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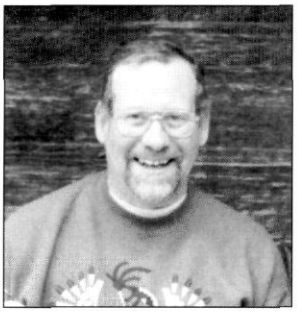
Samurai Commanders (2)

1577–1638

Stephen Turnbull • Illustrated by Richard Hook



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CONTENTS

Elite · 128

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Author's dedication

To Pat and Bill Robinson, with best wishes.

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I wish to thank the many individuals and organizations in Japan and elsewhere who have helped in the preparation of this book, in particular my daughter Kate, who now handles the administrative side of my work in worthy succession to her mother.

Author's note

It sometimes appears that the samurai of 16th-century Japan changed their names every few years. On occasions a grateful commander would give a syllable from his own name as a reward for service in battle, on others a samurai might give himself a completely new surname. To avoid confusion in the pages that follow I have chosen to use the most familiar form of a commander's name throughout his biography. This is usually the one he bore at the time of his death.

Artist's note

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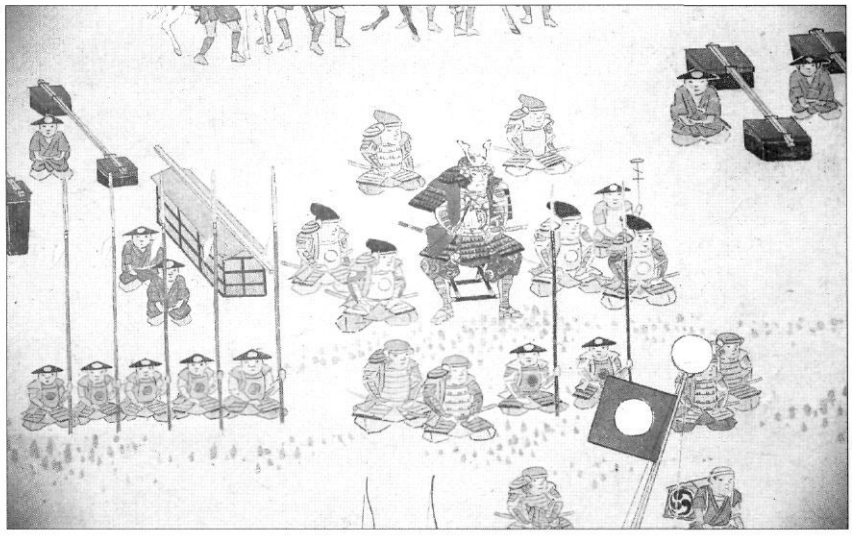
SAMURAI COMMANDERS (2) 1577–1638

INTRODUCTION

The fourth battle of Kawanakajima in 1561, covered in *Samurai Commanders (1) 940–1576*, was the epic struggle fought at the beginning of a decade that was to see huge changes in Japanese warfare, its organization and above all in the means of its command. The narrative thread in this volume will be dominated by the personalities of Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, the three great samurai commanders whose successive operations and periods of rule finally brought about the reunification of Japan. But they will not be the only names to be covered here. The last 50 years of the Sengoku Jidai, the 'Age of Warring States', was the heyday of the supremely skilled samurai commander. Shibata Katsuie and Maeda Toshiie are but two examples of fine generals who commanded armies on someone else's behalf, while Date Masamune, secure in his territory in northern Japan, built up a domain and a reputation that was second to none.

WARFARE AND COMMAND IN THE SENGOKU PERIOD

Certain trends will be noticeable in the biographies of the commanders that follow. The first is that from the 1560s onwards war was being waged on a much larger scale than hitherto. Not only had armies grown larger in size, their composition had changed with a reduction in the

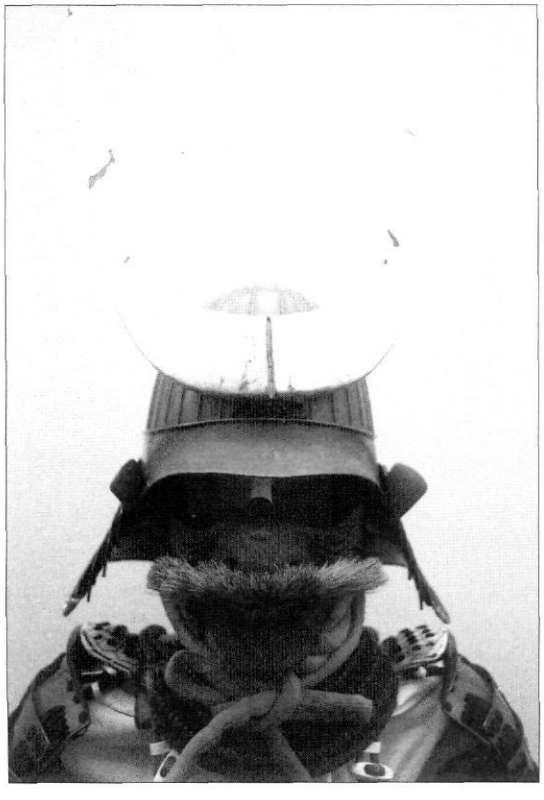


***Daimyo* with attendants. This picture shows the classic image of the samurai commander on the battlefield of the Sengoku period. He sits on a folding camp stool with his tasselled signalling fan in his hand, and is surrounded by bodyguard samurai and *ashigaru* whose job it is to carry his weapons and equipment.**

proportion of mounted troops compared to infantry, even if in many cases the overall numbers of mounted samurai remained broadly the same. The reason for this was the increased use of disciplined *ashigaru* (foot soldiers). Lower-class troops had always played a vital part in samurai warfare, although this often went unrecognized by the compilers of the war chronicles. But by the mid-16th century the casual recruitment of poorly trained peasants was giving way to the maintenance of what was almost a standing army. Needless to say, this was a luxury that only the wealthiest and most successful *daimyo* (feudal lords) could afford. So one other characteristic of the period was the disappearance of the smaller *daimyo* who depended upon part-time soldiers to fight for them. Instead these men, many of whom were highly skilled samurai commanders, became absorbed into the growing domains of their more powerful neighbours as vassals who had pledged loyal service in return for retaining their lands and their heads. It is among the ranks of these powerful generals, who grew to dominate Japanese warfare, that we will find some of the finest samurai commanders of the age.

A further trend involves the types of weapons used by the commanders' armies. By the end of the Sengoku period the samurai as a mounted archer had been almost completely replaced by the samurai as a mounted, or sometimes dismounted, spearman. This change enabled the samurai to deliver a cavalry charge against the ranks of *ashigaru*, to whom had been given the role of archers. But bows were to dominate the missile sections of an army for only a short time, because the most important innovation in samurai warfare at this time was the introduction of firearms. The first guns used in Japan were simple Chinese handguns. They were little used in battle, and were soon replaced by the matchlock arquebuses introduced from Europe in 1543. Although slow to operate, these firearms could be used very effectively under the direction of a skilled samurai commander. The other *ashigaru* weapon to be found in large numbers on every battlefield was the long spear that resembled a European pike. *Ashigaru* spearmen, like the European pikemen, would protect the arquebus troops, but would also wield their weapons more freely than the rigid phalanx of the Swiss.

The samurai commanders of the 16th century often embellished their rather sombre and practical suits of armour by wearing spectacular helmets. This example of a helmet is in Ogaki castle. It is lacquered red and bears two golden *kuwagata* (antlers), the left one of which is broken.



To command, supply and lead such large, organized armies demanded the finest skills of generalship that Japan could provide, so the samurai commanders we will meet in the pages that follow were indeed the *crème de la crème* both in their fighting skills and peacetime organization. Their elite status was proclaimed by their central position among an army, where they sat surrounded by bodyguards and banners, often wearing spectacular helmets ornamented with golden horns, feathers or antlers, which added a flamboyant touch to the very practical bullet-proof suits of armour that protected their bodies. From their vantage points on a battlefield or from the keeps of their castles, the samurai commanders of the Sengoku period directed

operations, communicating with their subordinates by a sophisticated system of signals and messengers. Yet on many occasions the commanders still led their men into the attack. As Tokugawa Ieyasu once remarked, 'Generals do not win victories by gazing at men's backs.' So risks were taken, and the best, or the luckiest, survived to lead their men into battle another day.

Two further factors will be noted in the biographies that follow. Wars were rarely fought between just one *daimyo* and another. Instead we see a complex pattern of alliances, with leaders changing sides or becoming absorbed into a victor's armies. It is quite striking how intertwined were the lives of the samurai commanders of this time. For this reason the details of battles that are included in the biographies are arranged in a way that avoids unnecessary repetition.

There is also the matter of what happened to a successful samurai commander after he won a battle. The simple conquest of another's territory and its inclusion within one's own became increasingly rare during the latter part of the 16th century. Battles were often fought and won on behalf of someone else, and such service demanded reward. This was usually made in the form of a grant of rice lands, the wealth of which was measured in *koku*, one *koku* being the theoretical amount of rice needed to feed one man for one year. So in the biography of Maeda Toshiie, for example, we will see his domain grow steadily by the acquisition of neighbouring districts in this way until on his death in 1599 his son and heir, Maeda Toshinaga, was able to inherit the second-largest territory (measured in production terms) in all Japan.

However, the *daimyo*'s overlord also had the power to move his subordinates to other territories. This could be done to make the loyal subject keep an eye on an unruly neighbour, so the fruits of victory could sometimes mean the successful samurai commander giving up his traditional home territory. The *daimyo* have sometimes been compared to potted plants, because they could be picked up and moved to any part of Japan.

This statue at the foot of the castle hill in Gifu is supposed to represent Oda Nobunaga as a youth. He is shown as a skilled equestrian archer, although archery was not a talent that samurai commanders were often called upon to display. The statue marks the site of one of Nobunaga's greatest triumphs, the capture of Gifu from the Saito in 1567.

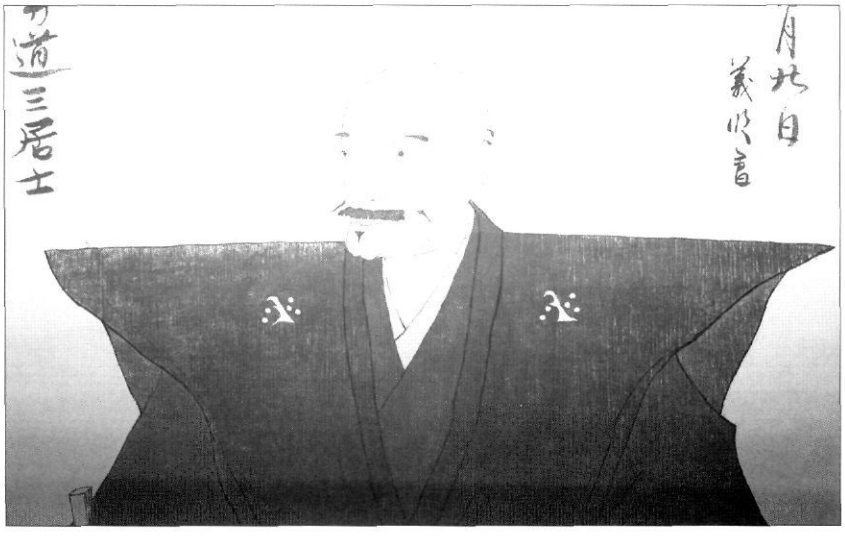
SAMURAI COMMANDERS

Oda Nobunaga (1534–82)

The surprise defeat of Imagawa Yoshimoto at the battle of Okehazama in 1560 was covered in *Samurai Commanders (1) 940–1576*. The victory was achieved by Oda Nobunaga, who was to go on to become one of the greatest samurai commanders of all time.

Oda Nobunaga was born in 1534 as the son and heir of Oda Nobuhide, a *daimyo* of Owari province. The greatest threat to the survival of the Oda domain had been posed by Imagawa Yoshimoto, so the battle of Okehazama was as significant for the Oda family on a personal scale as it was for Japan as a whole. Like his father Nobuhide before him, Nobunaga enthusiastically embraced new military technology, which he famously displayed on the occasion of a visit to his future father-in-law Saito Dosan in 1553. As part of Nobunaga's entourage, 800 *ashigaru* came armed with long spears and 500 carried arquebuses. Saito Dosan was much impressed, and, somewhat ironically, out of all of Nobunaga's future military conquests, the most significant was to be the taking of Inabayama (Gifu) castle from Saito Dosan's grandson in 1567.

With Gifu as his base, and with his ally Tokugawa Ieyasu providing his rearguard along the Tokaido road, Nobunaga entered Kyoto in 1568 and deposed the last Ashikaga Shogun, Yoshiaki. Oda Nobunaga's capture of Kyoto was a significant and very symbolic step. All the other great *daimyo* felt that Nobunaga had stolen a march on them. The main local opposition to this important development in Japanese politics came from the Asai and Asakura families, who threatened Nobunaga from the north. Oda Nobunaga won the victory of Anegawa against the Asai and Asakura in 1570. This was a fierce encounter fought in blazing summer sunshine across the bed of the Anegawa River, and resulted in an Oda victory. By all accounts this was a classic samurai battle with much hand-to-hand fighting with the famous Japanese swords. Over the next three years all other traces of the Asai and Asakura were eliminated when Nobunaga captured their castles of Odani and Ichijo ga tani.



Saito Dosan Toshimasa (1494–1556) was the father-in-law of Oda Nobunaga and one of the first to recognize the military talent shown by the young man. This modern portrait of Dosan, copied from a contemporary scroll, shows him in the characteristic costume of a samurai. He is wearing a jacket with winged shoulder pieces on which appear his *mon* (family crest).

He was also challenged by the populist Buddhist sect of Jodo-Shinshu, whose armies, the Ikko-ikki, were to engage Nobunaga in war for the next 12 years. The Ikko-ikki proved far more intractable to Oda Nobunaga's plans than any rival *daimyo*. From the early Sengoku period these armies, largely recruited from peasants, had become something of a third force in Japanese politics. In Kaga province they had even ejected a *daimyo* from his homeland and set up a territory controlled by an alliance of small landowners and farmers who shared the same fanatical religious beliefs.

The Ikko-ikki of the Osaka area provoked Japan's longest siege, in which Nobunaga was forced to spend ten years, off and on, reducing their formidable fortress-cathedral, the Ishiyama Honganji. This long and bitter campaign was directed against a massive castle complex built in the latest style and situated within a maze of reed beds and creeks. Supplies were run to the defenders by sea courtesy of the Mori family, and the Ikko-ikki also had large numbers of arquebuses.

In addition to the Ikko-ikki, Nobunaga was opposed by another religiously motivated army, whose members lived on the holy mountain of Hieizan. This was not ostensibly a military installation. It was the centre of Tendai Buddhism, and during earlier centuries had visited its wrath upon Kyoto in the form of armies of warrior monks. The monks had now allied themselves with the Ikko-ikki against Nobunaga. When marching to Echizen province in 1570, Nobunaga had passed beneath the vast bulk of Hieizan and realized how it threatened his lines of communication to the north from Kyoto. So in 1571 the mountain was surrounded by a huge army, and Nobunaga's troops simply advanced up the paths and shot or hacked to death every living thing they met, as a warning to any armies, clerical or lay, that dared oppose him. This was probably the only military action of Nobunaga's career so controversial that even some of his own generals opposed the move.

This typical display of utter ruthlessness ensured that Oda Nobunaga went from strength to strength, and in 1575 he gained his most famous victory at the siege of Nagashino castle. Nagashino was a frontier fortress that was attacked by Takeda Katsuyori. Nobunaga marched to its relief and set up simple defensive lines a few miles away. The Takeda were famous for their devastating cavalry charges, but this time their intended victim was armed with 3,000 arquebuses. Discipline was such that Nobunaga's men were able to deliver organized fire, perhaps even rotating volleys, into the successive waves of Takeda attack. The charge was blunted, and in the subsequent hand-to-hand combat Oda Nobunaga won the day.

Asakura Yoshikage (1533–73) had early success against the Ikko-ikki armies, but came into collision with the expansionist aims of Oda Nobunaga. Yoshikage allied himself with Asai Nagamasa but was defeated by Oda Nobunaga at the battle of Anegawa.

In 1576 Nobunaga built Azuchi castle, which became his main base. Azuchi was sufficiently far from Kyoto to avoid the periodic uprisings and protests that had always spoiled life in the capital, but it was near enough to allow Nobunaga to control any situation that might arise. In 1578 the Mori family were frustrated in their attempts to aid the Ikko-ikki at the sea battle of Kizugawaguchi. More campaigns followed against the Ikko-ikki in Osaka, where Nobunaga won his final victory against the Ishiyama Honganji in 1580. He then conducted successful campaigns against Ise and Iga provinces in 1580 and 1581.

By 1582 Oda Nobunaga controlled most of central Japan, including Kyoto and the strategic Tokaido and Nakasendo roads to the east. Following the fall of the Ishiyama Honganji, Nobunaga had begun to extend his influence westwards for the first time. Two of his most skilled and experienced generals began separate but parallel campaigns in this direction. Toyotomi Hideyoshi started the pacification of the southern coast of western Honshu on the Inland Sea, while his comrade in arms Akechi Mitsuhide pursued similar goals on the northern edge of the Sea of Japan. Much of Hideyoshi's campaigning was carried out against the Mori family, and the summer of 1582 was to find Hideyoshi sitting patiently in front of the Mori's castle of Takamatsu, which a dammed river was slowly but very surely flooding. It was at this point in his career that Hideyoshi received the message that was to change his life and with it the destiny of Japan. The defiance of the Mori had forced Hideyoshi to request reinforcements from Oda Nobunaga, who had hurried to send them on ahead under Akechi Mitsuhide, intending to follow personally shortly afterwards. This left Nobunaga perilously unguarded, and that night Akechi's army wheeled round and marched back into Kyoto to attack Nobunaga in the Honnoji temple where he was staying. The temple was set on fire and, overwhelmed by superior numbers, Oda Nobunaga committed suicide and his body was consumed in the flames.

