

News and Reviews

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Kokoyakyu: High School Baseball

■ Directed by Kenneth Eng. 2006. 54 minutes. In English and Japanese with English subtitles.

American baseball audiences in 2007 are hearing a lot about Japan's national high school baseball tournament because of the Boston Red Sox's new \$100-million pitching ace, Matsuzaka Daisuke (or Dice-K, as he is called over

here). Over and over, we are reminded that Matsuzaka became a national hero at 18 for pitching his team to Japan's high school championship at fabled Kōshien Stadium in August 1998. Baseball is an official sport in over 4000 high schools in Japan and the annual summer tournament at Kōshien is the pinnacle of the baseball season.

The summer national championship begins with 49 qualifying tournaments, and the regional winners come to Kōshien Stadium just west of Osaka for a two-week single-elimination championship tournament in the intense heat and humidity of August. Conduct is strictly regulated and choreographed by the National High School Baseball Federation, supported by the Asahi newspaper company, which started the tournament in 1915 and continues to sponsor it. There are other popular youth sports from Little League baseball to university rugby, but high school baseball—*kōkōyakyū* in Japanese—is still the national passion and Kōshien Stadium remains its Mecca. This documentary tells us why, vividly and poignantly.

Kokoyakyu is beautifully filmed and well-edited, a bit reverential, but still effective in conveying some of what is importantly at stake in this long-running national sports spectacle. It can be used in courses on Japan and on sport and society at the high school and university levels.

The film opens at Kōshien Stadium with the pageantry of the opening ceremonies—the parade and assembly of the teams, the players' oath, the energetic cheerleaders, and the raucous school supporters. The film is structured around the efforts of two representative teams to reach these Kōshien finals in 2004.

Chiben Academy in Wakayama Prefecture, just south of Osaka, is a well-known private school baseball powerhouse, three times the national champions. Like other "baseball high schools," it scouts and recruits potential players much as William Gates and Arthur Agee were recruited by a private school in the U.S. basketball documentary *Hoop Dreams*. In contrast, Tennoji High School in Osaka is a gritty urban public high school that has never been to Kōshien; its chances are much more remote.

But what both high schools have in common are wise and wizened coaches, who are featured prominently in the film. Both come across as strict

disciplinarians and dedicated, paternalistic coaches, offering tough love and life lessons to generations of teenage players.

The first third of the film introduces the schools, a few of the players, and the coaches, and is divided into short sections organized by some keywords of high school baseball: heart, fighting spirit, youth, dreams, and effort. We are shown one of the Tennoji players whose day begins with breakfast at 4:15 am, followed by early morning practice, where the players swing bats like kendo sticks. Both schools have long after-school practices, and we are then

taken to Chiben Academy's 8:30 pm practice in the pouring rain, with the coach lecturing the team that they must practice three or four times harder than their rivals to win.

One of the film's more poignant scenes is the Chiben coach's announcement of his selection of the 18 players

for the tournament squad, out of a team of 34 players. Coaches must balance talent, seniority, and effort in choosing from teams as large as

continued on page 2



Above, left: Tokaidai Shoyo High School players singing their school song. Above: Chiben Baseball team marching in Wakayama opening ceremonies.

Contents

From the Editor	2
How to Contact AEMS	2
Essay:	
Teaching About Bunraku	3
Reviews:	
<i>Kokoyakyu: High School Baseball</i>	1
<i>Children of China Series</i>	4
<i>Going to School in India</i>	5
<i>Buffalo Boy</i>	6
Distributors in this Issue	8

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 (UIUC). Our mission is to help educators at all levels, from elementary through college, find multimedia resources for learning and teaching about Asia, to promote understanding of Asian peoples and cultures. Our free services include:

- *News and Reviews*, published three times a year;
- An online database of audiovisual materials;
- Reference service;
- Educator workshops on teaching with film;
- Lesson plans, streaming video, film recommendations and other web resources;
- A lending library for local educators

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FROM THE EDITOR

As we all launch into a new academic year, AEMS is pleased to present a diverse set of reviews in our Fall 2007 issue. William Kelly—one of the foremost English-language experts on baseball in Japan—gives us a thoughtful review of *Kokoyakyu*, broadcast last summer on PBS's P.O.V. series. This issue also offers two excellent resources for upper primary students, both told from children's perspectives: Karla Loveall considers the "Children in China" series, while Rachel Heilman contextualizes *Going to School in India*. We are pleased to welcome back Jack Harris to review the beautiful Vietnamese feature film, *Buffalo Boy*. And finally, Anne Prescott writes about resources for teaching about *bunraku*, the Japanese art of puppet theater.

