journalistic ambitions at the same time. Pilley thus took on the shared editorship of the fledgling *Pinnacle Club Journal* alongside Lillian Bray in the mid-1920s and became a champion of women's mountaineering literature, exhorting and bullying fellow Pinnacle Club members to write about their experiences.

Pilley's legacy to mountaineering literature and the literature of women's mountaineering is assured. In *Climbing Days,* in her wider mountaineering writings and through her diaries she shows with eloquence and energy what women could achieve in the mountains: as individuals; as members of a wider mountaineering community of women and as writers of mountaineering literature. Indomitable in old age and still active, despite an almost fatal car crash in Spain in 1958, she travelled to Skye in January 1986 with her nephew. Skye was, she recorded in her diary on 22 January, 'fiercely cold and icy, but we camped in the mountain hut at Glen Brittle where I climbed joyfully 50 years ago which made me feel like my gypsy self.'

It seems fitting to conclude with a poem, which she penned on the frontispiece of her 1937 diary, titled *Triolet of a Hedonist*.

I climb because I like it;
Individual though it be
I climb (because I like it)
Though it's usual to like it
It means a lot to me;
This climbing – for, you see,
I climb because I like it

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MARTIN HOOD

One Hundred Mountains of Japan

A Japanese classic in translation sheds light on how another island people see their native mountains

Shirouma-dake – White-horse mountain. 'The name Shirouma came about because the snow on one face of the mountain leaves a horse-shaped patch as it melts. As the horse would appear when farmers started to plough the fields before planting out the rice seedlings (*nawashirokaki*), the name comes from *shiro*, meaning rice nursery, and *uma* for horse.' *(Martin Hood)*

To outsiders, Japan's mountains are a black hole. Until recently, it was easier to find information, in English at least, about East Greenland or the remoter Himalaya than the Japanese Alps. One or two hiking guides existed, a few blogs, and that was about it. But this gap is now partially filled by a new translation of Fukada Kyuya's *One Hundred Mountains of Japan*, a book that sums up the mountaineering traditions of its country.

What are these mountains? Open up a hiking map to almost any backcountry area of Japan, and you'll see a select few peaks marked as 'Nihon Hyakumeizan' – those included on the list of Japan's One Hundred Mountains. Yet this list has no official standing. Instead it represents the personal choice of a failed novelist and mountaineer who, half a century ago, published a series of short magazine articles about his favourite peaks.

In 1964, these articles were gathered into a best-selling book, the *Nihon*

Hyakumeizan – or *One Hundred Mountains of Japan*. In his afterword, Fukada wrote that mountains form the very bedrock of the Japanese soul. That is a sweeping claim, yet readers seemed to endorse it; the book swiftly won a major literary prize and became a bestseller.

Within a few years, Fukada's *One Hundred Mountains* had morphed into a canon. Today, thousands of hikers flock annually to the selected peaks, making it the goal of a few seasons or a lifetime to climb them all. Even foreigners are getting in on the act; a few years ago, an English-whelped border terrier named Hana and her master claimed the first canine round of all one hundred summits.

Fukada himself would have been bemused by this enthusiasm: 'Ultimately, the Hyakumeizan are a personal choice and I make no claims for them beyond that,' he wrote, adding that 'if the book is reprinted, I may well change a mountain or two.' For good or ill, it is too late for that now. Fukada died of a brain haemorrhage on a mountain hike in 1971. Since then, his list of mountains has been enshrined in maps, a raft of spin-off books, and even a TV mini-series.

If Fukada didn't mean to create a kind of national peak-bagging circuit, what is his book really about? A clue is found in the chapter on his own native mountain, the one in whose shadow he grew up. The essay on Hakusan, a dormant 2702m volcano on the Japan Sea coast, opens like this:

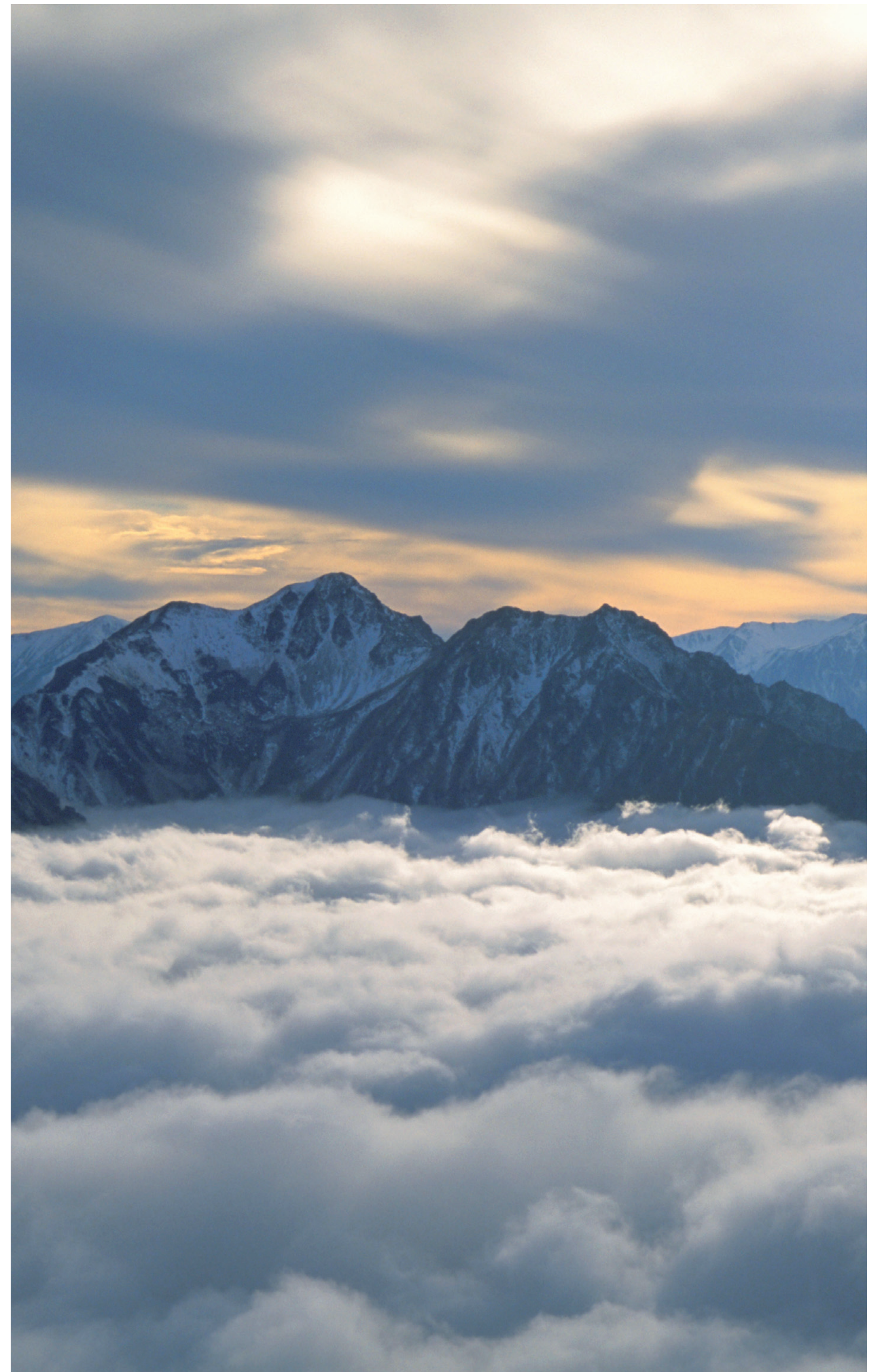
> *A mountain watches over the home village of most Japanese people. Tall or short, near or far, some mountain watches over our native village like a tutelary deity. We spend our childhood in the shadow of our mountain and we carry it with us in memory when we grow up and leave the village. And however much our lives may change, the mountain will always be there, just as it always has been, to welcome us back to our home village.*

This paragraph is practically an authorial manifesto. Setting out to show what mountains mean to the Japanese people, Fukada went about his task by weaving together, and with masterly assurance, historical incidents, travelogues, literary quotations, and his own reminiscences – for a mountain could only be included in his book if he had climbed it itself.

Read a few of these essays, and you'll notice that Fukada quotes generously from one source in particular. This is *Sangaku* (*Mountain*), the Japanese Alpine Club's journal, which was launched in 1906 on the model of the original *Alpine Journal* in which you read this. *Sangaku* owed its inspiration to Walter Weston, the English missionary and proud member of the Alpine Club, who roamed far and wide through the Japanese Alps during the early 1890s.

