

THE BATTLE OF ANEGAWA, 30 JULY 1570

# TENKA FUBU

The Sengoku period was coming towards its closing years. As Oda Nobunaga slowly realised his goal of setting up a tame shogun, he found that there was an ever-increasing hostility to his expanding power and influence. By 1568 this resistance was beginning to coalesce around the rival *daimyo* (the traditional feudal hereditary landlords) and, ironically, the *Ikko-ikki* (a loose uprising of religious groups who were opposed to the traditional feudal hierarchy of Japanese society).

By Eoghan Kelly



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In an attempt to break the back of both groups, Nobunaga launched a campaign against the *Ikko-ikki* with the strategic goal of breaking their fortified holdings and leaving them without strongholds. Initially Nobunaga had to deal with the Rokkaku clan, who were prepared to go to war over his choice for shogun – but they were far less prepared than Nobunaga, who all but destroyed the clan in a lightning war of 1569. He was then further pushed by the Asakura clan, who were attempting to curtail his rising power, and in 1570 he launched an invasion of their lands. To everyone's surprise, the Azai (or Asai) clan honoured their old alliance with the Asakura clan and broke their more recent alliance with Tokugawa Ieyasu to support Asakura Kageyuki. This was not quite so much of a surprise as Nobunaga portrayed it as, given that the Oda and Azai clans had been involved in a territorial struggle for the control of several provinces for nearly five years at this point. This meant that they effectively rebelled behind their erstwhile ally's back as he advanced against Kageyuki, and Nobunaga was forced

Samurai Sasai Kyuzo Masayasu at the Battle of Anegawa. He tries to avoid musket fire while hiding in the smoke.  
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Oda and allied cavalry press forward. Oda's colours are yellow and black, with a five-petaled flower mon.

to delay his advance in order to protect his lines. As their combined forces joined together, they were bolstered by the addition of *Ikkō-ikki* forces who saw the opportunity to deliver a blow to one of their longstanding foes.

Nobunaga advanced deep into Asakura territory before he was able to force the issue. The combined forces of Azai-Asakura were deployed to the north of the River Ane, commanding the roads that crossed their mountainous lands in one of the few valleys that allowed significant farming. Although Asakura Yoshikage was nominally in charge of his own clan, he handed control of his clan forces to Asakura Kagetaki. The scene was now set, and the battle was fought on 30 July, 1570.

### PLAYING ANEGAWA

The Battle of Anegawa saw the forces of Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu attempting to break the power of the Azai and Asakura clans. It is a huge battle and would be a challenge to play completely on the average wargames table (6' x 4'), even in 6 mm or 2 mm. I have chosen to represent the

whole battle here, rather than reduce it and consequently dilute it.

With this in mind, I would recommend breaking the battle into two or three segments or tables, ideally only playing part of the battle, or using a larger table. This is made easier as the attacking commands were divided into two. However, if you have the re-

sources to play the whole battle, then please do. I can imagine the whole battle in 28 mm on an eighteen-foot-long table would look spectacular!

Each unit of troops represents 400 infantry or 200 cavalry. If you are using an approximate ratio of 20:1, then each infantry unit will have twenty figures and each cavalry

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Samurai allied to Clan Tokugawa advance to meet the Asakura. They bear an ohgi-mon (a fan shaped mon).

unit will have ten. The map indicates which commander is commanding which line of troops and where the different troop types are deployed in that line.

## THE BELLIGERENTS

HQ units are samurai units and are considered unbreakable as they are the retainers of the general – but if he chooses to flee, they will join him.

### ODA CLAN – overall command and command of right wing:

- Oda Nobunaga (excellent general) – rearmost line of right wing (at 11)
- HQ – 4 units of *ashigaru*, 4 units of cavalry, 1 unit of fire-arms, and 1 unit of samurai

### Sub-commanders:

Sakai Masahisa – first line (closest to the river) of the right wing (at 5)

- 1 unit of samurai, 1 unit of fire-arms, 3 units of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry
- Ikeda Tsuneoki – second line of right wing (at 6)
- 1 unit of samurai, 3 units of *ashigaru*, and 2 units of cavalry

Kinoshita Iesada – third line of right wing (at 7)

- 1 unit of samurai, 3 units of *ashigaru*, and 2 units of cavalry

Shibata Katsuie – fourth line of right wing (at 8)

- 1 unit of samurai, 2 units of *ashigaru*, and 2 units of cavalry

Mori Nagayoshi, ‘The Devil’ (rash/impetuous general) – fifth line of right wing (at 9)

- 1 unit of samurai, 2 units of *ashigaru*, and 2 units of cavalry

Sakuma Nobumori – sixth line of right wing (at 10)

- 1 unit of samurai, 2 units of *ashigaru*, and 2 units of cavalry

### LEFT WING AND

### SECOND-IN-COMMAND:

- Tokugawa Ieyasu (inspirational leader) – rearmost line of left wing (at 4)
- HQ – 2 units of *ashigaru*, 2 units of cavalry, and 1 unit of firearms

### Sub-commanders:

Sakai Tadatsugu – the Heavenly King

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Clan Oda and allied cavalry press a charge through a river against the enemy. Rule the realm by military force!