Our "Teaching and Technology" column is taking a break this issue; I encourage anyone experimenting with new ways to use technology in teaching about Asia at any level to submit an idea for this column to me. Similarly, we have started a new section of our website called "Notes from the Classroom," in which teachers are invited to share their experiences teaching with specific films (whether reviewed by AEMS or not). How did you plan the lesson? How did the students respond? Submissions are always welcome! You can read our first contribution here: www.aems.uiuc.edu/publications/notes.

Online-Only Reviews Premiere

As promised, we have now added two new sections of online-only reviews: one for films and videos and one for web resources. The first of these, *Eating the Scorpion*, is a documentary about a group of American teachers who travel to China and bring home what they learn, reviewed by Anne Prescott. Robert Petersen evaluates two vivid films about traditional dramatic arts in rural India: *Gone to Pat* and *Surviving Chau*. These reviews—and hopefully others, by the time you read this—can be found at www.aems.uiuc.edu/publications/filmreviews.

Meanwhile, Rebecca Nickerson, who has just completed a three-year tenure as a graduate editorial assistant here at AEMS and is on her way to conduct doctoral research in Japan, reviews how-to-bow.com, a lively and informative website on Japanese etiquette and customs. You'll find this and other website reviews at www.aems.uiuc.edu/publications/webreviews.

Finally, I will again be guest editing a special AEMS multimedia section for the spring issue of *Education About Asia*; stay tuned for a request for submissions.

To keep up to date with new reviews, website features, events, and other announcements at AEMS, subscribe to our RSS feed (an explanation of RSS is available on our home page). ■

—Tanya Lee, Editor

Kokoyakyu

continued from page 1

80 players. In this scene, Ryōichi Haruki, one of only five seniors, waits anxiously to be the last player chosen and he is assigned #18. In making his selection the coach makes much of Ryōichi's progress in realizing that he must play for the team and not for himself (and he ends up making some real contributions).

The rest of the film follows the fortunes of the two teams through their regional qualifying tournaments. Actual game footage is rather brief and perfunctory, and the cameras linger longer over pre-game and post-game scenes. This editing much enhances the value of the film, which is more about sports team dynamics than baseball techniques. The pressure is palpable, and powerful emotions lie just beneath the stoic expressions of coaches, players, and supporters.

No doubt the film crew was disappointed that neither team made it through to Kōshien,

although the film is more real because of it. Failure is by far the more common experience, in this and other competitive sports, and in the end it is the aftermath of defeat that leaves the strongest impression on this viewer.

Japanese high school baseball deals rather well with failure, with its staged and public post-game gatherings—the cheerleaders serenade the team, the team apologizes, the coach eulogizes, and thick streamers of good luck paper cranes are handed over to the winners. The disappointment of the final defeat is faced head on; the seniors address their teammates and their parents outside the stadium with brief tearful speeches of appreciation. And the coach plans the first practice of the next season to begin the following day!

High school baseball in Japan has long been celebrated for its youthful exuberance, its fighting spirit, and its grueling practices. There is deep sentiment behind this nostalgia, and there is some substance to such an idealization of

continued on page 7

Teaching About Bunraku

■ *Bunraku: Masters of Japanese Puppet Theater*. Directed by Tomoo Ueno and Hisashi Miura. 2001. 53 minutes. In English and Japanese with English subtitles.

■ *Lovers' Exile: The Bunraku Puppet Theater of Japan*. Directed by Marty Gross. DVD re-release, 2006 (original video 1980). 90 minutes. In English and Japanese with English subtitles.

