Perceptions of Magic in Early Modern Greek Orthodox Christianity

Witchcraft and Tolerance in Orthodox Societies

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1. Chapter 1 - Introduction

'Take the head of a sheep and smear it with its own blood. Then, use black tar and spread it to the skull while holding it firmly with your hand. At this moment, if you listen to demonic buzzing do not be afraid, throw the skull instead to the ground, and it will show you the way to the treasure you are looking for. Make sure that your partner holds a bell inscribed with the following sigils.'[1] This macabre and graphic ritual was found in a manuscript written in Greek by an unknown seventeenth-century author. The aim of this incantation was to reveal hidden treasures of untold riches. Warnings of demonic interference might have been enough for the average peasant to avoid such practices, but mystical rites such as this were widespread all across the Balkan Peninsula, mainly among the literate few. Occult rituals mixed with folk practices were also quite popular among the illiterate peasants however. From magical ceremonies performed to stop a nosebleed or impregnate women, to incantations to kill enemies, magic and sorcery were used to explain the fears of laymen and were often seen as the solution to common problems. Traditions of magical beliefs found fertile ground in the rich religious culture of the seventeenth century. Sorcery was perceived as real, and stories about demons and undead revenants inspired real dread and anxiety among the masses. Despite these practices being widespread, there is a dearth of scholarly work on the Orthodox magical universe. Current historiography is focused on researching various aspects of the Western witch hunts spanning from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, and neglects early modern Orthodox beliefs. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the perceptions and attitudes of the Orthodox Church towards magic and witchcraft.

[1] Delatte, Armand. *Anecdota Atheniensia* .. Liége: Imp. H. Vaillant-Carmanne, 1927, p. 85.

Western historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth century has produced a huge number of demonological treatises. The major threat to Catholic and Protestant societies posed by witchcraft led Western theology to research the phenomenon in an attempt to discern its origins and suggest viable solutions. While the same phenomenon was also perceived as a menace in Eastern Orthodox communities, the reactions of laymen and the clergy radically differed from those in Western nations. The above statement can be confirmed with a simple look at the number of executions for crimes of witchcraft. Wolfgang Behringer presents a table with the approximate numbers of people executed for this crime in Europe. While those killed in Germany went above 20 000 during these two centuries, there were no executions for witchcraft in the Ottoman Empire.[2]

By examining official documentations and records, this study interprets the tolerance ecclesiastical authorities showed towards witchcraft and sorcery in early modern Orthodoxy and attempts to reconstruct the magical universe of the Orthodox millet (Rum millet). Furthermore, the particular views of Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite (also referred to as Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain), one of the most important voices in eighteenth-century Orthodoxy, on the topic of magic and the problems it posed in Orthodox communities.

This thesis is based on a geographical and religious landscape. The Orthodox millet included all Orthodox populations of the Eastern Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor. These Orthodox populations were under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Legal adjudications in the sixteenth century and onwards were drawn from various nomocanonical collections, and especially from the *Nomocanon of Malaxos*.[3] As national identities had not yet been formed in the period under study, the element connecting different

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[2] Behringer, Wolfgang. *Witches and Witch-hunts: A Global History.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004, p. 150.

[3] Lilies Georgios, *Church and Law in Ottoman ruled Greece according to Gustav Gaben,*Thessaloniki, 2013, p. 22.

groups under Ottoman rule was religious identity. The beliefs and perceptions of ecclesiastical authorities and of the Rum millet towards witchcraft are therefore at the center of this analysis. The specific time period investigated here spans from the conquest of Constantinople and the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, to the early nineteenth century, before the Greek War of independence in 1821.

My argumentation revolves around three major differences between magical Orthodox traditions and their Western equivalents: theological differences, legal differences, and the influences of Islamic traditions on Orthodox views. More specifically, theological differences concern the perception of the Devil and his powers, the stereotype of the witch and the origins of magic. The chapter discussing legal differences will discuss excommunication, the punishment suggested for witchcraft by ecclesiastical legal codes, and will examine the extent to which magic posed a threat to Eastern Orthodox societies. Lastly, the focus will shift from societal differences to cultural differences, through an analysis of the discernible influences of Islam, not only in the official Orthodox doctrine, but also in the attitudes of ordinary people who were more susceptible to incorporating unorthodox superstitions and practices into their belief systems.

1.1 Primary sources

Much of this thesis is based on the work of Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite, and in particular **'**Against the Types of Magic', written at the end of the eighteenth century. 'Against the Types of Magic' is one of the very few demonological works written in Greek, and attempts to answer very fundamental questions of demonology such as 'What are the different categories of magic?', 'Who bestows supernatural abilities on wizards and witches?' and 'How does magic

manifest itself?' Nicodemus offers answers to all of these questions, drawing a clear outline of Orthodox demonology, thus becoming an invaluable source for comparison with famous demonological works in the West.

In order to safely refer to the treatise of Nicodemus as 'demonological', the characteristics of Christian demonology in the early modern Europe must first be discerned to determine if they can be applied to his work. Demonology is the systematic study of supernatural beings and entities, both good and evil, which are usually subordinate or opposed to God. Demonological texts were produced from the early years of Christianity, but it was in the late medieval period that demonology took a more distinct and articulated form, becoming a branch of theology focused on malevolent beings (demons) and their followers (witches). In studying some of the most famous works that circulated in late medieval and early modern Europe, some clear patterns can be detected. Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum*[4] and Martin Del Rio's *Investigation into Magic,*[5] two popular demonologies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively, demonstrate the model used by authors at the time. Although they diverge in many respects, the structure remains the same. Both of these works include a chapter discussing the etymology of magic, its origins and types. Both also include chapters dedicated to the duties of a judge, and torture techniques to acquire confessions. Chapters on these topics are also found in the majority of demonological works popular in Western Europe during the early modern era.

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[4] Institoris, Heinrich. *Malleus Maleficarum*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[5] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Investigations into Magic.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

'Against the Types of Magic'[6] is chosen here as a focus of comparison for various reasons. It is 'demonological' because of the many similarities it has with demonological works of the West. Most of the features of famous Western demonological works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (the demonic origins, nature, types, and legal treatment of magic) are present in Nicodemus's work. 'Against the Types of Magic' is one of very few works of Orthodox theology that try to define the notion of magic, delineate its origins, and attempt to protect the Orthodox flock from the dangers lurking in such practices. The largest part of Nicodemus' work is dedicated to discerning, analyzing and categorizing the different aspects of magic. A discussion of the devilish nature of magic and warnings to pious Christians about its treacherous nature occupy the rest of the text, which ends with the earthly and afterlife punishments befitting such a sin.

Although legislation about magic is also presented in 'Against the Types of Magic', it is not enough to give us a clear picture of the legal procedures of Orthodox societies in the early modern period. To better depict the judicial reality of the period, I refer to the actual legal collections Nicodemus cited while writing his chapter. The Orthodox Greek ecclesiastical legal system was based on the juridical collection of laws called nomocanons. A nomocanon is essentially a collection of ecclesiastical laws consisting of elements from both canon law and civil law. The first nomocanon was written in the seventh century A.D., and from then on many Byzantine theologians made contributions by either enriching or altering the collection.

To comprehensively analyze the legal attitude of the Orthodox Church towards magic, we must study all of the legal collections that were used by ecclesiastical courts. The largest

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[6] Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Χρηστοηθεια των Χριστιανων*. Τυπογραφια Νικολαου Γλυκη του Εξ Ιωαννινων. 1803, pp. 160-195.

collection of nomocanons is the *Nomocanon Malaxou* (*Nomocanon of Malaxos)* written by Emanuel Malaxos and printed in Thebes in 1561.[7] During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this juridical work became the preeminent canonical collection of ecclesiastical law of the Ottoman period, with plenty of passages being dedicated to how ecclesiastical courts should treat magic.

Another important collection of ecclesiastical laws is the *Vactiria Arxierewn.*[8] This nomocanon, written by Archimandrite Jacob in 1645, filled the gaps in the legal code in the second half of the seventeenth century. It is not only a crucial source for studying canonical and civil law in regions populated by Orthodox communities, but it also offers advice and suggestions on a variety of topics that troubled seventeenth-century Orthodox societies, including the topic of magic.

The current study also uses another work by Nicodemus called *Pidalion*, written in 1793.[9] This comprehensive work includes comments and interpretations on the rules and laws of the Apostles, along with all the decisions taken in ecumenical and local synods. Furthermore, *Pidalion* includes extensive notes on contemporary issues and Orthodox customs that sometimes exceed the legal scope of the book.

The aforementioned sources were chosen because they were composed in different centuries. The *Nomocanon of Malaxos* was drafted in 1570, *Vactiria Arxierewn* in 1645, and *Pidalion* in the late eighteenth century. With the help of these nomocanonical works, I was able to research official juridical attitudes towards magic across several centuries, offering a

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[7] Malaxos, Manouēl, Nikolaos I. Pantazopoulos, and Dēmētrios S. Gkinēs. *Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou Tou Ek Naupliou Tēs Peloponnēsou: Metenextheis Eis Lexin Haplēn Dia Tēn Tōn Pollōn Ōpheleian.* Thessaloniki: Aristoteleio Panepistēmio Thessalonikēs, 1985.

[8] Jacob, Archimandrite of Ioanina, *Vaktiria Arxierewn*, Thesalonike, P. Pournaras press, December 2008.

[9] Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Pidalion of the Orthodox Church,* Athens: Konstantinos Garpolas Press, 1841.

broader view on the legal problems of Orthodox societies during this period. It should be noted however, that nomocanonical texts only condemn magical practices, and do not offer further clarification about the details and the nature of these.

Last but not least, the work entitled *De Graecorum hodie quorundam opinationibus* is also used a primary source for this analysis. The writer, Leon Allatios, was a Greek Catholic scholar who interpreted Orthodox beliefs through the prism of Catholicism. He was very critical of superstitions, often dismissing them as senseless or projecting Catholic beliefs onto his analysis of Orthodox realities. Even the selection of the word *'opionatibus'* in the title of his book demonstrates his preoccupation with Greek superstitions. The meaning of *'opionatibus'* is difficult to express in English. A direct translation is 'opinions', but during the early modern period *'opinationes'* often had negative connotations, coming to mean something akin to 'superstitions'.[10] Allatios attributes these 'superstitions' to common peasants, characterizing them as 'mad', 'stupid' or ' 'laughable.'[11] Despite such difficulties, this treatise offers an abundance of material to work with, giving a decent depiction of the magical universe interspersed with some insightful glimpses into occult traditions.

I now turn to the sources used to investigate views from Western demonology. For the purposes of this thesis, a comparison of the work *Malleus Maleficarum* will not be made. This work by the inquisitor Heinrich Kramer was written and published in 1487 and had such a great influence in fifteenth-century demonology that it inspired many other theologians and demonologists to further contribute to the existing literature. Some modern-day researchers claim that the acceptance and wide circulation of *Malleus Maleficarum* was one of the crucial

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[10] Hartnup, Karen. *'On the Beliefs of the Greeks': Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy*. Leiden: Brill, 2004, p. 5.

[11] These characterizations can be observed in many different parts throughout the text as, for example, in Allatios, De opin., VII, p. 126, XV, p. 151, XXI, p. 163; XXVII, p. 157 etc.

factors that led to the sixteenth-century witch craze.[12] 'Because of it (*Malleus*), sixteenth and seventeenth-century authors were no longer compelled to write about the new sect of witches; their witches had a short but well-documented history.'[13] *Malleus* was the starting point for every subsequent discussion of witchcraft. Nevertheless, *Malleus* is ridden with many misquotes and theological mistakes, to the extent that even the Spanish Inquisition warned its members 'not to believe everything the *Malleus Maleficarum* said, even when it presented apparently firm evidence.'[14] Moreover, the Department of Theology of the University of Cologne condemned the book for unethical legal procedures and characterized it as contradictory to Catholic doctrine on various points.[15] Current historiography is still divided on these claims, as well as on claims by Kramer that the book was approved by the Theology Department of Cologne.[16] However, these issues did not prevent *Malleus* from being reprinted more than 35 times up until 1669, or from becoming a key factor in the witch hunts, further contributing to the witch craze as well as the superstitions and tensions created by the Reformation.

The reasons mentioned above might not have impeded *Malleus* from becoming popular, but they are sufficient for the book to be considered too problematic for the analysis presented here. Instead, a work by Martin Del Rio, *Investigations into Magic*, has been selected

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[12] Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts: A Global History*, p. 84.

[13] Broedel, Hans Peter. *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 8.

[14] Ankarloo, Bengt, Catharina Raudvere, Edward Peters, and Clarc Stuart. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, p. 202.

[15] The book was initially printed and disseminated by the University of Cologne after a controversial acceptance by the Theology Department.

[16] This statement lies in the first pages of *Malleus*.

to represent Western demonology.[17] Del Rio's treatise has been characterized by historians of witchcraft as a more consistent demonology based on decent primary sources relevant to the period in which it was composed. Del Rio's six-book discussion about magic 'served as a handbook for judges providing numerous examples from contemporary legal practices', outgrowing all earlier products and being labeled as 'the demonology of demonologies'[18] by his contemporaries, practically replacing the *Malleus Maleficarum.*

At this point, some questions may arise: Nicodemus wrote his work in the last decades of the eighteenth century, with the first volume being printed in 1803. How can we compare it to the work of Del Rio, which first appeared in Mainz in 1595?[19] The answer to this question is twofold, with the first reason being the length of time *Investigations into Magic* remained relevant and influential. The first edition of the book may have been printed in 1595, but the last publication can be traced to Venice in the year 1747. During this 152-year period, the book remained in demand, enjoying more than 24 reprints across Europe.[20] We can therefore safely assume that Del Rio's work was quite widespread at least until 1747. This year is quite close to the publication of *Against the Types of Magic* in 1803. The second element that should allow for the comparison of these two works is the fact that Nicodemus based his whole treatise on nomocanonical texts and treatises written in previous centuries. For example, he based a number of his adjudications upon the *Nomocanon of Malaxos,* which was written in the mid-sixteenth century. These two factors drastically close the chronological gap, further allowing the comparison of Del Rio's *Investigations into Magic* and Nicode-

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[17] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Investigations into Magic.*

[18] Behringer, *Witches and Witch-hunts: A Global History*, p. 101.

[19] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Investigations into Magic.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 8.

[20] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Investigations into Magic.* p. 7-10.

mus' 'Against the Types of Magic'. This comparison, with the help of passages mentioning magic from the nomocanonical texts of the seventeenth century, reveals the different attitudes of Orthodoxy and Catholicism towards the crime of magic.

