

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

WITCHCRAFT IN
EARLY MODERN
EUROPE AND
COLONIAL
AMERICA

Edited by
BRIAN P. LEVACK

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CHAPTER 19

WITCH-HUNTING IN EARLY MODERN HUNGARY

ILDIKÓ SZ. KRISTÓF

THE establishment in 1983 of an interdisciplinary research group for the study of witch-hunting in Hungary coincided with the last years of communism in the country. The group was based in the Department of Folk Beliefs and Customs of the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest. It was headed by the renowned folklorist Éva Pócs, and had as one of its founding members the historian Gábor Klaniczay. The group consisted of a handful of folklorists, historians, and archivists, working together in an increasingly open academic atmosphere with the aim of renewing local religious studies, as well as the discipline of history, by studying and appropriating methods of Western historical research. The fall of the communist regime, with its promotion of Marxist ideology, in 1989–90 made the introduction of a number of modern approaches to the writing of history possible. Social and intellectual history, quantitative studies, the *histoire de la mentalité*, the history of popular culture, historical anthropology, microhistory, the *new cultural history* as well as postmodern criticism all penetrated the academic world of Hungary during the 1990s. It was mainly at this time that witchcraft research became, as it remains to a large extent today, attractive and fashionable in the eyes of Hungarian scholars, although it was not altogether new in local historical and ethnographical studies. Within the research group, however, the individual choices of research topics depended largely upon methodological preferences, linguistic knowledge, and the disciplinary and institutional affiliation of the scholars involved. The mosaic-like, fluctuating, and rather diffuse nature that characterizes witchcraft studies nowadays in Hungary is rooted to some extent in these early, formative years.

One of the initial projects of the witchcraft research group was to create a database of early modern Hungarian witch trials. To facilitate this undertaking the group used

KLEIO, a computer programme developed originally for the quantitative analysis of inventories in the Max Planck Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen, Germany. Almost two thousand witchcraft trials and approximately twenty thousand so-called *maleficium* or *bewitchment narratives*, which were found mostly in the testimony of witnesses in witch trials, were encoded at that time, according to a set of questions that the members of the research group developed. In this way the group gathered basic information about the individual trials: the accused witch's name, sex, age, family and social status, and religion. The same data was acquired for all the accusers, together with their relation to the accused. Another questionnaire was designed to codify information in the narratives of bewitchment. Inspired by historical anthropology and social studies of witch-hunting in Western Europe, these questions were intended to emphasize the *social* and *narrative* features as well as the *constructed* nature of witchcraft accusations. The testimonies of the individual witnesses were to be coded according to the morphological sequence of a model or 'ideal' bewitchment narrative. They were intended to reveal how the act of *maleficium* was imagined in the minds of the witnesses, and how the accused person became a 'witch' in the eyes of others.¹

The discovery of new archival material since the formation of the research group has led to a steady expansion of the database. By the year 2000 the number of known witchcraft accusations had almost doubled, and archival research on the subject, inside as well as outside modern-day Hungary, is still ongoing. Local historians and archivists, who were not necessarily members of the research group, also contributed to this enterprise. These historians have come not only from Hungary, but from Austria, Croatia, Romania, and Slovakia.

Despite the limitations of *KLEIO*, its use has provided a deeper understanding of the importance of *locality* in early modern witchcraft prosecutions, and has led to the publication of a number of local and regional studies of witch-hunting. The most notable of these studies includes an in-depth, historical-anthropological study of witch-hunting in a Calvinist region of Hungary (the town of Debrecen and the neighbouring county of Bihar);² a narrative-morphological analysis of bewitchment stories from the mostly Catholic county of Sopron; social-legal studies of the earliest, sixteenth-century, witch trials of the towns of Kolozsvár (Cluj in present-day Romania) and Sopron; wider regional statistical-legal studies of witchcraft inside and outside modern-day Hungary; and numerous studies of local witch-hunts in various urban and village communities, based on a close reading of trial documents and other local historical sources.

In addition to these local and regional studies, important statistical, bibliographical, social, and folkloristic summaries of the overall history of witch-hunting in early

¹ For a detailed description of the programme *KLEIO* and its uses for studying witchcraft trials see Gábor Klaniczay, Éva Pócs, Péter Tóth G. and Robert Wolosz, 'A Kleio boszorkányper-adatbázis' [The Kleio Witchcraft-trial Database], in Pócs, ed., *Demonológia és boszorkányság Európában* [Demonology and Witchcraft in Europe] (Budapest, 2001), 293–335, summary in English, 372–95.

² See Ildikó Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem* (Debrecen, 1998). For an earlier version see Kristóf, 'Wise Women', Sinners and the Poor: The Social Background of Witch Hunting in a 16/18th-Century Calvinist City of Eastern Hungary', *Acta Ethnographica*, 37 (1990), 93–119.

modern Hungary have resulted from the work of the research group.³ Individual researchers have also investigated specific aspects of Hungarian witchcraft, including demonology, folk beliefs, methods of elite and popular healing, midwifery, criminal law, and the micro-sociology of local witch-hunts. In addition, some scholars working mostly in the earlier research tradition, and outside the witchcraft research group, have used witchcraft trial documents to illuminate various aspects of early modern material culture, such as furniture, building materials, and minerals.

19.1 THE HISTORY OF WITCH-HUNTING IN THE KINGDOM OF HUNGARY

One of the most important features of witch-hunting in the ancient kingdom in Hungary is that it seems to have remained relatively moderate in intensity. There is documentary evidence of 848 executions for witchcraft before 1800 in a population that

³ General statistical/legal/social summaries include Gábor Klaniczay, 'Witch Hunting in Hungary: Social or Cultural Tensions?', *Acta Ethnographica*, 37 (1990), 67–91; Gábor Klaniczay, 'Hungary: The Accusations and the Universe of Popular Magic', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, eds, *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford, 1990), 219–25. Historiographical summaries and bibliographies are to be found in Klaniczay, 'A Cultural History of Witchcraft', *Magia, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, 5 (2010), 188–212; Éva Pócs, 'Bevezető: Egy munkacsoport tizenöt éve' [Preface: Fifteen Years of a Research Team] in Pócs, ed., *Demonológia és boszorkányság*, 9–19, summary in English, 337–46; Péter Tóth G., 'Boszorkányos hagyaték: A magyarországi boszorkányperek feltárásának kutatástörténete a kezdetektől napjainkig' [A History of the Exploration of Witchcraft Trials in Hungary from the Beginning to These Days], in Gábor Vargyas, ed., *Párbeszéd a hagyománnyal: A néprajzi kutatás múltja és jelene* [In Dialogue with Tradition: The Past and Present of Ethnographical Research] (Budapest, 2011), 637–94. An index of witchcraft trials known until 2000 is to be found in Péter Tóth G., *A magyarországi boszorkányság forrásainak katasztere (1408–1848)* [A Catalogue of the Sources of Hungarian Witchcraft, 1408–1848] (Budapest, 2000), with an introduction in English. For thorough analyses of folkloristic beliefs (e.g. fairies, *táltos*, etc.) providing, in many respects, the foundation of diabolic witchcraft, see the many works of Éva Pócs, including 'The Popular Foundations of the Witches' Sabbath and the Devil's Pact in Central and Southeastern Europe', *Acta Ethnographica*, 37 (1991/2), 305–70; 'Le sabbat et les mythologies indo-européennes', in Nicole Jacques-Chaquin and Maxime Préaud, eds, *Le sabbat des sorciers XV^e–XVIII^e siècles* (Grenoble, 1993), 23–31; 'Feenflug und Hexenflug in Mittel-Südosteuropa. Ritus und Mythos, Erlebnis und Bericht', in Dieter R. Bauer and Wolfgang Behringer, eds, *Fliegen und Schweben: Annäherung an eine menschliche Sensation* (Munich, 1997), 146–67; 'Shamanism, Witchcraft and Christianity in Early Modern Europe', in Ülo Valk, ed., *Studies in Folklore and Popular Religion* (Tartu, 1999), iii, 111–35; and, *Between the Living and the Dead: A Perspective on Witches and Seers in the Early Modern Age* (Budapest, 1999). For a survey of the activity of the witchcraft research group until 2001, see Pócs, ed., *Demonológia és boszorkányság Európában*, 9–19. For a relatively recent summary on witch-hunting in early modern Hungary see Sz. Kristóf, 'Hungary', 515–20. And for a summary of the beliefs and practice of treasure hunting, not infrequently related to witchcraft beliefs in Hungary, see Benedek Láng and Péter Tóth G., eds, *A kincskeresés 400 éve Magyarországon: Kézikönyvek és olvasóik* [Four Hundred Years of Treasure Hunting in Hungary: Handbooks and their Readers] (Budapest, 2009), which has a summary in English.

