Kyo no machiya — urban houses of Kyoto

Kyoto’s urban houses. A machiya is an urban house where artisan or merchant families both live and work, found in many urban areas throughout Japan; Kyo is short for Kyoto. This style of house dates back 500 years.
KYOTO STREET
In the Nishijin area of Kyoto where this house came from, the street is always an important part of daily life. Without a front yard, neighbors gather, kids play, and communities hold festivities on the street.

▼ Battari-shogi — Wooden foldable bench/shelf
ばったり床几 baa-tah-ree show-gi
Bench or shelf that can be folded down to display merchandise being sold when the family business is open, and folded up when the store is closed.

▼ Hyosatsu — Family name plate
表札 hyoh-sah-tsu
Plaque on which the family’s name would be written.

▼ Inuyarai — Fence
犬矢来 ee-nu-yah-rah-ee
Fence made of bamboo, commonly used for Kyo no machiya. It protects exterior walls from any damage caused by animals and/or people on the street.

▼ Kawara — Roof tiles
瓦 kah-wah-rah
The typical roof tiles of Kyo no machiya, slanted to allow rain to fall away from the house. When seen together, they create a beautiful traditional skyline.
Komayose — Fence
駒寄せ koh-mah-yo-say
Fence to prevent any people or animals (commonly horses in the past) from entering private property.

Miss Kyoto
ミス京都 Miss kyoh-toe
One of 58 dolls given to the United States by Japanese children in return for the over 12,000 American dolls sent to Japan in early 1927. For her journey to America, she brought trunks packed with toys, a tea set, lanterns, several pairs of shoes and, of course, her passport.

Shoki — Guardian statue on the roof
鍾馗 show-key
The “Demon Queller” and legendary hero of a story from China. Traditionally, Shoki statues are placed on the roof of a Kyo no machiya to protect the family from illness and evil spirits, and to bring good luck to Kyoto.

Yubinbako — Mailbox
郵便箱 you-bee-n-baa-koh
Mailbox, typically colored red in Japan. The symbol on the front 〒 is the Japanese postal mark.
MACHIYA ENTRY SPACE

The genkan serves as the entry space into a Kyo no machiya and the transition from outside to inside.

Genkan — Entry hallway 
玄関  gay-n-kah-n
Area in which one takes off one’s shoes before entering the rooms of the home, and puts one’s shoes on before going outside.

Getabako — Shoe shelf/closet
下駄箱  gay-tah-baa-koh
Shelves in the genkan where shoes and house slippers are kept.
FRONT ROOM
The first room in a Kyo no machiya is usually used for family business and as a workspace during the day.

_Fusuma — Thick paper-covered sliding panel_

襖  _foo-sue-mah_
Sliding doors that separate interior rooms. They have a wooden frame covered with several layers of paper. _Fusuma_ can be removed completely to make rooms larger or can be closed to make smaller, private rooms.

_Manekineko — Lucky Cat_

招き猫  _mah-nay-key nay-koh_
The "Lucky Cat" figurine. This _manekineko_ is made of porcelain and welcomes people to the store with a paw raised up by its ear and curled down, the "come here" beckoning gesture used in Japan.

_Oriya Tansu_

織屋箪笥  _oh-ree-yah tah-n-sue_
Typical cabinets for storage for a silk store in a Kyo no machiya.
**Kigumi — Joinery**

木組み  *key-goo-me*

Woodworking technique used in the construction of traditional Japanese architecture, including The Japanese House. This process involves fitting together pieces of wood without the use of mechanical fasteners or adhesives.

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**Shoji — Thin paper-covered sliding panel**

障子  *show-gee*

Sliding doors that allow light into the rooms. They have a wooden frame covered with thin, translucent paper. *Shoji* serve as windows or curtains.

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**Tatami — Straw floor mats**

畳  *tah-tah-me*

Mats made of a tightly-packed core of rice straw covered with a fine layer of *Igusa* woven rush, and bordered on two sides with cloth. *Tatami* are typically about 2-1/2 to 3 inches thick, and 3 feet wide by 6 feet long. They are the main unit of measurement in traditional Japanese architecture, where the size of the room is determined by the number of mats that would fit.

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**Zuihosho — Sacred Treasure Award**

瑞宝章  *zoo-ee-hoe-show*

An award certificate. This award, hung on the wall, reads: "The Emperor of Japan confers upon Seizaburo Sumiyama the Fifth Rank of the Zuihosho [Sacred Treasure] Award on this Day, November 3, 1976, confirmed by Imperial Seal at the Imperial Palace." The owner of this house was recognized and awarded for his contributions to the silk and textile industry.
MIDDLE ROOM
The multi-functional and casual room of the house; this room also has a stairway hidden in the oshiire closet.

Daruma
dah-roo-mah
Represents Daruma, the priest who created Zen Buddhism and who is a symbol of strong will and determination. Upon buying a Daruma doll, one sets a goal and colors in one of its eyes. When the goal is reached, the other eye is colored in.

Futon — Bed
foo-toe-n
Traditional Japanese bed, consisting of a padded mattress and a thick, quilted cover. Futon are designed to be laid out on tatami mats at night and then folded and stored away during the day, allowing for rooms to serve multiple purposes.

Kamidana — Family Shinto shrine
kah-me-dah-nah
Home of Shinto spirits, where a family prays for good health, business, and happiness. Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan.
**Kotatsu — Low heated table**

こたつ koh-tah-tsu

A square table with an electric heater attached to the underside. In the wintertime, people keep warm by sitting at the _kotatsu_, which has a quilt-like cover that is inserted between the tabletop and frame, to lock in the warmth of the electric heater.

