

well. The demonstration of Brazilian *capoeira*, which was part of the Durham exhibition, seems somewhat out of place here. All in all, this video should be useful for middle school, high school, and college-level classes, because in addition to showing exciting fighting sequences, it does give the viewer some idea of what the martial arts are all about. ■

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Tales of Pabuji A Rajasthani Tradition

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1996
33 MINUTES. COLOR

Those searching for cultural connections through art and literature, especially teachers of world studies and Asian studies classes, will welcome this short but rich exploration of the Rajasthan oral epic of Pabuji. The tales, not widely known beyond rural Rajasthan, are based on an actual medieval Rajput prince, a younger son of a younger son in what was to become the ruling line of Jodhpur. Throughout Rajasthan he is seen as a Robin Hood-type hero born in the remote desert village of Kohu. Although not accepted as a deity by higher-caste Hindus, Pabuji is widely worshipped as a divine incarnation and patron protector of livestock and camel drivers among herdsmen and others of rural Rajasthan. Sadly, this important background information is barely hinted at on the video case.

The narrator of *Tales of Pabuji* mentions that the Pabuji epic has twelve books. Teachers attempting to relate this epic to the traditional form for epics of the West like *The Odyssey* then discover that the video divides the narrative into five segments. “The Birth of Pabuji” explains Pabuji’s birth as the



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son of Dhadal Rathor and a nymph he convinces to be his wife after he steals her clothing while she bathes. She agrees to the marriage on the condition that he will never enter her chamber without her permission. When Dhadal eventually breaks his promise, he finds their son, two-year old Pabuji, nursing a tigress. The tigress/nymph disappears after promising her son to return as a mare, complete with a tiger skin saddle, when he is twelve years old. In “How Pabuji Took Kesar Kalami” she keeps her promise.

“How Harmal Went to Lanka” traces the journey of one of Pabuji’s men to collect

information on the camel population and defenses of Lanka and on its demon king, Ravana. With Harmal’s information Pabuji defeats and kills Ravana and brings the Lankan camels home, a promised wedding gift to his half-sister, Kelam. In “The Marriage of Pabuji” the hero attempts to avoid marriage and then escapes the marriage ceremony to keep his promise to protect the livestock of the goddess Deval. In the final segment, “The Great Battle,” the wounded Pabuji and his mare are carried away in a magic palanquin.

Framing each of the Pabuji segments, the video summarizes the ritual performance of the *bhopo*, an itinerant priest who chants the epic in a night-long session before his *par*, a cloth painting about fifteen feet long and four to five feet wide which functions as visual aid and portable temple. Superimposing puppet-like animation onto the traditional stylized images on the *par* and onto footage of contemporary village life, the video narrates the epic while at the same time introducing and explaining the *bhopo* performance tradition. Expository segments provide a glimpse of how contemporary *par* are painted. Background and narrative segments are set to traditional Rajasthani music of the *ravanhattho* or spike-fiddle, an essential part of the *bhopo* performance.

Without considerable classroom preparation, the video’s rich and comprehensive approach may confuse viewers. For example, unless teachers have prepared themselves and their students for a discussion of ancient medicine, the use of opium by Pabuji’s

FILM REVIEWS

heroic companion Dhebo raises difficult classroom issues. Students will also need to be informed about the tradition of heroic disembowelment. The video does not explain comparative folklore traditions into which some of the actions of the hero fit, such as the exchange of weapons in the final battle, and only references or omits entirely many of the Pabuji tales, including the post-apocalyptic final segment. Despite the issues raised by *sati* and blood revenge, students will want to know what happens after Pabuji leaves the scene.

Background information for classroom use can be extracted from John Smith's comprehensive text, *The Epic of Pabuji: A Study, Transcription and Translation* (Cambridge University Press, 1991). Smith provides information and instructions on how to download the complete text of the epic at: <http://www.bombay.oriental.cam.ac.uk/index.html>.

Information on the tradition of cloth paintings to which the *par* belongs and examples of such scroll paintings are at the *pichwals* Web site: <http://www.rajasthanweb.com/painting/pichwais.html>.

Maps of Asia to help place Pabuji geographically and historically related instructional materials and model lessons are at the Asia Society's Asian Education Resource Center K-12 Web site: <http://www.askasia.org>.

The epic of Pabuji and the performance tradition of the *bhoppo* will interest teachers of literature, social studies, music, art and theater. However, for most students the animation techniques juxtaposed with bits

of footage from actual performances and village life in Rajasthan will need to be explained separately from the narrative thread of the six hundred-year-old story. Without source material to sort out geographical locations, names of characters, and cultural expectations, students with some background may tangle anything they know about religious beliefs, especially concerning Rama, Indian visual arts and Indian music, into the Pabuji epic. Students with no background preparation may come away more confused than enlightened.

At the end of the video students are asked to speculate on what will happen as television becomes more common in rural India. Whatever the answer, the filmmaker's claim that this video offers a rare chance to "catch history by the tale" as this art form disappears over the edge of time is true. ■

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A Voice of Her Own

Women and Economic Change in Asia

PRODUCED BY THE INFORMATION OFFICE
ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
6ADB AVENUE

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DIRECTED BY ANDREA KALIN
PRODUCER: MATTHEW WESTFALL

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1997, 23 MINUTES. COLOR

Where do women fit into the pattern of rapid economic change in Southeast Asia, where traditional values, illiteracy and enormous poverty weigh heavily against new prosperity and increased opportunity? What share of the proceeds do women receive in this region where they have been called "the speechless ones" and where "... poverty wears a woman's face"?

Educators should welcome this short film produced by the Asian Development Bank which profiles the challenges and changes facing women in three Southeast Asian nations—Cambodia, the Philippines, and Bangladesh. Since filmmakers have been more attentive to societies in East Asia, documentary footage on the role of women in Southeast Asia is a welcome addition to the educational archives. The short eight-minute clips on each country highlight major economic and social issues. Through interviews with women in government, academia, business and self-help

organizations, the video paints a picture of growing awareness and limited progress in literacy and employment opportunities.

The video opens with a collage of images depicting the dramatic societal and economic contrasts one sees in these countries. The segment on Cambodia begins with the stark reminder that this nation is host to 8–10 million landmines which claim over 300 lives a month, and is clearly still hampered by the dark shadow of the Khmer Rouge legacy. As the narrator eloquently observes, "The people are in passage from pain to memory." With many young men dead, and institutions and the intellectual community decimated by the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodian women carry the burden of restoring their country. And reconstruction is just beginning.

Over half of the households are headed by women, most of whom cannot read or write. Telling words come from an illiterate woman early in the film. "If you don't have