

His 5400, Witchcraft Quote Response Papers

Write a two-page essay responding to the quote in which you (a) position yourself and (b) position at least one historian (preferably two) read for that section, (c) use a contemporary source or data to prove your point, (d) suggest specific additional types of material that would help prove your point. **Due 12 Sept.**

Respond either to:

- 1) European witchcraft had two main components: the popular beliefs in a malevolent and harmful magic (*maleficium*), and the idea entertained by the learned elite of a diabolical conspiracy against Christendom. Only when the latter was applied to the elements of popular lore could persecution on a large scale begin. A necessary pre-condition for the spread of witch persecution (and later of its decline) was that some elite ideas penetrated into the lower strata....

Sixteenth-century Europe was not an African village. The process by which *maleficium* was transformed and reinterpreted took place on a continental scale and involved several socio-cultural levels.... It was precisely in such a process of integration that the sabbath was related to malefice in "the model underlying witchcraft confessions."

or:

- 2) Social integration was an important pre-condition for the state-building process in early modern Europe. Seen from a legal and cultural point of view, it took two forms: standardization and participation. The emergence of a national literature and of literacy on a national scale obviously had highly integrative consequences. Everywhere princes tried to introduce more uniform legal and fiscal systems....

The imposition of new legal and bureaucratic measures was considerably mitigated by the participation in power-play of locally appointed groups. Tax collectors and jurymen became important mediators between centre and periphery: they came to have values and elements of a self-image which had been formed higher up. At the same time, they could from their intermediary position influence and even change the signals from the centre....

That the witch was brought to official trial can be seen as an expression, as it were, of integration and progress, and this is probably the greatest paradox of the European witch persecution.

—both from B. Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, "Introduction," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (1990), pp. 14-15.