# Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip

PAMELA J. STEWART
ANDREW STRATHERN
*University of Pittsburgh*

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# Contents

❧

# Witchcraft and Sorcery: Modes of Analysis

In this chapter we give a brief overview of some predominant ways in which anthropologists have analyzed the phenomena of witchcraft and sorcery. We then proceed to give a preliminary idea of the kinds of discussions of materials that have emerged from these orientations in ethnographic terms. Some of these materials we also discuss below in more detail. In particular we juxtapose here case histories from Africa and from Europe, to which we devote separate chapters subsequently. Our overall aim in looking at the materials here and throughout the book is to place in the foreground the virtues of an analytical approach that is processual and links microprocesses to larger historical themes. Our particular contribution to analysis is to highlight the intrinsically important roles played by gossip and rumor in the genesis of conflict.

## Definitions and Perspectives

Anthropologists and social historians have approached the topics of witchcraft and sorcery in different ways. Before we discuss these, we need to take note of the definitional issues at stake. Do we conflate witchcraft and sorcery as forms of "mystical power," or do we attempt to make a clear distinction between them? In principle, as we note below, a distinction can be made between witchcraft as the expression of a malign power in a person's body and sorcery as the use of a magical craft or knowledge

to harm or benefit others. Especially, what is labeled witchcraft is often seen as a consuming force. The witch eats the life power of the victim. But in fact, people's ways of putting ideas and practices together outrun any neat distinctions we may wish to make. Often what one writer translates as "sorcery" may look like "witchcraft" to another observer, depending on what features are emphasized. In Francophone Africa, *la sorcellerie* stands for what in English would be called "witchcraft." The original legislation in Europe against witchcraft also conflated the activities of ritual experts in charms, healers, practitioners of harm (*maleficium*) and protectors against these, prohibiting all of them as well as the activity of consulting them. All such actions were seen as outside the control of church or state and therefore potentially subversive and wrong.

In these circumstances it is not worthwhile to make and adhere to any rigid definitional distinctions. It is more important to recognize the complex and shifting boundaries of indigenous conceptualizations and how they change over time (cf. Mair 1969: 21 on the "nemesis of over-definition" of categories of analysis).

In British social anthropology, discussions about witchcraft have tended to take their departure point from the work of Evans-Pritchard on the Azande (Evans-Pritchard 1976 [1937]). Evans-Pritchard used the Azande people's own distinctions between what he translated as witchcraft and sorcery in his exposition of Zande beliefs. Analytically, his main purpose was to show how for the Azande ideas of witchcraft (his main focus) functioned as a means of explaining misfortunes that were difficult to explain in other ways. These ideas were then, he argued, harnessed to a way of settling suspicions between people. Once a person had been identified as exercising witchcraft against someone, their accuser could ask them to cool their witchcraft by blowing on a chicken's wing. In this way most suspicions could be dissipated. Evans-Pritchard's argument stressed the elements of the intellect and the moral imagination. Witchcraft for the Azande was a reasonable way of explaining things. It was not an irrational notion for them. Witchcraft also gave shape to

people's moral worlds. Implicitly, a modified functionalist argument appears in Evans-Pritchard's account: witchcraft accusations were a means of expressing and discharging tensions between people within a particular social structure.

Mary Douglas (1970: xiv), however, points out that the main emphasis in Evans-Pritchard's book was on "the sociology of knowledge": that is, on how ambiguities and discrepancies in meanings could be tolerated because they were always dealt with in specific practical circumstances affecting individuals in their lives. In practice, it is important always to pay attention to how the working-out of ideas and accusations has an impact on people's accountability for their actions. In some instances, people may be severely punished, even put to death, for witchcraft. In others, as with the Azande, the emphasis is on the voluntary removal of the effects of witchcraft by a ritual of purgation. The collection of studies edited by Middleton and Winter (1963) on witchcraft and sorcery in East Africa shows the continuous working-out of functionalist ideas in Africanist ethnography of the time. A more recent collection by Watson and Ellen on Southeast Asia points out how studies in that part of the world have taken up a different set of problematics that fall within the sphere of medical anthropology (Watson and Ellen 1993; Ellen 1993: 20). Evans-Pritchard's legacy is reflected in multiple ways.

