Witchcraft Accusations and Persecutions as a Mechanism for the Marginalisation of Women

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PREFACE

Historically, alleged witches have been drowned, hung, and burned alive for their 'crimes.' The witchcraft trials of the 16th to 18th centuries are a dominant feature of European history. Yet, whilst many believe witchcraft to be a thing of the past, the persecution of alleged witches continues, with prevalence, within contemporary society. Belief in witchcraft encompasses religion, culture and superstition, and is based on the linked concepts of fear and evil. Superstition is a misconception that specific behaviour can influence unrelated events. Thus, superstition creates a link between an action and an outcome, whereas, in reality, there is no causal link whatsoever. The belief in witchcraft is, thus, a culmination of all three concepts, superstition, evil and fear. This book will seek to examine all three concepts in detail, in order to fully understand the basis of witchcraft beliefs and accusations. Witchcraft enables people to manipulate others' beliefs into thinking that someone or something else is responsible. Thus, witchcraft regulates the conduct of society, through fear. It provides a discourse, which explains why things happen and what can be done to rectify the situation. Yet what the witchcraft discourse fails to do is ascertain how these things happen.

Belief in witchcraft is prevalent. Witches are alleged to possess inherent supernatural powers that are used predominantly to create evil or misfortune. The range of events blamed on witchcraft is extensive; illness, the inability to have children, accidents, loss or destruction of property, droughts, floods and fires are just some occurrences blamed on witches. Of course, there are always those people in society who are willing to propagate such beliefs for self-gain. Aggrieved family members and witchdoctors are often the primary accusers. Within those communities where witchdoctors are often the only form of medical treatment it is understood that their work is largely beneficial to society, as they perform their work openly and publicly, unlike witches, who allegedly perform all their work secretly throughout the night. Witches are almost always female. This was the case historically, and remains so today. The subordinate status of women as the weaker sex, who therefore must be more susceptible to witchcraft influences, still permeates throughout contemporary society.

The aim of this book is to raise awareness of witchcraft accusations and persecutions within contemporary society by specifically examining the phenomenon of witchcraft and the negative implications witchcraft accusations have on women globally. On examination of the contemporary belief in witchcraft, this book will seek to determine the extent to which witchcraft accusations and persecutions are being used as a marginalisation mechanism of women, in order to preserve patriarchal norms. Marginalisation, as a concept, is a way of relegating individuals or groups of individuals, in order to isolate and subordinate them from the rest of the group.[1] Marginalised groups are often denied access to rights, often connected to the characteristics shared within this group, for example, gender, social class, religious beliefs etc. Thus, the group, in this instance, women, are prevented from participating fully in all aspects of economic, social, political and cultural life.[2]

Legally, witchcraft accusations and persecution (WAP) threaten or violate a variety of human rights. Yet, the issue appears to have been largely ignored by the international community. This book will examine the content, effectiveness and limitations of the human rights framework regarding witchcraft accusations and persecution in order to determine how effective the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other instruments of International Human Rights Law are in protecting women from witchcraft related violence and persecution. There will be also be an examination of the legal aspect of WAP on a national level. Specifically concentrating on Ghana, Papua New Guinea, Nepal and India, the examination will focus on impediments to women's rights created by culture, tradition and discriminatory local customary laws, which remain dominated by systems of patriarchy throughout all aspects of society. Here, national laws specific to WAP will be examined, building on the recognition of legal pluralism, and will, subsequently, assess the effectiveness of these laws, examining why, despite the introduction of specific legislation, there remains a prevalence, if not an increase in the number of WAP related incidents. These four countries were chosen primarily due to the prevalence of WAP within all four countries, but also, due to their cultural diversity, so that they

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[1] Definition of 'Marginalisation' (Collins Dictionary Online) <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/marginalize> accessed 8 December 2015
[2] Poverty and Social Exclusion, 'Social Exclusion' (PSE 2012) <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/definitions-poverty/social-exclusion> accessed 8 December 2015.

represent a more comparative study of witchcraft within different cultures. This allows for an examination into how the witchcraft discourse manifests itself within different societies, identifying any common themes and differences. From this, we are able to ascertain whether the nature of the witchcraft discourse is inherently gendered, how effective the law is, both national and international human rights law, in protecting women from witchcraft related violence and persecution and whether witchcraft accusations are used as a marginalisation mechanism of women, in order to preserve patriarchal norms.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

