

The Catalan Church and the Witch Hunt: the Royal Survey of 1621¹

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One of the principal consequences of the Zugarramurdi trial in the kingdom of Navarre was that the Spanish Inquisition adopted an attitude of active opposition to the witch hunt (Henningsen 1980). This was true of the tribunal's behavior everywhere that it acted in the Hispanic kingdoms of the Catholic Monarchy, as well as in Sardinia and Sicily, with a central authority its Supreme Council. Nevertheless, the 1610 edit of grace, pardoning all the accused, and the 1614 edict of silence, ordering inquisitors to temporarily halt any new local trials, almost coincided with the beginning of the harshest years of the witch hunt in Catalonia.

Indeed, the execution of nine women in the hamlet of Palau de Vidre, in the *comarca* of the Vallespir (county of Rosselló) in 1614 marked the beginning of a period of harsh repression that, according to the historian Joan Reglà, claimed four hundred victims in just the years 1618-1622.² It is likely, however, that the number of victims was quite a bit higher. An inquisitional report written in mid-1620 gave the figure of over one thousand people executed.³ It should be noted that the trials became especially widespread beginning in the fall of 1617, when a major tempest from the Levant resulted in severe flooding and caused rivers to overflow. The torrential rains were significant enough to merit the publication of printed sheets relating the news in places as far away as Seville and Paris. Local chronicles dubbed the catastrophe “the year of the deluge” (“l'any del diluvi”) (Sales 1989, 310-312; Barriendos 2007).

At this time, the witch hunt affected in particular the central *comarques* of Catalonia, around mid-sized cities such as Manresa and Vic; the *comarca* of the Vallès near Barcelona; and the counties of Rosselló and Cerdanya. All of these areas were undergoing significant economic changes linked to the expansion of domestic industry (the putting-out system), the formation of urban networks, and regional division of labor. Tensions created by economic and social change had also resulted in a rise in banditry, a phenomenon that became practically endemic up until the 1630s.

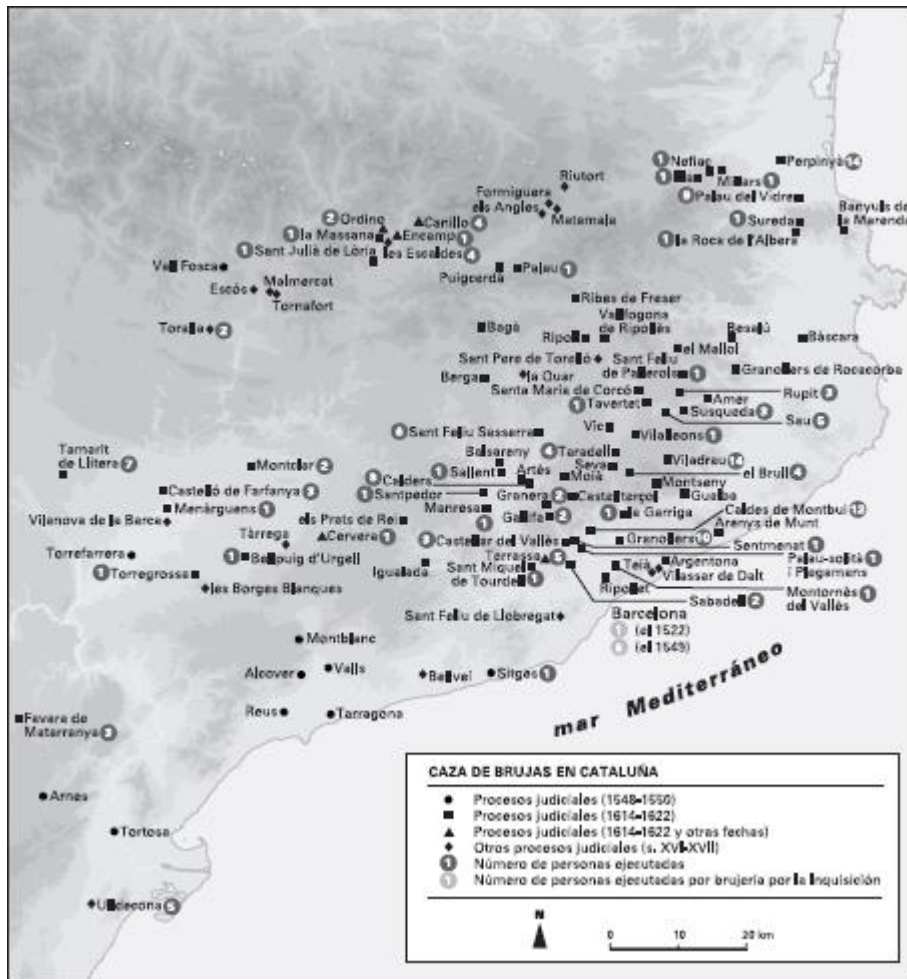
All of the witch trials were orchestrated by local royal or seigniorial tribunals. In most cases, they were driven by local residents, and it was their representative municipal councils that carried the initiative at all times. In some cases, we are talking about small villages, with a few dozen inhabitants; in other cases, the trials took place in mid-sized or large cities with highly diversified social structures. Vic and Elna-Perpinyà were, furthermore, episcopal sees, and Perpinyà was the second-most populous city in Catalonia, surpassed only by Barcelona.

The extent of the witch hunt in Catalonia was not fully realized until recent decades. The publication of numerous studies and local history monographs has allowed for the phenomenon to be mapped, although data is likely still largely incomplete.

¹ Translated by Ariela House (University of Barcelona).

² Reglà 1956, 64-65. Alcoberro – Roma 2007. Alcoberro 2008a. Alcoberro 2012.

³ Biblioteca Nacional (BN). Madrid. Ms. 2440, f. 82r-84v. Votos del proceso de Margarita Olivera, mujer de Pablo Oliver, Labrador del término de Montornés del Vallés, inculpada por bruja. “Porque se entiende aber ahorcado más de mil personas por brujas de poco tiempo a esta parte”.



THE WITCH HUNT IN CATALONIA

Trials (1548-1550)

Trials (1614-1622)

Trials (1614-1622 and other years)

Other trials (16th-17th centuries)

Number of people executed

Number of people executed for witchcraft by the Inquisition

The existence of a widespread witch hunt in Catalonia up until 1622 presents some interesting interpretative questions. In a period characterized throughout Europe by the persecution of witches, the Hispanic Monarchy emerges as a clamorous exception – starting in 1614, but, in fact, before as well. However, within this panorama, Catalonia became the “exception to the exception,” with numbers of trials and victims that are perfectly comparable with those regions of Europe where the witch hunt took on its most horrific proportions.

