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Islam

>> Mosque. Produced by Maryknoll World Productions. 1992. 28 minutes.

>> Faith of Islam. Produced by Maryknoll World Productions. 1988. 28 minutes.

>> The Long Search: Islam: There is No God But God. Produced by Peter Montagnon, directed by Jonathan Stedall, narrated by Ronald Eyre. 1978. 52 minutes.

There are about one billion followers of Muhammad's teachings today; approximately every sixth person in the world is a Muslim. We



often think that Islam is predominantly found in the Middle East; in reality, Islamic countries

stretch along the equator from Mauritania to Indonesia.

Should we, as Asianists, be concerned with Islam? In what we consider to be Asia proper, there are a number of nations that are overwhelmingly Muslim. These include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. Additionally, there are sizable Muslim minorities in India and the Philippines. And, although the more than 20 million Muslims in China may be a fraction of that country's population, they outnumber the population of a number of Muslim countries.

In this sweep of Islamic countries from the Atlantic Ocean in Africa to the southern Philippines in the Pacific, there is a myriad of local nuances. Yet, all Muslims agree on the basic tenets and teachings of their faith. Thus, no examination of the countries of Asia can be complete without some attention to the followers of Muhammad.

As a survey, these basic ideas are nicely depicted in *Mosque*, a 30-minute video put out by the Maryknoll order of the Roman Catholic faith. Though set in a neighborhood mosque in Cairo, *Mosque* serves as an excellent introduction. The stress is on the totality of the faith in the lives of its adherents, its all-embracing nature, or—as the narrator so aptly puts it—Islam's "fascination with God."

The film is nicely made and tightly organized. The scenery is gripping. Students can see the many things that happen in a mosque and not just the ritual of prayer. There is a good explanation of the "five pillars" on which the faith is based. These are the open profession of the belief in the one God, prayer five times each day, almsgiving, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the *hajj* to Mecca. Going beyond this base, emphasis is also given to the importance of God in the Word (to Muslims, this is the Qu'ran). The worldly aim of Islam is a just social order, to create societies based on law and peace.

There is an interesting discussion of the *jihad*. To some Muslims and many Westerners, this is the call for a "holy war." In *Mosque*, the narrator attempts to show through interviews that the first and most important *jihad* is to win the battle for God's control of one's own soul and the total rejection of the forces of evil.

Mosque does hint at the diversity of some Islamic practices from culture to culture. There is also a discussion of the links and similarities between Islam and the other "religions of the Book," Judaism and Christianity. The little discussion in the middle of the film on Christianity is not obtrusive. In short, then, *Mosque* can serve as a good introduction to the basic ideas of Islam at any grade from primary school through the first college world history course.

While useful, Maryknoll's second film on Islam, *The Faith of Islam* (28 minutes) is less satisfactory and I would not use it in lower grades. There is excellent footage of the *hajj* with pilgrims from all over the world joining in worship at the Ka'aba. Particularly interesting, in light of women's positions in some fundamentalist nations, is the number of women who are taking part in this sacred Muslim obligation. There are also some interesting views of other ritual customs, such as standing on Mount Arafat and the "stoning of Satan."

My objection to this film, especially for younger students, is the format. Essentially, it is a discussion of Islam by a sheikh from Ghana (in the United States as a missionary) and a Roman *continued on page 2*



From One Precept: Zen Buddhism in America. See review "Experiencing Zen in Film," page 4.

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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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Program Director: David W. Plath Program Coordinator/Editor: Sarah I. Barbour Assistant Program Coordinator: Elizabeth Cothen We elcome to the second thematic issue of AEMS' *News and Reviews*. I chose to focus on religion in this issue in part because I hope that these reviews will stimulate an interest in the large body of audiovisual material that is available. I also hope that the videos, CD-ROMS and Web sites mentioned here will help demystify Asia to a greater extent. Asia is often understood in the West in terms of its religions; Asian people and countries are frequently described with words such as "spiritual," "sacred," and "mystical." By showing how these religions change and grow and how they are practiced every day by real people, good A/V material can help students see Asians not as mysterious and exotic beings, but as ordinary people seeking guidance, community, and faith.

Observant readers will note that not all Asian religions are covered; traditional religions such as Tibetan and Thai Buddhism are unfortunately neglected, as are new religions, such as Falun Gong and Aum Shinrikyo, that have garnered attention in recent years. Also missing is any discussion of the role that Christianity has played in Asian society and history, from the Catholics who make up the largest religious group in the Philippines to the "hidden Christians" of Japan.

In some cases, I was simply unable to find material on a given subject (if anyone knows of a video on the Parsis, for example, I would love to hear about it!). For the most part, though, material (sometimes a lot of it) is available. The problem was finding an appropriate reviewer with the time to write about it. In future issues, I will try to see that material about other religions is covered. Until then, if you are looking for material on a particular religion in Asia, let our office know and we will do our best to help you.

New to the AEMS Web site

On-line Guide to Educational Films

http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/HTML/FilmGuide.htm

Liz Cothen created these new pages over the summer. The Guide is divided into two sections. "Using Educational Films" provides links to dozens of useful Web sites and on-line teachers guides. "Finding Resources" provides information about obtaining films (through purchase or loan) about all regions of the world, not just Asia.

The Alan Chalk Guides to Japanese Films

http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/HTML/contents.html

Alan Chalk, a high school teacher in Connecticut, has graciously allowed AEMS to make his extensive series of lesson plans and curriculum units on Japanese films available on our Web site. Most lesson plans focus on using Japanese film and anime in conjunction with Japanese literature. There are also curriculum units that explore topics such as imperial Japan and Japanese geography through film. The guides range in level from elementary school to college. \blacklozenge

Islam

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Catholic nun who served as a missionary in Indonesia with the two hosts, a Maryknoll priest and nun. In my opinion, the "talking heads" detract from the otherwise excellent footage.

There is a good attempt to separate the religion of Islam from the politics that one finds in some of the more fundamentalist nations today. It does introduce the basic concepts of the faith. As in *Mosque*, there is a special attempt in *The Faith of Islam* to show the commonalities of the Muslim religion with Christianity. The equation of Islam with Judaism is less satisfactory.

Perhaps the best combination for middle school or high school students would be to show *Mosque* in its entirety and use the film footage from *The Faith of Islam* as supplementary material. Both could easily be done in 45 minutes of class time. Both films humanize Islam and make it meaningful to the average American.

In The Long Search series of videos on world

religions is one on Islam titled *There is No God But God.* Ronald Eyre, a British playwright is the narrator. This is an excellent film (though also set in Egypt). Starting from basic definitions, he develops the religion in a beautiful film. Islam, he explains, means "submission," and Muslim is "one who submits." The tone of *There Is No God But God* is more academic than the Maryknoll films. Eyre takes the role of a novice who knows nothing and expands on Islam from this beginning.

