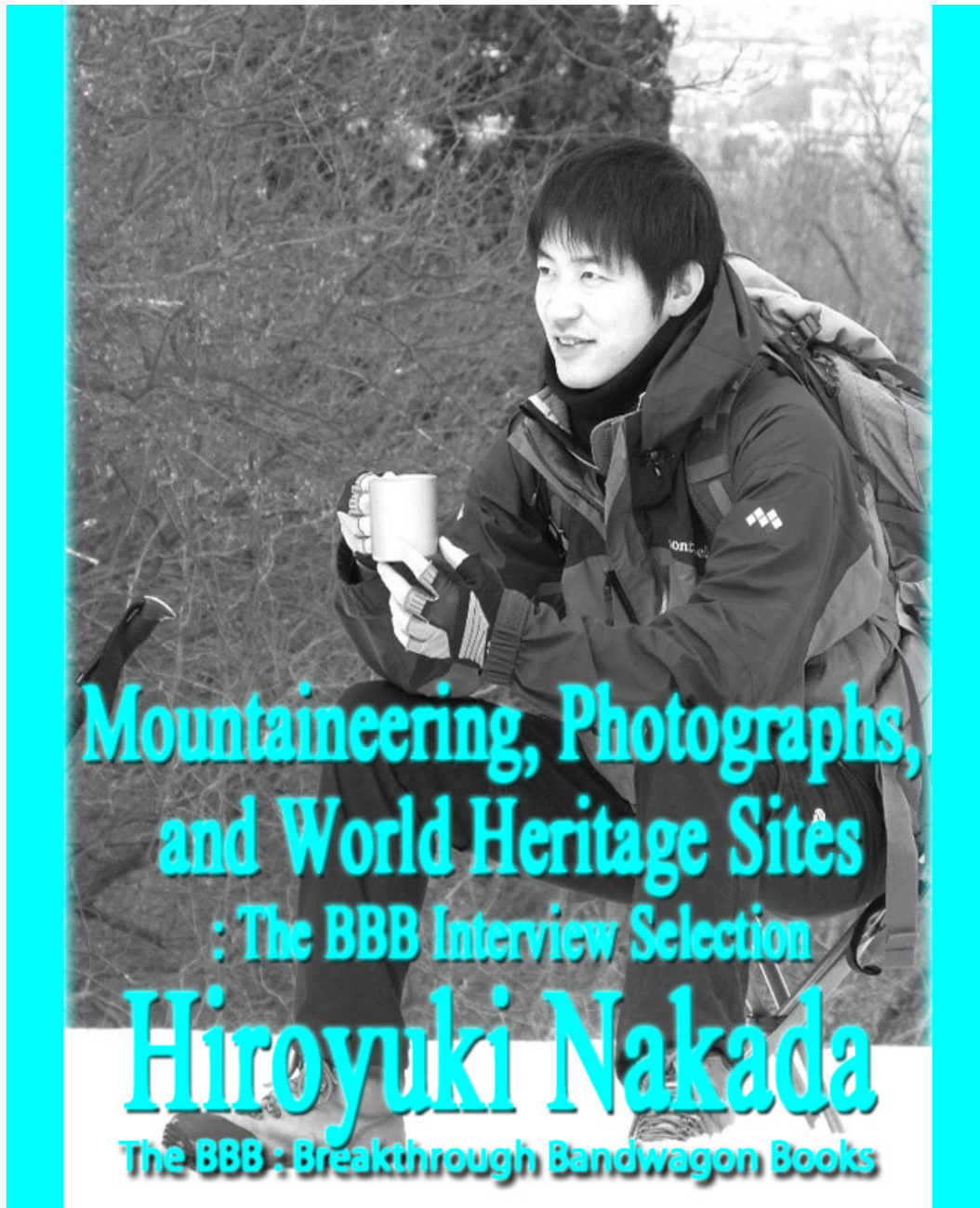


Mountaineering, Photographs, and World Heritage Sites



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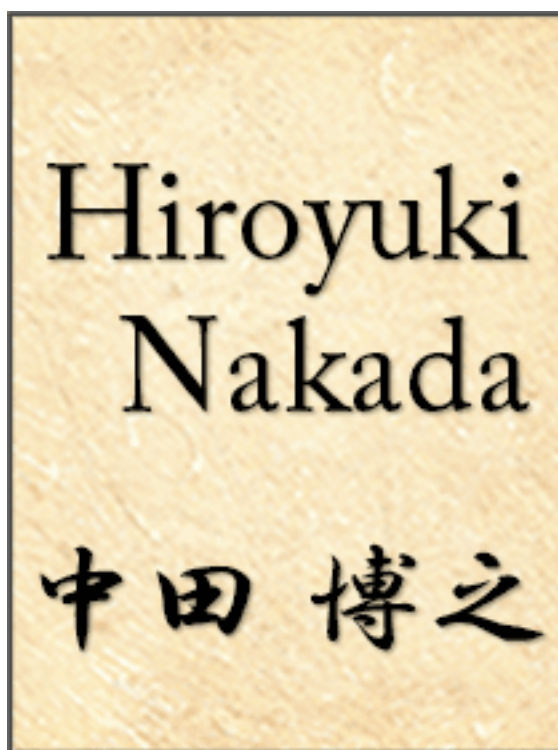
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1. Starting Point of Mountaineering

B (Editor of *The BBB*): Mr. Nakada, you are a mountaineering photographer and you hold the qualification of “World Heritage Meister,” the highest rank of the Test of World Heritage Study (which occurs only in Japan). First, we would like to ask you about mountaineering. To begin with, what was your first experience of mountains? What made you interested in mountains?

Nakada: None of my family and acquaintances were interested in mountaineering, so I originally had nothing to do with outdoor life. I loved nature from my childhood, though. One thing comes to mind as a starting point. It was during my elementary school days. One summer day, on my way home from school, I saw an unbelievably gigantic cumulonimbus cloud as I was walking across a pedestrian overpass. The beauty of the contrast between the huge white cloud and clear blue sky fascinated me. I came to feel as if the cloud were a snow mountain. At the time, I imagined that if I could climb such a great mountain, it would be the best experience. I still remember the scene vividly. I think it was the very moment when I first became interested in mountains. Besides, I have loved high places ever since childhood. I loved watching clouds and stars as I secretly climbed up the roof of my house. Since mountains are close to clouds and stars, I might have wanted to climb mountains almost instinctively. Before entering a university, I had not even had any experience sleeping in a tent. But I wanted to climb mountains when I had a free time, so I joined a Wandervogel Club when I entered a university.