**Oshiire — Closet**

押入れ oh-she-ee-ray

Closet used for storing bedding (_futon_) and seating cushions (_zabuton_).

**Tansu — Dresser**

箪笥 tah-n-sue

Chest of drawers to store clothing and other personal items.
FORMAL ROOM
Formal room or guest room of the house with a direct garden view.

Butsudan
Family Buddhist altar
仏壇 boo-tsu-dah-n
Place where family pays respect to Buddha and family ancestors. It is not unusual to have both a butsudan and kamidana (see above) in one household.

Tokonoma — Decorative alcove
床の間 toe-koh-no-mah
Alcove used for formal display of flower arrangements, a hanging seasonal scroll, or other seasonal objects.

Zabuton — Cushions
座布団 zah-boo-toe-n
Traditional Japanese floor cushions, serving a similar purpose to chairs.

Zashiki
Formal room
座敷 zah-she-key
Most formal room of the house, often with a tokonoma (see below) and a garden view. A family uses the zashiki for dining, entertaining, gathering, and as a guest bedroom, among other things.

Zataku — Low table
座卓 zah-tah-coo
Traditional Japanese low table. The family would typically eat at this table.
GARDEN

The appreciation of seasonal changes is very important in Japan, leading to the high value of a garden. Looking at a garden provides a sense of tranquility and a connection to nature. The garden also brings air and light into the house.

Engawa — Porch and passageway

縁側 ay-n-gah-wah

Narrow wooden floor space for sitting and enjoying the garden. The engawa also serves as the walkway to the room with sink (senmenjo), the bath (furo), the toilet (toire), and the kitchen (daidokoro).

Niwa — Garden

庭 ni-wah

Traditional-style garden with stepping stones and a stone lantern. The plants in the garden are usually native plants, such as bamboo and pine. These gardens are designed with great care and attention to look and feel completely natural.
KITCHEN

Though most *machiya* kitchens, like ours, have been remodeled since the house was built, these high ceilings with crossing beams are typical of *machiya* style houses.

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**Daidokoro — Kitchen**

台所  *dah-ee-doe-koh-roe*

Also called *Okudo-san*. The kitchen at the BCM was modernized in the early 1970s, with new appliances installed, such as a *yuwashiki* (see below) located above the kitchen sink.

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**Hotei-san**  

God of wealth  

布袋さん  *hoe-tay-ee-sah-n*

One of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune (not to be confused with Buddha). Hotei-san statues are believed to bring good fortune to the family business. The family that originally owned this house had a collection of Hotei statues, which was donated along with the house.
**Mizuyadansu — China cabinet**

水屋箪笥 *me-zoo-yah-dah-n-sue*
Cabinet where bowls, plates, and other dishes are stored.

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**Noren — Curtain**

のれん *no-ray-n*
Partial curtains that divide rooms, hung from the top of doorways. *Noren* are often split into two or three sections, and serve as visual room dividers. This one conceals the view directly into the kitchen from the street.

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**Yuwakashiki — Hot water maker**

湯沸かし器 *you-wah-kah-she-key*
Common style water heater in 1970s kitchens in Japan. These heaters are gas-powered and make hot water instantly, a method more conservative with energy than large boilers. Most Japanese households today use energy-efficient boilers instead of counter heaters like this.
BATHROOM
In Japan the functions of the bathroom are separated into three rooms: the senmenjo, the bath (furo), and the toilet (toire).

Furo — Bath
風呂 foo-roe
Contains the showering mechanism and bathtub. Wooden drain boards are set above the tile floor where one washes and rinses with water from a small bucket before getting in the tub of hot water to soak. The whole family will share the same water. After getting out, one puts a cover over the tub to keep it warm for the next person.

Senmenjo — Room with sink
洗面所 say-n-may-n-joo
The room in which one would wash the face, brush the teeth, and change clothes before and after bathing.

Toire — Toilet
トイレ toe-ee-ray
A squatting toilet. Instead of sitting, one squats over the toilet. When one flushes, water runs out of the spigot at the top, where hands are rinsed. This water is then stored in the tank, and becomes the water that runs through for the next flush. There is a big or a little flush. Today, many houses have sitting-style toilets and are often quite high tech. One always wears special bathroom slippers when using the toire, even today.
SECOND FLOOR
The 2nd floor rooms can be reached by the stairway in the closet.

Chashitsu — Tea room
茶室 cha-she-tsu
Equipped for a formal tea ceremony.

Chigaidana — Ornamental shelves
違い棚 chee-gah-ee-dah-nah
Shelves located in the smallest alcove adjoining the tokonoma. These shelves display pottery, dolls, or other decorations. The presence of a chigaidana increases the formality or specialness of the tokonoma, and by extension, the room.

Kazari-mado — Decorative window
飾り窓 kah-zah-ree mah-doe
Window with a bamboo lattice-work design behind it. When the sun shines, the window makes a beautiful pattern on the shoji paper.
**Mushiko-mado — Insect-cage window**

虫籠窓 moo-she-koh mah-doe

Common style attic and storage windows for Kyo no machiya. They have narrow slats that preserve privacy, but still let the air in.

**Yaneura — Attic**

屋根裏 yah-nay-ooh-rah

Space under the eaves of the roof generally used for storing unused and seasonal items such as New Year’s decorations.

**Yukimi-mado — Snow viewing window**

雪見窓 you-key-me mah-doe

Special shoji with snow-watching panels. These panels are at eye level when sitting. One can open them as much as desired to get a framed view of the outside without letting out too much warm air.