

PIERRE MUSTIÈRE

SECRET TOKYO



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

STATUETTE OF DAIKOKUTEN AT MINOBU-BETSUIN

④

Oily statue

Minobu-Betsuin temple

3-2 Nihonbashi-Kodenmacho, Chuo-ku (東京都中央区日本橋小伝馬町 3-2)
2 minutes from Kondenmachi station (小伝馬町), Tokyo metro Hibiya line

Inside the small temple of Minobu-Betsuin (身延別院), not to be confused with its larger neighbour Daianrakuji, you'll notice a plump and shiny statuette of *Daikokuten*.

This is one of the few Aburakake-Daikokuten (油掛大黒天 – Daikoku to be Sprinkled with Oil) in the country and the only one in Tokyo.

Traditionally oil has to be poured over the statue for good auspices, so its shiny appearance is no surprise. This statue isn't very old. Just after the war, the wife of actor Hasegawa Kazuo,¹ who was particularly devout, saw Daikokuten in a dream and spoke about it at the temple.



The temple then erected this statue, so Tokyoites could also venerate him as he deserved. The statue is surrounded by oil – just use the ladle supplied to pour some over it.

The temple also has a commemorative stone erected in 1983 by a local group of restaurants selling *kabayaki*, a local speciality, to give thanks for the fish from which the restaurateurs make their living.

¹ 長谷川一夫, 1908–1984. Theatre and cinema actor (appeared in some 300 films), particularly in the 1940s and 50s.

NEARBY

Kokucho bell

⑤

Just opposite Minobu-Betsuin, Jisshi-koen is laid out on the site of Denmacho prison from the Edo period. In the middle of the park, a small concrete tower houses the Kokucho bell (石町時の鐘). This bell, originally sited about 200 metres away, has been repeatedly destroyed by fire and the current model dates from 1711. Its chimes were also used to signal the time for prison executions. Nowadays the bell is only rung on the first day of the year. This is one of the nine bells of Edo installed to indicate the time of day for residents – it was the city's first. There are still two other antique bells, one in Ueno Park (near the face of the Buddha, see p. 274) and one in the temple of Senso-ji at Asakusa. The six others (Honjo, Yokoyamamachi, Ichigaya-Yawata, Meguro-Fudo, Akasaka-Tamachi and Yotsuya) have been lost.

Doing time in Edo

The traditional way of sounding the hour in the Edo period differed significantly from modern practices.

The day was divided into twelve 'hours' associated with the Chinese signs of the zodiac (six nocturnal, six diurnal) of varying length, depending on the amount of daylight and therefore the seasons.

The hours were counted from 9, the ninth hour corresponding to midnight and midday, down to 4, the last hour of the morning and last hour before midnight (in other words, in order from midnight, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4).

The sixth hours marked the imminent sunrise and sunset. The bells initially rang three times, then sounded the hour, changing pace.

The Meiji Government finally adopted Western practices in 1872, with consistent times for 24 hours each day, paving the way for some difficult transition months for the citizens.

Automatically sounding hours of varying lengths was a major engineering challenge.

It gave rise to some impressive mechanical devices, such as Tanaka Hisashige's¹ universal clock dating from 1851, displayed at the National Museum of Nature and Science in Ueno Park.

¹ 田中久重, 1799–1881. Engineer and founder in 1875 of Shibaura Seisakusho (芝浦製作所), which became Toshiba in 1939 in a merger with Tokyo Denki. A reproduction of the universal clock is on display at Toshiba Science Museum in Kawasaki.