The idea of a Japanese Alpine Club – and its concomitant journal – was

Opposite page: Mt Harinoki above a sea of clouds at dawn, North Alps, Japan. *(Peter Skov)*



Tsurugi, Japan's most 'alpine' mountain, is described as a 'tiltyard of alpinism' – a bit like Ben Nevis – in Chapter 48 of *One Hundred Mountains of Japan*. *(Martin Hood)*

first floated on a Saturday afternoon in early 1903, over an afternoon tea between Walter Weston and two young Japanese mountain-lovers. This fateful conversation led in due course to the foundation not just of Japan's but Asia's first mountaineering club.

Sangaku quickly became a hothouse – in fact, for years, the only hothouse – for Japan's first generation of mountain writers. As many of these authors are quoted in *One Hundred Mountains of Japan*, one might say that the book

inherited more than a few genes from the original *Alpine Journal* and its rich tradition of mountain writing.

Here and there, Fukada makes a nod towards that tradition. In his chapter on Nantai, a volcanic peak north of Tokyo, he likens the emotions of Shodo, the monk who first climbed the mountain in 781, to those of a famous Alpine Club member on his best-known Himalayan ascent. It is an inspired comparison:

> *Almost beside himself with joy and grief. How apposite that phrase is. How many mountaineers have experienced that strange mixture of exultation and regret when, after one failed attempt after another, they have at last stepped onto a long-sought summit. As H W Tilman wrote after his ascent of Nanda Devi in the Himalaya: 'After the first joy in victory came a feeling of sadness that the mountain had succumbed, that the proud head of the goddess was bowed.'*

In deference to the European precedent, the pioneers of the Japanese Alpine Club even spoke of their own golden age. By this they meant the period of mountain exploration before the Japanese Army surveyors came out with accurate maps, in the mid-teens of the twentieth century. Alas for Japan's alpine pioneers, actual first ascents were hardly possible; all the country's peaks had been climbed centuries before by monks, pilgrims or hunters. Japan's 'golden age' was a period more of rediscovery than true exploration.

Fukada was born a generation too late to experience this era for himself. But when he joined the Japanese Alpine Club in mid-1935, as member 1586, most of the club's founders were still active. In this way, the *Hyakumeizan* author could relive Japan's golden age through the memories and journal accounts of his older colleagues. It was rather as if a present-day editor of the AJ could interview Edward Whymper in person.

It is this institutional memory of the Japanese Alpine Club that accounts for the nostalgia running like a threnody through *Nihon Hyakumeizan*:

> *It was Kogure himself accompanied by Fujishima Toshio who, in 1919, first forced his arduous way to the top of Sukai, a hitherto virgin peak. In those days, we still had mountains in Japan that nobody knew how to attempt, where you had to find your own way by trial and error, fighting your way through or under the greenery, and so finally winning the summit. In short, we still had mountains where you could taste the true joys of mountaineering.*

Although they get their due, the elite of the Japanese Alpine Club are never allowed to crowd others off the page. For *Nihon Hyakumeizan* is the most democratic of books. Everybody is there, from the poets and novelists who wrote about the mountains, to the monks and pilgrims who first climbed them, today's hikers and hard-core alpinists, as well as farmers who timed their spring sowing by watching the telltale snow-patches

Mount Fuji: 'The phrase *hachimen-reirō*, meaning 'graceful in all its aspects', was coined with Fuji in mind. Its form keeps its beauty whether viewed from north or south, east or west. All other mountains have their quirks, from which they draw their individual charm. But Fuji is simply vast and pure.' *(Martin Hood)*

shrink, pioneer botanists who catalogued Japan's alpine plants, and rugged individualists such as the patriot who made it his life's mission to open up the northern island of Hokkaido before the Russians did.

This all-embracing sweep of characters and sources doubtless helped to broaden the book's appeal. *Nihon Hyakumeizan* has been continuously in print for fifty years, often in several different editions simultaneously. Yet none of this fully explains why the book has become a classic. If seeking to answer that question, one might usefully quote the chapter on Ontake, a sacred peak in central Japan still visited by throngs of white-robed pilgrims – and incidentally the very same volcano that erupted last autumn with a grievous loss of life. In Fukada's words:

> *The mountain's inexhaustible treasury of riches is like some endless story-book with its pages uncut. As one follows the rambling plot along, one is always looking forward to reading more. Every page yields things never found in other books. Ontake is that kind of mountain.*

Every page yields things never found in other books; one is always looking forwards to reading more. *Nihon Hyakumeizan* is that kind of book.

• *One Hundred Mountains of Japan* is published by University of Hawaii Press.