He does a good job of showing the totality of religion in the daily lives of devout Muslims and adds important aspects that are missing in the other two films. There is a stress on Islamic law that guides the details of Muslim life. Attention is also given to the Hadith, the teachings of the Prophet. There is a small introduction on Sufi Islam which I found unsatisfactory. His inability to discover a true Sufi may leave the viewer confused.

Eyre then visits a small village about one hundred miles south of Cairo. Here, he shows the role of Islam in the life of the village and stresses that *continued on next page*



Salaam Shalom: The Jews of India

>> A film by Vanessa C. Laufer. 2001. 50 minutes.

s the title indicates, Salaam Shalom is a film about the four Jewish communities of India: the Bene Israel residing mainly in Gujarat and the Bombay area of Maharashtra; the Cochini Jews of the Malabar coast; the Bene Menashe in Manipur; and the Baghdadi Jews said to be originally from Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan. The film takes us to weddings in Bombay where Jewish rituals are interwoven with pan-Indian marriage customs, to empty synagogues in Cochin housed in deteriorating buildings, and to untended cemeteries marked by crumbling headstones with Jewish symbols. We visit a thriving Jewish neighborhood in the Thane area of Bombay with a kosher butcher, an active synagogue, and a Jewish cemetery. In Thane, Passover matzoh are baked in tandoori ovens.

The filmmaker interviews Jews in India as well as in Israel and Canada, where members of the Indian-Jewish communities have settled in large numbers. We hear their stories describing the arrival of Jews in India, and their poignant recollections of better days when Jewish families flourished in Bombay, Calcutta, Gujarat, and Cochin. Several people describe life before independence in 1948, before Indian Jews left in droves for Israel and Canada, leaving empty

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the entire concept of Islam centers around community life. There is a minimal amount of material on the position of women in Islam; in the village they pray at home rather than in the mosque.

If the Maryknoll films can be best used with lower grades in school, There Is No God But God would be appropriate for the upper grades of high school and beginning college courses. Unfortunately none of the three, despite their merit, focus on what specialists want to call Asia. Still, they are an excellent introduction to a faith that is often misunderstood in the West. 🔶

synagogues and crumbling cemeteries.

During the British Raj, Jews were one of several minority communities granted business advantages and privileges in return for serving in administrative positions. Successful in these roles and unsure how they would fare once the British departed, most Indian Jews did not support the independence movement. After 1948, many Jews left for Israel in hopes of finding a more secure life. But though the Israeli government accepted them under the law of return, the larger society did not offer the homecoming they had anticipated. No longer unique in their Jewish identity, Bene Israels, Cochini Jews, and the Bene Menashe in Israel became simply "Indians," often facing the prejudices of European and other Jews in their new homeland. Like immigrants in most cultures, second-generation Indian Jews have become more integrated, gaining facility in Hebrew, earning university degrees, and achieving respected positions in Israeli society; but the initial transition from India to Israel was difficult.

The Bene Menashe, who believe their ancestry is derived from the lost tribe of Menashe, live in Manipur, one of the northeastern states of India. Bene Menashe explain that their ancestors settled

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Mosque is available from Maryknoll World Productions. Price is \$14.95.

Islam: There is No God But God, part of The Long Search series, is available from Ambrose Video. Price is \$99.95.

Faith of Islam is no longer available for purchase. Please call the AEMS office if you would like us to help you find a copy for loan in your area.

for a time in China, migrated to Burma, and eventually established themselves in Manipur where they have lived for centuries, following ancient Jewish ritual observances of prayer and holy days. When Christian missionaries in the late 1800s stumbled upon this community, whose book and prayers were so different from their Manipuri neighbors, the missionaries explained to them that their religious practices were part of a tradition known as Judaism and that many people outside of India shared their same customs. Although the missionaries converted most of this community to Christianity, a small group continued to pray and worship as Jews. The Bene Menashe now send young men to rabbinical schools in Israel to study and bring more orthodox leadership into their Manipuri religious observance. In the film, one of these young men explains that although he is an outsider in Israel, and a minority in Manipur, he is clear in himself that he is both a Jew and an Indian.

Although the narration in the beginning is rather slow to engage the audience, Salaam Shalom presents excellent first-hand interviews with the remaining Jews in Bombay and Cochin, as well as with those who have emigrated to Israel and Canada. This film is a wonderful oral history documenting the stories of these four communities. The speakers emphasize that Indian society always welcomed them as Jews, a testimony to India's long tradition of tolerance. One woman notes that she has never experienced any anti-Semitism in India, but then adds with a thoughtful pause, "up to now." As Indian politicians and intellectuals debate issues of religious diversity and secularism, the film offers an interesting contribution to this discussion.

Classes in South Asian studies and history of religions will find Salaam Shalom useful for understanding the way different Indian communities live together, and helpful, too, for its comments on the larger history of diversity and tolerance in India. The interviews and issues presented should be accessible for most audiences from high school students to adults, especially those with some background in Jewish history and ritual. Sociology and anthropology classes might be especially interested in the film's presentation of issues of immigration and prejudice. 🔶

Cathy Benton teaches classes in the Asian Religious Traditions at Lake Forest College. She has recently returned from three months in Pune, India, where she worked with ten students from the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, and where she learned that a very small Jewish community continues to support a grand old synagogue in one of the oldest sections of the city.

Salaam Shalom: The Jews of India is available from Filmakers Library. Price is \$350 for purchase and \$75 for rental.



Experiencing Zen in Film

>> One Precept: Zen Buddhism in America. Written and directed by Stephen Flood and Robin Adams. 1995. 26 minutes.

>> The Principles and Practice of Zen. Written and directed by Toshimaru Ama, narration by Ben Kingsley, produced by NHK. 1994. 1 hour 48 minutes.

Intellectually honest filmmakers are faced with a real challenge when approaching a subject like Zen Buddhism. Some of its key teachings say that the tradition and its many disciplinary practices must be experienced directly, not through language, description, or even images. These can all be useful in pointing the way, but to say they represent the tradition is straying from the path.

With this rather intimidating realization before him, Stephen Flood's film *One Precept* presents the viewer with glimpses rather than definitions of temple life and daily practice at the Rinzai-Ji temple in Los Angeles. Although Buddhism has many precepts, or guidelines, this particular temple and film choose to essentialize them all within the single precept of "practice." Shot in black and white, the first half of the film is poetic and evocative, ranging from silhouettes of disciples performing walking meditation, to close-ups of candles on altars, to the inevitable shots of individuals sitting in zazen meditation. A senior monk, Seijū, provides voice-over narration, but there is often little convergence between nicely framed shots of the temple or its activities and the narration's focus on the monk's Catholic background, his appreciation of Zen discipline, or pithy Zen sayings. Still, this was far less disconcerting than an obviously staged wielding of the "stick of compassion," which splinters as Seijū uses it to strike a slouching meditator.

