

Introduction



From 1608 to 1614, thousands of children across Navarre labeled themselves as child witches through the term *haur-sorgina* in Basque, which the legal systems rendered into Spanish as *niño embrujado* for male child witches or *niña embrujada* for female ones. This new identity held true whether the children in question were speaking in their homes, in public, or in court. The youngsters blamed their condition on older witches who lived nearby, snatched them from their beds, and took them to meet the Devil. The child witches' claims provoked one of the largest witch hunts in European history, one that resulted in the suffering of thousands of people, the rewriting of formal instructions for Spanish inquisitors, and the nullification of legal verdicts by the Spanish Inquisition.¹

The type of witchcraft in play over this six-year period conformed in many ways to long-standing traditions about witches in Navarre. Custom stipulated that Navarrese witches could be either men or women, who could fly through the air to the Devil's gatherings.² Navarre's witches took oaths of loyalty to the Devil; they turned toads into poisons, destroyed harvests, and murdered children.³ Yet the paradigm that dominated the 1608–14 witch hunt pushed conventions to unprecedented lengths. In 1608–14, the witches openly worshiped the Devil in gatherings rendered as *akelarreak* in Basque and *akelarres* in Spanish. They participated in an upside-down Catholic Mass,

1. The classic study of this witch hunt is Henningsen, *Witches' Advocate*. For a revisionist account based on new archival sources, Homza, *Village Infernos*.

2. Historians believe the concept of a Devil's sabbat, where many of his followers gathered, helped allow for the possibility of male witches. Rowlands, "Witchcraft and Gender," 454–55.

3. Most scholars no longer believe that the witchcraft paradigm was imposed by elites from above on the masses below. As one famous historian has noted, anyone in early modern Europe could tell a story about the Devil and his followers. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 28.

wherein the Devil decried the evil they had failed to do, sang a liturgy with nonsensical words and a tuneless voice, and gave them a black wafer rather than a white one to consume. The *akelarres* featured sex between the Devil and his disciples; they also involved cannibalism when the witches consumed bodies that they had disinterred. Finally, the witches skinned toads in the *akelarres* to produce toxic substances, which they used to destroy the agriculture that sustained their communities. The full-fledged version of the witches' sabbat in Navarre between 1608 and 1614 was the most extreme in western Europe in its level of detail and depth of inversion of Christian and community values. It was unique in its alleged cannibalism of adults.⁴

From 1608 to 1614, children brought to *akelarres* immediately viewed themselves as child witches, even if they did not renounce their Christianity. In fact, the Devil often waited to demand that renunciation, because he wanted to be sure the youngsters were mature enough to know what they were doing. If he gauged them as too young, he still found them useful: his witches put them in charge of guarding herds of ordinary toads, as well as toads that wore clothing. The groups of toads had different purposes. The witches turned the ordinary ones into poison; the clothed ones acted as diabolical guardian angels who awakened their witches to go to the *akelarres* and expelled the

4. The concept of the Devil's sabbat was created by 1450 in western Europe, but its features varied widely across time and space. In Germany and the Netherlands, the Devil's reunions often simply mirrored village dances and local social hierarchies: Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*, 40–41; Blécourt, "Sabbath Stories," 86; Roper, *Witch Craze*, 110–11. In Finnmark, the Devil's gatherings lacked sex or cannibalism: Hagen, "Witchcraft Criminality," 389–90. In Germany, suspects' confessions about the Devil's gatherings were pared down unless torture was involved: Roper, *Witch Craze*, 69–81, 82–120. The judge and demonologist Pierre de Lancre's description of the witches' sabbats in the French Basque

country in 1609 corresponds in some ways to Navarrese ones from 1609 to 1612, with flight, toads, a feast that disappeared, indiscriminate sex, and renunciations of the Christian God. Yet de Lancre's account also differs: abducted children put up no resistance, the Devil's appearance constantly changed, witches shape-shifted into animals, and there were many fewer details on the diabolical Mass. Moreover, de Lancre insisted that French Basque witches focused on weather magic and often flew to Newfoundland, which was befitting, given the area's maritime economy: de Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, 96–97, 99–100, 119, 151, 155–56, 158.

ointment that allowed them to fly there. Aside from guarding toads, even the child witches who accepted the Devil as their god primarily acted as witnesses to the witches' plans and actions. Some female child witches, typically teenagers, told legal authorities that they had experienced sex with the Devil.⁵ More children of all ages said they had watched the Devil's fornication with adults, as well as the witches' formulations of poisons. Still, the surviving documentation from and about child witches rarely attests their participation in harmful magic and never features them engaging in cannibalism.

