



Tokyo Heritage Week

Let's take a stroll around *Asakusa*!

One of the remarkable sightseeing spots in Tokyo – *Asakusa*! *Asakusa* was developed as a temple town of *Sensō-ji* Temple. Although its old townscape of the *Edo* period had gone caused by the Great *Kantō* Earthquake and the World War II, *Niten-mon* Gate in *Sensō-ji* Temple and *Asakusa Jinja* Shrine which escaped damage from the disasters are designated as Important Cultural Properties.

This walking course is selected to see the history and culture with its modern energy of *Asakusa*.

Only famous *Kaminari-mon* Gate and *Nakamise* Street are not enough to tell you the whole of this town. Let's take a stroll around *Asakusa* and find its new view point!





MAP





Let's take a stroll around Asakusa!

The place name “*Asakusa*”, which often appears in the popular period novel “*Onihei Hanka-chō*” written by *Ikenami Shōtarō*, was recorded for the first time in the history book “*Azuma Kagami*” in the *Kamakura* period. It is recorded in the book that a carpenter of *Asakusa, Musashi* Province was invited to build *Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū* Shrine in *Kamakura* in 1811, because there was no expert. There is also a record that three monks went from *Sensō-ji* Temple to *Kamakura* to attend the memorial service of the Cloistered Emperor *Goshirakawa* in 1192. This is the first appearance of the name “*Sensō-ji* Temple”. The surroundings of *Sensō-ji* Temple were donated as an estate of the temple after the medieval period and developed as a temple town.

In the *Edo* period, while the northwest of the temple was used for residences of daimyo or farmlands, many merchant houses were built in the southern of *Kaminari-mon* Gate, and *Sensō-ji* Temple became popular among the common people. Many tea-houses were opened along *Nakamise* Street to the south, and shows in booths and performances such as spinning tops were run at *Okuyama* in the east of the main temple. The botanical garden “*Hana-yashiki*” was opened in 1853. The *Asakusa* area developed as a major entertainment town.

After the *Meiji* Restoration, the precincts of the temple was questioned by the new government and came to be managed by Tokyo as the first public park in Japan “*Asakusa Park*” designated in 1873.

The twelve-storied tower “*Ryōun-kaku*”, built in 1890, used to be a landmark commanding the whole area of *Asakusa*. The program “100 beauties” gained great popularity among people, pasting up the photographs of 100 geisha from the 3rd floor to the 6th floor of the tower and holding a popular vote. *Asakusa* Opera was shown at the cinemas standing side by side under “*Ryōun-kaku*” and enthusiastic opera fans called “*Pera Goro*” used to strutted in *Asakusa* Park. While such a new entertainment, the traditional shows like sword dance or storytelling on street, were also performed everywhere. The characteristic popular culture mixing old and new came to be created around *Asakusa*.

The tasteful townscape of *Asakusa* in the *Edo* period, harmonizing affection for the *Edo* period with romanticism in the *Taishō* period, almost disappeared by the Great *Kantō* Earthquake in 1923 and the Great Tokyo Air Raids in 1945.

The designation of *Asakusa* Park as a public park was cancelled partly in 1951 and the land was turned back to *Sensō-ji* Temple. The temple buildings were reconstructed one after another in its precincts, such as the reconstruction of the main building in 1958. As the facilities of entertainment, the entertainment park “*Asakusa Hana-yashiki*” reopened in 1947 which was closed during the war, and theaters and places of entertainment were constructed on the reclaimed land of the pond called “*Hyōtan Ike*”.

The attractiveness of *Asakusa* is the mood of *Edo* caused by *Denbō-in* Temple, *Niten-mon* Gate, *Asakusa Jinja* Shrine, etc., that were survived the two big disasters, and also the atmosphere caused by the modern popular entertainment culture of *Asakusa* has been handed through hundreds years.



Walking around Sensō-ji Temple

The beginning of *Sensō-ji* Temple is said as follows: in 628, *Hinokuma no Hamanari* and his brothers *Takenari* found a small statue of Buddha in their casting net at *Miyato-gawa* River (current *Sumida-gawa* River). When *Haji no Nakatomo* recognized the statue as *Shō-kanzeon Bosatsu*, Bodhisattva *Kannon*, he became a monk and remade his residence into a temple.

