some of the burdens imposed on them when living at home in Japanese society. And it examines the special challenge that Japanese in Singapore must confront: coming to terms with the history of Japanese involvement in Southeast Asia over the last 150 years.

In the notes that follow, I offer examples of how the process of documentary video production and post-production have influenced the film.

Subtitles and Voice-Overs
A broadcast program will probably be viewed by one or two persons sitting at home positioned where they can read subtitles easily. If the program is screened in a classroom, however (not many classrooms being endowed with a projection system), students in the back rows will have trouble seeing. So for practical reasons of readability, I prefer to use subtitles sparingly.

My team makes its videos for English-fluent audiences, primarily in the United States. So life will be simpler for the audience as well as the production team if everybody in a program speaks English with ease. Well, what do we do when a person on camera is speaking a language other than English? (Let’s call it Japanese, since that has been the second language in most of the programs my team has made.) We can superimpose a spoken translation or “voice-over” in English. This eliminates the readability problem but leaves us instead with a problem of audibility.

First, somebody has to do the translating. Then somebody has to recruit and coach native English speakers to do the voicing. And their voice qualities—age, gender, eloquence, gentleness or stridency and so on—should approximate those of their Japanese counterparts, or at least be similar enough so as to not draw audience attention away from the content of the message being uttered.

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Ethnography in Fast-Forward and Rewind
Notes on Making the Video Program Under Another Sun
>> by David W. Plath

Sojourners attract the scholarly eye only in particular circumstances. They inhabit an ethnographic limbo somewhere between tourists and emigrants. The academically proper like to sneer at the tourist for not learning anything about a place he visits and to pity the emigrant for being obligated to acculturate. The sojourner lives in a locale long enough to learn some local conventions and to identify with the people without needing to go native.

Under Another Sun, released in September 2001 by the Media Production Group, brings into focus the 30,000 Japanese now living and working in Singapore. It profiles Japanese sojourners from an array of careers and professions, and sketches earlier phases of Japanese sojourning in Asia. It explores tensions between the expatriates’ attachments to their native land and their desires to shed...
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 audio-visual 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.

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What’s New?

Due to the tragedy that occurred on September 11th and the conflict that has ensued as a result, we have decided to extend our coverage of Afghanistan, a nation that is frequently considered part of South Asia. In addition to continuously updating the database as new media is released, we have also created a separate Web page focusing on educational resources (including numerous Web sites) that deal with Afghanistan and the Islamic World. Published on October 11th, this guide received over 3,000 hits during its first month of existence. You can check it out by visiting http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/HTML/AfghanistanLinks.htm.

Under Another Sun, David Plath’s production about Japanese expatriates in Singapore, premiered at the Midwest Conference for Asian Affairs in late September and was shown a few weeks later here at UIUC. For the time being, AEMS will be distributing the film; please contact us if you are interested in purchasing it.

AEMS has been very active on the UIUC campus during the past couple of months. With the help of other international studies departments, Sarah Barbour arranged the Documenting Diasporas film series, featuring seven documentaries that focus on migration of peoples. AEMS also sponsored a screening of The Turandot Project (will be available from Zeitgeist Films in late 2002), which was introduced by Professor Isabel Wong. For more information about on-campus screenings sponsored by AEMS or other Asian Studies organizations, visit http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/HTML/calendar.html.

Finally, I went to the National Council on Social Studies (NCSS) conference in Washington, D.C., right before Thanksgiving in order to promote AEMS and learn more about K–12 educational needs. We look forward to doing more with the Council on Social Studies at both a local and national level.

—Elizabeth Cothen, Guest Editor

Ethnography

continued from page 1

Next, somebody has to hire a studio and an audio engineer to record the English voices. And since it is conventional to have Japanese utterances audible in the background while the English voice-overs are heard, utterance and translation need to be trimmed to about the same length, and volume-levels on the two audio tracks have to be balanced carefully during final editing. Recording, editing and mixing thus take longer and cost more than if the voices were English-only.

But what should we do if the person on camera is speaking English with voice qualities that make it difficult for the listener to decipher? In Under Another Sun the problem arose with Joe Ide, the entrepreneur. Audio-visual recording blurs or blots out some of the behavioral cues that are present when you are conversing face-to-face. And some people are uncomfortable when coaxed to speak in the presence of a camera, microphone, and camera crew. Much as I dislike doing so, I occasionally have to insert English subtitles even though the utterances are in English. (Superimpose an English voice-over on top of an English utterance and the result is like something out of a Woody Allen movie.)

Each Japanese person who speaks to the camera in Under Another Sun has the ability to converse in everyday English. We recorded some participants using English only (e.g., Ms. Abe, the cosmetics executive). Most of the others began in English but after a few minutes we invited them to switch to Japanese. In English their comments and gestures and phrasings were too stilted, or their hesitation pauses were too long, etc. Viewers might think the person obtuse or juvenile or uneducated. And the program would lack the you-are-there flavor and spontaneity that are video’s strong suit.

Why So Many Lower-Thirds?

In the jargon of media production, “lower-thirds” are the titles that identify an individual in view on the image screen at that moment. Editors conventionally place the words in the lowest one-third of the screen. Lower-thirds pop up frequently in Under Another Sun. Some viewers find them distracting, and ask if there aren’t too many of them. Why do we so often identify people speaking on camera?

