

World Heritage

Kyoto was the cultural and political center of Japan for more than a millennium. It was established in 794 and was modeled on the city of Chang'an (now Xi'an), the capital of several Chinese dynasties. The architecture and gardens of Kyoto tell of the development of Japanese architecture through history, and Ginkakuji is an important part of that history.

Ginkakuji is celebrated as the birthplace of Higashiyama culture and is renowned for its stunning gardens and innovative architecture, which embody the aesthetics of Zen and the concept of *wabi-sabi*. Ginkakuji is one of a group of 17 sites accorded UNESCO World Heritage designation in 1994 as the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (in the cities of Kyoto, Uji and Otsu). The buildings and gardens constituting these sites were constructed from the tenth to the seventeenth centuries, and almost all are religious establishments.

In addition to the cultural and historical significance of Ginkakuji, the careful preservation and restoration of its architectural treasures was a key factor in gaining World Heritage site status. Although most of the original structures were damaged or lost to fire over the years, especially during the Sengoku (Warring States) period (1467–1568), the Tōgudō and Kannonden remain. Restoration and repair using traditional materials and techniques was performed first in 1615 and then again in more recent times.