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AP Euro Period 2

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Q: Explain how folk ideas along with social and economic upheaval fueled the accusations of witchcraft between 1580-1650.

**Introduction: (Contextualization)** During the sixteenth and seventeenth century, many Europeans turned to ‘cunning folk’, respected members of society, in times of natural calamity. Many believed they possessed a certain magic, however the Church went against the practice of witchcraft and stated those who practice magic outside the Church derived their power from the Devil. The distinction between the good and bad magic allowed the Church to persecute and get rid of the cunning folk, later allowing the church to expand its influence in the towns and villages. **(Restatement)** Folk ideas and social and economic upheaval were the cause of those being accused of witchcraft between 1580-1650. **(X)** The folks idea was to improve their social status in a village and make a living. **(Y)** Socially, religious division and warfare were major factors that contributed to the accusation of witchcraft. (**Z)** Due to their economic straits, the cunning folk claimed they had supernatural powers that made them influential in society, later causing the church to go against them. Also, Wars of Religion hurt the economic livelihood of the population.

Body Paragraph 1#

**Topic Sentence:** Folk ideas, such as the cunning folk, helped Europeans through magic to make a living due to them being single women.

* **Evidence:** Older, single women were a dependent social group who were greatly admired and respected before the Church criticizes them.
* **Analysis**: Europeans went to them as they claimed they had supernatural powers to improve lives. (Witch Hunts and Panics)
* **Evidence:** Midwives, which were an important part of folk life had an important role to play.
* **Analysis:** However, midwives were put in a predicament if the baby died during childbirth or other misfortunes.

Body Paragraph 2#

**Topic Sentence:** Socially, during the Reformation and Thirty Years War, the division of religions and war helped fuel the accusations of witchcraft.

* **Evidence:** While witchcraft had always been recognized within the church in one way or another it was not until the Lutheran reformation and the continuing protestant reformation that we find the growth in response to witchcraft.
* **Analysis:** It is also during this time that witchcraft goes under a transformation from peasant superstition to a threat to the edifice of the church itself and of the populace in general. In many ways the reformation contributed to this rise in accusations of witchcraft that capitalised on the changing religious and social landscape, especially the views on witchcraft and of the theological understanding of the devil in particular.
  + Malleus Maleficarum, (The Hammer of Witches) written by two Dominican monks was sanctioned by the church as an official guide to the detection and punishment of witches.
* **Evidence:** It can be noted that the period of The Thirty Years War (1618- 1648) was the period of most active witch hunts in the 1600-1650 period.
* **Analysis:** The nature of Religious warfare itself generated the superstition and fear necessary for the massive increase in recorded witch-hunts. Equally plausible is the hypothesis that the unpleasant side effects of the wars such as starvation, disease, and poverty caused the citizens of Europe to suspect the hand of the devil in their affairs, thus causing the high number of witch accusations.
* **Evidence:** The Scientific Revolution had a major impact on how people viewed their world and how to explain natural phenomenon.
* **Analysis:**Therefore, the chaos of the Scientific Revolution also fueled the accusations of witchcraft because of the uncertainty and confusion it created.

**Body paragraph 3#**

**Topic sentence:** The cunning folks’ economic straits put them in a situation to state they had superpowers to either gain social status or to make a living while the Wars of Religion created economic strain on the population.

* **Evidence:** Many women were midwives or cunning folk which put them in a precarious situation if it didn’t work out for their clients
* **Analysis:** Thus, they were associated with the deaths of beloved wives and infants which made society go against them. (Witch Hunts and Panics) especially after the Church condemned them in *Hammer of Witches*.
* **Evidence:** The Church stated there was a difference between bad and good magic and that the priests possessed “legitimate” magical power.
* **Analysis:** The Church said those who practiced magic outside the Church evidently derived their power from the devil and they also made it official that the practice of witchcraft was heresy. This caused many to believe the cunning folk was affiliated with the devil. (Witch Hunts and Panics)
* **Evidence**: It can be noted that the period of The Thirty Years War (1618- 1648) was the period of most active witch hunts in the 1600-1650 period.
* **Analysis**: Equally plausible is the hypothesis that the unpleasant side effects of the wars such as starvation, and poverty caused the citizens of Europe to suspect the hand of the devil in their affairs, thus causing the high number of witch accusations.

**Conclusion: (Restatement)** The cunning folks believed they had the same power as the priest, which angered the church and caused many witches to be persecuted. The ***perception*** of midwives and cunning fold change after the Church condemns them. The Reformation helped fuel the accusations of witchcraft as well as the French Wars of Religion. The church opposed the powers witches had and the community turns against them after having respected and revered them before. . **(Synthesis)** The accusations of witchcraft can connect to the Medieval times when the Black Plague hit Europe, which caused fear, suspicion, lack of understanding (social upheaval) which damaged the economy (economic loss), and blamed the Jews as well as other different groups similar to the blaming of witches because of fear and prejudice (misogyny).