



**The Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness
36th Annual Conference**

Wisdom Sits in Places

**March 31 - April 2 2016
University Place Hotel and Conference Center
Portland, Oregon**

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"Ladder to the Moon" (1958),
Georgia O'Keeffe

Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

36th Annual Conference
March 31 – April 1, 2016

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Portland, Oregon

Wisdom Sits in Places



In his book *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Keith Basso suggested that place making involves multiple acts of remembering and imagining which inform each other in complex ways. The 2016 Annual Meeting of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness will discuss how “wisdom sits in places” the ways in which people remember and imagine the realms in which they live.

*Nicole I. Torres,
Program Chair, 2016*

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Welcome to the 36th Annual Spring Conference of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness (SAC).

As an academic organization, SAC is grounded in the anthropological research of consciousness while simultaneously extending the boundaries of academia by integrating multiple disciplines and forms of experience. We support rigorous and empirically-based inquiries into consciousness and engage ethnographic, scientific, experiential, historical, artistic and alternative ways of knowing. Conference participants represent a diverse and multidisciplinary gathering of scholars, artists, students, performers and consciousness-related practitioners. We are thrilled to have you join us!

This year, our conference theme explores Place, Space, and Consciousness. Place making involves multiple acts of remembering and imagining which inform each other in complex ways. Over the course of three days and nights, we will discuss how “wisdom sits in places” —the ways in which people remember and imagine the realms in which they live.

We are honored to have one of our SAC elders (*wisdom, not age*), Tina Fields, as the keynote speaker this year. Her talk, *“I am He as You are He as You are Me, and We are All Together” – Fostering Ecopsychological Relationships with Space* stems from a lifetime of experience reconnecting people with Nature.

Each annual conference is a gathering of old and new faces, a community of practice bound by related interests, keen inquiry, and an open heartedness that holds the space for any and all ideas presented. I have been honored to be part of this “family” for 16 years, and even more so to be given the role of President. I would like to thank all of my colleagues for the support and encouragement.

So many dedicated and enthusiastic members and supporters of SAC have come together to make this conference possible. I wish to acknowledge program coordinator Nicole Torres for her diligent work in organizing this and last year's conference. I also wish to recognize Andy Gurevich for his service as site coordinator. Special thanks to the SAC Board for all of the tremendous work and dialogue as we move into the digital future and expand our presence. Finally, deep gratitude goes out to Diane Hardgrave, our recent President who carried SAC through challenging times with dignity and courage. Without the strength of character of these individuals, SAC could not be what it is. Thank you all.

During our time together, I encourage you to create new connections and friendships. If you are new to SAC, please consider becoming a member. If you are already a member, I thank you and invite you to increase your involvement with SAC.

On behalf of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness I warmly welcome each and every one of you.

Sincerely,
Bryan Rill
President, Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

Keynote Speaker



Tina Fields, PhD

*Associate Professor and Chair of Ecopsychology
Naropa University*

*“I am He as You are He as You are Me, and We are All Together”
Fostering Ecopsychological Relationship with Place*

In order to successfully navigate the current enormous environmental and societal upheavals that some are calling “the Great Turning” and others “the Long Emergency,” one vital question that scholars of consciousness must be asking ourselves is, how can we help our species prioritize a healthy, respectful, mutually beneficial relationship with the rest of nature so that we all can thrive together? To begin addressing such a multidimensional question, we must start much simpler: What might “right relationship” with “nature” in the 21st century even look and feel like? The currently dominant industrial growth society’s view of earth stands in stark contrast with most other cultural perspectives across both space and time. Two main differences lie in the degree of animacy that is ascribed to the more-than-human world, and ideas about human beings’ rightful place within this matrix. In this talk, Dr. Fields will offer a small sampler of cultural perspectives on humans’ proper relationship with our home places and the other-than-human neighbors that share them, and will show how these are broadly echoed by two western ecophilosophical models. Applied, these ancient/emerging relational perspectives hold power to effect positive change in individual and societal levels. Stories will be told and participants will be given experiential methods to more fully come to inhabit their own specific home places, however temporary.

Keynote Speaker

Biography

Tina Fields, PhD, is Associate Professor and Chair of the M.A. Program in Ecopsychology at Naropa University. She has taught about the cultural, psychological, & spiritual sides of environmental issues since 1999, including five years living and guiding outdoors for 260 days per year with the field-based Audubon Expedition Institute at Lesley University, and four years training sustainability activists at New College. Dr. Fields is also an ACISTE certified Spiritual Guidance Counselor specializing in non-clinical ecotherapy and spiritual emergence, a scholar/practitioner of shamanism and Druidry, and an accomplished visual and performance artist whose creative work helps build community and remind industrialized people of our animistic connection to the living world.

Tina Fields has a long relationship with SAC: she has served on the Executive Board, worked as Associate Editor of the Journal, drew the popular Medusa logo and other illustrations, and in partnership with Matthew Bronson, she co-chaired the 2006 conference and created the edited book, *So What? Now What? The Anthropology of Consciousness Responds to a World in Crisis* (Cambridge Scholars).

Conference Program
Thursday, March 31, 2016
WILLAMETTE BALLROOM

Thursday Morning

- 9:30 Check-in
- 10:00 – 10:45 **President's Welcome and Opening Ceremony:
The Wolf Spirit Singers**
- 11:00 am – 12:30 **Colonialism and Community Identity: Geopolitical,
Indigenous, and Archaeological Implications of Space**
Session Chair: Lee Gilmore
- 11:00 – 11:20 Julia K. Bilek—*"Crossing and Dwelling": Episcopal Hogans in
Navajoland*
- 11:20 – 11:40 Alexandra Peck—*Tamanowas Rock, Intertribal Conflict, and Settler
Colonialism: A Sacred Coast Salish Site in Northwestern Washington
and Its Contemporary Implications for Historical Archaeology*
- 11:40 – 12:00 Lee Gilmore—*Turn the World Upside Down: Indigenous Activists at
the Parliament of the World's Religions*
- 12:00 – 12:20 Discussion
- 12:30 – 2:00 LUNCH

Thursday Afternoon

- 2:00 – 3:30 **Mapping Individual and Cultural Space: Occultism, Inner
Ecology and Embodied Cognition**
Session Chair: Sharon G. Mijares
- 2:00 – 2:20 David Miller—*Biocultural Bases of Places and Spaces*
- 2:20 – 2:40 Brian Bartelt and Mr. Njakoi John Bah—*Making the Invisible Visible:
The Epistemology of Spatial Experience and the Efficacy of Occult
Phenomena in Cameroon*
- 2:40 – 3:00 Sharon G. Mijares—*Inner Ecology and Liminal Spaces*
- 3:00 – 3:20 Discussion
- 3:30 – 4:00 BREAK

Conference Program
Thursday, March 31, 2016
WILLAMETTE BALLROOM

4:00 – 5:30	Creation & Consciousness: Paleolithic, Archaeological, & Human-Centered Mappings of Place and Space <i>Session Chair: Andrew Gurevich</i>
4:00 – 4:20	Benjamin Campbell— <i>Consciousness and Place Making in European Paleolithic Cave Art</i>
4:20 – 4:40	Mark Thomas Shekoyan— <i>Partnering with Anima Mundi: From Enframing to Co-Creative Partnership through Shamanic Biomimicry</i>
4:40 – 5:00	Andrew Gurevich— <i>The Wisdom of THIS place: The Paisley Caves and the Origins of Symbolic Consciousness in North America</i>
5:00 – 5:20	Discussion
5:30 – 7:30	<i>SAC Board Meeting (location TBA)</i>