SHINCHITEIEN GARDEN

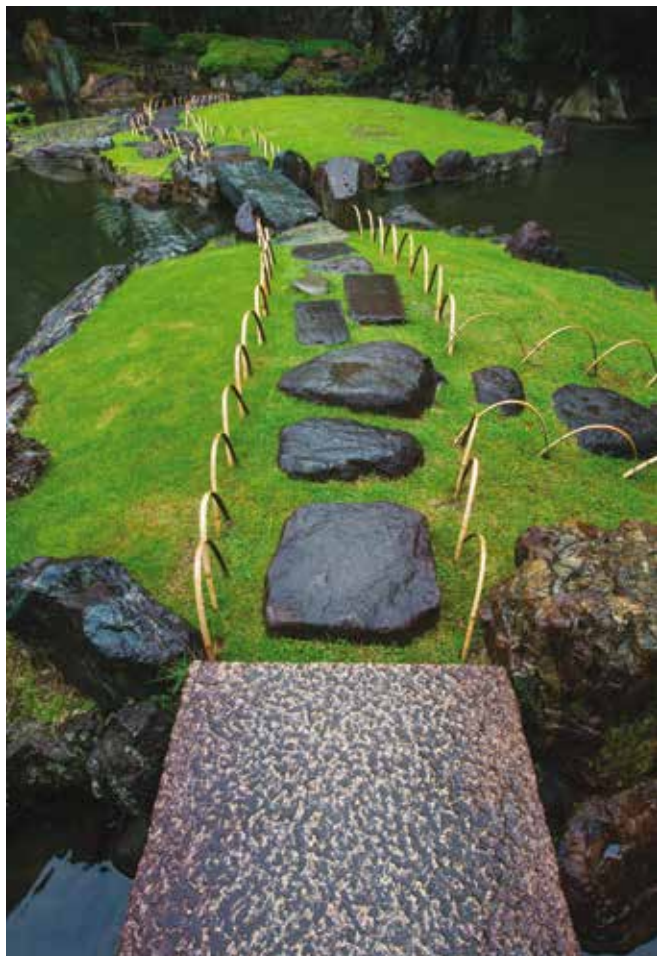
⑬

A rare example of a traditional garden from the early Meiji era

3-1-1 Kudan-Kita Chiyoda-ku (東京都千代田区九段北3-1-1)

Access: 10 minutes from Kudanshita (九段下), Tokyo metro Hanzomon, Tokyo Metro Tozai, and Toei Shinjuku lines

The Yasukuni Shrine compound opens in the morning at 6am. Closes from January to December at 5pm, in March, April, September and October at 6pm, from May to August at 7pm



Restored in 1999 under the expert guidance of Isao Yoshikawa, president of the Japanese Garden Research Association, Shinchiteien is a rare example of a traditional garden from the early Meiji era.

Located at the back of the Yasukuni compound, it is rarely visited by the many shrine visitors.

A few plump carps swim peacefully in a pond crossed by a footpath made of rocks. The water from this pond was apparently used to extinguish fires in the area after the 1923 earthquake, and the carps were donated to the shrine by Niigata Prefecture in 1982 to mark the opening of the Joetsu Shinkansen.

The unique granite block that forms the bridge over the pond is one of the longest in the country.

The three teahouses surrounding the pond in this urban oasis are not open to the public.



FOX STATUES OF TOYOKAWA-INARI TEMPLE

24

Get yourself promoted ...

1-4-7 Moto-Akasaka, Minato-ku (東京都港区元赤坂 1-4-7)
5 minutes from Akasaka-Mitsuke station (赤坂見附), Tokyo metro
Marunouchi, Ginza, Nagatacho (永田町), Nanboku, Hanzomon or Yurakucho
lines
Daily 6am-8pm



A few steps from the bustle of Akasaka, the Toyokawa-Inari Buddhist temple (豊川稲荷東京別院) surprises visitors with the overwhelming number (and that's an understatement) of fox statues and statuettes. They're everywhere, in all shapes and sizes, in every corner. Here, a vixen and her cubs are revered by parents wanting their own children. There, at the rear of the temple, an octagonal stone is covered with offerings of statuettes of foxes – no surprises there – overlooked by a stack of other canines ...

The presence of these innumerable foxes is down to the cult of Dakini, a Buddhist protective temple deity, who traditionally rides a white fox. Toyokawa-Inari is the Tokyo branch of Toyokawa-Inari temple in Aichi prefecture, where there are even more fox statues.