ranged between 3.5 million and 5.3 million people.⁴ This number should, however, be considered a minimum, since the records of some executions have probably been lost. Moreover, the boundaries of Hungary changed from time to time during this period, and included, at one time or another, parts of modern Austria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. As a consequence, plenty of the historical documents relating to witchcraft and witch-hunting in such areas are now to be found in archives outside the current boundaries of Hungary—and have not yet been explored as fully as possible.

19.1.1 Early Modern Witch-Hunts

Witch-hunting in early modern Hungary coincided with an unstable period in the country's political history. The Ottoman Turks defeated the Hungarian armies at Mohács in 1526 and occupied Buda, the capital, in 1541. For the next 150 years the country was divided into three parts, and this division, together with the accompanying politico-socio-cultural developments that it engendered, provided the geopolitical setting for early modern witchcraft accusations. During this period the kingdom of Hungary was limited to the north-western part known as Upper Hungary, which was ruled by the Habsburg monarchy. The central and southern parts (approximately the area of the Great Hungarian Plain), was occupied by the Turks, and belonged to the Ottoman Empire, while the eastern part, Transylvania (today in Romania), became a more or less independent principality, ruled mostly by Hungarian noble dynasties. In the 1680s and 1690s the Turks were driven out of Hungary with the help of the Habsburg army, bringing the whole country, including Transylvania, under the rule of the Habsburg monarchy.

19.2 THE LEGAL FOUNDATION OF WITCH-HUNTING

During the early modern period the prosecution of magic and witchcraft in the kingdom of Hungary acquired a new legal foundation. King Ferdinand I (r. 1526–1564)

⁴ Hereafter, the statistical figures for early modern witch-hunting in Hungary are provided according to the unpublished register of the accused witches, created by Péter Tóth G., indicated as UROW in the following. The last survey of national relevance accessible in English before that is to be found in Klaniczay, 'Witch-Hunting in Hungary'; Klaniczay, 'Hungary'; and Sz. Kristóf, 'Hungary'. The discrepancy in the statistical data given in these essays, as well as in the present survey, is due to the gradual increase in the archival findings on the one hand, and the constant refinement of the methods of interpreting historical data on the other. This is especially true for the possible number of capital sentences.

issued a decree against *incantatrices* (enchantresses or witches) in 1527, and the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina*, the criminal codex promulgated by Emperor Charles V in 1532, facilitated the prosecution of these offenders. In 1614 the Transylvanian Diet also issued a decree in order to punish 'sorcerers' and 'witches' to be found in that region. Witchcraft, however, has never been considered a *crimen exceptum*, that is, an excepted crime, in the kingdom of Hungary, and it was prosecuted together with other crimes in municipal, county, and landlords' courts. The most frequently used legal text was *Forma processus iudicii criminalis seu praxis criminalis* (Form of the procedure of jurisdiction or the practice of criminal investigation), based on the teachings of the Leipzig Lutheran lawyer Benedict Carpzov, and codified for Austria by Emperor Ferdinand III in 1656. It was published in Latin in 1687 by the Catholic university of Nagyszombat, and appended to the *Corpus iuris* of Hungary in 1696. *Praxis criminalis* constituted the most important channel through which Western demonological ideas, including those of the sabbath and the demonic pact, entered Hungary. Although its publication history is not well researched, it went into a minimum of six editions (all in Latin and without any textual change) between 1687 and 1748. The late publication of this legal manual in Hungary may help to explain why Hungarian witch-hunting reached its peak only during the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries. Only then did witch trials become widespread in the country.

Municipal customs also provided a legal foundation for some local trials. For example, a clause in the customs of the seven free royal cities published in 1701 ordered that anyone abusing the sacraments and the pictures of saints, that is, using them for magical purposes, should be put to death. Where municipal law made no reference to witchcraft, as in the Transylvanian Saxon cities, local courts relied on to the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina*. In early modern period most Hungarian witchcraft trials were held in the secular courts, but these tribunals often cited Exod. 22:18 to claim divine as well as temporal authority for proceeding against witches.

The long life and relatively frequent use of the water ordeal and other features of medieval criminal procedure testify to the survival of the accusatorial system of criminal justice well into the first half of the eighteenth century. But the increased reliance upon the production of material proof (such as 'magical' objects or instruments found with the accused person), the use of torture to extract confessions, and the taking of written depositions from witnesses, show that Hungarian courts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were gradually adopting some of the features of inquisitorial procedure, which was well established in most parts of Western Europe.⁵

⁵ On the use of the water ordeal in early modern Hungary and elsewhere see Péter Tóth G., 'River Ordeal-Trial by Water-Swimming of Witches: Procedures of Ordeal in Witch Trials', in Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs, in collaboration with Eszter Csonka-Takács, eds, *Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions* (Budapest, 2008), 129–63. For the city of Debrecen see Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 49–50.

19.3 OVERALL CHRONOLOGY AND STATISTICS

As shown by a recent statistical assessment, it was the sixteenth century that saw the beginnings of a (more or less) regular witch-hunt in the kingdom of Hungary. It seems to have intensified during the 1580s and 1590s, reached one of its peaks towards the end of the seventeenth century, but only become truly massive during the first half of the eighteenth century.

