

# News and Reviews Vol. 4, No. 4 Summer 2001

# Hollywood Films in Class: The Case of *Mr. Baseball*

>> by Richard Chalfen

The following essay discusses the use of "Hollywood" feature films—specifically *Mr. Baseball*—in an undergraduate course given at Temple University entitled "American Culture in



Japan." This introductorylevel course is offered every spring semester and is crosslisted between Anthropology,

American Studies, and Asian Studies. After watching the documentary *The Japanese Version*, we view feature films such as *Mr. Baseball* (1992), *Black Rain* (1989), *Tokyo Pop* (1988), *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (1958), and clips from several others.

Two reactions generally accompany any suggestion to use feature films during class time, and this list in particular. First we hear such films offer only "inaccurate" and stereotypically embarrassing representations. The second objection is that such films are too time-consuming for class use. To address the first complaint, we can develop a repackaging strategy focused on teaching "through" films, that is, teaching scheduled course content as part of commentary and analysis of a popular film. Regarding time constraints, such films do not need to be screened in their

entirety; carefully selected segments can do very well. Students can be required to view rented videotapes—preferably in small groups—and answer prepared questions as homework.

On the positive side, I know that students are ready (even eager) to learn from and react to such materials. Taking a cultural product out of the assumed context of popular entertainment and repositioning it as a learning opportunity—which it might already be doing in implicit ways—is generally appreciated and remembered by students. Acknowledging that feature films serve



unwittingly as sources of social and cultural information helps us better understand the information our students bring to the classroom. I try to incorporate the following principles when adopting this perspective:

Students must be encouraged to ask the following questions: (a) "What did the producers of this film want you to think?" (b) "How is this sense of credibility created and enhanced?" And (c) "What were the economic/political/social circumstances that contributed to a production studio's prediction that this film's

story line would be popular and thus profitable?"

The challenge is to treat feature films as cultural products and, in turn, as pictorial cultural documents, as suggested by Weakland (1975, 1971), and Drummond (1996) among others. As instructors, we need to foster a critical approach that sees feature films not as "natural," transparent views, but as culturally constructed views containing intentional and usually welltimed statements.

Film producers frequently speak of the "procontinued on page 2

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In Not One Less, Wei Minzhi (right) plays herself, a 13-year-old put in charge of a class of thirty children. Tian Zhenda (left) plays Mayor Tian. See review, page 6.

#### Asian Educational Media Service

The Asian Educational Media Service (AEMS) is a program of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. AEMS offers information about where to find audiovisual media resources for teaching and learning about Asia, and advice about which ones may best suit your needs. In addition to *AEMS News and Reviews*, published quarterly, services include a free call-in/write-in service and a Web site. To add your name to our mailing list, request additional copies of the newsletter to use in workshops or to share with your colleagues, or ask for help in locating resources, please contact us.

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### Staff

Program Director: David W. Plath Program Coordinator/Editor: Sarah I. Barbour Assistant Program Coordinator: Elizabeth Cothen In conjunction with the Asian American Studies Committee, AEMS co-sponsored its first on-campus speaker last spring. Regge Life, producer and director of numerous films and television shows, is widely known for his documentaries *Doubles: America and Japan's Intercultural Children; Struggle and Success: The African American Experience in Japan* and *After America, After Japan*. These films have aired on PBS nationwide, as well as in Japan.

While here, Mr. Life screened *Doubles* and *Struggle and Success*. He then gave his audience more background on the making of each film and answered questions. Mr. Life generously shared his time and his thoughts with all of us. We thank him for coming and hope that he will visit us again soon.

### Doubles: America and Japan's Intercultural Children (1995, 85 minutes)

*Doubles* traces the lives of several now-adult children from the postwar era who struggled to find their place in society as mixed-race individuals. "Doubles" is a term adopted by parents of mixed-race children who believe that the usage of "half" in relation to half-Japanese or half-American does not reflect both cultures as equally important in shaping their identity.

### Struggle and Success: The African American Experience in Japan (1993, 85 minutes)

Through a series of interviews with African-Americans living and working in Japan, the issues of race and ethnicity in Japan are presented. The experiences of African Americans living and working in Japan are examined. Issues of racism and Japanese attitudes are addressed. **♦** 

*Doubles* and *Struggle and Success* are available from Film Library. Price is \$175 each. More about Regge and his films can be found at http://www.globalfilmnetwork.net.

### Hollywood

continued from page 1

duction values" that give a particular look to a film. We should be able to discern the social and cultural values that surround, and partially determine, film contents and particular points of view. Feature films do not spring from cultural vacuums. Both macro- and micro-contextual factors can shed considerable light on a specific film's existence and degree of popularity. On the macrocontextual level, instructors should be able to address certain historical and political circumstances surrounding a particular film. On the micro-contextual level, students can be asked to review published articles about studios and production personnel. In the case of Mr. Baseball, reference can be made to "Japanese Buy Studio, and Coaching Starts" (Weisman 1992) or "Lessons on Baseball (And Life) in Japan" (Maslin 1992) to learn more about relationships between studio and international politics. Students may also benefit from reading Robert Whiting's popular and accessible text, You Gotta Have Wa (1989) or Whiting's articles (1986, 1979).

Instructors should always take advantage of the stop/pause features of VCR technology to introduce questions related to the readings, and to allow for discussions. Since our choice of films is not arbitrary, relevant issues should never be a problem. Do not expect students to see and interpret the films the ways you intend. You may be competing with strong forces that enhance a less useful interpretation of the film text. In fact, the topic of "alternative readings," including dominant, referential, critical, negotiated, etc., is quite popular. This is always the case when students come to the class with varying degrees of familiarity with Japan-from never having been to Japan, to having traveled there briefly or studied there on a shortterm basis, to having been brought up and gone to school there. Conflicting assessments can create lively class discussions. But generally I find students want to learn what I see in the film for comparison or addition to what they feel they already know.

