

News and Reviews Vol. 4, No. 3 Spring 2001

Treasure the Treasures Series The National Palace Museum: A Treasure-house of Chinese

Art, A City of Cathay, The Dragon in Chinese Art

>> Produced by the National Palace Museum, Taiwan. 1999. CD-ROM available for Windows platform only.

These three CD-ROMS introduce users to the collections of the National Palace Museum in Taipei. The series surprises the user with ingenious approaches to the collections but frustrates because

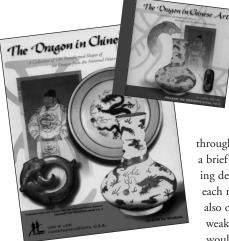
Review

it lacks some simple features that would make the CDs much more practical for classroom application.

Of the three, Volume Two, *A City of Cathay*, is probably the most suitable for classroom use.

The first of the series, *The National Palace Museum: A Treasure-house of Chinese Art*, surveys the museum's collections using three different interfaces. "The Story of the Museum" module presents four short documentary-style montages of still photographs narrating the origin, history, and mission of the museum. Each less than five minutes long, these montages (in particular the first two) put the museum in excellent historical context and could be shown to classes on late imperial or modern Chinese history in both college and high school classrooms. Although the perspective is obviously from the Taiwan side of the straits, the narrative is not overtly biased (interestingly, despite the CD's Taiwanese origins, pinyin romanization is used throughout this CD, but not the others).

One can view the museum's collections directly via the "Antiquities" module. Clicking on the words "Chinese Art" on the CD's home page produces an icon menu listing twelve categories of Chinese art, including sculpture, painting, carving, jade, bronze, calligraphy, and the "Scholar's Studio." This approach would be the most appropriate for college or advanced high school teaching. The 136 different items are easily



accessible, either by chronological sequence or through hyperlinks from a brief narrative describing developments in each medium. This is also one of the CD's weaknesses, for it would be a much more

flexible teaching tool if a single menu listed all the available objects at once, enabling the instructor to move quickly between pieces. It is also frustrating that not all the objects hyperlinked in the text can be enlarged.

The objects are presented in excellent detail and can be magnified by one degree. However, the detail is so great that many of the paintings, *continued on page 3*

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Opium fields along the borders of China and Thailand, from *The Heroin Wars* trilogy. See review, page 4.

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 quarterly, services include a free call-in/write-in service and a Web site. 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 and The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership.

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What's New?

Annual Board Meeting

O n March 20, AEMS held its Annual Advisory Board Meeting in Chicago. Board members came from around the country to answer questions, give suggestions, and offer advice. New to the Board over the past year are Lucien Ellington, Editor of *Education About Asia*, and Ellen C.K. Johnson, Professor of Anthropology at the College of DuPage. They, along with the other Board members, brought with them lots of ideas and plenty of enthusiasm.

Among the ideas that we discussed were a series of teacher's guides to popular films and documentaries, an on-line database of images from Asia with accompanying text, and at least one screening series. I will write about all these projects in more detail in upcoming issues of this newsletter. As always, we welcome suggestions from readers.

Back issues available

Back issues of *News* and *Reviews* are taking up space in our offices and we would love to find them good homes! If you would like a hard copy of a newsletter you have seen on our Web site, or multiple copies for a conference, workshop or inservice, please call Sarah at 888-828-AEMS or e-mail aems@uiuc.edu. There is no charge for back issues. (*Sorry—Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1999 is not available.*)

Call for Submissions

The Spring 2002 issue of *Education About Asia*, the K–16 teaching journal of the Association for Asian Studies, will focus on teaching about Asia through films, both feature and documentary.

As visual resources become cheaper and more accessible, more and more educators are turning to films as learning materials. As guest editor of this issue, I hope to publish feature articles (1,000 to 3,000 words in length) and resource essays (750 to 1,800 words in length) that will illuminate creative ways of bringing Asia to the classroom through film and video resources. Prospective authors are encouraged to submit articles that not only recommend superlative films but that also consider the pedagogical methods that will enable teachers to make the most of these resources.

The intended audience is K–16 teachers. Wherever possible, articles should have broad applicability to large numbers of educators. Please see the following Web page for writer's guidelines:

http://www.aasianst.org/eaa-toc.htm

If you would like to have a manuscript considered for publications, please submit TWO copies to EACH of the following:

Sarah Barbour, Program Coordinator Asian Educational Media Service University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue Urbana, IL 61801 Phone: (217) 265-0642 Fax: (217) 265-0641 E-mail: sibarbou@uiuc.edu Robin Kervin, Editorial Assistant *Education About Asia* University of Tennessee at Chattanooga 150 Patten #4504 615 McCallie Avenue Chattanooga, TN 37403 Phone: (423) 785-2118 E-mail: Robin-Kervin@utc.edu

The deadline is September 24, 2001.

Submissions by e-mail and fax are acceptable, but please call to make sure that the manuscripts have been received.

If you would like to discuss a possible manuscript idea or if you have other questions, please contact me either by phone or by e-mail.

Sincerely, 7 Rubou rah I. Barbour

New Video from the Media Production Group

Japanese as well as foreigners like to say that the Japanese are an "Island People," uneasy about living overseas. But in today's global era, sojourns abroad are becoming a normal part of life for Japanese as for people elsewhere. Maybe the real displaced persons in Japan today are those who have never lived under another sun?

A flamenco dance class from *Under* Another Sun: Singapore's Japanese, scheduled for release this summer.

A new documentary video program takes up that question. The program is being created by the Media Production Group (an affiliate of AEMS) jointly with faculty from the Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore.