In the medieval period, the estate of the temple had been gradually expanded by the donations from dominant figures, such as *Minamoto no Yoritomo* and *Ashikaga Takauji*. In the *Edo* period, the temple was designated as *Kiganjo* of shogunate (the temple for the *Tokugawa* clan to pray) by the first shogun *Tokugawa Ieyasu* and had been heavily protected. However, when the head monk *Chūun* was removed from his position because he broke a taboo of the 5th shogun *Tsunayoshi*, *Sensō-ji* Temple was put under the control of *Kan-ei-ji* Temple.

After establishing as a popular place of worship among the commonpeople, *Sensō-ji* Temple came to be one of the well-known sights in *Edo*, where many tea-houses opened in the precincts and show booths stood side by side. It is said that *Nakamise* Street, which is the most popular sightseeing spot in *Asakusa* today, begun when neighbors were permitted to open temporary shops around 1685, instead of sweeping in the precincts.

In the *Meiji* period, waves of modernization also arrived at *Sensō-ji* Temple, where a railroad for horsecar was laid on the street in front of *Kaminari-mon* Gate and Western-style brick buildings were built along *Nakamise* Street. The old townscape of *Asakusa* in the *Edo* period got a big damage from the Great *Kantō* Earthquake and all structures of the temple, and were burned down in the Great Tokyo Air Raids without *Denbō-in* Temple, *Niten-mon* Gate and *Asakusa* Shrine.

After only three months from the end of the war, the temporary main building (current *Awashima-dō*) was built on the ruins of the previous, and the



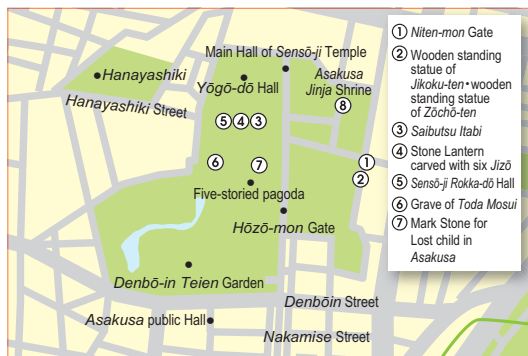
Main Hall of *Sensō-ji* Temple



principal image evacuated into the earth rested there. The current main building, *Kaminari-mon* Gate and *Hōzō-mon* Gate (former *Niō-mon* Gate) were rebuilt one after another in the thirties of the *Shōwa* period. The five-storied pagoda was also reconstructed in 1973, though on the different place from the previous. *Sensō-ji* Temple becomes the present state in this way.



Five-storied pagoda in *Sensō-ji* Temple



Map of *Sensō-ji* Temple

① *Sensō-ji Niten-mon (Niten-mon Gate)*

National Cultural Important Properties (Buildings)
Designated on November 29, 1946

Sensō-ji Temple has suffered a lot of calamities in its long history. The temple buildings were burned down twice during the *Kan-ei* era in the early *Edo* period. As a consequence, *Tōshō-gū* Shrine in the temple was relocated to *Momiji-yama* Hill in *Edo* Castle in 1636.

It is said that *Niten-mon* Gate originally used to be the gate of that *Tōshō-gū* Shrine. The original gate was built in 1618, but the current is estimated to be rebuilt in 1649.

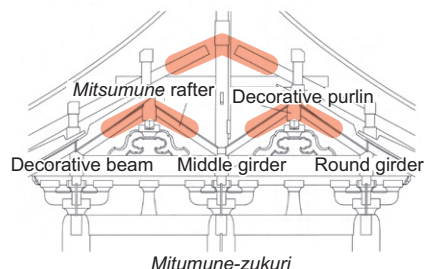
By the Ordinance Distinguishing Shinto and Buddhism in 1868,

the accompanied sculptures with the gate were changed two gods of Shinto to two Buddhist gods *Kōmoku-ten* and *Jikoku-ten*, who are the guardian gods of the west and the south in Buddhism, were dedicated by *Tsurugaoka Hachimangū* Shrine in *Kamakura*. Therefore, the gate was renamed to *Niten-mon*.

