

# News and Reviews

Issue 25  
Winter 2007

A PUBLICATION OF THE ASIAN EDUCATIONAL MEDIA SERVICE ■ CENTER FOR EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC STUDIES ■ UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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## Amongst White Clouds

■ Directed by Edward A. Burger. 2004. 86 minutes.

**A**merican director Edward A. Burger—Zen student, filmmaker, and songwriter—decided to become a Buddhist while attending university and visiting a local Zen center. In 1999, after encountering American author Red Pine’s book of translated Chinese poems by Buddhist monks, he decided to go to China and learn Chinese. This film is about his quest to find and interview some of the Zen (Chan, in Chinese) recluse monks dwelling in isolated hermitages among the peaks and gorges of China’s Zhongnan Mountain range, home to hermit monks perhaps for as long as five thousand years.

After introductory footage, we find Burger at a hermitage, meeting his Master (the term used for Buddhist teacher in this film). Scenes of the Master teaching (in Chinese, translated by readable English subtitles), are interspersed with views of the landscape, scenes of monks chanting, and close-ups of insects eating leaves or being attacked by insect enemies. This footage matches the points being made by the Master, who is saying “suffering and joy actually are the same—don’t differentiate among them.” The Zhongnan Mountains in the southwestern Shaanxi Province, centuries ago, were

first a refuge for Taoist monks. The parallels drawn in the film between nature and the monk’s teachings also reflect a major Taoist point: that humans should live according to nature, not against it.

Next, we see the Master planting bean seeds in his vegetable garden. Burger says (in Chinese), “Hey Master, sit for a minute, teach us something.” He replies, “Quiescence and action you can’t separate. Put your heart into it with one mind and all this is done in no time.” He stands up and gestures around him. “All this is practice, it’s not just sitting quietly somewhere. All is balanced and tranquil, even work is very calm. Don’t give rise to discriminating mind. When you work, just work.” The camera shifts to reveal a tall ancient pagoda, with bushy wild plants growing out of its crevices, rising out of the forest. The camera then moves to a view of the garden and its bean vines, of an owl in the cleft of a tree trunk, of garden stakes and a whisk broom leaning against the wall of the monk’s hut. The Master is advising against a discriminating mind that allows attention to wander, a common human tendency contrary to practically all Buddhist practice, no matter what the school. The old pagoda, the garden plants, the animals and

insects are simply being what they are.

Burger asks him why he lives in the mountains instead of in the city. The Master says, “Those who live here have this recluse heart. This Path is strong in them, they are willing to leave those noisy bustling places. They have very little contact with the world, few distractions, they don’t leave the mountain, they don’t want to see the world. Most of the monks here already understand the practice methods, they don’t make mistakes. But you must understand the practice. If you don’t, you make mistakes and that’s nothing but torture.” He means the life of a recluse monk is not easy. Each is responsible for his own maintenance (these monks do not go on

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

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

Please contact us to be added to the mailing list, or for back issues and extra copies of this newsletter. AEMS is funded with generous support from the Freeman Foundation.

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## MPG & AEMS Announce New DVD: "Preaching From Pictures: A Japanese Mandala"

The Media Production Group (MPG) has just issued its first interactive DVD, *Preaching from Pictures: A Japanese Mandala*. This DVD guides the viewer through a Japanese Buddhist painting, the *Kumano Mandala of the Ten Worlds*, used by itinerant nuns on their preaching tours across Japan from the 17th century into the early 20th. The painting depicts the arc of human life from birth to death, and—more vividly—the hells and heavens where we might be sent after death.

Unlike most Buddhist mandalas, which use esoteric symbols requiring explanation, the *Kumano Mandala of the Ten Worlds*, intended for mass viewing, is in a cartoon style familiar to anybody today who reads the comic sections of a newspaper. North American viewers should find most of its images easy to understand; we felt we needed to include background comment only for a few images.

The centerpiece of the new DVD is a program we originally released in VHS format in 2002, now enhanced with more than two hours of new material. We developed our guided tour of the Mandala by expanding upon a Japanese film created by Professor Kuroda Hideo and the National Museum of Japanese History for a 2001 exhibit, "Visions of the Other World." To provide North American viewers with a sense of the context that gave rise to the Mandala, we intercut images from it with scenes from a panoramic painting of daily life in 17th-century Edo, Japan's capital city, with comments by historian (and member of the MPG team) Professor Ronald P. Toby.

