

JIZŌ IN ACTION: THE ROLE OF JIZŌ STATUES IN TEMPLE ATMOSPHERE, SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF SENDAI TEMPLE ABBOTS

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Abstract: This article shows how abbots at four Buddhist temples in Japan interpret the image and role of the Bodhisattva *Jizō* – the most popular folk deity in Japan. Statues of *Jizō* can be found in almost every Japanese Buddhist temple, but their roles differ significantly due to the folk character of this Bodhisattva and the wide range of its functions. *Jizō* was granted the role of universal saviour in Japanese folk religion, with more and more functions added throughout the centuries. The author attempts to show that abbots see *Jizō* statues very differently, and that sometimes the *Jizō* statues of one temple can be interpreted differently by the abbots of different temples.

Keywords: Folk Buddhism, Japan, *Jizō*, statues, temple Buddhism, temples

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will attempt to show the differences in how statues of one of the most venerated and beloved Bodhisattvas in Japan, the Bodhisattva *Jizō*, are interpreted by abbots of several temples in a large city in the eastern part of Japan, Sendai city. The image of *Jizō* can vary according to the way an abbot sees his temple and his duty within it, and the point I want to clarify is that there are many ways a statue of the same Bodhisattva can be used according to the needs of the temple. We are going to trace four different stories of the temples and their *Jizō* statues and see how the abbots interpret the image of *Jizō*.

I chose four temples that store venerated statues of *Jizō* (although they are only meaningful to locals and are not well-known to the outside world) together with other *Jizō* statues, from those that were erected long ago to those that were erected by the acting abbot of the temple. The reason for this selection was my wish to show the difference in how statues are interpreted based on the circumstances surrounding their erection. As the main reason for my selection was the variability of the statues, I was not trying to select temples

from different parts of Sendai or from different Buddhism sects. However, the temples are located in different places: two of them are in Izumi ward, while the other two are in Aoba ward. Although the temples in Izumi are in the same ward, they are located quite far from one another, while the other two temples are within walking distance of each other. One temple belongs to Jōdo-shū, the remaining three are Sōtō-shū. Some of the stories contain private information, and for privacy I would prefer to refrain from giving the actual names of the temples, as well as calling the abbots by their names. In the majority of cases, I interviewed the acting abbots of the temple. In the case of Temple D, it was basically the former abbot, as he was the one who erected, or allowed the erection of, the majority of the statues in the temple. In the case of Temple C, the abbot's mother kindly participated in our conversation to clarify some points. The interviews were conducted from 2015 to 2017 on several occasions.

THE FEATURES OF *JIZŌ* STATUES IN JAPAN

Following Manabe Kōsai, many authors see the prototype of Bodhisattva *Jizō* (Skt. *Ksitigarbha*) in the ancient Indian earth goddess *Prthivi* (Manabe 1959: 4–5; also found, e.g., in Hayami 1975: 11; Yoritomi 1984: 97; etc.). The name, literally ‘the earth’s treasury’ (the character 地 means earth, while the character 藏 means storehouse or treasury) creates an image of a merciful ‘earthly’ deity who takes care of all living creatures (see, e.g., Sawa 1974: 97). Thus, probably the most noteworthy feature of *Jizō* is his familiarity, friendliness, and accessibility to the prayers of common people. In the main sutras about *Jizō* – *Jizōjyūrinkyō* and *Jizōbosatsuhongankyō* – *Jizō* is depicted as a saviour of beings who suffer in the *mubutsu sekai*, the world without buddhas, after Shakyamuni has entered Nirvana but before the next Buddha appears.¹

Although *Jizō* is attributed the power to save suffering beings in all realms, he is closely connected with the death realm, more precisely hell. *Jizō* is believed to be the saviour of those suffering in hell, and at the same time, according to the *Bussetsu Jizō bosatsu hosshin In'en jūō kyō* (The Ten Kings Sutra as Preached by the Buddha on the Causes and Conditions That Lead to the Bodhisattva *Jizō*'s Aspiration for Enlightenment), is one with *Enma-ō*, the most prominent of the Ten Kings of Hell, who judge the dead in the underworld.²

In Japanese Buddhist temples, *Jizō* statues can be found in great numbers. A temple can store more than 150 *Jizō* statues simultaneously, and many Japanese choose to have a small *Jizō* statue erected at their family grave.³

Why are there so many *Jizō* statues in Japanese Buddhist temples? *Jizō*, while being a popular Bodhisattva, is definitely not the main object of worship

at Buddhist temples. To provide an answer to this question, we have to turn to aspects of *Jizō* worship in Japan identified by Japanese and foreign researchers.

In Japan, *Jizō* is usually depicted in monastic form. A monk (especially *kozō*, a small monk), is the most frequent disguise in which *Jizō* appears in *Jizō-bosatsu reigenki* (The Miraculous Tales of Bodhisattva *Jizō*) (Ōshima & Enomoto 2002–2003) and other *setsuwa* (Buddhist legends). The majority of *Jizō* statues in Japan depict him in the form of a monk. Manabe Kōsai (1959: 18) mentions the fact that *Jizō* does actually have *bosatsu-kei* (Bodhisattva form), with a crown on his head and a *semuin* ('do not fear' gesture). This appears in *Hachi Dai-bosatsu Mandara Kyō* (Sutra of the Eight Bodhisattva Mandala) or *Jizō Bosatsu Giki* (A Way of Performing a Ceremony for Bodhisattva *Jizō*). As *Jizō* is supposed to appear among common people, he came to be depicted in monastic clothes to "soften his light" (Manabe 1959: 18). According to Manabe, his human-like appearance is what distinguishes *Jizō* from other Bodhisattvas, who are mainly depicted in their usual Bodhisattva form (Manabe 1959: 19).

Many researchers attribute the popularity of *Jizō* to this human-like form. Gorai Shigeru argues that if we analyse the extremely varied cult of *Jizō*, we will eventually find that it is nothing but a Buddhist version of the most fundamental Japanese object of worship, the ancestor spirit (Gorai 2007: 271).