Finally, in order to investigate the role of magic in the social realm, the writings of several foreign travelers through Greece and Asia Minor are also presented. These travelers offer an image of Orthodoxy through a Catholic or Protestant prism. This lens enabled them to discern possible influences or 'impurities' in the Christian doctrine stemming from Islamic traditions. Furthermore, many cases regarding undead revenants and the reactions towards these can be found in these travelogues. The sources introduced above offer a good starting point for studies of magic in the early modern period. We must accept, however, that this field imposes significant limitations. The absence of witch trial records and the scarcity of Orthodox demonological texts severely restrict historians wishing to investigate the different aspects of magic in Orthodox and Muslim societies in any greater detail.

1.2 Literature review and methodology

There is a great number of books and dissertations which try to explain Western witchcraft phenomena. From the theory of mass hysteria, to the disease theory suggesting that people were delusional from syphilis or the consumption of moldy bread, to the misogyny argument claiming that a witch hunt was a radical manifestation of misogyny, ideas have developed which examine specific aspects of witchcraft but not the whole picture, and which often neglect important factors of early modern witchcraft.[21] Moreover, very few historians have attempted to interpret the same events in Eastern Europe.

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[21] Pavlac, Brian A. "*Ten General Historical Theories about the Origins and Causes of the Witch Hunts,*" Prof. Pavlac's Women's History Resource Site. (June 6, 2006). URL: http://departments.kings.edu/womens_history/witcherrors.html Accessed:10/06/2016.

Historians such as Carlo Ginzburg and Robert Muchembled interpret instances of witchcraft and trace the origins of magic in order to construct theories and models applicable to Western societies.[22] American historians such as Margaret Murray focus more on the cultural characteristics of European folklore, suggesting that the great witch trials of the seventeenth century can be explained as the struggle of organized religion to suppress pre-Christian 'pagan' elements that survived and morphed throughout the centuries, forming a distinct pagan witch-cult.[23] While the 'witch-cult hypothesis' has been disproved by modern historiography, which characterized it as pseudo-historical, it inspired Ginzburg to form his hypothesis. Ginzburg claimed that Europe shared a common shamanistic background. This folklore, which might not have been organized into a witch-cult as Murray claimed, greatly influenced the notion of *Sabbath* and the depiction of the Devil, according to Ginzburg. By studying countless stories and records of early modern healers and wizards, Ginzburg further suggests that their beliefs and practices actually originated from pre-Christian pagan practices, further crediting Murray's work in his book, *Ecstasies.*

The reason to recognize a correct intuition in Murray's discredited thesis was the discovery of an agrarian cult of an ecstatic character.[24] The Ginzburg hypothesis and the connection it has with Murray's pseudo-historical explanation still divides historians. One side maintains that Ginzburg merely reworked Murray's arguments, and the other side agrees that Ginzburg's work might have some common ground with Murray's, however the final results were quite different.

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[22] Ginzburg, Carlo, and Raymond Rosenthal. *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1991.

Muchembled, Robert. *Damned: An Illustrated History of the Devil*. San Francisco, CA: Seuil/Chronicle, 2004.

[23] Murray, Margaret Alice. *The God of the Witches.* London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

[24] Ginzburg, Carlo, and Raymond Rosenthal. *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath.* p. 9.

By contrast, Robert Muchembled minimizes the importance of cultural characteristics and the folklore of European people, and instead focuses on radical political and social changes in his attempt to interpret the witch hunts. In his opinion, 'witch hunting is a liturgy of fear', spreading fear and terror essential for the elite but 'which inspire real dread and anxiety among the peasant masses.'[25] Clashing with Ginzburg's theory, Muchembled claims that the '*Sabbath* is simply and solely a figment created by theologians whose ideas governed the imagination of the elite classes of Europe.'[26] Instead of trying to find answers in demonological texts, he directs attention to the economic and social factors which led demonologists to create such stereotypes, thus concluding that the 'witch hunts were a sign of twofold crisis. First, a crisis in the mediaeval state and the unity of Christendom; and second, a crisis of the rural world, which succumbed to state authorities being forced to abolish previous systems of vengeance or vigilantism.[27] Marinos Saryiannis had the insight to apply Muchembled's theory to the Ottoman Empire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in an attempt to explain the tolerance Ottoman authorities showed towards witchcraft. Saryiannis underlines the fact that neither of the two aforementioned crises ever took place in the Ottoman Empire. The 'Ottomans never experienced any major breaches of their religious order nor did the rural world of the Balkans or Anatolia give up its system of values and internal moral equilibrium in favor of central state intervention.'[28]

Another attempt to explain the witch craze is Alan Macfarlane and Keith Thomas' theory, which deviates from the aforementioned ideas. These authors see a possible explana-

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[25] Oldridge, Darren. *The Witchcraft Reader.* London: Routledge, 2002, p. 136.

[26] Oldridge, *The Witchcraft Reader*. p. 136.

[27] Oldridge, *The Witchcraft Reader*. pp. 138-141.

[28] Saryiannis, Marinos. *Of Ottoman Ghosts, Vampires and Sorcerers: An Old Discussion Disinterred*, Archivum Ottomanicum 30 (2013), pp. 191-216.

tion in the enmity between neighbors accusing each other to achieve their goals. Accusations of witchcraft, according to the authors, were actually expressions of personal feuds and misunderstandings between neighbors or kin. As in Essex during Stuart England 'quarrels over gifts and loans of food, and to a lesser extent, money and implements, precipitated the majority of the witchcraft attacks.'[29] Nevertheless, the sources supporting their claims are geographically limited. They acknowledge this limitation, suggesting that their theory can be used as an explanation but cannot be applied to all cases.

Wolfgang Behringer's book *Witches, and Witch-hunts, a Global History* offers a well-documented background starting from the Early Medieval period until the 21st century, analyzing the phenomenon of magic and tracking the transition between medieval and early modern beliefs. Behringer investigates famous witch trials throughout the world, expanding his research outside of the territorial limits of early modern Europe into different regions of the world in different periods. He succeeds in offering a clear depiction of beliefs and perceptions of magic, and more specifically the attitudes of people from different cultures towards magic. Even though Behringer's research is very broad, the topic of magic in Christian populations under the Ottoman rule is not thoroughly examined. The main reason for this is that the focal point of the book revolves around witch trials, a phenomenon that is not documented in any part of the Ottoman Empire. However, the absence of witch trials does not mean that the Orthodox legal codes did not include passages dealing with magic. The fact that the types of punishment were not corporal, and that no witch craze occurred in Ottoman lands might have prevented Behringer from delving deeper into this topic.[30]

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[29] Macfarlane, Alan. *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England; a Regional and Comparative Study.* New York: Harper & Row, 1970, p. 176.

[30] Behringer, Wolfgang, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History.* p. 153.

Regarding magic in early modern Orthodoxy, one comprehensive study of magic in the late Byzantine period is offered in the book *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology,* by Richard Greenfield.[31] Greenfield offers an examination of the magical beliefs of late Byzantine societies, and supports his claims with a variety of sources ranging from medieval poems to legal manuscripts and magical texts of the Byzantine period. Greenfield attempts to track the origins of these beliefs as well as their continuation in following centuries. Furthermore, Greenfield claims that many Byzantine demonological traditions survived through the works of Byzantine theologists in the centuries after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, influencing the attitudes of early modern Orthodox societies towards magic. Greenfield's analysis of early modern magical manuscripts such as *Anecdota Atheniensia*[32] and *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantin,*[33] along with his interpretations, reveal to the reader the views of the literate and of ecclesiastical authorities towards witchcraft in medieval and early modern Greek Orthodox societies.

Aside from this seminal text, there is clearly a dearth of secondary literature dedicated to post-Byzantine magical beliefs. Although magical views are quite well studied up to the fifteenth century, the same cannot be said for the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Researchers such as Greenfield only scratch the surface of this topic, analyzing only the second half of the fifteenth century and not extending into the following centuries.

Models of research and methodologies that can be applied to the study of Western witchcraft cannot be accurately implemented in early modern Orthodoxy, as the differences in the social and administrative aspects of these societies are significant. In Karen Hartnup's

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[31] Greenfield, Richard P. H. *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology*. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1988.

[32] Delatte, Armand. *Anecdota Atheniensia*. Liége: Imp. H. Vaillant-Carmanne, 1927.

[33] Vasil′ev, Afanasij. *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina*. Mosquae: Univ. Caesar, 1893.

book ‘On the Beliefs of The Greeks, Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy’,[34] some of greatest difficulties encountered by historians in this field are analyzed thoroughly. According to Hartnup, the ‘popular religion associated with the laity, the peasantry and the illiterate’ is opposed to the ‘non popular religion of the elite, the clergy and the literate’[35] and poses the first methodological problem for the researcher. Although this two-tier model can be applied to some extent in the Western world, it might not be reliable when analyzing the Orthodox reality of the seventeenth century. The Reformation and the following Counter-Reformation in the West laid the foundation for a more settled doctrine. The involvement of secular authorities in the Church, as in Spain, and the reformation of bishops and priests all across Europe, imposed by the Council of Trent to counter absenteeism and aberrations of the doctrine, were essential in the solidification of Catholicism. Wherever the bishops failed to fulfill their duties, the Tridentine arsenal would deploy the Inquisition and missionary orders to achieve the goal of a unified and pure doctrine. Those were the tools used by Catholicism to correct the doctrine and to spread it to the laity.

However, these factors did not play a part in the Orthodox East, which was not influenced at all by the Reformation. Having limited methods for protecting the doctrine from outside influences, and even fewer ways to spread it, Orthodoxy was prone to superstition and heresy.

In this context, we can detect the problems of the two-tier system: ‘The clergy were not always drawn from the elite, and neither the elite nor clergy were necessarily literate.’[36] While ecclesiastical official texts tried to eliminate superstition, pagan traditions mixed with

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[34] Hartnup, Karen. *'On the Beliefs of the Greeks': Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

[35] Hartnup, Karen. *'On the Beliefs of the Greeks': Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy*..p 4.

[36] Hartnup, Karen. *'On the Beliefs of the Greeks': Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy*. p. 4.

religious rituals were practiced by rich and poor alike. The two-tier model is overly simplistic and not capable of capturing all aspects of magic practices in Orthodoxy.

In this study, the method the historical material is analysed using the method of comparative analysis, the historical critical method of textual analysis, as well as the contextual analysis of the relevant documents in accordance with the so-called Cambridge School conceptualization. On the one hand, the aim is to maintain a critical distance from the original sources by putting emphasis on their rigorous assessment and determining their strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, considering the historical narratives under examination as reflections of a hegemonic discourse, I will focus on the ecclesiastical and social context of the time, as well as on the role of institutional religiosity in its articulation. I contacted my research by putting my topic in a social and religious context. Since the differences between Western Christian and Eastern Greek Orthodox communities at the social and ecclesiastical level were significant, this research endeavours to study the cultural frames and religious systems within which the Orthodox Greek esoteric practices were formulated and developed, while avoiding falling into the trap of essentialism, and without ignoring the centrality and influence of the structural factor in the construction of a historical narration.

In Chapter 2, the comparative method is used to compare an important demonology produced in the West to various Orthodox Greek religious works, in order to reveal the aforementioned differences between Western Christianity and the Orthodox doctrine. Furthermore, I examine the demonological beliefs and the attitudes towards magic of the Greek Orthodox doctrine in the early modern period and their importance in the lives of Orthodox Greek societies during the early modern period. The analysis of Western demonology exposes the theological beliefs of the Catholic Church regarding the power of the Devil and the role of gender in magic. Through a top to bottom qualitative analysis of differences in the official

doctrines that played a role in the construction of beliefs and attitudes towards magic, I attempt to answer the question of why Orthodox societies were more lenient towards witchcraft. The aim is to discern the patterns and dissimilarities in important theological aspects between Catholicism and Orthodoxy that played a role in shaping attitudes towards magic.

In Chapter 3, I examine the official ecclesiastical and legal attitudes of the Orthodoxy towards magic. Using contextual analysis to a great extent and textual analysis somewhat less, the aim is to analyse legal attitudes towards magic by placing them in the Orthodox religious context. Legal passages reflect religious beliefs held at that time on the topic of magic by imposing the commensurable punishments for such a crime. The same method is also employed in Chapter 4, where I analyse Islamic and Ottoman influences on the Orthodox Church.

Finally in Chapter 5, an Orthodox Greek demonology is analysed in depth. The scarcity of Greek demonologies prevents a comparison with other Greek sources, therefore the method of contextual analysis is employed instead. Furthermore, the background of the particular author is also taken into consideration. By extensively studying Saint Nicodemus' early education and training in theology and the sciences, as well as the traditions of his hometown Naxos, it is possible to detect influences from Western theology that might have led him to reproduce some Western stereotypes of witchcraft. This is particularly evident in his notion of *kakogria* or the 'Orthodox witch'. Last but not least, by putting his work into the Orthodox religious context, I outline not only the legal attitudes of the ecclesiastical authorities, but also official religious opinions on the topic of magic.

The methodologies employed here bring to light the differences between Orthodoxy and Catholicism views on magic. Detecting these differences and placing them firmly in the

Orthodox historical context allows for a discussion of the factors that led to the leniency of the Greek Orthodoxy towards witchcraft in the early modern period.

Chapter 2 - Theological differences

As previously mentioned in the literature review, *Malleus Maleficarum* is not considered representative of Western demonology. Although it was very influential, it lacks consistency and credibility, and is disproportionately preoccupied with women. Another problem is that it does not give clear descriptions of theological views, being more focused on identifying and punishing witches instead of researching the origins and manifestations of magic. Heinrich Kramer might have been a skilled inquisitor, however the fact that he was not well versed in theology might have led to the harsh critiques of his work by contemporary theological circles. The work of Martin Del Rio, which succeeded *Malleus Maleficarum* as the dominant demonology of the Western world, is therefore preferred for the purpose of comparison to Orthodox demonology. Del Rio combined his knowledge as a Jesuit theologian with his personal experience at the side of Nicholas Remy, a famous French witch hunter.[37] While it appears that he partially reproduces ideas and notions from *Malleus Maleficarum,* his approach is more methodical than Kramer's. The result is *Investigations into Magic,* a complete demonology focusing on magic. It explains the phenomenon extensively and covers all of its unique aspects.

