



CAS-E

Alternative Rationalities and
Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective

CAS-E Newsletter 05/2024

The Center for Advanced Studies [CAS-E](#) investigates practices aimed at predicting, influencing, and orchestrating contingent life events. By bringing together researchers from all over the world, CAS-E compares such practices and examines their resilience despite socio-cultural discourses delegitimizing them.

Dear Friends,

As the winter program at CAS-E is in full swing, we would like to introduce you to the fellows who are with us this term, and to their respective research projects.

This year, besides weekly lectures and colloquia, time at CAS-E is marked by a number of thematic workshops conceived and conducted by fellows, alumni, and team members. After bringing together scholars at conferences of a broader scope, we now want to offer researchers the opportunity to meet in Erlangen and exchange ideas around specific topics more extensively and in-depth than what is usually possible at conferences.

We also present you the latest entries into our blog series, featuring reflections by CAS-E guest lecturers and fellows as well as a profile of Prof. Michael Taussig, in light of his residence at CAS-E this term.

Finally, we have created an Instagram profile, which you can follow [here](#) for our latest updates, photographs, and more.

Wishing you all the best,

Your CAS-E team



Network

CAS-E Scholars and Research Projects

Here you find an overview of the scholars who are currently at CAS-E and their respective research projects. This term, we are joined by CAS-E fellows Dr. Douglas Farrer, Dr.phil.Dr.rer.med. Dominique Hertzler, Dr. Gang Li, Dr. Davide Marino, Dr. Tommaso Previato, and Prof. Dr. Erhard Schüttpelz, and by associated scholar Prof. Dr. Fan-sen Wang, recipient of the Humboldt Research Prize.



Dr. Douglas Farrer

DS Farrer is a social anthropologist with interests spanning visual anthropology, narrative criminology, performance studies, psychoanalysis, and practical philosophy. Based upon fieldwork in Singapore and Malaysia with artists, Sufi mystics, and traditional healers (*bomoh*) his research focus at CAS-E is on 'dreamcraft': cognition embodied through lucid dreams/trance in divine Islamic art, and witchcraft.

More on his research project [here](#).

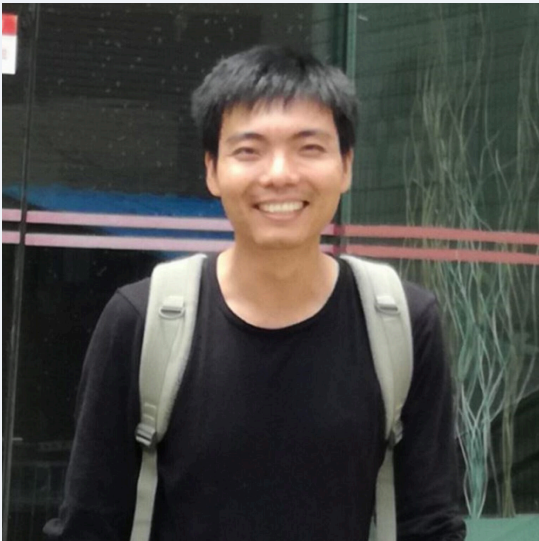


Dr.phil.Dr.rer.med.

Dominique Hertzler

Dominique Hertzler's research of the contemporary application of the *Yijing* in Chinese medicine reflects both her clinical background and academic focus. Starting with a sinological PhD thesis, she pursued studies in Chinese Medicine in Munich and in Tianjin, completing her education as a Heilpraktiker to establish her practice for Chinese Medicine. This clinical work sparked her interest in cross-cultural research on the mind-body discourse, so she did a second PhD in Theory Formation in Medicine.

More on her research project [here](#).



Dr. Gang LI

Gang Li did a double-PhD with the University of Groningen and FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg, focusing on the relations between Islamic law and Chinese state law in imperial and modern China. Following his PhD, he joined the Internationales Kolleg für Geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung at FAU and the Erlanger Zentrum für Islam und Recht in Europa (EZIRE).

More on his research project [here](#).



Dr. Davide Marino

Davide Marino specializes in the interplay between East Asian religions and European Esotericism. His PhD thesis, which received the CUHK Young Scholars Thesis Award, examined the influence of Chinese and Vietnamese religious concepts on the works of Albert de Pouvourville and René Guénon. More recently, he has been investigating the intersection of politics and esotericism in both China and Europe.

More on his research project [here](#).



Dr. Tommaso Previato

Tommaso Previato holds a PhD (2012) from Sapienza University of Rome and Minzu University of China. Combining text-based research with field data collection, his work lies at the intersection of history, religion, and gender with a focus on Sinophone Islam and Tibeto-Burman cultures of southwest China. His latest edited book *Fear, Heterodoxy and Crime in Traditional China* was published by Brill, Sinica Leidensia, in June 2024.