**Regge Life** 

To give just one example, I am particularly fond of *Mr. Baseball* for how it illustrates the notion of "culture broker." Most feature films with an intercultural story line include one or more characters responsible for translating features of one culture to another, including audience members. This film shows us three examples of the important culture broker role:

■ American baseball players always need a Japanese translator. Here, Yoji is the person hired by the team to avert trouble by smoothing out

### Learning More About Japan

in focus

The **Japan Information Center** (JIC) is the educational and cultural branch of the Consulate General of Japan at Chicago. Since its establishment in 1978, the JIC has been dedicated to promoting knowledge of Japan in its four-state area of Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

The JIC provides the following services to the community:

- Distributes Japan-related materials and publications
- Maintains a lending library with books in English and Japanese
- Loans videos, films, and slides
- Answers inquiries by phone, fax, mail, and e-mail
- Conducts local school and community visits
- · Provides information on scholarships and exchanges
- Sponsors lectures, concerts, art exhibits, and other Japanese cultural events

• Publishes Japan Journal-a monthly newsletter about Japan-related topics in the Midwest

You can contact the Center at:

Japan Information Center 737 N. Michigan Avenue Suite 1000 Chicago IL 60611 Tel.: 312-280-0430 Fax: 312-280-6883 E-mail: jicchicago@aol.com

Web site: http://www.jchicago.org/jicmenu.html

Other Japanese consulates throughout the country offer similar services. For a full list of Japan Government Offices and their jurisdictions in the United States, go to: http://www.cgjhouston.org/links/consulates.html. �

cross-cultural language and social confusions.

■ The Dragons baseball team already includes an African-American player, Max "Hammer" Dubois (Dennis Haysbert) when Jack Elliot (Tom Selleck) arrives. Hammer also plays the role of a middle-man, interpreting the Japanese model of baseball to Selleck, who initially insists that the game is the same everywhere.

Perhaps the most important broker-figure is Hiroko-san (Aya Takahashi), an independent business woman who just happens to be the daughter of the Dragons' coach, and thus Selleck's boss. Her character is most responsible for the majority of the cross-cultural interpretation in this film, focusing on Selleck who starts his stay in Japan as the stereotypical ugly American, exhibiting rather heavy-handed egocentric and ethnocentric vulgarities. In several scenes, Hiroko-san gives audience members cultural lessons by explicitly correcting Selleck's misguided understandings of Japanese people and society. One scene, a turning point in the film, is particularly relevant; Hiroko-san invites Selleck to her grandparents' home for lunch and differences in interpersonal communication and etiquette conflict in dramatic, though humorous, ways. Matters related to business and etiquette-greetings, sitting, drinking, eating-all illustrate cultural differences.

My conclusion is that, with appropriate preparation, Hollywood films can be effectively built into college courses with considerable success. Instructors' interpretive skills and examples contribute to the pedagogical advantages of such films. Students gain experience in seeing how Japan is depicted by our media elite, and in understanding the ways in which many people "know" Japanese people, society and culture. Students also gain experience in film criticism or, as it is sometimes referred to, media literacy. There is much to be gained by using popular visual materials, using good/bad examples, and turning negative aspects into positive attributes.  $\blacklozenge$ 

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Richard Chalfen is a Professor of Anthropology at Temple University and member of the Asian Studies Faculty. His courses cover visuality and visual cultures in the United States and Japan and relations of cultural anthropology to home media. Brief course descriptions, book contents, and current research can be found at http:///www. nimbus.temple.edu/~rchalfen.

*Mr. Baseball* (1992, 108 minutes, directed by Fred Schepisi) is commercially available on DVD from Amazon.com. Price is \$9.95. The VHS version can be rented at most major video rental outlets such as Blockbuster.



**Correction:** In the Spring 2001 issue of this newsletter, incomplete information was given for *Japan, The Land and Its People: The Tradition of Performing Arts in Japan.* The distributor is:

Great Plains National P.O. Box 80669 Lincoln, NE 68501-2007 Tel: 800-228-4630 Fax: 800-306-2330 E-mail: gpn@unl.edu Web site: http://gpn.unl.edu

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# Through the Consul's Eye

>> Directed by Jorge Amat. 1999. 50 minutes.

This video, originally produced for French television as *L'oiel du Consul*, uses an exciting trove of rare early photography of China. The subject is Auguste François (1855–1935), a French diplomat who served originally in French Indochina and then in China between 1886 and 1906.

François left behind an exceptional collection of still and movie photography that recorded his life in both Vietnam and China. The video uses François' movie and still photography interspersed with other early archival film. Contemporary maps, including field drawings made by François, are used effectively. Director Jorge Amat and screenwriter Gerard Guicheteau take a biographical approach drawing on François' diaries and letters in addition to his photography to depict him as a critic of French imperialism. In this version released in the United States, the narrative is in well-spoken English, but Chinese place names are rendered in awkward pronunciations.

The narrative portrays François as a well-educated bourgeois Frenchman sensitive to Chinese culture, whose adventurous nature made him into an intrepid amateur photographer-ethnologist. He is said to have possessed "an ironic and deeply generous eye" that separated him from ordinary French colonial officials and settlers. This favorable characterization is pushed too far when François is depicted as a man yoked unwillingly to French imperialisism, for the video clearly shows François engaged in intelligence work throughout his career in Vietnam and China. His consular postings in China were a direct outcome of French efforts to expand influence into southwestern China following the Sino-French War of 1884-85. Whatever his misgivings about French policy, Auguste François was undeniably an agent of French imperialism. The filmmakers quote François' strong words against Paul Doumer, the famous rationalizing administrator in French Indochina and later President of the French Republic, but grumbling against a colonial superior do not an anti-imperialist make.

