

# THE TALE OF KUNOHE MASAZANE

COMIC

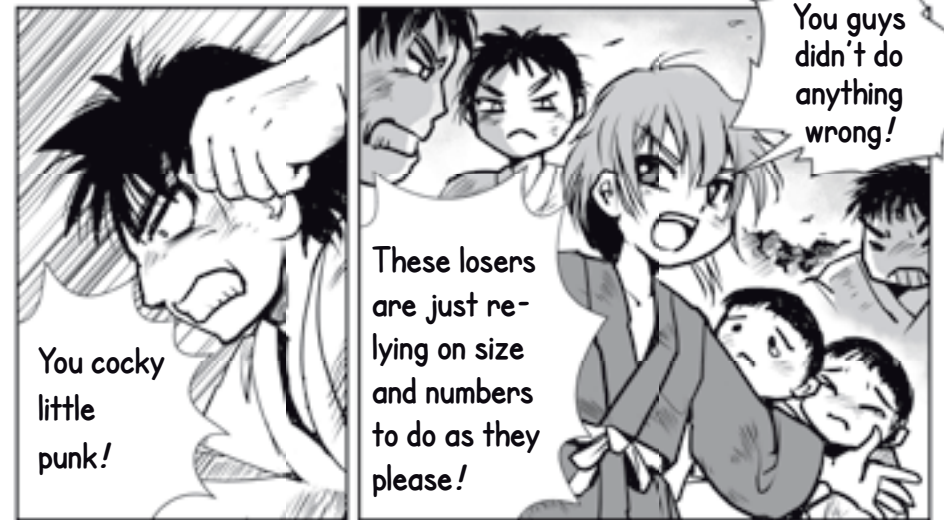
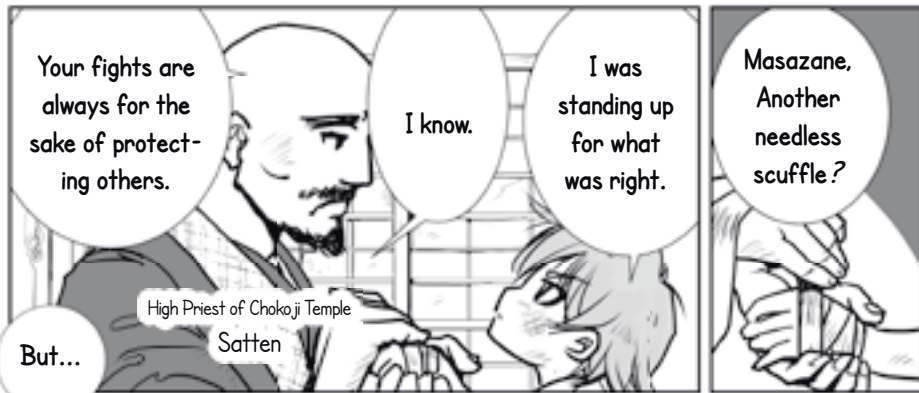
Original character design by Higa Yukari

Drawing by Gokokuhojo

Scenario by Admix



戦国ダンシ





Music to my ears...

Tonight, let us rest and recover our strength.

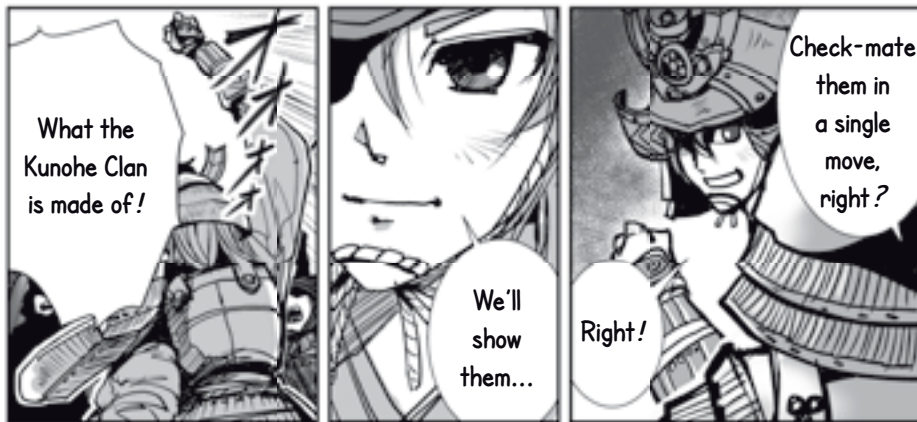
It's been a long and grueling march.



When we've drawn out the enemy,

Tomorrow, advance the infantry first.

send the cavalry around back and cut off their retreat.

