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The Battle of Nagashino took place on June 28th 1575. The forces of Takeda Katsuyori clashed with the allied forces of Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu on the Shitaragahara plain near Nagashino Castle, located in central Japan. Takeda Katsuyori was the son of the late great general Takeda Shingen and was ready to try and make a name for himself. Tokugawa Ieyasu owned the lands to the south, along the main avenue of approach through central Japan to Kyoto, the Imperial capital. The Takeda and Tokugawa had fought many times before. Allied to Ieyasu was Oda Nobunaga, the nominal hegemon of central Japan. Nobunaga controlled the heartland of Japan around Kyoto and was an innovator with firearms and tactics in Japanese warfare.

This analysis will use three sources to describe the Battle of Nagashino. The first of these are two books written by Stephen R. Turnbull, one of the most prolific authors of Japanese military history in the English language. These books are Nagashino 1575: Slaughter at the Barricades (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2000.) and Battles of the Samurai (New York: Arms and Armour Press, 1987). Mr. Turnbull's books are very detailed but slightly inconsistent. The last source is *"Nagashino no Tatakai"*, *Sengoku no Kassen,* #85, *Bessatsu Rekishi Tokuhon*. (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Orai Co., 1998). This is the definitive Japanese account of the battle.

The Takeda held the eastern mountain provinces of Kai and Shinano. To control Japan one had to control the center capital city of Kyoto. The first territories on the way to Kyoto were Totomi and Mikawa, owned by Tokugawa Ieyasu. Through these two ran the main highway between eastern Japan and the capital. His father had tried defeating the Tokugawa several times, until stopped by a sniper's bullet. In May of 1575 Katsuyori saw his chance to finish what his father had started. A high-ranking Tokugawa official offered to open the gates of Okazaki Castle, Ieyasu's capital, to the Takeda army.

Taking Okazaki would isolate Ieyasu from his ally Nobunaga and allow Katsuyori to destroy the Tokugawa with ease. On 30 May Katsuyori left his home territories with approximately 15,000 men, half of the Takeda army. The other half was engaged to the north against the Uesugi clan. Unfortunately the plot was discovered and the traitor executed. Realizing that an attack on the castle was no longer feasible, Katsuyori bypassed and attacked Yoshida Castle to the south. The Tokugawa had anticipated his secondary objective, however, and had reinforced the castle with 6,000 men. Not wishing for a prolonged siege against a strong garrison, the Takeda retreated up the Toyokawa River, arriving at Nagashino Castle on 14 June. Nagashino Castle was a small fortification guarded by 500 men. The attack began on 17 June and continued for several days until the 22nd, when after taking heavy casualties the Takeda decided to starve the defenders out. A samurai named Torii Sune'emon escaped the siege carrying a message asking for relief. Ieyasu was meeting with his ally Oda Nobunaga at Okazaki, deciding what to do. The message helped to spur the two warlords into action. Torii Sune'emon returned to Nagashino to inform his comrades, but was captured by the Takeda. Katsuyori offered to spare his life if he would shout to the garrison that no relief was coming. Bravely, Sune'emon shouted that help was on its way and not to give up. The Takeda then put him to death. Both they and the garrison knew that the Oda-Tokugawa combined army was on its way.

Intelligence support at this time in Japanese warfare was very rudimentary. Spies and scouts reported enemy positions and compositions to their commanders. Ieyasu's counterintelligence had discovered the plot against Okazaki, and his spies and scouts had tracked the Takeda well enough to allow Ieyasu to anticipate Katsuyori's moves. Torii Sunee'mon's report allowed Ieyasu and Nobunaga to gauge the situation and plan their attack; it's an easy conclusion to assume they had a good idea of the Takeda size and composition. Katsuyori also used spies and scouts, and made decisions based on the reports: he changed course after learning his plot failed at Okazaki; he retreated from Yoshida Castle once he ascertained its size; and now he knew an Oda-Tokugawa relief army was coming to aid Nagashino Castle.

