

Kaijusenji Temple: Five-Storied Pagoda

The Five-Storied Pagoda of Kaijusenji Temple is a Japanese National Treasure. It is a rare remaining example of Kamakura period (1185–1333) temple architecture, standing at about 17.7 m. The pagoda was constructed to serve as a reliquary for *bussbari*, the precious physical remains of Shaka Nyorai, the historical Buddha otherwise known as Prince Siddhartha. When Prince Siddhartha died, his body was cremated by his disciples. In 1214, Jokei (1155–1213), an influential Buddhist monk, bestowed two pieces of *bussbari* he received from the emperor to Kaijusenji Temple. This five-storied pagoda was built to enshrine them.

The original construction did not include a *mokoshi* (skirt story, or secondary roof), but one was added decades later. The *mokoshi* was lost during later reconstruction. Finally, when the pagoda was restored in 1962, the *mokoshi* was installed once again. This additional roof is one of the unique features of this pagoda. Of the five-storied pagodas built since the Edo period that have a *mokoshi*, this is one of only two that remain. The pagoda used to house Kaijusenji Temple's Four Heavenly Kings (Shitenno), but these statues are now at the Nara National Museum.