Indeed the narrative quotes François making observations combining an appreciation with familiar imperialist distain for the Chinese. The many photographs of François himself—sometimes times with great flaring mustachios in a full dress uniform and other times with a huge beard under a pith helmet—show him as a man quite comfortable in his role as a representative of French imperialism.

The video begins with a short segment of film and narrative depicting François' first decade of



service in French Indochina and then shifts to his first diplomatic post in China at Longzhou, here transliterated into French as "Long Tcheou." Longzhou was the first significant Qing administrative seat in Guangxi province and lies on the north bank of the Zuo River whose tributaries extend into Tonkin, and was thus was placed along the natural lines of communication between Vietnam and China. François' cameras recorded street scenes such as official processions, funerals, temple gatherings, opera performances, and markets, as well as events at the consulate, including a reception, lion dancing, and pig butchering.

In 1896 François was posted to the much larger and more important city of Yunnanfu (present-day Kunming), the Qing administrative center of Yunnan province and target of French expansionist aims. About ten minutes of the video focus on François' adventures during the Boxer Uprising. Yunnanfu was far removed from the main action of the Uprising, which took place in Beijing and Tianjin in 1900, but the local population around Yunnanfu attacked both Chinese Christians and French Catholic missions in the area. In these menacing circumstances, the French Foreign Minister sought Qing assistance for an overland march to extract the Frenchmen at Yunnanfu. François, together with two dozen other foreigners and their Vietnamese staff, along with horses and sedan chairs and accompanied by an escort of more than three hundred Qing troops, marched southward from Yunnanfu beginning on June 24, 1900, through the rough countryside to the border pass into Tonkin. After reaching Hanoi, François wrote an angry letter to the French Foreign Office detailing his belief that Doumer had hoped all along that François' party would be slaughtered, as happened elsewhere that year to foreigners under Qing military escort.

# Life in Pakistan Today

>> A Day Will Come: Tradition and Change in Pakistani Marriages. Directed by Britt Hamilton and Jennifer Rashleigh. 2000. 28 minutes.

>> Don't Ask Why. Directed by Sabiha Sumar. 1999. 58 minutes.

The predominant image of Pakistani women and girls presented in North American media is the veiled, silent woman scuttling down the street, in a hurry to return to her home where she is protected from the

gaze of unrelated men. As with most media images, this portrayal contains a grain of truth but is largely inaccurate in describing what life is really like for the majority of women in Pakistan.

The two films discussed here focus on the lives of two young women in different areas of Pakistan, and how they struggle with the tension between family expectations that they will adhere to traditional roles and activities for women, and their own desires to act in the ways they see as best for themselves. Each film allows the women to speak, at times, in their own voices, and gives the viewer the opportunity to see how these young women cope not only with the difficulties of growing up in a society in a dramatic state of change, but also with many of the same problems and opportunities faced by North American teenagers.

In *A Day Will Come* we meet Yasmin and Ilyas Mughal, sister and brother in a middle-class family in Quetta in western Pakistan, near the border with Afghanistan. Each is engaged to be married, but the circumstances of their engagements are very dissimilar. Ilyas has decided to allow his family to arrange his marriage to Razia. His parents have consulted matchmakers, other family members, and friends, and have decided that Ilyas and Razia are well suited. Ilyas and Razia have never met as their families are pursuing the marriage the traditional way, with the newlyweds meeting in person only on their wedding day.

Yasmin, in contrast, has gone out into the town and, through her work, found her own fiancé, Dr. KB. This is referred to in Pakistan, as well as in most South Asian countries, as a "love marriage," meaning that the couple are marrying one another because they have fallen in love rather than because their parents have arranged their match. Lest students think this is similar to the way North Americans tend to pair up, note that Yasmin carefully evaluated the qualifications of Dr. KB as a potential husband and submitted him to her parents for consideration before formalizing their engagement.

The most interesting parts of this video are the contrasts between Ilyas' and Yasmin's views on marriage and how it should be pursued. Yasmin



feels that, although her "love marriage" is unusual in Pakistan, it will become more common in the future (hence the title of the video) and that it is the best way for

marriages to take place. Early in the video, Ilyas is hesitant to criticize the way his sister has found a match, but towards the end he expresses concern over what other people will think of the fact that Dr. KB visits the house of his fiancée under cover of medical necessity in spite of the fact they are not yet married.

In Don't Ask Why we follow 17-year-old upperclass Anousheh through the course of several rather typical days. Many of her activities will look familiar to North American students: watching music videos on TV; arguing with her mother about whether a certain article of clothing is too revealing; going out to TGI Fridays with her friends; going to a rock concert by Janoon, Pakistan's most popular rock band; and kibitzing about which clothes to pack for a trip. Other activities will definitely capture attention, however, such as her attendance at marches and demonstrations by a Jama'at, a group of women hoping to "Islamize" Pakistan more. Anousheh does her best to stand out at these meetings by dressing completely differently than the approximately 50 other women in attendance. She has a conversation with her father about why in the Islamic tradition men but not women are allowed multiple spouses. He struggles to come up with an answer for her but in the end resorts more or less to "that is our tradition-that is how it is." Anousheh's father is obviously a very thoughtful man, but she asks questions which he cannot answer. And her questions are ones your students might be likely to pose in a situation similar to Anousheh's. As with other matters on which she quizzes him, her father tells her she shouldn't ask why, just believe what is in the Q'uran. When the interviewer asks her why she is looking in the Q'uran for equality for women, she replies that men have always been the ones who have interpreted the Q'uran, laws, government, etc. She feels that if women interpret the Q'uran, the results will be better for them.

Although Anousheh often seems very self-confident, and at one point distinguishes herself from other young Pakistani women by saying that they all suffer from "fear of men, fear of everything, fear of God, fear of their father," she also confesses to her diary that she too fears all of these things, as well as fearing herself sometimes.