It should be noted the aim here is not to provide a comparison of schools of theological thinking. Eastern Orthodoxy followed a different approach towards theological questions. Theology in the East, in contrast to the West, was apophatic, meaning that Eastern divines did not believe that the human intellect could reveal further truths by extrapolating from scriptures.[38] Rather than comparing schools of theology, I wish to compare demonological views.

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[37] Behringer, Wolfgang, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History.* UK: Cambridge, 2004,, p. 101.

[38] Hartnup, Karen. *'On the Beliefs of the Greeks': Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy.* Leiden: Brill, 2004: p 13.

The goal is to understand how traditional beliefs were described and experienced, in order to discern the major differences between Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism on the topic of witchcraft.

2.1 Are all types of magic evil?

The first difference between Western and Orthodox views that is apparent from the early pages of Del Rio's work is the demonization of some magical practices on the one hand and the acceptance and leniency towards others on the other. Del Rio divides magical practices into ' a) good magic, provided this to be done with good intentions, and uses lawful methods, something which only applies to Natural and Artificial Magic; and b) evil magic'.[39] In his fourth book, Del Rio offers a description of the different types of divination and divides them into the following types: prophecies originating from God, demonic divination and 'natural precognition which arises from signs or natural causes'.[40] With the exception of the first category, these were all considered to be sorcery, but the third enjoyed some acceptance if it met certain conditions. For example, in his discussion of the art of telling the future using lots,[41] he states that such practices should be considered illegal, but if they followed certain specific steps and were performed with caution, such rituals might be ways to discover God's will. Alchemy serves as another example, as it was perceived as being a noble art despite its sorcerous origins. In early modern Europe, alchemy and astronomy were widely recognized to

[39] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Investigations into Magic.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 32.

[40] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Investigations into Magic.* p. 148.

[41] By the word 'lots', Del Rio means bones, knuckles, dice, etc.

be distinct disciplines with their own respective methods and goals.[42] Orthodox demonology, on the other hand, considered every type of magic to be demonic and evil. Even if some practices seem to have positive or innocent effects, the advice of the Orthodox Church was always to avoid them. Divination of any kind was strictly banned, and the results of such dubious methods were characterized as petty demonic trickery. In no way was divination an acceptable and valid practice. According to Nicodemus 'diviners are those who by reading the palm or fire or by other methods think that they can guess what will happen next.'[43] More details can be found in the *Nomocanon of Malaxos* passage 637 (ΧΛΖ):'All those who ask (female) gypsies to foretell and call oracles to their houses promoting witchcraft should abstain from communion for five years according to the eighty-fourth law of the Ankara synod.'[44] A similar penalty is dictated by the *Vactiria Arxierewn,* an important nomocanonical collection written in 1645 by Archimandrite Jacob, in passage number eighty-three (ΠΓ).[45] Similar sentences are observed for alchemy. To summarize, both the nomocanonical texts and the works of Nicodemus agree that not only divination but all different sorts of magic have their roots in demonic influence irrespective of the results, while Del Rio's demonology found some practices acceptable if practiced in a limited and controlled environment.

2.2 Magic and misogyny

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[42] Newman, William R., and Anthony Grafton. *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, p 24.

[43] Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Χρηστοηθεια των Χριστιανων*. Τυπογραφια Νικολαου Γλυκη του Εξ Ιωαννινων. 1803, p. 160.

[44] Malaxos, Manouēl, Nikolaos I. Pantazopoulos, and Dēmētrios S. Gkinēs. *Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou Tou Ek Naupliou Tēs Peloponnēsou: Metenextheis Eis Lexin Haplēn Dia Tēn Tōn Pollōn Ōpheleian.* Thessaloniki: Aristoteleio Panepistēmio Thessalonikēs, 1985, p. 420.

[45] Jacob, Archimandrite of Ioanina, *Vaktiria Arxierewn*, Thessaloniki, P. Pournaras press, December 2008, Volume B: 825.

The second divergence between Western and Orthodox views, previously mentioned only in passing, is clearly illustrated in the legal passages of the nomocanonical texts. This difference is in reference to the female gender and its connection to magic. Western theology during the early modern period underlined a deep connection between the female gender and the crime of magic. Many studies in modern historiography have investigated the association of sex and witchcraft: Catherine DiDomenico decided to 'explore the varieties of ways in which women have been positioned as the 'other', whether as 'mad', or 'evil', or as 'witches'.[46] Silvia Federici on the other hand, connects the beginnings of witch hunts with the dawn of capitalism and the rationalization of social reproduction. The body, labor and the reproductive system, according to Federici, were being put under the control of a patriarchal state which had the intention of transforming them into economic resources.[47] Last but not least, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English attempted to explain witchcraft as an organized and systematic war against the role of women as self-taught healers. 'Because the Medieval Church, with the support of kings, princes, and secular authorities, controlled medical education and practice, the Inquisition [witch-hunts] constitutes, among other things, an early instance of the "professional" repudiation of skills and interfering with the rights of the "nonprofessional" to minister to the poor.'[48] As we can see, historical opinions on the topic vary, but all researchers agree that women played a significant role in witchcraft as supposed victimizers on the one hand, and victims on the other. Western contemporary records and documentation revolve around the female nature. Kramer argues that women are more susceptible to demonic temptations through the manifold weaknesses of their gender. It was believed that they were

[46] DiDomenico Catherine, *Women, madness, witchcraft and the evil subjective,* First Global Conference, Friday 1st May 2009 – Sunday 3rd May 2009, Budapest, Hungary.

[47] Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch. New York:* Autonomedia, 2004, p. 170.

[48] Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Deirdre English. *Witches, Midwives, & Nurses: A History of Women Healers*. New York City: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2010, p 1.

weaker in faith and more carnal than men.[49] Heinrich Kramer claims that 'Women are inclined to be credulous and because the aim of the Evil Spirit is to pervert and destroy the Faith, he prefers to attack them.'[50] Even in the work of Del Rio, which tends to reflect a milder approach, a misogynistic attitude is easily read between the lines. While Del Rio avoids ascriptions, in the sixth book, female pronouns are always used to describe the culprits. 'While the defendant is being tortured, SHE can be told the names of those who have witnessed against HER.'[51]

Orthodox theology held similar beliefs regarding women, however it did not share Western theology's opinions regarding witchcraft. In the nomocanonical collections, both male and female words are used to describe culprits of magic, although in most cases the word 'heretic' is preferred. Also, there is no extensive chapter explaining why women are more vulnerable to magic, as in *Malleus*. Orthodox theology believed that men and women could equally be tricked into committing the sin of magic. Even though we can observe a more hostile approach towards women in Nicodemus' works, in particular with the appearance of the notion of *kakogria*, it does not mean that Orthodoxy connected magic with the female gender. A full explanation of the notion of the *kakogria (Orthodox witch)* is provided in Chapter 6.

A possible exception is the art of poison crafting. The ninety-first legal passage of *Vactiria Arxierewn* explicitly states that 'Women who consume herbs to kill their babies in their wombs and all those women who brew those potions should be considered murderers

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[49] Rogers, Mark. *Esoteric Codex: Witch Hunting*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Lulu Com, 2014, p. 172.

[50] Institoris, Heinrich, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *The Malleus Maleficarum*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007, p 74.

[51] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, *Investigations into Magic*. p. 249. (my emphasis)

and treated as such',[52] which usually resulted in the punishment of life-long excommunication. In this passage, the perpetrators of the crime, not only those who consume the herb but also those who brew them, are female. In the *Nomocanon of Malaxos*, one chapter is dedicated to the actions a woman should never undertake, and among other acts, it is advocated that a woman should not cast spells to get pregnant and also never fall into petty practices such as poison making.[53]

However, from the concept of *Sabbath,* which revolved around female trickery, to the great percentage of female executions for the crime of witchcraft (80% were women),[54] the evidence points that Western witchcraft constructed around hatred towards women. Still, despite the fact that misogynistic views were present in Orthodox demonology, the construct of magic was not built around a hatred or fear of women, and men were considered just as vulnerable to the sin of magic.

Each of these theological deviations on their own are not enough to explain the absence of certain events, such as the witch craze, in the Orthodox parts of the Ottoman Empire. However together, they demonstrate fundamental ideological differences and thus different attitudes. Coupled with differences in interpretations of the power of the Devil, discussed next, and juridical dissimilarities, a plausible theory of the factors which contributed to the relative tolerance towards magic seen in early modern Orthodoxy can be formulated.

2.3 The power of the Devil

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[52] Jacob, *Vaktiria Arxierewn,* Volume B: 623.

[53]Malaxos,*Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou*. p. 412.

[54] Geoffrey; Callow, John (2001). *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (second ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 29–33. Rapley (1998) claims that "75 to 80 percent" of a total of "40,000 to 50,000" victims were women. Rapley, Robert

The very existence of the Devil is significant to the structure of Christianity. The Devil's schemes led to two corresponding Christian doctrines: Original Sin, and salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches agree on the fundamental teachings regarding the status of the Devil, his inferior nature compared to God, and his nature as the personification of evil. Where these two churches disagree, however, is in the power the Devil has in the realm of the living.

Throughout the centuries, the notion of magic changed and adapted to different religious and social contexts. In the first centuries of Christianity, even though witchcraft was considered despicable, there was no clear connection with the Devil. Magic was perceived as some supernatural power derived from old pagan demons. Despite the fact that witchcraft was a punishable crime, it did not yet pose a significant threat to Christianity. 'For Western theologians in the early and high middle ages, witches were individuals who believed they possessed powers that in reality did not exist. Witches were considered to be deceived by devilish illusions, and they were not to be killed but corrected and educated.'[55] The same attitude towards witches (with slight alterations) was common in the Eastern parts of Europe. In the surviving records of witchcraft trials in thirteenth-century Byzantium, witches were perceived as being deceived by the Devil. Furthermore, the Byzantine laws aimed to rehabilitate witches and not to eliminate them from the society.[56]

Although a fear of magic was present in Medieval Europe, there was no organized attempt to eradicate the threat, and while trials and executions of witches were not uncommon, it was not until the middle of the fifteenth century that the first methodically organized

[55]Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History*, p. 4.

[56] MIKLOSICH, Franz Von, and Joseph MUELLER. *Acta Et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi Sacra Et Profana, Collecta Ediderunt* F.M. Et J.M. Gr. Vindobonae, 1860. MMI, 180, no. 79, and 343—44, no. 153.I, 301—6, no. 134, 317—18, no. 137, 246—48, 25 are some examples.

witch hunt burst across Europe. In the years following 1450, Western Europe experienced an unprecedented phenomenon. Most of the regions of Europe were immersed in 'witch terror', and the perception of magic changed drastically. The crime of witchcraft incorporated new stereotypes such as the old, ugly, impoverished and deformed witch who has devoted her soul to the Devil while regularly attending unholy nocturnal conventions with other witches to worship Satan. This type of woman was also usually associated with 'horrible crimes like infanticide or cannibalism',[57] thus creating the *Sabbath* stereotype that was eventually perceived as a major menace to Western Christianity. The image of the witch was further enriched with a variety of supernatural abilities such as the ability to fly and an affinity with darkness and creatures of the night. The aforementioned stereotype spread widely through the sermons of monastic orders like the Dominicans and the Jesuits. According to Wolfang Behringer, 'the construction of a cumulative concept of witchcraft during the late fourteenth and the early fifteenth century was the decisive step towards mass persecutions of witches.'[58]

In the thirteenth century, the Catholic Church began arguing the exclusivity of magical powers, claiming that 'only its priests possess legitimate magical powers.'[59] To achieve this monopoly, Catholicism had to face other 'magic users' i.e. sorcerers, cunning people, and witches, who claimed they had power over the natural world, could help people to find lost items, cure them or foretell the future, etc. As the abilities of both clergymen and all other magicians were not human, it could either derive from God or the Devil. Consequently, anyone who was able to practice magic and was not associated with the Church had ipso facto acquired these abilities from the Devil and should be considered a witch. In this new crime of witchcraft, the

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[57] Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History*, p. 2.

[58] Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History*, p. 54.

[59] Craig, Albert M. *Heritage of World Civilization: Combined.* S.l.: Prentice Hall, 1999, p. 447.

Devil was the protagonist: an all-powerful threat with the sole goal of disrupting and destroying Christianity. The Devil took the role of the unknown and unseen threat, organizing an army of demons but also of humans who had made a pact with him. Witches willingly asked for the Devil's help; they knew the plans of the Devil from the beginning and agreed to help him lay waste to Christianity, thus becoming a 'enemies from within' for Western societies. Western demonology embraced these opinions, endorsed them, and further enriched them. Heinrich Kramer in *Malleus Maleficarum* stated that a 'diabolic presence demanded a mediator who could channel and direct disordering and destructive forces on earth. The witch neatly filled this void.'[60] In the description of the *Sabbath* by Del Rio, the organizers of night gatherings were evil spirits, or even the Devil, in the company of other demons.[61] Witches, in association with the Devil, were said to plan their next strikes, pledge vows against Christianity, narrate their crimes against humanity and repopulate the Devil's army through carnal intercourse. By the sixteenth century, the population of Europe was convinced that the continent was swarming with dangerous witches, and theology and demonology promoted this belief, underlining the power of Satan and aggrandizing the threat he posed. The crime of witchcraft, under those circumstances, became a major social plague, an enemy to the faith guided by the Devil.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Orthodox Church remained relatively behind in regards to theological theories. No new narratives of the Devil's nature were developed, and the Church still supported the 'Augustinian views of a powerful but strictly limited Devil',[62] predominant

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[60] Broedel, Hans Peter. *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 4.

[61] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, *Investigations*. p. 91-98.

[62] Broedel. *The Malleus Maleficarum*. p 41.

in Medieval Europe. The negative theological methodology[63] of the Eastern Orthodox Church is responsible for this 'stagnation', as the approach to religious questions was quite vague and there was an avoidance of precise definitions of doctrinal positions in matters such as Purgatory, Transubstantiation, and the Devil's power on Earth. Consequently, even though he had the ability to trick and delude, the Devil was virtually powerless after his great defeat by Jesus Christ. Nicodemus, in explaining that Christians are stronger than the Devil and all the demons, states that '(the Devil) once a Tyrant of humanity, lost all of his despotic powers on humans becoming subordinate to the pious Christians after Jesus's embodiment.' Nicodemus further explains that 'the Devil can only drag people into sinning only through trickery and cunningness and not through force as he used to in the past.'[64] In these few lines, we can discern the whole attitude of Orthodoxy towards the Devil. Even though the Devil exists, he is not a tyrant, he does not have an army, he is not even considered a threat to Christians, let alone to Orthodoxy. 'Why are you afraid of the Devil? He is powerless and unable to cause you any harm. The Devil should be rather scared of you who is armed with God's armor and carrying God's sling as a weapon with which you can tear down all the demons'.[65] In contrast, Western theology was overly afraid of the Devil's powers, often exaggerating these and thus creating a feeling of impending doom. As Increase Mathers, a Puritan minister in Massachusetts infamous for his involvement with the Salem witch trials, stated 'the Devil could destroy all the men upon the face of the whole earth in a very little time.'[66]

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63 Boesel, Chris, and Catherine Keller. *Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2010.

