

Miyamoto Musashi

Miyamoto Musashi (also known as Shinmen Takezo, Miyamoto Bennesuke, or by his Buddhist name, Niten Doraku) (c. 1584–1645) was a renowned swordsman, philosopher, strategist, and painter. Though little is known about his early life, he is believed to have been born in Yoneda, which is part of Takasago.

Musashi is known today for his skill with a sword, and for founding the Niten Ichiryu (two-sword) style of swordsmanship. He used this style to win more than 60 duels in his lifetime, making him the greatest undefeated swordsman of the day. The nearest contender, Ito Ittosai (1560–1653), is said to have fought in only 33 duels. Musashi was therefore bequeathed the title of *kensei* (sword saint), which was given to warriors with legendary skill in swordsmanship.

In his later life, Musashi wrote *Go Rin no Sho* (The Book of Five Rings), a text on strategy and martial arts, and *Dokkodo* (The Path of Aloneness), about his philosophy of life. In these books he states he was born in Harima Province (part of present-day Hyogo Prefecture). This claim was reinforced when his nephew (and later adopted son) Miyamoto Iori (1612–1678) left an inscription in his honor stating that Musashi was a warrior associated with Harima Province. Other documents of the time suggest that both Musashi and Iori were born in Yoneda.

Iori dedicated *munefuda* (a tag affixed inside a building as a record of renovation and giving details of the donors) at both Yoneda Tenjin Jinja Shrine in Takasago and Tomari Jinja Shrine in Kakogawa when the buildings were restored. The tags describe how Iori's ancestors, including Musashi, came to live in Yoneda. This is further evidence supporting the theory that Musashi was born in Takasago.

In 1990, a large stone monument made of locally sourced Tatsuyama stone was erected in Yoneda to honor its famous son, Musashi. A building near the monument houses a number of artifacts relating to his life.