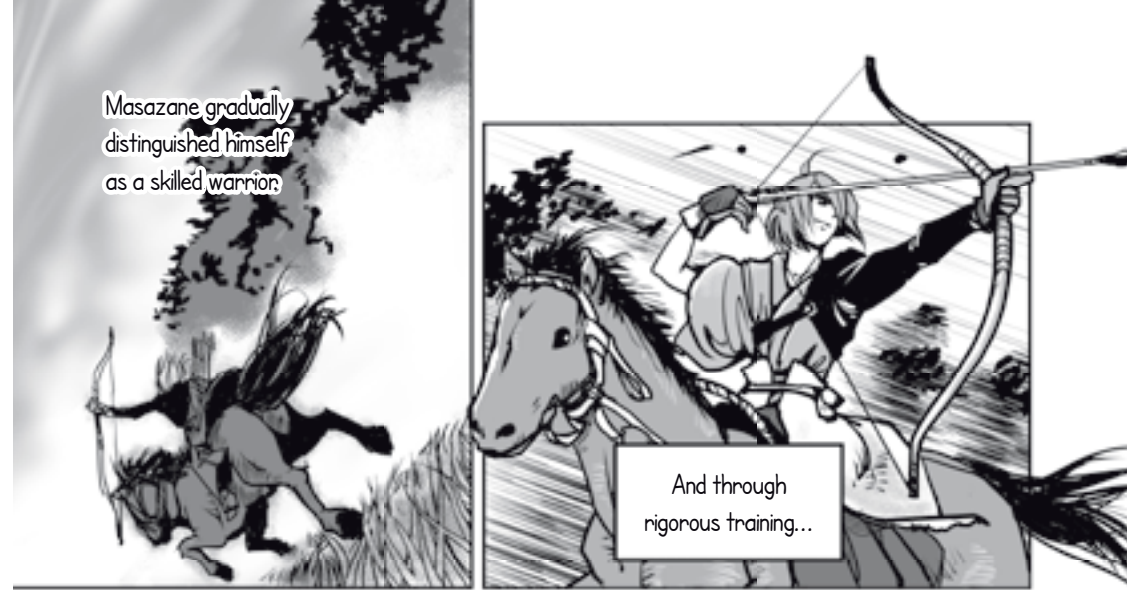


What the Kunohe Clan is made of!

We'll show them...

Right!

Check-mate them in a single move, right?



Masazane gradually distinguished himself as a skilled warrior.

And through rigorous training...



It was in 1569, in battle against the Ando Clan that his name became known far and wide.



Everyone! Halt!

...

Lord Masazane! Shall we press the attack?



Protect our lord!

Who are you!?

Aaahhh!

My lord!



Unforgivable.



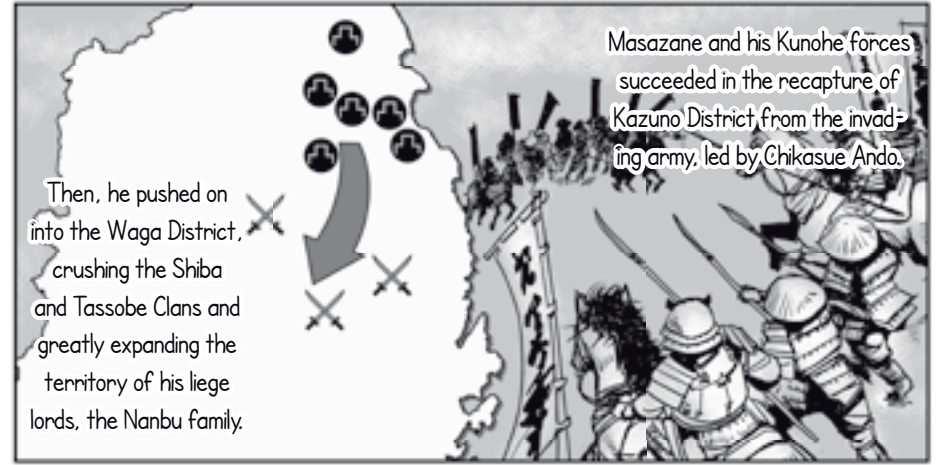
How dare they lay hands on our young lord Harutsugu...



He was only 13 years old.

MY LORD!

Harutsugu's death is cloaked in mystery. Some say he died of disease, others, that he was assassinated by Nobunao's supporters.



Masazane and his Kunohe forces succeeded in the recapture of Kazuno District from the invading army, led by Chikasue Ando.

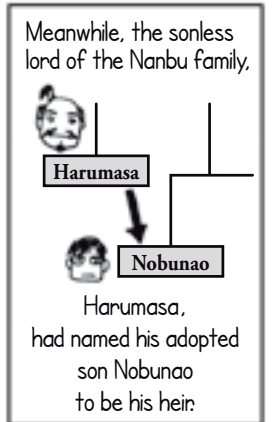
Then, he pushed on into the Waga District, crushing the Shiba and Tassobe Clans and greatly expanding the territory of his liege lords, the Nanbu family.



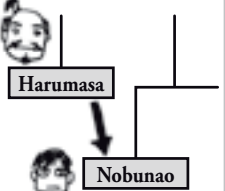
He gradually came to shun Nobunao.



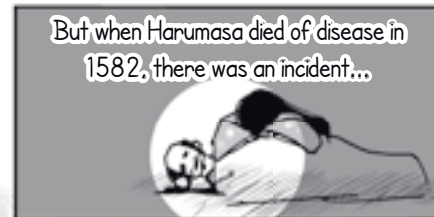
But then a son, Harutsugu, was born to him.



