



CAS-E

Alternative Rationalities and
Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective

CAS-E Newsletter 04/2024

The Center for Advanced Studies [CAS-E](#) investigates practices aimed at predicting, managing, and manipulating contingent life events. By bringing together researchers and research projects from all over the world, CAS-E examines from a transcultural perspective these practices and their persistence despite social and cultural discourses delegitimizing them.

Dear Friends,

With the beginning of the academic year 2024/25, CAS-E proudly enters its third year of existence!

The occasion is marked by a Special Lecture by Prof. Michael Taussig from Columbia University on Tuesday October 22, 6.15pm, at the Orangerie, Erlangen. Prof. Taussig will, moreover, be with us as distinguished CAS-E fellow until December 6, to discuss some of his salient works during our weekly colloquia.

Besides our exciting lecture series featuring the research of international guest speakers and CAS-E fellows on Tuesdays at 6.15pm, this term CAS-E goes to Venice, Italy, for its co-organized conference "The Aesthetics of Esoteric Practices: Materialities, Performances, Senses", on November 12–14.

As usual, our activities kick off with Welcome Day, on Tuesday October 15, where our team meets the new cohort of CAS-E fellows and gets to know more about their respective research projects, and introduces them to the CAS-E activities.

Wishing you a wonderful Fall/Winter term,

Your CAS-E Team



Events

Welcome Day

This term we are very happy to welcome **Dr. phil. Dr. rer. med. Dominique Hertzner**, with her research project on "Unlocking the Unknowable: Exploring Intuitive Cognition in the Yijing (Book of Changes)", **Dr. Douglas Farrer**, with his research project on "Art, Dreams, and Witchcraft in the Malay World", **Dr. Davide Marino**, with his research project on "Translating Western (?) Esotericism (?): The People's Republic of China", and **Dr. Tommaso Previato**, with his research project on "Sufi Saints and Their Contestation in the Modern Islamic Revival: Lessons from the Chinese Qadiriyya and Jahriyya".

Tuesday October 15 also signs the beginning of our winter lecture series, with **PD Dr. Viola Thimm's** lecture "'Super-Power' in the Grave: Meaning-Making of Muslim Saints' Graves in Southeast Asia and on the Arabian Peninsula".

We warmly welcome you to the first lecture of this season, as usual, **at 6.15pm** either in the Big Seminar Room in D1 at Hartmannstr. 14, Erlangen, or on [Zoom](#).

WELCOME DAY



OCTOBER 15, 2024

TUESDAY

3.00 PM



3.00 – 4.00	<p>Welcome and introduction of individual research and vision for the center by CAS-E Directors Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner Prof. Dr. Andreas Nehring Prof. Dr. Giovanni Maltese</p> <p>Introduction by Sandra Losch and Student Assistants of organizational team</p> <p>Welcome and introduction of individual research and the center's activities, programs and events by Research Coordinators Dr. Monika Hirmer Dr. Raquel Romberg</p>
4.00 – 4.10	Break
4.10 – 4.40	<p>Introduction of individual research and activities by Permanent Fellows PD Dr. Bernd-Christian Otto Dr. Knut Graw</p> <p>+ Associate Researcher Dr. Anna Ozhiganova</p>
4.40 – 4.50	Break
4.50 – 5.30	<p>Presentations by Fellows Dr. phil. Dr. rer. med. Dominique Hertzner Dr. Douglas Farrer Dr. Davide Marino Dr. Tommaso Prevato</p>
5.30 – 6.15	Break
6.15 – 7.45	<p>Lecture "Super-power" in the grave: Meaning-making of Muslim saints' graves in Southeast Asia and on the Arabian Peninsula by PD Dr. Viola Thimm</p>

Special Lecture

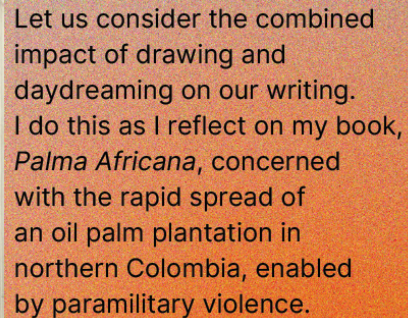
It is a great honor to bring to you eminent anthropologist Prof. Michael Taussig from Columbia University! Prof. Taussig will give a special lecture on **"Fairy Castles Gliding Like Swans: How Daydreaming Affects Writing and Analysis"** on **Tuesday October 22**, at **6.15pm**, at the **Orangerie**, Erlangen. Please register to attend in person [here](#), or follow the lecture on [Zoom](#).