Conference Program
Friday, April 1, 2016
WILLAMETTE BALLROOM

Friday Morning

9:30	Check in
10:00 – 11:30	Landscapes of Transformation—Encountering the Sacred <i>Session Chair: Bryan Rill</i>
10:00 – 10:20	Nancy Grace— <i>Music and Ecopsychology: Making Place Through Sound in Space</i>
10:20 – 10:40	Dennis L. Merritt— <i>The Soul of Glacier Country</i>
10:40 – 11:00	Bryan Rill— <i>Making Sacred the Mundane: Transforming the Mountain</i>
11:00 – 11:20	Discussion
11:30 – 1:30	LUNCH

Friday Afternoon

1:30 – 3:00	Romancing the Philosopher's Stone: Romantic, Pyrotechnic, & Architectonic Perceptions of Place <i>Session Chair: Jordan Burich</i>
1:30 – 1:50	Jordan Anthony Burich— <i>Fire in the Mind: Kindling a Discourse On the Role of Pyrotechnics In Physical and Cultural Evolution</i>
1:50 – 2:10	John (Sean) Hinton— <i>Subconscious Aspects of Place: Positivistic vs. Romantic Views of Place and Consciousness</i>
2:10 – 2:30	el-Sayed el-Aswad— <i>Architectonic Space and Cultural Identity: A Case Study of the United Arab Emirates</i>
2:30 – 2:50	Discussion
3:00 – 3:30	BREAK

Conference Program

Friday, April 1, 2016

WILLAMETTE BALLROOM

3:30 – 5:15

Session: Sacred Spaces of the Academic Mind

Session Chair: Jeff MacDonald

3:30 – 3:50

Matthew C. Bronson—*“Your Rubric Caged My Songbird”: Reclaiming Assessment as a Sacred Space of Reflection*

3:50 – 4:10

Jeff MacDonald—*Recreating Sacred Space among Refugees*

4:10 – 4:30

Timothy J. Lavalli—*Spaces Seldom Considered Sacred*

4:30 – 4:50

Mira Z. Amiras—*Walk through that door, and something will emerge—*

Friday Evening

Experiential Workshop

5:30 – 7:30

Mira Z. Amiras and Erin Vang—*Sacred Space / Sacred Time: The Jewish Obsession with Creation, Ritual, and the Alphabet.*

Conference Program
Saturday, April 2, 2016
WILLAMETTE BALLROOM

Saturday Morning

9:30	Check in
10:00 – 11:15	The Wisdom of Shamanic Initiations <i>Session Chair: Andrew Gurevich</i>
10:00 – 11:15	Susan Ross Grimaldi and John R. Lawrence, Jr.— <i>Traveling in Tandem to Invisible Places: A Video Presentation</i>
11:15 – 11:30	BREAK
11:30 – 1:00	<i>Zen & the Art of Cultural Healing: Navigating Community and Cultural Boundaries through Human Ritual and Social Action</i> <i>Session Chair: Andrew Gurevich</i>
11:30 – 11:50	Tara Gallagher— <i>The Shamans of Riverwest: The Anti-power of Community Radio in Social Action</i>
11:50 – 12:10	Justin Panneck— <i>Migratory Ascension and Human Potential: Decoding the Wisdom of Culture</i>
12:10 – 12:30	Donna Emsel Schill— <i>Corporeal Navigation and Human Potential</i>
12:30 – 12:45	Discussion
1:00 – 2:30	LUNCH

Saturday Afternoon

2:30 – 4:00	Death and Resurrection: Exploring Mythological and Virtual Concepts of Death and Crisis <i>Session Chair: Sydney Yeager</i>
2:30 – 2:50	Sydney Yeager— <i>Making Sacred in Virtual Space</i>
2:50 – 3:10	Greg Wright— <i>The Sea of Trees – Suicide, Mental Health, and Place in Japan's Aokigahara</i>
3:10 – 3:30	Stanley Krippner— <i>Anomalies and Stigmatic Activity in Brasilia</i>
3:30 – 3:45	Discussion

Conference Program
Saturday, April 2, 2016
WILLAMETTE BALLROOM

Saturday Evening

6:00 – 7:15

Keynote Address – Tina Fields, PhD

“I am He as You are He as You are Me, and We are All Together”
Fostering Ecopsychological Relationship with Place

7:30 – 9:30 Closing Buffet Dinner and Celebration

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(In alphabetical order by participant)

Mira Z. Amiras

Walk through that door, and something will emerge—

This paper will explore the old-fashioned researcher's longtime love affair with the Library in similar vein to Jenny Wade's approach to Transcendent Sex. That is, the Library not merely as a place to seek out information, or as a place to go when we want to get something done. But as a living, breathing erotic partner —and womb— in the creation of something new. This talk will be accompanied by a screening of Part I of my forthcoming movie, *The Day Before Creation*, brought to you by Something Will Emerge Productions as illustrative of the power of the Library in the creative process and in the pursuit of knowledge, if not wisdom.

Experiential Workshop (with Erin Vang): Sacred Space / Sacred Time: the Jewish Obsession with Creation, Ritual, and the Alphabet.

Jews and scientists contemplate the origins of the cosmos in similar veins: we keep refining our notions of 'the beginning' and are never quite satisfied that we've got it right. A physicist once told me that only a Jew could come up with Time-Space. He was referring of course, to Einstein. The Jewish obsession however, is more time and less space. And when it comes to time, we have (perhaps unfortunately) very long memories. We celebrate the origins of the universe every single week through the ritual of Shabbat. In our gathering together this Friday we will get a glimpse at the beginning of time through a short excerpt of Mira Amiras' forthcoming animated movie, and enact an ancient ritual that ushers in the universe. And the alphabet—? Well, you'll just have to wait and see. For as it is written—your own name, in letters of the Hebrew alphabet, speak of your own personal journey through space/time. Come. Join us.

Brian Bartelt and Mr. Njakoi John Bah

Making the Invisible Visible: The Epistemology of Spatial Experience and the Efficacy of Occult Phenomena in Cameroon.

Part of the difficulty in researching occult phenomena concerns the thorny question of reality. A common response is: "it is real to the people who use it." Oppositions such as reality and fantasy, etic and emic representations dominate the discussion of witchcraft in anthropology, yet the idea that "it does not exist" still marks most anthropological studies. Evans-Pritchard made his view clear: "Witchcraft is an imaginary offense because it is impossible....a witch cannot do what he is supposed to do and has in fact no real existence."

The denial of the reality of witchcraft and other occult phenomena according to western worldviews does not eliminate them, however, because of the social realities that underlie them. Indeed, as historian Keith Basso articulated, historical evidence is invisible to the observer without the insight provided by an epistemology of spatial experience. This is particularly true regarding the occurrence of occult phenomena in the kingdom of Oku, Cameroon, where spatial experience becomes a determining factor in the manner in which Oku people perceive reality. This paper will focus on the Oku person's experience of landscape, both physical and cosmological, and how it informs their epistemology. By utilizing this framework, one can move from interpretation to explanation, and help

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to facilitate an understanding of the efficacy of occult phenomena in Cameroon.

Julia K. Bilek

"Crossing and Dwelling": Episcopal Hogans in Navajoland

In 2014, the Episcopal Church headquarters in New York launched a nationwide fundraising campaign to support its Navajoland Area Mission in replacing deteriorating church facilities with Navajo (Dine) *hogans*. Traditional structures that serve domestic and ceremonial functions, *hogans* reconstruct Navajo cosmography and require related ritual choreography. The project reflects the church's missionary ideology of "partnership" with local communities, and reflects the (Episcopal) Church Building Fund's preference for flexible, multifunctional spaces that can foster engagement with the local community while bringing in revenue through rental fees.