Looming over Anousheh is the threat of militant Islam, although it is never explicitly mentioned. But when she expresses hesitation in trying to change the women of the Jama'at, she says she is worried they will take legal action against her. They might do this by accusing her of a crime under Pakistan's notorious Blasphemy Laws.

It is not clear if this film is a documentary or a re-enactment of Anousheh's daily life. Nonetheless, it is very useful in allowing students a look at some of the similarities between their own lives and those of a Pakistani girl, as well as some of the differences.

Both of these films present an image of life for young women in Pakistan. They invalidate some stereotypes, but also show that these women's lives are in some respects quite different from that of the average North American teenager. These videos also show that there is a diversity of opinions in Pakistan regarding gender roles and the role of Islam in the lives of Pakistani citizens. It is commonly assumed in the United States that Pakistan is likely to follow the "Talibanization" route of its

neighbor, Afghanistan, but these two videos show religious Pakistanis who express no interest in that type of Islam.

These videos could be used in any classroom from high school level up. They would be most useful for an instructor who knows some facts about Islam, such as marriage customs, and who is familiar with some of the debates regarding the proper role of Islam in Muslim countries such as Pakistan. They



add a valuable resource for those interested in learning how young people in a culture very different from their own cope with the problems and opportunities with which they are confronted.  $\blacklozenge$ 

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A Day Will Come is available from Filmakers Library. Price is \$295 for purchase and \$55 for rental.

*Don't Ask Why* is available from Women Make Movies. Price is \$195 for purchase and \$65 for rental.

### Learning One's Sums: Not One Less

>> Directed by Zhang Yimou. 1999. 106 minutes.

T ot One Less is a touching film that calls for some reflection in order to appreciate the nature and plight of a fair number of school children in China's countryside today. For ¥50 (\$US6) thirteen-year-old Wei Minzhi is hired to keep thirty-odd kids in school for a month while the old village teacher takes leave to visit his ailing Wei, the village head, the old school master, the head of the TV station, the obtuse gate guard in the city, and the village kids all more or less play the roles they have in real life.

mother. Wei herself has just finished grade school and has no idea how to teach. All her thoughts are on getting paid, and when she suspects that she might not be, she chases after the village head and old teacher demanding payment. The two promise to pay her after thirty days, and if no more children drop out of school, Wei will get an extra ten yuan bonus. It is this added "bonus" n real life. something on the blackboard and then sits outside guarding the door. She learns from the class monitor, four years her junior, to treasure the simple white chalk sticks—the instruments of education. Slowly, she begins to win respect. Having been schooled on what is expected of a teacher, Wei leads the class in tackling the matter of recovering the ten-year-old class imp, Zhang Huike, who has just dropped out of school. Zhang goes to the city to make some



Above, left: The children of Shuichuan village. Above, right: Zhang Yimou, center, on the set of *Not One Less*.

sum that gives Wei focus. She will make sure that there will be "not one less."

Wei soon learns that her students pay no heed to a young girl who simply writes something on the blackboard and then sits outside guarding money to help his widowed mother. This is when the math lessons begin for the students—and the audience—as Wei and her charges try to calculate how much money it will take to go the big city and bring him back. While the students get their figures right and manage to raise the cash, it turns out that their cost estimates are wrong. Wei calculates they have a surplus of ¥6 so she leads them to the village store where they share two cans of Coke—the new flavor of things. The next day they find out they are short over ¥40 for the costs of the bus tickets to the city.

Via determination, Wei makes it to the big city. Once there, her pertinacity wins out when, three days later, the local TV station broadcasts Wei's tearful plea for Zhang to come home. A kindly food stall proprietress sees the program and realizes that the street urchin she has been

#### continued from previous page

feeding the last few days is the one Wei is looking for. This human interest story not only strikes a chord at the TV station and in the food stalls around the train station but touches the hearts of the big city folk as well, and money pours in to buy books and school supplies for the village school. Wei and Zhang accompany these tools of education back to the village. The film ends with teacher Wei and her students writing Chinese characters on blackboard in colored chalk.

It is fortunate that Wei and Zhang get back to the village because neither is able to make a go of it in the city-both are penniless and reduced to scrounging for meals within a day of their arrival. Simply put, both of them need more education, and that is the message director Zhang Yimou wishes to convey. He made this movie to bring attention to the plight of the children in the countryside who drop out of school and thus are illequipped to deal with challenges and opportunities present in China today. Profits made from this film go to Project Hope, the national and international campaign to channel funds into the poor countryside areas to build schools, buy books, and champion children's education. This is truly a worthy cause, and when Not One Less premiered in the major cities of China, money poured in for Project Hope.

Poverty in rural China is real, but it is not uniform nor does it afflict the majority of the people living on the land. In Shuichuan\*, the village where the film was shot, the poverty of the schooling situation is relative. The brief glimpses of this village suggest that folks there are getting by well enough to build new brick houses, go and come from the city on the bus, and buy Coke regularly. However, now that the government has backed away from directing the local economy, there is no system in place to channel household wealth into public projects such as local schools. Had the film been set in a mountain village of Shanxi or Guizhou, where there are no new homes, buses, or Cokes, the tragedy of the situation would probably have been overwhelming.

Whatever the merits of the Shuichuan setting, the players are genuine and real. The cast comes from the towns and villages in Hebei, where the film was shot. Wei, the village head, the old school master, the head of the TV station, the obtuse gate guard in the city, and the village kids all more or less play the roles they have in real life. Zhang Yimou's ability to guide this assemblage in acting out this simple tale gives *Not One Less* an authenticity that is rare in cinema today.