The numbers of currently known accused witches in seven chronological periods are as follows:

1526–52	74
1553–1600	262
1601–50	544
1651–1700	781
1701–50	2,297
1751–1800	592
1801–48	32

The kingdom of Hungary has always been a multi-ethnic country. Upper Hungary had a fairly large population of Germans, Slovaks, and Czechs, while Germans and Romanians populated Transylvania, and, in the south, Croats, Serbians, and—towards the end of this period—Slovaks, lived on the Great Plain. In addition to these minorities, Jews and Roma lived in various places throughout the country. Despite this wide ethnic diversity, the great majority (approximately 75 per cent) of those accused of witchcraft or instrumental in bringing the accusations were Hungarians. One explanation for this ethnic concentration is that witchcraft charges developed mainly among people who interacted with one another on a daily basis, unimpeded by linguistic or cultural barriers, and Hungarians formed the largest ethnic bloc in the kingdom.⁶

19.4 LEARNED DEMONOLOGY

Historians know much more about Protestant than Catholic demonology, the latter representing the ideas of educated people regarding witchcraft and the powers of the devil. Protestant theologians wrote more extensively than Catholics about the subject, and Protestant synods issued orders to punish 'sorcerers' and 'witches'. For example,

⁶ UROW. The estimated per cents for other nationalities are very small: 9 per cent German, 7.5 per cent Croatian, 4 per cent Roumanian, 2 per cent Slovakian, 1 per cent Roma, 1 per cent Polish–Ruthenian, and 0.5 per cent Serbian.

the early Transylvanian Lutheran synod of 1577 threatened any person involved in magical acts with death. The first religious treatises that discussed witchcraft as such came from Protestant authors. The Lutheran preacher Péter Bornemisza published *Ördögi kísértetekről a vagy röttenetes utálatosságáról ez megfertéztett világnak* (About the Temptations of the Devil, or the Loathsomeness of this Infected World) in 1578. The book dealt with witch beliefs, related stories of witchcraft, and described various magical practices among peasants in north-west Hungary.⁷ The presence of the devil in the world and the danger he represented to Christians were also emphasized in the early Lutheran liturgies, such as the *Agenda* of István Melotai Nyilas, which was published in Várad (Oradea, in present-day Romania) in 1563. The liturgical work included a number of formulas for performing exorcisms.

The first Hungarian Calvinist demonology was included in *Confessio Ecclesiae Debrecinensis* (Confession of Faith for the Church of Debrecen), which appeared in 1562. The work was compiled under the direction of Péter Méliusz Juhász, who became the first bishop of the Calvinist Church in Hungary. Méliusz, who was a follower of the teachings of the German Lutheran theologian Johann Brenz, manifested a high degree of scepticism regarding the reality of diabolical witchcraft. His demonological ideas laid the foundation for a vigorous and long-lasting sceptical tradition among Hungarian Calvinists.⁸ Although Calvinist liturgical manuals also testified to the everyday works of the devil, and even contained a ritual of exorcism,⁹ scholarly scepticism pervaded contemporary Calvinist theology. It characterized, for example, the two comprehensive treatises on demonology, both titled *Disputatio theologica de lamiis veneficis*, which were compiled by two students of Calvinist theology, Joannes C. Mediomontanus and Andreas P. Csehi, and were published in Várad in 1656. Both of them relied on the work of the sixteenth-century sceptic Johann Weyer, and almost entirely rejected the diabolical ideas that characterized the *Malleus maleficarum* as well as the credulous tract on witchcraft by the English Protestant demonologist, William Perkins. One point, however, on which Mediomontanus and Csehi agreed with Perkins, was that they both condemned *any* kind of 'witch', even one who was a victim of diabolic illusions or a humble practitioner of popular 'white' magic, such as love magic, healing, or divination. For them it was the *intention* of those witches and sorcerers to use diabolical power that made them guilty of a spiritual crime.¹⁰

Seventeenth-century Hungarian Calvinist views on witchcraft were not altogether sceptical or homogeneous. A Calvinist synod held in the town of Margita in Bihar

⁷ Gábor Klaniczay, 'Die "Teuflischen Gespenster" (Ördögi kísértetek) des Pfarrers Péter Bornemisza (1578) und die Debatte über Erscheinungen und Gespenster', in Claire Gantet-Fabrice Almeida, ed., *Gespenster und Politik 16. bis 21. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2007), 51–65.

⁸ Ildikó Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 55–61 and Ildikó Kristóf, 'Elements of Demonology in Hungarian Calvinist Literature Printed in Debrecen in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Cauda Pavonis: Studies in Hermeticism*, 16 (1997), 10–11.

⁹ Éva Szacsvay, 'Az ördögűzés református szabályozása 1636-ban (I.)' [The Calvinist Regulation of Exorcism in 1636], in Gábor Barna and Erzsébet Kótyuk, eds, *Test, lélek, természet: Tanulmányok a népi orvoslás emlékeiből* (Budapest, 2002), 79–92, with a summary in English.

¹⁰ On Calvinist demonology see Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 54–76; Kristóf, 'Elements of Demonology', 9–17; Kristóf, 'Wise Women', Sinners and the Poor', 93–119.

county in 1681, for example, threatened all sorcerers and those who consulted them with excommunication. This injunction appears to have functioned as a catalyst to witch-hunting in the region. The synod was chaired by Bishop Mátyás Nógrádi, a Calvinist preacher in Debrecen, who published his *Lelki próbakö* (Spiritual Touchstone) in 1651. This book included a short treatise, 'Az ördögi practicáról mint kellyen ítélni embernek' (How to Judge Devilish Practices). Although Bishop Nógrádi argued for a rather prudent and careful handling and investigation of village witchcraft accusations, he analysed certain forms of the witches' pact with the devil, and even categorized them into types, and he gave greater credence to them than did his colleagues. It may be relevant to note that Bishop Nógrádi had travelled to England in the mid-1640s, when Matthew Hopkins, the notorious witchfinder, was conducting the largest witch-hunt in English history. Nógrádi may have also been influenced by the demonological treatise of William Perkins, *The Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608), which he cited in his own work.¹¹

Although the majority of Hungarian Calvinists rejected the idea of the witches' pact and the sabbath, considering them nothing but illusions or the product of melancholy, they condemned all forms of everyday popular magic, especially those of popular healers and cunning people. The Debrecen Calvinists also published *Lex politica Dei* (The Public Law of God) in 1610, which was a collection of the laws in the Hebrew Bible condemning sorcery and divination. The Calvinists made their strongest case against the practice of popular magic of this sort when discussing the origin and curing of illnesses, especially the plague. Seventeenth-century Calvinist preachers in Debrecen all insisted that popular healers and midwives who employed magical practices deserved severe punishment.¹²

Despite the harshness of these condemnations, Hungarian Protestant demonology manifested a rather 'gentle', sceptical attitude towards witchcraft. There is still research to be done on this question, but we already know that, for example, a group of seventeenth-century Protestant students studying in Wittenberg and Jena imported an explicitly anti-diabolical, anti-demonological concept of magic. Georgius Fridericus Magnus, a so-called 'Hungarus' (Latin for Hungarian but also for the greater kingdom of Hungary at the time) from the city of Pozsony (Bratislava in present-day Slovakia) defended the propositions of Johann Weyer and Kaspar Peucer in his *Disputatio physica de magia* (Physical Dispute about Magic), held in Wittenberg in 1665, and denied the possibility of the witches' pact with the devil. Later in the century Johannes Surmann, who came from Beszterce (Bistrița in present-day Romania), supported the arguments of the late seventeenth-century Dutch sceptic Balthasar Bekker in his *De*

¹¹ On Bishop Nógrádi and Perkins see Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 65–8 and Kristóf, 'Elements of Demonology', 12.