Colleagues were so enthusiastic about the original video as an instructional tool that we decided to move into DVD production in order to take advantage of the digital format's higher resolution images, and to package the video with other



*Kumano Mandala of the Ten Worlds*, c. 17th century, Japan

resources that frame the Mandala in various contexts.

A new feature on the DVD is a virtual symposium including conversations between pairs of scholar-specialists who discuss topics such as karma, pilgrimage, Japanese popular religion, and the human energy of the Edo era. The participants, in addition to Professor Toby, are Professors Barbara Ambros, D. Max Moerman, Brian Ruppert, and Henry DeWitt Smith II. The DVD also includes: additional images of Japan, historical and contemporary; expert commentaries on an

array of topics; a glossary of technical terms and Japanese words; and lists of sources in print and on the Internet.

We designed the DVD for use in classes from secondary schools on up to graduate seminars, in courses that cover topics such as Asian history and religions, Japanese popular art, world religions, gender studies, and lifecourse studies.

We would not have been able to undertake this novel project without funds generously provided by a grant to AEMS from the Freeman Foundation.

Copies of the DVD may be ordered from the AEMS website. Find the "MPG" tab in the navigation bar, then scroll down to the *Preaching from Pictures* link. An excerpt from the DVD can be viewed there. The DVD can also be purchased at Amazon.com. Our original video program remains available for purchase on VHS, distributed by AEMS. ■

**David W. Plath** is executive producer of the Media Production Group (MPG). He is also professor emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

*Preaching from Pictures* is distributed by Customflix.com, available through www.aems.uiuc.edu and Amazon.com. Price is \$70 for purchase.

## New Logo, Website and Newsletter Designs

AEMS is happy to announce a number of exciting changes to our appearance. The redesigned *News and Reviews* you are reading is the final step in a creative process that has taken many months.

The first step in revamping our overall look began with the design of a new logo, setting a new tone for AEMS. With input from our advisory boards, we worked with Electric Pictures, a graphic design studio in Champaign, Illinois, to develop the new logo, which was completed in June. Its rounded squares are loosely inspired by the filmstrip element of our old logo, but can be interpreted more openly, suggesting screens, film, or even keys on a computer keyboard.

In late September we launched our new website ([www.aems.uiuc.edu](http://www.aems.uiuc.edu)). Over the summer, we worked with Spinlight, a Champaign graphic design firm, to create this new website, aiming for a fresh and streamlined appearance with a clear and logical structure. Our old website dated from 1998 and served us well, but had become difficult to navigate as the pages accumulated.

In designing the new site, we wanted to preserve the features that users have come to rely on from AEMS while dropping outdated or redundant elements. We have retained website features such as “Current Events in Asia,” pdf files of *News and Reviews* back issues, lesson plans for use with film, and a selection of third-party resources. As part of our streamlining efforts, we have removed some features, including the individual country pages (useful resources of this type can be found at Library of Congress, National Geographic, Countryreports.org, etc.), and long lists of links that may be easier to find through a Google search.



In addition, we have introduced new features, like streaming video of on-campus film-related events, and we will soon be adding reviews of web resources, trailers for MPG videos, and Web-only reviews. Users will also be happy to find that our database has recently been updated and improved.

Graphic designer Evelyn Shapiro has now updated the look of *News and Reviews*, taking her cue from the new logo and Web site, while still retaining the newsletter’s classic look. In addition to a new banner and masthead and some changes in font and colors, the newsletter design can now highlight regularly featured columns (such as the “Teaching and Technology” column beginning this issue), grouped articles on related topics, and issues devoted to special themes. Shapiro has also designed new advertisements and a brochure for AEMS.

We welcome your feedback on these changes. Please let us know what you would like to see on our website or in our newsletter, and in what directions you would like to see us grow. ■

### Survey for Improving Our Services

AEMS, multimedia technology, and the world of education are all going through a period of rapid change and development. To keep pace with that change, we would love some feedback from you, our readers. What do you teach? What AEMS services do you use most? What do you wish we would offer? Please help us learn how to better serve you by filling out a short survey on our website (follow the link from [www.aems.uiuc.edu](http://www.aems.uiuc.edu))—this will take only a couple of minutes. Thank you!

### Next Issue to Focus on South Korean Cinema

I’m pleased to announce that the next issue of the AEMS newsletter will be a special issue devoted to South Korean cinema, drawing on the success of our film festival last September, and a hot topic internationally.

