

WASEDA REPORT 2015

This year, in february, a second mission of students/Kenshi from the Waseda University of Tokyo visited my hometown Florence (Italy), after a first trip in 2012.

When mr. Yokoyama, a long term friend and teacher of mine and active Sempai of the university, told that he was working on this project, that previous one came to my mind: at that time, due to heavy snow, we were forced to stay the whole week in town which finally came out as very pleasant. This time, we decided to spent most days in Florence from the start on: this was a good decision since a week may look long but schedule was filled with Kendo, events, visits, tours and even some spare-time.

So on a late evening, 3 girls and 7 boys with mr and mrs Yokoyama arrived to the airport after a long flight. All students were hosted in one large apartment, located at about 20 minutes away from downtown by bus. After spending the first day visiting the city, we had our first Keiko which was attended by the florentine Dojos: everybody could see the excellent quality and strong fighting spirit of the Waseda students: especially the younger members, kids of 8 to15 years were amazed to see which level it is possible to reach with daily practice and commitment. The kids invited the students to their homes, which gave the opportunity to know each other better and to see what life is like in Italy.

On the week-end we had planned two important events: the first one was the opening of our new Dojo, called Jofukan by the late Nishino Goro-sensei. After some speaches, we had demonstrations of both the kids and the students, ending with an open Gigeiko. Later, about hundred persons, Kenshi, relatives and friends had a marvelous party to welcome the new Dojo.

The second event was the day after, having a morning of Keiko focused on the Waseda students and their training methods: several fighters from Italy could again appreciate the intensity and the skills of the japanese members during demonstrations and having Gigeiko with them.



This two events had a very strong and long-lasting impact on our Kendo-community: first of all, many Dojos that usually do not meet very often were involved. Also inside Jofukan, everyone helped to make it a pleasant stay for our guests.

Further, we could appreciate practice with young students. Italy is actually a very popular destination for Kendo-teachers: we have nice cities, delicious food and people are friendly. Therefore every year several 8th Dan visit our country. I feel very lucky for this, since the whole Kendo-community in Italy counts about 1500 members and we need these teachers to improve our level. Nevertheless it is now obvious that a group like the Waseda-students is equally precious in motivating the young players showing a level that could actually be reached by italians too.

Personally, I had the chance to know some of the members better during these days: my feeling is that being Waseda an international oriented university, such an experience gave to their members a direct contact with a foreign country. Most of them told me that this trip helped them to reach a clearer view about both, Kendo and their lifes.

My hope is to meet these wonderful students soon again in Italy or Japan and that this kind of experience becomes a healthy and pleasant habit.

Many thanks to the Waseda board for making this possible and to mr. Yokoyama for creating and managing this wonderful experience

Bernardo Cipollaro, Kendo 6th Dan
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