Bunraku puppet theater is one of Japan's classic dramatic arts, dating back 300 years. Incorporating sophisticated puppetry, vocal and instrumental music, drama, and classic literature, bunraku can bring to life many aspects of Japanese culture and history for students. Each puppet is manipulated by three puppeteers, who are in plain view of the audience. A single chanter gives voice to all of the characters in the play, as well as narrating the action. He is accompanied by a *shamisen* (a three-stringed plucked instrument) player, who also musically sets the atmosphere.

For a general introduction to bunraku, a good option is *Bunraku: Masters of Japanese Puppet Theater*, which profiles a master puppeteer and a musician, documenting their lives and training, and even giving the viewer a glimpse of their private lives as grandparents and amateur bowlers. There is helpful commentary on stage action over excerpts of performance.

Lovers' Exile: The Bunraku Puppet Theatre of Japan, first released on video in 1980 is distinctive for showing an



puppeteer's body moves in tandem with the puppet, the intricate movements of the puppet's fingers, and its facial expressions are all carefully captured by the camera. The viewer also sees the musicians' facial expressions (or lack thereof), body language, and how the shamisen is played.

The still photos on the DVD capture the people associated with bunraku in candid moments, reflecting their devotion to as well as pleasure in performing bunraku.

The written notes that accompany the DVD, particularly the excerpt from *Backstage at Bunraku* by Barbara Adachi, are a welcome aid to understanding this art. I would highly recommend that teachers or others wanting to know more about bunraku consult Adachi's book, as it is one of the most complete sources on bunraku in English. Another excellent source is *A Guide to the Japanese Stage*, which provides an extremely useful, concise guide to all aspects of bunraku, including photos and stage diagrams.

The possibilities for incorporating bunraku into classes other than the obvious music or film courses are numerous. The play performed in *The Lovers' Exile* reflects the historical, business and social conditions in Japan during the Edo period (1600–1868), a time when Western influence on Japan was extremely limited. It would be interesting to compare aspects of European or American culture of the same time period.

Bunraku is even relevant to the study of international relations. Whaling has been a point of contention between the United States, which opposes commercial whaling, and nations such as Japan and Norway that have a long tradition of hunting whales. Some of the intricate moving parts of the bunraku puppets are made from whale bones, and it is said that no other material can provide the necessary fluid and noiseless movement. But with a ban on whaling, bunraku puppet makers face a dilemma—how do they get the parts necessary to maintain their puppets?

Students might examine the play's characters, plot line, setting, etc., to English-language dramas of that era. The single chanter in bunraku must change his voice to portray different characters and emotions. Are there comparable traditions in the Western world? How does the playwright aid in this? The play centers on the dishonest business behavior of an actual historical person. What plays

continued on page 8

dramatist of his time and one of the originators of bunraku theater; many of his plays are also performed in *kabuki* theater.

Lover's Exile was re-released last year on DVD with added features, including notes, still photos of the filming, and footage of the filming process. Although the quality of the picture betrays the DVD's VHS

origins, the viewer is soon entranced by the puppets and story, and much as the puppeteers recede in the background, so too does the less-than-contemporary look.

It is impossible to get the same experience from a film that one would have in a theater, but there are some things that this DVD offers that make it better than seeing it live. The way the



entire play (performed by the National Bunraku Ensemble of Osaka) without added commentary. The story told in *Lovers' Exile* is the play *Meido no Hikyaku* (*The Courier for Hell*), a *sewamono*, or domestic play about everyday people, which recounts a true story that occurred during the lifetime of the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725). Chikamatsu was the most famous

Children of China Series

- One Day in Ping Wei. 2004. 30 minutes.
- New Year in Ping Wei. 2005. 30 minutes.
- Land of the Dragon. 2006. 30 minutes.

In English and Chinese with English subtitles.
Series created by Pearl River Productions.

