

## **Tokugawa Ieyasu**

Tokugawa Ieyasu was born in 1542 as the son of a minor lord of the Matsudaira family near modern-day Nagoya. He was raised during the violent Sengoku period which began in 1467, and spent 17 years as lord of Hamamatsu Castle from 1570 until 1586, where he consolidated power and gained support.

Ieyasu fought numerous battles during his rise to power, many of them while he was lord of Hamamatsu Castle. Among these was the Battle of Mikatagahara in 1572 which ended in his worst defeat, with his forces outnumbered by approximately three to one. The opposing general, Takeda Shingen (1521–1573), was a powerful lord whose cavalry tactics obliterated the forces of Ieyasu, and Ieyasu himself barely escaped alive. Arriving back at his castle with a depleted force, Ieyasu nevertheless ordered the gates to remain open and fires to be lit to guide his retreating army home. This confused Shingen's advancing forces, and after an attack by a small group of Ieyasu's men during the night, Shingen retreated the next day, convinced that further reinforcements were on their way.

Ieyasu outlived or bested the other military leaders of his day, one by one, and by 1603, stood virtually unopposed. The Tokugawa family ruled Japan from 1603 until 1867, and oversaw an era of relative peace after hundreds of years of civil war.