¹² For Protestant notions on the plague epidemic see Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 70–2; Kristóf, 'Plague of the Plagues': Epidemic and Riot in Debrecen in 1739/42', *Ethnos*, 8 (1991), 64–77.

daemonologia recentiorum auctorum falsa (About the False Demonology of Recent Authors) of 1692. Gottfried Roesch, another 'Hungarus' from Körmöcbánya (Kremnica in present-day Slovakia), also rejected a diabolical interpretation of magic in his *Exercitatio historico philologica de cultu Simonis Magi* (Historical-philological Exercises on the Art of Simon Magus), published at Jena in 1683. Eighteenth-century scholarly writings, including *Keskeny út* (The Narrow Road, 1719) by Imre Pápai Páriz contributed to this sceptical trend in the Hungarian Protestant tradition. These works also recommended the punishment of any form of popular or white magic.¹³

The demonology of the Hungarian Catholics in the early modern period has not received much scholarly attention. To be sure, the *Malleus maleficarum* was known in early modern Hungary. The libraries of the various Jesuit colleges in Upper Hungary had copies of this notorious witchcraft manual, as did Miklós Zrínyi, one of the greatest poets and writers of the seventeenth century. The trials that took place in Somorja (Šamorín in present-day Slovakia) in 1691 made an explicit reference to the *Malleus*, but the book apparently did not exert a significant influence on witch-hunting in subsequent years. During the same century, copies of Martin Del Rio's *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex* (1599) could be found in some of the libraries of the Jesuit colleges in Upper Hungary, as could copies of Jean Bodin's *Daemonomania* (1580). Otherwise, the criminal courts in Catholic regions relied mainly on *Praxis criminalis* in prosecuting cases of witchcraft during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Towards the end of the prosecutions, courts relied on other legal guides, such as István Huszty's *Jurisprudentia practica* (The Practice of Jurisprudence), published in 1758, which included chapters on the practice of magic, and recommended the use of torture when prosecuting witches.

Rituals of exorcism were routinely included in Catholic liturgical manuals. Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries (often Italians or southern Slavs) performed these rites on both noble and peasant demoniacs during the seventeenth century. Catholic rites of exorcism differed significantly from those of Calvinists, which relied exclusively on the methods of prayer and fasting. But Protestants and Catholics agreed in their condemnation of both witchcraft and popular magic, in eighteenth-century printed collections of sermons, such as Zsigmond Csúzy's *Evangéliomi trombita* (The Evangelical

¹³ The majority of the authors and treatises mentioned here come from the research of Sz. Kristóf. The so-called learned magic (*magia naturalis*) and the occult sciences are not discussed in this chapter. Those interested in them should consult Benedek Láng, 'Research Problems of Magical Texts in Central Europe', in Blanka Szeghyová, ed., *The Role of Magic in the Past: Learned and Popular Magic, Popular Beliefs and Diversity of Attitudes* (Bratislava, 2005), 11–17, and Láng's *Unlocked Books: Manuscripts of Learned Magic in the Medieval Libraries of Central Europe* (University Park, PA, 2008); György Endre Szönyi, 'The Occult Sciences in Early Modern Hungary in a Central European Context', in Szeghyová, ed., *The Role of Magic in the Past*, 29–44, and Szönyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation Through Powerful Signs* (New York, 2004), esp. 241–70. See also Márton Szentpéteri, 'Magic and Demonology in Albert Szenci Molnár's Personal commonplace Book', in Szeghyová, ed., *The Role of Magic in the Past*, 64–72.

Trumpet), which appeared in print in 1724, and József Telek's *Tizen-két tsillagú korona* (Crown of Twelve Stars), published at Buda in 1769.

German demonology played an important role in Hungarian witch-hunting, both in its learned and popular forms. The first campaign against witches in the second half of the sixteenth century took place in the Upper Hungarian and the Transylvanian towns that had a predominantly German population, and was apparently inspired by the demonological teachings of the Lutheran Church. The first learned description of the witches' sabbath came from the area of Upper Hungary around the city of Pozsony, near the Austrian border, in 1578. The Lutheran preacher Péter Bornemisza's treatise on demonic temptation claimed that the local witches had a queen, that they could transform themselves into animals like cats, and that they made a great frenzy dancing and fornicating at their meetings.¹⁴ A much later, Calvinist description of the sabbath by Mediomontanus also suggests a German influence. According to Mediomontanus, the witches usually gathered in the wine cellars on Mount St Gellért in Buda, a mountain that probably acquired its reputation as the location of witches' assemblies because the local German inhabitants called it *Blocksberg*, the highest peak in northern Germany where German witches were believed to have gathered.¹⁵

19.5 POPULAR DEMONOLOGY

Although it is difficult to trace the popular adoption of demonological ideas, they appeared for the first time in regions inhabited mostly by Germans and Slovaks within the ancient kingdom of Hungary. A witch's confession to having made a pact with the devil was recorded as early as 1581 in the Upper Hungarian mining town of Selmechánya (Banská Štiavnica in present-day Slovakia). One of the first popular descriptions of the witches' sabbath, in which witches flew on broomsticks and copulated with the devil, was recorded in the city of Pozsony in 1602. In more or less the same region, in the communities of Sopron, Körmend, Lakompak, and Darázsfalva (Trausdorf in present-day Austria), numerous popular descriptions of the sabbath appeared during the 1650s and 1670s, which were periods of intense witch-hunting.¹⁶ Other locations where popular diabolical beliefs flourished at an early date were the seven privileged Saxon cities (*Siebenbürgen*) in Transylvania. The cities of Segesvár (Sighişoara/Schäßburg in present-day Romania), or Nagyszeben (Sibiu/Hermannstadt in present-day Romania) experienced a regular and intensive succession of witch-hunts from the

¹⁴ Klaniczay, 'Die "Teufflichen Gespenster"', 51–65. Tünde Lengyel, 'Nyitra és Pozsony megye boszorkányperei a 16–18. században' [Witchcraft Trials in Nyitra and Pozsony County in the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries], in *Archivum Sal'a—Levéltári Évkönyv* (2005), ii, 39–42.

¹⁵ On Mediomontanus and Mount St Gellért see Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 232–4, 249.

¹⁶ On the influence of German demonology upon Hungarian witch beliefs see Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 249–51, and Endre Hagenthurn, ed., *Segesvári boszorkányperek—Schäßburger Hexenprozesse* (Budapest, 2010).

1660s until the middle of the eighteenth century. Austrian German soldiers, lodged in Hungarian villages as part of the military occupation of the country during and after the Turkish wars, also seem to have introduced German ideas of witchcraft into Hungary. In a number of instances German soldiers, acting sometimes as witchfinders, accused their hosts of witchcraft.¹⁷

Early modern witch-hunting in Hungary was primarily an urban phenomenon. In addition to the Saxon towns of Upper Hungary, the city of Sopron in north-western Hungary, which was also exposed to German influences, held some of the earliest witch trials in 1528–9. Early trials also took place in the towns of Kolozsvár in Transylvania and Debrecen on the Great Plain, which were mostly inhabited by Hungarians. Kolozsvár, which had a religiously mixed population, held at least nineteen witch trials between 1565 and 1593, with thirteen of them resulting in burnings. Wandering preachers from Kolozsvár also helped to inspire the witch-hunts of the 1570s in Debrecen, whose confessional allegiance shifted from Lutheranism to Calvinism in the late sixteenth century. The towns and villages of the Great Plain, a frontier territory occupied by the Ottoman Turks from the middle of the sixteenth century until the end of the seventeenth century, did not experience intensive witch-hunting until the early years of the eighteenth century.¹⁸ Although the Turks did not prevent local courts from functioning in this region, it was not until 1728 that one of the largest witch panics in Hungary developed—in the Catholic city of Szeged—when twenty-one persons were tried for witchcraft. Of these, thirteen were convicted and burned, three were drowned during the water ordeal, and three died in prison. Between 1728 and 1744 a total of forty-one persons were accused of witchcraft in Szeged. In the religiously divided town of Hódmezővásárhely another forty-one persons were brought to trial between 1724 and 1763, although only seven of these were executed. No fewer than twenty people were accused of being witches in Ottomány in 1724. One possible explanation for the late date of these witch-hunts is that the belated urbanization of the Great Plain and the

¹⁷ Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 227, 229, 252–3, and Klaniczay, 'Witch-Hunting in Hungary', 80; Hagenthurn, ed., *Segesvári boszorkányperek*.