In every classroom visuals and media are an important part of the lesson when teaching about China. This is particularly true for the primary grades, but finding rich and rewarding documentaries is often difficult. Fortunately, a small production company, Pearl River Productions, based in Centerville, Massachusetts,

ZHANG MING



also included, something missing from the first two films, and particularly ideal for use in the classroom. At times some may find that Liu Hui Ping and the other narrators are difficult to hear clearly and some of the English vocabulary is complex for some students, but the visuals in all three films are realistic and memo-

to a student audience here in the United States. Despite the vast contrasts students will latch onto, there are familiar moments, like when Twin Twin returns home from school and watches TV before doing homework or shares a special dinner at the “kids table” with the rest of the children in the family.

The next film in the series, *New Year in Ping Wei*, follows the same Liu family as they prepare and celebrate the important Chinese holiday of Spring Festival, often called Chinese New Year here in the United States. The same rural streets and countryside of Ping Wei are now the setting for the holiday preparations, narrated step-by-step again in both English and Mandarin. The Liu family prepares a homecoming meal, visits ancestors’ graves, hangs red couplets on doors, lights firecrackers, and shares in the first of the New Year dumplings. This documentary would be a great addition to a unit on Chinese New Year as it provides the visual detail of customs and traditions as put in practice in today’s China.

While the first two documentaries of the series follow one family in a small village, the final film in the series, *Land of the Dragon*, provides a larger overview of China. This general sweep of Chinese culture, history, and language is narrated in English by a 13-year old Chinese host, Liu Hui Ping. The documentary has been edited neatly on the DVD and the menu provides a 21-chapter topical index. Liu Hui Ping journeys through China introducing sites and teaching language along the way. She introduces typical sites in Beijing, like the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven, as well as rural sights like the Yellow Mountains. We also see elements of contemporary Chinese life, such as a tea harvest, urban apartment living, and home cooking.

A Mandarin language lesson at the market is

able, and their high potential for use in the classroom clearly stands out.

All three documentaries in the *Children of China* series could be used effectively in the upper elementary and middle school classroom depending on the lesson. With their narration in English and Mandarin they would be ideal for Mandarin language programs or for introducing students to the sounds of Mandarin and the use of subtitles. Another possible use could be as part of an orientation and introduction for student groups preparing to go China.

As with all media for classroom use, effective strategies should be carefully planned and media should be woven with a few key exploratory questions. Discussion about these pieces is key. Screening the documentaries in short clips or stopping and starting while viewing for explanation is a must. There is a lot to digest visually about China and debriefing with students is essential for understanding the complexities of the detail. Although there are some errors of Mandarin pronunciation and some generalizations about China in the series, the overall effect provides a glimpse of a China not often available in the primary and middle school classroom. ■

Karla Loveall works for the Program for Teaching East Asia at the University of Colorado where she specializes in professional development programs for K–12 teachers, including the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia. She has conducted programs about China that include workshops, summer institutes, and study tours and has spent significant time living and working in China.

Each of the films is available on DVD from Pearl River Productions. Price is \$24.95 per film.



PEARL RIVER PRODUCTIONS

has produced a series of visually memorable and useful documentaries about China that could be included in the upper elementary and middle school grades. The *Children of China* film series includes three 30-minute documentaries that explore what life is like in China today.

The first in the series, *One Day in Ping Wei* follows a day in the life of a 10-year-old girl, Twin Twin, from the Liu family who lives in the small rural village of Ping Wei, just outside of Huainan in Anhui province. The strength of the documentary is its ability to present a realistic portrait as images fade and roll through rural and small-town China. The film does not follow China’s new glamour and glitz, which is so often seen in the headlines and on TV. The viewer is simply treated to a slice of life in rural China where the one-burner kitchen finds its place in the spotlight. We also see a woman washing clothes in a river and a market filled with small stalls and colorful fruits and vegetables.

Viewers watch Twin Twin go to school, return for her after-school activities (which include helping with the family’s traditional tofu business they have been running for generations) and interact with her family and friends. All this day-to-day activity is detailed with explanation in both English and Mandarin Chinese (with subtitles) and takes place in a world that is no doubt unfamiliar

Going to School in India

■ Created by Going to School. 2007. 76 minutes. In English or Hindi with English and Spanish subtitles.