It is crucial to note that in this particular witch hunt and in Navarrese witchcraft in general, child witches were treated as victims by their communities, even when they had renounced their Christianity before the Devil.⁶ Crucial conditions for their innocent status were a very young age—which implied a lack of consent—as well as the insistence that they had been taken to meet the Devil against their will. Boys fourteen and over and girls twelve and over could be in legal trouble if they had been seen at a Devil's *akelarre* but neglected to say they had been forcibly transported there.⁷

The court systems in Navarre generally agreed with local communities and sidestepped the prosecution of child witches, though there were exceptions.⁸ When it came to adults practicing witchcraft, however, there were three legal jurisdictions in Navarre (and Spain) that cared about their punishment and correction. When witches caused bodily injuries to people, animals, or crops through harmful magic, the royal secular court in Pamplona, under the supervision of the royal viceroy, could prosecute them. When witches renounced

5. While the Devil allegedly had sex with both his female and male followers, as all the child witches insisted, I have not found a male child witch or teenage-witch who admitted to copulating with him.

6. For contrasting attitudes on the guilt of child witches in Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Germany, see Wilmussen, "Children Accused of Witchcraft," 30–33; Bettlé, "Child-Witches"; Roper, *Witch Craze*, 204–21. From 1609 through 1611, Spanish inquisitors in

Logroño treated the statements of child witches as reliable testimony. Homza, *Village Infernos*, 96–97.

7. Homza, *Village Infernos*, 22–23.

8. In 1595, the secular court in Pamplona imprisoned three girls as witches, and the Spanish Inquisition declined to intervene. Although the children eventually were released to a hospital, they died. Archivo Real y General de Navarra (AGN), *Tribunales reales*, #71319. Rojas, "Bad Christians and Hanging Toads," 97–100.

their Christian baptism to venerate the Devil, the episcopal court, headed by Pamplona's bishop, worried about their religious welfare, because the Devil was the archenemy of the Christian God.

Nevertheless, a Spanish bishop's interest in witches was typically superseded by the Spanish Inquisition's. With witches' worship of the Devil and the abandonment of their baptismal vows, they were committing heresy, and Spanish Inquisition was founded in 1478 to pursue exactly that sin. Heresy has been a concern for Christians since the founding of Christianity. By the thirteenth century, heresy was defined as a stubbornly held and publicly voiced error against Catholic theology and ritual. Only baptized Christians could be heretics; heresy had to be intentional rather than accidental, though it could also be read into hypothetical statements and dietary choices.⁹ Like the ad hoc inquisitions of the medieval epoch, the Spanish Inquisition was grounded in ancient Roman law and depended on investigations carried out through human efforts.

By the early seventeenth century, Spanish inquisitors were specialists in canon law. They oversaw investigations, interrogated witnesses and defendants, held court proceedings in their tribunals, and pronounced sentences.¹⁰ An inquisitorial inquiry could begin as a result of ordinary men and women denouncing the spiritual errors or wrongdoing of relatives, neighbors, or acquaintances. An investigation also could start through information sent to inquisitors by their employees in the field. A defendant's guilt was presumed in the inquisitorial system, as it was in the secular and episcopal courts. While defendants in inquisition trials were assigned a lawyer and had

9. For the Inquisition's procedures and targets, see Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*. Spanish inquisitors were interested in learning about witches' harmful magic because it enhanced the witches' possible connections to the Devil. Still, it was the witches' religious apostasy that was the grounds for inquisitorial prosecution. Spanish inquisitors went after a range of heretics, such as individuals who observed Jewish or Islamic rituals despite being baptized Christians, preferred

Protestant Christianity, or indulged in morals offenses, such as bigamy. The last category seemed to demonstrate wrong religious belief about the sacrament of marriage.

