

## The Outer Eight Lakes

The Outer Eight Lakes (Soto Hakkai) stretch across much of Japan, from Lake Chuzenji in Nikko to Lake Biwa north of Kyoto, more than 300 kilometers away. Like the Inner Eight Lakes (Uchi Hakkai), they were explained as sites with some link to Hasegawa Kakugyo (1541?–1646), whom the Fuji-ko confraternities claimed as their founder. Kakugyo's biography does record austerities and *suigyo* purification rites at mountains and bodies of water across Japan, including two of the Outer Eight Lakes: Lake Biwa, and Lake Ashinoko in Hakone.

The Outer Eight Lakes are shown on the map below. Comparing this with the map to the right, which was printed in 1843, reveals that the eight *suigyo* sites that make up the Outer Eight Lakes form a loose ring around Mt. Fuji, largely in locations with a view of the mountain in the distance.

Some Fuji-ko groups, not satisfied with simply climbing Mt. Fuji and completing the circuit of the Inner Eight Lakes, began to follow in the footsteps of Kakugyo and make pilgrimage to the Outer Eight Lakes to perform *suigyo* there as well. A guidebook published in 1860 lists eight sites under the name "Outer Eight Lakes," suggesting that they were well known by this time. Another document from 1876 lists a Fuji-ko group with thirteen members that completed the entire circuit. This is one of the earliest such records. The group's pilgrimage reportedly took around two months.