The Asian American Studies Committee Film Series

by Ida Fadzillah

The Asian American Film Series is currently one of the most successful programs of the Asian American Studies Committee (AASC) of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. It was begun in the Spring of 1999 by Lena Choe, then AASC Staff Associate, and consisted of four films during March, Asian American Awareness Month at the University of Illinois. The Film Series continued in the spring of 2000, and this year was expanded by Sharon Lee, the current Staff Associate, into a monthly screening of films.

Each year the AASC Film Series has showcased specific themes or issues. The subtitle of the 1999 Series was “An Introduction to Asian American Histories,” with each film chosen for its treatment of significant moments in the experiences of Asians in America. Blue Collar and Buddha deals with anti-Asian violence, which occurred in the 1990s against Southeast Asians in Rockford, Illinois; Meeting at Tule Lake and Heart Mountain both address the incarceration of Japanese Americans in the internment camp at Tule Lake during World War II; and Roots in the Sand is a historical look at the South Asian presence in America. In the spring of 2000, the Film Series concentrated on addressing issues of identity among Asian American youth: Kelly Loves Tony examines a year in the life of teenage Laotian Americans; Mixed Feelings illuminates the experiences of growing up biracial in American society; and Miss India Georgia looks at issues of femininity and assimilation among second generation Indian Americans living in the South. This year’s selection—eight films in all and co-sponsored by the Asian Educational Media Service—is sub-titled “Asia/America: Intervention, Immigration, Imagination.”

The films deal with different aspects of Asian and Asian American history, bringing to the forefront complex issues of transnationalism and diasporic crossings.

The aim of creating an Asian American Film Series was to increase awareness of Asian American issues around the University of Illinois campus. The Film Series is accomplishing this in several ways. Not only do the films themselves disseminate information, but putting together a film series on a yearly basis brings together an eclectic group of students, staff, and faculty who share ideas, time, and resources. I was in charge of the spring 2000 Film Series, and worked with our continued on page 3
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.

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What's New?

Last spring, our newsletter included a survey card on which we asked readers to give us some feedback on our current services and make suggestions for the future. 62 people responded. Here are some of the results:

Respondents were split almost evenly between those who are involved with education on the K–12 level (28) and college (27). Four were involved with Community/Continuing Education and three checked “other.”

Over half the respondents (35) had never seen our Web site. If you have access to the Internet, I encourage you to have a look at it. We have recently redesigned parts of the site to make it more user-friendly and easier to navigate. The site’s main feature is a database of over 3000 audiovisual materials on Asia, which includes abstracts, running time, purchasing information, and reviews. Also on the Web site is a Bulletin Board for exchanging information, images and essays, and a list of related sites.

One quarter of the respondents indicated that they had heard of our help service. Originally, the help service was intended as a personalized search service for people who did not have access to our Internet site. But we have also been able to help people track down copies of out-of-print films, special interest Web sites, and performing arts organizations. Answering questions is part of our job and in searching for information, we often become aware of all kinds of new resources. Just call or e-mail us and we will do our best to help.

Most interesting were readers’ individual comments and suggestions. A few readers asked that we focus more on specific regions such as South Asia and Korea. Both our newsletter and database are somewhat biased toward Japan and China for the simple reason that the majority of materials available in English on Asia focus on those countries. It is part of our mandate, however, to seek out materials on other countries in Asia and review them. We will continue to do so and will try to make the coverage of geographic regions as comprehensive as possible.

Several readers requested that we provide a way for people to exchange classroom ideas and post information about upcoming seminars, conferences and in-services. If you would like to contact other AEMS readers, please utilize our Web site’s Bulletin Board http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/webboard/.

Several respondents suggested that AEMS create more educational material. We recently decided to produce a series of teacher’s guides to selected feature films and documentaries. I will write more about these guides in an upcoming issue. In the meantime, please let us know about the video resources that you have found most useful and we will consider creating a guide for them.

My thanks to all of you who responded. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome so please don’t hesitate to contact us.

—Sarah I. Barbour

AEMS Web Site Updated and Redesigned

We invite you to visit our web site (www.aems.uiuc.edu) to view recent changes, download teachers guides, and locate other free information about educational media and materials on Asia. ✦
Thanks, Caroline!

During a quarter-century of helping them on Asian Studies workshops and media projects, I accumulated a stack of snapshots of Jack and Caroline Bailey. Among their many achievements the Baileys created AEMS’ predecessor organization, the Center for Educational Media at Earlham College. And for four years Caroline has served on the AEMS national Advisory Board. She is leaving the board in order to pursue other projects, and this note is one small way for me, the staff, and the Board to show our appreciation for her years of selfless service.