Hank Glassman, who has conducted very thorough research on the image of *Jizō* in mediaeval Japanese Buddhism, also attributes great significance to the monk-like form of *Jizō*:

[*Jizō* is] a familiar and in many ways a very ordinary figure. At the same time, of course, this Buddhist monk is absolutely extraordinary. He is exemplary monk, but also a guide and mediator between life and death, a shaman, a thaumaturge, and a teacher. (Glassman 2011: 19)

However, this exemplary monk is still very similar to a simple human being. As Gorai puts it, *Jizō* can pose not only as a monk, but also as an ideal parent, or a child (2007: 271).⁴

Again, *Jizō* can adopt many different roles and thus appears as a protector or helper in almost every aspect of human life. Sugawara Ikuko, in her article on *Konjaku Monogatari-shū* (Anthology of Tales from the Past) analysed the ways in which *Jizō* saves believers, finding that there is an almost equal amount of benefit in this world as in the afterworld, although it is clear that the most frequent motif is of *Jizō* returning someone to life. This, again, shows that *Jizō*'s connection to hell is an important feature of the cult (Sugawara 1966: 96).

In mediaeval Japan, together with the spreading of *Mappo Shisō* (the philosophy of the time when Buddhist law has come to an end), a belief in the inevitability of hell appeared, giving birth to an impression that any afterworld

is in fact hell itself (Hayami 1975: 104). Places that somehow resembled the image of hell, like *Osore-zan* (Mount Osore, ‘Mount of Fear’) in Aomori prefecture, were perceived as borders or gates to the afterworld. As Suzuki Iwayumi pointed out, these places are not strictly Buddhist hells, but rather are familiar, cosy ‘hells’ that once a year become comforting spots of communication and fraternisation with the dead (Suzuki 2002). This concept of a place that serves as a borderline between the realms of the living and the dead can be applied to cemeteries as well.

Many *Jizō* statues can be found in these places. It is natural to have many statues of Bodhisattva *Jizō*, the saviour from hell, in places connected to death, but at the same time, if we use Gorai Shigeru’s (2007) theory about *Jizō* as the incarnation of Japanese ancestor spirits and combine it with Suzuki Iwayumi’s (2002) theory of the ‘familiar hell’, a meeting place with the dead, then we can assume that statues of *Jizō* in cemeteries, or ‘hells on earth’, are simultaneously images of the dead who can be contacted by the living.

There is a theory that the reasons for erecting *Jizō* statues could be grounded in much older, pre-Buddhist beliefs. Yanagita Kunio, Wakamori Tarō, Gorai Shigeru, and other researchers have observed a similarity between *Jizō* and *Dōsojin* (also known as *Sai-no-kami*, the deity of borders). Yanagita Kunio’s theory was that as *Dōsojin* were erected near roads or at the edges of villages, and *Jizō* are also often erected in the same liminal places, *Jizō* might be perceived as a *honchi* (the real form of the deity) of *Dōsojin* (Yanagita 1963: 277–282). Wakamori Tarō suggested that *Jizō*, who moves freely inside the six realms guiding suffering beings from one realm to another, came to be perceived as a deity that normally stands between the worlds, and, thus, has the ability to protect borders in our world. This has led to *Jizō*’s merging with *Dōsojin*, the ancient deity of borders (Wakamori 1951). Gorai Shigeru stressed the fact that *Dōsojin* was actually a stone monument of phallic shape, protecting a village from the evil spirits of disease and disaster (Gorai 2007: 266–271). These monuments were usually erected at a crossroads which were conceived as the entry points of evil spirits. Under the influence of Buddhism, these phallic stones were replaced with stone statues with a similar form, i.e. statues of *Jizō*. But *Dōsojin* had also influenced belief in *Jizō*. As the image of male genitalia, *Dōsojin* was also a deity of love, fertility, and easy birth, all functions that were also granted to *Jizō* (ibid.).

It is hard to tell if old folk traditions have any influence on contemporary Buddhist temples, but it might be that the positioning of *Jizō* statues in Buddhist temples was also shaped by local beliefs in *Jizō* as deity of borders.

Jizō is a Bodhisattva who appears in a human form, specifically the form of a monk. This form is distinctive and recognisable so that any primitive statue

of a monk can be interpreted as *Jizō*. At the same time, in this form we can see not only *Jizō* but also the image of the ancestors, children, and so on. While a Bodhisattva, *Jizō* is also a human being. In addition to this, while he is part of the great Buddhist tradition, belief in *Jizō* might be based on the older folk beliefs, making it harder to understand why statues of *Jizō* came to be placed where they are today.

One more feature of *Jizō* is his connection to children. As mentioned before, *Jizō* often appears as a small monk in *setsuwa* (for more information, see Katayose 1974: 432; Dykstra 1978). It is perceived that this motif of changing himself into a small monk has strengthened *Jizō*'s role as a guardian for children (Hayami 1975: 152–159), including dead children. In the afterworld, *Jizō* is the guardian of children who died before their parents and thus became stuck in *Sai-no kawara* (the bank of the River Sai). As *Jizō* is a substitute parent, a custom of erecting a stone *Jizō* statue or carving as a tombstone for dead children developed to secure his benefaction in the afterlife (Yoshida 1962; Inoguchi 2000: 50). Yoshida Shōya, who has collected photographs of such stone *Jizō* statues, pointed out their child-like appearance (Yoshida 1962). Presumably these tombstones served two roles, making it clear that the child is with *Jizō*, and, at the same time, being memorial images of children. Sometimes, two images of *Jizō* were carved on one stone, possibly meaning that as it is unsafe to have a small child travelling alone to the afterlife, *Jizō* stands beside this soul to accompany it on its way (as explained in Inoue 1977). Oyama Takehide recorded another possible explanation for this practice from a stone dealer living and working in Aomori prefecture, who explained that this was usually done for economic reasons (if a family lost two children, they ordered one stone with two *Jizō* images carved on it). This was considered dangerous because saving money in this way could bring more misery to the family (Oyama 2012: 24). Although this case describes a situation in twentieth-century Aomori prefecture, it is not impossible that economic reasons drove families to carve two *Jizō* images on one stone in the past.

Mizuko kuyō, memorial rituals for aborted/miscarried fetuses, and stillborn babies, created a new iconology in the 1970s, including *Mizuko Jizō*, supposedly based on *Sai-no kawara* belief, although not corresponding to it completely (Hardacre 1997: 28–30).⁵ Today, when technology and medicine have evolved dramatically, our fear of the unknown, unseen world is fading, thus *Jizō*'s role as saving us from hell has become less important. At the same time child death was no longer viewed as something usual but started to be interpreted as a tragedy, and because of this the role of *Jizō* as a children's saviour and protector in the afterlife became emphasised. As Yoritomi Motohiro puts it, despite the existence of *Sai-no kawara* belief, aborted or miscarried fetuses and the

stillborn were not cared for by any Bodhisattva or Buddha exclusively; rather they were simply among the dead, who were pacified during the *segaki* (service for the benefit of suffering spirits), or *urabon* (Bon festival or ghost festival). Only during the *Mizuko* boom were they granted their own rituals and their own Bodhisattvas (*Mizuko Jizō*, *Mizuko Kannon*) (Yoritomi 1984: 157–158).