This film will probably work best with a middle school audience. Younger school children may not be able to follow the story via the subtitles,

# Yangtze: New China and the Old River

>> Produced by RTVE. 1997. 84 minutes.

used as a supplement to a world history curricu-

The documentary takes the viewer on a jour-

ney from the beginnings of the Yangtze in Western

Chongqing. The most engaging and powerful sec-

tion of the film centers on the controversy of the

Three Gorges Dam. The filmmakers do an excel-

Gorges look like today. They take a step further in

showing us the smaller side gorges and the extraordinarily difficult methods used to move boats and

goods through the gorges less than 100 years ago.

how the Chinese battled the force of the river and

used long lines or porters to literally drag the boats

Additionally, the filmmakers do a good,

along the Yangtze in small cities such as Fuling.

though not excellent, job describing how the cre-

ation of the reservoir will impact the people living

The arguments of the government and of environ-

The filmmakers have included some excellent

footage from the 1920s, which shows students

through the narrow and dangerous gorges.

lent job showing the viewer what the Three

lum depending on the structure of the course.

China past the large industrial center of

I t is not very often that a video aimed at middle and high school students is informative and engaging for instructors as well. Such is the case with Yangtze: New China and the Old River, an excellent addition to any middle or high school geography or world cultures course. The material may also be

The documentary takes the viewer on a journey from the beginning of the Yangtze in Western China past the large industrial center of Chongqing. mentalists are presented in such a way that students may want to do additional research.

Finally, the journey concludes as the Yangtze approaches Shanghai. It becomes clear to the viewer how the character and uses of the river change along its course. Some discussion of the power of the river is

included in this section. The effect that the floods have had on the farming communities west of Shanghai is well presented and will further fuel the debate over the Three Gorges Dam.

Overall, this film does a very good job of moving back and forth through time on the journey down the river, including cultural as well as physical geography along the way. Since it can be shown in its entirety or in segments focusing on sections of the river, it is a video that will keep students interested, and who knows—the teacher just might learn a thing or two as well! **♦** 

Steve Kellner is a teacher of Social Studies at West Chicago Community High School in West Chicago, Illinois. At the University of Chicago he developed secondary school resources on Asia as a Graham School Fellow. He currently teaches Global Studies, an interdisciplinary class combining Geography and English.

*Yangtze: New China and the Old River* is available from Films for the Humanities and Sciences. Price is \$145 for purchase and \$75 for rental.

while high school students might be looking for something with more action and romance. Middle school students would likely be fascinated by the differences they see, yet feel a link to Wei. There are a couple of caveats in order. To give students a better sense of the diverse realities of today's China, teachers should make other materials—film clips, photographs, and readings describing grade school life in the big cities available as well, lest *Not One Less* become the sole source of mental images of what life is like for children in China. The film runs almost two hours, so it may take some imagination scheduling its screening. With these provisos in place, *Not One Less* has much to offer.  $\blacklozenge$  \*In the subtitles the village is misspelled "Shuixian." The film was filmed in Shuichuan in western Hebei, the province that surrounds Beijing. A hour or so drive away from Shuichuan is Zhangjiakou, the big city in the film.

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*Not One Less* is available from Amazon.com. Price is \$19.76 for VHS and \$25.49 for DVD.

### Inexpensive Resources for Teaching about South Korea

n the past century, America has had extensive L involvement with Korea. We fought a costly, bloody war on its soil, buttressed the South Korean regime for decades afterward, and still



maintain a large military presence on the peninsula. According to the United States Census, there were

798,849 Korean-Americans living in this country in 1990, and that number is projected to increase substantially once the most recent count is tabulated. Despite all this, however, there is a dearth of multimedia resources focusing on Korea, especially when compared to countries like China, Japan, or even Vietnam. The ones that are available for under \$40 tend to be rather general, focusing on issues like geography or family life. But there are also a few quality videos analyzing historical and political developments that can be recommended to high school and college educators. Therefore this issue's column will be broken into two sections, one for resources aimed at introducing Korea to middle school students and younger, and the other, for more advanced classrooms, that discusses media focusing on South Korea's transformation into a modern society.

### Korea for Kids: Materials for Elementary and Middle School Students

The Asia Society, recognizing the lack of popularly available materials on Korea, has done a terrific job producing several documentaries appropriate for younger students. Its 1988 series Discover Korea is composed of three videos, each accompanied by a teacher's guide and poster and each focusing on a different aspect of Korean society: Family and Home, School and Community, and Geography and Industry. All three are similar in format, focusing on the experiences of one or two children in order to make broader inferences about the entire society. The entire series is aimed at students between fourth and ninth grade.

The first video, Family and Home could be retitled Leave it To Beaver-Korean Style, because the family it covers seem to have come straight out of 1950s American television. This video deals with numerous Korean traditions and contains some very entertaining moments (most involving the main character's teeny-bopper older sister), but I fear that students will come away from this video feeling that all Korean families are as beautiful and scripted as the one portrayed. This film should be tempered with other documentaries and readings. For a more realistic view of Korean families, check

out Families of South Korea, part of the Families of the World series for elementary school students I have recommended in previous issues.

The Asia Society next produced School and Community, an endearing documentary focusing on a schoolgirl, her male friend, and her teenage brother (all of whom are more realistic than the Family and Home characters). We follow all three of them as they go to school, run errands, attend various activities, such as tae kwon do and violin lessons, and play outside. Unlike the other videos in the series, this documentary takes place entirely in an urban center. Geography and Industry, the final film in the series, follows a young boy as he travels around South Korea, visiting his uncle in the southwest countryside and traveling on a bus to the northeast mountains. Along the way, he meets a young girl from a tourist town called Yosu in the

southernmost part of the peninsula and tells her about the industrial town of Ulsan in southeast Korea where he lives.

All three of these videos are only 15 minutes each, perhaps too brief for students to absorb very much information about Korea. The teacher's manuals, each over forty pages, somewhat correct for that shortcoming by providing detailed background information about each subject, recommended readings, an annotated script with explanations, supplementary essays, and even a few fun activities for the classroom. Of the three included posters, I am partial to Geography and Industry's two-sided poster about the Korean Tiger, featuring different types of tigers and legends in which they appear.