—Tanya Lee, *Editor*

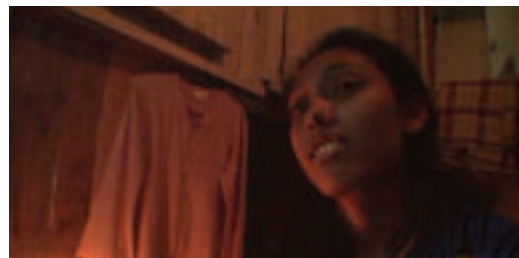
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**Customflix.com**, [www.customflix.com](http://www.customflix.com).

**Documentary Educational Resources**, 101 Morse Street, Watertown, MA 02472, [docued@der.org](mailto:docued@der.org), [www.der.org](http://www.der.org). Tel: 800-569-6621 or 617-926-0491. Fax: 617-926-9519.

**First Run/Icarus Films**, 32 Court Street, 21st Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201, [mail-room@frif.com](mailto:mail-room@frif.com), [www.frif.com](http://www.frif.com). Tel: 718- 488-8900. Fax: 718-488-8642.



## B.A.T.A.M.

■ Directed by Liam Dalzell, Per Erik Eriksson, and Johan Lindquist. 2005. 33 minutes.

**B.** *A.T.A.M.* explores globalization by focusing on the stories of two women living and working on the island of Batam, in a remote corner of Indonesia just thirteen miles from Singapore. The narrator frames the film against the background of the ongoing debate about globalization and whether it will improve people's welfare or create new forms of inequality.

The film takes on the task of portraying individual experiences, rather than statistics. We are thus given only a few numbers. Thirty-five years ago only 3,000 people lived on Batam. Today, as Singapore moves its high-tech manufacturing industries to Batam, some 600,000 people live there, mostly young, Indonesian women. Most of the women work in the factories, but 10,000 are sex workers; Singapore males make the short voyage to Batam for both business and for sex. Batam is an island of contrasts; brand-new shopping centers are often adjacent to empty ones filled with squatters. Ornate entrances into exclusive subdivisions have only vacant lots.

The film's title, spelling the island's name as an abbreviation, reflects the Indonesian fondness for playing with acronyms. Throughout the film, Batam residents share their creative interpretations of what "B.A.T.A.M." stands for in the Bahasa Indonesian language:

"If you arrive you will regret it."

"If you succeed you will be happy on Batam."

"If you endure you will succeed."

"If you arrive you will win."

"When you arrive a prostitute will be waiting for you."

"If you are afraid you will die."

These nicely summarize the Batam experiences.

The narrator tells us that on Batam, "the economy of the day is factory work and the economy of the night is sex work." Batam has a feminized economy, dependent on compliant young women whose skilled fingers can do the necessary electronic assembly. Meanwhile, men are increas-

ingly marginalized. We return throughout the film to pick up on interviews with the two featured women. One is a factory worker from Aceh (on the northern tip of Sumatra), the other, a sex worker



**Batam is an island of contrasts;  
brand-new shopping centers  
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from the central Indonesian island of Java.

The factory worker, age 23, works the night shift, from 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM, making circuit boards. With overtime, she earns US\$130 a month, most of which goes to support her parents and her unemployed brothers. She longs for her home village and often phones her mother just to chat. She does not want to work on circuit boards forever, but has her own goals: an education, work experience appropriate to that education, a return to her village (if the conflict has quieted down in Aceh); she does not want to become just a housewife.

The other woman, 36 years old, came to Batam with her husband. When he took up with a prostitute she left him, sent her children home to Java, and eventually turned to prostitution herself. She has chosen to be filmed in partial shadow so that her family will not be shamed. "For my father," she says, "shame is worse than death." The narrator elaborates on the cultural implications, explaining the Indonesian terms "merantau," or migration,

and "malu," or shame. *Merantau*, which means going out into the world before returning home, is valued only if the migrant succeeds. If not, it is deemed shameful. And since "most don't succeed, *malu* (shame) binds them to restless lives on the island," the narrator explains.

In an important sense, *B.A.T.A.M.* shows us only one side of the story: the lives of the Indonesian factory and sex workers who are earning barely enough to support themselves and their families perhaps, but at a level of grinding poverty. We learn nothing about the factory management class, and how they live, nor about the presumably affluent sexual tourists who cross the Straits from Singapore. What do they think, and how much do they understand the system that they support?