Oda Nobunaga's death was brought about by treachery. Akechi Mitsuhide, one of Nobunaga's generals, launched a raid on the Nichiren temple of Honnoji in Kyoto, where Nobunaga was accompanied by only a small bodyguard. In this dramatic print we see Nobunaga's last stand as the temple burns around him.

So perished the first of Japan's three unifiers and one of Japan's greatest samurai commanders. His skills at organization, his tactical flair and above all his visionary use of military technology placed him in the front rank of generals. His other outstanding characteristic was his great ruthlessness. Defeated enemies were usually exterminated, and the honourable surrender of the Ishiyama Honganji was an exception to a general rule that saw him massacre his victims in their thousands. His violent death brought a violent life fittingly to its end.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98)

Toyotomi Hideyoshi experienced a rise to power that was unequalled by anyone else in Japanese history. He was born in a village to a father who had been a peasant farmer and served Oda Nobunaga as an *ashigaru* until

Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98) was an outstanding strategist as well as a commander on the battlefield. He was also very much a soldiers' general, and his troops followed him with supreme loyalty. He is shown here in full armour ornamented with large golden *mon* (crests) on the *sode* (shoulder guards). This scroll is on display in the Memorial Museum to Hideyoshi and Kato Kiyomasa in Nakamura Park, Nagoya.

a bullet wound forced him to retire. Hideyoshi followed in his father's footsteps and served Nobunaga as the latter grew to become the first of Japan's great unifiers. Nobunaga had an eye for talent, and rewarded Hideyoshi's successful military accomplishments by rapid promotion, until by the time of Nobunaga's death in 1582 Hideyoshi was one of his most trusted generals.

Hideyoshi's campaign against the Mori family from 1581 onwards consisted largely of a series of successful sieges, and it was at the siege of Takamatsu that he received the news of Nobunaga's death. His fellow general Akechi Mitsuhide had done the impossible. He had overcome the most powerful man in Japan. Somewhat stunned by his own success, Mitsuhide immediately proclaimed himself Shogun and ordered the extermination of Nobunaga's five sons. Only Hideyoshi had the military capacity to react swiftly to this astounding development. Realizing that the news would encourage the castle's defenders, he kept it secret and arranged a negotiated settlement with the Mori. He then force-marched his army back to Kyoto to avenge his dead master, an act that would not only bestow upon him an enormous moral superiority over the treacherous Akechi Mitsuhide, but would also be likely to provide undreamed-of material and political gain.

Very soon the new Shogun received the news that a hostile army was on its way to destroy him. Having been taken completely by surprise by Hideyoshi's quick reactions, Mitsuhide marched downstream along the Yodo River and took up a position against his rival's advance behind a small river commanded by a hill near the village of Yamazaki. Beginning with a completely successful storming of the wooded hill, Hideyoshi trounced Mitsuhide, whose men fled in all directions. The Shogun of 13 days was now a fugitive, and was eventually murdered by a peasant gang.

The relationship between Oda Nobunaga and his general Akechi Mitsuhide was always a very tricky one, as shown in this print, which depicts Nobunaga chastising Mitsuhide in front of his peers. It was the resentment that built up as a result of such incidents that led to Mitsuhide's revolt against Nobunaga in 1582. This brought about the death of Nobunaga.

The triumph associated with being Nobunaga's avenger gave Hideyoshi the opportunity to fill the power vacuum that Nobunaga's death had left behind, and during the next two years Hideyoshi was to challenge and defeat all other rivals, including Nobunaga's three surviving sons, in a series of brilliant military campaigns. Most of his rivals were Nobunaga's other generals, whose biographies will appear later. At Shizugatake in 1583 Hideyoshi surprised his rival by a forced march similar to that at Yamazaki. This combination of quick reaction and splendid organization was to become one of Hideyoshi's finest characteristics as a general. Sakuma Morimasa had captured some of Hideyoshi's border fortresses and was sitting outside the walls of Shizugatake, confident that he could capture it before Hideyoshi could march to its relief. Yet within hours Hideyoshi's troops were flooding up the wooded hillside to catch Morimasa totally unprepared.

At Komaki in 1584 Hideyoshi faced a general as skilled and as cautious as he was. Tokugawa Ieyasu took the defensive. Hideyoshi acted likewise, and the result was that two samurai armies sat facing each other over an earthwork defensive line covered by arquebuses – the equivalent of a World War I trench system. The battle of Nagakute that followed (described in Tokugawa Ieyasu's biography, below) came about when Ieyasu's army abandoned their defensive positions to raid Hideyoshi's territory. The Komaki/Nagakute campaign ended in stalemate, so the two commanders patched up their difficulties and settled peacefully.

By 1585, with his political rivals eliminated and such agreements in place, Hideyoshi was able to begin extending the boundaries of Nobunaga's former conquests, taking in the island of Shikoku and the provinces of western Japan. The Shikoku campaign involved a successful sea crossing. The landing was unopposed and the subsequent campaign was brief. Chosokabe Motochika (1539–99), who had conquered the whole of Shikoku for himself over the past ten years, had a part-time army that proved to be no match for Hideyoshi's troops. They were

virtually professional soldiers, evidence of the trend that was developing whereby the functions of farmers and soldiers had to be separated if long and complex campaigns were to be successfully undertaken. The Chosokabe men were renowned for being so ready to serve that they tilled the fields with their spears thrust into the paths between the rice paddies. But they were soon swept aside by the overwhelming force Hideyoshi could bring to bear, so Chosokabe Motochika paid homage as a vassal.

The transportation of an army across the sea to Shikoku provided a model for Hideyoshi's next major venture in 1587 when he set out to conquer the great southern Japanese island of Kyushu, most of which was controlled by the Shimazu family. This was a huge and well-co-ordinated campaign that involved two prongs of attack moving down the western and eastern coasts, defeating the Shimazu *daimyo*'s forces as they went and gaining allies by the score. On the west coast, the island lords such as Goto and Matsuura hurried to pledge allegiance to Hideyoshi, and the forces converged on the Shimazu capital of Kagoshima. After a battle at the Sendai River, the only obstacles remaining were the volcanic gulleys that protected the last Shimazu outpost. There could have been the greatest act of mass suicide in samurai history, but instead a negotiated settlement was agreed, and the noble and ancient Shimazu family submitted to the upstart Hideyoshi. Once again Hideyoshi had shown his understanding of the benefits that could accrue from generosity to a defeated enemy when the once mighty Shimazu were allowed to retain their ancestral lands as his vassals.

Chosokabe Motochika (1539–99) is an excellent representative of the older style of samurai commander who was successful up to a point, but met his match when his part-time samurai faced the virtually professional army mounted by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Motochika had conquered the whole of Shikoku Island for himself, but his domain collapsed when Hideyoshi invaded in 1585. This statue is near the sea coast of Shikoku close to Kochi.

In 1588 Hideyoshi enacted the first of two ordinances that were to have a considerable influence on Japanese warfare. The first was the famous 'Sword Hunt', by which all weapons were to be confiscated from the peasantry and placed in the hands of the *daimyo* and their increasingly professional armies. But the Sword Hunt was much more than a search of farmers' premises – it meant that the means of making war were forcibly removed from anyone of whom Hideyoshi did not approve. Minor *daimyo* whose loyalty was suspect, religious institutions that had the capacity for armed rebellion and recalcitrant village headmen were all purged of the means of resistance.

The Separation Edict that followed in 1591 enforced a total distinction between the military and agricultural functions. The Separation Edict therefore defined the distinction between samurai and farmer that was to continue throughout the Tokugawa period (1603–1867). No longer could a peasant like Hideyoshi enlist as a foot soldier and rise to be a general. But to the leader of a modern army such as Hideyoshi such a restriction on military manpower was a matter of no concern. He had troops in easy sufficiency, and, because of the increased sophistication associated with weaponry, an untrained peasant handed an arquebus or a long-shafted spear would be a liability rather than an asset.

Hideyoshi's defeat of the Hojo of Odawara in 1590 developed into a long but fairly uneventful siege that was settled by negotiation. It has sometimes been referred to as the 'picnic campaign'. The collapse of the Hojo, who had ruled the area of what is now Tokyo for five generations, led to most of the other northern *daimyo* submitting without a fight. Date Masamune, whose biography appears below, was one of their number. With the fall of Kunoe castle to Hideyoshi's general Gamo Ujisato in 1591, the campaigns of the domestic arena were complete, so that the Age of Warring States was effectively over, and Japan was reunited under the sword of a former foot soldier.

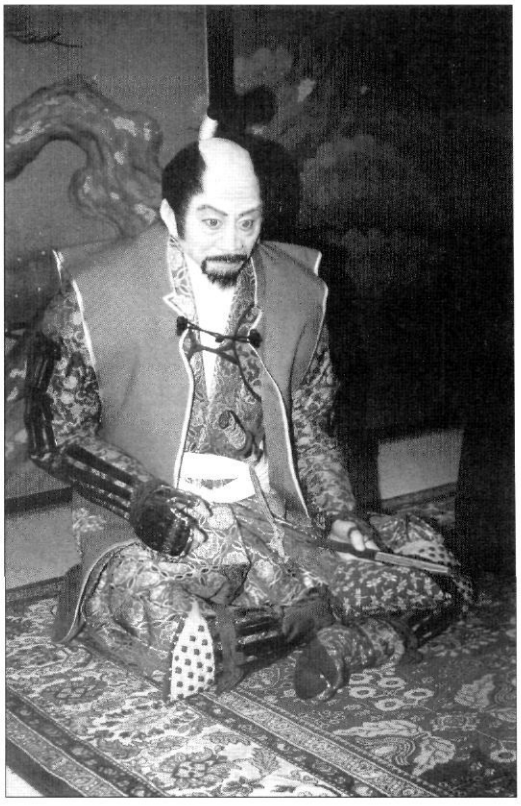
Toyotomi Hideyoshi completed the unification of Japan in 1592, by which time his appearance would have been very much like that depicted on this painted scroll in the Date Museum at Uwajima on Shikoku Island. He is dressed in full robes.

It was only at this stage, when Hideyoshi had unified Japan, that this consummate general overreached himself. His conquest of Japan gave him a vision of the conquest of China. Hideyoshi's representatives first engaged themselves in long and ultimately fruitless negotiations with the Korean government that sought to enlist that country's help in the grand design. Hideyoshi's desire was that the Korean court should pay him homage, thereby opening the road to China for his armies. But the Koreans refused and became instead Hideyoshi's first target. In an operation similar to the ones that had succeeded so well in Shikoku and Kyushu, almost 140,000 men were transported to southern Korea in 1592 and began to fight their way up the peninsula against little serious opposition. Hideyoshi never went to Korea, so the initial success was no credit to him as a tactician. Virtually all the direction was carried out by his commanders in the field, and it was only when the progress of the war turned against the Japanese that the overall strategic blunder became apparent. Korea was Hideyoshi's only failure in a brilliant military career. He died in 1598 showing signs of insanity. On his death the troops whom he had sent to Korea were recalled, and the cruel and fruitless war came to an end as a dismal and costly failure.

Yet in spite of this debacle, most *daimyo*, even those who had suffered in Korea, still cherished the memory of their great commander and pledged themselves to the service of his heir, Hideyori. Hideyoshi had always been a soldier's general. He combined the true general's assets of broad strategy and acute tactical thinking, skills and patience in siegecraft, and the guile of a subtle politician. His rise from the ranks was undoubtedly one of the reasons why he inspired such loyalty and confidence in his followers. Most of his generals were men like him. Several of them had served in the armies of *daimyo* defeated by Hideyoshi, and had then rushed to pledge service to this brilliant general who had allowed them to retain their heads. Unlike Nobunaga,

Hideyoshi had a perfect grasp of when to be ruthless with those he had conquered and when to be generous. The sectarian rabble of the Negoro temples were massacred in the same year that the defeated ruler of Shikoku island was allowed to retain his lands in return for a pledge of allegiance. Those who followed him were also richly rewarded, and were eager to share in further conquests.

In private life this ruthless leader of armies composed numerous tender and affectionate letters to friends and relatives. In this personal correspondence there is always great concern expressed for the recipient's health, just as Hideyoshi himself was also obsessively concerned with his own well-being. As for Hideyoshi's appearance, contemporary observers note his small, wizened stature and his total lack of aristocratic features on a monkey-like head, yet as his power grew Hideyoshi had taken on aristocratic trappings on a grander scale than any ruler before him. The lavish decoration of his castles, gardens and palaces, the use of gold leaf for sliding screens and the ostentation of his costume spoke of a Renaissance prince. Above all, there was Hideyoshi's passion for the tea ceremony. In his hands this exquisite practice that encapsulated all that was subtle and unworldly in Japanese culture became a tool both of self-expression and of political diplomacy. Through tea ceremonies Hideyoshi communed with nature and with his rivals.



Toyotomi Hideyoshi's one failure was the invasion of Korea in 1592. By this time he took a back seat from the actual fighting and left the conduct of the disastrous campaign in the hands of his generals in the field. This fine waxwork dummy in the Ise Sengoku Period Village near Ise projects the image of Hideyoshi that his loyal followers would have cherished. He is the epitome of the successful general.

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616)

When Oda Nobunaga achieved his surprise victory over Imagawa Yoshimoto at the battle of Okehazama in 1560 one consequence was a large number of desertions from the Imagawa camp. Many of Yoshimoto's former allies saw a better future for themselves allied to Oda Nobunaga, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, who was to become the third of the great unifiers, was the most notable *daimyo* who fell into this category.

Tokugawa Ieyasu was born in 1542. His father had spent years fighting against the Oda on behalf of the Imagawa, and young Ieyasu spent much of his childhood as a hostage in Imagawa Yoshimoto's court. When he grew to manhood Ieyasu continued the family tradition of loyal service to the Imagawa and was very active in the capture of Oda Nobunaga's border fortresses during the advance of Imagawa Yoshimoto in 1560. Okehazama, of course, put all this into reverse and freed Ieyasu from his obligations. Henceforth, as the loyal ally of Oda Nobunaga, Ieyasu's territories increased. In 1564 he overcame the local Ikko-ikki armies in his native province of Mikawa. In 1570 he fought beside his ally Oda Nobunaga at the battle of Anegawa.

In 1572 Ieyasu received his most serious military challenge when Takeda Shingen invaded his lands. Ieyasu fought the Takeda on the snow-covered plain of Mikata ga Hara. Driven from the field by the Takeda cavalry, he took refuge in Hamamatsu castle, and presented such an image of readiness and determination (which included the risky ploy of confidently leaving the gates open so that his men could return safely)

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) appears at the rear of this print depicting the battle of Mikata ga Hara in 1572. Although defeated at Mikata ga Hara, Ieyasu managed to find refuge at his castle of Hamamatsu. In the foreground is Ieyasu's leading retainer, Honda Tadakatsu (1548–1610).

that Takeda Shingen thought twice. Shingen did not dare risk a long siege in winter conditions. Luck stayed with Ieyasu the following year when Takeda Shingen returned for a spring offensive. Stalled at the siege of Noda, Shingen approached too close to the walls and was shot dead.

Ieyasu shared with Nobunaga in the great victory of Nagashino over Takeda Shingen's heir in 1575, and for the next few years Ieyasu patiently consolidated his position, allowing Hideyoshi to succeed Nobunaga. The two great generals eventually came to blows in 1584. As noted above, each had erected a fortified line near Komaki. Neither dared attack the other because both had memories of the Takeda defeat against a similar but weaker line at Nagashino. Eventually Hideyoshi detached some

troops to raid Ieyasu's province while the latter was otherwise engaged. But Ieyasu discovered the plan, and moved south to intercept them. The two forces met in battle at Nagakute, an encounter noted for clever manoeuvring on both sides that brought credit to both commanders. The battle itself had no decisive outcome, but Ieyasu earned Hideyoshi's grudging respect, which served the latter well in the years to come.

Ieyasu's location in central Japan conveniently helped him avoid involvement in the Shikoku and Kyushu invasions. The Hojo campaign was a different matter, but little actual fighting was involved. His reward far outweighed Ieyasu's contribution, because following the successful outcome of the siege of Odawara in 1590 Tokugawa Ieyasu was granted the Hojo territories in fief, and moved his capital to Edo, now the location of Tokyo. The distance of his domains from Kyushu also allowed him to avoid service during the invasion of Korea, a futile and bloody war that sapped the strength of many of his contemporaries.

The invasion of Korea ended when Hideyoshi died, leaving his infant son Toyotomi Hideyori to inherit newly unified Japan. The *daimyo* who had survived or otherwise avoided the decimation of the Korean war then divided into two armed camps and fought each other at the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. On one side was a coalition under the command of Ishida Mitsunari, who supported the cause of the infant Hideyori. They were called the Western Army. Opposing them was Tokugawa Ieyasu, who believed that he alone had the resources to manage the newly unified empire. His supporters were called the Eastern Army, and they marched towards Osaka from Edo. Great danger was caused for Ieyasu when his son Hidetada was delayed at the siege of Ueda, one of several sieges that took place as the two sides tried to capture each other's castles. But the final outcome of the contest was decided not by a siege but by an epic field encounter in the narrow valley of Sekigahara. Ishida Mitsunari advanced his army to block Ieyasu's move towards Osaka, and the issue was settled with much bloodshed in one of the most decisive battles in Japanese history.