One of the important *Mizuko kuyō* influences on the iconology of *Jizō* is exactly this further emphasis on the bonds between *Jizō* and children. The canonical *Mizuko Jizō* statue often includes a depiction of infants clinging to *Jizō*'s garments or lying/sitting in *Jizō*'s arms.⁶ The heads of these sculpture infants are sometimes covered by red caps made by parishioners or the abbot's family, just as the heads of *Jizō*. Additionally, small (approximately 50 cm) *Mizuko Jizō* statues, erected at private graves, are sometimes made in the shape of an infant. It is only natural to assume that those who frequently see these babylike *Mizuko Jizō* statues and are aware of their purpose, might willingly interpret any 'pretty' or babylike *Jizō* statue as a memorial for a child.

The emphasis on rituals for dead children can be seen in the way *Jizō* festivals in some places, like *Kawakura Jizō* in Aomori prefecture, lose their recreational functions and become quiet memorial events, although it becomes evident from diaries and newspaper articles up to the 1960s that these festivals used to be wild and jolly parties for local youth and children (see Oyama 2012; Fukuma 2007: 74). Therefore, one must bear in mind that even scholars and temple abbots, who are presumably more educated than the average believer, being products of modern society, can see these statues as memorials for children even if they were not meant to be interpreted in this way. Here, I will mainly use explanations given by my informants, and so, as they tended to see the statues removed from cemeteries as memorials for children, I will interpret their primary function in the same way. However, as mentioned above, not all *Jizō* statues in cemeteries were made as memorials for children, hence some of these statues might have already survived a change in the way they were interpreted.

TEMPLE A: PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN

This temple belongs to Jōdo-shū and is located in Aoba ward, in a district with a particularly high number of temples. It was built in 1601 or in 1635 (according to other documents) and has never been moved (Sendai-shi shi hensan iinkai 1953).

The temple's *Sanmon* (main gates), called *Sakasa-mon*⁷ in temple's sources, was admitted to Sendai city's list of treasures in 1986. These gates are considered to have been taken from Harada Kai's residence. Harada Kai is one of the main

characters of the Kanbun incident (*kanbun jiken*) and the temple's connection with this incident, as we will see later, is quite distinctive (for more about *kanbun jiken*, see Ōtsuki 1909; Kobayashi 1970; Sendai-shi shi hensan iinkai 2004: 4). There is a kindergarten near the temple that has been running for more than 60 years. The abbot of Temple A is simultaneously the director of the kindergarten and spends more time in the kindergarten office than in his temple.⁸

When asked about the nature of *Jizō*, he starts by explaining the difference between Buddha *hotoke* and Bodhisattva *bosatsu*.

Bosatsu is closer to people, walking the same roads, standing beside us; Jizō is the closest of all. He saves the weakest: the poor, children. Of course, he saves the dead, too, this is why Jizō is often erected for kuyō, but the living can always count on his help, too. (Interview on 11/08/2017)

In the temple garden, under an old pine tree, three *Jizō* statues (Fig. 1) stand in a row. These three statues are called *Sakasa-mon Tomurai Santai jizō-son* (three *Jizō* statues meant to commemorate the Sakasa-mon/Kanbun incident). According to the abbot, Sakasa-mon, which became one of the main sites of the Harada family slaughter, was moved to Temple A to prevent *tatari*, spirit revenge. At the same time, or soon after, the three statues were erected to pacify the spirits. Every year, on the last Sunday of May, there is a quiet ceremony to commemorate the dead. Temple parishioners and neighbours gather in front of the three *Jizō* statues to recite *The Heart Sutra* and *Nenbutsu*⁹.



Figure 1. Sakasa-mon Tomurai Santai jizō-son.
Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.

For the abbot of Temple A, these *Jizō* statues are meant primarily as a memorial for the dead.

The ceremony in May is a tsutome¹⁰. We gather to pray for those who were slaughtered here. It was a horrifying tragedy. The records say that there were many children's bodies at this gate. We pray for peace on earth as well, but this is not a matsuri (festival) of any kind. (Interview on 17/10/2014)

There is one more *Jizō*, erected for the veneration of the dead. In the temple's cemetery, old gravestones and *Jizō* statues from the abandoned graves were gathered in a *muentō*, a monument for the forgotten dead, somewhere between 1965 and 1975. A particularly impressive *Jizō* with a *shakujō*¹¹ and *nyoihōju*¹² (Fig. 2) was placed at the top. "This one was erected by my father, not me, but without doubt it was meant for the veneration of the forgotten dead," the abbot said (interview on 11/08/2017).



Figure 2. *Jizō* with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju* in the cemetery of Temple A. Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.

Apart from memorial *Jizō* statues, there are three *Jizō* statues and a *Roku Jizō* that were erected for other purposes.

At the entrance of the kindergarten, there is a pretty *Jizō* statue with folded hands (Fig. 3). The statue is popular with kindergarten children, who have

adopted a morning ritual of greeting the statue, which is transmitted from the eldest to newcomer.¹³ The statue was erected to commemorate the kindergarten's 50th anniversary.

Figure 3. *Jizō at the entrance of the temple kindergarten. Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.*



First we didn't know which statue to choose. We simply thought that we needed a Buddhist statue (butsuzō) at the entrance, as this is a Buddhist kindergarten. I consulted the stone mason, and he offered us this statue. I liked the idea at once because Jizō is a protector of children. Besides, it looks very pretty, children would like it, I thought. (Interview with the abbot on 11/08/2017)

At the gate of the temple, there are very small *Roku Jizō* (20 cm) (Fig. 4), erected in 2012. The abbot says that these *Jizō* statues are meant as a design element, not an object of worship. "These are a gate decoration (*kazari*). I guess they don't have any particular religious meaning" (interview on 11/08/2017).

Another *Jizō* statue, in front of the temple's *hondō* (main hall), about 70 cm tall, with palms together (Fig. 5) probably also fulfils a decorative function. "My father erected it some 30 years ago. Not sure why he decided to put this *Jizō* here," the abbot said (interview on 8/11/2017).



