



A community information paper created and edited by people who live in Azabu.



Fascinating Artistic Azabu ③⑤

All Japan Seamen's Union Headquarters Hall

Close to Roppongi Crossing where gleaming skyscrapers continue to appear, renovations on a 60-year-old office building have been completed. While its precious history is being preserved, new updates have been added to ensure it can be used for a long time to come. Some facilities have been opened to the community.

Lobby on the basement floor, where lighting equipment and fittings have been carefully maintained since the completion of the building

The History of the All Japan Seamen's Union and Roppongi

The All Japan Seamen's Union is an industry-specific single labor union and is the only union of its kind in Japan. This is where seamen in the shipping industry or the marine products industry are united as one, across industries, crossing the borders of the companies they belong to. When the union was formed in 1921, the main office was located in Kobe. After the War, they decided to relocate their main office to Tokyo because it was closer to national politics. They selected Roppongi from among other candidate sites in Tokyo because the land prices were relatively affordable. This is in addition to having good access to Tokyo Bay and the Kasumigaseki Government District.

The construction of the Headquarters Hall building started in 1962. At that time, Roppongi had entered a period of great transformation. Many of the buildings along Roppongi-dori Avenue were demolished to expand the road, and construction of the elevated expressway and the Hibiya-line subway were progressing under and over the road for the Olympic Games to be held in 1964. Looking at a photo shot in 1964 just after the completion of the Headquarters Hall building, we can see a 6-story modern and stylish white building that is noticeably bigger and brighter than its surroundings because there were still only low-rise buildings in the area. The sea was visible from the roof of the building.

The Headquarters Hall Building: Highly Rated

The architect of this Headquarters Hall building was Mr. OTAKA Masato, who had just become independent from the office of Kunio Maekawa Architects and Associates. Later, Mr. OTAKA led the construction industry in the architectural field, and also in the urban planning field. Mr. OTAKA's concept, "Creating architecture that is part of a beautiful townscape, and where people can work comfortably," has been successfully employed here and is appreciated by the staff of the All Japan Seamen's Union. The building was carefully used and preserved in beautiful condition. The architectural, historical, and cultural value of the building was highly rated, and the Hall was chosen as one of the DOCOMO Japan* Selected Buildings, in 2017.

* This is the Japanese branch of an international organization that, among other things, investigates, records, and proposes ideas for preserving or reutilizing Modern Movement architecture, which was an important trend in architecture in the 20th century. As of April 2025, 290 buildings have been selected across Japan. Two of these are in the Azabu area: this Headquarters Hall building and the International House of Japan (jointly designed by Mr. MAEKAWA Kunio, Mr. SAKAKURA Junzo and YOSHIMURA Junzo, located in Roppongi 5-chome).

A Facility Open to the Community

Along with the renovation of the building, an exhibition room and a new library and reference room have been created and are now open to the public (10:00 to 17:00 on weekdays). There's a lot to learn from their extensive exhibition and library materials. In particular, I had the deep realization that "the works of seamen are essential for people's lives in Japan, which is an island country," and agreed that "the tragedy of the requisition of merchant ships and crews for military service should not be repeated." The lobby on the way to the exhibition room and a beautiful and comfortable sunken garden were bathed in sunlight. The tile path connecting the Headquarters Hall and Roppongi-dori Avenue has been well maintained, and the aroma of fresh coffee from the Roppongi Coffee shop on the 1st floor of the adjacent JSS Building fills the air.

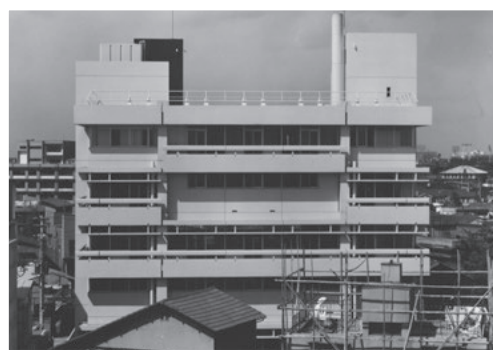
I can't help but hope that this wonderful space full of "knowledge" and "beauty" inside this piece of historically significant architecture will continue to be loved as a local treasure by the community for a long time, and used carefully.



Building exterior, viewed from Roppongi West Park



Sunken Garden



Appearance of the Headquarters Hall building just after its completion, shot from the side of Roppongi-dori Avenue (photo provided by All Japan Seamen's Union)



Exhibition room, carefully constructed in a way that also considers children



Library and reference room, where documents about seas and ships are curated.



Ship-handling simulator, good fun for both adults and children (photo provided by All Japan Seamen's Union)



The artistic floor tiles are exactly the same as at the time of completion

● Research Support ●
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Graduate School of Chiba University: Ms. EBARA Sumiko, Associate Professor

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麻布ひと

Azabu – A Human Story
Preserving Voices of Azabu
for the Future



Mr. TOMATSU Yoshiharu
(71 years old)
Chief Priest of Jodo Shu (Pure Land Buddhism)
Shinkoin Temple



Mr. TOMATSU's collection of precious records of Motown Music. He said he would never ever sell any of them!

The “DJ Bozu” (DJ Monk) connects with the town and people from the foot of Tokyo Tower by being “just the way he is.”



Mr. TOMATSU watched the construction of Tokyo Tower. The main building of Shinkoin Temple, completed in 1955, is a nationally registered tangible cultural property.

Shinkoin is a famous Jodo Sect (Pure Land Buddhism) temple established in 1393, and is located in the Higashi-azabu area just under Tokyo Tower. Mr. TOMATSU Yoshiharu, born in 1953, is its chief priest. He presently serves as the Chairman of the World Conference of Religions for Peace Japan (WCRP). He is a great music lover, and has published several music articles in serial form in bulletins under the pen name of “DJ Bozu.” Mr. TOMATSU is a “true native of Azabu,” and most of the schools he attended, from nursery school to university, were within walking distance. We listened to his personal story.

Mr. TOMATSU, you are the 50th chief priest of Shinkoin Temple, right? Please tell us about the history of Shinkoin Temple.

“The origin of Shinkoin Temple was the student dormitory of Zojoji Temple back in the Muromachi period. In the Edo period, it became a branch temple of Zojoji Temple. After that, it relocated to Shiba Akabanebashi. Then, after a long history, it moved to the present location due to land readjustment in 1950. I am the 3rd generation chief priest of the TOMATSU family.”

From nursery school to university, you always walked to school, with the exception of one year of university. That's right, isn't it?

