

1. What are Jizo?

Jizo are statues of Buddhist bodhisattvas. Many Japanese people are not able to distinguish between the Japanese words *Butsu*, *Hotoke*, and *Bosatsu*. The word *Butsu* originates from the Sanskrit word for 'Buddha'. The word for 'Buddha' used to be simple noun indicating a 'person who achieved enlightenment'. However, 'Buddha' is now also used as a proper noun in honor of the progenitor of Buddhism, Siddhārtha Gautama. The Japanese-origin reading of the Chinese character for Buddha is *Hotoke*. The word *Bosatsu* originates from the Sanskrit word bodhisattva, which itself means 'practitioner of austerities'. In addition, *Amida* is a Buddha whereas *Kannon* is a bodhisattva.

The word *Jizo* originates from the Sanskrit name Kshitigarbha, which means 'virtue of the earth'. The original meaning of Kshitigarbha was expressed with Chinese characters and became the word *Jizo*. This means that *Jizo* are of Indian origin. Regardless of this fact, *Jizo* blend in with the Japanese landscape. In modern Japan it is common to find *Jizo* enshrined by the roadside. One person who recognized this right off the bat was Koizumi Yakumo, born Lafcadio Hearn. Mr. Yakumo said, "It is no exaggeration to say that the *Jizo* are the most Japanese of the various Buddhist images found in Japan. ...the most well-known of the *Jizo* are the *Koyasu Jizo*, which are for those hoping to be with child. In Japan it is rare to find a road that does not have a *Jizo* present." Incidentally, having *Jizo* enshrined on city-owned land is not a violation of the Japanese Constitution, and there is a Supreme Court ruling to that effect.

2. The Jizo of Kanazawa

Besides being found on the roadside, *Jizo* are also enshrined at temples. *Jizo* enshrined at temples fit into two categories: *Jizo* as the temple's principal object of worship and *Jizo* enshrined next to the principal object of worship. In the case of the Jodo Shinshu school of Pure Land Buddhism, since adherents are charged with dutifully carrying out the teachings of Shinran, it is inconceivable that a *Jizo* would be enshrined as a principal object of worship. However, even in Jodo Shinshu temples you will find *Jizo* enshrined on temple grounds in locations other than as the principal object of worship. One example of this may be found at Renge Temple in the Wakamatsu-machi area of Kanazawa City.

As Mr. Hearn pointed out, among the Shinto and Buddhist images enshrined on the roadside, *Jizo* are the most common. Indeed, in Kanazawa City *Jizo* seem to be overwhelmingly common. Of particular note is the image found in the north of Kanazawa City in Kanaiwa-kita that the locals call a *Jizo* despite the fact that it is an image of *Kannon*. Among the Shinto and Buddhist images enshrined by the roadside, it is common to find *Jizo* statues in Kanazawa City, so it is thought that even other Buddhist statues became known as *Jizo*. In this way there are examples seen all over the country of locals calling other Shinto and Buddhist images *Jizo* despite the fact that they morphologically different.

3. Jizo and Dosojin

It is said that *Jizo* were enshrined on roadsides due to the fact that *Dosojin* were already enshrined there. People took this basic concept and applied it to *Jizo* as well. *Dosojin* are enshrined at the borders of settlements or villages. Their main purpose is to calm malevolent spirits on the road and protect travelers. The beginning of Basho Matsuo's *Oku no Hosomichi* mentions *Dosojin*. However, in the current Kanazawa City area the practice of enshrining *Jizo* by the roadside began in 1582 and before this no traces of *Dosojin* can be seen. *Dosojin* are mentioned in literature from the 11th century, but it is unknown whether the *Dosojin* faith was a countrywide phenomenon.