Under Another Sun: Singapore's Japanese is a one-hour program that explores the tensions people feel between their attachments to their homeland and their desires to be freed from the burdens imposed by living at home. Taking Singapore as a case in point, the program profiles the activities of Japanese sojourners from several walks of life. The program also reports on shifts in the climate of sojourning over the 150-year history of Japanese involvement with Singapore.

Location filming for the program was completed in October of 2000. The program is being produced and designed by David W. Plath and directed by Chet Kincaid, the MPG team that created the award-winning documentary, *Makiko's New World.* It is scheduled for release in the summer of 2001 and will be distributed by Documentary Educational Resources, the agent for several MPG programs. \blacklozenge



Treasure the Treasures

continued from page 1

including classics like *Travelers Among Streams and Mountains*, by Fan Kuan, and *Early Spring*, by Guo Xi, cannot be shown full-screen except as very small images. Once magnified, no more than one-fourth of the painting can be on screen at any one time. Chinese pronunciation is available with a mouse-click; audio and text narration accompany each piece. Also, each object has "hot spots," which produce more detailed analyses of particular features.

In the "Timeline" module, objects from the museum's collection parade across the screen, arranged by dynasty, from "pre-history" through the Qing. This section is probably not suited to classes beyond middle school. Any of the objects can be clicked on, linking to the detailed descriptions available through the Antiquities module.

A City of Cathay

The second volume of the series is probably the most useful for classrooms, perhaps because it focuses on only one work of art, the 11-meterlong handscroll here titled *A City of Cathay* (one of several similar paintings often titled *Going Upstream at the Qingming Festival*). The version presented here dates from the 18th century, though there are versions that date back as far as the 12th century.

This painting has long been recognized as a valuable source for teaching and learning about Chinese life in a large city (originally perhaps Kaifeng during the Southern Song era). Street entertainment, commerce, folk customs, daily household life, and architecture are just some of the many facets of life here presented. This CD would be very useful just for enabling the cumbersome scroll to be shown in a classroom.

The scroll can be accessed using six different menus: "Close-up," "Highlights," "Journey," "Study," "Guide," and "Fun," with the last being two jigsaw-type puzzles taken from the painting. The close-up enables the instructor to focus in on any part of the painting in great detail, at two different degrees of magnification. This permits great flexibility in viewing the painting, although flexibility is limited because the magnification has been arranged into a series of "tiles"; if a particular detail sits on the border between tiles, you may have to continually return to the wider view to click on the adjacent "tile." Still, this is a minor inconvenience, and the quality of magnification is exceptional and important for so detailed a painting.

For instructors or students who wish a more directed tour of the painting, the "Guide," "Journey," and "Highlights" menus are appropriate. The "Guide" narrates the painting, which is divided into 20 panels. Each panel is described in great detail, with hyperlinks to items described in the narrative, for instance an opera performance, a Daoist temple, or a medicine shop. Some of the scenes also include sound clips, enabling students to hear the sounds of Chinese opera or a bustling market. The "Journey" module is similar to the "Guide," but focuses on the artistic aspects of the painting more than the social and cultural details of its subject. The "Highlights" menu permits users to narrow down the painting's many details, choosing just one element from among eight choices (storefronts, for instance), which will then be highlighted from throughout the painting.

The "Study" module comprises resources to help understand the painting and its context,

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The Heroin Wars Trilogy

>> Directed by Adrian Cowell. 1996. 60 minutes each. Part 1: The Opium Convoys, Part 2: Smack City, and Part 3: The King of Opium.

he Heroin Wars trilogy is certainly original and dramatic film journalism, but too factually controversial for use as an educational tool. It would appear that the director paid for his seemingly exclusive access to the Shan rebels in Burma (now called Myanmar) for thirty years by projecting a favorable interpretation, even justi-

The technical and artistic quality of the production is superb and will certainly be entertaining for the novice audience.

ship of first one and then another Shan warlord. Both seem to have successfully convinced the production company to justify the illegal drug trade under the guise of a war of liberation from Myanmar.

highlights the leader-

The first warlord was arrested by Thai

authorities and eventually extradited to Myanmar. After serving some years in prison, he was released and went to work fighting the opium trade for the Myanmar government. The second warlord cultivated and pampered the international media and became famous as "Kuhn Sa." He eventually surrendered himself and 12,000 members of the Shan State Army to the Myanmar government and is now reportedly a thriving businessman in Myanmar. In summary, both warlords profited from their years in the opium trade in which many Shan State Army and Myanmar Army troops were killed and maimed, and the world was flooded with the deadly drug. Of course, the Shan State area remains part of Myanmar. Amazingly, the Shan State Army has become a militia force of the Myanmar government and both former warlords are living in comfort.

The narration has an "Alice in Wonderland" quality in which the warlords appear to look honorable and credible, but the Thai government authorities, the United States government authorities (mainly the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency), and the Myanmar government look either corrupt, or at least inept, in dealing with the opium trade for over thirty years. The narrator (who was also the director of the trilogy) makes brief allegations of corruption and ineptness without substantiation other than the statements of the two criminal warlords. On more than one occasion, the production company waived journalistic objectivity by becoming a player in this international life-anddeath drama. For example, the narrator claims (and films) that he brought one warlord's proposal to sell the annual opium crop for twelve million dollars to the United States Embassy in Bangkok. The narrator claims that bribes and duplicity by agencies of the Thai and United States govern-

The videotape production concentrates on the Thailand. The Shans built up the Shan State Army

fication, for the production and distribution of opium. This illegal product has caused untold misery and unnatural death for countless numbers of people around the world. To quote the production company, "The impoverished Shans had only one way to finance their war of liberationopium."