“Yes. First, I went to Shinko Nursery School (now merged with Iigura Nursery School), a school Shinkoin Temple opened for local children. Then, I went to Azabu Elementary School, Shiba Junior High School and Shiba High School, and entered Keio University. After that, I went to graduate school at Taisho University to study religions, mainly Buddhism. I also studied at Harvard Divinity School. I was a member of the table tennis club during my junior high and high school years. When I was a university student, I developed mobile DJ service activities together with my friends. Sometimes, I listened to music for as long as eight hours a day” (laughs).

Mr. TOMATSU is known as “DJ Bozu.” When we asked about his relationship with music, he answered, laughing, “I still don’t know why I came to like music.” However, he said that when he was young, classic records were always played at dinner time, which might have influenced his taste. Mr. TOMATSU really started immersing himself in music when he was a second-year junior high school student. He set up an audio system with the money he earned from part-time work and started editing audio tapes and DJing. The first record album he bought when he was second-year junior high school student was the Beatles’ “Please Please Me.”

His taste in music covers a wide range of genres and it is difficult for him to narrow it down to one or two favorites. However, when he was young, he became fascinated by Motown Soul Music. In this way he learned English through music, which became useful later during his days studying in the US. He smiled warmly as he remembered this.

How did you decide to become a monk while being immersed in music every day during your school days?

“I had been learning sutras since childhood, but I helped my father for temple events only a few times a year. My parents had a laissez-fair policy. When I was a fourth-year university student, I received a permanent job offer from a music production company where I did a part-time job. It forced me to make a decision to join the music company or follow in my father’s footsteps. At that time, ultimately, I felt I would regret giving up the opportunity to serve the parishio-

ners I had come to know so well. So, I decided to take over Shinkoin Temple.”

How do you feel about Azabu, the hometown where you were born and raised?

“Although Azabu has the image of a high-class residential area, it had a folksy atmosphere. There were many shops, public bathhouses (refer to the page “Historical Footsteps of Azabu” in “The Azabu No. 64”) and even Japanese-style tenement houses still there when I was an Azabu Elementary School student. I feel that there is still a downtown atmosphere even though it is a tranquil upscale residential area. This is the charm of Azabu.

I hope Azabu will continue to be a calm and livable place far into the future.”

Mr. TOMATSU always keeps the future of the community in mind. He offers his temple as a venue for neighborhood associations and young people to meet. He cherishes his relationship with local people, and actively encourages others to do likewise. Mr. IZAWA Ryota, the Chairman of the Azabudai Shopping Street Association who appeared in the article “The Local Community” in the “The Azabu No. 66,” attends this temple.

Mr. TOMATSU is also going to join a project where religious facilities like temples can accept victims during times of disaster. Mr. TOMATSU belongs to the Tokyo Association of Religious Organizations which, on April 28, 2025, concluded a comprehensive agreement with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government to establish a system where about 4,000 religious facilities in Tokyo can be used as shelters or support bases. In particular, Mr. TOMATSU is focused on accepting people with disabilities whose life in an evacuation shelter can be challenging, and seeks concrete ways to achieve this. He still values his belief, “Don’t manipulate yourself (Always be true to yourself).” This is a good philosophy to follow that he picked up while studying in the US.

“Just the way you are” is the title of a famous Billy Joel song that has stayed with him. He explained: “Above all, accepting yourself as you are leads to the acceptance of others. This is an important notion for all societies, especially a diverse one like ours.”

Mr. TOMATSU fulfills his many responsibilities and tasks with cheerful ease. He spoke to us with his warm

and natural smile. Seeing his attitude, we were quite sure that he is a person who can connect the town and people “just the way he is.”

Illustrated Guide to the Famous Spots of Edo “Akabane Shinkoin” provided by the Shinkoin website

The Shinkoin front gate (Nationally Registered Tangible Cultural Property), completed in 1743, is a popular photo spot, with a view of Tokyo Tower



In “Otake-Do,” a washstand and Buddha statue are enshrined (Registered Tangible Cultural Property in Minato City). “Otake” was a virtuous woman said to be an avatar of Dainichi Nyorai (Vairocana Buddha), in whom Keicho-In, birth mother of the 5th Shogun, Tsunayoshi, also believed.



Jodo Shu (Pure Land Buddhism) Shinkoin
Address: 1-1-5, Higashi-azabu, Minato-ku URL: shinkoin.com



This is the 33rd year since the Ambassador, Mr. Peiman SEADAT, first entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His career includes serving as the Ambassador of Iran to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union (EU), Special Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Director-General of the European Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and more. The photo shows him in front of a silk Persian carpet decoration.

Islamic Republic of Iran

Area: 1,648,195 km² (about 4.4 times larger than Japan)

Population: 89,200,000 (in 2023, based on the State of World Population 2023)

Capital City: Tehran

Language: Persian (Farsi), Turkish, Kurdish, etc.

Supreme Leader: Sayyid Ali Khamenei (since June 1989)

Legislature: Unicameral System (Speaker: Mr. Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, appointed in May 2020 and reappointed in May 2024) A four-year term and 290 seats.

Government: Mr. Masoud Pezeshkian appointed as the President in July 2024

Reference: Ministry of Foreign Affairs website
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/iran/data.html>

Islamic Republic of Iran

Interview Support: Islamic Republic of Iran

Visiting Ambassadors
From the “World”
of Azabu

Islamic Republic of Iran

The Situation in Iran, Invisible in Journalistic Reports: Warm Hospitality, Women’s Social Advancement, and Social Problems, etc.

There must be many people who saw the wall paintings of beautiful buildings and landscapes drawn on the walls along the Yakuen-zaka Slope. However, there are few Japanese people who have had the chance to experience personal contact with someone from an Islamic nation. We visited the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Japan with interest and excitement. We spoke with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Mr. Peiman SEADAT (hereinafter the “Ambassador”), who was assigned in March 2023.



1 Hall on the basement floor, where traditional handicrafts are displayed
2 A magnificent and modern concrete building

Cherishing the spirit of the custom “Taarof”

The Ambassador appeared in the spacious reception room of the official residence, where the beauty of the Persian carpets stood out. He looked composed and dignified. While he was talkative, he looked intently at the eyes of the interviewer and selected his words carefully. It was a very impressive moment for us.

When we asked him about the national character and lives of Iranians, he answered, “We cherish the spirit of ‘Taarof.’ This is our custom of respecting our elders, prioritizing hospitality, courtesy, and warmly welcoming others. For example, when we have a dinner party at home, we prepare generously to make our guests happy. As the guests leave, it is hard for us to say goodbye. We continue chatting on the sofa, in the corridor and even the entrance hall for as long as we can. Sometimes it takes

as long as 30 minutes for the guests to leave.” Usually, people sit together on a carpet. It is their custom to take off their shoes and relax in a circle, sitting straight or cross-legged. He said that in the past they have used a heated table like a Japanese kotatsu. Rice is one of their staple foods. They cook rice in a pan, and they like the crispy rice from the bottom. We found that Iranians share some similarities with us. We felt an affinity for the Iranian people, and had a lively conversation with the Ambassador.