10. Spanish inquisitors also had two bodies of external consultants. One looked over the evidence before a trial began and assessed its degree of potential heresy; the other conferred with the inquisitors over sentencing. The latter group was supposed to include a representative of the local bishop.

access to the testimony against them, depositions were stricken of all specifics that could allow defendants to identify prosecution witnesses.

At the same time, conclusive legal proof for inquisitors was supposed to come down to two eyewitnesses to the same event or a confession. Eyewitnesses to different events amounted to partial proof, and no amount of partial proof could ever add up to a complete proof. Confession was called the “queen of proofs” because it held the highest probative value in Roman law. When Spanish inquisitors deployed torture, their aim was to gain a confession.

The Spanish Inquisition’s explicit mission was to reconcile baptized Christians who had strayed from Catholicism back to the papal church. That goal explains why their officials called their sentences “penances.” Typical penances might involve attending a certain number of Masses or reciting certain prayers. The guilty could be forced to wear a penitential robe, called a *sambenito*, whenever they left the house. They could be enclosed in monasteries or convents or exiled for specific periods of time. They also could be executed if they refused to confess despite conclusive proof, though again, modern scholars believe that death sentences were far rarer between 1550 and 1650 than in the first decades of the Spanish Inquisition’s operation. Inquisitors were forbidden to shed blood; their sentences of execution were carried out by secular authorities.

The Spanish Inquisition officially supervised the 1608–14 witch hunt in Navarre. The inquisitors involved were located in a tribunal in the Castilian city of Logroño, approximately 104 miles southwest from the first witchcraft accusations, which occurred in the village of Zugarramurdi. Logroño’s inquisitors received news about Zugarramurdi’s witches in early 1609, and they quickly brought alleged leaders to their tribunal for questioning. Later the same year, one of them went into Navarre to look for witch suspects and returned with three hundred confessions. Over November 7–8, 1610, in a public ceremony called an *auto de fe*, or “act of faith,” Logroño’s inquisitors publicly sentenced twenty-nine individuals from Navarre for the heresy of witchcraft; they also privately sentenced two Navarrese clerics for the same offense. Out of a total of thirty-one condemned witches—nineteen female, twelve male—twenty repented and were reconciled to the Catholic Church, though most had to perform significant penances. Eleven

who had refused to confess and repent were burned at the stake, six in person and five in effigy because they had already died in prison. Whether they were penanced or executed, all thirty-one witches also had their property confiscated. The Inquisition's confiscation of property was routine for convicted heretics, but it also was practically unheard of in inquisition trials for witchcraft.¹¹

Contemporaries claimed that thirty thousand people attended the *auto de fe*, and two printed pamphlets about the event appeared in January 1611.¹² What happened next was a perfect storm of official inaction and local fury. Witchcraft accusations and confessions continued to flood Navarre, but the inquisitors could not possibly bring in so many suspects for trial: not only were they understaffed and underfunded, but their secret prison could not hold so many defendants. While the inquisitors' supervisors in Madrid suggested repeatedly that they go once more on visitation, this time with an edict of grace—which would have allowed them to reconcile suspects to the church without trials—they declined to do so.¹³ Instead, from November 1610 through May 1611, Logroño's inquisitors remained in their tribunal and only handled witches already in custody or ones who made the long and arduous trek to the tribunal.

So long as the inquisitors continued to be absent, there seemed to be no legal solution to the witch problem in Navarre's villages. Ultimately, parents verbally and then physically attacked accused witches to force them to confess and stop them from carrying children away. Witch suspects of all ages, whether male and female, were stoned, hung from bridges, tied into trees, chained, starved, knifed, and even tortured to death. Once suspects admitted to being witches, they were in a ruinous spiritual state. They could not receive the ecclesiastical sacraments until they were absolved by an inquisitor or

11. On the question of confiscating a convicted witch's property, see Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy*, chap. 12.

12. Juan de Mongastón printed one pamphlet in Logroño on January 6, 1611. Juan Baptista Varesio printed a second one, not indebted to Mongastón's, in Burgos on January 8, 1611. The Mongastón pamphlet exists in a

modern edition—Fernández Nieto, *Proceso a la brujería*, 30–72—but we have only a single copy of the Varesio pamphlet, in Pamplona's Universidad Pública de Navarra.