However, the Episcopal mission among the Navajo began like those of other mainline Protestant churches during the nineteenth century, as a domestication project that followed the pattern of frontier homesteading. Christian missionary history can be seen as a host of independent projects that follow one of two general spatial strategies, which I label "crossing" and "dwelling" (following religious studies scholar Thomas A. Tweed). Like other "dwelling" Christian missionaries, Episcopalians set out across the continent to domesticate the landscape and "civilize" American Indians – an effort that was often a matter of remapping Indian landscapes, countering nomadism with agriculturalism and private property ownership, and restructuring homes to have monofunction divisions according to sex and activity. To these ends, the Episcopal Church first established hospitals, schools, and orphanages among the Navajo – "home base" missionary compounds with satellite outstations that ultimately relied on the financial support of east-coast donors and non-local church hierarchy. Indeed, these structural patterns remain largely unchanged.

By comparing them to charismatic Navajo *Oodlani*, whose tent revivals and other spatial strategies epitomize social and architectural mobility ("crossing"), I demonstrate the consistency in the Episcopal tendency to "dwell" despite significant historical shifts in missiological discourse in the postcolonial era.

Matthew C. Bronson

"Your Rubric Caged My Songbird": Reclaiming Assessment as a Sacred Space of Reflection

How do you know what your students are actually learning as opposed to what you are teaching? The assessment movement has been turbo-charged in recent years to help (make?) the educational establishment answer this vital question. But faculty are typically resistant, if not hostile, to attempts to hold them accountable for "student learning outcomes", and rightfully so. The opportunity for genuine reflection on what matters most in education typically becomes a painful exercise in "feeding the alligators" of the bureaucratic machine. The presentation will distill wisdom gained from 12 years of working in the trenches of assessment at three institutions. We will cover the essential principles for reclaiming assessment as a "sacred space" of transformational dialogue, where applied mindfulness and collaborative inquiry can be activated across departments and disciplines. Examples will be drawn from curricula associated with the worldwide "anchor institution" movement, which challenges centers of learning to become fully integrated with their communities and bio-regions as

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partners in sustainability and social justice.

Jordan Anthony Burich

Fire In the Mind: Kindling Discourse on the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture

The element of fire is situated at the nexus of hominin evolution and cultural transmission; it is at times portrayed as the catalyst for physiological changes and the emergence of consciousness, and as the focal point of social life. Thus, the importance of ancient pyrotechnic experience cannot be overemphasized. From providing protection and warmth, to the cooking of raw food, pyrotechnic processes provided safety and enabled the evolution of larger cranial capacities—eventually paving the way for symbolic thought and ever-larger and more complicated social networks. Ancient pyrotechnic installations and processes also imbued power and meaning to ritual action and experience. A three-tiered typology of pyrotechnic experience views fire as a liminal force by positioning it as: (1) an agent of transformation which aids in many aspects of daily life and sensory experience; (2) a transubstantiative force which combines two or more extant substances or properties into novel ones, and; (3) a transcendent vehicle used for the communication with extra-natural ancestors, deities, and worlds. It is in these contexts that pyrotechnic experiences and material culture become imbued with ever-increasing symbolic meaning and complexity. Understanding how fire is used in these contexts can be useful in recreating the ritual and symbolic experiences of our ancestors, even providing a link to contemporary traditions.

Jordan Anthony Burich recently earned his bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His introduction to cognitive-processual archaeological theory was under the direction of Dr. Benjamin Campbell. Mr. Burich's archaeological fieldwork was done mostly in Cyprus with the Athienou Archaeological Project, focusing on the evolution of pyrotechnic installations in Cypriot sanctuaries. This fall, Jordan will be joining the Anthropology Ph.D program at SUNY University at Buffalo, working under the advisement of Dr. Peter F. Biehl. He joins us today as a first time attendee of these proceedings.

Benjamin Campbell

Consciousness and Place Making in European Paleolithic Cave Art

European Paleolithic cave art has long been treated as a unitary phenomenon with singular implications for the development of human consciousness. In recent years, Lewis-Williams has argued that European cave paintings represent the experienced internal reality of the shaman (broadly defined) while others have provided evidence for later painting as star charts, suggesting a more external locus for human awareness during this period. However, since internal and external experience represent different, if overlapping modes of awareness, there is no reason to consider “shamanism” and environmental records as mutually exclusive explanations.

I speculate that the long term trend in European cave paintings reflects an increasing integration of individual internal awareness with external environmental cues during periods of environmental change. Thus the earliest paintings, such as the handprints at El Castillo Cave, may represent an attempt at local group ritual place-making during associated with dramatic climatic shift around

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41,000ybp. Later paintings of animals such as those in Chauvet cave may represent an expanded attention to animals as the external basis of human existence during another period of dramatic climatic change around 35,000ybp. Only with the latest paintings, such as at Lascaux, associated with another climatic change 15-17,000 years ago, do theriomorphic figures consistent with the modern representation of shamanic practices emerge. At this same time many of the cave paintings themselves appear to be situated with regard to illumination by the solstice sun, suggesting an awareness of larger predictable patterns in nature. Thus, these youngest cave paintings bring together key elements of what we understand as the modern hunter-gatherer world view.

el-Sayed el-Aswad, United Arab Emirates University

Architectonic Space and Cultural Identity: A Case Study of the United Arab Emirates

Studies that examine architectonic space and social-spatial organization patterns of built environment in Emirates are scant. This inquiry investigates how Emirati people make architectonic space relevant to their identities. It discusses architectonic space not merely as the expression of social values, but as one of the core elements of the formation of Emirati cultural identity. Emirati people live in both traditional and modern houses and use state-of-the-art appliances, however, they are still attached to their traditional ways. They prefer to sit on mats/carpets and eat their food with their right hands in a specified manner without the use of spoons or forks. The Emirati house contains two reception rooms (*majlis*), one for men and another for women emphasizing social organization patterns of gender segregation. This segregation is viewed through social and religious lenses. The study examines the binary concepts of collective/individual, traditional/modern, inward/outward, internal/external, private/public, covered/opened and homogenous/heterogeneous so as to construct an inclusive and comparative framework for understanding the relationship between social and spatial patterns revealing the indigenous cultural identity of Emirati people. Ethnographic data put sociological concepts of two spatial identities, the local (associated with the small-scale place) and the cosmopolitan (connected to large-global domain) to question.

El-Sayed El-Aswad is currently professor of anthropology at the UAEU where he served as Chairperson of Sociology Department (2012-2014). He received his doctorate degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He has published widely in both Arabic and English. He published 8 books, over 80 papers in peer-reviewed journals, over 20 Encyclopedia entries and over 25 book reviews. He is the Editor-in-Chief of Humanities and Social Sciences: An International Refereed Journal (HHSS-UAEU). El-Aswad is known as a pioneer in the study of "cosmology" and "worldviews" in Muslim/Arab societies. His ethnographic fieldwork has focused on Egypt, Emirates, Bahrain and the USA. Awarded fellowships from various institutes including the Fulbright, Ford Foundation, Egypt, and UAEU. He achieved the CHSS Award for "excellence in scientific research publication in the academic year 2013-2014". El-Aswad taught at Wayne State University, Tanta University, and Bahrain University. Supervised graduate students including Master's and PhD students. Member of Editorial Boards of Digest of Middle East Studies, Muslims in Global Societies Series, Tabsir and CyberOrient. Member of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), the Middle Eastern Studies of North America and the International (MESA), American Academy of Religion (AAR) and Advisory Council of the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES). He is the author of [Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives](#) (AltaMira, 2012), "Dreams and the Construction of Reality: Symbolic Transformation of the Seen and Unseen in the Egyptian Imagination," [Anthropos](#), 105 (2): 441-453 (2010), "Narrating the Self among Arab Americans: A Bridging Discourse Between Arab tradition and American Culture," Digest of Middle East

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Studies ([DOMES](#)), 19 (2): 234-248 (2010), Spiritual Genealogy: Sufism and Sainly Places in the Nile Delta, [International Journal of Middle East Studies](#), 38 (4): 501-518 (2006), and [Religion and Folk Cosmology: Scenarios of the Visible and Invisible in Rural Egypt](#) (Praeger, 2002).