In the temple grounds, a monumental stone stands over the tomb of its founder, Edo magistrate Oooka Tadasuke,¹ which could almost pass unnoticed among the foxes. Oooka, who came from a lowly background, had climbed the social ranks to become one of the most renowned city officials. This explains why the temple and its foxes are highly respected nowadays by anyone looking for promotion or success.

Dakini, Inari, Buddhism and Shinto

Goddess (among others) of crops and trade, Inari (稲荷神) is a Japanese deity of complex origin. Patron goddess of the Hata, a powerful clan that immigrated from China, she is celebrated in the famous Fushimi-Inari shrine at Kyoto.

Inari is often identified with Ukanomitama (宇迦之御魂神), mentioned in the Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters), and thus in fact part of the traditional Japanese Shinto pantheon. The fox, chasing pests that destroy crops, is her messenger animal. The syncretism between Buddhism and Shinto (神仏習合 – *Shinbutsu-shugo*) is perfectly represented by the rapprochement between Inari and Dakini, who were again divided in the Meiji era with the separation of the two religions. Both goddesses have however retained the same symbolism.

In the Meiji era, the temple had to prove its connection with Buddhism. Habit won and the temple kept its name, adding to the confusion. Toyokawa-Inari, celebrating Dakini not Inari, is a Buddhist not a Shinto temple.

¹ 大岡忠相, 1677-1752.

COUNTDOWN 21ST CENTURY MONUMENT

25

A has-been monument by Friedensreich Hundertwasser

5-3-6 Akasaka Minato-ku (東京都港区赤坂5-3-6), south of the TBS building

Access: 2 minutes from Akasaka (赤坂), Tokyo Metro Chiyoda line.



©Arjan Richter from Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The famous Austrian architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928-2000), who died in February 2000, was unable to see the countdown of his creation, which was to mark the transition to the 21st century, reach 'zero' on 1 January 2001 at midnight.

Since then, the strange monument only displays the time to the few people who pass by here, probably attracted by Asakasa Sacas' animation. The countdown indicators are now black.

The circular clock at the top of the monument displays the time in kanji, giving it a slightly Japanese feel. It is supported by coloured pillars featuring the number 21 (a reference to the 21st century, of course).

Installed in 1992 alongside the TBS building to herald the 21st century and the half-century of the broadcaster's existence, the strange monument is gradually beginning to show signs of age. It may have been futuristic when it was first installed, but the age of the concrete and the very angular appearance give away its real age.

The transition to the 21st century is indeed a story of the past, making Hundertwasser's piece a perfect monument to commemorate the event.



©Arjan Richter from Amsterdam, The Netherlands

WASEDA EL DORADO

①

Catalan modernism at Waseda

517 Waseda Tsurumakicho, Shinjuku-ku (東京都新宿区早稲田鶴巻町 517)

3-minute walk from Waseda station (早稲田), Tokyo metro Toza line

Interior closed to non-residents



© Irina Gelbukh

Waseda El Dorado, with a barber shop on the first floor, is a small five-storey residential building erected in 1984 by Von Jour Caux and his Art Complex near the main Waseda campus.

The exterior might remind you of Gaudí's work in Barcelona, although it's even more eccentric. The façade with its clockface knows no restraint. Angular, curved and lavishly decorated, its many absurd details are astonishing. Masks and mysterious sculptures of bodies are set into the walls, and opulent wrought-iron railings with curved motifs complete the ensemble.

Visitors and residents are greeted at the entrance by an ornate mosaic showing a devil sticking out his tongue. The walls of what is probably the hallway are also decorated with brightly coloured mosaics. Everything here is curved and rather organic, rich in colour and stained glass. Down the hall, a huge arm hangs from the ceiling, the last big surprise before the residents' area. El Dorado is still a residential block, so you can't go any farther.

For more on Von Jour Caux, see p. 108.



CHINZANSO ESTATE

⑤

Superb gardens of a grand hotel

2-10-8 Sekiguchi, Bunkyo-ku (東京都文京区関 2-10-8)

10-minute walk from Edogawabashi station (江戸川橋), Tokyo metro

Yurakucho line

24/7



The lush gardens of the elegant Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo (椿山荘), formerly the Four Seasons, a 10-minute walk from Edogawabashi station, are open to the general public as well as hotel guests. The grounds formed part of the domain of the Maeda clan of Kururi in the Edo period.