It would be enough to identify a speaker once or twice if the program only were to be seen straight through in one sitting. But MPG’s policy is to format our videos for two different types of use. One is broadcasting over public and cable channels, the other is narrowcasting in classrooms.

For broadcast use a program must stand alone. A viewer should be able to comprehend its main ideas in a single viewing. Classroom instructors, on the other hand, are more likely to screen just one or two segments in a class period, reserving 30 or 40 minutes of time for lecturing and discussion.

With this in mind, Under Another Sun has been formatted as a sequence of eight segments plus an introduction and conclusion, each five to seven minutes long. This allows educators to position...
The Asia Society

in focus

The Asia Society works to heighten awareness and understanding of Asian history, culture, and current events among American schoolchildren. The Society provides elementary- and secondary-level materials, services, and teacher support. For more information visit AskAsia.org, a Web site dedicated to teachers and students.

New features on AskAsia.org include:

The September 11 Attacks: Background and Aftermath
This educator’s guide provides background material on the geo-political history of Central Asia, the faces of Islam, the backlash in the United States as well as in Asia, and more. As with all curricular material on our site, this unit includes background essays, maps, lesson plans and learner-centered activities.

Visible Traces
Based on the Special Collections from the National Library of China, this unit helps students better understand the history of human communication, interaction, and exchange. In addition to a full teacher’s guide, this site features educational games for students including geography and language puzzles and a “design an exhibition” feature.

South Asian Painting in the Classroom: A Teacher’s Guide
Using 17th- to 19th-century court paintings, this guide documents the traditions, customs, and manners of court life in what is today India, Pakistan, and Nepal. The paintings provide a window into the political, religious, and cultural forces that shaped the Indian subcontinent.

On location in Singapore with the Under Another Sun cinematography and recording team.

The wheel of video production drives you to do ethnography fast-forward. The legendary Lone Ethnographer can hang out long enough to witness events as they erupt spontaneously or are triggered by calendars and other modes of parochial scheduling. As an ethno-videomaker, lone or teamed, you can’t loll in such a luxury of time. You have to encourage events to occur when your camera is ready to record them, or else coax the locals to re-enact them.

Time is money on a scale more familiar to a field archaeologist than to the Lone Ethnographer. A camera crew earns $1500–$2000 whether or not you have work for them to do that day. Location success depends on scheduling, scheduling, scheduling—plus a little luck with the weather.

Time is money also in post-production: professional studio charges $800–$1200 per day for the services of an editor and rental of an editing system. You had better have detailed shot-logs in hand for every one of your field tapes (the Singapore project generated more than 70 half-hour tapes), and have your rough-cut program adzed into shape before you carry your project to the studio. And to complicate matters, some funding agencies pay only after the fact. After, that is, they have received a copy of the completed program.

Your reward, if all goes well, can be a program that will transmit your message to hundreds, even thousands of people who would regard reading The American Anthropologist as cruel and unusual punishment.

Making documentary programs has taught me to be suspicious about those how-to-do-it handbooks that show ethnographic production moving in a tidy sequence of stages of work. From start to finish in video production you are obliged to think about audiences every bit as much as “informants.” Long before you uncaps a lens and plug in a microphone you should be asking yourself how the scene would play in Peoria. The physical work of video production has its share of linear sequences, no more reversible than the moving finger of the Rubaiyat. But in the mental labor of video production, your imagined tape is speeding fast-forward and rewinding all the time.

David W. Plath is Director of AEMS and Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has produced several films about Japanese people, including the award-winning production Makiko’s New World.

The total running time for Under Another Sun is 56:34 and includes closed captioning for the hearing impaired. The film was created by the Media Production Group of the Asian Educational Media Service, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as part of a joint project with the Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore. The Freeman Foundation and the Japan Foundation provided funding. A program guide is in preparation and should be available mid-2002 for free downloading from the AEMS Web site.

Under Another Sun: Japanese in Singapore is available from the Asian Educational Media Service. Contact AEMS for price.
Japanese and Korean Pottery


In Japan around 1918, a movement to promote folk craft and folk art, called “mingei,” was initiated by Yanagi Sōetsu, a philosopher of religion, who was influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement and Zen Buddhism. During a retreat in 1926 at a Buddhist temple on the sacred mountain of Koya-san, Yanagi, along with potters Kawai Kanjiro and Hamada Shōji, came up with the term mingei and set out to preserve these traditional skills (Yanagi, 1972). The organizers’ initial focus was on traditional peasant pottery, though they worked assiduously with potters to develop aesthetic and practical adaptations of traditional forms. There was an explicit attempt to define the standards for, and then maintain, traditional styles and technologies of pottery production.

Each of the films reviewed here is based on an enthusiasm for what are perceived as authentic mingei artists and traditional mingei communities. They are also historical documents in their own right—primary observational data from the working lives of village folkcraft potters in Japan and Korea. All of the images are at least 25 years old and some go back more than a century.

