

Droids and Peasants: Akira Kurosawa's Thematic Influence on the Star Wars Saga

Brett Davies, Meiji University, Japan

The Kyoto Conference on Arts, Media & Culture 2021
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Following the international success of *Rashomon* (1950) and *Seven Samurai* (1954), Akira Kurosawa's films came to exemplify Japanese cinema to western cinemagoers and had "a significant influence on many international auteurs and genres" (Russell 2011). Most famously, George Lucas admits to basing the storyline for the original *Star Wars* (1977) upon *The Hidden Fortress* (1958), with its swordfights, rescued princess, and warriors' code of honour. Lucas mimicked Kurosawa's visual style, too, in pointing the camera at the sun, employing 'wipes' between scenes, and even dressing Darth Vader in a *kabuto*-style helmet. While these superficial similarities have been well-documented, Kurosawa's enduring influence over the major themes in the entire 11-film *Star Wars* saga has been discussed far less. Donald Ritchie (1965/1998) wrote that, above all else, Kurosawa's films "are about character revelation," and this thematic core is prevalent throughout the series, from Darth Vader's famous declaration to Luke Skywalker in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) to Kylo Ren's emotional transition in *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019). Additionally, due to the contribution of screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan (who calls Kurosawa "the Shakespeare of movies"), the franchise echoes Kurosawa's predilection for showing flawed characters hiding secret pasts. This paper will discuss some of the ways that Akira Kurosawa's work has influenced *Star Wars* – in terms of narrative, themes, and visual style – and will argue that, through the enduring popularity of the saga, Kurosawa's work continues to impact upon popular cinema, a quarter of a century after his final film.

Keywords: Akira Kurosawa, George Lucas, Star Wars, Intertextuality, Homage

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction: Kurosawa in Hollywood

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the films of Akira Kurosawa gained increasing recognition outside Japan. These works were venerated by international audiences, as well as by filmmakers, who were drawn particularly to his *jidaigeki* ('period plays') set in Japan's feudal era, such as *Rashomon* (1950), *Seven Samurai* (1954), and *Yojimbo* (1961)¹. Kurosawa's movies influenced Hollywood directly, inspiring some of the very earliest examples of what would later become common practice, as major American studios saw the value in remaking pictures from overseas: *Seven Samurai*, for example, was used as the template for *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), and *Rashomon* was adapted as *The Outrage* (1964). While these retellings provided evidence of his films' global popularity, Kurosawa's influence was perhaps felt more strongly in the ways that American filmmakers began to borrow visual techniques from his movies. Directors of action pictures were especially prone to copying Kurosawa's visual style, and both Arthur Penn (*Bonnie and Clyde* [1967]) and Sam Peckinpah (*The Wild Bunch* [1969]) admitted to following Kurosawa's predilection for slow motion and long lenses in their films' climactic shoot-outs (Prince, 1999, pp. 349-350). Similarly, Robert Altman (2002) said he began experimenting with pointing his camera towards the sun after seeing the early sequence in *Rashomon*, in which bright sunlight shimmers through a canopy of forest leaves.

It was in the late-1960s and 1970s, though, with the emergence of the 'Movie Brats', that Kurosawa's impact became more prominent. The cohort of young filmmakers, many of whom were early graduates of the new film schools, saw these pictures from overseas as representative of a different approach to making films, "a radical alternative to the mainstream" (Russell, 2011, p. xi). Martin Scorsese later said that Kurosawa was, through his films, "our master, our sensei", while Steven Spielberg called him "a maestro to my entire generation" (Anaheim University, 2013).

Japanese cinema was not easily accessible at this time, and its perceived rarity perhaps added to the allure of Kurosawa's work. According to Lee (2005), George Lucas describes being unable to see foreign films while growing up in the small California town of Modesto, but, while at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, he was repeatedly told by classmate John Milius that *Seven Samurai* was "the best film ever made." When it was screened at his university, Lucas finally watched it and said that "it basically changed my life." He explains that it "influenced me [...] in terms of understanding how cinema works and how to tell a very exciting story and still have it be very funny and very human" (Lee, 2005).