This book seeks to build upon the literature already present within the area of witchcraft accusations and persecution against women and challenge the patriarchal systems, which dominate cultural beliefs. Chapter one explores the concepts of superstition and evil. It initially analyses the concept of superstition, discussing definitions of superstition, before categorising the different types of practices that fall under the umbrella of superstition. The latter half of the chapter examines the concept of evil, which will be traced historically, before investigating the link between evil and agency. This chapter will highlight and acknowledge the link between evil, superstition and witchcraft, providing the foundation for the more detailed discussion of witchcraft in chapter three. Without this foundation, it would be impossible to fully understand the basis of witchcraft beliefs.

Chapter two examines the phenomenon of witchcraft. It initially explores the history of witchcraft, before examining the phenomenon of witchcraft within the 21st century. This involves an analysis of differing terminologies associated with witchcraft, in order to ascertain a working definition that will be used throughout the book. The chapter then considers three explanations for the existence of witchcraft beliefs before, subsequently examining the dynamics of witchcraft accusations, the perpetrators and propagators of witchcraft beliefs and the social repercussions of witchcraft accusations. The purpose of this chapter is to primarily identify the nature of witchcraft within society, before providing an understanding of where the witchcraft came from, what it is and how it is believed to work. Thus, it is imperative to primarily identify the nature of witchcraft within society, as without identification, interpretation of the phenomenon and its impact on women would be impossible.

Chapter three examines the gendering of witchcraft, exploring how and why women are accused of witchcraft and the effects of such accusations on the enjoyment of human rights. The relationship between violence against women and the traditions of culture and custom is examined, focusing explicitly on witchcraft accusations, in order to ascertain whether such accusations are used as a marginalising tool, to keep women within their traditional roles in society. In order to establish this, the focus is on

four case studies, Ghana, Nepal, India and Papua New Guinea to examine the way the witchcraft discourse manifests itself within different societies. Thus, common themes and differences within this discourse will be identified and examined in order to see whether the nature of the witchcraft discourse is inherently gendered.

Chapters four and five explore the legal protection of women's rights. Chapter four explores the protection of women's rights under international human rights law. It examines international and regional human rights instruments relevant to witchcraft accusations and the persecution of women. It then studies related United Nations and intergovernmental bodies and their jurisprudence on witchcraft, in relation to India, Nepal, Ghana and Papua New Guinea, analysing these provisions, in order to assess the effectiveness of international human rights law in protecting women from witchcraft accusations and persecutions. Chapter five explores the issues surrounding the legal protection of women from WAP, evaluating the domestic provisions and the enforcement of existing legislation on a national level. Focusing on the four states, Nepal, India, Ghana and Papua New Guinea, this chapter examines the barriers to women's rights on a domestic level, posed by culture, tradition and local customary laws, and dominated by patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that defend and propagate the witchcraft discourse.

Chapter six is the concluding chapter of the book and provides a summary of all the arguments referred to in the preceding chapters. It then re-visits the earlier assertion that WAP is being used as a marginalisation mechanism against women. It offers answers to the questions raised and makes recommendations on how to improve the law.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This book examines the concepts of superstition, evil, witchcraft and gender together with an examination of both national and international law. As this book deals with a critical examination of the rights of women, the theoretical framework that informs this work is feminist theory, specifically feminist legal methodology. Feminist theory is the exploration of inequality in respect of gender relations and is utilised to understand how gender inequality manifests itself in both the public sphere and in the private sphere. The book draws on feminist commentary, in order to expose inadequacies within international law, at both its conception and in later developments, revealing the jurisprudentially masculine characteristics inherent within the system, which prevent women's assimilation.[3] Men have developed international human rights and the legal instruments, which protect them.[4] Accordingly, they have not been created to be receptive to the experiences of women. This is particularly noticeable when examining the gender, a socially constructed concept.[5] Gender refers to much more than the simplistic outlook that one is either a male or a female; it denotes the social and psychological characteristics that are stereotypically connected to being masculine or feminine.[6] Thus, women are stereotypically depicted as being emotional, willing and calm, whilst men are portrayed as rational, aggressive and driven.[7] Where sex

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[3] Karen Engle, 'International Human Rights and Feminisms: When Discourses Keep Meeting', in Doris Buss and Andreena Manji, *International Law: Modern Feminist Approaches* (Hart Publishing 2005), 47.