The site at the edge of a plateau was called *Tsubaki-Yama* (椿山 – Mount of the Camellias), because of the flowers that grew there. When Meiji politician Yamagata Aritomo¹ acquired it in 1878 after crushing the Satsuma rebellion, he created sophisticated gardens that naturally became known as *Chinzanso* (椿山荘 – Domain of the Mount of the Camellias). In 1918, the estate came under the control of Baron Fujita Heitaro.² He brought a small shrine from Kyoto in 1924 to install in the garden and, in 1925, a three-storey pagoda dating from the Muromachi period, from Hiroshima prefecture.

Although the gardens suffered some damage during the Tokyo bombing, they have been beautifully restored and even enhanced. Several tearooms and rest points in the southern section were built after the war. The grounds, far from being flat, surround the large pond of Yusui-Ike. Particularly notable among the many points of interest are some twenty curious black *nakan* (Buddhist disciple) statuettes and a pretty thirteen-storey stone pagoda.



© Irina Gelbukh

¹ 山縣有朋, 1838–1922. Samurai of the Hagi domain, soldier and politician of the Meiji era, was one of the most powerful men of his time, holding successive ministerial posts and even becoming prime minister twice.

² 藤田平太郎, 1869–1940. Businessman and politician, leader of the second Fujita zaibatsu.

³ 松尾芭蕉, 1644–1694. Classical poet, recognized master of haiku.



BLIND ENMA STATUE

⑨

Look after your eyes and teeth

Genkaku-ji

2-23-14 Koishikawa, Bunkyo-ku (東京都文京区小石川 2-23-14)

5-minute walk from Kasuga station (春日), Toei subway Mita or Oedo lines;
or from Korakuen station (後楽園), Tokyo metro Namboku or Marunouchi
lines

Daily 7am-5pm



Genkaku-ji (源覚寺), a temple sandwiched between buildings along Kasuga-dori, offers an agreeable mix of ancient traditions (very much alive) that traditionally help you stay healthy.

The temple is known as Konnyaku Enma (こんにやく閻魔 – Enma at Konnyaku), the custom being to offer *konnyaku* ('devil's tongue' seaweed paste) to the temple's Enma statue to give thanks to the deity. The practice dates back to the Edo period, when an elderly person with failing eyes had their sight restored after praying to Enma and gave thanks with an offering of *konnyaku*. Enma was thought to have lent his eyes. Note that the statue is blind. The cypress-wood statue of about 1 metre dates from the Kamakura era and was restored in the 17th century. It is not placed immediately at the entrance to the protective *enmado*, but is clearly visible inside. You can't always get close to it. A photo of the statue just in front of the *enmado* indicates where the *konnyaku* offerings should be made. Near the temple cemetery, to the right of the *enmado*, a small cabin protects two headless *Jizo* statues from the weather and other hazards. Here you have to sprinkle salt on the statue at the part of the body that hurts after touching it with a wand.

Whereas the temple's Enma has particular success with eyes, the two *Jizos* cure many things, especially toothache. The amount of salt piling up on these two *Jizos* can become really impressive. A standing stone at the entrance to the temple enclosure, worn at the base and topped with a little roof, is a *Hyakudo-ishi* (百度石 – Hundred Times Stone). This stone, erected in 1852, marks the starting point for believers who wish to make a pilgrimage of a hundred round trips (百度参り – Hundred Times Pilgrimage) in the precincts of the temple itself to multiply the effects of prayer. There are still some pebbles (but probably less than 100) placed in front of the stone, as the pilgrims place one pebble each time they pass to count the number of trips made.

Itinerary of a bell

The temple bell, cast in 1690, has had an eventful life. It was stored in 1844 after a fire, then in 1937 was sent to a temple in Saipan (then Japanese territory). Hit by a bullet, it went missing in 1944 in the chaos following the fall of the island to US-led Allies, probably taken home by a marine as a souvenir. It was found in 1965 in Texas by a Japanese national, who informed the temple. The bell was finally returned to Genkaku-ji in 1974, thirty-seven years after leaving. Next to the bell, the bodhisattva statue is a memorial to the dead of the South Pacific Islands (南洋群島物故者慰霊像) colonized by Japan. The shells scattered in front of the statue come from the waters around Saipan.