When the fighting commenced that foggy October morning, Ieyasu's vanguard advanced under Fukushima Masanori and Ii Naomasa. The latter led his 'Red Devils', named for their red-lacquered armour. The Ieyasu vanguard moved against two Western Army contingents, first the troops of Ukita Hideie, and then the Shimazu. The outcome of the battle was very much in the balance until Kobayakawa Hideaki dramatically changed sides in favour of the Tokugawa and attacked the Western contingent nearest to his position. This was the turning point in the struggle. Ishida tried to hold firm, but the Shimazu pulled back and, as the Western Army began to withdraw, the Shimazu began a gallant rearguard action. The pursuing Ii bore the main brunt of their brave and stubborn endeavour. When contingents of the Western Army were seen withdrawing, Tokugawa Ieyasu ordered a general advance. Up to that point he had not worn his helmet, but with the words, 'After a victory tighten your helmet cords', he completed his arming and followed his troops to victory. Ishida Mitsunari was captured alive, and his castle at Sawayama was burned to the ground.

In the immediate aftermath of Sekigahara there was little opposition left to prevent Tokugawa Ieyasu taking the title of Shogun (the military dictator of Japan), which he, alone among the three unifiers, was able to

Tokugawa Ieyasu was the final unifier of the trio whose military victories brought the era of civil wars to an end. This portrait of him hangs in the Nagashino Memorial Hall.

Tokugawa Ieyasu appears here in a black and white woodcut. Undoubtedly the most successful samurai commander of all time, he founded a dynasty that ruled Japan for two and half centuries.

do because of his distant descent from the Minamoto family. He was formally proclaimed Shogun in 1603, and set in motion a number of schemes to consolidate his family's position. These included a massive redistribution of fiefs, with the traditional allies of the Tokugawa and their hereditary retainers (the *fudai*) being given key territories where they could control dangerous neighbours. Those who had opposed Ieyasu at Sekigahara by word or deed (the *tozama* or 'outer lords') found themselves moved to the far corners of Japan. Needless to say, this provoked great resentment among the losers in the process, and the greatest loser of all was Hideyori, the heir of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who had been disinherited by Ieyasu's victory.

There were many others who resented the Tokugawa rise to power, including thousands of samurai whose lords had been killed at Sekigahara or had their lands confiscated after it. They were now *ronin* ('men of the waves' or unemployed samurai) and in 1614 they flocked to join Hideyori's standard when he began to pack into his late father's mighty edifice of Osaka castle every element of military opposition to the Tokugawa takeover. This was a severe challenge to the Tokugawa hegemony, and there was no alternative but to mount a siege against Osaka, where the outer walls measured 12 miles in circumference. The events of the siege will be described in the section that follows. When the castle fell, Toyotomi Hideyori committed suicide, and all his family were executed to stamp out the Toyotomi line for ever. With the fall of Osaka castle, the opposition to the Tokugawa was over, and the Sengoku period came to an end.

Tokugawa Ieyasu died peacefully in 1616. In terms of his political achievements he has to rank as the greatest samurai commander ever. His battlefield prowess, however, needs careful consideration before accolades are offered. Ieyasu was undoubtedly a lucky general. Mikata ga Hara was a defeat that the onset of winter saved from being a rout. His crowning victory at Sekigahara depended very much on the defection of

Tokugawa Ieyasu would have been the first to acknowledge the debt he owed to his loyal retainers. This middle section of a three-panel print shows Ieyasu on a raised platform in front of his generals. His *mon* of hollyhock leaves appears on his clothes and on the *maku* (curtained enclosure) behind him.

Kobayakawa Hideaki, and the absence from the scene of his son Hidetada serves to illustrate how just once there was a failure in Ieyasu's otherwise classic strategic vision. Herein lay the essence of Ieyasu's abilities and success. He possessed the particular wisdom of knowing who should be an ally and who was an enemy, and he was gifted in the broad brush strokes of a campaign. He also knew how to learn from his mistakes. Ieyasu was also patient – a virtue sadly lacking in many of his contemporaries – and, unlike Hideyoshi, never outreached himself. To establish his family as the ruling clan in Japan for the next two and a half centuries was abundant proof of his greatness.

Ii Naotaka (1590–1659)

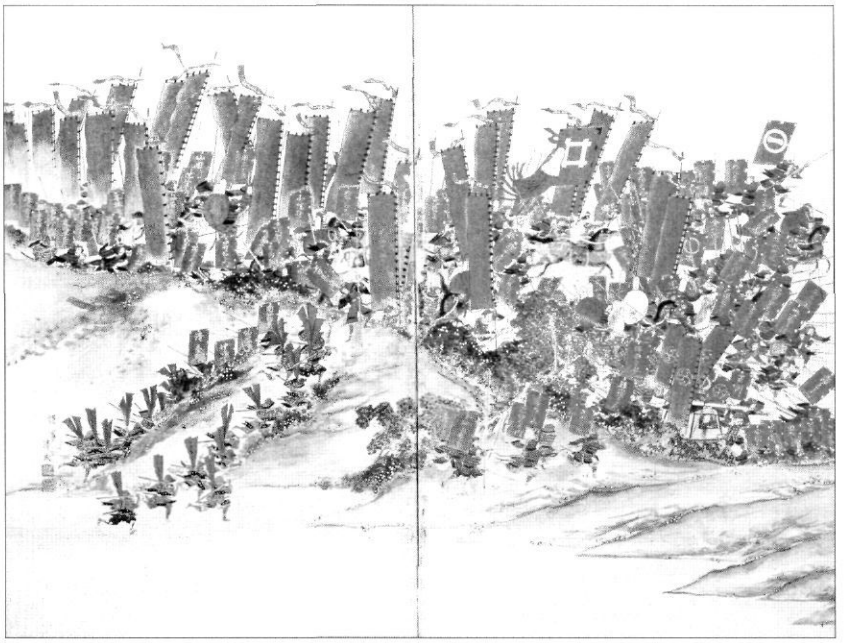
Reference was made above to the part played by Ii Naomasa in the battle of Sekigahara. The siege of Osaka is examined through the contribution made by Ii Naomasa's son Naotaka. Naomasa died in 1602 and was succeeded by his incompetent son Naokatsu, even though he had wished that his illegitimate son Naotaka should take over the domain. In 1614, when the Osaka campaign was just beginning, Tokugawa Ieyasu took a hand in the family affairs and ordered Naotaka to lead the Ii contingent into battle, so Naotaka was present at one of the first actions at Osaka

during the Winter Campaign of 1614–15. The 'Red Devils' attacked the huge complex of earthworks built to the south of the castle and known from the name of its commander as the Sanada-maru, or Sanada Barbican. The Ii were badly mauled during the fighting but would not withdraw. It is by no means clear whether this was from sheer samurai stubbornness and determination to complete the job or a simple lack of communication from headquarters in all the noise and smoke. But those to their rear knew that the Ii had to pull back or they would be annihilated. A fellow commander solved the problem very neatly by ordering his men to fire against the backs of the Red Devils. This had the result of forcing the Ii to 'attack to safety' when they reacted as expected, and the Red Devils survived to fight another day.

That day was not long in coming, and the Summer Campaign of Osaka in 1615 was to prove to be the last time that the Red Devils went into battle. Their most celebrated episode of the campaign was the battle of Wakae. This was one of a number of engagements that took place some distance from Osaka castle itself prior to the main assault on the fortress. Wakae and Yao, which are now suburbs of Greater Osaka, were then tiny hamlets in the middle of rice fields. The first encounter, at Yao, saw the Todo family on the Tokugawa side come off very badly, but out on their left flank the Red Devils soon came to grips with Kimura Shigenari, one of the most senior commanders on the Osaka side. When the Todo were defeated, the Ii were hurriedly ordered into position near Wakae to face the Kimura. Beginning with a volley from their arquebusiers, the Ii under Naotaka charged forward with allied units on their flanks. Having fired their arquebuses the *ashigaru* gunners shouldered their weapons and ran along beside the bulk of the cavalry and the large number of foot soldiers carrying red banners. The Kimura samurai were soon in full retreat. Kimura Shigenari was killed and his head cut off, several of the Ii samurai claiming the credit for such an illustrious prize. When the head was taken to Tokugawa Ieyasu he noted that Kimura Shigenari had burned incense inside his helmet prior to the battle so as to make his severed head a more attractive trophy. Ieyasu commended the practice to his followers.

BELOW **Ii Naomasa (1561–1602) was one of Tokugawa Ieyasu's staunchest supporters. He is best known for leading a contingent of samurai whom he dressed in red-lacquered armour. They followed him into battle at Sekigahara, and then fought at Osaka under Naomasa's son Naotaka. This statue of Naomasa stands outside the railway station in Hikone, the Ii capital.**

The siege of Osaka finished in the summer of 1615 with the huge battle of Tennoji, fought on the fields to the south of the fortress. The move was initiated by Toyotomi Hideyori, who planned to march out of the castle under his late father's standard when the Tokugawa were on the point of being defeated. Unfortunately things did not go according to plan, and Sanada Yukimura, the commander of Osaka castle, was killed fighting. When Osaka castle looked about to fall, Tokugawa Ieyasu entrusted Ii Naotaka



This painted screen in the Hikone Castle Museum shows Ii Naotaka leading the Ii 'Red Devils' into action at the Summer Campaign of Osaka in 1615 when he defeated Kimura Shigenari.

with the task of keeping watch over Toyotomi Hideyori and his family and of securing the castle. Ii Naotaka interpreted these orders somewhat generously as an invitation to open up on the castle with every piece of artillery he possessed, and soon the keep was in flames.

Ii Naotaka's reward for his services was to be given the domains of his brother Naokatsu. He retired to Hikone castle, which had been begun by Naokatsu in 1603, and made it his residence in 1623. There he lived as one of the pillars of the Tokugawa Shogunate until his death in 1659. Together with his father, Naotaka's leadership of the Ii Red Devils showed excellent tactical skills as a samurai general, coupled with an enthusiasm and dash that was the prerequisite for any samurai commander.

Shimazu Yoshihisa (1533–1611) and Shimazu Yoshihiro (1535–1619)

By 1571, Shimazu Takahisa had established his family as the principal samurai army in southern Kyushu (see *Samurai Commanders (1) 940–1576*). On his death, Takahisa bequeathed to posterity not one but four samurai sons whose military exploits were to dominate the affairs of southern Japan for half a century to come. The eldest, who became his heir, was Yoshihisa (1533–1611), but he would have been the first to acknowledge the debt he owed to the service loyally provided by his three brothers. Yoshihiro (1535–1619) fought against the Otomo and took the main brunt of the invasion of Kyushu by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1587. Yoshihiro also led the Satsuma contingent during the Korean war. The third son Toshihisa (1537–92) suffered poor health and died before he could see service in that ill-fated expedition, while Iehisa (1547–87) was assassinated as Hideyoshi's army swept through Kyushu. We will therefore concentrate on the two older brothers who worked together so well.

Having the advantage of a large and loyal army, the Shimazu were able to co-ordinate their movements in a way many other *daimyo* may have envied. Their favourite move was the use of a decoy force to

Shimazu Yoshihisa (1533–1611) inherited the domains of his father Takahisa in 1571. Yoshihisa defeated Otomo Sorin at the decisive battle of Mimigawa in 1578. He is shown here in this print with the Shimazu flag flying behind him. Most unusually, the print shows its subject wearing a face mask.

produce an advance from the enemy. The decoy unit would then go into a rapid and controlled false retreat, stimulating pursuit. Other units of the Shimazu would lie to the flanks in ambush, with the main body held back. The Shimazu operated the decoy system on eight occasions between 1527 and 1600. All but one was successful, the failure being Sekigahara in 1600, where the Shimazu were but one army among others in a force doomed by the defection of an ally. Otherwise the system enabled the Shimazu to be victorious even against overwhelming odds at the battle of Kizakihara in 1573 against the Ito, and the battle of Okita-Nawate in 1584 against the Ryuzoji, where in each case their forces were outnumbered by ten to one.

In 1578 Shimazu Yoshihisa inflicted a major defeat upon Otomo Sorin at the battle of Mimigawa. The Otomo had invaded Shimazu territory and were laying siege to Takajo castle. Yoshihisa's younger brother, Iehisa, had managed to reinforce the castle, but their situation was growing desperate, partly from a shortage of water, and partly from the bombardment from two Portuguese cannon, although the effects of the latter were probably more psychological than material. Shimazu Yoshihisa led the relief force and operated the decoy system to great effect. Thousands of Otomo Sorin's troops were slaughtered.

Another classic application of the system was at the battle of Hetsugigawa in 1586. As part of their overall long-term campaign to gain control of the whole of Kyushu, the Shimazu army invaded Bungo province. They advanced in three columns: 15,000 under Shimazu Yoshihisa, and by a separate route a vanguard of 1,300 under Shimazu Iehisa leading the main body of 67,000 under Shimazu Yoshihiro. At this point Toyotomi Hideyoshi enters the story, because he had realized that by providing help to the Otomo he could eventually control Kyushu himself. Reinforcements came from across the sea on Shikoku Island under Chosokabe Motochika and Sengoku Hidehisa. Their orders were to act defensively until further troops from Hideyoshi himself and the Mori clan were able to join them in Kyushu. By now half the invading Shimazu army had pulled back to safeguard their extended lines of communication from Satsuma. Perhaps because of this reduction in enemy numbers (now reckoned at 15,000), the Otomo and their new allies (7,000 in all) decided to disobey Hideyoshi's orders and try to relieve the castle of Toshimitsu. The Shimazu besieging army noted their approach, and redoubled their efforts to take Toshimitsu, which subsequently fell to a rapid and ferocious attack.

Otomo Sorin (1530–87) spent much of his military career fighting against the Shimazu family. Sorin converted to Christianity and was a supporter of the Jesuit missions in Japan. It was partly through this European connection that Sorin was able to become one of the pioneers of firearms use in Japanese warfare. This is depicted on the bas-relief of him at the site of his castle of Usuki.

When the allies arrived at the Hetsugigawa River, which flowed within sight of the castle, they could see in the distance the flags of the Shimazu flying from its towers. Chosokabe Motochika proposed a retreat, but his companions insisted on doing battle. They were deployed in two main bodies: Sengoku and Otomo on the left, Chosokabe on the right. The Shimazu set their trap. The decoy force, led by Ijuin Hisanori, attacked across the river and then withdrew, which persuaded the allied left wing, whose vanguard was led by a certain Soko Nagayasu, to follow them. They were met by arquebus and arrow fire, and the main body of the Shimazu, under Niiro Tadamoto, Shimazu Yoshihiro and Shimazu Iehisa, then fell upon them. After much fierce fighting the Otomo/Sengoku force withdrew across the river and caused confusion to its own right wing. Chosokabe Motochika was obliged to signal a retreat, during which his son and heir Nobuchika was killed. After the battle, Otomo fled from Bungo, and the province fell to the Shimazu.

The final peaceful surrender of the Shimazu to Hideyoshi in 1587 was described earlier. Henceforth, as vassals of Hideyoshi, the Shimazu were allowed to retain their ancestral lands, although Yoshihisa was ordered to retire in favour of Yoshihiro. Yoshihiro therefore led the Shimazu contingent in Korea. His greatest contribution came in October 1598 at the end of the campaign when he defended the castle of Sach'on along with his son Tadatsune (1567–1638). In preparation for their attack on Sach'on, the Chinese army advanced as far as Chinju, where they sent out scouts across the Nam River. Hearing of their approach, the Shimazu evacuated their forward positions, and pulled their troops back to the castle. Shimazu Tadatsune was for making an immediate attack, but his

Shimazu Yoshihiro (1535–1619) took over as *daimyo* of Satsuma province following the defeat of the Shimazu by Hideyoshi. It was Shimazu Yoshihiro who led the Shimazu contingent in the invasion of Korea. In this illustration from the *Ehon Taikoki*, Yoshihiro is shown in Korea in a bad-tempered mood. His *mon* appears on his breastplate.

father forbade it. He reasoned that the Chinese army would wish to waste no time in attacking anyway, and the men of Satsuma were ready for them. This assumption proved to be correct, and the Ming army, in three units of right, left and centre, moved in for an attack with a total of 36,700 troops. The Shimazu father and son monitored their movements from the two towers that flanked the eastern gate. Under strict orders from Yoshihiro, the Japanese held their fire, and as one or two men fell dead from Chinese arrows Tadatsune was again for launching an attack, but once more his father urged caution.

By now the Chinese were approaching the walls, and were also attacking the main gate with a curious siege engine that was a combination of cannon and iron-tipped battering ram mounted on a carriage. The joint effects of cannonball and ram smashed the gate, and soon thousands of Chinese soldiers were milling round the entrance and climbing up the castle walls. At this precise moment the Japanese managed to destroy the combined ram and cannon, causing its stock of gunpowder to explode with great fury right in the middle of the Ming host. This dramatic action proved to be the turning point of the battle. Seeing the confusion in the Chinese ranks, Shimazu Yoshihiro led out his men in a tremendous charge. Thousands of Chinese were killed or pursued back as far as the Nam River, where very few stragglers managed to cross and reach the safety of Chinju. Sach'on was China's worst defeat at Japanese hands. The site is now marked by a massive burial mound containing the remains of more than 30,000 Ming troops killed by the Japanese. The corpses were interred here without their noses, because these important trophies were sent home to Kyoto as proof that the Shimazu had served Hideyoshi correctly.

The Shimazu's legendary capacity for survival was tested to its limits in 1600 when Yoshihiro became one of the leading *daimyo* to side against

Tokugawa Ieyasu. Defeated at Sekigahara, the Shimazu contingent escaped from the field and made it safely back to Satsuma province. In an act of acute political vision, Yoshihisa, long retired, arrested his younger brother and held him captive! Negotiations followed, and Yoshihiro was pardoned on condition that he become a monk and cede his domains to his son Tadatsune. This was merciful indeed. Tadatsune paid homage to Ieyasu, who granted him permission to use the name of Matsudaira, the Tokugawa's own ancestral name. The Shimazu rule thus continued in Kyushu, and Yoshihisa and Yoshihiro both died peacefully in old age.

Shimazu Yoshihiro is splendidly depicted in this dramatic equestrian statue outside the railway station in Ujuin, near Kagoshima in southern Kyushu. He is waving the general's war fan.

