Mapping Kyoto: An Artist’s Perspective

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Introduction

a. Project’s Context

In 2005, as a reaction to the continuous displacement of his hometown’s numerous historic buildings due to—rather ironically— the rapidly-increasing tourism industry, the author embarked on a self-commissioned project involving several relevant communities, to map most of those buildings and publish the result in a book illustrated with hundreds of watercolor sketches done during the mapping activities. Since then, the book has evolved into a series, each one representing a major city in Indonesia.

The result, however, is a limited success since the displacement process has continued since then: of 180 historic buildings featured in the first book, eight privately-owned buildings have since been demolished, largely due to the perception that business in old buildings is usually not profitable. It seems that the public needs more samples of financially sustainable privately-endorsed preservation efforts, and we need to publish a more diverse range of materials in order to reach a wider audience. This is an omnipresent issue common to all historic building preservation efforts throughout the world and, thus, we need to learn from the best examples.

Listed among the world’s best heritage cities, Kyoto clearly offers a wealth of samples of this kind. It is an excellent example (showcase? Exemplar? Model?) of how numerous world-scale cultural heritages sit side-by-side with the most advanced modernization icons of today. More importantly, it also offers a range of excellent examples of how a vast number of established business owners (shinise) capitalize on the preservation of their historic buildings as an important aspect of their business.

Another reason for choosing Kyoto is that Japan is basically a cartographically-conscious society. The country’s earliest map was drawn in the 7th century CE. Numerous Kyoto maps from the Edo period (17th century CE) that accurately portray the city’s features—even individual land parcels—are extant to this day. Japan is also familiar with illustrated popular publications: the most obvious and contemporary example, of course, being the omnipresent industry of Japanese comics, whose aesthetics has permeated all kinds of media. Even the most detailed map is presented in an irresistible kawaii (cute) fashion. Thus, a visitor to present-time Kyoto will immediately find that—compared to other tourist-destination cities in other countries—Kyoto offers a lot more of tourism-oriented navigational publications customized to fit all kinds of interests and different seasons.

b. Objectives

The objectives of this study are twofold: (1) to study and categorize various mapping objects and methods employed in numerous thematic maps of Kyoto; and (2) to produce a copy-ready script for an illustrated sketchbook of Kyoto City,1 similar to a previous book series by the author.

c. Significance

By accomplishing the first objective, the author wishes to identify various potential city resources that should be incorporated in any historic preservation-related maps and to present them in a structured and interesting way. Accomplishing the second objective will enable the author to learn about Kyoto’s various realistic, workable solutions for the classic conflict between a city’s persistent nature to modernize and the urge to maintain its established urban scape and character.

d. Methodology

The project will mainly consist of two activities:

1. A map-making activity, with sub-activities such as:
   - A literature study on Kyoto’s history to determine the scope and method of the field survey, as well as its analysis method
   - Field surveys focused on collecting data on privately-endorsed preservation efforts, as well as map samples. It is crucial to get map samples that are as diverse as possible.

The Work of the 2010/2011 API Fellows
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- Interviews with locals to identify and confirm important resources

2. Producing an illustrated book will consist of such sub-activities as:
   - Re-drawing the resulting map, as the direct outcome of the map-making activity
   - Writing a script in order to present the outcome of the activity in a more structured, comprehensive way
   - Creating illustrations in watercolor
   - Preparing a layout design

To determine what objects should be included in the illustrated sketchbook, the author applied a mapping method similar to those of Green Map™, an environmental movement established in 1995 that has spread to 55 countries since then. Basically, it is a specifically-themed map collaboratively created by local communities to identify both environmental resources and problematic spots around their neighborhood that were then marked in a custom map using an established set of icons. The icon set is copyrighted and to use it (and other Green Map™’s resources) the user has to be registered; thus, Green Map™ usage is rather exclusive. However, with the advance of the Internet and GPS technology, similar methods are also provided by a number of online, editable map services such as Openstreetmap™, Google Maps™, Wikimapia™, Bing Maps™, and MapFan™ (Japan only). Although Openstreetmap™ is arguably the most versatile of all, the author chose Google Maps™ for its popularity.