Can such disparities be sufficiently explained by differences in the Catalan Inquisition's sensibilities or conduct? Can the Barcelona Tribunal of the Sacred Office (as well as those of Saragossa and Valencia, which had jurisdiction over some parts of Catalonia) be accused of a lack of interest in the matter, or even cowardice in the face of the instigators of the trials? William Monter, in his classic book, explained the differing conduct of the Inquisition in the Crowns of Castile and Aragon following the Zugarramurdi trial. In an interesting exercise in comparative history, Gunnar W. Knutsen has contrasted the behavior of the Barcelona and Valencia tribunals,

concluding that the former demonstrated a significantly more contemplative attitude during the trials (Monter 1990; Knutsen 2009, 114-115).

Any valid explanation of “Catalan exceptionalism” must take into account the nature of the different forces that were in conflict in the Principality of Catalonia: on the one hand, the Spanish Inquisition, and on the other, Catalan public law, which regulated the powers of various tribunals and governmental institutions.

The Inquisition was, at the time, most likely the only unitary institution in a Monarchy that was by definition composite. The Hispanic Monarchy was a collection of states, as can be seen in the king's various titles (he was the king of Castile, Leon, Aragon, and Valencia; the count of Barcelona; the lord of Biscay, etc.). The Inquisition, however, had created a centralized council (the Supreme Council of the Inquisition), responsible for appointing, transferring, and promoting judges and prosecutors. It was common for the same functionary to be given multiple destinations over the course of his career. In the Barcelona tribunal, the position of Inquisitor General was almost never held by a Catalan. The Supreme Council also had the power to appoint *visitadors*, authorized to intervene wherever they were sent. This had already occurred in Barcelona in 1549 due to the first major institutional crisis caused by the witch hunt (Alcoberro 2008b; Moreno 2012). The *visitador* Francisco Vaca saw to it that Diego Sarmiento de Sotomayor, the Inquisitor General of the Barcelona tribunal, was immediately removed from his duties, along with his prosecutor. Both men were ordered to appear before the Supreme Council.

The Inquisition was unquestionably unitary in character, and its tendency to act uniformly was particularly obsessive in one particular area: the witch hunt. Already in 1526, the Inquisition had resolved that in trials for witchcraft, local tribunals were required to consult with the superior tribunal before handing down a sentence (Monter 1990). In practice, this meant that the Supreme Council had access to almost immediate and systematic information about witch trials, as has been confirmed in the case of Catalonia.

The Inquisition was one, but the Hispanic Monarchy was a mosaic of states, each with its own laws and institutions, with only a monarch in common – a monarch who, as we have seen, was known by various titles. A century later, following defeat in the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1715), Francesc Castellví, a Catalan living in exile in Vienna, attempted to educate European public opinion about the composition of the Hispanic Monarchy:

He advertido con el trato de diferentes naciones (no hablo con los que fundamentalmente están noticiosos de la historia) que muchos que son considerados instruidos en la historia, reciben notorias equivocaciones respecto a la España, y no pocos creen que los reinos y provincias que contiene la España (a la excepción del reino de Portugal) tienen un mismo idioma, las mismas leyes, exenciones, costumbres y los mismos trajes.⁴

To counter these perceptions, Castellví described a rather more heterogeneous reality:

⁴ Castellví, I, 54-55. In discussing different nations, I have noticed that many who are considered well-versed in history have received obviously incorrect information about Spain [*la España*], and quite a few think that the kingdoms and provinces that Spain comprises (with the exemption of the kingdom of Portugal) have the same language, the same laws, exemptions, and customs, and the same manner of dress. In discussing different nations, I have noticed that many who are considered well-versed in history have received obviously incorrect information about Spain [*la España*], and quite a few think that the kingdoms and provinces that Spain comprises (with the exemption of the kingdom of Portugal) have the same language, the same laws, exemptions, and customs, and the same manner of dress.

Eran estas naciones, en el continente de la España, distintas en leyes, costumbres, trajes y idiomas. En leyes, como es de ver en sus particulares estatutos; en costumbres y trajes, lo advertirá el que viajare; en idiomas, son 4 distintos, esto es portugués, vizcaíno, catalán y castellano o aragonés, que es el mismo idioma. (*Ibidem*).⁵

From a constitutional perspective, according to Castellví, who drew on the Catalan-Aragonese political and legal tradition, the “political nations” or peninsular states of the Hispanic Monarchy were four: the Crown of Castile, which had endowed itself with a uniform political system, with laws and Courts shared by all of its territories; and the Kingdom of Aragon, the Principality of Catalonia, and the Kingdom of Valencia. These three states collectively formed the Crown of Aragon, but each had its own laws, Courts, and governmental institutions. Despite having been joined by a dynastic union in the fifteenth century, the four aforementioned political units (the Crown of Castile, Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia) continued to operate internally as independent entities. Their laws on foreigners applied to vassals of the other territories of the Hispanic Monarchy as well as to subjects of other monarchs. Concerning the period that interests us here, it should be added that Portugal was annexed to the Hispanic Crown in 1580, but maintained its own system of government. In 1640, Portugal took advantage of the centrifugal dynamic set in motion by the Catalan Revolt a few months earlier to separate from the Hispanic Monarchy.

The Constitutions and Court Chapters of the Principality of Catalonia and the Counties of Rosselló and Cerdanya were compiled and modernly printed on three occasions (1495, 1589, 1704). Their political system, called “pactism,” was based on a pact between the governing and the governed and on the preeminence of law. This model, in clear contrast to absolutism, had its maximum expression in the General Court, an institution made up of three estates or branches (noble, ecclesiastical, and urban), convened and presided over by the king. Only the General Court had the power to approve or modify laws and taxes. The *Diputació del General*, or permanent representation of the three branches, was responsible for collecting and managing most public taxes. The *Diputació*, also known as the *Generalitat*, also established itself as the defender of constitutional legality, particularly in the face of any infringement of rights by the monarch or his functionaries. Additionally, municipal institutions, and especially the *Consell de Cent*, Barcelona's proud municipal government, had important powers and their own sources of funds. Barcelona, for example, had the right to armed mobilization and to send ambassadors to the king. Furthermore, the nobility and the institutions of the Church enjoyed broad powers in those lands where they were jurisdictional lords – as was the case for two-thirds of Catalonia's territory. Among these baronial powers was high justice, which included the right to hand down and execute death sentences (Ferro 1987).

In this overall context, Ferdinand II's imposition of the Inquisition was met first with a great deal of suspicion and opposition, and subsequently legislation to safeguard the powers of the various actors in play in the General Court. As Jaime Contreras has reminded us, in Catalonia, the Inquisition was perceived as an institution that was “openly dysfunctional and incompatible with – if not a threat to – its traditional constitutional system.” This situation worsened in the seventeenth century, coinciding

⁵ These nations in the continent of Spain were distinct in laws, customs, manner of dress and language. In laws, as can be seen in their different statutes; in customs and manner of dress, as anyone who travels will realize; in language, as there are four different ones: Portuguese, Biscayan, Catalan, and Castilian or Aragonese, which are the same language.

with the witch hunt: “La Inquisición en Cataluña, durante esta centuria, se ve obligada a dedicar sus mayores esfuerzos a la resolución de la multitud de pleitos que las instancias jurídicas catalanas se interponen de continuo. Más que un tribunal de la fe, es una institución política constantemente asediada.” (Contreras 112).