Figure 4. Three of Roku Jizō at the gates of the temple.
Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.



Figure 5. Jizō statue and stone turtle in front of the temple's hondō.
Photograph by the author, 29/10/2014.

Although the statue is dressed in a red bib and red cap that look quite new and indicate that the statue is being cared for, it seems that the abbot does not clearly remember much about it. Initially, when I spoke about a *Jizō* statue in front of the *hondō*, he started talking about the *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son*. He understood which statue I was talking about only after I explained its whereabouts in detail. Beside the *Jizō* statue is another one depicting a turtle. The two statues create a composition more reminiscent of garden design than of a religious object.

The last statue has an intriguing background. The statue itself is about 50 cm tall, headless and, in fact, might not be *Jizō* at all as there is nothing much left of the original sculpture (Fig. 6). It was probably erected on temple territory more than 400 years ago, as it was dug out from beneath an old pine tree that grew in Temple A at approximately this time. Several years ago, the pine started to fade away, so the abbot decided to cut it down. Under the tree, there was something that at first was considered a stone, although after the object came out it became clear that it was a severely damaged statue, probably a *Jizō*. “It must simply have been absorbed by the tree. I wonder how many years this *o-Jizō-san* had stayed underground,” the abbot said (interview on 8/11/2017).



Figure 6. *Jizō found beneath a tree. Photograph by the author, 11/08/2017.*

When I first came to Temple A, in September 2014, the statue was secured in a temple corridor. The explanation I got from the abbot at that time was the following: “We did not know what to do with it and decided that it would be better to put it here. It is an extremely old statue, so we keep it inside and check it every day” (interview on 26/09/2014).

In 2017 the statue was moved to a new place near the *hondō* and was granted a small *Jizō-dō*. The abbot explained that after rethinking the situation he decided that *o-Jizō-san* would be happy to return to the place it used to occupy. In this case, the abbot had to choose between the two main concerns about the statue: first the physical, that is, how it should be treated because of its age and condition, and second the spiritual, that is, where it would prefer to be placed. The result was a decision in favour of the spiritual needs of the statue, and it returned to where it had been found.

In fact, small *Jizō* statues (or what seem to be *Jizō* statues) are often dug up or found under tree roots. In Sendai, I found three other *Jizō* statues that had been discovered when an old tree was cut down, or when the temple was undergoing renovation. In two cases the statues were placed inside the temple buildings (*hondō* and *Kannon-dō*), and in one it was placed outside, on the way to the *hondō*.

As we can see from the case of Temple A, the *Jizō* statues in its territory are treated very differently by the abbot. *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son* and the statue on top of the *muentō* are meant to be memorials and are subjects of death rituals. At the same time, the abbot clearly separates the statue at the entrance of the kindergarten as it was erected for reasons that are only partly religious. Here, *Jizō's* connection to children is obvious: if it is a statue for a kindergarten, it should be *Jizō*. Interestingly, when we talked about *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son*, the abbot mentioned the slaughtered children of the Harada family, although he never made the point that the *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son* were erected exclusively as a memorial for the Harada children.

There are *Roku-Jizō* at the gates and the *Jizō* statue at the entrance to the *hondō* that apparently do not have any religious meaning at all for the abbot; rather, he views them as decoration or design elements. And there is a pine tree *Jizō* that has a certain aura of unease surrounding it. It is an object that came out of nowhere, erected for unknown purposes, while at the same time inevitably belonging to the temple and thus requiring some special position. Eventually, it could not be treated like a statue that had been erected by the abbot or presented by someone; instead, the abbot had to guess what the statue would want for itself. Thus, it can be assumed that in the statue hierarchy of Temple A, the pine tree *Jizō* takes a position somewhere in between *Sakasamon Tomurai Santai jizō-son* and the *Jizō* at the entrance of the kindergarten.

TEMPLE B: ON THE BRIGHT SIDE OF BUDDHISM

Temple B is said to have been first built by a monk called Gessō, but it soon burned down completely with all its documents and chronicles. Many monks receive the Buddhist name Gessō, so, having the majority of sources lost, it

is impossible to say for sure who was the first founder of Temple B and when exactly it was founded. It was rebuilt in 1466 by Shōmin, the 14th abbot of Dōunji, the oldest temple in Izumi ward, also known as Yama-no Tera (mountain temple) (Izumi-shi shi hensan iinkai 1986).

The temple is situated in Sanezawa, a quiet rural area. Many of its parishioners come by car from nearby residential districts. The abbot of Temple B proudly tells me while guiding me through the temple that he is engaged in many activities that will change the image of his temple and Buddhism in general.

Before me, it was simply a provincial temple, nothing more. I made it so great and fun. I wanted to make it brighter, more modern, just like a museum so that people would come here to admire the works of art, to have a good time, not just for o-haka mairi [visiting ancestor's graves]. (Interview on 17/10/2015)

At the same time, the abbot generally relies on the temple's parishioners and values the bonds between them and the temple. The annual *Garan DE Konsāto* (concert in the temple), when some performers, usually of classical Japanese or Western music or Jazz, are invited to perform in the temple's *hondō*, is aimed mainly at the parishioners. They also receive a calendar from the temple every year.

The temple's *Jizō-kō*, an event dedicated to *Jizō*, is one of the temple's annual events and is again aimed mainly at parishioners, although it is not limited to them. Temple B's *Jizō-kō* has an approximately 100-year history and is held on 16 January, the last day of the so-called *koshōgatsu*, Little New Year. The participants are mainly women, although several men participate, too. Many of the participants have inherited their duty to take part when their mother or mother-in-law died. One of the male participants told me that he started participating on behalf of his bed-ridden wife.

There used to be a *Kannon-kō* as well, but it was discontinued. The abbot explains the fact that *Jizō-kō* is still in action as follows:

Little New Year is a women's celebration, so I definitely want to keep it. It is a tradition that has been preserved from long ago, for example, in Jōdo-shū temples there is a Nenbutsu-kō on the 16th of January. We are Sōtō-shū, so we don't have Nenbutsu-kō, we have Jizō-kō. But I think that the meaning is the same. People gather at a temple, they eat together, create some bonds (en wo musubimasu). It is very important. (Interview on 16/10/2016)

The abbot has changed the look of the temple as well. Thinking that Buddhist statues go a long way to creating the right image of the temple, the abbot has rebuilt the *hondō* and changed the temple's *honzon*¹⁴ from Kannon to Shakyamuni. The previous *honzon* is now placed in the *ihaidō*¹⁵.

