

Jizo Statues

These statues are all of the bodhisatva Jizo, the guardian deity of children and one of the most popular Buddhist deities in Japan. Jizo statues can be found throughout Japan, most often along roadsides, or in graveyards. Statues of Jizo may be identified by the red cape that they wear. It is said that each of the hundred disciples of Tenkai (1536–1643) donated one of the Jizo statues. The statues are a prayer for the peaceful repose of the souls of the dead and for their achievement of enlightenment.

In 1902 a great flood swept through Kanman Gorge, washing away the Jiunji Temple and severely damaging most of the statues. Ever since that time, visitors have noticed that their number seems to change when they try to count them. For this reason, they are sometimes called *bakejizō*, or phantom Jizos.