



CAS-E

Alternative Rationalities and
Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective

CAS-E Newsletter 01/2024

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 Mariano Errichiello

CAS-E alumnus Mariano Errichiello is the Shapoorji Pallonji Lecturer in Zoroastrianism, Co-Chair and Executive Director of the SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies. His research focuses on history, communities, rituals and texts of modern Zoroastrians.



Dr Cecilia Bastos

CAS-E fellow Cecilia Bastos was a postdoctoral researcher in Social Anthropology at UFRJ's National Museum, Brazil. She develops research in anthropology, covering topics such as individualism, subjectivity, embodiment, emotion and spirituality.



Dr Keith Edward Cantú

CAS-E alumnus Keith Edward Cantú is Visiting Assistant Professor at St. Lawrence University and Research Affiliate at the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, where he works on the Transcendence and Transformation Database project.



Dr Dendup Chophel

Bhutanese anthropologist Dendup Chophel, CAS-E alumnus, is a fellow at the Centre for Contemporary Buddhist Studies, University of Copenhagen. He specializes in the intersection of the anthropology of religion, esotericism, ritualism, and social movements and changes in the Himalayas and Bhutan.



Dr Júlia Gyimesi

CAS-E fellow Júlia Gyimesi aims to draw attention to the specific influence of esotericism on psychology by focusing on a contemporary manifestation of esotericism in psychotherapeutics, namely Bert Hellinger's family constellation method.



Dr Monika Hirmer

CAS-E fellow Monika Hirmer investigates how tantric practices change when they travel from South Asian to Western contexts. In particular, Hirmer is interested in uncovering the ontological coordinates that inform such adaptations

[More CAS-E People](#)

Research Projects

Researcher: Bastos, Cecilia

Research Project: *Building Identities among Yoga and Meditation Practitioners in the Middle Classes of South America*

Region: South America

Researcher: Gyimesi, Júlia

Research Project: *A Present-Day Hybridising Reinvention of Esoteric Practices: Bert Hellinger's Family Constellation Therapy*

Region: Hungary, Germany

Researcher: Hirmer, Monika

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

Region: South Asia, Uk And Europe

Researcher: Mozias, Ilia

Research Project: *The Shades of Emptiness: The Alchemical Teaching of The Master Wei Yao 魏堯*

Region: China, Taiwan

Researcher: Rivera, Juan

Research Project: *Indigenous Cosmologies and Esoteric Practices in the Cases of Contemporary Andean Ritual and Music*

Region: South American (particularly the highlands)

[More CAS-E Research Projects](#)



Events



Impressions from the CAS-E Conference 2023

Our second international CAS-E conference took place from November 15 to 17, 2023, at the conference center Forschungscampus Waischenfeld. The conference centered on the discussion of "The Politics of Authenticity in Esoteric Practices." The meeting was divided into five themes, each dealing with a particular principle organizing claims of authenticity, its politics and thus its efficacy: (1) nature and the body as source and resource; (2) margins, Circulations and Boundaries; (3) portability and presence; (4) spatiotemporal origins recovered and remade; and (5) science as legitimizing and delegitimizing means. [Read more.](#)

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 CAS-E fellows and guests. Link for virtual attendance: <https://fau.zoom.us/j/63672581746>

09.01.2024

Prof Dr Birgit Menzel (CAS-E), "Translation and the Study of Esotericism"

16.01.2024

Prof Dr Dominik Müller (FAU, CAS-E), "Hybrid Pathways to Orthodoxy: Esoteric Practices in 'Sharia Compliant' Exorcism"

23.01.2024

Adjunct Prof Dr Iris Gareis (Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main), "Magic and Witchcraft as Cultural Crossroads in the Colonial Andes"

30.01.2024

Dr Monika Hirmer (CAS-E fellow), "Śrīvidyā Goes West: Continuities and Transformations in Cross-Cultural Encounters"

06.02.2024

Prof Danielle Boaz (University of North Carolina), "The Gorilla in the Room: The Right to Practice Animal Sacrifice Amidst Growing Animal Rights Activism"

Some Past Lectures

28.11.2023

Dr Jane Parish (Keele University), "American Idols and West African Spirits: Bewitching Superstars in New York City"

06.12.2023 (special lecture)

Prof Jason Ānanda Josephson-Storm (Williams College), "Through a Dark Prism: Astral Armies, Psychic Surveillance, and The History of Military Occult Research"

19.12.2023

Dr Jesper Sørensen (Aarhus Universitet), "Magic as Social Mediation"

[More CAS-E Events](#)



Blog

Latest Blog Posts



Processes of Production and Transmission of Meanings in the Construction of the Yogic and Meditative Ethos

by Cecilia Bastos

[Go to blog post.](#)



Andean Indigenous Alterity Otherwise: Unnamed, Invisible and Distorted as Violent, Poor or Mystical

by Juan Rivera

[Go to blog post.](#)

