

When Iaido meets Vikings



My name is Petros Moulagiannis. I hold the rank of 4th Dan in Aikido and 4th Dan in Iaido, and I have practiced these arts alongside each other for many years in Athens, where I live and work. Upon the invitation of my old friend and fellow Aikido practitioner Dimitris Farmakidis, I recently visited Norway.

The opportunity to experience this country through the art of Aikido excited me. At the time, my knowledge about Norway was restricted to fjords, Vikings and its northern lights. I found that it is, in terms of development, the most advanced first world country; this being one of the reasons why it has some of the happiest inhabitants in the world. However, that did not prepare me for what I was about to meet.

Norway is different from Greece in every aspect. The cold, clean air and the fairytalelike towns and houses created an awe-inspiring scenery. The snowy mountains, ragged coastal lines and small houses and villages in the middle of nowhere was making me wonder how this technologically developed country could live in such harmony with nature. The greatest enthusiasm, however, stemmed from the warmth of the people I met. From the very first moment, they received us with open hearts, and I felt a sense of hospitality that matched their technological advancements.



Petros and David showing techniques.



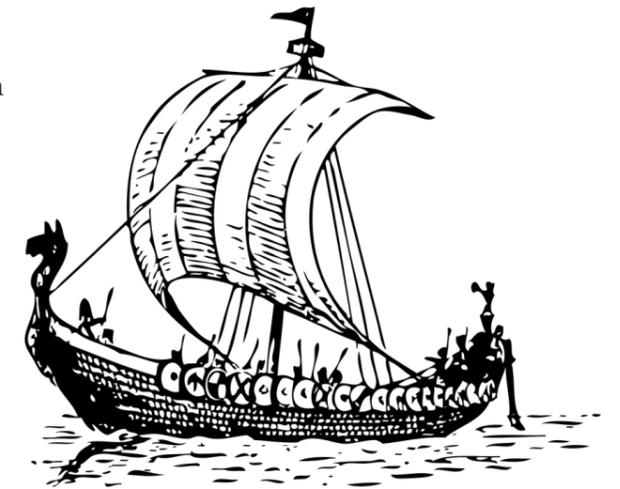
Students preparing to show their technique.

Although it was something rather new to them, the young students at Hadeland Folkehøgskole welcomed the art of Iaido with enthusiasm. My commands were executed with precision and right posture, as they should by those who wield the samurai spirit. This is, of course, due to Dimitris' teachings, giving the students the proper preparation. Their connection to the sword allows them to understand that we are not merely practicing technique, but also polishing our spirit.

During my six days at the school, I must admit that the students taught me a lot more than I managed to teach them. The Aikido students' respect, discipline, politeness, good etiquette and ambition for a better life was a life lesson for me. I must also mention the contribution of the teachers, and the support from the Norwegian Government that permits such a school, that I wish had the likes in my country, to exist.

I would like to end by thanking the young students with the phrase "Imperare sibi maximum imperium est", which means that the greatest achievement is the victory over oneself. The staff of the school also deserves a thank you for their warm welcome and continued hospitality. I now consider the students and teachers alike my friends.

With respect,
Petros Moulagiannis



The class after a successful week of training.