Shan State, which is located in a remote part of Myanmar along the borders of China and with opium profits for the express purpose of independence from Myanmar. The production

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Smuggling

>> Part of The Winds of Change series. 2000. 12 minutes.

n 1997 my husband and I crossed the border L from Laos into a tiny Vietnamese village and began looking for a ride to the larger town of Dong Ha. We struck a deal with an energetic young woman who piled us into her van along with a dozen other passengers. None of us were allowed to bring our luggage into the van, however, until the driver and her helpers had filled the vehicle with what I suspect was the real reason for their trip. Hidden compartments that appeared in the floor, the ceiling, and under the seats, and even the spaces behind the roll-up window shades were stuffed with cartons of cigarettes, shrinkwrapped clothing, plastic sandals, and tiny glass vials filled, presumably, with medicine. Our driver even asked if she could pack some of her goods in our luggage (we declined). Backpacks, baskets, and the rest of the passengers' belongings were then dragged on top of the loose floorboards, and we were on our way.

According to the documentary *Smuggling*, made in 2000, the art of running contraband in Vietnam continues to thrive. The video focuses on the town of Mon Cai, on the Chinese border. Here, the C98 Special Task Force guards the border in an effort to prevent smuggling which Khanh, the C98 leader, says threatens to destabilize the Vietnamese economy. The brief documentary shows the young soldiers cleaning their automatic weapons (which are used "just to intimidate" the criminals), patrolling the desolate border area, and questioning a pair of smugglers caught in the act.

Interestingly, C98 is funded by a percentage of the proceeds from the goods it confiscates. Although Khanh and his comrades seem dedicated and honest, one wonders if this system might not encourage corruption over the long term.

Ironically, though, C98 is so efficient that it is disbanded after just six months, the logic being that if there are no smugglers, there are no proceeds with which to fund the task force. While we hear this news in voice-over, the camera pans slyly from the task force soldiers enjoying a celebratory dinner to a shot of two young men, carrying bundles and running past the guard house and over a bridge, suggesting that smuggling will continue regardless.

Not surprisingly, the narrator points out the irony of free-market capitalism flourishing on the border of two communist holdouts. More surprising is the statement that the average inhabitant of Mon Cai earns \$140 a month. That may not sound like much to most American students, but according to the U.S. State Department, the average per-capita income in Vietnam is \$372 a year.



Either the video makers got the number wrong, or the residents of Mon Cai are doing very well for themselves indeed. Might there be other reasons that C98 was disbanded?

Only 12 minutes long, the video does not have time to go into much detail and leaves the viewer wondering about the economic repercussions of smuggling and the lives of both soldiers and smugglers on the northern frontier. On the other hand, the brief running time makes it easy to view in a single class period with time left over to dis-

cuss it. The video might kick off informative discussions on, for instance, the reasons that people turn to smuggling or the impact of illegal activities on whole economies, but the video should not be relied upon to provide much information in and of itself. *Smuggling* would be appropriate for high school or early-college classes in world studies and geography, and could also be used to interesting effect in economics classes. \blacklozenge

Sarah I. Barbour is the Program Coordinator of AEMS and Editor of *News and Reviews*.

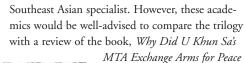
Smuggling is part of *The Winds of Change* series, distributed by First Run/Icarus Films. Price is \$155 for purchase, \$45 for rental.

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ments killed the deal-again, no substantiation,

just narration, about official corruption which resulted in the annual opium crop again going to the addicts of the world. Therefore, by implication the Thai and United States governments, not the criminal drug lords, are responsible for the misery caused by subsequent drug addictions.

The technical and artistic quality of the production is superb and will certainly be entertaining for the novice audience. Unfortunately, the basic premise, which relies to a great extent on the honesty of the drug lords, is simply not credible for the educator and the scholar. Perhaps *The Heroin Wars* trilogy would be of some value to a university-level



by Maung Pho Shoke (Meik Kuang Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 1996). (Copies may be available from the Embassy of the Union of Myanmar in Washington, D.C.) Evidently the former drug warlord, Khun Sa, cooperated with the author and even gave him access to his photos of international visiting dignitaries to his drug headquarters in the Shan State over all those years. Many of these photos are reprinted in the book, including the visit of former advisor to former United States president Jimmy Carter, Dr. Peter Bourne; the journalist/author, Bertil Lintner, a well know

critic of the Myanmar government; and the Karen National Union leader, Bo Mya, who came allegedly to solicit funds from U Khun Sa.

The Heroin Wars trilogy represents a unique but tragic look into an illegal drug production and distribution industry over a thirty-year period. Unfortunately, the two former warlords seem to be the only people to have benefited from this tragic business. �

Franklin Mark Osanka earned his Ph.D. at Northwestern University and has spent many years traveling and researching in Southeast Asia. His first book was *Modern Guerrilla Warfare* (The Free Press/Macmillan, 1962) and he recently wrote the Foreword to the late Dr. Maung Maung's *The 1988 Uprising in Burma* (Yale, 1999).

The Heroin Wars trilogy is available from Bullfrog Films. Price is \$395 for the series or \$195 each for purchase, \$75 each for rental.

Nu Shu: A Hidden Language of Women in China

>> Directed by Yue-Qing Yang. 1999. 59 minutes.