KATORI-JINJA SHRINE AT KAMEIDO

Shinto for sporting types

3-57-22 Kameido, Koto-ku (東京都江東区亀戸 3-57-22)
10-minute walk from Kameido station (亀戸), JR Sobu line
Daily 9am–5pm



①

The Katori-Jinja Shinto shrine at Kameido (亀戸香取神社) is dedicated to victory and by extension has become the must-visit site for the capital's athletes. Allegedly founded in the 7th century, this is one of the shrines to Futsunushi, one of the sun goddess Amaterasu's generals mentioned in the *Nihon shoki*. Futsunushi is also a sword spirit in the Shinto pantheon. Since Fujiwara no Hidesato¹ bequeathed an arrow to the shrine after crushing Taira no Masakado's rebellion in the 10th century (see also p. 28) to give thanks to the *kami* (spirit or deity) for granting him victory, the shrine was the site of veneration of other great warriors, beginning with Chiba Shusaku.² Competing at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Izumi Hiroshi,³ judo silver medal at Athens in 2004, was apparently carrying a *kachi-mamori* (勝守), a Shinto victory talisman (omamori), as did the women's volleyball team in the qualifying heats for the Athens Games.

Visit the shrine for the ambience rather than the architecture. On the small wooden plaques (*ema*) are written victory prayers or wishes for a particular game, or the whole season, an individual or team. In an eclectic atmosphere where all kinds of sporting types mingle freely, young baseball players rub shoulders with amateur boxers to make a quick offering at the weekend. Note the imposing memorial shaped like a radish, with no sporting connotations but apparently offered to the shrine in the 19th century to give thanks for a bountiful harvest.

The pilgrims' road to the shrine, the oldest road in Koto, has a certain charm. The shopping street known as *Katori Daimon Shouun* (香取大門勝運商店街) was revamped without much fanfare in 2011 to give it a 1950s allure, with very successful results. There's something retro in the air, even if it's artificially revived.

NEARBY

Monument in the plum orchard

②

Utagawa orchard and Van Gogh

Behind Katori-Jinja shrine, along the banks of the Kita-Jikkengawa, a marker stone and noticeboard near No. 3-51 commemorate the site of Umeyashiki Park, where one of the most crooked plum trees in the city used to grow. The tree was first depicted by Utagawa Hiroshige⁴ in the 19th century in *Umeyashiki* (梅屋敷 – Plum Orchard) from the series *One Hundred Views of Edo*, later recaptured by Van Gogh in his *Flowering Plum Orchard*. The park was destroyed in the great flood of 1910.

¹ *Nihon shoki* (*Chronicles of Japan*) is a book of classical Japanese history, also known as *Nihon-gi*.

² 藤原秀郷, ?–?, noble warrior at the 10th century court of Kyoto.

³ 千葉周作, 1793–1856, grand master of weapons and founder of the Hokushin Ito Ryu school.

⁴ 歌川広重, 1797–1858. Painter and grand master of ukiyo-e (art form popular in 17th–19th century Japan).

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SECRET TOKYO

A building that acts as a giant firewall, a secret city centre canyon, a statue that cures warts, ultra-modern designer toilets, an extraordinary tree that helps you quit smoking, an electronic sunflower, a spectacular modern temple hidden in the heart of Shinjuku, a street that gives Tokyo taxi drivers nightmares, a massive building that looks like a warship, forgotten rivers ...

Far from the crowds and the usual clichés, Tokyo swings between modernity and tradition, preservation of its heritage, sophisticated aestheticism and eccentricity, offering countless offbeat experiences. The Japanese capital is home to any number of well-hidden treasures that are revealed only to residents and travellers who find their way off the beaten track.

An indispensable guide for those who thought they knew Tokyo well or would like to discover the other face of the city.

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