Going to School in India is a series of nine short films that introduce the viewer to a diverse group of students. Among them are a young boy walking to school through the desolate beauty of Ladakh, a young girl traveling Kashmiri waters in a *shikara* (a type of wooden boat) on her way to school, and students attending classes as they ride in a bus. Although these films were created by Going to School (GTS), a non-profit organization, in order to encourage Indian children to view schooling as a fun and relevant experience and thereby increase enrollment, they can engage American students just as easily, if for different purposes.

In general, education in India is a messy combination of private and public schooling in which even universal primary school education cannot be taken for granted. As government funding for education has lagged, most members of the middle and upper classes have opted out of public education. Government-run schools often have poor infrastructure and impossible student-teacher ratios which combine with socio-economic factors to make attendance at these schools an unattractive option, particularly for girls and children from poorer families. Aimed at these families, these vignettes showcase some of the unique ways in which children attend government-funded schools (on a boat, at night, or in the desert, for example).

The nine featured students tell us about their lives and how they go to school. Their words have been translated into English (there is also a Hindi language track with Spanish or English subtitles) and the insight into their lives this gives the viewer is both charming and enlightening. Although the children are obviously responding to a standard set of questions, their views about not only school but

also their world—and their curiosity about the worlds of other children—are often entertaining and apparently their own. Appealing local music and eye-catching images of each child's home and surroundings are likely to catch and hold the attention of any viewer.

Thought-provoking statements are sprinkled throughout. For example, a boy who lives on a street corner and wants to grow up to be like his favorite movie star observes that, "Maybe all you need to be a star are the right clothes." Another believes that children in America live in palaces. There are many opportunities for reflection on not only the lives of Indian children but on the lives of the viewers as well. From Indian culture to the role of children in society to philosophical points, there is a lot to think about. Given the potential for wide-ranging classroom discussion presented here, this DVD is particularly well-suited to classroom use.

The films provide a glimpse into the lives of nine children; the focus is more on the students' motivations and how they view their own lives than it is on the actual schooling experience. However, GTS's message that school can be a fun place clearly comes through, as does the children's enthusiasm for education.

At 7 to 10 minutes each, the films are a convenient length for classroom use. They are probably best watched individually with opportunities for discussion after each one. The bright colors, catchy music, and fast-moving visuals will appeal to young children. Although perhaps directed at elementary-level students, the films have potential for use in middle school and even high school

classrooms. An older viewer will pick up on themes such as militancy in Kashmir, the limited opportunities available to some girls, and the universality of some aspects of childhood. The lives of

these students also provide some context for a discussion of child labor, as many of these children also work in some capacity.

This is also an opportunity for educators to reflect on the process of education—is it necessary that an education system be standardized? Are there benefits to finding more imaginative ways to fit education into the diverse lives of children and families, both in India and the United States, or does such

diversity of provision result in the entrenchment of societal inequalities? There is something in these films for every viewer.

However, there are some flaws. The only map on the DVD is on the school selection page. It would have been helpful for American students to see where India is in relation to the rest of the world and also where each school is within India. The schools are generally in remote areas where formal schooling is limited and the students tend to be from families with meager financial resources, but unfortunately this tends to give the films a certain element of the exotic and unfamiliar.

Educators should be careful to contextualize the films so that students do not come away from these films with generalizations about Indian children or schools in India. Although many children in India attend more conventionally structured schools that would be more familiar to American students, none of these are depicted in these films because they do not fit the mission of GTS. Nevertheless, as long as the students' stories are treated as snapshots of children's lives, the films are excellent for classroom use and should encourage students to want to learn more about India. ■

Rachel Heilman is a social studies teacher and recently completed an M.A. at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies with a South Asia area focus. Her graduate studies concentrated on education in India.

Going to School in India is available on DVD from Asia for Kids or amazon.com. Price is \$29.95.

Going to School's Flash-animated website, www.goingtoschool.com, offers kids' activities for each of the nine stories (and a few extras), as well as information about GTS projects, current and planned.