Meanwhile, the sonless lord of the Nanbu family,



Harumasa, had named his adopted son Nobunao to be his heir



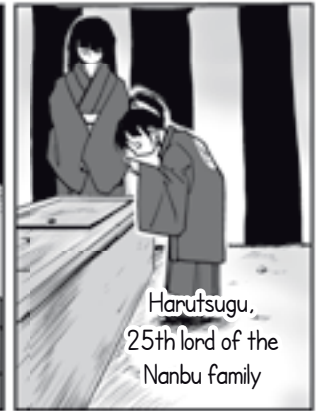
But when Harumasa died of disease in 1582, there was an incident...



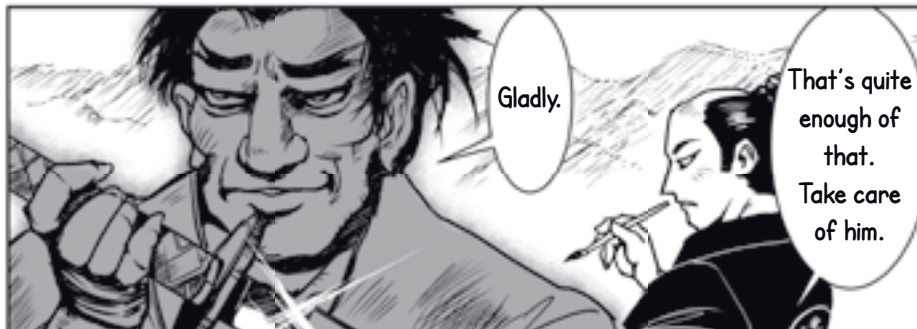
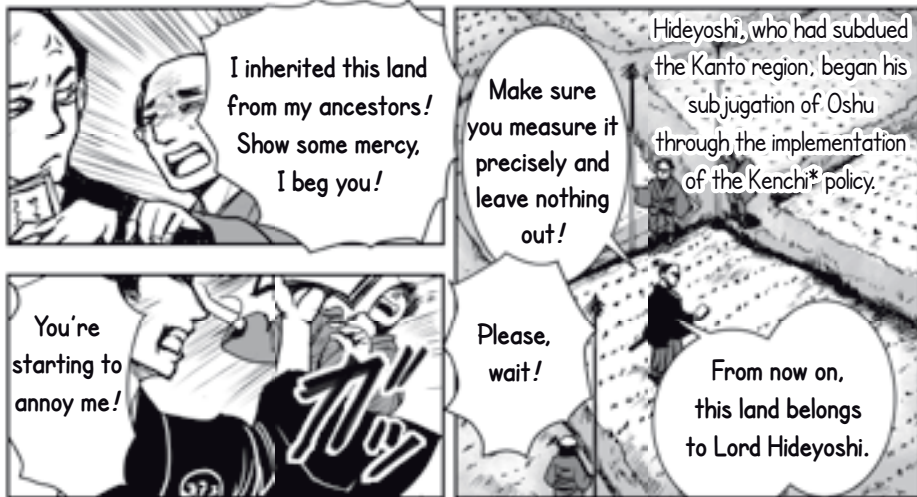
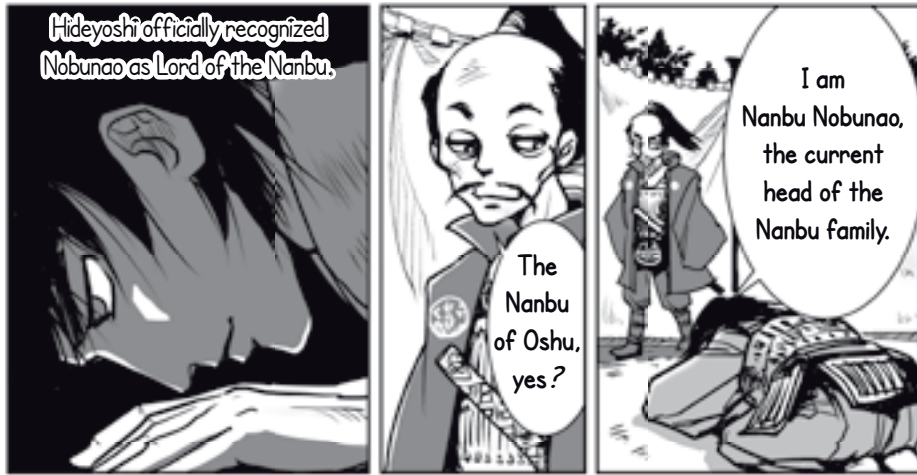
I miss you...