Several years after releasing the Discover Korea series, The Asia Society produced Tune in Korea: Geography and Society, an information-packed hour-long video designed to inform middle school students everything they need to know about Korea. This video features a group of young American high school students who are supposedly each producing a segment about different aspects of Korean society. The segments, which



DISCOVER

he Annenberg/CPB Collection

THE PACIFIC CENTURY

Families of

South

Korea

include titles such as "Resources and Population," "History," "Language," and "Belief Systems," are in no way amateur, how-



ever. Teachers will find the section recap, a list of all the major ideas in each lesson, particularly useful. This video is more informative and up-todate than the Discover Korea series, but it is less personal and does not come with a teacher's guide. Although I was unable to

find any inexpensive videotapes focusing on Korean arts, two audiocassettes, Korean Folk Dance Music, featuring traditional music, and Tales of Korea, a collection of stories accompanied by Korean instruments, both serve as nice auditory introductions to performing art forms.

### Beneath the Surface: A More Sophisticated Look at the Land of the Morning Calm

The twentieth century was a period of great upheaval for Koreans. They have endured invasion by the Japanese and later the Cold War forces, followed by a brutal and lengthy civil war that continues to divide them. More recently, North Korea has been inflicted with terrible famines and South Korea still faces political instability caused by dictatorial leaders and frustrated students. On the other hand, for the first time in its history, South Korea is a major world player and, despite recent downturns, continues to wield significant economic and political clout. The Pacific Century, a series produced in the early 1990s, does an excellent job discussing the successes and conflicts present in modern Korean society. Big Business and the Ghost of Confucius, the seventh video in the series, includes about twenty minutes of discussion about how Confucianism continues to influence Korea, with both positive and negative repercussions. The eighth video, The Fight for Democracy, describes another side of South Korea, including images of students and workers rioting in the street for more democratic rights and women fighting for social reforms. This hour-long video questions whether average Koreans have fully reaped the benefits of the "economic miracle."

Going back in time, The History Channel has produced an acceptable account of the Korean War, titled *Korea: The Forgotten War.* Narrated by Mike Wallace, this video provides an overview of the conflict, focusing mainly on American veterans, but alluding to the effects this dispute had on North and South Koreans as well. **♦** 

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### Videography/Discography

- Discover Korea: Family and Home, School and Community, and Geography and Industry (1988, 25 minutes each) is available from the Asia Society. Price is \$65 for the series or \$22.95 per program.
- *Families of the World: Families of South Korea* (1996, 30 minutes) is available from Asia for Kids. Price is \$29.95.
- *Korean Folk Dance Music* (51 minutes) is available from Asia for Kids. Price is \$10.95.
- *Korea: The Forgotten War* (1996, 50 minutes) is available from the Teacher's Video Company. Price is \$29.95.
- The Pacific Century: Big Business and the Ghost of Confucius and The Fight for Democracy (1992, 60 minutes each) are available from Annenberg/CPB Multimedia Collection. Price is \$39.95 each.
- *Tales of Korea, Parts I* and *II* are available from the Korea Society. Price is \$5 per tape.
- *Tune in Korea: Geography and Society* (1999, 60 minutes) is available from the Asia Society. Price is \$29.95.

### Through the Consul's Eye

continued from page 3

François believed the arch-imperialist Doumer then could have dispatched a French force to occupy Yunnan.

Nevertheless, François returned in 1902 to Yunnanfu, where he made thorough investigations along the line of his earlier overland march to select the route for a French railway to Yunnanfu. François' cameras recorded his adventures while he confided to his diary that the whole scheme was an absurd waste of the French taxpayers' money and that Doumer was an "ambitious imbecile." Local Chinese opposition to the railway produced a second siege of the French consulate at Yunnanfu in the spring and summer of 1903, but once again François and those seeking refuge with him escaped unharmed. Construction of the railway

### Korean Culture Web Sites

### Sites for Elementary School Students

- Korea Insight: Korean Kidsight http://korea.insights.co.kr/english/forkid/index.html
- Access Korea: Korea for Kids http://www.curriculum.edu.au/accessasia/korea/kids.htm

Holidays and Celebrations: Korea http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/holidays/korea/korea.htm

#### Middle and Early High School Students

Kids and Korea: A Project in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War http://www.rsa.lib.il.us/korea/korea1.htm

Life in Korea: Language and Culture http://www.lifeinkorea.com/culture/index.cfm

### **Older Students**

Korea Insights: The Korean Culture and Arts on the Internet http://korea.insights.co.kr/english/index.html

Korea Society

http://www.koreasociety.org

- Korean Literature Today: Quarterly Newsletter http://www.kcaf.or.kr/klt/index.html
- Commerce and Culture: A Reader on Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong http://www.easc.indiana.edu/pages/easc/curriculum/eastasia/threedragons/intro.htm

#### Teachers

- Korea in East Asian and World History: A Guide for Teachers http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/teachingaids/korea/korea\_in\_east\_asian\_and\_world\_hi.htm
- *Teaching About Korea: Lessons for Students in Grades 4–12* http://www.easc.indiana.edu/pages/EASC/curriculum/korea/1995/general/intro.htm
- Cultures Speak: Korea—Personal Reflections as Teaching Resources http://www.easc.indiana.edu/pages/EASC/brochure/koreanspeaks/intro.htm

resumed, but it was not completed until 1910. By then François had left China and the diplomatic service and returned to France where, in the best tradition of retired colonial civil servants, he married and lived in a small château near the border of Brittany in retirement until his death in 1935 at the age of 80.