Maeda Toshiie (1538–99)

Maeda Toshiie was born in 1538, the fourth son of the keeper of the castle of Arako in Owari province, a man of modest means. In 1551, while still in his early teens, Toshiie became a *kosho* (page) to the family's more powerful neighbour Oda Nobunaga for an annual stipend of 125 *koku*. During his early years of service to Nobunaga, Toshiie's conduct was exemplary, and in 1556 his stipend was tripled after he suffered a wound in his right eye. This occurred during an attack on Nobunaga's unruly brother Nobuyuki.

Unfortunately, Toshiie's bravery was accompanied by a quick temper, and in 1559 he became involved in a quarrel with another of Nobunaga's retainers. It was a strange dispute. The man was a master of the tea ceremony named Juami, whom Toshiie accused of stealing the wooden anchor peg from one of Toshiie's swords. This was no trivial matter, because without the peg to hold the blade securely inside the handle there was the risk that Toshiie's sword would fall to pieces in battle. Juami sought refuge with another retainer, and Nobunaga forbade Toshiie to exact revenge. Toshiie ignored the order and killed Juami when Nobunaga was present. The fact that Toshiie had disobeyed a command was more serious than murder, so he was dismissed from Nobunaga's service as a punishment.

Toshiie still believed that his future lay with Nobunaga, and over the next two years he joined Nobunaga's armies on his own initiative and without official authorization. In this capacity he fought bravely with no hope of material reward. He hoped merely to achieve a record of battlefield exploits that would redeem him in Nobunaga's eyes. To present his lord with the severed head of an enemy warrior was the supreme accolade for a samurai, and Toshiie's moment came at the battle of Okehazama in 1560. When Imagawa Yoshimoto's forces were routed, Toshiie came before Nobunaga and showed him not one but two enemy heads that he had taken. Later in the same year he fought in Nobunaga's campaigns against Saito Tatsuki of Mino, and in 1561 he even managed to take the head of one of Nobunaga's main rivals, Adachi Rokuhyoe. That was sufficient proof of Toshiie's loyalty and skill, so Nobunaga took Toshiie back into his service and raised his stipend to 1,125 *koku*.

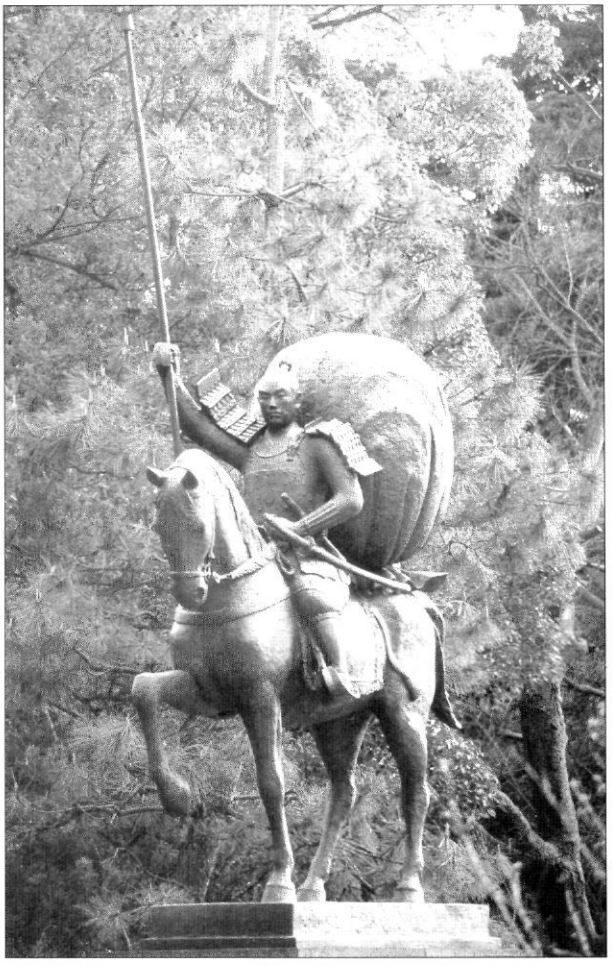
Young Maeda Toshiie (1538–99) is shown in action here in one of his earlier battles on behalf of Oda Nobunaga. His determination to be reinstated by Nobunaga after his disgrace earned Toshiie the respect of his contemporaries.

The following year, 1562, Toshiie was made a member of the *akai horo shu* (red *horo* unit), one of Nobunaga's two elite bodyguard units (the other being the *kuroi horo shu* or black *horo* unit). Each group consisted of ten of the finest samurai. The *horo* was a curious device consisting of a cloak stretched over an almost spherical bamboo frame. It was commonly worn on the back of a suit of armour by the elite mounted samurai who acted as messengers or aides-de-camp between generals and their subordinates. As the man rode along, air filled the cloak and made it billow outwards. The idea was that this made the warrior highly conspicuous in the heat of battle. Wearing a *horo* was always an indication that the man was important, and it was accepted practice that when a *horo*-wearing samurai was killed his severed head would be

wrapped in a piece of the *horo*. The appearance of the *horo* wearer could be made to look even more flamboyant by adding flags, feathers or some other heraldic device to the *horo* shaft. Illustrations show that Maeda Toshiie augmented his red *horo* by the addition of angelic-looking golden wings!

Needless to say, Maeda Toshiie's behaviour on the battlefield was anything but angelic. The efforts he had already made to be reinstated in Nobunaga's army were proof of that, and over the next seven years he added a long string of battle honours to his record. In 1569, having established himself as the leading light in the family, he by-passed his three brothers to assume the Maeda family headship on his father's death. He was also given the castle of Arako. It was from this position that Maeda Toshiie was able to thrust himself into the ranks of the major *daimyo*.

In 1575, while still a member of the red *horo* unit, Maeda Toshiie played a key role in the battle of Nagashino (described in Oda Nobunaga's biography, above). Along with Sasa Narimasa from the black *horo* unit and three other experienced captains, Toshiie was given command of the 3,000 *ashigaru* armed with arquebuses who were to make such a memorable contribution to the celebrated victory. The discipline provided by the five first-rate samurai commanders enabled the *ashigaru* to fire their weapons in a series of controlled volleys, thus breaking the Takeda cavalry charge. To be given such a responsibility indicates the trust Nobunaga had in Toshiie.



Maeda Toshiie appears here in an equestrian statue in the grounds of the Oyama Shrine in Kanazawa. On the back of his armour he wears a *horo*, the cloak worn over a bamboo framework that was reserved for the elite of a *daimyo*'s samurai. This indicates that Toshiie is shown in his role as the leading member of Oda Nobunaga's red *horo* unit, which provided his immediate and most trusted support.

It was not long before Nobunaga sent Toshiie off on campaign in the direction in which the latter was to make his fortune. The provinces of Echizen and Kaga, which lay to the north of Kyoto, were hotbeds of the Ikko-ikki. While the Ishiyama war, the long campaign against the Ikko-ikki of the Osaka area, was raging to the south of Kyoto, Nobunaga's generals steadily nibbled at the Ikko-ikki power bases to the north of the capital. It proved to be a campaign almost as long and costly as the Ishiyama war itself, and Maeda Toshiie was fully involved in the operations.

As early as 1573 forces commanded by Akechi Mitsuhide and Toyotomi Hideyoshi had driven through Echizen and on into the southern part of Kaga. In 1574 a fierce counterattack by the Ikko-ikki blunted this advance, so Nobunaga took personal command of the response. The following year Nobunaga moved out of his base at Tsuruga and swept through Echizen, recapturing the province from Ikko-ikki forces. In the eighth lunar month of 1575 Nobunaga attacked Fuchu (now Takefu) in Echizen, and wrote two letters from the site to a senior official in Kyoto. One contained the chilling sentence, 'As for the town of Fuchu, only dead bodies can be seen without any empty space [between them]'. Maeda Toshiie's personal involvement in the

Maeda Toshiie is shown in this statue outside the gate of Kanazawa castle in a familiar guise from later in his career. He is wearing the gold-lacquered armour and golden catfish-tail helmet that he is known to have worn during the relief of Suemori castle in 1584. This was the most important action in securing Toshiie's position in Kaga and Noto provinces.

slaughter has recently been dramatically confirmed by an archaeological find. An inscribed tile found on the site of Komurayama castle in Echizen records the date of Tensho 4 (1576) and the 24th day of the fourth lunar month and the number of prisoners executed by Maeda Toshiie as 1,000.

Akechi Mitsuhide and Toyotomi Hideyoshi continued the advance into Kaga, taking in rapid succession the three fortified temples of Daishoji, Hinoya and Sakumi. By the end of 1575 the southern half of Kaga was firmly under Nobunaga's control and the Ikko-ikki federation was beginning to fall apart. In November 1575 Nobunaga boasted to the *daimyo* Date Terumune that he had 'wiped out several tens of thousands of the villainous rabble in Echizen and Kaga'. Oda Nobunaga assigned the conquered province of Echizen to Shibata Katsuie, who took up residence at Kita no sho castle (now modern Fukui). At the same time he appointed Maeda Toshiie to be one of three *metsuke* (overseers) to report on Shibata Katsuie's conduct in the post. Toshiie's reward for accepting the position

In this print by Yoshitoshi we see Toyotomi Hideyoshi blowing the *horagai* (conch shell trumpet) to announce the advance at the start of the battle of Shizugatake. Hideyoshi's armour and 'sunburst' helmet are accurately depicted, but it is doubtful that Hideyoshi himself would have actually blown the trumpet to give a signal.

was to be given two country districts in Echizen, which in effect gave Toshiie a territory worth 30,000 *koku* and a status equivalent to that of a *daimyo*. To carry out his new duties Maeda Toshiie moved to Takefu.

To assist in the task of pacification, Nobunaga's generals made clever use of religious rivalry. It was not too difficult to persuade the Nichiren sect temples of Echizen to oppose the Ikko-ikki, because class differences had always ensured that they loathed each other, but Nobunaga also made use of the jealousy that still existed within Jodo-Shinshu. This was the enmity that could be found between the dominant Honganji temple and the smaller rival branches of Jodo-Shinshu. Any Honganji followers who survived his attacks in Echizen and Kaga were given the opportunity to change their allegiance. It proved to be a successful policy, because some *monto* (followers) from the Takada branch in Echizen went so far as to capture and kill Shimotsuma Hokkyo, one of the Ishiyama Honganji's principal deputies in that province.

Up until 1582 Maeda Toshiie assisted Shibata Katsuie in suppressing the Ikko-ikki in Kaga, but his most important military role was to defend Echizen against Uesugi Kagekatsu. For his reward, Maeda Toshiie was named in 1581 as *daimyo* of the province of Noto, the claw-shaped peninsula to the north of Kaga, with a worth later assessed at 200,000 *koku*. But the year 1582 was to pose a frightful dilemma for Toshiie, because when Nobunaga was killed he had to make a choice between Shibata Katsuie, his old comrade in arms in the north, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who appeared to have succeeded Nobunaga. Toshiie knew both men personally. All three hailed from Owari province. All had risen from the ranks and proved their worth in Nobunaga's service. All three had fought side by side at the battle of Nagashino, but the fact that Toshiie shared a border with Katsuie proved to be the deciding factor, so he contributed men to Shibata Katsuie's opposition to Hideyoshi. Thus it was that Maeda Toshiie fought against Hideyoshi at the battle of Shizugatake in 1583. When Katsuie's incompetent nephew Sakuma Morimasa was routed by Hideyoshi's surprise attack, Toshiie had very rapid second thoughts. Hideyoshi accepted his pledge of loyalty as genuine, so when Hideyoshi's troops pressed on to attack Katsuie's Kita no sho castle, Maeda Toshiie fought in the vanguard.

Toshiie then advanced further into Kaga to confront the remnants of Katsuie's army in the fortress of Oyama Gobo, the former headquarters of the Ikko-ikki in Kaga. He trapped the fleeing troops outside the castle and was able to make a bloodless entry. The next day Toyotomi Hideyoshi rode into the fortress in triumph. In gratitude for Toshiie's work he added two districts of Kaga to Toshiie's Noto province, which nearly doubled the size of the Maeda domain. He also instructed Toshiie to move his headquarters to Oyama Gobo, which Toshiie renamed Kanazawa. This place, which is now the fine old city of Kanazawa, was to be the Maeda centre for the next 300 years.

The establishment of Kanazawa, however, did not mark the end of Toshiie's struggles for his position in Kaga and Noto. At the time of the Komaki/Nagakute campaign, Maeda Toshiie supported Hideyoshi, while another of Nobunaga's former generals, Sasa Narimasa, took the part of Tokugawa Ieyasu. Narimasa saw the opportunity to extend his domains in the north and attacked Toshiie's castle of Suemori, which was ably defended by Okumura Suki'emon and his gallant wife. Narimasa's first attacks took a heavy toll of the defenders. Part of the castle fell to his troops and was burned to the ground. The garrison were in desperate straits until Maeda Toshiie received the news of their plight. He collected forces at two other local castles, and arrived in the middle of the night with 2,500 men. Although small, this relieving force was enough to allow him to defeat Sasa Narimasa.

When Hideyoshi overcame Sasa Narimasa in 1585, Maeda Toshiie received Narimasa's fief and doubled the size of the Maeda domain once again. Two years later, in 1587, he took part in Hideyoshi's invasion of Kyushu, but only by commanding the forces that guarded Kyoto in Hideyoshi's absence. In his place his eldest son Maeda Toshinaga (1562–1614) led 3,000 troops on to the battlefield. In 1590 Toshiie, as the loyal follower of Hideyoshi, assisted in the campaign against the Hojo of Odawara by taking some of their outlying castles. That was almost the last action that Toshiie was to see. When the Korean invasion

Sasa Narimasa (1539–88) was never in the major league of samurai commanders, but served his masters well until overreaching himself with his ambitions in northern Japan. In this print we see him about to charge into action in the battle that led to his defeat by Maeda Toshiie. Note the snow-covered landscape, and Narimasa's personal *sashimono* (back flag) with an *oni* (devil) on it.

was launched, he accompanied Hideyoshi to the base at Nagoya in Hizen province where the army was assembled, and directed affairs from there for the duration of the Korean war. When Hideyoshi was near to death in 1597 Maeda Toshiie was one of the five regents, or *go-tairo*, that he appointed to support Hideyoshi's infant son Hideyori and to assume the affairs of government until he was of age. Out of all the regents Toshiie seems to have been the one whom Hideyoshi trusted the most, because his will instructed Toshiie to supply troops to garrison Osaka castle, where Hideyori resided.

In the tumultuous time that followed the death of Hideyoshi in 1598, Toshiie was involved in the arguments with his fellow regent Tokugawa Ieyasu. These matters were eventually resolved on the battlefield of Sekigahara, but Maeda Toshiie was not there to fight. He died peacefully in 1599, and his vigorous son Toshinaga succeeded him. Not long after

Toyotomi Hideyori (1593–1615) is one of the most tragic figures in Japanese history. He was only five years old when the death of his father, the great Toyotomi Hideyoshi, plunged the country into chaos once again. The defeat of the pro-Toyotomi faction at Sekigahara in 1600 effectively disinherited Hideyori, who perished after making a long and bitter last stand at Osaka castle in 1615.

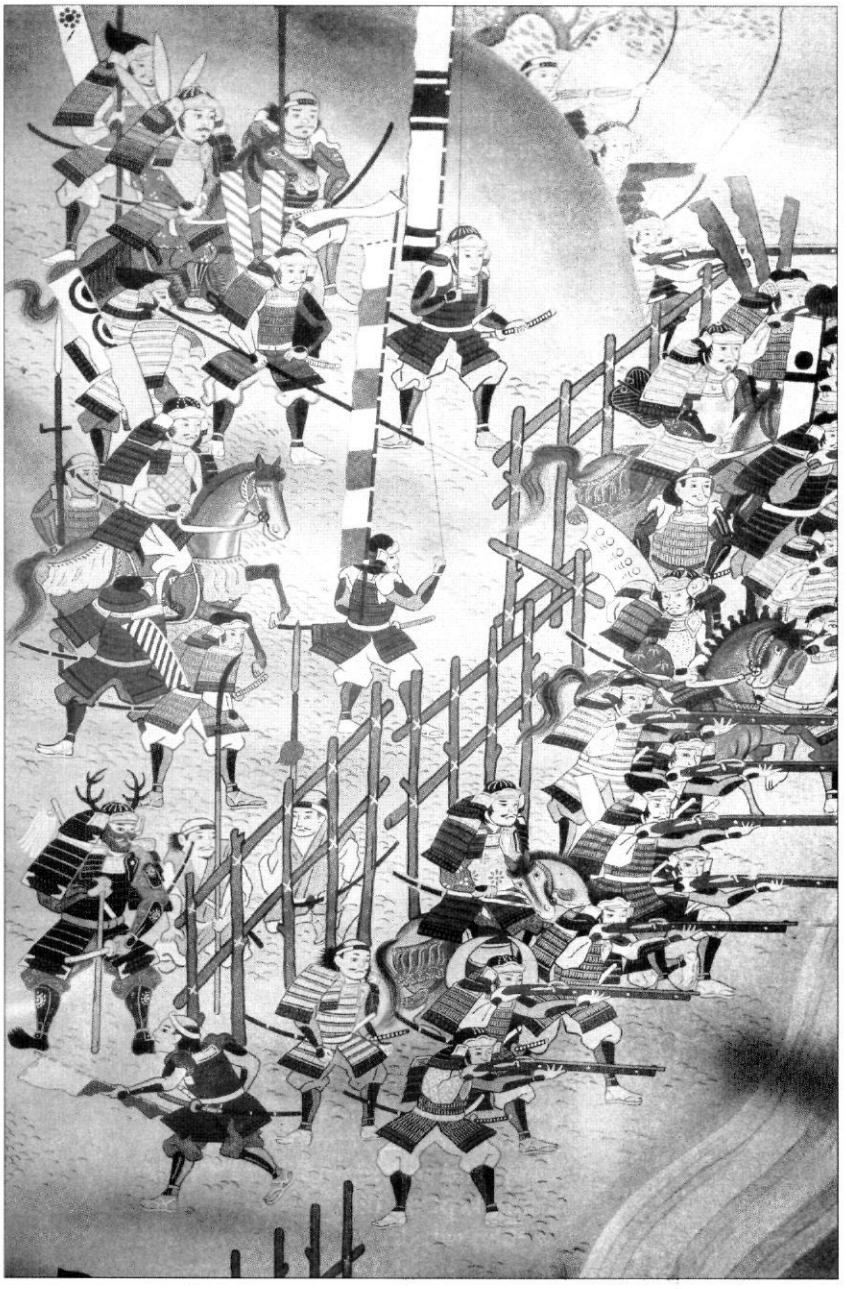
Toshiie's death, Tokugawa Ieyasu received reports that Toshinaga intended to oppose him, and drew up plans to attack Kanazawa castle. Toshinaga was therefore placed in a similar dilemma to that which had troubled his father two decades earlier, but, thanks to his father's efforts, he now commanded the second-largest fighting force in Japan. He also knew that his father had risen to power by supporting other men's ambitions to rule Japan. In the end Toshinaga declared for Ieyasu, and although he did not take part in the battle of Sekigahara, he kept Ishida Mitsunari's allies busy elsewhere in Japan. For this the Maeda were rewarded with the remaining districts of southern Kaga, giving them control over the three provinces of Kaga, Noto and Etchu. This territory's productive capacity was assessed as one and a quarter million *koku* of rice, which meant that in size and power the Maeda family stood second only to the Tokugawa. Maeda Toshinaga had due reason to be grateful to his talented father, who had risen from pageboy to *daimyo*.

