

## = Siege of Inabayama Castle =

The Siege of Inabayama Castle ( ??????? , Inabayama @-@ j? no Tatakai ) of 1567 was the final battle in Oda Nobunaga 's campaign to defeat the Sait? clan in their mountaintop castle and conquer Mino Province , Japan . It was a short two @-@ week siege , fought between 13 and 27 September 1567 , or in the Japanese calendar : from the 1st to 15th day of the 8th month , in the 10th year of the Eiroku era , according to the Nobunaga Chronicle . The siege ended in a decisive battle and victory of Nobunaga 's combined forces , and resulted in the subjugation of the Sait? clan , their vassals , and allies . This victory was the culmination of Nobunaga 's Mino campaign , waged intermittently over the previous six years , and brought an end to a rivalry between the Oda clan of Owari province and the Sait? clan of Mino , which began over twenty years earlier between Nobunaga 's father , Oda Nobuhide and Sait? D?san .

Due to the weak leadership of the Sait? , many samurai leaders defected to Nobunaga before the battle , while others willingly submitted afterward . With this victory , Nobunaga took control of the expansive and fertile Mino Province and gained numerous supporters and resources . Nobunaga had the former Sait? castle repaired and renamed it Gifu Castle , a firm base from which to expand north into the Hokuriku region and to make his drive toward Kyoto . Gifu Castle functioned as his primary residence and military headquarters until he moved to the partially completed Azuchi Castle in 1575 .

Nobunaga 's young retainer Kinoshita T?kichir? ( later known as Toyotomi Hideyoshi ) played an important role in attaining the victory at Inabayama . In the years leading to the battle , he negotiated for the support of local warlords , which ensured a ready @-@ made army by the time of the attack , and built a castle on the edge of the enemy 's territory to serve as a staging point for the attack . In addition to these preparations , T?kichir? devised and led a bold plan , something of a commando raid , to break into the castle and open the gates for the attacking army . As a result of his efforts and the victory , his standing with Nobunaga rose considerably . Thus , in addition to the battle 's immediate importance to Nobunaga 's plans , it was also an important step in Toyotomi Hideyoshi 's rise to power .

## = = Background = =

In 1549 young Oda Nobunaga ( 1534 ? 1582 ) , who would later become a major daimyo of Owari province , Japan and would initiate the unification of 16th century Japan , was married to N?hime , the daughter of Sait? D?san , leader of the rival Sait? clan of neighboring Mino Province . Nobunaga was the second son of Oda Nobuhide , head of the Oda clan , who was at that time fending off opponents on the northern and eastern borders of Owari province , matters that were complicated by internal dissent . Sait? D?san , lord of Mino , was a strong and ruthless leader , but internal strife had begun to split the Sait? into factions . Both clans needed some respite to deal with more pressing problems and thus the political marriage of Nobunaga and N?hime brought an end to the clans ' rivalry and their border skirmishes .

In 1555 Sait? Yoshitatsu , eldest son of D?san , came to believe his inheritance would be taken away and murdered his two younger brothers . The following year he rallied troops loyal to him and openly rebelled against his father . D?san indeed changed his will and named his son @-@ in @-@ law , Oda Nobunaga , his legal heir . Shortly thereafter D?san was killed by one of Yoshitatsu 's retainers at the Battle of Nagaragawa . At the time Nobunaga was not in a position to help his father @-@ in @-@ law and the Sait? civil war soon ended before any active intervention could be mounted . In 1561 Yoshitatsu died of leprosy and his son , Sait? Tatsuoki , succeeded to the leadership of the clan . At the time Tatsuoki was young but , as he attained adulthood , he was eventually considered incapable of effective leadership by his peers and retainers , viewed with contempt by his subordinates , and even despised by the local peasantry . After the Oda and Matsudaira clans allied and then defeated the Imagawa clan at the 1560 Battle of Okehazama , Nobunaga was in a more secure position to focus on their northern neighbor , the Sait? clan . Nobunaga 's plans for an invasion of Mino were ostensibly motivated by revenge for the death of his

father @-@ in @-@ law , Sait? D?san , but Yoshitatsu died before Nobunaga could attack . As a result , Nobunaga reasoned that Yoshitatsu 's heir , Tatsuoki , likewise benefited from D?san 's demise , and thus continued with his plans for invasion , using revenge as a pretext .

= = Mino campaign = =

Oda Nobunaga mounted forays into Mino territory in 1561 and 1563 , which resulted in brief battles . In each expedition Nobunaga and his 700 troops were outnumbered by rapidly assembled forces under local daimyo , who would muster up to 3 @,@ 000 men . Caught in the open and unable to organize a defense , he fell back each time to his home territory . The local history of Gifu city states that in 1564 Nobunaga went so far as to attack Inabayama Castle , the headquarters of the Sait? clan . The castle was situated atop Mount Inaba , which had a ruggedly steep northern face with the bank of the Sunomata River at its foot , and accessed by a winding avenue up the southern slopes . Although it was considered nearly impregnable , Tatsuoki fled the parapets and hid within the castle while his retainers Takenaka Shigeharu ( called Hanbei ) and And? Morinari commanded the defense . Nobunaga then left or was driven out soon afterward . In later years Nobunaga had this setback expunged from records and omitted from the Nobunaga Chronicles .

