

Saito Dosan's (1494–1556) son was named Saito Yoshitatsu. Yoshitatsu an imposing man who stood 197 cm tall when the average height at the time was 157 cm, and just as ruthless as his father. In 1554, Dosan was 60 years old, and the question of who would succeed him was becoming more and more pressing. Rumors were circulating that Yoshitatsu was not Dosan's natural son, but the son of Toki Yoshinori (1502–1582), Dosan's former lord. Other rumors suggested that Dosan was considering his other sons, or even his son-in-law, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582). Yoshitatsu was based at Sagiyama Castle, not far from Gifu, and he recognized the opportunity to have a decisive influence on his father's decision. In 1556, Yoshitatsu killed his brothers, brought the majority of Saito clan warriors to his side, and attacked his father in the Battle of Nagaragawa. Dosan was killed in the battle and Yoshitatsu became the ruler of Gifu Castle.

Nobunaga attempted many times to kill Yoshitatsu in revenge, but was defeated each time. In 1559 Yoshitatsu sent a matchlock gunner to assassinate Nobunaga while he was traveling to Kyoto, but the attempt failed. Yoshitatsu died from an illness in 1561 and was succeeded by his teenage son, Saito Tatsuoki.