

News and Reviews

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SONITH HENG



The Flute Player

■ Directed by Jocelyn Glatzer. 2002. 53 minutes. In English and Khmer with English subtitles.

Monkey Dance

■ Directed by Julie Mallozzi. 2004. 65 minutes. In English and Khmer with English subtitles.

THE FLUTE PLAYER

Arn Chorn-Pond was a child when the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia, set the calendar to year zero, and began a horrific four years of oppression and cultural genocide. Among the estimated two million casualties were 90% of the country's musicians, dancers, and artists, killed or dead from starvation. Ironically, Arn survived on his musical ability by playing Communist propaganda songs on the flute for his captors. Eventually escaping the "killing fields," he found his way to a refugee camp in Thailand where an American missionary adopted him.

The Flute Player begins more than twenty years later in Lowell, Massachusetts, where Arn Chorn-Pond works with Cambodian-American youth, teaching them Khmer traditional musics and encouraging them to compose and reflect

musically on their own lives. This moving, intelligent film follows Arn from Massachusetts back to Cambodia, as he seeks out senior master musicians who survived the Khmer Rouge regime. Arn manages to find numerous master folk and classical musicians, records their music and, effectively, re-starts many of their careers.

The cultural preservation agenda that drives much of this project would make a valuable film in its own right. However, a second theme—one that sets it apart from other salvage ethnography projects and makes this relevant beyond strictly musical interests—is the attention given to Arn Chorn-Pond himself, as he confronts many of the demons from his own past. Arn saw and was forced to participate in unspeakable horrors in the death camp where he was held as a child worker. When the Vietnamese invaded in 1979, Arn, still only 14 years old, was given an AK-47 and told to

fight. Shortly thereafter, Arn fled, eventually reaching Thailand.

This film is a testament to his ongoing quest to transcend this heartbreaking catastrophe. His family and culture were destroyed, yet Arn lived. Today he struggles to assuage the guilt of surviving. Many were killed because they were musicians; he survived because he was one.

Glatzer's film deals with Arn's emotional journey without sensationalizing the atrocities. As Arn reaches out to former Khmer Rouge soldiers who are also dealing with guilt, we gain insight into the psychological complexity of this recovery. The lines between the oppressed and the oppressors, between Khmer Rouge soldiers and the victims of those soldiers, are blurred. Though a child during the Pol Pot era, Arn reflects back on his situation as both a perpetrator and victim. In order to survive, we must learn to forgive—and we must learn first to forgive ourselves.

These very personal steps towards reconciliation impel Arn Chorn-Pond to do as much as he can to revive the country's music. Music and the efforts made toward supporting musicians are, for him, very clearly a psychological survival strategy. As he says: "I do this work for myself, so I don't go insane." Music saved his life and he recognizes that the survival of Cambodian culture at large is also

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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 (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

Please contact us to be added to the mailing list, or for back issues and extra copies of this newsletter.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Our fall issue brings us reviews of four extraordinary films on topics spanning the Asian continent; if there is a theme this time, it might be “tragedy and transcendence.” *The Flute Player*, reviewed by Gavin Douglas (along with *Monkey Dance*), asks how music can give the survivors of the Cambodian genocide the strength to heal and to speak. Nazif Shahrani introduces *Kabul Transit*, a street-level exploration of the fractured cityscape of contemporary Kabul, Afghanistan—like Cambodia, a place torn apart by violence and trying to heal, but against daunting odds. *The Blood of Yingzhou District* moved reviewer Bob Cagle to action—after viewing this film about AIDS orphans in China, he began to organize fundraisers for their medical care. Finally, on a somewhat lighter note, Clay Dube takes us to a classroom in Wuhan, China, for an experiment in electoral politics—with some provoking questions to consider as we build up to our own presidential election. In our Teaching and Technology column, I present a guide to finding and using digital videos in a world exploding with technological opportunities and obstacles.

New additions to the **AEMS website** include a current events page on *China's May 12 Earthquake* and updates to our *2008 Beijing Olympics* page (click on the **Other Resources** tab), as well as new film reviews focusing on Southeast Asia (click on the **Publications** tab), and an interview with Keiko Ikeda, producer of *On Another Playground: Japanese Popular Culture in America*.