B: How did you spend time at the Wandervogel Club?

Nakada: The first mountain I climbed was Mount Tanzawa in Kanagawa Prefecture. Its elevation is about 1,500 meters, a mountain for beginners. It was not difficult at all, and I was not satisfied. But I was fascinated by my first experience spending the night in a tent on the mountain. I felt as if I blended into nature. In June of that year, I did a five days, six nights trip to the Yatsugatake Mountains in Nagano Prefecture. As it was to be a more genuine mountaineering, we learned how to read a weather map and first aid treatment, and trained well. We had a five-story building for club activities on the university premise. Its long flights of steps were our training grounds. Shouldering a backpack weighing about 30 kilograms, we trekked up and down from the first floor to the fifth floor ten times. First, we climbed up every step. Next, every two steps. It was my first time shouldering such a heavy object. And it was tougher on the steps. Simultaneously, I rather enjoyed such rigorous training.

B: Was it a really tough mountaineering effort that required such hard trainings?

Nakada: Actually, it rained every day when I first climbed the Yatsugatake Mountains. Although it rained most of the time, it cleared up soon after we climbed down the mountain. It was as if nature was mocking us. While climbing, we were a party of five to six, and each one was assigned to carry part of our burden, such as tents, food ingredients, and dishes. Because I was one of the biggest among them, I was assigned to carry tents. Tents themselves are quite heavy, and they became heavier after getting soaked in the rain. They were so heavy that I could not feel my shoulders when I laid them down. Training on the stairs helped me, although the real situation in the mountain was different.

