

News and Reviews

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SONY PICTURES



Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War

>> Directed by Kang Je-gyu. 2004. 148 minutes.

Although it has been labeled the “Forgotten War”—buried between the memories of World War II and the Vietnam War—the Korean War (1950–1953) recently became a focus of attention in the divided country again, half a century after

Review

the war’s “end” (the 1953 armistice was never followed by a peace treaty). The catalyst was Kang Je-gyu’s *Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War*, which became the largest production in Korean film history at the time of its release, with its \$14-million budget and a record-breaking audience one-fifth the size of the South Korean population.

The Korean War has appeared in a number of documentary and feature films in the U.S., China, and the two Koreas. Some films justify their nation’s involvement in the conflict with their own versions of nationalism and individual heroism. Others trivialize the actual content of the war in pursuit of political or commercial success for the film. While many of these films present

certain aspects of the war introducing collections of footage captured by the U.S. Office of Armed Forces and interviews with journalists, war veterans, and policy makers, they tend to treat the war as an inevitable and impersonal clash of ideologies in the context of the Cold War, rather than the lived experience of individual participants. What

frustrates a teacher of the Korean War is, then, not necessarily the paucity of films on the topic but the invisibility of Koreans in the narratives of the traumatic event, of those who suffered ten times the casualty rate of Americans. As ambitious director-writer Kang attempts to reconnect his audience to this long-neglected historical experience, *Taegukgi*

provides a fresh look at the war from a Korean perspective.

During his visit to the University of Illinois in February of this year, Kang explained his belief that a feature film needs to reward its audience with “emotional excitement” and “relatable themes.”

**The film highlights
the resilience of
ordinary people in
pursuing their daily lives
while transcending
political and ideological
contradiction.**

Accordingly, while introducing the specific context of the Korean War, *Taegukgi* focuses on a universal theme of brotherly love in a politically detached manner. The film brilliantly unfolds the double tension that runs through two parallel wars: the physical battle between North and South Korea, and the psychological rivalry between two brothers, whose estrangement in some ways represents those of actual Korean families torn apart by the war.

Jin-Tae, an uneducated but earnest and strong shoeshine boy, cheerfully supports his family, especially his bookish and sickly brother Jin-Seok for his college education. The family barely makes ends meet, but they have dreams of a better life as they anticipate Jin-Seok’s successful future career and Jin-Tae’s marriage to Young-Shin. With the outbreak of the war, the family’s hopes are shattered as the brothers are drafted off the street against their will. The brothers are dispatched south to the Nakdong River where their unit must maintain the final defense line against the militarily superior enemies of the North. Like many other South Korean soldiers at that time, the brothers have had no proper military training nor equipment, let alone knowledge of Cold War politics. The film follows the fluctuating battle fronts during the first year of the war and doesn’t flinch from depicting the daily horrors of battle as the brothers struggle to survive

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Asian Educational Media Service

The Asian Educational Media Service (AEMS) is a program of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. AEMS offers information about where to find audio-visual media resources for teaching and learning about Asia, and advice about which ones may best suit your needs. In addition to *AEMS News and Reviews*, published three times a year, services include a free call-in/write-in service and a website. To add your name to our mailing list, request additional copies of the newsletter to use in workshops or to share with your colleagues, or ask for help in locating resources, please contact us.

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What's New?

From the New AEMS Program Director



Tanya S. Lee

I am very pleased to be taking over the directorship of AEMS. Jenny Huang Yang worked closely with me for a few weeks to make the transition as smooth as possible. She made significant improvements to the program during her tenure and I feel fortunate to be taking over as AEMS is experiencing so much forward momentum. We will all miss Jenny and wish her and her family all the best in California.

I bring to this job a somewhat eclectic set of experiences. Although my recent doctoral work in ethnomusicology here at the University of Illinois has been in American folk music, I have a strong background in East Asia. I graduated from Oberlin College with a major in East Asian Studies and did my early graduate work in ethnomusicology with an East Asian focus. Between college and graduate school, I spent two years teaching English at Yunnan University in southwestern China, where I also studied Chinese language and traditional music. After returning to the U.S., I held several positions in academic administration. My ongoing interest in China is complemented by a lifelong interest in Korea, reflecting my own heritage, as well as travel in and coursework on other parts of Asia.

I look forward to continuing the AEMS mission and furthering Jenny's efforts. Please feel free to contact me any time; I am eager to get to know the AEMS community.

