

# KUSUNOKI MASASHIGE Aids GODAIGO - *The Death of KAMAKURA*

See "GOTOBA and GEN-RYAKU KYOTO" for a history of the HOJO/KAMAKURA power play  
(from the book: sho-shin, Appraisal & Price - KOTO)

## GODAIGO's Dream

After 150 years of absolute HOJO rule stationed comfortably at KAMAKURA, a capitol of over one million, - with its shinning palaces, state houses, homes of nobility, its villas, and the full running financial engine of Japan's wealth and elite, - Emperor GODAIGO awoke, in far-a-way KYOTO, from a dream...

He dreamt a KUSUNOKI "Camphor Tree" had provided shelter.

This story begins with the 500 warriors that rallied under the vision of one SAMURAI, a vision seen only through squinting eyes.

*That they few might prevail - against the vast architecture of HOJO power;  
- by running in the delighted laughter of the Seven Gods  
...with an Emperor's dream*



GODAIGO-SAMA

KUSUNOKI MASASHIGE accepted the appeal for assistance from GODAIGO who had fled KYOTO to Mt. KASAGI on the YAMATO border.

The HOJO BAKUFU, chasing GODAIGO, had attacked the wrong Temple, which then helped clarify sides. It was the warrior-monks, scattered Imperialists and their Emperor running amok in the mountains.

MASASHIGE stretched his gambit with creative warfare. He built AKASAKA in KAWACHI and defended it with hidden flank attacks, huge rolling logs and the liberal use of boiling pitch and water. On the last night, sneaking off small groups, he buffaloed the entire HOJO force by leaving a gigantic and dramatically set funeral pyre with one sobbing attendant claiming the great KUSUNOKI Clan had found their destiny with mass suicide. Earning the empathy of all, the aghast HOJO army - let the sobber go.

The HOJO settled up by taking Mt. KASAGI and GODAIGO with it. He was exiled to GOTOBA's OKI Island - but escaped in the year on a fishing boat, secreted under seaweed.

MASASHIGE had by then built the unconquerable CHIHAYA Castle, and his vision now stood out for the imagination of all. With great resources tied up at CHIHAYA, the BAKUFU sent their general, ASHIKAGA TAKAUJI to attack GODAIGO directly. TAKAUJI, with MINAMOTO blood, saw a greedy chance. If he reversed sides and supported the Emperor, he might then finagle himself a new SHOGUNATE. - So he switched sides.



NITTA YOSHISADA

With TAKAUJI's army gone over, and the engaged forces at CHIHAYA, a new player from KOZUKE, NITTA YOSHISADA, takes the field for the South against the suddenly vulnerable KAMAKURA capitol itself.

A BAKUFU veteran of AKASAKA, YOSHISADA had been convinced of the Imperial cause by GODAIGOs' son, Prince MORINAGA. After impregnable resistance in the hills, YOSHISADA threw his TACHI into the sea in a crazed appeal to "The Divine Goddess of the Sun," AMATERASU, who withdrew the tide allowing his successful approach from the beach. The 9th and last KAMAKURA SHIKKEN, HOJO TAKATOKI with all his stable committed SEPPUKU, MAY 22, 1333.

*Continue* →

## GODAIGO's dream

...And KAMAKURA burned  
- under the impassive gaze of its great DAIBUTSU Buddha

The Imperial Restoration was complete. A new era was dawning. MASASHIGE was awarded KAWACHI-no-KAMI, and the provinces of SETTSU, KAWACHI and IZUMI. YOSHISADA became HARIMA-no-KAMI with KOZUKE and HARIMA as fief.

TAKAUJI received MUSASHI, SHIMOSA and HITACHI. But, of course, the ex-HOJO General ASHIKAGA TAKAUJI, whose mother was HOJO, was there to be SHOGUN. He was HOJO blood but would never have held HOJO power. He had forsaken them for the SHOGUNATE, but the position was now given GODAIGOs' son, Prince MORINAGA. TAKAUJI's SHOGUNAL design, however, would soon find its full expression.

HOJO TAKATOKIs' son, TOKIYUKI, raised troops in SHINANO the following year and retook KAMAKURA under the HOJO banner.

GODAIGO sent his general, ASHIKAGA TAKAUJI who destroyed this last HOJO, but once in KAMAKURA pronounced himself SHOGUN and distributed land to his generals. Branded a traitor, NITTA YOSHISADA was sent against him.

After two wins, YOSHISADA's forces were routed on HAKONE Road and TAKAUJI marched on KYOTO, defeating MASASHIGE on the ancient battle ground at UJI. - GODAIGO was forced to flee to the YAMATO hills, once again.

Young KITABATAKE AKIYE whose family held DEWA and MUTSU for the Southern cause, joined the monks of ENRYAKU-JI and defeated the ASHIKAGA in OMI and, uniting with YOSHISADA and MASASHIGE, expelled TAKAUJI from KYOTO allowing Emperor GODAIGO a triumphant return.



ASHIKAGA TAKAUJI

Driven south, TAKAUJI then assembled a new army in KYUSHU and advanced north for a final show down with Imperial forces.

YOSHISADA's army withdrew northward along the ASHIKAGA advance. At council, MASASHIGE's plan to trap TAKAUJI in an evacuated KYOTO was rejected by the Emperor.

