The Nagai clan were originally retainers of the Saito clan, the deputy military governors of Mino (present-day Gifu). The Nagai clan seized power during a period of political turmoil for the Saito clan, and by the end of 1525 the Nagai had overthrown them entirely and sent them into exile along with domain ruler, Toki Yoshinori (1502–1582). Nagai Shinzaemonnojo (life dates unknown) was one of the Nagai clan samurai who participated in the coup. Shinzaemonnojo was not born a samurai, but grew up as a monk in Kyoto, became a successful oil merchant, and then joined the Nagai clan. He eventually became the head of the Nagai clan and took control of Inabayama castle. His son, Saito Dosan (1494–1556), would succeed him as ruler of Inabayama castle after Shinzaemonnojo’s death in 1533.