Mashiko Village Pottery is reproduced from a silent black and white movie made in 1937. There is neither narration nor captioning beyond a brief description of Mashiko as a pottery town at the beginning. It shows the workshop of one local man, Sakuma Torataro, currently remembered as the one who made it possible for Hamada Shōji to be accepted into Mashiko society when he chose to move in and establish his workshop there. The film shows all the stages of production from digging the clay out of a local hillside to firing the finished pots in a large multi-chambered climbing kiln (naborigama). Storage jars, kitchenware (grater bowls), and teapots are all shown being thrown on the wheel and decorated with slips and glazes.

One woman, Minagawa Masu, is shown deftly drawing landscape decorations on the teapots. She was famous in the village for her ability to decorate the pots quickly and simply. She had no workshop of her own, but went into local workshops when summoned. The items she created were not produced for ceremonial or high society use; they were farmers’ utensils that could be taken to work in the fields. When asked what attracted him to Mashiko, Hamada used to credit the example of Minagawa’s work. She inspired his understanding of mingei with her repetitive, simple, and artful designs reproduced without pretension.

Two generations later, Sakuma’s grandson has inherited the workshop and continues to produce functional work. A small collection of his grandfather’s work is displayed in a special gallery. But Minagawa’s descendants no longer go out to decorate other people’s pots. They have their own shop and gallery where they turn out reproductions of the teapots seen in this film—favorite souvenirs for current visitors familiar with the history of Mashiko.

Potters at Work features two workshops in the Kyushu villages of Onda and Koishiwara—communities much favored by the early mingei organizers. The families are descendents of Korean potters kidnapped in the late 1500s during Hideyoshi’s invasions of that country. Yanagi and his friends were especially taken with Onda, a small village at the top of a mountain pass with room for only 14 families. It represented for them their mingei ideal of a cooperative community with three communal kilns and a consistent pottery style. Traditional pottery technology was assiduously and self-consciously maintained. Pots are still often signed with the name of the town rather than the potter or household. Because of the attention drawn to both communities by the mingei movement, they were able to abandon their farm work and become fulltime potters by the time this film was made in 1976. The film, taken in color, has no narration and only brief captions to introduce the major sections. The only sound is the ambient sound from the scenes filmed and a few short conversational phrases in Japanese. It is expertly edited to convey its story.

The film opens with the mudding up of chamber doors and the firing of a kiln at Ohta Kumao’s shop in Koishiwara. Then the film switches to Onda, with an extended series of shots about the preparation of clay. Dug from the hillside, the town has particularly hard rock clay that has to be pulverized before it can be used. The trademark image of Onda is its heavy log clay pounders that are operated by waterpower from the town stream. Good pictures of this procedure gradually reveal the nature of the technology. Then the camera moves into the workshop of Sakamoto Shigeki where he is throwing pots alongside his teenage son Takumi. A caption says, “Teaching the craft.” The son is shown in initial attempts at throwing small plates from a lump of clay. The fatherly concern for his son’s progress is shown by the way he looks at him and gives occasional pointers, even while he continues to make his own pots. Not mentioned in the film is the older custom of severe apprenticeship outside of the immediate household for a son who will become the heir to a shop. Shigeki, for instance, worked with an uncle for a couple of years before coming home to work with his father. Takumi, on the other hand, undertook to learn the craft in earnest after two years of college in Tokyo. While there, he spent time exploring Yanagi Sōetsu’s mingei museum and gaining a larger national view of mingei. Twenty-five years after the film was made, Takumi and Shigeki still make pots together. As shown in the film, Shigeki’s wife continues doing many jobs around the shop. This is a family enterprise; they use their own kiln, rather than the communal one.

In the film, the camera travels back to Koishiwara to show Kumao and two other potters working at wheels placed on a common deck. There are more workers here, beyond the immediate family. Many different pots are being made and are carried out from the wheels to sun dry in the yard. Suddenly one of the women workers cries out, “Ame da!” (It’s raining!) With some consternation, everybody jumps up from their work to run into the yard and rescue the pots from a
Doing Time, Doing Vipassana

Produced by Vipassana Research Publications. 1997. 52 minutes.

Doing Time, Doing Vipassana is a film about the Buddhist meditation practice called vipassana. Not a typical documentary film with footage of Buddhist monks or directions for practice, Doing Time puts this practice of meditation within a real life situation, a prison. It documents how prison inmates in one of the largest prisons in India came to learn vipassana and how doing this practice affected them.

The film begins with four men, from Somalia, Australia, England, and India, explaining why they were imprisoned and describing what life is like in Tihar Prison, a huge concrete structure housing 10,000 inmates. Having committed crimes ranging from murder to drug dealing, each man speaks of the violence that permeates life at Tihar, both among prisoners themselves and between guards and prisoners.

However when a new director, a woman named Kiran Bedi, is assigned to direct Tihar, attitudes within the prison begin to change. Bedi asks, “Is there anyone among us who hasn’t wanted to take something not ours, to hurt someone who angers us?... We are all potential criminals.”

