiets dempelse og den sande laerdoms fremgang' (Subduing idolatry and the progress of true knowledge) (Kildal 1945). Two female figures are depicted on Poulsen's drum. Here we might have expected the names of some of the known Sámi goddesses, commonly found on shamanic drums, specifically Maderakka, Uksakka, and Juksakka (Reuterskiöld 1910, 88–98; Pollan 2002,

xxii; Skjelmo and Willumsen 2017, 208). Instead we are presented with Anne and Mary, in an explanation which is not in conformity with Christian teaching. Holy mountains are described by Isaac Olsen, and in von Westen's letter of 1723 to the clergy in Jämtland (Nissen and Kvamen 1962). Sámi sacrificial sites are described originally by Isaac Olsen in his copybook, later copied by several others (Vorren and Eriksen 1993).

Was drumming the key issue in the case against Poulsen? The answer can be both yes and no. The case involved a shaman who was imprisoned for having used a rune drum. When questioned about the symbols and design of this instrument, he provided a demonstration in court. One key question remains, however: did Poulsen's demonstration reflect an element of Sámi religion in the form of shamanistic practice? In my opinion, Poulsen's drumming performance in the courtroom was not a genuine demonstration of how a Sámi shaman works. The confines of a courtroom are simply too different from the natural religious setting for Poulsen's practice. Whereas the normal intention of a shaman's work is to help people, the intention in this case was to provide a demonstration in answer to the interrogation. If the intentional part of a shaman's work is removed, the seriousness and commitment with which he usually works are also removed. The fact that Poulsen could raise his drum into the air in the courtroom and show how it would be used tells us little about shamanism as a craft, a skill, and an insight. The religious overtones are gone.

Conclusion

This article has discussed linguistic, content-related, contextual, and religious aspects of the court records from the Poulsen trial. It is not possible to regard the court records as an authentic description of Sámi shamanism or nature worship. As a religious language, however, the drum imagery appears to have been flexible, since new content and new approaches invited new interpretations of the fixed structures and figures on the drum (Pollan 1993, 24).

The imagery and rhetoric used by Poulsen refer to the Trinity and reflect core tenets of Christian teaching. Poulsen's interpretation of the Holy Spirit has many similarities to the explanation of what Christ represents. The qualities that Poulsen attributes to the church concern its ability to help believers in their earthly lives as well as in the hereafter.

An inconsistency appears when we see the types of answers that Poulsen provides when questioned (SATØ, SF 25, fol. 3r). The contradictions that emerge in his confession may also give grounds for doubt regarding his interpretation of the other symbols on the drum. As an old shaman, Poulsen would have possessed detailed knowledge about the drum's symbols and its use for both good and evil ends. This was not the knowledge that he presented in the courtroom. On the contrary, during the trial he repeatedly professed to believe in the Christian God and to use his drum only with good intentions. This is not consistent with the views of Isaac Olsen, who clearly states that a shamanic drum was invariably used for both good and evil ends

(Qvigstad 1910, 40). Poulsen's interpretation of the symbols is a hybrid including Christian dogma, with significant deviations from the teachings of the Bible.

The assertion that the trial of Poulsen provides the best information available on Sámi shamanism in northern Scandinavia is not convincing. There are descriptions of other rune drums from around the same period that include, among other things, the three famous goddesses of Sámi mythology (Skanke 1945, 245 and 247; Skjelmo and Willumsen 2017, 206–10). Poulsen's explanation cannot be deemed reliable. He provides contradictory information on a number of issues and wavers when asked to present his religious views. This indicates that context played a crucial role. Poulsen's desire to appear as a Christian believer who uses the drum for exclusively good ends, as well as his uncertainty regarding the progress and outcome of the trial, have helped produce an interpretation of the symbols that cannot be seen as related to Sámi shamanism or as a presentation of Sámi religion. Poulsen's confession is an attempt to portray the drum as an instrument to promote Christianity. The court records from this witch-trial must be placed in their legal context, and Poulsen's explanation of the symbols recognized in its variety for the interpretation of the document as a whole to have meaning. An uncritical recounting of the trial that fails to take into account the numerous tensions that are implicit in the records will only serve to romanticize the Sámi.

Notes

¹ There were two testimonies from eyewitnesses in connection with the imprisonment of Anders Poulsen in December 1691; however, these are not mentioned during his formal trial.

² From a contemporary source by Niels Knag dated 15 December 1693, it comes to the fore that Poulsen was moved and shed tears in the courtroom. Ref. Appendix to Thott no. 1735, Royal Library, Copenhagen.

³ By law of 1686, all death sentences in witchcraft trials had to be confirmed by the king before execution.

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