

Reflecting the Fuji-ko Faith: Waters of Purification around Mt. Fuji

In addition to visiting the peak, Fuji-ko confraternities developed other ways to express their faith. One of these was the Eight-Lake Circuit (Hakkai Meguri), a pilgrimage to eight bodies of water at the base of Mt. Fuji that was established in the eighteenth century. Either before or after climbing the mountain, pilgrims would visit the lakes one by one to perform a rite called *suigyo*, a partial or full immersion thought to purify body and soul. The lakes considered part of the circuit varied over time and within different texts, but all lists include the Fuji Five Lakes and Lake Asumiko. Most researchers believe that Fuji-ko pilgrims began this practice in imitation of Hasegawa Kakugyo (1541?–1646), whom the Fuji-ko confraternities claimed as their founder.

Fuji-ko adherents also sought other sites for *suigyo* across Japan more broadly, which they conceived with Mt. Fuji at its spiritual center. These became known as the Outer Eight Lakes (Soto Hakkai) by contrast with the original Inner Eight Lakes (Uchi Hakkai). In addition to these circuits, the Oshino Eight Lakes (Oshino Hakkai) were established in the nineteenth century as a convenient and compact alternative, being entirely located in a single village near the mountain.