B: You carried them for five days and six nights?

Nakada: Yes. Honestly, I hated to carry them. But once I started walking, I could climb more smoothly than I thought. When we reached the mountain top, though, we could not see anything because of the mist and rain. I wondered why I had bothered climbing after having such a difficult experience. There was still some snow even in June, and it was somewhat similar to a snowy mountain, but it was completely different from the snow-mountain-like clouds that I had seen and dreamed about when I was in elementary school. Because I did not know mountains well at the time, I even thought we should not have climbed in the rain. But, I later discovered that rain in mountains was very common. So after that, I realized that the mountain

climate could change very easily. At the time, though, the tents were so heavy and the climate was so bad that while I was climbing, I only wanted to get home soon.

B: After your experience, why didn't you dislike mountaineering?

Nakada: To be sure, I thought I would come to dislike mountains. However, even though I had such a tough time on the mountain, I found myself wanting to climb mountains again when I got back to daily life. Despite the bad climate, the sense of accomplishment at the mountain top is better than anything else. It was a pleasant feeling, as if I defeated myself. It was not limited to mountains. The more you have a tough time, the greater pleasure you feel. That first experience on the mountain made me think about everything positively.

B: After you experienced that, how did you do at the club?

Nakada: Back then, I also belonged to a volunteer club. After the second year of university, I came to value the volunteer club and climbed mountains alone, not with club members. In fact, there were unpleasant customs in the Wandervogel Club, and I disliked it. For example, after we made a curry soup, we were forced to drink the sediment of the pot with water. Or, at the mountain top, we were forced to introduce ourselves in a loud voice in front of many other climbers. I just love mountains, so I hated the club's unpleasant customs. After graduating from university, I did not have sufficient time and could not climb mountains for several years. But then I realized I still had not climbed Mount Fuji and thought I had to climb it because I was Japanese. So, I decided to try. If I climbed Mount Fuji, I would have seen the sunrise from the mountain top. I planned to climb Mount Fuji after my weekday's work.



2. To Mount Fuji

B: You climbed Mount Fuji after work?

Nakada: Yes, because of my schedule. One day in August, I finished work at 5:00 p.m. and drove alone to the fifth station of Mount Fuji. My workplace was closer to Mount Fuji than my home. I arrived at the fifth station around 7:30 p.m., where I met many people, like me, wanting to climb. I took some time there to adapt to the elevation. I changed clothes and tried to take a nap, but I was too excited to sleep. Then, eventually, I started climbing to the mountain top beginning at around 9:00 p.m. At the beginning, I climbed up smoothly on a gentle slope. While climbing, it was so hot that only a T-shirt sufficed. But the higher the elevation became, the stronger the wind blew. Even if I took a short rest, it was very cold, like severe winter. In addition, because of drowsiness, I nearly lost conscious several times. Gradually growing more physically exhausted, I fought against cold and drowsiness. As I thought how long it would continue, I kept climbing steadily. Other climbers looked exhausted, so we continued climbing, encouraging each other. Someone said, “We could not climb alone, could we?” energizing me. I wanted to give up several times, but I finally reached the mountain top before sunrise.

B: How long do climbers take from the fifth station to the mountain top?

Nakada: That depends on which mountaineering route you choose. The first time, I climbed the Yoshida Route (also known as Lake Kawaguchi Route), which is accessible and easy to climb. We climbed carefully with some rests, and it took seven or eight hours. But if you climb during the weekend, the area near the mountain top will be so crowded that you cannot climb freely. To see the sunrise from the mountain top, some people climbed throughout the night as I did, but other people stayed in a mountain cabin and began climbing at midnight. In my later experience, it was too crowded to climb up, and I saw the sunrise at the ninth station, not the mountain top.

B: What did you feel when you first saw the sunrise from the mountain top?