As with any battle, terrain and weather played a significant part at Nagashino. June is Japan's rainy season, and the night of the 27th there was a heavy rainstorm. The day of the battle, June 28th, was hot and humid. The battlefield, Shitaragahara, was five kilometers southwest of Nagashino Castle. Key

terrain in the area included Nagashino Castle, Tobigasuyama Hill across the Toyokawa River, and Mount Gambo, which anchored the Oda flank. The sources do not significantly discuss avenues of approach, but none of the terrain was severely restricted, since horse cavalry and infantry could move through the woods and rolling hills fairly well. Obstacles to movement were the Onogawa and Takigawa Rivers, which joined together at Nagashino to form the Toyokawa River; these framed the battlefield. Woods extended from the Onogawa to about 200-400 meters from the Tokugawa and Oda lines near Mount Gambo, and 100 meters from the lines was the Rengogawa River, a small little stream with high banks that would break up a cavalry charge. The ground itself was muddy from the heavy rain. Lastly the Oda and Tokugawa forces built their own obstacles, a loose palisade halfway between the Rengogawa and their front lines, high enough to prevent a horse jumping over it. The fence provided some cover for the Oda gunners from the Takeda cavalry, and had gaps to allow counterattacks. Observation from the Oda positions was limited to the open 200-400 meters from their position to the woods on the other side of Shitaragahara. Fields of fire were only limited to the range of a matchlock musket, which was 200 meters. Once the Takeda left the woodline, there was no cover or concealment available except possibly the Rengogawa's banks.

The Oda army was 30,000 strong and the Tokugawa force was 8,000. This included a large matchlock corps of 3,000 gunners. Against them, the Takeda had 15,000 soldiers, one-third of which were the famous Takeda cavalry. Technology wise both sides were relatively similar. The Oda relied more on matchlock and spear-carrying foot soldiers while the Takeda relied on their cavalry, but overall the weapons were the same. A baggage train commanded by the "S4" ensured the frontline troops were supplied. Logistics did not appear to be a problem for either side at Nagashino with the exception of the garrison of the castle running out of food. Command and control differences played a large part in the battle. Oda Nobunaga gave the important job of controlling the 3,000 peasant-footsoldier matchlockmen to seven members of his personal bodyguard. They managed to keep the sometimes unreliable *ashigaru* in formation. The Takeda, on the other hand, had their best commanders with the forward cavalry units. Usually this worked since the cavalry led the charge, but it was the cavalry that was to suffer devastating casualties, and Katsuyori lost many of his most valuable commanders this way. As mentioned before, intelligence collection was somewhat advanced, but processing was very rudimentary. Scouts and spies

reported directly to the commanders of both armies, who evaluated the information with the help of their generals. Direction and processing were conducted at this level, and information was disseminated usually in orders to subordinate commanders. The Oda and Tokugawa armies relied heavily on the *ashigaru* (peasant footsoldier) as spearmen, archers, and gunners, and spent much time training these lower class soldiers into disciplined troops. Gunners shot at the enemy while archers covered the reload time and spearmen protected them from cavalry charge. The Takeda, on the other hand, used their battle-tested cavalry to charge the enemy and force him to break, while the footsoldiers followed behind to clean up the disorganized enemy. The Oda and Tokugawa army's biggest advantage was most likely leadership: On the same side you find the "three unifiers" of Japan, Oda Nobunaga, Tokugawa Ieyasu, who later became Shogun, and Hashiba Hideyoshi, one of Nobunaga's generals and later unifier of Japan. Takeda Katsuyori had many good generals and commanders with much experience underneath him, however he failed to follow their advice to retreat and reaped the inevitable reward.