Early Influence

George Lucas's appreciation for the work of Akira Kurosawa would remain even as he began writing the synopsis for 'The Star Wars' in 1973. It was not *Seven Samurai*, though, but another of Kurosawa's films that was most influential. Lucas has since attempted to downplay the comparisons between the first *Star Wars* (1977) and Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* (1958). However, Helander (1997/2010) demonstrates the obvious similarities between Lucas's initial story document and the outline of *The Hidden Fortress* as written by Donald Richie (1965/1998, p. 134) in his seminal book on Kurosawa's career. For example:

¹ For ease of reading, when referring to non-English-language films, this article will employ the titles used in their most recent releases by the BFI or Criterion Collection. For the original titles, please see the Filmography (in which films are listed alphabetically by the title used within the main text).

The Hidden Fortress Synopsis (Richie)

It is the sixteenth century, a period of civil wars. A princess, with her family, her retainers, and the clan treasure is being pursued. If they can cross enemy territory and reach a friendly province, they will be saved.

‘The Star Wars’ Synopsis (Lucas)

It is the thirty-third century, a period of civil wars in the galaxy. A rebel princess, with her family, her retainers, and the clan treasure is being pursued. If they can cross territory controlled by the Empire, and reach a friendly planet, they will be saved.

Such similarities are clearly not coincidental, and they suggest that *The Hidden Fortress* was – at the very least – a starting point in the creation of *Star Wars*, even if Lucas’s synopsis would go through further drafts that gradually weakened the connection between the two films. What remains in the finished picture, though, is the epic scope of *The Hidden Fortress*, which, like many of Kurosawa’s samurai pictures, occurs within the context of a much larger conflict (given even more grandeur by Kurosawa’s use of the widescreen Cinemascope format for the first time). Lucas deliberately throws the audience into his story with little exposition, aside from the opening crawl that was inserted late in post-production. We must learn largely through context about societal structure, government, and even vital elements such as the mystical Force or the history of the Jedi – samurai-like warriors who follow a strict moral code (and whose name is derived from the ‘jidai’ of *jidaigeki*). This choice to make the audience work for the information echoed Lucas’s perception of Kurosawa’s oeuvre, which, according to one biographer, “was so alien it could well have been Mars” (Baxter, 1999, p. 72). With local viewers primarily in mind, Kurosawa’s films do not overtly explain the inner workings of feudal Japanese society; instead, they presume prior knowledge, leaving the uninitiated to construct an understanding through dialogue and action. Lucas does the same in his imagined universe. Brooker (2009, p. 32) cites the example of ‘Kessel’ in *Star Wars*, mentioned first by C-3PO in a throwaway remark about the “spice mines of Kessel.” Then, in another scene, Han Solo boasts of making “the Kessel run in less than twelve parsecs.” No explanation of Kessel’s significance is offered, and it does not appear in any episode until four decades later. Such offhand references, though, tease us with the prospect of other planets and other stories; and they contribute to the rich and specific story world, just as Kurosawa’s more grounded films suggest wider machinations that we do not see directly onscreen.

In narrative terms, however, the strongest influence that *The Hidden Fortress* had upon *Star Wars* was in telling the story from the point of view of its “lowliest characters” (Lucas, 2001). In fact, the entire *Star Wars* saga would have at its centre the bickering droids R2-D2 and C-3PO, just as *Fortress* follows the peasants Tahei and Matashichi as they become embroiled in the wider story, as if by accident. While these pairs of characters provide comic relief in both films, the story device also contributes to a sense of verisimilitude. With such unremarkable characters as conduits, their respective worlds become more accessible to the audience and help the films avoid the trope of becoming a typical ‘fairy tale’ (as Lucas has called his series [Jones, 2016, p. 306]) told solely from the perspective of the most privileged central protagonists. Lucas said that this choice “set me off on a very interesting course because it really did frame the movie in a very interesting way and altered the point of view of all three movies” (Bouzereau, 1997, p. 10).

While *The Hidden Fortress* served as an early story template, George Lucas (2001) has said that it is Kurosawa's "visual style to me that is so strong and unique," and aspects of this are present in *Star Wars*. Famously, the transitional wipes between scenes echo those used by Kurosawa in many of his pictures.