Locally, we are hosting our sixth annual Asian Film Festival in downtown Champaign, Illinois, October 3 through 5, 2008: *Young in Japan*. And on September 16, we launch *AsiaLENS: AEMS Documentary and Independent Film Series at the Spurlock Museum*, a series of six documentary films presented and discussed by local scholars. For more information, click on the **Events** tab at www.aems.uiuc.edu.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that our library catalog is now online with the Lincoln Trails Library System, making our materials available for loan in a nine-county region of east central Illinois. Click on the **Local Media Library** tab of our website for more information. ■

—Tanya Lee, Editor

Poshek Fu, New Director of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies

AEMS is pleased to welcome Poshek Fu as the new director of the University of Illinois's Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies (EAPS). Professor Fu's scholarly expertise on film is particularly exciting for AEMS. Nancy Abelman has completed her three-year term as EAPS Director, in which she infused AEMS and EAPS with astonishing energy and inspiration, leaving us in a spirit of optimism about our future. Nancy tells us that she looks forward to sustained participation with AEMS—welcome news!



Poshek Fu

from 1935 to 1950, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford University Press, 2003; Chinese translation, Peking University Press, 2008). I have also edited and co-edited *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (Cambridge

University Press, 2000), *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia* (University of Michigan Press, 2001), and *China Forever: Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema* (University of Illinois Press, 2008). Currently I am working with support of a Fulbright research fellowship on a book studying the development of cultural entrepreneurship and film industry in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan during the period of 1900–2000.

I am also the series editor of *Politics and Popular Culture in Asia Pacific* (University of Illinois Press).

With my interests in cinema and popular culture, I am particularly excited to take up the directorship of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies (EAPS). AEMS, with its devotion to deepening our understanding of Asian

It is a great pleasure to introduce myself to the AEMS community. I am a historian of modern China with interests in East Asia at large. My intellectual interests are broad and cross-disciplinary—from pan-Chinese cinemas to East Asian popular culture, and from World War II in China to the meanings of loyalty and collaboration. I have published books on Japanese-occupied China, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937–1945* (Stanford University Press, 1993) and on the history and cultural politics of wartime Chinese cinemas



Kabul Transit

■ Directed by David Edwards, Maliha Zulfacar, Gregory Whitmore. 2007. 84 minutes.

Produced by American anthropologist David Edwards, Afghan-American sociologist-turned-diplomat Maliha Zulfacar, and filmmaker Gregory Whitmore, *Kabul Transit* captures intimate scenes of Afghan realities shortly after the fall of Taliban regime. Kabul youth fly kites again (perhaps in reference to Khaled Hosseini's now famous book and film *The Kite Runner*); young,

anxious amulet seekers try to protect their newly acquired car, love, and health; a college-student turned money changer ekes out a living in the streets; female Kabul University students express doubt about the sincerity of the international efforts to bring peace and development or improve the conditions of Afghan women; confident Ministry of Interior officials fight corruption and shop for new security technologies; ultra-security-conscious U.S. Embassy personnel discuss their hardships; and ISAF officers conduct security research, dispensing shovels, pens, and candies.

This well conceived and tastefully edited film depicts the capital city of Afghanistan, Kabul, ravaged by years of war apparently on a possible road to recovery. It captures heart-wrenching moments of suffering, joy, and palpable hope, mixed with uncertainty and fear about the outcome of the ongoing military and humanitarian intervention by the U.S.-led coalition.

The film does not offer commentary by the filmmakers; rather, it invites the viewer to listen to and experience the life and concerns of a society victimized by three decades of proxy wars, and the activities of their presumed international saviors. It offers images of the bombing of Taliban strongholds in Kabul by the U.S. B-52s from the perspective of the pilots, and as it was experienced by a Kabul University student money changer and his family. It also offers a window into the anxieties of

a forty-something man seeking help from an herbalist wise-man, or *hakim*, about his declining health and especially his impotency, as well as the concerns of an older woman and her suffering child who is cured by the *hakim's* words. It depicts the dedication of a French couple who have found emotional solace, following the loss

of their own young child, in caring for a few of Afghanistan's huge number of orphans at their Le Pelican Day Care Center.

