

that took place in the Dutch village of Druten in the spring of 1995. An analysis of reliable testimonies of neighbours, friends and police officers is presented; in particular the last of these sets of witnesses give relatively strong support to the reality of these phenomena in this case.

In order to find independent testimonial support for the reality of the Poltergeist case correlations were explored of the frequency of claimed poltergeist events with the behaviour of a field-RNG. The results showed there to be a marginally significant decrease in deviations from chance ( $p < 0.05$  two-tailed) whereas the post-hoc correlations were of insufficient strength to merit any conclusion. Additionally the RNG-PK runs showed some evidence for RNG-PK from the two adolescents in the family but not to such degree as might be expected in a poltergeist agent. The article concludes with an analysis of the family dynamics which might be of relevance to the case and some recommendations are made.

### **Introduction**

On Monday 15th May, 1995, the Parapsychology Institute in Utrecht received a request for help from a Turkish family in the village of Druten in Holland. The phenomena this family experienced were recognized as classical poltergeist events: the flying about of stones, clods of earth, sand, and objects, some of them hitting people and smashing windows. Family members were frightened by these events which seemed to concentrate around Çetin, the 15 year old son. Apart from Çetin, the family consists of his father Rafet (48 yrs), step-mother Saime (55 yrs), and half-sister Aynur (16 yrs). Other main characters in the event were Gülseren, the older half-sister of Çetin (25 yrs) who lives nearby, Dorus, a friend of Rafet, and neighbours Wies and Simon.

In doing our research, we tried to focus on as many aspects as possible. First of all, we gained and checked detailed eye-witness reports of the occurrences. Furthermore, a field RNG was installed, the persons involved did some PK-tests, and we gathered data on the situation of the family and Çetin in particular. The field RNG was intended to explore new ways of 'bringing the laboratory into the field' and

The phenomena started on Thursday 11th of May 1995 and ceased on Sunday the 21st. The first weekend saw the flying about of such a multitude of stones, that police assistance was called in. On Monday the 15th two researchers of the Parapsychology Institute were brought in (JG and RW), who arrived late that afternoon. They took some eye-witness reports and installed a video camera, focussing on Çetin and some spots where the phenomena seemed to concentrate. The next day JG was accompanied by DB. They installed a field RNG, explained the logbook system (see below), and recorded some testimonies on videotape. During his first visit JG felt his lower leg being touched, with no animals in the house and all persons far off. In an effort to become a part of the system, JG spent two nights (17th and 22nd May) at the house, and was present during daytime hours on 15th, 18th, 22nd and 23rd. Despite such efforts no further anomalous phenomena took place in the presence of the researchers, a frustrating finding well known from other RSPK cases (e.g. Rogo, 1974, p. 441). We contacted the family twice a day by telephone on those days in the first week when none of us was present. On Wednesday 21st June, four weeks after the RSPK phenomena stopped, we brought the family in contact with Mete Sabanoglu, a social worker of Turkish origin. This lowered the cultural and language barriers somewhat, allowing us to focus on some details of the testimonies. Also, Mr. Sabanoglu gathered some valuable information on the psychological and cultural background of the case (see Discussion).

Starting on Tuesday 16th May, the logbook registers a total of 110 phenomena that were classified as ‘anomalous’ by those involved. It is not possible to estimate what portion of this total number can be considered as reliable evidence of RSPK phenomena. The credibility of the witness reports is enhanced by two observations. First, being the centre of poltergeist activity in a quiet rural neighbourhood (with neighbours complaining and with press and total strangers crowding in and around the house prowling for psi) evidently brought no real gain to the family. On the contrary, family members were frightened by the disturbing events, while the father, Rafet, was convalescent with a heart condition. Second, most witnesses (Rafet, Saime, Aynur, Dorus, and Simon) mentioned the fact that Çetin tried to deceive them by imitating the events on some occasions. We will return to the subject of imitative fraud in the Discussion, but for the present let us point out that even with the possibility of fraud on the part of Çetin taken into account, a number of events cannot be easily explained away, although we realize that a high evaluation of witness credibility does not provide a decisive answer to the question of genuine RSPK (as is explained by e.g.

suspected the stone throwing merely to be due to mischief. For one and a half hour Van Deursen made a reconnaissance of the back side of the house, while Cramer checked this same side through a window on the top floor, using binoculars. They reported that in this way they would certainly have detected a perpetrator if there was one; unable to do so, they noticed that stones kept hitting the back of the house, only the house of the Turkish family and not the neighbours houses.