From her perspective, the men must be treated with love and care so that they might learn to meet others with kindness. Attempting to create a more positive environment, she establishes a program for prisoners to receive outside visitors, listen to music, wear new clothing, and visit the prison canteen. But she knows these changes are minor, that what the men really need is a way to change the way they see themselves. Ultimately, Director Kiran Bedi arranges for a well-established vipassana meditation teacher, S. N. Goenka, to come into the prison and teach vipassana to a small group of inmates, after first running the same course for a number of prison guards.

The rest of the film documents the changes effected by these courses, focusing especially on the young men from Australia, Somalia, and England who are interviewed throughout. The young Somali and Australian are exceptionally perceptive and articulate about their own growth and the changes within the larger prison community, giving the audience a deeper insight into this experiment. Interspersing these comments with images of tough prison inmates embracing after 10 days of sitting in meditation, the film encourages the viewer to see the possibility of real change. Yet at the same time, the speakers emphasize that once they leave the structure of Tihar, the key to any real change will be the self-discipline necessary to continue the practice.

Audiences from high-school age through adult will find Doing Time engaging on different levels. As it follows the introduction of vipassana practice in the prison, the film thoughtfully recognizes the psychological and sociological dimensions of working with people incarcerated for criminal offenses. But the primary focus of Doing Time is the exploration of the effectiveness of this Theravadin Buddhist form of meditation. Though the film does not stress, or even discuss, these Buddhist origins, S. N. Goenka’s clear direction for the structure of the teaching demonstrates the strong discipline of his own Buddhist training. Although distributed by Goenka’s followers, the film is not in any way self-promoting. In fact, the filmmakers are careful to let inmates, guards, and prison directors speak for themselves, as they assess the effectiveness of vipassana practice among several different prison populations, not simply those taught by Goenka.

Doing Time is an excellent film that might be used to evoke discussion and further research in a variety of classes including sociology, religion, and criminal justice. The final frames conclude that teaching vipassana practice has been successful in major prisons in India, as well as in Taiwan and the United States. But more accurately, the film has no real conclusion. Even better, my appetite was whetted to learn more about these prison experiments, and more about vipassana practice.

Cathy Benton teaches classes in the Asian religious traditions at Lake Forest College. She has recently returned from three months in Pune, India, where she worked with ten students from the Associated Colleges of the Midwest India Studies Program. Currently, she is working on a study of Sanskrit stories associated with the Indian god of desire, Kamadeva.

Doing Time, Doing Vipassana is available from Pariyatti Book Service. Price is $29.95.
Sadako’s Legacy


The video, Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes, is based on a children’s literature classic written by Eleanor Coerr twenty-four years ago. It is the true story of Sadako Sasaki and takes place in Japan in 1955. Ten years after the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, 12-year-old Sadako begins to experience dizziness and finally collapses. At the hospital, she is diagnosed with leukemia. This disease is not unknown to young Sadako since many children and adults have died from leukemia during her short lifetime. Throughout the book, she never loses hope that she may be one of the few who survive. When a friend reminds her of an old Japanese legend that says if you fold a thousand paper cranes your wish may come true, Sadako starts folding. This story is a testimony to her courage. Her hope is kept alive by her diligent effort to complete the thousand cranes, her attentive parents, and friends who bring her scraps of colored paper. Sadako herself shares her message of hope with another hospitalized child who has acquired leukemia from his mother. Sadako never finishes her thousand paper cranes, but her friends construct the remaining cranes so that she can be buried with them.

Though sad, the story allows people to share Sadako’s hope for her own life and the lives of all the children who have been or will be affected by wars. In 1958, children in Japan gave money to erect a memorial statue in her honor, and every year since, many thousands of paper cranes continue to appear at its base, renewing Sadako’s wish for peace and bringing attention to the suffering caused by war.

The video, which was made in 1991, remains true to the book. Liv Ullmann’s narration could not be any better in voice and expression. Ed Young’s soft pastel drawings, the sole images featured in this film, perfectly embrace the sentiment of the story. (Young, an award-winning illustrator, has also written and illustrated a picture book, entitled Sadako, for younger children.) The music, performed by guitarist George Winston, enhances the story and provides a lilting background, though at times it makes the narration difficult to understand.

This video has already won many awards, including the Gold Award by Parents’ Choice Magazine, the Blue Ribbon for the American Film and Video Festival, The Gold Apple from the National Education Film and Video Festival, and the Notable Film and Video Award by the American Library Association. It has been reviewed and given five stars from the Video Rating Guide, a “Highest” rating from Children’s Video Report, and is highly recommended by Video Librarian. School Library Journal states it is “deserving of the honors and awards it has received and delivers a powerful message that is especially appropriate in today’s world” (April, 1991).