Evans-Pritchard's account therefore partakes of both "functionalist" and "intellectualist" tendencies in anthropological analysis, the first centering on social process and the maintenance of social order and the second on cognitive processes and the maintenance of mental order within a particular social structure. Clearly, the two can go together, although they need not do so. In British social anthropology generally, functionalist viewpoints prevailed until they became unfashionable with the demise of the idea of closed societies able to reproduce themselves over time. Africanist studies, coming to grips with historical change, tended to see witchcraft and sorcery accusations as reflections of the upheavals of community life brought on by labor migration, the movements of people, and

epidemics. At a microlevel, accusations were related to tensions between people in ambiguous competitive relations such as contendants for office or workmates vying for promotion (Anderson 2002; Marwick 1965).

Victor Turner added to the functionalist paradigm his notion of the social drama in which conflicts exposed the weaknesses of lineage organization and caused fission in social groups (Turner 1996 [1957]). In Turner's view, witchcraft accusations were seen as the surface indicators of underlying conflicts over land and power. His processual models of social dramas remain valuable to this day, provided we recognize that resolutions of conflict may be open-ended.

The division between cognitive (intellectualist) and social (functional, processual) ways of approaching witchcraft remains significant. But in our view, these ways need to be brought together. Social processes feed off the moral imagination of people and their searches for explanations and order. The moral imagination reflects local structures of power, enshrined in class and ethnicity, for example. Michael Taussig, in his work on Bolivian tin mines, showed clearly how ideas about El Tio (literally, "Uncle," but also "the Devil") reflected a complex mix of indigenous ideas about the environment and introduced capitalist relations of production (Taussig 1980). El Tio functioned as an explanation for the wealth and poverty of people and of accidents that happened to them. Equally, ideas of El Tio reflected both acceptance of and resistance to the capitalist class structure. The same is true of witch beliefs around the world. A synthetic viewpoint is needed to understand them. Our argument here is that in the formation of the moral imagination and in the development of social processes, rumor and gossip play a vital part, one that has not always been adequately recognized by students of witchcraft and sorcery.

Equally, rumor and gossip tend to feed on and contribute to patterns of uncertainty in human communication that are intertwined with the probability of misunderstanding and conflict. Gossip becomes a way of trying to come to terms with, or negotiate, social situations in these

circumstances, as Nigel Rapport (1996: 267) argues. Rapport refers to the work of John Haviland (1977) on gossip in Zinacantan, southeast Mexico, in this regard. Haviland's work showed how gossip enters pervasively into people's conversations, as much to damage people's reputations as to enhance them. "Talk is littered with failed careers, frustrated ambition, the pitiable and the laughable" (Haviland 1977: 111). Zinacantecans are clearly not unique in this regard. Discussions among academics at conferences or in departmental corridors are cases in point, especially in fraught and ambiguous times of conflicts such as those that accompany struggles over new appointments to faculty positions, where internal politics, rather than the basic merits of the candidate, play a major part in determining who will eventually be offered the job. Victor Turner's concept of the "social drama" applies to the in-fighting and gossip that takes place on these occasions as well as to the processes of fission in African villages.

Earlier theories of social change in places described as the Third World tended to assume that in the process of "modernization" witchcraft ideas would disappear as they supposedly did in Europe earlier. This was a superficial view, on two counts. First, people feed their own ideas into new circumstances. They do not simply abandon all ideas from the past, even if they say they are doing so. Witchcraft ideas in contemporary Africa have become a prominent way of conceptualizing, coping with, and criticizing the very "modernity" that was supposed to have done away with them. Second, at a deeper level, ideas that belong to the genre of witchcraft or sorcery reappear pervasively in modern "witch-hunts" and rumored explanations of untoward happenings in Europe as they do everywhere in the world. Contemporary anthropological studies come to grips with these points.