#### Clusters 9, 10, Sunday 14th May

That evening, officer Cramer returned to the house assisted by officer De Haas. Individually each officer accompanied Çetin to his room on the upper floor. No one else was upstairs. On this occasion De Haas had sand thrown in her face while watching Çetin, while Cramer even got sand in his face with Çetin having his hands in his pockets. Thereupon one of the officers left, being too frightened to stay in the house. Later that night Cramer and De Haas drove Çetin to Gülseren's house. Several times during that ride sand fell on De Haas's head; relating to it afterwards she leaves open the possibility that Çetin, sitting in the back seat, might have thrown it. However, this she claims can be no valid explanation for what happened next: when she got out of the police car to open the back door (which, for obvious reasons, cannot be opened from the inside) and stood next to the car with all its doors and windows closed, she again had sand falling forcefully on her head.

#### Cluster 14, Tuesday 16th May

Feeling too terrified to spend the night at home, the family stayed at Gülseren's house where on the preceding days some events had taken place. By way of precaution, Rafet placed a beer-jug in the kitchen, remarking that 'otherwise it too might get broken'. Next, a clap was heard from the corridor. At that moment Rafet was back in the living-room with Dorus, while Çetin and Saime were in the garden. The beer-jug was lying in pieces against the front door.

#### Cluster 15, Tuesday 16th May

Coming out of the living-room, a stone measuring half the size of an egg flew through the kitchen, smashed into the wall, and fell on the airco. Dorus picked it up, noticing it felt more than hand warm to the touch, this is confirmed by two other witnesses. The stone brushed past the head of Wies who was standing in the doorway; she claims there was nobody in the room right behind her that could have thrown the stone.

A while after event 30 with Simon, Dorus and Çetin still on the couch, a glass water-bottle smashed forcefully against the lavatory door in the corridor, falling to pieces and striking a hole. Again, nobody was near the table on which the bottle definitely had been standing, as reported by the witnesses. It is highly improbable that Çetin could have thrown the bottle unobserved: Simon reports being very alert at this stage, as he had noticed before that events seemed to concentrate just after the departure of the hoja. Also, if Çetin could have thrown the bottle, then, given his position on the couch, the trajectory of the bottle would have to be an impossible curve around the doorpost between the living-room and corridor.

### **Filming and fixating**

We used a video camera with the intention to record any genuine RSPK phenomena as well as to control for possible instances of fraud. The camera was focussed on Çetin and on certain places where the phenomena seemed to concentrate. The camera filmed Çetin and a researcher (JG) sleeping during the night. A neighbour (Simon) installed the camera, pointed on focal places on several occasions after the phenomena stopped. The interior of the house has been filmed several times; with this method we intended to 'fix' objects in order to be able to locate the place where moving objects originated from.

No evidence of RSPK was recorded. Also the fixation process yielded no results. A closer analysis of the material did reveal a case of fraud in which a hand movement of Çetin, pretending to look at his wristwatch, is followed by the observation of a small stone falling against the wall at the right side of Çetin, noticed by his father.

### **Field-RNG measurements**

In trying to obtain independent and objective corroboration of the claimed Poltergeist events we installed a RNG on the premises (as recommended by e.g. Radin & Roll, 1994; Roll, 1977). From May 17th, the behaviour of this RNG was continuously recorded and whenever a disturbance occurred one of the family members could press a key on the computer keyboard causing the exact time and an event-number of the event to be stored. This event number was also displayed and was used in the paper diary where a description of the event was entered (for a rationale of the use of so-called field-RNGs see Bierman, 1996; Nelson et al., 1996; Radin & Rebman, 1996).

patterns. No significant deviations of a single pattern frequency was found. It should be noted however that this test is statistically insensitive since, without any prediction of what to expect, it tests for 256 patterns simultaneously.

The choice of the experimental epochs for these evaluations is crucial but relatively arbitrary. Of course it should be related to the disturbances but one can choose one minute before, one minute around or one minute after or a smaller period. We opted for the smallest unit of possible analysis between 18 and 36 seconds preceding button press, because from oral reports we learned that generally it took about half a minute before someone indicated on the computer that an event had occurred. A few other choices were explored but didn't show anything. Thus the effect reported, although in hindsight probably representing the most logical choice of analysis parameters, should have been corrected for multiple analyses if this had been a confirmatory study. However we present these results only as explorations and conclude that using a field-RNG is certainly worthwhile to follow up in future Poltergeist cases.