Buffalo Boy

■ *Buffalo Boy (Mùa Len Trâu)*. Directed by Nguyen-Vô Nghiem-Minh (Minh Nguyen-Vo). 2004. 98 minutes. In Vietnamese with English and French subtitles.

Can life be this hard, and maturing into manhood this difficult? In this debut feature film by writer and director Nguyen-Vô Nghiem-Minh, everything is difficult, including the actual logistics and shooting of the film. Water is everywhere and fills the landscape. This is quite typical for Vietnam, where the name for country, *nuoc*, is also the name for water. This film's location, the southernmost province of Ca Mau, is particularly severe; rarely visited by tourists, regular and debilitating flooding is a fact of life and death in this part of the country. It also remains a place of unsettled ethnic division, where resentment lingers between remnants of the ancient Khmer

So begins this desperate tale, told over two flooding seasons, of a young rural Vietnamese male's coming of age while "on the road," a story of male domains characterized by violence and rape. Winner of many film festival awards, this film is a dark tragedy buffeted only by fleeting moments of kindness. Only the most sentimental will believe that there is light and rescue at the end of this tunnel.

Buffalo Boy is filled with beautiful images. It is true that Vietnam is a place of glorious landscapes; however, the beauty conceals the ruthlessness of this watery terrain where, as the film's narrator tells us in the very beginning, there is rot and

depicted in the film. In Kim's world, survival of the family's buffalos, and the subsistence of the family, would be signs of grace—real prosperity is certainly out of reach. We can expect little of these characters except endurance and forbearance.

The film is based on a series of short stories remembered by writer-director Nguyen-Vô, who was educated in France and the United States, from his childhood. There is certainly an ample share of the typical themes that often make up the Vietnamese genre—stark poverty and hardship, struggle and survival, tragedy, and the sometimes saving forces of family and community. But unlike many Vietnamese films there is no nostalgia here.

In this stark and wet world, women provide social integration through the binding embrace of family and community. Men hold dominion over their families as the putative breadwinners and spend most of their time in the company of other



(Cambodian) culture and the Vietnamese (Kinh).

Our protagonist, Kim, looks back and tells his granddaughter and us how he became a man. Though the story is set in the wartime 1940s, the existence of the French colonialists and Japanese imperialists is quite irrelevant to this rendition of Vietnamese peasant life, a life that presents few choices and is at the mercy of nature.

Vietnamese peasant farmers depend on their buffalos for plowing the paddy and as beasts of burden. In this cyclical season of the floods, the buffalos need grass to survive and need to be moved to higher ground. This is brutal and dangerous work, made more dangerous and more brutal as the herders compete with rival herdsmen for choice grassland. When they can afford it, rural families hire buffalo herders to drive their buffalo to fresh pastures. Kim's family is too poor to hire the herders and his father too ill to travel, so Kim, at age 15, is charged with getting the family's two buffalos to clear grass before they die.

decay. The Vietnamese continue to live with this duality—water is the sustainer for wet rice agriculture and the serene paddies, and floods provide new nutrients for the fields while threatening everything in their path. Pray to the Water God, indeed—for rain to come and to stop the rain! This cosmology of powerful gods and a powerful Nature is the backbone of a Vietnamese fatalism on the one hand, and a startling hopefulness for a better future on the other. It is luck and good fortune to which the rural Vietnamese aspire, especially in environments as unlucky as the one

men. It is a complex masculine world of competition, hierarchy, drinking, and violence, but it is also one of friendship and camaraderie. There is tenderness between Kim and his father, between Kim and his friend Det, and between Kim and Det's son, Thieu, whom Kim adopts. The relationship between Kim and his father is one of filial piety and obedience, and also one of silences and secrets, which the son must discover on his own. Kim's father seems like a congenial old man, but he was once a buffalo herdsman and a rapist. In the season he spends herding buffalo, Kim repeats the sins of the father.

There is a nod to the taxing realities of French colonialism but these corruptions add little to the narrative; they are just another cost and nuisance to living. That aspect has not changed in Vietnam, where petty corruptions are a daily occurrence.