[4] Rebecca J Cook (ed) *Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives* (University of Pennsylvania 1994), 10.

[5] For a more detailed discussion on gender and CEDAW see Simone Cusack, 'The CEDAW as a legal framework for transnational discourses on gender stereotyping' in Anne Hellum and Henriette Sinding Aasen, *Women's Human Rights: CEDAW in International, Regional and National Law* (CUP 2013) 124 – 157 and Sandra Fredman, 'Engendering socio-economic rights' in in Anne Hellum and Henriette Sinding Aasen, *Women's Human Rights: CEDAW in International, Regional and National Law* (CUP 2013), 217-241.

[6] Susan L. McCammon, David Knox and Caroline Schacht, Choices in Sexuality (3rd edn, Atomic Dog Publishing 2007), 112.

[7] Ibid.

refers to the biological difference between being male or female, gender is a term, which has been socially constructed, dependent on social categories other than sex.[8] Social construction is a practice whereby we define and identify people and situations inconsistently so that we are able to assimilate our observations with our social beliefs.[9] Therefore, it is not the difference *per se*; it is the way in which the difference is portrayed within society. Gendered concepts of masculinity and femininity are, thus, incorporated into legal rules and structures, silencing the voices of women and reinforcing the 'globally observed dominion of women by men.'[10] It is these gendered interpretations, relied upon by the international human rights system, which have overemphasised women's role as a mother and wife, thus, relegating women to the private sphere.[11] For women, the private sphere sanctions violence and abuse. The concept of patriarchy and the devaluation of women, although displayed differently throughout distinct societies, is a universal dilemma.[12] Abhorrent practices, such as WAP should not just be accepted, because of social obligations to conform to traditions upheld by society. Culture does not construct society; it is society that constructs culture. If the equality of women is not part of a culture, society has the ability to change this. Culture and tradition are not static concepts; they are dynamic. We have the power to change tradition and culture and the way in which people live their lives. This is something that people quite often forget.

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[8] Charles Zastrow and Karen K Kirst-Ashman, *Understanding Human Behaviour and the Social* Environment (Cengage Learning 2010), 372.

[9] Laura Kramer, *The sociology of gender: A brief introduction* (3rd edn, OUP 2005), 3.

[10] Charlesworth, Chinkin and Wright, 'Feminist Approaches to International Law,' 618.

[11] Ibid., 636.

[12] Ibid.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and People's Rights
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAT	Convention against Torture
CCPR	Human Rights Committee
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CSM	Cerebral Spinal Meningitis
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DEVAW	Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ESP	Extrasensory Perception
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GA	General Assembly
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICHRP	International Council on Human Rights Policy
IHEU	International Humanist and Ethical Union
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
MOGSCP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
NCW	National Commission for Women
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OBD	Other Backward Classes
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PPR Nepal	Forum for the Protection of People's Rights, Nepal
SR	Special Rapporteur
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations

UNAIDS   Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP   United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF   United Nations International Children's Emergency
            Fund
UN Women   United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the
            Empowerment of Women

UPR   Universal Periodic Review
VAW   Violence Against Women
WAP   Witchcraft Accusations and Persecution
WHRIN   Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adivasi: Scheduled Tribes

Aghori: A tribe of monks from Varanasi, India who engage in cannibalistic rituals and live near cremation/burial sites. They are believed to have the ability to predict the future and perform evil prophecies

Asuras: Powerful demons (Hinduism)

Benge: Red powder contrived from a forest creeper mixed with water to form poisonous mixture, known as a poison oracle

Black magic: Magic involving the summoning of evil spirits for evil purposes

Caste system: A hereditary class structure present within Hinduism

Cathars: A heretical medieval Christian sect which professed a form of Manichaean dualism, the battle between good and evil, and sought to achieve great spiritual purity

Chaupadi: Social tradition in Nepal where women are sent to live in animal sheds and are deemed untouchable when menstruating. They are prevented from participating in family activities, entering the home or eating foods other than dry food, salt and rice during menstruation

Daayan: Witch (Hinduism)

Dakini: Female supernatural being (Sanskrit)

Dalit: Oppressed or Untouchable. Member of caste system located outside of the four main castes