In the snapshots we usually see both of the Baileys, together with other people involved in whatever Bailey-led project was going on at that moment. As I riff through the photos, I realize that there are times when Caroline is nowhere to be seen—and then I remember why: she was the one behind the camera. Or she was off-camera in a corner of the room, taking a phone call probably intended for Jack. I have some shots of Jack Bailey in solo. But not once does Caroline appear in a photograph all by herself. And that little fact tells a big story.

Caroline Bailey is one of those persons-without-whom: the silent partners every volunteer organization relies upon—those willing to invest large amounts of time and energy in service of the cause, but who don’t clamor to be put in the spotlight or paid with dividends of publicity. Projects were in the name of Jackson H. Bailey, but everybody knew that Jack would not have been half as effective a skipper without his First Lieutenant.

Jack told how one time he was rushing from Indiana to Japan for a series of meetings. His plane to Detroit was late, and he was racing to board the connecting flight to Tokyo. As he was explaining to the check-in clerk how he must be on that flight, the clerk looked up and said, “But, Mr. Bailey, you can’t travel on your wife’s passport.” Jack had to return home, fetch the right passport, and arrive in Tokyo a day late.

Caroline Bailey leaves AEMS with a model of selfless service that others should strive to emulate. Thanks, Caroline… ✷

David W. Plath, Program Director

AASC Film Series

AASC undergraduate interns and work study students to choose the movies. Together, we screened various films found through the NAATA (National Asian American Telecommunications Association) catalogues, the UIUC Media Center movie lists, and Asian American Studies professors’ personal collections. Many films were rejected because the interns found the contents too vague or inappropriate for undergraduates.

A screening series is also a wonderful way to bring together a diverse viewing audience. The interns were in charge of advertising and designed flyers, which they put up across campus. They also spoke about the Series to Asian American Studies classes and to Asian American student organizations, attracting many undergraduates to the event. The interns also introduced the films and led the discussions that followed each screening. This helped create an atmosphere in which both the interns and the attendees felt comfortable talking about and questioning the issues raised in the films. Several professors also attended to see if the films would be appropriate to show in their classes. The films were shown at the Asian American Studies building; many who came to see the Series had never been there before and were thus made aware of its many resources for both students and faculty.

Finally, films can examine ideas that are not necessarily dealt with in classrooms or lectures. While there are several classes on Asian American Studies taught at the University of Illinois, they cannot deal with all issues of significance to the Asian American experience. The films in our series serve to fill a gap by making such issues as biracial identities and South Asian history accessible to the community.

The success of the Film Series is due to a number of factors. First, showing films on a college campus is not a costly endeavor. The only film bought for the spring 2000 Series was Mixed Feelings. Kelly Loves Tony was loaned by a faculty member, and Miss India Georgia was borrowed from the Media Center. Advertising costs were limited to photocopies, and expenses for the actual event were for snacks and drinks. This year none of the films were purchased: they were borrowed either from the Media Center or from AEMS.

For this small financial investment though, a lot was gained. Film is a medium through which complex ideas such as racial identity and assimilation can be expressed and understood by diverse groups of people. This was demonstrated in the animated discussions which always followed a showing. Also, unlike conferences or lectures, screenings are an event that consistently attract undergraduates. Undergraduate students do not have a lot of time to spare during the day, but several have found the Asian American Film Series to be a stimulating way to spend their lunch hour.

After some enjoyable screenings, several student organizations on campus have requested to borrow films from the Series to show their own members. Finally, participants in the Film Series always left screenings more informed about the variety of

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Circles and Cycles: Kathak Dance

Along with Bharata Natyam, the classical solo dance for women of South India, Kathak, the classical solo dance of North India, is one of the world’s most exquisite performing arts. Beautifully photographed in 16 mm, this video cuts very effectively between dance sequences or commentary and still images from miniature paintings of the dance, photos of old palaces, and portraits of important dancers who are also ancestors of Birju Maharaj, one of the most famous male dancers of recent times. Aside from Birju himself, many of his pupils are featured in brief excerpts illustrating various elements of Kathak style, particularly the two most important features common to many Indian dance genres, abhinaya, or mime, and nrtta, or abstract dance.

Initially, abhinaya is illustrated by dancer Sawati Sen portraying one of the milkmaids featured in the stories about Krishna; she demonstrates churning butter and then storing it in a pot hanging from the ceiling (the latter cleverly explained through intercutting with a miniature painting). Immediately thereafter, the second element of pure dance is demonstrated by Daksha Seth, who demonstrates the importance of the dancer’s marking the return of the first beat of the rhythmic cycle (tala) with a special posture arrived at with a climactic series of movements. Next, Jai Kishan further emphasizes the link between physical movement and the rhythm of the music, as realized on the drum by reciting rhythmic syllables (bol) also used by drummers and then executing them in movement.

