

■ Topics : Letters from alumni

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My Name is Omer Faruk Hatipoglu. I am a currently an assistant professor at the Department of Medical Genetics at Turgut Ozal University Medical School in Ankara. I spent 10 years in Okayama from April 2003 to March 2013 during my postgraduate and postdoctoral studies and I have collected some unforgettable memories during my stay. Let me share some of them with you.

I studied for my doctorate at the Molecular Biology Laboratory under the supervision of Professor Yoshifumi Ninomiya and Associate Prof Satoshi Hirohata and received my Doctor of Medicine degree from Okayama University in March 2009.

My Japan adventure started in 1996 after I had just graduated from high school in Istanbul, Turkey. First, I registered at a language school to learn Japanese before taking the “language and science” examination (Japanese Language Proficiency Test, JLPT).

I got accepted into the Tokyo Agriculture and Technology for my undergraduate course in Genetics Department. I was the only Turkish undergraduate student in that university at that time and as far as I know, I am the only Turkish graduate to this day.

When I was looking for a master’s program after graduation, my Turkish friends who studied in Okayama before suggested that I consider Okayama University. They told me that Okayama was a perfect city for a student and that the university was top quality. I was accepted to Prof Ninomiya’s group and I met a very warm environment there. We were very much like a family. Later on, the number of Turkish students in the lab increased and reached a total of 4.

I really liked Okayama town, too. I was travelling between the lab and my house comfortably by bicycle and not like by train as I used to in Tokyo.



Climbing Mount Daisen with Prof Ninomiya



Three Turkish students from the lab with Prof ninomiya and Prof Hirohata - 2006

About 1 month after my arrival, there was a welcome party for me. I was very surprised and also happy to see 2 professors and around 30 others to attend an event which was held just for me. We had a very social lab environment. We had a party almost every month. However, for certain reasons, we as the Turkish students couldn't eat every food item in those parties and social events. Our Japanese friends were very understanding and they tried to accommodate us by asking us what we can eat what we cannot eat. They even let us organize the outdoor picnics so that it was easier for us. They would happily eat and drink with us whatever we had prepared. I cannot forget their kindness in this respect.



Akitada Conference 2010

Prof Ninomiya and Prof Hirohara took me along with them to many conferences around the world. Now that I am a supervisor myself, I know how costly it can be to bring your students with you to overseas trips. Therefore, I would like to thank my supervisors and Okayama University for giving me those opportunities.

Finally I wanna share with you a memorable moment I had with Prof Ninomiya.

In 2006 Prof Ninomiya and I went to Mount Daisen for hiking. Both of us were amateurs in terms of mountain climbing. We started climbing around noon time. The interesting thing was there were no others who were going up. We only saw people coming down from the mountain. When we reached the peak after 4 hours, we were extremely delighted. When we started our descend, we realised that going down the mountain was much harder than going up. Halfway down the mountain, it started getting dark and we were so exhausted we found it very hard even to stand, let alone walk! We were worried that the police or the fire brigade would start looking for us. But fortunately, we managed to reach the bottom of the mountain late at night!



Okayama Turkish Cultural Center, New Year Party - 2008

Overall, I am very pleased and grateful for the education I received in Okayama University. I would like to thank everyone, especially Prof Hirohata and Prof Ninomiya, who made my stay in Okayama memorable one with all their help and guidance.