13. For the important differences between an edict of faith and an edict of grace, see Homza, *Village Infernos*, 108.

a representative of Pamplona's bishop.¹⁴ At the same time, the harshness of the Inquisition's verdicts in November 1610 had terrified the Navarrese. Families consequently brought tremendous pressure to confess on members named as witches by kin or neighbors, even when they knew the confessions would be false. They believed that if their children or relatives confessed at once, they could avoid being sent to Logroño's inquisition tribunal and having their property confiscated.

The vigilante justice that occurred across Navarre from 1609 through 1611 was illegal in every respect. Later, villagers would tell the Royal Court that they had acted out of desperation and on the advice of the Inquisition's own local employees, who had recommended they coerce witch suspects into confessions. When those inquisition employees deposed in the Royal Court in 1612—from which they were legally exempt because of their inquisitorial jobs—they explained that they had finally told villagers to force witch suspects into confessions because they could not secure peace any other way.¹⁵

By February 1611, the inquisitors told their superiors in Madrid that they had reports of more than fifteen hundred witch suspects. Accordingly, the Inquisition leadership finally commanded one of them to visit Navarre with an edict of grace, which would allow remorseful witch suspects to return to the Catholic Church. The visitation fell to the most junior member of the Logroño tribunal, Alonso de Salazar Frías. Salazar left in May 1611 and returned in January 1612. While he was in the field, he reconciled hundreds of alleged witches and pronounced exorcisms, as a precaution, over thousands of bewitched children. He also came to believe that his tribunal lacked sufficient evidence to prosecute current suspects for witchcraft. While he was away, Salazar heard children and adults say that they had no idea how they were taken to revere the Devil. He listened to eighty-one

14. Homza, *Village Infernos*, 48–49. Members of the Society of Jesus, whom the bishop of Pamplona sent into Navarre after the November 1610 *auto de fe*, did not dare to absolve and reconcile witch suspects for fear of encroachment on the Inquisition's privileges: Homza, *Village Infernos*, 102.

15. A prosecutor for the secular court attempted to have one of those inquisition employees charged with murder when a witch died in his custody: Homza, "When Witches Litigate," 261–65. For those inquisition employees' depositions in secular court, see AGN, *Tribunales reales* #072902, fols. 50r, 191r.

individuals revoke admissions to witchcraft because they had been forced to confess. Finally, Salazar was unable to find any physical evidence of witchcraft, nor could he locate eyewitnesses to witchcraft who were not suspects themselves. His experiences gave him pause. Inquisitors were supposed to pay attention to intent, because heresy was purposeful, not accidental. They were supposed to conduct trials on the basis of evidence that could be perceived. They also were supposed to prefer witnesses “outside complicity,” meaning people who were not accomplices to the errors under investigation. By the end of 1611, Salazar believed his tribunal’s cases were insufficiently grounded in what should have been essential legal principles.¹⁶

In March 1612, Salazar sent a report to Madrid that outlined the weaknesses of his tribunal’s prosecutions of witch suspects. Over the next two years, he and his two inquisitor colleagues argued about the quality and quantity of their proof. In 1614, the governing council of the Spanish Inquisition, called the Suprema, asked Salazar to come to Madrid to help hash out new rules for the Inquisition’s witchcraft prosecutions. Salazar complied; once he and the Suprema had completed the revisions, the new guidelines were sent to every inquisition tribunal in the Spanish Empire.¹⁷ Even more importantly, in 1614, the Suprema also nullified every witch investigation and trial conducted by the Logroño tribunal between 1609 and 1614. The Inquisition leadership lifted sentences of exile and imprisonment, restored the possessions of convicted witches, and explicitly reestablished the honor of the people who had been prosecuted for witchcraft over that five-year period.

