



Embassy of India
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Institut für Südasiens-, Tibet-
und Buddhismuskunde

Invitation to two public lectures

Dr. Tiziana Leucci

(Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud , CNRS)

The Impact of the Neo-Tantric Movement on the Choreographic Traditions in Europe and India (1960s to 2000s)

Thursday, April 21, 2016
18h c.t.

Dance and Dancers in Indian Cinema

Friday, April 22, 2016
15h c.t.

Dr. Tiziana Leucci is a senior research fellow at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris, and attached to its Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud. Her Ph.D. thesis in Social Anthropology (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris) dealt with the culture of South Indian courtesans. Dr. Leucci also studied ballet and contemporary dance at the National Academy of Dance in Rome and Indian dance (Bharat Natyam and Odissi) in India. She has authored a book and numerous chapters and articles on the anthropology and history of dance in South India and on the European perception and representation of Indian courtesans. Her further research interests are the history of the interaction between Indian and Western artists, and the anthropology of aesthetic theories and Indian choreographic practices, especially in terms of their transformations in the colonial period and on the modern stage. Since 2010, Dr. Leucci teaches Bharat Natyam at the Conservatoire "Gabriel Fauré", Les Lilas – Est Ensemble (France).

Venue:

**Lecture Room 1,
Department of South Asian,
Tibetan and Buddhist Studies,
AAKH, Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7
1090 Vienna**

The Impact of the Neo-Tantric Movement on the Choreographic Traditions in Europe and India (1960s to 2000s)

The presentation will focus on the impact of the Neo-Tantric Movement on the choreographic avant-gardes in Europe and India, from the 1960s onwards. Three major figures in the international landscape of dance in these years are chosen to illustrate the phenomenon. After a chronological analysis of the works of the French choreographer Maurice Béjart (1927–2007), the presentation will deal with some later stage productions by two remarkable Indian choreographers and feminist activists: Chandralekha (1928–2006) and Mallika Sarabhai (b. 1954). These three “counter-culture” choreographers expressed their own ideas, quests and struggles by exploring the “shadow and light” in the meanders of the human mind, body, sexuality and emotions, and by employing in their choreographies some Indian poems and musical compositions as well as several abstract symbols and diagrams borrowed from the Tantric traditions. Special attention will be devoted here to the authors and literary texts that deeply influenced their artistic work and struggle eloquently mirroring the contemporary “love and peace” ideologies of the hippies, the quests for “oriental” spirituality, sexual liberation and freedom of expression, the political contestation of conservatism, racial discrimination and military power, and the support of women's emancipation, the ecological movement and the human rights movement.

Dance and Dancers in Indian Cinema

The presentation will deal with the crucial role played by dance and dancers in Bollywood films and forms of regional Indian cinema(s). Special attention will be paid to the dancers, masters and musicians who belong to the hereditary communities of artists performing in temples, at courts and in the setting of the salon (known in South India under the generic terms *devadāsī*, *rājadāsī* and *naṭṭuvaṅṅār*) and acted, choreographed and sang for these movies, making them highly successful. The lecture will also focus on the speaker's Bharat Natyam dance master, the late *naṭṭuvaṅṅār* V.S. Muthuswamy Pillai, who worked for the cinema in the 1940s and 1950s, trained quite a number of dancers and film actresses, and choreographed several items performed by them in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi movies. Interestingly, some members of the hereditary communities of performing artists found in the cinema a way to continue practicing their profession, which had been taken away from them by other communities after the application of the 1947 Devadasi Act. Stigmatized and criminalized by this law, for a short time they found some kind of patronage in the cinema, though this was not devoid of ambiguity.

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