More on his research project [here](#).



Prof. Dr. Erhard Schüttpelz

Erhard Schüttpelz studied at universities in Hanover, Exeter, Bonn, Oxford, Cologne and New York, Columbia University. His research interests shifted from literary theory and literary history towards a philosophy of language and the history of anthropology. He became a professor of media theory as a result. Currently, he is in the process of publishing his major work on media anthropology. His last book was on the origins of modern hermeneutics.

More on his research project [here](#).



Prof. Dr. Fan-sen Wang

Prof. Wang Fan-sen is an historian specializing in the cultural-intellectual history of early modern and modern China (circa 1500 to 1930). Prof. Wang Fan-sen received his PhD from the East Asian Studies Department at Princeton University in 1993. Prof. Wang served as Vice President and Acting President of Academia Sinica. He is currently serving as the Chancellor of Taiwan Comprehensive University System. In 2005, he was elected as Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of the United Kingdom.

More on his research project [here](#).

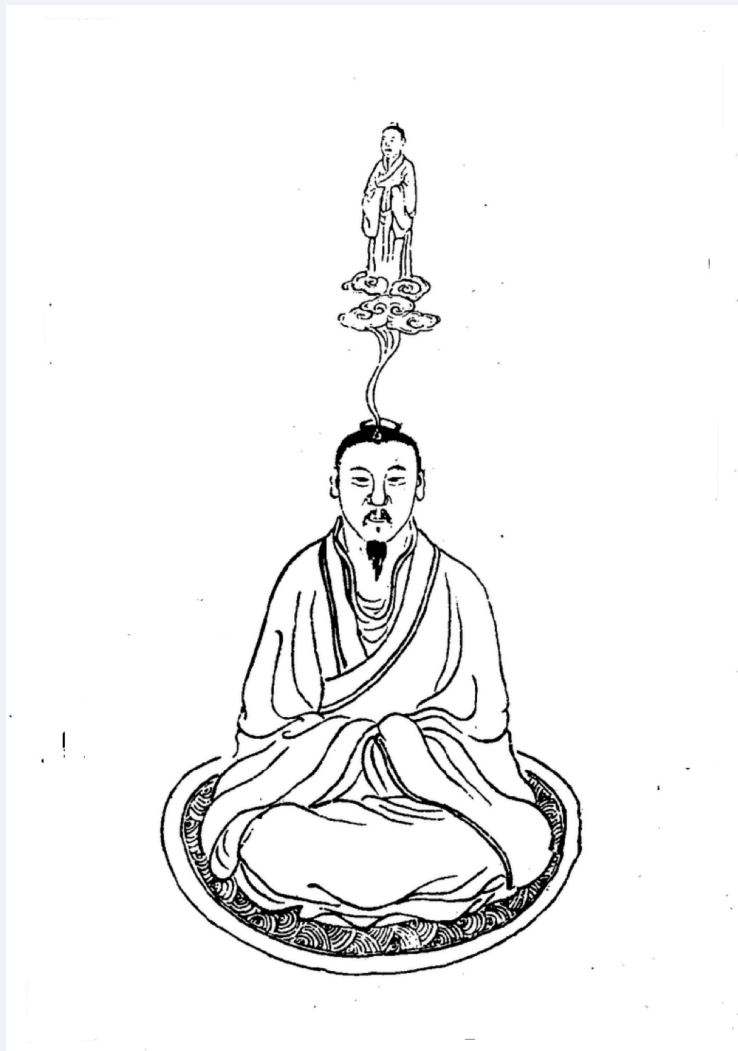
[More CAS-E People](#)



Events

Workshops

Our workshops provide a space for scholars to present and discuss their findings with researchers from similar or overlapping fields over one-to-three days at CAS-E. By bringing together scholars with shared research interests at our center, we wish to create a fecund terrain where existing collaborations can expand and new ones emerge. Our workshops kick start on November 21 with "Symbolic Action in Late Imperial China", followed by "Ownership and Hidden Knowledges in Indigenous South America and Beyond", and "Daoist Internal Alchemy and Science in Contemporary Taiwan". Stay tuned, as we have more workshops in store!



"Egress of the Yang Spirit". From the *Xingming quizhi*, early 17th century

Symbolic Action in Late Imperial China

The first of our workshops is organized by [Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner](#), Senior Professor of Sinology at FAU, and led by [Prof. Wang Fan-sen 王汎森](#), a distinguished historian from Academia Sinica, Taiwan, and recipient of the Humboldt Research Prize. This one-day workshop is part of Prof. Wang Fan-sen's three-month residence at CAS-E, and will focus on some of his latest research insights and foster in-depth discussions with fellow scholars.

