

## A tour of Numata (沼田探訪)

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Tokyo Gakuren Kenyu Rengokai holds so-called “Musha-shugyo” (a journey around the country to learn from the great masters of martial arts), 2 day 1 night training camp almost every year.

Our main objectives are to visit the places around Kanto area and have an exchange with the members of the local Kendo Federations. It is our 16<sup>th</sup> Musha-shugyo this year, and I am very happy to say that many of our OBs/seniors participate every year.

Musha-shugyo 2016 was held on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of March. The destination was Numata City, Gunma Prefecture where is in the limelight now as the location of “Sanada Maru” which is the Period Drama broadcasted by NHK-National Television in prime time. (For your interest, please check <http://www.nhk.or.jp/sanadamaru/en/about/index.html>). Numata was the very important foothold as a military and commercial base in the North Kanto area, and the place where heroes of the past struggled for supremacy.

“Musha-shugyo” this time, we place great importance on not only training Kendo but also widening our experience and knowledge in order to find what to expect to attain in our future life in Kendo.

I was called by the President, Mr. Toru Takahashi, in November 2015 and consulted, “I would like to have the next Musha-shugyo (March 2016) in Numata. If possible, how about a tour of Numata Castle?” I replied, “I should study the history of Numata Castle if we tour there”, and started studying it soon after that day.

In [*The History of the Nation*], Numata Castle was built by Lord Numata Akiyasu in 1532 and became the foothold of Numata clan. Afterward, the Castle went through turbulent times of the history of military interventions by local clans.

On the second day of Musha-shugyo, we strolled around the park of the ruins of the Castle and understood how it was built by making full use of the natural landscape.

In [*Taiheiki*], a piece of classic Japanese literature, it is written as “Numata has a severe topography and is suitable to defend against the enemy. Let us wait the enemy placing the

Tone River in front.” Therefore, Numata must have been a place of strategic importance even before the construction of the Castle. In modern times, many things were provided along the highways and the place became the cardinal point of the highways in addition to the military role they used to play.

Through this Musha-shugyo, I suddenly remembered that I stayed at the home of Mr. Victor Harris, the former director of the British Museum, by chance, because I practiced at Noma Dojo in Tokyo when I was a student. His wife, Mrs. Katsuko Harris said, “There are many Japanese who do not know the history of their own country. They should be ashamed.”

Of course, kendo practitioners cross swords when we meet; however, it is also important to know the history of the place we visit in order to get into the heart and mind of the opponent. When I think of the “internationalization/globalization” of Kendo, her words penetrate my heart quite sharply. It may seem unexpended, but the study of history and culture may provide hints to improve Kendo.

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Started learning the court music of Japan in the University, and studied under a musician in the Imperial Household Agency of Japan.

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