Particularly captivating were images of the temple monks begging at a large vegetable distribution center, and their obvious delight in coming away with boxes of fruit and vegetables for temple meals. Only at the end do we get a sense of a more formal organizational hierarchy and structure, as head priest Kyōzan Joshū Sasaki is shown meeting his students individually as they wrestle with $k\bar{o}an$ study. Like a dream, he appears briefly and then the film ends with artfully arranged shots of the meditation hall being cleaned, an act which is, according to the film's title, also part of the precept of practice.

The Principles and Practice of Zen, produced by the Japanese public television network NHK with added narration by actor Ben Kingsley, makes very clear from the beginning how integral structure and hierarchy are to both a traditional Rinzai training temple and to the tradition of Zen Buddhism in Japan. One Precept and The Principles and Practice of Zen both begin with rather predictable music from a bamboo flute, and both plunge us immediately into the rigors of practice. But The Principles and Practice of Zen centers around the year's most intensive period of prolonged sitting meditation (rohatsu ozesshin) for its resident monks, where "seven days and nights are as one." Lest we entertain romantic thoughts about the attractiveness of pursuing enlightenment in such an environment, viewers are told the sesshin is called "a monk killer" for its demanding 21-hour days.

To provide a more human dimension within this intense and rather austere mid-January setting, a young novice monk is singled out. The film reenacts his arrival at Shōgenji temple when the cherry trees were in full bloom, the ritual hazing he endures upon being admitted, and his gradual integration with temple life. We see the temple kitchen in full operation, learn how the dining hall (along with the meditation hall and bathhouse) is one of the three training centers, and observe the fascinating ritual etiquette of taking meals in silence.

The images of meditating monks are beautifully staged and lit—signature elements in almost any NHK production. However, the tranquility quickly fades whenever we see the monks being stalked by a senior monk holding the "stick of compassion," which is "never used for intimidation" according to the narration. Perhaps not, but it's difficult to imagine how the monks can feel otherwise when the blows come (four on each shoulder, with a loud report as wood strikes padded winter robes). My own students found these portions of the film rather shocking, and

COURTESY OF WOMEN MAKE MOVIES

My Journey, My Islam

>> A film by Kay Rasool. 1999. 56 minutes.

slam is what your heart tells you," muses Kay Rasool's mother-in-law, trying to answer Kay's questions about what Islam is and what it means to be a Muslim, especially as a woman. This movie is autobiographical and follows Kay Rasool, a Muslim from India, on her search for the many faces of her religion. Her parents were both teachers at the Alighar Islamic University and practiced Islam at home and at work. In dress Kay did not differ from the Hindu majority. She and her Hindu friends pitied Hindu and Muslim women who wore the veil, because they saw it as a sign of male domination. Her father taught her that Islam liberates and treats men and women as equals. The movie follows Kay as she visits the countries she belongs to: India; her second homeland, Australia; Pakistan where her in-laws live and where she interviews Benazir Bhutto; and finally the United Kingdom, in London, where most of her brothers and sisters now live.

The movie addresses important questions about how a woman can be faithful to her Islamic identity in a globalized world. The answers are many and show the wide range from legalistic to spiritual interpretations of Islam. Kay interviews her family and friends about issues such as, "Does a Muslim woman have to wear the veil?" "Is the

Experiencing Zen

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indeed there has been considerable criticism of this practice in recent years. Some North American Zen Centers no longer use the stick unless the practitioner requests it, while other centers have abolished it altogether.

Forty minutes into the program, we revisit the origins of Japanese-style Rinzai Zen. Viewers are shown the Chinese temple where the sixth patriarch Hui-Neng composed the poem which, according to legend, qualified him to succeed the head priest. When the film returns to Japan, the contrast between Chinese and Japanese monastic cultures is softened by highlighting the practice of *takuhatsu*, or mendicant begging. Viewers accompany the monks on their rounds through a local village, and learn that the temple also grows rice as a form of work/practice.

At one hour into the program, the monastery is left behind to explore the influence of Zen aesthetics upon Japanese artistic expression. Included in this narrative is Noh performance, the traditional Japanese house (which looks suspiciously like an inn or $ry\overline{o}kan$), calligraphy, temple gardens, and ink painting. The photography is gorgeous, of



home the ideal place for a woman or can she also work outside?" "Should she be secluded even though the women around the Prophet Muhammad were not?" Kay keeps questioning whether she should be "an anonymous Muslim" or profess her religious identity by wearing the veil in public, and whether she can still call herself a Muslim without following all the religious rules.

In Australia, Kay meets with Australian and Middle Eastern women who don the veil, many after a long inner struggle. For them it provides community and signifies resistance to the materialistic and secular societies surrounding them. They are aliens to the Australian scene who have strong personalities and a deep belief in the clear parameters set by Islam. They testify to the inner spiritual change that moves a woman to choose to wear the veil.

Throughout the movie Kay's mother is shown. She has made the opposite journey—from living fully veiled in seclusion to stepping into the public world where she cast off the veil. She carries the spirit of Islam within her without outer signifiers. In contrast, Kay's mother-in-law in Pakistan prefers to

course, but I wanted a bit more context, social history, and additional examples in order to accept this premise. Principles of (Zen-influenced) aesthetic expression are also highlighted, and the video ends with a Noh actor leaving the stage.

While One Precept is more poetic and evocative than The Principles and Practice of Zen, I believe it conveys better for university students and adult audiences the excitement and transformative potential of a Western engagement with Zen. The Principles and Practice of Zen takes a cinema verité approach to show us how the culture of training young men to be future Zen priests actually works, as well as conveying Zen's influence on Japanese artistic expression. While interesting as a cultural document, I found students intimidated by the severity of sesshin training. The key to using the latter film effectively is to select five-to-ten minute clips that illustrate topics such as the world of the novice monk, meditation, koan practice with the master, begging, or temple life in general. During a semester-long study of Zen Buddhism, I never did finish showing The Principles and Practice of Zen in its entirety.

I look forward to the day when we have a Zen documentary that addresses its subject matter with more humor than *The Principles and Practice of* live in purdah because it "gives women honor." At the same time, she understands that her condition is relative to her environment: "You live overseas, you don't need to wear the veil." Visits to a theater group that advocates women's rights and to a house for victims of domestic violence show the other side of Pakistani Islam as it is laid down by the government in restrictive *hudud* laws. These reduce women to beings without status, to non-persons.