Sasa Narimasa (1539–88)

Sasa Narimasa's biography is similar to those of others who once served Nobunaga. His military exploits were as successful as those of his contemporaries, but he will be included here in particular for the example he gave of how a samurai commander might end his life in the finest samurai fashion.

Sasa Narimasa was the leading member of Oda Nobunaga's black *horo* unit, and shared with Maeda Toshiie the command of the arquebus corps at Nagashino. After successfully campaigning against the Ikko-ikki in Echizen and Kaga he shared another responsibility with Toshiie when he became a *metsuke* to watch over Shibata Katsuie. He was granted the fief of Etchu province and based himself in the castle of Toyama, thus making him Maeda Toshiie's immediate neighbour. Matters came to a head when the two rivals declared for opposite sides in the Komaki/Nagakute campaign between Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. They came to blows at Suemori castle, as described in Maeda Toshiie's biography, above. The relief of Suemori confirmed Maeda Toshiie as the leading light in the Kaga and Noto areas, and he was to be involved in 1585 when Toyotomi Hideyoshi turned against Sasa Narimasa. Uesugi Kagekatsu, the heir of the famous Uesugi Kenshin, joined in from Echigo province to fight Narimasa on a second front. Maeda Toshiie fought in the vanguard and defeated Sasa Narimasa once again following a forced march across bitterly cold snow-covered mountains. Narimasa was cornered in his castle of Toyama, and one Japanese historian likened his resistance to that of a 'dried sardine gnashing its teeth'. But Hideyoshi showed his characteristic magnanimity towards a defeated enemy, and instead of putting Narimasa to death, transferred him to a distant fief in Kyushu.

Hideyoshi's motivation for doing this is by no means clear. Treating Sasa Narimasa as a 'potted plant' may simply have meant that he could be trusted to run a distant fief where the natives, such as the Shimazu



The battle of Nagashino in 1575, renowned for being Oda Nobunaga's greatest victory, is also remarkable for the participation of several of the future great samurai commanders covered in this book. Maeda Toshiie, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Sasa Narimasa, Shibata Katsuie and Tokugawa Ieyasu all took part in the battle. Honda Tadakatsu, with his deer-antler helmet, appears in the foreground.

family, were restless. The other theory is that Hideyoshi only gave him such a reward to placate the other followers of Nobunaga, knowing that Narimasa would be likely to fail and thus give Hideyoshi an excuse to get rid of him. In the event Sasa Narimasa brought about his own fall in a rather spectacular fashion. When he was presented with the fief of Higo, Narimasa gave Hideyoshi's wife Yodo-gimi a present of a rare black lily. The lady was so pleased with the gift that she gave a tea ceremony party in its honour. But when Hideyoshi's chief concubine got to hear of it she made careful enquiry as to where black lilies could be obtained, bought a large quantity of them, and invited Yodo-gimi to a flower-viewing party. Yodo-gimi's fury at being upstaged reflected badly on Sasa Narimasa. So

when Narimasa ran into difficulties administering his fief, Hideyoshi had little sympathy with him and ordered him to commit suicide. His death is described as follows:

'Sasa Narimasa went out into the garden and sat down on a rock. Calling his leading retainer to him, he gave the man thirty gold pieces and told him that he could have his clothes also. He ordered him to proclaim the fact that the particular rock was the one on which Narimasa sat for the last act of his life. Then he cut open his belly in the shape of a cross and tore out his intestines. "Now is the moment!" he exclaimed when this had been done to his satisfaction, and he stretched out his neck, whereupon Todo Izumi no kami, who was acting as his second, struck off his head.'

Shibata Katsuie (1530–83)

Shibata Katsuie, who was born in 1530, was another samurai commander who began his career as a follower of Oda Nobunaga. Sadly, he is best known for his final defeat at the hands of Hideyoshi in 1583, a tragic end to an otherwise glorious and exemplary career as a leader of men.

Like so many other prominent samurai of the age, there were several occasions in Katsuie's life when he was forced to make a decision as to which side to support. The first period of decision came quite early in his career in 1557, when he joined a plot formed by Hayashi Michikatsu to replace Oda Nobunaga by his brother Nobuyuki. When Ikeda Nobuteru defeated the plotters, Katsuie submitted to Nobunaga and served him faithfully from then on. In 1570 Nobunaga entrusted him with the defence of the castle of Chokoji in Omi province. The father and son team of Rokkaku Yoshikata and Yoshisuke besieged this strategically located place. All castles were dependent upon a reliable water supply, and Chokoji was fed by a complex wooden aqueduct that Katsuie kept closely guarded. The Rokkaku troops, however, succeeded in smashing the aqueduct and waited for the 400 men of the garrison to die of thirst or to surrender. To fool the enemy, and to keep up morale within the castle, Katsuie kept sending out troops to make attacks and then withdraw, but one samurai was captured during a raid and cried out for water. The enemy then knew that the water must be very close to running out, so they prepared for a final assault. That night Shibata Katsuie gathered all his men into the inner courtyard of the castle and showed them the three remaining water jars, which between them held only enough water for one more day. Then, in full view of his army, Katsuie took his spear and with the iron butt end smashed the sides of the jars, allowing all the precious water to run away. With the words, 'Sooner a quick death in battle than a slow death from thirst!', he led the Shibata samurai out in a wild impetuous charge.

Shibata Katsuie (1530–83) is unfortunately best known for being the most prominent loser against Toyotomi Hideyoshi when the latter seized power following the death of Oda Nobunaga. This tragic end masks a glorious career as a samurai commander, remembered here in his home town of Fukui by this statue on the site of his castle of Kita no sho.

ODA NOBUNAGA AND HIS ELITE BODYGUARD *c.* 1560

THE RISE OF TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI 1582–95

B

c

D

E

COMMANDERS RISEN FROM THE RANKS, c. 1584

SAMURAI COMMANDERS IN KOREA 1593

G


SAMURAI COMMANDERS OF NORTHERN JAPAN c. 1600
1
2
3

So vigorously did they fight with nothing to lose that they carried all before them. The Rokkaku pulled back, completely routed, and the castle was saved.

Shibata Katsuie was another of Nobunaga's generals who was to distinguish himself in the wars against the Ikko-ikki. In 1571 Shibata Katsuie was one of two generals entrusted with the reduction of the Ikko-ikki's fortress of Nagashima. This was a formidable place, its rudimentary appearance belied its strength. The Nagashima delta consisted of a number of dyked communities located amid sea and swamp, among which were wooden fortresses and fortified temples. The mud of the estuary proved to be Katsuie's first obstacle. The attacking horses soon became bogged down and proved easy targets for the bullets of the Ikko-ikki. As the survivors dragged themselves on to the nearest dry land they encountered ropes stretched between stakes which further hindered their progress. The shoreline was covered with beds of dense reeds that provided no refuge but were hiding places for the Ikko-ikki gunners and archers. The shores of the reed beds were also booby-trapped: old pots and vases buried up to their necks in the sand provided an easy way of breaking an ankle. As night fell, the defenders of Nagashima assessed the position of the attackers, and cut a dyke to trap them in a rush of muddy water. Few of Nobunaga's samurai escaped. Shibata Katsuie was among the survivors, but he had been badly wounded.

Shibata Katsuie's most dramatic episode concerned his defence of the castle of Chokoji in 1570. The garrison were about to surrender because of a raging thirst, but Katsuie smashed the remaining water jars and led his men out on an apparently suicidal final charge. So unexpected was the move that he won the battle and survived.

The campaign against the Ikko-ikki of Echizen province was, by contrast, highly successful, and Nobunaga assigned the newly pacified territory to Shibata Katsuie. Oda Nobunaga also ensured that his generals followed a policy of disarming the rural population from which the Ikko-ikki had traditionally drawn their strength. This went a long way towards separating the farming class from the samurai class, a development that is usually regarded as having begun with Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 'Sword Hunt' of 1587. In 1576 Shibata Katsuie conducted a Sword Hunt of his own in Echizen, just to make sure.

Four years later, as the spearhead of his uncle's forces, Sakuma Morimasa devastated the Ikko-ikki of Kaga by destroying their headquarters of Oyama Gobo in Kanazawa. In that same year of 1580 the Ishiyama Honganji surrendered, so the war in Kaga should have been over, but diehard elements among the Ikko-ikki abandoned the flat plains of Kaga and entrenched themselves in fortified temples in the mountainous areas round about.

Shibata Katsuie made the first attack upon the main Ikko-ikki fortified temples of Torigoe and Futoge in the third lunar month of 1581. He captured both places and set up a garrison of 300 men, but before the month was out the Kaga Ikko-ikki had recaptured them and

slaughtered the unfortunate troops. In the 11th month of 1581 Shibata Katsuie and Sakuma Morimasa returned to Kaga and crushed the resistance once again, killing all the *monto* on the sites. We read that on the 17th day of that month the heads of the ringleaders were sent to Nobunaga's castle of Azuchi and placed on public display. In spite of this setback, Ikko-ikki resistance continued, and elements of the organization recaptured Torigoe and Futoge for a second time during the second lunar month of 1582. The defences were rapidly strengthened to face an anticipated third attack by Oda Nobunaga's forces. The temple castles were taken, and this time no chances of resurgence were to be allowed. First, 300 men of the Ikko-ikki were crucified on the river bed, and after this gruesome local display Sakuma Morimasa carried out further suppression with great severity. The century of Ikko-ikki rule in Kaga was finally over.

Not long after this triumph, Oda Nobunaga was killed by Akechi Mitsuhide and revenged by the ambitious Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Had Hideyoshi's fellow generals and the two regents co-operated against him then the chance of a Toyotomi triumph would have been very slim, because between them they had Hideyoshi surrounded. To the north was a loose coalition of former Oda generals under the overall leadership of Shibata Katsuie, who could march on Kyoto from Echizen province. Fortunately for Hideyoshi, his rivals came dramatically to his assistance early in 1583, when Oda Nobutaka foolishly decided to attack Hideyoshi before the snow had melted in the Echizen mountain passes, which meant that Shibata Katsuie could not move to help him. Fully appreciating this point, Hideyoshi moved rapidly against Nobutaka's headquarters in Gifu, and such was his reputation for successful siegework that Nobutaka immediately surrendered.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi was served by many loyal generals. Here we see a statue of him with Ishida Mitsunari (1560?–1600), who first attracted Hideyoshi's attention by his prowess at the tea ceremony. Following Hideyoshi's death, Mitsunari led the faction that supported the claims of Hideyoshi's heir, Hideyori. Mitsunari was executed after his defeat at Sekigahara in 1600.

Spring was now on its way, and the thaw would free Shibata Katsuie from his frozen fastness. To guard against this, Hideyoshi sent several detachments of troops north of Lake Biwa to strengthen the existing garrisons of the mountain-top forts that covered the roads. When spring came, Shibata Katsuie led his army south, and just as Hideyoshi had expected, his *yamashiro* provided a genuine barrier. Katsuie set up his positions on other mountains opposite and began the serious business of capturing the frontier forts. Katsuie concentrated on the weakest forts. Maeda Toshiie provided a rearguard, and at first all went well for Sakuma Morimasa, who led the initial advance. Soon only the castle of Shizugatake was left, but Katsuie became very concerned about how vulnerable Morimasa was to a counter-attack, and sent a messenger

In this section from the *Ehon Taikoki,* we see Toyotomi Hideyoshi's rapid night-time advance to Shizugatake, where he took Shibata Katsuie's army by surprise. Note Hideyoshi's famous 'thousand gourd standard'.

ordering him to abandon his open siege lines for the security of a newly captured castle. Sakuma Morimasa pooh-poohed the idea. Shizugatake would be his before night fell, and he dismissed out of hand any suggestion that Hideyoshi could return to its relief when he was entangled with Gifu. Six times Shibata Katsuie sent the order and six times Sakuma refused to comply.

When the news reached Hideyoshi he made ready for a rapid advance to Shizugatake. The first armed contact was made as dawn was breaking. Numerous small group and individual combats took place all along the mountain paths and in among the trees. As the first of Sakuma's retreating troops came hurtling down into the valley or along the further ridges towards his headquarters, Katsuie realized that the day was lost. Hoping to save as many of his army as he could, he ordered a general retreat, making it safely back to Kita no sho castle with Hideyoshi in hot pursuit. The 3,000 survivors of Shizugatake were all that he had to defend the place with. As the third and second baileys fell, Katsuiie retired to the keep with members of his family and resolved to go to his death in spectacular samurai fashion. The keep was filled with loose straw that was set on fire, and Katsuie committed *hara-kiri* among the flames.

Today, all that is left of Kita no sho castle is a fragment of wall consisting of a few stones beside a main street in Fukui. On top sits a memorial to Fukui's most famous son in the shape of a fierce-looking statue of Shibata Katsuie, personally undefeated, but betrayed by his nephew who would not obey orders.

Kato Kiyomasa (1562–1611)

One of the most striking features of the Sengoku period was the way the turbulence and disorder of the age allowed men from relatively humble backgrounds to achieve great power and influence through the exercise of military skills. The greatest example of such a rise to power was of course Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who made sure that no one else could follow his lead by the Sword Hunt of 1588 and Separation Edict of 1591. But before the ladder of promotion had been removed, at least one other commoner from Hideyoshi's home village had made his own rise to martial stardom. His name was Kato Kiyomasa.

Kato Kiyomasa was born in the village of Nakamura, which has long since been swallowed up within the modern city of Nagoya. He was

Kato Kiyomasa (1562–1611), a boyhood friend of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, fought at the battle of Shizugatake in 1583, and earned the accolade of being one of the 'Seven Spears of Shizugatake' – the seven most valiant warriors that day. His personal banner bears the slogan of the Nichiren sect.

called Toranosuke ('the young tiger') in his childhood, and was the son of a blacksmith who died when the boy was three years old. Because of a familial relationship between the two boys' mothers, Toyotomi Hideyoshi took Toranosuke under his wing when his father died.

Kato Kiyomasa soon proved to have a considerable aptitude for the military life. The first opportunity to demonstrate it came at the age of 21 with the battle of Shizugatake, where the absence of a flat battlefield and lines of arquebus troops allowed the individual samurai spirit to be expressed in an unfettered way. Kato Kiyomasa fought from horseback in classic style with the support of a loyal band of samurai attendants, and wielded his favourite cross-bladed spear to great effect. It was not long before a number of enemy heads had fallen to Kiyomasa, so to intimidate his opponents one of his attendants tied the severed heads to a long stalk of green bamboo and carried it into Kato's fresh conflicts like a general's standard. Kato Kiyomasa was named that day as one of the 'Seven Spears of Shizugatake' – the most valiant warriors – and from that time on his fortunes prospered.

Konishi Yukinaga (1560?–1600) was the neighbour and deadly rival of Kato Kiyomasa. Yukinaga led the First Division of the Japanese army in the invasion of Korea. This statue of him stands on the site of his castle at Uto in Kyushu.

In 1585 Kato Kiyomasa received from Hideyoshi the important role of inspector of taxes, and in 1588 he began a long association with the island of Kyushu, having been given Sasa Narimasa's fief following the suicide of the latter. He was based in the castle town of Kumamoto. Statues of Kiyomasa here show him in full armour with a striking helmet design that was supposed to represent a courtier's cap, and was made by building up a crown of wood and papier mâché on top of a simple helmet bowl. Some portraits of Kiyomasa also show him with an extensive beard, which was quite unusual for a samurai.

One other characteristic of Kiyomasa was his fanatical attachment to the Nichiren sect of Buddhism, to the extent of using a saying of the monk Nichiren, founder of the sect, 'Namu myoho renge kyo' (Hail to the Lotus of the Divine Law), as his motto and war cry. His most treasured possession was a white flag with the motto on it, said to have been written by Nichiren himself. This was carried as his battle standard in every encounter he fought. Kato's religious affiliation contrasted markedly with the Christianity espoused by his neighbour in southern Higo, Konishi Yukinaga, and the two men did not enjoy friendly relations.

