



CAS-E

Alternative Rationalities and
Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective

CAS-E Newsletter 02/2024

CAS-E undertakes the investigation of the apparent persistence of practices aimed at predicting, controlling, managing, and manipulating contingent life events, despite social and cultural discourses that delegitimize them. CAS-E opens up a global network of research on such practices from a transcultural perspective by bringing together researchers and research project from all over the world. With this newsletter, we are happy to introduce some of the people from our CAS-E network, the research and the events taking place at CAS-E, our CAS-E blog and publications.



Network

People



Dr Lennert Gesterkamp

Lennert Gesterkamp joined CAS-E as Senior Fellow in 2022/23. He is currently working on a proposal for a large conjoint research project on esoteric practices in China between CAS-E, IGPP Freiburg, and Kunming University, tentatively titled "Charting the Unknown".



Dr Ilia Mozias

CAS-E Fellow Ilia Mozias examines the practice of internal alchemy in late-imperial and modern China. Specifically, Mozias focuses on the adaptation of alchemical theory and doctrine to modernity, as well as the development of new alternative models of transcendence and immortality.



Dr Juan Rivera

CAS-E Fellow Juan Rivera's ongoing research examines cosmologies among indigenous groups of South America, particularly Quechua-speaking peoples of the highlands. His projects have received the support of the UNESCO, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.



Dr Raquel Romberg

CAS-E Research Coordinator Raquel Romberg is a sociocultural anthropologist and folklorist and author of *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico* (2003) and *Healing Dramas: Divination and Magic in Puerto Rico* (2009).



Dr Darrel Rutkin

CAS-E Fellow Darrel Rutkin is deeply engaged in plumbing the depths of Marsilio Ficino's astrological practices and their philosophico-theurgical engagements, and thus exploring the transformation from medieval to Renaissance in astrology and talismanic magic.

[More CAS-E People](#)



Opportunities

Call for Applications

We are looking for

Junior and Senior Fellows

to join CAS-E for 3 to 12 months from fall 2024.

Requirements

- Applicants should have a degree and a PhD in Cultural or Social Anthropology, Religious Studies, Theology, Sociology of Religion, (Cross-) Regional/-Cultural Studies or in a related interdisciplinary field. We also encourage applications from the field of Natural Sciences.
- The Center has a decidedly contemporary research focus, hence applicants are required to pursue a project on present-day esoteric practices, based on appropriate research methodologies (e.g., fieldwork, interviews, participant observation).
- The Center also invites historically oriented projects that touch upon contemporary esoteric practices (e.g., by focusing on transfer or entangled history), yet going back to no more than the 19th century.
- The Center has a decidedly global research focus, hence fellowship proposals may focus on esoteric practices from all world regions and cultural or religious contexts.
- The working language of CAS-E is English, therefore excellent spoken and written English is required. Furthermore, regular presence at the CAS-E is required.

We offer

- Participation in an interdisciplinary, innovative und prestigious DFG-funded joint research project.
- Access to extensive international networks of high-profile researchers in the social sciences and humanities.
- An open-minded, cooperative team.
Flexible working hours and family-friendly working time schemes.
- Professional support with travel, visa, and accommodation arrangements.
- Travel costs to and from Erlangen at the beginning and end of the stay.
- Travel costs for trips and conferences that are related to the research within CAS-E.

Please find more information on our Center and how to apply [here](#).

Deadline: April 15, 2024

Call for Papers



"The Aesthetics of Esoteric Practices: Materialities, Performances, Senses"

12-14 November, 2024

Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

This conference focuses on the *aesthetics* of esoteric practices through *materialities*, *performances*, and the *senses*. It aims to explore the extent to which esoteric practices are socially and culturally constructed and effective because they are practiced, performed, sensorily perceived and embodied by participants as practitioners as well as spectators.

We invite contributions that address aesthetics of esoteric practices through materialities, performances and senses, from a theoretical, empirical research-based and/or practical perspectives—we also encourage performative contributions that are dedicated to mediating the aesthetics of esoteric practices by making them observable and tangible. The conference will serve as a forum for exchange on whether and how aesthetics play a key role in the success and omnipresence of esoteric practices in contemporary (oc)culture.

Download the call [here](#).

Deadline: May 1, 2024

Call for Workshop Participants

"Weaving the World: Ethnographic Writing Workshop" by Paul Stoller

May 8, 15, and 22, 2024

Hartmannstr. 14, Building D1, Erlangen

The aim of this workshop at CAS-E is to introduce students to the fundamental features and essential practices of writing ethnography and creative non-fiction. The primary objective of the course is to show participants how to sensuously describe ethnographic spaces, sounds and characters. Participants will engage in writing exercises that enable them to "Weave the World," a seamless linkage of sensuous description and social analysis. Participants will also be asked to read examples from the work of writers (including ethnographers) who have, in various ways, successfully used "weaving the world" techniques to evoke places and spaces, develop dialogue and craft character. By the end of the course, participants will have practiced writing strategies that they can use to ensure that their future readers come to know a people who live in a particular place. During the workshop participants will be asked to write culture evocatively. The instructor will outline ethnographic writing practices—the "tricks of the trade." He will then ask the participants to begin to "Weave the World" by writing (1) descriptions of space/place, (2) dialogue and (3) character portraits.