Teachers and educators will find many useful resources to accompany this video. The video of How to Fold a Paper Crane (1994), produced by the same company as Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes, begins with a brief reprise of the Sadako story and includes information about the Sadako statue (known as the Children’s Monument), which stands in the center of Hiroshima’s Peace Park surrounded by millions of paper cranes. After the introduction, it very clearly describes the procedures for constructing the origami paper cranes. A narrator presents the 26 steps in a clear voice while a pair of gloved hands demonstrates the folds. Teachers will find the video particularly suited for a class project since the steps are divided into individual segments that can be paused to allow students to complete each of the steps. The accompanying guide provides visual instructions for folding a paper crane, a brief history of origami and information about cranes. The Sadako Film Project’s Web site (http://www.sadako.com) provides free posters, additional directions for folding paper cranes, and factual information about many endangered species of cranes who themselves have become victims of habitat loss. This site also has links to

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Swing in Beijing

Swing in Beijing consists of a series of well-integrated short sketches of avant-garde artists in Beijing. It runs from an opening sequence on punk rockers Underbaby (“I’m going to throw my blood on the flag, then s*** on it”) to sculptor Jiang Jie and video artist Shou Zhijie. Artist interviews are intercut with informative views of their exhibitions, installations, films, and stage performances. In between most of the vignettes, we are treated to shots of downtown Beijing. Together, the vignettes form a powerful impression of a varied, radical, and seemingly vibrant arts underground.

The studio interviews reveal some of the concerns of contemporary Chinese artists; particularly salient among them are the limits to their creative expression and the influence of foreign audiences. Almost all of the artists agree that political limits on their work are not their main problem. According to one, “The only restriction on my work is lack of funds,” a common complaint among Chinese artists. Another artist philosophically points out, “I never expect total freedom.” Several of the artists combine commercial work in advertising or media with their experimental work. Those who decide to rely solely on sales of their work struggle.

Wu Meichun, a curator of experimental art, agrees resources (such as lack of exhibition venues) and creativity, not politics, are the biggest challenges for artists. While we are shown a large exhibition of “experimental” art, Wu and others point out that the audience is almost entirely other artists. Most of the artists interviewed have exhibited only overseas. Video artist Shou explains that “Chinese [are] often chosen for overseas shows so that western curators [will] look radical.” Another artist, the painter Wei Dong, explains that while he’s gratified with the exposure overseas, the responses have been superficial: foreigners are interested in his work, but don’t understand it. All of the artists want to exhibit their work in China. “I long to present my work to the people of my generation,” says Wei.

The dramatist Meng Jinghui is one of the few artists in the video with a substantial Chinese audience. He estimates 25,000 people have seen his creative staging of Nobel Laureate Dario Fo’s play “Accidental Death of an Anarchist,” which was funded by private interests. Drama works better on video than visual art and the play stands out as edgy, dynamic, political—and funny. In his interview Meng admonishes artists, “Don’t be afraid that the western bourgeoisie will misunderstand, that Beijing common people won’t understand, that senior colleagues will suppress you, don’t be afraid of anything.” Self-censorship poses the greatest danger.

Several artists express concern over rapid modernization in Beijing. Zhang Wang describes a conceptual piece he did among the demolition of traditional houses for a downtown shopping plaza saying that “without those old buildings, you don’t know where you’re coming from.” Several other artists also mention the problem and relate it to the question of Chinese identity. Zhang notes that businessmen can make you want a product and that consumption of the product will change your entire way of life. He recognizes that artists have little influence.

This film depicts an underworld and must be understood in that way; Swing in Beijing art world is exclusive and difficult to participate in, even in China. The film is valuable in that it takes the viewer to places that even well-connected Chinese and foreigners would be unlikely to be able to visit. On the other hand, it fails to frame this experience as unusual and would leave a class of students with the impression that China was a hotbed of radical and challenging art. The reality of the vibrant contemporary Chinese art world is bigger, subtler, and more diffuse. This program presents the radical and politicized art with which westerners (and art-world westerners at that) are most comfortable. It also foregrounds social concerns that Chinese share with westerners—feminism, mass-marketing, the destructive aspects of modernization—without addressing more local concerns such as identity, unemployment, and corruption. It’s true foreign audiences don’t understand Chinese art in a very profound way, but this tape makes only a measured contribution towards alleviation of that problem.

With that caveat in mind, the tape’s introduction of engaged and stimulating work in many media gives viewers a glimpse of contemporary Chinese artists’ life, ideas, and challenges. Swing in Beijing is accessible to people with no previous knowledge of China. Students from senior high school through graduate school should find it a surprising, provocative, and stimulating look at this potentially influential subculture.

Patrick Dowdey works at Wesleyan University as Curator of the Mansfield Freeman Center for East Asian Studies and Assistant Professor of Anthropology. He has conducted extensive fieldwork within the contemporary Chinese art world. His most recent exhibitions include “Living Through the Forgotten War: Portrait of Korea” and “Streets of Kyoto: Photographs by Kai Fusayoshi.” This spring he will present an exhibition of woodcuts titled, “Serving the People: Woodcuts from Li Huanmin’s Education in Tibet.” Swing in Beijing is available from First Run/Icarus Films. Price is $390 for purchase and $75 for rental. A 73-minute version is also available for $440 for purchase and $100 for rental.
Few countries have had a greater affect on the American psyche than Vietnam. The war we fought on that soil remains with us today in the form of countless books, movies, songs, and memories. But despite decades of political and military involvement, Americans still know very little about the place itself. This month’s Bargain Buys column focuses on affordable media that makes some attempt to talk about Vietnamese, not just Americans, who were touched by that terrible conflict. In addition, I will discuss what is available on Vietnam today, especially since it reopened for development during the 1990s. Everything mentioned is appropriate for high school through college classes unless stated otherwise.