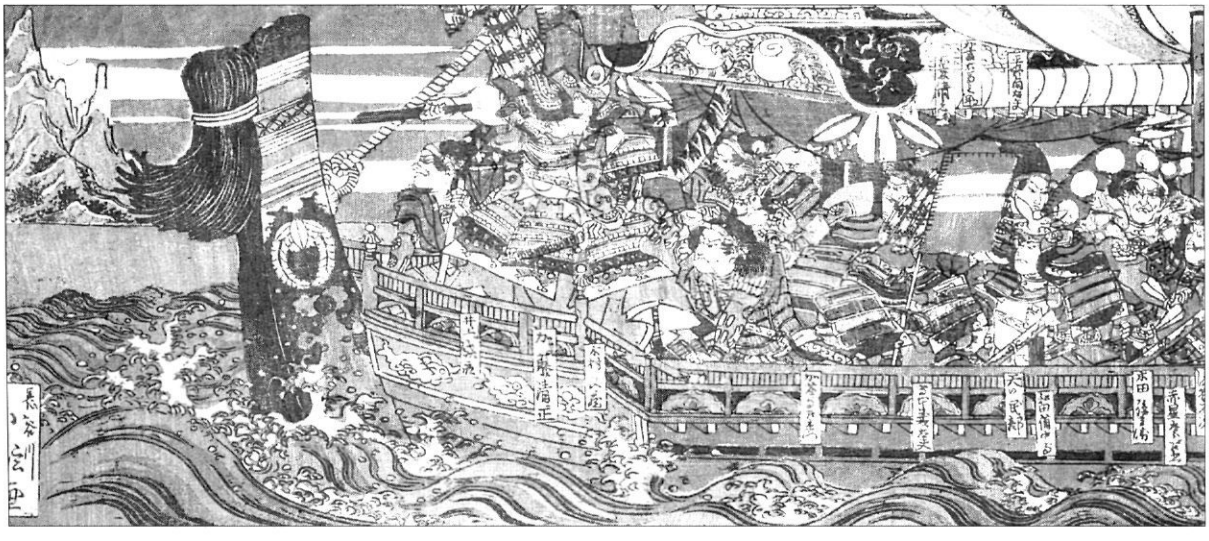
In 1592 the invasion of Korea was launched, and Kato Kiyomasa was given command of the Second Division of the Japanese army. Unfortunately his rival Konishi Yukinaga was given command of the First Division. So easy was Konishi's landing and so rapid his progress up Korea that it seemed there would be little glory left for Kato Kiyomasa's troops. In fact by the time the Second Division caught up with the First at Ch'ungju, Konishi's men had reaped all the battle honours. A furious row then broke out between the two commanders over who should now lead the final advance on Seoul. A compromise was reached by which the two divisions took separate routes, but again Konishi beat his rival to the glory of being first into battle, because when Kato Kiyomasa arrived at the gates of the capital he found Konishi's men on guard duty, and he had to persuade them to let him in!

As Konishi's troops were tired after their 20-day march through Korea, it was sensibly agreed that Kato's division should now take the lead and pursue the retreating Koreans northwards. Kato Kiyomasa therefore set off in high spirits, only to come to a grinding halt on the southern bank of the wide Imjin River. There he sat for almost a month, and it was only when an unwise Korean raid presented the Japanese with some boats that a crossing was made. By this time the king of Korea had made his escape. At a council of war held in Seoul the Japanese high command agreed that Konishi should continue northwards in pursuit of the king, while Kato Kiyomasa headed north-east after the two Korean princes who had taken refuge somewhere near the Tumen River.

Kato Kiyomasa's campaign in Hamgyong province, the wildest area of Korea, was the crowning glory of his military career. He crossed the peninsula from Seoul and made his way along the east coast, meeting his first armed resistance at the battle of Songjin, where a Korean army trapped Kiyomasa's force inside a rice warehouse. The Japanese defended the position so well with massed arquebus fire from behind barricades of rice bales that the Korean general withdrew for the night. Without waiting for the next day Kiyomasa launched a night raid and drove the Korean soldiers into a trap.

Kiyomasa eventually caught up with the Korean princes at Hoeryong, a Korean penal colony on the Tumen, where he discovered to his surprise and delight that the princes had been taken captive by their own rebellious subjects. With his primary objective attained, Kato Kiyomasa became the first, and only, Japanese general to enter China during the Korean campaign. The Jurchens of Manchuria proved to be stubborn fighters, and at one stage Kiyomasa had to take his precious Nichiren flag in his own hands when his standard bearer was killed.

It was about this time that developments elsewhere in Korea sounded the death knell for the Japanese invasion, and within a few months Kato Kiyomasa was to be found first defending his line of forts and then abandoning them altogether as the army regrouped at Seoul. A retreat to the coast followed, where Kato Kiyomasa took a prominent part in the siege of Chinju. He is credited with the use of reinforced wooden



In this print Kato Kiyomasa leads the way to Korea from the prow of his ship. Kiyomasa performed very distinguished service during the campaign, and became the only Japanese general to enter China.

wagons to protect foot soldiers digging away the foundation stones of the wall to create a breach.

Over the next four years, 1593–98, Japan carried out a limited occupation of Korean territory. Kiyomasa's contribution was to provide troops to garrison the fort of Sosaengp'o. Tiger hunting was a popular relief from boredom, and many prints and paintings depict Kato Kiyomasa in this role. On one occasion a live tiger was taken into Hideyoshi's court. It tried to pull away from its keepers and approached Kato Kiyomasa, who fixed it with such a fierce glare that the tiger is said to have stopped dead in its tracks.

Kato Kiyomasa was one of the leading generals when the Japanese invaded Korea for a second time in 1597. He took part in the capture of Hwangsoksan castle, but his most important role was in defence of the fortress of Ulsan during a long and bitter winter siege when soldiers froze to death at their posts. Kiyomasa had come to Ulsan with a small force from Sosaengp'o, and immediately took charge of the situation. He inspired his men to hold out until a relieving army arrived, in spite of 'human wave' attacks against the walls by thousands of Chinese.

On his return to Japan, Kato Kiyomasa took over his manorial responsibilities at Kumamoto once again, and because of the unpleasant experience of being besieged in Ulsan, he resolved to make Kumamoto castle impregnable. He planted nut trees within the baileys to provide food, and all the mats within the living quarters were stuffed not with the usual rice straw but with dried vegetable stalks, so that even they could be eaten in an emergency. It would no doubt have given Kiyomasa great satisfaction if he had known that Kumamoto castle would indeed withstand a siege – from a modern-equipped army in 1871!

In this double-page illustration from the *Ehon Taikoki,* Kato Kiyomasa shoots a tiger in Korea. Tiger hunting was a popular pastime during the Japanese occupation of Korea. Toyotomi Hideyoshi believed that tiger meat had the power to restore his flagging potency.

When the *daimyo* split into the two factions that led to the Sekigahara campaign of 1600, Kiyomasa's remoteness from the scene meant that he could take a more calculated view of the likely outcome than many of his contemporaries. His old rival and neighbour Konishi Yukinaga declared for Ishida Mitsunari and lost his head as a result, so Kiyomasa was quick to seize for himself the other half of Higo province in the name of Tokugawa Ieyasu. Yet there was a less selfish reason for Kato's choice, because Toyotomi Hideyori, Hideyoshi's heir, was still alive, and Kato's loyalty to Hideyoshi's memory led him to believe that Hideyori would be safer if there was peace between him and the Tokugawa. Hideyori was present at a meeting held in Nijo castle to discuss his future, and it is said that Kiyomasa had a dagger concealed on his person which he intended to use on Tokugawa Ieyasu if Hideyori's safety was threatened. As it happened, Kato Kiyomasa did not live long enough to witness the death of Hideyori at Osaka castle, because he died himself in 1611, possibly from the effects of poison. Tokugawa Ieyasu may have had a hand in his death.

Kobayakawa Takakage (1532–96)

Mori Motonari's victory at the battle of Miyajima in 1555 was noted in *Samurai Commanders (1) 940–1576*. He was assisted at that epic struggle by his two sons, Kikkawa Motoharu (1530–86) and Kobayakawa Takakage (1532–96). Motoharu died in 1586, to be followed shortly by his son Motonaga. The Kikkawa inheritance was taken by his third son Hiroie (1561–1625), who served in Korea along with the main subject of this biography, his uncle Kobayakawa Takakage. Takakage was the elder statesman of the Japanese army of invasion, and was responsible for Japan's largest victory on foreign soil, the battle of Pyokje in 1593.

By late February 1593 all the units of the Japanese army that had been stationed north of the capital had retreated back to Seoul. The pursuing Chinese vanguard set off full of confidence about engaging an enemy that had been in steady retreat since the fall of P'yongyang earlier that month. For Ukita Hideie, the Japanese commander, the decision now had to be taken over where the defensive line should be

Kikkawa Hiroie (1561–1625) was another Japanese general who distinguished himself during the invasion of Korea. He is shown here in civilian clothes on a hanging scroll in the museum at Iwakuni.

drawn. It was Kobayakawa Takakage, the veteran commander in the Japanese army, who forced the issue. In his opinion the Japanese forces had retreated far enough anyway, and it was time to take the fight to the advancing enemy. His Sixth Division would lead an attack on the Chinese somewhere along the road back to Kaesong.

The Chinese and Korean movements were being carefully monitored by Japanese troops whose scouts kept their distance. On the morning of the eventual battle this scouting role was replaced by an attack spearheaded by a flying column under young Tachibana Muneshige, who led Takakage's force out to intercept the Chinese; the main body followed some distance behind. The total strength of the Japanese army was about 40,000 men. At a place called Pyokje, the main road to China passed one of several lodging houses that had been set up for the use of envoys travelling between China and Korea. Much of the subsequent fighting took place near this lodging, so that the battle is commonly called the 'battle of the Pyokje lodging' (Pyokje-yek). That morning the freezing February fog was so dense that it is doubtful if anyone could even see the road properly, let alone the famous lodging house. The lack of visibility therefore made Pyokje one of those battles where units collide and disengage with little knowledge of overall developments. The first of a series of such encounters began at about 7.00am when Tachibana's forward troops blundered into a mass of Chinese soldiers. Fierce fighting took place and by 10.00am the remainder of Takakage's division arrived.

Leading Takakage's troops were Awaya Kagenao and Inoue Kagesada, each of whom had 3,000 men. They were for making a joint frontal attack, but Takakage's subordinate commander Sayo Masakatsu persuaded them to deploy as two forward wings with Awaya on the left and Inoue on the right. The lack of visibility helped to confuse the Chinese as to the actual size of the Japanese army, and they turned their attentions to Awaya, who soon began to give ground. Inoue prepared to move over in support, but Sayo restrained him, suggesting that he should wait until Awaya had begun to pull back, at which point Inoue could take his pursuers in the flank as they advanced up the hill. This is precisely what happened and, when both forward wings of his army were engaged, Takakage saw the opportunity to develop a further phase in the struggle. Far from merely holding their own, Awaya and Inoue were driving the Chinese vanguard back up the pass. When they had gone about half a mile, Kobayakawa ordered an encircling movement. While these flank manoeuvres went on Takakage advanced up the pass behind his vanguard with Kikkawa Hiroie in the lead, and somewhere within the fog in the environs of the Pyokje lodging house they encountered the rest of the Chinese army.

For a short while Kobayakawa Takakage let them advance. The ground, made sodden from mountain streams and melting snow, became chewed up under the impact of thousands of feet. Horsemen could not move their mounts, whose hooves became mired. At that point the three units of the Japanese converged upon the Chinese from three sides. In the fierce hand-to-hand fighting it was the relative efficacy of the rival swords and spears that decided the issue. The razor-sharp edges of the Japanese blades cut deep into the heavy coats of the Chinese, while Japanese foot soldiers tugged mounted men from the backs of their horses using the

Ukita Hideie was the nephew of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Following the fall of Seoul during the attack on Korea, he was appointed commander in chief of the Japanese army in Korea. This painted scroll of him is in the castle at Okayama.

short cross-blades on their spears. The chronicle goes on to say that the fight lasted from the Hour of the Snake (10.00am) until the Hour of the Horse (12.00noon). Even the Chinese commander was in the thick of the fighting: 'The Japanese General, who wore a golden helmet, was about to capture the Commander, when his second-in-command covered him with his own body and received a great number of Japanese blades, but then his horse was struck by a bullet and he fell off and died.'

At about this time it started to rain, and the broken ground grew more and more to resemble a swamp, as men and horses trampled together and helmets, spears and halberds were scattered on the ground. Changing tactics, Takakage drew back his samurai to allow a field of fire for his arquebus squads, who shot bullets into the mass of Chinese and Koreans. The Japanese then pursued the defeated enemy back up the pass to its highest point, and after a few more hours of fighting Kobayakawa ordered the advance to cease as darkness fell. The army made its way back to Seoul, carrying 6,000 Chinese heads with them as trophies.

Kobayakawa Takakage retired from active service shortly after this triumph. Having no son, he adopted Hideaki, the nephew of Hideyoshi. Hideaki was to continue the Kobayakawa name in a very different fashion. He distinguished himself in battle, but is best known for being the samurai commander who changed sides during the battle of Sekigahara, thereby changing the destiny of Japan.

Date Masamune (1566–1636)

Military history shows that the armies of the world have contained their fair share of people with disabilities, the one-eyed, one-armed Lord Nelson being the most famous example. Japan furnishes one further outstanding character: Date Masamune, Lord of Sendai – Japan's own One-Eyed Dragon. He lost his eye not in action, as Nelson had, but from disease: a very mundane, albeit painful episode of smallpox at the age of five. The incident left him permanently disfigured, which was not auspicious for the son and heir of the local *daimyo,* Date Terumune. At the time the family owned and occupied Yonezawa castle in what is now Yamagata Prefecture in northern Japan. The Date were an ambitious clan, but were surrounded by enemies.

In one of those little stories of childhood promise, young Masamune was taken to a temple to see an image of the god Fudo (literally 'the immovable one'). Fudo is always represented in a fearful pose, with glaring features, a sword in his right hand and a rope in his left hand with which to bind evil spirits. Masamune was much impressed by the ferocity of the god, but the priest explained that although he had a frightening exterior he was gentle at heart and had a calm, reasoned disposition. The lesson sank in, and that precise combination of outward toughness and inner calm was to characterize Masamune's later

In this page from the *Ehon Taikoki*, Kobayakawa Takakage (1532–96) is shown in command of the attacking Japanese army at the battle of Pyokje in Korea in 1593. Although a great victory, the battle did nothing to reverse the overall trend of Japanese defeat in Korea.

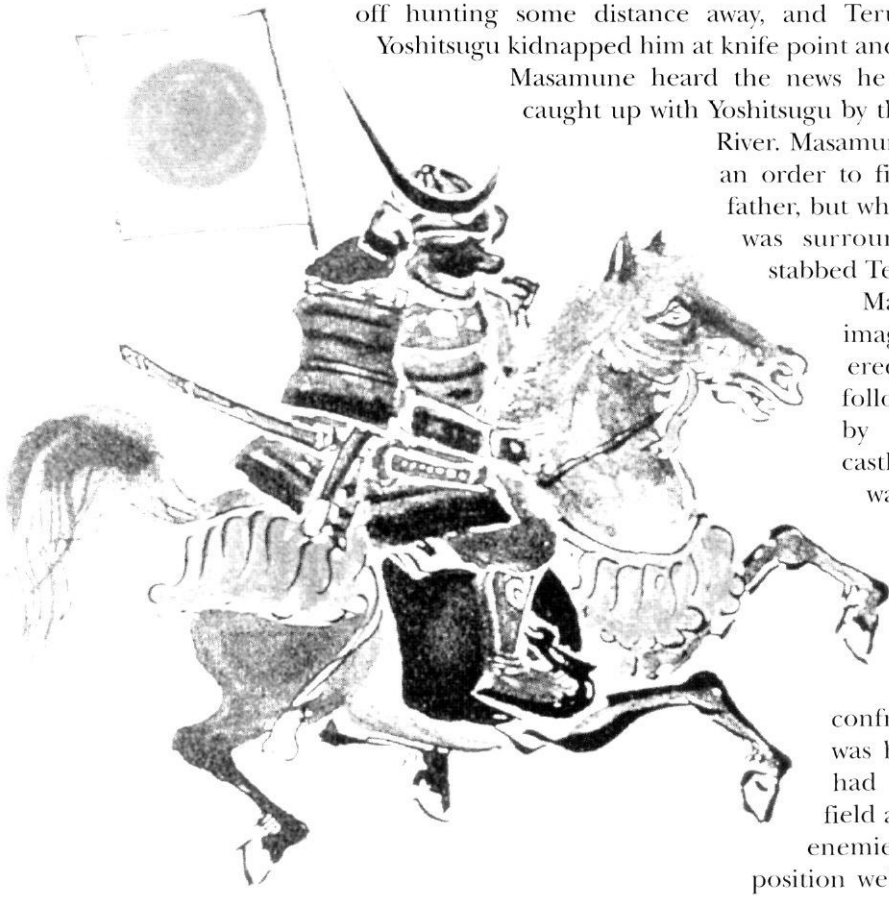
life. Another incident, probably exaggerated, is directly concerned with his blind eye. At one stage, it apparently hung out on to his cheek, and a retainer remarked that in single combat an enemy might be able to grab hold of it. So Masamune took his short sword and cut off the useless eye. He gave a start as he did so, which earned the rebuke from his companion that unless he could control himself better he would never make a great general. This Masamune resolved to do, and his epic self-control became legendary.

In 1577 this young heir of the Date family celebrated his *gembuku* (coming into manhood) ceremony and received his adult name. Two years later he proved his manhood by marrying the daughter of another local lord at the age of 13. Two years after that, in 1581, he marched to the battlefield with his father for the first time. The occasion was a rebellion within the Date domain itself. At first Terumune did not want his son to accompany him, but Masamune's wishes prevailed.

