

Three Villains of the Hidden Fortress

A Weekly Film Report

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JAPN 310 Japanese Cinema

February 18, 2014

In this Kurosawa film, the main essence of Japanese feudal culture that really struck me was the difference between the classes. I thought it was really interesting to see how different people were treated or how they behaved themselves when two individuals of differing statuses came into contact. For example, when the audience first sees Rokurouta seek out the princess in the cave, he bowed and announced himself rather than walked in. Similarly, the elderly lady advisor to the princess also behaved graciously to her, even when at this point in time there was very little the princess could do to them. I also saw the class difference when it came to how the enemy soldiers treated Rokurouta and Princess Yuki versus the women they rescued at the end of the film. Despite the fact they were all prisoners, the enemy soldiers still treated the princess and Rokurouta by their status by giving them horses while the other woman had to walk. Similarly, when Rokurouta encountered the other samurai after he chased off the enemy soldiers on horses that came after them, the two samurai engaged in a duel rather than all the soldiers attacking Rokurouta at once. I saw this as a deference toward his class as a samurai, especially when he was allowed to leave after defeating the enemy samurai. While there are similar class situations in other cultures, I think the Japanese unyielding respect even toward people of status on the enemy side is a unique characteristic of Japanese feudal culture.

While I have never seen the first Star Wars movie, after watching this film I am interested to watch it and identify any similarities in the camerawork. This film was very captivating because it felt very natural, which I think is a feature of all Kurosawa films. I noticed a few scenes in many of his movies where the camera captures the characters in the background rather than the foreground, which I found interesting because I don't normally see movies where the main image the camera is trying to capture is actually behind other objects that are blurred out in the foreground. An example from *The Hidden Fortress* would be the plants covering parts

of the actors, but the example that sticks in my mind the most is in *Sanjuro* when the characters are seen through the wooden grating or from behind someone's leg. I always thought it was very interesting how this style of camerawork isn't distracting; I would imagine that it would be, but instead it feels very natural. I also really appreciated Kurosawa's use of the land in this film. The characters have to journey across a vast area, and Kurosawa captures this without any extreme shots from a helicopter or anything, and it is still really entertaining.

It also really accents the storyline, which requires such an epic journey. When I read the title, I thought that a majority of the film was going to take place at the hidden fortress, but instead that was only a small portion at the beginning that was used to establish the characters and setting. I really liked the fact that I didn't know where the film was going to go after that point, and with each encounter the characters had, I was guessing what was going to happen next. The scenes that come to mind the most are the ones when the soldiers are running into them at every turn when they are transporting the gold across enemy territory. It seemed like they were finally going to get caught, when they made it out, then they were almost going to get caught again, when they made it through; and so on. So when they finally did get caught, I think it was perfect timing because part of me was waiting for it but a part of me thought they were going to make it out again. In fact, the timing of the storyline throughout the entire film was really great.

I came into this movie thinking that I was going to make a lot of connections between *The Hidden Fortress* and other Kurosawa films that I have now seen, but the only real connection I made was wondering whether Rokurouta was the same actor from *Sanjuro* and *Yojinbo* (which I had to actually look up afterward because I was still unsure). In actuality, I made a more interesting connection between the female leads of *The Hidden Fortress* and *Gojira*. While I felt that Princess Yuki in this film was much more useful than the woman in *Gojira*, I still felt a distain toward her that I didn't feel from Tanpopo. I tried to analyze why I would feel this way, and I think it comes down to the fact that, like the woman in *Gojira*, Yuki-hime doesn't experience any form of transformation, while Tanpopo succeeded and overcame her troubles. I guess one would argue that Princess Yuki overcame her trouble as well, which

was to escape the enemy lands, but I feel that she is still in a similar scenario as princess whereas Tanpopo improved into a successful ramen chef. Overall though, while I like Tanpopo the best, I definitely like Yuki-hime more than the woman from *Gojira*.

I would score this movie as a five out of five, because I could definitely watch it again. Not only was the storyline great, but the camerawork and casting all worked well together. I also like that this story has somewhat of a moral message to it, which I think is something along the lines of “greediness will always lead to unfortunate situations, but if you persevere you will still get something for your effort.” I see this is all of the bad situations that the two village people get into because of their greed for gold, up to and including the capture of Rokurouta, Yuki-hime, and the other woman. I also see this in that they were about to end up with nothing due to their greediness, but because of all their efforts they actually ended up with one piece of gold that they had to share. All in all, great movie! I'm actually enjoying all the Kurosawa films so far.