Tara Gallagher

The Shamans of Riverwest: The Anti-power of Community Radio in Social Action

In this study, I examine how a Milwaukee based community radio show called *Stonesoup* uses spoken word poetry to promote social change through shared memory and social consciousness. Drawing on performance theory, I explore how *Stonesoup* intersects ritual with everyday practice, specifically a playful diversion of time—"la perruque"—to challenge formal systems power. In this context, social action is not simply a matter of individual agency on behalf of the radio producer, or the "anti-hero who haunts our research" (de Certeau 1988: xxiv), but as an imagined community of similar social deflectors. Situated within both the legal structure of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the physical boundaries of the Riverwest neighborhood, *Stonesoup* manifests a strategy of tactics to break spatial boundaries amidst a developing dialogue for what radio is and should do for a shared community. I also discuss the *Stonesoup* application of the shaman metaphor as it applies to social divination and cultural healing evident in the poetic narrative and embraced by the real collective of contributors, artists, and listeners. Inherent in the performative process of radio is an imagined audience with whom *Stonesoup* wishes to construct and teach new cultural symbols. *Stonesoup* projects a relative liberation where it is impossible to escape structural cultural systems in an absolute sense. To conclude, I argue that tactics are the strategy by which *Stonesoup* attempts to motivate social action, however, the real power of the show springs from an environment of open-endedness and the producers' faith in creativity and collaboration.

Lee Gilmore

Turn the World Upside Down: Indigenous Activists at the Parliament of the World's Religions

This paper will examine the role of indigenous communities in inter-religious dialogue at the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Salt Lake City in October of 2015. Organized in different cities around the world roughly every five years since 1993 (in commemoration of the first Parliament of World Religions convened as part of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair), the Parliament attracts a global array of faith leaders and activists for panels, networking, and ceremonies. My focus in this presentation will be on the presence of diverse indigenous peoples in this space, and on their relationship with American Neo-Pagans. This examination will demonstrate how religious communities that are typically marginalized in the so-called "world religions" model used the 2015 Parliament as a space in which to stake a claim at the center of the dialogue. In keeping with our conference theme, my presentation will include a consideration of the politics of space at the Parliament. Held at the Salt Palace in downtown Salt Lake City (across the street from the Latter-Day Saints' Temple Square) the labyrinthine convention center was adapted to hold space for numerous religious communities. For example, Native American groups erected teepees alongside the exterior of one side of the building, and maintained a fire circle at the main entrance. However, these spaces were not without tension, even within the idealistic narratives of peace through interfaith dialogue promoted at the Parliament. This paper will update my 2014 SAC presentation by examining some of the ways in which American neo-pagans (educated, white, and middle-class) have continued to describe their religious traditions as

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“indigenous” and have also asserted this term as applying to efforts to reconstruct pre-Christian European traditions, in particular a Lithuanian community known as Romuva. These exchanges raise critical questions about colonialism, identity, and appropriation, as well as about what counts as “indigeneity”—contested among indigenous and non-indigenous communities alike.

Nancy Grace

Music and Ecopsychology: Making Place Through Sound in Space

This presentation will explore how music written to be played outdoors, with the environment in mind, can serve to bring people back into place, thereby bridging the alienating gap between the Western psyche and the natural world. Leaving behind the concert hall’s walled-in separation of human from nature, outdoor eco-musical performances break down these artificial, insulating barriers, allowing for a more indigenous experience of place, of person as embedded within place and within the more-than-human world. These ideas are brought to life through modern composer John Luther Adams’ pieces *Inuksuit* (2009) and *Sila: The Breath of the World* (2014), and Paul Walde’s *Requiem for a Glacier*, which was performed at the Farnham Glacier in British Columbia in 2013.

These eco-musical experiences facilitate place-making both internally and externally. Externally, they serve to animate, commemorate, and celebrate place, via a human presence that is appropriately humble and honoring. Playing music outdoors, previously-composed human-made sounds are inevitably met in unexpected ways by spontaneous sounds from the surrounding environment, which become part of each performance in unique and unrepeatable ways, serving to highlight the defining characteristics of each particular place and time. Internally, music serves as a medium connecting person to place, allowing the presence of place to come alive in the individual human psyche in a new way, with music helping to foster awareness of the person-place interrelationship. As the concerns of global warming and climate catastrophe becoming increasingly central in social discourse, the role that outdoor eco-music can play in fostering ecopsychological engagement which benefits humans and the more than human world is encouraging, and may just lead us closer to re-discovering the wisdom that sits in places.

Susan Ross Grimaldi and John R. Lawrence, Jr., PhD

Traveling in Tandem to Invisible Places: A Video Presentation

In Inner Mongolia, China, due to unexpected circumstances, John filmed a Daur Shaman and Susan as they joined souls and journeyed north to Lake Baikal to the ancestral home of the shaman. Susan underwent an initiation, thereby elevating her status and expanding her powers to heal. What makes this documentary outstanding is the rare opportunity to know the words of the shaman’s chanting. Additionally, the Shaman was filmed while she consulted with patients in her clinic, where we see her performing divinations and utilizing special healing techniques.

Susan Ross Grimaldi, M.Ed., is a Field Associate for the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, specializing in Audio/Visual Documentation. She began recording shamanistic rituals in 1989 on the island of Grenada. She has produced numerous documentaries, and published many articles on her field research. She has served as a consultant helping the Chinese government re-integrate shamanism back into contemporary Chinese society. She lives in Vermont where she has a private practice.

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John R. Lawrence, Jr., PhD is a cultural anthropologist, photographer, and videographer, specializing in research on traditional shamans. John is a Staff Associate for Audio-Visual Documentation for the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. He has produced many documentaries on shamans. He has published articles on Estonia, China, and Chile. For years John lived onboard boats, and he captained several small sailing vessels crossing both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, also sailing around Cape Horn in a 35' sailboat.

Andrew Gurevich

The Paisley Caves complex is a system of four caves in an arid, desolate region of south-central Oregon. One of the caves may contain archaeological evidence of the oldest definitively-dated human presence in North America. The site was first studied by Luther Cressman in the 1930s. A field school from the University of Oregon has been examining the site since 2002 and analyzing its pre-Clovis artifacts. In the summer of 2007, they identified the oldest human DNA yet discovered in the American continents.

When combined with other evidence, a case can be made that some of the earliest, if not *the* earliest, known sites of human habitation in North America exist right here in the state of Oregon. Since the practice of “place-making” (or “land-claiming” as the Icelandic tribes called it) involves multiple acts of collective remembering and imagining, it may well serve us to look back to these shadowy origins as we look forward to chart a course for our own uncertain futures.

Now, in 2016, as we gather in this same region to consider the “wisdom that sits in places,” and how consciousness is mediated through multiple acts of remembering, we should “remember” to connect with the nonlocal, energetic matrix that exists within the topography of this very place. The first inhabitants of North America settled right here, and did so based on a confluence of complex social, environmental and psychological factors. The region’s character was intimately woven into the very fabric of those decisions, into the fabric of the communal consciousness of those original inhabitants. So too, we now are entering a time of great uncertainty and change. So too we now must make new choices rooted in our relationship to this land, to the flora and fauna, to the animals, to each other and the air and the water. Remembrances of things past, our former selves, may bring to light dormant aspects of knowing that can once again serve us as we adapt and change along with this great land we call home.

There is a reason, in other words, why *SAC* keeps coming to Oregon. The *MRG* is a Sanskrit term that is used to discuss the “pathway” of a creature. It is used in mythological studies to refer to the “pathways” or “natures” of things within the cosmological structure of a given society. The thought is, by following the path of an animal backwards, you can find their dwelling place: their place of *origin*. Similarly, by following the human animal backwards, into the recesses of the human heart and the collective consciousness of our symbolic origins, we may we rediscover some lost aspects of our original selves. Here, in Oregon, we find a touchstone along this human journey. One that sparked a series of events of which we are still a part. One tied inextricably to the garments of our own becoming.