These are indeed moments of considerable hope and expectations for better days to follow, for the residents of the shattered city, Kabul, and Afghanistan as nation. Much to the disappointment of millions of Afghans, after nearly seven years and the expenditure of over two hundred billions dollars by the United States to wage the so-called "War on Terror" against the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, their hopes have been slowly dashed and with them, the credibility of the U.S. and its Western allies.

This superb film is witness to impending troubles in the international reconstruction and security mission which remain unnoticed, at a huge loss both to the peoples of Afghanistan and the international community. The producers of *Kabul Transit* should be proud of this

memorable and invaluable videographic time capsule of Afghanistan's social history at the dawn of twenty-first century. It should also serve as a powerful critique of the West's post-9/11 approaches to security and reconstruction. ■

M. Nazif Shahrani is professor of Anthropology and Central Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at Indiana University. His research explores "low-intensity" wars and their human consequences, and the impact of Islam upon the social imagination of Afghanistan's people. He is the author of *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan: Adaptation to Closed Frontiers and War* (University of Washington, 1979 and 2002).

HOW TO PURCHASE: *Kabul Transit* is available on DVD and VHS from Bullfrog Films. Price is \$295 for purchase and \$95 for rental.

This well conceived
and tastefully edited
film depicts the capital
city of Afghanistan,
Kabul, ravaged by
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a possible road
to recovery.



cultures and societies through media, is one of the most active and successful programs at EAPS, providing teaching support for the profession and educational outreach for the local community. In the past five years, AEMS has co-organized with EAPS a widely popular Asian Film Festival—most recently on Korea (2006) and Southeast Asia (2007)—that draws large crowds and wins critical acclaim. In May AEMS also attracted national attention with the Digital Asia initiative, which helped many scholars to realize their dream of "making a movie."

I am excited about working closely with Tanya Lee in exploring how AEMS can build on its success to further expand its collection of media (including many hard-to-find films such as *The Vagina Monologues: Stories from China*) and to become even more prominently integrated with EAPS, the University of Illinois, and the larger community. As Asian cinemas are "hot" around the world, AEMS has a big role to play in promoting better understanding of Asia in the U.S. through media education. In this environment of fiscal restraints, I plan also to explore various funding opportunities to ensure the continued success of AEMS. ■

—Poshek Fu

JIFENG GUO



Please Vote for Me

■ Directed by Chen Weijun. 2007. 55 minutes. In Chinese with English subtitles.

“What is democracy?” *Please Vote for Me* opens with the unseen filmmaker asking this question of a third grade student in Wuhan, China. This student and his classmates are about to embark on an experiment: the election of their class monitor.

As Teacher Zhang makes clear at the outset, this is a contrived situation. The norm is for teachers (at all levels, including college) to appoint class monitors who assist them in maintaining discipline and enforcing the rules. For this exercise, teachers at Changping No. 1 Elementary School have selected three students that the students may choose among. This one-hour documentary by Chen Weijun, the award-winning director of *To Live Is Better Than To Die*, follows the two-week campaign from the introduction of the candidates to the final voting. Students at all levels will gain from watching this reality-show-style film.

Viewers get to know the candidates quite well by the end of the film. Luo Lei is the son of two police officers and has already been a class monitor for two years, employing a stern leadership style with a tendency to strike other students.

Cheng Cheng, one of his opponents, is a gregarious fellow whose mother is a television producer and whose stepfather is an engineer. He's a master politician, shaking hands, getting others to sling mud, and even managing to point fingers at Luo Lei when Teacher Zhang steps in to criticize

the class for intimidating and shouting down Xu Xiaofei, the third candidate. She is the daughter of a school administrator, a single mom who suffers along with her daughter's setbacks. A bright student, Xiaofei is soon preparing for expected negative attacks, researching her opponents' shortcomings, and joining in shouting at the poor singing of one of them.