The personal inquiry makes this movie unique. Through her questions Kay addresses issues that are seldom asked in documentaries about Islam. She lays bare the inner struggle that Muslim women in many countries experience, especially those who are living in the West. This makes the movie excellent material for the college level where it can spark vivid discussions about issues related to gender, Islam, culture and globalization. \blacklozenge

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My Journey, My Islam is distributed by Women Make Movies. Price is \$250 for purchase and \$60 for rental.

Zen, that includes the importance of women to the contemporary tradition, and that even conveys a bit of irreverence and critique. After all, since it is said the essence of Zen cannot be conveyed in words or images, perhaps this approach could free a filmmaker rather than bind him or her to what is fast becoming conventional narratives and stereotypes.

John Nelson is an Assistant Professor at the University of San Francisco's Department of Theology and Religious Studies as well as at the Center for the Pacific Rim. He is the author of two books on contemporary Shinto shrines and is working on a film concerning the same topic. His most recent publication (forthcoming in *Critical Asian Studies*) provides an overview of the controversial "new history textbook" for Japan's middleschool students.

One Precept: Zen Buddhism in America is available from Documentary Educational Resources. Price is \$145 for purchase and \$30 for rental.

The Principles and Practice of Zen is available from Films for the Humanities and Sciences. Price is \$159 for purchase and \$75 for rental.

Shinto on Film

>> Nature, Gods, and Man in Japan. Produced by Peter Grilli. Directed by David Westphal. 1977. 50 minutes.

>> Japan Past and Present: Buddha in the Land of the Kami. 1989. 53 minutes.

>> Religions of the World: Shinto. Produced by Schlessinger Media and Greenstar Television. 1998. 50 minutes.

Three popular videos used in courses to help students gain a deeper understanding of Japanese religions in general and Shinto in particular are *Nature, Gods, and Man in Japan; Buddha in the Land of the Kami;* and *Religions of the World: Shinto.* The three films were produced in different decades (the 1970s, '80s, and '90s) and provide a glimpse into

how the study and perception of Shinto and Japanese religion have developed and changed over the years. But perhaps the best indicator of how effective these videos are in the 21st century in introducing classes to Japanese religion and culture is to ask the students themselves for their evaluations. What follows is a brief description of each film accompanied by the comments and insights of students in Japanese Religion and World Religions classes.

Nature, Gods, and Man in Japan was produced in 1977 by the Japan Society Film Center and, although it is the oldest of the three films under review, it provides the most visually arresting cinematography. The film utilizes serene and mystical images of Shinto with footage that lingers on the beauty of Japan's natural landscape to help convey some of the basic traits and themes, such as permanence and renewal, which characterize Shinto. Two of the most important and sacred sites in Shinto-the Ise and Izumo shrines-are shown, as well as ceremonies, local festivals, and seasonal celebrations. Shinto images and works of art are also depicted to help explain how Shinto evolved through interaction with other Japanese religions, especially Buddhism. Most of the students' comments, however, focused on two aspects of the film: the cinematography and the film's emphasis on nature and harmony.

The emphasis on the mystical nature of Shinto and the aesthetically pleasing cinematography affected students in a number of ways. Some said they could feel the serenity and peacefulness of Shinto through the video. They found it especially helpful to see the Ise and Izumo shrines and how their architectures express Shinto themes. Other students, however, felt that the pace of the video, the lingering footage of scenery, and the resonant tone of the narrator made it difficult to maintain concentration. One student said that the scenery

For the most part, students thought Nature, Gods, and Man in Japan was informative and stunningly beautiful. footage was pleasant and beautiful but excessive and slow-paced and made her "want to cuddle up with a blanket and sleep." Indeed, some students in class fell asleep!

In the view of some students, the emphasis on Shinto as a religious tradition in harmony with nature resulted in an unbalanced view of the

religion. A number of students commented that they would have liked to learn more how Shinto affected the lives of ordinary individuals and their communities as Shinto is as much a dynamic tradition of communal festivals as it is a religion of tranquil beauty. The focus on Shinto as a harmonious religion also meant that State Shinto was not discussed in the video, much to the dismay of some students.

For the most part, students thought *Nature*, *Gods, and Man in Japan* was an informative and stunningly beautiful film. The video rightly points out that Shinto is an amalgamation of various influences yet also preserves essential characteristics such as the emphasis on purity, the affirmation of nature, and the closeness between nature and the divine.

The second video, *Buddha in the Land of the Kami*, was produced in 1989 and highlights the role of Buddhism and Chinese culture on the development of Shinto and Japanese culture from the 7th to 12th centuries. It is actually part of the *Japan Past and Present* film series that spans Japanese history from the 7th century to the 20th century. As such, the video provides a good historical framework from which to view Japanese religion and culture and offers insight into the evolution of various Japanese traditions, including sumo, rice paper making, calligraphy, and the creation of Japanese gardens.

Students responded positively to the ritual performances of the Shinto creation myths at the opening of the film. They found the explanations of *kami* (gods), the myths involving the deities Amaterasu and Susanō, and the Shinto sacred rope, or shimenawa, both interesting and helpful. The video also tells how the arrival of Buddhism and the culture it brought along influenced Shinto. For example, *kami* were not depicted in any distinct shape or portrayed in human form



until contact with Buddhism. There is also an intimate look at ritual ceremonies that illustrates the integration of Buddhist and Shinto traditions.

Although *Buddha in the Land of the Kami* contains some beautiful footage of Japanese scenery and arts, there were also some odd claims made in the film that caught the attention of students. Statements such as the one made at the beginning of the video that the *kami* are not actually gods and the assertion made near the end that Shingon Buddhism is only practiced by a select few are simply not accurate. But the remark that produced the most discussion in class was the one made in the first part of the film that the *kami* are well disposed to humans, especially the Japanese. Students would have benefited from more detail and explanation regarding these statements.

Overall, *Buddha in the Land of the Kami* provides good historical context for understanding the development of Shinto, especially in regards to its interaction with Buddhism and Chinese culture. Students found the historical emphasis of *Buddha in the Land of the Kami* helpful in explaining how contemporary Japanese art and aesthetics can be traced to earlier practices.

Although there are some clear strengths to the 1998 *Religions of the World: Shinto*, the video

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improves little on the two earlier films. What students found especially positive about this video were the insights and comments of a professor interviewed during the course of the film, something that the other two videos lacked. The film conveys the complexity of the *kami* concept and clearly explains how Shinto adopted and incorporated other religious traditions into its framework. *Shinto* also raised the issue of World War II and State Shinto, topics not covered in the other videos.