In short, the situation on Batam today is convenient for business in both Indonesia and Singapore. It is globalization at work, and the young women pay the price.

This film is an excellent, even subtle work. Secondary schools would likely find the centrality of sex work difficult to deal with, but at the college level students could discuss what keeps these two women on Batam, the chances that they will ever leave, and what their futures could be. They might even try to play the acronym game in English with *B.A.T.A.M.* ■

**Karl G. Heider** is Carolina Distinguished Professor in Anthropology at the University of South Carolina and past president of the Society for Visual Anthropology. Among his works are the books *Ethnographic Film*, *Indonesian Cinema*, and *Seeing Anthropology: Cultural Anthropology through Film*, and the films *Tikal* (1961), *Dani Houses* (1974), and *Dani Sweet Potatoes* (1974). Currently he is researching emotions and folk psychology of the Minangkabau of West Sumatra.

*B.A.T.A.M.* is available on DVD from Documentary Educational Resources (DER). Price is \$145 for purchase.

# The Men Who Would Conquer China

■ Directed by Nick Torrens and Jane St. Vincent Welch. 2004. 58 minutes.

**T**he *Men Who Would Conquer China* is the story of a bold New York investment banker, Mart Bakal, who, upon learning about investment opportunities in China, becomes enamored with the potential to make billions of dollars. With no clue about Chinese language and culture, Mart travels to China with plans and financial backing for investing millions of dollars in China. His approach, a well-tryed formula in the USA, is to buy sick businesses with potential for turnaround, invest capital and management systems in the companies to restructure them, turn them around, and then sell them off for a big profit. How difficult could it be to buy non-performing companies in China, he wonders, when the whole economy is performing below par compared to US standards?

Mart Bakal learns quickly that he simply does not know how to do business in China. The film shows clearly how cultural differences can be paralyzing, and it is worth showing business students for that reason alone. The film also offers many other insights that make this film valuable for a wide range of viewers.

People who are familiar with the theory of individualism and collectivism in cross-cultural psychology will find the film illustrative, capturing many aspects of it. Mart believes in rational exchange in his relationships, and his Chinese partner, Vincent Lee, a relational thinker, believes in building a long-term relationship. This basic difference leads them to struggle with the differences between short-term and long-term strategies in their business dealings.

Mart is eager and impatient. He does not want to start small just to build relationships; he wants to start big. Vincent is himself a big player financially, but to develop a long-term relationship he is willing to start small, and knows this new relationship will help get bigger projects in the future.

Interestingly, in the end, it takes Mart six years before he can invest in China. He has to start with a dairy plant, instead of an automobile parts



FIRST RUN/ICARUS FILMS

**The film shows clearly how cultural differences can be paralyzing, and it is worth showing business students for that reason alone.**

factory as originally envisioned, and the company is in need of capital, not management expertise, since they were already well run and profitable. So, when he finally does get his start in China, everything goes against his original vision, but it all works out well. These six years allow Vincent and Mart the necessary time to develop a relationship. This time enables them to learn about each other's strengths and weaknesses, and how to work with together. In this way, the video can be used to train business students to learn from Mart and Vincent's experiences and how to avoid their mistakes.

The film offers a collection of incidents that illustrate a range of theoretical concepts from cross-cultural studies. Differences in communica-

tion styles become transparent when Mart is seen talking down to dignitaries at a party that Vincent has organized for network building. In such settings, Chinese business people customarily greet dignitaries and government officials and listen to them. Business people seek the VIPs' blessings in such gatherings. In contrast, Americans seek to impress potential business partners by telling people how good they themselves are, what their plans are, how good their plans are, and why others should be a part of their plan.

The film exemplifies how Americans, as individualists, are constantly selling or promoting an idea, product, or themselves, whereas Chinese, as collectivists, have a time and context for each of these activities. The film also demonstrates the importance of maintaining face in China. This idea is foreign to American businesspeople, and the film shows Mart making mistakes over and over about not saving face.

The title of the film, in my mind, is problematic. Although it is intended to be satirical, the irony will likely be lost on many. China is a proud country, and it will continue to play a critical role in the world economy. There will be a lot of opportunities to succeed in China not only for business people but also for educators, researchers, artists, musicians, and so forth. Therefore, it is critical that the lesson of mutual respect is foregrounded and clear.

