

News and Reviews vol. 9, No. 2 Fall 2006



Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War

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

Ithough it has been labeled the "Forgotten War"-buried between the memories of World War II and the Vietnam War—the Korean

Review

War (1950-1953) recently became a focus of attention in the divided country again, half a century after

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 recordbreaking 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

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

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 directorwriter Kang attempts to reconnect his audience to this longneglected historical experience, Taegukgi

provides a fresh look at the war from a Korean

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."

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 audiovisual 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.

AEMS is made possible by generous support from The Freeman Foundation.

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What's New?

From the New AEMS Program Director



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.

Tanya S. Lee

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



Asian Educational

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.

Taiwan's Online Multimedia Gallery

o 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

of Butterflies (#037), which features a fascinating scene of a caterpillar fending off a praying mantis with its scent spray.

The primary advantage of this website is that you can play clips at home or at school on a computer. Clips will play for either 56K or 300K Internet connections, with RealPlayer or Windows Media Player. Not all videos download with the same ease, however, and some appear to

> 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. +

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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

any 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, attorneyadvisor 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, continued on page 5



Deacon of Death: Looking for Justice in Today's Cambodia

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

ok Chea is still haunted by the atrocities she witnessed as a child under the brutal Khmer Rouge regime led by Pol Pot. She recalls seeing through a crack in the window shutter of a Buddhist temple a man hanging upside down with his belly cut open. "I couldn't see his face. It was covered by the skin hanging down. I saw his heart beating.... They were about to take out his liver. But then, I had to run away, or I would have been killed because under the Khmer Rouge, they killed all witnesses." It is believed that an estimated 1.7 million people (or nearly a quarter of Cambodia's total population) died from starvation, overwork, disease, torture, and execution during 1975-1979, when the Khmer Rouge controlled the country.

Although more than 30 years have passed and Sok Chea now lives in Phnom Penh, the capitol, she is still fearful of the man she remembers as Mr. Karoby, the Khmer Rouge leader of the village where she lived during the Pol Pot regime and the person she holds responsible for killing most of her family. Karoby, who is living in the same village alongside the people he once terrorized, has since transformed himself into a traditional healer. He also serves as the village's "deacon of death,"



The film is particularly timely in light of the long-awaited tribunal against former Khmer Rouge leaders about to begin next year.

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 awardwinning filmmaker and anthropologist) and Willem van de Put (a medical anthropologist with extensive field experience in Cambodia), *Deacon of*

the person who officiates at cremation ceremonies.

Although Sok Chea wants justice for her family and wants to see Karoby put on trial for his crimes, she (along with countless other Khmer Rouge victims like

her) is fearful of the retaliatory measures that might be taken should the current government fail and the Khmer Rouge return to power. She also believes, as do most Cambodians who follow Buddhist teachings, that Karoby will eventually pay for his misdeeds—that his karma will catch up with him-even if his day of reckoning does not come in this lifetime. A chance sighting of Karoby, however, emboldens Sok Chea to gather evidence against Karoby and confront him.

Death won the Golden Calf award for "best feature-length documentary" at the 2004 Netherlands Film Festival, and the award is well deserved. The film effectively combines archival footage, interviews with Karoby and his former victims, who are now his neighbors, and arresting original footage to tell a powerful story that explores issues of history, memory, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation in a country still traumatized by its genocidal past.

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.

"That," according to co-producer Willem van de Put, "will make it difficult for some to accept that those they know to have committed crimes will not be brought to justice." The film, which is being used by many NGOs in Cambodian villages where thousands of people like Karoby still live among the people, thus raises challenging questions for Cambodia and Cambodians as they attempt to move beyond the horrors of the "killing fields" to rebuild their society. Can reconciliation occur without justice? And, if justice is not possible, where does that leave the victims?

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.

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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.

Suggested Reading

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.

Theary Chan, Deacon of Death Co-Producer

heary Chan played a unique role in the production of the documentary film Deacon of Death—she featured prominently in the story

Profile

as a mediating influence and was credited as coproducer.

