4
Witch-hunts and the Male Witch: A Chronology

I am an honest man, a child of God... I am now a frightened man. I should not be driven away from God. On the Day of Judgment I want to prove to God that I am not a witch.

(Statement made by Michael Heisch at his trial in Esslingen in 1603; he was later executed as a male witch)

The devil makes the same pact with the witches and the sorcerers...

(Statement of the Catholic suffragan bishop of Bamberg, Dr. Jacob Feucht, 1570)

This chapter deals with the temporal dimension of the persecution of male witches, this time drawing a chronological timeline rather than giving a statistical cross-section of the data. The chapter begins with a discussion of whether there were in fact peaks in the persecution of alleged male witches, and then looks into a theory on trials of male witches in the light of regional persecutions in territories with different denominations.

The 17th century

Quantitative methods are, despite all the problems with historical sources and unknown or unrecorded cases, an expedient way of depicting tendencies in persecution patterns. Again, I do not claim to cover all the trials which took place in a particular region; the data presented are intended as a guide to the relations between the various regions and historical periods.

Gender relations changed in the course of time: whereas witchcraft was still considered a gender-neutral crime in the late Middle Ages,
the proportion of men persecuted grew from low at the beginning of
the early modern era to high in the course of the 17th century. This is
borne out by the figures for a number of territories for which data is
available for the entire or large parts of the 16th and 17th centuries:

During the same period the gender relations also changed in the
Protestant regions; however, the changes were much less marked and the
category ‘woman’ remained the decisive factor in witchcraft accusations
in these regions. In the Calvinist county of Büdingen, for example, the
proportion of men increased from 3 per cent to 17 per cent and in the
Lutheran Duchies of Holstein and Saxony-Lauenburg from 10 per cent
to 15 per cent in the period under discussion.

In the course of the 17th century the courts increasingly assimilated
men as potential agents of the devil into their witch concept, leaving
behind the phenomenon of the 16th century when women had
represented the vast majority of the people persecuted and executed.
Although in the witch-hunt around 1590 the female witch stereotype
was still dominant, magical aggression at this point still being consid-
ered an almost exclusively female domain, the following century saw
a general increase in the number of men affected. In some Catholic
regions this tendency went so far as to almost reverse the gender pro-
portions. The case whereby the majority of victims were women had
become out of date, and the witch image in these regions took on male
features; witch-hunts were now aimed increasingly at men.

It was, then, not the first major witch-hunt of 1590 but the second and
third peaks around 1630 and 1660 which demonstrate the beginnings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>% of Men</th>
<th>Period</th>
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