He told us, “Japanese people might be unconscious of it, but your politeness, order and discipline in society are outstanding. From you, I feel harmony and a relaxed tempo of life. Sometimes, it takes time for you to decide, but I feel that you consider things seriously. You are also humble. I believe that the more humble a person is, the greater they are.” We were deeply moved by his words.

Women’s Social Advancement

When I hear about women in Islamic nations, a very conservative image comes to mind. However, the Ambassador said that women’s social advancement in Iran has been remarkable since the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. They don’t have to enroll in two-year compulsory military service like men, so they have time to study and participate in various activities. Recently, there are many women in occupations such as “pilot” or “engineer.” He told us that “My wife is a university professor and medical doctor and my daughter works as a pharmacist,” with an obvious sense of respect for his family. “For example, in some countries, the number of women who participate in Parliament is set to increase. However, I believe that proper individuals with expertise, knowledge, and tough physical strength should be employed, regardless of gender.”

In Iran, there are some things that Japanese people, who are not so religious, might not understand well, for example, about the “hi-

jab” worn by women. The Ambassador commented that “More than anything, I want an understanding based on a country’s unique culture and religious history.” He added earnestly that “Such diversity is the exact reason why the world is beautiful. It is important for us to accept the different values of each country, as well as the universal value of the world.”



Recent Social Problems

On the other hand, the Ambassador pointed out the changes in society, in particular in urban areas, because of the increase of dual-income lifestyles. For example, in the past, it was usual that fathers, mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers were taken care of at home even when they aged. However, over the last 10 years, the number of elderly facilities has increased. Also, people now often use delivery services for food. They have come to prefer a time-saving lifestyle. In addition, the urban population has increased and depopulation in rural areas has been progressing, which has caused a heavy concentration of people in urban areas. This is a reality for Iranian people just like us in Japan.

How does he spend time in Tokyo, and what about the future?

When he has free time, he takes long walks to maintain his health. We were very impressed when he told us that for some reason, he preferred walking on the left side of streets, Meiji-dori Avenue in particular. “While the city of Tehran is set out neatly in a grid, Tokyo is complicated and I had the experience of becoming lost for five hours, and had to ask for directions at a police box.” Perhaps he sometimes becomes lost in thought when walking? “I have visited many countries in my long car-



5 Firoozeh koobi handicrafts: Many small pieces of turquoise stone are attached. One of the oldest and largest mines of turquoise is located in northeastern Iran.
6 The method of engraving a pattern using a nail or hammer on brass, gold or silver plate is called “ghalamzani”.
7 This traditional percussion instrument, a “santur”, is played using a plectrum
8 Inlay works called “khatam kari” are decorated with triangular pieces arranged like a mosaic



rier as a diplomat and learned many things. Techniques are required for diplomacy. They are acquired not only by careful study, but also through difficult experience. This is an endless process.” He continued, “The city of Tehran is too large for me. I would like to return to my hometown and spend time writing books or taking a teaching job, taking advantage of my experience, in a tranquil environment.” As he told us about his future life after retirement, we were also able to feel his pride and enthusiasm for a diplomat’s job.

The interview took more than two hours. He told us a wide range of stories about children, education, university entrance examinations, and a world-class Persian carpet. After that, he thoroughly explained about the many gorgeous and luxurious handicrafts displayed in the permanent art exhibition in the Embassy Hall. He was warmly hospitable, and agreed to take a commemorative photo with us. All of us felt enriched as we went home.

In the hall. Our editorial staff members, wearing colorful ethnic costumes from Iran, are posing for a photo together with the Ambassador (center).

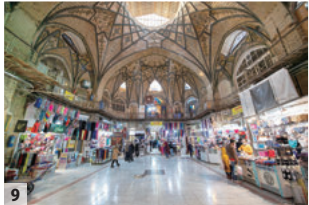
Address: 3-13-9. Minami-azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo
<https://japan.mfa.gov.ir/jp>



3 Generally, wool Persian carpets are placed on the floor and silk Persian carpets decorate walls.



4 Usually, several people work together to complete a single carpet. However, a carpet completed by one person is a high quality item.



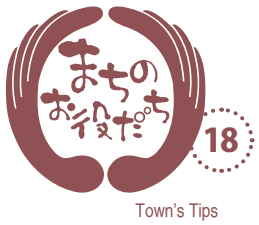
9 A bazaar unique to the Middle East with an impressive ceiling



10 The capital city, Tehran: Mountains can be seen from the city center. Air pollution has become one of the most recent social problems.



11 KISH ISLAND is a beautiful beach resort with an expansive emerald-green sea.



80 Years After the War, in the Backroom of the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library

Visiting an Intellectual Center in Azabu



In the backroom, a vast amount of material is arranged in an orderly manner. On the shelves, original newspapers, historical maps, local materials and specialized books, etc. patiently wait to be rediscovered. Mold is the archenemy of books, so temperature and humidity are strictly controlled. On the floor of the entrance, a sticky mat has been placed securely. Also, in preparation for an emergency or disaster, a damaged materials rescue kit has been prepared. Today, 80 years after the War, how does this intellectual center function and what kind of value does it have for the Azabu area? We get to know the backroom of this library, and its true value is revealed.

● Storing materials that survived the War

The Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library took over the predecessor of this library, the Tokyo Metropolitan Hibiya Library. This is a public library in Tokyo, the capital city of Japan. It preserves the collection of books rescued from the Great Kanto Earthquake and the Tokyo Air Raids, and continues to collect new materials. The library has supported learning, investigation, and research by Tokyo citizens, in particular those from Azabu, for a full 52 years.

● The closed stack archive supports the open stacks, consisting of about 350,000 books.

The collection of books is divided into two types. One is open

stack materials that can be accessed and picked up directly by the users from the shelves, and the other is closed stack materials that can be accessed from the closed stack archive only by staff members, after being requested by a member of the public. Old materials that can be easily damaged and very valuable materials are managed in the closed stack archive.

