

The Ten Shrines of Tokyo

(Tōkyō Jissha)

Subhajit Chatterjee¹

¹Research Scholar, Department of Japanese, Visva-Bharati, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT

Tokyo is the capital of Japan and one of the busiest and most beautiful cities in the world. People love to visit Japan and enjoy the rush-hour trains, beautiful Sky tree, Tokyo tower et al. We all know about the famous Shibuya crossing which a large number of people pass through everyday. The Tokyo metro service is one of best with extremely efficient arrangements of tracks and trains. Tokyo is not just a Hi-tech city but also a bearer of the Japanese tradition and culture in its vein, alongside the technological reformations. The Senso-ji is one of the major attractions for tourists where beautiful temples, and shrines with a large number of traditional shops can be seen standing after crossing the famous Kaminari-mon. The Tokyo Sky tree can be visible from this temple and people enjoy the view from the temple pavilion. The Shinto Shrine Meiji-jingu which is situated here is dedicated to the Emperor Meiji and his wife Empress Shoken. There are many more temples and shrines located throughout Tokyo, but in this paper I would discuss about the 'Ten Shrines of Tokyo'.

Keyword: - Shinto, Buddhism, Shrine, Jingu, and Tokyo Jissha

Introduction

Shinto is the native religion of Japan. Temples of Shinto deities are known as 'Shrines' such as, *Nanasha Jinja*, and *Akagi Jinja*. In Japanese, common terms like '*Jinja*', '*Jingu*', and '*Taisha*' are widely used to refer to a shrine. Shrine can also be referred to as *Miya*, since *Miyamairi* means Shrine visit. The deity of the '*Jingu*' is the ancestral deity of the imperial family, such as *Meiji Jingu*, *Ise Jingu*. '*Taisha*' is the 'Head Shrine' or 'Parent Shrine' of the group of a particular deity such as, *Izumo Taisha* and *Kasuga Taisha*.

Pilgrimage is a journey, through which spiritual and moral experiences are gained. The religious definition of pilgrimage is a journey to temples or to sacred places related to one's beliefs or faiths. The person who undertakes a pilgrimage is called a pilgrim. Followers of *Sanatana Dharma* travel annually to the *Kumbha Mela* and *Chardham* and many more pilgrimage sites, where millions of people gather to pay their respects. The famous Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India are *Bodhgaya*, *Sarnath*, *Kushinagar* et al.

In Japan there are many pilgrimage sites throughout the nation. The Shikoku Pilgrimage is very popular, consisting of the 88 temples throughout the Shikoku island. The Shikoku Pilgrimage is associated with the Buddhist monk *Kūkai* (774-835), who is well known as *Kōbō Daishi*. The Japanese term of the Shikoku Pilgrimage is '*Shikoku Henro*' or '*Shikoku Junrei*'. This is a long pilgrimage of about 1200 kilometers. Generally it takes around 60 days by foot. Presently however, many people use car or other modes of transportation and complete the journey within a few days. Many people start their journey from Mt. *Kōya* (*Kōya-San*, Wakayama prefecture) and complete it by visiting Mt. *Kōya* as well. Mt. *Kōya* is the head office of the Shingon sect of Buddhism.

The *Kumano Kodo* is one of the ancient pilgrimage routes of Kii peninsula, consisting of the *Kumano Sanzan* or the three main Kumano Shrines which are the *Kumano Hongu Taisha*, the *Kumano Nachi Taisha* and the *Kumano Hayatama Taisha*. It takes around a week to visit all these three shrines.

The *Bando Sanjusankasho* refers to the 33 temples of Kannon¹. It is in Kanto region of Japan and the word Bando is the ancient name of the Kanto region. On the other hand, the *Saigoku Sanjusansho*, is a series of 33 Kannon temples located in Kansai region (around Kyoto (*Heiankyō*), the ancient capital of Japan).

The Ten Shrines of Tokyo

The Ten Shrines of Tokyo, is a pilgrimage in which all the Shrines are located throughout Tokyo. It is about 50 Kilometers and can be easily completed within two days by foot. Presently, with the help of cars, bike or other modes of travel it can be completed within a day. I personally have completed this journey. It was very much memorable and I was able to meet many people and became friends on our way. I started my journey from November 20, 2021 and completed it on December 1, 2021.

