

Witch 022C; B 3136 no 3, Otile femme d'Emerich, du Roseau de Bitche

27 November 1619

Otile had been arrested on 23 November after denunciation by Lutschen Meyete; was now confronted with the latter. Statement that she had a bad reputation and was strongly suspected of witchcraft.

Meyete claimed that Otile had helped to kill the wife of the miller of Ramstein, the child of Schutz Hans, 3 horses of the Bergier du Roseau, and the bull of the late Bastien Charpentier. Added 'et quelle est sorciere ayant comise toute meschancetez ensembles que sy elle n'est pareillement chastiée quel en crie vengeance et quelle veut mourir sur ceste accusation.' Otile denied all this, saying she had not committed any such acts.

Said she was 49, native of Achen, a village in the seigneurie. First husband had been potter named Caspar, which was why she was called Hassen Otile. Had heard of accusation 3 days before arrest, and sought advice from several people; had been minded to come and purge herself of the charge.

4 December 1619; Change de Nancy approves taking of depositions and interrogation.

13 December 1619; informations preparatoires

(1) George le Vieu Bergier, 60

When he had been helping to build a wooden structure some time earlier a piece of wood fell and broke his leg; Otile passed him and said 'que ce luy estoit bien fait'; later when he was alone on bed, his people having gone to the fields, she tried to throw him to the ground, then disappeared. Report at second hand of occasion when she had words with her husband in fields, then cried out several times 'le diable qu'il la viene querir et qu'il l'emporte'. On day of her imprisonment he had been present when her son came to tell her she was to be taken; she became 'toute esperdue et bleu au visage le marit de ladite Otile dit a sa femme a quoy elle avoit pensé de les ruiner luy et ses enfans sur ce elle luy dit qu'il aille demander advis a Jean Houbet et a Cornelius son beaufreere comme elle debvroit faire'.

(2) Bastien le Bouchier, 44

About a year earlier his neighbour Emrich had a cow about 2 years old which he was willing to buy, but Otile objected saying that they should offer it to brother-in-law Cornelius l'Hoste. Witness accepted this, but told Emrich that if Cornelius did not take it within the week he would renew his offer; Emrich duly returned to say that he was offering a florin less. so he bought the cow, at which she was discontented. Collected it on Monday, and it was fine until Friday, when on going into stable to kill it he found it dead. He told Otile, who pretended to be upset and cry, without any tears. Within a few days another cow died overnight, since when he had been forced to kill animals immediately on purchase.

(3) Anthoine le Potier, 33

Two days before Lutschen Mayete was tortured Ottilie, his commere, came to his house and told him 'qu'elle ne scavoit comment faire de son sorps et de sa vie', saying she heard that Mayete had accused her of being a witch. He told her he did not believe this, since he thought that she had not yet been tortured.

14 December 1619; interrogation

Asked whether she was not a witch, in view of Mayete's accusation against her and Marguerite la Porchiere, 'Joinct aussy quil ne peut quelles naient quelque affaire et secretes par ensemble veu quelles trois seules estoient ordinairement ensembles et qu'estant separées pour couvrir et pallier laffaire elles detractoiert l'une l'autre dequoy lon sest aperceu des quelque temps.'

Denied everything, saying Mayete was her enemy.

Was asked about deposition of Jean le Mulnier of Rambstein, third witness against Mayete, who had named her as well - did not want to say a word.

On charges of George le Bergier cried 'Jesus qu'est ce que vous me dit disant encor que je sois assez estrange et mauvaise sy ne suis je sorciere pourtant et ne scay sy jay oncques appele le malin'.

Asked how she had known about charges against her so early, and whether this did not show that she was already frightened of being charged, replied rather at cross-purposes that the maid of her brother-in-law Cornelius had told her that the 'gens de justice' had sent a messenger to her native Achen, and that people there and at Herbitzheim said she was a witch.

Questioned about asking as she was taken to prison whether she and Marguerite were the only witches at le Roseau and whether there were not more, said she did not remember this.

Followed by confrontations; she denied the very limited charges, except for her conversation with Anthoine le Potier; she claimed that this was not prompted by fear, but by desire to clear herself.