Figure 1: A Transitional Wipe from *Star Wars*



Figure 2: A Transitional Wipe from *Ikiru* (1952)

However, it is subtler connections in scene structure – as physicalized through camerawork and editing – that suggest a deeper influence. For example, the lance duel between Rokurōta and his longstanding rival Tadokoro in *The Hidden Fortress* serves as a model for the lightsaber fight in *Star Wars* between Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader (in *kabuto*-style helmet). As illustrated in Figure 3, both fights are established with a wide shot employing a long lens, the participants in profile as they size up one another. Then comes a medium-length shot over the shoulder of the protagonist, mirrored by a reverse shot from the antagonist's perspective. Then, as the battle intensifies, the camera takes up a closer position for a frenetic two-shot.

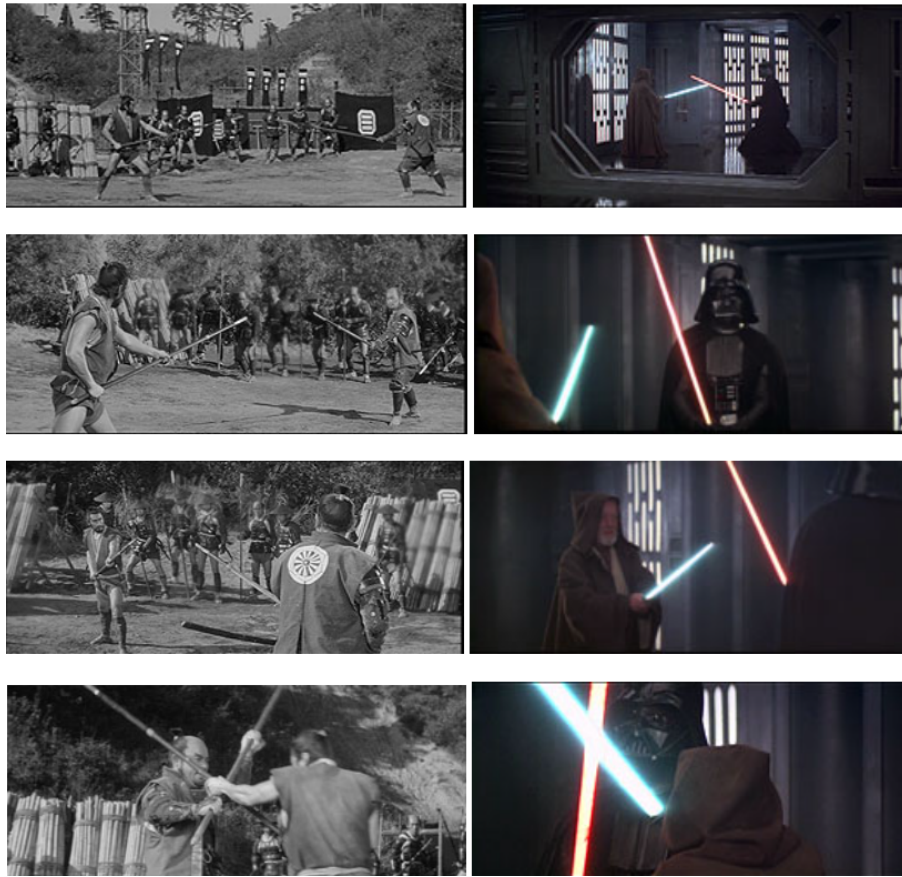


Figure 3: Duels in *The Hidden Fortress* and *Star Wars* (Kaminski 2007)

Such similarities demonstrate the influence of Akira Kurosawa as George Lucas began making his saga, and Lucas has been candid in discussing his debt to *jidaigeki* in constructing the first film. However, even as Lucas employed other writers and directors for future episodes, the connections remained strong.

Continued Influence

While George Lucas was the director and only credited writer on *Star Wars*, he hired Irvin Kershner to direct the second film, *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), with first Leigh Brackett and then Lawrence Kasdan writing screenplay drafts based upon Lucas's initial story.