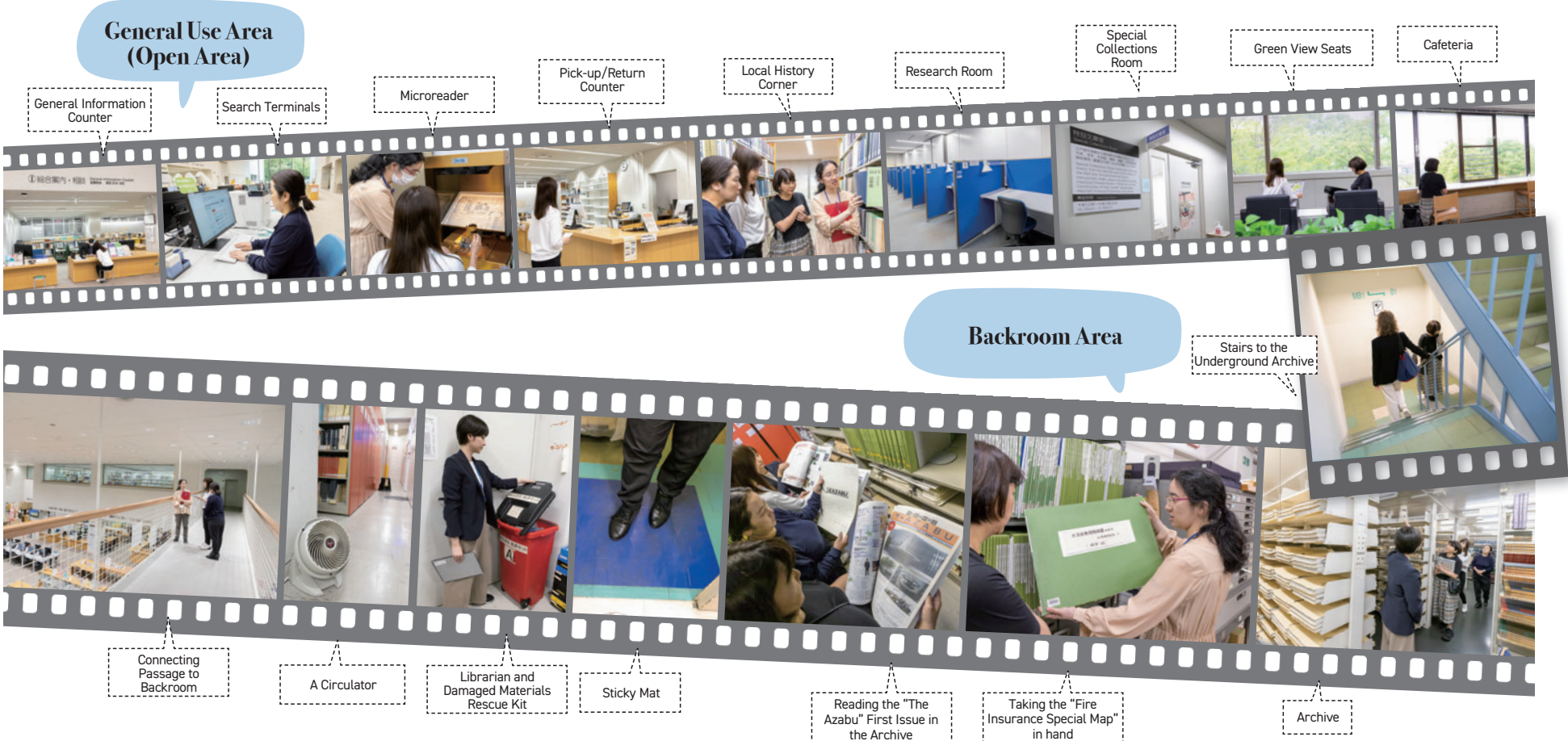
● Features of each floor

When you come in through the entrance, you can see the national newspapers, local newspapers and specialized newspapers in the newspaper reading area on the 1st floor. In the central hall, network terminals are set up and keyword searches of newspapers or magazine articles are available using the online data-

base. There is also a corner provided for you to search local materials, old maps, local magazines, housing maps and telephone directories etc. in Tokyo.

On the 3rd floor, there is a local history corner where people from regional areas can get an opportunity to explore their roots.

Valuable materials from the late Edo period to the mid-Meiji period are kept in the special collections room on the 5th floor. Resources about National Important Cultural Properties, including materials related to the construction of Edo Castle, and books spared from the War are in the collection. The digitalized Edo and Tokyo historical materials in the special collections room, etc. can be viewed online through the "TOKYO Archive" on the Tokyo Metropolitan Library website.



How to enjoy the library

The charm of the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library is that it can be used regardless of where you live and there is no registration procedure. Books from the library cannot be lent out, so most of the materials can be viewed in the library. For example, simple interests such as wanting to have a look at "an old Tokyo map" or wanting to "trace my family roots" can be easily achieved, which is a great service provided by this library. The General Information Counter on the 1st floor can advise visitors about how to investigate or how to select books. The Internet terminals can be used free of charge, and magazines or newspapers can be searched using specific keywords. Through local history books and old maps, you can learn a great deal about the history of the local area you are living in.

The library building is surrounded by a green park and a tranquil, comfortable environment. You can read books in natural light while sitting on the "green view seats." From the cafeteria on the top floor, Tokyo Tower is visible, and the scenery of the Azabu area is magnificent. This library provides space where visitors can refresh both their bodies and minds.

Also, the Research Room has free Wi-Fi, power supplies, and large desks. A great environment is provided for writing and investigative activities. There, visitors can concentrate and work quietly. This place is especially valuable for people involved in academia or writing activities to deepen their knowledge in a calm space.

Secrets of the backroom — Valuable materials kept for the future

In the backroom, there is environmental control (temperature and humidity). Dust and dirt is removed by the sticky mat on the floor. A damaged materials rescue kit is provided in case of a natural disaster. This library is also fully equipped to deal with water damage caused by rain leakage.

To repair damaged books, Japanese paper is used instead of sellotape. This is better for long-term storage. The librarian told us that "local magazines and municipal publications that are not available in book stores have been collected and stored here." The Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library plays an important role, preserving these materials for future generations. With such projects, this library has become a space open to all Tokyo citizens, and the people living in the Azabu area in particular, as "a place for accumulating and preserving knowledge."

Relocation to Shibuya City — A new era of knowledge

The building is quite old and in bad condition, so the Metropolitan Central Library will move to Shibuya City. It might be our last opportunity to utilize this historical facility in Azabu. I hope Tokyo citizens, including the local people of Azabu, will enjoy the pursuit of knowledge and fully utilize the valuable materials.

Periodic tours of the library

Tours to see the inside the archive are occasionally available, like the one taken by our editorial staff. This is not generally open to the public, and we appreciate being able to learn about the storage of valuable materials. We recommend that our readers visit the library, taking this opportunity to enter the backroom of the library and see the heritage of knowledge, 80 years after the War.