Professor Andrew Gurevich lives with his wife and two children in Portland, Oregon where he teaches writing, mythology, literature and philosophy. His work has appeared in Popular Archaeology,

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Anthropology of Consciousness, The Ecologist, The Voice, Reality Sandwich, *as well as in the books* The Afterlife Survey, Mother Earth Book, Tribal Indonesia *and* Voices of the Sacred Feminine—Conversations to ReShape Our World.

He is a regular speaker at academic conferences, community lectures and on radio programs such as Dr. Karen Tate's "Voices of the Sacred Feminine," Dr. Christopher Ryan's "Tangentially Speaking" and his own podcast, "On the Block Radio with Andrew Gurevich."

John (Sean) Hinton

Subconscious Aspects of Place: Positivistic vs Romantic Views of Place and Consciousness

The proposed presentation will explore the relationship of place from both the mystical or indigenous views and the positivistic view regarding man's subconscious being and the environment. Place has been thought of for millennia as having forces that effect the individual. Current interest in environmental psychology is at present exploring again these effects. The two viewpoints noted above bring differing conclusions about man, consciousness, epistemology, and nature. The presentation will discuss examples of places and personal experiences related to these places. The purpose is to explore the meaning of place and the relationships we have to place.

John (Sean) Hinton, PhD, is in Private Practice in Northern California. He has worked with both Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, and the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, Calif. Sean has pursued his interest in EHE extraordinary human experiences in his research and has published in academic journals such a (JEEP) Journal of Exception Experiences and Psychology.

Stanley Krippner

Anomalies and Stigmatic Activity in Brasilia

The term "stigmata" refers to apparent bleeding from areas of the body corresponding to the wounds of Jesus Christ during crucifixion. A contemporary ostensible case of stigmata is described, the experient being a Brazilian male who was raised as a Muslim. Commonalities with other experients (or "stigmatics") are identified. Psychophysiological explanations are considered, especially those that see the stigmata as evidence of various types of psychogenic bleeding, post-traumatic bleeding, somatization, and/or dissociation. Even so, those who experience the stigmata may be experiencing meaningful spiritual growth and development as well. On the other hand, several stigmatics have been found to self-inflict their wounds, perhaps as an attention-getting strategy.

Timothy J. Lavalli

Spaces Seldom Considered Sacred

Based on my current book-in-progress *Undomiciled: How to be the Perfect Long-Term Houseguest*

Exploring the effects of entering (invading) the home and space of others. How the "everyday space" of others is often very sacred and subtly protected & defended by them and by all of us. Suggestions for entering such spaces and strategies to identify what are and are not uncommon sacred spaces.

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Jeff MacDonald

Recreating Sacred Space among Refugees

The recreation of sacred spaces for refugees who have left family and homeland behind poses just one of the many cultural challenges that they must face in resettling in western countries. These challenges are often unique to each refugee community depending upon the nature of their traditional religion and spiritual practices. Communities that were long sedentary and closely tied to sacred sites in their homelands face different challenges than those that have a history of migration. In this paper, I examine how the Iu-Mien, a refugee group that fled Laos after its fall to communism in 1975, developed and continue to use a successful 700-year strategy as migrants across the mountains of Southern China and Southeast Asia to recreate sacred space in the United States. Since at least the 14th Century, they have practiced their own portable form of Taoism that relies upon sacred Chinese character Taoist books and scrolls to create virtual sacred spaces in lieu of actual temples in which to conduct their rituals. This paper explores how these books are currently used and have been transformed by literate Iu-Mien spirit masters or shamans to create sacred spaces for ritual use in the U.S. since 1978.

Dennis L. Merritt

The Soul of Glacier Country

A basic premise of ecopsychology and deep ecology is that a person connected to the land will have a natural desire to protect it. Dreams of landscapes, plants, animals, and natural phenomena like storms can be used to establish a sense of place, especially if these natural elements appear with a numinous or sacred quality in a dream. Dennis Merritt will present his dream of a typical Midwestern landscape that appeared in a sacred light and describe how he used that dream to connect with the soul of glacier country via weekly round-trip bus rides through a notable glacial feature called drumlins. Ten different time frames can be experienced on that journey.

Dennis Merritt, PhD, LCSW, has an MA in Humanistic Psychology, a PhD in entomology from UC-Berkeley, and is a graduate of the Zurich Jung Institute. He practices as a Jungian analyst, sandplay therapist, and ecopsychologist in Madison and Milwaukee, WI. His Zurich thesis was titled, "Synchronicity Experiments with the I Ching and Their Relevance to the Theory of Evolution." His article, "Use of the I Ching in the Psychoanalytic Setting" is available on www.EcoJung.com and has been translated into Chinese. He authored four volumes of The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe—Jung, Hermes, and Ecopsychology. His blog, www.JungianEcopsychology.com, has articles on guns and the American psyche and Hunger Games from a Jungian, political, and environmental perspective.

Sharon G. Mijares, PhD

Inner Ecology and Liminal Spaces

Restoring a deepened sense of inner ecological connectedness is vital for humanity's future. We need to know our inner landscape, improve our relationship with inner distinctions and diversity in order to heal the outer world. Archetypal presences can illuminate an awareness of unknown territory.

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There are places where split off parts of the soul reside, isolated and disconnected from wholeness. They can lead us into liminal spaces, thresholds of awakening. Individual healing and expansion illuminates

David Miller

Biocultural bases of places and spaces

Many scholars have tended to conflate the concepts of place and space. Often those working from a sociocultural vantage point have emphasized the importance of place, while those in the natural sciences have routinely concentrated on space. This paper examines the distinctions laid out by both perspectives and possible biocultural elements that may underlie this division. In doing so I hope to help separate the two constructs, demonstrate that each may be the foundation of the other, and some advantages of understanding this more complex relationship. Our concepts of space may be situated in at least three types of substrate: the physical spacetime continuum; a liminal zone of psychophysical transduction (where an externality becomes internalized); and embodied cognition. On the other hand, our emergent concepts of place apparently rely on experiential, personal, social, and cultural domains.

First, we will examine the intertwined constraints and possibilities of place and space as they influence each other. Further, we will explore how these constraints and possibilities provide affordances that may prefigure specific neural and semantic networks. Spaces are more than passive relationships between entities; they provide the framework for cognitive maps, paths and navigation. The active process of place-making builds upon this framework both structuring and maintaining memory, narrative and history. These places in turn are often projected onto actual and virtual spaces, and subsequently constitute a multitude of possible “realities.”

David L. Miller, PhD, is a psychophysicist who has done a range of research from sensory phenomenology and functional brain imaging, to cognitive and cultural influences on perception. His avocations include amateur astronomy, maker culture, visual and plastic arts, and various forms of self-experimentation. He currently teaches perception, cognition, neuroscience, and related theory and method at the University of Rhode Island.

Justin Panneck

The Invisible Ambush: Insights into the Wisdom of Culture, Consumerism, and Modern Mysteries

As anthropologists, scientists, scholars, and observers of ancient and newly emerging cultural phenomena, most of us are aware of this new game—one in which observing what is in our own “backyard” has become just as interesting and unique as what we may observe in a foreign or ancient culture. It is quite evident once the eyes are truly open that wisdom not only sits in places, but ambushes us in a voluminous array of manifestations, and especially within the modern cultural artifact (e.g., smart phones, toys, cinema, culinary experimentation, etc.). In the modern world, cultural artifacts have become alloyed—fused, just as mind and matter were alloyed together throughout nature in the ancient world. This is what I call *migratory ascension*, and reflects some interesting insights about the human condition—our desires, our future, etc. Wisdom can also be often seen in social media and the rampant cynicism that we see within this media, which may be the result of the emergence of greater information access and an increasing DIY-amateur-expertise-type

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of culture, combined with festering psychic wounds that something has overtaken the world that does not serve the well-being of humans—and “Old Story.” There is an emerging paradigm shift that places the “power” within the hands of the people, where wisdom and ideas are reasserting themselves in the marketplace. However, important principles must be applied and the activation of a “New Story” should and will take place. I will discuss the details of this phenomenon and shift and the importance of the wisdom all around us. I will also discuss the cultural importance of and wisdom embedded within modern day conspiracies and mysteries (e.g., UFOs and Bigfoot), scientific revelations, nightmares and the macabre, fashion trends, psychedelic-visionary content, the nature of archetypal and morphogenetic fields, and a subject I have come to call *EntheoWisdom*.