We are delighted that Prof. Taussig will also join us during our **colloquia in October–December**, where we will discuss with him some of his salient works. These special colloquia are open to a limited number of scholars outside of CAS-E, in addition to the CAS-E fellows and team. If you wish to join, please send your short CV and reason for wanting to participate to raquel.romberg@fau.de for more information (it is expected that you familiarize yourself with readings that will be shared in advance).

Michael Taussig

Fairy Castles Gliding Like Swans:

Tuesday October 22, 2024, 6:15 pm – 7:45 pm, Orangerie



Michael Taussig is Class of 1933 Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, Columbia University, and author of several books including *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*; *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*; *Mimesis and Alterity*; *Defacement*; *My Cocaine Museum*; *I Swear I Saw This*; and *Mastery of Non-Mastery in the Age of Meltdown*.

1. The first step is to identify the problem. In this case, the problem is that the system is not working properly.



Funded by

DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

During the semester, CAS-E hosts a weekly lecture series, **Tuesdays at 6.15pm CET**, with presentations by CAS-E fellows and invited guests. Join us in person in the **Big Seminar Room, Building D1, Hartmannstr. 14, Erlangen**, or via **Zoom**.

Lecture Series Winter Semester 2024/25

Upcoming Lectures

15.10.2024

PD Dr. Viola Thimm (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

“Super-Power” in the Grave: Meaning-Making of Muslim Saints’ Graves in Southeast Asia and on the Arabian Peninsula

22.10.2024

Prof. Michael Taussig (Columbia University)

Fairy Castles Gliding Like Swans: How Daydreaming Affects Writing and Analysis

Special lecture at Orangerie, Erlangen. To attend register [here](#).

29.10.24

Dr.phil. Dr.rer.med. Dominique Hertzner (CAS-E Fellow)

Unlocking the Unknowable: Exploring Intuitive Cognition in the Yijing (Book of Changes)

5.11.24

Prof. Roger Canals (University of Barcelona)

Visual Miracles, Trust, and the Cinematic Experience

12.11.24

No lecture (the CAS-E Team is at the conference "The Aesthetics of Esoteric Practices: Materialities, Performances, Senses" in Venice, Italy)

19.11.24

Prof. Audrius Beinorius (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Malleable Fixity: On Destiny, Agency and Indian Astrologers

Preceded by documentary screening “Managers of Luck” by Eglė Vertelytė and discussion with Prof. Beinorius at **3.15pm**

26.11.24

Prof. Per Faxneld (Södertörn University, Stockholm)

A Touch of Zen: Spirituality in Japanese Martial Arts in Sweden

Speaker will join us on Zoom

3.12.24

Dr. Davide Marino (CAS-E Fellow)

Translating Western (?) Esotericism (?): The People’s Republic of China

10.12.24

Prof. William Mazzarella (University of Chicago)

Advertising as Integral Magic: An Afterlife

Speaker will join us on Zoom

17.12.24

Joanna Katharina Kiefer (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Practices of Multiple (Religious) Affiliations: Spatial and Practical Negotiations in Havana, Cuba

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

You can watch the **recordings of passed lectures** on our [CAS-E YouTube channel](#).

More on CAS-E Lecture Series

Conference

CAS-E proudly announces **"The Aesthetics of Esoteric Practices: Materialities, Performances, Senses"**, a conference jointly organized with the **Giorgio Cini Foundation** (the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities), the **Center for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents** at the University of Amsterdam, and the **Research Network for the Study of Esoteric Practices** (RENSEP). The conference will take place on 12–14 November in Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, and brings together eminent international scholars, CAS-E alumni, fellows and team members.

The conference explores the extent to which esoteric practices are socially and culturally constructed and effective because they are practiced, sensorially perceived and embodied by participants as practitioners as well as spectators.



Natasha V. Moodie, *Locos VI, Ph(ø)toforms, photograph 8x10"*, 2021



Network

People

With each newsletter, we present you a different set of people from our CAS-E network. This time, meet one of our directors, the managing director, one permanent fellow and two alumni of the Center!



Prof. Dr. Dominik Müller

Dominik Müller, one of the three directors of CAS-E, is holding the Chair of Cultural and Social Anthropology at FAU. He specializes in legal and political anthropology and has conducted extensive research in Southeast Asia (esp. Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore). He is heading the FAU branch of the International Max Planck Research School "Global Multiplicity" (IMPRS-GM), including two doctoral research groups under his supervision. He currently also serves as the Institute of Sociology's director. He has previously led a Research Group studying the bureaucratization of Islam in Southeast Asia.