Shovana Narayan appears next with a brief excerpt of storytelling involving Radha’s anger at the infidelity of her divine lover, Krishna, which is accompanied by an effective voiceover explaining the meaning of the gestures. The most significant sequence, however, captures the great master of the recent past, Birju Maharaj, in a performance that is now virtually obsolete and which was always suited only to the private performances of the court and salon rather than the contemporary stage. Instead of dancing in the usual sense, Birju performs seated, using only his facial expressions and arm movements to interpret a few lines of a lyric-erotic song, a thumri. While the text is brief, it suggests many variants to the performer who improvises at his leisure while singing and rearranging the phrases of the tune. A mention of clouds, typically associated with the cool and romantic monsoon, brings forth a series of gestures such as combing of the hair, which billows like clouds, or lighting a lamp whose smoke accumulates and floats like clouds. This excerpt alone makes the film an historically important document.

Despite the high quality of the film production, the excellence of the artistic personnel, and a cameo appearance by the tabla superstar Zakir Hussain as narrator, the full potential of this film has not quite been realized because of the somewhat disconnected way in which its various components are linked. In a film of 28 minutes, one can only hope to stir the interest of the viewer to seek more information and fuller examples. This the video will certainly do, but it could have been more effective in its attempt to characterize the art by presenting fewer, and lengthier, excerpts by one or two dancers instead of many very brief snippets by a succession of dancers. It is, nevertheless, a useful introduction to the basic elements of the history and technique of one of the world’s greatest dance traditions.

For college or high-school courses that deal with the performing arts, this could make an effective contribution to the inclusion of non-western materials, especially if the instructor has access to supplementary material like Sunil Kothari’s beautifully illustrated overview of the genre in his Kathak: Indian Classical Dance Art (Abhinav Publications, 1989). To use this documentary most effectively, the teacher should pause frequently in order to elaborate on what has been illustrated and to make sure that the point of an excerpt has been absorbed before proceeding to the next. In this way, some of the continuity lacking in the film can be supplied by interacting with it.

Charles Capwell is an ethnomusicologist and a past editor of Ethnomusicology, the journal of the Society for Ethnomusicology. He has worked on folk music in Bengal and musical life in late 19th-century Calcutta and is currently interested in popular music with an Islamic slant in Indonesia.

Circles and Cycles: Kathak Dance is available from Documentary Educational Resources. Price is $145 for purchase and $45 for rental.
I recommend this video to anyone interested in issues of cross-cultural identity and Korean adoptees.

Northern Thailand and their perceptions of future options. She is also the graduate assistant at the Asian American Studies Committee at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

For a complete listing of this semester’s AASC Film Series titles and times, please contact the AASC office at 217-244-9530 or look at its web page at http://www.uiuc.edu/unit/aasc.

Videography

Blue Collar and Buddha (1988, 57 minutes) is available from NAATA. Price is $150 for purchase and $60 for rental.

Meeting at Taxi Lake (1994, 33 minutes) is available from NAATA. Price is $150 for purchase and $60 for rental.

Heart Mountain: Three Years in an Internment Camp (1997, 26 minutes) is available from NAATA. Price is $175 for purchase and $45 for rental.

Roots in the Sand (1998, 57 minutes) is available from NAATA. Price is $265 for purchase and $65 for rental.

Kelly Loves Tony (1998, 57 minutes) is available from NAATA. Price is $265 for purchase and $65 for rental.

Mixed Feelings (1998, 45 minutes) is available from America for Kids. Price is $19.95 for home use and $79.97 for institutional use.

Miss India Georgia (1997, 57 minutes) is available from Urban Life Productions. Price varies depending on intended use.

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PASSING THROUGH

>> A film by Nathan Adolfson. 1999. 27 minutes.

In 1995, during his senior year in UCLA’s film school, Nathan Adolfson decided to go to Korea as a foreign exchange student. Korea was a strange land to Adolfson, despite the fact that he was born and raised there until the age of three, when he was adopted by a family of Coon Rapids, Minnesota. With his Hi-8 camera and a travel guidebook in his hands, not knowing what to expect, Adolfson embarked on his journey to Korea. Passing Through tells a deeply personal story about the observations and surprising discoveries that changed his life and the way he viewed his identity.

Born in Inchon, Korea, as Chai Chee Man, Nathan Adolfson is one of an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 Korean-American adoptees living in the United States. Growing up in Minnesota, Adolfson was assimilated into the culture of his adoptive family, and traces of his Korean background remained only on his Asian face. Passing Through follows Adolfson’s journey, starting with the interviews he conducts with his adoptive parents before leaving for Korea. His journey in Korea begins at Yonsei University, where, for the first six months, he studies with other exchange students. Although he does not expect an instant connection to Korea, he is disappointed to realize that he remembers nothing about his birth land and feels alienated and dislocated. He does not fit in with either the drunken foreign exchange students from America or militant Korean student demonstrators whose monthly clashes with the police flood the campus with tear gas. One day, as he gasps for air through the smoke, he finds himself asking, “What am I doing here?” He realizes that he is neither a traveler on vacation nor is he returning home; he is just “passing through” as a stranger in the foreign land where he doesn’t understand the language or the culture.