¹⁸ For Debrecen see Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 45–8 and "'Wise Women", Sinners and the Poor', 96–103. For Kolozsvár see Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 229–30; Klaniczay, 'Witch-Hunting in Hungary', 73–5; Klaniczay, 'A boszorkányperek mozgatórugói. Gondolatok az első kolozsvári boszorkányperek kapcsán' (The Triggers of Witchcraft Accusation. Thoughts in Connection with the First Witch Trials in Kolozsvár), *Korunk*, 16/5 (2005), 27–38; Klaniczay, 'Mely ördögtől volt nyavalyája, azon ördög volna gyógyítója. "A gyógyítók elleni boszorkányperek problémája a magyar boszorkányperekben"' ('That Devilish Person who Caused the Harm, Would Also Take It Away.' The Problem of Witchcraft Charges against Healers in Hungarian Witch Trials), in Gábor Vargyas, ed., *Párbeszéd a hagyománnyal. A néprajzi kutatás múltja és jelene* (Budapest-Pécs, 2011), 695–712; and Tünde Komáromi, 'Hat boszorkány rontásai. Kolozsvár, 1584' [The Harms Done by Six Witches Kolozsvár, 1584], in Árpád Tőhötöm Szabó, ed., *Életutak és életmódok* (Kolozsvár, 2002), 5–41. As for the towns of Upper Hungary (today's Slovakia), archival research for witchcraft trials is still ongoing, but some local/regional analyses have been published, especially for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Lengyel, 'Nyitra és Pozsony megye boszorkányperei' and Majtán, 'Servants of the Devil in Krupina', in Szeghyová, ed., *The Role of Magic in the Past*, 101–7.

resettlement of this area after the end of Ottoman rule caused considerable social and cultural turmoil in these communities.¹⁹

The popular image of the Hungarian sabbath was based not so much on foreign demonological concepts as local, originally non-diabolical, beliefs. Beliefs in the Hungarian *táltos*—who was a sort of shamanistic sorcerer—and south-eastern Slavic and Romanian fairies and sorcerers such as *kresnik* and *zduhač*, influenced these popular notions of witchcraft. Either learned demonologists diabolized these supernatural beings, or local accusers and judges referred to them in the trials in order to prove the suspicious supernatural connections and malevolence of accused witches.²⁰ The witches' sabbath, as represented in confessions and legal depositions made by town and village dwellers in early modern Hungary, tended to be more like a community feast, with excessive eating and drinking, playing music, and dancing in houses, churchyards, or the local tavern. In the majority of cases the sabbath resembled a rather profane feast in which the devil was not present. When, however, the devil was in attendance, he was imagined either as a he-goat (as in the trials at Szeged in 1728) or as having horse legs (as in the Pozsony area). Sometimes he took the shape of a human being, either a tall black man, a priest, or a handsome peasant lad. According to the testimony of some witnesses, he wore Hungarian dress in regions inhabited by Germans and German dress in predominantly Hungarian areas. He could also be represented as an ordinary animal, such as a dog or cat.²¹

¹⁹ For Sopron see Ildikó Németh, 'Az 1528–1529. évi soproni boszorkányperek' [The Witchcraft Trials Held in 1528–29 in Sopron], in Éva Pócs, ed., *Közösség és identitás* (Budapest, 2002), 163–70, summary in English: 288–9 and Németh, 'Boszorkányperek a 16. századi Sopronban' [Witchcraft Trials in Sixteenth-century Sopron], *Soproni Szemle*, 2 (2006), 166–74. For Kolozsvár see Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 229–30; Klaniczay, 'Witch Hunting', 73–5, and Komáromi, 'Hat boszorkány rontásai', 5–41. For Debrecen and Ottomány see Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 45–8, and Klaniczay, "'Wise Women", Sinners and the Poor', 93–119. For Szeged see István Petrovics, 'Witch-Hunt in Szeged in the Early Eighteenth Century', in Szeghyová, ed., *The Role of Magic in the Past*, 108–16. For Hódmezővásárhely see Barbara Benkéné Sándor, 'Hódmezővásárhely egészségügyi kultúrája a 18. századi boszorkányperek alapján' [The Medical Culture of Hódmezővásárhely, based on Eighteenth-century Witchcraft Trials], in *Néprajzi Tanulmányok*, Studia Ethnographica, 4 (Szeged, 2003), 69–74.

²⁰ For a survey of the popular beliefs on which the image of the witches' gathering could be founded see Pócs, 'The Popular Foundations of the Witches' Sabbath'; Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 243–55. For further analysis of certain beliefs see Éva Pócs, *Fairies and Witches at the Boundary of South-Eastern and Central Europe* (Helsinki, 1989); Klaniczay, 'Benandante-kresnik-zduhač-táltos. Samanizmus és boszorkányhit érintkezési pontjai Közép-Európában' [Benandante-kresnik-zduhač-táltos: Some Points of Contact between Shamanism and Witch-belief in Central Europe], *Ethnographia*, 94 (1983), 116–34, with a summary in English; Klaniczay, 'Shamanistic Elements in Central European Witchcraft', in Mihály Hoppál, ed., *Shamanism in Eurasia* (Göttingen, 1984), 131–69; Éva Pócs, 'Tündéres and the Order of St Ilona', or, Did the Hungarians Have Fairy Magicians?, *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 54 (2009), 379–96; Pócs, 'Hungarian Táltos and his European Parallels', in Mihály Hoppál and Juha Pentikäinen, eds., *Uralic Mythology and Folklore* (Budapest, 1989), 251–76.

²¹ For examples see Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 250–3, and Gábor Klaniczay, 'Le sabbat raconté par les témoins des procès de sorcellerie en Hongrie', in Nicole Jacques-Chaquin and Maxime Préaud, eds., *Le sabbat des sorciers XV^e-XVIII^e siècles* (Grenoble, 1993), 227–46.

19.6 A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF HUNGARIAN WITCHES

According to our present knowledge, a total of 4,592 accused witches were brought to trial between 1213 and 1800 in the kingdom of Hungary. The total number of trials was 2,291. These figures should be considered minimum totals, since the exploration of witchcraft trials in different archival collections is still ongoing. For the entire period, the great majority of the accused witches were women (3,962 or 86 per cent). Local studies provide similar gender distributions: only eleven men (roughly 9 per cent) were brought to trial in the city of Debrecen between 1575 and 1759, and eight (roughly 5 per cent) in the villages and towns of Bihar county between 1591 and 1766.