—Tanya S. Lee, Program Director, AEMS

Jenny's Zai Jian (Good-bye)

I write from Silicon Valley, where my husband and I are settling in, hoping to expand our family. Reflecting on the past two years of my life in the Midwest, I don't think I ever fully replaced Sarah Barbour, my predecessor, but it's been both a challenge and joy to help redefine AEMS' vision and to work toward expanding our services. In the process, I have had the good fortune of meeting many dedicated and generous people, educators who are passionate about exploring Asia through media and technology and eager to share that love with others. Although my time with Tanya Lee, the new AEMS Director, was brief, I am confident that AEMS is in good hands. I look forward to seeing where the program goes from here. It has been a privilege to be a part of this unique and great program. Thanks for all of your support and encouragement.

—Jenny Huang Yang

AEMS and EAPS Present South Korean Film Festival

Our fourth annual Asian Film Festival will feature South Korean cinema this year. Five recent feature films, representing a variety of genres, will be screened September 29 and 30 in downtown Champaign. We are especially pleased to have Director Yoon Jong-Bin with us at the screening of his debut feature, *The Unforgiven*, an exploration of military service and masculinity in contemporary South Korea. This year, for the first time, we are also offering a workshop for K-12 and college educators on teaching South Korean culture through film. For more information, please see our website.

AEMS Advisory Bodies Reconstituted

In recent months, AEMS has met with its National Advisory Board, reconstituted and reconceived the local advisory board—now called the University Committee—and helped create a new Teacher's Advisory Council. The University Committee (see membership at left) convened in May to revise its purpose and reconstitute its membership. The Committee's primary function is to serve as advocates of AEMS within the context of the University of Illinois and associated campuses. We have welcomed five new members aboard, including two from Eastern Illinois University. The Teacher's Advisory Council is comprised of local K-12 educators who will provide feedback on the Center for East Asian Studies' events, initiatives, and curriculum ideas, including AEMS projects. The teachers will also serve as a liaison between the University and local school districts. We are excited to have access to this new talent in advising the directions that AEMS should take.

A New Look for AEMS

AEMS has a new logo, the first piece in a major makeover. Look for a completely redesigned and reorganized AEMS website this fall. *News and Reviews* will follow, with a new design for our Winter issue. ♦



Asian Educational
Media Service

Taiwan's Online Multimedia Gallery

To promote an understanding of its culture and history, Taiwan's Government Information Office (GIO) produces and distributes films on various facets of the island. All of the videos are available for free viewing and downloading at its website, www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/av, under the link "Sights and Sounds." This online archive contains approximately 88 short videos in five categories: History and Prominent Figures, National Development, People and Lifestyles, Culture and Traditions, and Nature and Wildlife. The videos range in age and sophistication from 1961 black-and-white to 2005 full-color productions. Overall, I highly recommend selecting videos for teachers' own viewing or as regular or extra-credit assignments for high-school and college students.

■ There are four videos in the category “History and Prominent Figures.” Since I teach undergraduate history, this category was the most valuable to me. My favorite was *A Half Century of the Republic of China* (#002). It is 48 minutes long, produced in 1966 when Chiang Kai-shek was still alive, and employs vintage black-and-white footage. I recommend pre-teaching if you assign it to students, perhaps with two themes for students to watch for: Taiwanese anti-Communism (both Chinese and Soviet Communism) and the Taiwanese reverence and respect for Dr. Sun Yat-Sen.

■ In the category of “National Development” there are 10 videos, and in this group I found the most useful to be the 16-minute *Kinmen: Outpost of Freedom* (#012). In this video we see that in 1958, the People’s Republic of China bombed Kinmen, or Quemoy, an archipelago only a few

miles from the Chinese mainland, for 44 days, destroying 3,000 homes and killing 400 people. Kinmen remains a part of Taiwan today and its quiet beaches have become a popular tourist destination for both Taiwanese and mainland tourists.

■ The “People and Lifestyles” category includes

40 films covering a wide range of topics, including rice culture, bamboo, and acupuncture, among others.

The 27-minute color film *Confucianism and the Taiwan Experience* (#903) may be the most useful for teaching purposes. The video shows present-day applications of the revered Chinese teacher's philosophy. The video also highlights the democracy and modernization of Taiwan, which goes beyond what you will normally read about Confucianism today.

