

Hideyoshi's Gourd-shaped Battle Standard (*Hoko umajirushi no hyo*)

This gourd-shaped standard is thought to have been used by Hideyoshi (1537–1598) on the battlefield. Called *umajirushi* in Japanese (literally “horse insignia”), standards of this sort were used during the Warring States period (1467–1568) to indicate the location of a commander on the battlefield. The gourd became a symbol of Hideyoshi's success in warfare through its association with one of his earliest victories, the Siege of Inabayama Castle (1567), during which his men displayed gourds on their spears to signal their capture of the castle gate. This authentic standard is shaped like a single gourd; the more famous Thousand Gourds (*Sennari byotan*) design that became associated with Hideyoshi is a later invention that appeared for the first time in Edo-period (1603–1867) narratives. These stories held that another gourd would be added to Hideyoshi's standard after each of his victories, and so great was to be his success that they would eventually number one thousand. This standard was preserved in the care of the Yabunouchi family before it was donated to the Toyokuni shrine.