**Bargain Buys!**

**Vietnam: Then and Now**

**The War**

From the Vietnamese perspective the war lasted 30 years, from right after the end of WWII when negotiations with the French broke down to when the North Vietnamese army marched into Saigon in 1975. The man who led them through most of that period was the revered Ho-Chi Minh. Although most documentaries on the war barely mention him, A&E Biography has produced a respectable 50-minute account of his life, focusing mostly on his time in Europe and as a young revolutionary. This video portrays Minh in a generally favorable light, but shies away from discussing the revolutionary. This video portrays Minh in a generally favorable light, but shies away from discussing the

There are also resources available to educators interested in teaching about particular events during the war. During the 1990s, CBS’s “60 Minutes” traveled back to the village My Lai to confront an incident many Americans would like to forget—the cold-blooded murder of hundreds of civilians by U.S. soldiers. Accompanied by two airmen who helped stopped the atrocity, Mike Wallace talks with several of the town’s former residents (no one actually lives in My Lai anymore, though some still work there), including one woman who had been personally saved by one of the airmen. Although the program, titled *Back to My Lai*, is very critical of the men who instigated the massacre, especially the officers, it stops short of arguing that the entire war effort was wrong.

The Discovery Channel feature, *The Fall of Saigon*, on the other hand, views the U.S. involvement more negatively. Twenty years after the fact, key players in Washington (including President Ford and Henry Kissinger), the military, and the former U.S. embassy recount the chaotic situation that evolved over that last week before the North Vietnamese took over the city. Also featured are Vietnamese people who aided the Americans throughout the war effort and were then left behind. This program reveals what an utter failure this conflict was and how it ultimately hurt most the people it was designed to protect.

**Beyond the War**

No one, American or Vietnamese, forgets a conflict like the Vietnam War quickly. While anger persists on both sides, many people just want to make peace with this terrible chapter in their lives. War widow Barbara Sonneborn traveled to Vietnam on just such a mission, a journey documented in the acclaimed documentary *Regret to Inform*. Accompanied by her Vietnamese-American friend, who is also a widow, Sonneborn visits the village where her husband was killed and talks with the former Vietcong women still living there. *Regret* is unique in that it chronicles the heartache and recovery of three groups of women—American, South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese—focusing on their common humanity and strength. This film could be used in Women’s Studies classes as well as units on Vietnam.

Sonneborn’s friend represents another legacy of the war—the migration of millions of Indochinese people to the United States and other Western countries. *The Vietnamese: A Refugee Journey*, produced by Penn State, discusses this phenomenon in a short, but informative 9-minute video that can be shown to younger classes.

Now that Vietnam is open to Americans again, many young people are traveling there as tourists. One somewhat eccentric but brave woman, Karin Muller, trekked through Vietnam alone with only a Hi-8 camera to record her adventures. The resulting documentary, *Hitchhiking Vietnam*, focuses on Muller more than it should, but does offer a view of rural Vietnam that most tourists never see. Even better, there is an online teacher’s guide available from PBS that accompanies it (see “Vietnam Web Sites,” page 9, for URL).

Vietnamese filmmakers have become quite popular in the United States during the last five years. Of the new releases, *Three Seasons* by Tony Bui is perhaps the most teachable, because it focuses on so many aspects of Vietnamese life, including traditional rural practices, war memories, poverty and the underworld, gender roles,
and the effects of modernization/ Westernization. Several other recent films dealing with some of the same themes, including Cyclo and The Vertical Ray of the Sun (both by Tran Anh Hung), have also gained prominence in the film community and would nicely fit into college-level Asian Studies courses.

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Videography

Back to My Lai (1998, 14 minutes) is available from Social Studies School Service. Price is $29.95.

Cyclo (1997, 123 minutes) is available from Facets Video. Price is $29.95.

The Fall of Saigon (1995, 90 minutes) is available from Discovery Store. Price is $19.95.

Hitchhiking Vietnam: Letters from the Trail (1997, 60 minutes) is available from Facets Video. Price is $19.95.

Ho-Chi Minh (50 minutes) is available from A&E Biography. Price is $14.95.

Regret to Inform (1999, 72 minutes) is available from Facets Video. Price is $24.95.

Three Seasons (1999, 110 minutes) is available from Facets Video. Price is $14.95.

Sadako’s Legacy

Sadako, the heroine of Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes, is a symbol of courage and resilience. Her story continues to inspire and educate people around the world, particularly in the context of Japanese history and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Sadako’s Legacy continues from page 6

many other organizations that promote world peace.

With the world at war again, it would be appropriate to recall the story of this little girl. She was an innocent victim of war just as many Afghan and American children will become victims of this current war. It is a time to remember how American children of Japanese descent were victims of internment during the Second World War. Remembering our mistakes may help us to refrain from targeting innocent people of Middle Eastern descent in this time of terrorism. Sadako’s wish for peace needs to be resounded again and again. This video will provide a gentle glimpse into the tragedy of wars, and promote lively discussions that can be related to situations that will occur during our current involvement in Afghanistan.

