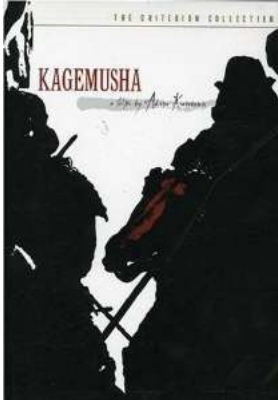


Kagemusha

Kagemusha, 1980, Japan

Film Overview



Set in the late 16th century, *Kagemusha* centers on the Takeda clan, one of three warlord clans battling for control of Japan at the end of the feudal period. When Lord Shingen (Tatsuya Nakadai), head of the Takeda clan, is mortally wounded in battle and near death, he orders that his death be kept secret and that his "kagemusha"--or "shadow warrior"--take his place for a period of three years to prevent clan disruption and enemy takeover. The identical double is a petty thief (also played by Nakadai) spared from execution due to his uncanny resemblance to Lord Shingen--but his true identity cannot prevent the tides of fate from rising over the Takeda clan in a climactic scene of battlefield devastation. Through stunning visuals and meticulous attention to every physical and stylistic detail,

Kurosawa made a film that restored his status as Japan's greatest filmmaker, and the success of *Kagemusha* enabled the director to make his 1985 masterpiece, *Ran*. --Jeff Shannon

Akira Kurosawa is one of Japan's best-known filmmakers, responsible for such classics as *The Seven Samurai*, *Yojimbo*, and *Rashomon*. Though he is best known for samurai films, he also directed more modern-themed pieces such as *Ikiru* and *Dreams*. He is known for working with Toshiro Mifune (who has a small role in *Kagemusha*).



An original painting for the film by Akira Kurosawa.

Culture Notes

- **The Battle of Nagashino:** The climactic battle in *Kagemusha* is a historical one, in which Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu fought against Takeda Katsuyori. It took place in 1575, during the Warring States (Sengoku) Period. Takeda's forces were vastly outnumbered, and the failure of the cavalry charge for which they were famous led to their defeat. The battle was influential for a number of reasons: the use of arquebuses, a precursor to the musket, which turned the battle in Oda's favor and following Nagashino became a standard asset in Japanese warfare; also, since the Takedas' cavalry charges failed, it ushered in a new style of warfare in which new weapons and tactics were as important as individual bravery. --*Willamette University*, <http://www.willamette.edu/~rloftus/jfilm/nagashino.html>
- **Samurai Culture:** The culture of the samurai valued fealty and self-sacrifice for the sake of their feudal lord, values which are reflected in *Kagemusha*. Those who wish to read more about samurai culture may be interested in *The Book of Three Rings* by Musashi Miyamoto, who himself was a famous samurai and the basis for Hiroshi Inagaki's *Samurai Trilogy*.