Students also found a number of weak points that detracted from the overall quality of the video, however. To start with, the narrator, Ben Kingsley, had difficulty pronouncing several terms which gave the perception he was simply reading from a script and did not know much about the subject. Also, a number of students thought too much time was spent on subjects not related to Shinto. For example, there is a long sequence on Christianity that lacks any clear reference to how it directly impacted Shinto. There were also occasions where the video footage did not match the narration, which left students wondering what they were watching.

Perhaps the most telling comments about the film come not from the students who watched the video but from the professor who appears in the film itself, John Nelson, a Japanese religion scholar and Shinto authority. Nelson has written elsewhere¹ of his frustration in trying to help create "an intelligent, visually interesting, and accurate documentary on one of Japan's most long-lived and pervasive religio-political traditions." Space does not permit the listing of all the errors and problems Nelson found with the video; however, two glaring mistakes should be mentioned. Near the middle of the video we are told that the most important Japanese festival is the New Year's celebration. This may be true, but the footage shown accompanying this statement is not a New Year's celebration but scenes from a summer festival! Also, the "evil kami" mentioned and depicted in the video are not Shinto kami at all but Buddhist guardian deities! Such errors as these led Nelson to recommend that Shinto be taken off everyone's purchase list.

Taken as a whole, the three films complement each other and provide a clearer picture of one of Japan's most enduring religious traditions. Separately, however, the distinct emphases and focuses of each film (mystical, historical, analytical) result in an uneven presentation of the complexity and richness that color Shinto. This tells us as much about the inherent ambiguity and amorphous nature that characterize Shinto as it does about the effectiveness of the films to disseminate a deeper understanding of Japanese religion. The attempt to capture and convey in video the important themes

The Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith: Hinduism and Buddhism

>> A Bill Moyers Special. 1996. 56 minutes.

A ny chance to expose our students to Huston Smith, one of the great scholars of the 20th century, is one that should not be missed. With this in mind any high school or college instructor would be well served to consider this film. While there are many profound moments in this interview/documentary, I will offer a few cautionary suggestions for classroom use.

As with many Bill Moyers special productions, Moyers occasionally forgets that his guest should be primary focus of the film, not his own witty questions. Granted, these self-serving moments are isolated, but they obscure some of the narrative quality of the presentation. The film is presented in an unusual style. Moyers and Smith have conversations about Hinduism and Buddhism, and then Smith narrates some of his own footage from the late 1960s. These insights into his personal experiences are very enlightening and engaging. They also serve to place the sometimes obscure discussion of religious beliefs in a more concrete context.

In terms of balance, the film devotes more time and gives greater insight into Buddhism than Hinduism. While Smith's journeys though India are featured at the opening of the interview, it is his experiences in Tibet and Japan that make up the bulk of the conversations. (This is not to say that the sections on Hinduism are poorly done; quite the contrary.) To truly appreciate the anecdotes about Hinduism your students will need prior background on Hinduism, both belief and practice. Smith once again displays his unique talent for conveying the complexity of the world's religions in clear uncluttered metaphors. Teachers may find one of these metaphors worthy of a great deal of class discussion: "The light of a lamp can be covered up by a shade made dirty from dust or soot or mud to the point where the light does not shine through at all. That is our nature—that the divine within us has been completely overshadowed by bad karma."

and issues that inform Shinto can be a fascinating and frustrating endeavor for both the filmmakers and their audiences. Yet the study of Shinto and Japanese religion is richer because of it. ¹Nelson, John. "Shinto." *Japanese Religions*, Vol. 26 (2), July 2001, pp. 205–209.

Jay Sakashita received his Ph.D. in Japanese Religion from the University of Stirling in Scotland and currently teaches religion courses at the University of Hawaii and at Leeward The section of the video devoted to Tibetan Buddhism is interesting, but tends to veer from a religious bent to focus on the vocal ability of monks. This discussion of the unusual three-toned chant does not provide additional illumination into the practice of Buddhism. Certainly this section of the video would require significant supplementary material on the part of the instructor for this anecdote to have meaning. For an introduction to Tibetan Buddhism I suggest looking elsewhere.

The final section of the video is perhaps the strongest. Smith outlines his stay at a Japanese Zen Buddhist monastery in the 1960s. His descriptions of the practices, routines, and trials that take place here clearly illustrate the often cloudy world of Japanese Zen Buddhism. Smith openly admits his own ignorance but by doing so answers many of the questions your students may have about the seemingly strange practices of the monks.

Clearly this film has some shining moments that can greatly add to any discussion of religion in the high school or college classroom. Instructors should carefully pick and choose which sections will benefit their particular classroom before showing the entire video. When studying the religions of the world more information is not always beneficial. When using this video opt for quality over quantity.

Steve Kellner is a Social Studies teacher 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.

Hinduism and Buddhism, part of The Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith series, is available from Films for the Humanities and Sciences. Price is \$89.95.

Community College. His area of research is Japanese new religions.

Nature, Gods and Man in Japan is available from the Japan Society. Price is \$85.

Buddha in the Land of the Kami, part of the *Japan Past and Present* series, is available from Films for the Humanities and Sciences. Price is \$159 for purchase and \$75 for rental.

Shinto, part of the *Religions of the World Series*, is available from Social Studies School Service. Price is \$39.95.

Bargain Buys: Experience India on a Budget

I n keeping with this issue's theme, I have chosen to concentrate on India, the birthplace of two of the world's great religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as of numerous faiths with



somewhat smaller followings such as Jainism and Sikhism. India has also been a location of great religious turmoil

in the past century, most significantly between Hindus and Muslims. Not surprisingly, therefore, much of the media available on India focuses a great deal on religious theology and influence. Many of the materials I was able to locate for \$50 or less concentrated on Hinduism, India's most prominent religion, and Mohandas Gandhi, India's most famous Hindu. Both of these topics are covered in this article. But India cannot be understood as just a place of great spirituality; like every other nation in the world it has been impacted dramatically by globalization. Over the past few years, the nation has fast become a major economic player, with an internationally trained workforce, emerging infrastructure, and decreasing restrictions on foreign trade. India is also gaining recognition for its artistic achievements, both traditional and modern. Its film industry produces more movies than Hollywood, exporting Indian

> culture around the globe and revolutionizing India's countryside. Many of the documentaries I watched take differing views on these transformations; some embrace the nation's

development as the solution to its historic backwardness, while others protest

what they see as the destruction of an entire way of life.

Hinduism Practice

Gandhi

Hinduism is an extraordinarily complex religion, which can be daunting to try to teach in a short unit. Several multimedia units do a good job tackling this subject in a simple and interesting way while at the same time remaining sensitive to the fact that Hinduism is an active religion practiced by many people throughout the world. *Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion*, a curriculum unit and accompanying video compiled by the Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, DC, focuses on how Hinduism is actually practiced by worshippers in the United States and modern India. *Puja* shows how rituals are performed in various settings, such as households or shrines, and discusses the ultimate purposes these ceremonies serve. High school students will especially relate to the numerous interviews with young Indian-

Americans discussing their personal relationship with Hinduism. The unit also comes with three posters of deities. (For a more detailed review of *Puja*, see AEMS *News and Reviews*, Vol. 1, No. 1. Spring 1998.)