Tokugawa-shitennō (excellent general). First line (closest to the river) of the left wing (at 1)

- 1 unit of samurai, 1 unit of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry

Ishikawa Kazumasa – second line of the left wing (at 2)

- 1 unit of samurai, 1 unit of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry

Ogasawara Ujisuke – third line of the left wing (at 3)

- 1 unit of samurai, 1 unit of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry

**AZAI-ASAKURA CLAN ALLIANCE – overall command and command of left wing:**

Azai Nagamasa – rearmost line of left wing (at H)

- HQ – 2 units of samurai, 5 units of *ashigaru*, 2 units of cavalry, and 1 unit of firearms

**Sub-commanders:**

Isono Kazumasa – first line (closest to the river) of left wing (at D)

- 2 units of samurai, 1 unit of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry

Asai Masazumi – second line of left wing (at E)

- 1 unit of samurai, 1 unit of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry

Atsuji Sadahide – third line of left wing (at F)

- 1 unit of samurai, 1 unit of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry

Shinjo Naoyori – fourth line of left wing (at G)

- 1 unit of samurai, 1 unit of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry

**RIGHT WING AND SECOND-IN-COMMAND:**

Asakura Kagetaki – rearmost line of the right wing (at C)

- HQ – 3 units of samurai, 2 units of cavalry, 1 unit of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of firearms

**Sub-commanders:**

Shinpachiro Maeba (stubborn general) – second line of right wing (at B)

- 2 units of samurai, 4 units of *ashigaru*, and 1 unit of cavalry

Kagenori Asakura – first line of right wing (at A)

- 1 unit of samurai, 4 units of *ashigaru*, and 2 units of cavalry

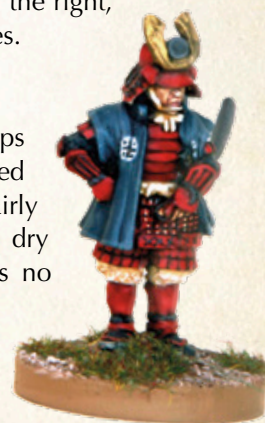
**Deployment**

Ieyasu deployed on the left side of Nobunaga's forces, with his army in successive lines facing the Asakura forces north of the river, who were also deployed in successive lines. Nobunaga, taking the larger share of the army, deployed on the right, opposite the Azai forces.

**Terrain**

The fields are dry. Crops are ready to be harvested and will catch fire fairly easily. The weather is dry and clear and there is no chance of rain.

The river is shallow and gentle flowing;





Samurai allied to Oda and Asai clash for the ford. Note the individual mon symbols and the Buddhist manji symbol.

however, it is deeper in the front opposite Nobunaga. To the west of the bridge it will take a unit two turns to cross the river, but to the east it will take three turns. Firearm units cannot fire for three full turns after they exit the river, and archers cannot fire on the turn after exiting the river.

### Forces

*Ashigaru* units are mixed melee weapons and bows. The exception is that half of the Asakuru *ashigaru* units are mixed melee and firearm units. All mounted units are also bow armed, and the river rules apply to these.

All forces are well trained and disciplined and can be considered more or less the same in terms of unit quality. The exception is the unit commanded by Atsuji Sadahide, which includes *Ikkō-ikki* forces deployed in their own units – so all infantry units that are not samurai or cavalry in his command are *Ikkō-ikki*. These units are fanatical and can be considered unbreakable.

The Asakura had been very early proponents of firearms, and their firearm



forces will have a +1 (or equivalent) to any firing to represent their superiority over other forces. This does not extend to Azai forces.

### The game

The battle starts at 1200. Each turn represents 30 minutes and the armies will cease fighting at sunset (1830), or when one army breaks from the field or both of their senior leaders are dead.

### Winning

The Oda have a major victory if they are the only forces on the field at the end of the day. Similarly, the Asakura and Azai have a major victory if they are the sole occupants of the field.

The Oda have a marginal victory if their opponents have fled the field but both their leaders are still alive. The Asakura must still hold the river line or have broken one of the wings of the Oda army for a marginal victory.

Any other result is a draw.

### Scenario options

**Assassins:** Both sides attempted to assassinate opposing leaders in this period. If your rules allow it, then you can allow the use of one assassin in each army (in other words, two on

each side); use a skirmish set of rules to fight out the assassination attempts.

### HISTORICAL OUTCOME

Although he chose to deploy opposite what he perceived as the weaker forces, Nobunaga quickly found himself in trouble, with his forces fought to a standstill in the river. However, this meant that the Azai forces were similarly static, and it turned into a toe-to-toe fistfight. Meanwhile, to the west, Ieyasu eventually drove off the Asakura forces and was able to angle his forces into the flank of the Azai forces, forcing them to disengage and withdraw. Between them, the armies lost over 3,000 men, and of these there were over 1,000 samurai. The Azai and Asakura forces withdrew, and after a short time Nobunaga retreated back towards Kyoto. Tactically the battle had been a draw, but strategically it was catastrophic for the Azai alliance, with first Nobunaga and then Ieyasu completing their goal of uniting Japan under one powerful shogun – an objective that saw them destroy the Azai and Asakura clans in order to achieve it... **WS&S**

**Tenka Fubu, the inscription on Oda Nobunaga's seal, means, "Rule the realm by military force!"**