Determined to find the “real” Korea, he leaves the Yonsei exchange student dormitory at the end of the six months, moves into a boarding house, and actively seeks ways to reconnect his past to the present. Then one day, two months after his move, his parents in Minnesota receive a letter from the adoption agency, which inquires into the whereabouts of Chai Chee Man, on behalf of his Korean family. Less than a week after receiving the forwarded letter, Adolfson meets his Korean sister and brothers who have been trying to find him for many years. A major Korean broadcasting company airs the emotional meeting on a national television show, and Adolfson’s story is told to Korean viewers as one with a happy ending. However, to Adolfson, the sudden events bring him both happiness and sadness, and the questions of his identity grow even more complex. After another year in Korea, he returns to the United States to pursue his film career.

Passing Through is a personal video diary of Adolfson’s observations, encounters, and thoughts in Korea. The viewer gets to follow the unplanned and unexpected events as experienced by Adolfson, and the questions he asks himself are sincere and inviting. At the end of the film, he concludes that he is merely “passing through” his life both during the trip to Korea and in the United States: “Maybe I am like the rivers I spend so much time on the banks of. Rivers begin small and narrow, but as they are fed by other rivers, lakes, and streams, they become larger, wider, deeper.”

I recommend this video to anyone interested in issues of cross-cultural identity and Korean adoptees. It is appropriate for all ages, and the vagueness of the video’s ending provides an excellent discussion topic. In addition, the questions raised in Passing Through go beyond adoption and ethnic identity; more fundamentally, the video questions how we define and view ourselves. And it tells a story of a young man who is Chai Chee Man by birth and Nathan Adolfson by upbringing but who is, most importantly, a survivor and a talented filmmaker. ✦

Esther S. Kim is Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is the author of Finding a Voice: Asian-American Theater History, 1960–1999. Passing Through is available from NAATA. Institutional price is $175 for purchase, $45 for rental.
This film centers on two ambitious and eager Chinese women who are intent on their goal to improve fashion in China and gain attention in the international marketplace. The film's purpose seems to be to provide some insights into the minds of young Chinese women today and the world in which they live. This purpose, however, is not altogether clear. It is only by way of fleeting conversations in the film's somewhat disjointed segments that information is provided on topics that have potential educational value. These topics are (1) changing lifestyles in China and (2) the thriving textile and apparel industries in China. In terms of both, the film may be a disappointment for educators. While parts of the film are enjoyable, few are insightful. At the end of the film, viewers may well have more questions about both the lives of young Chinese professionals today and the Chinese apparel industry than they did at its outset.

The film is launched with separate introductions of the two designers, Guo Pei and Sun Jian, both in their early 30s. Guo Pei is employed as the chief designer of a large apparel company in Beijing that targets the mass market, while her former classmate and best friend Sun Jian works for herself and serves as an image consultant (wardrobe and total appearance) to individuals. When Sun Jian receives an invitation to participate in Shanghai's Fashion Week, the two decide to accept and collaborate on the project. Guo Pei resigns from her job and the two devote full-time energy and effort to the planning of a 30- to 40-minute show that will include 80 or 90 of their designs. After arriving in Shanghai, the women are disappointed to learn that the venue will be a suburban campus. Still, they manage what appears to be a very successful show. Only during the show do they realize that there is no competition, the audience is primarily students, and that no media representation is present. The film concludes with the two women walking and talking in Beijing on National Day about the huge generational differences that they perceive exist today in China.

This main storyline is interspersed with brief vignettes that show the women interacting with each other, with their elder family members, and with colleagues. Scene shifts are broken by un-narrated film shots of rural China, Inner Mongolia (where Guo Pei has traveled to buy fabric), and city streets in Shanghai and Beijing.

There should have been great promise in this framework for introducing middle school or high school students to a wealth of knowledge about China. China indeed is undergoing dramatic shifts today; to see these through the eyes of two young businesswomen could have yielded interest and value. However, only surface attention is given to the varied complexities inherent in family relationships, value differences, customs, social change, and industry information. Omissions and disconnects are notable. Moreover, students could come away making generalizations regarding the inability of Guo Pei to deal effectively with her boss or the emphasis on the importance of female appearance.

If students can be given appropriate background information and focus before seeing the film, it might capture their interest. If so, it could provide a foundation for useful classroom discussion about some of the transformations that are altering China today.