There are plenty of peculiar statues in the temple's *hondō* (for example, there is a *Nehan-zō*, a statue depicting Buddha Shakyamuni entering Nirvana¹⁶). The abbot explains that he is always trying to find something rare for his temple. "I want people to come to the temple, see an unusual statue and get interested in Buddhism itself. I think it is totally OK to look at a temple as a museum. I would be glad if I could create a beautiful and fun temple" (interview on 17/10/2015).

The statues of *Jizō* are being erected with the same wish to entertain visitors. "But I don't search for beautiful *Jizō*, I search for pretty (*kawaii*) ones. I like *Jizō*. He is easy to relate to, and you can change his shape, think of something new and it would still be *Jizō*," the abbot explains (interview on 17/10/2015).

In the temple's garden, there are *Roku Jizō* about 50 cm tall, made of stone and looking rather pretty (Fig. 7). They were erected in 2008 to make the temple's territory look brighter and friendlier. There is another *Jizō* statue in the middle of the composition that looks as though it was made 100 or more years ago (Fig. 8). The abbot does not remember clearly where it came from. "Probably I had to relocate it and put it between other small *Jizō* statues. I don't know," he admits (interview on 17/10/2015).



Figure 7. One of Roku Jizō in the garden of Temple B. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.

Figure 8. An old statue standing between Roku Jizō in the garden of Temple B. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.



At the temple's gates, there are three life-sized *Jizō* statues, an unusual version of the three wise monkeys (*san'en*) that embody the proverb "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" (Mieder 1981), with one statue covering its eyes, the second covering its ears and the third covering its mouth (Fig. 9).



Figure 9. San'en-Jizō. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.

The composition was erected in 2010. The abbot said that he was drawn to it because it is *kawaii* and familiar to everyone, so he thought it would make the temple look brighter (interview on 17/10/2015).

In front of the *hondō*, at the entrance, there is a stone composition about 80 cm high, depicting three smiling *Jizō* (Fig. 10). This composition was erected in 2012. “I wanted to have something fun near the entrance to *hondō*. It creates the mood,” the abbot said (interview on 17/10/2015).

However, not all the *Jizō* statues were erected for entertainment. *Gankake Enmei Jizō Bosatsu* (Bodhisattva *Jizō* who can grant wishes), which became a formal reason for Temple B’s *Jizō-kō*, was erected about 200 years ago, in the nineteenth century (Fig. 11). It was highly venerated in the vicinity as a miraculous statue that could grant any wish. If a wish was granted, one had to present *Jizō* a knitted hat or other piece of clothing. The statue is still venerated by parishioners today. When speaking about the statue, the abbot stresses the fact that it is a *Gankake Jizō* and that it does not have any connection with death and mourning. “It is a *Jizō* that grants people’s wishes. I always remind the participants of *Jizō-kō* about that. This is a ritual of life, *gensei riyaku* (literally ‘this world’s profit’), you see,” the abbot explained (interview on 16/01/2016).

Some of the temple’s *Jizō* statues are actually related to death. In the temple’s *ihaidō* there are *Sentaibutsu Jizō*, ‘thousand *Jizō* statues’, carved approximately in the 1970s as memorials for a parishioner’s ancestors (Fig. 12).



Figure 10. Three smiling *Jizō* in front of the *hondō*.
Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.

They used to be in the *Jizō-dō*, but it was ruined during the 2011 earthquake. The statues that were whole and unharmed were moved to the *ihaidō*.



Figure 11. Gankake Enmei Jizō Bosatsu. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.



Figure 12. Sentaibutsu Jizō. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.

There is one more *Jizō* statue in Temple B's *ihaidō* (Fig. 13), part of a set of 12 wooden statues of different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (about 20 cm high each), placed almost right under the ceiling. These serve as the protectors of visitors to the *ihaidō* (interview on 17/10/2015).

There are two *Mizuko Jizō* in Temple B. One of them is situated on the way to the cemetery and was erected in 1976 using funds collected from parishioners (Fig. 14).

The second one was erected in 1988 at the entrance to the *hondō* (Fig. 15).

The abbot comments that there was no necessity to erect another *Mizuko Jizō*, “simply these were the years when *Mizuko kuyō* was pretty popular, and these statues were erected everywhere” (interview on 17/10/2015).

A small monument, a memorial to pets, has its own *Jizō* statue nearby (Fig. 16). When the monument was erected in 2012, the abbot wanted to provide a small Buddhist statue for this memorial, to make it more noticeable. “There is no particular reason why I chose *Jizō*. It is popular and there are statues of a small size, that’s all” (interview on 17/10/2015).

There are two more *Mizuko Jizō* statues at the cemetery, but, according to the abbot, they were not erected for *Mizuko kuyō* (Fig. 17–18). They are placed near a water tap to avoid people leaving it opened and spilling too much water. “Yes, they look like *Mizuko Jizō*, but it has no meaning. Simply I needed some small statue, and I used these. They are simply transmitting a message to the visitors” (interview on 17/10/2015).

As we can see, the abbot of Temple B is determined to make his temple a place of merry gathering rather than exclusively a place to mourn the dead. All the activities he carries out are aimed at promoting this brighter, lighter image, both of the temple and Buddhism in general. Peculiar statues, concerts in the *hondō* differ greatly from how the Japanese usually look at Buddhism and Buddhist temples. However, Temple B is not unique, as many temples choose to have some activities that will brighten their image in the eyes of believers; what is interesting here is how the abbot sees *Jizō* statues in this rearranged temple atmosphere.

The abbot admitted to me that he likes *Jizō* himself. The two main reasons he mentioned were *Jizō*'s friendliness and closeness to the worldly realm, and the fact that you can experiment with the shape and people will still recognise *Jizō*. These two aspects, it can be assumed, are what makes *Jizō* a good helper in the abbot's job of reinterpreting temple Buddhism in Japan. People are drawn to the familiar image of *Jizō* and are surprised and amused to see *Jizō* mimicking the three wise monkeys or smiling at them at the entrance to the *hondō*.

Figure 13. Jizō statue in Temple B's ihaidō, part of a set of 12 wooden statues of different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.



Figure 14. Temple B's first Mizuko Jizō. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.



Figure 15. Temple B's second Mizuko Jizō. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.



Figure 16. Memorial to pets with Jizō statue. Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.



Figure 17. Mizuko Jizō near water tap.
Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.



Figure 18. Another Mizuko Jizō near the water tap.
Photograph by the author, 12/08/2015.