It was extraordinary for the Spanish Inquisition to admit to error or rescind its own verdicts. The Zugarramurdi witch hunt—named after the village in which it began—consequently has become one of the most famous witchcraft episodes in European history. At the same time, historians have known for decades that we lack crucial documents about the persecution because Napoleon’s troops burned

16. Historians have disagreed as to whether Salazar was originally and perpetually skeptical about the reality of witchcraft. For opposing views, see Henningsen, *Witches’ Advocate*;

and Homza, *Village Infernos*, 135–37, 153–58, 162–65, 172–75, 188–90.

17. For an analysis of the 1614 guidelines, see Homza, *Village Infernos*, 175–80.

down the Logroño tribunal when they invaded Spain in 1808. All the witches' trials were destroyed; the only inquisition evidence about the witch hunt that survives are letters and reports exchanged between Logroño and Madrid and preserved as copies.¹⁸

Yet it turns out that the other two legal jurisdictions in Navarre—embodied in the royal secular court and the bishop's court, both of which were in Pamplona—played unexpected and pivotal roles in this witch hunt, as their surviving records attest. Multiple secular prosecutions in Pamplona had this witch hunt as their foundation, though the trials formally were for slander, attempted homicide, and assault. People accused of being witches and tortured by neighbors filed lawsuits against their attackers and won. Parishioners who were tormented over witchcraft suspicions by their village priest underwrote a trial against that priest and won.¹⁹ As Inquisitor Salazar moved through Navarre in 1611, he not only learned about these prosecutions in the other courts but also supported them. When he put the secular and episcopal prosecutions together with the eighty-one witchcraft confessions revoked in his and his employees' presence, he began to understand how confessions could have been fictitious, even though he was trained to regard confessions as the best possible proof. Salazar never doubted whether witches could be real. He never expressed misgivings about the institution that employed him. Instead, he came to radical conclusions through paying close attention to the details of legal testimony and the circumstances of confessions.

As Inquisitor Salazar started his visitation in May 1611, he soon went through Olague and spoke to some of the children and adults in this book, who referred to him in their legal testimony. Even more importantly, this book allows readers to see a witch hunt that was a youth-driven event. Sometimes, historians have posited that children's actions and emotions could have no appreciable impact on adults in European history, but the evidence from Olague proves otherwise.²⁰ At

18. For some of the surviving inquisitorial texts in translation, see Henningsen, *Salazar Documents*. The primary surviving Inquisition dossier, which is in the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN) in Madrid, can

be accessed at <http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/2340978>.

19. Homza, "When Witches Litigate"; Homza, *Village Infernos*, 141–46.

20. Maza, "Kids Aren't All Right"

the same time, scholars often have argued that witchcraft accusations were routine in this epoch.²¹ The documents here illustrate instead how dysfunctional witch-hunting could be for communal and familial relationships.

The Olague texts also support modern scholarly findings that witches and their victims were never strangers.²² The children and adults who accused neighbors, denied allegations, attacked and slandered each other, and inflicted and suffered public dishonor knew each other very well.²³ Like most sites in this witch persecution, Olague was tiny. Located twelve miles north of Pamplona, the village reported twenty-five heads of household in a census from 1606: if each household held on average five people, the total population would have come to 125.²⁴ As was the case throughout early modern Navarre, Olague's residents were generally illiterate and predominantly Basque-speaking. Most owned at least a few pigs, goats, sheep, cattle, or oxen. Though their wealth varied, they all could expect to be vulnerable to subsistence crises caused by drought, worm and beetle infestations, unseasonably cold temperatures, or plague. Hunger was predictable; infant mortality was routine.

Beyond these facts of life, Olague's residents shared a Catholic religious culture as well as the same honor code. Cultural imperatives about religion meant that people believed in the Devil and witches, though they could turn those beliefs in manipulative and hostile directions. Cultural expectations about marriage and honor meant that women in miserable unions had few options. Cultural expectations about honor and shame meant that when men and women were

21. Rojas, "Bad Christians and Hanging Toads"; Tausiet, *Urban Magic*.

22. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*; Roper, *Witch Craze*; Kivelson, "So That They Will Love Me"; Geschiere, "Witchcraft and the Dangers of Intimacy."

23. Such profound acquaintance begs the question of how lifelong neighbors could inflict so much

suffering on each other over witchcraft beliefs: Roper, *Witch Craze*, 2–5.