Chan belongs to a

generation that has witnessed political upheaval, genocide, civil war, drought and poverty. In 1975, when she was only seven, the Khmer Rouge, which means "red" (or Communist) Cambodians, came to power under the brutal leadership of Pol Pot. His desire for a "pure," utopian, agrarian society led to mass killings of his fellow Khmer. The major cities were evacuated and the intellectuals murdered as Pol Pot's regime sought to return to "year zero."

When the Khmer Rouge took over, Chan was only seven and too young to be separated from her parents as many children were; she was permitted to remain with them until three months before her family fled the country. Even after she was taken to the children's camp, however, she often escaped to see them. Each time, Chan's father asked her what the Khmer Rouge were teaching her, and told her that it was wrong. Like many children in those days, Chan often felt conflicted between her desire to obey her commander's instructions to report on her father's activities on the one hand, and her desire to follow her parents on the other. In the end, Chan chose to side with her parents and escape Cambodia but she stubbornly refused to let go of a huge mosquito net to accommodate 20 children which the Khmer Rouge leaders had asked her to be responsible for. Fortunately, Chan hung onto the mosquito net for three years, protecting her family from harmful



Co-producer Theary Chan

diseases during their escape.

When thousands abandoned their homes and fled the country, Chan's family was among them. Chan spent a total of twelve years in Thai/ Cambodian refugee camps. It was there that she became interested in working with women's, children's, and neonatal health, collaborating with the dedicated humanitarians from abroad who were helping thousands of sick and dying refugees to survive. She received the necessary professional training and today, she is an executive director for the Reproductive and Child Health Alliance (RACHA), a Cambodian Non-Governmental Organization funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with certifications as a registered nurse, midwife, and a master's degree in Public Health.

It was through her public health work that she first came in contact with Sok Chea, the protagonist of Deacon of Death, and the film's director, Jan van den Berg. Chan wanted to be a part of the project because she felt that she understood the struggles of both the victims and the perpetrators. Had the Khmer Rouge's regime continued, Chan believes that she might have become more

entrenched in their way of thinking and taken part in their activities. At first, Chan's parents were opposed to the project out of fear for Mr. Karoby's safety, a sentiment shared by many of the older villagers. This concern prompted the filmmakers to further edit the film to better address the concern that the younger generation might seek revenge against Mr. Karoby after seeing the documentary.

When asked what message she would like to give any American students who might see the film, Chan said that she would like them to learn to look at this history from different angles. Personally, she feels a tremendous sense of peace knowing that "the past is the past" and that according to the concept of karma, ultimately, when they die, the perpetrators will face their sins.

Although the film focuses on Sok Chea, viewers will note the integral role Chan played; she was not only a mediator but a friend to both Sok Chea and Mr. Karoby. Chan is too modest to talk about her contributions but it is clear to me that the healing we see in the film would not have been possible without her involvement. On film and in person, Chan exudes a graciousness that is incredible to me, considering her personal suffering. I hope that the film and Chan's story will provide a window into the struggles and hopes of the Cambodians as the nation heals through the upcoming tribunal process. +

Jenny Huang Yang is the departing program director of AEMS and now lives in San Jose, California, with her family.

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Author's note: I met Theary Chan in Honolulu last December at the 4th Annual Asia in the Curriculum Symposium hosted by the East-West Center, where she helped introduce the conference's featured documentary film, Deacon of Death. Touched by the film and her moving talk, I invited Theary to meet over breakfast on the last morning of our stay. My thanks to Theary for sharing her personal story with us.

Copyright

continued from page 3

especially as it relates to film and media, I have compiled a list of websites which can shed some light on both general issues related to the law and more specific questions about fair use of materials.

- Stanford University's Copyright and Fair Use Center: fairuse.stanford.edu
- American Library Association (ALA) Copyright Advisory Network: www.librarycopyright.net
- Frequently Asked Film and Video Copyright

Questions (UC Berkeley): www.lib.berkeley. edu/MRC/Copyright.html

- Indiana University-Purdue University Copyright Essentials: www.copyright.iupui.edu
- Regents Guide to Understanding Copyright and Educational Fair Use (University of Georgia): www.usg.edu/admin/legal/copyright

This list offers a sample of the many resources available for those interested in learning more about the copyright law. Any specific questions should always be directed to someone in the legal profession or to the U.S. Copyright Office. The

full-text of the law is available on the U.S. Copyright Office website at www.copyright.gov. +

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Susan Norris is assistant program director for the Asian Educational Media Service at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She holds a Master of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in Southeast Asian Studies from Northern Illinois University, as well as a Master of Library Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

For a Place Under the Heavens

>> Directed by Sabiha Sumar. 2003. 53 minutes.