Sandra Losch

Sandra Losch is the Managing Director of CAS-E since the Center started its operations on April 1, 2022. She holds a B.A. in Translation Sciences as well as an M.A. in Intercultural Management. Under her management leadership, the Center and its infrastructure were built up and she is responsible for financial controlling, contract issues, real estate, and human resources at CAS-E. Her team supports our fellows in many aspects and assists in the organization of events.



Dr. Knut Graw

Dr. Graw is a permanent fellow at CAS-E and a well-established anthropologist with a strong focus on West African cultures, particularly in the areas of divination, migration, and religious practices. His work spans multiple disciplines and has a significant international presence in his field. Both aspects were well reflected in his recent talk on “Divination Dialogues: Towards a Philosophical Ethnography of Divination in Senegal and the Gambia” at Yunnan University in Kunming, China, in May this year.



Prof. Pablo G. Wright

Pablo Wright, CAS-E Visiting Fellow (summer 2024), holds a Ph.D. from Temple University. He is Professor at the Anthropology Department, University of Buenos Aires, and Senior Researcher of the Argentine National Council for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICET). He is interested in anthropology of religion, intercultural hermeneutics, phenomenological and existential anthropology. He conducted ethnographic research among the Argentine Chaco Qom/Toba shamans and coordinates research projects to study religious heterodoxies as sacred peripheries in Argentina and Spain.



Dr. Wan-Chun Cheng (鄭宛鈞)

Dr. 鄭宛鈞 joined CAS-E as Research Fellow in 2022–23. Previously, Dr. 鄭宛鈞 was Research Fellow at IKGF (Internationales Kolleg für Geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung). Dr. 鄭宛鈞 holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Chinese Medicine at China Medical University in Taiwan and is currently an Associate Research Fellow in the Department of Nursing and Health Care at the Ministry of Health and Welfare in Taiwan.

[More CAS-E People](#)

Farewell and New Beginnings

A message from **Dr. Stefanie Burkhardt**:

I have had the privilege of being part of the team of research coordinators at CAS-E for the last 1.5 years. Now it's time to say goodbye and hopefully see you soon! It has been an exciting time and I am grateful to everyone for the opportunity to combine inspiring discussions and friendly conversations, cutting-edge research and meeting the people who do it. I will now be working as a "wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin" (research fellow) for Religious Studies at the University of Münster in Germany, but hope to stay in touch with many of you.

I am pleased to introduce my successor as coordinator who will join and complete the dream team of Dr. Raquel Romberg and Dr. Lina Aschenbrenner. Many of you will already know her as a former CAS-E fellow, a brilliant scholar and a great person in every respect: Dr. Monika Hirmer.



Bidding farewell to Dr. Stefanie Burkhardt leaves a bittersweet impact on CAS-E, for as much as we are delighted about her success and excited to see where her new role will take her, we will miss having such a wonderful person and excellent scholar in Erlangen very much. The entire CAS-E team wishes

Stefanie the very best in all her future endeavors and looks forward to crossing paths again.

Internship Opportunity

CAS-E is looking for an intern! If you are a student currently enrolled in a humanities/social sciences program with a strong interest in the study of esoteric practices and related fields from a transcultural and comparative perspective, this opportunity may be for you.

What to expect:

- participation in upcoming events, weekly colloquia and the lecture series
- assisting with projects such as the CAS-E Podcast
- contributing to the maintenance of the website
- managing and creating content for social media channels
- supporting the organization and execution of academic events and workshops
- networking with experts and professionals in the field

The duration of the internship is 3–6 months full-time/part-time, during which presence at CAS-E in D1, Hartmannstr. 14, 91052, Erlangen, is required on at least two days per week. We cannot offer remuneration, but compensation of train tickets or other expenditures related to the internship can be discussed. Proficiency in German/English is required.

To apply, please send your resume, references, and academic transcript to case@fau.de



Media

CAS-E Blog

Our blog features short writings by the scholars who presented their work at the CAS-E lecture series. In their blog entries, scholars reflect on their research and address broader societal, political, cultural or religious questions in an essay format, making it attractive for academic and non-academic audiences alike. You can access the latest blog entries below. Happy reading!



Esoteric Dimensions of Buddhist Meditation: Reaching Out to Transform Other People's Minds

by Jens Schlieter

Read blog [here](#).



UFOs and Utopian Visions: A Brief Guide for the Perplexed

by Kelly E. Hayes

Read blog [here](#).



