

South and Southeast Asia Video Archive

Video technology has altered the way people view themselves, their nations, and the world in general. It has long been recognized as a powerful cultural force in Western countries, but the rapid expansion of this technology to the rest of the world has largely gone unrecognized. Every country has television broadcasting capability, and the number of television sets steadily increases, even in the most impoverished countries of the "third world." Television viewing is not just a middle and upper class phenomenon in these societies. Indeed, probably the most notable change in village life in South and Southeast Asia over the past decades has been the introduction of video technology. The video cassette recorder/player has added a new dimension to mass media consumption patterns, permitting more frequent and convenient access to video programming which is not directly mediated by government agencies.

Today television, radio, and film are major mechanisms of information transfer and consensus building. These media do not merely provide information about national and world events they explain and interpret their meaning. They also express the dominant culture and maintain a commonality of values while offering the opportunity to examine both domestic subcultural and foreign value systems. In addition, these media can facilitate and coordinate programs intended to achieve national goals by announcing societal objectives and the means intended to achieve them.

The tapes acquired for this collection are produced by Asians for Asians, thus providing a far different cultural perspectives than those produced by Westerners about the region. Despite the quality of such productions as the film *The Jewel in the Crown* or the television series *Vietnam*, these productions provide approaches to subject matter which are clearly Western in their orientation. The same topics produced in an Asian cultural context would provide quite different and, probably, more revealing perspectives. The general criteria used in selecting these videotapes will be:

- Expressions of the past and present "great traditions" of the various cultures of South and Southeast Asia published by both private and government agencies.
- Samples of productions for the mass "pop culture" market, including popular broadcast TV programming as well as taped versions of locally produced motion pictures of broad commercial appeal.
- Productions by governmental agencies with the specific purpose of educating viewers about government economic, social and political policies and objectives.

The South and Southeast Asia Video Archive has three principal objectives: first, to produce archival master tapes of the highest possible quality; second, to produce circulating copies which will be loaned to scholars throughout the country; and third, to catalog and publicize the collections broadly. The intent of the project is not just to make current materials available, but to house masters in a preservationally sound manner.

The South and Southeast Asia Video Archive was initiated by Jack Wells, the South Asian Bibliographer at the University of Wisconsin-Madison until 1996. The collection has had generous

support from the United States Department of Education, the Luce Foundation, and the General Library System of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

More

Update (October 2015): The Archive may now be considered closed, as since the late 1990s additional videos have been directly added to the Libraries' main catalog, and not included in the Archive.

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