Early in the contest, Cheng Cheng's verbal dexterity and detailed debate preparation place him well in front of his rivals. At this point, however, Luo Lei's father, a high-ranking police official, helps his boy turn the tide by arranging for the class to take a free field trip to ride on Wuhan's impressive monorail. Despite earlier protestations of independence, Luo Lei becomes quite willing to accept his father's help. The children love it. In the final round of candidate speeches, Luo Lei shows that he's sensitive to complaints about his tendency to hit his classmates and explains that he has and will continue to change. He ends up

winning by a landslide.

This film could be usefully employed by teachers from upper elementary grades through undergraduate courses. In addition to sparking a great deal of discussion on potential advantages and disadvantages of democratic selection of leaders and on what the course of this election reveals about democracy or childhood, it also affords opportunities to discuss many other important issues specific to China, like the impact of China's family planning regulations.

Nearly all of the children in the class are only children and most have at least six adults (two parents and four grandparents) who lavish attention and goods on them. After the May 12, 2008, earthquake in Sichuan, many grieving parents said that their futures died with their children. It's clear from this documentary that parents have a lot invested in their children.

The documentary also provides glimpses into class divisions (the police official owns an automobile), everyday family life (homework, play, and eating), and school routines (flag raising, dining, eye exercises, and calisthenics).

How “real” is this compelling story? Filmmaker Chen Weijun insists that he did not structure the activities or suggest strategies to parents or

children. He did ask teachers to ensure that the election be fair and the vote be counted publicly.

It's important to note, though, that the entire election came about because Chen had been commissioned by STEPS International, a South African production company, to make a film for its *Why Democracy?* series. According to producer Don Edkins of STEPS International, school authorities were reluctant to go along with the experiment, but the parents of the three candidates welcomed the filmmaker into their homes and allowed the children to wear wireless microphones.

Though it's not mentioned in the film's promotional material, it may be significant that Chen was a first-year journalism student in Chengdu at Sichuan University in 1989 when pro-democracy protests broke out in Beijing, Chengdu, and many other Chinese cities.



The candidates for class monitor (top to bottom): Cheng Cheng, Luo Lei, and Xu Xiaofei.

JIFENG GUO

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The film and its supporting websites slightly exaggerate the uniqueness of this effort. For twenty years, hundreds of millions of Chinese villagers have been electing village leaders. Those elections are not uniformly open and contested. In many cases, local Party leaders or township officials decide who can be a candidate, much like the pre-screening that teachers conducted at Changping No. 1. Village elections are primarily designed to help defuse tensions between state and society by permitting rural residents to choose among themselves who should represent the community. Nonetheless, *Please Vote for Me* is a fascinating look at how children, parents, and teachers in a huge and modernizing Chinese city understand democracy, authority, and power.

Please Vote for Me suggests that Chinese children, like those elsewhere, have an innate sense of fairness and that democracy can be messy. Though incumbency and resources make the difference in this election, *Please Vote for Me* also demonstrates that the process itself requires candidates to be responsive to popular concerns. Will Luo Lei be a less dictatorial monitor? The film doesn't show us. And if the electoral experiment isn't repeated, isn't made part of the routine, what incentive has he to really change? ■

Clayton Dube is associate director of the U.S.-China Institute at the University of Southern California. His research focuses on the effects of economic and political change in China on small-town life. He has taught Asian and world history, has written teaching guides on Chinese history, and previously headed the teacher training program at UCLA's Asia Institute.

HOW TO PURCHASE: *Please Vote For Me* is available on DVD from First Run Features: \$195 for educational institutions and \$24.95 for consumers. It is also available at Amazon.com.

Additional Resources

The *Why Democracy?* Project website offers a trailer and background information on the film, the director, and contemporary China: www.whyledemocracy.net/film/3. PBS's Independent Lens also hosts a website on the film, with background information and comments from viewers: www.pbs.org/independentlens/pleasevoteforme.