Nakada: Honestly, I first felt concern about climbing up alone. But I had read websites of people who had climbed up, and I willingly talked with other climbers, so I could reach the mountain top without any trouble. When I first reached the top of Mount Fuji, I had a special feeling of achievement that I had never gotten from other mountains. I shared the feeling with other climbers. The moment of the sunrise was really moving. Gradually, it was getting brighter beyond the cloud sea. Then, the world was filled with golden light, which made me forget tiredness and coldness in a moment, and energized me. Although sunrises are our daily routine, we felt moved at that special place. I felt that humankind had been living with nature like this and gotten energy since ancient times.



B: Could you see by the moonlight?

Nakada: If the moonlight is bright and you are in good condition, you could see without a headlight. Climbing under the moonlight is fantastic and exciting. Numerous people are climbing, so there is a trail of headlights on Mount Fuji at night. The line of the lights is winding and leads to the sky. There are several people around you, so you are unlikely to go missing. There are several mountain lodges at each station, so I made them a goal for resting. If the weather is fine, a stadium of stars are above you and you can see shooting stars clearly, and feel you are in the universe. Using Google Star app, you can see the constellations easily. Enjoying the stadium of stars is an advantage of climbing at night.

B: How many people climbed Mount Fuji on that night? How many climbers came from abroad?

Nakada: Thousands of people, probably. I felt the percentage of climbers from abroad was about 10 percent or so. Recently, visitors from Asian countries are often seen. Each country's guidebook introduces Mount Fuji, so climbers from abroad are very common. While resting, we can easily communicate with others regardless of nationalities and become close because we all share the same goal. Climbing at midnight is so cold, but I sometimes see climbers from abroad wearing short sleeved shirts and shorts. Since then, I have climbed Mount Fuji seven times. I had an experience climbing and guiding beginners, all told me that it was one of the best three experiences in their lives and they felt really moved.

B: Mr. Nakada, you often take pictures of Mount Fuji. The mountain is special for you?

Nakada: Yes. I am fascinated by the beauty of Mount Fuji itself. It will look perfect in the setting from any direction. And looking at it gives me energy. If you climb it, you can feel how gigantic it is. I understand why the mountain has been worshipped by people since ancient times. Each of the four mountaineering routes

has its unique features. You can enjoy nature, or take a challenging route, and enjoy different aspects of the mountain. Above all, the most beautiful scenery that only climbers can see will be what you never forget. You can feel the universe in the quiet air, seeing the sunrise. Mount Fuji is special because it immerses you in the mystery of nature and awe for its beauty.

3. Attraction of Mountains

B: Besides Mount Fuji, has any other mountain strongly impressed you?

Nakada: Climbing Mount Fuji is relatively easy. But, I often climb the Northern Alps (also known as the Hida Mountains), which include many sharp mountains overwhelmingly towering. Climbing up a sheer cliff is very thrilling, so I can get a satisfaction from mountaineering there that I cannot at Mount Fuji. If I slipped, I would die. In fact, terrible accidents occur every year. It is really dangerous, but I cannot help but climb there. When I climbed Mount Okuhotaka (elevation: 3,190 meters), the weather was getting worse, and the rain was getting heavier. I had to climb up a sheer cliff that became like a waterfall. My climbing pace drastically slowed. As it was getting darker, and I was alone, my anxiety was increasing. My backpack was so heavy that it cut deep into my shoulders. It was a fight against time, so I was desperately aiming at the mountain top. Because I knew there was a lodge just over the mountain top a little way down the other side, I did not care how physically exhausted I became until I got to the lodge. I was absorbed in climbing, and it was completely dark when I managed to reach the mountain top. I could hardly see, and I almost got lost. The situation was really serious, so I was not happy at all even though I had reached the top. Immediately, I started climbing down toward the lodge.

Surrounded by darkness, I imagine the worst case (If I slipped...). Then, the light of the lodge loomed up in the darkness. The moment I saw it, I said to myself, "I'll be saved." From this experience I learned that I could use more power than I thought I had when driven by desperation in any circumstances. In addition, I became meticulously careful about time management and my safety. I originally planned to sleep in my tent that night, but the rain was so heavy that I opted to stay at the lodge.

B: What's the difference between a lodge and a tent?