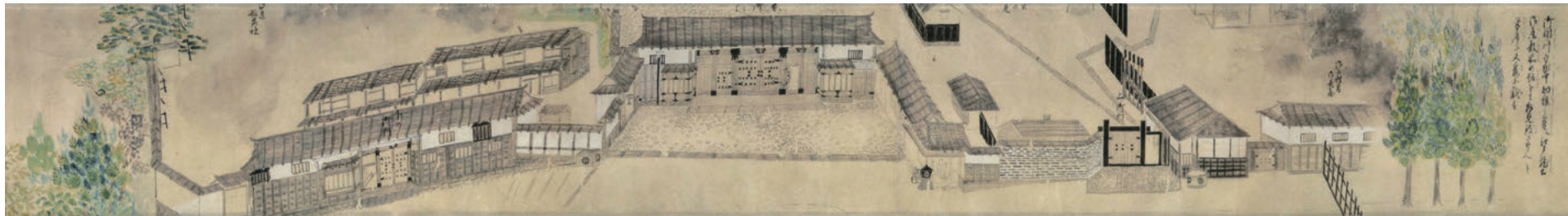
↑ Event list on the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library official website

Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library
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Ms. MASUBUCHI Rin, Librarian, Information Service Dept.
Ms. URASHIMA Kotone, Librarian, Information Service Dept.

After the Research

"The valuable materials were carefully preserved and I felt the importance of the accumulation of knowledge" (INOUE Mayumi) "The moment I entered the underground archive, I was fascinated by the scent of the ink of the old books" (Sumiko) "A careful management system has created such a comfortable reading environment" (SATO Masako)



"Ryukyu-jin Ourai Suji Nigiwai no Zu" (Drawing of the Ryukyu People Coming and Going on a Lively Area Road): Drawn by KOTSUKI Yukio-oshi, a feudal retainer of Uwajima Han. This was created to show what daily life was like in Edo to the younger generation in his home province. The sentence on the right says, "in front of the residence in Ryudo town in Edo...", so we know that this is a drawing of the front gate of the Uwajima Han main residence in Edo. It is a very valuable picture scroll that shows the atmosphere of those days in detail.

Fascinated by the Artistic Azabu

Extra Part

“Kamon”:
The crests of the Daimyo families
who once lived in the Azabu area

Uwajima Han (Feudal Domain) in Iyo



The National Art Center, Tokyo is located in Roppongi, Tokyo. Do you know that there is a place where you can experience the atmosphere of our samurai past at the foot of this piece of modern architecture? In the Edo period, the main Edo residence of the daimyo (feudal lord) of Uwajima Han in Iyo Province was in this area. Its name was written on the sectional “Azabu map” in the Edo period. The feudal lord of Uwajima Han was a member of the Uwajima DATE family, descended from the famous DATE Masamune, who was a powerful daimyo in the Tohoku region. The family crest used a “bamboo-and-sparrow” design, slightly different from that of the Sendai DATE family. At present, there is no historic site with this family crest in Uwajima. However, their spirit still remains in an unexpected place.

“Bamboo-and-Sparrow” Crest

The bamboo-and-sparrow pattern used for the DATE family crest dates from the time of DATE Harumune, DATE Masamune’s grandfather. This family crest has been highly regarded by the Uwajima DATE family since its founding by DATE Hidemune. The DATE family had other family crests such as the “Tate Mitsubishi Ryou-mon,” a crest designed with three vertical lines in a circle, and the nine star “Kuyo-mon” crest. However, they decided to use only the “bamboo-and-sparrow” design for their jinmaku camp curtains. There is great pride in the DATE family’s bamboo-and-sparrow crest, as it represents their samurai family’s success in battle. Since the Edo period, this crest had been used by the Sendai, Uwajima and Yoshida DATE families as their common family crest. However, the designs of the bamboo, bamboo leaves, dew and sparrows on the crest were slightly different for each DATE family. The “bamboo-and-sparrow” crest used by the Uwajima DATE Family is called the “Uwajima-zasa” (Uwajima bamboo-leaves) crest. This distinguishes it from the others. Inside a circle of bamboo leaves, two sparrows face each other. The sparrow on the left forms an “A” (pronounced “ah”) with its open beak. The other one on the right forms “un” with its closed beak, which represents “perfect harmony ah-un” as a set. “A-un” symbolizes the contrast of opposites that live in harmony; the origin of all things.

Who Were the Uwajima DATE Family?

When we hear the words “DATE family,” we are immediately reminded of DATE Masamune, a famous samurai lord in the Warring States period. Masamune is very famous for his fearless fighting style and his stylish appearance. He appears in pictures with his “One Eye and Cloak.” He looked so striking that the Japanese word for dandy, “Date-otoko,” originates with him. The Uwajima DATE family were from the DATE Masamune line, and governed the region centered around present day Uwajima City in Ehime Prefecture during the Edo period. The Uwajima DATE family was a very distinguished family. DATE Hidemune was the first head of the family, and after him the family ruled Uwajima for nine generations. The family was known as a daimyo family of academics, martial artists and for overall cultural excellence. They established a clan school called “Naitokukan” (later called the “Meirinkan”) and produced DATE Munenari, who became one of the “Four Remarkable Feudal Lords” at the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate. They greatly contributed to the modernization at the end of the Edo period.



The upper and lower photos are provided by the Edo-Tokyo Open-Air Architectural Museum



The photo shows the front gate of the residence of the Marquis Uwajima DATE, now standing in the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum. The gate was constructed in Shirokane during the Taisho period. It is designed like the gatehouse of a daimyo residence in the Edo period, and there is a guard post with a curved roof attached. The gatehouse was made entirely of Japanese zelkova wood. The wood carving of the Uwajima DATE family crest is attached onto the crossbar on the upper side of the gatepost.

The DATE Family’s Aesthetic Sense Remains in Azabu

They took pride in their own unique culture in Uwajima on the island of Shikoku, far from the Uwajima Han main residence in the Azabu area in Edo. The landscape in Azabu is completely different now compared to back then. It’s hard to imagine the past, when the DATE family members were living here and flags bearing the family crest fluttered in the wind. However, when I think that the aesthetic sense of a former samurai family has made its mark in the present premises of the National Art Center, Tokyo, a contemporary art center, the layers of time feel richer.