Vietnam Web Sites

Vietnam/American War

The American Experience: Vietnam Online
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/vietnam/index.html

Battlefield Vietnam
http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/

The Cold War—Episode 11: Vietnam
http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/11

Famous Trials: My Lai Courts-Martial
http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mylai/mylai.htm

Peace Trees Vietnam: Reversing the Legacy of War
http://www.peacetreesvietnam.org

Vietnam: Echoes from the Wall
http://www.teachvietnam.org

Vietnam War Internet Project
http://www.vvip.org

Vietnamese Boat People Stories
http://www.boatpeople.com/stories

Vertical Ray of Sun (2000, 112 minutes) is available from Facets Video. Price is $29.95 for the DVD.

Vietnam: Chronicle of War (1981, 88 minutes) is available from Social Studies School Service. Price is $19.98.

Vietnam Today

Asia Society: Vietnam Resources
http://www.askasia.org/teachers/Instructional_Resources/Regional/Vietnam.htm

Hitchhiking Vietnam
http://www.pbs.org/hitchhikingvietnam

Vietmedia: Vietnamese Culture
http://www.vietmedia.com/culture

Vietnam Picture Archive
http://www.ibiblio.org/vietnam

Vietnam: Yesterday and Today
http://servercc.oakton.edu/~witman

Viettouch: Vietnamese History, Art, and Music
http://www.viettouch.com

Vietnamese-Americans

Vietnamese Community in America
http://vietspace.kicon.com

Vietnamese-American Society
http://www.vas-dc.org

The Vietnamese: A Refuge Journey (1991, 9 minutes) is available from Penn State Media Sales. Price is $20.


Vietnamese-American Society

Sadako, an 11-year-old girl who lived through the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is the focus of Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes. The film is a powerful story of resilience and hope, and is an important resource for educators.

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes is available from Informed Democracy. Price is $99.95.

How to Fold a Paper Crane is available from Informed Democracy. Price is $99.95 or $179.95 with Sadako. (The soundtrack for Sadako, including Liv Ullmann’s narration, is $15.95.)

Additional Resources for Educators

Web Sites

Sadako Film Project
http://www.sadako.com

Transcript of an Interview:
Francis Mitsuwo Tomosawa
http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/wwii/interview/trans.htm

World Peace Project for Children
http://www.sadako.org

International Crane Foundation
http://www.savingcranes.org

Books


This is a superb video about love, marriage, and speech in an isolated village in Central Sumatra, Indonesia, that can be used in a wide range of classes. It is a team product in which Kathrin Oester was primarily responsible for the filming and Heinzpeter Znoj for the ethnography. The people of the area, called “Sungai Sepi” (Quiet River), are generally Malay but they do not use any particular ethnic label. They resemble their neighbors to the North, the Minangkabau, in being both Muslim and matrilineal, but they do not have the distinctive houses or ceremonial _adat_ attire of the Minangkabau.

The film is structured as an ethnographic suspense story. It seems that in Sungai Sepi weddings are held only once a year, after the rice harvest (they have resisted the Green Revolution). This means that much is at stake at one moment. Marriages are still arranged (or, as one disgruntled participant says, “forced”). Although the young people do their best to push their own choices, matters are still in the hands of the elders, especially the mothers. The two foreigners—filmmaker and ethnographer—got caught up in the excitement but they had as little success in finding out who would marry whom as the young people. Tension rose, “love was in the air,” but not until the wedding day itself were the marriage arrangements revealed.

As the wedding day approached, many people tell us of their hopes, and by the denouement we are deeply involved with several marriage candidates and finally we, like them, are surprised. The people, especially the young ones, are remarkably open, to the point of indiscretion, on camera. (For the protection of their privacy, it is forbidden to show the video in Indonesia.)

We never see either of the two foreigners, although we sometimes hear the voice of Znoj. A woman’s voice narrates, telling us of the progress of the research. The villager whom we get to know best is a young man who, in a series of interviews, gives us a perceptive and frank account of himself and his romantic liaisons. (It is not giving away too much to say that he had a main marriage target and three fallbacks, none of whom seem to know about his wife in another village.)

One of the ethnographic gems is his explanation of the indirect allusive speech (sindiran) used in marriage negotiations. At one point he and the mother of one of his prospects demonstrate this speech style on camera. Another key sequence comes when the female ethnographer describes her attempts to interview the woman who has become her best friend in the village about the process of arranging marriages. The woman resists her direct questioning, but eventually leads the ethnographer out to her isolated rice field. There, in private, she teaches the ethnographer an alternative mode of gathering information—role playing. So the two women play two mothers discussing marriage between their children. This is a dramatic example of what Charles Briggs was writing about in his 1985 book, _Learning to Ask_. He proposed that instead of training people to be good informants in our speech style, we should search for their own style of communication information.

The video deals with many other issues: tension between nationalism, Islam, and the matrilineal principles; the dilemma of young women who have had too much schooling to fit back into village life; gendered speech and gendered space; the good company of women alone; the shaman in a Muslim society; and polygyny in a matrilineal society. All of this is presented in an easy way, avoiding heavily didactic tones.

This film would work well in a wide range of classes. I have even used the interview sequences in a graduate methodology seminar.