Mao's New Suit is available from Filmaker's Library. Price is $350 for purchase, $75 for rental.

Sara Douglas is Associate Professor of Textile Marketing and Economics, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include the textile industries in East and Southeast Asia and textile trade policy.

Mao's New Suit is available from Filmaker's Library. Price is $350 for purchase, $75 for rental.
The economic boom times that China has enjoyed for the past two decades have provided work for migrant workers, but mostly of the hard, menial, and sometimes dangerous variety.
The high cost of many media resources can be discouraging for educators trying to stick to a budget; schools have enough trouble buying books without having to worry about spending a sizeable chunk of their allotted money on one videotape. Fortunately, it is not necessary to pay a premium for quality instructional resources. In fact, the film quality of many inexpensive documentaries is often very high because their distributors have the money to mass-produce them. But, as with all products sold cheaply, large quantities of these videos must sell in order for the distributors to make a profit. Therefore, moderately priced videos need to have broad appeal, resulting in productions that are frequently, but not always, more general and not at the cutting edge of their field. While this may decrease the value of these films in professional and graduate school settings, it often makes them perfect for introducing Asia to K–12 students and lower level college classes.

This column, which for the next few issues will appear as a regular feature, will review inexpensive videos and other resources that the AEMS staff believes are worthwhile. Each column will focus on a different region of Asia, starting in this issue with China. I have excluded those items I felt were overly orientalizing, unclear, or lacked academic content.

Introducing China: Documentaries for Students with Little Background

One of the more prolific producers of educational documentaries focusing on world cultures is IVN Entertainment, Inc. Their Video Visits series introduces dozens of countries around the world, concentrating on important sites and cultural practices. Video Visits—China: Ancient Rhythms, Modern Currents provides a simple and interesting account of modern Chinese life. Moving from North to South, then East to West, this documentary features many of China’s famous places, including Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou, the Three Gorges, and Tibet, as well as cultural practices such as painting, traditional music, and Buddhism. Because China: Ancient Rhythms, Modern Currents is more descriptive than analytical, and because its coverage of Chinese history is only superficial, I would recommend this video be shown to middle-grade students (7–10 grade) as their first introduction to China. Another IVN production, Trav’s Travels—China, uses much of the same footage as Video Visits and follows a similar format, but is aimed at 3–6 graders. (Trav’s Travels—China was reviewed in detail in our Fall 1999 issue.)

Another somewhat dated, but fun introduction to Chinese culture for elementary school students is Big Bird in China. Big Bird plays a clueless tourist who visits China in search of the mythical Phoenix (a famous bird from America meets a famous bird from China). Aided by the Monkey King, played by an actor of the Beijing Opera, and a young Chinese girl who speaks English, Big Bird is given a series of clues to find the Phoenix, which takes him past many famous sites. The video features numerous scenes with Chinese school children at play and adults practicing tai chi. Also aimed at the younger set is Global Families—China for ages 5–10. Families features two 15-minute segments narrated by children, one living in a rural village and the other in a moderately sized city. Each segment details the families’ daily routines, carefully avoiding judgements about their lifestyle and subtly emphasizing the similarities between Chinese and American children.

Beyond the Basics: Building on Knowledge

For teachers looking for more in-depth descriptions of particular aspects of Chinese culture, the Discovery Channel offers two very good 50-minute documentaries focusing on China’s two most famous sites, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall. Forbidden City: The Great Within features famous Chinese actors reenacting life in the emperor’s palace from the beginning of the Qing dynasty (1666–1912) to its fall. Because the narrator’s description of court life includes discussion of the role of concubines and eunuchs in some detail, this video is most suitable for late high school and college students. Secrets of the Great Wall discusses not only the history and culture associated with the Great Wall, but also endeavors to find out how the structure was built and how it was utilized to defend the nation. Like Forbidden City, Secrets is intended for an older age group.

Just as Discovery produces quality documentaries about famous locales, A&E Biography specializes in accessible portrayals of important people. Their videos focusing on Confucius and the current Dalai Lama discuss the childhood, development, philosophy, and influence of these two great men without over-politicizing them. The biography of Confucius features reenactments of scenes from his life and historical artwork of his image. Both documentaries could be shown to most high school and college students. (A&E has also produced biographies of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, but I have not seen them.)

My favorite of all the documentaries in the under $30 range is China: Emerging Powers, narrated by Deborah Wang, a former ABC News correspondent to Beijing. In many ways very similar to In Search of China, a PBS production reviewed in this issue, Emerging Powers concentrates on how current economic changes in China are impacting the people who live there. Focusing on the san lao jie, or three old classes, the generation that graduated from high school during the Cultural Revolution and was sent to the countryside to work, it discusses how Chinese values have changed from socialist idealism to a desire to get rich and prosper. The video interviews people whose lives have been both improved and hurt by the economic reforms, but as a whole Emerging’s tone is upbeat, insisting that China is waking up and can no longer be ignored.

