

九鬼神流

KUKISHIN RYU

Kuki Ohsumi no Kami Yoshitaka

九鬼大隈守嘉隆

9TH Soke 九宗家: Kuki Yoshitaka no kami Yoshitaka 九鬼大隈守嘉隆 (1542 – 1600) was the son of the 6th Soke of Kukishin Ryu, Kuki Kunai shosuke Sadataka 九鬼宮内少輔定隆. In His youth Yoshitaka was called Umanosuke, and when Yoshitaka passed into adulthood he went to serve under the Kitabatake family who were administrators of Ise province.

In 1574 Yoshitaka was now a vassal of Oda Nobunaga, and Yoshitaka lead ten ships from the Kuki Suigun in the attack against the castle at Oshima for Oda.

At the 3rd siege of Nagashima in 1574, Oda Nobunaga had the support of Kuki Yoshitaka. Kuki took his men to fight the Ikko Ikki by ship, fighting in a way that had yet to be successful. Kuki ordered the bombardment of the Ikko Ikki at Nagashima, firing at them with cannonballs, and fire arrows, just off the shore line. Kuki ordered his men to concentrate there attack on the wooden towers of the fortification. Kuki used his ships to cut off any supplies being sent into help the Ikko Ikki. With the Kuki's sea based support, a land based army carried out a pronged attack from the north and defeated the Ikko Ikki.

For his services to Oda, and his help in attacking the Mori at Kisogawaguchi, Yoshitaka was given some land valued at seven thousand Koku, which is now in the city of Toba, and he built, and became the lord of the castle of Toba. After he built Toba Castle Kuki Ohsumi no Kami Yoshitaka became lord of Toba castle, and he was possibly the founder of Kuki Suigun. His castle site in Toba was an ideal location for him to set up his base to collect taxes from passing ships. The bay that is situated in Toba has four islands, one of these, Sugashima has the women sea divers who collect abalone shells. Another of the islands, Toshijima which has the largest land area of the four islands, has several sites relating to Kuki Yoshitaka. Is this were Yoshitaka operated from?

Kuki Yoshitaka, was ordered by Oda Nobunaga to again attack the Mori and the Ikko-Ikki at the mouth of the Kizu which opens into Osaka bay. Again Yoshitaka was admiral of the Oda fleet. Oda had ordered the construction of a large naval fleet, six of these ships were clad totally in iron, and became known as the 'Iron clad ships'. It was Yoshitaka who commanded the so-called 'iron ships' in the 2nd battle of Kizugawaguchi in 1578. Arrows and musket ball's just bounced off the side of the ships. Hand to hand fighting took place as boats on both sides were boarded. Many were also sunk or burnt.. However, one of these iron ships was boarded, and consequently capsized

With the death of Oda Nobunaga, Yoshitaka joined the forces of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and became a general in his naval fleet. For the Toyotomi, Yoshitaka commanded the port at Ise, and took control of the sea in the regions around Kumano, and an area known as Ki-i water ways. Yoshitaka also governed Shima. Eventually his land in Shima and Ise was valued at thirty five thousand Koku.

Some time after joining Toyotomi, Yoshitaka received the court rank of 'Lower fifth' and was made a governor of Osumi

In April 1576, at the 1st battle of Kizugawaguchi, Oda Nobunaga sent his admiral Kuki Yoshitaka to create a blockage to stop the Mori getting to the sea at the mouth of the Kizu. The Mori beat the Kuki navy, and the supplies they were carrying got through the blockade.

Lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi ordered Lords Konishi Yukinaga, Wakizaka Yasuhara, and Kuki Yoshitaka and several of his other generals to besiege the castle at Hirasu. On 3rd June 1587, they all attacked this castle. Katsura was defending it.

1590 saw the siege of Shimada. The Kuki navy laid siege to a coastal fort at Shimada which was owned by the Hojo clan. Toyotomi Hideyori's army was besieging Odawara castle, with a fleet under the command of Chosokabe Motochika, Kato Yoshiaki, and Kuki Yoshitaka. Ankokuji Ekei lead an army of 14,000 men.

In 1590 Yoshitaka was involved in the attack against Odawara castle in Izu. This was a combined attack of land and sea forces.

In 1592 Toyotomi Hideyoshi appointed him commander of the fleet to expedition Korea. His ship was the fleets flag ship and was named the 'Nipponmaru'. While he was off the Korean shores at Ulsan, Yoshitaka managed to jump from his ship to one of the Korean ships. He faced one of the Korean Admirals, and cut up at him, hitting him in the crutch cutting all the way to the abdomen through his armour. Yoshitaka's sword was kept and handed down in the Kuki family. The sword was named 'Tsurmatano Meiken'.

1600 Yoshitaka was now sided with Ishida Mitsunari (Western army), and Yoshitaka fought for Ishida in the battle of Sekigahara (September 1600), against the Tokugawa army (Eastern Army). His son Kuki Moritaka sided with the Tokugawa. On the 12th of December 1600 having been on the losing side Yoshitaka felt defeated so Yoshitaka committed suicide (Seppuku). This is in itself an unfortunate thing, because a short moment after his death a message arrived from Tokugawa Ieyasu. This message was a pardon for Yoshitaka, but unfortunately it had arrived too late. Yoshitaka's standard was three balls gold, white, gold while his banner was black with 'a Ra Ha' in gold hiragana characters.

The Mukai and the Kuki where from the provinces of Ise and Shima. Kuki Yoshitaka was lord of Toba castle. In the deep dense forests of neighbouring Kii province, there was lots of wood for ship building which these two clans took advantage of. These areas also provide good natural harbours.

One interesting fact to add here is their still exists a Mukai Ryu which specialises in Suijutsu, and methods of swimming. Whether or not this Mukai Ryu is connected to the Mukai family mentioned above I do not know, but with the Kuki's interest with the sea and water, it would be nice if there was some connection between this Mukai and the Mukai Ryu. Then we would have two Ryu working together that have some sort of association with water. Mukai Tadakatsu was also an admiral of naval forces, but for the Tokugawa shogunate. He fought at the winter campaign of Osaka castle.

A lot of comment has been made about the Kuki family being involved in one way or another as some form of Pirate. As we have just seen the Kuki were highly skilled in the use of boats etc. Also their domain was also partially coastal, and using their seafaring skills they obviously took advantage of this situation. Any boat or ship that wished to pass this area patrolled by the Kuki were forced to exact a tax to the Kuki. We do not know if they were doing this for personal gain or if it was in the name of the emperor or Shogun. Either way they appear to have been good at what they did. This was to the point that several of the surrounding lords may have actually eventually had enough of these taxes, as the Kuki stopped collecting taxes. Did they do this because of the fear of complete destruction from their neighbours, or has it also something to do with the fact that they suddenly became allies to the Oda, and as such became Oda's fleet commanders. Kuki Yoshitaka being the admiral of Oda's naval force.

The Kusarigama was developed from the Kaginawa (hook, and rope). The Kaginawa was used by a pirate called Kuroda Saneyuki, who was originally from Kishu. This is possible from the Kuki Suigun another Kuki related Ryu-ha founded by Kuki Moriyori (1542 - 1600)

Fujiwara no Kurodo Saneyuki was active as a pirate near Shima and Kishu. History states Kurodo used a Kaginawa for boarding or towing ships. It is from this simple hook and rope that the Kusarigama no jutsu in the Kukishin Ryu originates.

Connection to the Bujinkan

Takamatsu sensei was a senior teacher at the Kuki families Kukishin Ryu Sendokoyokai. Takamatsu then went on to teach Hatsumi sensei the many different arts of the Kukishin Ryu including the Amatsu tatara.