In 1999, the Sunday Times of London announced that a "secret language" used only by women had been "discovered" in southern China. The story was prompted by the premiere of Yue-Qing Yang's documentary film, *Nu Shu: A Hidden Language of Women in China.* The journalist got it wrong, however, since the subject of the film is a writing system, not a language, and its existence had been known and documented by Chinese scholars for at least half a century. After viewing the film, I am not sure we can blame the journalist for the misinterpretation.

The writing system, called Nu Shu, literally "women's writing," was once used in Jiang Yong county in Hunan province, where residents reflect a mixture of Yao and Han ethnic cultures. A primary theme of the film is that Nu Shu helped to strengthen female bonds and served as a coping strategy for women dealing with an imported, Han-derived patriarchal system. This is a region where women (and men) customarily created ritual siblinghoods, special relationships contracted with same-sex, same-age friends. A local saying was, "Beside a well, one won't thirst; beside a sister, one won't despair." The film is a remarkable demonstration of the social role of writing in an ethnographic context, illustrating how shared and exchanged Nu Shu writings fostered and buttressed ritual sisterships. Men weren't really "forbidden" to learn Nu Shu, as the film asserts, they just ignored or belittled it. Nu Shu writing was cherished and squirreled away as treasured memorabilia, and was burned at a woman's death so that she could read it in the afterlife.

In the film's National Geographic-style search for the oblique, diamond-shaped script, we learn that it was intertwined with forms of Han and Yao literary genres, including lyric ballads, folktales, and letters lamenting the wretched state of marriage. Nu Shu was also tied to a unique local custom, the "third-day booklets" given to a bride by her ritual sisters and female kin. The cathartic function of Nu Shu writing is particularly highlighted in the film. We meet eighty-six-year-old Huan-Yi Yang, one of the few women still able to read and write it, and other elderly ladies who speak of the importance of exchanging Nu Shuencoded sentiments. Although younger women may still know the songs and poems, they no longer learn the writing system. Sociopolitical changes since 1949, such as the anti-tradition campaigns of the Cultural Revolution, different



work roles for women, and television, have been linked to its demise.

One of the things I loved about the film was seeing examples of spidery Nu Shu calligraphy crawl across the screen. It is said that local men called it "ant graphs" or "mosquito graphs" due to the extended legs of some of the strokes. However, the film doesn't provide adequate information on the technical features of Nu Shu, which is predominantly syllabic (each graph represents a syllable), with the addition of logographic, iconic and punctuation graphs. The writing system contains around 700 core graphs, and individual graphs might be composed of one to twenty strokes combined with dots, curves or small chevrons. A text was read upright or titled, right to left and top to bottom, although some samples of boustrophedon (writing in alternating directions) have also been found. Groups of women chanted aloud or sang from texts while doing embroidery or celebrating holidays and festivals.

Nu Shu is derived from Chinese characters, and the original shapes can still be detected in perhaps half of the graphs if you imagine that square, vertical characters have been gripped by the upper right and lower left edges and pulled diagonally. The whole aspect of the script, inked thinly with crosshatched lines and threadlike tendrils, resembles complex embroidery designs, a similarity

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which folk theory links to its origin. The film claims that Nu Shu was once concealed in the designs and patterns of embroidery, but many of these samples of woven script were tourist items popular after Nu Shu became the topic of media attention in the 1980s, and earlier evidence of this practice is weak. Nevertheless, the film allows us a rare opportunity to view many elegant Nu Shu artifacts, such as decorated third-day booklets, and writing on salmon-colored cloth, pale blue silk ribbon, stark white paper fans, and delicate handkerchiefs. We also see rare archival film footage of calligraphers writing in Nu Shu.

This is a beautiful and moving film with high artistic merit, but it is also overly polemical. The filmmaker wanted to present Nu Shu as the "crucial sustaining force" in the lives of oppressed women, and not enough attention is given to linguistic issues. There are extended scenes that document the misery of female lives, yet the actual language used for writing Nu Shu is merely described as a "local dialect." (The mother tongue of Nu Shu writers, Xiangnan Tuhua, is not mutually intelligible with the official state language.) At times the critical distinction between language and writing is blurred. Nor are the obvious and fascinating parallels with the Japanese hiragana syllabary of the ninth century fully explored: the common descent from Chinese characters, the connection to particular genres of writing, the importance of aesthetic qualities, and the association with women all deserve more attention. For a balanced and scholarly description of Nu Shu, I suggest William Chiang's book, We Two Know the Script; We Have Become Good Friends (University Press of America, 1995).

Although one might wish that the film were a bit shorter, with fewer scenes of pretty landscapes and wicked husbands, it could profitably be used in college-level courses on Asian studies, women's studies, and anthropology. Linguistic anthropologists are always looking for films to use in their language and culture courses, and this will admirably fit the bill if comprehensive linguistic background is provided. \blacklozenge

Laura Miller is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Loyola University of Chicago. Her research interests include linguistic anthropology, gender ideology, and popular culture. Recently she edited a special theme issue of the U.S.–Japan Women's Journal entitled "Speculating on Spin: Media Models of Women."

Nu Shu: A Hidden Language of Women in China is available from Women Make Movies. Price is \$250 for purchase and \$75 for rental.

Gaea Girls

>> Directed by Kim Loginotto and Jano Williams. 2000. 106 minutes.

e can fight the power. We are violent... freakout. We can fight forever!" bellows the announcerin English vetas the GAEA Girls professional women wrestlers leap, punch, and kick their way through the opening scenes of this video. We then see Nagaya Chigusa put a weepy Takeuchi Saika through her intense probationary year in the GAEA Girls' training camp. Nagaya is rather a brute, able (the video shows us) to arise from allegedly serious torture to defeat the sinister Lioness Aska. The daughter of a military man who apparently used the same abusive tactics, her role, she cheerfully tells us, is to goad her charges into working hard in hopes that they may

eventually be able to beat the "bitch."