64 Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, pp. 181-184.

65 Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 184.

66 Breslaw, Elaine G. *Witches of the Atlantic World: An Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook.* New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000, p. 78.

Since the Devil in Orthodox reality was powerless, his loyal minions were also perceived differently. Witches and wizards could not be a huge threat to society nor part of an army aiming to destroy Christianity. Users of magic were viewed as deluded and adrift, and not members of a bigger cult. While in Western demonology witches were described as fanatics who in full consciousness participated in *Sabbaths* venerating the Devil and his demonic minions, Eastern wizards and witches were perceived as victims of illusions, deluded, practicing evil magic without even realizing it. Even the notion of the *Sabbath* cannot exist under those circumstances. Necessary for the *Sabbath* was the presence of a demon or Devil who would guide and give orders to the witches to thwart the advance of Christianity in any way they could. Participation in such gatherings, a witchcraft crime that was both religious and civil, was considered so hideous that only execution was a suitable punishment. This demonological view takes for granted that the Devil can and will harm both humanity and Christianity, beliefs that were not supported by Eastern Orthodoxy. 'The diabolical pact which became so central in Western witchcraft never became a prominent part of witchcraft in the East.'[67]

Witches and wizards in Orthodox regions, on the other hand, were punished with excommunication. The goal was not to exterminate a threat from societies but to rehabilitate and re-educate those who had lost their way, offering them salvation instead of hell. The act of using magic was considered one of the most heinous sins, but mainly because it would carry the user away from God. Witchcraft was seen as a sin and a deviation from faith, but not as a crime. Notions of *Sabbath* and of evil female agents of the Devil were not documented because they were never created in the Orthodox context, seeing as they could not fit into the

[67] Hartnup, *Leo Allaci*, p. 160.

theological narrative. The Orthodox Church was not involved in a religious war, and thus the creation of evil 'enemies from within' did not seem necessary.

A perfect example that helps to illustrate the differences just mentioned is the attitude of the official ecclesiastical authorities towards the phenomenon of dead bodies returning to life. I shall begin with a passage found in *Investigations into Magic,* answering the question 'What power does the Devil have over a soul which is to be separated from the body and over the separation itself?'[68] Although Del Rio believes that the Devil is unable to influence the separation of the soul from the body, he is able to use the cadaver to scare or harm the living. The soul might be out of the Devil's powers, but the body is vulnerable as 'he (the Devil) can assume a corpse and appear in it. He can work wonders thereby, which may astonish the ignorant: for example making blood flow in the presence of the murdered corpse.'[69] Furthermore, demons (evil spirits for Del Rio) can possess dead bodies and commit atrocious acts. Evil spirits can even delay putrefaction by preserving a body from decay, protect it from burning, or cause the hair and nails of a corpse to grow.[70] While some of these extraordinary stories can today be explained by science, in the seventeenth century they were attributed to acts of the Devil. The Devil or any demon could directly influence a dead body, and exterminating undead revenants was considered an acceptable solution to such problems by both the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

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[68] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, *Investigations*. p. 108.

[69] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, *Investigations.* p. 108.

[70] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, *Investigations.* p. 108.

While reports of undead revenants were recorded in Orthodox Greece,[71] the official ecclesiastical reasoning and treatment of these had little similarity to the West, mainly due to the aforementioned theological differences. As Orthodox theology wanted the Devil to be, if not powerless, then at least limited, the response to those who believed that the dead could walk again or even worse, take countermeasures against them, was excommunication. According to Malaxos, 'the human body cannot move or work after death without the help of the soul. (…) So how is it even possible for a body without a soul to act or walk?' [72]For Nicodemus, the phenomenon of the walking dead is a deception by the Devil, intended to deceive the faithful into committing a sin. 'It is an act of the Devil who tricks you into burning your fellow people in flesh to drag you to hell.'[73] The same supernatural explanation is given in both theologies for instances of vampirism, but with a striking difference. While Del Rio's Devil could actually take control of a dead body, in Malaxos' legal passage all of this is an illusion, a mere trick and figment originating from the Devil.[74] Readings of similar content can also be found in *Vactiria Arxierewn.*[75] Nicodemus' description takes it one step further by stating that 'beliefs of people rising from their graves and walking is an old scheme of the Devil and with such tricks he made a lot of individuals believe that the souls of those who faced a violent death become demons. (…) Now he uses the same scheme hoping to convince some Christians to dig up graves of the dead to cut their bodies into small pieces or to burn

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[71] The first mention of vampirism is in the work of Leone Allaci, '*De Graecorum Hodie*'. Since then, references to vampires can be found in various works, as for example in Evliya Celebi 'S*eyahatnâme*' and in the work of Newton, *Travels & Discoveries in the Levant.*

[72] Malaxos,*Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou*, pp. 457-460.

[73] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, pp. 183-184.

[74] Malaxos,*Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou*, pp. 457-460.

[75] Jacob, *Vaktiria Arxierewn*, Volume B: 997.

them. (…) It is impossible for the dead to rise and beleaguer you but from your own disbelief, fear and disloyalty, the Devil can put those illusions in front of your eyes.'[76]

This does not mean that Orthodox Christians were following the letter of the law regarding vampirism. There are documented instances where peasants took the law into their own hands and decided to exterminate the undead threat from their communities, and during the seventeenth century this phenomenon got out of control. 'Vampires appeared everywhere to spread terror, plague, to destroy crops, bring infertility to women. (…) A real vampire hunt started in many Greek islands, so ferocious that it can be compared with Western witch hunts.'[77] Travelers were astonished to see locals digging up bodies to impale their hearts, boiling them in vinegar and finally burning the cadaver, throwing the ashes into the sea in hopes of ending all the misfortunes connected with the presence of a vampire. Phenomena like the above cannot be denied, however the focus here is on theological views rather than common practices. As seen above, the Orthodox Church attempted to discourage people from these practices by threatening excommunication.[78]

While Western theology accepted vampirism phenomena, further promoting vigilantism as a war against the Devil, Eastern Orthodox theology was actively trying to avoid vigilantism or countermeasures against the dead. These aspects of collective decompression, vampirism, and the connections it has with the punishment of excommunication are discussed further in the next chapter.

Despite both Greece and Western countries belonging to the same Christian context, the different attitudes towards magic in Western and Eastern demonologies can be explained

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[76] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, pp. 183-184.

[77] Gerouki Anastasia. *Collective Fears in History.* Athens, Ethniko Idrima Erevnwn (E.I.E) 2000, pp. 13-35.

[78] Jacob, *Vaktiria Arxierewn*, Volume B: 997. Malaxos,Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou, p. 461.

by the perceptions of the power of the Devil, as well as the nature of females and the dead, which are based upon different schools of theology. Theological differences mirror the societal disparities derived from different social and legal backgrounds, and thus the legal context of magic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is quite revealing. The following chapter delves into the social and legal aspects of magic, and investigates the powers of the head of the Orthodoxy, and consequently the clergy, regarding the punishment of those who refused to comply with ecclesiastical law.

Chapter 3 - Legal differences

Magical beliefs belong in the religious realm as well as the social realm. Not only theology but also changes and alterations inside communities could influence the ways people perceived and responded to magic. Crucial societal differences between the Catholics in the West and Orthodox communities in the East can therefore not be overlooked. In order to better understand the question of ecclesiastical attitudes towards magic, this chapter provides an analysis of the legal context in which witches and wizards were acting. The legal systems and procedures in Orthodox communities during the seventeenth and eighteenth century were entirely unique, due to the administrative system of the Ottoman Empire called *millet.* 'According to Islamic Law, Jews and Christians were accepted as people of the book. Islam provides protection for non-Muslims via agreement between the State and the group.'[79] The Patriarch of Constantinople was appointed by Ottoman authorities as the leader of the Christian millet. He was the political head of the community before the State. Among other privileges, legal autonomy and the right to adjudicate spiritual and religious affairs were granted to the Patriarch and his community. The Orthodox population was therefore subject to the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, being judged by ecclesiastical courts that followed Orthodox legal codes. Orthodox ecclesiastical courts could not punish sinners corporally, only spiritually. The Patriarch had a disciplinary role and the right to adjudicate penal matters. However, even though he had the right to impose imprisonment, penal servitude, or exile (as long as the Sultan gave consent), he had no right to impose execution.[80] A more concrete explanation of ecclesiastical authority is provided by Najwa Al Qattan: Dhimis (non-Muslim subjects) had

[79]Öztürk, Fatih. *Ottoman and Turkish Law:* Eskisehir 2013, the Capital City of Culture for the Turkic World, p. 1.

[80] Lilies Georgios, *Church and Law in Ottoman ruled Greece according to Gustav Gaben,*Thesalloniki, 2013, p. 93.

the right to litigate most of their affairs in officially recognized dhimmi courts as long as their cases did not cross religious boundaries, involve capital crimes, or threaten public order and security.[81] So, it can be assumed that the leader of the Orthodox millet, and consequently the priests and judges of the ecclesiastical courts, could not execute other Christians irrespective of their crime. In cases of capital crimes, Ottoman authorities had to intervene.

3.1 Excommunication

It could be said that the Orthodox Church, without the power to execute dissenters, would be powerless to deal with those who do not follow the doctrine, i.e. heretics, wizards and witches. This was not the case however, because the Orthodox Church used excommunication as a threat to discipline the flock. The most common punishments for practitioners of magic were penance, fasting, prohibition of attending church for a certain amount of time, forbidding the sinner to communicate, and finally excommunication, the most severe punishment. Specific details can be drawn from the work of John Covel, a British clergyman and scientist who wrote a book titled 'Some account of the present Greek Church', published in 1722. 'Now, as to other cases of public sins and scandals, excommunication or public censure were used even as public acknowledgments. Confessions and penance were required.'[82] Excommunication could be imposed on both the laity and the clergy, and was divided into two different categories: 'The first is excommunication for a short period. The excommunicated is no longer considered to be a part of the community, he cannot participate in liturgy nor any ecclesiasti-

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[81] Najwa Al-Qattan, *Dhimmis In The Muslim Court: Legal Autonomy And Religious Discrimination, Int. J. Middle East Stud. 31 (1999), 429-444. Printed in the United States of America*, pp. 430-444.

[82] Covel, John. *Some Account of the Present Greek Church: With Reflections on Their Present Doctrine and Discipline ; Particularly in the Eucharist, and the Rest of Their Seven Pretended Sacraments, Compared with Jac. Goar's Notes upon the Greek Ritual, or Euchologion.* Cambridge: C. Crownfield, 1722. p. 239.

cal process, especially Holy Communion and the second is the so-called anathema, where the anathematized person is no longer considered to be Christian, nor part of any Christian community. While excommunication is a reversible situation, anathema could not be reversed, and it is essentially 'a disjuncture from God and an alliance with the Devil.'[83] Orthodox Patriarchs used to anathematize mainly in cases of heresy. As the capital spiritual punishment, this punishment was reserved for extreme cases that threatened the doctrine of Orthodoxy as a whole.

During the Ottoman Empire, excommunication became the most common penalty. This punishment was significant in that the Christian faced isolation from the flock. 'The Orthodox Church used the fear of the faithful to its advantage resorting to spiritual threats to discipline Christians with the decisions of its courts.'[84] Sir Paul Rycaut described the awe of the common people towards this intimidating threat. 'Yet, I cannot but almost retract what I have said when I consider how they (Orthodox people) are startled and affrighted at the sentence of excommunication... How obedient and submissive they are to the censure and injection of the priest'.[85] Excommunication was a public event, making the punishment known to the people of that particular parish and also those in other nearby parishes. Every priest and Christian was responsible for carrying out the decision. Almost all of the nomocanonical legal collections threatened to excommunicate anyone who would even interact with the convicted.[86]

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[83]Malaxos, *Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou.* p. 106.

[84] Gerouki Anastasia. *Collective Fears in History.* Athens, Ethniko Idrima Erevnwn (E.I.E) 2000, pp.13-35.

[85] Rycaut, Paul. *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches, Anno Christi 1678.* London: Printed for John Starkey, 1679, p 9.

[86] According to the *Nomocanon of Malaxos*, whoever prays with an excommunicated person should be anathematized as well (p. 111). Vactiria Arxierewn is even more strict, stating that not only should the faithful never pray with the anathematized, but they should not even stand their presence (Page 370 Volume 1). ['Stand' here means to stand up.. but I think you mean 'remain in their presence'?]

With the Act of 1542, King Henry VII, the King of England, 'was the first to define witchcraft as a felony, a crime punishable by death',[87].but in the West the crime of witchcraft took many forms and was different from one region to the next. In some places it was mainly a religious crime, as in France or the Holy Roman Empire, and in others it was a social crime, as in England or Scotland. Witchcraft in Western demonology had a binary nature. Magic was both a religious crime and a penal offense. For this binary violation of both the state and God's laws, the only appropriate punishment was execution. Furthermore, the proper way to execute a witch was by burning her at the stake, a punishment that also would purge the soul of the convicted.

Having explained and analyzed the notion of excommunication, I turn to the nomo-canonical texts and Nicodemus' treatise, to discern how serious of a crime magic was in early modern Greece. An analysis of the nomocanonical texts serves to reveal the severity of the discord magic could bring to Orthodox societies. We shall begin with the *Nomocanon of Malaxos*. The first passage refers to any priest caught divining or requesting help from ora-cles. Malaxos suggests unfrocking the priest for life but refrains from suggesting any further punishment.[88] There is also a similar passage concerning priests who associate with as-tronomers and animal charmers. Again, the punishment suggested is the unfrocking of the priest. Moving on to the first passage discussing the laity rather than the clergy, we see that the severity of punishment differed depending on the various decisions from the particular Synods they cite. The harshest punishment, twenty years of excommunication, is reserved for the summoning of demons, influencing the weather, those who cause harm and those who bring complications to birth. Those who ask magicians to cause harm or death to others

[87] Gibson, Marion (2006), "Witchcraft in the Courts", in Gibson, Marion, Witchcraft And Society in England And America, 1550–1750, Continuum International Publishing Group, pp. 1–9.

