Witchcraft and Human Rights: Past, Present, Future

An international conference

Lancaster University

10-11 January 2019

Programme
Background

Over 400 years ago twelve unfortunate women were accused of witchcraft and hanged in Lancaster. Today, horrific human rights abuses linked to certain manifestations of beliefs in witchcraft abound across the world. The cases do not respect any geographical boundaries and are widely believed to be increasing in scale. It is striking that, of the 1460 cases of abuse and harmful practices linked to the concept of “witchcraft” in the UK in the period 2016-2017, the highest concentration was in Lancashire, where this conference will take place.

The situation of ritual killings or muti murders of persons with albinism in several countries in Africa, the violations linked to so-called child witches being abandoned to live on the streets of Nigeria and the situation of women being accused of sorcery in Papua New Guinea and set on fire, jointly and severally amount to some of the most challenging human rights issues of the 21st century. There is an urgent need to draw upon a number of disciplines and cross-regional perspectives to develop a common language and understanding of the issues, and to identify preventative strategies at national and international levels.

This international conference forms a core component of wider work being carried out by UN bodies, academics and activists highlighting the scale of human rights abuses involving harmful practices related to certain beliefs in witchcraft.

One main goal is to work towards mainstreaming the issue into the UN system and ultimately to put a stop to these harmful practices.

In addition, the two-day event will provide further impetus and practical guidance to numerous international, regional and national mechanisms, academics and civil society actors that have been working to raise awareness and understanding of these challenging issues.

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1 The working definition of ‘witchcraft’ for the purposes of this programme and to drive discussion at the conference is: The ‘practice of magic, especially black magic; use of spells.’ This is taken from the Oxford Dictionary as a ‘neutral’ starting point for discussion. The focus of the conference is on harm from certain manifestations of belief in witchcraft. We recognize that not all beliefs in witchcraft are linked to harmful practices and that many are positive and nurturing. Ultimately, we hope this conference will guide stakeholders to a more fitting definition in light of the Objectives of the Conference outlined below.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the conference are:

1. To identify, understand and draw upon lessons learned from countering harmful practices related to certain manifestations of beliefs in witchcraft across different continents and time periods.

2. To identify, at a preliminary level, solutions needed to prevent harmful practices related to certain manifestations of beliefs in witchcraft.

3. To feed into the wider work of international, regional and national bodies – including governmental and non-governmental organizations - in raising awareness of, and finding sustainable solutions to human rights violations, in particular certain manifestations of beliefs in witchcraft.

Key Themes

The key themes of the conference are:

- Definitions/ terminological issues of “witchcraft” including but not limited to:
  - Accusations
  - Ritual attacks
  - Spiritual abuse
- Literary, historical and cultural representations of harmful practices related to certain witchcraft beliefs and its victims
- Witchcraft and human rights
- Witchcraft and public health
- Witchcraft and gender
- Faith-based perspectives on witchcraft
- UK experiences of working on harmful practices related to beliefs in witchcraft and spirit possession
- Identifying good practice in combatting human rights abuses linked to certain beliefs in witchcraft
  - Prevention measures
  - Protection measures
  - Accountability measures
- Methodologies for studying this field
Keynote Speakers

Ms Ikponwosa Ero, United Nations Independent Expert on Albinism

In June 2015, Ms Ikponwosa Ero was designated the first UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism. The vision of her mandate is driven by the cross-cutting principle of the UN Sustainable development goals: “leaving no one behind...starting with the furthest behind first.” Ikponwosa Ero has over a decade of experience in the research, policy development, and practice of human rights concerning persons with albinism. She has advised organizations and governments around the world on human rights concerning persons with albinism. As the International Advocacy and Legal Officer for Under the Same Sun, an international organization with a focus on albinism, she developed strategic initiatives involving regional and international human rights mechanisms, prepared guiding documents, and oversaw the implementation of recommendations made by the UN and other human rights organizations. Ikponwosa Ero is the author of numerous papers and articles, particularly with regards to applicable legal frameworks as well as the development and implementation of special measures to facilitate the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism.

Dr Fiona Hukula, Senior Research Fellow and Building Safer Communities Program Leader at NRI, Papua New Guinea

Dr Fiona Hukula is a Senior Research Fellow and Building Safer Communities Program Leader at the PNG New Guinea National Research Institute (PNGNRI). She holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of St Andrews, a Masters in International Criminology from the University of Sheffield, and a BA in Anthropology from Victoria University of Wellington. Having started in 1998 at the NRI as a project research officer, she is a career policy and social researcher with over twenty years’ experience. She has authored and co-authored various publications relating to crime, urban issues and gender violence in PNG. Her research interests are in the area of urban studies, gender and socio-legal studies. Dr Hukula represents the PNG NRI on high-level national committees such as the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) and the National Action Plan against Sorcery Accusation and Related Violence (NAP SARV). She serves on the board of the NGO Peace Foundation Melanesia and is a Commissioner of the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission.

