

## Kisaragi Shrine Main Hall

Kisaragi Shrine stands at the confluence of the Miyazawa River and Suge River.

Although the origin of the shrine is unclear, one theory surmises that it was dedicated on the same ground as the shrine of the local guardian deity that stood in Kamimura, Suge Village.

According to the *Kiso Shiriyaku ("Brief History of Kiso")* of 1757, "It seems that the name Kisaragi is very new, so the villagers do not have any record. It is not known where it came from. How regrettable. The shrine festival is held on the first day of August."

The *Nagano-ken Choson-shi ("Nagano Prefecture Municipal Journal")* of 1936 notes "Kisaragi Shrine. Village Shrine. Shrine grounds approximately 793 m<sup>2</sup> in area, approximately 22 meters east-to-west, approximately 18 meters north-to-south. Located east of the farmland in Suge. Kotoshironushi-no-Kami is the enshrined deity."

The Kagura-den (a hall for ritual dance) stands in front. Kisaragi Shrine directly faces the top of the stone stairs. Hachimangu Shrine stands to its right. The shrine of the local guardian deity is at left.

With the amalgamation of these shrines in September 1909, the shrine in Kamimura that enshrined local guardian deity and the Hachimangu Shrine that stood in Kamide were enshrined together here.

Standing today on the site of the former shrine of the local guardian deity is a monument preserving the site, which was erected by the people of Kamikuriya, Ohira, and Haramura, who served as its Shinto priests (erected in 1915).

Architecturally, each shrine is built in the *Ikkensha Nagare-zukuri* style with a roof covered with wooden shingles and stands under a protective roof called *ooiya*.

Fixed to the roof over the steps leading up to the main hall of Kisaragi Shrine are undulating barge boards with pine tree carvings above the rainbow beams (curved transverse tie beams) of the roof, and phoenix carvings on the boards just under the eaves.

Compared to the highly decorated front, the decorations on the gabled pediments are simple, with frog-leg struts, rainbow beams (curved transverse tie beams), and large bottle struts.

The influence of the late Edo period (1603-1867) Tatekawa school can be seen in the craftsmen's work.

While Hachimangu Shrine is of a similar age, the shrine of the local guardian deity is older, and appears to be from the mid-Edo period.

Dedicated in Kisaragi Shrine are also a hanging disk with an image of Kokuzo Bosatsu (Akasagarbha Bodhisattva) and a crocodile-mouth gong.

The shrine festival used to be held every year on September 1st, but is now held on the first Sunday of September.

*Shishimai* (lion dance) is offered at the festival, and in olden times, the festival fireworks were such a large event that they were called the Kisaragi Shrine Fireworks Festival.

Young people made fireworks in competition with each other and launched them with wooden tubes fitted with bamboo hoops, with the Kiso-odori dance on the shrine grounds making for a great festive event.

The *Nishichikuma-gun-shi* ("West Chikuma County Journal") notes, "In olden times the festival may have been held in February, because February of the lunar calendar is also known as Kisaragi." However, this has not been confirmed.

A project to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the amalgamation of the shrines was undertaken in August 1984 with works on the shrine grounds including erection of two new torii gates.

Source: *Kiso-mura no Bunkazai Meguri* ("A Tour of Cultural Properties in Kiso Village") (Published by Kiso Village Board of Education, March 25, 1986)