Niten-mon Gate has a quite massive structure with eight pillars and a width of 8.13 meters at the beam. The roof with formal tiles is made in the *Kiritsuma-zukuri* style. The gate itself is built in the *Mitsumune-zukuri* style, which is one of the gate style hanging two roof-like triangular ceilings in the front and rear of the gate. Because it looks like having three ridges of roof, the style is called “*Mitsumune-zukuri*” (“*Mitsumune*” means three ridges). This style was frequently adopted by the structures in relation to the *Tokugawa* shogunate, such as *Kyū Taitoku-in Reibyō Sō-mon* Gate (built in 1632, in *Minato* Ward). The gate is entirely coated with red painting, but these red-colors are different according to parts; the lower part is lacquered by blackish Indian red and the upper part is painted with red lead of a light orange color.



Niten-mon Gate in *Sensō-ji* Temple



This is called *Mitsumune-zukuri* style, because it looks like having three ridges of roof.



② *Mokuzō Jikoku-ten Ryūzō* •
Mokuzō Zōchō-ten Ryūzō
(Wooden standing statue of *Jikoku-ten* •
Wooden standing statue of *Zōchō-ten*)

Tangible Cultural Properties of Tokyo (Sculptures)
Designated on October 29, 1963

Jikoku-ten and *Zōchō-ten* are two of the Four Devas (others: *Kōmoku-ten* and *Tamon-ten*). The Four Devas are the guardian gods of Buddhism, represented by a general armed with armor. Because it is said that *Jikoku-ten* protects the east, *Zōchō-ten* does the south, *Kōmoku-ten* does the west and *Tamon-ten* does the north, these sculptures are frequently arranged around Shakamuni triads (mainly at four corners).

The previous sculptures installed in this gate suffered from the Great Tokyo Air Raids on March 10, 1945, at the place repairing. Therefore, they had had no sculptures in *Niten-mon* Gate for a while.

Nearly ten years later, *Kan-ei-ji* Temple in *Ueno* worked on the repair of *Gen-yū-in Reibyō Chokugaku-mon* Gate since 1956. The left and right wings attached to the gate were decided to be withdrawn, because they were proved to be attached in the *Meiji* period, and two wooden sculptures *Jikoku-ten* and *Zōchō-ten* arranged in the wings were obliged to take away. In 1957, *Sensō-ji* Temple, which had been carrying on the improvement of the precincts aiming for the reconstruction of the main building, inherited these sculptures to install to the unoccupied *Niten-mon* Gate.

These were restored to its original state from 2007 to 2009. In the restoration, a signature “*Dai-busshi Hokkyō Yoshida Hyōbu*” by Indian ink was found on the inside of the head of the sculpture of *Zōchō-ten*. It showed that they were made by the official sculptor of Buddhist images “*Yoshida Hyōbu Fujifusa*”, who was active in *Kyoto* in the late 17th century AD.

Wooden standing statue of *Zōchō-ten*Wooden standing statue of *Jikoku-ten*

③ *Saibutsu Itabi*
(Board monument of *Saibutsu Itabi*)

Tangible Cultural Properties of Tokyo (Historical Materials)
Designated temporarily on February 5, 1924
Designated as Historic Site on April 1, 1952
Item changed on March 12, 1981

Saibutsu Itabi is a board monument erected on the pond in front of *Yōgō-dō* Hall at the east of the main building of *Sensō-ji* Temple. “*Itabi*” is a kind of the stupas, which is made of rectangular stone board and has a triangular top. The stone stupas made of chlorite schist produced in *Chichibu*, *Saitama* Prefecture, are called “*Aoishi Tōba*” (blue stupa), and have been preferred because of the beauty of their colors and shapes.

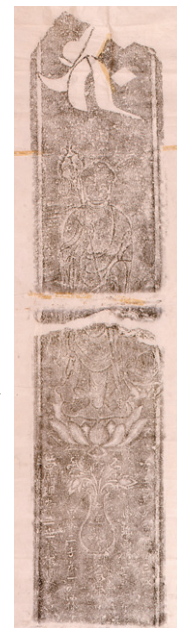
Saibutsu Itabi are engraved the followings on: a large Seed-Syllable of *Shaka Nyorai* at the center of the upper part, a *Jizō Bosatsu* standing on a lotus calyx and a vase with lotus flowers under the Seed-Syllable, an image of child acolyte of Buddhism on the right side of *Jizō Bosatsu* and a sentence that *Saibutsu* hoped for the happiness of his family in the current world and the next. Its builder *Saibutsu* had been supposed to be “*Kamata Saburō Nyūdō Saibutsu*” who was a magistrate ordered to construct the bank in *Shimo Kōbenoshō* Manor, *Shimousa* Province, according to Article August 29, 1253 in the history book “*Azuma Kagami*”. However, it is unclear because there are several candidates of *Saibutsu*.

