

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.