



Buildings and Garden

Ginkaku

Since most of the buildings disappeared over the years, the grounds of the Ginkaku-ji look now completely different from Yoshimasa's days. What remained are the Kannon-den (観音殿 - the Ginkaku) and the building comprised of Tōgu-dō (private Buddha hall) and Dōjin-sai (study).



The Silver Pavilion - Ginkaku - has 2 stories (unlike the Golden Pavilion, which has 3). The ground floor is called Shinkyu-den (心空殿 - Empty Hall) and offers a grand view over the garden. It was used for meditation by Yoshimasa. The garden was designed to be viewed from the pavilion, and the harmonious proportions of the Shinden-zukuri architecture frame the view nicely. The style is still elegant and representative, but quite airy and light

compared to earlier periods. The pavilion is 8.2m long and 7m wide.

The second floor is called the Hall of the Roaring waves – Chōon-kaku (潮音閣), just as the second floor of the Kinkaku-ji. It is 3 x 3 bay (間 - ken) wide and designed in the Chinese Zen style called Ch'an architecture. The room holds a gold plated Kannon image (Kannon - Bodhisattva of Compassion, Goddess of Mercy) which stands out against the black lakked background of the interior. The windows have the classical bell shape (火灯笼 - Katō-mado) and there is a veranda attached to the outside. A bronze phoenix has been placed on top of the roof.

By the way, there are several theories over why the silver coating has not been applied to the pavilion. Some say that it was due to the shogunate's empty coffers at that time, others say that Yoshimasa died before the silver could be applied to it. Another group of scholars even says that the pavilion indeed used to be coated in silver, but in 2007, a research team found out that there never has been silver coating on the pavilion's wooden walls.

The Tōgu-dō (東求堂) is the second building that has not been destroyed by the flames. It is a jibutsu-dō 持仏堂, a Buddha hall or room in a private estate to worship Buddha. Its name means "Search for the East" and it belongs like the Kannon-den to the National Treasures of Japan. The Tōgu-dō houses a room where Yoshimasa and his guests had enjoyed green tea. It is considered to be Japan's first and oldest tea room (茶室 - cha-shitsu).



Shinden zukuri
寝殿造
architectural style during the Heian period (794-1185), mostly used for aristocratic mansions

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