Substantive Results

a. Historic Preservation in Japan: The Leading Edge

Japan is, perhaps, among the most advanced countries in the world when it comes to historic preservation. Their first comprehensive list of historic artifacts was compiled in 1871, largely as a reaction to a nation-wide movement known as haibutsu kishaku several years earlier, when a large number of Buddhist temples and artifacts were destroyed in an attempt to “purify” Japan. In 1897, the government enacted the Ancient Temples and Shrines Preservation Law, which, as its name implies, focused on protecting historic religious buildings and artifacts. However, in the early 20th century, modernization also transformed the landscape and posed a threat to historic and natural monuments, which led to the enactment of the Historical Sites, Place of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments Preservation Law in 1919. This was extended further by a 1929 law, which extended protection to all public and private institutions, and individual estates such as family castles, private shops, and residences. Another law was passed after the Great Depression in 1933 to prevent the international trading of important artifacts. In 1955, those laws were finally merged under one comprehensive law, thereby (or effectively) incorporating intangible cultural artifacts such as the performing arts and making it among the most comprehensive historic preservation laws in the world.

In the 1960s, the destruction of historic sites in several cities brought forth citizen’s protests that eventually led to the enactment of the Law for the Preservation of Ancient Capitals in 1966. In 1975, the law was expanded to also include important districts with groups of historic buildings. Along with the decentralization of the urban planning authority to the municipality level, citizen’s participation in historic preservation efforts began.

In 1972, Kyoto Municipality passed the City Ordinances on Urban Landscape, making it the nation’s first on such subject. Several historic districts (Gion Shimibashi, Sanneizaka) were designated as preservation areas under this ordinance. More districts were added to the various categories of preservation areas between 1996 and 2003. In 2007, the New Landscape Policy was enacted. It strictly regulated all aspects of individual buildings (height, materials, colors, design features) that may affect the overall character of the landscape in those preservation areas.

b. The Decline of Kyo-Machiyas

Although the local ordinances have resulted in a more consistent landscape character such as those of Sanneizaka’s and Gion, the designation of certain districts as preservation areas creates a new problem in those areas not traditionally intended as main tourist areas. While numerous existing traditional Kyoto-style shops (kyo-machiyas) have flourished along the tourist-crowded paths of Sanneizaka and Gion, a large number of kyo-machiyas are located within the now declining residential and industrial areas due to the prolonged economic crisis that has been persisting for almost 20 years. A 2008 survey on kyo-machiya shows that of the 50,000 machiyas within the city, more than 20% exist
within the Nishijin area, a declining textile-producing district within the central portion of the city.

The kyo-machiya owners have limited options to upgrade their houses due to the new policy; further, maintaining a kyo-machiya is not easy. The wooden structures are often cold during winter and extremely hot during Kyoto’s summer. Living inconveniences, the risk of earthquakes and fires, the expensive costs of repair, and high inheritance taxes are often cited as the primary reasons for not living in a kyo-machiya (Kyoto Center for Community Collaboration 2009). In fact, 923 kyo-machiyas (9.4%) within the Nishijin area had perished within a five-year period (2003-2008). This happened even after the City Planning Bureau devised two plans to revitalize the district.

In 1998 (revised in 2004), the bureau planned to create a Business-Residential Special Use District through a broad-based partnership between residents, businesses, and government. It was followed in 2000 by the Kyo-Machiya Revitalization Plan to promote the reuse of kyo-machiya as new shops, small offices, ateliers, and public service facilities, as well as to create support networks to preserve them (City of Kyoto 2000). The Kyo-machiya House Development Fund in the Kyoto Center for Community Collaboration even opted for the most direct (and expensive) approach to reverse the trend, by funding the renovations of the selected Kyo-machiyas and partially converting those into public facilities. But the fund’s financial and technical capacities were somehow limited: only seven machiyas were renovated in 2006, and 12 machiyas in 2007.2

Kyo-machiya’s reputation, however, is not always associated with backwardness. If maintained properly, a kyo-machiya’s image will easily be associated with the established and well-cultured. Most of Kyoto’s shinise (established shops that have been in business for at least a century) prefer to retain their original kyo-machiya shop, even if that would mean having to purchase an additional shop, that is, the one adjacent to it.3 One particular book that covers most of Kyoto’s shinise, namely, Old Kyoto: A Guide to Traditional Shops, Restaurants, and Inns by Diane Durston is extremely popular among tourists. Its 20th edition came out in 2005, with the first revised edition published in 2000 or almost 20 years after the first edition. This fact shows that those traditional shops still possess their original appeal among Kyoto’s foreign visitors.