Starting in 1564 , Oda Nobunaga began dispatching his loyal retainer , Kinoshita T?kichir? , to convince , with liberal bribery , many of the warlords in the Mino area to defect to the growing alliance under the Oda clan . Kinoshita even approached Takenaka Hanbei , who was considered a brilliant strategist but lived in pious seclusion , to persuade him to defect . Although the Sait? retainer was frustrated by the ignominious behavior of Tatsuoki , he did not want to appear capricious with his loyalty , and declined Kinoshita 's offers on behalf of his lord . Kinoshita was impressed with the integrity of the retainer and invited him to an extended stay in his home , as a guest . Hanbei admitted that the Sait? clan could not survive for much longer under Tatsuoki , and accepted Kinoshita 's invitation in exchange for a promise of leniency if ever the Sait? leadership fell into Kinoshita 's hands .

In 1566 , in anticipation of the upcoming campaign , Kinoshita proposed that a castle should be built somewhere near Inabayama Castle to serve as a staging point for the Oda forces . Nobunaga agreed and charged Kinoshita with the task . To this end Kinoshita built Sunomata Castle on the bank of the Sai River opposite Sait? territory . The advantage of the castle 's proximity to the enemy was also a problem during construction . Until the castle was complete , Kinoshita 's men and the construction site were vulnerable to an amphibious attack from across the river . According to legend , Kinoshita built the castle in one night ; however it is more likely that it was the tower 's skeleton with a facade that was seen from the opposite bank . The result of the hasty construction was meant to give his own men a vantage point and to surprise and impress the enemy . Stalled by the enemy 's caution , Kinoshita 's men were able to quickly transform the fragile framework into a functioning fortification , and then into a complete castle . Nobunaga then ordered Kinoshita to remain as steward of the castle , and bestowed upon him the name Hideyoshi .

= = Siege = =

In 1567 , Oda Nobunaga led an attack against the Sait? clan of Mino Province . The clan headquarters and administrative center for Mino Province was Inabayama Castle , a mountain fortress atop Mount Inaba ( in present @-@ day Gifu city ) . As Sait? Tatsuoki , the daimyo of the clan , had shown himself to be a cowardly and ineffective ruler , Takenaka Hanbei had staged a coup and took command of the castle and its garrison . Although Tatsuoki was allowed to remain the titular head of the clan , he contributed nothing to the outcome of the battle . When the Oda army entered Mino , Hanbei prepared the garrison for the defense of the castle .

According to the Shinch? k?ki ( or The Nobunaga Chronicles ) , preparations for the battle began on 13 September 1567 ( Eiroku @-@ 10 year , 8 @-@ month , 1 @-@ day ) . Nobunaga entered the area , made contact with allies , and the core of Nobunaga 's army of about 5 @,@ 000 troops crossed the Kiso River . As the troops assembled on the far shore , Nobunaga sent two messengers

, Murai Sadakatsu and Shimada Hidemitsu , to three of the Sait? clan 's top vassals , known as the Mino Triumvirate , asking for their cooperation in the upcoming battle . Mino warlords that Kinoshita Hideyoshi had persuaded to defect brought additional troops to Nobunaga 's banner .

As the forces loyal to Nobunaga moved across the plain , several skirmishes were fought in a futile effort to turn the invading forces . Nobunaga 's forces then entered the town of Inoguchi , which lay below Inabayama Castle . To clear the field of view and provide space for the besieging army , Kinoshita Hideyoshi 's vanguard set fire to the town . As some soldiers took positions on Mount Inoguchi and a nearby ridgeline , the main army positioned itself before Mount Inaba to begin the siege . The greatly augmented army , now bristling with the flags of the Sait? clan 's former vassals and allies , bewildered the castle 's defenders . During the days that followed , Kinoshita dispatched men to gather intelligence , especially from peasants willing to help . Kinoshita met with a local resident , Horio Yoshiharu , who showed him a little @-@ known path that led up the north slope of the mountain . The north slopes below the castle were so steep that assault by a large force was considered impossible , and was thus effectively ignored by the defenders at the advent of battle .

= = = Final assault = = =

It is uncertain exactly what happened on the battlefield between 14 ? 25 September . Given what is known of Nobunaga 's aggressive fighting style , the prevailing siege tactics of the day , the layout of the Japanese castle , and the events that followed , it can be inferred that Nobunaga 's forces pressed their attack and probably breached the outer defenses of Inabayama Castle . It is known , however , that Kuroda Kanbei , considered a talented strategist , was charged with directing and coordinating the main attack . It is also certain that Kinoshita Hideyoshi devised a plan in which a small force would scale the north face of the mountain , enter the castle , and rush to open the gates for the besieging army . Nobunaga approved and charged Kinoshita with leading the raid . For his team Kinoshita selected Horio Yoshiharu , Hachisuka Koroku , and five or six other men to accompany him . On 26 September Nobunaga was so confident of Kinoshita 's plan and the outcome of the battle that he had an heraldic partition erected on the battlefield where he held a meeting with his top officers and allotted tasks pertaining to the re @-@ construction of the castle following the battle . He also greeted the daimyo of the Mino Triumvirate , who were stunned by his audacity , and offered them sake .

