

History (long version)

Miketsukuni and Ise Jingu:

Ise-Shima has a long and interesting history of people whose lives have been shaped by the sea. Excavations have unearthed 3,000-year-old tools for taking abalone. There are also records of seafood being traded by Ise-Shima's Daio Town dating from 745 CE.

With its rich natural environment, bountiful harvests, and fine seafood, the area was identified as a *miketsukuni*. These were regions of Japan responsible for providing food to the imperial court. In the *Manyoshu*, a collection of classical poems compiled around the eighth century, Wakasa (now Fukui prefecture), Awaji Island (in modern Hyogo), and Ise-Shima are listed as the three regions bestowed this honor.

As the *jinja* (*Shinto shrine*) complex dedicated to Amaterasu-Omikami, the most important deity in Japan's native religion of Shinto, Ise Jingu is regarded as the spiritual center of the country. Throughout history, Japanese people have been moved to visit Ise Jingu at least once. The improvement of roads in the Edo period (1603–1867) allowed significant numbers of people to visit the sacred site. This increase in visitors to Ise Jingu led to the establishment of many teahouses nearby. The atmosphere of eras in which people made the pilgrimage lingers today along Okageyokocho Street, opened in 1993, which is lined with reconstructions of Edo period buildings. Located near Ise Jingu's Naiku, the street has traditional sweet and souvenir shops.

Kuki Yoshitaka's Naval Forces and the Warring States Period:

The Kuki family rose to prominence in Toba during Japan's turbulent warring period in the sixteenth century. Kuki Yoshitaka (1542–1600), originally the leader of a band of pirates, eventually established himself as a resourceful naval commander. In the 1570s he became an ally of Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), at the time the most powerful warlord in the country. In the Battle of Kizugawaguchi, Kuki supported Oda's army, using iron-plated ships to repel the opposing Mori Clan's attacks.

After Oda's death, Kuki went on to support Japan's emerging unifier, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536 or 1537–1598), rising to become commander of the Toyotomi Clan's fleet. He was granted permission by Toyotomi to build Toba Castle, which was completed in 1594. This was a sea-facing castle, with a large gate that opened directly onto Toba Bay, and was surrounded by a seawater moat. The seaward

side was painted black, and the landward side white—explaining its nickname “Two-colored Castle.” Today, visitors to Shiroyama Park and the Toba Castle ruins can see the remains of the castle’s foundation walls, and enjoy the commanding view it once had over Toba Bay.

In 1600, the Toyotomi and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) forces fought a decisive battle at Sekigahara. Kuki Yoshitaka fought alongside Toyotomi. However, his son, Kuki Moritaka (1573–1632), joined the opposing Tokugawa army.

Moritaka managed to obtain a pardon for his father from Tokugawa. Unfortunately, Kuki Yoshitaka committed suicide on Toba’s Toshijima Island before the news could reach him. His body is now buried there. His head was buried separately on a promontory in Toshijima where he can look over towards Toba Castle.

An Important Shipping Route:

During the era of peace brought about by the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603–1867), Ise-Shima and its ports prospered through trade. This brought wealth to the area and enhanced standards of living, as well as starting an exchange of culture with Osaka. Such exchange is evident in traditions such as Anori Bunraku puppet theater, which was inspired by a similar form of entertainment popular in Osaka in the eighteenth century. The Shogunate collected taxes from the various domains in the form of rice, and Ise-Shima flourished as an important port for rice ships en route to the capital Edo (now Tokyo).