Professor Ronald Hutton, Professor of History, University of Bristol

Ronald Hutton is Professor of History at the University of Bristol. He was educated at Cambridge and then Oxford, and held a fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford, before moving to Bristol University in 1981. He is a leading authority on history of the British Isles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on ancient and medieval paganism and magic, and on the global context of witchcraft beliefs. He is also considered the leading historian of the ritual year in Britain and of modern paganism. Professor Hutton is a prolific author and his books include, among others: The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy (1991), The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft (1999), Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination (2001), Witches, Druids and King Arthur (2003), The Druids: A History (2007), Pagan Britain (2013), and The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present (2017).
The Location

The conference will take place in the historic city of Lancaster, the site of the most famous English witch-trials in 1612.

Overlooking the beautiful English Lake District, Lancaster University, which is ranked in the top 10 UK Universities, provides the ideal backdrop for the conference.

Conference delegates will be able to visit local historic sites and gain a deeper understanding of the factors behind the persecution of the so-called Lancashire witches.

Accommodation

A wide-range of accommodation is available close to the university. From affordable options in student halls, to mid-range bed and breakfast, to the comfortable Lancaster House Hotel on the doorstep of the University, there are options to meet all needs and budgets.

For further information, please visit: https://www.conferences.lancs.ac.uk/bedandbreakfast/

Transport

Lancaster University is set in 560 acres of beautiful parkland and lies approximately three miles south of the City of Lancaster. The campus is easily accessible via road and rail and is within 70 miles of Manchester's International Airport. For further travel information, please see: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/contact-and-getting-here/maps-and-travel/

Taxis can be booked from Lancaster city centre to the university campus for between £8 and £10 for a single journey.

848 Taxis: Telephone 01524 848848

Lancaster and Morecambe taxis: Telephone 01524 32090 or 01524 35666
Activities

Thursday 10th - Thursday 17th January

Photographic Exhibition ‘From Horror to Hope’:
Witchcraft and Human Rights,
Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster University

We are delighted to host this photographic exhibition to coincide with the conference. Launched at the UN Human Rights Council headquarters in Geneva in September 2018, the exhibition is now travelling between venues internationally.

Friday 11th January at 7pm

Witches Walk

Join a guided tour of Lancaster castle and take a look at one of England’s most famous stories of witchcraft and the part Lancaster played in the trial and execution of the notorious ‘Lancashire Witches’.

After the walk, enjoy a drink at a traditional 15th century English pub – The Golden Lion – the place where locals believe the Lancashire witches had their final drink before being taken up the hill from the pub and hanged.

Conference Fees

1. £240 - 2-day conference registration for delegates resident in the global north. Registration fee includes refreshments and lunch on both days, and the conference dinner.

2. £140 - 2-day conference registration for delegates resident in the global south / postgraduate students. Registration fee includes refreshments and lunch on both days, and the conference dinner.

3. £100 - Day delegate rate. Registration fee includes refreshments and lunch. Please note - this rate does not include the conference dinner.

4. £50 - Postgraduate student day delegate rate. Registration fee includes refreshments and lunch. Please note - this rate does not include the conference dinner.

Conference Programme: Thursday 10\textsuperscript{th} January 2019

\textbf{8.30-9.30}

\textbf{Registration, Coffee and Welcome}
Room 1: Private Dining Room

\textbf{9.30-11.00}

\textbf{Panel 1: Transcultural Historical Perspectives \#1}
Chair – Will Pooley
Room 1: Private Dining Room

\textit{Some political origins of English witch-hunting: 1558-1566}
Lewis Brennen, University of Southampton, United Kingdom

\textit{Anti-witchcraft laws in the British Western Pacific 1877-1980: An episode in the history of strategies to end witchcraft-related violence}
Daniel Midena, University of Queensland, Australia

\textit{Medicine killings, abduction of people with albinism, wealth and prosperity in North Malawi}
Denis Mwiba, University of Livingstonia, Malawi

\textbf{Panel 2: Responses to Human Rights Abuses Linked to Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices}
Chair – Gary Foxcroft
Room 2: Marketplace

\textit{Understanding and responding to abuses linked to faith and belief}
Sagal Warsame and Leethen Bartholemew, National FGM Centre