This particular “exclusive” image also contributes greatly to the recently (2011) emerging trends among Kyoto’s young designers, artists, and startup entrepreneurs: to rent and share a kyo-machiya for their studios and shops.4 Sharing is a good strategy to lower the cost of renting and maintaining the whole machiya, while retaining its well-cultured and exclusive image, and giving the customers more choices (thus increasing their visiting time).

c. Promotions as a Means of Survival

Another important aspect of any business is about how to make oneself visible. Promoting the business both online and offline (through brochures and booklets) is paramount for those who run their businesses in a kyo-machiya, especially those who cater to the much-needed foreign tourists. Tourists are usually quite hesitant to enter a traditional kyo-machiya, mainly due to the traditional Japanese’s discreet nature of doing business rather than displaying a vast array of products and leaving the door wide open. Original kyo-machiya shops usually keep their doors closed and merely hang a noren (a piece of curtain cloth imprinted with the shop’s insignia) on their front door as a sign that their shop is open for business.

Figure 1. A noren hung on the closed front door of a machiya, indicating that the shop is open for business.
Another factor that adds to the hesitation of tourists is the fact that the Japanese use a completely different address system. Whereas Western countries usually use a linear address system such that houses facing the same street would be using the same street name and an incremental set of numbers, the Japanese use a so-called nested spatial system whereby an address is first defined by the largest spatial unit (shi, equivalent to a municipality), followed by its subunit (ku), then its sub-sub-unit (cho, equivalent to a neighborhood of approximately 30 houses), and finally, by the lot number (Nitschke 2003). This results in a seemingly confusing address system, with houses across the same street using a completely different address name and a seemingly random address number. Finding an address in Japan is simply an impossible task for the first time Western visitor.

Thus, providing promotional information beforehand will surely boost the tourist’s confidence in making transactions with kyo-machiyas. This provision of information is now being done by most young entrepreneurs online (via the Internet) and offline (via brochures, booklets and other printed materials).

d. Online Maps of Kyoto: A Matter of Depth

A map is always an essential element in those promotional materials, both online and offline. The most influential factor that affects the current public usage of those maps, however, was the development of editable, online map services. MapFan™ (800 thousand visitors a day) and the more commercially-oriented Mapion™ (1.4 million visitors a day) are among the leaders of the online map providers in Japan. Combined with GPS-enabled mobile-phone and mobile-web applications, those providers are heavy contenders for the top position Google Maps, the worldwide leader, enjoys in Japan’s market. Five years ago, Mapion had already invented the “point-based search” technology, in which users can point mobile phones toward virtually any business location, billboard, or geographical area to access information (BusinessWire.com 2006). To compete with Google Streetview™ (not available in most countries, but almost always available in any Japanese middle-sized town) that enables the user to navigate along a virtual street, Mapion has devised a new, three-dimensional technology that enables the viewers to experience the simulation of depth on their computer screens.

Despite these advanced technologies, most of kyo-machiya-based businesses that promote online prefer to create their own, customized mobile-oriented map, using the online map services only as a base map. This is due to the facts that Japanese mobile devices are highly advanced and, in Japan, most websites are accessed more often via those devices than a computer. The users usually prefer the much simpler and quick nature of customized maps, as it takes but a single mouse click to get the location info in a customized map, compared to a few more clicks deep in an online map provider’s main page. A customized, specially-themed map conveys only relevant information, thus avoiding prolonged download time as well as “information overload” so ubiquitous in most Japanese web pages.

e. Offline (or Printed) Maps of Kyoto: Selecting the Right Information

The selective nature of a customized online map also applies to offline (or printed) maps. Even more, with its limited capacity and availability, a printed map has to be extremely selective in conveying information and necessitates suitable distribution points. Based on their theme, these maps are broadly categorized into the following:

1. Mapping by Region
   This map category is usually designed for the general, first-time visitors who do not have particular interests or specific destinations. In these maps, every object of interest is featured, thereby potentially generating confusion if not chosen selectively. To avoid such confusion, the objects are usually organized into major objects (such as city landmarks), and into one to two levels of minor objects. Most official maps (published by local authorities) fall in this category. For example, maps of Takao (www.kyo-takao.com), an area north of Kyoto, features several temples, scenic spots, historic bridges, and even traditional wood logging activities within one single map. This type of map is mainly distributed at the entry points to a specific area, such as in bus/train stations and airports.

