

## Types of Chinese Swords

There are generally five types of swords in Chinese history, they are Jian, Zhanmadao, Liuyedao, Wodao and Yanmaodao.

The **jian** is a double-edged straight sword used during the last 2,500 years in China. The first Chinese sources that mention the jian date to the 7th century BC during the Spring and Autumn Period; one of the earliest specimens being the Sword of Goujian. Historical one-handed versions have blades varying from 45 to 80 cm (17.7 to 31.5 inches) in length. The weight of an average sword of 70-centimeter (28-inch) blade-length would be in a range of approximately 700 to 900 grams (1.5 to 2 pounds). There are also larger two-handed versions used for training by many styles of Chinese martial arts.



The **zhanmadao** is a saber with a single long broad blade, and a long handle suitable for two-handed use.

Dating to 1072, it was used as an anti-cavalry weapon. This is mentioned in the "Wu Jing Zong Yao Song Military Manual" from 1072.

Surviving examples include a sword that might resemble a nagamaki in construction; it had a wrapped handle 37 cm long making it easy to grip with two hands. The blade was 114 centimetres long and very straight with a slight curve in the last half.



The **liuye dao**, or "willow leaf saber", is a type of Dao that was commonly used as a military sidearm for both cavalry and infantry during the Ming and Qing dynasties. This weapon features a moderate curve along the length of the blade. This reduces thrusting ability (though it is still fairly effective at same) while increasing the power of cuts and slashes.



The **wodao** (literally "sword/knife of the Wo people") is a Chinese sword from the Ming Dynasty. Apparently influenced by Japanese sword design, it bears a strong resemblance to a Tachi or Odachi in form: extant examples show a handle approximately 25.5 cm long, with a gently curved blade 80 cm long.

During the period of raiding by Japanese pirates, two factors contributed mostly to the successes of the generals of the Ming dynasty, in particular Qi Jiguang in thwarting the invaders. The wodao was quite frankly the latter of these factors, as the Japanese ronin, at the time, favouring close combat above all else, were faced with a considerable dilemma when faced against the long spears and pikes of the Ming cavalry and infantry, where as the wodao, being quite literally a modified version of the katana became standard issue for officers during the struggle. It would be later quickly replaced by the piandao during the late Ming dynasty.

It is a common misconception that the wodao was manufactured as a result of the inferiority of Chinese weaponry at the time when placed against that of the Japanese ronin. In reality, the battles were quite one-sided in the Ming Dynasty's favor.

The **yanmao dao**, or "goose-quill saber", is a type of dao made in large numbers as a standard military weapon from the late Ming through the end of the Qing dynasty. It is similar to the earlier zhibei dao, is largely straight, with a curve appearing at the center of percussion near the blade's tip. This allows for thrusting attacks and overall handling similar to that of the jian, while still preserving much of the dao's strengths in cutting and slashing.