In 1584 Terumune formally abdicated from his position of *daimyo* and handed over the management of his territories to his talented son, who was still only 18 years old. He had a lot to learn, but soon showed a certain wisdom and ruthless cunning that would stand him in good stead. A retainer of the Date, Ouchi Sadatsuna, had abandoned them and gone over to their rivals, the Ashina family of Aizu, so when he returned and begged forgiveness Masamune's suspicions were aroused. Nevertheless, Masamune placed Sadatsuna in charge of a castle, but the man was so closely watched that the pressure proved too much for him. He abandoned his spying role and begged to be allowed to leave. Masamune permitted him to go, and soon proved that he was much more skilled in espionage than Sadatsuna had been. Spies were sent into the opposing camp. Intrigue and bribery followed, and one by one Sadatsuna's supporters were seduced away. By August 1585 Sadatsuna's power-base was so weakened that Date Masamune could take his castle of Otemori with consummate ease.

Then tragedy struck the Date family. The destruction of Ouchi Sadatsuna had aroused tensions between Masamune and another local rival called Hatakeyama Yoshitsugu. Masamune constantly rejected Yoshitsugu's offers of peace talks, but owing to the influence of his father he finally agreed. The meeting appeared to be a success. An alliance was concluded, and the following day Yoshitsugu went off to thank Date Terumune for his positive contribution to the outcome. He was warmly received, but the friendly visit was merely for show. Young Masamune was off hunting some distance away, and Terumune was undefended. Yoshitsugu kidnapped him at knife point and rode off with him. When Masamune heard the news he hurried in pursuit, and caught up with Yoshitsugu by the banks of the Abukuma River. Masamune hesitated before giving an order to fire for fear of hitting his father, but when Yoshitsugu saw that he was surrounded he panicked and stabbed Terumune to death.

Date Masamune (1566–1636) appears here on a hanging scroll. He is shown fully armoured and with a face mask. His *sashimono* (back flag) bears the design of the rising sun, the motif later chosen for the Japanese national flag.

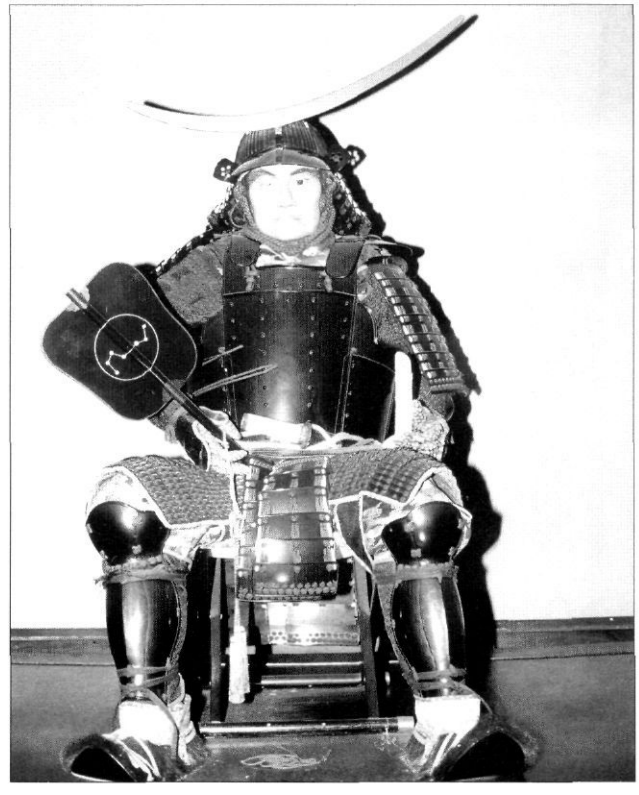


Masamune's reaction can be imagined. His troops slaughtered Yoshitsugu's force, and followed up the act of revenge by attacking Yoshitsugu's castle at Nihonmatsu. All-out war was soon being waged between Masamune and Yoshitsugu's heir. But the Hatakeyama had powerful allies who joined forces with them and marched north to confront the Date. Masamune was heavily outnumbered. He had only 7,000 men in the field against some 30,000 of his enemies, but he prepared his position well, anchoring his defence

at Motomiya castle to the west of the Abukuma River at Hitotoribashi (Hitotori Bridge). On the morning of the battle of Hitotoribashi, Masamune advanced his army to receive the expected attack in an advantageous position. The battle proved to be the fiercest fight of Masamune's career, and sheer weight of numbers drove them back. Soon the Date forces were in full retreat. Then good luck intervened. Hatakeyama's allies planned to deliver the knock-out blow the following morning, but a messenger arrived to tell the general Satake Yoshishige that his own territory had been invaded in his absence. His subsequent rapid departure from the scene took much of the allied army with him, leaving Hatakeyama Kuniomaru with insufficient strength to complete the rout of the Date. Masamune had survived.

Hitotoribashi was a near-run thing, but Masamune's next battle, Suriagehara, proved to be just the reverse. Here Masamune defeated his family's traditional enemies, the Ashina clan. The incentive to move against his strongest local rival came when the Ashina's general Inawashiro Morikuni defected to the Date. Masamune gathered his allies and marched out of Yonezawa castle to crush the Ashina. The campaign began with a series of moves against castles. Two of them, Akogashira and Takatama, fell to Masamune, who then moved towards the safety of the castle of his new comrade Inawashiro. When he was told of Ashina Yoshihiro's approach, Masamune left to confront him with 23,000 men and marched as far as the plain of Suriagehara. By the time the armies came into contact Yoshihiro had amassed only 16,000 men, so Masamune had a considerable numerical advantage. The vanguards collided at eight o'clock in the morning. At first the Ashina made the best progress, defeating their traitor Inawashiro Morikuni, whom Masamune had placed in the front line of his army. Masamune's loyal and experienced uncle Date Shigezane plugged the gap this defeat had created and allowed a respite for Masamune to commit his reserves. The advantage of numbers that the Date side possessed now came into its own, and the Ashina force crumbled and ran. As they fled, the bridge of the Nitsubashi River was destroyed ahead of them, leaving many of the Ashina trapped. No quarter was given, and those who tried to swim across were swept away by the currents or drowned in their heavy armour. Date Masamune had won a brilliant victory, and 2,300 heads were paraded in front of him as part of the traditional victory celebration.

The territory he acquired because of this victory gave Masamune a domain worth two million *koku* of rice, the third largest in Japan at the time. In 1590 Toyotomi Hideyoshi laid siege to the Hojo family's castle of Odawara. Hideyoshi made repeated requests for Masamune to join him in the siege, but



This modern statue of Date Masamune, which is in the Date Masamune Historical Museum in Matsushima near Sendai, is based on a contemporary wooden effigy of the great commander. His lack of a right eye is depicted faithfully, and all the details of his armour are correct. His helmet badge is a long, slender, crescent moon. The heavy bullet-proof armour he is wearing is called a *yukinoshita-do,* and was issued to all his samurai.

Date Masamune is shown here in a flattering portrait in Sendai, the castle town that became his capital.

Masamune, secure in his huge territory in the far north, felt under no obligation to risk weakening his army. Nevertheless, when it was clear which way the affair was going, Masamune made up his mind to take the winner's side, and was about to leave to join Hideyoshi in the extensive, and largely peaceful, siege lines when his attentions were drawn to matters much closer to home. Masamune had discovered a plot to poison him and place his younger brother Kojiro in charge of the clan. Astonishingly, the plot was being led by his own mother, who was being strongly influenced by her family. When the plan was discovered, Kojiro was put to death and Masamune set off for Odawara. The delay had made him miss the action, so, fearing Hideyoshi's anger Masamune dressed himself in a white shroud as if he was ready for death. The gesture was not wasted and Hideyoshi forgave him.

The triumph of Hideyoshi at Odawara meant that all of Japan was now unified under his sword except for the far north. Realizing that any further resistance would be counter-productive, Date Masamune submitted to Hideyoshi, who allowed him to retain all his territories as a vassal. His sensible submission and his subsequent loyalty helped him when he was accused by Gamo Ujisato, Hideyoshi's general, of fomenting riots. Once again Masamune appealed to Hideyoshi and won his case. Secure in his possessions, Masamune surveyed their extent and followed Hideyoshi in his example of disarming the peasantry through a 'Sword Hunt'. The carrying out of the scheme was no less violent nor any more popular in the Date fief than it had been anywhere else in Japan, but it established Masamune's authority in no uncertain fashion.

Along with most of the *daimyo* in Japan, Date Masamune was called upon to serve in the expedition to Korea. Fortunately for Masamune, Hideyoshi's muster lists worked on a sliding scale according to how close to the embarkation point the *daimyo* was located. The vast bulk of the invading force was therefore made up of contingents from the southern island of Kyushu. When it marched through the streets of Kyoto, the Date army made up for its small size by its flamboyant appearance. An eye-witness described the splendour of the men's armour and costumes, which included stunning gold-lacquered helmets for the foot soldiers made in the shape of a tall cone like a witch's hat. The wealthy Masamune could afford such extravagance, and his martial appearance was tempered by the fact that the Date contingent served in the reserve corps stationed in Japan for much of the first invasion, thus missing the bloodbath that Korea was to become.

Masamune's army crossed to Korea only when matters were getting very serious for the Japanese cause. The invaders were in retreat and heading back to Pusan, the port they had captured so brilliantly during

The battle of Hitotori Bridge in 1585 was one of the most desperately fought actions conducted by Date Masamune. Heavily outnumbered by over four to one, Masamune was saved from destruction only by the fact that Satake Yoshishige, one of his opponents, had to withdraw when his own province was invaded.

the initial assault. A letter sent home by Date Masamune reported an outbreak of beri-beri that killed eight out of ten who caught it, and in another letter sent three days later he referred to deaths occurring 'because the water in this country is different', which may imply cholera or typhus.

Date Masamune returned from the eventual defeat in Korea with his army in much better shape than most of the other *daimyo* who had served there. Masamune then managed to avoid entanglement in the decisive battle of Sekigahara and its aftermath. He could not, however, avoid being involved in the last battle of the samurai, fought in the fields around Osaka castle in 1615. The siege of Osaka had lasted since the winter of 1614, and when the decisive battle of the Summer Campaign was about to begin an operation was undertaken to secure communications towards Nara to the south-east of the castle. Here two rivers met below a range of hills to make a formidable natural obstacle around the village of Domyoji. It was a very historic corner of Japan, because it was the site of several old imperial tombs, all of which consisted of massive mounds of earth within artificial lakes. The largest of them housed the remains of Emperor Ojin, who had been deified as Hachiman the God of War – a very suitable neighbour for a battlefield! The battle of Domyoji was fought around these tombs, although the combatants saw very little of them because of the dense fog that enveloped the area. Date Masamune fought in the vanguard of the Tokugawa army. A very confusing time followed, but a decisive moment was reached when an arquebusier from the Tokugawa army put a bullet into the Osaka general Goto Mototsugu.

The final battle of the Osaka campaign was fought at Tennoji. On that awesome day Date Masamune held the Tokugawa left flank, and was able to provide crucial support during a very critical moment in the battle. Asano Nagaakira moved out wide to attack the Osaka flanks, and in the confusion he appeared to be bearing down on his own allies. Cries of treason were heard, and not without some justification, because

Sanada Yukimura (1570–1615) was the commander of Osaka castle during the great siege fought on behalf of Toyotomi Hideyori between 1614 and 1615. This statue of him stands on the site of the Sanada Barbican, an earthwork fort named after him that withstood attacks by the Tokugawa army in the winter of 1614.

a similar thing had happened at Sekigahara. But this time there was no betrayal. Nevertheless, the mistake was enough to cause great confusion and thereby to put the Tokugawa at a disadvantage. Date Masamune was one of the commanders who steadied the troops and rallied them. His long experience of fighting provided inspiration and helped towards the final victory.

After Osaka, Date Masamune was able to concentrate on building up his domain in Sendai and ruling it well. It was at this time that he made a unique contribution to samurai history, because perhaps the most unusual of Date Masamune's exploits was his embassy to Europe. At this time Christianity was being persecuted almost everywhere in Japan by order of the Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada. Date Masamune reversed this

Tokugawa Ieyasu died peacefully in 1616. This shrine to him in Okazaki contains a wooden effigy of the great commander who re-established the Shogunate.

trend, and negotiated the release from prison in Edo of the missionary priest Father Sotelo. Masamune had him taken to Edo, where he commissioned him to return to Europe accompanied by one of Masamune's retainers, Hasekura Tsunenaga, as an ambassador to the Pope. The embassy left Sendai in 1613, the year before the siege of Osaka began, and took a year to complete its journey to Spain via Mexico. Received by King Philip of Spain, Tsunenaga was baptized as a Christian inside the royal court. He then proceeded to Rome and was feted with honorary Roman citizenship by Pope Paul V. It was five years before the embassy returned to Japan, where they found the situation to be much changed from the tolerant world they had left behind in 1613. Date Masamune, under pressure from the Shogun, had begun to persecute Christians, and orders had been given that the faith was to be abandoned. Many complied, but Tsunenaga remained steadfast in the faith. Masamune did not dare lift a hand against such a faithful retainer, and Tsunenaga eventually died peacefully in 1622.

Date Masamune always cared for the men under his command, to the extent of issuing them with bullet-proof suits of armour in a style that became known as the *sendai-do* after Masamune's capital. We noted earlier Masamune's legendary self-control. As an accomplished master of the tea ceremony he was once called upon to display similar tranquillity when he was handed a priceless tea bowl. As he was examining it with lordly composure it almost fell from his grasp. This made him start. 'Ah!' he exclaimed. 'Even though I have taught myself never to flinch on any occasion in battle, not to speak of other situations, yet I find myself starting like this from fear of smashing a tea

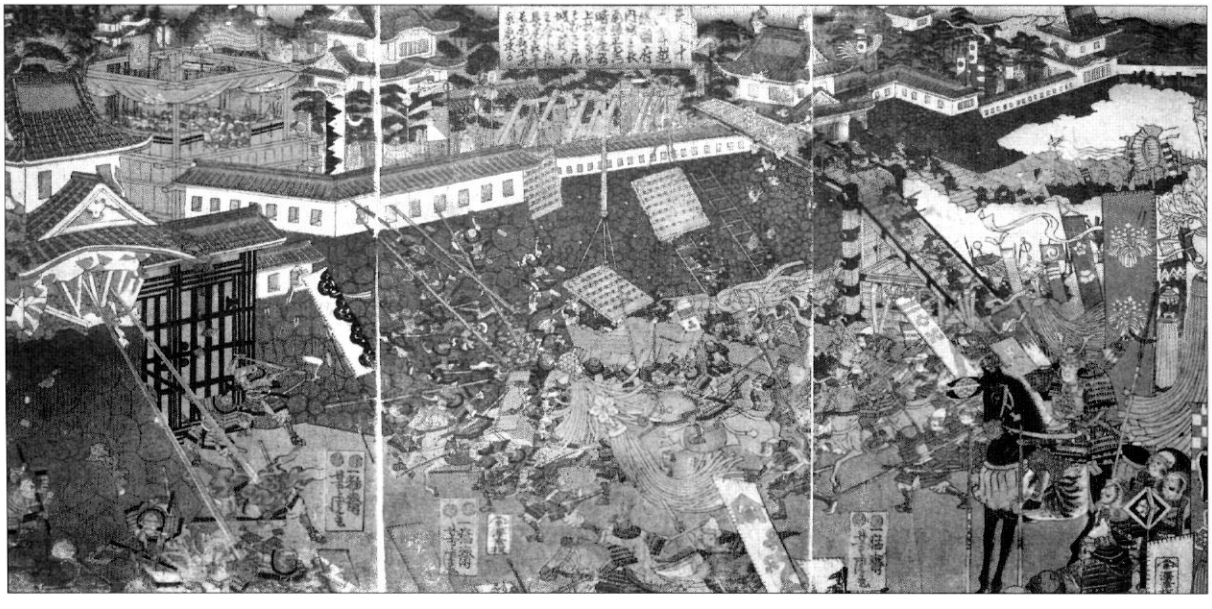
bowl because it may be worth a thousand gold pieces! This will never do!' So he took the bowl and flung it down on to the stones, smashing it completely.

Date Masamune died in 1636, respected by all as a wise administrator and an outstanding general. The time of samurai battles and samurai commanders was almost over, and Date Masamune was one of the last of a long and glorious tradition. Two years later there occurred the Shimabara Rebellion, a peasants' revolt in Kyushu led by persecuted Christians. So incompetent was the government's response that the motley force of rebels managed to hold out against the Shogun's troops for over a year. Here was the clearest evidence of all that the age of the great samurai commanders was finally over.

GLOSSARY

bakufu	the government of the Shogun
dangaie-do	armour of mixed styles
do-maru	armour style that wraps around the body
fukigayeshi	helmet turnbacks
haidate	thigh guards
hara-kiri	ritual suicide
jinbaori	surcoat
jingasa	simple *ashigaru* lampshade helmets
kami	the deities of Japan's religion of Shinto
kebiki odoshi	armour laced with close-spaced cords
koku	unit of wealth of rice fields, one *koku* would feed one man for one year
kosho	junior attendant on a lord, equivalent to a page
kote	sleeves of armour
kusazuri	skirt pieces of armour
kuwagata	ornamental 'antlers' on a helmet
maedate	helmet crest worn at front
maku	semi-enclosed space provided by curtains on the battlefield
mogami-do	armour made from large separate sections

Kato Kiyomasa in action against the Korean fortress of Chinju in 1593. Both sides are employing many weird and wonderful Chinese siege weapons.



mon	heraldic badge or crest
monto	believers, followers of Jodo-Shinshu
naginata	glaive
namban-do	armour of European style
nuinobe-do	armour made from large scales with scalloped tops
okegawa-do	armour with plain breastplate, often worn by *ashigaru*
ronin	'men of the waves' or unemployed samurai
sashimono	identifying device, usually a flag, worn on the back
shikoro	neckguard to helmet
shugo	the Shogun's provincial deputy
sode	shoulder guards
sohei	warrior monks
sugake odoshi	armour laced with spaced cords
uchidashi-do	embossed armour
wakidate	side crests on helmet
yamashiro	mountain castles
yoroi	old style of armour
yukinoshita-do	a very strong armour associated with the Date family

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Kato Kiyomasa appears here in a statue outside the castle of Nagoya. He is wearing a *jinbaori* and his famous courtier's cap helmet.

