

## **Ordination Platform**

Directly west of the Golden Hall is the Ordination Platform where the Buddhist monastic precepts were transmitted during the formal ordination of monks and nuns. Atop of this platform is a stupa, under which are enshrined relics of the historical Buddha that were brought to Japan by Ganjin.

When monks take their vows, they do so to the Buddha, promising, among other things, not to kill, steal, lie, or be unchaste. Once ordained, for eight days every month they also must abstain from sleeping in a large bed (which represents luxury), taking evening meals, going out when it rains (because they may step on and kill worms and insects), or attending secular entertainments.

In 754, a year after his arrival from China, Ganjin helped to erect Japan's inaugural ordination platform at Todaiji, making it possible to conduct formal ordinations of monks and nuns from each of Nara's six schools, rather than dispatching ordinands overseas to be ordained.

A second platform was built by Ganjin when he established Toshodaiji in 759. Similar ceremonies for all Buddhist schools were held there, though that multi-denominational function later declined as each school built its own platform at its own head temple.

The original platform at Toshodaiji fell into disrepair in the course of several centuries. It was later restored, only for much of it to then be destroyed by fire in 1848. All that remains today is a three-tiered stone altar, atop which a stupa designed to resemble the ancient Sanchi Stupa in India was erected in 1978.