As there is no order to visit the shrines, the *Goshuin-chō* or the stamp book is followed for the list below. The shrines' names are given below with the locations (the word 'ku' is for ward, *Bunkyo-ku* means Bunkyo ward)

- ❖ *Nezu Jinja, Nezu*
- ❖ *Kanda Jinja or Kanda Myojin, Sotokanda*
- ❖ *Kameidoten Jinja, Kameido*
- ❖ *Hakusan Jinja, Hakusan*
- ❖ *Oji Jinja, Ojihoncho*
- ❖ *Shiba Daijingu, Shibadaimon*
- ❖ *Hie Jinja, Nagatacho*
- ❖ *Shinagawa Jinja, Kitashinagawa*
- ❖ *Tomioka Hachimangu, Tomioka*
- ❖ *Akasaka Hikawa Jinja, Akasaka*

There is no established route that one must follow to complete the pilgrimage, so one can freely go to any of the ten shrines at any time without thinking of adhering to a route. In Japan *Goshuin-chō* or the Stamp Book for Temples and Shrines are sold widely because people love to collect the stamps when they visit temples or shrines. It costs around 1000-2500 Japanese Yen (around 648-1617 INR). For this particular pilgrimage (*Tōkyō Jissha Meguri*), one can get a special wooden stamp book from any of the ten shrines and it costs approximately 1500 Japanese Yen (around 970 INR) with the first temple stamp where one is buying the stamp book. The difference between a normal stamp book and this wooden stamp book is that the wooden stamp book is only for this specific pilgrimage, and a route map and details about the each shrine are written in it.



Map of the ten shrines of Tokyo



Goshuin-chō or stamp book

¹ Bodhisattva of mercy, Avalokitesvara.

About the Shrines

Nezu Shrine: *Nezu Shrine* is located at Bunkyo ward of Tokyo. The main deity of this shrine is *Susano no Mikoto*. It is one of the oldest Shinto shrines in Bunkyo ward. The beauty of the nature can be seen after crossing the main entrance gate *Torī* or the Shinto gate. Trees, pond, small bridges and a long and beautiful hilly path with many Shinto pylons come into one's view. This hilly path goes towards the *Otome Inari Shrine* at the end.

Kanda Shrine: *Kanda Shrine* is located at Chyoda ward of Tokyo. This shrine is dedicated to *Daikoku-ten* and *Ebisu*. During the new year's ceremony, a huge number of people visit this shrine. A large statue of *Daikoku-ten* is located next to the main entrance gate. There is also a beautiful waterfall beside the temple, which enriches the temple's beauty. There are 108 neighboring deities inside the temple complex.

Kameidoten Jinja: *Kameido Tenjinja* is also widely known as *Kameido Tenmangū*. It is located at Koto ward of Tokyo. After the *Torii* or the Shinto gate, a big garden with a traditional bridge is situated over a water body. From the top of the bridge the view of the Tokyo Sky tree is wonderful. Water comes out of a turtle in the water fountain and a sacred cow is located at the left side of the main hall.

Hakusan Shrine: *Hakusan Shrine* is located at Bunkyo ward of Tokyo. The deity of *Hakusan shrine* is *Kikurihime*, the Shinto goddess of marriage. Couples often visit this shrine.

Oji Shrine: *Oji shrine* is located at Kita ward, Tokyo. *Izanami no Mikoto* and *Amaterasu Omikami* is worshiped here. This temple was built during the Kamakura period (1185-1333). It is known as the northern protector shrine. The *Oji shrine* was destroyed during the World War II. In August, the Mikoshi parade takes place with the traditional Dengaku-Dance. The Mikoshi parade is a sacred palanquin parade to move the deity from one Shrine to another.

Shiba Daijingu: *Shiba Daijingu* is located at Minato ward, Tokyo. The main deity of this shrine is *Amaterasu Omikami* and *Toyouke no Okami*. People visit this shrine for prosperous life. This shrine is very much respected by the Japanese people and it is also considered as a cultural asset of Japan. The annual festival continues for 11 days from September 11. The festival is known as '*Shoga Matsuri*' or 'Ginger Festival'.

Hie Shrine: *Hie Shrine* is located in Chiyoda ward, Tokyo. The deity of this shrine is *Oyamaui no Kami*. During the World War II, the shrine was destroyed and again rebuilt in 1958. The temple becomes very busy during the time of *Shichi Go San* (shrine visit by children aged 7, 5 and 3). After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Hie shrine started being considered as the guardian shrine of the Imperial family.

Shinagawa Shrine: *Shinagawa shrine* is located at *Kitashinagawa*, Tokyo. *Daikokuten* is enshrined here. This shrine was built by the order of the *Minamoto no Yoritomo*, the founder of the Kamakura period. A statue of *Daikokuten* is located next to the *Torī* or the Shinto gate. The *Torī* gate is also very significant here because two dragons are carved in the pillar, the gate known as *Soryu*. There are three dragon carved *Torī* gates in Tokyo. Those are - *Mabashi Inari Shrine*, *Shinagawa Shrine*, *Koenji Temple*.

Tomioka Hachimangu: *Tomioka Hachimangū* is located at Koto ward of Tokyo. It is also known as '*Fukagawa Hachimangu*'. There are three small shrines inside the shrine premises. *Hachiman* is worshipped here. The shrine was

built around 1624. The shrine got permission from the Edo government to hold matches of Sumo wrestling in the premises. The two Mikoshi's² are also displayed in the Shrine compound.

