

Sankoan Square

Sankoan Square (also called Sankuan Square) is located between a hillside graveyard and the river that runs parallel to the main street running through the Uchiyama district. It takes its name from the Sankoan hermitage that formerly stood here.

A wooden Jizo Bodhisattva statue stands in a small shrine at one end of the square. The 2.6-meter-tall statue, which is an Arita City Important Cultural Property, is sometimes called the “Kaki no Ki Jizo” after a large persimmon tree (*kaki*, persimmon, and *ki*, tree) that used to stand nearby. The statue remarkably survived the Great Bunsei Fire that tore through Uchiyama on August 9, 1828. Legend states that a local man named Tokusaburo tried to save the statue, but it was too heavy. He prayed for it to become lighter so that he could carry it on his back, and miraculously, the statue became light enough for him to pick up. Burn marks are still visible near the bottom of the statue.

The hillside graveyard on the north side of the square is distinctive for the gold-painted lettering on the grave markers. Unusual in most Japanese graveyards, it is said to be a remnant of Chinese influence on the culture of northern Kyushu.