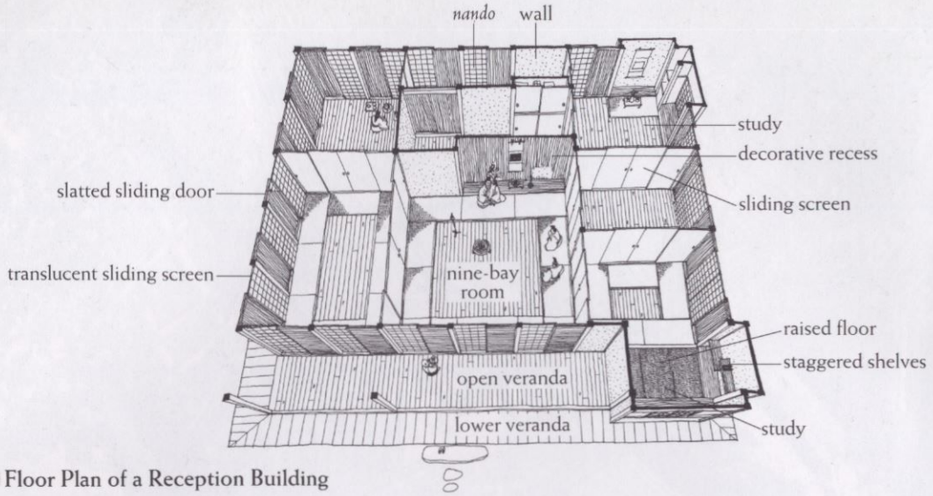


■ Floor Plan of a Reception Building

The Beginnings of the *Shoin* Style

The Muromachi period saw the beginnings of a new style of architecture among the samurai class that was to have repercussions down to the present day. This was the *shoin* style. In its final form, this style's chief characteristics were to be the convoluted nature of its interior space—with formal areas, family areas, kitchen, etc. being clearly demarcated—and the furnishings that came to distinguish the formal rooms.

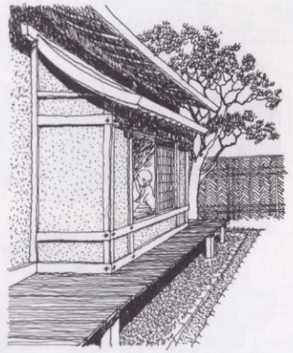
One of the changes that occurred in the Muromachi period that suggested future events was the de-emphasis of the ceremonial aspect of life in favor of private family life. Under this new emphasis, the *tsunenogosho* in the north peripheral area (*hisashi*) of the *shinden*, formerly the private room of the head of the household, became the most important room and was used for the private entertaining of guests. In residences of the shogun, where there were large numbers of visitors, it was sometimes housed in a separate structure.

In the residences of the upper echelons of the samurai class, a simplified form of a *shinden* annex, known as *kogosho*, was sometimes built as a separate structure for the everyday activities of blood relations.

In another change of emphasis, the *kaisho* (see p. 52) came to be built as a drawing room specifically for the entertaining of private family guests. In the residences of the shogun, several *kaisho* were sometimes accommodated in separate structures for use in gatherings involving large numbers of visitors. Where the *kaisho* was constructed separately (see illustration above), the reception space was separated by decorative sliding screens into rooms for different purposes. The room known as the *kokonoma* ("nine spaces"; so called because it measured three bays square) was reserved for the most distinguished visitors and had a decorative recess (*oshiita*; the forerunner of the *tokonoma* or decorative alcove) on the side opposite the entrance, in which a picture scroll was hung.

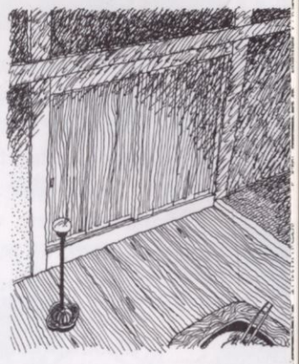
These semi-private rooms, all having their specific functions, were partitioned off by double-grooved sliding screens, either covered with decorative cloth or paper (*fusuma*), overlaid with translucent paper (*shōji*), or paneled. Use of such screens meant that square pillars were more suitable than round, and these gradually became general. Cushions for sitting and other furniture became permanent fixtures, as did fitted *tatami*—either exclusively around the outside of the room or completely covering the floor—along with such decorative features as the *oshiita* (decorative recess), staggered shelves (*chigai-dana*), and the *tsuke-shoin* (built-in desk alcove).

Decorative recess (precursor of decorative alcove)



Desk recess (precursor of built-in desk alcove)

Shelves (precursor of staggered shelves)



Door to sleeping quarters (precursor of decorative door)

Zashiki Fittings and Their Formalization

In samurai residences and Zen Buddhist temples in the latter part of the Medieval period, it became common practice to provide rooms known as *zashiki* with various decorative appurtenances ("*zashiki* fittings") in accordance with their respective functions. The *zashiki* (lit., "laying down a cushion for sitting [on wooden floors]") was a room that was to undergo various permutations throughout its history, but essentially referred to a room for formal use that had thick, fitted straw mats (*tatami*) laid wall to wall. It was to become one of the quintessential features of the Japanese home, even though its function was not always clear or fixed. In large part, "*zashiki* fittings" appeared in samurai residences and Zen temples because they were needed for the display and appreciation of articles imported from China, including books, hanging scrolls bearing Buddhist or other paintings, writing implements, and tea utensils, which were part and parcel of the Zen culture introduced in this period.

The decorative recess known as an *oshiita*, which seems to have been the predecessor of the modern *tokonoma* (decorative alcove), was a shallow boarded space in front of which a low table was placed bearing the *sangusoku* ("three appurtenances")—flower vase, incense burner, and candlestick. It was seen chiefly in rooms used for entertaining. When there were guests, a Buddhist painting would be hung on the wall behind the *oshiita* and flowers arranged in the vase.

The shelves were used for storing or displaying scrolls, tea bowls and utensils, and the like. Shelves used for storage were known as *todana* ("door shelves"), those for display as *chigai-dana* (staggered shelves). The "staggered shelves," so called because of the irregular arrangement, took various forms and usually occurred in conjunction with the built-in desk alcove (*tsuke-shoin*).

The latter was a miniature study made by extending one part of the room out onto a well-lit veranda and fitting it with a writing desk and translucent screens. Later, there appeared the *hira-shoin* ("flat desk"), which had a translucent screen as a window but did not project onto a veranda.

What was known as the *nando-gamae* or *chōdai-gamae* was originally an arrangement created by raising the threshold and lowering the lintel to the entrance of the room used for sleeping, with bolts installed on the inside of the wooden door as a means of ensuring personal safety or the safety of valuables. The raising of the threshold was originally intended to keep in the straw spread on the floor, but later became a regular, decorative feature of the *hiroma* (to be discussed later).