At the same time, *Jizō* is not only a Bodhisattva close to the worldly realm; he is the saviour of those in the afterworld and hence has a strong connection to death and mourning. This aspect is what the abbot of Temple B presumably likes the least about *Jizō*. He insisted on *Gankake Jizō*, as he has no connection to death, although many other temple priests, who rely mainly on parishioners, usually stress the universal character of every *Jizō* statue and are somehow reluctant to admit that the statues can grant wishes or cure diseases. Again, the abbot constantly pointed out to me how the statues of *Jizō* erected by him for purposes other than making the atmosphere of the temple brighter, were chosen for no particular reason. When, during *Jizō-kō*, people went out to offer some incense sticks and coins to *Gankake Jizō*, the abbot did not encourage the participants to make offerings to *Mizuko Jizō*, which stands just a few steps away from *Gankake Jizō*, although I saw some of the participants paying a visit to this statue later (as observed on 16/01/2016).

Of course, it can be that the statues selected for the water tap or pet memorial were truly selected only because of their size. Also, the abbot did not encourage *Jizō-kō* participants to pay homage to *Mizuko Jizō*, which can be explained by the fact that he forgot or was too absorbed in his duty. But the main point here is that we see that the abbot has an urgent need to rely on the worldly side of *Jizō* in his difficult task of creating a new image for Japanese Buddhism. The qualities of *Jizō* that are the most valuable for the abbot of Temple B are brightness, friendliness, and recognisability, and, on the other hand, he might have neither the need nor will to stress the connection of *Jizō* to death and mourning.

TEMPLE C: EXEMPLARY BUDDHIST AND PACIFIED SPIRIT

Temple C is located approximately a 30-minute walk from Sendai station. It was built in 1615 near the bridge of Nagamachi but was later moved to its present location. Unfortunately, as often happens with temples in Japan, Temple C has burned down several times, losing almost all of its records and a great part of its treasures. In 1888 the temple was merged with its neighbour Kōfukuji (Sendai-shi shi hensan iinkai 1953).

Together with Kōfukuji's land and parishioners, Temple C inherited one more treasure, a highly venerated wooden *Enmei Jizō* statue that was believed to cure smallpox (Fig. 20). The statue was granted a new *Jizō-dō* by a temple parishioner, and this remains the centre of parishioner attention to this day.

The statue itself is believed to have been made at some point in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. Almost life-size – 150 cm – it is usually locked inside the *Jizō-dō*, but on the 24th of each month the door stays open for the *Jizō-kō*.

Figure 19. Enmei Jizō-dō sanctuary.
Photograph by the author, 26/09/2014.



Figure 20. Enmei Jizō statue.
Photograph by the author, 26/09/2014.

Temple C's *Jizō-kō* is quite different from that of Temple B. It takes place every month, except for September, when the temple is busy because of the autumn *higan*¹⁷. It has a confirmed 50-year history, as there are no records of something like this existing before. Ten people or so participate every month, all women from their 60s to their 80s. Almost all of them have taken their precepts (*jukai*), and often assist the abbot in other temple activities. New members are usually invited by participating members, and there are almost no chances of somebody from aside come across *Jizō-kō* as there is no notification of its time and place anywhere.¹⁸

The abbot, when asked about his thoughts on *Enmei Jizō*'s powers, says that he sees *Jizō* as a Bodhisattva whose duty is to help people to attain Buddhahood (*jōbutsu suru*).

I really don't know about smallpox, but there is nothing wrong in asking Jizō about these things. Simply, this is not the true meaning. This is the same as with o-haka-mairi (annual visit to the ancestor's graves, usually performed on higan or o-bon): of course, one can come to the graves, leave some offerings, clean up, but one should not forget about death anniversaries (nenki). I usually tell participants that for a Buddhist Jizō is, first of all, the example of how we all should be. Everyone should try to be compassionate, faithful, calm. It never prevents grannies from muttering "Please, grant me a long life!" though [laughing]. (Interview on 24/04/2015)

Near the entrance to the cemetery, there is a *Mizuko Jizō* statue depicting *Jizō* in the *hanka-fuza* position,¹⁹ with a *shakujō*, *nyoihōju*, and a baby, surrounded by toddlers (Fig. 21). This statue was purchased with the alms gathered from temple parishioners and erected in 1986. According to the abbot, it is mainly visited by parishioners during *o-haka-mairi*, and although the temple holds some occasional *Mizuko kuyō* at private request, there is no annual gathering or ritual connected to this statue (interview on 04/09/2014).

The most interesting case, however, is the temple's third *Jizō* statue. Here, the abbot's mother helped me greatly in clarifying the story, as she was the one who participated in the events and, hence, her knowledge was more accurate than her son's.

The statue is a very simple one. It is 130 cm high, with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju* (Fig. 22), and was erected in 1971, although there is an inscription on the pedestal saying:

Erected by the 19th generation (of priests) of this temple.

This statue was erected to repose the soul of a young monk, who was executed for burning the temple 150 years ago.

Figure 21. Mizuko Jizō statue.
Photograph by the author, 26/09/2014.



Figure 22. Statue erected as a memorial
for an executed monk. Photograph by the
author, 26/09/2014.



It seemed quite strange to me that someone had erected a statue of a monk executed so long ago, so I asked the abbot to clarify the story. He told me that as far as they knew, this young monk did not intend to burn the temple down. He simply fell asleep and left a candle burning, although this was enough for him to be executed as the nearly the entire temple had burned down. After the temple had been rebuilt, it was always subjected to misfortune. People started suspecting *tatari*, the vengeful spirit of the young monk, although no one tried to do anything about it. The temple had even been left without a single priest for a long time,²⁰ until the acting abbot's parents moved in.

Here the abbot's mother takes the lead.

I became worried because of the talk of tatari. How are we going to raise our children here? So we decided to pacify the spirit. We have searched for his grave, but those who were executed were not buried in the usual way. Nothing was left. We did not even have anything that had belonged to this poor boy. Eventually, we went to the place where this kind of execution used to take place, took some ground from there, brought it to the temple and erected this Jizō. I think it helped. Our baby grew up healthy, didn't he [looks at the abbot with a smile]? (Interview on 04/09/2014)

At Temple C we see that the abbot and his family see *Jizō* in two ways. The *Enmei Jizō* and *Mizuko Jizō* are communal and are venerated by parishioners and the people living around the temple, and thus they (especially *Enmei Jizō*) give the abbot the chance to educate those who come to pray to them about the true Buddhist way. *Jizō-kō* becomes a space for parishioners and the abbot to gather not only for the ritual but for the more relaxed tea party with sweets and free talk. It is fully understandable that the abbot prefers to see this *Jizō* as “the example of how a Buddhist should behave” (interview on 04/09/2014), not as a miraculous statue that cures disease and grants long life. In fact, this is how he would prefer his parishioners to think about Japanese Buddhism: more as a moral way of life, less as a syncretic religion with all kinds of folk cults hidden inside.