The Flute Player

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tied to music. The four years of the Khmer Rouge struck a devastating blow to all of Cambodia's oral traditions. Traditional dance and music were almost completely wiped out. To seek out surviving musicians, Arn Chorn-Pond founded the Cambodian Masters Performing Project (CMPP). Many of these master artists, successful singers or popular artists before the Khmer Rouge, were found living in abject poverty and, of necessity, had been forced to deny their musical identities. One artist, Master Kung Nai, a singer and performer of Chapei (a long-necked lute), has, since becoming involved in this project, received significant attention, performing for the Smithsonian World Arts festival and recently recording an album under Peter Gabriel's Real World label.

A recent name change from the Cambodian Masters Performing Project to Cambodian Living Arts—a shift in emphasis from preservation to cultivation—speaks to the success of the project. The websites for Cambodian Living Arts and the PBS website for the film (see below) are valuable secondary sources for educators who use this film. The websites include brief biographies and performances by master musicians Nong Chock, Youn Mec, and Yim Saing, giving fascinating glimpses of musical survival; further interviews with Arn; descriptions of Cambodian traditional instruments and ensembles; and recording samples of traditional and new compositions. This film will continue to be valuable for some time, as the Cambodian musical community continues to both rebuild and grow in new directions. The dream for many involved in this project is that Cambodia will some day be recognized not for the killing fields but for its arts and culture.

MONKEY DANCE

For educators doing a longer unit—on the aftermath of the Cambodian tragedy, the role of history on everyday lives, the strength of culture across generations or the role of the arts in cultural identity—the film *Monkey Dance* by Julie Mallozzi provides a fine complement to *The Flute Player*.

Monkey Dance follows three teenage Cambodian-Americans (also from Lowell, Massachusetts) as they struggle to reconcile their American identities with that of their parents' homeland. Traditional Khmer dance links these three students to Cambodia but American culture—from University applications to cars and cell-phones—pulls in a different direction. As they dance, bond with fellow Cambodian-

American youth, and struggle with growing up American, they also wrestle to understand the sacrifices and the horrors of their parents' lives.

Mallozzi wisely keeps the parents, the direct victims and survivors of the Khmer Rouge era, in the background and focuses on the victims' children. As such, the film has much to say about the transmission of history and cultural identity, the fluidity of national identities, and reconciliation of traditional gender roles. The film, further, provides interesting portrayals of traditional Khmer dance in transition, as it is re-contextualized in a context of American youth and, inevitably and perhaps controversially, incorporates moves from African American dance traditions.

The Flute Player and *Monkey Dance* focus on two contrasting yet complementary aspects of the Khmer and Khmer diaspora struggle to not only reclaim aspects of their culture lost to the Cambodian genocide but also to advance the Khmer identity beyond it. The films could be effectively used together or alone in a multitude of interdisciplinary courses that deal with cultural preservation and music, cultural identity, arts and trauma recovery, and diaspora studies. ■

Gavin Douglas is associate professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. His research focuses on music and nationalism in Burma/Myanmar and on the role of music in political movements across mainland Southeast Asia.

HOW TO PURCHASE: Both films are available from the Center for Asian American Media on DVD and VHS. Prices for *The Flute Player* are: college/institution—\$265 for purchase and \$125 for rental; K-12/library/community group—\$125 for purchase and \$40 for rental. *Monkey Dance* is \$275 for purchase and \$65 for rental (contact distributor for discount pricing).

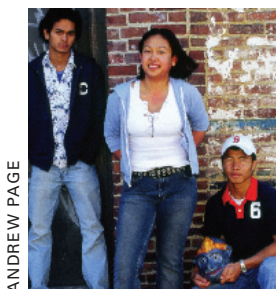
Additional Resources

Cambodian Living Arts (formerly Cambodian Masters Performing Project): www.cambodianlivingarts.org.

For biographies of musicians, click on "People." For audio files and photos, click on "Archive."

P.O.V.'s website for *The Flute Player*: www.pbs.org/pov/pov2003/thefluteplayer.