The Spanish Inquisition's position of legal inferiority in Catalonia (perhaps comparable only to the situation that might have arisen in the kingdom of Aragon) must have affected its agents' ability to act. Beyond these legal difficulties, however, it must be asked to what extent the Inquisition achieved a degree of social control in Catalonia similar to that which it enjoyed in Castile, or even in the kingdom of Valencia. All of these factors undoubtedly created serious obstacles to the imposition of inquisitorial doctrine in a matter as incendiary and with as great an impact on public opinion as witchcraft.

As long as the trials remained infrequent and local, the members of the Inquisition were able to intercede between local courts and victims, invoking their jurisdiction over matters of apostasy and heresy. Thus many trials in the last decades of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth century were halted by inquisitors, and the accused were moved to Barcelona, where they were eventually freed by the Inquisition, without being sentenced or after receiving very light sentences. But beginning in 1614 (and, even more clearly, in 1618), what was happening in Catalonia took on the dimensions of an epidemic. In this context, the Inquisition had neither the human and material resources nor, even worse, the legal and moral authority to face such an enormous challenge. A great number of cases could be cited in which the same women who had previously been freed or given light sentences by the Inquisition were tried, sentenced to death, and hanged by local tribunals, with the widespread and enthusiastic support of their neighbors.

Such was the situation, and those sectors who aimed to halt the witch hunt in Catalonia were well aware that the only way to stop the trials would be to look for allies and consensus. This meant having collaborators close to the royal administration, the judiciary, religious orders and the hierarchy of the Regular Church. The 1622 royal survey sent to the bishops of Catalonia must be understood within this context. It must be said, furthermore, that the opponents of the witch hunt were not mistaken in their approach; the completion of the survey was a decisive and irreversible step towards ending the witch hunt in the Principality of Catalonia.

Context and Preparation of the Royal Survey

The first voices opposing the witch hunt emerged in early 1619, led by the Jesuit Pere Gil (1551-1662). Gil was a figure of great importance and intellectual influence, provincial of the Company of Jesus, confessor of viceroys and advisor to the Barcelona tribunal of the Inquisition (Iglésies 2002; Alcoberro 2012). In the months that followed, the Barcelona tribunal produced multiple reports, but failed to obtain any positive results.

The change of direction that resulted from these protests began on November 7, 1620 when Philip III sent a letter to the duke of Alcalá, his lieutenant (or viceroy; the two terms were used interchangeably) in Catalonia.⁶ The monarch mentioned the large number of witches in the Principality, “and above all in the Counties of Rosselló and Cerdanya” and proposed the granting of a “general pardon.” To this end, he instructed

⁶Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó (ACA). Barcelona. Consell d’Aragó. Leg. 368, unnumbered sheets. All documents from the survey can be found here; all citations in this article come from the same source unless otherwise noted.

his lieutenant to conduct a survey of relevant authorities.⁷ This step, however, was delayed by nearly a year. In the intervening period, Philip III died on March 31, 1621 and his son, Philip IV, ascended to the throne. Although the duke of Alcalá kept his position as lieutenant of Catalonia under the new king, he was not officially confirmed until April 15. It was not until the autumn of 1621 that the mechanism of the survey was put into motion. Philip IV issued an order to begin the process on November 14.

The survey consisted of two very concrete questions. The first dealt with the suitability of granting a “general pardon” due to the large number of people who had fallen into the sin of witchcraft. The second was whether the repression of this offense should be exclusively entrusted to the Inquisition.

Despite the judicial and political implications of this second question, the survey was addressed only to the archbishop of Tarragona and the bishops of Catalonia's eight sees. In fact, only seven of the nine recipients answered the survey, because the archdiocese of Tarragona and the see of Girona were vacant at the time. In chronological order, replies came from the bishop of Tortosa, Luis de Tena; the recently-appointed bishop of Urgell, Luis Díez de Aux de Armendáriz; the bishop of Lleida, Pedro Antonio Serra; the bishop of Solsona, Juan Álvaro; the bishop of Elna, Francesc de Santjust i de Castre; the bishop of Barcelona, Joan Sentís; and, finally, the bishop of Vic, Andrés de San Jerónimo.

Before examining the content of the bishops' responses, it would be useful to take a look at the composition and characteristics of the group of authorities consulted. Since the reign of Charles V, the Hispanic Monarchy enjoyed the right of patronage over all the sees in its Iberian kingdoms. Thus bishops were appointed by the monarch (and confirmed by the Pope) in an exercise that had to take into account the loyalty and merits of the most important aristocratic families and, at the same time, the qualities of the candidates. It was common for bishops to be moved around several times during their careers. These movements were generally seen as promotions, punishments, or early retirements. The significant income disparities and differing degrees of complexity and internal conflict between Hispanic dioceses are factors that must be considered. Whatever the characteristics of their dioceses, bishops acted as an arm of the monarchy, upon which their future luck depended. It seems logical that the crown would address a survey on such an incendiary topic as witchcraft to its closest and most trusted officials. Furthermore, in Catalonia, bishops were members of the ecclesiastical branch or estate of the General Court, and the archbishop of Tarragona was its president.

Catalan dioceses were not in great demand among bishops not native to Catalonia. In addition to cultural differences, this can be explained by the level of social unrest and Catalonia's position as a country that shared borders with two enemies: the Pyrenean border with France, which had seen frequent religious warfare and where the Huguenots were ever-present; and the Mediterranean Sea, home to North African corsairs.

Of the seven bishops who answered the survey, two were from the kingdom of Castile: Luis de Tena, from Andalusia; and Andrés de San Jerónimo, from Asturias. Three were Aragonese, or of Aragonese parentage: Luis Díez de Aux, born in Quito; Pedro Antonio

⁷ “Tengo entendido que ay gran cantidad de bruxas en ese Principado, y particularmente en los Condados de Rossellón y Cerdeña. Y aviéndose considerado en la forma que se podría remediar tan gran daño, se ha ofrecido un medio, que es conceder perdón general a los que huvieren incurrido en este pecado, por ser tantos, para castigar a los que reincidieren después con mayor rigor. Encargo y mándoos que, comunicándolo con el obispo de Elna y portanvozes de general governador de los dichos condados, y con las demás personas que os pareciere, que por sus partes y letras pueden tener voto en la materia, veais y concidereis entre todos con el cuidado y atención que se requiere lo que se os ofreciere en esto y pareciere, y me aviséis dello, para que se ponga remedio en lo que tanto necessita. Del que en ello seré mui servido.”