Much of the classic literature on witchcraft and sorcery, especially analyzed in processual terms, comes from colonial and postcolonial Africa and New Guinea. A longer tradition of writings deals with the historical experience of witchcraft trials in Europe, reexamined by contemporary historians and anthropologists. The basic ideas involved in all of these

contexts are similar. Witchcraft is seen as a power belonging to persons through their bodies or spirits, giving them an ability to fly out of the body or to transform themselves into other creatures and to kill, harm, or inflict sickness on those whom they intend to weaken. Characteristically, the witch is seen as a kind of cannibal, eating the victim's life-force as a way of self-augmentation. Sorcerers also are seen as destroying a victim's life-force, not by directly consuming it but by inflicting sickness through magical means. These ideas can be conflated in various ways.

For instance, in the Pangia area of Papua New Guinea two types of sorcery were known in the 1960s. In one type, called *tomo*, the sorcerer was thought to slip lethal substances directly into people's food, causing them to become ill and die unless purgative medicine along with a spoken spell could be administered in time by a trained curer. In the other type, *nakenea*, someone with a grudge against the victim was said to pick up a part of their life-force held in a piece of clothing (such as a hair) or food remnant (an incompletely eaten piece of food) and to take or send this to an expert sorcerer living some distance away. The commissioned sorcerer was reported to have suspended the captured item over a pool of water and uttered spells over it, making the water rise up. If the item was covered by the rising water, the victim was said to have been marked for death. Another kind of Pangian magical expert, known as *kawei* or *kewanea*, was said to be able to send out from his own body red birds of paradise that could find and retrieve stolen items used to make the person ill. By bringing this item back, the victim was said to have his/her life-force restored, if this was done quickly enough after the sorcerer had performed the spells. The *kawei* could also use his familiars (the birds of paradise) to inflict sickness. All classes of experts in the use of magic required payments for their services in wealth items such as valuable shells. Knowledge of these experts and the putative actions of people in using their services or indirectly practicing sorcery was a matter of covert community comment and suspicion, maintained by the equivalent of gossip and rumor, since the supposed hostile magicians were never

publicly accused or brought to trial. People were highly circumspect about leaving parts of meals or clothing behind after visiting another place, which might contain personal or group enemies. For example, they would crush chewed fragments of discarded sugarcane into puddles of rainwater whenever possible to "neutralize" their own life-force held in the remnants. People who picked up such remnants were said to do so with improvised tweezers made of twigs, to avoid mingling their own life-force with that of the victim, thereby avoiding the possibility of endangering themselves. People vigilantly watched one another for any signs that this form of "bio-terrorism" was being practiced, and they would spread gossip about any case they thought they had observed.

Claims and counterclaims about the activities of witches and sorcerers tend to exist in the background of community affairs in the societies where such ideas are held. They flourish in the shadows, fed by gossip and rumor, and emerge into public debate or accusations only in times of specific tension, most often following the actual sickness or death of someone in a prominent family. Notably, rumors follow the patterns of imputed jealousies, hostilities, and resentments that also keep mostly to the shadows or lurk in the background of social life, ready to reveal themselves in times of crisis. Or they swing into play at times of unusual or epidemic deaths that themselves cause panic and fear.

This point is well illustrated by Nutini and Roberts's extensive discussion of the idea of blood-sucking witches, or *tlahuepuchi*, among rural Tlaxcalans in Mexico (Nutini and Roberts 1993; discussed by Risjord 2000: 13–16). While Nutini was in the field on December 9, 1960, he was told that seven infants had died overnight, with bruises on their bodies indicating the work of the *tlahuepuchi*. This attribution of the deaths to witchcraft might be seen as a way of coping with an unusual and threatening disaster. The people also excluded other possible causes, such as accidents or illness, but they were socialized from childhood into accepting the idea of witchcraft, concomitantly with their Catholicism. Nutini and Roberts also suggest that possibly the children were inadvertently smothered in

bed while heavily swaddled against the cold, and that the attribution of death by witchcraft might have alleviated a sense of guilt on the part of their mothers and the community at large.

Ideas of witchcraft and sorcery thus step in as forms of explanations for misfortunes in general, as Evans-Pritchard originally argued for the Azande people (Evans-Pritchard 1976 [1937]). The crucial point to note here is that such explanations are not appplied indiscriminately, still less "irrationally." They belong to local logics of explanation, and they are applied in cases that within such local logics call for special focus and attention. All deaths are likely to arouse emotions and a search for explanations, particularly if they are untoward and unexpected. The deaths of a number of infants all at the same time would be perceived by the Tlaxcalans as a threat to their reproductive future.