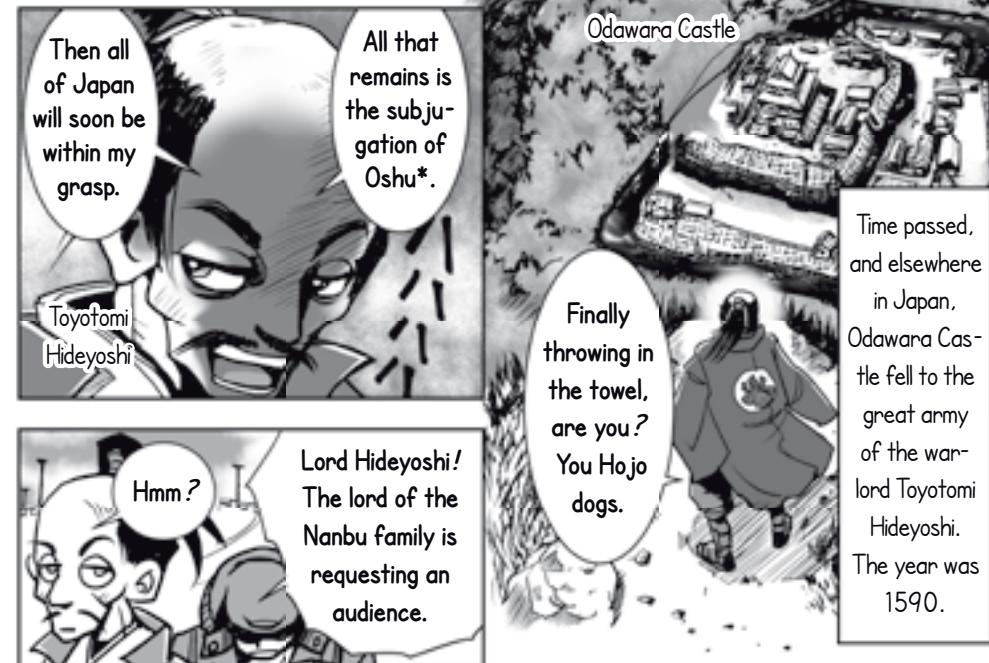
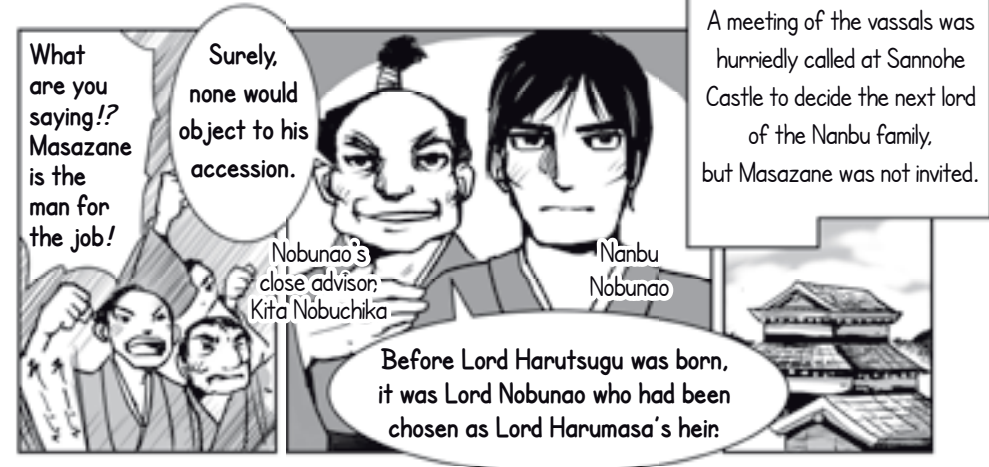
My kind father...



Harutsugu, 25th lord of the Nanbu family



\*Kenchi: A land survey conducted to assess taxes and levies on feudal lords by measuring their peasants' farmland.



\*Oshu: Modern day Tohoku (Fukushima, Miyagi, Iwate and Aomori Prefectures, and part of Akita Prefecture)

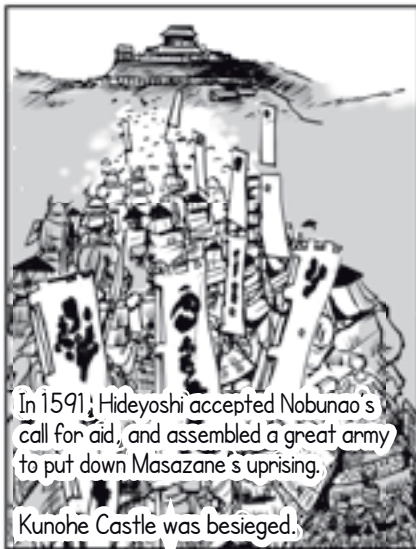
Masazane, who had fought so long to protect the Nanbu family, was grieved at the thought of civil war, but he couldn't stand by and watch as the common people were trampled upon by Hideyoshi and his lackey Nobunao.

Everyone, prepare for war.

Very well.



Kunohe Castle



In 1591, Hideyoshi accepted Nobunao's call for aid, and assembled a great army to put down Masazane's uprising.

Kunohe Castle was besieged.



If it's come to this...

We must call to Lord Hideyoshi for reinforcements.



Defeated samurai from the Kasai, Osaki, Waga and Hienuki regions...

Gathered one after another at Kunohe Castle to appeal for Masazane's aid.



Lord Masazane!

Lord Masazane!



We can't just stand by and do nothing anymore!

Lord Masazane!

Please, you have to strike back!

However, resistance to Hideyoshi's transgressions sprang up all across Oshu.



Indeed. They are, after all, nothing but backcountry samurai. Right about now, I bet they're scurrying around preparing to surrender.

I doubt they've ever seen numbers this great.

Asano Nagamasa, General Magistrate of the Punitive Force

Gamo Ujisato, Commander of the Punitive Force

At this time, the punitive force that had converged on Kunohe Castle numbered 65,000 men.

