Defeat in the Boshin War (1869)

The Yamagata domain, which initially participated on the side of the new government, joined the Ou Domain Alliance. The lord of the Yamagata domain had pledged loyalty to the emperor in Kyoto; however, the Yamagata domain was surrounded by many other large domains. In order to protect the territory, he had Yamagata join the Alliance. Despite efforts to procure weapons and funds for participation in the war, they were overwhelmed by the military strength of the new government. In September, surrounding domains surrendered one after another, leading to Yamagata's surrender on September 17.

Young chief retainer Mizuno Saburoemon Motonobu led the Yamagata domain in the absence of the domain lord. At 22, he succeeded his father and devoted himself to diplomacy with surrounding domains during the war. As chief retainer, his role was to protect the territory and the people in the absence of the lord. Thanks to his desperate efforts, the castle town did not become a battlefield. He himself took responsibility at the time of surrender in order to prevent war damage from reaching the retainers, the people of Yamagata, and the land. As a result, he bore sole responsibility for the war. At the young age of 27 he was executed by beheading within the precincts of Chogen-ji Temple in the city. The man who devoted himself entirely to Yamagata rests at Chogen-ji temple to this day.