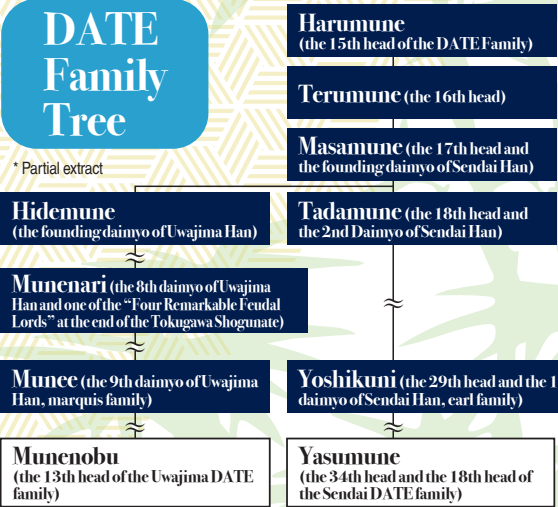


Copyright: The National Art Center, Tokyo

(Research and text by TANAKA Yasuhiro)

DATE Family Tree

* Partial extract



- ※ Munee (the 9th Daimyo of Uwajima Han) was the last daimyo of Uwajima Han.
- ※ Yoshikuni (the 29th head) was the last daimyo of Sendai Han.
- ※ The current head of the family is shown in the white box.
- ※ In the Sendai DATE family, the successive heads of the family are referred to by the number of their generation, and in the case of Masanobu (founder of the daimyo Sendai DATE family), “founding daimyo of Sendai Han” is written together with “17th head” of the DATE family to avoid confusion.

● References: Uwajima Date Cultural Properties Association website <http://www.b.pikara.ne.jp/off-date/index.html>
“Tokyo Metropolitan Archaeological Center’s Excavation Report No. 134 for the Former Uwajima Han DATE Family Residence Site – For the Construction of the New National Art Exhibition Facility (Temporary Name: National Gallery)” edited by Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for Lifelong Learning and Culture (Issued by Tokyo Metropolitan Archaeological Center in 2003)
“Ryukyu-jin Ourai Suji Nigiwai no Zu” collected by Tamazato Bunko (Presently in the collection of Kagoshima University Library) <https://dc.lib.kagoshima-u.ac.jp/item/0126730001>
DATE Family Memorial Association website https://datemasamune.com/history/successive_lord.htm
Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum website <https://www.tatemonoen.jp/english>



Tokyo Asahi Newspaper No. 163 issued on January 31, 1933



The building's appearance was designed by Antonin Raymond: the façade opens up to a broad view of the garden (front)

麻布の軌跡

The Historical Footsteps of Azabu

The French Embassy in Japan In Fujimi-cho, Azabu-ku



Old Embassy main office building designed by Joseph Belmont



Appearance of the current French Embassy in Japan (Copyright: KAWASUMI Architectural Office)

The French Embassy in Japan (hereinafter called the “French Embassy”), located on a hill at 4-11-44, Minami-azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo, has been here for more than 90 years. On January 31, 1933, the Tokyo Asahi Newspaper (Photo 1) published an article titled “The French Embassy Will Move Soon,” covering the relocation of the French Embassy from Iida-machi, Kojimachi-ku (presently 1-chome, Kudan-minami, Chiyoda-ku) to Fujimi-cho, Azabu-ku. The Great Kanto Earthquake occurred in 1923, damaging many foreign diplomatic offices. As a result, a number of foreign diplomatic offices—including the French Embassy—moved from around the Imperial Palace to an area centered around Azabu. I would like to explore the social factors and the processes around the time that the French Embassy moved.



The building was constructed on the hill in the center of the vast area.



Large hall on the 1st floor: the garden can be seen from the circular hall.

I. Consulates and Legations in the Town of Edo

“Shuko-zan Saikaiji-zo Gaikoku-sho Negaidome”^{*1} (Foreign Registration Applications Collected by Shuko-zan Saikai-ji Temple) (edited by Minato City Board of Education in 1987), kept by the Minato City Local History Museum, are documents kept by the Temple between August 12, 1859 and 1974. According to these documents, the French diplomatic office (a consulate general or legation) was established in Saikai-ji Temple (present address: 4-16-23, Mita, Minato-ku) on August 26 of that year (1859), by de Bellecourt, Consul-General of France.

After that, according to “Houki Bunrui Taizen” (Encyclopedia of Legal Classifications) (edited by the Cabinet Record Bureau), there is a record regarding official matters in the official gazette issued on May 12, 1887 stating that the French Legation “moved to the former Okuma Family Mansion at 1 and 2, 1-chome, Iida-machi, Kojimachi-ku.” It moved again to its location in the present-day Kudan area in search of a permanent legation site. The French Legation was established on land with an area of about 18,704 m² (5,658 tsubo). In 1906 the Legation was at last promoted to an Embassy.

II. The Mystery of the Relocation to the Azabu Area Demographics and Urbanization

“Tokyo-fu Tokeisho” (Tokyo Prefecture Statistics Book) (edited by Tokyo Prefecture in 1915) has the record of the residential population in Tokyo from 1883 to 1941. The residential areas in Yama-no-te (uptown) in the Meiji period were mainly those in Hongo (Koishikawa-ku), Ushigome (Ushigome-ku) and Azabu (Azabu-ku). The residential populations in 1902 were 83,959 (Koishikawa-ku), 61,343 (Ushigome-ku), 58,600 (Azabu-ku) and 61,580 (Kojimachi-ku) where the French Legation was located; there wasn’t any significant population growth.

It is interesting that during the following year (1903), three train companies in Tokyo opened new railways. As a result, the number of commuters to Kanda or Nihombashi using streetcars suddenly increased. A short story titled “Shojo Byo” by famous novelist TAYAMA Katai (included in the “Standard Complete Works of Katai Vol. 1” written by TAYAMA Rokuya (Katai’s real name), published by Rinsen Shoten in 1993) describing the up-town life in this era, is an excellent work. This is a masterpiece of a story woven around a beautiful young lady and the main character, a middle-aged man, who share a train together. Actually, looking at the dynamics of the population at that time in Iida-machi in Ushigome-ku, a place that features in the story, the population increased many times, for example, 152,620 (Koishikawa-ku), 139,887 (Ushigome-ku) and 87,906 (Azabu-ku). However, when looking only at Kojimachi-ku, including Iida-machi, in the time between 1923 (after the Earthquake) and 1926, the population decreased from 61,580 to 56,379.

Foreign legations did not reconstruct buildings on the same sites lost in the Earthquake, but increasingly moved further away following demographic shifts, as times changed and urban areas gradually expanded with the development of urban transportation.

III. The French Embassy Moved to Azabu-ku: Reported in Newspapers In and Out of Japan

Many buildings, including the French Embassy main office building, managed to survive the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. However, most parts of the buildings had serious fire damage. Paul Claudel, the Ambassador between 1921 and 1927, was also a poet and playwright. He described the scene.

10 years after the Earthquake, the Embassy was relocated to 33, Fujimi-cho, Azabu-ku. The Tokyo Asahi Newspaper issued on January 31, 1933 said that “The relocation procedures to Azabu Fujimi-cho will begin early next month. Count De Martel will be welcomed as the Ambassador to the new Embassy. The former owner of the building was Mr. TOKUGAWA Yoshi-chika. [text partly omitted] The architect is Mr. Antonin Raymond, a Czech, the same man who designed the Russian Embassy building.”