Nakada: Before that experience, I usually climbed mountains with my tent for sleeping. But I first discovered how comfortably I could stay in a lodge at that time. By staying at a lodge, you can sleep in a bed and have a meal. Moreover, you need to carry fewer belongings. The night at a lodge is short because most guests go to bed soon after the meal in the early evening. But there is space for talking with others, watching TV, or reading a book. Lights-out and meal time are fixed at a lodge, whereas you can be alone and act freely in a tent. Of course, to stay in a tent, you have to carry a tent and a sleeping bag, mat, food, and cooking utensils. Each has both advantages and disadvantages, so I use either a tent or a lodge, depending on which mountain and when I climb.

B: What do you think is the attraction of mountaineering?

Nakada: First, by climbing a mountain, I can feel that my daily concerns are less important than I had thought. I feel fine and can stay calm. Nature has taught me how a tiny human being is. When I am busy and cannot afford to think about anything, I often visit a mountain nearby to restore my energy. It is my pleasure to see alpine plants, rock ptarmigans, stoats, or deer while climbing. Then, the best pleasure after climbing down a mountain is a hot spring. We Japanese love hot springs, and soaking in one after climbing down a mountain is really special. Basically, mountain lodges do not have a bath. So, I enjoy relaxing in a hot spring after mountaineering, looking back at the mountain I have just climbed. Because Japan is small and a volcano country, you can find natural hot springs here and there. Every time I go climbing, I always enjoy a hot spring.

B: Do you have any goals for the future?

Nakada: First, I will climb all 100 Famous Japanese Mountains. Then, I would like to describe the attractions of mountains to people who do not have climbing experience. To climb mountains, you need to prepare tools and strengthen your body. Even if it is somewhat troublesome for you, you will get a special feeling that you cannot get in daily life. People often ask me, "Why do you keep climbing despite its difficulty." Once you climb a mountain, you will know the answer. The climbing experience builds your

confidence and positively affects your life; therefore, I think you will want to climb mountains one after another. I would like to tackle mountains in foreign countries from time to time. And finally, I would like to climb a snow mountain like the thunderhead I saw when I was very young.



4. Entering the World of Photographs

B: Well then, let me ask about your taking photographs. How long have you concentrated on shooting pictures?

Nakada: I had not concentrated on it before. It began with just one photo. The picture of the sunrise that I took from Mount Fuji was noticed by someone at the World Heritage Academy (NPO in Japan), and fortunately they adopted it for the cover picture of an issue of the organization's newsletter. This experience strengthened my interest in photographs. Around the same time, the World Heritage Academy was looking for a picture of Mount Fuji to use on their new member card. So, I went to Mount Fuji several times to take better pictures. There are many spots around Mount Fuji from which you can enjoy a magnificent view. I found out that Mount Fuji's appearance can greatly differ depending on the time of shooting or what types of clouds surround the mountain. Gradually, I became fascinated with taking mountain photographs. When I was taking pictures of the sunrise, I was waiting in heavy snow, but felt so excited that I did not think the temperature was cold.



B: I think you have an aptitude for photography.

Nakada: Maybe. I have loved seeing the photo books of Mr. Michio Hoshino, an explorer and photographer. But after we started shooting, I came to realize the profundity of photographs. The more I wanted to take better pictures, the more fascinated by photographs I became. Nowadays, camera functions are highly developed, so anyone can take great photos to a certain extent. But I find it difficult to take convincing pictures. So, I need to build experience to take better pictures.

B: Your photos are always well composed. Do you have tips for taking good pictures?

Nakada: First, I shoot the point where I feel the scenery is beautiful. Then, looking through the viewfinder, I shoot when I feel “this is it.” To do so, as I consider the subject and balance of scenery, I change standing points and camera angles until I am convinced.

B: That type of intuition must be your talent. Then, what pictures do you want to take in the future?

Nakada: I will continue shooting mountain pictures. The appearance of mountains greatly depends on sunlight, so I want to concentrate on the time and place of shooting. To capture each season’s beautiful scenery, I will shoot throughout the year. Besides, clouds are indispensable to accentuate the scenery. Clouds are also changeable in sunlight, so I want to click beautiful photographs by being conscious of the contrast between mountains and clouds. It is difficult to click a beautiful photo of nature consciously, and we cannot take the same picture twice. I want to value every chance and every moment.