Dr. Justin Panneck is an assistant professor of psychology at Colorado Technical University and adjunct faculty for Blue Cliff College and South University, as well as an instructional designer for several Fortune 500 companies. He holds a MEd in Instructional Technology and a PhD in Health Psychology and is working on a counseling degree. In addition to psychology, he teaches/has taught such diverse courses as organizational psychology, history of psychology, stress management, world history, American history, American culture, and American diversity. He is a writer and author and published a fictional book entitled The Knight of Dark Wood: The Last Tree Whisperer, which includes themes related to mythology and consciousness. His current research interests include consciousness, altered states, dreams, ethnopharmacology and plant medicines, shamanism, mythology and alchemy, spirituality, and behavioral health. His most recent research study involved the effects of ayahuasca on consciousness, spirituality, and stress coping, which was later published as a book entitled Ethnopharmacology and Stress Relief. He is currently working on another book entitled Belly of the Beast and is related to his own experience with altered states and true life adventures, as well as topics like spiritual evolution, quantum realms, spiritual entities, archetypes, mythology and alchemy, culture, and the future of global society. He is working on another book entitled From Ghana with Love, which is a compilation of hilarious pranks with scam artists, including inheritance and Russian bride scams.

His work has included university training specialist, university alumni advisor, small business consultant, district leader for Citigroup subsidiaries, mentor, private school teacher, and instructional designer. He designed a unique course for a local private school and taught it—Communication, Comedy, & Invention—a purpose of which involved exploring and developing learning motivation for students ages 8 to 11. He was President of the Educators’ Network AIU Online Chapter for two years, which turned local education communities into a global community. He was also the organizer of “Future Health Leaders,” a group that included 70 members—doctors, nurses, psychologists, massage therapists, and healers of all sorts, the goal of which was to promote alternative healing movements in Portland, OR.

In his spare time, Justin does everything in his power to flexibly bend social mores and societal rules, forging new paths, exposing some semblance of truth, conducting humorous and uncomfortable skits in public, and manifesting assorted riotous adventures. He is also an avid mushroom hunter and spends a good deal of time in the woods connecting with nature and enjoying her mycelial fruits. As a cultural critic and researcher, he also spends time exploring important mysteries, such as the Bigfoot phenomenon and UFOs, mostly exploring the psychology of those who pursue this field and the cultural meaning behind its relevance. A self-proclaimed iconoclastic oneironautic psychonaut, he also spends time exploring his dreams and consciousness and all of its abilities by experimenting with altered states, remote viewing, bi-location, active imagination, lucid dreaming, and meditation. He lives in Portland, OR by day, and somewhere near the fringes of Sloan’s Wall by night.

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Alexandra Peck

Tamanowas Rock, Intertribal Conflict, and Settler Colonialism: A Sacred Coast Salish Site in Northwestern Washington and Its Contemporary Implications for Historical Archaeology

Believing time to be circular, the best storytellers often begin their tales from both the beginning and the end. The story of Tamanowas Rock and its complex history, chock full of multiple interpretations from Native tribes and settler colonial descendants alike, deserve to be told in this cyclical fashion. I seek to complicate this story, in an effort to expose and better understand the multifaceted meanings of the naturally occurring memorial, as it relates to both historically silenced and unlikely contemporary stakeholders. Located in Chimacum, Washington, and sacred to the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, Tamanowas Rock draws attention to the importance of (and the increased need for) historical archaeology in the Pacific Northwest, causing scholars and the public alike to question traditional monolithic approaches to understanding the recent past in connection to the present. Reinterpreting memorials, monuments, and culturally important sites remind us that physical locations are not stuck in a time warp, and do not solely exist in the past. Instead, many sites, such as Tamanowas Rock, remain active places of communal identity, ritual use, and Native cultural importance, having also acquired reputations as sites of local recreation, proposed “development” projects (which, ironically, often actively seek to demolish such landforms), and even New Age significance. Likewise, the story of Tamanowas Rock is a story of ancient geological events, intertribal violence, colonial encounters, broken treaties, uprooted communities, and land use proposals, leading, ultimately, to integration, cooperation, and contemporary conflict. Historical archaeology is, thus, much needed when examining Tamanowas Rock and its contemporary implications of meaning, because multi-stranded approaches (consisting of oral histories, treaties, maps, census records, published accounts, and archaeological and geologic data) expose the ways in which certain information has been left out of the historical record, has been either marginalized or perhaps given too much credence, or has been not recognized as entirely legitimate.

Alexandra M. Peck is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology at Brown University, where she is a student of Robert Preucel. Her research focuses on Central and Southern Coast Salish art forms of the Pacific Northwest. She is especially interested in tribal museums, archaeological collaboration, and repatriation in relation to Native American tribes, as well as how Coast Salish communities are adopting and challenging museum models as a means of promoting self-representation and asserting sovereignty. Her M.A. research is centered upon the ways in which Coast Salish knowledge, values, and art styles influence exhibit practices within cultural centers on Coast Salish reservations in Oregon and Washington. Prior to attending Brown University, Peck attended Seattle University, where her interest in Native Studies was piqued under the guidance of Ted Fortier. Her current research projects include curating the Rhode Island School of Design’s (RISD) Native American collection, with the goal of designing the school’s first Native American exhibit. Additionally, she is in the process of creating her own exhibit at Brown University’s John Hay Library, in which the theme of “playing Indian” is scrutinized from an anthropological perspective, through the use of ledger art and historical documents relating to pan-Amerindianism and cultural appropriation. Peck is also involved with the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative at Brown University, in hopes of bringing attention to contemporary Native issues and reminding the Ivy League that “we are still here.” She is extremely grateful to present at the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness’ annual meeting, as well as to return to the Pacific Northwest, a place that she calls home.

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Bryan Rill

Making the Sacred Mundane

The presentation will discuss how Shugendo adherents—mountain ascetics in Japan—transform the mountainous landscape into a sacred realm wherein they refine themselves and their relationship to the world around them into meaningful narratives of being. Through a process of interpretive drift, participants first unlearn and then relearn new symbolic constructs of reality that transform the mountains into the Dharma Body. Identifying with this sacred landscape cultivates an increase in capacities and a subtle spiritual power that empowers these men and women in their everyday lives. In this talk I will draw from two years of ethnographic fieldwork to present the specific pathways through which such transformation can occur.

Donna Emsel Schill

Objective

To illustrate how “Wisdom Sits in Places” and is emerging within visual and performing arts and in such unexpected disciplines as choreography.

Goals

We will observe how the human body can navigate the time-space continuum in ways nobody has done before. This presentation will focus on visuals derived from the work of Elizabeth Streb whose STREB ExtremeAction Company challenges assumptions of art, aging, injury, gender and human possibilities. (As of this writing, January 2016, the showing of the film *Born to Fly*, has not been confirmed. However, both static images and slide show will be shared.)

