

Dharmaga Tongjoguro kan Kkadalgun?

("Why Did Bodhi-Dharma Leave for the Orient?")

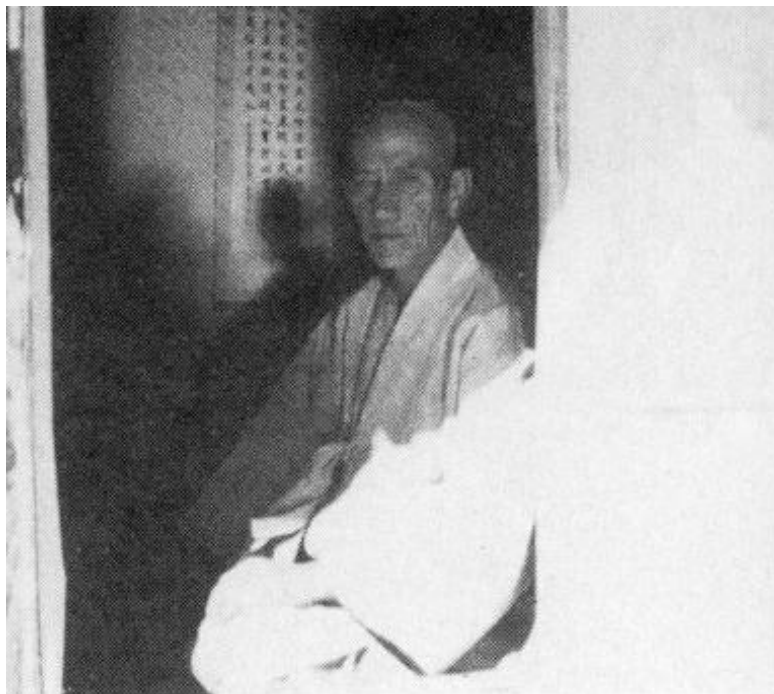
South Korea : 1989 : dir. Bae Yong-Kyun : Bae Yong-Kyun

: 135 min

prod: Bae Yong-Kyun : scr: Bae Yong-Kyun : dir.ph.: Bae Yong-Kyun

Yi Pan-Yong; Sin Won-Sop; Huang Hae-Jin; Ko Su-Myong

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ € Z ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Source: 33rd London Film Festival programme

33rd London Film Festival (1989) programme review:

"So why *did* Bodhi-Dharma leave? This powerful, mesmerising film, which won the top prize at Locarno, is not interested in pat answers, or indeed in a tidy narrative. Instead, we are invited to contemplate with awe the daily activities of three Zen Buddhist disciples – an old master, a young monk running from modern urban turmoil, and a wide-eyed child – high in the mountains.

Bodhi-Dharma, it turns out, is a figure from history, who went to China from India carrying the principles of Zen Buddhism; the question has now become one of the religion's tools for meditation. Once adjustment to the slow pace is made, we become sucked into a mysterious, rugged world governed by fire, wind, water and the natural cycle of birth, death and regeneration. The maverick Bae spent three years shooting, rigorously moulding his chosen scenery and non-professional actors into scenes and images of strange beauty. It is a majestic achievement."

- Geoff Brown, **The Times**

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Geoff Brown's review bears the usual hallmark of the art-house film critic in that it appears to heap praise upon a foreign-language film simply for its delightful "foreignness". Quite why we should "contemplate with awe", for example, the daily rituals of three monks, merely because they live in a remote part of Asia, is not immediately apparent. Nor why a film documenting their lives should count as "a majestic achievement", simply because it was made. This is patronism, albeit from a liberal aesthetic, and obscures more objective appraisal of a film's intrinsic worth.

More recently, Buddhism – and the lives of boy monks – has enjoyed a brief vogue in Hollywood, with "**KUNDUN**", "**LITTLE BUDDHA**" and "**SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET**" rather more overtly expressing western fascination with the exoticism of that culture. Fascination promotes sympathy, not necessarily understanding, and Buddhism is still loosely categorised as a "world religion" along with Islam, Hinduism and Christianity, when it would perhaps be more accurately described as a philosophy. We should consult the Dalai Lama.

See subject index under **ASIA** and **RELIGION**.