

Itsukushima Shrine: Jindaiko Drum

The jindaiko or war drum was used by samurai to signal troop movements. It was a common sight on battlefields during the Sengoku period (1467–1568) of constantly shifting alliances and rivalries among local warlord-led clans. The drums came in many sizes. Some were small enough to be carried by a single person, while heavy drums such as the one displayed here would be placed on the deck of a boat and beaten during naval engagements. It is not clear which clan this drum belonged to, but the nine-point star pattern on the leather is distinctive, as most jindaiko were instead decorated with a swirling pattern made up of three comma-like shapes (mitsudomoe). Why the drum ended up at Itsukushima Shrine is unknown, but it was likely presented as an offering to the deities of the shrine and as a symbol of the donor's faith.