\textit{Witchcraft and responses: Exploring the potential for reintegration in West Nile, North West Uganda}
Elizabeth Storer, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom

\textit{Witchcraft, albinism and human rights: Evidence from a mixed methods study}
Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham, Barb Astle, IK Ero, Kristi Panchuk, Emma Strobell and Duncan Dixon, Trinity Western University, Canada

\textbf{Panel 3: Witchcraft and Human Rights}
Chair – Miranda Forsyth
Room 3: FASS Meeting Room 1-2

\textit{Beliefs, the Law and Witches}
Kirsty Brimelow QC, Barrister

\textit{Plotting the Daakan Pratha (Practice of Witchcraft) in Dahod and Panchmahal Districts of the Indian State of Gujarat: The Event/s of Nomination and Modalities of Intervention}
Sarjoo Shah, IIT Bombay, India
Witchcraft Accusations and Human Rights: Agency and Victimhood in Northern Ghana
Leo Igwe, Human Rights advocate, Founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement

Everybody’s Business, Screening and presentation of a short film
Philip Gibbs, Papua New Guinea

11.00-11.30  Coffee
Room 1: Private Dining Room

11.30-13.00

Panel 4: Transcultural Historical Perspectives #2
Chair – Marion Gibson
Room 1: Private Dining Room

Violence against suspected witches in France 1790-1940
Will Pooley, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

The oral tradition of the witch
Jannie Uhre Ejstrud, Curator, VejleMuseerne, Denmark

19th Century American Romantic Witches
Ines Tadeu, University of Madeira, Portugal

Panel 5: Witchcraft Beliefs and Gender
Chair - Sam Spence
Room 2: Marketplace

Witchcraft, human rights and gender
Amit Anand and Preethi Lolaksha Nagaveni, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

‘You rarely hear of wizards. It is witches you must watch out for’: The gendering of evil in Nigerian Christian discourse
Naomi Richman, Oxford University, United Kingdom

Raising Awareness of Witch hunting and finding sustainable solutions to human rights violations
Sashiprava Bindhani, Commissioner for Information, Orisha State, India

Panel 6: Research Methodologies
Chair - Elvis Imafidon
Room 3: FASS Meeting Room 1-2

Measuring the harm caused by sorcery accusations and related violence
Miranda Forsyth, Australian National University, Australia

The methodology of rationality: Capturing a West African witch in New York City
Jane Parish, Keele University, United Kingdom

13.00-14.00  Lunch
Room 1: Private Dining Room

14.00-15.30

Panel 7: Muti murders and ritual attacks
Chair - Christo Geoghegan
Room 1: Private Dining Room

Heads roll: Hindu Shakta Tantra and witch violence
Sravana Borkataky-Varma, University of North Carolina, United States of America

Albinism, Witchcraft and Public Health: Questions and Intersections in Tanzania
Sam Clarke, Standing Voice, United Kingdom and Tanzania

The Challenge of Combining Agendas: Albinism and witchcraft at the UN Human Rights Council
Charlotte Baker, Lancaster University and Sam Spence, University of Bolton, United Kingdom

Panel 8: Exploring the Impacts of Beliefs in Witchcraft
Chair - Laura Hamblin-Opaluwa
Room 2: Marketplace

Oppression-Alienation-Protest Discourse: The Unique Case of Witchcraft Accusations in Jalpaiguri, India
Soma Chauduri, University of Michigan

New perspectives on the effects of witchcraft accusations on non-accused siblings
Leethen Bartholomew, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Beliefs about people with albinism in Uganda: A qualitative study
Julie Taylor, University of Birmingham; Patricia Lund, Coventry University; Caroline Bradbury-Jones, Jane Betts, Advantage Africa and Peter Ogik, Source of the Nile Union of Persons with Albinism, Uganda

Panel 9: Witchcraft and African Traditional Beliefs in Trafficking of African Women for the European Sex Industry
Chair - Jean Burke
Room 3: FASS Meeting Room 1-2

Witchcraft, African religious rituals and global entrepreneurial spirit: Trafficking of African women for the European Sex Industry
Anne Kubai, Uppsala University, Sweden and Ana Dols Garcia, Universidad de Extremadura, Spain

Oath Bondage as a coercive mechanism: legal and judicial considerations
Ana Dols Garcia, Independent researcher, Spain

On the Predicament of the Daughters and their vital resources
Simona Taliani, University of Turin, Italy
15.30-16.00  Coffee  
Room 1: Private Dining Room  

16.00-17.30  

Panel 10: Witchcraft Beliefs and Public Health  
Chair – Lewis Brennen  
Room 1: Private Dining Room  