Does all this deserve Japan Foundation funding? The video asks you to make that judgement visually; oddly enough, there is no narration, no explanation of who these women are, and no clue (apart from hints of a sell-out) of what role the sport plays in Japan, nor who decides who wins. Certainly the video is nicely filmed, giving us extraordinarily personal scenes of women at work. It is also interesting to see how these stern training techniques compare with traditional Japanese methods ranging from early Zen meditation on through other sports and activities.

Many viewers may also feel that this video replaces traditional Japanese stereotypes with images of empowered women. I say "may" because the images seem to me to be mixed. GAEA girls



GAEA girls inspire many...yet they also seem to me to be humiliated by tough training tactics, and exploited by the demands of the media, pop culture, and a perpetual life on the margins of mainstream culture.

are pop stars, presumably well paid and idolized by many teen-age women. They seem to be well educated, are in fantastic physical shape, and bounce happily around (by choice) in a demanding career of pseudomayhem far removed from the world of subservient office ladies. They inspire many, in short; and yet they also seem to me to be humiliated by Nagaya's tough training tactics, and exploited by the demands of the media, pop culture, and a perpetual life on the margins of mainstream culture.

We may ask, then, if a mostly visual video on professional women wrestlers is a useful teaching resource. Does it illuminate any of the key issues in Japan? Does it really honor women? Aren't our students already all too eager to look upon Japan as bizarre? In the end, I am not sure that the Japan Foundation got its money's worth—but

perhaps that is because I am an ancient white male, long overdue for one of Nagaya's basic body slams. �

Peter K. Frost is the Frederick L. Schuman Professor of International Relations at Williams College, an Associate Editor of *Education About Asia*, and Editor of the AAS series, *Resources for Teaching About Asia*. He regularly offers courses on Japanese history and the Vietnam War.

Gaea Girls is available from Women Make Movies. Price is \$295 for purchase and \$90 for rental.

Correction: In our last issue, the URL for AEMS' K–12 Resource list was misprinted. The correct Web address is http://www.aems. uiuc.edu/HTML/K-12.html.

Japanese Media Resources Under \$40

In the last issue, this column discussed quality resources focusing on China that could be found for under \$30. This time I chose to concentrate on Japan, perhaps the most popular Asian



country to teach, especially at the K–12 level. Unsurprisingly, I had no shortage of material to sort through and many

I wanted to recommend. The ones finally decided upon are, in my opinion, representative of the best cheaply available media resources focusing on the following three areas: traditional art-forms, the wartime period, and modern Japanese culture.

Living Traditions: Introducing Japan's Visual, Performing, and Literary Art Forms

Japan is famous for its rich artistic heritage, a legacy that has been carefully preserved and developed for centuries. In 1980, National Geographic produced Living Treasures of Japan, a 60-minute documentary featuring a number of Japan's finest artisans. Recognized by the Japanese government as the best in their respective crafts, these artists are responsible for teaching the next generation their skills, which include doll-making, weaving, sword-making, koto, puppetry, and others. Another similar documentary suitable for high school and college students is The Tradition of Performing Arts in Japan, part of Japan: The Land and Its People series. Performing Arts contains extensive footage of traditional Japanese theater, focusing on Noh, Bunraku puppetry, and Kabuki. Although this documentary could feature more historical background, the performance clips are impressive and well explained.

There is also a multitude of slide and audiocassette units that focus on Japanese art. Japan: Images and Words is composed of a 64-page lesson book, 13 photos, and six slides. Designed for sixth-grade language arts classes, the main goal of this unit is to teach students how they can learn about a society through looking at its artwork. The first lessons compare Western and Japanese techniques and show connections between artwork and folktales. The final lessons instruct students on how to create their own screens, a task that will probably involve purchasing additional materials, such as ink, brushes, and calligraphy paper. Another unit, which requires nothing extra except some creativity, is the literary arts curriculum unit, The Haiku Moment, available in elementary and secondary editions. Complete with 21 slides and an audiocassette, the secondary edition teaches students how to write Japanese poetry, using the

traditional five-seven-five syllable pattern and explains how seasonal changes and Zen Buddhism have inspired haiku masters. The elementary edition, which focuses on writing simple haiku, includes 12 slides and a tape.

Japan at War: Views of WWII and the Post-War Experience

Even after over fifty years, Japan's role in the Second World War is still hotly contested. Finding well-balanced accounts of this conflict is very difficult, especially for under \$40. Unfortunately, the videos I viewed that were critical of Japan's conduct (rightly so in many cases), also tended to use rather racist language that I am uncomfortable endorsing. Therefore, all of the videos I decided to recommend tend to adopt a pacifist stance and avoid glorifying either side of the conflict.

The Japanese version of the war (or at least one moderate view) is beautifully conveyed in the animated feature, Grave of the Fireflies. In this story, two young children, orphaned and scorned by their kin, try to survive on their own in an increasingly desperate war-torn nation. This feature is too intense for young children, but older students (8th grade-college) will gain a greater appreciation for the toll military conflict takes on all members of society, even innocent four-year old children. Another film that discusses World War II's effect on Japanese children is the American family feature Hiroshima Maiden. Set in 1950s America, this hour-long video details the experience of a suburban family who decide to take in a young woman from Hiroshima so that her extensive scars can be treated by local plastic surgeons. Harassed by his Jap-hating buddies, the family's elder son must come to terms with peer pressure, racism against Japanese people, and the effect war (especially atomic war) has on civilians. The young Japanese woman is faced with constant rejection in both the United States and Japan. This film is a great vehicle for teaching fourth through tenth graders acceptance of different people as well as WWII and





WHY THE BOME WAS DROPPED post-war history. For teachers looking for a more in-depth analysis of the atomic bombings, *Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped*, an hour-and-a-half long special produced by ABC News, debates questions such as: Was the dropping of the bomb really necessary? How many lives did it actually save? Were there alternative courses of action? Although this docu-

mentary clearly takes the perspective that the United States was wrong to drop the bomb, high school and college educators can utilize it to initiate a two-sided discussion.