Some of my Vietnamese student friends say that they do not like this morality tale, that it is boring and does not express Vietnamese reality.

continued on next page

They argue that it is a southern story without the southern soul, and that the dialogues are influenced by the West and are not native to southern Vietnamese life. While, for my Hanoian students, Ca Mau is very far away and the lives of their poorest farmers quite remote, these representations speak to the conditions of life in the 1940s and may have applicability today. The film's depiction of a darker-side to Vietnamese masculinity with its violence and misogyny remains a reality in Vietnam. The film's images of the floods, the stark minimalism of the houses, the tempered dress, and of course, the centrality of the buffalo are all quite powerful representations of a Vietnamese way of life still found in the countryside.

This is not an appropriate film for young children, because of the violent and sexual subject matter (though little is explicitly shown on screen). High school and college students will find it a fascinating story of an adolescent coming of age with its masculine rituals and displays. They will also find this watery landscape foreign and foreboding and get a fictionalized glimpse into the life of desperately poor Vietnamese peasant farmers then, and even now.

Although this film would not be useful for a history lesson, it does provide some timeless images of daily life, human character, and adversity. Useful discussions for Western audiences might be the complex relationships between fathers and sons, men and women, men's relationships to other men, respect for elders and ancestors, and human choices in the face of desperate hardship. ■

Jack D. Harris is professor of Sociology at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. His research areas include Vietnam social organization and Vietnamese masculinity. He has been the recipient of an Academic Exchange Grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam, American Council of Learned Societies, and ASIANetwork (2006), and a Vietnam Research Grant from the ASIANetwork Freeman Foundation Student Faculty Fellows Program (2003).

Buffalo Boy is available on DVD and VHS from First Run/Icarus Films. Price is \$248 for purchase and \$125 for rental.

Additional Resources

A discussion guide for *Buffalo Boy*, developed by The Global Film Initiative, is available on the DVD and also at www.frif.com/guide/buf.pdf. In addition to discussion questions on film aesthetics and narrative themes, the guide includes background information on the film, the writer/director, and Vietnam, as well as a glossary.

Kokoyakyu

continued from page 2

high school sport, although the film lends too much credence to the dubious Japanese view that such qualities are unique.

In using the film with students, it would be more useful to probe the claims of the coaches, players, and supporters.

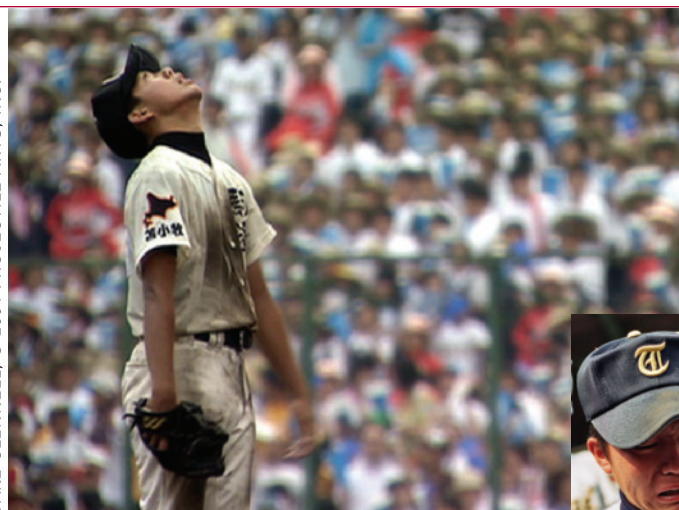
For instance, it is true that there is a very high ratio of practice to games in Japanese school baseball, which goes back to the very beginning of the sport. In this, it is less like baseball in the United States and more like high school football, whose players can work year-round through spring training, preseason and season in order to play 10 or 12 games. To talk about "American game, Japanese discipline" requires a willful suspension of disbelief about our own youth sports!