[88] Malaxos,*Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou*, p. 142.

should also be excommunicated for twenty years, and should be considered abettors to the crime. For the other magical practices discussed, suggested penalties are more lenient, usually three to six years of excommunication.

An exceptional case was the art of poison making. Malaxos condemns those who craft poisons as well as those who use them to twenty years of excommunication.[89] However, instances of homicide (with or without magic) were judged by Ottoman courts, rather than the Patriarch, because they fell under the category of capital crime. Finally, those who burned dead bodies were to be excommunicated for five years. The same crimes and punishments are also discussed in the nomocanonical collection *Vactiria Arxierew*n and Nicodemus' treatise.[90]

In total, the crime of magic is mentioned in thirty-five passages in all three nomocanonical works examined here. Eight of these are found in the second volume of *Vactiria,* while four are in the third volume. Nineteen passages speaking to the topic of magic can be found in the *Nomocanon of Malaxos*, while four passages in Nicodemus's *Pidalion* discuss magic. It must again be noted that all three of these works were written in different centuries. The *Nomocanon of Malaxos* was drafted in the mid-sixteenth century, *Vactiria Arxierewn* in the mid-seventeenth century (1645), and *Pidalion* in the late eighteenth century. We can safely assume that magic posed a problem for societies throughout these three centuries, but interestingly, the descriptions and the countermeasures remained the same. No changes can be observed in the ecclesiastical legislation that would indicate that magic posed a greater or lesser threat at different times.

One surprising detail is that the punishment of magic also remained the same regardless of the type of magic or the century in which the crime was committed. In all thirty-four

[89] This punishment was the same as that handed down for homicide.

[90] Jacob, *Vaktiria Arxierewn*, 865, 997 Vol B

passages dealing with the problem of magic, the suggested punishment is always excommunication, and never anathema or any other type of punishment. The length of the punishment varied however, depending on the severity of the magical effects. Minor cantrips were punished with two years of excommunication, while more dangerous applications of magic could be punished with twenty years. All three nomocanonical collections and the treatise of Nicodemus seems to agree that even though magic was dangerous enough to be punished with exile from the parish and the community, it was not a severe enough insult towards religion to be punished with anathema. The milder and reversible penalty of excommunication was preferred over the extreme punishment of anathema, which is not only irreversible but according to the Orthodox doctrine also had important consequences in the afterlife. This leniency of the Orthodox courts towards wizards and witches further supports the claim that they were perceived as fooled and deceived by devilish illusions. By all means, they should be punished because magic is a violation of a God-given order and works against the will of God, however they also deserved a chance for salvation.

The punishment of excommunication involved more than just isolation from one's parish and community however. The excommunicated had to follow strict penance and pray at specific hours of the day. After completion of their sentence, the convicted could again be a member of the flock and of mainstream society. In some cases, if the convicted person showed real signs of regret and humility to the archpriest[91] who sentenced him or her, the period of the punishment could be shortened considerably. 'If the man who has sinned comes back for help, do not cast him away from the Church. He needs protection from the grip of

[91] Malaxos, *Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou*, p. 112.

the Devil. Instead, invite him inside and see if he deserves to be forgiven. If he shows signs of true regret, he has earned once again his place in paradise.'[92]

Orthodox communities did not have statehood under Ottoman occupation. The Orthodox Church was a very powerful ecclesiastical and semi-legal institution, but it did not have any executive power to enforce any corporal penalty. It is fruitful to compare the attitudes of the late Byzantine Empire towards wizards and other pawns of the Devil, when the Patriarchy of Constantinople had the rights and the means to persecute and punish practitioners of magic. 'There are records of some trials held before the Patriarchal court involving both practitioners of sorcery and their clients, which help to confirm the real existence of beliefs and perhaps even of practices.'[93] There are a number of trials and records that have survived,[94] but for the purpose of this thesis, only two of these trials will be presented, in order to demonstrate the punishment applied to 'sorcerers' in an era where the Church was not restrained in its application of ecclesiastical and imperial law. The first case involves the penalty imposed upon George Terezinis, who in 1338 was convicted of being involved in devilish arts, using the name of God in his incantations, and summoning demons to do his bidding. According to his trial record, he was 'purified through confession', and was also 'made to stand outside of a Church asking for forgiveness from those who would enter'.[95] Moreover, he was forced to follow strict penance and repeat specific prayers every day for a hundred days, except Saturday and Sunday when he had to pray twice as much.[96] The second trial

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[92] Malaxos, *Nomokanōn Manouēl Notariou Tou Malaxou*, p. 107.

[93] Maguire, Henry. *Byzantine Magic.* Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995, p. 126.

[94]MIKLOSICH, Franz Von, and Joseph MUELLER. *Acta Et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi Sacra Et Profana, Collecta Ediderunt* F.M. Et J.M. Gr. Vindobonae, 1860.

[95] MIKLOSICH, *Acta Et Diplomata,* pp. 180-182.

[96]Miklosich, *Acta et Diplomata*, pp. 180-182

mentions a woman named Amarantina who was caught cursing[97] one of her enemies in an unknown year. After asking for forgiveness, she was forced to join 'the monastic order of Pretze, which would take care of the salvation of her soul.'[98] The penalties imposed by the courts of the Byzantine Empire in these two trials did not differ significantly from the penalties dictated and imposed by the nomocanonical texts of the following centuries. Therefore, it seems that the attitudes towards and beliefs about sorcerers and other users of magic, as well as the punishments handed down to these criminals, remained relatively unchanged throughout the centuries.

It cannot be denied that there may have been cases of vigilantism in Orthodox societies, but the focus of this research is to analyze the views and attitudes expressed in official documents and records. This limitation might exclude the beliefs and traditions of uneducated peasants however. It is possible that when villagers and farmers were feeling threatened by a supernatural or magical force, they would take the law into their own hands to solve the problem, without the involvement of Christian or Ottoman authorities. Nevertheless, if this vigilantism took place it most likely remained limited. If these events had been frequent, it would have provoked a reaction from the Ottoman authorities and some official record might be found, as occurred with instances of vigilantism against vampires in the rest of the Empire. Recorded instances of Ottoman intervention to solve the problem of a revenant are not uncommon in Ottoman legal documentations, and include a good number of cases in which revenants disturbed the social peace, requiring Ottoman mediation to protect and reassure Muslim populations living among Greek societies. 'In a village near Thessaloniki, a Christian presented himself in the middle of the night to some of his relatives and acquaintances some

[97] The word used by the document is *vascania*, meaning to bring bad luck to someone.

[98] Miklosich, *Acta et Diplomata*, pp. 301-306.

days after he was dead and buried, asking them to come and visit together other inhabitants, who died the next day in their turn as well. Asked whether the Muslim inhabitants should flee the village in fear of the ghost, the author answers again that the unbelievers may well be watchful, but the Muslims should do nothing but refer to the authorities.'[99] This example is one of many such instances recorded not only in Ottoman literature and official documents, but also in travelers' logbooks.[100] If cases of witchcraft had become such a nuisance, the population would have requested a solution. Consequently, Ottoman authorities would have been informed and perhaps have intervened, thus documenting the case.

To conclude, the records of Byzantine trials and passages from legal works originating in the post-Byzantine period support the theory. Wizards and witches in the West were perceived as criminals. Not only were they breaking earthly and imperial laws by distorting social peace, but they also presented an affront to religious legislation by offending and threatening Christianity as a whole. The distinct attribute of magic that remained the same all across Western Europe was the threat it posed to society and most importantly, to Christianity. According to the nomocanonical legal collections, this was not the case within the Eastern Orthodoxy. Wizards and witches were perceived as a minor threat to society and religion. Although the sin committed was considerable, it remained a sin and never became a crime. Instead of being burned alive or hanged, the spiritual punishment of excommunication was preferred, even over the capital spiritual penalty of anathema. The reversible character of excommunication gave the sinners a chance for salvation and allowed them to become active

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[99] Saryiannis, *Of Ottoman Ghosts*, pp. 191-216.

M. E. Duzdağ, *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları*. İstanbul, 1983, 197-198 (nos 980-982).

[100] P. Fr. Richard, *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable à Saint-Erine, isle de l'Archipelago,* Paris, 1657, pp. 224-226

Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d' un voyage du Levant,* Paris 1717, Volume 1, p. 13

members of their societies once again. ‘Upon this solemn performance of these absolutions or restitution to the community, reinclusion to the Church was granted.’[101]

An objection might be raised, by claiming that the Orthodox Patriarchy could not act differently without the consent of the Sultan, who had a monopoly of violence in the empire. While claims like this generally stand on solid ground, we have seen that witchcraft was treated the same in the Late Byzantine Period, a period in which the Church had full executive power. Magic in the Orthodox context, in contrast to in Western Catholicism, was always considered a sin and not a crime.

The theological and legal factors discussed above had a great impact on the development of Orthodox demonology, however in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of perceptions of magic in the Orthodox context of this period, Ottoman religious and supernatural traditions must also be taken into account. The Ottoman and Orthodox cultures were so intertwined that many distinct traits and attitudes can be explained as loans between the two cultures resulting from centuries of intense contact. The next chapter therefore analyzes the attitudes of the Ottoman world towards magic in order to uncover influences that may have led the Orthodoxy to perceive the magical universe in ways different from the West.

[101] Covet. *Some Account of the Present Greek*. 239.

Chapter 4 - Eastern Orthodoxy and the problem of 'Ottomanization'

Witchcraft is neither a concept unique to a particular period nor to a specific region. Evidence for sorcerers and magic users can be found even from around one thousand B.C.[102] From Egyptian magical papyri to the great witch hunts of early modern Europe, a fear of the supernatural was present throughout the history of humanity. Moreover, this same fear knows no borders, with witchcraft incidents being recorded in Western Christian nations as well as in the Muslim world and in East African cultures. It seems that magic has been used by almost all cultures as a way of interpreting the unknown, in each case being adapted to fit the particular historical and cultural characteristics of the tradition in which it develops. Even in the limited scope of this study, considerable differences across Europe can be observed. In the *Malleus*, as in some other German texts, the witch was defined through her *maleficium* (casting spells with the help of the Devil) and practice of *malefica*.[103] Throughout southern Europe, authors tended to frame witchcraft around the traditions associated with *bonae res,* good female spirits influenced by demons. Many French models of witchcraft depicted the witch more as a heretic, a being defined by her willing entry to a demonic pact and her worship of the Devil.

In the Orthodox world, four hundred years of constant cultural exchange with Ottoman traditions resulted in clear trans-cultural and interdenominational influences. Despite the official doctrine of Orthodoxy being very cautious towards magic and wizardry, common people seemed to accept witchcraft, often employing practices of magic when the ecclesiasti-

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[102] For more details about Maqlu and ancient writings about witchcraft see Abusch, Tzvi. *The Witchcraft Series Maqlû*. Society of Biblical Literature, 2015.

[103] Broedel, Hans Peter. T*he Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular* Belief. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 6.

cal practices were not sufficient for their needs. Considering the leniency of the Byzantine Empire towards witchcraft seen in the previous section, it is plausible to suggest that the leniency Ottomans demonstrated towards magic might have influenced Orthodox societies to embrace such practices as alternative methods to achieve their goals, despite the warnings of the Church. In return, plenty of Orthodox and Balkan beliefs were transferred and adapted to the Islamic religious context, one example being vampirism.

The Ottoman Empire had a long tradition of magical amulets and charms that were supposed to protect the wearer from evil, bring good luck, or guarantee good health. Those amulets were most commonly associated with the notion of the 'evil eye'. The evil eye was connected with bad luck, jealousy, or mischievous thoughts. Charms, talismans, and amulets were quite popular in early modern Orthodox Christianity, even in Byzantium,[104] and beads aiming to protect from the evil eye are even today quite popular in modern Greece, Turkey, and the Balkans. The similarities in superstitious practices between the Ottoman Empire and the Christian people of the Balkans did not go unnoticed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and various historians and theologians wrote treatises discussing the situation of the 'Pristine Primitive Church' and the problem of Ottomanization. The Greeks,[105] all European observers agreed, suffered badly under Ottoman rule, and as inhabitants of the East they showed marks of excessive ceremonial and superstition or Ottomanisation.[106] In general, the Orient in early modern times was a place full of heresy, mysticism and sorcery. 'As recent historiography on the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean has emphasized, the religious

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[104] For more details on amulets in Byzantium, see Spier, Jeffrey. "*Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition.*" Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 56 (1993): 25. doi:10.2307/751363.

[105] In this case, the term 'Greek' is used to describe the Orthodox Christians and is not a reference to pagans in the way Nicodemus uses the term.

[106]Ben-Tov, Asaph, Yaacov Deutsch, Tamar Herzig, and Michael Heyd. *Knowledge and Religion in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Honor of Michael Heyd.* p. 145.

landscape in the area was remarkably hybrid and flexible.'[107] It was common for religious identities under the constant influence of others to adapt and change, resulting in a diverse amalgam of various practices.

This chapter investigates these influences through an analysis of the general attitudes of the Islamic religion and Ottoman authorities towards magic and sorcery, as well as the opinions of travelers regarding some superstitious practices of the Orthodox Church, in order to further explain the tolerance witchcraft enjoyed in the Orthodox context during the early modern period.

As mentioned above, the Ottoman world had a rich occult tradition. Contemporary Western historiography might have exaggerated the popularity and the extent of dissemination of superstitions, however if we take into consideration significant religious and social factors, we might understand how exotic and bizarre these practices would have looked to the eyes of Western travelers. Indeed, the Ottoman world had incorporated a huge variety of symbols and symbolism into their traditions and beliefs, with magic and sorcery being a major part of these. In the Empire, witchcraft and the occult were considered acceptable practices to some extent. 'Ottoman authorities seem to have accepted or at least tolerated witchcraft in general, but kept a vigilant eye over sorcerers and witches and punished them whenever they were suspected either of heresy/blasphemy or for political incitation.'[108] Ottoman authorities would persecute magic users, but only when they were disrupting social tranquility; they did not punish magic per se. One possible explanation for this attitude can be found in the role the Devil played in the Islamic religious cosmos. 'The Devil's role in Islam is

[107]Goffman, Daniel. *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[108]Saryiannis, *Of Ottoman Ghosts*, pp. 191-216.

mainly that of a tempter, of a bad influence on humans but not an active assistant to wizards and witches.'[109] Furthermore, Saryiannis claims that 'the absence of any systematic witch-hunting could also be attributed to the religious character of the authority that had jurisdiction over sorcery, i.e. the şeyhülislam or the local müfti's offices in the first place; all the more since no heresy was permanently linked to witchcraft.'[110] In addition, as in the West, magic needed a mediator in order to manifest. The mediators for the Ottoman world were spirits called *Djins* or *Jinns*. In Islamic theology, *Djins* are spirits, who along with angels and humans are the sapient creations of the God. The distinct difference between these and Christian angels and demons is their ability to choose their course of action. Having free will, according to Islamic theology they could be evil, good or even neutral, exactly like humans. *Djinns* were the source of witchcraft in the Ottoman world. 'God the Almighty had created the tribe of Jinn before Adam, and they ruled this world for seventy-thousand years; all these talismans and sorcery all remain from them.'[111] Therefore, Ottoman witchcraft had an indissoluble connection with *djinns* instead of the Devil. While the Western mediator (witch) was preconceived as evil and malicious, *djinns* could use magic to do good deeds as much as for wicked ends. In this hugely different religious context, the empire maintained a skeptical stance towards magic, punishing it in cases where it was promoting heresy or disorder, while turning a blind eye where it was not. However, the Ottoman authorities never banned such practices or connected them to the Devil.