It is significant also to note here that forms of explanation are constituted in practice rather than as objects of theoretical thought. Inconsistencies do not matter, since people are concerned primarily with given cases and not with constructing a general cultural scheme of thought (Lambek 1993: 17, referring to Evans-Pritchard 1976 [1937]: 540–1). As Lambek further notes, explanations of misfortune "are not particular manifestations of closed, self-affirming systems of thought, but . . . they are rather provisional and contestable readings of events, moments in the life of narrative" (1993: 385). Nor does one such reading necessarily preclude another in the course of the search for causes and accountability. Given this open-ended character of discourse, it is evident why gossip and rumor are important, since they thrive on uncertainty and speculation.

Just as people may invoke witchcraft or sorcery as explanations for death and misfortune, so anthropologists have spent much effort in searching for explanations of witchcraft and sorcery ideas themselves. In the European context, one way of looking at these phenomena has been to see them as signs of pre-Christian forms of religious belief and practice, demonized through their incorporation into Christian theology in which they were seen as emanations of Satan (Ginzburg 1966).

Witch-hunts, persecutions, and trials have been seen as reflections of massive religious, political, and economic changes in early modern Europe, in which church authorities sought out heretics or people accused their neighbors who might be jealous of their wealth and to whom they themselves were unwilling to give charity (Macfarlane 1970a). In African studies, social anthropologists working first at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and later at Manchester University in England developed a mode of analysis of witchcraft cases that is of particular interest to us here: the processual approach, in which the focus is on community tensions and disputes that lead to crises in terms of accusations and attempts to resolve these. The crises may revolve around a sickness or death and may cause community fission. Victor Turner was a prominent exponent of this approach. He developed the term "social drama" to refer to sequences of this sort (Turner 1996 [1957]). Turner's work on conflict and ritual became widely known and influenced the field of ritual studies in general (Turner 1977). He saw witchcraft accusations as "social catalysts" that could precipitate unforeseen results.

## African Cases

Turner's development of the processual approach emerged out of an earlier phase of thought that was influenced by functionalist explanations of social phenomena more so than today. He built on a set of analytical concepts developed by Max Gluckman, a South African anthropologist who was director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Zambia (at that time still called Northern Rhodesia). Gluckman characterized the small-scale African communities that he and others studied at the time as having "multiplex" relationships; that is, people were bound together in multiple roles. Gluckman argued that in such a context, conflicts that arose between people over one type of relationship (e.g., matrilineage members) could be resolved through appeal to other types of relationships within the wider community (e.g., Gluckman 1959). He also argued that in these

kinds of community contexts, ritual was used to demarcate times when persons took up new roles that needed to be distinguished from other roles they had in the society. Gluckman presented a picture in which, by and large, conflicts were resolved and harmony restored. However, the African societies studied by anthropologists at that time were all undergoing long-standing processes of change. Young men were constantly drawn into labor migration. This drained the villages of their working capacity. Christian missions were at work everywhere, deploying new ideas and practices and destabilizing indigenous religious ideas, including notions of witchcraft and sorcery. These influences must have certainly made it harder to achieve harmonious resolution of conflicts.

Andrew Sanders uses African case materials from the Ceŵa people of Northern Rhodesia in his book on witchcraft (Sanders 1995). He discusses a case of a Christian village headman, Gombe, who trained as an evangelist, married a Christian woman, and became headman of his village when accusations of internal witchcraft caused some disgruntled members of the community to leave. As a headman, Gombe decided to take a second wife so as to better entertain guests. This act seriously antagonized his first wife and signaled his departure from the Christian practice of retaining only one wife (see also Mair 1969: 112 on this same case). Gombe and his second wife subsequently declared that they had found witchcraft substances in a "medicine horn" that was hidden in the first wife's hut. They took the first wife to court over this, causing her to be reprimanded. The Ceŵa said that "polygyny produces witchcraft," by which they meant that by the action of a man taking more than one wife, relationships between a husband and a first wife become strained. This can lead to notions that cowives bewitch one another. But Marwick argues that in marital disputes the couple can divorce, precluding recourse to witchcraft (Marwick 1965). Since the first wife in this case was Christian, it is possible that the solution of divorce was made less accessible because churches sometimes discourage divorce even under these difficult circumstances. The complicating presence of Christian doctrines could have led to an

escalation in negative feelings here (Sanders 1995: 102–3). Sanders points out that Gombe's first wife was from his own father's matrilineage; that is, she was his patrilateral cross-cousin, and this for the Ceŵa "made divorce impossible" (ibid.). On two grounds, then, Gombe's actions set into play a conflict sequence.