‘We ask for them to be returned back by taking them to the sacred forest and make them disappear by burying them and make it secret’  
Sarah Snow, Medical Assistance Sierra Leone, and Mary Penn-Timity, Sierra Leone Autistic Society  

The Curandero murders in Peru  
Christo Geoghegan, Documentary Photographer and Filmmaker, United Kingdom  

Disbanding the Witchcraft Tradition  
Dinesh Mishra, Human rights defender, India  

Panel 11: Film screening and discussion  

‘Branded: The True Story of Mardoche Yembi’ – Screening and presentation of a short film  
Jordan Bunton Williams and Mardoche Yembi  
Room 3: FASS Meeting Room 1-2  

17.30-18.30  

Keynote 1:  
Professor Ronald Hutton (University of Bristol)  
European Witch Hunting in the World Context  
Chair - Charlotte Baker  
Room 1: Private Dining Room  

18.30  
Wine Reception and Photo Exhibition  
Peter Scott Gallery  

19.30  
Conference dinner  
Room 1: Private Dining Room
Conference Programme: Friday 11th January 2019

8.30-10.00

Panel 12: Literary and Artistic Representations of Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices
Chair - Charlotte Baker
Room 1: Private Dining Room

Sarah Moore and the Witch Museum: Witches and witchcraft beliefs in historical/contemporary fiction
Syd Moore, Writer, United Kingdom

Malleable malefice: Changes of genre and role in early modern and modern stories of witchcraft
Marion Gibson, University of Exeter, United Kingdom

Witchcraft and queerness in contemporary art
Kevin Talmer Whiteneir Jr., The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, United States of America

Panel 13: Preventing and Addressing Children as Victims of Witchcraft Accusations: UK
Chair - Leethen Bartholomew
Room 2: Marketplace

Representations of Witchcraft in UK Child Protection: Lessons from case reviews
Maria Clark and Julie Taylor, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom.

The multi-agency response to Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Belief
Inspector Allen Davis, Metropolitan Police Service, United Kingdom

‘This is abuse of children by devil worship, magic, witchcraft and the supernatural’: An exploration of child abuse linked to faith or belief in the UK context
Lisa Oakley, University of Chester, United Kingdom and Justin Humphreys, Thirtyone:Eight

‘The Child and the Abusive Context: Preventing Future Human Rights Abuses
Laura Hamblin, University of East London, United Kingdom

Panel 14: Faith-based Perspectives and Approaches to Witchcraft Beliefs #1
Chair - Stephanie Mooney
Room 3: FASS Meeting Room 1-2

Violent Skepticism: Modern Christian witch trials in Papua New Guinea
Chloe Nahum-Claudel, The London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom

Faith-based Perspectives on Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices
Carolyn Gent, The Bethany Children’s Trust and Stop Child Witch Accusations, United Kingdom

Church and Pastoral Engagements with Child-Witch Accusations in Kinshasa, DRC
Robert Priest, Taylor University, United States of America
**10.00-10.45**

**Keynote 2**  
*Ms Ikponwosa Ero, United Nations Independent Expert on Albinism*  
*Harmful Practices related to Certain Manifestations of Belief in Witchcraft: How the Human Rights Framework provides a powerful approach and comprehensive response*  
Chair - Gary Foxcroft  
Room 1: Private Dining Room

**10.45-11.15**  
**Coffee**  
Room 1: Private Dining Room

**11.15-12.45**

**Panel 15: Preventing and Addressing Abuses Linked to Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices #1**  
Chair - Robert Priest  
Room 1: Private Dining Room

*Reducing Albinism-related Stigma through an Interactive Theatre Intervention in Tanzania: Is an increase in knowledge equal to a decrease in stigmatization?*  
Tijitske de Groot, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

*Why are Academics Useful?*  
Jean La Fontaine, London School of Economics, United Kingdom

*The Search for Solutions: Better understanding the impact of interventions to prevent human rights abuses linked to harmful witchcraft beliefs and practices*  
Gary Foxcroft, Witchcraft & Human Rights Information Network, United Kingdom

**Panel 16: Faith-based Perspectives and Approaches to Witchcraft Beliefs #2**

Chair – Carolyn Gent  
Room 2: Marketplace

*Witchdemonology: The new face of witchcraft in Africa*  
Opoku Onyinah, Professor and Church Leader, Church of the Pentecost, Ghana

*The Magic of Today: Is the belief in magic fundamental to our minds?*  
Eugene Subbotsky, Lancaster University
Panel 17: Role of the Media in Perpetuating and Addressing Harms Linked to Witchcraft Beliefs