Alternative Media

Videos are not, of course, the only media available; there are numerous slide units on the market that also make excellent teaching materials.
resources (as do CD-ROMS, but I was unable to find any good, inexpensive ones focusing on China). Traditional Chinese Celebrations: Continuity and Change in Taiwan, published by the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education, discusses four major Chinese holidays (oddly leaving out Chinese New Year) and how they are practiced in Taiwan. This unit, which includes sixteen slides and thirty-two pages of text, focuses on the historical basis of these festivals and compares them to similar American celebrations. Traditional Chinese Celebrations is most suitable for 6–9 graders.

For more advanced students (tenth grade through college), the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. has assembled a unit called The Chinese Scholar’s Studio. Any student who thinks he or she is receiving too much homework should be directed to Lesson 1, which describes the extraordinarily rigorous education of boys in pre-modern China. Lesson 2, on the other hand, discusses the leisurely lifestyle of older men who, having successfully passed their examinations and served as officials, were free to absorb themselves in nature, music, art and poetry. This unit is mostly textual, but does include six slides featuring artwork and supplies used by the literati. (Slides three and four may be reversed.)

There are, of course, many more resources available at reasonable prices, including a whole list of feature films I do not have space here to write about. Anyone interested in a more comprehensive list of Asian K–12 resources, visit www.aems.uiuc.edu/K-12.html or call us at 1-888-828-AEMS.

Videography

Video Visits—China: Ancient Rhythms, Modern Currents (1996, 60 minutes) is available from IVN Entertainment. Price is $24.99.

Trav’s Travels—China (1998, 20 minutes) is available from IVN Entertainment. Price is $29.99.

Global Families—China (30 minutes) is available from Asia for Kids. Price is $29.95

Forbidden City: The Great Within (1995, 50 minutes) is available from the Discovery Channel. Price is $19.95.

Secrets of the Great Wall (1999, 52 minutes) is available from the Discovery Channel. Price is $19.95.


Traditional Chinese Celebrations: Continuity and Change in Taiwan is available from the Stanford Program on International and Cross Cultural Exchange (SPICE). Price is $20.95.

The Chinese Scholar’s Studio is available from the Freer Gallery of Art. Price is $10.

Okinawa Omnibus

In Okinawan dialect, the term champuru literally means “a mixing of things,” as in the combination of different foods to make one delectable dish. Champuru is also the term used to symbolize Okinawan culture as a variable mixture of foreign and native influences that unite in one unique entity. Thus, this video highlighting diverse aspects of Okinawa appears appropriately named “Okinawa Omnibus.” In general, the video appears to leap from one vignette of Okinawa to another, from a section on the characteristics of local marine life to a scene with crowded streets in the “international” city of Naha. While this approach certainly attempts to capture a panoramic view of the island prefecture, such a whirlwind of images with few flowing transitions tends to limit the continuity and depth of the video.

Still, the video offers a vivid display of Okinawa and especially Okinawan arts. The video shows various art forms that have become specialized in Okinawa, including brilliantly colorful fabric dyeing techniques called bingata, pottery styles developed from Korean influences, and handmade crafts such as shisa (lion-dragons), from a Chinese tradition that are said to ward off evil spirits. In addition, the video provides some information on the performing arts in Okinawa. Since the Golden Ages of the Ryukyu Kingdom in the 15th century, the performing arts have been heralded as a crucial part of what constitutes Okinawan identity. The video emphasizes contemporary musical and dance groups that retain a local Okinawan flavor while appealing to broader audiences. Unfortunately, only a passing reference is made to more traditional performance genres such as koten odori (classical dance). However, some scenes in the video feature minazoku odori (folk dances) such as the eisa drum dance. As part of the obon festival that is celebrated in many regions throughout Japan, the Okinawans perform a powerful group dance that honors the souls of the dead. For both educational and enjoyment purposes, it is worth viewing the eisa performances in order to get a taste of the excitement generated by Okinawan dances.

The greatest weakness of the video is that while highlighting all of these positive and glowing aspects of Okinawa, it neglects to mention the complex historical and political issues that greatly affect this part of Japan and its people. Okinawa represents the only Japanese territory that witnessed American ground invasions during World War II. Even today, Okinawa continues to host 75% of all American military bases present in Japan, although it only occupies approximately 1% of the nation’s total surface area. Many foreigners appear in the video, walking on the streets or even taking part in local festivals, but the narrator never comments on their presence. A majority of foreigners in Okinawa are connected to the bases, but again, this is carefully ignored in the video. If educators wish to use this video in their classrooms, they should include some background information for their students and maybe even conduct a group discussion of what issues were elided in the video, why, and how this reflects the specific choices of the video producers.