Serra, from Saragossa; and Juan Alvaro, from Calatayud. Two were Catalan: Francesc de Santjust, from Barcelona; and Joan Sentís, born in Xerta, near Tortosa. The ratio of Catalan bishops to bishops from elsewhere remained more or less constant throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Among the aforementioned figures, the bishop of Solsona deserves special mention. Juan Álvaro was just the second bishop of this diocese, founded in 1595 at the height of the fight against Huguenot infiltration into Catalonia. The bishopric of Solsona was one of the lowest-earning in Catalonia, due to its newness, but it was undoubtedly a strategic bastion in the fight in favor of the Counter-Reformation directed by the Hispanic Monarchy.

The other personality who merits special mention is the bishop of Barcelona, Joan Sentís, who would go on to serve as lieutenant of Catalonia from 1622 to 1626. In his position as the principal royal authority in Catalonia, he would be the official responsible for implementing the measures that resulted from the survey, as well as serving as president of the Royal Audience, the supreme tribunal and the highest court of appeal in the Principality and the Counties. The viceroyalty of Sentís was a period of major political turmoil, marked by the “Union of Arms” proclaimed by the new king, Philip IV, and his favorite, the count-duke of Olivares. In fact, Sentís’ term ended with the failed General Court of 1626, which represented a point of no return in the relationship between Catalonia and the Hispanic Monarchy and was the immediate political precedent to the Catalan Revolt of 1640 that led to the conflict known as the Reapers’ War (*Guerra dels Segadors*).

Because bishops were royally appointed, they formed an exclusive club, often rather disconnected from the Church they led. In Catalonia, as elsewhere in the Monarchy, there were frequent conflicts between bishops and cathedral chapters, whose canons generally came from families of the local lower nobility. Nonetheless, the survey entrusted the bishops with the task of consulting with those around them. Thus, in a sense, the bishops had to act as spokesmen for the opinion of the qualified minority in their dioceses. This role is reflected in most of their responses. The bishop of Tortosa met with a theologian, two jurists and “vicars of mine”; the bishop of Solsona expressed “my opinion and that of many others with whom I have consulted”; the bishop of Elna prepared his response “with individuals from whom a correct decision could be expected”; and the bishop of Barcelona had informed himself in consultation with “erudite individuals from the Order of Saint Dominic, the Company of Jesus, and others, ecclesiastics as well as laymen.”

We have now seen the contents of the survey and the profile of those surveyed. It must be added that, as was the case in similar proceedings, the questions were accompanied by a report or brief that to a certain degree signaled the official position on the issue. This document, which was highly important, was drafted within the viceregal circle and the duke of Alcalá had sent it to the king on September 4. As we shall see, the report was actively opposed to the witch hunt. Its contents must be taken into consideration because it undoubtedly had an influence on the bishops’ responses.

The enclosed report: an argument against the witch hunt

The text that the duke of Alcalá sent to the king, and subsequently to the Catalan bishops, contained, first of all, all of the stereotypes about Catalonia that the Monarchy had made its own. Catalonia was an insecure country to begin with on account of its mountainous terrain, and even more so because of “the freedom that [Catalans] enjoy

under their laws.”⁸ In this overall context, witchcraft was said to have substituted other endemic criminal activities, such as counterfeiting money and banditry, that had been eradicated thanks to the punitive actions and zeal of previous viceroys.

The alleged witches were accused, as elsewhere, of causing poor weather that destroyed the harvest and killing children and livestock. In Catalonia, however, the repression had become widespread, affecting nearly all towns and places.⁹ The proceedings were absolutely unjudicial. For example, it was claimed that the witch hunt in the county of Rosselló had been instigated by a French “diviner” or “*saludador*” (person who can identify witches) named Laurent Calmell, who had been summoned by judicial authorities as an expert:

La ocasión resultó que habiendo hecho entrar de Francia guiado un bruxo llamado Lorenço Calmell en el condado de Rossellón (por la ignorancia de los mismos juezes), le hazían ir por las villas y lugares, adonde mandavan que todas las mugeres saliessen a las puertas, a las quales mirando el bruxo endeziendo “ésta” o “éstas lo son”, luego las prendían y reconocían, jusgando qualquier senyal que les hallavan por estigma. Y con esto y la fama que desto salía luego las hechavan a tortura, y como casi todas eran mugeres débiles y flacas, y las más viejas, luego les hazían confessar a fuerça de tormentos, porrogando aquellos muchas vezes sin causa, sólo para obligarlas a que dixessen lo que ellos querían y ellas no sabían.¹⁰

Popular pressure had made a big business of witch-hunting, with the participation of lawyers and notaries:

Ha llegado el exceso a tal extremo que no ha faltado letrado que se ha consertado con algunos jurados de las villas, que dándole quinze o veinte escudos se encargaban de todo el processo y gasto, y si llegava la prueba que la horcasse le davan lo concertado, quando no una cosa poca. Y lo mismo concertavan con el notario, que era ocasión de grandísimos desafueros, haziendo las torturas por unas mismas palabras, como acopiadas, y alguna se ha hallado condenada sin publicarle enquesta, otra sin exigir deposición.¹¹

⁸ “En este Principado de Cataluña y sus Condados, por ser la justicia tan desvalida y sin poder, junto con la libertad que por sus leyes gosan los que habitan en ellos, y ser tan muntuosa la tierra, y la vezindad de Francia, de donde entran muchos a residir y servir, es ocasión que haja maior freqüencia de delictos que en otras partes.”

⁹ “Pero reparado este danyo con los castigos grandes que se han hecho, y conservado la pas con el zelo y cuydado de los vizorreyes, que dempués con tanta prudencia la han governado, con todo esso, han salido (en tiempo que se pensava gozar más quietud) tanta abundancia de strijas, lamias o bruxas que no ha dado poco cuydado, porque como el delicto que se les cargava era de que con granisso y piedra que hazían caher talavan los campos y miesses, y con niebla hazían perder los frutos, y otros muchos males de infanticidios y muertes de ganados, todos se han mostrado instancias contra ellas por el danyo universal que recibían. De manera que no hay villa ni lugar que no haya hecho diligencia en investigar si las había en su término, para hazerlas castigar, nombrando síndicos y que se gastasse para ello qualquier dinero de las universidades.”

¹⁰ “They had him travel from town to town, where they ordered all the women to come to the door, and the wizard [Calmell] looked at them, saying “this one” or “these ones are [witches],” then they took [the women] and searched them, interpreting any marks that they found on them as stigmas. And with that and the reputation that came with it, they threw them into torture, and since nearly all were weak, thin women, mostly old, they quickly made them confess under torture, which was frequently prolonged without cause, simply to force [the women] to say what they wanted to hear and [the women] didn’t know.”

¹¹ “It has reached such extremes that some lawyers have made arrangements with municipal authorities that for fifteen or twenty crowns they took charge of the whole trial and expenses, and if evidence was found to hang her, they received the full sum agreed upon; if not, something small. And arrangements were made with the notary, which led to grave injustices [...].”