Another curriculum unit/video combination, Spotlight on Ramayana: An Enduring Tradition, teaches Hinduism through a more historical/cultural lens. The Ramayana is an epic story, much like the Greek Odyssey, that imparts important societal values, such as integrity and chastity, and features prominent deities. In fact, the educators that assembled this unit thought the tale was such a good representation of Hinduism that they included over 350 pages of lesson plans focusing on it, as well as a 60-minute videotape, mostly featuring poorly filmed performances of the tale, and several posters featuring important scenes. The result is a comprehensive teaching tool for any classroom teacher willing to sift through all of the material provided.

For a greater understanding of how Hinduism evolved through the millennia, check out the 60-minute documentary, Religions of the World: Hinduism. Unlike the other units, Hinduism follows a chronological timeline, explaining how the religion reacted to various stimuli, including the development of Buddhism and Jainism, Muslim invasion, and the independence movement, and how in turn it shaped those events. This gives the viewer (preferably someone in 9th grade or above) the sense that Hinduism is an active, changing religion, not a static, mystical one.

The Great Mahatma

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Families

India

Gandhi died over 50 years ago, but his belief in nonviolent resistance is just as relevant today as it was during his lifetime. Two inexpensive resources, a documentary and a CD-ROM, look at this man's

life and legacy.

Mahatma Gandhi: Pilgrim of Peace is a 60-minute video produced by A&E Biography describing the life and times of the great leader. Journalists, biographers, former colonialists, family members, academics, and even the Dalai Lama touch on his legacy. This informative and straightforward introduction to Gandhi would be most useful for high school and college classrooms. For a more in-depth look, purchase Gandhi: Apostle of Peace and Nonviolence, a PC-compatible CD-ROM that includes recordings of Gandhi's voice, letters in his handwriting, 175 pho-

tographs, a 45-minute video, maps, timelines, and extensive background information.

India in Today's Changing World

After years of protectionism, India opened up its economy in the early 1990s. The result has been an economic boom and the creation of a substantial middle class able to fully enjoy the perks of capitalism. This

emerging consumer culture has in turn sparked a number of fundamental changes in Indian society. The Wall Street Journal documentary *Emerging Powers: India* views these developments in a generally positive light, emphasizing the development of a powerful middle class, improved opportunities for returning expatriates, and increased customer choices, while allowing for the fact that these changes have not been good for everyone.

National Geographic's *The Great Indian Railway*, on the other hand, has a more nostalgic attitude toward the past. This almost-two-hour production uses trains, the predominant form of public transportation in India, to explore several important themes common to developing nations. These include the supplanting of traditional culture with modern values and techniques (represented by the replacement of steam engines with electric ones); the rapid development of the city compared to the stagnation of the countryside; and the necessity of unifying diverse groups of people to form a solid nation state. In my opinion, these ideas are explored much more successfully during the second hour than the first, which tends to be bogged down by its own sentimentality. This video would be most appropriate for middle and high school students and can be shown in clips.

With the exception of a few lessons plans in Spotlight on Ramayana, nothing I have mentioned thus far is appropriate for elementary school students. Fortunately, the series I mention in every single column, Families of the World, does have a video focusing on India. Families of India is 30 minutes long and features an urban boy who lives with his parents and a young girl who resides with her very large extended family in the countryside. These segments can be shown separately.

India's Artistic Achievements

Indian culture is currently going through a period of massive change. Nowhere is this more obvious than the music industry, where national celebrities, supported by multi-million dollar corporations, are rapidly replacing traditional street performers. Not to say the country's music is now borrowing wholesale from the West; the emerging popular culture is uniquely Indian, but with more hype and much sexier than before.

Classical Indian music, which can be argued to be the basis for the nation's modern pop, is explored in Discovering the Music of India. This videotape is useful mainly in late-elementary to high school music classes because the focus is on the elements of the music itself, such as tone, rhythmic patterns, augmentation, and the sound of different instruments, rather than its socio-historical development. Discovering also distinguishes northern and southern musical traditions and demonstrates various dance techniques.

The Indian Film Music Phenomenon: There'll Always Be Stars in the Sky mourns the loss of traditional music performers, who are increasingly being driven to margins of society as the silver screen (most Indian movies are musicals) mesmerizes the masses. It also criticizes the Bombay film industry for creating fantasy worlds that intoxicate people instead of motivating them. Indian Film Music discusses different elements of the film industry as well as various strata of the society as a whole. All around, it is a thought-provoking film even if you don't agree with the director's conclusions. 🔶

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Videography/Discography

Discovering the Music of India (1969, 21 minutes) is available from AIMS-Multimedia. Price is \$49.95.

India Links

Young Kids

- Appu Kids: Indian Portal for Young People http://www.appukids.com/
- Devi: The Great Goddess: Unit for Kids http://www.asia.si.edu/devi/forkids.htm

How Does Art Tell Stories: Art from India and Southeast Asia http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/edu-artstart2/

artstart.asp

Indolink: Illustrated Kids' Stories http://www.indolink.com/Kidz/stories.html My India http://www.netfundu.com/myindia.htm

Middle and Early High School Students

Devi: The Great Goddess http://www.asia.si.edu/devi/index.htm Indian News for Kids http://www.pitara.com/news/news_india.asp

Comic Book Version of Ramayana http://www.askasia.org/adult_free_zone/virtual_gallery/exhibitions/index.htm

The Life of Buddha

http://www.buddhanet.net/lifebud.htm

EZ Vidya.com: Know India http://www.ezvidya.com/

Older Students and Teachers

The Ancient Indus Valley

http://www.harappa.com/har/har0.html "700 illustrated pages by leading scholars of the largest and least known ancient urban civilization."

Companion Site to Spotlight on Ramayana Unit http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/southasiacenter/Ramayana/index.asp

Companion Site to "Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion" http://www.asia.si.edu/pujaonline/puja/start.htm

Indiafood.com

http://www.tadka.com/

Kamat's Potpourri: The History, Mystery, and Diversity of India http://www.kamat.com/

An extremely comprehensive site which includes thousands of photographs and paintings, several timelines, accounts of Hindu gods and mythology, and much more.

Note: Many of these sites were found at http://tlc.ousd.k12.ca.us/library/india/india_kids.html

Emerging Powers: India (1996, 50 minutes) is available from the Social Studies School Service. Price is \$24.95.

