

Hitoana Lava Cave and Shiraito-no-Taki Waterfalls

Sacred sites with a connection to Hasegawa Kakugyo (1541?–1646), revered by the Fuji-ko pilgrims as their founder, were also found on the west side of the mountain, and some Fuji-ko pilgrims visited these sites, too. The route they used was called the Konnoji road, and connected the north and west side of the mountain.

Hitoana Lava Cave

The Hitoana Lava Cave was formed by an ancient lava flow. It is partly flooded but large enough to stand in, with a mysterious, evocative atmosphere that inspired fear and awe in visiting pilgrims. The cave is mentioned in written records as early as the thirteenth century. Some believed it was the residence of Sengen Daibosatsu, the mountain deity; others that it was the entrance to hell.

Tradition records that Kakugyo performed ritual austerities within the cave. In the eighteenth century, the Fuji-ko pilgrims came to revere the site as sacred, and visit it to pay their respects. Today, more than 200 stone monuments placed by Fuji-ko groups surround the mouth of the cave. (An advance appointment is required to enter.)

Shiraito-no-Taki Waterfalls

Shiraito means, roughly, “threads of white.” Tradition holds that Kakugyo used this site to perform austerities before he used the Hitoana Lava Cave for that purpose. The remarkable beauty of the falls also attracted the attention of artists. A 1762 painting by Ikeno Taiga (1723–1776) of the falls with the mountain behind them was particularly influential in its composition. An 1843 work by Hirai Kensai (1802–1856) is more abstract, even mystical, positioning Mt. Fuji at the center to create something similar to the two-dimensional pilgrimage mandalas commissioned by sacred sites across Japan.