The falseness of the accusations was confirmed by the priests who confessed the condemned women prior to their deaths:

Y se ha sabido de confesores que muchas dellas condenadas in iudicio conscientiae no sólo no se han acusado deste delicto, pero han assigurado que morían sin culpa, y que oprimidas de los tormentos confessavan lo que no havían hecho.¹²

The report also condemned as contrary to the law certain common practices, such as considering three accusations obtained under torture sufficient proof of the guilt of the defendant. It claimed that, in some cases, the accused had been killed by their own family members to avoid collective dishonor.¹³ It also stated that the trials had fomented “factions and malice” in local communities, as well as the extortion of “persons of quality.”

The report justified the Royal Audience's inability to obtain the *evocació general* of the trials, without giving precise details.¹⁴ An *evocació general* would have meant that the Royal Audience, as the highest court, grant itself jurisdiction over all witchcraft cases, and would have required handing over trials and prisoners. But, at the same time, the high tribunal defended the actions it had taken “against certain judges, and particularly against one who condemned a boy of fourteen years under civilian law.”

Lastly, the text recalled that the crime of apostasy “is heresy and belongs to the Holy Inquisition,” and took precedent over “malicious crimes, infanticides or devastation of crops, that might fall under the jurisdiction of a civilian judge.”¹⁵ To this end, it proposed the direct participation of the Inquisition in trials, and in any case it insisted on the need to come to a decision urgently, “because the necessity and the danger are great, hence the need to implore [a quick resolution].”

The pardon debate: arguments against

The bishops of Lleida and Vic argued against pardoning the accused. Their arguments are of particular interest because their dioceses (and especially Vic) were among those most affected by the witch hunt. The bishop of Lleida, Pedro Antonio Serra, responded with a long report dated January 6, 1622. The most original of his arguments was that a general pardon would be a stain on the reputations of all the women of Catalonia, who would all be considered witches. Thus, the Principality

¹² “And confessors have reported that many women condemned *in iudicio conscientiae* not only did not confess to this crime, but rather claimed that they were going to their deaths free of guilt, and that due to torture they had confessed to things that they had not done.”

¹³ “Y ha sido causa esta persecución que se han hallado muchas mugeres muertas que estaban infamadas deste delito, que se presume las han muerto sus deudos para que no llegassen a manos de justicia, por no ser más infamados. Y las que han sido presas por este delicto han sido tan oprimidas que nadie se atrevía a deffenderlas ni osavan hablar por ellas, aunque fuera su marido o deudo; porque todo el pueblo se alborotava contra dellos, sin dar lugar a que hablassen con nadie para poderse deffender, tiniéndolas muy apretadas.”

¹⁴ “Algunas como meior han podido han recorrido al concejo real, y así ha tenido alguna noticia destas cosas, sin que se haya podido hazer evocata causa general para assumirse todas las causas y reparar este danyo, por muchas dificultades que se han propuesto.”

¹⁵ “Y es que como en lo que toca a la apostesía, que es por donde empiessan estas astrigias a hazer su officio, es eregía y toca a la Santa Inquisición, y aún en cosas de astrigias hay bullas y breves apostólicos que dan el conocimiento a dichos inquisidores, y si hay delictos maléficis, infanticidios o devastación de los frutos, que es de lo que puede conocer el juez seglar, va inmixto con aquella asistencia y operación diabólica, con que lo hazen y están tan annexos estos delictos que no se puede entrar sino con dificultad en el conocimiento del último que no se passe por el primero, el qual es el principal.”

Porque quedaría infamado con auctoridad pública, de que la maior parte de las mugeres dél son bruxas, vicio tan vil y que tanto desdiçe de gente que es tan cathólica como la deste Principado. Porque este perdón general para que tuviesse justificación por lo menos havía de suponer que todas, o casi todas, las mugeres de Cathaluña son bruxas. Y no es justo que, no constando de tal, Su Santidad ni su magestad noten de vicio tan infame a una universidad, y menos a un reyno, pues para ello no hay fundamento ni causa bastante. [...] Porque la fama de todo un reyno no es bien tan general por ser bien universal, que equivale a la vida. Y si como los doctores dizen comunmente se debe dexar sin castigo el delicto de muchos quando se teme que entre ellos sería castigado el inocente, con más razón se a de dezir que por no infamar a tantas mugeres honradas principales y christianas, como hay en Cathaluña, no se debe conçeder perdón general. Pues concediéndolo se presumiría comúnmente que casi todas son bruxas, y sería castigar sin culpa muchas inocentes, quitándoles, como se les quitaría, su buena fama y nombre.¹⁶

For this reason, Bishop Serra supported seeing the witch hunt through to its final consequences. In this way, he claimed, it could be confirmed that the women involved in witchcraft “amount to less than one hundredth of the women of this Principality.” In his view, the model to follow was that of Germany, where “in one hundred and fifty years the inquisitors punished thirty-two thousand, without this figure ever seeming so large that it would warrant granting a general pardon on account of the number of criminals.”¹⁷ Catalonia, which must have been approaching a population of five hundred thousand (and, therefore, two hundred and fifty thousand women), could have up to two thousand five hundred executions, while preserving the good reputation of the survivors...

Bishop Serra proposed a sort of general hunt, with the participation of authorities from all jurisdictions as, he recalled, had already been done in the persecution of counterfeiters and bandits.¹⁸ According to Serra, this systematic or massive action would have two effects: firstly, it would be known “if it represents as great an evil as claimed in this brief,” and secondly, it would result in “the punishment of the accused.”

For his part, the bishop of Vic, Andrés de San Jerónimo, was also harshly critical of the skeptical tone of the report sent by the viceroy:

Acerca del memorial que vuestra magestad me embió, siento que dezir ser sueños e yllusiones todo lo que a las bruxas acontece, y apariciones del demonio en figura dellas, y no reales hechos y obras suyas executadas por sus proprias personas, es hierro muy grande, y

¹⁶ “Would by defamed by public authority that most of its women are witches, a vile vice that so discredits the most Catholic people of this Principality. Because in order for a general pardon to be justified, at the very least one would have to assume that all, or nearly all, of Catalonia’s women are witches [...] Because the reputation of an entire kingdom is such a great good so as to be universal, equal to life itself. [...] Because with the concession of a general pardon it would be presumed that nearly all are witches, which would amount to punishing many innocent women, taking away their good reputation and name.”

¹⁷ “Y en este delicto de bruxos y bruxas en Alemaña en discurso de ciento y cinquenta años castigaron los inquisidores treinta y dos mil, sin que respecto de aquellas provincias paresciesse multitud que obligasse a conçeder perdón por ser muchos los delinquentes.”

