

WITTGENSTEIN AMONG THE SANTEROS

Proceeding from a perspective guided by Wittgenstein's "second philosophy," this lecture aims to probe the limits of the ethnographic endeavor vis a vis worlds unthinkable in terms of the ethnographer's own "hinge propositions" around which doubt can turn, but which cannot themselves be allowed to fall into doubt. To do so I revisit a set of ethnographic data from my first fieldwork among practitioners of Afro-Cuban ritual traditions in Miami where I was repeatedly told that the spirit of a dead slave named Tomás was watching over me. I had originally used the "idea of Tomás" as an analytic device to establish my own implication in a violent Atlantic modernity whose (however unwitting) heir I, like all "moderns", am. Here, however, I explore how a Wittgensteinian approach may help us overcome a facile representationalism, give the dead – Tomás, no less than Wittgenstein – a place in the scaffolding of our mind, engage them as metapersons, and so perpetuate their presence in our worlds or forms of life.



Stephan Palmié conducts ethnographic and historical research on Afro-Caribbean cultures, with an emphasis on Afro-Cuban religious formations and their relations to the history and cultures of a wider Atlantic world. His other interests include practices of historical representation and knowledge production, systems of slavery and unfree labor, constructions of race and ethnicity, conceptions of embodiment and moral personhood, science and technology studies, and the anthropology of food and cuisine



Date:
Tuesday - 3 June, 2025



Time:
6.15 - 7.45 PM

**Location: Big Seminar room,
Hartmannstr. 14, Building D1, Erlangen**

Link for virtual attendance: <https://fau.zoom-x.de/j/62556506187>



Funded by



Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation



CAS-E

Alternative Rationalities and
Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective



Friedrich-Alexander-Universität
Erlangen-Nürnberg