In addition, I am interested not only in mountain photographs but also those of ruins and architectural sites, so I want to shoot them, focusing on world heritage sites. Because they are overwhelming, world heritage sites are the best subjects. When I visited the Taj Mahal in India, it was so beautiful that I had goose bumps. Its symmetric silhouette and whiteness was outstanding and overwhelmed me. Also, the beauty of the great cathedral and Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany took my breath away, and Sagrada Família in Spain left me speechless because of its creativity indicating the potential of human beings. Each local culture affects its architecture in the Middle East or Africa as well, so I have several subjects to shoot.

B: Your photographs of the Egyptian pyramids and Machu Picchu must be great ones.

Nakada: They represent world heritage sites, so they will definitely overwhelm me. Overwhelming things move us beyond description. Whoever takes pictures of them, the photos would be great. However, I want

to take my own convincing pictures, following my intuition. I became absorbed in shooting pictures, beginning with just one picture, the sunrise from Mount Fuji. I always carry it with me, to remind me of my original intention.

5. The Things We Can Learn from World Heritage Sites

B: Mr. Nakada, you hold the qualification of “World Heritage Meister,” the highest rank of the Test of World Heritage Study. To begin with, what made you interested in world heritage sites?

Nakada: Since I was young, I have loved nature and architecture such as ruins, castles, and churches, and I have loved watching TV programs and picture books featuring world heritage sites. Beyond being moved by them, we can learn various things about history, culture, and arts from them. I have also been interested in history, culture, and arts, so I was fascinated by world heritage sites because I can learn from them everything I love. Then, one day, I learned of the Test of World Heritage Study.

B: How did you study for the Test of World Heritage Study?

Nakada: When I first became aware of the test, I was so happy about taking an exam on my favorite things. So, I decided to obtain the qualification of World Heritage Meister. I was unwavering about it. The more I learned, the more my intellectual curiosity was stimulated. There was no trouble in studying because I learned about things that I love. I really enjoyed learning. When I visit a place after I have learned about it, I can be moved ten times more powerfully. I think it would be a waste if I visited a place without first obtaining that knowledge.

B: Those holding the qualification of World Heritage Meister can act as a certified lecturer after having interviews and training. Do you have a vision to do so in the future?

Nakada: Yes, I have. Nowadays, many people recognize world heritage sites, but if you knew their backgrounds in addition to their appearances, you could enjoy them in a different way. The important points of world heritage sites are not necessarily their appearance. They have a “cultural scenery” category for the interaction of human beings and nature, where human-made scenery exists in nature, such as a garden. Or it may be cultural scenery connecting industry with nature, like rural fields and ranches. I want to tell people about the attractions of such world heritage sites.

B: Mr. Nakada, how do you yourself want to get involved in world heritage sites in the future?

Nakada: I can still learn lots of things from world heritage sites, so even though I already have the qualification of World Heritage Meister, I will continue learning and visiting many places, and enjoying them. The number of world heritage sites today is close to 1,000. Among them, we must pay attention to world heritage sites at risk from disasters and conflicts. Merely becoming listed as world heritage site is not the goal. After being listed, sites require consideration of scenery and local residents, and city planning must operate and maintain the site. I think preserving the cultural wealth of humankind is our mission, and I want to be involved in such activities.

B: By the way, what is your favorite world heritage site among the places you have visited?

Nakada: I have visited many world heritage sites during my independent trips and the worldwide cruise trip. Among nature heritage sites, the wildlife that I saw in Serengeti National Park in Tanzania and Angel Falls in Venezuela, which is a waterfall 979 meters high, are the hidden scenic spots that made me feel the grandeur of the Earth. I want to visit Turkey again because it has great world heritage sites, its food is delicious, and the people are pro-Japanese. I saw many couples at the Acropolis in Greece and felt they must be lucky because they can date at a world heritage site. I cannot give you all examples, but I can say that I surely feel an attraction to all the world heritage sites I have visited. Above all, the most impressive place for me was Rapa Nui National Park in Chile, so-called Easter Island which has the moai statues. I wanted to visit there, and when I actually visited it, I felt the mysterious atmosphere and history.