Rituals of Justice

by Kalindi Kokal

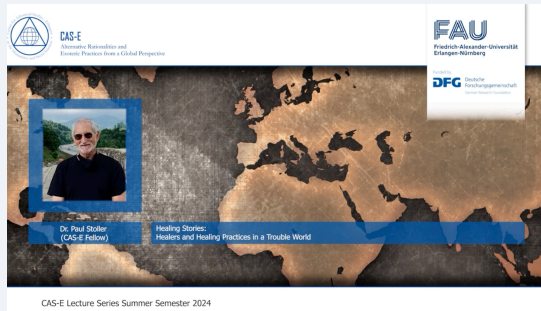
Read blog [here](#).

CAS-E Blog

CAS-E YouTube Channel

On the CAS-E YouTube channel you can re-watch the talks from our lecture series and catch up on the ones you missed. You will also find brief interviews where our fellows, alumni and team members introduce their respective

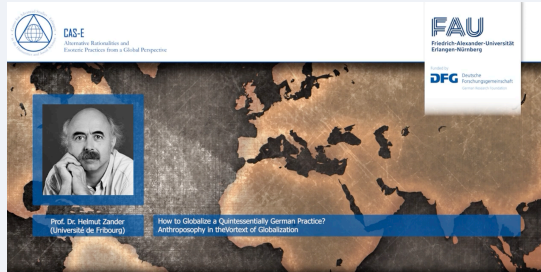
interests and research areas. Don't forget to [subscribe](#) to the channel to keep up to date with the latest lectures! Have a look at some of the lectures below:



Healing Stories: Healers and Healing Practices in a Troubled World

Paul Stoller, June 25, 2024

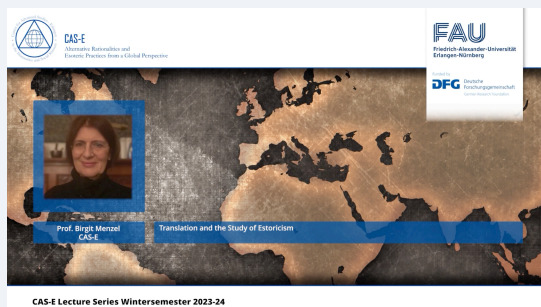
Watch it [here](#).



How to Globalize a Quintessentially German Practice? Anthroposophy in the Vortex of Globalization

Helmut Zander, June 19, 2024

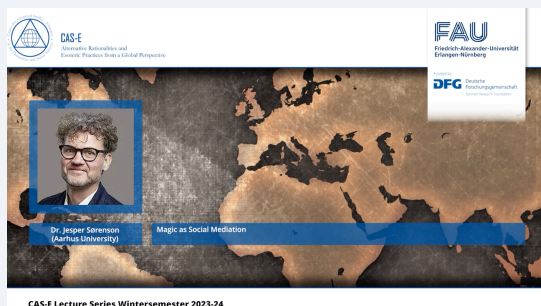
Watch it [here](#).



Translation and the Study of Esotericism

Lecture by Birgit Menzel, January 9, 2024

Watch it [here](#).



Magic as Social Mediation: A Culturo-Immunological Approach

Lecture by Jasper Sørensen, December 19, 2023

Watch it [here](#).

CAS-E YouTube



Publications

In this section, we present you the publications of our fellows, alumni and team members that draw on their research and intellectual exchanges at CAS-E. Regardless of whether these publications were envisioned, conceptualized, or written at our Center, the ever-growing number of articles, books, reviews, blogs, exhibitions, and more, is a testimony to the vibrant and stimulating intellectual environment that CAS-E fosters.

Books

Burkhardt, Stefanie (2024). *Religion Erzählen. Mircea Eliades religionswissenschaftliches und literarisches Doppelwerk*. Brill | Fink.

Articles

Lackner, Michael (2024). "博弈之苦乐 (Hardship and Comfort Playing the Register of Chinese Language)," in *全球中文发展研究第二辑* 2 (8).

Commentaries

Otto, Bernd-Christian (2024). "Re-defining Esotericism from a CAS-E Perspective", in *Aries – Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 24, 236–239.

Book Reviews

Lackner, Michael (2024). "Maître de Huainan (2022), transl. by Marc Kalinowski. *Traité des Figures Célestes*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres," in *International Journal of Divination and Prognostication* 5 (1), 154–157.

Blog Posts

Graw, Knut (2024). "Into Oneness," Research Network for the Study of Esoteric Practices (RENSEP). URL [here](#).

More CAS-E Publications

Interviews

Otto, Bernd-Christian (2024). "Bernd-Christian Otto on the Project 'Alternative Rationalities and Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective'," The Secret History of Western Esotericism Podcast. URL [here](#).

Otto, Bernd-Christian (2024). "Was ist Magieforschung? – Ein Interview mit Dr. Bernd-Christian Otto," FAU. URL [here](#).

CAS-E Lectures and Conferences



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



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