About two thirds or 3,444 of the accused witches were Hungarian, while most of the rest were German (428), Croatian (340), and Romanian (183). There were small numbers of Slovaks (92), Roma (47), Poles–Ruthens (41), and Serbs (18) as well.²²

The exact number of executions cannot be determined. According to the most recent research, only 848 witches or roughly 51 per cent of those whose final sentences were known were given capital sentences. One should, however, take into consideration the fact that the final sentences are *not* known for roughly 64 per cent of the total number of accused witches. The majority of those not sentenced to death received corporal punishment or were banished from their communities either temporarily or permanently. The remainder were acquitted. Local rates of capital punishments varied. In the Calvinist city of Debrecen only 27 per cent of those whose sentences are known were executed, mainly by burning, while in the predominantly Calvinist county of Bihar the comparable figure was 38 per cent.

19.7 CHRONOLOGICAL PATTERNS OF WITCHCRAFT PROSECUTIONS

Early modern Hungarian witch-hunting tended to increase in intensity during periods of peace that set in after or between wars and internal rebellions. These periods also coincided with periods of devastating plague epidemics and their immediate aftermath. Witch-hunting reached its first peak in the 1580s, a peaceful period that coincided with a plague epidemic. The intensity of prosecutions decreased during the Fifteen Years' War with the Turks (1591–1606) and also during the anti-Habsburg uprising of István Bocskai (1604–6).

²² UROW.

The 1620s saw a new spike in the number of prosecutions. Although this was a time of rebellion, when Gábor Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania, led three campaigns against the Habsburgs, many individual trials were held in years of peace and in regions unaffected by military conflict. A decree issued by the Transylvanian Diet in 1614 to punish sorcerers, coupled with the outbreak of the plague, most likely contributed to the intensification of witch-hunting during these years.

Another increase in witch-hunting occurred after 1690, when the Ottomans were finally driven out of the country. Witch-hunting reached its highest peak in the first half of the eighteenth century, after the end of the War of Independence against the Habsburgs (1703–11). The two greatest plague epidemics of the eighteenth century, which took place between 1709 and 1711 and between 1738 and 1745, also seem to have contributed to this intense period of witch-hunting.

19.8 DECRIMINALIZATION AND LATE WITCH TRIALS

Although witch-hunting declined somewhat in the middle of the eighteenth century, it did not register a significant reduction in intensity until the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa took steps to stop the prosecutions after 1758, and until Hungarian witch beliefs underwent a profound transformation.

The person who was primarily responsible for the change in official policy was Gerard van Swieten, Maria Theresa's enlightened court physician. After having examined personally a Slovenian woman (a certain Heruczina) accused of witchcraft, van Swieten submitted a *mémoire* to the empress in 1758, arguing that the charges against this woman were based on false beliefs. In order to avoid future miscarriages of justice of this sort he suggested that the government end all such prosecutions. In keeping with his recommendation, the royal court reversed a number of local, municipal sentences passed against accused witches, and in 1768 a royal decree prohibited the execution of witches.²³ This decree did not, however, bring an immediate end to all witchcraft prosecutions in Hungary. County magistrates, who presided over their own criminal courts and resisted the centralizing efforts of the Habsburg rulers, continued to hold witchcraft trials during the last three decades of the eighteenth century, and in some regions even into the early years of the nineteenth century.

In addition to this change in royal policy, local magistrates began to interpret witchcraft as an imposture or the product of illness rather than a supernatural, diabolical act. This is what happened in the city of Debrecen, where prosecutions for

²³ Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 235; Lilla Krász and Péter Tóth G., 'Die Dekriminalisierung der Magie und der Kampf gegen Aberglauben in Ungarn und in Siebenbürgen 1740–1848', unpublished manuscript; UROW.

witchcraft ended well before the decrees of Empress Maria Theresa. A large volume of educational literature, including popular scientific texts, schoolbooks, and chapbooks, ridiculed witch beliefs as superstitious, and attributed its effects to natural causes. Lawyers used these attacks on traditional witch beliefs to defend witches at their trials, and they were successful in winning a number of acquittals in the mid-eighteenth century.

19.9 ACCUSERS AND ACCUSED: A MICRO-SOCIOLOGY

Accusations of witchcraft in early modern Hungary must be studied in their proper local, social, and cultural context. In many cases witchcraft charges involved other offences or crimes, such as adultery, fornication, arson, or malevolent curing, and they often reflected 'dangerous' social relations between the accused witches and their accusers.

Early modern Hungarian witchcraft accusations reveal three main patterns. The first is what may be called 'accusations from above', which occurred when a wealthier person or one of higher social or political status accused a person of lower status. This pattern was evident in politically initiated witch trials within the Transylvanian high nobility. Among the princes who accused family members of their political enemies of witchcraft were Sigismund Báthory, who blamed the mother of Boldizsár Báthory, whom he had murdered, for causing his impotence; Gábor Bethlen, who, after having taken power from the murdered Gábor Báthory in 1612, accused the sister of the latter as well as two other noblewomen of his entourage; and Mihály Apafy, who initiated a very large witch-hunt between 1679 and 1686. Apafy's main target was the wife of his exiled rival, Pál Béldi, whom he accused of inflicting a serious illness on the prince's wife, Anna Bornemisza, in revenge for her husband's defeat.²⁴

This pattern was also apparent in early modern urban and village witchcraft. For example, in the city of Debrecen, well-to-do burghers (artisans and merchants) accused their lodgers, their house servants, or even city beggars of witchcraft in dozens of cases. These accusations seem to have formed part of an explicit local socio-political campaign against the poor. A variant of this pattern was evident when so-called 'honest' Calvinist citizens in Debrecen accused adulteresses, drunkards, thieves, and 'blasphemous' women of witchcraft. The latter group comprised fifty-three people, roughly 36 per cent of the total number of Debrecen witches. Another variant of this pattern, in which

²⁴ Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 238. János Herner, ed., *Bornemisza Anna megbűvöltetése* [The Bewitchment of Anna Bornemisza] (Budapest, 1988). Lengyel, 'Nyitra és Pozsony megye boszorkányperei', 36–7. For the witchcraft charges against Erzsébet Báthory see Tünde Lengyel and Gábor Várkonyi, *Báthory Erzsébet: Egy asszony élete* [Erzsébet Báthory: The Life of a Woman] (Budapest, 2011), 285–91.

a person of 'superior' social or moral status accused a subordinate of witchcraft, occurred when young female servants were accused of witchcraft (mostly love magic) and fornication by their landlords, hosts, or their mostly male acquaintances or clients.