The influence of Akira Kurosawa on *Empire* has been much less discussed than those in the first movie, yet – just as *Star Wars* was loosely modelled on *The Hidden Fortress* – the second episode bears a marked similarity to another, lesser-known, Kurosawa work: his lament on humankind's estrangement from nature, *Dersu Uzala* (1975).

The opening scenes of *Empire*, set on the ice planet Hoth, echo the visual design of *Dersu Uzala*, which Kurosawa shot on 70mm in order to capture the desolate majesty of the Siberian plains. In both films, the colour palette is subdued – khaki, beige, navy – accentuating the bleakness of the terrain. Both contain sequences in which, lost in the ice, one friend is saved by another; and these sequences are executed remarkably similarly, as Kaminski's (2007) side-by-side comparison demonstrates (Figure 4, below). First, the characters' stumble towards the camera; then one of the men collapses, prompting his companion to rush to his aid; the friend checks for signs of life, then keeps the prone man warm by improvising shelter (straw in *Dersu*

Uzala, the belly of a dead ‘tauntaun’ snow creature in *Empire*); finally, morning comes, and the sun reflects off the ice in an extreme wide shot, symbolizing salvation.



Figure 4: *Dersu Uzala* Versus *The Empire Strikes Back* (Kaminski, 2007)

The plot and central theme of *Empire* echo many aspects of Kurosawa’s film, too. The wizened Jedi Yoda, who mentors the protagonist Luke Skywalker, possesses many of the attributes of Dersu in his choice to live a solitary life in the wilderness. Richie (1965/1998, p. 199) calls Dersu an “elf of a man, almost like a forest fairy,” and this physical description could just as easily be applied to Yoda. Both characters are very much in tune with nature (or the Force), seeking to live as part of a greater whole rather than trying to overcome it through violence;

and both strive to educate others to do the same. Harrison (2020) credits *Empire*'s ecological concerns to its director, Irvin Kershner, "a staunch advocate of vegetarianism and spiritual harmony between living things and their habitats" (p. 32). Similarly, Kurosawa stated his intention for *Dersu Uzala*, that "people should be humbler toward nature because we are a part of it and we must become harmonized with it" (Richie, 1965/1998, p. 199). This is realized by contrasting Dersu's humility with the younger Arseniev's impulsiveness and naïveté, traits that almost kill them both as Arseniev insists on going to see a beautiful lake even as Dersu warns of inclement weather approaching. Similarly, in *Empire*, Yoda's advice is ignored by his headstrong pupil Luke, who rushes to confront Darth Vader before completing his training, a decision that leads to the film's downbeat finale.

In the last of the original *Star Wars* trilogy, *Return of the Jedi* (1983), there are echoes of *Seven Samurai* in its placement of the innocent, forest-dwelling Ewoks at the centre of the battle against the invading soldiers, just as Kurosawa set farmers against the militaristic and far better-equipped bandits who attacked their land. In formal terms, Kaminski (2007) demonstrates that the speeder-bike chase through the forest shares beats and camera angles with the horseback chase in *The Hidden Fortress*. Finally, Barber (2016) contends that Luke Skywalker's rescue "by a facially scarred villain who has a last-minute change of alliance" may be based upon Tadokoro's similar volte-face at the denouement of *The Hidden Fortress*. However, compared to its predecessors, *Jedi* appears less obviously indebted to Akira Kurosawa's filmography, as the *Star Wars* series becomes less a pastiche of existing films, and instead a complete saga of its own.

As with *The Empire Strikes Back*, George Lucas did not direct *Return of the Jedi* (Richard Marquand taking that role, with Lucas supervising), but this would change when he decided to return to the franchise after a 16-year hiatus in order to make the 'prequel' trilogy. Lucas took sole writing and directing duties for *The Phantom Menace* (1999), 'Episode I' of the entire saga. Rather than moving further away from his influences, he returned even more overtly to Kurosawa, *The Hidden Fortress* in particular – and perhaps that initial synopsis for 'The Star Wars'. This time, Queen Amidala must cross an enemy blockade in order to gain help for her people (like Princess Yuki in Kurosawa's film). She is helped by two Jedi, with Qui-Gon Jinn bearing a striking resemblance to Rokurōta in *The Hidden Fortress*:



Figure 5: Rokurōta (Toshiro Mifune) Versus Qui-Gon Jinn (Liam Neeson)

In order to evade detection, Amidala disguises herself as a servant, just like Princess Yuki. In this role she is exposed to the suffering of slaves first-hand, leading her to help free Anakin Skywalker from servitude, which echoes Yuki's actions as she liberates one of her compatriots who has been forced into prostitution. Finally, both films end with the celebration ceremony that was also present in the original *Star Wars* – the royal in full regalia, flanked by the warriors in ceremonial robes.