2. Mapping by Object
   This map category is usually designed for special-interest tourists. Most commercial maps fall into this particular category. As Kyoto is a historic city, the most typical of its maps are historically-
themed ones featuring gardens, temples, castles, and palaces. The more specific maps usually consider the said city landmarks merely as starting points for finding more specific spots or objects. The specially-themed maps usually cover:

**Historic/religious buildings and sites.** One interesting map is the Higashiyama Roadside Buddha Statue Map featuring several statues within the Higashiyama area (Southeastern Kyoto). It depicts different manifestations of Buddha (Furebotoke, Sawaribotoke, Iyashihotoke), as well as some other objects thought to possess healing properties. The map encourages visitors to this area to touch those objects in certain ways to earn merit. Another map encourages visitors to collect and stick a series of *shuin* (temple’s official stamp) on a certain portion of their map. The bearer of the completed map receives a special souvenir as his or her prize.

**Natural Features.** One example: The KYOTO TRAIL MAP (http://kaiwai.city.kyoto.jp/raku/kanko_top/kyoto_trail_en.html) is a paid map that features a hiking course covering about 70 kilometers. The hike starts from Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine (southeast of the city), leading to Mount Hiei, Ohara and Kurama areas, Takao, Arashiyama, and, finally, to Koke-dera Temple on the west side.

**Accommodation and Commercial Facilities** (inns, shops, cafes). This is, perhaps, the most abundant and most costly map of all. Usually, it comes in the form of a thick booklet or even a pocket book. The publication (production) of the map is usually subsidized by advertisements, which somehow affects its objectivity. Some maps are even sold at a profit. There are also maps of this type that combine several types of maps within a single publication.

**Other special interests.** A map that falls under this category would be the Map of the Art Museum in Kyoto that features Kyoto’s numerous public and private art museums, complete with exhibition schedules and a list of the famous artworks in the museum. In a sense, Diane Durston’s book *Old Kyoto* which was mentioned earlier is also a special interest map, albeit with larger sections devoted to detailed explanations on the featured objects.

3. **Mapping by Distance and Mode of Transportation**

This map category is extremely effective for those users whose times are limited. The coverage area is usually defined by the amount of time needed to reach all the featured objects (destinations?) on a predestined path, using certain modes of transportation (walking, riding a bike, riding a car, or even taking the train). For example, the KYOTO WALKING MAP features interesting objects and scenic spots that are reachable within 20 minutes of walking. Another map features objects and scenic spots that accessible along a specific railroad route, the train being the most popular transportation mode in Japan. The Uji Walking Map, published by Japan Railway (JR) Company features additional information such as walking time and distance from each object(destination), with the starting and ending points (naturally) being at the nearest JR train station.

It is worth noting that most major railway companies in Japan are actively engaged in promoting tourist destinations. Different banners for different seasons are hung inside the train’s cabin, advertising various tourist events and destinations along the train’s route. Every spring, Randen—the only streetcar operator left in Kyoto—proudly advertises its scenic route (lined with sakura trees in full bloom) to Arashiyama, while on certain summer nights, Eizan Railway happily conveys large crowds of tourists to the north to witness the Kurama Fire Festival, for free.

4. **Mapping by Calendrical Events**

This map category is perhaps unique to Japan. It includes maps that feature regular events and festivals, especially those held to celebrate the change in seasons. Celebrating a change in season is always a huge event in Japan, with thousands of locals visiting one spot after another within days, vying for the perfect *hanami* (sakura blossom-viewing party) spot in spring, or the perfect *momiji* (maple leaf party) spot in autumn. To appreciate the fully-blooming sakura or the brilliant red maple leaf, it is crucial to arrive on the right spot at the right
Kyoto is the nation’s favorite place for celebrating the change of season, and the Kyoto Sakura Map, the special map that plots the best hanami or momiji spot on a certain date, is extremely helpful. Yahoo* Japan has, in fact, devised a special mobile-map application to indicate in percentage the blooming progress of sakura flowers in favorite hanami or momiji spots.