When: **November 21, 2024, all day**

Where: **CAS-E**, Big Seminar Room in D1, Hartmannstr. 14, Erlangen

Language: **Chinese**

For more information: michael.lackner@fau.de

Moreover, on **December 4**, 3.00–5.00pm CET, **Prof. Hong He** will give a lecture on the research on PSI phenomena in China, past and present. Prof. He is Head of the Helmholtz Beijing Representative Office. His familiarity with Chinese researchers in the field will provide an overview on activities little known in the West.

Ownership and Hidden Knowledges in Indigenous South America and Beyond: Human and Non-Human Sounds, Images, and Bodies

This workshop, organized by [Dr. Juan Rivera](#), will be dedicated to the comparative exploration of hidden knowledges and ritual practices in four dimensions of life among contemporary indigenous groups in South America (and some comparable areas beyond this region): those closely related to sounds (i.e., production of music and other sonic beings), images (i.e., iconography and chromatism), bodies (i.e., rituals and narratives linked to shamanism, healing, witchcraft, and sorcery), and subsistence practices (such as fishing, hunting, agriculture, and herding).

Invited guests will be mainly ethnographically trained social anthropologists, but also ethnomusicologists, sociologists, linguists and ethnohistorians whose research would be preferably based on their own long-term fieldwork on contemporary indigenous societies of South America and beyond.

When: **June 12–14, 2025**

Where: **CAS-E**, Big Seminar Room in D1, Hartmannstr. 14, Erlangen

Language: **English**

Daoist Internal Alchemy and Science in Contemporary Taiwan

Organized by [Prof. Dr. Fabrizio Pregadio](#), this workshop addresses a subject barely explored in Western-language scholarship: the "modernization" and "scientization" of the Daoist practice of Internal Alchemy (Neidan) in contemporary Taiwan. This process actually started in mainland China around the 1940s but went through major developments in Taiwan, where it continues to the present day.

We plan to explore various topics, including: a) the key areas where the synthesis of Neidan and science occurs; b) the integration of Western scientific theories into Neidan, and whether there has been an evolution in the "scientific" foundations of Neidan as it is explained, transmitted, and practiced in Taiwan today; c) the implications of the "scientization" of Neidan. In particular, we ask: which aspects of Neidan are articulated using scientific language, and does this make them more comprehensible? Does this lead to a "de-esoterization" of Neidan? Does translating Neidan into scientific terms result in the addition or modification of significant features and/or in the neglect of features present in earlier formulations?

When: **July 8–9, 2025**

Where: **CAS-E**, Big Seminar Room in D1, Hartmannstr. 14, Erlangen

Language: **English**

Form more information: fabrizio.pregadio@fau.de

This will be the second part of a two-part workshop, the first taking place in Taipei (Chengchi University, January 2025).

Lecture Series

Our lecture series continues as usual on **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](#).

Upcoming Lectures

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 (Södertorn 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

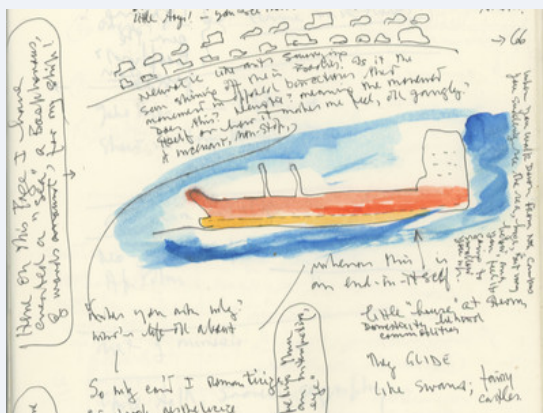


Media

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!



Thoughts on a Lecture at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Erlangen

by Michael Taussig

Read blog [here](#).



Super-Power in the Grave: Something Superstitious, or Rational?

by Viola Thimm

Read blog [here](#).



Globalization of Anthroposophy

by Helmut Zander

Read blog [here](#).



In Anticipation of a Special Guest: Michael Taussig will be a CAS-E Distinguished Fellow

by Raquel Romberg

Read blog [here](#).

CAS-E in the News

Esoteric Here, Part of Everyday Life There

"Oracles, prayers, dance – what do these topics have in common? That is what the researchers from the Center for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (KFG) "Alternative rationalities and esoteric practices from a global perspective" hope to answer, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) in its first phase until April 2026".

Read the interview on CAS-E with Prof. Dr. Michael Lackner, for FAU, [here](#).

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



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



CAS-E

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Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective

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