On the night of 26 September Kinoshita gathered his team and , concerned over the late summer heat and the exertions in store , provided them with gourds of fresh water . Horio Yoshiharu then guided Kinoshita Hideyoshi and the small assault force around to the back of the mountain , where they climbed the steep slopes by the light of a full moon . At dawn , while Kinoshita 's mission was in progress , the main force under Kuroda Kanbei proceeded with its attack on the castle .

Sometime after dawn , Kinoshita 's team infiltrated the castle , set fire to a storehouse and the powder magazine , and then rushed to open the front gates , cutting down whomever got in their way . With explosions erupting from the powder magazine and the other building burning fiercely , the castle defense quickly devolved into chaos , as the shocked and exhausted defenders thought they were under a full @-@ scale attack from behind . Kinoshita 's men , filthy from the night 's exertions and brandishing bloody swords as they rushed across the main courtyard , added to the impression . The castle garrison was thrown into complete disarray as men were pulled from the parapets to face the nonexistent assault , while others threw down their weapons and surrendered . When Kinoshita 's team had attained the gatehouse they tied their gourds to spears and waved them to their allies below to signal they were in position , whereupon Kuroda 's infantry charged the open gates and overran what was left of the castle 's garrison . While Kuroda 's men mopped up the last of the resistance , Kinoshita 's team found a place to rest while Horio Yoshiharu passed around a large gourd of sake he had taken from the castle 's supply . By the end of 27 September 1567 Inabayama Castle had fallen and the remaining lords of Mino province formally surrendered to Nobunaga .

= = Aftermath = =

In about two weeks ' time Nobunaga had entered the sprawling Mino Province , raised an army , and conquered the ruling clan in their mountaintop castle . Following the battle the Mino Triumvirate , awed by the speed and skill of Nobunaga 's conquest , permanently allied themselves to Nobunaga . Nobunaga had the castle repaired and renamed it Gifu Castle . The castle @-@ town of Inoguchi was likewise renamed Gifu , after the mountain from which Wu Wang launched his campaign to unify China . Nobunaga had a lavish manor built at the base of the castle mountain . He then transferred his primary base and residence from Komaki Castle to Gifu , from which he would launch his historic march on Kyoto the following year . He continued to use Gifu Castle as his primary residence and headquarters until he moved into the partially completed Azuchi Castle in 1575 .

Sait? Tatsuoki survived the battle , though there are at least two accounts of how he managed this . In one account , Tatsuoki abandoned the castle the night before the final attack , took a boat , and fled down the Sunomata River . In another account , following the breach of the main gate , Hideyoshi dispatched a messenger to the main tower , where Tatsuoki and his entourage were cornered , with assurances of leniency if the Sait? holdouts would surrender . Tatsuoki accepted the offer and , with Nobunaga 's troops forming two lines , Tatsuoki marched out of the main tower with his family and retinue . In any event , Tatsuoki eventually found his way to Nagashima , Ise Province . He lived in exile for a while , but eventually sought refuge with Asakura Yoshikage . He was killed in the Battle of Tonezaka , at the age of 26 , in 1573 .

The efforts of Kinoshita Hideyoshi as the mastermind of the victory were recognized by Nobunaga and his status rose accordingly . After the battle Kinoshita was promoted in rank and made lord of three districts in the northern part of the newly conquered Mino province , and not long afterward took the surname Hashiba . When Nobunaga later gave him a field command , Hideyoshi used an image of a golden gourd as his battle standard , in commemoration of his success at Inabayama Castle . In time he would change his surname again , to Toyotomi . Kuroda Kanbei , who led the frontal attack , and Takenaka Hanbei , who directed the castle 's defense , would both eventually serve Toyotomi Hideyoshi .

= = Order of battle = =

At the outset of the siege , Nobunaga organized the troops of his allies and retainers into several divisions , with a reserve and a vanguard :

Main Division

3 @,@ 000 troops under Oda Nobunaga

First Division

2 @,@ 000 troops under Shibata Katsuie

2 @,@ 000 troops under Ikeda Tsuneoki

Second Division

1 @,@ 000 troops under Mori Yoshinari

1 @,@ 000 troops under Maeda Toshiie

1 @,@ 000 troops under Sassa Narimasa

Others

Reserve Division

2 @,@ 000 troops under Sakuma Nobumori

Vanguard

1 @,@ 000 troops under Kinoshita Hideyoshi

Mino forces , unspecified numbers under :

Ujiie Naotomo

And? Morinari

Inaba Yoshimichi

Others