A ward-winning writer and director Sabiha Sumar is an independent Pakistani film-maker whose documentaries and features have tended to address political and social issues affecting women. Released in the same year as her fea-



Writer and director Sabiha Sumar

ture film *Silent Waters*, Sumar's documentary *For a Place Under the Heavens* essentially presents her own personal attempt to come to terms with the changing status of women in her native Pakistan in light of the increasing Islamization of her society.

Sumar presents her story largely by juxtaposing the secu-

They ask themselves

why their own activities,

aimed at arresting

the erosion of women's

rights and halting the

Islamization

of their society, have

remained unsuccessful.

lar views shared by Western-educated and successful Pakistani women—including herself and three of her friends—with the views of religious women who wear the Islamic head-covering known as *hijab*. These contrasting views and lifestyles alternate throughout the film as Sumar guides her audience through the political, social, economic, and religious changes that have occurred since Pakistan's creation at the time of the Partition of British India in 1947. This technique is quite successful in bringing to the forefront the dilemma now facing many Islamic societies: how to reconcile two essentially opposing points of view—the religious and the secu-

lar—and achieve an atmosphere of social tolerance for the good of all.

While the film grapples effectively with this question, it does not present any answers or solutions. A few "middle ground" views are presented, such as those espoused by an educated, religious female teacher of Islamic jurisprudence in England, who believes that the full

rights of women can be won through a feminist interpretation of the Qur'an. A well-respected Islamic scholar in Pakistan similarly declares that nothing in the Qur'an holds women back but that women themselves must come forward courageously to claim their rights.

But in the end Sumar herself and her friends seem to dismiss as unrealistic avenues that try to

work within the religious framework. They ask themselves instead why their own activities, aimed at arresting the erosion of women's rights and halting the Islamization of their society, have remained unsuccessful, and they seem to conclude that it is because the uneducated masses are too busy struggling to survive to have time to oppose what is happening in the country, even though they may be quite ready themselves to "discard religion." This view is exemplified in the film by a maid who has worked since she was six years old. She is so busy



laboring every day from morning to night, she wonders how she would ever have the *time* to even think about these things.

Sumar and other likeminded secular women seem to believe the drift toward Islamization is related to the downward turn of Pakistan's economy and is partly a reaction to the influx of foreign money and thought. They believe that, in time, the masses will lose faith in religion, too, just as they

once lost faith in secular leaders who failed to meet the economic needs of the country. Whether this is a realistic belief might also be questioned.

Born in Karachi in 1961, Sumar was educated in the U.S. and England and thus lived outside of Pakistan for a number of years. Upon her return to Pakistan, she was surprised and distressed by the growing religiosity of her country, and became determined to work towards arresting the trend. At the beginning of the film she says that, when she was growing up, she saw Pakistan as a secular country, but later in the film, after re-examining Pakistan's political history in an effort to understand the society she now sees, she realizes that in fact Pakistan was never a secular country, and the current "schizophrenic" situation has in fact always existed.

Sumar and all of the other secular women in the film speak in very fluent, articulate English, while all of the women representing the religious viewpoint, with the exception of one woman who recently adopted the wearing of *hijab*, speak in Urdu (the national language of Pakistan). This contrast subtly implies that Sumar and other Western-educated women have, in some sense, become "foreigners" in their own country.

This film provides ample material to spark discussions and debates and is highly recommended for that purpose to college and secondary educators in the fields of religious studies and women's studies. •

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Jane Shum holds master's degrees in Library Studies and Languages and Cultures of Asia from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and has worked in a variety of libraries in the U.S. and abroad. She also currently serves as assistant editor and website manager for *The Annual of Urdu Studies*.

For a Place Under the Heavens is available in VHS from Women Make Movies. Price is \$295 for purchase or \$90 for rental.



