

## **Overview of Naegi Castle Site**

Naegi Castle was built in 1526 by Toyama Masatoshi (dates unknown), whose family had served as local administrators of shogunal estates since the fourteenth century (Kamakura period). The sixteenth century was a time of fierce rivalries among the powerful warlords of the surrounding region, and Mt. Takamori, with its steep, rocky terrain, made the Toyama fortress highly defensible.

The Toyama formed relations by marriage with the Oda family of Owari province to the south as well as with the powerful Takeda family of Kai province to the east. From their seat at Naegi castle, they managed to maintain their family line through the tumultuous sixteenth century and, after a brief interim, on into the subsequent Edo period (1603–1867). The castle was occupied by the Toyama family for 270 years until 1871. The newly established Meiji government, which embarked on a policy of rapid modernization from 1868 onward, viewed castles as symbols of the past. Naegi Castle was one of the many castles abandoned and dismantled at that time.

The castle site is located on the north bank of the Kiso River. In the past, the river acted as a partial moat, affording defenders yet another level of protection. In addition to the surviving stone retaining walls, the castle once had gates, watchtowers, enclosures, and the main keep at the top. Today, the supports of the Castle Observation Tower are based in postholes in the rock made to construct the original main keep overlooking the Nakatsugawa area.

In 1981, the castle was designated a National Historic Site, and in 2017, it was recognized by the Japan Castle Foundation as one of the great castles of Japan.