



## A Reflection of the Sacred Power of Mount Fuji: A Personal Journey

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### Abstract

This reflective note explores the profound spiritual and symbolic role of Mount Fuji in shaping my academic and personal journey. From an obscured view during a professional trip in 2014 to awe-inspiring full views in 2017, Mount Fuji became more than a natural landmark; it evolved into a sacred guide during moments of professional hardship. Faced with rejection, academic politics, and delayed promotion, I found renewed purpose and motivation through the recurring appearance of the mountain during key life events. Drawing from cultural, psychological, and spiritual literature, the reflection suggests that sacred landscapes like Mount Fuji can foster resilience, mental clarity, and persistence. This note highlights how nature's sacredness can influence human endurance and life decisions, particularly in the pursuit of professional milestones. Mount Fuji, through both presence and symbolism, ultimately inspired me to achieve full professorship despite prolonged challenges and systemic adversity.

**Keywords:** Mount Fuji; Perseverance; Sacred Landscape; Academic Journey

### My Personal Reflections

Mount Fuji has long been celebrated in Japan as a cultural, artistic, and spiritual icon [1-3]. Mount Fuji is more than a natural wonder because it has been a symbolic mountain of perseverance, faith, and spiritual strength in my life journey. My encounters with this sacred peak, across different years and contexts, seemed to mirror my own academic struggles and triumphs.

In March 2014, I visited Tokyo for an international conference. Eager to fulfil my dean's encouragement to attend more global academic events, I brought along my wife, eldest daughter, and brother-in-law. After the conference, we visited Lake Kawaguchiko, hoping to witness the majestic Mount Fuji. The weather, however, did not favour us. The peak was shrouded in clouds, as if wearing a hat, hiding its grandeur (Figure 1). The temperature was a chilling 13°C, cold for us Malaysians. Despite the awe of being in its presence, the view was obscured. When I returned to Malaysia and approached the same dean about my promotion to full professorship, I was met with shifting justifications and disappointments. It dawned on me that the support he promised was never truly intended. I felt bullied, frustrated, and deeply disheartened. Such experiences are not uncommon in academia, where bullying can be subtle, institutional, and difficult to trace [4]. Academic bullies often operate behind a façade of professionalism, leaving their targets isolated and silenced [5].

Yet, fate had more in store. In April 2017, during a leisure trip to Japan, we were fortunate to witness Sakura blooms in Tokyo which was a magical moment of spring transition (Figure 2).

More importantly, I witnessed Mount Fuji in its full glory from the Fuji Shibazakura Festival, surrounded by vibrant pink moss flowers in bloom (Figure 3). The mountain stood magnificent and unmasked. That sight struck me with awe - and renewed hope. It ignited in me the idea of applying for sabbatical leave in Japan. However, once again, I faced resistance at the departmental level support. Fortunately, a new head took over shortly after and supported my request. I felt lucky, perhaps even blessed, again by the sacred energy of Mount Fuji. As Mount Fuji has long been revered as a spiritual symbol and natural icon in Japanese culture [1, 6], such moments of personal connection are often deeply meaningful. The mountain's enduring cultural and spiritual power continues to captivate both locals and travellers [7], and in recent scholarship, it is also seen as a place where modern climbers can be reconnected with traditional pilgrimage experiences [8].

In November 2017, I began my sabbatical leave in Japan. Despite a mild earthquake that shook us in our rental house in Tsukuba, the overall experience was humbling. On 25 November 2017, during



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**Figure 1:** Cloud-covered Mount Fuji from Lake Kawaguchiko (29 March 2014).



**Figure 2:** Sakura blooms in Tokyo (29 March 2014 on the left & 23 April 2017 on the right).



**Figure 3:** Clear Mount Fuji views from Fuji Shibazakura (25 April 2017).

a trip from Tokyo to Osaka, we again caught a marvelous glimpse of Mount Fuji while still in the bus, just before arriving at Tokyo station. Later that same afternoon, while riding the Shinkansen, I saw Mount Fuji once more in breathtaking clarity through the train window (Figure 4). That moment filled me with gratitude. The mountain had become a quiet companion in my academic pilgrimage.

Back in Malaysia, I debated whether to continue pursuing my full professorship. The rejections and delays were mentally exhausting. But something kept whispering; try again. My mentor, Prof. Tan WS, gave me words that struck deep: "Chee Kong, think of your family." With that push, I approached the new dean. He was a genuine academic and advised me to obtain a patent before applying. Though I had failed two patent attempts in 2014, I persisted. With guidance from my junior colleague, I succeeded in registering a patent and gained the dean's endorsement.