Includes extensive background information and a lesson plan. A complete study guide can also be downloaded here, or from <http://distribution.asianamericanmedia.org/browse/film/?i=7>. A Viewer's Guide and a Classroom Activities Packet for *Monkey Dance* may be ordered from: www.monkey-dance.com (under "Educational Use").





The Blood of Yingzhou District

■ Directed by Ruby Yang. 2006. 38 minutes. In Chinese with English subtitles.

The task of writing about Ruby Yang's Academy Award-winning documentary, *The Blood of Yingzhou District*, is a daunting one. Its subject matter—the day-to-day struggles of five AIDS orphans in China's Anhui province—is so emotionally charged that any attempt to translate reactions into words seems terribly inadequate. As troubling as these individual stories are, however, Yang's film stresses the greater tragedy that the vast majority of the infections and deaths that make up this AIDS crisis could and should have been avoided.

In the late 1990s, motivated by a desire for profit and a desperate need for blood (China had ceased importing blood in the hope of keeping its population AIDS-free), Chinese officials urged residents of some of the nation's most impoverished provinces to trade blood for money and food. Unsanitary conditions resulted in the spread of numerous diseases, including HIV.

In addition, amateur clinicians often combined the blood cells that remained after extracting the plasma product from the day's donations and reinjected this material into donors, ostensibly to shorten their recovery time. This practice, aimed at increasing the efficiency of the project, ironically fulfilled at least part of its mission by providing a highly efficient means of transmitting HIV. According to some reports, in villages where the majority of adults took part in regular blood donation, more than 60% ended up infected by the late 1990s. In Henan province, one of the hardest hit areas, a full 90% of cases where children were orphaned as a result of AIDS-related death can be traced directly back to blood donation.

Furthermore, because little or no educational material was available to them, many of the infected had no idea why they suddenly fell ill and

were often too frightened to seek treatment. Thousands died and left behind children who, because of their association with this modern-day plague, became outcasts.

Yang frames her film with the story of Gao Jun, a little boy of approximately four years old whose tragic circumstances take on an exemplary significance in the film. As the film's most compelling figure, Gao Jun serves as the face of Yang's film, and the face of AIDS in China. Gao Jun appears at the beginning of the film clearly very ill, unable to laugh or cry; in fact, he has stopped communicating altogether.

After both of Gao Jun's parents die from AIDS-related illnesses, he is taken in by his grandmother, who suffers from dementia. When the grandmother dies unexpectedly, responsibility for looking after him is passed on to two uncles, each of whom finds a reason to refuse the child: one fears for his own children's health, while another worries that adopting a child with AIDS will destroy his chances of finding a wife. Eventually, the toddler is placed with a young, HIV-positive couple and their children. Although his new family welcomes him with open arms, Gao Jun is clearly traumatized by his experience, and in one of the film's most heartbreaking passages, the little boy begins to cry.

When the film returns to Gao Jun later, it is spring, and the little boy's condition is greatly improved: he walks along a gravel road with his siblings and plays in a field of flowers with his foster father; he laughs and talks like any other child; he has become a part of his adopted family.

His happiness, however, is short-lived. Gao Jun's T-cell count drops and his viral load climbs. He suffers from debilitating diarrhea and is terribly weak. As he stands quietly next to his foster

parents, they explain that he has become a burden on them. The responsibility of dealing with such a gravely ill child is simply too much for them to handle. An off-screen voice finally asks, "Have you thought of sending him away?" The couple stares into the distance without uttering a word. Their silence betrays the decision they have clearly already made.

The film closes with an image of Gao Jun wandering alone down a deserted road—a crushing metaphor not only for the lonely life the child has led, but also for the uncertain future that he faces. "By the winter of 2006, Gao Jun had been moved again, to another new home," the film's closing titles explain, adding further that Gao Jun is, in fact, one of the lucky among China's countless AIDS orphans, thousands of whom remain homeless with no access to medical treatment or care.

As a tool of education and social activism, Yang's film is invaluable. It involves viewers with its personalized stories, delivering its message with an emotional blow so overwhelming, so profound, that no viewer will remain unmoved. And yet, despite its heartbreaking subject matter, the film remains hopeful and inspiring, illustrating in the combined efforts of the children and the charitable organizations that look after them, the strength of the human spirit.