B: How do you like Japanese world heritage sites?

Nakada: My favorite is Himeji Castle. European castles are very beautiful, but we are definitely proud of Japanese castles. Himeji Castle surpasses the others in scale, beauty, and design. I want to guide foreign guests there. Although it will be undergoing re-construction until 2015, I want people from around the world to visit there in 2020, the year of the Tokyo Olympics. Among nature heritage sites, Yakushima island is the best. At the center of the island stands Mount Miyanoura-dake (elevation: 1,935 meters), the highest mountain in the Kyushu (Western Japan) area. It is a beautiful island called “The alps in the ocean,” where we can see diverse plants.



B: What world heritage sites do you want to visit in the future?

Nakada: I cannot list all of them, but certainly the Egyptian pyramids and Machu Picchu. Actually, I once planned to visit the Egyptian pyramids, but I could not go there in the aftermath of September 11th attack in 2001. I am interested in seeing the ruins in South America and wanted to visit Tikal in Guatemala, which people have recommended. Finally, the place I definitely want to visit is Santiago de Compostela, the 1,500-kilometer long road for the pilgrimage from France to Spain. That entire walk would take several months, but I want to walk it as far as possible. It was the setting of the movie *The Way* (2012) starring Martin Sheen, and its nature is amazingly beautiful. I want to encounter such impressive nature. I once traveled about 1,500 kilometers from Tokyo to Cape Soya, the north end of Japan, by bicycle. I want to recapture the feeling of that achievement, next time on foot.



6. Widened World through English

B: Mr. Nakada, you have been learning English seriously, right? How has it been so far?

Nakada: I once frequently traveled in Thailand, India, and Europe alone. During the trip, I felt happy when I could communicate with Non-Japanese people in English. Each time I returned to Japan, I definitely wanted to master English. I have a friend who is an English native speaker living in Seattle in the United States, and I showed him around when he visited Japan. I had a bitter memory of it because I could not express myself in English. I bought textbooks on English conversation or listened to English programs on the radio, but I could not continue until I knew enough.

B: How did you learn English?

Nakada: In many cases, I used the radio and textbooks. I once had e-mail friends in more than 10 countries. There was a community website in for Non-Japanese interested in Japan, so it was very easy for me to make friends there. As I exchanged e-mails with people in various countries, I learned many expressions and stocked phrases that I frequently used in e-mails. Communicating in English with people from various countries greatly stimulated me.

B: Do you have any impressive stories about your learning English?

Nakada: When I traveled to Europe alone and contacted some e-mail friends in advance, some of them told me that they were willing to show me around. I did not believe their kindness because we had never met before. When I landed at Vienna International Airport and saw my name on the board the guy was holding, I was really moved. Then, he had me stay at his home and guided me to local shops and sightseeing sites. After walking around in several countries, I stayed at the home of one of my e-mail friends in Belgium. The trip became unforgettable because I felt people's warmth. I still exchange e-mails with some of them, so I am looking forward to seeing them again someday. If you can speak English, you have opportunities to widen your world. It would be a waste not to learn English.

B: Do you want to use your English competency for your future activities?

Nakada: Of course. But I do not have enough opportunities to use English in my daily life. So if I do not have a specific goal, I would spend less time learning English. One day I met Ryusui (Seiryoin), Chief Editing Officer of the BBB, after that, I began studying with a specific goal based on the TOEIC (Test of English International Communications). As I continue learning, my connection with other learners has expanded, and we can now strive toward each of our goals with good learning companions. Improving my English competency by focusing on the TOEIC and valuing my speaking ability, I will communicate with non-Japanese more. Then, as I have been welcomed in Europe, I want to welcome them back when they visit Japan.

B: There must be many people in the world who love mountaineering, photographs, or world heritage sites. So, we would like you, Mr. Nakada, to communicate and exchange information with people all around the world by the keywords "mountaineering," "photographs," and "world heritage sites." We also hope this interview will become the springboard for that communication.