The final challenge came during the interview for promotion. I was asked uncomfortable questions by the panels. These questions were less about evaluation and more about diminishing my achievements. Still, I persisted. The kind Vice-Chancellor, acting as the chairperson of my interview at that time, postponed the decision,



**Figure 4:** Mount Fuji from the Shinkansen (25 November 2017).

setting conditions: JCR Q1 papers and a valid international grant. I fulfilled both within six months.

Finally, after a 30-month wait, in June 2021, I was officially awarded the title of Full Professor from the date of my original application on 2 January 2019. Looking back, I am grateful to all who supported me. But deep in my heart, I believe that Mount Fuji, in its silent and sacred presence, gave me courage and clarity. It appeared clearly to me during pivotal moments (April and November 2017), as though acknowledging my perseverance (Figures 3 and 4).

Indeed, Mount Fuji is sacred. Its presence reminded me that clarity may not come immediately, but persistence leads us closer to truth, honour, and success.

## Literature Supports

To understand the sacred significance of Mount Fuji in powering persistence and perseverance for success in life, we can explore its cultural, spiritual, and psychological impacts. Mount Fuji has long stood as a cultural icon in Japan, representing aesthetics, discipline, and ideological resilience deeply rooted in Japanese identity [9]. Its spiritual reverence stems from centuries of mountain worship practices that continue to this day, merging with Shinto, Buddhist, and folk traditions [1]. The mountain's prominence has also made it a symbol of persistence, standing firm and unyielding through seasons and storms, much like the spirit it inspires in those who gaze upon it.

Recent studies have shown that engaging with Mount Fuji's natural environment brings tangible psychological benefits, from enhanced happiness to improved mental toughness and motivation [10]. These benefits persist for months, indicating that sacred nature can have lasting effects on personal resilience. Similar to the mental toughness developed by high-altitude mountaineers [11], those inspired by Fuji's grandeur often report a strengthened resolve in facing life's challenges. Furthermore, sacred landscapes like Mount Fuji are instrumental in preserving cultural identity and shaping a collective consciousness around the values of continuity, spiritual endurance, and moral clarity [2, 3]. All these elements underscore why I felt such deep emotional and spiritual affirmation during my encounters with the mountain.

## Conclusion

In retrospect, Mount Fuji was not merely a backdrop to my travels; it emerged as a sacred symbol that paralleled my academic perseverance. Its majestic appearance during critical periods, once hidden behind clouds, later unveiled in full which clearly mirrored my own emotional and professional trajectory. From being overlooked for professorship despite qualifications, to finally securing it after years of rejection and effort, my encounters with Mount Fuji symbolized renewal, strength, and quiet assurance. Scholarly literature supports

this sense of spiritual and psychological empowerment tied to sacred landscapes, affirming that such sites can inspire not only cultural reverence but also personal growth. I believe that Mount Fuji's sacredness is more than legend; it was a guiding presence in my life, a silent mentor reminding me that persistence matters. Ultimately, the mountain taught me that the journey to success, like its snow-capped summit, is earned through resilience, faith, and the courage to continue upward, even when the path is unclear.

## Declaration of Withdrawal and Publication Status

The manuscript entitled "A Reflection of the Sacred Power of Mount Fuji: A Personal Journey" was originally submitted to the International Journal of Biomedical Science and Research in 2025 and received an acceptance notification following peer review. However, following the publisher's request for an Article Processing Charge (APC) and subsequent considerations regarding the journal's scope and publication requirements, I officially withdrew the manuscript from the journal. The editorial office and publisher were formally informed of this withdrawal, and the withdrawal was duly acknowledged.

Accordingly, the manuscript was not published in the International Journal of Biomedical Science and Research, has not appeared in any printed or online issue of the journal, and remains an unpublished scholarly work. Consequently, its subsequent submission to the WebLog Journal of Environmental Sciences constitutes the submission of an original and previously unpublished manuscript. To the best of the author's knowledge, no copyright has been transferred, no version of the manuscript has entered the published scientific record, and no duplicate publication has occurred.

## Author's Declaration

I hereby certify that the above statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. This declaration is provided in the interest of transparency and to clarify the publication history of this manuscript.

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