While Masazane's army, the defenders of the castle, numbered only 5,000.



Well, then...





What?!



Ah!



Samurai of Kamigata!  
This is the spirit of  
the Oshu samurai!



How will we ever show  
our faces before Lord  
Hideyoshi...  
If we can't even take down a  
single castle with this great  
of an army?

To think that  
Oshu was home  
to such fierce  
warriors...



Try as they might,  
in the face of Kunohe Castle's  
natural defenses and  
Masazane's superior strategy,  
the Punitive Force couldn't  
take the castle.

Behold!



However,  
even as the days passed...  
...Masazane didn't budge.

It's a  
beautiful  
thing.



Do you ever  
intend to  
give us battle,  
Masazane?!



Damn it all!  
All forces,  
charge!

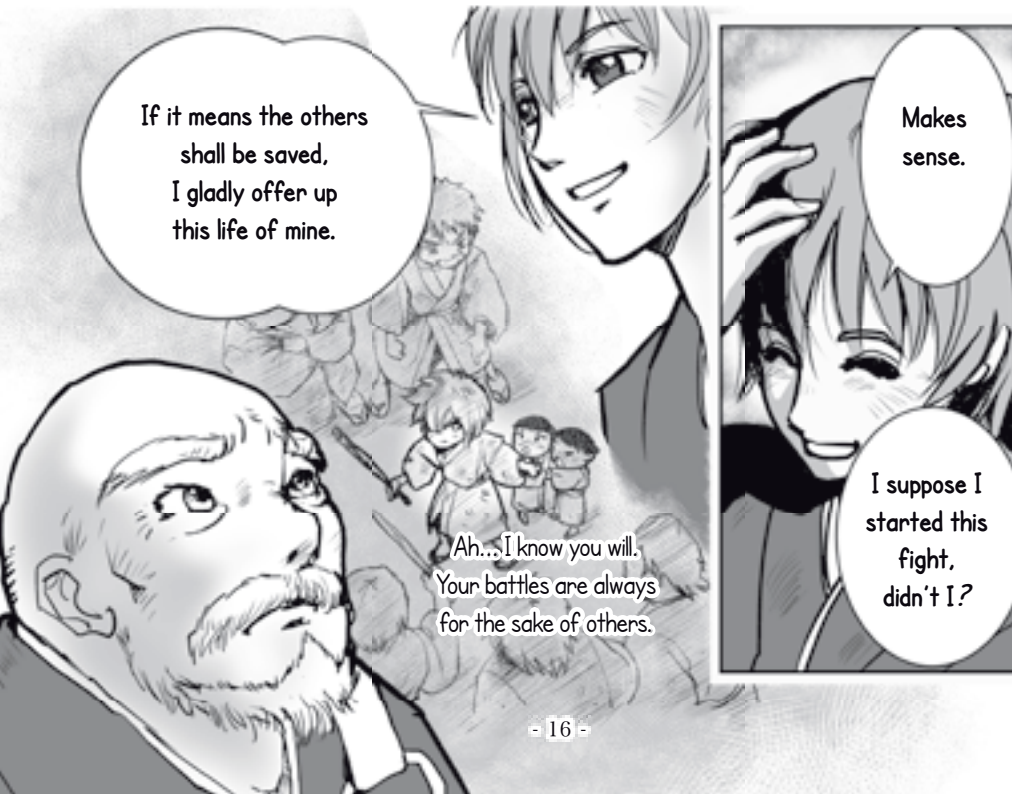






To put it bluntly, if you surrender yourself, our foes say that they will spare the lives of the others.

High Priest, I fail to see how we need to surrender even though we are winning.

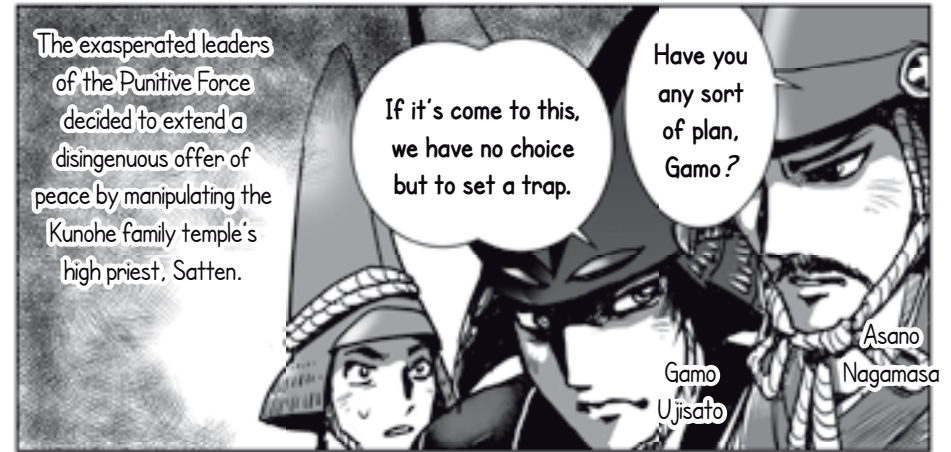


If it means the others shall be saved, I gladly offer up this life of mine.