■ “Culture and Traditions” is another comprehensive category with 37 titles. My personal favorite is *Chinese Zodiac Signs: The Animal in All of Us* (#112). It provides an excellent window on Chinese culture, by incorporating discussions of many Chinese folk arts, including lantern making, glass blowing, puppet theater, paper cutting, and Peking Opera. If I assigned this video for extra credit to my college students, I would have them focus on their own zodiac sign and describe parts of the video that deal with their Chinese zodiac sign and the folk arts depicting their zodiac sign.

■ “Nature and Wildlife” includes 14 videos that biology teachers might appreciate. I particularly enjoyed *Taipei Tree Frog* (#092), and *The Kingdom*



be unavailable. Each video is listed with a short description and notations indicating whether it is in color or black and white, the year it was produced, the length of the video, and its availability

for purchase in 16 mm or VHS format.

Some videos are award-winning, which the descriptions note, and overall, the quality of the videos is very good. I have made effective use of the website by awarding students extra credit for watching videos at home and writing short reaction papers. The most impressive thing to me is the availability. This is a marvelous gift from the Republic of China on Taiwan. ♦

[illegible]

Carole Schroeder is in the History Department at Boise State University. She specializes in History of Eastern Civilizations, and has taught upper-division classes on Asian history and culture through film. In 1999 she taught English in China and currently, on a part-time basis, teaches English as a Second Language for Berlitz Language School.


On Copyright Issues and Digital Media

Many *News and Reviews* readers have expressed a particular interest in copyright issues as they pertain to their use of materials in the classroom. I recently attended a seminar on “Copyright and Libraries” at the annual American Libraries Association (ALA) conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, and the information provided at the seminar should help to answer some of the questions posed by readers.

The featured speakers were Mary Rasenberger, who has served as the policy planning adviser for special programs in the U.S. Copyright Office and



was most recently named director of Program Management for the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDI-IPP), and Chris Weston, attorney-advisor at the U.S. Copyright Office.



According to the U.S. Copyright Office, copyright is a protection for “works of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression.” The use of copyrighted materials is subject to the Copyright Law of the United States of America and related laws contained in Title 17 of the United States Code.

Much of the ALA presentation focused on the challenges that digitizing collections poses for the current copyright law. Technological progress increases the tension between the libraries, whose

mission is to provide their patrons with access to these materials, and copyright holders, who want to maximize the economic benefit from their investment. The law seeks to take into account these competing interests and tries to strike a balance somewhere in the middle by allowing certain exemptions for libraries with regard to copyright issues. Currently, a study group comprised of copyright experts is conducting “a reexamination of the exceptions and limitations applicable to libraries and archives under the Copyright Act, specifically in light of the changes wrought by digital media.” Any findings or recommendations emerging from this study will be presented to the Librarian of Congress and are expected in the next year or so.

Given the complexity of the copyright law,

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>> Directed by Jan van den Berg. 2003. 64 minutes.



the person who officiates at cremation ceremonies.

...nning documentary, *Deacon of Justice in Today's Cambodia*, a remarkable journey back to the place she witnessed the atrocities as a nurse. She finally brings her face to face with the past, a process mediated by a Buddhist nun. The film is by Jan van den Berg (an award-winning filmmaker and anthropologist) and features a performance by a nun (a medical anthropologist with extensive experience in Cambodia), *Deacon of*

The award-winning documentary, *Deacon of Death: Looking for Justice in Today's Cambodia*, tracks Sok Chea's remarkable journey back to the same temple where she witnessed the atrocities as a child, and eventually brings her face to face with Karoby in a meeting mediated by a Buddhist monk. Conceived by Jan van den Berg (an award-winning filmmaker and anthropologist) and Willem van de Put (a medical anthropologist with extensive field experience in Cambodia), *Deacon of*

The film is particularly timely in light of the long-awaited tribunal against former Khmer Rouge leaders about to begin next year, and offers a valuable contribution to the Cambodian and international discussion. However, since it was decided to try only the highest-ranking leaders and those who were responsible for committing the most serious crimes, a low- or mid-ranking Khmer Rouge member like Karoby is not likely to be put on trial.

