



American Center for Mongolian Studies
And SOS Medica Clinic in Ulaanbaatar
Inner Asian Film Series Seminar 4, April 3, 2008

Khadak: A film by Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth (2006) – 104 minutes

Brief synopsis

The film follows the story of a young herder living with his grandparents, who is forced to move to the city and work in mining after the government informs the family of an animal plague. In the city he saves the life of a young woman who is a member of a group of young activists/performers. The resolution of the film then unfolds through the young man's epileptic seizures and resulting visions, and the group try to find a way for the people reconnect with their animals and land...

Before watching the film

It is worth noting the overall style of the film beforehand, which incorporates theatrical story-telling and film techniques - it does not have a clear linear plot and mixes in 'real life' with dream sequences and visions...

While watching the film

Some major themes of the film to bear in mind:

- Shamanism and man's spiritual connection with nature
- The influence and power of authority and business interests / corruption
- Urbanisation/modernisation and the transition to a market led economy

There are some strong visual and symbolic motifs in the film, see how many you can notice, some are obvious, some not so.

After watching the film

The topics we will discuss at the end of the film, in addition to any questions you may pose, are:

- Positive and negative portrayals of Mongolia
- The film's ultimate message
- The style of the film: non-linear narrative, fantasy sequences, type of ending etc.
Does it work? As a viewer are you challenged or annoyed?
- Visual motifs and symbolism: the khadak, the tree, fire... what do they mean?
- Foreign vs. Mongolian view of Mongolia. Is it obvious this film has a foreign POV, why? Is this good or bad?
- Comparisons with other recent portrayals of Mongolia in feature films; e.g., Mongol, Story of the Weeping Camel; etc.

Discussion will be facilitated by Clare Hill, VSO Volunteer