And lest we are tempted to accept the spiritual nostrums of the two coaches at face value, we should recall that the two other big stories of Japanese baseball this spring were scandals involving covert payments to players and illegal subsidies. In fact, any observer of Japanese baseball knows these to be longstanding practices, periodically exposed but never eradicated, not unlike the underside of the NCAA, Little League baseball, and popular school sports everywhere. What the Chiben player Maeda notes in a moment of candor would surprise no fan of school sports anywhere:

"It's hard to do both academics and baseball. I don't do a lot of studying; it's mostly all baseball for me. I know I should, but I can't keep up. It's like the baseball club gets special treatment. We have our own classes and stuff. We have it a lot easier. We get basic questions on the test."

Of course high-minded character-building goes hand-in-hand with low-down tawdry dealings. Since the beginnings of school sports in the mid-nineteenth century on the playing fields of English elite schools, the purism of an amateur ethic and the prestige of success have mingled uneasily. Japanese high school baseball, shown here with perhaps a rosier-tinted lens than necessary, expresses these universal tensions in colorful spectacle, all-out effort, school spirit, and national passion. ■

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Pitcher from Komodai Tomokomai, moments before his winning pitch.



Tokaidai Shoyo High School player crying after losing at Kōshien Stadium.

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Kokoyakyu: High School Baseball is available on DVD from Customflix. Purchase price is \$29.95.

Suggested Reading

- Cave, Peter. 2004. "Bukatsudōs: The Educational Role of Japanese School Clubs." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 30:383–415.
- Moeran, Brian. 1984. "Individual, Group and *Seishin*: Japan's Internal Cultural Debate." *Man* 19:252–266.
- Gordon, Dan. 2006. "Japan: Changing of the Guard in High School Baseball." In *Baseball Without Borders: The International Pastime*. George Gmelch, editor. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp 3–21. Appropriate for high school and college students.

Suggested Viewing

- "Young Baseball Heroes." 1986. Part of the *Faces of Japan* series produced by TeleJapan USA. Recommended for comparison with *Kokoyakyu*.

Additional Resources

- "Kokoyakyu Lesson Plan." P.O.V. website: Kokoyakyu. www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/kokoyakyu/for.html.
- Kokoyakyu: High School Baseball. Official film website. www.projectilearts.org/kokoyakyu/high_school_baseball.html. Includes background information and filmmakers' weblog.

Bunraku

continued from page 3

or stories from that time in the United States or Europe are similarly based on actual historical figures and happenings? What are the social, economic and historical conditions in which this story occurred? How does bunraku compare with soap operas and telenovellas of our time?

Many students (and teachers) may believe that bunraku is stuck in time, and has no relevance to post-Edo people. However the modern author Tanizaki Jun'ichiro (1886–1965) used bunraku as a central point in his book *Some Prefer Nettles*, a work that could open up interesting discussions on the tensions between tradition and modernity.

An unfamiliar art, in this case bunraku, can be a good way to approach historical and cultural topics that may have become stale from a too-familiar approach. Young people who are fans of *anime* may find familiar characters among bunraku puppets, but with the added twist of the puppeteer giving life to the character. Add it all up, and this film is a good hook for discussion of many historical and contemporary issues in Japan and the West. ■

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Bunraku: Masters of Japanese Puppet Theater is available on VHS and DVD from Films for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Price is \$149.95. Some libraries may make this film available streamed online.

Lovers' Exile: The Bunraku Puppet Theater of Japan is available on VHS and DVD from Marty Gross Film Productions. Retail price is \$40; institutional price is \$150.

Suggested Reading

Adachi, Barbara C. 1985. *Backstage at Bunraku: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Japan's Traditional Puppet Theatre*. New York: Weatherhill. Additional photos of bunraku

from the Barbara Curtis Adachi Bunraku Collection at Columbia University are available at www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/eimages/eastasian/bunraku.

Cavaye, Ronald, Paul Griffith and Akihiko Senda. 2004. *A Guide to the Japanese Stage: From Traditional to Cutting Edge*, Tokyo: Kodansha. National Theater of Japan (with links to *bunraku* and other theatrical arts) www.ntj.jac.go.jp/english.

Tanizaki Jun'ichiro. 2001. *Some Prefer Nettles*. New York: Vintage Press. (First published in English, 1955 by Knopf Press.)

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