In short, *Deacon of Death* is a compelling film that contributes to the much needed discussion of the Khmer Rouge legacy as Cambodians struggle to come to terms with their country's terrifying past, and it is a film that will find wide use in any number of undergraduate or high school courses dealing with Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge, genocide, Buddhism, and more. ♦

Namji Steinemann is the director of the AsiaPacificEd Program at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Deacon of Death is available on DVD from drsFILM. The film is in Khmer and comes with subtitle options that include English, Dutch, and French.

Becker, Elizabeth. 1998. *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Kiernan, Ben. 2004. *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930–1975*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Osborne, Milton. 1979. *Before Kampuchea: Preludes to Tragedy*. Crows Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin.



Islam, making a life for herself instead of dwelling on the things she had lost. But the arrival of her brother brings back the past and the life she has built begins to unravel.

The importance of the film lies in its success in bringing to the screen a subject that even now, after 58 years, is almost taboo on the Subcontinent: the fate of the “abducted women” of the Partition period. Sumar’s intended focus, however, seems to be the changes that occurred in Pakistan at the time of Zia-ul Haq and the effects these changes had on the lives of women. Perhaps because of its frankness and openness, the film won the top award at the Locarno (Switzerland) International Film Festival in 2003. While it may not be great cinema, *Silent Waters* is a thought-provoking film and is recommended to college or high school educators as enrichment material related to the issues of religious tolerance, women’s rights, and South Asian studies in general. ♦

Jane Shum (see biography page 6).

Silent Waters is available in VHS or DVD from First Run/Icarus Films. Price is \$298 for purchase or \$125 for rental.

Guide to Distributors

>> A list of distributors mentioned in this issue
of *AEMS News and Reviews*

drsFILM, the Netherlands. Email: info@
drsfilm.nl. Web site: www.drsfilm.nl.

First Run/Icarus Films, 32 Court
Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201.
Tel: 718-418-8900. Fax: 718-418-8642.
Email: mailroom@frif.com. Web site:
www.frif.com.

Women Make Movies, 462 Broadway,
Suite 500W, New York, NY 10013.
Tel: 212-925-0606. Fax: 212-925-2052.
Email: orders@wmm.com. Web site:
www.wmm.com.

Silent Waters /Khamosh Pani

>> Directed by Sabiha Sumar. 2003. 95 minutes.

This feature film tells the tragic story of Ayesha, and why she never goes to the well.

The reason gradually becomes clear through the brief, cryptic flash-backs she has whenever something or someone reminds her of the past. Although filmed largely in Pakistan in early 2001, this movie is more or less in the Indian Bollywood style, with its tinge of melodrama and its almost obligatory song and dance sequence.

The story opens in 1979 in the Pakistani village of Charkhi, where an old Sikh shrine is located. Ayesha is a middle-aged widow who supports herself and her son Saleem on her late husband's pension, supplemented by the money she earns teaching the Qur'an to young girls. On the surface, she seems content with her life as it is and takes pleasure in the thought of getting her son settled into a job and arranging his marriage to Zubeida, the pretty, high-spirited girl he loves.

But Pakistan is changing. Zia-ul Haq has seized power and embarked upon a national Islamization campaign, and two young men arrive in Charkhi from the city intent upon recruiting other young men for their *jihad* to support Zia-ul-

Haq's campaign. Soon afterward, Pakistan and India sign an agreement allowing the Sikhs, who

fled the region at the time of Partition in 1947, to return to Pakistan to visit the sacred shrines they left behind. All of this impacts Ayesha's life and brings the secrets of her past out into the open with tragic consequences.

Her discontented son Saleem is looking for direction in life. He wants more than the village can offer him, but is not exactly sure what it is that he

wants. He becomes involved with the two young recruiters from the city and gets caught up in the local Islamization campaign as it begins to reignite the religious intolerance that had erupted in 1947.

Meanwhile, among the Sikh pilgrims who come to Charkhi to visit its shrine is one man searching for a sister left behind during the chaos and violence following Partition. He believes she may still be there in Charkhi after all this time. As events unfold it becomes clear that the woman known as Avesha is that sister.

In the violence of 1947, many of the Sikh women of Charkhi jumped to their deaths in the village well to preserve their honor, encouraged or

In the violence of 1947, many of the Sikh women of Charkhi jumped to their deaths in the village well to preserve their honor, encouraged or coerced into doing so by their male relatives.

SONY PICTURES



>> To view video excerpts from Director Kang Je-gyu's visit to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in February 2006, visit the AEMS website: www.aems.uiuc.edu/HTML/taegukgi.htm.