The new Ambassador to Japan was introduced in the French illustrated newspaper “L’illustration” (issued on September 23, 1933). (Photos 2 to 4)

(The original text is quoted in the reference section).^{*2} It says “Mr. Raymond was put in charge of design, as he is an architect who has worked for several years in Japan. The foundation of the Japanese house was left as it was, and the construction was successful.” Raymond focused on “pénétrer”^{*3} and he “made great efforts to incorporate the garden into the building as much as possible.” To be specific, the building was oriented to the proper position facing south, and the inside space was opened up so sunlight and air flowed through the windows and the glass door on the 2nd floor. (Photo 2) This represents an important feature of Japanese design: architecture must exist in harmony with the natural environment around it. Clearly, Raymond fully understood the essence of Japanese architecture.

IV. Fire, Demolitions and the Building Shines Again in Fujimi-cho Town

The building, highly acclaimed both domestically and internationally, burnt down in 1945, late in the Pacific War. After that, the construction of the old Embassy main office building (Photo 5) designed by Joseph Belmont, a disciple of Jean Prouvé, was completed in 1957. In the 2000s, beautiful early modern buildings constructed at the dawn of rapid economic growth disappeared one after the other, due to deterioration. This old Embassy main office building was no exception. The art event titled “NO MAN’S LAND Creation and Destruction @ French Embassy” was held between November 26, 2009 and February 18, 2010, open to the public. The completion ceremony for the new Embassy building designed by Pierre-Michel Delpuech and Dominique Chavanne was held in December 2009.

The reason why this place was named “Fujimi-cho” was that it was on a hill and Mt. Fuji can be viewed in the distance. Located at the southern end of Azabu, this Embassy building has an elegant and traditional space, harmoniously integrated within the surrounding environment. Distinguished guests are welcomed from Japan and overseas. (Photo 6)

^{*1} <https://www.minato-rekisho.com/museum/2009/10/56.html>
^{*2} “M. Raymond, architecte établi depuis plusieurs années au Japon, fut chargé de la construction et réussit, en conservant simplement les fondations de l’ancienne maison japonaise, ” “consiste à faire “pénétrer” le plus avant possible le jardin à l’intérieur de la maison. ” “L’illustration” (Paris 1933/9/2-1933/12/20)
^{*3} “pénétrer” means to penetrate.
Acknowledgment: This text owes much to the advice provided by Mr. KASHIMA Shigeru, a French literary scholar, who told us, “You should research the history of the French Embassy.” I also would like to express my gratitude to the French Embassy for providing me with valuable pictures.
● References:
“Chronologie de Paul Claudel au Japon” edited by ODE Atsushi, TOKUNAGA Nobutaka and NEGISHI Tetsuro, issued by Kress Publishing in 2010
“Encyclopedia of Japanese Historical Place Names, Tokyo” issued by Heibonsha in 2006
● Photos 2 to 6 provided by the French Embassy in Japan



Information Items in November

The Fixed Assets Tax & City Planning Tax for small-sized non-residential land is reduced or exempted (within Tokyo's 23 Wards).

20% of the Fixed Assets Tax & City Planning Tax is exempted for part (up to 200 m2) of a non-residential land space of 400 m2 or less in a single lot (limited to land owned by individuals, or companies with a capital/investment amount of 100 million yen or less). You must apply for this tax exemption by December 26, 2025 (Fri).

※ You can also apply for this tax exemption online.

※ A guide for the application will be sent to individuals or companies that are presumed to have some small-sized non-residential land and have not yet applied for the tax exemption by September.

Inquiries:

Metropolitan Taxation Office in the city where the taxpayer owns land
For land, etc., located in Minato City: Minato City Metropolitan Taxation Office
Tel: 03-5549-3800 (rep.)

Tax System for Encouraging Smaller Business Enterprises to Save Energy Consumption

– Reduction or Exemption from Corporate Business Tax and Individual Business Tax –

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government reduces the amount of Corporate Business Tax and Individual Business Tax to support small and medium-sized enterprise owners so they can obtain energy-saving equipment, etc.

For details, refer to “About the Metropolitan Tax Mitigation System for the Environment” on the Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation website.

Inquiries:

◆ For the Tax System for Encouraging Smaller Business Enterprises to Save Energy Consumption, contact one of the following offices.

Minato City Metropolitan Taxation Office (rep.) 03-5549-3800

Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation:

Taxation Department (For Corporations): 03-5388-2963

Taxation Department (For Individuals): 03-5388-2969

◆ For Tokyo Carbon Reduction Reporting Program and Recommended Equipment

Cool Net Tokyo

For Tokyo Carbon Reduction Reporting Program: 0570-03-3517

For Recommended Equipment: 03-5990-5087



Metropolitan Taxes can be paid through a smartphone payment app.

We recommend that you pay Metropolitan Taxes using the smartphone payment app. Simply use the smartphone payment app to read the eL-QR (Unified Local Tax QR Code) on the payment slip, and you can easily pay the tax anytime, anywhere. For details, refer to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation website.

<https://www.tax1.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/cashless-nouzei/>

※ The QR code is a registered trademark of DENSO-WAVE INCORPORATED.



You can apply for all Metropolitan Tax payment certificates at any of the Metropolitan Taxation offices, branch offices and outstations.

You can apply for all Metropolitan Tax payment certificates at any of the Metropolitan Taxation offices, branch offices and outstations. However, if you apply for a tax payment certificate within a couple of weeks after the declaration or tax payment, please bring both (1) the original receipts (with an official stamp) and (2) a copy of the application* (with a receipt stamp) to the counter of your nearby City Metropolitan Taxation Office, etc.

※ For (2), only for the declared tax items.

Inquiries:

Minato City Metropolitan Taxation Office Tel: 03-5549-3800 (rep.)

Beware of fraudulent Metropolitan Tax emails and telephone calls!

Recently, there have been cases of criminals misrepresenting themselves as a member of the Metropolitan Taxation Office to illegally obtain personal information or financially defraud people. If you receive any kind of contact that seems suspicious, don't answer, and contact the following number.

If you are victimized in any way like this, immediately contact the police.

Inquiries:

Consultation and Public Relation Team, General Affairs Division, General Affairs Department, Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation

Tel: 03-5388-2925

A system is available for the reduction or exemption of Metropolitan Taxes for victims who have suffered extensive damage due to disasters or similar events.

A system is available for those who have suffered extensive damage due to a disaster or similar event. This system offers a reduction or exemption of taxes which have been paid before the tax payment due date (there is also a system that offers a grace period for tax payment). This applies to the Fixed Assets Tax & City Planning Tax (23 wards), the Real Estate Acquisition Tax and the Individual Business Tax, etc. As a general rule, the tax payer will need to apply by the due date (excluding Real Estate Acquisition Tax). Please apply to the Metropolitan Taxation Office along with the documents to prove the facts of the disaster.