A limited number of places are available for doctoral students and postdocs from FAU and nearby universities. Travel and accommodation are not included. To apply, please send a short profile and reason for participating plus a CV to one of CAS-E's Research Coordinators Dr. Stefanie Burkhardt (stefanie.burkhardt@fau.de) and Dr. Raquel Romberg (raquel.romberg@fau.de).

Deadline: April 1, 2024



Blog

Latest Blog Posts



Translation and the Study of Esotericism

by Birgit Menzel

[Go to blog post.](#)



Śrīvidyā Goes West: Continuities and Transformations in Cross-Cultural Encounters

by Monika Hirmer

[Go to blog post.](#)



Occult Disavowal: A Research Note

by Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm

[Go to blog post.](#)



The shades of emptiness: The Alchemical Teaching of the Master Wei Yao 魏堯

by Ilia Mozias

[Go to blog post.](#)



Chased by Blessings: The Metaphysics of the Olfactory

by James Edmonds

[Go to blog post.](#)



Ghanaian Traditional Religious Divination and American Celebrity in New York City

by Jane Parish

[Go to blog post.](#)

More CAS-E Blog Posts



Events

Lecture Series

During the semester, CAS-E hosts a weekly lecture series, **every Tuesday, 6.15 pm EST** (occasionally also at other times) with presentations by CAS-E Fellows and guests. The lecture series will continue on **April 16, 2024**.

Link for virtual attendance: <https://fau.zoom.us/j/63672581746>

Lecture Series Summer Semester 2024

16.04.2024

Prof. Robert Desjarlais (Sarah Lawrence College, New York), "Walter Benjamin's Berlin Childhood around 2024: Digital Filmmaking and Multimodal Phenomenality"

23.04.2024

Prof. Bron Taylor (University of Florida), "Exhibiting Gaian Animism: How Curators Are Fusing Esotericism, Science, Spirituality, and Promoting Environmental Conservation, at Art & Science Museums Around the World"

30.04.2024

Prof. Pablo Wright (CAS-E Fellow), "Ethnographic Travelogues Through the Argentine Chaco Current Shamanism: Between Healing, Power, and Tradition"

07.05.2024

Dr. Nurul Huda Mohd. Raz Nurul (Kyoto University), "Enemies from Within: Love Magic, Sorcery & Intra-female Violence Among Co-Wives in Malay Polygyny"

14.05.2024

! starts at 5.30 pm CET !

Dr. Stephen Jones, "Li Manshan: Portrait of a Folk Daoist (film screening and discussion)"

21.05.2024

Prof. Dr. Erhard Schüttpeitz (CAS-E Fellow), "The Trajectories of Early Writing Systems and Divination Methods: Some Intercontinental Comparisons"

28.05.2024

Prof. Abimbola Adedokun (CAS-E Fellow), "Die in the Name of Jesus!: The Animating Performances of 'Violent' Prayers"

04.06.2024

Dr. Kalindi Kokal (CAS-E Fellow), "Mystical Regimes of Order: Ritualistic Practices and Conflict Resolution in Everyday Uttarakhand"

11.06.2024

Prof. Dr. Helmut Zander (Université de Fribourg), "How to Globalize a Quintessentially German Practice? Anthroposophy in the Vortex of Globalization"

18.06.2024

Dr. Judith Bachmann (Universität Heidelberg), "Ifá in Comparison: African Tradition, Esotericism and Christianity in the 19th Century"

25.06.2024

Prof. Henrik Bogdan (Universität Göteborg), "What is Contemporary Esotericism? Reflections on Teaching and Supervising Post-Graduate"

02.07.2024

Prof. Dr. Jens Schlieter (Universität Bern), "Esoteric Dimensions of Buddhist Meditation: Reaching Out to Transform Other Peoples' Mind"

09.07.2024

Dr. Stefanie Burkhardt (CAS-E), "Literal Ghosts: African Narratives and Religious Experience as Tools for a Critical Expansion of the 'Spectral Turn'"

16.07.2024

Dr. Darrel Rutkin (CAS-E Fellow), "Marsilio Ficino's Theurgical Astrology: Astrological Theory and Practice at the Root of Modern Esoteric Practices"

Please find the **extended program including the abstracts** [here](#).