An example

During the 2012 London Olympic Games the STREB ExtremeAction Company dancers navigated and “flew” from the London Bridge. Three dancers *walked down* the curved and vertical surface of the London City Hall. The PopAction dancers continually challenge the “hegemony of the ground” (Sterb, E., “*Born to Fly*”)

Mark Thomas Shekoyan

Partnering with Anima Mundi: From Enframing to Co-Creative Partnership through Shamanic Biomimicry

Biomimicry is a relatively recent design science that has captured the attention of many interested in sustainable design. It is defined as:

“As an approach to innovation that seeks sustainable solutions to human challenges by emulating nature’s time-tested patterns and strategies. The goal is to create products, processes, and policies—new ways of living—that are well-adapted to life on earth over the long haul.” (<http://biomimicry.org/what-is-biomimicry>)

In surveying ways in which Biomimicry is practiced, it becomes apparent that it is a contested practice in which the imperatives of techno-capitalist modernity are in tension with archaic approaches to being and consciousness.

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Far from leading to a sustainable world, Biomimicry can become just another form of what Martin Heidegger in “The Question Concerning Technology” calls enframing (Gestell). Enframing reduces all being to utilitarian ends that serve reductive and acquisitive ends. In a recent Ted talk and follow-up paper published on LinkedIn, Luis Arnal, cofounder of Insitum, an innovation consultancy, shared that Empathy is the base of Creativity (https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/empathy-key-creativity-luis-arnal?trk=sushi_topic_posts_guest). This understanding, at the heart of the field of human centered design of technology products, is potentially more significant when considering co-creation with the planet.

To challenge technocratic assumptions and approaches to Biomimicry, shamanic states of consciousness that foster a deeper ontological and empathic relationship with nature and creativity will be discussed. In turn imaginal approaches to the “Plant Realm” will be explored. A proposal for pairing Biomimicry with shamanic practices that create resonance with Gaian consciousness will be promoted to challenge the instrumental rationality driving many Biomimicry projects today.

Mark Shekoyan earned his MA (94) in Anthropology from the University of Oregon based on ethnographic work with the 3HO Kundalini Yoga community of Eugene. He earned his PhD (99) from the University of Oregon based on ethnographic work with a Taoist folk sect in Taiwan. He is a practicing design anthropologist with over 15 years of experience working in design, innovation, and high-tech contexts in the San Francisco Bay Area. With a long-standing interest in sustainable design, he is currently studying with Biomimicry 3.8 and ASU towards becoming a certified Biomimicry Specialist. He dreams of one-day facilitating “Deep Biomimicry” retreats on land he owns in the forests west of Mount Shasta in service of cultivating a Deep Biomimicry based sustainable culture.

Nicole I. Torres

2016 Program Chair

Dr. Nicole Torres is the Editor-in-Chief of the Anthropology of Consciousness, the journal of SAC. She is also a medical anthropologist and a clinical social worker who focuses on community mental health. Nicole earned her PhD in anthropology from the University of Washington, where she explored immigration, militarization, and the ecology of violence in the South Central and borderlands regions of Arizona. Her doctoral research is now published as a book: Walls of Indifference: Immigration and the Militarization of the US – Mexico Border (Paradigm Publishers, 2015). She has served as board member for the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness and has been the Program Chair for the 2015 and 2016 Annual Meetings.

Greg Wright

The Sea Trees of Suicide, Mental Health, and Place in Japan's Aokigahara

Over the last thirty years, a forest off the eastern side of Mt. Fuji in Japan, called Aokigahara, has gained a sinister reputation. Regarded by the West as the second-most-popular suicide spot in the world after San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, it is no less notorious in Japan. Long a place of evil in Japanese mythology and social practice, Aokigahara's reputation as the Suicide Forest is a new face on an old place, and reflects modern issues facing a nation who has one of the highest suicide rates in the industrialized world. Before 1988, it is estimated 30 deaths took place in the forest per year, but since, that rate has risen to over 200 a year, with local officials around Aokigahara choosing to stop

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reporting suicide numbers in attempts to stop publicizing the forest as a place to end one's life. As Aokigahara's reputation grows on a global scale through Hollywood movies, Japanese animation, and growing urban legends, local and national governments seek answers as to what Aokigahara is and what it represents about modern Japan. Suicide in Japan is not stigmatized: suicide is, in certain circumstances, seen as honorable, tied to ideas of conformity and acceptance going back centuries to honored traditions of suicide among the samurai class. As such, Japanese officials treat suicide not as a public health concern, but a social issue, blaming the individual's perceived inability to conform to society rather than the suicide victim's personal psychology. Despite this, the Japanese government has sought to combat suicide, and suicide in Aokigahara in particular, through methods including the posting of encouraging signs at the beginning of the forest's many paths, imploring potential suicide victims to reconsider their decision. Local efforts to collect bodies have forced many locals around Aokigahara to confront Japan's astounding suicide rates and the sinister reputation of the Sea of Forests at their doorstep. Aokigahara represents a "key symbol" (Ortner, 1973) of Japan's ecopsychological landscape, representing the internal and international issues facing suicide Japan and Aokigahara's status as a liminal space, transitioning with the times.