¹⁸ “Y assí mismo excitar su magestad las jurisdicciones, mandando a sus ministros y juezes reales, inquisidores y señores de los lugares, y escribir a los obispos y otros juezes ecclesiásticos, que todos a una cada uno en su jurisdicción salgan a persiguir y castigar los delinquentes deste delicto, y dar orden que, como en otras ocasiones de monederos y bandoleros destre Principado se ha hecho, salgan dos, o tres, o más, juezes de la Audiencia, o se embien otros juezes de letras y rectas conçiencias, para que den buelta por el Principado por partidos, y hagan pesquiça deste delicto, y paticularmente en la parte que más inficionada está deste vicio.”

falta de doctrina y de lición de muchos libros de graves autores antiguos y modernos que desta materia tratan y yo he visto y leýdo.¹⁹

He stated that his opinion had been “confirmed by the trials of some witches who have been sentenced in baronies under my authority” –which shows that local authorities had not acted alone, at least not in the bishopric of Vic.

The pardon debate: arguments in favor

The strongest defender of the pardon was the bishop of Solsona, Juan Álvaro. If the report referenced the figure of the diviner Llorenç Calmell, instigator of the trials in the county of Rosselló, Alvaró cited the case of the diviner Cosme Soler, known as Tarragó, who came from a hamlet in the diocese of Urgell called Tarragó:

Por mi obispado pasó un hombre que se llamava Tarragó, y sucedió en una villa cuya jurisdicción es de vuestra magestad, que yva señalando mugeres que eran brujas, y desnudándolas para ver un señal en las espaldas, y a algunas me hizieron relación las hazía desnudar sólo por su gusto y por el de los que le acompañavan. Luego que llegó a mí noticia estando en mi cathedral, la qual está entre montañas, hize diligencia para tomarle preso y ymbiarlo a vuestra magestad; huyó luego, que después no le han visto ni sabido rastro dél.²⁰

The bishop of Solsona was probably unaware that Soler, who had been arrested by the Inquisition upon his request on May 20, 1617, was let go thirteen days later on the condition that “from here on out he not use any of the things to which he has confessed thus far related to identifying witches, nor teach them to anyone.”²¹ He was freed despite having confessed that twelve women had been executed in western Catalonia as a result of his actions. Needless to say, Tarragó did not heed his promise to abandon such a lucrative business. In the succeeding years, he continued to operate as a diviner and was the principal instigator of the witch hunts in the areas of Vic and Manresa. In fact, he is the only *saludador* who did not meet a tragic end, as far as we are aware. Conversely, Laurent Calmell, instigator of the witch hunt in the Rosselló, was arrested by the Barcelona Inquisition in October 1619 and sentenced to ten years as a galley slave, which amounted to an effective death sentence.

Bishop Álvaro thought that “this matter of witches is very difficult” because testimonies often reflected “the tricks and flattery that the Devil uses to bring souls to Hell, and for this purpose he seeks out the weakest and slightest of subjects, who are women, and usually old.” Because of this, civilian judges, insisting on a literal reading of the trials, ended up causing grave injustices.²²

¹⁹ “To say that all that is related to witches and apparitions is dreams and illusions, rather than real events and deeds carried out by their persons, is a serious error, a doctrinal mistake, and demonstrates a failure to consult many books by important authors, both ancient and modern, that deal with this subject and that I have seen and read.”

²⁰ “A man called Tarragó came through my diocese. And in a town under royal jurisdiction he went about pointing out women who were witches, and undressing them to see a mark on their backs. And some [of the women] told me that he made them undress only for his enjoyment and that of those who accompanied him. When the news reached me, I was at the cathedral, which is in the mountains, and I ordered that he be imprisoned and sent to Your Majesty. Later he fled, and he has not been seen or heard from since.”

²¹ Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN). Madrid. Lib. 732,f.369-371.

²² “Esta materia de brujas es dificultossísima, y quantos autores scriben dellas lo dicen deesa manera; particularmente un inquisidor, que haziendo experiència en una muger que ella misma havía confesado ser bruja, alló ser grande parte dello falso, y que todos son embustes y embelegos del Demonio para llevar

The bishop of Solsona used his response to recall the danger of the Calvinist heresy coming from France, which he was familiar with “because my cathedral is close to France,” and which he believed was experiencing a revival precisely due to the new dynasty's repressive policies against Protestants: “Pues viene a propósito me á parecido advertir a vuestra magestad que agora con las guerras que haze el rey de França, como christianíssimo que es, contra los hereges, entran tantos françeses huyendo de allá, que tengo por cierto la mayor parte son hereges.”²³

Álvaro pointed out, however, that in his diocese (which, he recalled, was “the smallest in Spain”), there had been just one local trial for witchcraft, resulting in the execution of two women.²⁴

The rest of the bishops – with the exception, as we shall see, of Barcelona's – responded in much briefer terms, almost out of institutional obedience. It is rather evident that they merely said what they had been made to understand was expected of them. Thus the bishop of Tolosa, Luis de Tena, did not mention a single local trial in his response. The bishop positioned himself in favor of the pardon, with one exception: “that of dogmatists, should any be found, who teach this as rightful doctrine.” This piece of advice recalled that which he had given Philip II during his time as professor of theology at the University of Alcalá, with regards to another pardon: that of the crypto-Jews of the kingdom of Portugal, then recently incorporated into the Hispanic Monarchy.²⁵

For his part, the new bishop of Urgell, Luis Díez de Aux de Armendáriz, responded from the diocese he was leaving (Jaca, in Aragon), recalling that, although the king had appointed him bishop of Urgell, he had yet to receive papal approval. “Y así,” he added, “no aviendo visto ni estado en aquella tierra, ni conocido por experiencia los naturales de ella, ni su condiçión y trato, ni savido en qué forma se introduxo y á continuado este delicto, no podré hazer tan entero e individual juizio como quisiera en lo que vuestra magestad me manda.”²⁶ Recalling the Logroño Inquisition's trial “in the mountains of Navarre and the province of Gipuzkoa,” he wrote of the difficulty of punishing the crime “por lo mucho que tiene de imaginación, fantasía y sueño, y de ilusión, enbeleço, embuste y maraña del demonio.”²⁷

Nor was the bishop of Perpinyà, Francesc Santjust, particularly explicit in his response, in which he recalled that “hasta agora han conoçido y usado jurisdicción contra semejantes delinquentes los ministros de vuestra magestad y demás juezes

almas al infierno, y busca para esto los sujetos más débiles y flacos, que son las mugeres, y ordinariamente viejas; y todos los juezes seculares queriéndolo levar juridicamente se engañan en muchas ocasiones, porque por miedo de los tormentos confiesan y muchas mueren sin culpa.”

²³ “Now, with the king of France's wars against heretics as His Most Christian Majesty, so many French people are arriving, fleeing from there, that I am convinced that the majority of them are heretics.”

²⁴ “En todo mi obispado no he allado cossa ninguna que tocasse a brujas (es verdad que es el más pequeño de toda España), ni en el abbadiado que tengo, sino fue en un lugar que ahorcaron dos por meçineras o brujas.”