Ah...I know you will. Your battles are always for the sake of others.

Makes sense.

I suppose I started this fight, didn't I?



The exasperated leaders of the Punitive Force decided to extend a disingenuous offer of peace by manipulating the Kunohe family temple's high priest, Satten.

If it's come to this, we have no choice but to set a trap.

Have you any sort of plan, Gamo?

Asano Nagamasa  
Gamo Ujisato



Indeed it has.

Ahh.



High Priest!

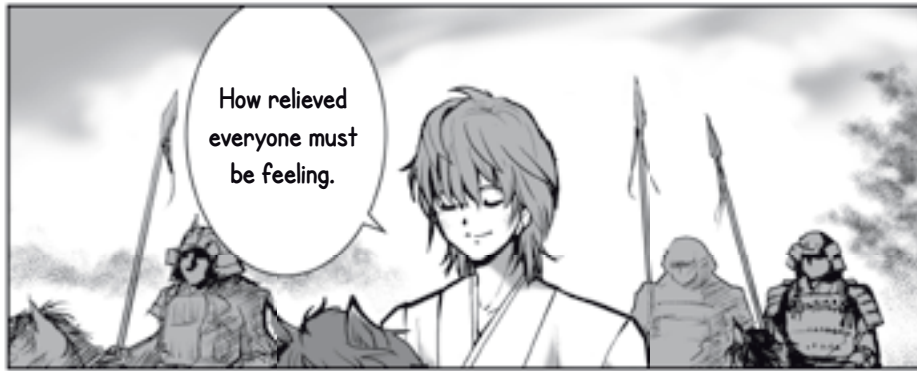
It's been ages!



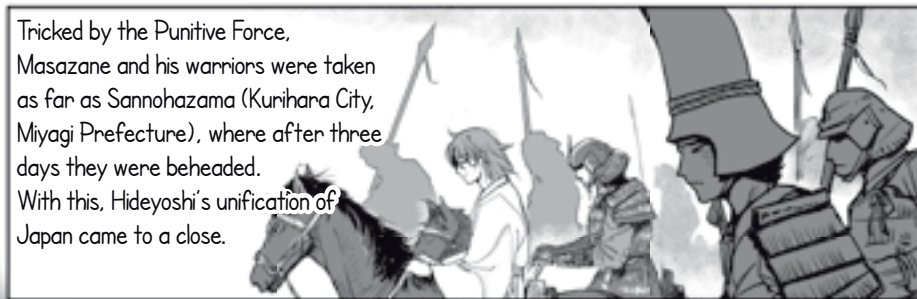
You have made your strength clean. Won't you call off this fighting?

Masazane.



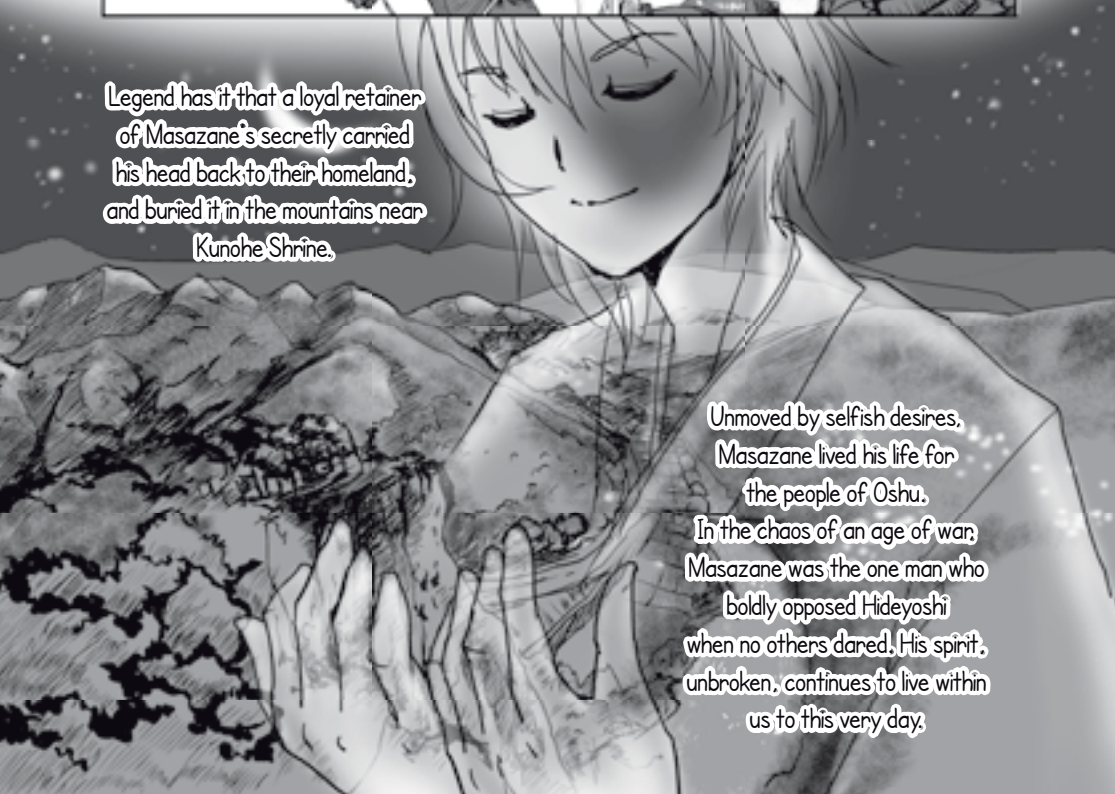


How relieved everyone must be feeling.