Chair – Prospera Tedam
Room 3: FASS Meeting Room 1-2

Media Strategy to Engage Churches and the Public on the issue of Child Witch Accusation in Kinshasa
Stephanie Mooney, Stop the Child Witchcraft Accusation Coalition (SCWA), United Kingdom

Faith-based Perspectives on Human Rights and Witchcraft Beliefs as portrayed in East African Media
Jean Burke, Australian Catholic University, Australia

12.45-13.45 Lunch
Room 1: Private Dining Room

13.45-14.30

Keynote 3
Dr Fiona Hukula, National Research Institute, Papua New Guinea
Research as Activism: An example from Papua New Guinea
Chair - Miranda Forsyth
Room 1: Private Dining Room

14.30-15.00 Coffee
Room 1: Private Dining Room

15.00-16.30

Panel 18: Preventing and Addressing Witchcraft Accusations #2
Chair - Sravana Borkataky-Varma
Room 1: Private Dining Room

Preaching the end of witchcraft accusations
Maimouna Obot, Storychangers NGO, Germany

‘I began to hate myself': Co-producing essential knowledge about witchcraft labelling for social work practice
Prospera Tedam, United Arab Emirates University

The role of worldviews in addressing sorcery accusations and related violence
Miranda Forsyth, Australian National University, Australia and Philip Gibbs, Papua New Guinea
Panel 19: Understanding and Explaining Witchcraft Accusation
Chair – Gary Foxcroft
Room 2: Marketplace

Population structured by witchcraft beliefs in southwestern China
Ruth Mace, University College London, United Kingdom

Witchcraft belief: Testing co-evolution with societal traits
Sarah Peacey, and Ruth Mace, University College London, United Kingdom

Witchcraft as an ideology of difference: Reflections on albinism in African places
Elvis Imafidon, Ambrose Alli University, Nigeria

16.30-17.30

Round table discussion: Identifying solutions
Gary Foxcroft, Ikponwosa Ero, Philip Gibbs, Lisa Oakley, Kirsty Brimelow
Chair - Charlotte Baker
Room 1: Private Dining Room

17.30 Conference close
A note about terminology during the conference

The terms we use in this area can be problematic and undermining of the agendas we are seeking as a group to advocate. We ask speakers to avoid terms such as “witchcraft related harm” as this implies the harm comes from witchcraft rather than from the actions of individuals motivated by certain manifestations of belief in witchcraft. One of the questions we wish to explore throughout the conference is whether we can develop an agreed upon terminology for better understandings and action at global and national levels.

We propose that in the area of accusations speakers refer to “witchcraft accusation related violence/harm” or “sorcery accusation related violence/harm”. This makes it clear the violence or harm comes from the accusation, not from any magical source. Whether sorcery or witchcraft is used is a decision for the speaker. Speakers are also welcome to use the vernacular terms for the particular belief systems and practices they refer to.

In relation to other types of violence and harm stemming from witchcraft beliefs and practices, such as muti killings and other ritual harms, we propose the umbrella term “harmful practices associated with certain manifestations of beliefs in witchcraft.” Speakers are welcome to talk in specific terms about the different facets of that harm.

We are very keen to engage in dialogue about these proposals so please let us know your thoughts or raise any issues with these proposals before or during the conference.

Presentations

Presentations should be no more than 20 minutes long to allow plenty of time for discussion. Chairs will stop speakers who exceed 20 minutes, so please keep this in mind when preparing.

A laptop and projector will be provided in each room. Presenters should bring their slides on a USB stick / pen drive so that they can be accessed easily on the day. Presenters should upload slides in the break prior to their panel.

A booklet of abstracts and biographical information will be circulated in advance of the conference so that delegates can decide which panels to attend. Should you wish to move between panels, please do so quietly to avoid too much disruption to speakers.

Tables will be provided should you wish to distribute leaflets, reports or copies of research materials to other delegates. Blackwells will also run a book stall featuring publications that may be of interest.

Outputs

The Conference Organizers will be preparing a conference report and are planning a number of publications as an outcome of the conference. We will contact presenters after the conference with further details and an invitation to contribute.
**Organising Committee**

Dr Charlotte Baker (Lancaster University)

Ms Ikponwosa Ero (UN Independent Expert on Albinism)

Dr Miranda Forsyth (Australian National University)

Mr Gary Foxcroft (Director, Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network)

Dr Lisa Oakley (University of Chester; Chair of the National Working Group for Child Abuse linked to Faith and Belief)

Dr Sam Spence (University of Bolton)

**Sponsors**

We wish to express our grateful thanks to our sponsors:

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