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Karl Heider is Professor of Anthropology at the University of South Carolina. His research is focused on Indonesia. He is author of _Ethnographic Film_ (1976), _Grand Valley Dani: Peaceful Warriors_ (1997, third edition), and _Seeing Anthropology Through Film_ (1997). He also is co-editor of _Films for Anthropological Teaching_ (1995).

_I Love You—Hope for the Year 2000_ is available from Artefakt Productions. Price is $100.

Contact AEMS for suggested readings.
Kamala and Raji

Kamala and Raji tells the stories of two women in Ahmedabad, India, who are both members of SEWA (Self-Employed Women’s Association). SEWA is an unusual trade union that was founded in 1972 to organize women who work exclusively in the non-wage sector. The film examines the impact that SEWA has had on the lives and opinions of its two protagonists.

Kamala is a young mother, married to a man who does not contribute enough either to the work or the income of the household, and who has been abusive to her in the past. Over the years, Kamala has learned how to cope with him and yet not relinquish her independence. She is determined that her daughters will have access to education and will not be forced into early marriages. As the camera follows her at home and at work, we hear her talk about the importance of SEWA, about her own views on marriage, and about the status of women in her community.

Raji is a vegetable seller and a representative of SEWA. She seems to be happily married and lives in a neighborhood that she describes as being friendly and safe. Through her narrative, we understand how SEWA provides legal representation for its members as well as financial aid through a cooperative bank. Like Kamala, she talks about the difference such an organization can make in the lives of women who, as individuals, would be unable to confront either traders or the cumbersome legal system.

As the film progresses, we perceive the depth of the courage these women display in their day-to-day routines. The film shows us aspects of “third-world feminism” in action, through the words and decisions of the women. But perhaps because it concentrates so much on the impact of SEWA on the lives of the women, it does not provide a very clear picture of the organization itself. Undergraduate students who saw the film were very impressed by it, but also a little confused because it did not present enough information about the history or the status of SEWA. I would recommend that teachers talk to their classes about SEWA and its role in Indian labor history before showing the film. Information about the organization is available from http://www.sewa.org. It might also be helpful to remind students that the film concentrates on a particular region and socioeconomic group and should not be taken as being representative of India as a whole. For feminist anthropology or sociology courses, a good companion piece might be Shabnam Virmani’s documentary When Women Unite, which tells the story of women in Andhra Pradesh, who successfully organized to oppose the sale of the local liquor, arak, in their district during the early 1990s.

Simona Sawhney teaches Comparative Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her areas of interest include South Asian literature and literary theory.

Kamala and Raji is available from Documentary Educational Resources. Price is $195 for purchase and $45 for rental.

When Women Unite (1996, 90 minutes) is available from Television Trust for the Environment. Contact the organization to find out about pricing.

Pottery

continued from page 5

Pottery production has depended on rural workshops with specialized workers to make large numbers of pots quickly and efficiently. The technology is, however, much the same as the Japanese communities in the other videos. What is impressive is the skill and energy of the workers as they make and fire acres of pots (as measured in their drying sheds). The style of work is parallel to an earlier period of Japanese folk pottery production, before it was validated as an “art” by the mingei movement.

The film pays homage to this pottery as a dying art and craft since the jars were then disappearing from urban balconies and rural yards. Potters were closing. Less than ten years later, however, Sayres reported at the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) conference that Korean critics and pottery specialists are now recognizing the art value of onggi pots and seem to be laying the groundwork for continuation of some production. It is a turn of events not predicted in his monograph or the film.

Asian studies students can learn a lot from these films, if they and their teachers are willing to do some extra work. Only the Korean film can stand alone as an instructional unit, but combined with the other films, one can construct an interesting unit for classes in art history, ceramics, aesthetics, village sociology, and a kind of cultural psychology (in which Japanese identity is sometimes presented and often contested.) The three resource texts listed below are specific to the three films. Yanagi’s essays are the basis for making the Moksho history film and are central to understanding mingei. Moeran’s ethnography of Onda, in which Sakamoto Shigeki was his principal informant, not only probes the nature and economy of the pottery village, but also contains an excellent critical review of Yanagi’s philosophy. Sayre’s monograph gives a much more comprehensive description of the specific onggi pottery practices and history in Korea.

The pottery communities in the Japanese films still exist and thrive as centers of tourism and art interests. The standards for what is to be considered authentic mingei continue to evolve and only some potters think of their work in these terms. It is, however, an important marketing image for local communities and commerce. Onda and Koishiwara villages look much the same as they did 25 years ago. Mashiko has changed and expanded, but is still promoted as a tourist spot. More importantly, young potters not only inherit ongoing family workshops, but many outsiders are able to establish and survive in new workshops. In the last 15 years, Mashiko workshops have increased from 350 to 500. Pottery lives!

John Singleton is Professor Emeritus of Education and Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. He has done fieldwork on folkcraft pottery apprenticeship in Mashiko, has interviewed the potters in Onda and Koishiwara pictured in these films, and has visited an onggi pottery workshop in Korea. He is the editor of Learning in Likely Places: Varieties of Apprenticeship in Japan (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Mashiko Village Pottery and Potters at Work are available from Marty Gross Productions. Price is $15 each.

Korean Onggi Potter is available from Penn State Media Sales. Price is $100.

Additional Resources for Educators