The film's message, however, is not purely emotional. It is an important testament to life in the age of AIDS. Viewers see what life is like in China's remote villages. They hear, directly from the mouths of government employees, the almost unbelievable history of how HIV spread throughout China's rural populations.

The Blood of Yingzhou District offers an important perspective on the global AIDS crisis otherwise unrepresented in many—indeed, most—contemporary accounts. It is a precious reference and teaching tool, suitable for incorporation into the high school or college classroom. No library, public or private, should consider its collection complete without a copy of this touching and impressive work. ■

Robert Cagle is an assistant professor of Cinema Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has written extensively on representations of the AIDS crisis in film and video. In April 2008 he organized a series of benefits to raise funds for the medical treatment and daily care of AIDS orphans in rural China.

HOW TO PURCHASE: *The Blood of Yingzhou District* is available on DVD and VHS from Cinema Guild. Price is \$295 for purchase and \$85 for rental.

TEACHING & TECHNOLOGY

Digital Videos: How to Find What You Need

In *AEMS News and Reviews*, we do our best to give you in-depth reviews and background information on some of the best video resources available for teaching about Asia, and each review includes current information on how to purchase that film.

But what if it's not feasible for you to simply purchase a \$265 film outright? Or if you're looking for resources on a topic we haven't covered? Or you've heard of a video that interests you, but are not sure if it will suit your needs?

I thought I'd take the opportunity here to offer an overview of some of the technical and logistical aspects of finding and obtaining video useful for teaching. For some readers, this article may be a review; for others, an introduction to navigating the world of video resources, through AEMS and beyond.

If you are looking for a video resource on a particular Asia-related topic, but don't know what's available, your first stop should be the AEMS Media Database, available online at www.aems.uiuc.edu/aemsdatabase. The AEMS staff patrols catalogs and the Internet constantly to stay current with what's available in documentary film, dramatic film, and multimedia educational materials, selecting the most appropriate for entry in our database, which now contains nearly 5500 records.

The database can be searched either with the quick search tool (in the upper right corner of the website) or, for more refinement, with the advanced search tool, which allows you to search by subject, region/country, director, and other fields. Each record that you pull up will include a link to one or more distributor(s) from which you can purchase the item.

Visit the distributor's website, or request a catalog, in order to find out the cost of the item. Pricing, as you've probably noticed, varies widely. There is no hard and fast rule, but in general, the more you pay for a video, the more likely it is that you are purchasing public screening rights with it. Videos intended for the consumer market (for example, most of what is available at Amazon.com) are for private use only, while items like *The Flute Player*, reviewed in this issue and priced at \$265, include public performance rights with purchase. If the rights you obtain with purchase are not clearly stated, and if you think you would like to show the film publicly, you should contact the distributor directly to clarify.

The easiest way to find out if a particular item is available from a library in your area is to visit



www.worldcat.org—formerly available only to libraries, but now a public online database—which will list libraries holding the item in order of their distance from your zip code. Be aware, however, that there are often multiple entries for the same item, with very subtle differences (according to one search I did, the nearest copy of the DVD *China Blue* was in Queensland, Australia—despite the fact that there's one down the hall in our library!)—so don't assume you've clicked on the best search result on the first try.

Some distributors are starting to experiment with selling and renting downloadable videos, which are saved to your computer or portable media player (rented videos self-delete after a designated period of time). In addition to well-known sources such as Amazon.com's Unbox and Apple's iTunes, educational distributors are also starting to test these waters. Some public libraries now subscribe to services like **My Media Mall**, where

downloads are free but disappear after a set loan period.

Keep an eye out for these programs as they become more common.

Some of the videos we review here, and no doubt many others that you might be interested in, were produced primarily for Asian markets and are a little harder to find in North America (and of course the reverse might apply if you are reading this in Asia). There are several websites that specialize in selling Asian DVDs and other products overseas (DVDAsian.com and YesAsia.com, for example); independent sellers on Amazon.com are another source for imported DVDs; and if you can navigate websites in an Asian language you could buy directly from the source country. The Internet makes everything more accessible, but not

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Buying Videos Internationally

When purchasing imported videos, always check for the proper region coding, color standard, and format—as well as English subtitles!