Two documentaries can be used to teach about the Occupation period following WWII, *The Pacific Century: Reinventing Japan* and *Occupied Japan: An Experiment in Democracy.* Both of these videos are appropriate for high school and college students, and feature many of the same photographs, footage, and interviews, but of the two, *Occupied* is somewhat more critical of the American occupation.

New Directions: Japan in the Modern Era

Neither the Noh scene from The Tradition of Performing Arts in Japan, nor the maimed face of the Hiroshima Maiden portray an accurate image of Japan today. Teachers wishing to convey to their students that Japan is a modern, evolving society should check out the following videos. For elementary school children, Families of Japan, part of the Families of the World Series, records one day in the life of two young children and their families. Similar in format to the Families of China video I recommended in the last issue, Families of Japan features two fifteen-minute segments, one about a boy who lives in a rural area and the other about a girl from the city. Older students who want to learn about their Japanese peers can watch Suburban Tokyo continued on next page

High School Students or The College Years, from the Video Letter from Japan series. Produced in the late 1980s, these films are also narrated in the first person and relate the experiences of both boys and girls. Asia Video Reports—Japan, a series coproduced by AEMS, features real footage from Japanese news programs and is accompanied by detailed teacher's guides. Four fifteen-minute tapes detail different aspects of Japanese culture including arts and crafts, festivals and holidays, food, and housing. \blacklozenge

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Videography

- Living Treasures of Japan (1980, 60 minutes) is available from Facets Video. Price is \$19.95.
- Japan: The Land and Its People: The Tradition of Performing Arts in Japan (1989, 30 minutes) is available from Great Plains. Price is \$39.
- Japan: Images and Words (1994) is available from the Freer Gallery of Art. Price is \$16.
- The Haiku Moment (1995) is available from Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Exchange (SPICE). Price is \$31.95 for elementary edition, \$34.95 for secondary edition.
- *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988, 88 minutes) is available from Facets Video. Price is \$29.95 for dubbed edition, \$19.95 for subtitled.
- *Hiroshima Maiden* (1988, 57 minutes) is available from Library Video Company. Price is \$14.95.
- *Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped* (1995, 70 minutes) is available from Social Studies School Service. Price is \$19.95.
- The Pacific Century: Reinventing Japan (1992, 60 minutes) is available from Annenburg/ CPB Multimedia. Price is \$39.95.
- Occupied Japan: An Experiment in Democracy (1996, 60 minutes) is available from PBS Video. Price is \$39.95.
- *Families of the World—Families of Japan* (1996, 30 minutes) is available from Asia for Kids. Price is \$29.95.
- Video Letter II from Japan: Suburban High School Students and The College Years (1988–91, 30 minutes each) are available from Sasuga Japanese Bookstore. Price is \$35 each.
- *Asia Video Reports—Japan* (2000, 15 minutes each) are available from Social Science Education Consortium (SSEC). Price is \$25 each, \$90 for all four.

Treasure the Treasures

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including essays on the different versions of the scroll, whether its subject is purely realistic, mythical, or some combination, and on the Qing imperial painting academy.

The Dragon in Chinese Art

Volume Three offers three ways to interact with China's most recognizable cultural symbol. Although creative and interesting, this CD is not flexible enough to make it useful in most classroom settings. First, an informative and entertaining "Documentary" introduces the motif of the dragon in Chinese history and art. Next, the "Dragon Types" menu analyzes the nine different types of dragon commonly depicted in art, from the kui dragon with roots in Shang and Zhou bronzes, to the lion-like rampant dragon popular during the Tang dynasty, to the Ming and Qing imperial seated dragon. Each type is introduced with excellent graphic detail, using photographs of objects that depict each style and computer animation to illustrate the prominent features.

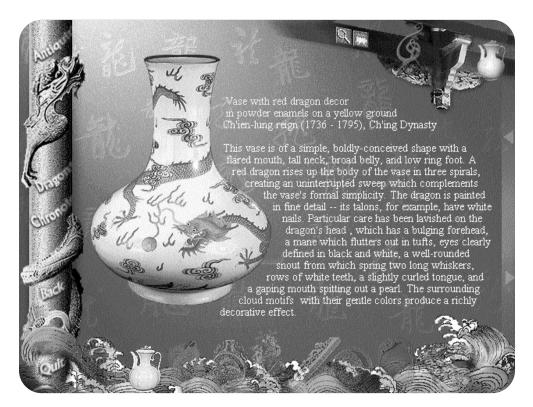
A chronology presents the major dynastic periods in Chinese history, and invites the user to trace the development of the dragon through each of them by analyzing stylistic innovations and also changes in the meaning of the different depictions over time. Finally, the "Antiquities" module allows direct access to the 126 objects presented in the CD, ranging from the Neolithic period to the 19th century, from jade carvings to silk robes.