The film is a little slow in the beginning, but if one is patient, it becomes engaging. I showed the film to my Ph.D. students in international management as well as to undergraduate business students, and they all enjoyed it and found it instructive. I think the film will be useful in communications courses as well as in Asian Studies courses, particularly those that discuss China. High school students who are taking business classes may also enjoy the film. I plan to show it to my students in other business courses, and recommend it to others. ■

**Dharm P.S. Bhawuk** is a professor of Management and Culture and Community Psychology, University of Hawaii at Manoa. His research interests include cross-cultural training, intercultural sensitivity, diversity in the workplace, individualism and collectivism, culture and quality, culture and entrepreneurship, culture and creativity, indigenous psychology and management, and political behavior in the workplace.

*The Men Who Would Conquer China* is available on DVD and VHS from First Run/Icarus Films. Price is \$390 for purchase or \$100 for rental.

## Multimedia Telecollaboration in a Beginning Japanese Language Class

This fall, the college students in my first-year Japanese language class in Canada started collaborating online with Japanese language-learners in South Korea. The students are working together via Internet-based technology, communicating in Japanese to create multimedia projects. This collaboration is an ongoing experiment and what follows are some notes from the field. In this, the first of two parts, I will give you a brief description of the collaboration and how it was set up. In the second part, to appear in the spring issue of *News and Reviews*, I will report on the final outcomes.

In formal classroom situations with time and equipment constraints and large student-teacher ratios, it is often nearly impossible to facilitate a significant amount of authentic interaction in the target language. So this semester I started experimenting with ways to use technology to see if I could motivate my students to close their textbooks, open their ears and mouths, and actually communicate with other human beings. And maybe even have fun too!

The professor of the class in Korea, Ohnishi Hitoshi, is an old friend from graduate school in Japan. Having our students collaborate was an idea that started during hours of online chatting about ways to improve our Japanese language classes. In order to convince our students to actively participate, we decided from the outset on the following criteria for a successful collaboration. Any collaborative project would have to:

1. Count for a significant percentage of the final grade;
2. Be built into the curriculum (or directly connected to the required vocabulary and grammar);

3. Include lots of opportunities for individual evaluation independent of the actual product of the collaboration (this alleviates the stress of being held accountable for other students' performance, encourages trust to develop between students and frees up creativity); and finally,



4. Include a component of self-reflection so that even if the project failed, the *students* wouldn't—they could still learn and still get a passing grade by analyzing and explaining what had happened.

To create a situation where students had to use Japanese to produce their assignments, they were divided into small, mixed groups and asked to make three multimedia slideshows using Microsoft PowerPoint. Three general topics common to both of our courses (and most beginning language texts) were chosen: weekend activities (Project 1); food and cooking (Project 2); and shopping (Project 3).

The students were divided into ten small groups. Because of uneven class sizes, each group ended up having two Canadian and three Korean members. The groups were then divided into two teams (five groups in each) with names to differentiate them clearly.

Any online course management tool would work for this kind of project. We have chosen WebCT as the platform because it is available at

my university, which has agreed to make visitor accounts for each of the Korean students. Another option would be Moodle, a free, open-source tool available at moodle.org. Each group has been given its own discussion board on WebCT and space to upload and share files using the “student presentations” tool.

We decided to have the students use PowerPoint to construct their projects because most students

were already familiar with it. It also required the least amount of equipment, took less data storage space, and was available on all the computers in the labs in both countries.

Each project was divided into the same six clear steps to allow for group cohesion and to give students the opportunity to master the technology involved. What follows is adapted from the instructions given to the students:

STEP 1: Using the group discussion board, group members negotiate the details of their project—they choose one specific topic (Which weekend activity for P1? Which food for P2?

What product for P3?) and divide the tasks clearly.

STEP 2: Each person in the group gathers photos and information, makes basic PowerPoint slides (text and image) and

shares them with the group.

STEP 3: The group then combines all the slides and decides on an overall “story” or “message.” The narration is divided up among group members and recorded, and the sound files are embedded in the slideshow. Maximum length: 6 minutes—or 1 minute per person + 1 minute for the conclusions.

STEP 4: Using the “group evaluation worksheet” (downloaded from WebCT), they evaluate the five slideshow projects from the other team.

STEP 5: The instructor tallies the points from Step 4 and chooses the top project from each team. The students watch them both and then vote (by secret ballot, in class) for the best one.

STEP 6: Each person must fill out a “self-evaluation worksheet” to evaluate his/her own effort and to think about the group dynamics and what can be learned from them.

