**Kuki Yoshitaka’s Ironclad Warships**

Kuki Yoshitaka (1542–1600) rose to prominence by displaying tactical prowess in naval combat after entering the service of the powerful warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582). He was also a skilled shipwright who was not afraid to innovate in the face of failure.

In the first Battle of Kizugawaguchi in 1576, Nobunaga suffered a major defeat when his fleet was destroyed by the superior naval forces of the Mori family. Yoshitaka was ordered to find a way to defeat the Mori family. Consequently, he developed what are thought to be the world’s first iron-plated warships. The ships were outfitted with cannons, and could hold a large number of troops.

He created six of these enormous floating fortresses, which were launched in the second battle Battle of Kizugawaguchi against a fleet of 600 Mori ships in 1578. Yoshitaka emerged victorious, and was given control of Toba as a reward.