Saibutsu Itabi was destroyed by a storm in October, 1742. Then, it was broken into three, according to the topography “*Edo Meisho Zue*”. The top part is said that it had been by the side of *Inari-sha* Shrine in *Denbō-in* Temple, but it is unfortunately missing. The remaining parts was reset by ten volunteers in 1814, supported by side pillars.

This board monument is estimated to be raised from the late *Kamakura* period to the early *Muromachi* period. Its size is 217.9 cm in height and 46 cm in width; this is the largest *Aoishi Tōba* (blue stupa) in Tokyo. *Saibutsu Itabi* is im-



Saibutsu Itabi;
Photo credit: Courtesy of *Taitō* Ward Board of Education



Rubbed Copy of *Saibutsu Itabi*;
Photo credit: Courtesy of *Taitō* Ward Board of Education



portant, not only as a valuable material for understanding the medieval belief, but also as a typical example of huge board monument.

④ *Roku-jizō Ishi-dōrō* (Stone Lantern carved with six *Jizō*)

Historic Place of Tokyo

Designated temporary on February 5, 1924

Designated on March 28, 1955

The stone lantern standing at the front of *Yōgō-dō* Hall in *Sensō-ji* Temple is about 180 cm in height and carved an image of *Jizō* on each face of hexagonal *Hibukuro* (burning place of lantern). Unfortunately, these images and inscribed letters are illegible at present, caused by weathering and damage by fires.

It is unknown when this stone lantern was made. According to one theory, it is said that “*Kamata Hyōenojō Masakiyo*” built it when he visited *Sensō-ji* Temple with his leader *Minamoto no Yoshitomo* during the *Kyūan* era (1145-51). However, according to another, it is said to be built during the *Ōan* era (1368-75). In any case, this is estimated to be one of the oldest stone lantern in existence in Tokyo.

Originally, it was located at the foot of *Azuma-bashi* Bridge east of *Kaminari-mon* Gate; therefore, the bank of *Sumida-gawa* River around there was said to be called “*Roku-jizō Kagan*”. It had been buried from the base to the lower half of the pole stone, until it was moved to the present place in 1890 in replanning of streets. This stone lantern is protected in the small hall with roof now.



An image of *Jizō* is carved on six faces each of the stone lantern;
Photo credit: Courtesy of *Taitō* Ward Board of Education



Full view of *Rokujizō Ishi-dōrō*;
Photo credit: Courtesy of *Taitō* Ward Board of Education

⑤ *Sensō-ji Rokkaku-dō* (*Sensō-ji Rokkaku-dō* Hall)

Tangible Cultural Properties of Tokyo (Buildings)

Designated on November 3, 1952

This hall is supposed to be the oldest building in *Sensō-ji* Temple at present, because, it has used the old architectural forms. Furthermore, according to “*Sensō-ji Shi*” (History of *Sensō-ji* Temple, edited in 1813), there is a mention that the hall was built on a well dug in 1618. Actually, the bottom of the hall is supported by the hexagonal wooden foundation and the stone base, and a well-shaped hole underground with piled stones of eleven steps is dug to a depth of about 1.5 meters.

The structure style: *Sangawara-buki* roofing, vermilion lacquered, hexagonal hall, the center of the hall with a diameter of 1.82 meters, 0.91 meters interval between pillars of a side. Such a style is very unique in Tokyo. The rafters supported the roof was made in “*Ōgi-taruki*” style that the rafters spread radically like umbrella ribs. This style of rafter, especially hexagonal, is difficult to work and set up, so that is an opportunity for carpenters to show their skills.

“*Higiri Jizō-son*” is enshrined in *Rokkaku-dō* Hall, which is said to have a miraculous efficacy surely if one prays on the fixed date. Therefore, this hall is also called “*Higiri Jizō-dō*” (“*Higiri*” means the fixed date).

The hall had been originally located about 22 meters east from the present, but was moved to the present place in 1994. The original place is marked on the south stylobate of current *Yōgō-dō* Hall.



