

## **The Kyushu Connection**

Historians believe that the Azumi clan were fishermen who once made their home in the northern part of Kyushu, where they had contacts with mainland Asia. For reasons unknown, they decided to abandon their homeland sometime in the fifth or sixth century and scattered over Japan in search of a new place to put down roots.

After a long search, some of them finally decided to settle in what is now known as the Azumino valley. Protected on all sides by rugged mountains, this place was a far cry from the coastal regions they had come from.

While the Azumi clan gave up their boats and nautical lifestyle, they stayed true to their principal deity, Hotakami no Mikoto, who had protected them in their seagoing days and on their land journey north. Today, the deity is regarded as a guardian of transportation, and many people bring their cars to Hotaka Jinja to be blessed during the New Year period. Many climbers can be seen offering prayers for safety before setting off to trek the Northern Alps.