Uses and Strategies

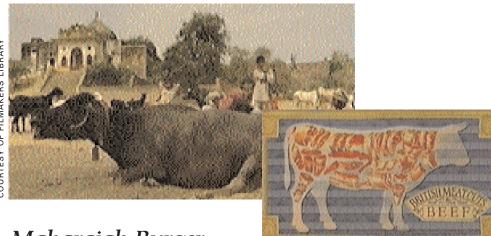
These CD-ROMs present numerous opportunities for classroom use at several levels. I recommend using them essentially as slides, employing a multimedia projector rather than a traditional one. The computer-stored images have a great advantage over traditional art slides: because you can move between images with at most a few mouse clicks, in no fixed order, comparisons among slides—even comparisons not anticipated by the instructor—are easily made.

For younger students (perhaps middle school) the timeline feature of the first volume could serve as a useful introduction to Chinese history. The narration, though too slow and pedantic for more advanced classes, would reinforce the information presented visually through the objects. When a class appeared bored, an object could be selected for group discussion. Because *A City of Cathay* presents numerous scenes of daily life, including performing animals, stage performances, and household games, younger students could be engaged in discussions of how similar or different life in imperial China was from life in their own time and place.

Instructors in the college classroom can use continued on page 10



One of the 126 "antiquities" from the National Palace Museum in Taipei accessible on *The Dragon in Chinese Art* CD-ROM.



Maharajah Burger

>> Directed by Thomas Balmès. 1997. 50 minutes.

irected by French filmmaker Thomas Balmès, this film takes its name from what the McDonald's Corporation calls its "Big Mac" sandwich in India. Although made with lamb patties in India, the burger's traditional source of meat in the West-the cow-is the focus of this film. Maharajah Burger juxtaposes the cow of the West-considered primarily a source of

meat-with the cow as it exists in India. There, it is a source of milk and of fuel in the form of dung, a beast of burden in the farmer's field and ultimately, and perhaps most importantly for Hindus, an object of reverence. The film's overarching theme comes directly from this juxtaposition, i.e., how an element of one culture can

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these CDs to augment, rather than replace, their own lectures. To do so effectively will require significant preparation time working with the CD, but once familiar with its contents, an instructor can use the many images stored to illustrate points from four millennia of Chinese history.

Advanced high school and college undergraduate courses are probably the best suited to these CDs. The documentary-style images that introduce Volumes One and Three could be shown in their entirety to such classes, setting up further activities or discussions. This could be especially valuable in world history or world cultures survey classes,

Suitable for an audience from high school through college, it could be an effective tool in illustrating the differences in cultural values between India and the West...

assume a totally different meaning and significance in another.

Balmès successfully plays with this theme throughout the film, interweaving interviews with Hindus of different social classes illustrating their attitudes toward cows along with news segments from the BBC reporting on the progress of mad cow disease in the United Kingdom. The first part of the film, for example, introduces an Indian veterinarian at a goshala, or cow hospice,

a place where sick and aging cows can live out the rest of their lives, tended by humans who care for their well-being. Leaving what may seem to most in the West as an unfamiliar scene, the director next shows a group of Indians watching a television report about the English beef industry and the impact of mad cow disease. After seeing the

where instructors are not always experts in Chinese history and art history.

A City of Cathay is probably the most useful volume for the classroom at either the advanced high school or college level. This is in part because of the richness of the source, which provides an unparalleled visual introduction to life in imperial China. Because the time and location of the painting's subject is not specific, it can be used in any course focusing on traditional, imperial, or lateimperial China. The CD permits exceptionally flexible interface with the painting so that instructors can focus on specific kinds of practices (religion, entertainment, commerce, architecture, et cetera) and use the painting to illustrate their points.

In conclusion, despite some unintuitive and

report and the large-scale destruction of cattle, one Indian viewer becomes angry, incensed that people in the West cry when their pet dogs die, but consider cows less worthy of such compassion. Other portions of the film continue this theme.

The one weakness of Maharajah Burger is that roughly two-thirds of the way through the film, Balmès introduces another theme-that of Western cultural imperialism. To illustrate his argument, he shows the opening of a McDonald's franchise in New Delhi, covers scenes of protesting Indian farmers destroying the Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise in Bangalore, and draws attention to the presence of laundry detergent, pizza, and Pepsi Cola in the Indian marketplace. Although interesting, the interjection of another theme so late in the film detracts from its main idea. In addition, the focus of the secondary theme-on what seems to be primarily American cultural imperialism-may ultimately be more a reflection of French, rather than Indian, sensibilities on the issue.

Despite this small flaw, Maharajah Burger is a beautifully photographed and well-crafted film. Suitable for an audience from high school through college, it could be an effective tool in illustrating the differences in cultural values between India and the West, particularly in an introductory course about India or a course in comparative sociology. 🔶

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Maharajah Burger is available from Filmakers Library. Price is \$295 for purchase and \$75 for rental.

awkward interfaces and some inconsistencies in how the images can be viewed, these three CD-ROMs introduce a valuable collection of art treasures to a wider audience, and do so in flexible, creative, and usually effective ways. 🔶

James Carter is Assistant Professor of History at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. He holds a Ph.D. in Modern Chinese History from Yale University.

The National Palace Museum: A Treasure-house of Chinese Art, A City of Cathay, and The Dragon in Chinese Art are part of the Treasure the Treasures Series available from Lee & Lee Communications, U.S.A. Price is \$49.95 each.

Fishing in the Sea of Greed

>> Produced and directed by Anand Patwardhan. 1998. 45 minutes.