Magic was therefore considered acceptable in Ottoman theology, making it quite popular among the laity. Furthermore, relations between Orthodox and Ottoman commoners

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[109] Saryiannis, *Of Ottoman Ghosts*, pp. 191-216.

[110] Saryiannis, *Of Ottoman Ghosts*, pp. 191-216.

[111] Marinos Sariyannis, *The Dead, the Spirits, and the Living: On Ottoman Ghost Stories*, Journal of Turkish Studies / Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları 44 (2015) [Çekirge Budu: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Dankoff], pp. 373-390.

were normal. Christians lived alongside Muslims in most of the cities and towns in Greece, Asia Minor, the Levant and in other regions. Transcultural exchanges were common, with Muslim practices being endorsed by Christians (e.g. the evil eye) and vice versa. John Covel gives an example of a shared religious practice from 1670 in his diary: 'You cannot imagine the strong superstitions that are generally amongst the people of this country: Turks, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, all have their amulets and talismans and *phylacteria.*'[112] Furthermore, the Christians' freedom to practice their religious ceremonies led Muslim populations to adopt Christian practices as well. For example, the Orthodox ceremony of blessing the seas in spring was a respectable tradition for non-Christians. 'Even Turkish sailors would not sail before the performance of this by the Greek priest.'[113] This reciprocity between the two religions was not confined to the lower castes, but worked its way up to the official Orthodox doctrine, to the extent that Catholic and Protestant travelers would characterize Orthodoxy as superstitious and full of excessive devotional practices. In other words, they accused the Eastern Orthodox Church of being Ottomanized and corrupted by Islam. Thomas Smith, a British scholar, traveled to the Levant in 1688 and observed that 'It must be sadly acknowledged that there is a great deal of superstition mixed in their (Orthodox) public service and office'[114] further commenting on the crossing[115] of the faithful, on the obsession they had with objects (crosses, pieces of bread and charms) among other critiques. The extensive use of crosses is also decried by John Covel: 'If any devout person wears a cross or crucifix

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[112] Covel. *Some Account of the Present Greek*. 239. 255.

[113] Ben-Tov, Asaph, Yaacov Deutsch, Tamar Herzig, and Michael Heyd. *Knowledge and Religion in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Honor of Michael Heyd*. p. 140.

[114] Smith, Thomas. *An Account of the Greek Church as to Its Doctrine and Rites of Worship with Several Historicall Remarks Interspersed, Relating Thereunto: To Which Is Added an Account of the State of the Greek Church under Cyrillus Lucaris, Patriarch of Constantinople, with a Relation of His Sufferings and Death*. London: Printed by Miles Flesher for Richard Davis. 1680.p 10.

[115] He must have been referring to the tradition among Orthodox populations of making the sign of the cross whenever afraid or making wishes.

around his neck as a memorial... I shall blame him no more... but if it is worn as a phylactery to keep him away from the Devil, I must think it is as a gross superstition and folly.'[116] The views of Western travelers on the Orthodox Church and doctrine further underscore the differences between Orthodoxy and Catholicism and Protestantism. This difference, perceived as 'Ottomanization', highlights the tight cultural bonds and the exchanges Orthodoxy and Islam shared throughout the centuries, not only in the traditional beliefs of uneducated people, but also in the official doctrine and the clergy.

The widespread dissemination of magical traditions among the Muslim population and the tolerance of officials may have influenced the attitudes and the perceptions of Christians, also making them more tolerant towards magic. Although the legal ecclesiastical collections condemned magic, commoners did not stop asking Muslims for help. A passage from 'Against the Types of Magic' demonstrates this: 'Where are you (Christians) now; you who rush to the Egyptians and Ottomans or Hebrew asking them to cure you of diseases, to craft your talismans or asking them to cast spells?'[117] The modern researcher should avoid the mistakes that historians of the seventeenth century made, and must take care to investigate the religious loans in the context of a multicultural and multi-religious landscape. There are both Greek and Ottoman sources in which these cultural transfers can be noted. With extensive study, we might discern to what extent these intercultural influences have penetrated Orthodoxy and Islam, creating an amalgam of beliefs and traditions that can still be found in almost all nations of the Balkan Peninsula.

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[116] Covel. *Some Account of the Present Greek*. p. 390.

[117] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 165.

In the following chapter, the views of Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite about magic are analyzed. Nicodemus' categorization of magical types, his views on witches, the notion of *kakogria,* and the powers of the Devil are the focal point of the rest of this thesis.

Chapter 5 – Life and works of Nicodemus

Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite, or Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (Greek: *Αγιορειτης*) was an ascetic monk, theologist, and philosopher who lived in the eighteenth century, a time when most of Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire. During his prolific career, Nicodemus wrote more than twenty theological books, some of which are still venerated by the Orthodox Church. Furthermore, he was interested in mysticism and demonology, having written one of the very few demonological works ever produced in the early modern Orthodox context and drafted in Greek. Many biographers have documented Nicodemus' life, including his early education and achievements, and have produced extensive works based on different sources or even on personal experience. Here, the work of Gerasimos Makrigianatos is primarily consulted as it is based, in my opinion, on relatively accurate sources.[118] However, some of the other biographies are also presented to better depict Nicodemus' theological views.[119]

Saint Nicodemus was born in Naxos in 1749, when the island was part of the Ottoman Empire, under the name Nikolaos Kalivroutsis (Greek: *Νικολαος Καλιβρουτσης*). His early education was guided by the priest of his parish, who taught him the love of Christ and to

[118]Mikragiananitos, Gerasimos. *Διονυσιάτικον Ἁγιολόγιον, Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Διονυσίου Ἁγίου Ὄρους.* Holy Mountain (Αγιον Ορος). 2004, pp. 98-130.

[119]Koukis, Kostantinos. Κολλυβαδες : *Μακαριος Νοταρας, Αθανασιος Παριανος, Νικοδημος Αγιορειτης,* Athens. Αρχονταρικι press. 2005.

love his Holy Church.[120] After acquiring primary education, he studied in the school of Naxos where he was taught the Holy Scriptures under the guidance of the Archimandrite Chrysanthos Aitolos, brother of the martyr Cosmas Aitolos. Chrysanthos recommended Nicodemus continue his studies further, and at the age of fifteen he was honing his knowledge of theology, sciences, and languages at the famous Evangelical School of Smyrna. Among other courses, Nicodemus was taught Ancient Greek, Latin, Italian and French.[121] His studies there lasted five years, and according to Makrigianatos 'everyone was surprised by his strong memory, his bright judging abilities, and his exceptional ethics.'[122]

In 1770, Nicodemus was forced to discontinue his studies and go back to Naxos, due to the Ottoman retaliation for the destruction of their fleet by the Russian army.[123] At this time in his life, the twenty-five year old Nicodemus met some monks who were also persecuted by the Ottomans, and recognizing his talents they suggested that he become a monk in the monastery of Hydra. Nicodemus stayed in the monastery of Dionisios in Hydra for two years.[124] He left when he learned that his spiritual father, Bishop Makarios, had arrived on Mount Athos (Holy Mountain) and that Nicodemus was invited to join him in his quest of enlightening the Orthodox Greeks.'[125]

In the year 1777 Nicodemus began composing, with the help and guidance of Makarios, his most famous work, '*Philokalia'*, an important work on monastic spirituality. For most

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[120] Mikragiananitos, Gerasimos. *Διονυσιάτικον Ἁγιολόγιον, Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Διονυσίου Ἁγίου Ὄρους.* Holy Mountain (Αγιον Ορος). 2004, pp. 98-130.

[121] Mikragiannanitos, *Διονυσιάτικον Ἁγιολόγιον,* pp. 98-130.

[122]Mikragiannanitos, *Διονυσιάτικον Ἁγιολόγιον,* pp. 98-130.

[123]Mikragiannanitos, *Διονυσιάτικον Ἁγιολόγιον,* pp. 98-130.

[124]Koukis, Kostantinos. Κολλυβαδες : *Μακαριος Νοταρας, Αθανασιος Παριανος, Νικοδημος Αγιορειτης,* Athens. Αρχονταρικι press. 2005.

[125] Koukis, *Κολλυβαδες.* p. 35.

of his life, Nicodemus stayed on Mount Athos, writing a plethora of books.[126] Some examples are *'Invisible War'* and *'Spiritual Exercise'*. Legal works include '*Pidalion'*, an analysis of legal nomocanonical texts, which might be his most influential work, and a book of great importance for this thesis '*Christian ethics*', written sometime between 1770 and 1790. Saint Nicodemus spent almost his entire life dedicated to writing theological dissertations, until his death in 1809. His accomplishments were so influential that he was canonized by the Ecumenical Patriarchy in 1955, and the Orthodox Church still venerates him as one of the brightest and most enlightened scholars of all time.

5.1 - ***Against the Types of Magic***

Nicodemus's demonological treatise was included in his book *Christian Ethics* (*Χρηστοηθεια*). This book is essentially a collection of advice for pious Christians who want to protect or redress themselves from corruption and sin. Among the sinful behaviors criticized by Nicodemus, we find a chapter titled 'Against the Types of Magic', which draws attention to the issue of magic and how Christians should abstain from practicing it.

Before discussing the different types of magical practices, Nicodemus offers a brief introduction. In a plaintive tone, the author presents the current situation of the Christians, claiming that more and more people are renouncing the name of Christ and falling prey to the machinations and guile of the Devil, who deludes the faithful with petty tricks such as magic

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[126] δὲ Ἀρσένιος μετὰ τὸ κτίσιμον τῆς καλύβης ἄνωθεν τοῦ Κυριακοῦ ἐμετοίκησεν εἰς τὴν Σκυροπούλαν καὶ ὡς ὑποτακτικὸς τὸν ἠκολούθησεν καὶ ὁ Νικόδημος καὶ ἐκάθησεν ἕνα χρόνον.

Arsenios, after building his hut, moved to Skiropoula and Nicodemus followed as a good servant and stayed there for a year.

"Ὅσιος Νικόδημος ο Αγιορείτης." Ὅσιος Νικόδημος ο Αγιορείτης. Accessed May 17, 2016. http://users.uoa.gr/~nektar/orthodoxy/tributes/osios_nikodhmos_agioreiths/. [This seems a little irrelevant… who is Arsenios? What hut? why is Nicodemus his servant? Also the sentence in the text says he was on Mount Athos, so where does Skiropoula come in?]

in order to drag their souls to hell. In this introduction, the popularity of magic is implied in Nicodemus' claim that 'modern day Christians with their charms and auguries help the Devil resurface to this world to tyrannize their lives one more time.'[127] Due to the scarcity of written records and documented cases of magic, this work is invaluable for estimating the extent to which magic posed a threat to eighteenth-century communities. The fact that Nicodemus thought of adding a section specifically discussing magic to *Christian Ethics* is significant.

It must be noted here, that the writing style of Nicodemus can appear complicated to modern readers. The lack of distinct chapters and the frequent repetitions make this work quite difficult to understand. For the sake of convenience, I divided this work into thematic categories in order to facilitate analysis and make it easier for the reader to follow the major points underlined by the author.

From the very beginning of the treatise, the connection between magic and worshipping the Devil is made clear, and constitutes the axis on which Nicodemus bases most of his claims. In 'Against the Types of Magic'**,** he states that the types of magic deployed by the Devil to deceive humans are essentially countless, but he distinguishes thirteen different types. Each category has a unique name, and the practitioners of each have different names as well. Some of these classes are quite similar to Western conceptions of magic, but others are unique, following the traditions and customs of the Byzantine and Orthodox past. While all of the categories will be presented here, I will focus on those which deviate from Western categorizations, as they require further explanation.

[127] Nicodemus of the Holy mountain, *Χρηστοηθεια των Χριστιανων*. Τυπογραφια Νικολαου Γλυκη του Εξ Ιωαννινων. 1803, p. 160.

The first category, according to Nicodemus, is the art or science of magic (*μαγεία*).[128] Magic is the art of 'summoning demons and asking them to reveal hidden treasures or great secrets.'[129] The second is the art of divination (*Μαντεια*), and its practitioners are called oracles (*Μαντεις*). The third category is *goetia* (*Γοητεια*), and its followers should be called *goites* (*Γοητες*), the name deriving from the cries they make and dirges they sing upon tombstones in order to summon demons, asking them to cripple or kill others. The fourth category is interesting because here Nicodemus makes some comments on the physical attributes of witches, connecting this category with the female gender. The art is called charming (*Γητεια*) and was considered to be one of the worst magical practices because Orthodox chants were blended into the invocations, in the hopes of greater results.

Next is the art of *epeodia* (*Επαιοδια*), and the description given is quite vague and ambiguous. In this category are included all those who summon demons with special incantations, those who bond with wild animals to protect herds and those who cast love spells. The sixth category is very similar to western traditions and concerns poisonous filters and other miraculous potions that have various effects.

Nicodemus then discusses a type of variation of divination referred to as omen reading (*οιωνοσκοπια*). He mentions various methods of omen reading in this chapter, alongside some popular practices meant to bring luck to ships or houses. Some examples are ceremonial sacrifices to make the fountains of homes firmer (which according to Nicodemus were unconscious sacrifices to the Devil), foretelling events by observing the way birds fly, and belief in nereids[130] and fairies.

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[128] Nicodemus often uses the term magic (*μαγεία*) as a general term to refer to all the various aspects of magic, but *μαγέια* is also a category in itself.

[129] Nicodemus. *Χρηστοηθεια*. p. 160.