### **RNG PK-tests**

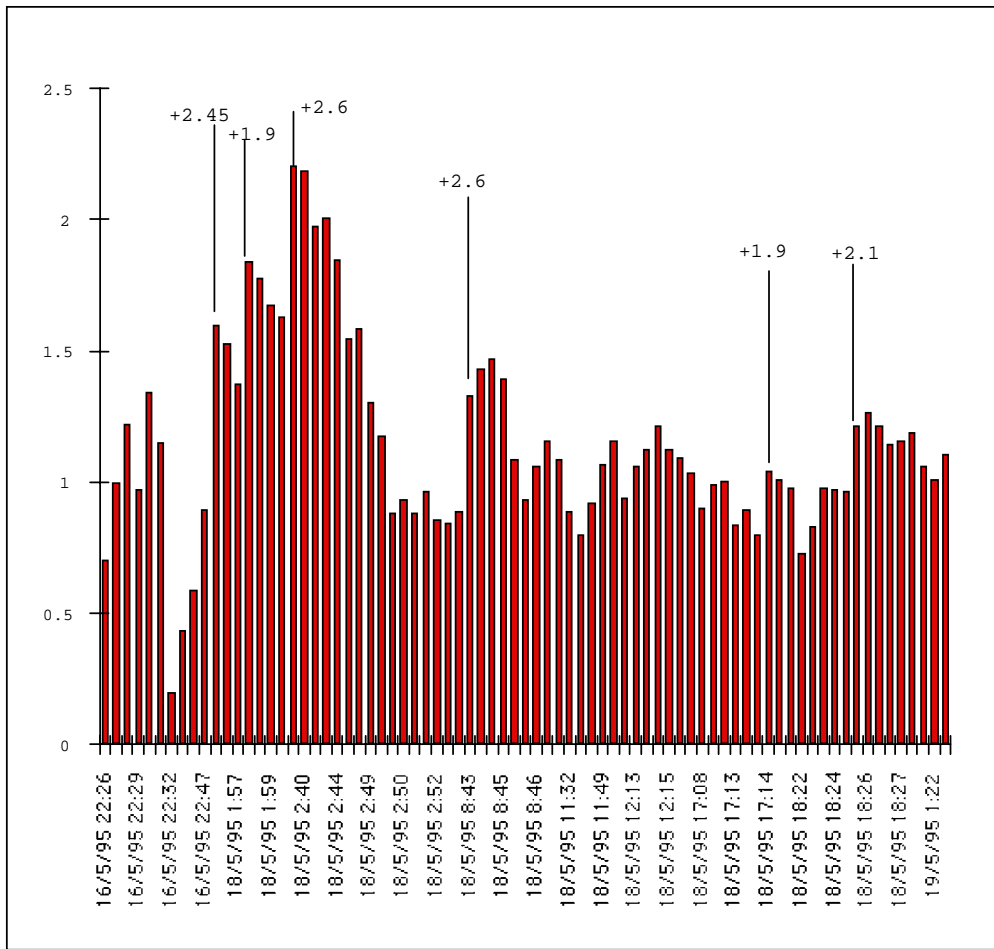
The RNG in Druten could also be used to run direct experimental PK tests. This would mean that the continuous (field) monitoring was temporarily switched off and the behaviour of the RNG was displayed on the screen as a circle which would randomly grow and shrink. These tests were organised in runs. A run started (see Fig.1) with a random selection of the target direction and comprised 128 random binary events.

The sampling rate was about 5 samples per second and a run took 19 seconds. A total of 130 runs were done under rather informal conditions. Although generally one family member was designated to be the participant sometimes others were also watching the display. Since the field RNG was the focus of our research, timing, nor the number of runs, nor the target directions were pre-set since these tests were considered as a sort of entertainment other than serious experiment.

The results for Çetin, Aynur and others are presented in Table 1. The results of Aynur reach a statistical significance, but in a direction opposite to the target direction.

### **Table 1**

Figure 1



variance as if to compensate for the extreme runs.

## Discussion

### Physical aspects

As Roll (1977) states, the term ‘focussing’ refers to repeated incidents with the same or similar object and/or taking place in the same area. In the first place, the Druten phenomena were not house-centred: RSPK events were observed at the house of Çetin's step-sister Gülseren, in the house and the area surrounding the house of the family, at Çetin's classroom at school, and near the police station. There was nevertheless some so-called area focussing (concentration of incidents in specific locations): often moving objects originated from the audio-rack or the dining-table in the living-room, while many of the stones and clods of earth seemed to originate from the garden at the back of the house. Three windows at this side were smashed, while those at the front remained intact.