²⁵ “Y quanto al primer punto de conceder perdón general a todas las brujas que hasta agora ubieren delinquido, concordamos ser conveniente con que se excepte el castigo de los docmatizadores, si acaso los ubiere enseñando esta doctrina por lícita; y lo mismo se me acuerda aver respondido siendo cathedrático de theologia en Alcalá al rey don Philipe Segundo, nuestro señor, que está en el Cielo, en materia de los judíos de Portugal, quando les quiso dar perdón general.”

²⁶ “And thus, not having been in that land, not knowing its natives, nor their nature and manner, through personal experience, and not knowing how this crime was introduced and has been continued, I cannot make a sincere and personal judgment as I would like.”

²⁷ “Because it involves much imagination, fantasy and dreams, as well as delusion, flattery, and devil's trickery.”

ordinarios, assí ecclesiásticos como seglares.”²⁸ Santjust limited himself to the opinion that a general pardon “muy conforme a la piedad y clemencia del cathólico y real pecho de vuestra magestad.”²⁹

The opinion of the bishop of Barcelona, Joan Sentís, was slightly different. The man who was to become lieutenant of Catalonia added an important nuance to the debate. Sentís believed that a general pardon should not be granted, but rather that the accused should be freed on bond. His argument was as follows:

Muchas dellas han confessado que estando en poder de la justicia no pueden hazer daño alguno, ni el demonio librarlas de la cárcel, qüestión de tormento ni otras diligençias judiciales, como se vee esto por experiençia cada día, y assí sería bien darlas en fiado con que siempre quedarán sugetas a la jurisdicción real, ellas y las haziendas de los fiadores.³⁰

Sentís also favored deporting those accused women who came from France and, in general, avoiding their return to the places where they had been tried.³¹

On this note, it should be pointed out that Sentís proposal came very close to the solution that was final arrived at in Catalonia, as there was no formal “general pardon,” but the necessary steps were taken to obtain a practically identical result.

The witch hunt and inquisitional jurisdiction

The second question of royal survey dealt with whether crimes of witchcraft should judged exclusively by the Inquisition. As will be seen, this question had important legal ramifications, seeing as any step in this direction meant infringing the rights of civilian, royal and baronial tribunals. This also involved, obviously, the rights of bishops as jurisdictional lords of lands and vassals, a possibility that the bishops could hardly take as anything other than a deauthorization and a humiliation. For all these reasons, a common response among the bishops was that this decision could only be taken if substantial modifications were made to Catalonia's laws, something that only the General Court could do.

However, this made the witch hunt an unsolvable problem. The General Court of Catalonia had not met since 1599, and since then the conflicts between its branches and the Monarchy had multiplied unceasingly. In fact, as has already been stated, when the General Court was finally convened in 1626, the result was a clear confirmation of the schism between the king and Catalonia. However much the witch hunt weighed upon the consciences of many, given the overall political situation there was no question of the king convening a meeting of the Catalan parliament to resolve this matter.

The judicial debate became mixed up with the overall debate over the position that ought to be taken with regards to the witch hunt. Supporters and opponents were perfectly aware of the Inquisition's active opposition to the witch trials. Thus it should come as no surprise that the two bishops most in favor of allowing the witch hunt to continue, those of Lleida and Vic, were also the most strongly opposed to handing the

²⁸ “Up until now Your Majesty's ministers and other ordinary judges, both ecclesiastical and civilian, have acted against this type of criminals.”

²⁹ “Would befit the piety and clemency of Your Majesty's Catholic and royal heart.”

³⁰ “Many [of the women] have confessed that while they are under judicial authority they cannot do any harm, nor can the devil free them from prison, torture, or other judicial proceedings. And thus it would be good to free them on bond, because they and their property would remain subject to royal jurisdiction.”

³¹ “Y se les podría mandar que las que sean de Françia se buelvan y las otras saliessen de los lugares donde estan infamadas.”

trials over the Inquisition. As will be seen, the positions of the other bishops were more varied and nuanced.

The bishop of Lleida believed that granting the Inquisition a monopoly over the repression of witchcraft “sería hazer perjuicio a los obispos y juezes ecclesiásticos, y despojarles del derecho y jurisdicción que tienen de poder prender y castigar a los delinquentes deste delicto en lo que toca a su jurisdicción.”³² Furthermore, since the crime was of “mixed jurisdiction” (“*mixto fuero*,” meaning that it affected both civilian and ecclesiastical rights), “sería privar a los señores de los lugares de la jurisdicción y conocimiento dél (que parece no podría hacerse sin Cortes Generales).”³³

On this point, however, the bishop of Vic was more pragmatic. Andrés de San Jerónimo thought that the inquisitors “nunca darán el castigo condigno a las culpas”³⁴ because of their skepticism towards witch trials. He claimed that this attitude had caused the Sacred Office to “se ha descuidado mucho estos años pasados en hazer diligencia en esta materia; y por esto los varones y señores de los lugares, vista la perdición de los frutos y clamores de los vezinos, han procurado el remedio destos daños con el castigo destas mugeres.”³⁵ In his opinion, thus, granting the Inquisition jurisdiction over witch trials would impede the punishment of the guilty and “por consiguiente, no habrá emmienda dellas, y aumentarse han los delitos y sus autores, y a la proporción desto las ofensas de Dios y daños de la república.”³⁶

The bishops who expressed the greatest support for exclusive intervention by the Inquisition were those of Tortosa and Urgell. The first, Luis de Tena, argued that the Inquisition should immediately take on all trials, even those in which the defendants were accused of homicides and other worldly crimes. He warned, however, that this would only be possible if the Pope issued a brief granting this power to the Sacred Office. The Inquisition's initial filter would benefit even those eventually charged with crimes of an exclusively criminal nature because, “aviendo primero pasado por manos de los inquisidores y hecho averiguación de todo el delicto irá el negocio más considerado, y se detendrán los ordinarios de hacer exorbitancias como hasta agora.”³⁷

The recently appointed bishop of Urgell, Luis Díez de Aux de Armendáriz, also favored exclusive jurisdiction for the Inquisition “because the principal crime committed by witches is apostasy, heresy and making a pact with the devil.” Like his colleague from Tortosa, he called for the king to request a brief from Rome on criminal offenses:

Y si los inquisidores de aquel Principado no tienen privilegio para proceder contra las bruxas en razón de los infanticidios y de otros daños temporales que hazen, y relaxarlas por ellos al brazo seglar, será cosa muy fácil para quitar el escrúpulo y peligro de la irregularidad el alcançarlo de Su Sanctidad, mandándolo vuestra magestad al embaxador que tiene en Roma.³⁸

³² “Would harm bishops and ecclesiastical judges, taking away their right and jurisdiction to arrest and punish criminals in their jurisdictions.”

³³ “It would mean depriving the lords of these places of jurisdiction over and the right to investigate the crime, which it would seem cannot be done without convening the General Court.”

³⁴ “Will never mete out the punishment that is deserved.”

³⁵ “Fail to be diligent in this matter in these past few years, and because of this barons and lords, seeing the destruction of crops and the clamor of locals, have tried to remedy these evils by punishing these women.”

