

Waterfront Advance

Photos and text by Naoki Mukoda



The advance of civilization creates new adventures and new opportunities for urban dwellers. At the same time, these adventures in civilization are also adventures in language as new phenomena demand new coinages. As new adventures are conceived, new terminology has to be coined to describe and delineate them. These new terms then become the key words characterizing the era. The march of civilization thus produces a never-ending flood of new words with new meanings.

This has been especially true in post-war Japan. Just as Tokyo has spawned countless urban spaces, these have been given new names in new styles. At first, the names were in kanji. More recently, they have been in the spartan phonetic of *katakana* usually reserved for foreign words and innovative sound-play. One such is "waterfront."



It is only in the last few years that "waterfront" has come into vogue. Just as New York is washed by the Hudson, Paris by the Seine and London by the Thames, Tokyo has its Sumida River. In addition, Tokyo also fronts on a vast inlet from the Pacific, giving it a considerable expanse of shore.

This shoreline is today the setting for new adventures in urban life as the city's boundless energy seeks to create new space. In times past, the Tokyo shoreline teemed with shipping and associated activities. Now reborn and rebuilding as the "waterfront," it offers Tokyoites new opportunities for realizing untapped potential. As the shore has given way to the waterfront, Tokyo has slipped into a new dimension.

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