

Higashiyama Culture

Higashiyama culture marked a period of cultural innovations during the late fifteenth century. It was symbolized by Ashikaga Yoshimasa's Higashiyama-sansō estate—the villa that would come to be known as Ginkakuji. Much of what is thought of today as traditional Japanese culture began to develop during that time, including Noh drama, flower arrangement (*ikebana*), tea ceremony (*sadō*), ink painting (*suibokuga*), and incense appreciation (*kōdō*). These art forms evolved from the aesthetic of seeing beauty in imperfection, while accepting the impermanence of all things. It was a merging of the values of Zen Buddhism and the concept of *wabi-sabi* (an appreciation of simplicity, imperfection, and the effects of time).

As a patron and enthusiastic supporter of the arts, Yoshimasa was at the forefront of this new cultural flowering. Even as armed conflict continued in Japan in the aftermath of the Ōnin War, Yoshimasa preferred pursuing art over leading military campaigns. He was skilled at calligraphy and poetry, but his greatest gift was the ability to recognize talent and bring artists together, and the estate soon became a gathering place for poets, artists, and intellectuals from all walks of life.

The estate was more than a symbol of Higashiyama culture; the architecture of its buildings epitomized the values of the movement and the concept of *wabi-sabi*. Key architectural innovations of the estate have influenced Japanese architecture to the present day, most notably the *shoin* style of the Dōjinsai room, in the Tōgudō.