The third *Jizō* statue of the temple is a ‘private’ *Jizō*. The temple's parishioners and occasional visitors do not know and do not care about the tragedy that happened at the temple 200 years ago. At the same time, this story is important for the abbot's family. Their bond to the temple started when they tried their best to set a suffering spirit to rest (something that no one of the temple's inhabitants had achieved before), and this statue symbolises their own victory, as well as a tragedy that happened long ago, but nevertheless became their tragedy too. Hence, this *Jizō* represents a privately held belief that is not meant to be shared.

TEMPLE D: UNIVERSAL SAVIOUR

Temple D was founded in 1532 and used to be a thriving place of worship according to the records but was abandoned during the Meiji restoration and stayed in this state until the 1970s, when a new family of priests took over. The temple was completely rebuilt in 1975 together with the territory around it (Izumi-shi-shi Hensan linkai 1986), so it still looks rather new.

In Temple D, I generally spoke with the former abbot – who still lives in the temple – as he was the one who erected, or allowed the erection of, the majority of statues.

In the *hondō*, there are two *Jizō* statues, 180 cm high wooden statues with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju*, and a headless stone statue just 18 cm high, presumably very old.²¹ The first of these statues had been purchased by the former abbot.

I wanted to have a big Jizō statue in the hondō. Jizō is a Bodhisattva who saves everyone. He's universal. Look at Roku-Jizō – every realm has a Jizō in charge of it. Wherever you go, you always find Jizō. Always around us, you see. This is why the Japanese feel attracted to Jizō. This one is big and beautiful, fits well in the hondō. (Interview on 17/08/2014)

The small and headless one is almost a repeat of the story from Temple A, which is now stored in a *Jizō-dō*.

It came out of the ground when we were doing some construction work in the temple. You can see that this is definitely Jizō. I did not know where to put it, so I decided that it would be good for it to be placed at the feet of the big one. (Interview on 17/08/2014)

The small statue is placed in the way that both statues share the offerings that are left for them every day by the abbot's wife and visitors.

There is a *Jizō* statue in the *ihaidō*, too. This is a 30-cm-high *Mizuko Jizō*, placed between the *ihai*²². Neither the abbot nor his wife could say how this statue happened to be in the *ihaidō*. It was obvious that it had been brought by a parishioner, but who and when remains a mystery (interview on 23/10/2014).

Outside, there is a *Mizuko Jizō* statue in front of the *hondō*, although it does not look much like *Mizuko Jizō*. It is a regular *Jizō* statue with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju*, with nothing reminiscent of *Mizuko kuyō* in its image (Fig. 23).

The former abbot explains this:

This statue was erected in 1975, at the very beginning of Mizuko kuyō. It was a gift from a parishioner to commemorate his own child, but soon people started to bring offerings for Mizuko to this same statue. Of course, it does not look like a Mizuko Jizō, although it could be one. I told you, Jizō is universal. (Interview on 17/08/2014)



Figure 23. Mizuko Jizō statue.
Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.



Figure 24. Roku Jizō. Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.

Near this statue, *Roku-Jizō* stand in a row (Fig. 24). These are in the classical style: the first is holding a banner, the second a *nyoihōju*, while giving a *semuiin*

(‘do not fear’) gesture with the right hand, the third holds an incense container, the fourth a rosary, the fifth is doing *gasshō*²³, and the last holds a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju*. These *Roku Jizō* are a present of gratitude from a parishioner who was struggling with his health and psychological problems and received frequent support from the former abbot of the temple.

When this person suggested presenting a statue to the temple, we agreed on Roku Jizō. It was a symbol: Roku Jizō help those who have lost their way, who are wandering around in all six realms without knowing what to do and where to go. This is how we all feel sometimes. (Interview on 17/08/2014)

Near the entrance to the cemetery there is a group of ten *Jizō* statues (Fig. 25) that seem to be more than 100 years old,²⁴ all of different sizes and shapes. The abbot said that the scenery around the temple had changed considerably in the last thirty years, with many villages disappearing or being redeveloped into posh residential areas. This led the villagers to bring *Jizō* statues that had previously been worshiped in the village to the temple.

They just came and asked me if they can leave it here. It is so bad when o-Jizō-san is abandoned. I accepted them, collected them here, now everyone can come and pray to them. It is better than being abandoned, right? (Interview on 17/08/2014)



Figure 25. A group of *Jizō* statues, brought from local villages.
Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.



Figure 26. Naki Jizō. Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.

These *Jizō* statues are not the only ones at the entrance of the cemetery. At the other entrance, near the stairs, there is a human-size (165 cm), peculiar *Jizō* statue (Fig. 26). This statue depicts a sitting *Jizō* with a *shakujō* and *nyoihōju*, and an enormous, stylized head.

I erected him after the tsunami [of 2011]. I wanted to cheer up those who come to the cemetery, so I decided that this fun statue would do it. I was not thinking about it as an object of worship, I just wanted people to smile more after that horrible thing. But one day one of my parishioners told me: “Oshō-san [respectful title for a priest], this Jizō is crying! Why is that?” I went to look and yes, there were tears in his eyes! You can see now: his eyes are closed, so on rainy days it really looks as though Jizō is crying. I was thinking about it for a while, and then I found an answer. He is crying because he is happy to see us! Happy when someone comes for a visit. I said this to my parishioner, and soon the word spread. Now people call this statue Naki Jizō (crying Jizō). (Interview on 17/08/2014)



Figure 27. Oyako Jizō. Photograph by the author, 17/08/2014.

Near *Naki Jizō*, there is another composition, a set of three smiling *Jizō* doing *gasshō* (Fig. 27).