I am predicting that Project 1 will be total mayhem, Project 2 will be boring but safe, and that Project 3 will be absolutely amazing (and maybe even on time). We shall see—check back in May for the results! ■

**Alwyn Spies** is assistant professor of Japanese in the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies at the University of British Columbia-Okanagan. She received her Ph.D. in Asian Studies from UBC-Vancouver in 2003, writing a dissertation on Japanese pop culture. She worked and studied in Japan for ten years.

*Editor's note: This is the first of what I hope will be an ongoing series of columns on teaching and technology, reporting and reflecting on innovative classroom experiments, both successes and failures. If you would like to write for this column, or know someone who might, please let me know!*



## ExEAS Website: Asian American Filmography and Other Online Resources

Columbia University's Expanding East Asian Studies (ExEAS) website ([www.exeas.org](http://www.exeas.org)) serves faculty across the humanities and social sciences by providing innovative teaching materials and syllabi for both Asia specialists and non-specialists. Materials included on the website, which is supported by the Freeman Foundation, were written by members of the ExEAS Teaching Collaborative, a diverse group of instructors and postdoctoral fellows from a wide range of disciplines and undergraduate institutions.

One recently added feature of the ExEAS website that may be of special interest to readers of this newsletter is the "Asian American Filmography" (<http://www.exeas.org/asian-filmography.html>). Many instructors who teach about East Asia incorporate the subject of the Asian diaspora into their classes or teach entire courses on the subject. This resource is designed to help both high school and college instructors teach about this important subject through film.

The filmography provides instructors with a fully annotated list of reliable and accessible film and video resources on the topic of Asian Americans. The films featured in this select list of more than thirty films are wide-ranging in subject matter and style, from popular feature films like *A Great Wall* and *Better Luck Tomorrow*, to documentaries such as *Sa-I-Gu: From Korean Women's Perspectives*, which examines the 1992 Los Angeles

riots from the viewpoint of Korean-American women shopkeepers.

Sue Gronewold, assistant professor of history at Kean University and faculty director of the Asian American Filmography, explains that "while other online catalogs and directories of Asian American films exist, they are primarily targeted toward film festivals or film studies. I wanted to create a resource specifically designed to help instructors select films for classroom use."

To make the materials as useful as possible, each film has its own page, featuring a short synopsis, distributor and rental information, and links to background information, reviews, related articles, and more. Some entries include sample discussion questions and links to study guides. The films are arranged and cross-listed in multiple categories, including ethnicity, genre, family and inter-generational issues, political and legal issues, religion, and many more.

In addition to the filmography, other highlights of the ExEAS site include more than 45 teaching units on topics such as race and ethnicity in East Asia, Buddhism in Asian philosophy, *The Tale of Genji*, and recent developments in China's economy. The units are designed to be incorporated into courses in all subjects in the humanities and social sciences, including general education and survey courses. Each unit includes all of the materials that instructors need to introduce the units into existing courses, including background information for instructors, lists of student readings annotated

for easy selection and understanding, discussion questions or other classroom activities, and lists of further readings.

For example, the unit "Your Honor, I am Innocent: Law and Society in Late Imperial China" features student readings and activities focused on the translation of a nineteenth-century homicide case. Written by historian Ming-te Pan of the State University of New York (SUNY) Oswego, the unit not only introduces Confucian ideas, family structure, and social hierarchy in Chinese society, but also explores broader issues such as gender relations and capital punishment. Like all ExEAS units, it is designed to fit into a number of different courses, from East Asian history to women's studies and philosophy, and does not require that instructors have substantial training in Chinese studies.

"The real strength of the ExEAS site is practicality," says Ian Miller, assistant professor of history at Arizona State University and a former ExEAS postdoctoral fellow. "These materials show us how our best teacher-scholars put cutting-edge ideas to work in the classroom."

"Asian Revolutions in the Twentieth Century" is another rich resource featured on the ExEAS site. Designed by a team of historians, this website provides timelines and extensive lists of online resources on Mao Zedong, Mohandas Gandhi, Ho Chi Minh, and Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as links to information on other revolutionary leaders. Two teaching units, "The Middle East and Asia: Revolutions in Comparative Perspective" and "Poster Politics: the Art of Revolution" offer lecture material and teaching strategies for approaching the subject of Asian revolutions in the classroom.