Akasaka Hikawa Shrine: Akasaka Hikawa shrine is located at Minato ward of Tokyo. *Susano no Mikoto*, *Kushinadahime* and *Okuninushi* are worshipped here. This temple survived not only earthquakes but also World War II. The Akasaka Hikawa festival lasts for 3 days and is a grand festival where many people are gathered.

My Journey

I came to Japan in October of 2021. After completing the quarantine, I went to the *Senso-ji* temple at Asakusa and stayed there for a long time because I enjoy the temple and the nature. The Tokyo Sky tree can also be seen from the temple premises. At *Senso-ji* temple, I decided to go and complete the pilgrimage of the Ten Shrines of Tokyo and then I will start my journey to other temples and shrines. After completing all the official works, from the November 20, I started my journey from *Oji* shrine, Kita ward, Tokyo.

I visited *Nanasha shrine* from where I went to Nichiren sect's worship place. At that spot a beautiful miniature garden is constructed with a water body, a small bridge and a small maple tree next to a small temple. From there I walked to the *Oji* shrine, which was the start of my journey. I spoke with a person of the shrine, who took me to the place where I can get my *Goshuin* or the temple stamp and gave me the wooden Tokyo Ten Shrine stamp book with the *Oji* shrine's stamp on it. Next day I visited the *Hakusan Shrine*, where I gave my respect to the deity and enjoyed the natural beauty of the place. I met some Japanese people and they asked me to visit the next destination with them and we went to the *Akasaka Hikawa Shrine together*. The serenity of the temple really moved me.

The next destination was *Kanda Shrine*, the shrine and the surrounding nature are juxtaposed with modern culture and architecture and a beautiful feeling of the intermingling of the past and the present can be felt. The motifs of many anime characters can be found among the *Ema* or the hanging wooden prayer tablets which is quite different from the other shrines that I had visited till that time. I took my stamp from the temple and quickly moved to *Hie shrine*, where I finally reached the top after crossing a large number of steps. The *Hie shrine* was very calm. I sat there for some time and watched an ongoing prayer ritual at the temple. My next destination was *Shiba Daijingu*. From there I took the train to *Shinagawa shrine* but after the sun set, I ran through the steps and enjoy the evening view of the shrine. A *Daikokuten* idol was located next to the *Tori*.

The next destination was *Kameidoten Shrine*, where not only the shrine but the garden view too moved me with the greenery. One of the visitors explained that the three bridges have three different names and meaning, the first bridge after crossing the *Tori* or the Shinto gate is known as '*Otoko Bashi*' representing the 'past', the second bridge is known as '*Hira Bashi*' which represents the 'present' and the third one is known as '*Onna Bashi*' which represents the 'future'. I enjoyed the view of Tokyo Sky tree

² Palanquin (Portable shrine carried in festivals).

from the garden. The 25th day of every month is considered as the Day of *Tenjin Sama*. I received my temple stamp and again rushed for the next destination but this time was unable to reach it on time and the *Tomioka Hachimangū* was closed but I paid my respect to the deity and sat there for some time before returning. The next morning again I went to the *Tomioka Hachimangū* to pay respect to the deity and collected my temple stamp. From there I moved to *Nezu* shrine to pray and thereby completed my journey. Then I went back to the *Oji Shrine* again to finally complete my pilgrimage, because I heard that we must end our pilgrimage from where we started the journey.

Through this journey I have learned about many things, from how to pray in a Shinto shrine to how to enjoy the nature by not only watching it but by feeling my own self to be a part of it. I learned about *Shodō* calligraphy at shrines, as well as punctuality and generosity to help others.

During my walk, I met aged Japanese people who visit these shrines every year to enjoy the spiritual environment. The beautiful smell and the lovely smoke of incense always made me feel calm and hearing the profound recitation of sutras gave me a wonderful feeling. I personally believe that every visitor to Tokyo should undertake this pilgrimage of the Ten Shrines of Tokyo for emotional upliftment as well. One can easily feel the simplicity of nature and spirituality of the Buddhist teachings during this short trip.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Goshuin* or the temple stamp is not always drawn in the *Goshuin-chō* or the stamp book, the stamp is prepared in a separate paper and one can receive it from the temple. *Nezu shrine*, *Kanda Shrine*, *Kameidoten Jinja*, *Hakusan Shrine*, and *Shiba Daijingu* gave the *Goshuin* on paper, but *Oji shrine*, *Hie shrine*, *Shinagawa shrine*, *Tomioka Hachimangū*, and *Akasaka Hikawa shrine* gave the *Goshuin* on the *Goshuin-chō*.

The offering for the *Goshuin* is different according to each of the shrines, ranging from 300 Japanese Yen (around 194 INR) to 500 Japanese Yen (around 323 INR). I received *Omamori* or amulet for protection and candy at *Hie shrine*, *Shiba Daijingō* and *Kameidoten shrine*.

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