Inquiries:

For properties, etc., located in Minato City:

Minato City Metropolitan Taxation Office Tel: 03-5549-3800 (rep.)



Taxation details can be sent to you in braille.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation can send your tax notice details in braille. The Bureau can send the following tax notifications in braille: Fixed Assets Tax & City Planning Tax (within the 23 Wards), Individual Business Tax, and Automobile Tax (Category Base). The contents consist of the type of tax, the name of the taxpayer, the tax notice number, the tax payment deadline, the tax amount, and contact information. If you would like this information in braille, contact the following number by February 27, 2026 (Fri). Notifications in braille will be sent to you from FY2026. If you are already using this service, you don't have to apply for it again.

Inquiries:

Consultation and Public Relation Team, General Affairs Division, General Affairs Department, Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Taxation

Tel: 03-5388-2925

Full of neighborhood information not found in any guidebook! The community social media app “PIAZZA”



Connect with other Azabu lovers!

This app gathers local information useful for daily life in the Azabu area from users, such as: “We are holding a festival in Azabu-juban.” “I’m thinking of giving my electric fan away to someone in the area.” “Please recommend a dentist for children in or around the Roppongi/Higashi-azabu area.” etc.

New information from the government such as crime or disaster prevention information, local government news, and event news will be posted when relevant.

You'll be able to find anything and everything on the PIAZZA app, from general and interesting information about the area (without having to go out and search yourself!) to specific topics like how to address concerns about taking care of children locally.

Inquiries: Collaboration Project Subsection,
Collaboration Project Section, Azabu Regional City Office
Tel: 03-5114-8802



Three-step registration procedure

STEP 1

Download the PIAZZA application.

STEP 2

Register your name through your email address or Facebook account.

STEP 3

Input your name and birthplace and select “Azabu/Roppongi Area”.

Your information will help somebody!
Get involved to enjoy living in Azabu even more!



Download the app from here.



Information from the Azabu Regional City Office



Why don't you join “Heiwa” (peace), the citizen-participation driven project to be established with postcards and origami cranes?

The “Heiwa” (peace) project is made up of young people, and has been developed by the Organization Committee for the 40th Anniversary of the Minato City Declaration as a City of Peace. We recommend that you join this project, to be established with postcards and origami cranes. This project consists of two activities.

① “Heiwa” (Peace) with Postcard Art

An illustration or message is drawn on a piece of postcard-sized paper based on the theme of “Your Vision of Peace or a Moment of Peace You Feel.” The postcards will be collected and displayed artistically at peace-related projects or used as the materials for mosaic art planned for the 40th Anniversary of the Minato City Declaration as a City of Peace.

② Origami Cranes Re-creation and Circulation Project in the Hope of “Heiwa” (Peace)

Using the recycled origami paper from the origami cranes sent to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park from all over the world, origami cranes will again be created with prayers for peace. These origami cranes are going to be devoted to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, sending prayers for peace.

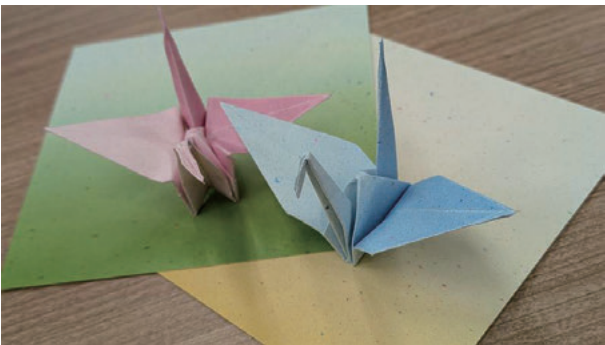
These activities will take place at facilities in Minato City in addition to the Minato City Peace-related Projects during the following period. Let’s take this opportunity of the 40th anniversary to think about peace!

- Facilities Hosting Activities

Iki-iki Plazas, Kids-to-Teens Halls, and Children’s Halls in Minato City
- Period

Until Friday, December 12, 2025

Inquiries: Human Rights and Gender Equality Subsection, General Affairs Section, General Affairs Department, Minato City
Tel: 03-3578-2014



The “Home Evacuation Guidebook For When an Earthquake Strikes” is being distributed!



If your house is not damaged in an earthquake etc., do not go to a shelter: consider “Home Evacuation,” or “sheltering in place,” and continue living at home.

Shelters are temporary living spaces for people who cannot live at home, because their homes were seriously damaged, collapsed or burnt down, etc.

Living space in a shelter is limited. Because of this, we need to be careful about privacy, health management and hygiene management (such as for toilets, etc.) Therefore, each of us needs to realize the importance of home evacuation.

For this reason, the Azabu Regional City Office has created the “Home Evacuation Guidebook For When an Earthquake Strikes,” recommending home evacuation in the Azabu area following an earthquake. This guidebook outlines important details regarding safely living at home during a disaster, telling us exactly what home evacuation means, what we should prepare, etc.

This guidebook is being distributed at the Collaboration Project Section counter at the Azabu Regional City Office.

More details about the guidebook can be found on the Minato City website.



Access our website using this QR code to read the “Home Evacuation Guidebook For When an Earthquake Strikes”.



Inquiries: Collaboration Project Subsection, Collaboration Project Section, Azabu Regional City Office
Tel: 03-5114-8802

AZABU

● Locations of the Newsletter: Roppongi 1-chome, Roppongi, Hiroo, Azabujuban and Akabanebashi subway stations, The Chii Bus, Minato Library, Azabu Library, Minami-azabu Iki-iki Plaza, Nishi- azabu Iki-iki Plaza, Iigura Iki-iki Plaza, Azabu Civic Center, Azabu Regional City Office, etc.

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Editor's Note

During the editorial meeting held during the full bloom of the cherry blossom season, we discussed the rich culture and history of Azabu, including the samurai residences, the international landscape where there are embassies of various countries, and shrines and temples that have been passed down from generation to generation. And of course, cultural bases such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library. The fresh perspective of our new editor added to the discussion, and our motivation for creating this newspaper was strengthened. We will continue to make an effort to polish our strengths, while maintaining our positive aspects .

(HORIKIRI Michiko)

The original article is written in Japanese.

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“Minato Call” information service answers your questions about everyday life! Feel free to ask about services provided by City Hall, facility guides, event information, and more. Available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm every day.

* This service is also available in English.

Minato Call

Tel: 03-5472-3710 Fax: 03-5777-8752

Inquiry submission form: <https://www.city.minato.tokyo.jp/kouchou/kuse/kocho/iken/form-inquiry.html>