



Dr. Mara Matta

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**The Diary of Kalpana Chakma:
The Power of Memory and the Display of "Absence"
in the Fight for Adivasi and Women's Rights in Bangladesh**

**The Khasi New Wave:
Addressing Indigenous Issues from a Cinematic Perspective**

Dr. Matta is a researcher in South Asian Studies at the Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali, Università di Roma „La Sapienza“, where she has been teaching “Modern Literatures of the Indian Subcontinent” for the last seven years. Her recent studies, which were part of her postdoctoral fellowship project at the Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”, focused on indigenous literatures and cinemas in the borderlands of Northeast India and Bangladesh’s Chittagong Hill Tracts. She is continuing her research on literature and filmmaking as modes of retrieving a voice, fighting a visual hegemonic regime and providing alternative insights into the social and cultural history of “subaltern people” in India and Bangladesh (Adivasis, Dalits, women). Dr. Matta also works on issues of migration and diaspora, both in South Asia and Italy, and is a member of the Archive of Migrant Memories (AMM, Rome) and of NETPAC (The Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema).

Seminar
Donnerstag, 19. Mai 2016
18:00

Vortrag
Freitag, 20. Mai 2016
15h c.t.

Ort:
Seminarraum 1,
Institut für Südasiens-, Tibet- und
Buddhismuskunde,
Universitätscampus,
Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7
1090 Wien

The Diary of Kalpana Chakma: The Power of Memory and the Display of “Absence” in the Fight for Adivasi and Women’s Rights in Bangladesh

Kalpana Chakma was a young *ādivāsī* leader and the General Secretary of the Hill Women's Federation, an organization that campaigns for the rights of the Jumma People of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh (CHTs). She disappeared on June 12, 1996. Hence, June 12, 2016 will mark the twentieth anniversary of her forcible abduction and murder. The Bangladeshi State and its army may have turned Kalpana into a ghost, but her presence and voice have never faded. In this seminar, we will read some extracts from *Kalpana Chakma's Diary* which today, more than ever, presents Kalpana's voice as the haunting call for justice that resonates in every corner of the CHTs. Many Jumma people, following Kalpana's courageous and resilient example, have risen in protest against displacement, sexual harassment, disenfranchisement, induced poverty and progressive annihilation of political and cultural rights, using literature and art to re-write history. Deploying memories to contradict hegemonic history, and voicing “silence” and marking “absence” to fight against politics of (in)visibility, Kalpana's words have become the manifesto of the ongoing fight of the indigenous people and the Jumma women of Bangladesh.

The Khasi New Wave: Addressing Indigenous Issues from a Cinematic Perspective

In 2011, the Khasi language film “19/87” was selected for the prestigious International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala. Directed by Wanphrang Diengdoh, in collaboration with the filmmaker Dondor Lyngdoh and the writer Janice Pariat, the film was received by some critics as “the birth of Khasi New Wave”. Devised as part of an experimental trilogy set in the city of Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, the film tells the story of a Khasi youth, Banri, who befriends a Muslim tailor, Suleiman. Even though they are both Indian nationals and live on Indian territory, Suleiman is a *dkhar*, a derogatory term used by the Khasis to refer to people they consider “outsiders” to their ethnic group, “foreigners” to the tribal hills and, ultimately, “strangers” to the land. The only film of the trilogy to have been released so far, “19/87” is an important work of social history that addresses the ambivalent condition of “the stranger” in an imaginary Khasiland. During this lecture, we will look at “19/87” as an important authorial work that aims at deconstructing the artificial idea of a pure Khasiness which constantly places those who allegedly “do not belong” in an ambiguous and sometimes dangerous situation. “19/87” (36 minutes) will be screened after the lecture and before the concluding discussion.