

## Mao The Real Man

BY SZILVESZTER SIKLOSI  
FIRST RUN/ICARUS FILMS  
153 WAVERLY PLACE  
NEW YORK, NY 10014  
1995. 54 MINUTES

Anyone who thinks this might be a real movie about Mao's life should think twice. This is actually an eccentric Hungarian-made film, which attempts to show how easy it is to manipulate people by confusing fact and fiction. The movie argues that Mao had a brother who emigrated to Chicago, where, in the 1930s, he became a mob kingpin nicknamed Wasp. After getting into a gang battle with the Russian mob, Wasp returned to China and took Mao's place as head of the CCP. Members of the Chicago mob then appeared in the CCP surrounding Mao. In order to get rid of them, the CIA turned to the Mafia. The Mafia agreed to cooperate in return for the CIA giving them Cuba, but this was thwarted when Castro overthrew Batista.

The movie further insists that Nikita Khrushchev, before returning to Russia, was the Chicago gangster with whom the Wasp feuded, hence the origin of the Sino-Soviet dispute. The movie ends by suggesting that after the Long March, the original Mao went to a monastery in Tibet, where he has lived without aging, though there may have been a recent sighting of him in K-mart with Elvis.

Sound bizarre? There's no question about that. But the movie does allude to a lot of arcane points in the history of the CCP. As such, it might be something that someone might want to show to an advanced class or graduate seminar in a zany moment, or in a desperate effort to inspire a spirited discussion. But no one should use this movie without watching it first!

Lee Feigon

LEE FEIGON is a Professor of East Asian Studies and History at Colby College. He is the author of *Demystifying Tibet: Unlocking the Secrets of the Land of the Snow* (Ivan R. Dee, 1996).

## Ōsaka Story

BY TOICHI NAKATA  
FIRST RUN/ICARUS FILMS  
153 WAVERLY PLACE  
NEW YORK, NY 10014  
1994. 75 MINUTES/COLOR

This documentary traces the return visit of a Japanese Korean filmmaker in his thirties to his family in Ōsaka after a three-year absence to study in the United Kingdom. It has been shown at the 1994 Margaret Mead Film Festival and 1995 New York Asian American Film Festival, and it won the Gold Hugo at the 1994 Chicago Film Festival.

By examining the intimate details of one family, we see the complexities of contemporary Japanese urban life that clearly contradict the image of a uniform, homogenous Japan. The video also gives a good "feel" for daily existence with excellent footage of urban life, streets, shops, homes, restaurants, and so



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forth. The success of *Ōsaka Story* is how it operates on multiple levels.

A central message, repeated throughout the story, is the father's offer to buy the mother a burial plot. As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that although he may not divorce her in life, he intends to end the relationship and leave her alone in death. He

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## FILM REVIEWS

probably will be buried in Korea with his "secret" second, Korean wife. Father and mother are both tragic figures. He is very hard working and has achieved financial success at great personal cost. To him life is full of pain, and pleasure only comes when he is asleep. She is committed to stay in a loveless marriage to maintain the family and business and will not change things because she only expects to live four or five more years. She holds onto appearances and the empty shell of a family that remains.

We see people caught up in a web of everyday obligations combined with a strong continuity that extends beyond one generation. For example, the father traces his roots back to Korea, proudly explains to Toichi, the filmmaker, that he is the twenty-eighth generation of the family, and enjoys playing with his grandson, the obvious heir to the family line. We are introduced to Toichi's brother, Shori, who will take over the family's money-lending and Pachinko business. He is the classic dutiful son. Now reunited with the family after leaving and taking a Korean wife, Shori carries on tradition by working at the family business, marrying, and having offspring. It is a tradition that Toichi, the oldest son, cannot fulfill. He remains torn inside because he feels he should.

The emotional cost of Japanese Korean marginality is a theme repeated in many ways. The father says he feels he is neither fully Korean nor Japanese. We learn of the problems faced by Toichi's Japanese mother and Korean father when they married. We see it in Toichi's siblings, and broken ties between father and children. The only hope offered by the story, in the sister optometrist and Toichi, is bittersweet. It is to escape family obligation and tradition by pur-

suing individual fulfillment in a professional career.

For instructional purposes, *Ōsaka Story* has strengths and weaknesses. It gives a close-up look at a side of Japanese life rarely seen, a gay man and his Korean Japanese family in which there are seven children and estrangement between the parents with a bigamist father. It explores the Korean minority in Japan and emotional strains of a family's relationships. I would be hesitant to show this video unless the students were prepared with a background on Japanese society. Undergraduate students who are just beginning to learn about Japan may over-generalize from an atypical situation.

For students with an appropriate preparation, the video could be an excellent vehicle for initiating a class discussion about the Korean minority in Japan, mixed marriages, family obligations, gender roles, and differences between the generations.

W. Lawrence Neuman

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