As the prequel trilogy progresses, the connections to Kurosawa's work diminish, with similarities mostly fleeting and superficial. Like the original trilogy, by the third episode the story becomes more self-contained, and less reliant on homage as it fulfils its narrative responsibility to complete the overarching Hero's (or anti-Hero's) Journey. *Revenge of the Sith* (2005) would be the final live-action *Star Wars* film before George Lucas's retirement and the sale of Lucasfilm to Disney in 2012; but it would not be the end of the saga's debt to Akira Kurosawa.

Kurosawa, Kasdan, and Beyond

While George Lucas's regard for Akira Kurosawa is well-documented, he is not the only *Star Wars* writer to be so heavily influenced. Lawrence Kasdan had just completed the first draft script for *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) – also for Lucasfilm – when Lucas asked him to work on *The Empire Strikes Back* following the death of the original screenwriter, Leigh Brackett. Kasdan says that “George and I had an immediate connection” thanks to their shared admiration of Kurosawa's samurai films (Bouzereau, 1997, p. 180), and this perhaps contributed to the success of their working relationship through *Empire* and *Return of the Jedi* as well as *Raiders*. Kasdan calls Kurosawa “the greatest director that ever lived, [...] one of the greatest writers that ever lived” (August & Mazin, 2016), and is more open than Lucas in crediting his references. For example, Kasdan says he based the character of Yoda not upon the lead in *Dersu Uzala* but upon Kanbei Shimada, the senior warrior in *Seven Samurai*, who, Kasdan states, “always sees the big picture and is slower to react because he's figured it out” (August & Mazin, 2020). This contributed to Yoda's unusual back-to-front syntax and its “meditation teacher” quality, his utterances designed to make the student listen more attentively. Kasdan says: “It slows things down. You have to worry through the sentence to understand. And then that way you're paying more attention” (August & Mazin, 2020).

My previous research (Davies, 2019, pp. 219-220) has found that both Kurosawa and Kasdan favour the imperfect hero, drawn into action by necessity rather than valour, and constantly threatened with exposure or humiliation. In fact, Kasdan quotes Kurosawa on this subject: “heroes evolve – they're open to change and growth” (Dutka, 1991, p. 3). The character of Han Solo epitomizes this type, and Kasdan repeatedly places him at the centre of events, even though it is Luke Skywalker taking the Campbellian Hero's Journey in Lucas's overall saga. Han's actions dovetail with many of the roles played by Toshiro Mifune in Kurosawa's pictures, in particular the ronin samurai in *Yojimbo* and its sequel *Sanjuro* (1962). Han Solo is aloof and taciturn, and his motivations are less clear than the typical Hollywood hero's, his choices made primarily to serve his own needs and desires rather than any noble cause.

After writing screenplays for two films in the *Star Wars* original trilogy, Kasdan declined to participate in the prequels (Dyer, 2015). However, he returned for the first post-Lucas sequel, *The Force Awakens* (2015) and reincorporated many of the themes favoured by Kurosawa. Richie (1965/1998) writes that Kurosawa's films are “about character revelation” (230), and they often feature characters struggling with their own identity, whether hiding their past or

coming to terms with their changing self-perception. *The Force Awakens*, as well as bringing back Han Solo – who, once again, has left behind noble causes in order to return to smuggling – shows its new characters grappling with their sense of self. Finn is an escaped stormtrooper pretending to be a Resistance hero, and Rey is searching for her family and her heritage, unsure of where she has come from. Most prominently, the central antagonist is torn between the ‘Dark Side’ of the Force as Kylo Ren; and to the side of good as Ben Solo, the son of Han and Princess Leia; and this conflict leads to the emotional crux of the film, and ultimately the entire trilogy.