[130] Nereids were female creatures supposedly found near lakes and ponds.

The art of cloud chasing (*νεφοδιωκτικη*) is also mentioned, the goal of which was to influence the weather. With the help of demons, practitioners could bring rain to certain places and drought to others.

The attitude towards astrology and mathematics, also included in Nicodemus' types of magic, parallels Western notions,[131] with the former (astrology) being a direct violation of God-given orders and the latter (mathematics) being recognized as a science and thus enjoying some leniency, as long as it did not cross certain boundaries. The explanation for why astrology is a sin is quite simple: All astrologers who think that the stars dictate life and worship them as gods are misguided by the demons. Regarding the science of mathematics, all those who 'deal with math in strange and out of boundary ways'[132] were also misguided by demons

The art of making charms and amulets by imbuing them with incantations comprises the tenth category of magical practices. This art was very popular in Byzantium and Ottoman communities.

The eleventh category of magic was also 'commonly practiced in the Aegean islands.'[133] It is called *klidones* (κληδωνες) and consists of foretelling the future through voice and speech. Nicodemus confirms that this approach was popular on many islands. An additional variation that falls into this category is the attempt to foretell the future by studying fish innards.

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[131] For more details regarding Western beliefs about astrology and mathematics, see Antoine, Del Rio Martin, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Investigations into Magic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 164-172.

[132] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 162.

[133] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, pp. 163-170.

The final type of magic does not have a specific name, and Nicodemus simply mentions it as the twelfth (*ιβ* in the Greek numeric system) kind of magic. Vagueness also characterizes this category, which looks more like a collection of traditions and beliefs than an articulated practice with specific limits and features. Among other practices, charms for a good catch and talismans for herd protection are mentioned. The notion of *kakogria* (Orthodox witch) is also presented here with a short description. The similarities between *kakogria* and Western witches, together with the conceptual problems created by this notion are the discussed in the following section.

5.2 Wizards, the nature of magic, and its origins according to Nicodemus

After this categorization, Nicodemus explains why magic works against God's will. By often referring to Deuteronomy, the book of Levictus, and other sources derived from the Old Testament, Nicodemus gradually constructs his argument. From the very beginning, he makes it clear that magic is a direct abuse of the Christian faith, and that by practicing it one rejects one's holy baptism by allying with the Devil or falling into heretic and pagan ceremonies.

All heathen non-Christian religions, including the old religion of the Greeks (Dodecatheism), were worshiping the Devil, unconsciously or not. In the sentence 'Where are you now (Christians) who when you are sick you run to Jews, Arabs, Egyptians, Ottomans and other heretics asking them to heal you by the means of magic and give you protective talismans',[134] certain traits of the wizard are demonstrated. Another statement adds more details: 'Divination, charms, poisonry, protective talismans, necromancy and all the types of magic enlisted before are ceremonies of the Devil and all the atrocious and foul rituals which were

[134] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 165.

used by Greeks[135] and idolaters to worship the Devil as god, which are now deployed by those Christians who use magic.'[136]

Therefore, for Nicodemus, wizards and witches were on the one hand the Arabs, Ottomans, Gypsies, idolaters and heretics, who practiced devilish magic of their own accord or by demonic deception, and on the other hand, Christians who had lost their faith in God and had turned to magic. In the rest of the treatise, Nicodemus focuses only on the latter category.

Nicodemus goes on to explain the power of baptism and the extent of the sin all magicians are committing by renouncing the vows implied in baptism. 'Jesus Christ asked you Christians before baptism if you renounce this cruel and inhumane tyrant (the Devil) and all of his works and his worship. Each and every one of you answered, through their priests, that you denounce and hate and abhor not only the Devil but all of his works and his worship.'[137] For Nicodemus, baptism and all of its vows were of great importance to the faithful and could operate as guidelines and protection against magic. All those who forgot the promises they had made to Christ were vulnerable to the sin of magic, since demons were seeking the weak to lure them into magic.

A striking similarity between Western and Eastern theological and demonological texts is the demonization of magic and the direct connection it is seen to have with the Devil. Nicodemus, like all his Western counterparts, was eager to underline this connection. 'Everyone acknowledges that all the Christians, men, and women who cast spells and foretell the future cast away the grace of God and the Holy Spirit. They replaced them with a demon; everyone can agree that all wizards and witches denounce Christ and surrender to Devil and

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[135] The word used by Nicodemus is not the word Greek but the word '*Elinas'* (Ελληνας) which was used exclusively to describe those who still follow the old religion or paganism.

[136] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 166.

[137] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 166.

with the help of demons they chant and act in strange and unholy ways.'[138] In addition, Christians who asked for assistance from wizards and witches to heal their wounds or to assist them in any way committed the same crime towards their community and towards God.

Nicodemus concludes the second part of his treatise by claiming that 'wizards are not Christians, and they should not be called such'.[139] The reasoning behind this is to make clear to the flock that even if some Christian rituals and some ecclesiastical practices are used by wizards in order to cast their spells, the faithful Christians should not be deceived by such petty tricks and should keep their hearts and their faith pure, avoiding such practices.

Nicodemus attempts to explain and characterize those who use magic, and advise as to how the faithful can discern and avoid them. However, despite his extensive use of quotes from the Old and New Testaments, the goal is not ultimately achieved. Nicodemus's paragraphs are riddled with repetition. Furthermore, he does not attribute clear, distinctive characteristics to the different types of magic or to the different types of magic users (with a possible exception in the case of *kakogria,* discussed below).

5.3 Nicodemus and the problem of *kakogria*

A historian may notice several differences between the Western notion of witchcraft and the various words used by the Orthodoxy to describe the effects produced by magic. The term 'witchcraft' is itself problematic, being composite and varying socially and culturally. The cultural and social framework of Western Europe was quite different from that of Eastern Europe. However, they both had a magical worldview,[140] an essential element for the notion of

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[138] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 167.

[139] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 169.

[140] Russell, Jeffrey Burton. *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972, p. 4-10.

witchcraft. A modern-day definition is the following: 'Magical thinking is the belief that one's thoughts, words or actions can achieve specific physical effects in a manner not governed by the principles of ordinary transmission of energy or information.'[141] This modern definition can be applied in Christian societies up to the beginning of the fifteenth century. The rise of heretical movements changed this perspective however. Heinrich Kramer (the author of the book *Hammer of Witches*) imagined witches to be members of a conspiracy directed against God.[142] From then on, S*abbath*[143] became a fundamental element in the new crime of witchcraft, a crime aiming to eliminate Christianity and undermine the power of God, always under the guidance of the Devil. Heinrich Kramer's opinion of the *Sabbath* was generally accepted by contemporary demonologists, and marks the distinction between Western and Eastern perceptions of witchcraft.

In this sense, we cannot speak of witchcraft in early modern Orthodoxy, since the practice of the *Sabbath* was absent. Furthermore, the Western depiction of a wizard or a witch does not fit the Orthodox context. The Orthodox definition of magical practices and its practitioners is rather vague, mainly due to the absence of demonological works similar to those found in the West. The appearance of magic as a punishable crime in nomocanons does not offer a clear and coherent description. Passages in the *Nomocanon of Malaxos* and in *Vactiria Arxierewn* amass many different practices under the umbrella term 'magic (*μαγεία*)', without making any distinctions regarding the severity or the effects of such practices.

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[141] Zusne, Leonard, and Warren H. Jones. *Anomalistic Psychology: A Study of Magical Thinking.* Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1989, p. 13.

[142] Behringer, *Witches*, p. 4.

[143] Details of the Sabbath and its supposed rituals can be found in Wilby, Emma. "Burchard's Strigae, the Witches' Sabbath, and Shamanistic Cannibalism in Early Modern Europe." Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft 8, no. 1 (2013): 18-49. doi:10.1353/mrw.2013.0010.

It was only in the eighteenth century, in the work of Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, that a coherent depiction of an 'Orthodox Sabbath' appeared: 'Also some clerics[144] take candles made from tar and go to mountains and there they light them and wear priests' robes in reverse. Those who read Solomonic writings, or to be more precise devilish books to make people or herds die. Such instances are very common in Crete and Cyprus.'[145] The similarities with the Western *Sabbath* are very apparent in these sentences. In both his *Pidalion* and 'Against the Types of Magic', Nicodemus describes the *kakogria,* or 'Orthodox Witch'. The name *kakogria* is the opposite of the Greek word for a nun. The Greek word for a nun is *καλογρια,* which literally means 'good old lady', whereas *kakogria* means 'vile old hag'. This depiction of women is much more hostile than those found in older nomocanonical and theological works by other authors. Moreover, Nicodemus attributes various types of magic to the female gender. In the descriptions of practitioners of charming (*Γητεια*), he explicitly states that those who practice it are female Gypsies, drunk women, and *kakogries*. Further examples of this can be found in Nicodemus' narration of repulsive stories aiming to avert Christians from such practices. The majority of the protagonists in these stories are female, and many of these portrayals are followed by curses or words that describe disgust or repulsion.

As previously mentioned, in 'Against the Types of Magic', a brief account of the destructive abilities and intentions of the enigmatic figure of the *kakogria* is provided. 'Some men and women and especially *kakogries* are known to fly (grab the air) and go from place to place to kill infants.' We can see from Nicodemus' description that this Orthodox version of a witch has a version of the *Sabbath* that fits into the Orthodox reality. She mocks Orthodox rituals by wearing a priest's cassock in reverse and committing hideous crimes like infanti-

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[144] Nicodemus does not refer to Orthodox priests, but rather to heretic clerics and *kakogries.*

[145] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 163.

cide or homicide by means of magic. Later in Nicodemus' treatise, when he tries to convince the reader that wizards and witches accept the Devil as their mentor, he provides some examples, including *kakogries*, further enriching the list of her mischievous and hideous acts: 'See this drunken *kakogria*, observe how she opens her mouth and yawns; can you see how she is whispering to the sick? With this yawning, she is making the demons enter her heart and with this whisper, she begs the demons and by exhaling, she is letting demonic energy out and transmits it to the sick. Can you see this unholy woman which brews potions to make men fall in love with her? She also invokes demonic powers to help her brew them.'[146]

In his legal work *Pidalion*, Nicodemus again refers to *kakogries*: 'There also should be punishment according to the letter and spirit of the law for those *kakogries* who tell the future by using seeds or coal, or those who curse or choke babies or grab the air with the help of demons and fly from place to place.'[147] With this description, Nicodemus's perception of *kakogries* almost matches the stereotypes of a Western witch. A *kakogria* might not fly on a broom, but she flies by grabbing the air. They both kill infants and cast spells to distort social peace. One additional similarity is the portrayal of these crimes being committed mainly by old women, usually ugly, impoverished, and drunk. Nicodemus also thinks that poisoners are usually women.[148] Poison was traditionally considered to be a woman's weapon of choice, due to the stealthy and devious nature of the art, characteristics that were also attributed to women themselves at that time.

Nicodemus' connection between women and magic raises some important questions. If the stereotype of the Orthodox witch and of the Orthodox *Sabbath* as portrayed by

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[146] Nicodemus, Χρηστοηθεια, p. 168.

[147] Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Pidalion of the Orthodox Church,* Athens Konstantinos Garpolas Press, 1841, p. 154.

[148] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 161.

Nicodemus, was present in the centuries before Nicodemus, then why is there no mention of these in any legal passages or documentation? If the inclination of women towards such despicable acts was posing such a threat to communities, as Nicodemus suggests, why do the nomocanons refer to magic users as wizards (male) and not witches (female) or some other equivalent? If the notion of the 'Orthodox *Sabbath*' involved repulsive crimes such as infanticide, why is there no documentation, theological or otherwise, describing or even mentioning it? One possible answer to these questions is that this particular notion was created to cater to a newly arising threat, resulting from some kind of social crisis that ended up targeting women, similar to the events that happened in the West.[149] Despite the fact that Orthodox societies experienced many changes in the early and final decades of the eighteenth century,[150] none can justify such hatred and enmity toward women. The religious and social crisis that struck Europe during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation contributed to the beginning of the West's intense persecution of witchcraft. It had its origins in deep socio-religious conflicts. The aftereffects of such a crisis can easily be tracked through the centuries and can entirely explain the creation of an 'enemy from within' which threatens Christianity.[151] No crisis like the aforementioned struck the Orthodox communities in the Ottoman Empire, thus leaving the question of where this hostility towards women came from unanswered. The fact that these stereotypes are present only in Nicodemus' works leaves this topic open to speculation. My claim is that Nicodemus might have developed this notion from Western influences. Evidence for this lies in two crucial aspects of Nicodemus' life that

[149] Levack, B. P. (1992). *Witchcraft, women, and society*. New York: Garland Pub.

[150] While most of these crises had a social character, they revolved around the creation of a national identity, the increase of power devolved to the local level and the solidification of the authority of the patriarchy, and were not gender or marital crises. For more information on this topic, see Brewer, D. (2010). *Greece, the hidden centuries: Turkish rule from the fall of Constantinople to Greek independence*. London: I.B. Tauris.

[151] For more details on the theory of the 'enemy from within', see Demos, John. *The Enemy Within: 2,000 Years of Witch-hunting in the Western World*. New York: Viking, 2008.

influenced his mindset, leading him to reproduce this Western stereotype in his future works. The first was his birthplace, and the second was his lifelong education.

Nicodemus was born on the island of Naxos, located at the center of the Aegean Archipelago. Naxos, along with Chios and other Mediterranean islands, was heavily influenced by Catholic missionaries. After the Council of Trent in 1543-1563, missionary activities are widespread across the entire Ottoman Empire. From the seventeenth century onwards, Catholic missionaries began arriving on the Aegean islands with the aim of converting Christian communities to Catholicism, or at least to accept the Pope as the head of Christianity.[152] The presence of Catholicism' was even stronger on islands such as Crete, which was under Venetian control until the late seventeenth century. The capitulations granted in 1535 had paved the way for missionary activities in the empire, with the Catholic missionaries being institutionalized in 1622 under the Propaganda Fide. Catholics in Constantinople, but also all around the empire then managed to acquire political and social power, even influencing the ecclesiastical decisions of the Patriarchy, as in the case of Patriarch Lucaris who had Calvinistic views and was toppled from the Patriarchal See several times due to the interference of Catholic missionaries.[153]

Therefore, by the seventeenth century, Catholic missionaries had settled on various Greek Islands. 'According to reports of contemporary travelers to the Aegean islands, on Tenedos, Naxos, Chios and Cythnos, most Greeks were Roman Catholics.'[154] Chios was in-

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[152] Caykent, Ozlem. *The Islands of the Eastern Mediterranean a History of Cross-cultural Encounters*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2013.: Chapter 4.

