

The Yoshida Tainai (Yoshida Lava Tree Molds)

The Yoshida lava tree molds are a group of 63 caves in the Kenmarubi lava flow. They are located in Kamiyoshida, around 700 meters southeast of the Funatsu lava tree molds, and are also included in Mt. Fuji's World Heritage listing. The largest, which was adopted by Fuji-ko pilgrims as a site of faith, is called the Yoshida Tainai.

The first group to make use of the Yoshida Tainai was the Maruto Muneoka-ko. This group descended from the Maruto-ko confraternity founded by Takada Toshiro (1706–1782), which had strong connections to the Funatsu Tainai. In 1892, Hoshino Kanzo, eighth leader of the Maruto Muneoka-ko confraternity, adopted the site as an alternative to the Funatsu Tainai, apparently with the support of the *oshi* from Yoshida.

Because the Yoshida Tainai is closer to the Yoshida Ascending Route to the summit, pilgrims might have been expected to prefer it over the Funatsu Tainai. However, both sites remained in use.

Confraternities fit a visit to the Yoshida Tainai into their itinerary in different ways. Some visited it on their way to the summit, others on the way back, and some even visited the site the day before they climbed.

Today, the Yoshida Tainai is closed for much of the year. However, each April 29, at the Yoshida Tainai Festival, anyone who wishes can crawl through the cave and be reborn.