The mission of the Oda-Tokugawa forces was to defeat the Takeda cavalry charge and then destroy the Takeda as an effective fighting force, forcing them to retreat. The Takeda mission was to decisively defeat the combined forces, forcing a retreat and allowing the Takeda to gain control of Nagashino Castle. The Oda-Tokugawa forces formed in line running from north to south from Mount Gambo down to the Toyokawa River, about 2,000 meters. Fifty meters in front of the main positions, the palisade was erected to provide protection to the gunner force of 3,000. Fifty meters in front of the palisade was the Rengogawa River. The Takeda left 3,000 men to continue the siege and moved 12,000 in four groups to the woodline 200-400 meters away from the Oda across Shitaragahara. Katsuyori placed three groups of 3,000 each forward, and kept a reserve of 3,000 soldiers. At 0600 on 28 June, Katsuyori gave the signal to attack, and the three forward units charged out of the woodline to attack the Oda lines. However the Rengogawa considerably slowed the charge, and at this point the Oda gunners opened fire at close range, further breaking any momentum. Using a volley fire system with three ranks, they quickly fired again and again, destroying the Takeda charge. This is the first documented use of large-scale volley fire worldwide, 25 years before it is seen in Europe. Takeda samurai who managed to break through were cut down in isolated pockets as they came through the palisade. While this was going on, an Oda raid of 3,000 men had maneuvered to the Takeda rear and attacked the siege forces, routing

them and relieving the castle defenders. Back at Shitaragahara, the battle continued in much the same way until 0900. Takeda cavalry would charge and be repulsed by Oda gunfire. The next wave of Takeda would charge, but was even further slowed by the bodies of their comrades, and would be halted. On the northern flank, the outermost Oda unit retreated, causing the Takeda to chase, only to be hit in the flank by another Oda unit. Fierce hand-to-hand fighting raged on the southern flank, unprotected by woods or palisade. At this point Katsuyori committed his reserves and personal bodyguard, charging personally at the Oda lines. Again the result was the same, and the charge was stopped. The battle degenerated into brutal hand-to-hand combat as the Oda samurai charged out from the palisade. This continued until 1300, when Nobunaga signaled his men to withdraw to the palisade. Temporarily disengaged, the Takeda began to retreat. Nobunaga ordered a pursuit, and despite the valiant attempts of Katsuyori's generals to fight a rearguard action, many Takeda samurai were run down and killed. Takeda Katsuyori withdrew back towards his home provinces. His northern commander had broken contact on the other front and hurried south to cover Katsuyori's withdrawal, and the Oda-Tokugawa force broke off pursuit at the border. Total Takeda casualties were 10,000 out of 15,000, 67%. Most of the Takeda high-ranking commanders had died leading their units in the charge, and many more had died fighting during the withdrawal. Oda-Tokugawa casualties totaled 6,000, around 16% of their force. One third of the Takeda army was destroyed along with half of the senior command. This eliminated the Takeda as a contender for power and began their destruction. The Tokugawa completely destroyed them in 1582. Victory at Nagashino secured the Oda eastern flank, and allowed Oda Nobunaga to consolidate his power around the capital and expand to the west.

Several things caused the Oda to win. Oda Nobunaga correctly read the ground and determined that he could withstand a cavalry charge. Katsuyori counted on the cavalry charge to break the lower class Oda troops and cause a rout. Because of the natural and man-made obstacles, this did not happen. Katsuyori also assumed that the rain would nullify the effects of the Oda matchlocks, but the Oda soldiers succeeded in keeping their powder dry. Katsuyori decided not to follow the advice of his generals, and it cost him dearly. Two intelligence "lessons learned" are apparent. The first is that Katsuyori's scouts did not do a good job reconnoitering the Oda positions, because they would have had to have seen the palisade. This reconnaissance failure caused the Takeda to charge at fortifications they could not breach.

The second lesson is the value of Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield and knowing your opponent's doctrine. The mighty Takeda cavalry charge had beaten Nobunaga before, and he focused all of his preparation on breaking the momentum of the charge, from choosing the battlefield to emplacing obstacles to developing a sustained rate of fire with single shot matchlocks. Katsuyori focused only on his own tactics, since they had won for him before, and did not properly assess the terrain and enemy forces.