THE PLATES

A: ODA NOBUNAGA AND HIS ELITE BODYGUARD *c.* 1560

Oda Nobunaga, the first unifier of Japan, was loyally served by a number of samurai who went on to become commanders in their own right. This plate shows Nobunaga in 1560 early on the morning when he set off from Kiyosu castle to fight Imagawa Yoshimoto, whose army vastly outnumbered his own. The encounter was fought at Okehazama. Yoshimoto was killed, and the victory thrust Nobunaga into the leading rank of samurai commanders. History records that on that fateful morning Nobunaga chanted a section from the Noh play *Atsumori*, which runs, 'Man's life is fifty years. In the universe what is it but dream and illusion? Is there any who is born and does not die?' The action is taking place inside Kiyosu castle, where Nobunaga's *mon* (family badge) is painted in red on the white walls.

A1: Oda Nobunaga (1534–82)

Nobunaga is shown in the delicate pose of a Noh actor, although he is almost fully armed except for his helmet, which is held by Sasa Narimasa. He is wearing an armour of *do-maru* style, laced in dark blue *kebiki odoshi*. His *kote* are of green silk reinforced with black-lacquered iron plates. His *haidate* are of ornate brocade cloth, with gold- and black-lacquered hexagonal metal plates as protection.

A2: Maeda Toshiie (1538–99)

Maeda Toshiie began his military career in the service of Nobunaga. There is a certain artistic licence in this plate, because Toshiie is shown as a member of Nobunaga's elite red *horo* unit, which he did not actually join until 1562.

Asai Nagamasa (1545–73) was an accomplished samurai commander who fell foul of Oda Nobunaga. He is shown in this print as he reacts to the presentation to him of the severed head of one of his enemies.

Toshiie is wearing a simple battledress armour of *mogami-do* style, laced with *sugake odoshi*. His helmet has a large gold *maedate*, but most striking of all is the red *horo*, which was a thin cloak stretched over a light bamboo framework. Fixed to the support of the *horo* is a pair of gold-lacquered wooden angel's wings.

A3: Sasa Narimasa (1539–88)

Narimasa served Nobunaga as a member of his other elite bodyguard, the black *horo* unit. His armour is similar to Toshiie's, although lacquered red, and his *horo* is, of course, black. Sasa Narimasa is carrying Nobunaga's helmet, which has Nobunaga's *mon* as a *maedate*.

B: THE RISE OF TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI 1582–95

When Oda Nobunaga was killed in a surprise attack in 1582 by his general Akechi Mitsuhide, another leading commander, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, avenged his master and took power for himself over the next few years, eventually eliminating rivals from his own family such as Toyotomi Hidetsugu.

B1: Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98)

Hideyoshi is shown in a suit of armour preserved in his Memorial Museum in Nagoya. It is a *do-maru* laced in *kebiki odoshi*, red on the upper half of the torso, blue the lower half. Hideyoshi's *mon* appears in silver on the *sode*, while there is a further ornate silver decoration on the *haidate*. His helmet is a spectacular black-lacquered iron design topped off with a white horsehair plume.

B2: Akechi Mitsuhide (1526–82)

Mitsuhide is shown in the act of fleeing from the battlefield of Yamazaki, where he was defeated by Hideyoshi. His armour is simple and practical, and the most noticeable feature of his costume is the *jinbaori*, which bears on its back a beautiful design of a Chinese dragon among clouds. The source is a painted hanging scroll in Kyoto.

B3: Toyotomi Hidetsugu (1568–95)

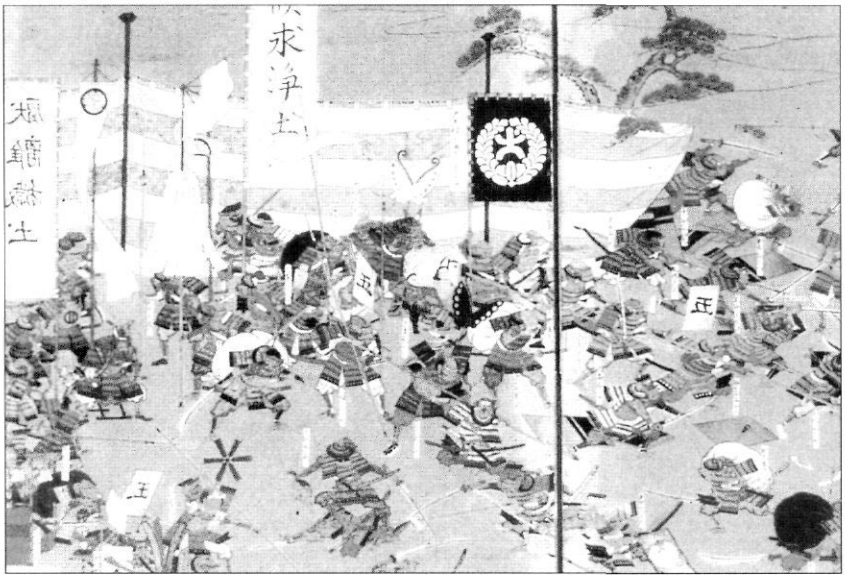
Toyotomi Hidetsugu was the nephew of Hideyoshi and served his uncle in many campaigns. In 1591 Hideyoshi adopted him as his heir, but disinherited him when Hideyori was born. He was ordered to commit *hara-kiri* in 1595. Hidetsugu is shown here in his magnificent red and black armour, now owned by the Suntory Museum. It is of *nuinobe-do* style laced in *sugake odoshi*. The helmet is ornamented with a crab's face as the *maedate* and its claws as *wakidate*.

C: TOKUGAWA IEYASU AND HIS LOYAL RETAINERS *c.* 1600

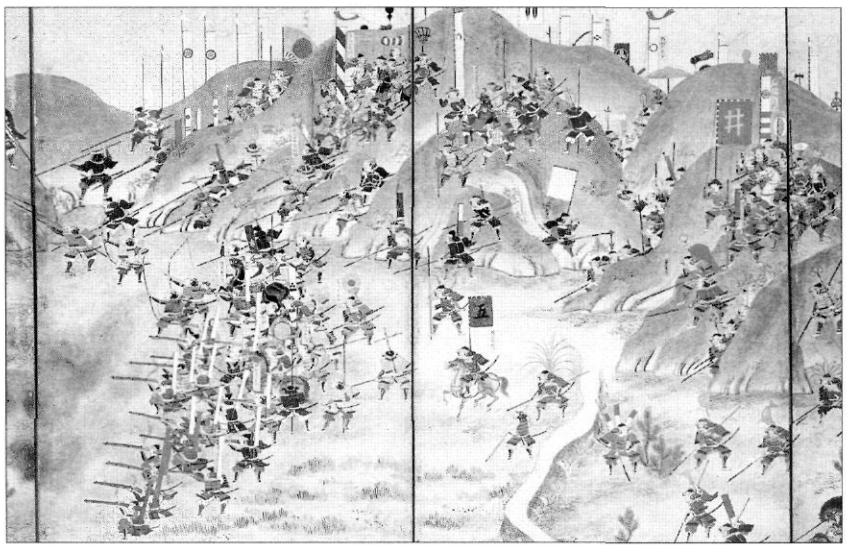
Tokugawa Ieyasu became the third unifier of Japan and founded a dynasty that was to rule the country for the next two and a half centuries. Here we see the most successful samurai commander of all time together with two of his most trusted retainers, Sakakibara Yasumasa and Ii Naotaka.

C1: Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616)

I have chosen to show Ieyasu in a very odd suit of armour, now owned by the Tokugawa Art Museum in Nagoya. When Hideyoshi presented Ieyasu with the Hojo's former territories of the Kanto area as a reward for his service in the siege of Odawara, he made a joke that the rural nature of the gift would make Ieyasu 'the cow of the Kanto'. With hindsight this



The battle of Anegawa in 1570 was one of Oda Nobunaga's most celebrated victories. In this section from a painted screen in the museum at Fukui we see Nobunaga's ally Tokugawa Ieyasu directing operations from within the *maku* (curtained enclosure).



The battle of Nagakute in 1584 witnessed the clash of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. In this section from the painted screen of Nagakute in the Tokugawa Art Museum in Nagoya, we see Ii Naomasa's 'Red Devils' in action.

was particularly ironic as the Kanto plain has since become metropolitan Tokyo. Ieyasu had this armour made as a return jest. It is a simple *okegawa-do* style, covered all over with cow hair and sporting a fine pair of horns. The red-lacquered face mask provides a contrast to the overall design.

C2: Sakakibara Yasumasa (1548–1606)

Increasing contact with European traders led to an enthusiasm for incorporating pieces of European armour into Japanese suits, and this *namban-do* worn by Sakakibara Yasumasa is an excellent example. The European features are the breastplate and helmet in russet iron. A *shikoro* has been added to the helmet along with a horsehair plume. The suit is preserved by the Tokyo National Museum.

C3: Ii Naotaka (1590–1659)

The Ii family of Hikone were famous for dressing all their troops in red-lacquered armour. Here we see the *dangaie-do* style armour worn by Ii Naotaka, who fought for the Tokugawa at the siege of Osaka in 1614–15. The body armour is made with its upper portion as a *nuinobe-do* laced in *sugake odoshi* and its lower part *in kebiki odoshi*. Two enormous golden *kuwagata* set off the ensemble. This armour is owned by Hikone Castle Museum.

D: THE BURDEN OF COMMAND, OSAKA 1615

To be a samurai commander was a demanding role both on the battlefield and off it. This plate illustrates the need to exercise discipline even during a lull in the fighting. The scene is the siege of Osaka in 1615, where a group of *ashigaru* (foot soldiers) are off duty and making a nuisance of themselves, only to be disturbed by a very senior member of the Tokugawa entourage.

D1: Honda Tadamasa (1575–1631)

Tadamasa was the son of Honda Tadakatsu and continued the family tradition of loyal service to the Tokugawa when his father died in 1610. He is wearing a very elaborate suit of armour with a European-style *namban-do* body armour and

both *sode* and *haidate* of gold-lacquered scales. But the most spectacular feature is the amazing helmet in the style of a sea shell, with breaking waves as the *wakidate*. The armour is in the Tokyo National Museum and is known to have been owned by the Honda family, although the staff were not able to say for certain that it was worn by Tadamasa.

D2: *Ashigaru c.* 1615

A group of *ashigaru* are enjoying refreshment from wayside vendors, but a dispute has broken out with the seller of *dango* (rice dumplings). Other *ashigaru* are smoking tobacco in long thin pipes. The men wear simple *okegawa-do* armours with *jingasa* instead of samurai helmets.

E: THE *TOZAMA* (OUTER LORDS) 1592–1600

The expression *tozama* (outer lords) applies to those *daimyo* who opposed the Tokugawa at the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Some of the finest samurai commanders of the age appear in their ranks. Most saw their domains decreased. Two prominent families, the Shimazu of Satsuma and the Uesugi from northern Japan, are featured here.

E1: Shimazu Yoshihiro (1535–1619)

Yoshihiro was the most active of the four sons left by Shimazu Takahisa (see *Samurai Commanders (1) 940–1576*).

Oda (Kambe) Nobutaka (1558–83), the son of Oda Nobunaga, sits proudly in front of his standard in the classic position of the samurai commander. His signalling fan, the general's baton of command, is in his hand. Nobutaka committed suicide when Gifu castle fell to Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1583.

In this plate, which is based on a hanging scroll in Kagoshima, Yoshihiro wears a strangely old-fashioned suit of armour. It appears to be in the *yoroi* style, because it has a large silk cord bow on the back plate holding everything together. His helmet is nevertheless of contemporary design, and has a white plume hanging from a ring at the back. He also carries a short, straight-bladed spear and wears *haidate*.

E2: Shimazu Toshihisa (1537–92)

Yoshihiro's brother Toshihisa suffered poor health and died before he could accompany his brother in the Korean invasion. His suit of armour is preserved in Kagoshima, and consists of a *do-maru* with large *sode* laced in *kebiki* style. The Shimazu *mon* appears in gold on the *fukigayeshi* and the small plate that protects the body armour suspensory cords.

E3: Uesugi Kagekatsu (1555–1623)

Kagekatsu was the heir of the famous Uesugi Kenshin (see *Samurai Commanders (1) 940–1576*) and opposed Ieyasu on his rise to power. His armour, now in a private collection in Japan, consists of a *mogami-do* laced in *sugake odoshi*. As in so many cases, a dramatic helmet sets off the comparatively straightforward body armour. Kagekatsu's little flamboyance is a large golden *maedate* with a swastika on it.

In the painted screen in the Watanabe Museum in Tottori we see the Shimazu army in full retreat after the battle of Sekigahara.

Kato Kiyomasa appears here in single combat. Note his famous 'courtier's cap' style of helmet, and the circle that was his *mon*.

F: COMMANDERS RISEN FROM THE RANKS, MAEDA AND MORI *c.* 1584

During the Sengoku period it could have been said that every samurai carried a general's baton in his knapsack. Here are two men who started as ordinary samurai and ended as *daimyo*, and the heir of the second.

F1: Mori Nagayoshi (1558–84)

Mori Nagayoshi served Nobunaga, and fought with distinction against the Ikko-ikki of Nagashima. He went on to support Toyotomi Hideyoshi, but was killed at the battle of Nagakute in 1584. His armour is a battledress *nuinobe-do* with multicoloured lacing on the *kusazuri*. His simple helmet has the addition of a beautiful openwork Buddhist slogan, 'Namu Amida Butsu', the battle cry of the Ikko-ikki whom Nagayoshi helped defeat.

F2: Maeda Toshiie (1538–99)

Maeda Toshiie was portrayed in plate A as one of Oda Nobunaga's bodyguard. By 1584 he had acquired a considerable territory of his own, and is shown here wearing the armour he wore during the relief of the castle of Suemori in that year. It is a *nuinobe-do* lacquered gold with white *sugake* lacing. The helmet is also lacquered gold and in the shape of a courtier's cap with a white horsehair plume over the neckguard. His *sashimono* is in the form of two flags made up of small golden flags.

F3: Maeda Toshinaga (1562–1614)

On his death in 1599 Toshiie bequeathed to his son Toshinaga a domain second in wealth only to the mighty Tokugawa. In this illustration Toshinaga seems determined to outdo his father in the size of his helmet – a long catfish tail lacquered silver over a suit of armour of *do-maru* style with multicoloured *kebiki odoshi*.

G: SAMURAI COMMANDERS IN KOREA 1593

The invasions of Korea in 1592 and 1597 were the only occasions on which the samurai commanders used their aggression against another country. Here we see three prominent leaders in the bitter winter of early 1593.

G1: Kikkawa Hiroie (1561–1625)

In this armour preserved in the Kikkawa Museum in Iwakuni, Hiroie at least looks warm because his armour is covered with black bear fur! His breastplate is a *uchidashi-do* with a golden Chinese dragon.

G2: Kobayakawa Takakage (1532–96)

Sadly, no armour of this veteran of the Korean campaign appears to have survived, so I have dressed him in a straightforward battledress armour with a *jinbaori*. His helmet bears his *mon*.

G3: Kuroda Nagamasa (1568–1623)

Kuroda Nagamasa led the Third Division of the Japanese army in the invasion of 1592. This plate is based on a contemporary scroll depicting Nagamasa wearing a helmet still preserved in the Akizuki Museum. It is known as an *ichinotani* helmet, the sweep of the metal representing the valley of Ichi no tani from the famous battle of 1184.

H: SAMURAI COMMANDERS OF NORTHERN JAPAN *c.* 1600

For much of the Sengoku period the samurai commanders of northern Japan were a law unto themselves, but in this plate we see Date Masamune wearing a suit of armour presented to him by Hideyoshi in return for his pledge of allegiance.

H1: Date Masamune (1566–1636)

Date Masamune was the most prominent *daimyo* in the north until the rise of Hideyoshi. Instead of his customary style of armour, Masamune is wearing a black *nuinobe-do* laced in white. His helmet is covered in bear fur, with the strange addition of a golden general's signalling fan at front and rear.

H2: Shiroishi Munezane (1553–99)

A loyal follower of Date Masamune, Munezane is shown here in the traditional *yukinoshita-do* style of armour associated with the Date family, famous for its strength and its bullet-proof breastplate. His augmentation is the character 'ya' (the verb 'to be' in classical Japanese) as a silver *maedate* on his helmet.

H3: Naoe Kanetsugu (1570–1619)

Formerly a retainer of the Uesugi, Kanetsugu opposed the Tokugawa rise to power and besieged Hasedo castle while the Sekigahara campaign was under way. He is wearing a *dangaie-do* and a helmet with a *maedate* of the character 'ai', the first ideograph of 'Aizu' – his territory.

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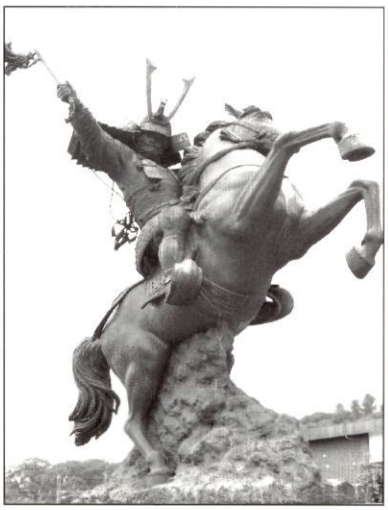

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