[153] For more details, see Hering, Gunnar. *Oikoumeniko Patriarcheio Kai Eurōpaikē Politikē, 1620-1638.* Athēna: Morphōtiko Hidryma Ethnikēs Trapezēs, 1992.

Chatziantoniou, George A. *Protestant Patriarch: The Life of Cyril Lucaris, 1572-1638, Patriarch of Constantinople,* George A. Hadjiantoniou. Richmond (Va): John Knox Press, 1961.

[154] Caykent, Ozlem. T*he Islands of the Eastern Mediterranean a History of Cross-cultural Encounters.* London: I.B.Tauris, 2013.: Chapter 4.

habited by Jesuits and Naxos was inhabited by Jesuits and Franciscans.[155] The influence of Catholicism was great in the Mediterranean islands, and especially on the isle of Naxos where Orthodox and Latin bishops coexisted. Catholics had brought their own traditions and beliefs along with them to the Greek islands, and as Orthodoxy and Catholicism shared some views on the magical universe, the notion of witches and ideas like the *Sabbath* might not have been too strange or bizarre to be embraced by the Orthodox tradition. Nicodemus was therefore raised on an island influenced by Western notions and where witches and evil women might have been part of the culture.

Furthermore, his command of Italian and French enabled him able to study Western theological treatises in his later education, further solidifying the beliefs mentioned above. At the age of fifteen, Nicodemus went to study at the Evangelical School of Smyrna, and from his extensive biography we know he excelled in most of the curriculum. He studied and conquered everything: general medicine, physics, astronomy, philosophy, psychology, and above all theology.[156] From the same source, we learn that 'his brilliance was such that he could read any scientific dissertation once and remember every word of it for the rest of his life; philosophical, economical, astronomical, medical and even militant dissertations; poets, historians, older or contemporary, Greek writers and Latin authors and all the works of the fathers of the Church were stored in his memory and could be brought up with ease by him.'[157] In these sentences, his biographer shows us that Nicodemus was exposed to Western literature. Furthermore, Nicodemus' occupation in the monastery of Dionysios as a 'reader and

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[155] Ozlem, *The islands of Mediterranean*, Chapter 4.

Frazee, Charles *A. Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire,* 1453-1923. London: Cambridge University Press, 1983: p. 174.

[156] Koukis, *Κολλυβαδες,* p. 53.

[157] Koukis, *Κολλυβαδες,* p. 55.

scholar'[158] might have brought him in contact with Western works that otherwise were not easily accessible even to scholars of this period.

Taking into consideration these details of his life, it now seems possible that all of Nicodemus references to 'Orthodox witches' and his notions of *Sabbath* are rooted in Western theology and adapted to fit the Orthodox context. Furthermore, Nicodemus' opinions regarding women and magic, if compared with previous nomocanonical and theological works, should be indicative. Either inspired from his background in Naxos as a young adult, or later from his life as a scholar, Nicodemus's notion of *kakogria* is unique in Orthodoxy. The ambiguity in the description provided by Nicodemus further underlines the similarities it has with Western theology, and further supports that those concepts were theological loans and not conceptions of the Orthodox society. People might have believed that villainous old women intending to cause harm and discord did exist, but these rumors must not have been very popular. Nevertheless, beliefs such as these existed because of the Catholic presence but remained limited to particular areas. It is not a coincidence that only in areas where Catholic doctrines were widespread do we see notions of witches like *kakogries* appear. The scarcity of sources describing Orthodox magical beliefs of the eighteenth century prevents us from further delving into this stereotype. An extensive study on this topic might reveal more details about this problematic concept.

5.4 The power of the Devil according to Nicodemus

In the next section of his work, Nicodemus examines the powers of demons and develops his argumentation around the response he gives to the three primary reasons why a Christian

[158] Koukis, *Κολλυβαδες,* p. 55.

would feel the urge to ask demons and magicians for help. The results are much more coherent than the previous section, the structure being clear and easily understandable. 'We (Christians) believe that demons can cure all sicknesses. Secondly, they (demons) reveal hidden treasures to us and also the future, and last we are afraid of the malicious and misanthropist nature of the demons, so we use magic to reform and soothe their evil natures.'[159] Nicodemus then proceeds through each of these reasons with the aim of proving that demonic powers are limited, and that all the supposed effects of these powers are the results of trickery and are not in fact real.

In his critique of the first reason, Orthodox perceptions regarding demons and the Devil can be noted in Nicodemus' dealing with the supposed healing abilities of demons, as well as with their powers in general. With fiery speech, Nicodemus accuses Christians relying on magic to find a cure for their sickness of being asinine and gullible since the Devil is powerless, limited by God and by the nature of his very essence. A descriptive metaphor supports his next argument: 'The Devil is a cunning fisherman, offering a small bait to catch a huge fish.'[160] By this metaphor, Nicodemus attempted to advise Christians to be strong and pious, even when their bodies were sick, and to avoid turning to wizards for help because even if the Devil had the ability to cure their diseases, he would do it at the cost of their souls. By emphasizing the size of the sin committed, the goal was to scare and avert Christians from even considering turning to heretics and idolaters for any help. He instead suggested the Orthodox faith as the only solution, with the saints and apostles being the only ones able to heal their souls and bodies, either in this life or in the afterlife. Furthermore, for everyone who turned to the Orthodox faith, a place in heaven was guaranteed.

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[159] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 170.

[160] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 171.

Regarding the second issue of Christians asking magicians to reveal secret treasures, Nicodemus explains that the Devil is incapable of showing anything to men because of his decline from the side of the God. There may be some angels or humans who know some hidden secrets or places, but this happens only with the accord of God, who enlightened them with such knowledge. The future cannot be revealed by demons or the Devil. The explanation given for this refers to the free will of humans and the idea that their lives are not predestined. This means that no human or demon could predict future acts and events. In subsequent lines however, many similarities with the work of Del Rio[161] can be found. Nicodemus claims that the knowledge of demons is on the one hand susceptible to natural laws, but on the other hand demons are way more observant than most humans, and make assumptions about things that may be possible, thus creating the illusion of divining and foretelling to trick the faithful and make them their servants. Del Rio, in *Investigations into Magic,* offers a similar explanation of why demons cannot predict the future: 'An evil spirit cannot predict with certitude those things which belong entirely and without restriction to the future because those things depend on the free will of human beings.'[162] According to Del Rio, demons (evil spirits) have excellent observational skills, intelligence, and knowledge of the natural world. This allows them to make predictions with a degree of probability, but not accurate predictions for the future. Despite this similarity in the writings of these two scholars, one major difference between Nicodemus' and Del Rio's demonologies is that while Nicodemus claimed that even the Devil cannot predict the future, Del Rio believed that the powers of the Devil were

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[161] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, and P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Investigations into Magic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 148-153.

[162] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, *Investigations*. p. 153.

greater than the demons, allowing him to accurately predict natural disasters, and all those things that he knew he would do with God's permission.[163]

The next section of 'Against the Types of Magic' is dedicated to answering the problem of Christians being afraid of demons and trying to reform them through the use of magic. Here Nicodemus provides an extensive analysis of how demons, and even the Devil himself, are subordinate to God. Even at the peak of his power, the Devil did not pose a threat to humans. 'Christians should not be afraid of the Devil. The Devil is the one that should be afraid of Christians.'[164] The powers of the Devil are diminished to a minimum by Nicodemus, who further supports his claim with traditional stories of saints like Saint George, who crushed the tyranny of the Devil by killing his embodied form, a dragon.[165] Indeed, Saint George is perhaps the most venerated saint in the Greek Orthodox pantheon, as the one who freed humanity from the threat of the Devil's tyranny. This was not the first victory of Christianity over the Devil however, and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is equally underlined by the author.

Nicodemus states that the Devil's free will is an illusion, and can manifest itself only under the acceptance of God. Even demons would not be free to serve the Devil if God did not allow this to happen. Here, Nicodemus promotes the profile of an all-loving God who although he loves his obeisant people, wants to test their faith by allowing practices such as magic to exist. Therefore, the Devil can only trick and deceive, but cannot impose his will as a tyrant, a privilege long lost after his defeat and fall following Jesus Christ's resurrection.

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[163] Antoine, Del Rio Martin, *Investigations*. pp. 154-155.

[164] Nicodemus, *Χρηστοηθεια*, p. 181.

[165] The embodiment of the Devil's in Greek Orthodoxy is depicted as huge snake called *δρακων (*dragon).

In the third and final chapter of the treatise, Nicodemus discusses punishments appropriate to the crime and sin of witchcraft. Many passages are basically excerpts from older legislation of three different types: punishments in the afterlife as dictated by Orthodox doctrines, earthly punishments derived from ecclesiastical nomocanonical legal collections (more specifically from the decisions taken in the sixth Ecumenical Synod and from the *Nomocanon of Malaxos*), and finally from the imperial laws that were composed during the early years of the Byzantine empire and were in force until the fall of Constantinople. Nicodemus then proceeds to offer some recommendations to Christians who wish to protect themselves from wizards and magicians. He ends by reiterating one last time the fate of all those who decide to practice magic, eternal damnation, and states that the virtues of those who choose to remain pure and pious are glorified, underlining their rightful place next to saints and angels in heaven.

The work of Nicodemus was very influential. He mixed elements from both Western and Eastern theologies to create this demonology. However, the dissimilarities of Eastern Orthodoxy with its Western counterpart were clearly demonstrated. Nicodemus put emphasis in the powers of the Devil, underlying the Orthodox views on the topic. Furthermore,the leniency towards witchcraft in Orthodox Greek societies was presented with clarity. In the context Nicodemus created, witchcraft was not a serious crime. Even though it should not be underestimated; in Nicodemus eyes magic was a threat that could be solved through rehabilitation and not execution. Similar attitudes can also be observed in legal dissertations. In conclusion, Nicodemus demonological treatise offers to the reader the views and attitudes of ecclesiastical authorities towards witchcraft. However, Nicodemus might have depicted some of his own views towards certain aspects of witchcraft (e.g. the Orthodox witch and *Sabbath*) the scarcity of Orthodox demonological works might make it difficult for the historian to re-

search how witchcraft was experienced from societies. However, from the sources presented in the previous chapters, we can conclude that the dissimilarities between Western Christianity and Orthodoxy in the social, theological and legal aspects of magic resulted in a more lenient treatment towards magic, with no official executions at all.

Chapter 6 - Concluding remarks and discussion

It might seem tempting to the reader to embrace Muchembled's theory as an explanation for the absence of organized witch hunts in early modern Orthodox societies. The Ottoman Empire, and consequently Orthodox populations, did not experience any significant religious or administrative breaches. The religious minorities of the empire were never forced to abandon their old traditions or even their cultural superstitions, nor did they have to surrender their legal administration to the central authority. Muchembled's theory is well developed and indeed applicable in the Orthodox context, however the theoretical framework of this theory is not enough to fully interpret Orthodox views on witchcraft. Muchembled focuses his attention on social problems and significant changes in Europe during the transition from the Medieval to the early modern period, neglecting the impact of theology and ecclesiastical attitudes in everyday life. This research attempted to direct attention towards these religious and cultural factors and their role in the shaping of views on magic. Only by considering social changes alongside cultural and religious traditions is it possible to accurately interpret the attitudes of early modern Christianity towards magic.

The views and perceptions of the Orthodox Greek communities in the Ottoman Empire differed greatly from Western understandings of magic. Orthodox witchcraft did not revolve around the degradation or demonization of women. Furthermore, unlike in the West, none of the various types of sorcerous practices was accepted by the Church, regardless of its results. Most importantly, there was no belief in the gathering of demonic entities and their human servants in remote places in order to plan for the destruction of communities and Christianity. The reason for this can be found in the very notion of the Devil himself. While

the narrative of the Devil in Western demonology changed from the sixteenth century onwards, depicting an all-powerful entity that could direct his armies of humans and demons against Christianity, the Eastern depiction presented a powerful yet contained Devil. Eastern demonology could not envision a wicked army of witches because according to theology, the limited powers of the Devil made this impossible, and thus there was no need to exterminate practitioners of magic. Most magical practices were regarded as mere illusions or minor tricks, while the Western narrative believed that witches could and would use magic to bring destruction. In both cases, the law evolved to cover the needs of the society. Western legislation changed to protect communities from the crime of witchcraft, suggesting execution and essentially legalizing witch hunts and giving great authority to monastic and inquisitorial orders. Since no major changes such as these took place in Eastern demonology, the nomocanons continued to treat witches the same way they were treated in the Byzantine Empire. Catholic and Protestant narratives drastically changed their portrayal of those using magic from being deluded by the Devil to actually being associates of the devil. In Orthodox demonology however, the narrative remained the same: Eastern witches and wizards were viewed as having been deceived and being in need of rehabilitation, not extirpation.

In the Western world, the clergy became increasingly versed in theology, and peasants were more informed about the corrected and revised doctrine, thus traditional practices were effectively demonized. Attempts by the Catholic Church to strengthen the flock's resistance to superstitious influences were greatly successful. At the same time, the Orthodox Church in the Ottoman territories, lacking repressive mechanisms and remaining untouched by the Reformation, was unable to fully control the indoctrination of its flock. Orthodox communities remained vulnerable to Islamic influences, embracing them to various extents. If we take into consideration the tolerance of the Ottoman population towards magic together with the dispo-

sition of Christian communities towards sorcery and the differences between perceptions of the power of witchcraft in Orthodox theology versus the West, we can clearly understand the relative leniency of the Orthodox authorities towards witchcraft.

Nevertheless, certain limitations with regard to this research must be acknowledged. There are very few demonologies discussing the problem of witchcraft in Orthodox communities. The nomocanonical collections, while valuable, do not delve into the social aspects of witchcraft. While modern historiography has focused on magical beliefs in Byzantium, the topic of magic in early modern Orthodoxy remains poorly covered in the literature. Magical rituals and traditions were mostly spread orally, making it difficult to find records of them. Therefore, historical research based on written documentation might not be enough to fully interpret such phenomena, and a more interdisciplinary approach may prove fruitful. With the help of folklorists, theologians, and even linguists, it may be possible to achieve a better understanding of the Orthodox magical universe in the Ottoman Empire and the distinguishing features of both Eastern and Western perceptions of witchcraft. Moreover, further study of Eastern demonology will provide valuable material for comparative research that may offer additional insights into the Western phenomenon of the witch craze.

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