It is in *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018), though, that Kasdan, co-writing with his son Jonathan, most strongly emulates the themes of Akira Kurosawa. The entire plot is predicated on notions of identity, hidden agendas, and the search for belonging. Han, his girlfriend Qi’ra, and his surrogate father figure Beckett each hide their motivations from one another, reinventing themselves just as Toshiro Mifune’s characters do in *Seven Samurai*, *Yojimbo*, and even Kurosawa’s contemporary dramas such as *Drunken Angel* (1948) and *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960). The film also evokes Kurosawa’s work in its treatment of class inequality, with Han Solo escaping from indentured servitude, freeing Chewbacca from captivity, then assisting in the rescue of enslaved ‘wookies’ and droids. This latter action – the droid uprising in a mine – is remarkably similar to the peasants’ revolt in *The Hidden Fortress* after Tahei and Matashichi are forced to dig underground for gold.

Solo was Lawrence Kasdan’s final screenplay for *Star Wars*, yet even without his and George Lucas’s influence, recent creators of *Star Wars* appear similarly indebted to the films of Akira Kurosawa. Rian Johnson, writer-director of *The Last Jedi* (2017), employs the same narrative device as that used by Kurosawa in *Rashomon* when describing the past battle between Luke Skywalker and Kylo Ren. He first shows the fateful incident from Luke’s perspective, then Kylo Ren’s, and finally Luke’s again under increased pressure from Rey. This use of the ‘unreliable narrator’ differentiates the film from its more linearly-plotted predecessors. Thus, references to Kurosawa’s work are not only allusive; they also help lead the saga in a new stylistic direction. Johnson’s film also shows the seven Knights of Ren (seen briefly in *The Force Awakens*), who – in their distinctive armour and pictured in the driving rain – are almost a negative image of Kurosawa’s *Seven Samurai*:



Figure 6: The seven Knights of Ren (*The Last Jedi*)

The film's palette, too, draws heavily from Kurosawa's later colour films, with the reds, whites and blacks of *Ran* (1985) prominent in the fight scenes in *The Last Jedi*. As well as its visual appeal, this shared style highlights the violence and desperation at the centre of each movie – where death comes to major characters and where morals are not always clear in the ferocity of battle:



Figure 7: Battle scenes in *Ran* (top) and *The Last Jedi* (bottom)

Such similarities demonstrate that allusions to Akira Kurosawa's canon remain central to *Star Wars* films, even as the series continues through its fifth decade, and nearly ten years after George Lucas's retirement from the saga.

Conclusion

These findings demonstrate that Akira Kurosawa's films helped to inspire George Lucas's initial plotting of the *Star Wars* series, with the synopsis of *The Hidden Fortress* acting as a template for his very first synopsis. Furthermore, George Lucas and his collaborators returned repeatedly to Kurosawa's work, both for narrative and visual inspiration through the original trilogy and the three prequels. In particular, the device of telling the story from the perspective of the "lowliest" set the tone for the entire series, in which apparently inconsequential characters become protagonists in a larger conflict. Additionally, the master-student relationship prevalent in many of Kurosawa's *jidaigeki* is a clear model for the Jedi hierarchy depicted throughout *Star Wars*. The visual style of the series has been affected by Kurosawa too, with scenes frequently adopting the camera angles and editing beats preferred by Kurosawa, as well as using long lenses, extreme weather, and a red and black colour palette, especially in the most intense battle scenes. Furthermore, many of Kurosawa's favoured themes are revisited throughout the franchise, such as the pull of duty versus self-preservation (particularly in Han Solo's story), inequalities between classes, and questions of identity and belonging. These similarities have remained strong even as the series has become part of a larger corporate entity following George Lucas's retirement and its resurrection by Disney.

Thanks in part to Lawrence Kasdan's participation, but since continued by other creators of the series, Kurosawa's films remain an important touchstone for many aspects of the expanding franchise.