Tricked by the Punitive Force, Masazane and his warriors were taken as far as Sannohazama (Kurihara City, Miyagi Prefecture), where after three days they were beheaded. With this, Hideyoshi's unification of Japan came to a close.

Legend has it that a loyal retainer of Masazane's secretly carried his head back to their homeland, and buried it in the mountains near Kunohe Shrine.



Unmoved by selfish desires, Masazane lived his life for the people of Oshu. In the chaos of an age of war, Masazane was the one man who boldly opposed Hideyoshi when no others dared. His spirit, unbroken, continues to live within us to this very day.



Ever since you were a boy.

You've been a paragon of a samurai,

I'm sorry, Masazane.



Heeding the words of High Priest Satten, Masazane clad himself in funeral robes...

...and with 7 of his warriors in tow, he rode out and surrendered.



Now the battle is over...



And slaughtered all those within.



Afterwards, despite Masazane's surrender, the enemy surged into the castle...

### Sannohe Castle

(Aomori Prefecture, Sannohe Town)

Built by 24th head of the family, Nanbu Harumasa, this castle is called the "birthplace of the Nanbu." The present day castle remains have been converted into Shiroyama Koen Park, and, in addition to the reconstructed castle gate and tower, the original stone walls and earthen fortifications still remain.



### Kunohe Castle Ruins

(Iwate Prefecture, Ninohe City)

Surrounded on the three sides by the Mabechigawa, Nekobuchigawa and Shiratorigawa rivers, Kunohe Castle was a flatland-mountain-style castle used as the headquarters of the Kunohe clan. After the fall of the castle in the wake of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's second repression of Oshu, it was rebuilt in the early-modern style and renamed Fukuoka Castle, whereupon it briefly became the main castle of the Nanbu family. The stone walls that remain in the honmaru (castle keep) area are some of the oldest in Tohoku.



### Choko-Ji

(Iwate Prefecture, Kunohe Village)

Built in 1504, this old temple is known for being the ancestral family temple of the Kunohe branch of the Nanbu family. The giant ginkgo tree growing in the temple yard is said to have been planted by Masazane himself before setting out for battle.



### Kunohe Masazane's Burial Mound

(Iwate Prefecture, Kunohe Village)

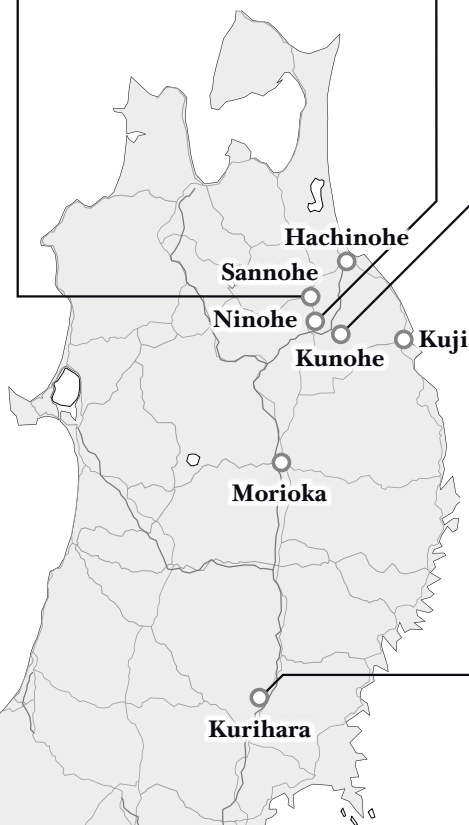
According to legend, after Masazane was beheaded at Sannohazama (Kurihara City, Miyagi Prefecture), a retainer secretly carried his head back to the Kunohe homeland and buried it here.



### Kunohe Masazane's Decapitation Site

(Kurihara City, Miyagi Prefecture)

The site where Kunohe Masazane was taken and executed. The purification pond where his head is said to have been washed and the shrine, where his bones are said to be buried, are both located here.