More CAS-E Events



Publications

Articles

Aschenbrenner, Lina (2024), "Aesthetic Assemblages: Relational Aesthetics of the Israeli Movement Practice Gaga, Material Religion," in *Material Religion*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2024.2303899>

Graw, Knut (2023). "Migration, Anthropology, and Voice. Notes on a West African Memory," in *Commoning Ethnography* Vol. 5 No. 1 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.26686/ce.v5i1.6835>

Gyimesi, Júlia (2024). "A misinterpreted psychoanalyst: Herbert Silberer and his theory of symbol-formation," in *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 60, e22289. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jhbs.22289>

Isrtatii, Romina and Monika Hirmer (2024). "The Role of Language in Diversifying Knowledge Production: Reflecting on the Experience of Decolonial Subversions as a Multilingual Publishing Platform," in Victoria Odeniyi and Gillian Lazar (eds), *Decolonial Subversions Special Issue: Decolonising the university and the role of linguistic diversity*, 77–95.
http://decolonialsubversions.org/special_issue_2023.html

Book contributions

Burkhardt, Stefanie (2024). "'...and we have fallen apart:' Vom Zerfallen, Verschieben und Aushandeln von Grenzen in Chinua Achebes Things Fall Apart," in Klaus Hock, Claudia Jahnel, and Klaus-Dieter Kaiser (eds), *Mission in Film und Literatur. Band 2: Grenzüberschreitungen: Plots – Akteur:innen – Kontexte*. Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie (VWGTh), 72. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 167–176.

Essays

Aschenbrenner, Lina (2023). "Introduction: on Material and Embodied Power Dynamics and Religion." in *Material Religion*, 19(1), 80–81.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2023.2170108>

Book reviews

Rivera Andía, Juan Javier(2023). "Ethnography and sound: recent methodological efforts in a strongly patrimonialised space," in *Sound Studies*, 9:1, 114-116, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2022.2163800>

Rivera Andía, Juan Javier (2023). "Cushing, Frank Hamilton. 2022. Tenatsali ou l'ethnologue qui fut transformé en Indien. Editado por Patrick Pérez et Frédéric Saumade. Traducido por Éléonore Devevey. Paris: CNRS Éditions," in *Anuário Antropológico*, v.48 n.2 | -1, 194-198.
<https://doi.org/10.4000/aa.11114>

Rivera Andía, Juan Javier (2023). "Vinciane Despret, La Danse du cratérope écaillé. Naissance d'une théorie éthologique," in *L'Homme*, 245, 161-163.
<https://doi.org/10.4000/lhomme.46211>

Rivera Andía, Juan Javier (2023). "Reseña de: MUÑOZ MORÁN, Oscar (ed.): Ensayos de etnografía teórica: Andes. (Madrid: Nola, 2021), 412 pp." in *Disparidades. Revista De Antropología*, 78(2), r025.
<https://dra.revistas.csic.es/index.php/dra/article/view/1042>

Rivera Andía, Juan Javier (2023). "Vilaça, Aparecida: Paletó and Me. Memories of My Indigenous Father. Stanford: Stanford University Press,

2021. 219 pp." in *Anthropos* 118(1), 285-286. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0257-9774-2023-1-285>

Blog posts

Aschenbrenner, Lina (2023). "We Should All Learn *kōkua* and *kāko‘o*," in *Counterpoint Navigating Knowledge* (blog), September 26, 2023.

<https://www.counterpointknowledge.org/we-should-all-learn-kokua-and-kakoo/>

Hirmer, Monika (2023). "Tantra Goes West: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Encounters, Centre–Margin Dynamics and an Insidious Paradox," in *Research Network for the Study of Esoteric Practices* (RENSEP) (blog).

<https://www.rensep.org/private/tantra-goes-west-reflections-on-cross-cultural-encounters-centre-margin-dynamics-and-an-insidious-paradox/>

Exhibition

SURROUNDED BY THE SPIRITS: PAUL STOLLER AND THE SONGHAY JOURNEY TOWARDS WELLBEING

September 29, 2023 – December 1, 2024

Honoring the life work of renowned anthropologist Paul Stoller, Surrounded by the Spirits: Paul Stoller and the Songhay Journey Towards Wellbeing invites us to experience the culture of West Africa, and gain profound insights into holistic healing practices that place us in harmony with the social, natural and spiritual worlds. With rare artifacts from Niger and Ghana, the exhibition examines the varied healing practices of the Songhay people of Niger—including spirit possession, witchcraft and divination, Islamic religious devotion, and traditional medicine. A second retrospective gallery looks at the life of Stoller, who trained as a Songhay sorcerer's apprentice, conducted urban ethnography among the West African diaspora, and is internationally recognized for his evocative and accessible writing style. A professor of anthropology at West Chester University for his entire career, Stoller is the author of over 15 books and the recipient of numerous awards including the Anders Retzius Medal given by the King of Sweden, the highest honor in anthropology.

Attend the exhibition virtually: <https://www.wcupa.edu/sciences-mathematics/anthropologySociology/museum/surrounded-by-the-spirits.aspx>

More CAS-E Publications



DFG Kollegforschungsgruppe „Alternative Rationalities and Esoteric
Practices from a Global Perspective“
Hartmannstr. 14, 91052 Erlangen



CAS-E

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