



7389 A lacquered wood zushi (travelling shrine), containing a figure of Jizō Bosatsu seated on a double-lotus base before a mandorla with three Nyo-i Hōju (wish granting jewels). Jizō holds a shakujō (Buddhist staff) in the right hand and a Nyo-i Hōju in the left. The robes and base are delicately decorated in kirikane (thin cut strips of gold). The zushi has gilt metal mounts and the interior is gilded, the doors painted with a design of lotus flowers

Japan 17th century Edo period

Dimensions: H. 6½" x W. 4¾" x D. 4" (16cm x 12cm x 10cm)

Jizō Bosatsu, represented as a simple monk, has existed in Japan from the eighth century, becoming widely worshipped by the masses at the end of the Heian period with the rise of Pure Land (Amida) Buddhism. He is often shown, particularly in paintings, as an attendant of Amida. His powers include the saving of souls condemned to the various Buddhist hells, the intervention with Yama, the Master of Hell, on behalf of those reborn in each of the six realms of transmigration. He guards travellers safely on their way, protects warriors in battle, watches over the safety of families and aids women in pregnancy and childbirth.

Jizō when holding the Nyo-i Hōju is said to have the capacity to grant fulfillment of all desires.

In Buddhism, the Nyo-i Hōju by its luminosity and its brilliance symbolises the Buddha and the Doctrine.

As a pearl, an emblem of purity, it represents the truth of the Buddha and the veracity of the Law. Shakujō (literally tin cane) is a Buddhist ringed staff used in prayer to make a distinctive sound and it originates from the Indian khakkhara (sounding staff). It is said that it engenders goodness by awakening the compassionate Bodhisattva heart. The shakujō is one of the thirteen things which a pilgrim monk should carry with him and its jingling sound is used to warn off small beings (i.e. insects) from being accidentally trodden on. Ringing also helps to alert and inform villagers that there is a travelling/itinerant monk within earshot in need of alms.