They are called Oyako Jizō (parent and child Jizō). They symbolise the dead. Someone has lost his or her parents, there are people who have lost their children, too. I believe that o-haka-mairi should be a merry event. You come to visit your loved ones. They should be very happy to see you, shouldn't they? This is a day of reunion. Parents reunite with their children. This is what this Oyako Jizō is about. Being together. (Interview on 17/08/2014)

The former abbot of Temple D values *Jizō*'s universality most of all. This is what helps him to fulfil the needs of his parishioners. *Jizō* can take care of *mizuko*, meet and cheer up those who come to the cemetery, be a symbol of the availability of spiritual help for those who are suffering alone, or become a substitute for the dead. All one needs to do is find the right design of statue.

Here we can see how parishioners respond to and influence the way the abbot sees his statues. The abbot and his parishioners decide together on erecting a statue. They simply bring their own statues to the temple believing they have to be accepted, and eventually parishioners give a new meaning to a statue by pointing out the fact that it looks as though it is crying.

CONCLUSIONS

The abbots of the four temples we examined here understand *Jizō*'s role very differently. They all seem to agree that *Jizō* is a universal Bodhisattva with many functions and roles, although every abbot emphasises some quality of *Jizō* that he likes the most. For the abbot of Temple A, *Jizō* is primarily a protector of children, living and dead. For the abbot of Temple B, *Jizō* is a fun creature who cares for the everyday lives of his adherents. For the abbot of Temple C, *Jizō* is an exemplary Buddhist, after whom his parishioners should take. At the same time there is another aspect of *Jizō*, mostly hidden from the outside world: the aspect of the statue that commemorates and pacifies a spirit that the family of the priest managed to subdue. And for the abbot of Temple D, *Jizō* is truly universal, taking on any role that is needed of him.

Although the images that these abbots have of *Jizō* are very different, there is one point that they all share: they all use the power of *Jizō* to maintain the way of operating a temple that they chose. *Jizō* statues are erected to transfer a message to temple visitors, and *Jizō-kō* become spaces to educate people about Buddhism in a lighter, friendlier atmosphere.

In Temples A and B, some of the statues were erected exclusively to decorate the temple's outer territory. The statues in Temple D (Fig. 26 & 27) are said to have no religious function, although they have important roles in reminding parishioners about the meaning of visiting the graves. They can be compared to colourful booklets that visitors frequently receive in Japanese Buddhist temples. They advertise temple Buddhism and educate people about its values, although these booklets can hardly be considered religious texts. In the same way, although these statues are usually more than just decorations, they are not supposed to be venerated.

There are not only the statues that the abbots have erected themselves, or those that were treasured in the temples for centuries. As we have seen, there are statues that simply appear in the temple, having been dug out of the ground or brought by a parishioner. There is a certain point of unease in these situations, although ultimately the statues are treated with respect, and, as we have seen in the case of Temple A, a place is found for such statues, an act that was not at all easy, as the abbot had to guess where and how the statue would have liked to be placed, as if it had a mind of its own.

Judging from the way the statues are treated, one can assume that the abbots have a certain freedom in building their image of *Jizō*. His universality and folk character make this Bodhisattva easier to deal with, but his popularity among Japanese people ensures that any *Jizō* statue will at least be noticed.

NOTES

- ¹ These sutras can be found in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*. For a brief explanation of the *Jizō* sutras, see Manabe 1960: 73–154.
- ² The sutra can be found in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*. According to Manabe Kōsai, it was written in Japan and mainly tells of the trials set by the Ten Kings of Hell, which everyone must undergo after death. Manabe writes that the sutra is actually a mixture of Buddhist and Daoist beliefs, as nine of the ten kings are Daoist deities. For a detailed description of the sutra, see Manabe 1960: 124–131. For more information about Japanese hell and *Jizō*'s role within it, see, e.g., Shimoizumi 2015: 79–132; Sawada 1968: 113–121; Ishida 1985: 236–255.
- ³ Guidebooks on organising the family grave recommend a *Jizō* statue for the family's *mizuko*/children (see, e.g., Fukuhara 1988: 66).
- ⁴ For *Jizō* posing as a substitute child or mother, see Harrison 1996.
- ⁵ Hardacre notes that the concept of dead children as suffering innocent victims is completely new, having been created by *Mizuko kuyō*, and represents a significant change from traditional understandings.
- ⁶ *Jizō* statues with infants were made before the spreading of *Mizuko kuyō*, although not in such great numbers. In addition, they were not always connected to *Sai-no kawara* or memorial rituals for dead children (see, e.g., Miyoshi 1975: 213).
- ⁷ Reversed gates, meaning that the gates were located in a wrong way with their back facing the outside.
- ⁸ Taken from the kindergarten's official website.
- ⁹ An invocation *Namu Amida Butsu*, which means "I take refuge in the Buddha Amitābha".
- ¹⁰ In this context it means a service for the dead.
- ¹¹ *Khakkhara*, a staff topped with metal rings, used by monks to frighten away animals; used as a musical instrument and sometimes as a weapon.
- ¹² *Cintāmani*, a wish-fulfilling jewel, sometimes held by Bodhisattvas.
- ¹³ My daughter is enrolled at this kindergarten, and the first time I heard about the ritual of saying hello to *o-Jizō-sama*, it was from her. I started observing children coming to the kindergarten and saw that they follow the same pattern. The abbot confirmed that the children had probably adopted this ritual themselves, without his or teachers' influence. It is also possible that it was shown to one of the children by a parent.
- ¹⁴ The main statue or image of the principal Buddha or Bodhisattva worshipped at a temple.
- ¹⁵ Hall for memorial tablets of a temple's parishioners.
- ¹⁶ This motif is very popular in paintings, although there are few statues depicting it.

- ¹⁷ A Buddhist holiday dedicated to grave visiting.
- ¹⁸ For more about *Jizō-kō* of Zenkyūin and other *Jizō-kō* of Sendai, see Donnere 2015.
- ¹⁹ A position for meditation, in which one foot is down on the ground, usually indicating readiness to stand up and depart on a saving mission.
- ²⁰ The fact that Temple C was deserted for some time actually finds a proof in *Sendai-shi-shi* (Sendai-shi-shi henshū iinkai 1953); it states that in 1953 the temple was under a responsibility of a priest from Fukushōji (Setagaya, Tokyo). No reasons for this are named though.
- ²¹ Unfortunately, photographs were not allowed.
- ²² Memorial tablets of parishioners.
- ²³ A gesture used for greeting, with palms put together.
- ²⁴ Because of the condition of the statues it is impossible to read the date of erection (although I suspect that the majority of them were dated). On one of the statues I could just make out the characters 明治 (Meiji), but I was not able to read the numbers.

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