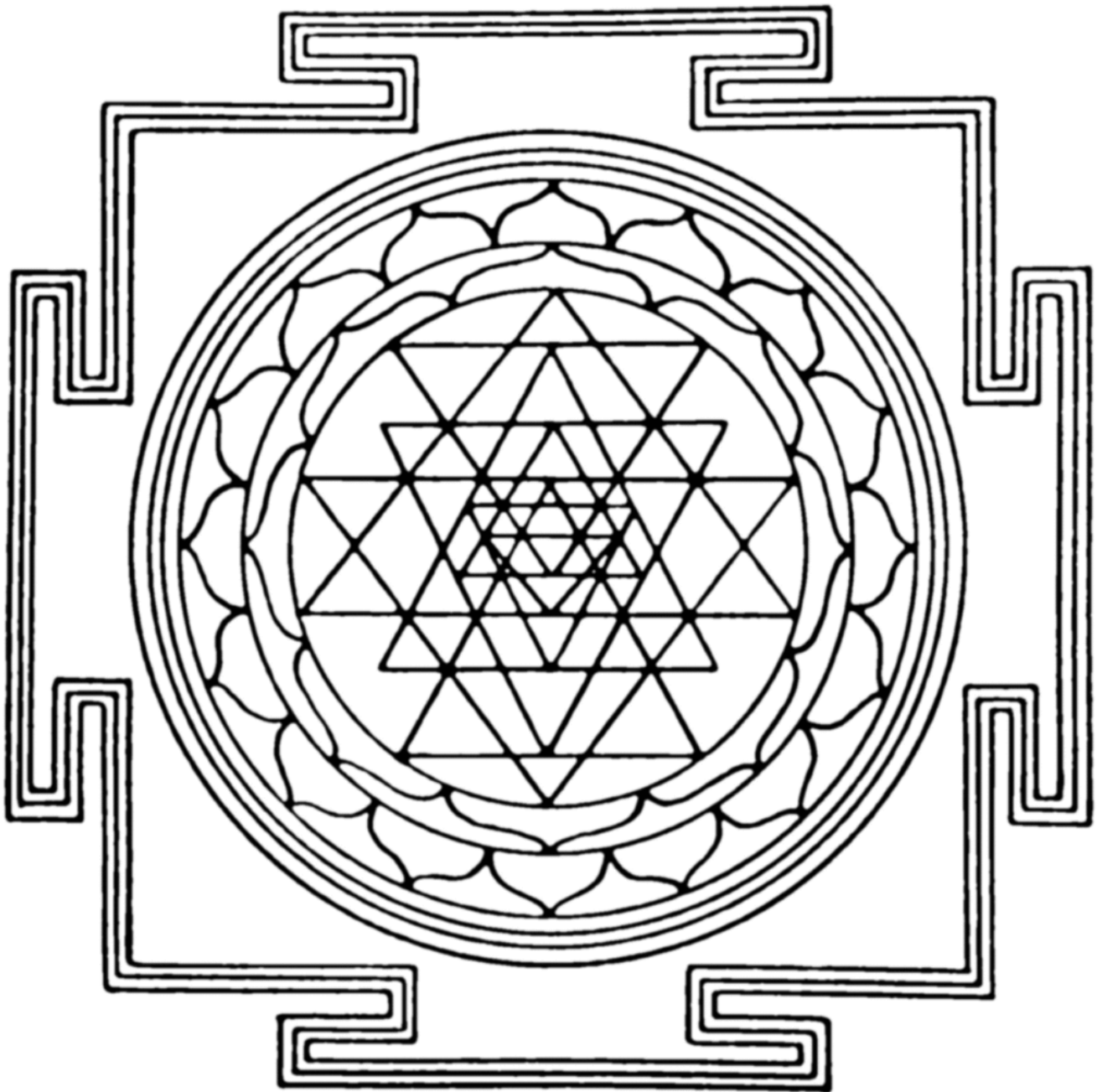
Sydney Yeager, M.A., PhD Candidate

Making Sacred in Virtual Space

Many people in the 21st century live a good portion of their life in digital space, connected to people all around the globe. This has resulted in the emergence of rich technological practices. As with all cultural spaces, digital spaces develop unique ritual behaviors, synchronizing physical practices and adapting techniques learned from other, older websites. In moments of crisis, people turn to their religious and cultural values for answers. Mourning practices have transitioned onto the digital landscape. When Facebook users die, their existing Facebook accounts live on, and their Timelines (brief narratives, images, and videos that collectively tell the story of the users' life) may be converted into a digital memorial (Burbaker et al. 2013). Facebook documents a portion of mourners' communal reimagining of the dead. Memorialization on Facebook shares many similarities with ancestral and spontaneous shrines; this inspired the term "Facebook Shrines" for this study. In the acts of remembering and re-imagining their dead loved ones, Facebook users create a sacred space in what may seem like the most unlikely place, thus transforming digital spaces into virtual spaces of wisdom. What wisdom do Facebook Shrines offer grievers? This paper will present preliminary findings from my ongoing dissertation research relying on both interviews and analysis of Facebook Shrine content, asking how sacred space is created in a digital medium primarily reserved for sharing mundane and trivial content.

Notes

“That Thou Art”



The Upanishads

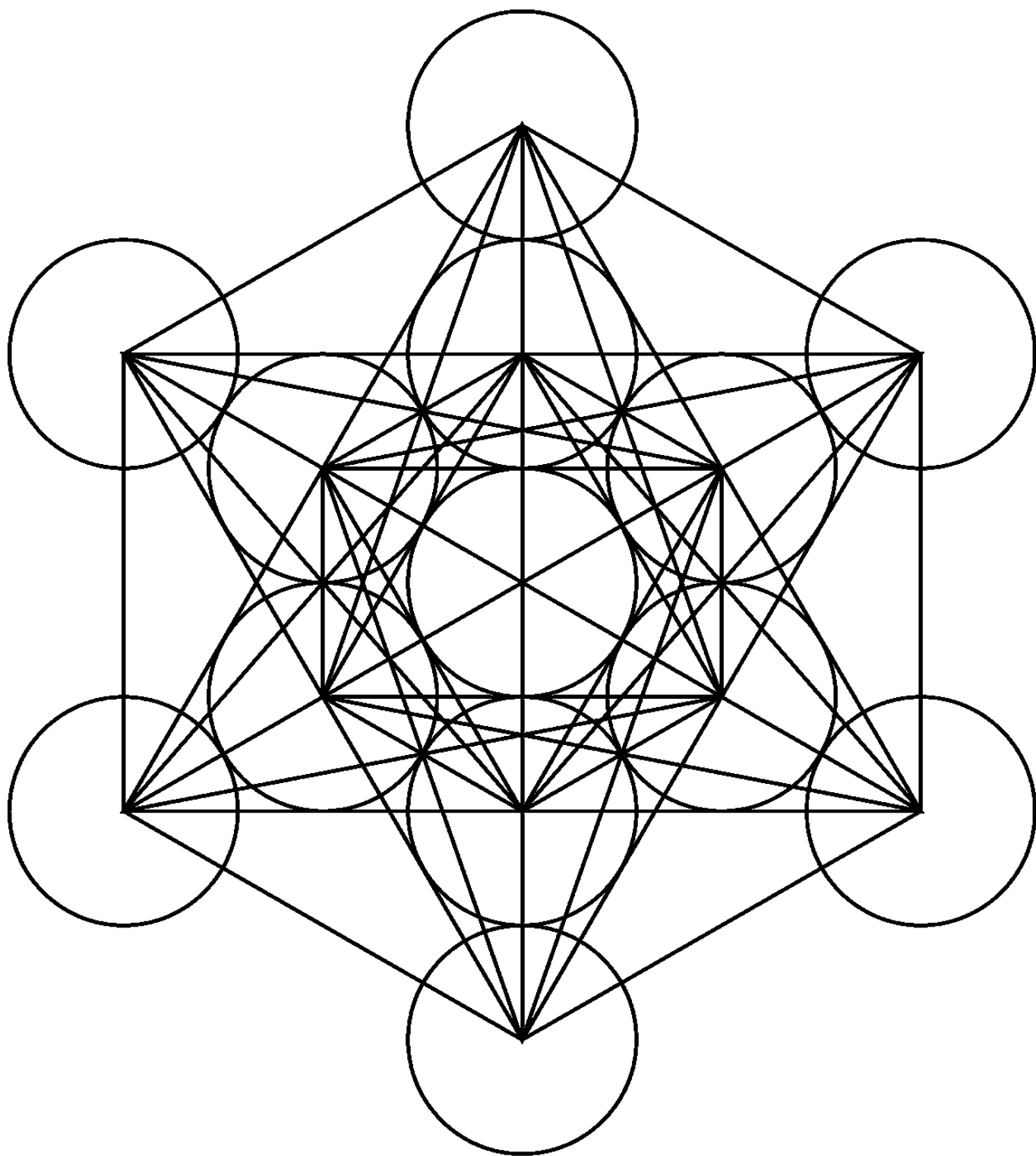


To realize this vision, the SAC seeks to:

- Publish the peer-reviewed journal *Anthropology of Consciousness*; convene an Annual Spring Conference that consists of individual papers, panel discussions, and experiential sessions; and host sessions at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association.
- Value interdisciplinary perspectives, respect diverse traditions, and prioritize inclusiveness and open dialogue in the study of consciousness.
- Support rigorous and empirically-based inquiries into consciousness that utilize diverse methodologies, including ethnographic, scientific, experiential, historical, and alternative ways of knowing.
- Reflect on how consciousness and human transformation can be made relevant to the challenges of our age, with the aim of a praxis to catalyze a shift toward a more just world.

Our interests:

- **States of consciousness and consciousness studies**
Dreams, possession, trance, dissociation, theories of mind/cognition, epistemology, methodology, evolution of consciousness, biosocial, psychophysiology, psychotherapy, cultural psychology.
- **Shamanic, religious, and spiritual traditions**
Ethnographic studies of shamanism; modern and core shamanism; Eastern, Western, and indigenous religions; healing practices; ritual; mediumistic, mystical, and transpersonal experiences; magic and witchcraft; music and dance.
- **Psychoactive substances**
Studies of psychoactive plant use in traditional and contemporary settings, ethnopharmacology, psychopharmacology, healing, addiction and recovery.
- **Philosophical, symbolic, and linguistic studies**
Myth, oral traditions, language, archetypes, body and mind, comparative studies, visual anthropology.
- **Anomalous experience**
Psychic phenomenon, reincarnation, near-death experiences, mediumistic communication, divination.



2016 Program Committee
(in alphabetical order)

Andrew Gurevich
Gary Moore
Justin Panneck
Nicole Torres