23 December 1619; Change de Nancy approves torture, by thumbscrews only unless she appears to be about to confess, in which case 'conviendra passer oultre'.

31 December 1619; interrogation under torture

Very hostile questioning and use of thumbscrews did not produce any immediate avowals. Then asked why she had made a disturbance in prison on the night of Christmas Eve, when she had been heard speaking and calling out. She denied this, but said that on second night of imprisonment a bad smell had entered her mouth and throat, since when she had not been able to sleep. Was then placed on strappado, but not tortured. Asked if this had not been the evil spirit, said 'quelle ne scavoit que l'on luy dise comme elle doit dire et quelle le droit', to be told it was her task to reply to the questions. Then said 'que ouy que cestoit le diable quelle ne scait quelle diable un noir diable que l'on luy dise comment les diables estoient quelle le droit autrement quelle ne scavoit rien et n'avoit faict aucun mal.'

When executioner then started to lift her she offered to confess. Said she had been out in fields with husband, but had gone off into bushes, when evil one had made her renounce God and had intercourse with her - had thought it was her husband, and he was warm like him, but as he left told her his name was Abraham. Could not remember exact date, but next harvest they had plentiful grain, which was

some 6 years earlier; she had harmed no-one. Knew nothing of witchcrafts alleged against her, 'que sy elle y a esté qu'il faut que les autres l'ayant aveuglée et menée avec elles, et que le malin l'a esgarée quelle n'a rien de bon en elle.'

Told it was impossible that she had done no harm, and that evil spirit had been called Abraham; when she would say no more was lifted again. Now confessed that she had been with others to bewitch miller's wife at Rambstein. Would make no further confessions, and note that since Nancy court had not given permission for question extraordinaire matters had been left there.

2 January 1620; interrogation

Still admitted seduction, but denied any harm; now said she had not bewitched miller's wife.

11 January 1620; Change de Nancy approves death sentence, with interpolated note permitting further torture to obtain information about malefices and accomplices.

16 January 1620; interrogation under torture

Started by claiming that all she had said had been extorted by torture, claiming that if she had not been a good woman and protected by God she would not have survived the cold in prison as she had done. Was given thumbscrews, strappado and rack; recorded as crying out very strangely, but persisted in her denials throughout.

23 January 1620; Change de Nancy states that because death sentence had not been read to her before second torture, as it should have been, she can be tortured again.

29 January 1620; informations and confrontation

This was supplementary investigation into noises heard from prison.

(4) Jean Tonnellier, portier à la porte de la ville en bas, 40

Had several times heard sounds as if someone was talking to her, and strange whistlings around tower, but because he was alone on guard and way down was 'fort mauvaise', had been frightened of suffering some harm if he went down. Claimed that on night of 15 January, when next day she was to be condemned to death and tortured, he heard someone urging her to deny everything, and she promised she would do so unless forced otherwise, to protect husband and children from dishonour. Did not know if this had been a person or the evil spirit, although there had been a couple of occasions when he had seen people he could not recognize around the tower in the early morning. Was then confronted with the prisoner, who denied everything.

29 January 1620; interrogation under torture

Withstood thumbscrews and strappado, but when placed on rack and given 'beinschauben' (which seem to have been form of brodequins, pressing on leg), offered to confess. Now renewed earlier admissions about seduction by Abraham ('fort hideux, laid et noir'), and said it had been he who had caused her to withdraw

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them. Said that Mayette and Margueritte had been only companions, and latter was cause of her ruin, 'parce quelle l'auroit amiellée de bonne parole, jusques a tant quelle l'auroit desbauchée et rendue sorciere comme elle'. Agreed to participation in bewitching miller's wife, child of Schutzen Hans, and bull of Bastien Charpentier.

30 January 1620; she was confronted with Margueritte la Porchiere, whom she insisted was a witch as she was.

8 February 1620; death sentence from Change de Nancy

Execution was on 14 February; total costs of case came to 212 francs. There was evidently some dispute about this, and in May 1622 the Chambre des Comptes reduced them to 175 fr.