This promising combination of François' diary entries together with his photography yields a work that will have limited use in teaching because of conflicting messages contained in the video. The narrative that depicts François as an anti-imperialist turned out on second viewing to be a mask that slips to reveal François as an alltoo-typical representative of Western imperialism. Also, the full value of much of François' remarkable film of scenes from daily life in Yunnan from a century ago is lost because the filmmakers lacked someone to interpret what is recorded in this trove of photography. Specialists in China's southwestern region and Vietnam will want look at it simply as a record of how the cities, countryside and people looked all those years ago.  $\blacklozenge$ 

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David D. Buck is a Professor of Modern Chinese History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a former editor of the *Journal of Asian Studies*. He writes primarily about Chinese urban development and recently contributed a chapter to *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950* (Joseph Esherick, ed., Hawaii, 2000) on the history of the Japanesedominated city of Changchun in northeast China.

*Through the Consul's Eye* is distributed by First Run/Icarus Films. Price is \$390 for purchase and \$75 for rental.

# Gross National Happiness and Other Considerations

>> Bhutan: In Pursuit of Gross National Happiness. Produced by the Asian Development Bank. 1997. 10 minutes.

>> Bhutan: Gross National Happiness. Produced by Journeyman Pictures. 2000. 20 minutes.

tiny country poised precariously between its Tunuch larger and more powerful neighbors China and India, Bhutan struggles to maintain its sovereign status and raise its standard of living without sacrificing its cultural and moral standards. The King of Bhutan stated once that his goal to improve his country focused not so much on gross national product as on "gross national

happiness"-a phrase which seems to have appealed not only to the Bhutanese themselves but also to the few filmmakers who have made it to this isolated Himalayan nation.

There are, in fact, very few films that concentrate entirely on Bhutan. This is no doubt due in part to the high tariff imposed on all visitors to Bhutan (currently \$200 per day) and the minimum royalty of \$10,000 imposed on film-

makers. The Bhutanese government uses these fees to restrict mass tourism for fear that an uncontrolled influx of visitors will have a deleterious effect on the fragile infrastructure of the nation. Controlled tourism is only one of the many ways in which Bhutan is seeking to develop its economy without adversely affecting its society or its environment. Both of the following two films focus on Bhutan's attempts at economic development. Although they are too short to go into much detail, each provides a fascinating look at a littleknown country.

Bhutan: In Pursuit of Gross National Happiness was produced in 1997 by the Asian Development Bank. Like most of the ADB's video productions, it puts a very positive spin on development in general and the ADB's activities in particular. It provides a brief overview of the Bhutan government's economic development policy and shows examples of a few ADB projects. Although only 10 minutes long, the video manages to convey a surprising amount of information. Much of this information is supplied through brief interviews with people such as Yoshihiro Iwasaki of the ADB, Planning Minister Chenkyab Dorji, and several

Bhutanese entrepreneurs. Dorji briefly describes Bhutan's development philosophy: "Modernization has to be sustainable in terms of preservation of culture and traditional values and... of physical environment and ecology." Both the inter-

views and the narration makes it clear that

Controlled tourism is only one of the many ways in which Bhutan is seeking to develop its economy without adversely affecting its society or its environment.

although the government wants to raise the population's standard of living, it will do so on its own terms.

Bhutan: Gross National Happiness was produced in 2000 by Journeyman Pictures. Somewhat longer than the ADB production, it also emphasizes Bhutan's economic development but does so in the context of the king's silver jubilee

and the social changes that accompany it. The film is shot entirely in the capital city of Thimphu. The streets are swept, the buildings freshly painted, and the sports field is full of dancers and musicians rehearsing for the big day. A handful of Bhutanese articulate the king's policy of economic advancement, again emphasizing the preservation of social values and the environment. Unfortunately, the interviewees are not identified so it is unclear whether they are speaking as private citizens, business people, or members of the government.

The narrator is enthusiastic but slightly condescending; "I've never seen a set of traffic lights enjoying itself as much as this man!" he says, describing a traffic policeman on duty, and is unable to resist the temptation to refer to Bhutan as "the last Shangri-La." Nonetheless, he conveys some interesting information. He tells us, for instance, that Bhutan is the only country in the region in which tree cover has actually increased over the past 25 years and that plastic bags have been banned; both results of the king's environmental policies. We also learn that both the Internet and television are coming to Bhutan as part of the jubilee festivities.



Neither film tells us much about the culture itself. Nor does either film touch on Bhutan's ongoing problems with Assamese and Bodo rebels in the south and east, or the tensions with its ethnic Nepali minority, many of whom have fled to Nepal for fear of violence at the hands of the Bhutan military. Life in Bhutan may be less idyllic and more complicated than these films suggest, but the

films do offer high-quality visual images of this rarely seen country. More importantly, their enthusiasm for the government's careful efforts to secure economic development without sacrificing either the environment or the culture seems to be well placed. Literacy, life expectancy, and access to health care have all risen dramatically over the past 30 years while the environment remains largely untouched. In a world in which "development" is often synonymous with exploitation, Bhutan's economic policies may point the way toward a sustainable pattern of growth-in both product and happiness. 🔶

Sarah I. Barbour is the Program Coordinator and Editor of the Asian Educational Media Service.

Bhutan: In Pursuit of Gross National Happiness is available from Asian Development Bank. Price is \$10.

Bhutan: Gross National Happiness, part of the Global Connections series, is available from Chip Taylor Communications. Please contact distributor for price.

NOTE: A number of links to the Government of Bhutan's ministries and other organizations can be found at http://www.undp.org.bt/links.htm# Bhutan Links. The Bhutan National Human Development Report 2000 can be downloaded at http://www.undp.org.bt/GENERAL/NHDReport 2000.pdf.



TAYLOF

OF CHIP

King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan.



# Contemporary Chinese Societies: Continuity and Change

>> Produced and developed by the Chinese Studies Faculty of the University of Pittsburgh. 2001. CD-ROM available for both Windows and Macintosh platforms.