Families of the World: Families of India (1996, 30 minutes) is available from Asia for Kids. School price is \$29.95.

Gandhi: Apostle of Peace and Nonviolence (1996), a CD-ROM, is available from CD-Access. Price is \$24.95.

Great Indian Railway (1995, 115 minutes) is available from the Social Studies School Service. Price is \$19.98.

The Indian Film Music Phenomenon (1992, 60 minutes) is available from World Music Store/Multicultural Media. Price is \$25.

- Mahatma Gandhi: Pilgrim of Peace (1997, 50 minutes) is available from the Social Studies School Service. Price is \$14.95.
- Puja: Expressions of Hindu Devotion (1996, Curriculum Unit: 40 pages, Video: 20 minutes) is available from Arthur M. Sackler Gallery/Freer Gallery of Art. Price is \$18.
- Religions of the World: Hinduism (1998, 50 minutes) is available from the Social Studies School Service. Price is \$39.95.
- Spotlight on Ramayana (1995, Curriculum Unit: 356 pages, Video: 57 minutes) is available from the Social Studies School Service. Price is \$40.



Illustration from the video and curricu-

Devotion, disributed by the Arthur M.

lum unit Puja: Expressions of Hindu

Sackler Gallery/Freer Gallery of Art.

Chinese Religion

>> *Taoism: A Question of Balance.* Produced by Peter Montagnon, directed by Jonathan Stedall, narrated by Ronald Eyre. 1977. 52 minutes.

>> Believing. Produced by Time-Life Video. 1984. 57 minutes.

>> Confucianism and Taoism. Produced by Schlessinger Media and Greenstar Television. 1998. 50 minutes.

The volume of *The Long Search* titled *A Question of Balance* ostensibly deals with Daoism (which the narrator spells Taoism). I would question two things about the appropriateness of the film's start. One, the first scenes show fishermen; second, the film is set in Taiwan. Traditionally, China saw itself as a land power; thus, perhaps this examination should have begun away from the sea. Furthermore, can the island of



Taiwan be considered typical of China?

Once past this, however, this 52-minute treatment has potential for teaching. Very quickly, it seems to abandon the search for Daoism in a more general discussion of Chinese religion. The narrator points out that our definition of religion makes it difficult to find the same concept in Chinese history. Using the yin/yang dichotomy as a starting point, it sweeps quickly through Confucius and folk religions. Using the rituals for a local village god as a background, there is a good explanation of important concepts: the reciprocal relations between gods and humans and the nonexclusive nature of traditional Chinese religions.

In this examination, there is a proper focus on the practicality of the Chinese. Their religions have grown out of stress and calamity. The majority of the many gods were once humans themselves. Religion is centered on the community. What worshippers expect is long life, prosperity, and children (especially males). This is what they expect from the supernatural in return for their devotion.

In images centering on the springtime Qing Ming festival, during which graves are swept clean, the film deals with the concept that we exaggerate as "ancestor worship." The true stress is on the interrelatedness of living and dead and the hope to properly respect the ancestors. When Daoism itself is finally addressed, we see the role of a Daoist priest at a funeral and the connection of that religion to the tai chi exercises practiced by many Chinese.

Believing, the fourth volume in *The Heart of the Dragon* series, also looks at the various faiths in China. The first segment begins in Yentai on the northern coast of the Shandong peninsula. There is a quick recounting of the rise of the Chinese Communist Party to power, after which the video moves on to discuss the position of religion in the People's Republic of China. These scenes are followed by a brief discussion of Buddhism, featuring footage of a temple.

Focusing on a Daoist temple at Lao Shan, the film stresses the search for a balance between man and nature, the yin and yang, and the ultimate goal of achieving immortality. In its summary of Daoism, there is stress on the long-lasting effects of this tradition on the culture. We next move to Qufu for a brief examination of Confucianism, which is characterized as a code of moral behavior rather than a religion.

Finally, there is a trip to Mount Tai for a look at folk religions centered on the relationship of earth, sky and family. We are reminded that popular religion avoids definitions and separation, that heaven is not a single god, and that the correct rituals will bring harmony and prosperity.

Though there is a discussion of the attacks on religion during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, this segment insists that much of Communist China has its roots in the ancient religions and philosophies. The need for patience and a strict hierarchical leadership that is expected to adhere to a strict code of moral behavior remains. When these leaders are moral, there will be peace and harmony as the morality spreads downward through the masses.

The second segment begins by looking at the practicality of the Chinese with their focus on family, home, and security. In post-1949 China, the revolution replaced religion for many people. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao was elevated almost to the status of a god and his sayings became sacred scripture. This was supposed to replace the old traditions, but in the end the horrors of the times stripped many people of their belief in the new pantheon.

Some attention is given to the new China of the "four modernizations," but many of the older generation are worried about the acquisitiveness of the younger generation. There is concern for the youth because of problems of unemployment, materialism, "bourgeois decadence," and a lack of confidence. Therefore, party elders are still concerned with teaching morals and values that are as much Confucian as they are socialist. There is still an emphasis on the need to respect authority.

A third possibility for teaching this subject

is the film *Confucianism and Taoism* from the *Religions of the World* series. At 50 minutes, it nicely fits into the average class. Narrated by Ben Kingsley, it is packed with useful information, but totally uninspired in its presentation. In discussing Confucianism, it shows the lasting impact of this philosophical system on China over the past two millennia. It does a nice job of demonstrating that there are religious aspects of these teachings, though more might have been said about "ancestor worship."

Coverage of Daoism (Taoism) is even better; the video gives extensive treatment to the religion's absorption of the earlier folk religions of yin/yang and the Five Elements. There is stress on the fact that yin and yang are actually complementary rather than in opposition. The center of the discussion is the importance of living in harmony with the natural world. I especially liked the insistence that Confucianism and Daoism do complement each other and nicely merge in the Chinese psyche. Where Confucianism stresses the importance of moral behavior in human relations, Daoism is based on the moral necessity to live in harmony with nature.

That said, I have serious objections to the method of presentation. The film never makes a connection between the narrative and the images on the screen. Several bits of black-and-white archival film are used (in some cases more than once) without saying what these show or why they are important. For example, there is a snippet showing people rubbing statues in a Daoist temple. The purpose is to seek healing by rubbing the appropriate part of the stone figure, but this is never mentioned. Likewise there is a rather long segment (about five minutes) showing a religious service in a Daoist temple today. At no time, though, is there any indication of why these rituals are being performed. Finally, some of the more popular but superstitious aspects, such as fortune telling, that have become part of the practice of Daoism are entirely omitted.