While these findings are relevant to *Star Wars* as a discrete cultural entity, they also have wider implications. As many contemporary filmmakers cite *Star Wars* as an inspiration, then this increases the influence of Akira Kurosawa not only upon George Lucas's series, but also upon those directors and writers who have followed. For example, Christopher Nolan has cited *Star Wars* as an important picture in his film education, and he based Bane in *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) upon Darth Vader (Maurer, 2015); and much of the Marvel Cinematic Universe pays homage to Lucas's saga, both in its universe-building and in its tone, balanced as it is between verisimilitude and humour. Thus, while the films of Akira Kurosawa are consistently venerated among film scholars and practitioners, they have increasing relevance even among those moviemakers who may be less familiar with his work, as Kurosawa's plots, themes and visual style – via the conduit of *Star Wars* – continue to influence the ways that modern motion pictures are produced.

References

- Altman, R. (2002). Interview. *Rashomon*. DVD Extras. Criterion.
- Anaheim University. (2013, June 14). *Akira Kurosawa's 100th anniversary memorial tribute* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErelcWcNelQ>
- August, J., and Mazin, C. (Hosts). (2016, April 26). Episode 247: The one with Lawrence Kasdan [Audio podcast episode]. In *Scriptnotes*. <http://johnaugust.com/2016/the-one-with-lawrence-kasdan>
- August, J., and Mazin, C. (Hosts). (2020, May 26). Episode 452: The Empire Strikes Back with Lawrence Kasdan [Audio podcast episode]. In *Scriptnotes*. <https://johnaugust.com/2020/the-empire-strikes-back-with-lawrence-kasdan>
- Barber, N. (2016, January 4). *The film Star Wars stole from*. BBC Culture. <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160104-the-film-star-wars-stole-from>
- Baxter, J. (1999). *George Lucas: A biography*. HarperCollins.
- Bouzereau, L. (1997). *Star Wars: The annotated screenplays*. Ballantine.
- Brooker, W. (2009). *BFI film classics: Star Wars*. Palgrave/British Film Institute.
- Davies, B. (2019). Kurosawa to Kasdan: Storytelling influences. *Journal of Screenwriting*, 10(2), 213-228.
- Dutka, E. (1991, December 24). *Lawrence Kasdan's grand balancing act*. The Los Angeles Times. http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-24/entertainment/ca-947_1_grand-canyon/3
- Dyer, J. (2015, December 18). *Star Wars: The Force Awakens – the complete history, part I*. Empire. <https://www.empireonline.com/movies/features/star-wars-force-awakens-complete-history-part-i/>
- Harrison, R. (2020). *BFI film classics: The Empire Strikes Back*. Bloomsbury/British Film Institute.
- Helander, J. (1997/2010). *The development of Star Wars as seen through the scripts by George Lucas*. Starkiller/StarWarz. <https://www.starwarz.com/starkiller/the-development-of-star-wars-as-seen-through-the-scripts-by-george-lucas/>
- Jones, B. J. (2016). *George Lucas: A life*. Headline.
- Kaminski, M. (2007, April 10). *The influence and imagery of Akira Kurosawa*. The Secret History of Star Wars. <http://fd.noneinc.com/secrethistoryofstarwarscom/secrethistoryofstarwars.com/kurosawa1.html>
- Maurer, M. (2015, December 14). *10 great movies inspired by Star Wars*. Screen Rant. <https://screenrant.com/best-movies-inspired-by-star-wars/>

Lee, M. (2005, May 14). *Film-makers on film: George Lucas*. The Daily Telegraph.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmmakersonfilm/3642010/Film-makers-on-film-George-Lucas.html>

Lucas, G. (2001). Interview. *The Hidden Fortress*. DVD Extras. Criterion.

Prince, S. (1999). *The warrior's camera: The cinema of Akira Kurosawa*. Princeton University Press.

Richie, D. (1998). *The films of Akira Kurosawa* (3rd ed.). University of California Press.
(Original work published 1965)

Russell, C. (2011). *Classical Japanese cinema revisited*. Continuum.

Filmography

The Bad Sleep Well/Warui yatsu hodo yoku nemuru/悪い奴ほどよく眠る (1960). Writers: Hideo Oguni, Eijiro Hisaita, Akira Kurosawa, Ryuzo Kikushima, Shinobu Hashimoto. Director: Akira Kurosawa. Toho.