Sensō-ji Rokkaku-dō Hall

⑥ *Toda Mosui Haka* (Grave of *Toda Mosui*)

Historic Place of Tokyo

Landmarked in October, 1919

Designated on March 28, 1955

Toda Mosui (1629-1706) is a *Waka* poet in the *Genroku* age of the *Edo* period. He was born the 6th son to *Watanabe Kenmotsu Tada* in *Sunpu-jō* Castle, and was adopted by his uncle *Toda Masatsugu* after his father’s death. His original name was *Tanomu*, but he changed



own name into *Yasumitsu* later. His pseudonym is *Moemon* or *Mosui*. He had served under *Honda* family, *Mikawa Okazaki* Domain for a period, but became a monk and lived near *Sensō-ji* Temple. He is known as an aggressive critic of the traditional poem study in name only. His most important works are the topography “*Murasaki no Hitomoto*”, the chronicle “*Gotōdai-ki*”, the book of poem study “*Nashinomoto-shū*”, etc.

His gravestone was found at *Banshō-in* Temple in *Ushigome* area and was moved in *Asakusa* Park in 1913. The gravestone is composed of three parts: from the bottom, the base made of natural stone, the foundation stone of *Hōkyōintō* pagoda and the *Gorin-tō* pagoda. This *Gorin-tō* pagoda was built by *Toda Mosui* himself before his death for the repose of his soul; such pagoda is called *Gyakushū-tō* pagoda.

Grave of *Toda Mosui*

⑦ *Asakusa Maigo-shirase Sekihyō* (Mark Stone for Lost Child in *Asakusa*)

Historic Place of Tokyo

Designated temporary on February 5, 1924

Designated on March 28, 1955

This mark stone is standing at the front of the left side of the main building of *Sensō-ji* Temple. It is carved “*Namu Daijishi Kanzeon-bosatsu Mayoiko-no Shirube*” and had been used for exchanging information about lost child in the *Edo* period.

It is carved “*Shirasuru-kata* (to let know)” on the right side of the stone, and people put the paper here, to give the information about a lost child or a missing person whom they were keeping. On the left side, “*Tazumuru-kata* (to ask)” is carved, and people put the paper here, to give information about one who they are looking for. In the *Edo* period, people looked for a lost child or a missing person checking these papers.

This mark stone was raised on March, 1860 by *Matsuda-ya Kahei*, who was an owner of geisha house in *Shin Yoshiwara*, in order to mourn for the dead in the red-light district in the *Ansei* Great Earthquakes happened at about ten o'clock at night on October 2, 1855. The dead and wounded by that earthquakes estimated at magnitude 6.9 and accompanied fires are said to reach 1000 people in *Yoshiwara* area.

It was originally located in front of *Niō-mon* Gate (current *Hōzō-mon* Gate), but collapsed in the World War II and a part of

the foundation stone barely remained. The present mark stone was restored in 1957.

In Tokyo, a same mark stone for lost child remains at the foot of *Ichikoku-bashi* Bridge over *Nihonbashi-gawa* River. In the collection of short stories “*Genshoku Edo Goyomi*” by *Miyabe Miyuki*, you can find a mark stone for lost child (not one in *Asakusa*) in the story “*Maigo no Shirabe*”.

Mark Stone for Lost Child in *Asakusa*

National Place of Scenic Beauty *Denbō-in Teien* (*Denbō-in Teien* Garden)

Designated on September 21, 1911

Walking on *Nakamise* Street to *Hōzō-mon* Gate and crossing *Denbō-in-dōri* Street, you can find a solemn front gate at the secluded place from the left. Going through the front gate, you arrive at *Denbō-in* Temple which is the office of *Sensō-ji* Temple and also the residence for head priest for generations. The garden covering the greater part of *Denbō-in* Temple is separated from the bustle of tourists, and a calm air is blowing among the garden. Here is one of the few temple gardens from the *Edo* period in Tokyo.

This garden is estimated to be originally landscaped in the Middle Ages. Old drawings and the style of landscape show that the present allocation of space arranging ponds on the north and west side of buildings is unchanged from the early *Edo* period.

Looking at the west pond from *Ōjoin* (large drawing room) facing the garden, you see a large artificial hill on the left, the stone arrangement which represents a three-step dry fall from the top of the hill and the sandy beach which represents the water surface. Turning your eyes to the center, an undulating shore in islands spreads out.

Strolling around the pond and standing on the island on the opposite side of *Ōjoin*, you can see a full view of the five-storied pagoda through the sandy beach arranging stepping-stones and



Ōjoin. Viewing the north shore which is gently undulating in contrast to the west, it is better to see standing on the stone bridge across a stream joining each pond.

