

Shinjuku Kaleidoscope

Story and photos by Bill Tingey

Originally, Shinjuku was nothing more than a post town on Koshu-kaido, one of the ancient highways heading west out of Japan's historic capital Edo. But now it is recognized by people all over the world as a symbol of modern Tokyo and Japan, partly because of the high-rise buildings which have emerged to the west of the station during the past twenty-five years.

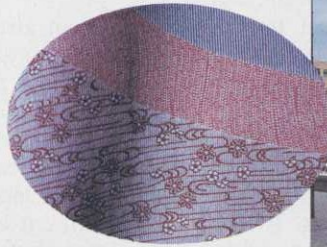
Covering an area of more than half a million square meters previously occupied by a water treatment plant, the individual blocks on which these buildings were erected were initially mapped out in a redevelopment scheme aimed at alleviating some of the congestion that was being experienced in the Marunouchi district, formally Tokyo's only major seat of business, government and authority.

The first of these high-rise blocks to be built was the Keio Plaza Hotel in 1971, followed fairly rapidly by the Sumitomo Building with its unusual triangular section, and the black monolith-like Mitsui Building. Subsequently, buildings with a variety of other features—the vast well of the NS Building, the sweeping rocket-like form of the Yasuda Fire and Marine

Building, the curves of the Washington Hotel and others—gradually set the scene here, or played supporting roles on sites nearby. However, it was not until 1991 that the grandest and most prominent performer on this modern architectural stage made its appearance.

Housing Tokyo's administrative functions, the Tokyo City Hall or "Tocho" complex was designed by the offices of Tange Kenzo, the architect who was also responsible for the highly distinctive gymnasiums built for the Tokyo Olympics in Yoyogi. Despite the criticism leveled at the Tocho, there is no doubting the fact that it fulfills its functions: an administrative center which is symbolic of authority, the nation and the times. It has also provided a very popular observation platform from where the sprawling metropolis can be viewed against a backdrop of sea, mountains and sky, all hinging on that eternal symbol of Japan—Mount Fuji.

If the Tocho is a triumph of symbol-



(Top left): Dainty florals combined with the finest of stripes on a Tokyo some komon cloth
(Right): The Tocho from the forecourt of Park Towers
(Bottom left): A tastefully decorated and orientally-appointed room at the Park Hyatt Tokyo



ism, then surely Park Towers is a triumph of a new sense of quality and design. Owned by Tokyo Gas and once again designed by Tange's office, this building stands adjacent to Koshu-kaido and accommodates a number of different facilities, including a comprehensive collection of interior showrooms called O-

zone, where the British home decorating store and The Conran Shop are located.

The building itself, however, is topped by a hotel, the Park Hyatt Tokyo. The interior was designed by John Morford, an American designer based in Hong Kong, which explains perhaps why he has been able to combine European taste, modernity and comfort, while still hinting of the orient. In fact, the quality of the design and atmosphere in the public areas and restaurants would be difficult to match almost anywhere in the world, and stand supreme amongst the mad, strange, urban poetry of Tokyo.

Such forthright examples of contemporary Japan in the shape of the high-rise edifices to the west of Shinjuku Station are contrasted by the less controlled and more feverish atmosphere to the east of the train station. Glitter, kitsch, and gleam fight for the attention of the crowds who flock here daily to be entertained, or who simply pass through on their way to and from work, in the millions. Some people might even say that this melee of styles and references is much more representative of Tokyo and Japan.

Besides these architectural contrasts, however, Shinjuku is also home

Once in Tokyo, Shinjuku is easily accessed by either subway or overland urban transport. The Tocho observation platform is open from 9:30-5:00 every day except Mondays, Tel: (03) 5321-1111. Park Hyatt Tokyo, Tel: (03) 5322-1234. The O-zone showrooms, Tel: (03) 5322-6500, and The Conran Shop, Tel: (03) 5322-6600, are both closed Wednesdays. Examples of Tokyo *some komon* can be found at the Mitsukoshi Department Store in Nihon-bashi. Tel: (03) 3241-3311 Information is also available from Japan Traditional Craft Center, Minami Aoyama, Tokyo, Tel: (03) 3403 2460.



to one of Japan's top quality dyed kimono cloths, called Tokyo *some komon*. Most usually based on finely executed geometrics or dainty floral designs sometimes almost microscopic in scale, the finished cloth at a distance only appears to be textured and the patterns only become apparent on close inspection. Such delicacy is achieved using a stenciled resist after

which the silk cloth is piece dyed and used for lady's kimonos, although long ago these fine cloths were made up into ceremonial garments for high-ranking samurai.