24. Olague was too small to support a notary: villagers instead must have gone to Pamplona to file legal documents. Because notaries in Pamplona were so numerous and notarial records in this epoch were so abundant, we have not yet been able to locate the notarial sources that would illuminate Olague's society and economy.

defamed as witches in public, they sometimes struck back in legal ways that they could not sustain financially, with disastrous consequences.

The calamity over witchcraft in Olague began in the spring of 1611 and conformed to the larger witch hunt's general patterns. Numerous youngsters asserted that they had become the Devil's servants; the cause of their transformation lay with neighbors and relatives who were witches themselves and had flown them through the air to meet the Devil and venerate him. Parents and relatives were enraged over the damage being done to their children, who told them what had occurred and announced they had been turned into child witches (*niños embrujados*) through their contact with the Devil. The children knew the adults they had seen at the Devil's gatherings. They consequently stormed around their village as a gang and shouted witchcraft accusations at others, allegations that they repeated since they were taken to the *akelarres* multiple times. The child witches' parents then confronted the witch suspects, first verbally, then physically.

The damage caused by Olague's child witches was substantial. The epithet of "witch" was a severe affront. Verbal slurs on the street, in church, or in any other open space crippled personal and familial honor, and this was true no matter the speaker, recipient, audience, or circumstances. An affront became that much more ruinous if it was reiterated. Having the wider community echo or talk about the slander, even if it was false, reinforced the injury.²⁵

At the same time, children in early modern Navarre enjoyed a peculiar sort of legal immunity when it came to defamation.²⁶ When children spoke public insults, they could not be prosecuted for slander; the evidence also indicates that "witch" was by far the predominant public slur that children uttered.²⁷ Hence, children in Olague and across Navarre became the perfect accusers of witchcraft between

25. Berraondo Piudo, "La violencia interpersonal," 162. For the impact of compounded insults, see Taylor, *Honor and Violence*.

26. To the best of my knowledge, we do not have research findings on children and defamation from other

Spanish locales, but I would presume the same legal immunity held.

27. Scott Taylor found an instance in which an adult paid a child to call a woman a whore: *Honor and Violence*, 183.

1608 and 1614. They could repeat one public allegation after another, and there was no legal mechanism to stop them.

Some adults in Olague lost their lives and had their houses burned down due to the children's accusations.²⁸ Ultimately, people fled. In July 1612, a census found that the village had twenty-six households, but practically one-third—eight—had missing owners.²⁹ We do not know if those families ever returned.



Chapter 1 presents inquisitorial correspondence and pamphlet literature about the witch hunt for the purposes of context. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are devoted to three legal texts that only surfaced in 2014, 2018, and 2019, respectively, when archivists in Pamplona discovered them. Two of those documents are secular trials for slander against adults in Pamplona's Royal Court.³⁰ The third is a petition for a marital separation, filed in Pamplona's episcopal court by a wife against her husband.³¹ None of these three legal cases was specifically for the crime or heresy of witchcraft, and none was conducted by the Spanish Inquisition; nevertheless, they were provoked by the larger witch hunt that the Inquisition was supervising.

The two slander cases excerpted and translated here offer an especially complicated legal trajectory. In a typical trial for any crime in the royal secular court, including defamation, defendants could present witnesses for their side. But in these slander prosecutions, the defendants went one step further and filed defamation lawsuits of their own against the adult plaintiffs who had insulted them. Thus, the defamation trials in chapters 2 and 3 involve two sides pursuing proof of slander, which means the legal records have more intricate bodies

28. See chaps. 2 and 3, as well as Homza, *Village Infernos*, 109–21.

29. Depopulation over this witch hunt was even more extreme for the village of Arraioz. In the summer of 1612, Arraioz had thirty-six houses, but

twenty-seven owners had fled. Homza, *Village Infernos*, 182–83.

30. AGN, *Tribunales reales*, #330569 and #41366.

31. Archivo diocesano de Pamplona (ADP), C/1.232, n. 38.

of evidence than we usually see. The original plaintiffs called many child witches to substantiate that the defendants were truly witches: if that were the case, then the plaintiffs had spoken the truth, and no slander was in play. Concurrently, the defendants called different child witches who said their accusations had been false, at which point the defendants had been defamed by the original plaintiffs who had hurled insults on the bogus evidence of children.

