

In the memory of Prof. Keiichi Takeuchi

by Yoshikazu Naskamura

The Mediterranean Studies Research Group at Hitotsubashi University was founded in 1973. The initiative was taken by two scholars, – one was Prof. Kin-ichi Watanabe, a Byzantinist who occupied the chair of History, and another Prof. Keiichi Takeuchi, a geographer who had studied at the University of Tokyo and Milano University. I taught Russian language in Hitotsubashi University and joined the Group, as it were, by accident. However, I must admit that the Group exerted very deep influence upon the orientation of my academic work. The Group consisted of diverse specialists from different universities and institutes. In brief, so as to contribute to the interests of the members, I was obliged to look at the course of Russian history and culture in their relationship with the Mediterranean world. Thus, I began to have serious interest in the destiny of Russian Old Believers who emigrated from Russia to the Balkans and Anatolia. I also became interested in the records of Russian pilgrims to the sacred places in the East. The Group held monthly meetings and the transactions of the Group were often published – in fact, 17 volumes in 30 years. When our Group organized the first field work in several regions of the Mediterranean Sea, I chose to go to Greece together with Prof. Watanabe and Prof. Eizo Matsuki, a historian of the medieval Russian town of Novgorod. We stayed about three months on Naxos, the biggest island of the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey. The village Filoti, our research field, was situated in the middle of the island on the slope of the mountain Zas. Prof. Takeuchi, being in charge of the project, came to see us on his way around the research spots. He spent about a week with us, first in Athens, then on Naxos. One day he took a rental car and drove around the island. Thanks to Prof. Takeuchi's service (only he was able to drive a car), we were able to tour all the villages of Naxos. We even drove through Apollonos, the northernmost small fishing harbor. Prof. Takeuchi had long lived in Europe before assuming his professorship. He was completely familiar with the European way of life. Consequently, he behaved himself as confidently in Greece as in

Japan. It had been well-known that Prof. Takeuchi was a marvelous polyglot (he read also Russian) and a great lover of books. In Greece we renewed our appreciation of his enormous talent of generating ideas and his skill in their accomplishment. His talents of “sniffing out” good restaurants at every mealtime astonished us all. His Gargantuan appetite matched his vital force to continue discussions, academic or secular, even after several cups of rather strong Greek wine. So it is difficult to believe that he is no longer among us in this world. According to a plan drawn up before his passing, a party of our Research Group, including Prof. Matsuki and me, had a chance to visit the Greek village Filoti again and have a reunion with old friends at the very end of the summer of 2005. The trip brought back strong memories of Prof. Takeuchi. It was just nine weeks since he passed away.

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