

TERMEN VAN TOVERIJ

*De veranderende betekenis van toverij
in Noordoost-Nederland
tussen de zestiende en de twintigste eeuw*

WORDS OF WITCHCRAFT

*The changing meaning of witchcraft
in the northeastern Netherlands
between the sixteenth and the twentieth century*

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam
op gezag van de rector magnificus Prof. dr. C.J. Rijnvos
en volgens besluit van het college van dekanen.

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door

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geboren te Kampen

PROMOTIECOMMISSIE

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STELLINGEN

1

Het hedendaagse wetenschappelijke en populaire gebruik van de term 'hekserij' voor verschijnselen die destijds door de betrokkenen werden aangeduid met 'toverij', is anachronistisch en draagt niet bij tot een beter begrip van die verschijnselen.

2

Indien toverijbetichtingen niet direct verwijzen naar betoveringen, meer precies: naar ziekte of schade die door een toveres of tovenaars veroorzaakt zou zijn, wil dat nog niet zeggen dat deze betichtingen voor betichter en betichte geen betekenis hadden.

3

De afname van toverijbetichtingen in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw was in eerste instantie geen gevolg van een beschavingsoffensief, maar moet vooral verbonden worden met veranderingen in de demografische omstandigheden waaronder die betichtingen toentertijd tot stand konden komen.

4

Het einde van de strafrechtelijke vervolging van toveressen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden hangt eerder samen met juridisch conservatisme dan met een verlichte mentaliteit der rechtsprekenden.

5

De tekenaars van heksen in kinderboeken putten uit een iconografische traditie die weinig, om niet te zeggen niets, heeft uit te staan met het vermeende voorkomen van heksen en tovenaars zoals dat tot in deze eeuw kan worden getraceerd.

6

Zonder substantiële aandacht voor duivelbanners, waarzegsters en wonderdokters is de geschiedschrijving van gezondheidszorg en misdaadbestrijding eenzijdig.

7

Termen als 'volkscultuur', 'volksverhaal', 'volkslied', 'volkskunst', 'volksgebruiken' en dergelijke zijn zodanig door sociocentrische vooronderstellingen bezwaard, dat het voorvoegsel 'volks-' beter geschrapt kan worden.

8

Er bestaat een direct verband tussen het voorkomen van meer-generatie huishoudens in oostelijk Nederland en de verspreiding van verhalen over witte wieven.

9

Het onderzoek naar mondeling overgeleverde verhalen kan aan diepte winnen wanneer de onderzoeker de erin voorkomende metamorfoses zou opvatten als metaforen.

10

Historisch-demografen zouden, zowel ter verfijning van hun begrip-apparaat alsook om een beter inzicht te verkrijgen in demografische processen, meer gebruik moeten maken van antropologische verwantschapsbegrippen.

11

In tegenstelling tot de mening van de landbouwhistoricus Bieleman vormen de Drentse haardstedenregisters een oneigenlijke bron voor de bestudering van paardenbezit en vooral van de paardenfokkerij. Cf. Jan Bieleman, 1987, *Boeren op het Drentse zand 1600-1910. Een nieuwe visie op de 'oude' landbouw*. Utrecht: HES.

12

Het microficheren van omvangrijke archiefbestanden en kranten mag het behoud daarvan ten goede komen, zonder een adequate indexering wordt serieel onderzoek er zo door belemmerd dat het verlies van de geficheerde bron er tegenop kan gaan wegen.

13

Niet alleen uit emancipatorische overwegingen maar ook uit praktisch oogpunt zouden vrouwen zich bij publikaties consequent van hun eigen naam (dus hun meisjesnaam) moeten bedienen.

SUMMARY

Over the past twenty years historical research on European witchcraft has greatly profited from anthropological insights and methods. This research has, however, been confined mainly to the period of the witch trials, despite ethnographic and folkloristic evidence that witchcraft can be found in some European communities to this very day. Folklorists have, for their part, mainly restricted themselves to collecting witchcraft tales and legends while refraining from anthropological analysis. The present study seeks to fill the temporal gap by analyzing the witchcraft tradition from the sixteenth to the twentieth century in the Dutch province of Drenthe.