T his film shows how the traditional fishing communities of India and Bangladesh have been struggling to protect their coastal areas from over-fishing, industrial exploitation, and devastating pollution. Their livelihood and way of life are threatened by transnational corporations supported by development-minded national governments and the World Bank. The film introduces students to an important worldwide environmental problem, and to the creative ways local communities

have met this threat through concerted non-violent political action. The producer/ director is a leading Indian documentary filmmaker, and the film is well photographed, realistic and forceful.

The film opens with a fishing community near Madras whose men go into the Indian Ocean in small boats fighting against the waves only to return after a day of fishing with little or nothing to show for

their work. First, mechanized trawlers owned by Indian fishing companies and more recently, giant foreign-owned factory ships have depleted the oceans. The fishermen and their families are in desperate economic straits and their whole way of life is jeopardized. Fish, once a staple of their diet as well as their economy, are now sent directly to urban centers and cost more than the rural people can afford. An ex-priest, Thomas Kocherry, who has been traveling around the country organizing fishermen for thirty years, shows them how to voice their grievances. He is a fiery speaker, originally inspired by Liberation Theology to help the poor. In the Madras episode, he recruits the fishermen into the National Fishworkers Forum, a branch of the World Forum of Fishworkers and Fish Harvesters, and then leads them in non-violent protest marches and demonstrations.

We follow Thomas Kocherry as he travels to Mumbai (Bombay) to work among the Kolis, the local fishing community who have lived for hundreds of years in the southern section of the city. Here he organizes a massive march by the fishermen, their wives and their children, who chant, sing and even dance in a festive mood, and end their march by ceremonially burning a replica of a factory ship. Their songs are about the happy days of the past and the various kinds of fish they used to catch, many of which are now almost extinct from over-fishing. In his speech to them, Kocherry tells them about the fishermen of Madras and Ahmedabad who joined the National Fishworkers Forum. They agree to follow his plan for a peaceful blockade of Bombay harbor, sailing out en masse in their tiny boats to

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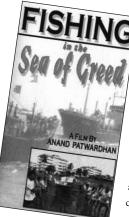
political action.

meet the giant factory ships, and to urge their captains to anchor outside the harbor or leave the area entirely. The captains acquiesce, and the boycott soon brings the Union Minister for Food Processing from New Delhi to mediate the dispute.

After his success in Bombay, Thomas Kocherry sets off on a new mission, to protect the coastal zones from industrial exploitation. Although India has a law making it illegal for industries to exploit

beach property within 500 meters of the water, the film shows huge earth-moving machinery engaged in sand mining with the full cooperation of the local government. In this case, the mining company destroyed the local mango groves without compensating the farmers. Even more polluting and devastating to agriculture has been aquaculture-the construction of giant ponds or tanks in which shrimp are raised for export. The World Bank and national governments have been eager to promote aquaculture as a way for debtor nations to earn foreign exchange. In aquaculture, the shrimp are raised in salt water pumped in from the ocean, water which seeps through the tank walls and gushes out through breaches, creating salinity in the soil of adjacent rice-growing land. The land is rendered useless for generations, and the villagers are on the edge of starvation. In the film's final segment, set in Bangladesh, shrimp farmers have leased large areas of land from absentee owners. The local farmers protest not only the ruin of their land, but intimidation and the molestation of village women by company goons. Local police join the company's strongmen to disperse the protesters, even killing some.

The film ends on a note of hope. The world-



wide movement to which Indian fishermen now belong has grown in power and has demanded a global ban on factory ships, industrial pollution, and aquaculture. In response, India, among other countries, has canceled the licenses of many of the factory ships operating off its coast. Nature too has a

way of redressing ecological imbalances. In 1997 "white spot virus" halted the expansion of shrimp farms in South and Southeast Asia, while seventyfive percent of the world's fisheries have been forced to close down to allow the seas to replenish their fish populations.

Although the main purpose of the film is to alert young people to a serious environmental danger, what most impresses the viewer is the picture of indigenous people struggling to survive and to restore their livelihoods. In spite of all their troubles, they try to stay cheerful and maintain their sense of humor. They sing and dance with each other and joke about their situation and their oppressors. This film is well worth showing to high school and undergraduate college classes interested in South Asia, in environmentalism, or in non-violent action as a political technique. **♦**

Blair B. Kling, Professor Emeritus, taught South Asian history and civilization at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from 1962 to 2000. He has published numerous books and articles on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian history and is currently working on a study of Jamshedpur, a center of steel and automobile manufacturing in eastern India.

Fishing in the Sea of Greed is available from First Run/Icarus Films. Price is \$375 for purchase and \$75 for rental.



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Asia for Kids, P.O. Box 9096, Cincinnati, OH 45209. Tel: 513-563-3100 or 800-765-5885. Fax: 513-563-3105. E-mail: info@afk.com. Web site: http://www.afk.com.

Asia Society, 725 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021. Tel: 800-ASK-ASIA or 212-288-6400. Fax: 888-FAX-ASIA or 212-517-8315. Web site: http://www.asiasociety.org.

Bullfrog Films, P.O. Box 149, Oley, PA 19547. Tel: 800-543-3764. Fax: 610-370-1978. E-mail: catalog@bullfrogfilms.com. Web site: http:// www.bullfrogfilms.com.

Facets Video, 1517 West Fullerton Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614. Tel: 800-331-6197 or 773-281-9075. Fax: 773-929-5437. E-mail: sales@ facets.org. Web site: http://www.facets.org.

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Freer Gallery of Art, Jefferson Drive at 12th Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20560. Tel: 202-357-4880. Web site: http://www.asia.si.edu.

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PBS Video, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314-1698. Tel: 800-344-3337. Fax: 703-739-5269. Web site: http://www.pbs.org.

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