The First Emperor of China

The Videoway Company for Software Design
New York, NY

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The vodidisc version requires use of a laserdisc player and a vodidisc-capable monitor. The CD-ROM version requires an appropri-
ate personal computer, 13" color monitor, and CD-ROM drive (dou-
ble-speed recommended). These two programs, especially the CD-ROM version, cover more information than the title suggests. When supple-
mented by lectures or readings, they make excellent single-unit introductions to ancient Chinese civilization for students with little or no previous background in the subject. The enhanced special features of the CD-ROM succeed in stimulating initial interest in a remote but pivotal era of ancient Chinese history, the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.). The colorful figurines, paintings, and dramatic focus on the recent and fascinating archaeo-
logical discoveries dating from this period are sure-fire attention grabbers and should evoke positive responses and raise curiosity among students of all ages.

The First Emperor of China is of special interest to educators about Asia for many reasons. In this review, I will briefly describe the types of materials contained in the program and the differences between the videodisc and CD-ROM versions, and will proffer a few critical observations and suggestions.

The main attraction of this multimedia program, known in dif-
ferent formats as The First Emperor of China, is the wide range

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of audio-visual materials focusing on the spectacular archaeo-
logical discovery in 1974 of the underground terra cotta army dating from the time of China's first emperor, Shi Huangdi, founder of the Qin Dynasty. The program is tailored for either academic or general audiences, contains both sound movies and still images providing abundant details on the archaeological excavations and remains near Xi'an, in Shaanxi Province. Much scholarly information on Qin Shi Huangdi, Qin Reforms, Qin artifacts, the Great Wall, and the military. Since the program also includes a hefty sampling of material on the social and cul-
tural context of ancient China generally, it provides a visually rich and detailed entry into the subject and therefore should find a durable niche in any course that covers the period. I use the 1991 videodisc version in class to introdutory college courses and recommend the 1994 CD-ROM version for individual student use, although, with the proper equipment, the latter can be employed in class situations as well, including team or small-
group collaborative sessions. Both programs are worthwhile instructional tools that will stimulate further exploration. While specialists and researchers will find much here that is already familiar, they too will want to have a look at these interesting presentations, for these are serious attempts at scholarly communication with a wide audience.

Assisted by an international team of scholars, and aided by financial support from Simmons College in Boston and a Libraries Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Dr. Ching-chih Chen of the School of Library Science at Simmons created Project Emperor's army. Traveling through media, Chen shows a selection of the extensive collection of artifacts of his team collected figurines, photos, and other electronically reproducible materials focusing on the society of the short-lived dynasty which produced these fascinating artifacts. Chen's team collected about fifty skeletons, horses, and chariots replicating portions of the first emperor's army. Traveling through media, the viewer sees how Chen's team collected these artifacts and reconstructed them. True to their initial goal of employing the latest technology to make the collected materials as accessible as possible to the widest audience, Dr. Chen's team organized and reproduced the information and images of Chinese dynastic history in a meaningful way.

To use this program effectively, the user must first gain access to the main menu, which can be found by pressing the stylized "G" for Glossary button on the videodisc. From the main menu, the user can select the text viewer option, which provides a detailed overview of the events and artifacts discussed in the program. The text viewer is searchable and includes links to other sections of the program, allowing the user to explore the material in a more personalized way. The reference section provides a comprehensive list of references and additional resources for further study.

The history section provides a detailed overview of the events and artifacts discussed in the program. The user can explore the material in more depth by selecting specific events or artifacts from the list. The program also includes a glossary of terms related to Chinese history and archaeology, which is an invaluable resource for students and scholars.

The multimedia section includes a series of interactive modules designed to engage the user and provide a more immersive learning experience. These modules include virtual reality tours of ancient Chinese sites, interactive timelines, and quizzes. The interactive nature of these modules makes the material more engaging and memorable for the user.

In conclusion, the First Emperor of China is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of ancient China. The program's multimedia features, coupled with its comprehensive coverage of the events and artifacts discussed, make it an excellent tool for both classroom use and independent study. The program's user-friendly interface and targeted audience make it accessible to a wide range of users, from elementary school students to university professors. Whether used in the classroom or for personal study, the First Emperor of China is an informative and engaging introduction to one of the most fascinating periods in Chinese history.
Comparing Cultures: Readings on Contemporary Japan for American Writers

Edited by Merry L. White and Sylvan Barnet
xiii + 475 pages

Comparing Cultures is no ordinary writing text. It could just as easily be titled Japan: An Introductory Reader. The fifty-plus essays and book excerpts, along with extensive chapter introductions by the editors, make this book an excellent introduction to Japan for advanced high school or early college students. And, as the editors intended, it presents an innovative approach to English composition.

The editors divide the book into two parts which total eleven chapters. Each chapter consists of the editors’ introduction, a number of readings, and suggestions for writing. Part one, the first two chapters, prepares students to enter a foreign culture. The editors’ introduction to chapter one includes a discussion of the ways people often view other cultures. In the extreme, the two sides are “people are all pretty much the same” and “it is impossible for an outsider ever to read another culture accurately” (p. 7). The editors take a middle ground, and they hope to persuade their readers to do the same. To make their point, they include “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” Horace Miner’s famous spoof of an anthropologist’s essay on American culture. Anthropology sharpened Miner’s eye as he looked back on the U.S. So, too, the editors hope, students using Comparing Cultures will learn to view their own culture more carefully, as well as Japan’s. As they state in the “Preface for Instructors,” “We use a single culture, Japan, as an aid or foil to enable students to think and write about America with a fresh perspective” (p. v).

The second chapter of part one, “Thinking About Texts,” presents the elements of a standard composition text: note taking, highlighting, and summarizing; journals, essays, and analyses. This chapter is supplemented by the appendix, “Doing Research,” which explores additional writing concerns: using sources, conducting field research, and interviewing research subjects; audience, theses, and quotations. This aspect of the book benefits from the expertise of Sylvan Barnet of Tufts University, an author of many successful writing texts.

Merry White, associate professor of sociology at Boston University, uses her extensive background in Japanese studies to guide the editors in part two, “Readings for Cultural Comparison.” Most of these nine chapters, which include growing up, courtship, consumption, and work, focus on life experience in Japan. Many of the readings, usually those written by journalists, refer to specific Japanese people and their lives; women in their twenties, homosexuals, sumo wrestlers, and company em-

NOTES

ROLAND L. HIGGINS is Professor of East Asian history at Keene State College. Interested in the use of visual media and computers in instruction, he has been teaching since 1968.

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