Both of the first two films mentioned in this article can be used in teaching. A Question of Balance is probably the simpler and more useful for lower grades. It contains many of the elements that teachers would want to stress, showing the merging of many religious traditions and the practicality of the Chinese in dealing with the supernatural. Believing is more complex but far more meaningful to the People's Republic of China. The discussion of the traditional religions is adequate. More importantly, it puts "Mao Zedong Thought" into a new perspective that views it almost as a modern religion. Finally, by inference, it demonstrates that humans may have a cultural or biological need to believe in something beyond themselves; hence, the apparently

Sikh Religions on the Internet

he diversity inherent in Sikhism, rarely revealed in standard texts, appears boldly in the proliferation of Web sites representing the Sikh religion and community. While no single Web site can be definitive, taken together they provide a visual array of Sikh religious views and heritage. Never before has Sikh expression been so accessible to so many who never visit a Sikh Gurdwara or interact with the Sikh community. For this reason, the Internet provides a virtual gateway for exploring the world's fifth largest religion. Sikhs have no aversion to new technology, so many have dedicated themselves to creating Web sites intended to inform and inspire the viewer. For the student of religion and culture at any level, Internet sites can be a study in how Sikhs present their identity to an English-speaking audience.

I have chosen four sites to highlight as points of entry to Sikh religion on the Internet. If you decide to take these virtual pathways, I recommend going first to a Sikh music link that will allow you to hear Sikh Gurbani, which is the main carrier of Sikh religious tradition, as you browse through the sites. Sikh spiritual expression is primarily a musical one, so listening to Sikh songs is by no means a subsidiary activity. Start at http:// www.sikhnet.com and select the Gurbani link, click Sikhnet Radio and begin to listen. Sikhnet is primarily a community site, maintained by webmaster Gurumustuk Singh Khalsa. The "Sikhism" section has a good introduction to the Golden Temple, the Sikhs' central temple in Amritsar, India. The Siri Guru Granth Sahib link (http:// www.sikhnet.com/s/GuruGranthSahib) accesses an on-line version of the Sikhs' primary sacred text. The "Community" section provides the best source for viewing contemporary Western Sikh artwork. The articles on this site reflect the influence and

continued from previous page

universality of religion in human societies.

In my opinion, *Confucianism and Taoism* is not particularly useful as teaching material. While packed with information, this is presented to the student aurally. The total lack of connection with the visual images will probably result in most students, especially at younger grades, totally missing the point of the narration. I probably would not use this below college level unless I was teaching a particularly advanced senior high school class. **♦**

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Arthur Barbeau is a Professor of History and Anthropology at West Liberty State College in present the lectures of Siri Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogi-ji (aka Yogi Bhajan) whose leadership has given rise to the non-Punjabi American Sikh community. The site also provides a Sikhism search engine, which allows users to search through 591 Sikh Web sites through Sikh-Seek: http://www.SikhSeek.com.

Another highly recommended educational site is the Sikhism Home Page created by Sandeep Singh Brar at http://www.sikhs.org. Clearly organized and written, this site may be the best introduction to the Sikh religion. The articles are well informed and succinct and present the normative view of Sikhism. The excellent section on Sikh Gurdwaras offers insight into both history and sacred places of the Sikhs. The virtual tour of the Golden Temple gives panoramic views of this sacred precinct. The portrait of a Sikh wedding provides a superb orientation to the ceremony. For a comprehensive and transparent presentation, this site presents a fine learning resource for readers at any level.

For a site with an academic background, visit http://www.sikhnet.com/HemkuntSahib, Heather Michaud's site on a Sikh Gurdwara in the Indian Himalayas which was the subject of her Master's thesis in anthropology. Her extensive field research on Hemkunt Sahib is displayed very artfully at this site, which is both a guide for the aspiring pilgrim and a teaching resource for the juxtaposition of Himalayan and Sikh culture. Although Sikhs do not recognize pilgrimage as a sacred act of religious merit, the "pilgrimage process" is not unlike journeys to other sacred sites. For an instructor planning a cross-cultural course on pilgrimage, the site would be a worthy stop as it illustrates many Sikh practices performed on this arduous trek.

The Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force (SMART) maintains a Web site at http:// www.sikhmediawatch.org. This non-profit, voluntary organization plays an advocacy role by monitoring the media for misinformation on the Sikh

West Virginia. He specializes in China and has also taught Curriculum and Methods in Social Studies. He has been to China nine times in last decade and a half, including two full years in China (one was as a Fulbright scholar).

A Question of Balance, from The Long Search Series, is available from Ambrose Video Publishing. Price is \$99.95.

Believing, part of the *Heart of the Dragon Series*, is available from Ambrose Video Publishing. Price is \$99.95.

Confucianism and Taoism, part of the *Religions* of the World Series, is available from Social Studies School Service. Price is \$39.95.

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faith, and serves as a source for a Sikh perspective on aspects of Sikh religion, culture, history and politics. By reading the Letters to the Editor in the Mediawatch section, one can discover many of the religious, social and legal issues which Sikh Americans contend with in the North American context. For example, the Letters and Publications sections contain attempts to correct the misassumption that Sikhism is a Hindu sect, rather than an independent religion. On this intelligent Web site, students researching interfaith issues or case studies of religious identity in the diaspora may find ample examples of Sikh stereotyping and misrepresentation in the media. \blacklozenge

Gurudharm Singh Khalsa earned his Ph.D. in the History of Religions at the Graduate Theological Union, and writes on issues in Sikh Studies. He administers Asia study abroad programs at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. 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

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Guide to Distributors

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

AIMS-Multimedia, 9710 DeSoto Avenue, Chatsworth, CA 91311-4409. Tel: 800-367-2467. Fax: 818-341-6700. E-mail: info@aimsmultimedia .com. Web site: http://www.aimsmultimedia.com/ aims/index.htm.

Ambrose Video Publishing, Inc., 145 W. 45th Street, Suite 1115, New York, NY 10036. Tel: 800-526-4663. Fax: 212-768-9282. Web site: http://www.ambrosevideo.com.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery/Freer Gallery of Art, Education Department, MRC 707, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560. Tel: 202-357-3200. E-mail: web@asia.si.edu. Web site: http://www.asia.si.edu/edu/curriculummat.htm.

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.

CD Access, 6870 Comstock Road, College Grove, TN 37046. Tel: 800-959 5260. Fax: 615-595-1599. E-mail: info@cdaccess.com. Web site: http://www.cdaccess.com. **Documentary Educational Resources**, 101 Morse Street, Watertown, MA 02172. Tel: 800-569-6621. Fax: 617-926-9519. E-mail: docued@ der.org. Web site: http://der.org/docued.

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.

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, NY 10014. Tel: 800-876-1710 or 212-727-1711. Fax: 212-989-7649. E-mail: infor@frif.com. Web site: http://www. echonyc.com/-frif.

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