Deliverance: The act of being set free from demons or evil spirits

Defanging: Removal of teeth

Demonology: The study of demons or demonic beliefs

Deuki: Ancient custom practiced in far western region of Nepal, where young girls are offered to the local Hindu temple to gain religious merit

Devadasi: Ancient Indian custom where young girls are offered to the local Hindu temple to gain religious merit

Dhan-Khaane: Nepalese practice of taking money from the bride's family

Divination: The art of obtaining information about the future via communication with the supernatural

Dualism: The belief that the universe comprises of two basic opposing principles of good and evil

Exorcism: Religious/Spiritual practice of removing demons and spiritual entities from people possessed by these

Evil: The antithesis of good in all its principal senses

Evil Eye: Belief that someone can project harm by simply looking at another individual or their property

Hausman: House specifically for males in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. They are kept away from the female population found in the main village and are very significant to every village, clan and tribe, where elders teach cultural norms and values

Iblis: Arabic word for Devil

Jhuma: The practice of separating a daughter from her family and placing her in the service of a Buddhist monastery

Jinn: Spirit (Islam)

Jus cogens: Latin terminology meaning 'compelling law' describing a body of peremptory norms from which no derogation is permitted

Juju: Black Magic (West African)

**Local customary
Laws:**   Laws or standards based on traditional and religious values that have become established within specific communities

Malefica: Feminine form of *Maleficium*

Maleficium: Malicious harm or witchcraft

Maleficus: Masculine form of *Maleficium*

Marginalisation: The relegation of individuals or groups of individuals to the fringes of society with the intention of subordinating and isolating them from the rest of the group. Members of the marginalised group are often denied access to rights, often connected to the characteristics shared within this group, for example, gender, social class, religious beliefs etc.; thus, the group is prevented from participating fully in all aspects of economic, political, social and cultural life[13]

Monotheism: The belief in one God

Muti: Form of traditional magic medicine (South Africa)

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[13] 'Social Exclusion' (2012)

Necklacing: Placing a tyre around someone/thing and setting it alight

Pantheism: The belief that regards the universe as a manifestation of God i.e. no belief in an anthropomorphic God

Patriarchy: The manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general[14]

Payback: Form of retaliation

Personal laws: Personal laws are region-specific to South Asia, pertaining to matters of family law and are explicitly divided in terms of religion or ethnicity

Pricker: A person who looked for a 'witch's mark' (section of the skin that does not bleed) by pricking the skin with a needle in order to ascertain whether the person was a witch

Polytheism: The worship or belief in multiple gods usually assembled into a pantheon of gods and goddesses, along with their own religions and rituals. Polytheists do not always worship all the gods equally, but can be **henotheists**, specializing in the worship of one particular god, or **kathenotheists**, worshiping different gods at different times

Protestant Reformation: 16th century European movement aimed at the reformation of the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. As hopes of reformation diminished, Protestants separated from Roman Catholicism, resulting in the diverse formation of protestant denominations seen today. For example, Lutheran Churches in Germany, Scandinavia,

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[14] Marilyn French, *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals* (Ballantine Books 1986), 239.

Reformed churches in Switzerland and the Netherlands, Presbyterian churches in Scotland, and the Anglican Church in England

Ritual: A religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order

Sabbats: Midnight gatherings

Sanguma: Witchcraft / Sorcery (Papua New Guinea)

Sati: Ancient Indian custom where widows sacrifice themselves on their husbands funeral pyre

Shaman: Religious specialist (originating from Siberia)

Shaytan: Arabic word for Devil

Superstition: A belief providing the relief of anxiety through an irrational perception of the causal relationship between action and outcome

Tindana: Chiefs/Priests with the ability to cleanse people accused of witchcraft (Africa)

Trokosi: Meaning 'slaves of the Gods.' Ghanaian practice whereby virgin girls are given to village priests in order to appease the Gods for crimes committed by family members

Wantok: Tradition based on solidarity where members of tribes protect each other from external threats (Papua New Guinea)

Witchcraft: A natural philosophy by which the relations between men and unfortunate events are explained and a ready and stereotyped means of reacting to such events.