Nakada: If so, that would be my greatest happiness.

B: Mr. Nakada, thank you so much for your valuable talk today.

Nakada: It is I who thank you. I appreciate it.

(This interview was recorded in Tokyo on March 18, 2013)

7. Exclusive Article about Mount Fuji Being Listed as World Heritage Site

• The history of Mount Fuji

Mount Fuji can of course be considered the symbol of Japan, and its beautiful appearance is known worldwide. It captivates people seeing it and makes them happy. There are several mountains whose appearance are quite similar to Mount Fuji, such as Mount Taranaki (elevation: 2,518 meters) in New Zealand and Osorno Volcano (elevation: 2,660 meters) in Chile. However, it must be difficult to find a mountain like Mount Fuji where people can enjoy different sceneries during each season, harmonizing with nature.

Mount Fuji has been listed as a World Heritage Site, whose background reflects the extent of the mountain's effect on the Japanese people. People interpreted Mount Fuji's eruptions at regular intervals as indicating that Kami (Japanese god or Spirit) lived there and were awed by it. To calm the volcano, people built the Asama Shrine (also known as the Sengen Shrine) at the foot of the mountain. Thus, the mountain has been worshiped by the Japanese people. Until 1872, women were forbidden to climb it, but history records a woman wearing man's clothes climbing it in the 1830s.

The mountain has been featured in *tanka* and *haiku* (Japanese poetry style) countless times. And Mount Fuji's *ukiyo-e* (Japanese picture) drawn during the Edo period even affected artists in distant countries, including Vincent van Gogh and Claude Monet.

Many Japanese associate the *senzo* (public bath) with Mount Fuji because the mountain is drawn on the wall of many *sentos*. In short, Japanese are familiar with the mountain, and it represents a spiritual home of the Japanese people. This mountain is noteworthy because it has been affecting and is recognized by countless people not only in Japan but also abroad throughout history.

• Listing Mount Fuji as World Heritage Site

I was happy about Mount Fuji becoming the 17th world heritage site in Japan in 2013. This honor came not only because the mountain was recognized by the world but because preserving its environment necessitated it being listed as a world heritage site.

At first, Mount Fuji was targeted as a nature heritage site in 2003, but lost in domestic competition because an independent, conical shaped mountain had precedents, and it had been trampled upon by too many people and suffered from accumulated litter. Then, it was targeted as a cultural heritage site and finally achieved recognition as it related closely to Japanese religion and identity, and has been revered by people throughout history.

Being listed as a cultural heritage site carries great meaning. As it was listed under the name "Fujisan, sacred place and source of artistic inspiration," it has unique value because its magnificence and beauty inspired religion as well as countless art works. This, Mount Fuji represents not only cultural heritage but also includes nearby shrines, mountain paths, forests, lakes, marshes, and invisible aspects of Japanese culture. I would like people around the world to know that fact.

• The problem of preserving Mount Fuji's environment

The number of people visiting Mount Fuji from around the world may be increasing, but we Japanese need to pay attention to the preservation of its environment, living up to the status of a world heritage site. If we Japanese cannot preserve it, it will be deleted from the list. Each time I climbed it before it was listed as a world heritage site; I was shocked by the amount of litter that was there.

Since then, each climber must recognize the issue. As more than 300,000 people climb it each year, we need to restrict access by car and the number of climbers to ensure the preservation of mountain paths, as well as the maintenance of the scenery and sightseeing spots. The government and the people must handle it

together. There are world heritage sites abroad that can serve as good models, so we should refer to those and apply their strategies through trial and error here.

February 23rd is specified as “The Day of Mount Fuji.” It is an ordinance of Shizuoka and Yamanashi Prefectures (Mount Fuji spans these two prefectures), and people have tried to highlight its value. Preserving the environment of beautiful nature enhances the site’s reputation. To ensure that we leave Mount Fuji for future ages as a proud heritage in Japan, I want to recognize its importance and act accordingly.



This interview was exclusively conducted as one of the made-in-Japan content belonging to The BBB: Breakthrough Bandwagon Books.