More CAS-E Blog Posts



Publications

Exhibition

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

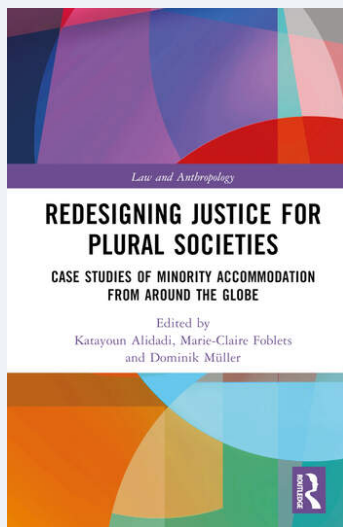
September 29, 2023 – December 1, 2024

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—

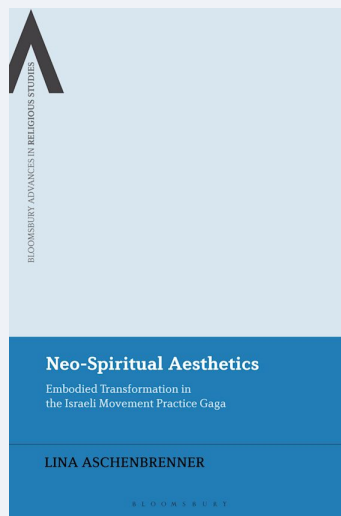
including spirit possession, witchcraft and divination, Islamic religious devotion, and traditional medicine. A second retrospective gallery looks at the life of Stoller, who trained as a Songhay sorcerer's apprentice, conducted urban ethnography among the West African diaspora, and is internationally 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>

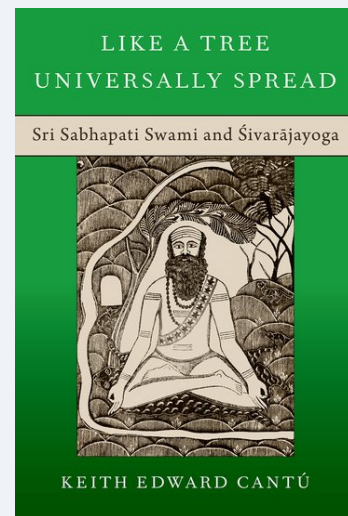
Books



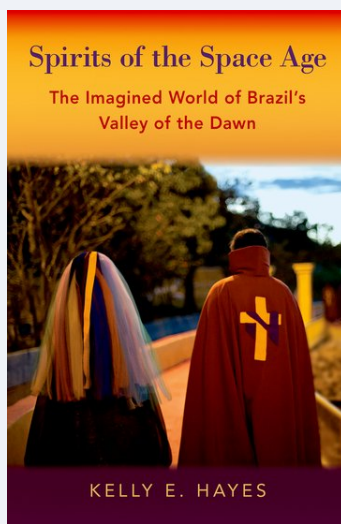
Alidadi, Katayoun, Foblets, Marie-Claire, and Dominik Müller. *Redesigning Justice for Plural Societies. Case Studies of Minority Accommodation from around the Globe*. Routledge 2023.



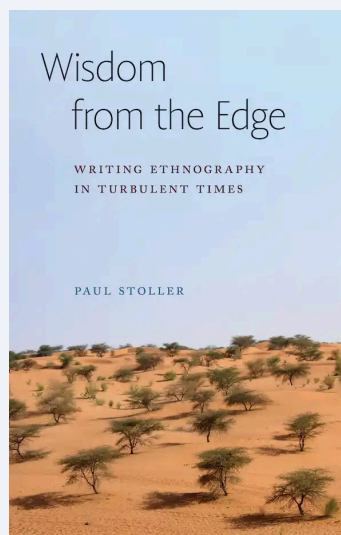
Aschenbrenner, Lina. *Neo-Spiritual Aesthetics. Embodied Transformation in the Israeli Movement Practice Gaga*. Bloomsbury Advances in Religious Studies. Bloomsbury Academic 2023.



Cantú, Keith. *Like a Tree Universally Spread. Sri Sabhapati Swami and Śivarājayoga*. Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism. Oxford University Press 2023.



Hayes, Kelly E. *Spirits of the Space Age. The Imagined World of Brazil's Valley of the Dawn*. Oxford University Press 2023.



Stoller, Paul. *Wisdom from the Edge. Writing Ethnography in Turbulent Times*. Cornell University Press 2023.

Articles

Chophel, Dendup (2023). "Punctuating 'Happiness': Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and the Agenda-Setting of the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Policy in Bhutan," in *Review of Policy Research* 00, 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ropr.12559>

Chophel, Dendup, and J. Phuntsho (2023). "Buddhism and Modernity: Fourth International Vajrayana Conference—An Analytical Report," in *Journal of Global Buddhism* 24(1), 47–53. <https://doi.org/10.26034/lu.jgb.2023.3409>

Otto, Bernd-Christian (2023). "Introduction: Western learned magic as an entangled religion," in *Entangled Religions* 14/3.
<https://doi.org/10.46586/er.14.2023.10457>

Otto, Bernd-Christian. "Conjuring Planetary Spirits in the Twenty-First Century: Textual-Ritual Entanglements in Contemporary 'Magic(k)'," in *Entangled Religions* 14/3 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.46586/er.14.2023.10299>

Otto, Bernd-Christian (2023). "Hans Thomas Hakl: Three Lives in One," in *Religiographies* 2/1. https://www.cini.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Otto_2023_Three-Lives_1-2.pdf

More CAS-E Publications



Happy new year 2024!

We are very much looking forward to starting and continuing our discussions and exchanges with you all in this new year.

DFG Kollegforschungsgruppe „Alternative Rationalities and Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective“
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CAS-E

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