Bonnie and Clyde (1967). Writers: David Newman, Robert Benton. Director: Arthur Penn. Warner Bros.

The Dark Knight Rises (2012). Writers: Christopher Nolan, David S. Goyer, Jonathan Nolan. Director: Christopher Nolan. Warner Bros.

Dersu Uzala/デルス・ウザーラ (1975). Writers: Akira Kurosawa, Yuri Nagibin (based upon the novel by Vladimir Arsenyev). Director: Akira Kurosawa. MosFilm/Daiei.

Drunken Angel/Yoidore tenshi/酔いどれ天使 (1948). Writers: Akira Kurosawa, Keinosuke Uegusa. Director: Akira Kurosawa. Toho.

The Empire Strikes Back (1980). Writers: George Lucas, Leigh Brackett, Lawrence Kasdan. Director: Irvin Kershner. Lucasfilm/20th Century Fox.

The Force Awakens (2015). Writers: Lawrence Kasdan, J.J. Abrams, Michael Arndt. Director: J.J. Abrams. Lucasfilm/Disney.

The Hidden Fortress/Kakushi toride no san akunin/隠し砦の三悪人 (1958). Writers: Ryuzo Kikushima, Hideo Oguni, Shinobu Hashimoto, Akira Kurosawa. Director: Akira Kurosawa. Toho.

Ikiru (a.k.a. *To Live*)/生きる (1952). Writers: Akira Kurosawa, Shinobu Hashimoto, Hideo Oguni. Director: Akira Kurosawa. Toho.

The Last Jedi (2017). Writer/Director: Rian Johnson. Lucasfilm/Disney.

The Magnificent Seven (1960). Writer: William Roberts (uncredited: Walter Bernstein, Walter Newman). Director: John Sturges. United Artists.

The Outrage (1964). Writer: Michael Kanin. Director: Martin Ritt. MGM.

The Phantom Menace (1999). Writer/Director: George Lucas. Lucasfilm/20th Century Fox.

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981). Writers: Lawrence Kasdan, George Lucas, Philip Kaufman.
Director: Steven Spielberg. Lucasfilm/Paramount.

Ran (1985). Writers: Akira Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni, Masato Ide (based upon the play *King Lear* by William Shakespeare). Director: Akira Kurosawa. Toho.

Rashomon/羅生門 (1950). Writers: Akira Kurosawa, Shinobu Hashimoto (based upon the short story *In a Grove* by Ryunosuke Akutagawa). Director: Akira Kurosawa. Daiei.

Return of the Jedi (1983). Writers: George Lucas, Lawrence Kasdan. Director: Richard Marquand. Lucasfilm/20th Century Fox.

Revenge of the Sith (2005). Writer/Director: George Lucas. Lucasfilm/20th Century Fox.

The Rise of Skywalker (2019). Writers: J.J. Abrams, Chris Terrio, Derek Connolly, Colin Trevorrow. Director: J.J. Abrams. Lucasfilm/Disney.

Sanjuro/*Tsubaki Sanjuro*/椿三十郎 (1962). Writers: Ryuzo Kikushima, Hideo Oguni, Akira Kurosawa. Director: Akira Kurosawa. Toho.

Seven Samurai/*Shichinin no samurai*/七人の侍 (1954). Writers: Akira Kurosawa, Shinobu Hashimoto, Hideo Oguni. Director: Akira Kurosawa. Toho.

Solo: A Star Wars Story (2018). Writers: Jonathan Kasdan, Lawrence Kasdan. Director: Ron Howard. Lucasfilm/Disney.

Star Wars (a.k.a. *A New Hope*) (1977). Writer/Director: George Lucas. Lucasfilm/20th Century Fox.

The Wild Bunch (1969). Writers: Walon Green, Sam Peckinpah, Roy N. Sickner. Director: Sam Peckinpah. Warner Bros.

Yojimbo/用心棒 (1961). Writers: Ryuzo Kikushima, Akira Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni.
Director: Akira Kurosawa. Toho.