In general, the film seems best suited for younger students who might benefit from the broad array of simple topics that are covered. However, short clips of the video might also be incorporated into an upper level high school or college course in order to emphasize an understanding of “Japan” as a multi-strand country rather than as a homogeneous nation-state. Again, the video could facilitate more in-depth discussions about other aspects of Okinawa that have been seemingly glossed over. All in all, the video offers English-speaking educators a chance to include some visual aids and imagery of Okinawa in their courses which might inspire students to do further work and research on this intriguing island prefecture.

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Okinawa Omnibus is available from International Motion Picture Co., Inc. Price is $50 for purchase.
India: Environment and Industry

**Films for the Humanities and Sciences. 1996. 20 minutes.**

This film, aimed at an audience of middle and high school students, poses an important question for India as a developing nation: Can India afford to protect its environment and ecosystem at the cost of eliminating jobs, which could reduce the families of workers to possible starvation and retard industrial production? The problem is posed in a case study set in Dehra Dun, a city in a scenic area in the Himalayan foothills. From 1960 to 1985 there was widespread, uncontrolled limestone quarrying in the vicinity, which destroyed forests, rivers, and farmlands, and brought air pollution and a severe water shortage to the area. The limestone was essential for the burgeoning steel industry of India whose products were meeting consumer demands and raising the standard of living. In 1985, however, the Supreme Court of India took the side of environmentalists and ruled that the quarries in the area be closed. Since 1985 the area has been undergoing rehabilitation.

The film begins with the effects of limestone quarrying on the city of Dehra Dun itself. Dehra Dun is famous for its excellent prep schools, which attract over 100,000 students from well-off families throughout India. The Dehra Dun segment of the film, which centers on the city’s water shortage created by erosion and the choking of nearby rivers with limestone debris, depicts students of both boys’ and girls’ schools cheerfully facing their hardships by giving up their swimming pool and collecting rationed water in buckets twice a day for personal use. The parents of two of these students are wealthy local residents, socially aware environmentalists who meet with others like themselves to deplore the decline of their beautiful city. Presumably, these articulate and well-connected environmentalists were involved in precipitating the action of the Supreme Court. One fault of the film is that it does not explicitly explore the issue in terms of class conflict between well-meaning middle-class environmentalists and desperate workers whose first obligation is to feed their families.

Other segments of the film portray the plight of local farmers whose village homes were pulped by falling rocks from the quarries above them, whose farms were covered with stones, and whose rivers were buried under mounds of rock. Most peasants in the area have abandoned their farms and moved to the cities in search of work. The final segment deals with an environmentally enlightened company that for years carefully mined their limestone on terraces, restored and reforested quarried areas and removed stones from rivers and streams. The Supreme Court and the environmentalists forced even this mine to close because so much damage had been done to the region that they wanted all mining stopped. But half the nearby villagers worked in the mine and now face the prospect of joining the army of unemployed in India. The fact that the government has made no interim provisions for these families is another important issue which the film does not discuss. The film ends abruptly without restating these important issues, perhaps considered too complex to be properly discussed in a 20-minute film directed at a high school audience.

Despite its drawbacks, the film is clearly of value to classes studying either environmental issues or third-world problems. It is concerned with an urgent, real-life problem of contemporary India (though unfortunately the film makers could not resist the temptation of filling the sound track with exotic music while depicting Indian landscapes). American high school audiences might also appreciate the realistic depiction of their Indian counterparts. Above all, the film offers rich material for class discussions of the economic and ethical issues involved in environmental decisions, of the social responsibility of industry, both domestic and global, and of the differences between the human costs of environmentalism in our country and in India. ♦

Blair K. 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.

India: Environment and Industry is available from Films for the Humanities and Sciences. Price is $99 for purchase.

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The Tradition of Performing Arts in Japan: The Artistry of Kabuki, Noh and Bunraku

**Part of the Japan: The Land & Its People Series. Created by the Nippon Steel Human Resources Development Co. 1990. 35 minutes.**

One of the best videos of the Japanese theater that can be used for educational purposes is The Tradition of Performing Arts in Japan: The Artistry of Kabuki, Noh and Bunraku. This excellent video would be useful not only for introducing the classical theater but also Japanese culture at its best through its centuries-old tradition of performing arts. With excerpts from breathtaking stage performances of Noh, Bunraku, and Kabuki, the video provides concise commentaries on the development, characteristics, and acting techniques of each theater. Highlights of scenes from these theaters are presented in beautiful color by effective camera work, whose excellent timing transmits the tremendous energy created on the stage to the viewers. Also effective are the English subtitles of dramatic dialogues and chanting, and the transcription of the entire narration in English and Japanese in the attached script, features not always given in a theater video but very helpful for teaching.

