



## Swinging swords and drumsticks: Personal fitness draws on tradition

Shindo and taikobics give personal fitness regimes a Japanese twist with kendo moves and taiko drumming.

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# The History of Kendo

## The Birth of the Nihonto

There are several fundamental points that cannot be overlooked in the history of kendo. The first is the advent of the “nihonto”, or the Japanese sword.

The Japanese sword emerged in the middle of the Heian period (794-1185), and had a slightly curved blade (sori) with raised ridges along its length called “shinogi”. The prototypes of this style of sword were used by tribes of horsemen in northern Japan during the 9th century. Since then, this style of sword was adopted by samurai, and forging technology advanced rapidly during the early period of warrior hegemony from around the end of the Kamakura period (1185–1333). The shape of the blade was distinctive with its elevated sides (shinogi). In modern Japanese, the term “shinogi-wo-kezuru” means “grinding the shinogi together”—in other words, “a tight contest”. Such is the influence of the ideals of the sword in Japanese culture.



# Notable People of Kendo

## Miyamoto Musashi

Miyamoto Musashi was a Japanese swordsman, philosopher, strategist, writer and rōnin, who became renowned through stories of his unique double-bladed swordsmanship and undefeated record in his 61 duels (next is 33 by Itō Ittōsai). Musashi, as he was often simply known, is considered a Kensei, a sword-saint of Japan. He was the founder of the Niten Ichi-ryū, or Nito Ichi-ryū, style of swordsmanship, and in his final years authored *The Book of Five Rings* (五輪の書, Go Rin No Sho) and *Dokkōdō* (The Path of Aloneness).

Through the Japanese tradition, kendo is linked with Miyamoto Musashi who belongs to the national treasure of Japan. The Miyamoto Musashi Budokan located in Ōhara-chō[26] built in honor of the samurai regularly hosts all of Japan's kendo schools. As a result, at the 60th Okayama National Sports Meetings in 2005 held at the Miyamoto Musashi Budokan, two official techniques from the Niten School founded by Musashi were incorporated into the International Kendo Federation by the Japanese Minister of Education.



# Kendo Gear

## Shinai



A shinai (竹刀) is a Japanese sword typically made of bamboo used for practice and competition in kendo. Shinai are also used in other martial arts, but may be styled differently from kendo shinai, and represented with different characters. The light, soft wood used in a shinai distinguishes it from other wooden swords such as a bokken, which is generally made of heavier, sturdier wood.



# Kengo Dojos in Ho Chi Minh City

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