Witchcraft beliefs: A system of values, which regulate human conduct

Witchdoctor: Religious specialist who identifies, cures and protects
                      society from witchcraft

Yetzer Hara: Jewish notion of evil inclination

Fear has many forms … Until you have admitted your own fears to yourself, and have guarded yourself by a difficult effort of will against their myth-making power, you cannot hope to think about many matters of great importance, especially those with which religious beliefs are concerned. Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.[1]

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[1] Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays* (first published 1951, Routledge 2009) 103.

CHAPTER ONE

SUPERSTITION AND THE CONCEPT OF EVIL

Introduction

This chapter will initially explore the concept of superstition. Definitions of superstition will be discussed, albeit it briefly, before categorising the various types of practices, which come under the umbrella of superstition. The chapter will then subsequently address the psychology behind superstition. It is important to highlight here, that the examination of superstition within this book will be limited. Whilst an examination of superstition is necessary to highlight the relationship between superstition and witchcraft beliefs, the concern of this book is witchcraft beliefs. Consequently, a full examination of superstition is beyond the scope of this book. The latter section of this chapter will be spent exploring the concept of evil. This concept will be traced, before investigating the link between evil and agency, which forms the basis for witchcraft beliefs. Thus, the rationale of this chapter is to highlight and acknowledge the link between superstition, evil, agency and witchcraft, in order to provide an understanding of the basis of witchcraft beliefs. This, in turn, will then provide the foundation for the in depth discussion of witchcraft in chapter two.

Superstition

Superstition is based upon notions of luck, chance and fate, arising from attempts to explain nature and human existence within the knowledge people possessed in the distant past.[1] When we think of the word superstition, many will conjure up images of black cats, broken mirrors and Friday 13th. It is suggested, when faced with the question of whether or not they are superstitious, many people will instinctively refute the idea.[2] Yet, on further contemplation, many may admit to quaint and

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[1] Alexander Lesser, 'Superstition' (1931) 28(3) The Journal of Philosophy 618.
[2] Felix E. Planer, *Superstition* (Cassell London 1980), 3.

'harmless' beliefs or rituals that they perform, with little realisation as to why they are doing so. Planer[3] suggests that there are two main questions to consider when looking at superstition. Primarily, we need to discover exactly what the meaning of superstition is. Secondly, it needs to be examined whether superstition is a harmless tradition, or whether this façade actually conceals a hidden mischief.[4]

Definition

Abbott and Sherratt,[5] provide two definitions for superstitious behaviour. The first derives from a study conducted by Skinner,[6] a psychiatrist who published his study on a group of pigeons, which demonstrated that even animals are prone to superstitious behaviour;[7] superstitious behaviours can be defined as 'actions or inactions that are given, in order to affect the probability that a beneficial outcome occurs when, in fact, there is no causal relationship between the action and the outcome.'[8] The second, a stricter definition of superstition referred to as 'supernatural superstition,'[9]

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Kevin R. Abbott and Thomas N. Sherratt, 'The evolution of superstition through optimal use of incomplete information' (2011) 82 Animal Behaviour 92.

[6] Burrhus Frederic Skinner, 'Superstition in the pigeon' 38 *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 168.

[7] Skinner examined the creation of superstition in pigeons by placing sequences of hungry pigeons in a cage. Food was delivered automatically to the pigeons by a machine at regular intervals, regardless of the bird's behaviour. Skinner noted that the pigeons began to associate the delivery of the food with whatever chance actions they had been performing as the food was delivered. Skinner notes, "One pigeon turned counter-clockwise about the cage, making two or three turns between reinforcements. Another repeatedly thrust its head into one of the upper corners of the cage, whilst third developed a 'tossing' response, as if placing its head beneath an invisible bar and lifting it repeatedly. Two further birds developed a pendulum motion of the head and body, in which the head was extended forward and swung from right to left with a sharp movement followed by a somewhat slower return." Skinner, 'Superstition in the pigeon,' 168. Thus, Skinner concluded that the pigeons had behaved as if there were a causal relation between their behaviour and the deliverance of food, despite there being no causal link between the two. Essentially, the pigeons believed that their actions had influence upon when the food was provided.

[8] Abbott and Sherratt, 'The evolution of superstition through optimal use of incomplete information.'