"The World of Banned Books," "East Asia's Dynamic Economies," "Korea in East Asia and the World," and "Food in World History" are among the syllabi featured on the ExEAS website. Syllabi include those courses developed by ExEAS postdoctoral fellows and piloted at Columbia as well as syllabi contributed by faculty from around the country. The links section of the website offers a carefully selected listing of Web-based resources for images, primary sources, teaching materials, writing guides, and much more. New materials, such as units on "East Asian Security Today" and "Bruce Lee in Hong Kong and Harlem" are continually being added, so it's worth exploring the site regularly. ■

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## Asian Educational Media Service

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## Monks

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alms-begging rounds as in some traditions). Each must find his own food and water, build his own hut, sweep and clean, as well as meditate and study scriptures; so much hardship requires prior understanding of Zen practice to be endured.

In following episodes, Berger meets two ascetic monks, eating only enough to stay alive and wearing old robes cast off by other monks. They are helping each other build huts, living together for now on the mountainside, but when both huts are built they will separate and begin practicing alone. One monk laughs as he says, "We can't live together, what if one of us snores, that's no good."

Burger then goes in search of other Masters, including a hermit nun from Guangdong, a region far away from her hermitage. She lives there with her novice disciple, who helps her do some of the hard work. We see them gathering edible weeds from the woods. She says, "This one is very tasty." Burger and his camera crew hike up the hill to help her siphon off fresh water from the spring, a tiring job. She says, "I have to do this by myself." She is spirited in her expression, less restrained than the male monks in her personal comments to Burger about daily practice.

The last monk visited is said to be "almost at the end of his journey," meaning close to enlightenment. He's meditating when they get there. They wait for two hours, wondering if he will open his gate. When he finally allows Burger and his crew to film him, they ask him, "Why did you come to Zhongnan Mountains?" This monk is so



adept in Zen practice that he doesn't choose to deal with a question that to a Master of his experience is pointless. He saves the face of his interrogator

by smiling broadly and simply saying, "I wish I knew myself." The viewer suddenly knows that this Master will not be responsive to Burger's interview format. Hoping for some Zen wisdom, Burger asks, "How do you find the path if you get lost?" The Master replies as he displays the pages of a book, "You read the texts, they contain the true path to Buddhahood." In other words, this teacher will not be drawn into seeming to have a personal claim on wisdom.

Viewers cinematically follow Burger's hikes through these beautiful mountains, meeting Buddhist monk hermits and encountering their wisdom stories and ways of living. We gain an immediate sense from this film of the forest recluse tradition of Chinese Buddhism. Variations of this tradition are followed today in two other places, in Tibet and in Thailand. In Japan, religious practice in some schools calls for periods of lone wandering retreat, but such monks are attached to monasteries, unlike the reclusive (as opposed to monastery-dwelling) monks of China, Tibet, or Thailand. Students could produce interesting papers by researching and comparing these traditions, although this may be the only film available on a Buddhist forest tradition (see suggested readings, below).

One problem I had with the film was that the dubbed background music and chanting often obscured the narrator's voice-over. Other than

that, I highly recommend this film for courses in comparative religions, Buddhism, and China Studies. However, instructors should be knowledgeable about Chinese Buddhism and/or Buddhism in general because the film does not offer explicit explanations of Buddhist teachings. Students will have questions about the meaning of the monks' teachings in this film, even as it provokes opportunities for extended discussions. ■

**Joanna Kirkpatrick** is the author and producer of *Transports of Delight: The Ricksha Arts of Bangladesh* (Indiana University Press, 2003). She is a cultural and social anthropologist who specializes in South Asia, both India and Bangladesh. Since doing her first fieldwork in Punjab, India, in 1965–66, she has published in the fields of medical anthropology, women studies, and popular arts in Bangladesh. Currently she's a film review editor for the journal *Visual Anthropology*.

*Amongst White Clouds* is available on DVD (NTSC or PAL) from Cosmos Pictures. Price is \$229 for purchase. Release date: February 20, 2007.

### Suggested Reading

- Hodge, Stephen. 2002. *Zen Master Class: A Course in Zen Wisdom from Traditional Masters*. London: Godsfield Press.
- Meng-hu. 2004. "Shan-shih: The Hermit House of Stonehouse." *Hermitary: Resources and Reflections on Hermits and Solitude*. <http://www.hermitary.com/articles/stonehouse.html> (accessed November 20, 2006).
- Red Pine, et al. 1998. *The Clouds Should Know Me By Now: Buddhist Poet Monks of China*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Tiyavanich, Kamala. 1997. *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.