The Tradition of Performing Arts in Japan begins with accounts of the Japanese sense of nature in harmony with everyday life that permeates all aspects of its culture, including theater. It ends with illustrations of continental influences of imports such as musical instruments and masks from advanced Asian countries in ancient times. Putting Japanese civilization in this historical and geographical perspective adds to a deeper understanding of its theatre arts that are intercultural and interdisciplinary in nature.

The medieval Noh is represented by Adachi-gahara, a play about a supernatural transformation of an old woman, spinning in a desolate mountain hut, into a demon who takes revenge on the travelling priests who broke their promise not to see her inner room, which is filled with corpses. The change of masks and other surrealistic staging of theatrical interests are vividly portrayed in the selected segment. Noh is usually known for the elegant and mystical aesthetics of dance plays, but the producer’s intention here seems to have been to choose a more dramatic piece in the vein of the other two plays represented, thus making this video more appealing to Western audiences.
Botchan

This version... emphasizes scenery and environmental elements.

This animated version of the Japanese literacy classic Botchan tells the story of a young man who leaves Tokyo to become a teacher in Matsuyama on the island of Shikoku. Soon after arriving in Matsuyama, Botchan becomes bored and unimpressed with both the students and the locale. He thus creatively passes the time with activities such as giving the other teachers and school administrators nicknames and going to a local public bath. The students continuously play pranks and spy on the new young teacher, yet receive no punishment. Botchan is soon led to suspect his sole friend, Hotta, of causing his problems. Eventually, after realizing that they were really true friends all along and that it was the vice principal who was conspiring against them, Botchan and Hotta work together to reprimand the vice principal and bring his scandalous behavior to light.

This version of Botchan emphasizes scenery and environmental elements, with interesting views of Japanese architecture, both indoors and out, aerial shots of the city, and diverse scenes such as the public baths, a graveyard, and sunsets, which are artistically and colorfully presented. The occasional songs are lively and varied and enhance the atmosphere of key scenes. The translation may be somewhat over simplified, but conveys the basic meaning and mood of the original Japanese. As the story is divided into two sections, The New Teacher's Wrath and Exterminate Red Shirt, each under 30 minutes, the film could be shown during two different class periods with time for discussion of each segment.

Because of the subtitling and mentions of red-light districts and geisha, this video would not suit elementary school settings. And, although Botchan could be used to point out glimpses of Japanese culture, such as traditional clothing or public bathing, to slightly older students, it would not provide much introduction to Japanese culture as there is little focus on family, employment issues, arts, leisure, economy, politics or religion. Botchan would best be used as a literary study with themes based on characters, such as deception, friendship, retribution, and arrogance, as discussion topics. The video alone probably would not offer much to upper level students, but presented along with an English translation of the book to students who have no knowledge of Japan, or who struggle to picture the story in their minds, this brief animated version could enhance mental images or understanding of the characters and story.

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Botchan is available from Central Park Media Corporation. Price is $26.96 for purchase.
Guide to Distributors

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

**Asia for Kids**, P.O. Box 9996, Cincinnati, OH 45209. Tel: 513-563-3100 or 800-765-5885. Fax: 513-563-3105. E-mail: infor@afk.com. Web site: http://www.afk.com.


**Documentary Educational Resources**, 101 Morse Street, Watertown, MA 02172. Tel: 800-569-6621. Fax: 617-926-9519. E-mail: docued@der.org. Web site: http://der.org/docued.


**Films for the Humanities and Sciences**, P.O. Box 2053, Princeton, NJ 08543-2053. Tel: 800-257-5126 or 609-275-1400. Fax: 609-275-3767. E-mail: custserv@films.com. Web site: http://www.films.com.


**International Motion Picture Co., Inc.**, 1 Nurihiko Bldg., 2-9-2 Kyobashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan, 104. Tel: 81-3-3563-1341. Fax: 81-3-3563-1344. E-mail: impc@mail.raidway.ne.jp.


**NAATA Distribution (National Asian American Telecommunications Association)**, 346 Ninth Street, Second Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103. Tel: 415-552-9550. Fax: 415-863-7428. E-mail: Distribution@naatanet.org. Web site: http://www.naatanet.org


**Social Studies School Service**, 10200 Jefferson Blvd., Room, Y411, P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802. Tel: 800-421-4246 or 310-839-2436. Fax: 800-944-5432 or 310-839-2249. E-mail: access@SocialStudies.com. Web site: http://SocialStudies.com.

**Stanford Program on Inter-Cultural Exchange**, Encina Hall East, Ground Floor, Stanford, CA 94305-6055. Tel: 800-578-1114 or 650-723-1114. E-mail: spice@forsythe.stanford.edu. Web site: http://spice.stanford.edu.