So although the history of Shinjuku is now shrouded by the complex fabric of modern life, this cloth still represents a wholly indigenous part of Japan and its craft culture. And ulti-

mately, the kind of kaleidoscopic juxtapositions of history, style and design found in Shinjuku are part of its enduring appeal to both visitors and residents alike.



In cooperation with the
JAPAN TRADITIONAL
CRAFT CENTER

TABLE TALK

LUNCHAN Bar and Grill



"How about dinner at Lunchan?" is a strange-sounding invitation to an evening meal. You would undoubtedly have to add, "I mean Lunchan, not luncheon."

Someone once said, "a good name for a store requires an explanation." If the adage is true, a restaurant named "Lunchan" should pique anyone's curiosity. "Lunchan" is the surname of a Chinese-American who lives in San Francisco who took charge of designing this simple and elegant restaurant. You are a Lunchan "regular" when you can recount this story to others accurately.

Even if you do not have a fat wallet, you'll still feel treated as a regular. While you wait to be shown your table, slide up to the bar and down a draft beer and enjoy an "American" salad.

The staff's cheerful smiles welcome guests, recognizing faces in a matter of two, three visits. The manager makes his rounds, greeting each guest, ensuring complete satisfaction. Getting acquainted with the manager is a heartening experience, a real plus

for regular patrons.

Lunchan is happy to provide buffet-style dinners for small gatherings such as class reunions. Though your budget may be limited to the ¥3,500 range, the satisfaction your party receives is greater when it includes friendly service.

The reason the beer is so good here is that Kirin Brewery has a 50% share in Lunchan's capital (Royal, one of Japan's biggest family restaurant operators, holds the other 50%). In addition to beer, Lunchan stocks its cellars with wines from around the world. Yes, you too can become a sommelier.

The restaurant's chief chef, David Chiddo, is from Los Angeles. His philosophy is to use fresh, healthy ingredients that appeal to people of all ages. Food is expertly prepared in an open-style kitchen, in sight of the guests' tables. Soft American music complements the atmosphere, and the scent of freshly-baked bread wafts toward diners. Well-balanced meals of meat, fish, and vegetables contain plenty of volume. You walk away feeling that you ate "a substantial meal."

Whether you select a made-to-order burger or a Mexican quesadilla, Lunchan will be both a culinary and cultural experience.

Hori Yoshimichi

President, Fukui Oil Storage Co., Ltd.

LUNCHAN Bar & Grill

Chicken quesadilla	¥1,400
Caesar salad	¥1,000
Turkey chili	¥1,500
Hamburger	¥1,600
Grilled swordfish	¥2,300
Meat loaf	¥1,600
Pizza	¥1,400 to ¥1,600
N.Y. cheesecake	¥700
Coconut pudding	¥700
Draft Beer ¥600 (glass),	¥2,300 (pitcher)
White & Red Wines,	¥2,500~¥7,800

Address: Alive Mitake Bldg. 1F, 1-2-5
Shibuya, Shibuya-ku
Tel: 5466-1398

* Reservations are recommended.

Reservations required for dinner on
Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays

Hours

Lunch 11:30 - 14:30

Tea 14:30 - 17:00

Dinner 17:00 - 23:00

(last order taken no later than 22:00)

Sunday Only

Lunch 11:00 - 15:00

Tea 15:00 - 17:00

Dinner 17:00 - 22:00

(last order taken no later than 21:00)

* Open year-round (except New Year
holidays and Obon holidays)

Credit cards are accepted.

Party inquiries are welcome.