5. Mapping by Period

The existence of a series of old Kyoto maps, some dating back to the 17th century AD, has enabled some cartographers to put layer upon layer of maps chronologically, thus simulating the development of Kyoto year after year. A particular publication stands out for this kind of map: the Time Trip Map by Jidai Map (www.jidaimap.jp). A layer of transparent map (made from a vellum sheet) is laid on top of another transparent map, thus enabling the viewer to see chronologically all the gradual changes that the city has been through. A research done in Kyoto Ritsumeikan University takes the experience further by reconstructing the entire city in certain eras using old maps, GIS data and computer-generated building models. Several layers of these city models are then laid virtually on top of each other, to enable the viewer to simulate the urbanscape changes in three-dimensional form.

Most of these offline maps have their digital, downloadable versions as well, mainly for environmental reasons rather than as a matter of convenience. This digital version may gain popularity in the future, mostly due to the rapid development of lightweight tablet computers such as Apple* iPad™. Nevertheless, the printed-version is more ubiquitous and is easier to use, making it simply irreplaceable in the near future.

C. User Responses and the Participation of Local Communities

Due to limited resources, the author did not commence a full-scale survey to obtain a comprehensive account of the users’ responses to the maps. Rather, the author relied on the interpretation of data obtained from a series of existing map-making efforts (ca.2000-2006). Those were undertaken mostly to comprise an important step in the machi-zukkuri (“town-planning”) decision-making process, for which locals were involved in communal mapping efforts to identify potentials and drawbacks within their neighborhood. Satoshi Otsuki et al. (2006) questioned the effectiveness of those so-called “map-making methods”. Based on his findings, he concluded that their effectiveness would significantly increase if the users were directly involved in the process.

Otsuki thus implies two user categories according to their degree of participation:

1. Users who are directly involved in the map-making process, usually local inhabitants or local businesses.

2. Those who are not directly involved in the map-making process (especially tourists).
   a. For them, the goals, scopes and boundaries of those maps must be clearly indicated;
   b. As far as they are concerned, there is a lack of detailed information in those maps due to the media’s limited capacity;
   c. Disorganized, confusing information commonly found on certain maps are usually intended to cater to users who are as varied as possible. A specialized map is more effective.

According to the author’s observation, the first user category usually plays an important role in new and/or small-scale tourist destinations, where the lack of a comprehensive source of information usually facilitates more intensive interaction between the locals and the visitors. This was observed during the author’s brief visit to Miyazu Town, north of Kyoto. Miyazu is a small, sleepy place located near the famous Amano-Hashidate (“Heaven’s Bridge”), one of the top three major natural tourist destinations in Japan. However, due to the lack of other tourist destinations, the duration of the tourist’s visit to Miyazu is usually rather brief. Miyazu’s Town Council had developed a tourist map involving a large number of locals who could identify interesting spots and objects previously known only to locals. This move has also prepared the city inhabitants to interact more intensively with tourists in the future, an important factor in creating a warm, welcoming impression.
The line between those users who are directly involved and those only indirectly involved in the map-making process, however, started to blur recently. The development of online (internet) map technology has enabled virtually all kinds of participants, even occasional tourists, to be directly involved in the map-making process. This is similar to Lonely Planet’s method of authoring travel books: readers actually collect and supply the information in Lonely Planet’s books. On the other hand, some online map providers like Google Maps™ and Openstreetmap™ have enabled users to collaboratively build their own maps using both default and customized icons. Thus, a group of local citizens can simultaneously and collaboratively work on the map, pinpointing both local resources and hazards that affect the quality of their environment. Technically known as Public Participation in Geographical Information Systems (PPGIS), it has the “enormous potential for community involvement in policy-setting and decision-making by local governments” (Seto et al. 2009). PPGIS enables the user to tag various attributes to a location on the map. In a major kyo-machiya survey (2008-2009), a group of scientists from Kyoto Ritsumeikan University applied this PPGIS method to assess the physical conditions of Nishijin’s kyo-machiyas, as well as to identify certain locations considered as “scenic spots” with aesthetic potentials by the residents. The result was later uploaded to the Web, using Google Maps as a basemap. Google Maps’ capability has enabled the Green Map™ movement in 2009 to launch its collaborative online mapping network, OpenGreenMap.org.