The University of Pittsburgh has created *Contemporary Chinese Societies: Continuity and Change*, a comprehensive CD-ROM on China. Though focusing on modern China, it has ample materials on China's past.

The program is outstanding:

it is well made and well integrated. It is organized in two ways: units and pathways. There are six units: "Unity in Diversity"; "Views of Time and Space"; "The Individual and the Collectivity"; "Adapting to a Changing World"; "Shaping Conformity and Dissent"; and "Political Culture." Each has subdivisions to make searches easier. There are four pathways: "Life and Society"; "Economy;" "Power and Politics"; and the "Chinese Perspective." These too are subdivided.

The text is excellent and extensive. Throughout, color coding permits the user to jump to photographs (some of these allow the user to zoom in for a closer look), to view short videos (which are accompanied by sound), listen to audio, or view appropriate maps. Other keys provide a glossary of people and places; key terms are explained. There are also footnotes leading to scholarly sources.

One of the point-and-click bars provides access to all of the maps. There are timelines that



compare Chinese history to happenings in other parts of the world. A search mode permits the user to find appropriate text, images, glossary terms, and the integrated videos. The "Notepad" allows users to create their own programs by selecting and combining any of the text and images.

Through the "Journey Log," the user can keep track of what parts of the overall program have been covered. It is possible to print materials. Finally, there are keys to appropriate Web links.

The other tool bar has a short self-test for each of the units and sub-units. This allows the user to quickly review the unit content and provides an overall score of the user's understanding of the whole program to that point. This tool bar also provides extensive bibliographies for each of the units and sub-units.

In short, *Contemporary Chinese Societies* provides just about anything that the teacher or student could want to know about contemporary China, and shows the historical roots from which Chinese civilization has been built. Particularly, it gives teachers who do not have an extensive background in China the ability to bring that culture into their classrooms.



Of course, it is always possible to "nitpick." I felt that a few of the photographs were not particularly appropriate or useful. The short videos could have been larger and longer. Although the title gave evidence that it was about Chinese society, the major focus is on the People's Republic of China; as a result, I found the little bits of material on Taiwan and Singapore to be slightly distracting. More seriously, while the creators of the program did an excellent job in providing us with a large number of original photographs, they might have used more film from archives (even in black and white) to give a better long-range perspective. Finally, I had to view the long Overview twice in order to learn how to negotiate through the many features that are available. This might be a function of my age, though, as my children zipped their way through it with far less trouble that I had. Also, I would have liked to have had the Overview in print.

In short, the University of Pittsburgh has provided teachers (and students) with a compact and impressive study of modern China. With its reasonable price, it is accessible to any school. There are materials that are useful at any level from the lowest primary grades through senior high school. Its versatility allows the teacher to pick and choose what best fits classroom needs. Again, based on the price, the disk could easily be used as a textbook for any basic college course in modern Chinese history.

It will be useful for teachers who do use the program to provide syllabi of how they are integrating this into classrooms at various grade levels.

Arthur Barbeau is a Professor of History and Anthropology at West Liberty State College in West Virginia. He specializes in China and has also taught *Curriculum and Methods in Social Studies.* Professor Barbeau has been to China nine times in last decade and a half, including two full years in China, one was as a Fulbright Scholar.

Contemporary Chinese Societies: Continuity and Change is available from Columbia University Press. Price is \$49.50. Asian Educational Media Service Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 230 International Studies Building, MC-483 910 South Fifth Street Champaign, IL 61820

http://www.aems.uiuc.edu

PAID Permit No. 75 Champaign, IL

### Guide to Distributors

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

Annenberg/CPB Collection, P.O. Box 2345, S. Columbia University Press, 61 W. 62nd Burlington, VT 05407-2345. Tel: 800-LEARNER Street, New York, NY 10023. Tel: 800-944-8648. (532-7637). Fax: 800-864-9846. E-mail: info@ learner.org. Web site: http://www.learner.org.

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

Asia Society, 725 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021. Tel: 800-ASK-ASIA or 212-288-6400. Fax: 888-FAX-ASIA or 212-517-8315.

Asian Development Bank, P.O. Box 789, Manila 0980, Philippines. Tel: (632) 632-4444. Fax: (632) 636-2444. Web site: http://www .adb.org/Publications.

Chip Taylor Communications, 2 East View Drive, Derry, NH 03038. Tel: 603-434-9262 or 800-876-CHIP (2447). Fax: 603-432-2723. E-mail: sales@chiptaylor.com. Web site: http:// www.chiptaylor.com.

Fax: 800-944-1844. Web site: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup.

Filmakers Library, 124 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016. Tel: 212-808-4980. Fax: 212-808-4983. E-Mail: info@filmakers.com. Web site: http://www.filmakers.com.

Film Library, 22-D Hollywood Avenue, Hohokus, NJ 07423. Tel: 800-343-5540. Fax: 201-652-1973.

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

First Run Icarus Films, 153 Waverly Place, Sixth Floor, New York NY10014. Tel: 800-876-1710 or 212-727-1711. Fax: 212-989-7649. E-mail: infor@frif.com. Web site: http://www .echonyc.com/~frif.

Korea Society, 950 Third Avenue, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10022. Tel: 212-759-7525. Fax: 212-759-7530. Web site: http://www.koreasociety.org.

Teacher's Video Company, P.O. Box WHG-4455, Scottsdale, AZ 85261. Tel: 800-262-8837. Fax: 602-860-8650. E-mail: customerservice@ teachersvideo.com. Web site: http:// www.teachersvideo.com.

Women Make Movies, Inc., Distribution Department, 462 Broadway, Suite 500R, New York, NY 10013. Tel: 212-925-0606. Fax: 212-925-2052. E-mail: orders@wmm.com. Web site: http://www.wmm.com.