From a cultural relativist point of view, witchcraft can not be considered as a universal phenomenon; it has only been academically defined as such to the neglect of native categories. For that reason the study of indigenous witchcraft in Europe becomes all the more necessary. Witchcraft (Dutch: *toverij*) also poses an epistemological problem: it is only to be known as words. Consequently, its study amounts to the study of the meaning of witchcraft accusations. Trials for slander (in which the reputed 'witch' demanded retraction of the offending words and a restitution of honour) and newspaper articles were the main sources for this investigation, while tax registers provided information about the relative social status of the accuser and the accused. (Only a few witch trials were held in Drenthe, as the legal system contained means of evading them by swearing an oath of innocence or buying off a prosecution.)

To reconstruct the indigenous meanings of witchcraft accusations, I have derived a set of questions from the 'ethnography of speaking', dealing with form, content, participants, effect, norms, circumstances, and genre. In this way not only four different types or meanings of witchcraft can be distinguished, but their changes can be traced over time. The four types are: bewitching (*betoveren*), unwitching (*onttoveren*), witching (*toveren*) and scolding (*kijven*). Bewitching refers to doing harm by witchcraft. It concerns the crossing of a material, metaphorical, and social border; witches had been too close to their victims. It was also possible to bewitch someone by giving him or her something to eat, thereby violating the social norms of

neighbourhood. There is no indication of conflicts preceding an accusation of bewitching, evidence points only to fairly good social relations earlier. Unwitching refers to counter-witchcraft; either the witch herself or unwitchment specialists could undo a charm. Witching relates to enrichment by means of witchcraft – a feat that could only be accomplished by men. Accusing someone of witching, or calling him or her a member of a witch family, was also used to prevent marriages. Scolding, i.e., comparing someone with a witch, occurred during other conflicts. In most cases the different types were separated, spatially and socially as well as in relation with the presumed actor. Unwitchment specialist were very rarely accused of bewitching; a witchcraft accusation did not imply counter-witchcraft, as a man accused of witching seems not to have been thought to do this by bewitching. Also, it was usually a woman from the neighbourhood who bewitched someone; it could be a man from a neighbouring village who witched, and the unwitchment experts were always outsiders, who, during most of the period in question, even lived outside Drenthe.

The meanings of witchcraft are bound up with the economic and demographic facts of daily life. Women were thought to bewitch people, especially young children, and dairy products within their domain, the household; if ever a man was accused of bewitching, it involved cattle or horses. Accusations of witching were concentrated in periods of economic growth; some members of a community profited more from a boom than others. Bewitchings of people and children occurred mostly in times and places of high demographic growth. The bewitchment of churns was strongly connected with an increase in the production of butter – until the establishment of butter factories made it come to an end. Although during the sixteenth and seventeenth century neighbouring witch trials can be seen to have had an influence in Drenthe, peaks in the accusations (more of a qualitative than of a quantitative kind) could not be correlated with periods of crisis.

Changes in the meanings of witchcraft are connected mainly with the disappearance of one type of witchcraft after another. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century witchcraft was considered a crime, in the nineteenth century it was by intellectuals defined as superstition. From around 1700, when farmers in Drenthe were caught between rising costs and diminishing returns and had to adapt by specializing, which instigated a process of individualization, men were no longer accused of witchcraft. They stopped being bewitched, did not accuse each other of witching and refrained from

scolding. The notion of witch families (running through the male line), with members of which it was deemed unwise to marry, nevertheless continued into the nineteenth century, when it dwindled with the importance of traditional farms. I have come across no nineteenth century instances of scolding. Bewitching, since the eighteenth century chiefly a matter between women, was, from the nineteenth century onwards, restricted to the peat districts of Drenthe. There it was backed up by the popular interpretation of orthodox Calvinism and Catholicism.

Comparative research on neighbouring regions could help to determine where, when, and among which groups the lines dividing the different types of witchcraft and bewitchings in Drenthe can be extended. It seems likely that witchcraft as a special topic will eventually be subsumed into more embracing cultural-historical research.