Another manifestation of this pattern can be seen in two other forms of social conflict in the eighteenth-century frontier world of the Great Plain that were closely connected to its resettlement and the restructure of its social world. The first was evident when local village or town dwellers accused strangers or newcomers of witchcraft, a very common phenomenon in the period. The second was apparent when formerly privileged social groups, such as the *hajdú* (Haiduk) nobles who had lost their administrative, economic, and military liberties after the end of the Turkish occupation, accused their peasant neighbours of witchcraft. Suffering the loss of their ancient privileges, the nobles apparently used witchcraft accusations to retaliate against people of lower social status who had recently settled in their communities.²⁵

The second main pattern of witchcraft accusations might be labelled 'accusations from below'. It was evident when a socially disadvantaged party accused a person of higher social or economic status. This pattern was most common in witch panics. We find it, for example, in the city of Szeged in 1728, when a poor wise woman and beggar accused a highly esteemed former judge, Dániel Rósa, of witchcraft. Town and village magistrates and judges were also accused during the witch panic in the villages of Ottomány and Nagykereki in 1724, and in the Kiskunhalas panic of 1734.²⁶

Another manifestation of this pattern was evident when fourteen- to sixteen-year-old house servants or kitchen maids, and even younger children accused their landlords, hosts, and even parents or grandparents of witchcraft. Some of these accusations from below also occurred during witch panics, as in Kolozsvár towards the end of the witch-hunt that lasted from 1615 to 1629. Others, however, occurred in trials when only one person was accused, such as in Debrecen and the county of Bihar during the first half of eighteenth century.²⁷

Accusations from socially subordinate groups also occurred during periods of moderate witch-hunting. In some trials in eighteenth-century Debrecen lodgers accused their hosts of witchcraft. In an even larger number of cases, patients and clients accused wise women, midwives, and healers who had failed in their efforts to

²⁵ Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 132–43, 162–70, 171–6. For the trial of a young servant from Nyírgyulaj in 1728–9, accused of fornication and witchcraft, tortured, and then banned from the county, see György Szoboszlai, 'Egy falusi boszorkány és a közösség: Fodor Mária története' [A Village Witch and the Community: The Story of Mária Fodor], in István Czövek, ed., *Tanulmányok az egyetemes és magyar történelem köréből VI* (Nyíregyháza, 2008), 41–54.

²⁶ For Szeged see Petrovics, 'Witch-Hunt in Szeged', 114–16 and Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 239. For Kiskunhalas see Klaniczay, 'A halasi boszorkányok és az új kultúrtörténet' (The Witches of Kiskunhalas and the New Cultural History) in Zsombor Bódy, Sándor Horváth and Tibor Valuch, eds, *Megtalálható-e a múlt? Tanulmányok Gyáni Gábor 60. születésnapjára*, (Budapest, 2010), 118–39. For Ottomány and Nagykereki see Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 224–5. For a case of a Calvinist preacher accused informally of having associated himself with the devil in the 1630s see Szentpéteri, 'Magic and Demonology'.

²⁷ Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 239; Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*.

cure them. Cunning folk, who were mostly women in early modern Hungary, were called either *tudós* (wise), *orvos* (doctor), *tudós asszony* (wise woman), *orvosasszony* (doctor/medicine woman) or, referring more to the practices of divination and fortune-telling, *néző* (seer). Witchcraft accusations against cunning people reflected a broader transformation of the healing and medical culture in Debrecen, in which popular healers and experts of magic gradually suffered a loss in prestige. Debrecen was not an isolated case. Witchcraft accusations against wise women and cunning people occurred in South Transdanubia, Nagybánya (Baia Mare in present-day Romania), Kolozsvár, and in many other local communities throughout the country. They show, among other things, that relationships between patients and healers or diviners were not always amicable during this period.

Occasionally accusation from below reached the highest levels of society. For example, Anna Benkő, a Transylvanian noblewoman, was accused of witchcraft in the middle of the eighteenth century. Her trial involved both accusations from below, since it was servants and housemaids who accused her of various magical practices, and those from people of equal social status, namely her noble relatives who wanted to get her fortune.²⁸

The third main pattern of witchcraft accusations involved individuals who had the same social status or occupation or possessed magical power. Many of the accusations of this kind reflected competition among cunning folk; a large number of witchcraft accusations in Hungary originated in this kind of magical status rivalry. Almost all the victims of the first witchcraft trial in Kolozsvár in 1565 were cunning folk who accused one another of witchcraft. The same was true in the early modern Debrecen trials, in which roughly 31 per cent of all the accused witches were practitioners of popular or magical healing. During these trials local wise women brought charges against other wise women, midwives accused other midwives, and city barber surgeons and licensed midwives testified against their popular equivalents, stigmatizing them as 'diabolical' and therefore illegal. These kinds of witchcraft accusations, as mentioned above, reflected the reorganization and institutionalization of the local health care system in Debrecen during the eighteenth century. Rivalry among wise women and midwives was also apparent in the Hódmezővásárhely and Nagybánya witch trials.²⁹

²⁸ Krász, 'Bábák és boszorkányok a kora újkori Magyarországon' [Midwives and Witches in Early Modern Hungary], *Rubicon*, 7 (2005), 37–40; Krász, 'Zwischen Verbanntsein und Akzeptiertsein', in Glatz Ferenc, ed., *An der Schwelle der Europäischen Union: Begegnungen, Schriftenreihen*, x (Budapest, 2000), 217–32. On Anna Benkő see Szoboszlai, 'Rivalisok és jó rokonok: Egy háromszéki boszorkányhistória néhány tanulsága' [Rivals and Good Relatives: Lessons from a Story of Witchcraft in Háromszék], in István Czövek and Gábor Reszler, eds, *Múlttörédek. Tanulmánygyűjtemény Hársfalvi Péter emlékére* (Nyíregyháza, 2008), 208–21, and Zsuzsa Bokor, 'Történelmek–levéltárak–boszorkányok: A boszorkánypercek kutatásának problémáiról' [Histories–archives–witches: About the Problems of the Research of Witchcraft Trials], in Árpád Tőhötöm Szabó, ed., *Lenyomatok. Fiatal kutatók a népi kultúráról* (Kolozsvár, 2002), 47–62.

²⁹ Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 143–70 and Kristóf, 'Wise Women', *Sinners and the Poor*, 107–11; Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 239; Klaniczay, 'Mely ördögtől volt nyavalyája'; Benkéné Sándor, 'Hódmezővásárhely egészségügyi kultúrája'; András Kiss, 'Ante Claram Bóci (Egy 1565-beli ismeretlen

Same-status accusations and magical status rivalry contributed to the development of witch-hunts in various ways. In some eighteenth-century hunts, the magistrates forced cunning folk to furnish 'proofs' of alleged agreements with the witches, according to which the latter had agreed to bewitch people so that the cunning folk would have more patients to cure. These charges were based on the well-known adage in Hungary that 'Who can lift the spell, can cast it as well.'

A specific group of Hungarian cunning men known as *tudós pásztorok* or wise shepherds also found themselves accused of witchcraft, either by their village clients or their shepherd colleagues, during the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century. A peculiar charge brought against them testified to popular beliefs in so-called werewolves, humans who were believed to be able to transform themselves into wolves. Such charges were made throughout the early modern period.³⁰ Charges against shepherds for practising witchcraft and acting as werewolves may have reflected the decline of the ancient practice of cattle-herding in the eighteenth century. Another aspect of the economic and social transformation of Hungary that occurred after its Turkish occupation was the undermining of the traditionally high prestige of the shepherds, who had reputations as popular healers. The resettlement and the profound economic–political reorganization of the country under the returned Habsburg rulers and the newly established institutions of absolute monarchy were responsible for this development.³¹

In sum, charges of witchcraft were used by individuals belonging to many different social groups to advance their interests and resolve their social conflicts. These charges were not limited to one social group, nor did they reflect a particular type of social

kolozsvári boszorkányper)' [Ante Claram Bóci: An Unknown Witch Trial from Kolozsvár, 1565], in his *Más források—más értelmezések* (Marosvásárhely, 2003), 291–309, and Kiss, 'Körmives Prisca boszorkánypere 1565-ből' [The Witchcraft Trial of Prisca Körmives from 1565], *Korunk*, 16 (2005), 16–25; Judit Kis-Halas and Péter Tóth G., 'Hával és conditioval' [With 'If' and 'Conditio'], in Béla Balogh, ed., *Nagybányai boszorkánypercek [Witchcraft Trials of Nagybánya]* (Budapest, 2003), 28–9; Kis-Halas, 'Trial of an Honest Citizen in Nagybánya 1704–1705: A Tentative Microanalysis of Witchcraft Accusations', in Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs, in collaboration with Eszter Csonka-Takács, eds, *Demons, Spirits, Witches 3: Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions* (Budapest, 2008), 213–36.