Let us analyze examples within Kanazawa City of the syncretic erecting of *Jizo* on the roadside where *Dosojin* are normally found. The oldest surviving *Jizo* found on the roadside in the Kanazawa City area is the Kamewari *Jizo* found on a path in Dendoji-machi. It is said that this *Jizo* was erected at the end of the Muromachi period (1336-1573) in memorial of those that perished during the Ikko-ikki uprising. Regarding the *Jizo* found at Zenkoji-zaka in Kodatsuno (erected in 1582), considering that no temple with named 'Zenko' exists in the area, the temple must have been destroyed and only the *Jizo* remains. This means that it is possible that the Zenkoji-zaka *Jizo* was not originally erected by the roadside.

The Gema *Jizo* of Ishibiki (erected in 1592) was erected to wish for the safety of those transporting boulders for the construction of Kanazawa Castle. Although the purpose of erecting *Jizo* for safety is the same for *Dosojin*, *Jizo* were originally erected to obtain benefits in this world through the observance of Buddhist teachings, so there is no need for a forced theory of syncretism between *Jizo* and *Dosojin*. There is a legend that says that the Enmei *Jizo* of Kanaiwa-kita (established between 1661 and 1672) cured smallpox. This purpose is common to *Dosojin*. Another commonality to *Dosojin* is its use as a boundary marker. However, this *Jizo* is enshrined at a lay ancestral hall adjacent to a charnel house, which is a Buddhist place. *Dosojin* are not Buddhist deities, so there is no need to theorize on the syncretism between this *Jizo* and *Dosojin*.

The Daien Temple *Jizo* of Tera-machi (erected between 1661 and 1672) was on the way to Daijo Temple. Although it is possible that this *Jizo* acted a road marker, there was already another *Jizo* acting as a road marker from the middle ages, so there is no need to theorize on the syncretism between this *Jizo* and *Dosojin*.

The six *Jizo* of Kyusho Temple in Horikawa-machi (erected between 1703 and 1708) were erected on the way to where executions were carried out to calm the spirits of those executed. Like *Dosojin* these *Jizo* serve a memorial purpose, but the similarity end there.

The Gidai Temple *Gappa Jizo* of Juichiya-machi (erected in 1719) also served as a road marker, but shares no other similarities with *Dosojin*. The Senkoji-machi *Jizo* (erected in 1729) was erected as part of a memorial for Buddhists who passed away. The Magira *Jizo* (erected in 1759)

shares no similarities with *Dosojin*.

Other than serving to mark a boundary, the Kanaiwa-nishi Enmei *Jizōson* (erected in 1766) shares no similarities with *Dosojin*. In 1833 the Tenpo famine started and the *Jizō* found in Takaikemachi, Kasamai, and Kaminaka-machi were erected to memorialize its victims. The seven Shichine *Jizō* on the approach to Mount Utatsu were erected to memorialize then seven people who in 1858 made a direct appeal to the lord and were executed. The *Jizō* that were erected on the roadside in the Edo period (1603 to 1868) in what is now the Kanazawa City area were mostly erected to memorialize the dead or to memorialize those who suffered violent deaths. Since *Dosojin* along the road are there to calm malevolent spirits, you can say that *Jizō* are similar to *Dosojin* in this respect. However, already in the Heian period (794 to 1185) *Jizō* were erected for people who may go to hell, to help people who went to hell, or to obtain benefits in this world through the observance of Buddhist teachings. For those interested in learning more, please read volume 17 of the *Konjaku Monogatari-shū*. The functions of *Jizō* have continued since the middle ages and through the Edo period to this day. In conclusion, at least for Kanazawa City, it is incidental that the places *Jizō* were erected to memorialize the dead or to obtain benefits in this world through the observance of Buddhist teachings were along the roadside.

The practice of erecting *Dosojin* statues in Japan began in the Edo period. My thoughts are as follows. In the Edo period there were some regions in which *Jizō* were erected on the roadside and other areas where *Dosojin* were erected. It was later that scholars of Japanese literature and culture started to think about a link between *Jizō* and *Dosojin*. The 1825 essay *Kanso Zuihitsu* even states that it is a perversion to equate *Jizō* and *Dosojin*. At least for Kanazawa City, it is my conclusion that the *Jizō* erected on the roadside have nothing to do with *Dosojin*.