

## Yoshida Jizo Statue

From National Route 19 in Yoshida district, a local road branches off to the west, leading upward finally to a Jizo-do Hall called **Shigetsuan**, which houses this Jizo statue. The hall of Shigetsuan is about 4.5 m across and about 3.6 m deep.

The principal Buddhist image is Jizo Bosatsu, with Dainichi Nyorai (Vairocana) and Kokuzo Bosatsu (Akasagarbha Bodhisattva) on either side.

It is said that this image of Jizo Bosatsu was discovered in 1685 by a man named Kohee, ancestor of local resident Nakamura Nobuyoshi, while tending to his fields. Then, around May 1694, statues of Dainichi Nyorai and Kokuzo Bosatsu were also discovered in the same place, and these discoveries were also recorded in the *Shigetsuan-ki (Journal of Shigetsuan)* of 1780.

Local place names such as Teranoue ("above the temple") and Hotokezawa ("Buddha marsh") suggest there was a temple here in olden times.

An **octagonal bronze mirror** was unearthed by farmers working in the same field in the early Showa era (1926-1989).

While the age of this octagonal bronze mirror is not certain, an almost identical mirror was found in Yasaka Village, Nagano Prefecture. That mirror is believed to be from the Heian period (794-1185), and is an example of a mirror with features of both Chinese mirrors and subsequent Japanese mirrors.

Said to have miraculous powers, this image of Jizo Bosatsu attracts the faithful in the local area, especially for being the guardian deity for safe birth. The regular festival is held on April 24th, and Buddhist services called *jizoko* are held by local women on the night of the 23rd every month.

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

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