Denbō-in Teien was a secret garden as even the daimyo were not easily allowed to visit, because *Denbō-in* Temple was used as *Gozen-sho* (the place *Tokugawa* shoguns took a meal or rest) when they came. However, when the precinct of *Sensō-ji* Temple was designated as a public park in 1873, this garden had been open to the public by Tokyo from 1930 to the outbreak of the Pacific War. At present, here is open to the public for a certain period by *Sensō-ji* Temple. This garden hands down the atmosphere of the *Edo* period to now, which was mostly lost from *Asakusa* in the Great *Kantō* Earthquakes and the Pacific War.



Walking around Asakusa Jinja Shrine

When going through the stone *Torii* standing on the east side of the main building of *Sensō-ji* Temple, you arrive in the precinct of *Asakusa Jinja* Shrine, which is enshrined local Shinto deities of the whole *Asakusa* and commonly known by “*Sanja Sama*” famed for *Sanja Matsuri* Festival. The beginning of this shrine is that people built *Sanja Gongen-sha* Shrine (current *Asakusa Jinja* Shrine) for worshipping three persons, *Hinokuma* brothers and *Haji no Nakatomo*, who are deeply related to the story about the beginning of *Sensō-ji* Temple (see above). Therefore, the crest of this shrine is “*Mitsuami*” modeled on three casting nets. It is supposed that this shrine had already been built until the end of the *Kamakura* period, because there is a record that one of the Shinto rituals “*Funatogyo*” (carrying the sacred object across a river by boat) was performed at that time.

The main building of the current shrine was rebuilt in 1649 donated by the 3rd shogun *Tokugawa Iemitsu*, because that was repeatedly suffered collapses by fires.

And at that time *Asakusa Tōshōgū* Shrine in the precinct of the temple moved into the *Edo* Castle, but the image of *Ieyasu* (first *Tokugawa* shogun) in the *Tōshōgū* Shrine was kept at *Asakusa* and came to be enshrined together with three deities of *Sanja Gongen-sha* Shrine and was served by *Sensō-ji* Temple. How-



“*Sanja Matsuri* Festival” :

Photo credit: Courtesy of *Suga* collection, Owned by *Taitō* Ward Board of Education

ever, by the Ordinance Distinguishing Shinto and Buddhism in the *Meiji* period, *Sanja Gongen-sha* Shrine was independent from *Sensō-ji* Temple and changed its name into the current. *Hikan Inari* Shrine also remains in the precinct,

which was built by the request of *Shinmon Tatsugorō*, who was deeply connected with *Asakusa* and asked *Fushimi Inari* Shrine to make a branch shrine.

Sanja Matsuri Festival, held at *Asakusa Jinja* Shrine every year from Friday to Sunday near in May 17 and 18, is one of the major festivals in Tokyo. It is the very lively festival that three *Mikoshi* (portable shrine), where each deity enshrines, are carried around 44 towns of *Asakusa*. According to the chronicle “*Sensō-ji Engi*”, the shrine received the oracle “*Make Mikoshi*, hold the ritual *Funatogyo*, and pray for world peace,” in March of 1312. This is said to be the beginning of *Sanja Matsuri* Festival. Once, the festival held every year on March 18, which is the day *Hinokuma* brothers found the statue of Buddha, and the ritual *Funatogyo* held every other year. In the *Edo* period, eighteen towns of *Asakusa*, its number is associated with the day 18th, competed the luxuriousness of their festival floats.

In the *Meiji* period, the ritual *Funatogyo* and the parade of festival floats disappeared in the festival, and its schedule was changed into the two days, on May 17 and 18. The parade of *Mikoshi* came to hold in place of the festival floats. In 1963, the schedule was changed again into the current. At present, a big parade holds on the first day (Friday); the dancers of *Binzasara-mai* Dance, *Teko-mai* Dance, *Shirasagi-no-mai* Dance and so on are marching around the whole *Asakusa*, guided by the music of Japanese orchestra and the song of scaffolds. On the second day (Saturday), the parade of about 100 small *Mikoshi* made by each town of *Asakusa* holds, and three large *Mikoshi* (*Ichino-miya*, *Nino-miya* and *San-no-miya*) are carried around 44 towns of *Asakusa* on the final day (Sunday).