Region coding makes commercially produced DVDs and DVD players from different regions of the world incompatible with one other. Even computers are set to play only one region code, and that setting can be changed only a limited number of times.

- North America — Region 1
- Japan and Europe — Region 2
- Korea and Southeast Asia — Region 3
- India and Africa — Region 5
- China — Region 6.

Some films are available in region-free (or “all-region”) versions, compatible with most DVD players; region-free DVD players play any DVD regardless of region code.

Broadcast color standards also change from country to country, and are incompatible. An NTSC DVD player or TV typically cannot play a PAL DVD. This doesn't affect DVD drives in computers.

❖ NTSC

- North America (to be replaced in 2009 by ATSC with the switch to digital broadcast TV)

- Japan
- the Philippines
- Taiwan
- South Korea
- a few other Asian countries

❖ PAL

- China
- India
- Indonesia
- most of Southeast Asia

❖ **SECAM** is used by only a handful of Asian countries, including Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

VCDs (for “video compact disc”) are an alternative to DVDs quite common in Asia but relatively unheard of in North America. VCDs are:

- not region coded
- inexpensive, and
- playable in most DVD players and computers (you can download free software).

...But the quality is no better than VHS tape, and sometimes worse.



*Look for this symbol, which means compatible with all DVD players.



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Digital Videos

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necessarily simpler; see the box on page 7 for technical considerations.

All of the above cases involve videos protected under copyright. There are some instances, however, where the copyright holders have made their video available online, or where the copyright has expired. An excellent source for videos like this is **Archive.org**, which, at last count, hosts 124,932 moving image files, ranging from classic feature films to documentaries to news broadcasts, many of which include Asia-related material.

Another source of free video is the recently launched **iTunesU**, a project of Apple's iTunes dedicated to distributing audio and video specifically for educational use, such as lectures and documentaries, much of which is produced by universities (and can be searched by institution).

The world of visual media is exploding and our means of access are proliferating. Taking advantage of changing technologies can be challenging, but the potential for bringing us better understanding of people around the world makes it more than worthwhile. ■

Tanya Lee is program director of the Asian Educational Media Service and editor of *AEMS News and Reviews*; she watches a lot of videos. She is also a doctoral candidate in ethnomusicology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Additional Resources

"DVD Frequently Asked Questions" at *DVD Demystified*.

www.dvddemystified.com/dvdfaq.html

Copyright and Fair Use—a comprehensive resource from Stanford University Libraries.

www.fairuse.stanford.edu

"Video and Copyright," ALA Library Fact Sheet Number 7, American Library Association—on legal uses of copyrighted video.
www.ala.org/ala/alalibrary/libraryfactsheet/alalibraryfactsheet7.cfm

World maps showing region DVD region codes and NTSC, PAL, and SECAM countries:

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DVD_region_codes
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:PAL-NTSC-SECAM.svg

Distributors in this Issue

Bullfrog Films, P.O. Box 149, Oley, PA 19547. Tel: 800-543-3764 or 610-779-8226. Fax: 610-370-1978. Email: video@bullfrogfilms.com. Web site: www.bullfrogfilms.com.

Center for Asian American Media, 145 Ninth Street, Suite 350, San Francisco, CA 94103. Tel: 415-552-9550. Fax: 415-863-7428. Email: distribution@asianamericanmedia.org. Web site: www.asianamericanmedia.org.

Cinema Guild, 115 West 30th Street, Suite 800, New York, NY 10001. Tel: 800-723-5522. Fax: 212-685-4717. E-mail: info@cinemaguild.com. Web site: www.cinemaguild.com.

First Run Features, The Film Center Building, 630 Ninth Avenue, Suite 1213, New York, NY 10036. Tel: 212-243-0600. Fax: 212-989-7649. E-mail: info@firstrunfeatures.com. Web site: www.firstrunfeatures.com.