³⁶ “Consequently they would not mend their ways, and the number of crimes and perpetrators would increase, and in proportion the number of offenses against God and damages to the republic.”

³⁷ “Having first past through the hands of the inquisitors, with all crimes having been investigated, ordinary judges will act more cautiously, avoiding abusive practices seen up until the present.”

³⁸ “And if the inquisitors of this Principality do not have the right to act against witches when they commit infanticides or other worldly crimes, and must leave them to the secular branch, it would be rather easy

The bishops of Solsona, Elna-Perpinyà, and Barcelona, however, expressed more nuanced opinions. All were in favor of the exclusive intervention of the Inquisition in this affair, but they warned that in order for this to be possible legislative changes would be necessary, changes that only the General Court of Catalonia could approve. It should be noted that one of these bishops was Aragonese and the other two were Catalan; all three were very familiar with the composite system of government in their kingdoms. Thus, Juan Álvaro, while acknowledging the correctness of the proposed measure, wrote that:

Corre algún peligro que los varones no se sientan que les quiten esta jurisdicción, porque en esta tierra todas las defienden con las armas en las manos; y para quitar este peligro entiendo sería hazertado se hiziese en Cortes, donde todos los estamentos están juntos, y después se podría confirmar con bullas de Summo Pontífice.³⁹

Therefore, according to the bishop of Solsona, the approval of the Catalan General Court was absolutely essential and had to precede any proceedings in Rome. The bishop of Elna-Perpinyà, Francesc de Santjust, concurred, pointing out that the exclusive jurisdiction of the Inquisition in matters of witches would cause “great harm to royal jurisdiction and to ordinary judges,” for which reason he advised “parecería conveniente fuesse vuestra magestad servido mandar differir la resolución deste negocio hasta las primeras Cortes nos hará vuestra magestad merçed celebrar en estos Principado y condados, para que en ellas con constitución particular se ordene lo que más importare para el servicio de Dios Nuestro Señor y de vuestra magestad.”⁴⁰

For his part, the bishop Joan Sentís also expressed the need for an increase in the Inquisition's powers in this area to be first approved by the General Court. He introduced, however, a significant nuance:

Los inquisidores, señor, conozen deste delicto quando ay heregía o apostasía, por tocarles privativamente. Mas quando esto cessa, conozen los juezes de vuestra magestad, obispos y barones en sus casos. Y assí, sin perejuizio de la jurisdicción real y de los otros interesados no se podría remitir al tribunal del Santo Officio. Por lo qual fuera de Cortes no la tengo por materia practicable. En ellas sería muy fácil hacer ley para ello con pena çierta.⁴¹

According to Joan Sentís, then, opposition to the witch hunt could already bring together a large majority in the three branches that made up the General Court. Ecclesiastics, nobles, and cities and towns could even accept, by majority vote, that the Inquisition take on all of the trials. It is evident that, in this scenario, the most difficult

for you to obtain this from His Holiness, by giving the necessary orders to Your Majesty's ambassador to Rome, in order to avoid doubts and the risk of irregularities.”

³⁹“There is a risk that the barons might consider that this jurisdiction is being taken away from them, because in this land all defend their jurisdictions with their weapon in hand. And to avoid this risk, I believe that the best solution would be for this measure to be approved by the Courts, where all estates are represented, and subsequently it could be confirmed by papal bulls.”

⁴⁰“Differing the resolution of this affair until the first Courts that Your Majesty will grant us the favor of celebrating in this Principality and Counties.”

⁴¹“The inquisitors, my lord, are responsible for judging this crime when there is heresy or apostasy, which falls under their exclusive jurisdiction. But when this ceases, it falls under the jurisdiction of Your Majesty's judges, bishops, and barons, respectively. And thus it could not be handed over to the Sacred Office without detriment to royal jurisdiction and that of other interested parties. For this reason, this could not be done outside of the Courts. Within them, it would surely be very easy to pass such a law.”

task would be convening the General Court, a step that would amount to setting off another conflict whose consequences would not be insignificant.

Epilogue: the end of the witch hunt in Catalonia

The bishops' responses were sent in between December 31, 1621 and January 22, 1622. On March 12, the duke of Alcalá sent everything to the king, asking him to come to a prompt decision. The lieutenant reminded the king that

La materia de las bruxas desde luego dixe lo mucho que convenía se declarase brevemente, por lo que pende della, y porque con la dilación dexan de recibir castigo las que le merezen, y padezen injustamente las que no son dignas dél.⁴²

The decision came immediately and affected all trials. But it did not result in the Inquisition obtaining exclusive jurisdiction over witches, the issuance of the requested papal brief, nor, evidently, the convening of an uncertain General Court. The measure that was taken was quite a bit simpler, but equally effective. In fact, the solution that was eventually arrived at had already been mentioned in the report accompanying the survey, but by way of justifying the impossibility of taking such a step. In late March 1622, the Royal Audience declared an *evocació general*. All open witchcraft cases were immediately placed under the jurisdiction of the high court, and trials and prisoners were moved to Barcelona, where the trials were promptly canceled and the women freed (Ferro 1987, 379-381).

The role of the bishops of Catalonia in carrying out this measure must be highlighted. As has already been noted, Joan Sentís, lieutenant from 1622 to 1626, was the official responsible for implementing it in his position as president of the Royal Audience. He was succeeded as viceroy by another of the bishops who had answered the survey, the bishop of Urgell, Luis Díez de Aux de Armendáriz. One year later, the vicerealty went to Juan Álvaro's successor, the third bishop of Solsona, Miguel Santos y de San Pedro. Santos, who had served as Inquisitor General of Aragon for more than twelve years, became bishop of Spain's smallest diocese in 1624 and was lieutenant of Catalonia from 1627 to 1629.

It should be noted that Santos was able to halt a new attempt to spread the witch hunt in 1627. Specifically, the Royal Audience claimed jurisdiction over this matter and freed four women from the hamlet of Vilanova de la Barca, which was under the jurisdictional lordship of the Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem; the women had been arrested by the local baronial tribunal. This episode is mentioned in a contemporary work by the jurist Francesc Ferrer i Nogués (Ferrer 1629, 7-45). Ferrer wrote that the bishop of Solsona and viceroy was a "minister and person of illustrious virtue, learnedness, and circumspection, well-versed in this subject."

It can be asserted, thus, that the witch hunt was halted in Catalonia in 1622. In contrast to what had occurred in the other kingdoms of the Hispanic Monarchy, the end of the witch hunt in Catalonia did not result in an increase in the powers of the Inquisition. As befits a composite state, the participation of multiple institutions was required, including the Secular Church, the viceregal administration, and the Royal Audience. Along the way, however, hundreds of innocent victims had been forcibly hanged.

⁴² "As I have said from the beginning, in this matter of witches it would be best that you state your position quickly, because of all that depends on it, and because with the delay those who deserve punishment are not receiving it, and those who do not are suffering unjustly."

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