[9] Bruce Hood, *Supersense: From Superstition to Religion – the Brain Science of Belief* (HarperCollins 2009).

is where, 'there are no rational grounds to believe in a relationship between action and outcome.'[10] This definition is supported by Planer,[11] who attributes two interacting and distinctive elements to the meaning of superstition. The first, 'is a belief in influences and events that are incapable of being justified on rational grounds.'[12] Rationality has proved contentious for some academics[13] who argue that what is rational to one person may be completely irrational to another. Moreover, can every irrational belief be categorised as superstitious? Planer[14] contends that the inclusion of a second element into the definition of superstition, distinguishes between such simple irrational beliefs and superstitious belief. This element is fear.[15] Thus, taking all these explanations into account, I will define superstition as a belief providing the relief of anxiety through an irrational perception of the causal relationship between action and outcome.

Categorisation

Before discussing the psychological element of superstition in more detail, I will categorise the various components, which fall under the umbrella of superstition. Planer[16] categorises superstition into four basic categories; prediction of the future, which covers all attempts at divining future events, such as astrology, clairvoyance and extrasensory perception (ESP); the world of spirits, which comprises of beliefs in demons, devils, spirits, ghosts and reincarnation; magic, which covers beliefs in exorcism, faith healing, sorcery and witchcraft; and finally religion.[17] However, Planer's categorisation of superstition is problematic when looking at the latter three categories. The difficultly lies in the attempt to distinguish between magic, the spirit world and religion, due to the closely related nature of these components. Thus, when looking at witchcraft, it becomes difficult to distinguish the notion of witchcraft as solely a constituent of magic, when witchcraft also has relationships with both religion and the spirit world. Moreover, the use of the term 'magic' conjures up its own issues.

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[10] Abbott and Sherratt, 'The evolution of superstition through optimal use of incomplete information,' 92.
[11] Planer, *Superstition.*
[12] Ibid., 4.
[13] Lesser, 'Superstition.'
[14] Planer, *Superstition,* 5.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 7.
[17] Ibid.

As Martin suggests, the term 'magic' is misleading, often used to describe activities which are, 'in fact misunderstandings of nature.'[18]

Hood[19] restricts superstition into two main categories; religious supernatural beliefs, which encompasses Planer's three categories, the world of spirits, magic and religion; and secular supernatural beliefs, to include ESP, telepathy and those contained in Planer's first category, prediction of the future. This categorisation is certainly more workable, allowing the relationships between religious supernatural beliefs to remain, whilst making the clear distinction between religious and secular beliefs. It is important to note that within both categorisations, the distinction is clearly made between superstitious beliefs and religious beliefs. As highlighted by Hood, 'all religions are based on supernatural beliefs, but not all supernatural beliefs are based on religion.'[20] This distinction becomes necessary when analysing each type of superstition. Religious supernatural beliefs are considered sacrosanct and largely unchallengeable, due to their belief in entities, such as witches, spirits and Gods. As these are not real in terms of measurable material existence, it is argued that such beliefs are beyond the realm of scientific analysis due to their 'miraculous' properties.[21] Conversely, many secular supernatural beliefs have been scientifically studied, and, generally rejected by conventional science.[22] Utilising the categories laid down by Hood, witchcraft can be positioned within the scope of religious supernatural beliefs. As observed by Stark, 'In the beginning, the Church used the term "superstition" not only to condemn various forms of magic but also in the modern sense that these beliefs and practices were irrational and false.'[23] Whilst religion plays a substantial role in the existence of superstition, it is important to note other reasons for the existence of superstitious belief, for example societal and cultural elements. As discussed in chapter two, family disputes over property, land rights of women and village/gender/ culture conflicts

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[18] Dale B. Martin, Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians (Harvard University Press 2009), 10.

[19] Hood, *Supersense: From Superstition to Religion – the Brain Science of Belief.*

[20] Ibid., 57.

[21] Ibid., 58; Leonore Loeb Adler and Uwe Peter Gielen, *Cross-cultural topics in Psychology* (2nd ed. Praeger Publishers 2001), 186.

[22] See Nathalia L. Gjersoe and Bruce M. Hood 'The supernatural guilt trip does not take us far enough' (2006) 29 Behavioural and Brain Sciences 473-474; Chris Carter, *Science and Psychic Phenomena: The Fall of the House of Skeptics* (Inner Traditions 2012).

[23] Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism led to the Reformations, Science, Witch-hunts and the End of Slavery* (Princeton 2003), 228.