³⁰ Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 254. One of the earliest witchcraft trials held in 1528–9 in Sopron concerned a shepherd and his son said to have specific knowledge, and be able to send wolves to kill their rival/enemy shepherd, using various kinds of magical instruments. See Németh, 'Az 1528–1529. évi soproni boszorkánypercek' and Németh, 'Az 1528–1529. évi soproni boszorkánypercek' (The Witchcraft Trials Held in 1528–9 in Sopron), in Pócs, ed., *Közösség és identitás* (Budapest, 2002), 163–70, and Németh, 'Boszorkánypercek a 16. századi Sopronban' (Witchcraft Trials in 16th-Century Sopron), *Soproni Szemle*, 2 (2006), 166–74.

³¹ Klaniczay, 'Hungary', 254; Kristóf, *Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem*, 85–6. For an analysis of the witchcraft trial held in 1759 of a shepherd from the village of Vaszar, accused of magical (and unsuccessful) healing, and sending wolves to kill his enemies see József Hudi, 'Az újjáépítés korszaka (1697–1847)' [The Period of Rebuilding 1697–1847], in József Hudi and Zsolt Mezei, eds, *Vaszar története* (Vaszar, 2010), 232–4.

conflict. Charges of witchcraft penetrated early modern Hungarian society as a whole and reflected the transformation of that society during the early modern period.³²

19.10 FUTURE RESEARCH

One large gap in our knowledge of witch-hunting in Hungary is the way in which the prosecutions in the ecclesiastical courts corresponded with, contributed to, or overlapped with those of the secular courts. Early modern ecclesiastical records often dealt with offences related to witchcraft, and these have not been adequately explored. Some work has been done on the records of Calvinist tribunals, but very little has been conducted in the ecclesiastical records of other religious denominations.

Another gap is the importance of gender in understanding witchcraft prosecutions. Some Hungarian studies have investigated the influence of Calvinist concepts of female weakness and fallibility with those of diabolic temptation, but the views of Lutherans and Catholics regarding the connection between witchcraft and women remain relatively unknown. The degree to which clerical stereotypes of women coincided with popular attitudes towards women accused of witchcraft remains largely unexplored.

There is also a need for a better understanding of the cultural language of witchcraft narratives and the particular social and cultural context in which they were produced. For example, the locations where witches were thought to assemble might refer to specific sites in the local landscape, or more generally to locations such as private vineyards, whose access was restricted by law.³³ Gestures and ceremonies mentioned in the trial documents might refer to forms of legal ritual, while the dramatic character of these narratives made them appear to constitute a 'theatre of blood and pain'.³⁴ Finally, more attention needs to be paid to the construction of witchcraft narratives. In this respect the methodologies of microhistory, critical discourse analysis, and linguistic

³² A thorough analysis of local conflicts resulting in witchcraft accusations in Hungary would show a broader perspective than the one proposed by Robert J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550–1700* (Oxford, 1979), 411, according to which witchcraft charges went hand in hand with efforts at social control, and formed 'another aspect of the pursuit of settled hierarchy' in Hungary and in Central Europe. A considerable number of the above-mentioned 'dangerous relations' involved in such charges would also testify to the subversive function of witchcraft, itself very much present in early modern Hungary.

³³ Melinda Égető, 'Boszorkányszombat a szőlőhegyen: A szőlőhegy elkülönítettségének tükröződése a népi mentalitásban' [Witches' Sabbath on the Vineyard Hill: The Reflection of the Separate Legal and Economic Status of the Vineyard Hill in Folk Mentality], in Éva Pócs, ed., *Demonológia és boszorkányság Európában*, 227–47, summary in English, 365–7.

³⁴ Ildikó Sz. Kristóf, 'How to Make a (Legal) Pact with the Devil? Legal Customs and Literacy in Witch Confessions in Early Modern Hungary', in Klaniczay and Pócs, *Demons, Spirits, Witches* 3, 164–83, and Klaniczay and Kristóf, 'Écritures saintes et pactes diaboliques: Les usages religieux de l'écrit (Moyen Age et Temps modernes)', *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 4–5 (2001), 947–80 (esp. 973–5); Tóth G., 'The Bloody Theatre of Europe'. The Culture of Pain, Cruelty and Martyrdom in Early Modern Hungary', *Acta Ethnographica*, 48 (2003), 385–96.

analysis will continue to contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject, and bring us to a deeper knowledge of the mental worlds of those who initiated witchcraft prosecutions and those who staged them.³⁵

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³⁵ Bokor, 'Történelmek'; Zsófia Frazon, 'Az ördögszövetség mint büntetőügyi igazság és létrehozásának mechanizmusa' [The Devil Pact as Truth of the Criminal Procedure and the Mechanisms of its Construction], *Tabula*, 1(3) (2000), 28–47 (with an abstract in English); Emese Ilyefalvi, '... akar mi lellyen benneteket mingyart Emberre gyanakoztok'. Boszorkányfenyegetések pragmatikai elemzése [Whatever occurs to you, you suspect a human being behind]. A Pragmatical Analysis of the Threatenings of the Accused Witches], in Tünde Székely, ed., *Rodosz konferenciakötet* (Cluj, 2010), 75–92.

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CHAPTER 20

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WITCHCRAFT TRIALS IN RUSSIA: HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

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VALERIE KIVELSON

IN 1648 Vasilii Pavlov, a military man in the service of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, came to the court of the governor-general of the frontier fortress town of Belev to denounce his bondsman for working magic against him. The accusation was framed as a humble petition—as convention dictated—addressed directly to the tsar from his suppliant 'slave':

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Alexei Mikhailovich, your slave Vaska, son of Andrei Pavlov, petitions.

In this year, 1648, my bondsman, Ivashka Ryzhei, threatened in the presence of my [other] bondsman, Gavrilko Filipev, saying 'if my master is ever mad at me for any reason, then I will stand in the threshold or wherever, and say [a spell], and he will be able to do nothing to me. And as to the female sex, whomever I want, even if it is a *boiarinia* (mistress/noblewoman), my spells will cause [her] to fall in love with me.'

The horrified master took what he saw as appropriate steps:

So I beat him and ordered him to write what he had boasted of in front of my bondsmen. He wrote it out with his own hand in the presence of people, my peasants. Merciful sovereign, tsar and grand prince... have mercy on me, your slave. Order, sovereign, that my man Ivashka Ryzhei be questioned and his criminal letter taken as evidence.

In many ways, this case typifies the prosecution of witchcraft in Muscovite and early imperial Russian courts. Initiated by petition, denunciations very often grew out of domestic tensions or hostilities between masters and serfs, slaves, or other dependents. They were normally heard in secular courts, overseen by the tsar or the central