Victor Turner's case histories from the Ndembu people show many similarities to Marwick's on the Ceŵa. Ndembu villages at the time of Turner's study in the 1950s were small groups centered on matrilineage segments, and village fission was common because of competition for the position of headman. Sanders, who also discusses the Ndembu case, significantly notes the influence of colonial change on patterns of competition. He says that village division became more frequent in the twentieth century "as men established farms and independent residences away from kinsmen in order to avoid claims on the income they derive from cash crops" (Sanders 1995: 123, citing Mair 1969: 130). Ambitious Ndembu men needed to keep women of their matrilineage with them and to found a matrilineage segment, but in time conflicts developed between a headman's sister's sons and his brothers, since the brothers expected to succeed to the headship (by adelphic succession) but the nephews were impatient and would try to preempt the situation by seceding with their own sisters, using accusations of witchcraft as a catalyst for fission. Rivals for the headman's position would consult diviners and seek to accuse each other of witchcraft. The colonial government, however, prohibited the use of diviners, making it harder to bring cases to resolution.

In a lengthy case history revolving around a man whom Turner himself employed as his cook, a man, Sandombu, was first suspected of killing his maternal uncle, the village headman, by witchcraft, and subsequently came into further conflict with a later claimant to the same position. Village gossip claimed that he had uttered threats that resulted in a villager's death, but there was gossip also against his rival. The wives of the succeeding headman declared it was the rival, Kasonda, who had bewitched the headman and made him ill, and that the fact that he was building a

brick house was proof that he was scheming to obtain the headmanship for himself. Jealousy of the rival was increased by his having obtained the job of cook (which presumably brought in pay as well as prestige) for the anthropologist. The rival decided to found his own village, announcing that some would follow him and others would stay with Sandombu. Several other witchcraft accusations punctuated the narrative, and Turner pointed out that at least one of these was aimed at a widow who was from a different country, Angola, on the father's side of her family and was suspected of witchcraft because she was partly an outsider to the community (Sanders 1995: 127). Significantly, this same woman, Nyamuwang'a, was said to have become angry when a young woman who had later died had refused to give her some meat. This is an important detail, on two counts. First, it is a classic theme that witches themselves are thought to act out of resentment over the sharing of meat: the theme is found notably also in New Guinea. Second, as Ndembu matrilineages grew in size, it became less easy to satisfy their members in meat distributions, and witchcraft accusations were tied in with this process.

Further, we should note here that, as is also frequently found elsewhere, accusations centered on people *following a death*. They were post-hoc attempts to explain the death and pinpoint blame for it. Rumor and gossip particularly came into play on the occasions of death and sickness, bringing out veiled suspicions and animosities in the sequences that Turner called social dramas. Gossip may also center on people who are thought of as outsiders. Here, as in Max Gluckman's overall argument about gossip and scandal (see more on this in Chapter 2), gossip may be seen as picking on someone to *treat as* an outsider, thereby redrawing the boundaries of the community, but the immediate motive may have to do with local politics in circumstances where group cohesion is fragile. Rather than being a mark of a strong community, gossip may mark its weakness and may itself escalate conflict, weakening the community further.

From one viewpoint, the continual founding of new Ndembu villages may be seen as the phase of resolution in the social drama. But it is equally

clear that this part of Africa generally was deeply affected by change and that large-scale historical events entered into villagers' worlds and produced their own twist on the foci of gossip. The theme of suspicion directed against people who succeed in building houses made of permanent materials turns up as a recurrent element in Peter Geschiere's discussion of witchcraft in Cameroon and tells us much about the correlation of hostilities with developing class structures and ideologies of consumption associated with money (Geschiere 1997). Luise White's extensive analysis of "vampire" narratives from parts of Africa also continually refers to this theme (White 2000). We consider these two studies more fully in a later chapter.