YOSHISADA and MASASHIGE were then bound to meet TAKAUJI on the HYOGO plain just inside SETTSU at the MINATO-GAWA River.

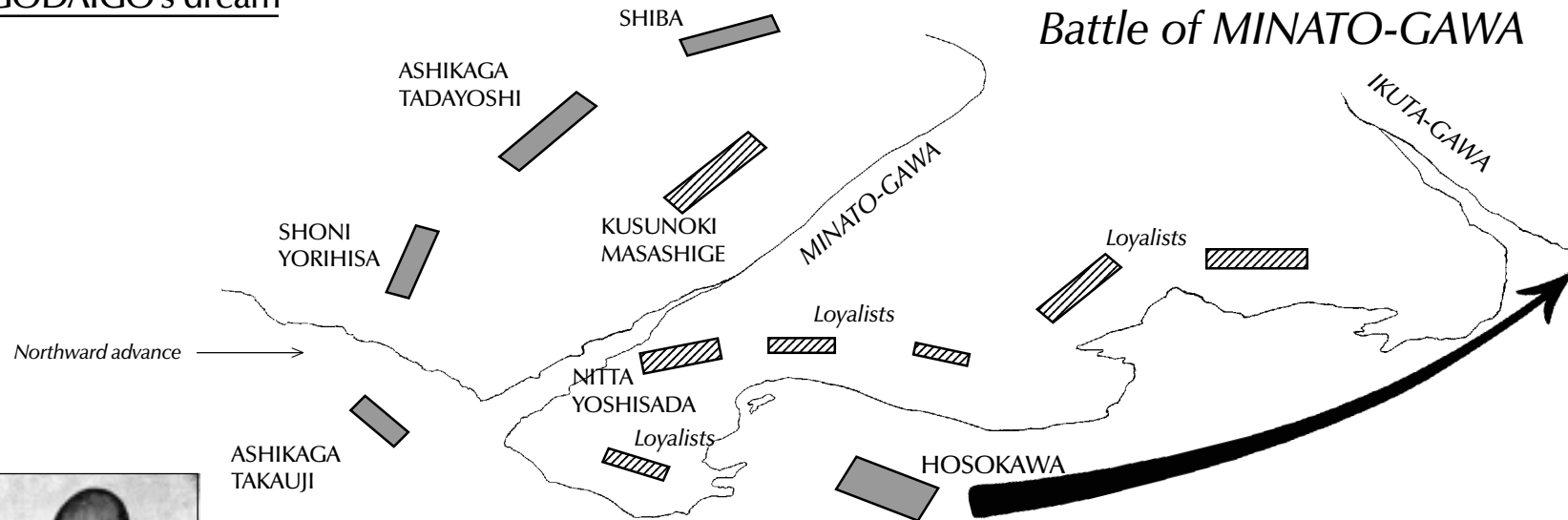
MASASHIGE knew this plan was lost and resolved to die, telling his 10 year old son, his dying for this just cause was a just death.

It was summer

The river at his back, MASASHIGE's men held the field facing three armies, the SHIBA to his right, ASHIKAGA TADAYOSHI at left, and SHONI at the sea to the far left. NITTA YOSHISADA was behind, across river to his left, standing its mouth against the SHONI to his right and the sea-borne armies of ASHIKAGA TAKAUJI and the HOSOKAWA.

The HOSOKAWA attacked from the sea but were driven back. While the SHONI engaged YOSHISADA at the river, the HOSOKAWA made a landing at IKUTA, 4 miles up and advanced on his rear, - forcing retreat.

## GODAIGO's dream



KUSUNOKI MASASHIGE

MASASHIGE stood off the SHIBA and TADAYOSHI, but soon received pressure on the left from TAKAUJI, and the HOSOKAWA coming across the river on his back.

KUSUNOKI MASASHIGE received eleven wounds before taking his SEPPUKU, in that afternoon heat, July 5, 1336. He is honored as one of the greatest heroes in all of Japanese history for his noble and selfless support of the Imperial cause. The NANKO-SAN Temple was erected for him where he died.

## 1348: KUSUNOKI and the Imperial Cause

MASASHIGE's son, KUSUNOKI MASATSURA rose to take the leadership of his clan and fought the ASHIKAGA, driving the HOSOKAWA and their re-enforcements from KAWACHI. In response, TAKAUJI sent the KO brothers, MORONAO (who had destroyed KITABATAKE AKIYIE ten years before in 1338) and MOROYASU, with 60,000 men.

MASATSURA withdrew from the first encounter to YOSHINO. There, he was received by the 21 year old new Emperor, GOMURAKAMI-SAMA, who impressed his protector with the supreme gratitude for the KUSUNOKI family's Imperial bargain and the Emperor's personal great confidence. With his men, he visited the tomb of GODAIGO-TENNO before taking leave to the battle. He cut his farewell poem into the door of the NYOIRIN-JI Temple - with the point of an arrow:

"I could not return - I presume  
So I will keep my name...  
with those of departed archers"

KUSUNOKI MASATSURA, his brother MASATOKI and cousin WADA TAKAHIDE died with all their partisans at SHIJO-NAWATE defending the Imperial cause. He was 22. The SHIJO-NAWATE JINJA, at the foot of nearby Mt. IIMORI, commemorates him.



Last poem at NYOIRIN-JI