A scene of *Binzasara Jyunkō* parade



A scene of *Shirasagi-no-mai* Dance (Dance of Egrets) in the big parade

⑧ Asakusa Jinja (Asakusa Jinja Shrine)

National Cultural Important Properties (Buildings)
Designated on November 29, 1946

The current *Asakusa Jinja* Shrine was reconstructed together with the buildings of *Sensō-ji* Temple in 1649, after all of them had been burned down in 1642. According to the chronicle “*Sensō-ji Shi*”, their reconstruction costs were quite huge; the buildings of the shrine cost more than 1200 *ryō* (money at that time).

The buildings of the shrine are built in a style resemble to the *Gongen-zukuri* style that *Hon-den*, *Hei-den* and *Hai-den* are connected by corridors, but adopt slightly unique structures. *Hai-den* is 7 *ken* (about 12.7 m) width at the beam and the dedication of *Binzasara-mai* Dance hold here in *Sanja Matsuri* Festival. *Hon-den* is in the *Sangen-sha Nagare-zukuri* style, and *Hinokuma* brothers and *Haji no Nakatomo* are enshrined here.

The whole buildings of shrine are lacquered by Bengal red, but the fittings are black lacquered, which contrast well. The small walls above the beams are vivid, where holy animals such as Chinese phoenix, *Kirin* and dragon symbolizing a good omen are painted with brilliant color on the golden ocher background. These lacquer and paintings were repaired in 1994-95, because the deterioration over time came to stand out since the repair in 1963. The brilliantness of revived colors is amazing. This shrine is a precious cultural property, because it retains the atmosphere of those days as it was still now even if 360 years and over have passed since its construction, escaping damage from the Great *Kantō* Earthquakes and the World War II.



Exterior of Votive Offering Hall of Asakusa Jinja Shrine



Interior of Votive Offering Hall of Asakusa Jinja Shrine

Intangible Folk Cultural Properties(Performing Arts)

Aasakusa Jinja no Binzasara (Binzasara Dance of Asakusa Jinja Shrine)

Designated on November 16, 1956

Binzasara is a musical instrument which consists of 108 wooden strips connected to each other at the side ends in the bendable state inward (a strip:15 cm in length and 6 mm in thickness). To make sound, people grasp both ends of the instrument and wave it to rub these wooden strips. The dance with this instrument is dedicated on the first day of *Sanja Matsuri* Festival.

On the opening day (Friday) afternoon, the performers of *Binzasara-mai* Dance line up at the middle of the big parade, who are a couple of dancers with large red and blue *Shishi-gashira* (lion mask), a drummer with a big drum wearing a red long wig to his knee, three players of *Binzasara* covering their face with *Ayai* hat, two drummers with small drums, two players of Japanese flute and so on. When the big parade arrive at the shrine, only that performers are allowed entering the building of shrine. At *Hai-den*, they dedicate three kinds of *Shishi-mai* Dance and four kinds of *Sasara-mai* Dance and pray for a bumper harvest. In the chronicle “*Sensō-ji Engi*” which has the illustrations of *Binzasara-mai* Dance when *Sanja Jinja Matsuri* Festival started in the end of the *Kamakura* period. This performance is a precious Intangible Folk Cultural Property, which passes on the traditional performing art since the medieval period to us.



A program “Katazoroe” of *Binzasara-mai* Dance in *Asakusa Jinja* Shrine

**National Tangible Cultural Properties (Buildings)****Kamiya Bar Honkan
(Kamiya Bar)**

Registered on October 28, 2011

Kamiya Bar is one of the landmarks in *Asakusa*, which has stayed at the approach to *Azuma-bashi* Bridge since before the Great *Kantō* Earthquakes.

In the *Meiji* period, when the precincts of *Sensō-ji* Temple became a public park, many entertainment facilities, like a theater, came to be built on the west of the temple. Especially, the *Denki-kan* Cinema was very popular for the cultured people. The word “*Denki* (electricity)” symbolized a novelty at that time. The *Kamiya Bar* served the strong cocktail with has 45 percent alcohol content was named “*Denki-bran*”. This cocktail and wine were also novelty and appeared in many literary works at that time. *Kamiya Bar* was founded in 1880 and remodeled into a Western-style bar in 1912. This is said to be the first bar in *Asakusa*.

The present building was built with a reinforced concrete in 1921 in the forefront of time. The big triple arch with round windows at the front is characteristics.



