

Torii Pass - Kiso Village Historic Site

Located on the boundary between Kiso Village and Narai, Shiojiri City (formerly Narakawa Village) at an altitude of 1,197 m, Torii Pass forms the **watershed** between the Kiso River, which flows into the Pacific Ocean, and the Narai River, which continues on to the Sea of Japan.

Around the year 713, when the pass was called Agatazaka ("Agata Hill"), road access over the pass was opened up with a public road called **Kisoji**.

Records show that from the Kamakura period (1185-1333) the pass was called **Narai-toge Pass** or **Yabuhara-toge Pass**, but during the Meiji era (1868-1912), or possibly the Daiei era (1521-1528), Kiso Yoshimoto, who won the battle against the Ogasawara clan of Matsumoto on this spot, offered his gratitude to the deities by building a torii gate, and it thus came to be known as Torii-toge Pass.

In the Edo period (1603-1867), this pass was one of the most difficult points to traverse on the Nakasendo Road, but it was also key to transportation and bustled with travelers, primarily Tokugawa shogunate officials, including those moving to and from Edo (Tokyo) for alternate attendance at the seat of the shogun and votive envoys sent to dedicate offerings to Nikko's Toshogu Shrine called *Nikko reiheishi*, as well as devotees on pilgrimage to Ise Shrine or Zenkoji Temple, and also mountain devotees traveling to and from Mt. Ontake.

Located within the designated area are the Torii Pass Ancient Battlefield Monument, monument to Meiji Emperor's Visit, Pine Tree Planted by Emperor Meiji, Ontake Shrine Yohaisho (place of worship), **suzurimizu** spring water that Kiso Yoshinaka used to write a prayer for victory, as well as the site of a fire beacon platform and fort, which are said to have been provided for protection.

This area also has a **legend of Koumi-no-Tochi (Child in the Tree Hollow)** and there is a grove of giant chestnut trees which is mentioned in haiku of Matsuo Basho.

Source: *Kiso-mura no Bunkazai Meguri ("A Tour of Cultural Properties in Kiso Village")*

(Published by Kiso Village Board of Education, March 25, 1986)