The following list demonstrates how the two slander trials unfolded:

Step 1: Olague children publicly and repeatedly named particular adults as the witches who were taking them to the Devil's *akelarres*.

Step 2: Olague adults reiterated the children's slurs against the witch suspects and even physically assaulted them.

Step 3: When the adult witch suspects insulted in turn their adult accusers, those accusers immediately filed lawsuits in Pamplona for defamation.

Step 4: The adult witch suspects were thus brought to trial not on witchcraft but on slander charges. They, in turn, filed their own slander cases against the adults who had called them witches.

Step 5: Both sets of adults—plaintiffs and defendants—called Olague's child witches to testify. The plaintiffs hoped the child witches would verify that the defendants were witches. The defendants hoped the child witches would verify that their public accusations had been false and had come about through coercion.

It may surprise modern readers to learn that children as young as six not only gave evidence in secular trials in this epoch but also had their statements treated as agential, though they typically were not formally sworn to speak the truth. Still, children's legal testimony was always potentially contentious, and readers will see how both sides in the trials tried to work the children's ages to their advantage.

The witch crisis in Olague could also have a context of marital strife, as chapter 4 demonstrates. Readers will also encounter María de Alzate, a woman in her early fifties, in chapter 2, where she testifies

about the public and false allegations of witchcraft directed at her by her own daughter, an adolescent girl named Marimartín. Alzate and others told the Royal Court why Marimartín had accused her mother: her father and especially her stepbrother had used death threats to push her into false allegations. Chapter 4 explores the background to this domestic drama, which was horrific. María de Alzate was married to Juan de Unciti, who was Olague's blacksmith. Alzate and Unciti were second spouses for each other; their only child together was Marimartín, though both had offspring from their prior marriages. Unciti detested Alzate and abused her for years before taking advantage of the witch panic to try to ruin her through false accusations of witchcraft. The documentary basis of chapter 4 is a petition that Alzate filed in episcopal court in December 1611, seeking a marital separation from Unciti on the grounds that he was liable to kill her if she was forced to continue living with him. She won her legal case, though she may well have died of poverty afterward. Putting together the two slander cases and the petition for a marital separation allows us to see how witch-hunting, domestic viciousness, and gender norms could intersect.

For chapters 2, 3, and 4, it is important to understand that legal cases opened with statements and evidence for the plaintiff, before being followed by statements and evidence for the defendant. Both the plaintiff and the defendant had lawyers; both created what we call "interrogatories," which were lists of questions to put to certain witnesses. If witnesses were of sufficient age, they deposed under oath; later, they would be obliged to ratify their original statements under oath, and in the ratification process, they could alter what they had originally said.

Significantly, the majority, if not all, of the plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses in these legal manuscripts were deposing in Basque.³² Their statements under oath were translated into Spanish, which was the formal language of the three legal jurisdictions in Navarre. Modern historians have frequently cautioned us not to view legal statements as

32. For the predominance of Basque speakers in early modern Navarre, see Monteano Sorbet, *El iceberg Navarro*.

transmitting the true voices of our historical subjects.³³ People were responding to direct questions; their responses were confined in legal formulas.³⁴ With the Basque-to-Spanish translations in play here, that warning seems even more appropriate. Yet people testifying in these prosecutions were not confined to what interrogators wanted or expected to hear.³⁵ Deponents could decline to answer questions and were not penalized for doing so. They could decide how much they wanted to say and make changes to their statements.³⁶ Such conditions held true whether children or adults were testifying.

33. German historians of witchcraft, whose surviving sources very often were produced under torture, can be adamant that the witch's "voice" cannot be detected: Voltmer, "Witch in the Courtroom." The extant sources from this witch hunt were not produced under such conditions.

34. For a classic caution about historians' use of legal sources, see Kuehn, "Reading Microhistory."

35. As an example, see chapter 4, where Juan de Unciti calls defense witnesses who verify his domestic abuse instead.

36. For a thoughtful evaluation of hearing subaltern voices in inquisitorial settings, see García-Arenal, "Polyphony of Voices."