Chokoji Temple,  
High Priest  
**Satten**



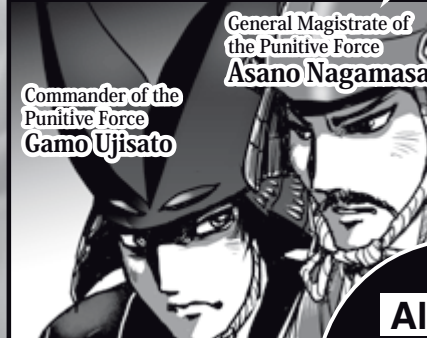
## Kunohe Masazane



Troops:  
**5000**

**VS**

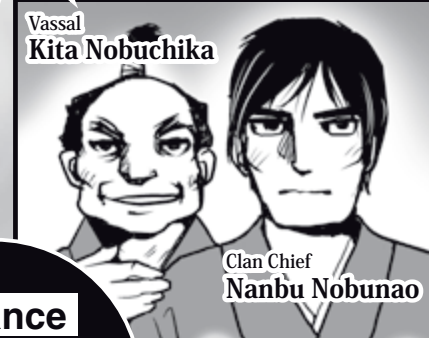
### Toyotomi Forces



Commander of the  
Punitive Force  
**Gamo Ujisato**

General Magistrate of  
the Punitive Force  
**Asano Nagamasa**

### Main Family of Nanbu



Vassal  
**Kita Nobuchika**

Clan Chief  
**Nanbu Nobunao**

**Alliance**  
Troops:  
**65,000**

### Toyotomi Hideyoshi



## Important Characters

## Important Locations From The Manga



If you read the manga and still want to know more, by all means, please come visit us at the Kunohe Castle ruins. Our guides will provide tours and information.  
(Japanese language only)

Guides: Kunohe Volunteer Guide Association  
 Season: From mid-April to late November.  
 Time: Between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.  
 Contact: Ninohe Tourism Association  
 TEL: 0195-23-3641 (Japanese language only)  
 FAX: 0195-23-2343

A reservation made at least a week in advance is necessary for those wishing to receive a guided tour.

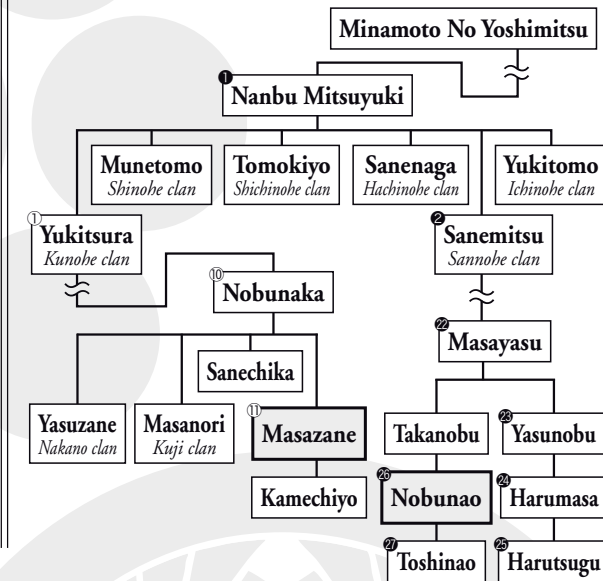
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 English translation by Adam Fink (Kunohe Masazane Bushotai)  
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This manga is a work of fiction based on real historical events. Some sections may differ from historical reality.

A branch of the Nanbu family, the Kunohe clan traces its origins back to the family founder Yukitsura, Mitsuyuki's sixth son. Masazane is said to have been the 11th head of the Kunohe clan after Yukitsura. Masazane had three younger brothers, but in the wake of the fall of Kunohe Castle, the entire family was put to the sword and the bloodline came to an end. Masazane's son Kamechiyo is theorized to have either fled to Takko Town in Aomori Prefecture, where he was captured and beheaded, or to have escaped to Edo and survived. On the other hand, Masazane's foe Nobunao was born as the illegitimate eldest son of Ishikawa Takano bu, second son of Masayasu, the 22nd Nanbu Lord. Nobunao married the daughter of his sonless cousin, the 24th Nanbu Lord Harumasa, and was thus installed in Sannohe Castle as Harumasa's adoptive heir. After the death of Nanbu Harutsugu, he became the 26th head of the Nanbu family.

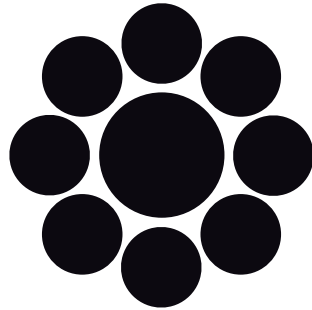
The circled numbers beside the names represent generational numbers, with Nanbu Mitsuyuki's generation being the first of the Nanbu clan, and Kunohe Yukitsura's being the first of the Kunohe clan. Several theories exist regarding the genealogy prior to the 26th generation chieftain Nanbu Nobunao, and the family tree shown here is a single example of such.



#### Year - Event

- 1536 - Masazane is born.
- 1582 - Death of Harumasa. Eldest son Harutsugu succeeds him but dies suddenly.  
Nobunao becomes the new head of the family.
- 1590 - Nobunao participates in the siege of Odawara Castle.  
The Nanbu domain is approved by Hideyoshi, who then begins the repression of Oshu.
- 1591 - March: A full-blown battle between the Nanbu and Kunohe families begins, with the Kunohe family gaining the upper hand.  
April: Nobunao appeals to Hideyoshi for reinforcements.  
July 24th: The Punitive Force marches out from Aizu (Fukushima Prefecture).  
August 24th: The Punitive Force encircles Kunohe Castle.  
September 4th: Masazane accepts the Punitive Force's offer of peace talks and surrenders.  
September 20th: By the order of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Masazane, aged 56, is beheaded in Sannohazama.

## Abbreviated Nanbu-Kunohe family tree Kunohe Masazane Timeline



戦国ダンシ

# 九戸政実物語