Kamiya Bar

National Tangible Cultural Properties (Buildings)**Gallery éf Gura (Storehouse of Gallery éf)**

Registered on December 11, 1998

The area of the gallery on the south *Kaminari-mon* Gate, near *Azuma-bashi* Bridge, along *Sumida-gawa* River, used to be called “*Zaimoku-chō* (timber town)”. Actually, there had been a lot of wholesale merchants dealt in timbers or bamboos.

This storehouse was a household storehouse of a wealthy timber merchant “*Takeya*.” Many residences and stores had stand side by side all through the area to *Sumida-gawa* River.

The structure of the storehouse is quite strong; it has big pillars and beams, and its plaster work on the wall is solid. There is an ink script under the beam of the second floor, which is the date of “August, 1868” and the name of “*Takeya Chōjirō* 3rd”. It is the year that the era name changed to *Meiji*, on September,

1868. This storehouse is a precious cultural property, handing down the atmosphere of the *Edo* period to now. At the present, it becomes the gallery accompanied with art space.

**⑨ Asakusa Kannon Kaisatsu no Hi
(Monument for prohibition of fishing at
Asakusa Kannon)**Tangible Cultural Properties of Tokyo (Ancient Documents)
Designated on June, 1922

When there were no car and no train, there was a wharf in the area of *Komagata-bashi* Bridge over *Sumida-gawa* River, and crowded with the river traffic. People who came to *Asakusa* by boat used to worship *Komagata-dō* Hall, said to be built in 942, at first and next to *Sensō-ji* Temple.

Komagata-dō Hall was built on the place of the bank, where *Hinokuma* brothers found the statue of Buddha, the principle image of *Sensō-ji* Temple.

Sensō-ji Temple was designated as a place for players of *Edo* shogunate by *Tokugawa Ieyasu*. Afterwards, in 1642, during the era that the 5th shogun *Tsunayoshi*, who is known for the ordinances of animal protection, this area was prohibited from fishing.

The range was from south *Suwachō* (current *Komagata, Taitō* Ward) to north (*Asakusa 7-chōme*) around *Komagata-dō* along the *Sumida-gawa* River. The area is about 10 ha, more than 2 times the area of Tokyo Dome.

In the next year, *Senzon*, the 4th *Gon Sōjō* of *Sensō-ji* Temple, raised this monument in the precincts of *Komagata-dō* Hall, commemorating the designation as the area of prohibition of fishing.

This monument is a precious historical material, which tells the belief in the *Genroku* age of the *Edo* period.

Monument for prohibition of fishing at *Asakusa Kannon*;
Photo credit: Courtesy of *Taitō* Ward Board of Education



《Walking Course Highlights》

Sensō-ji Temple

- ① Sensō-ji Niten-mon
- ↓
- ② Mokuzō Jikoku-ten Ryūzō・Mokuzō Zōchō-ten Ryūzō
- ↓
- ③ Saibutsu Itabi
- ↓
- ④ Roku-jizō Ishi-dōrō
- ↓
- ⑤ Sensō-ji Rokkaku-dō
- ↓
- ⑥ Toda Mosui Haka
- ↓
- ⑦ Asakusa Maigo-shirase Sekihyō
- ↓
- ⑧ Asakusa Jinja Shrine

Asakusa Jinja Shrine

- ↓
- Kamiya Bar Honkan
- ↓
- Gallery éf Gura
- ↓
- ⑨ Asakusa Kannon Kaisatsu no Hi



Opening Information

①~⑦ Sensō-ji Temple

Opening Days : All year

Opening Times : All day



※Denpo-in Teien Garden

Usually not open to the public

※Kamiya Bar

Opening Days : All year (Allowed to look at only the exterior)

Opening Times : All day (Allowed to look at only the exterior)

Fee : Free (Allowed to look at only the exterior)



⑧ Asakusa Jinja Shrine

Opening Days : All year (Only the precincts of the shrine)

Opening Times : All day

Fee : Free



※Storehouse of Gallery éf

Opening Days : All year (Except on Tuesdays and temporary non-business days)

Opening Times : 11:00 ~ 18:30 (Varies depending on the type of exhibition)

Fee : Free

Café



⑨ Monument for prohibition of fishing at Asakusa Kannon

Opening Days : All year

Opening Times : All day

Fee : Free