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.

Silent Waters/Khamosh Pani

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

his 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 flashbacks 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-ulHaq'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 Ayesha 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

coerced into doing so by their male relatives. But Ayesha refused to jump. She ran from the well instead, only to be abducted by a group of Muslim men rampaging through the Sikh areas of the village. She ended up marrying one of her abductors and converting to

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.

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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.

Asian Educational Media Service

Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, MC-025 Urbana, Illinois 61801

www.aems.uiuc.edu

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage

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Taegukgi

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in the midst of the dehumanizing insanity of the war.

Jin-Tae figures out that the only way to send Jin-Seok

home is to win a medal of honor and to request his brother's release from duty. As the South Korean army, joined by U.S.-led U.N. allies, pushes through North Korea to the Chinese border, Jin-Tae becomes a war hero and merciless executioner of the "commies." Yet when he is finally awarded a medal of honor, his superiors will not release his brother. The film bluntly depicts massacred civilians and maltreated POWs, victimized both by the North and the South. Included are the brothers' family friend, forced to join the North Korean army and eventually killed on Jin-Tae's command, and Young-Shin, who is falsely charged as a North Korean spy and executed by anti-Communist fanatics for getting food for her family from the Communists.

Jin-Seok becomes increasingly disgusted with the cruelty of the war and doubts the motives behind Jin-Tae's obsession with heroism. Jin-Seok's battle, then, becomes not only against the North but also against everything that his brother seemingly stands for. *Taegukgi* thus portrays the frustrating and unglorified reality of the war, which manipulated the norms and values of ordinary people and ultimately defeated its original purpose of reuniting families and the nation. While political leaders Syngman Rhee, Kim Il Sung, and Stalin appear in various scenes of the movie, they remain in the corners. Despite the layers of distrust and



misunderstanding between them, the brothers' allegiance remains to their family as they persistently dream of a return to humble happiness in their daily lives. Through

narrative twists and dramatic turns, Jin-Seok's resentment of Jin-Tae is eventually resolved when he realizes his brother's unchanging principle has not been pursuit of glory, but rather genuine love for their family.

The original title, *Taegukgi hwinallimyeo*, or *Waving the Taegukgi* (the South Korean national flag), is meant to provoke broad questions: What was the civil war actually about? How contradictory was the rationale of a war that destroyed family relationships, community, and the nation for the sake of unification? How arbitrarily was the concept of the "enemy" constructed through the experience of the war? By treating the war with political ambivalence and rejecting simple moralization, *Taegukgi* stimulates debates and discussion concerning the context of the event and its process and consequences.

Despite some weaknesses, such as the lengthy running time of nearly two and a half hours, occasionally unsophisticated character development (especially female characters), continuous graphic violence, and lack of attention to class tensions in the background of the civil war, the film's humanist approach to the unresolved political dilemma appeals to a broad audience across national and generational boundaries. As the film highlights the resilience of ordinary people in pursuing their daily lives while transcending political and ideo-

logical contradiction, it projects hope for healing the wounds of the traumatic experiences of the civil war.

With proper warning (it is rated "R" for violence) and accompanied by additional class materials—such as historical readings or periodicals that reflect changing attitudes in contemporary Korea toward the issues of national division and reunification, or related Korean short stories including Cho Chong-rae's "Land of Exile" (in Land of Exile by M.E. Sharpe, 1993) and Hwang Sunwon's "Cranes" (in Modern Korean Literature by University of Hawaii Press, 1990), the film will elicit active responses from students. The film's bilingual website (www.taegukgi2004.com) and extra features on the DVD include a timeline and map of the battles, information on 1950s Korea, and interviews with Korean war veterans. These are, along with the movie, easily accessible educational tools for college students as well as for general audiences interested in learning about the Korean War as it was experienced by ordinary Koreans. •

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Jinhee Lee is assistant professor of history at Eastern Illinois University. She is currently completing her book *Instability of Empire: Earthquake, Rumors, and the Massacre of Koreans in Imperial Japan.*

Released by Sony Pictures, *Taegukgi: The Brotherhood of War* is available on DVD from amazon.com, sony.com, and other online retailers. Prices start at \$9.99.

>> 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.