The African cases we briefly have looked at here testify clearly both to the long-ingrained status of ideas about witchcraft and to their intertwinement with processes of colonial change. It is notable that in the Ceŵa and Ndembu cases suspected witches could be taken to trial in a chief's court, which would be sanctioned by the colonial power (Britain). If convicted, they might simply be reprimanded, not put to death, in strong contrast to what we are accustomed to from the history of European witch trials of early modern times. We turn now to this context.

## European Cases

Andrew Sanders, following work by the historian Keith Thomas (Thomas 1973), points out that on the European continent witch trials came to center on the idea of witchcraft as a heresy, involving a pact with the Devil. By contrast, he says, in England, where papal authority was more limited, specific acts of harm continued to be the focus, even though witches were also thought to obtain their power from the Devil. Even on the Continent itself, cases at the local level resembled the English pattern. When accusations reached the courts, however, the clergy and magistrates together emphasized their own theologically oriented concerns with the idea of Satanic "orgies" (Sanders 1995: 29). At the local level, among

peasants themselves, witchcraft ideas and accusations in historical Europe are quite comparable to those from Africa.

Ideas regarding witchcraft in Europe were linked with notions about the use of magic, including potions and poisons, and so can be conflated partly with concepts of sorcery. These ideas go back both to Greek and Roman times and to the early notions of the pagan peoples of northern Europe. One persistent notion was that a "witch" could do good or harm. The same people might be healers or witches, and persons who claimed to be witch-finders might also be later accused of bewitching others, on the principle of "set a thief to catch a thief." The use of occult powers to harm others was called by the Latin term *maleficium*, but was not treated by the Catholic Church as heresy until the fourteenth century. Indeed, the Church at first derided the idea that witches had real occult powers, regarding them as simply deluded by the Devil. Prosecutions of witches had to be conducted privately, although an accused person might be subjected to an ordeal such as holding a red-hot iron in their hands (ibid.: 149).

The officialized incorporation of witch beliefs into Christian theology from the fourteenth century onward in continental Europe made of the witch a heretic, who was declared to deny his or her duty to God by giving himself or herself over to the Devil. Trials focused on the witches' putative attendance at meetings or sabbats where they worshiped the Devil. The Devil in turn was thought of as appearing to the witch at a time of distress and as promising occult powers in return for allegiance to him. In many instances the accused were females. The Devil was thought to mark the woman's body with his own baptismal mark, claiming her as his own. Witches were also said to anoint themselves with fat from murdered infants, enabling them to fly to sabbats, which were presided over by the Devil and marked by the *osculum infame*, the kissing of the Devil's anus (ibid.: 151), and a sexual orgy. Given such images, it is unsurprising that the punishment for witchcraft as heresy was burning to death, presumably thought of as followed by the soul's torments in Hell.

The witch had become the inversion of a true person, an anti-image of society rather than a maleficent but ordinary human with some magical powers. Witchcraft in this sense was "produced" by the Church hierarchy itself in the context of continuing struggles to assert its overall authority. Elements of pagan religion were incorporated into the theological picture of witchcraft and demonized as a part of this drive to essentialize and stereotype the phenomenon. Civil elites were concerned to carry out this project on the peasantry, while religious elites used it in struggles among themselves over Church reforms.

One group charged with Satan worship in this way was the Cathars, who were influential in Europe from the tenth to the fourteenth century. The Catholic authorities charged them with "cannibalism, infanticide, and holding sexual orgies" (ibid.: 153). The Cathars in southern France were also known as Albigensians, and their continued survival caused the Catholic Pope Gregory IX to establish the Inquisition in 1232. The Cathars held that the world, including the Catholic Church, was inherently evil and to be avoided, thus maintaining an oppositional theology of their own. One family of Albigensians is said to have made its way to Ayrshire in Scotland at the end of the twelfth century. These were the Howies, who many generations later in the seventeenth century figured as staunch Covenanters, opposed to the Church of Rome (Carslaw in Howie 1870 [1775]: ix). Others persecuted by the Pope were the Waldensians, whose sect was founded by Peter Waldo in 1173. Both the Cathars and the Waldensians were branded as witches by the Catholic Church. Their ideas fed into those of the Lollards, or "Murmurers," followers of John Wyclif who also opposed the authority of the Pope and argued that the Bible should be available to all in their own vernaculars. Lollards also made their way to Ayrshire and persisted there through the sixteenth century (see Davies 1999: 454; Howie 1870 [1775]: 9). All these groups were forerunners of the massive Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, including the Calvinism that fed into the creation of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Such a narrative shows us that social movements