Independent of each other, all witnesses reported not seeing the trajectory of missiles such as stones until they struck; this is remarkable, especially for those missiles that hit the wall behind the person. Some mention of this non-observation is made in the literature (e.g. Amorim, 1990, p.197; Owen, 1964, pp.269-275); in trying to find an explanation we should weigh a perceptual psychological explanation, in which small, fast missiles are usually not easily observed anyway, against more intriguing speculation in terms of ‘teleportation’ or non-local psi in which anomalous missiles are not restricted to known ballistic laws (e.g. Roll, 1977, p.53; Owen, 1964, pp. 271 & 418-421). Such a non-local quality is contradicted, however, by the observation made by Wies in cluster 15, in which a large stone brushed past her head and ‘flew’ into the kitchen. Perhaps the use of optical detection devices in future research can shed some light on this question.

As far as objects are concerned, there seemed to be a preference for stones, clods of earth, sand, and relatively small objects, the largest object transported being the water bottle in event nr.7. The composition of the clods of earth was identical to the clods lying around in the garden (such similarities are noticed by e.g. Owen, 1964, p. 269). In agreement with McCully's notion that paranormal phenomena correspond to, or have some relation with, laws associated with symbolic language, Amorim

Concerning time focussing, possible RSPK events seemed to concentrate at times of departure of 'official' persons that were involved in the case: events were reported directly after the departure of the researchers or the hoja, who paid a daily visit to the family (see events 30, 37; see also Amorim, 1990, p. 197; Rogo, 1974, p. 442).

### **Psychological, social, and cultural aspects**

Poltergeists are a parapsychological manifestation most properly understood within the context of psychopathology and more specifically within the context of interpersonal relationships (e.g. Burger, 1973, p. 229; Roll, 1978; Rogo, 1974, p. 434; Rogo, 1982, pp. 235-237). When RW and JG arrived at the house, Çetin was pointed out as the person around whose presence 'the ghosts manifested themselves' (a phrase used by the family that seemed to have no further consequences for the way the family handled and understood the events). It soon became clear that step-mother Saime and step-sister Gülseren were more often a target for flying stones and objects than either Çetin himself, his father Rafet, or step-sister Aynur.

Rafet came to Holland in the early seventies. After his first job, he went to work in a pork-butcher's shop, a change that is not easily reconcilable with his religious beliefs (pigs being thought of as 'unclean' in Islam). He met a woman of Turkish origin, F., with whom he lived, again a problematic situation conflicting with his marriage (his wife, Saime, was still living in Turkey). Çetin was born out of this relation; at the age of one he was taken to Turkey by F., who re-emigrated.

Çetin had a problematic youth. He was not allowed to play outdoors, as his mere presence posed a problem for his unmarried mother. His final year in Turkey was spent in a boarding school based on strict Islamic rules. It seems that Çetin had known little freedom before he went to Holland. About two weeks after his arrival in Holland, Rafet developed a heart condition. This might be related to his contradictory feelings: a father wishing his son to be part of his family, traditionally an important asset in an Islamic community, but a reunion that may give rise to much gossip within that community.

Three weeks before the start of the events reported here, Saime and Gülseren had departed for Turkey to arrange for the matter of Gülseren's marriage. During that period Çetin, in Holland for eleven months by this time, received more attention and affection from Rafet. Also during this period Rafet was admitted to a hospital for a



towards his half-sister Aynur almost of the same age. From an outside point of view, Aynur is the strongest person in the family; she is attractive, she is 'westernised' and fulfils the role of contact between the family and the Dutch community. This contrasts with Çetin's position as a man, which is important in itself within Turkish tradition. Apart from that there is the fact that Çetin lived his childhood in Turkey for the greater part isolated from women. All in all, Çetin's feelings towards Aynur may have been coloured by contrasts like attraction versus rivalry. This would be consistent with the observation that during the events Aynur was scarcely hit by stones or objects, while perhaps a more speculative reflection of this strained relation lies in the data of the PK tests, which indicate that Çetin's irregular extreme runs show a significant positive deviation, while Aynur, sitting near Çetin most of the time during the runs, scores significantly below chance.

A year after his arrival, Çetin finds himself in the middle of a complex family situation in a society that is permissive to an extent he hasn't experienced before, having left behind a trusted and yet unpermissive world. Such a description of his psychological context fits with Roll's observation that in 62 % of the reported RSPK cases in which the 'medium' is aged younger than 18 s/he is away from home (Sargent, 1982).