D. Implications/Follow-ups

These extensive mapping knowledge and skills acquired while in Kyoto would greatly help the author in raising the public’s appreciation and awareness of historic buildings in his hometown (Bandung). It would also help privately-owned historic buildings to survive financially by effectively promoting their businesses. However, there are significant differences between the two cities, and some adjustments/solutions need to be made, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Conditions</th>
<th>Adjustments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyoto</td>
<td>Bandung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International tourist destination focused on historic tourism. Information on those objects is easy to obtain.</td>
<td>Local tourists destination, focused on retail-based tourism. Information and promotion on historic tourism are limited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive preservation laws and local ordinances</td>
<td>Weak preservation laws on the national level, with limited implementation on the local level. No preservation ordinances existed for privately-owned objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing local cho (neighborhood-scale communities) traditionally bound by religious rituals (matsuri) and local shrines</td>
<td>No strong neighborhood communities nor local communal events. Most public events are held by small special-interest communities such as cycling, photograph, and auto communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on his experience in Kyoto, the author is currently working on the following projects:

The publication of the *Kyoto in Watercolour*, preferably in Japan. The author also plans to hold a charity exhibition to sell reproductions and original versions of some of his works. Funds generated from these activities will be given to the Tohoku earthquake recovery program.

Inspired by the shuin-collecting map, the author has already embarked on a pilot project to encourage local tourists to explore the relatively neglected part of Bandung’s old town, by creating a so-called Bandung Treasure Map. The concept is simple:

- Create a network with Bandung’s well-known designers to design 10 categories of souvenirs unique to Bandung. Each category would consist of three to five product items. Each category will be produced in a craft-producing area within the city, thus creating a much-favored link between designers and craftsmen, enabling the latter to improve on their products.
- The souvenirs will be sold in certain locations within the old town area, preferable in old shops (similar to “shinise” in Kyoto) currently struggling to survive. This will give those shops some unique “branding”, and will enable them to survive and even diversify their merchandise.

3. Inspired by young Kyoto designers supporting the Machiya Revival Program, the author aims to promote the idea of creating collaborative (“shared”) working spaces in some parts of Bandung’s old town, especially among fellow designers and young artists in Bandung. Most buildings in Bandung’s old town area have an expansive floor area (up to 600m²), making it prohibitive for young entrepreneurs and creative workers to rent the space on their own. Sharing the rent and operating cost would make it much more affordable for these people. The author also proposes to dedicate a portion of the working spaces as a communal space for college students, freelance workers, and community activists. Through this, the author wishes to reverse the city core’s decaying process, establish images of old buildings as a “hip” place for a creative office, and thus initiate a new trend: that of using old buildings for new purposes.
NOTES

1. The resulting book script has been excluded from this paper. See http://watercolorichsan.com for illustration samples.

2. It is expensive to renovate even a small machiya unit. According to a 2008 workshop, it would take 5 million yen to lease, renovate, and rent 10 small machiya units. It would take the same amount to purchase one large unit.

3. For example, Ippodo, a world-famous tea shop in Teramachi dori, prefers to open another additional shop in another corner in the same block, rather than enlarge the original shop.

4. One of such shared kyo-machiya is located at Ajiki roji (alley) near Gojo dori (street) in Higashiyama. It was featured in a documentary film The Alley in Kyoto produced by NHK. The machiya is shared by six tenants, among them, a young Japanese purse-maker, a florist, a house decorator, and a garment accessories-maker. Another shared kyo-machiya is located near Imadegawa Dori (within Nishijin area). It is shared by a honey shop, a pottery artist, a furniture designer, and an architect’s office specializing in the renovation of kyomachiyas (Rover Architect).

5. In August 2011, according to www.neatstat.com

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