and institutions grow by defining themselves in dialectical opposition to others, and that what is stigmatized at one time as heresy may emerge later elsewhere as a new orthodoxy with a legacy of historical animosity against its original persecutors. The Catholic Church clearly created the character of "diabolical witchcraft" as an anti-image of itself, applied the term to some of its rivals, and subsequently fed this image back into popular conceptions of *maleficium*. At the same time, most of the elements that were systematized in the Church's theology also had existed in an informal way in earlier popular conceptions (see also Bailey 2003).

In the history of European witchcraft it is easy to forget this particular aspect of history because of the overwhelming emphasis on witchcraft trials, mostly directed against certain peasant women who were often perceived, as Sanders argues, as outsiders or deviants. These trials themselves also reflected another dimension of the wars of religion in Europe, in this case the war on the remaining fragments of pre-Christian European religious ideas. In both contexts the Church and civil hierarchies in effect defined the "enemies" whom they wished to punish by labeling them as being in league with the Devil. By declaring rival sects to be heretical, the Church gave itself the power to persecute them and to strengthen its own political power. In the case of witchcraft trials, we have to see these rather as ritual dramas whose purposes included the intimidation of certain individuals in local communities and the confirmation of people's allegiance to orthodox religious authority. The drama consisted of the age-old process of identifying evil, driving it out, and recreating order: misfortune is followed by counteraction and the restoration of society. In practice, what is striking in all accounts of this process is the way or ways in which local suspicions and accusations led into more dramatic and severe forms of counteraction emanating from the state and its religious authorities. And the starting point for suspicions is invariably some misfortune that is attributed to witchcraft or sorcery, followed by an accumulation of such suspicions. A severe illness or a death may then crystallize these suspicions into an accusation. Quite typically, a sick person may make a
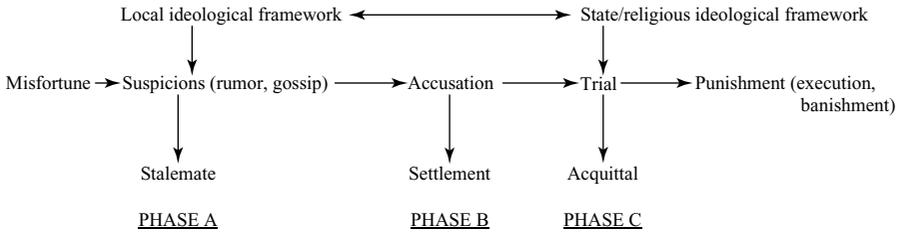
FIGURE 2. The intersection between state-based and local processes in witchcraft trials.

deathbed accusation that sets the relatives into a direct effort to bring the accused person to trial. We summarize these processes in Figure 2.

This figure repeats the basic structure of processes given above in Figure 1. Phase A leads to phase C only if suspicions develop into a specific accusation. In phase A, events belong to a local community context. Phase A does not necessarily lead to phase B, which represents the intersection between levels involved. It is necessary to recognize that local and state ideological frameworks are at work both separately and together. This is signaled by the double-headed arrow linking these two frameworks horizontally, while vertical arrows show their separate impingements in phases A and C. The two-way connection at the ideological level records the fact that state codifications affect local ideas and attitudes, but local ideas also feed into the state or religious apparatus. The local framework is therefore already an amalgam of earlier ideas and Christian codifications, but it may not articulate these codifications very clearly. Nevertheless, it provides the catalyst that can move processes into phase C, in which the state or Church authorities impose their own definitions and methods, moving toward the clear stigmatizing and punishment of a single individual named as a witch or sorcerer. Inchoate suspicion is transformed into scapegoating.

It is also striking in case histories how events themselves become translated into suspicions. Sanders argues that such suspicions generally fell on families perceived as both poor and abnormal. Such families were