Independent of the Parapsychological Institute, an Islamic priest, a hoja, was called in by the family for assistance. The hoja organised a prayer ritual with exorcistic connotations which involved all members of the family; praying took place at the house during seven consecutive days, a period at the end of which, so it was claimed, the phenomena would cease to occur. In fact it took three days longer, which makes it unclear whether the ritual was successful and, if it was, whether this was due to a certain 'exorcistic' effect or should be attributed to mere psychological 'expectancy effects'. We can be certain, however, that the regular visits of an Islamic dignitary will have boosted Çetin's status as well as satisfying his need for attention (e.g. Hess, 1988b). Also, the presence of the venerable hoja may have inhibited any RSPK effects, an inhibition that is cancelled the moment that the hoja leaves the house at which moment, according to some witnesses, some of the strongest events took place.

Two interpretative models suggest themselves: individual-centred RSPK in terms of parapsychological 'mechanics', and on the other hand, the 'activity' of entities, ghosts or demons within a traditional religious perspective. Considering the latter model, the fact that Çetin has attended an orthodox Islamic school would

stance and propose an alternative approach in which such models have to complete each other to reach an integrated understanding (see e.g. Feyerabend, 1975).

Due to the conspicuous presence of the police, the neighbourhood got wind of the curious phenomena that were taking place, and a crowd (often more than 100 people) was gathered in front of the house for most days during the relevant period. Whenever the family members were frightened by an anomalous phenomenon, they ran out of the house and were able to mingle and feel safe in the crowd. They also allowed the (inquisitive) public to enter their house, a decision that may have stemmed from possible social unrest that could have grown in this situation, given the sometimes difficult position of immigrants combined with rumours of 'creepy ghosts'.

Radio, TV, and newspapers journalists tried to force their way into the house. Instructed by the researchers, the family kept them and the crowd at bay, as well as the many self-proclaimed psychics who offered their services and some of whom, their services being declined, expressed in the media their sometimes ridiculous and irresponsible opinions on the case. The presence and demystifying work of the researchers may have had a therapeutic effect on the psychosocial system in which the phenomena occurred (Bayless, 1967; Eisenbud, 1972, pp. 27-41; Gerding et al., 1989, p. 25; Hashizume & Marinho, 1977; Rogo, 1974, p. 422; Thurstone, 1954); it also released the tension of the crowd somewhat (Burger, 1973, pp. 228, 229) and facilitated Çetin's return to school.

### **Mischief and fraud**

The case of external, hidden fraud would implicate vandalism specifically directed against the family. An argument against such an explanation is that it leaves several phenomena unexplained, especially those that took place indoors. But also, for example, a hypothetical outside perpetrator in a 'normal' explanation of clusters 9, 10 would have to follow a police car, park and hide in time and nearby enough to throw the sand falling exactly on police officer De Haas's head, thereby repeating the phenomena that took place during the ride (which would suggest a conspiracy of at least two persons including Çetin).

Instances of internal fraud on the other hand are frequently observed in RSPK cases. Gauld (1979) proposes the differentiation of total and imitative fraud, the latter of which can either be open (with the RSPK person openly and playfully imitating the phenomena) or hidden. A number of the events in this case can be accounted for by

outbreaks, which like neurosis, thereby yield 'secondary gain' (Owen, 1964, p. 387) for Çetin, being the centre of interest with even the hoja, the press and researchers attending. Consistent with this, the video-tapes show Çetin to be specially 'camera-conscious' and relaxed, given the irregular situation. Of course, being camera-consciousness is necessary for Çetin to check his environment and prevent exposure.

In short, it remains unclear as to what extend the total of the reported phenomena must be accounted for by imitative fraud. From a psychodynamic point of view such a question does not arise, since imitative fraud and genuine RSPK would both function as symbolic acts having the same effects of gaining attention and releasing hostility towards the other family members (e.g. Hess, 1988; Rogo, 1974). The question of genuine RSPK seems to be relevant for a parapsychological verificationist, but then again that stance is not without alternatives: from a more 'magical', Batcheldorian point of view and questioning the philosophical assumption of an objective reality, we may not altogether be able to differentiate a genuine RSPK component and determine a percentage of fraud (e.g. Batcheldor, 1984). We were reminded of the words of Gauger (1979): "again one wonders at the intelligence and elegance, with which these phenomena withdraw themselves from verification and falsification. The 'inter-existence' ('Zwischenexistenz') of many paranormal phenomena does not only consist in their observational indeterminance, but also in their indeterminability within a system of yes-no-logic."

Assuming that we did not deal with a conspiracy encompassing the family, friends, neighbours, and the police (including even us?), to us the most plausible conclusion is that some of the events that took place are possibly indications of real RSPK. Although the results of the field RNG and the PK tests show some evidence for RNG-PK and seem to correspond to our prudent conclusion, we must be sure not to forget that these results are marginal and exploratory.

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