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## Japan: Journey Reflections

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# Japan:

## *Journey Reflections*

by Dorothy Pulsifer



Traveling to Japan in May of 2003 for 19 days was my first direct experience of an Eastern culture. Arriving in Tokyo, somewhat overwhelmed by its size and intensity, I soon grew to enjoy this truly livable city and spent several days cycling about—one of the best ways to see Tokyo. Sites visited included the Imperial Palace, temples, museums, galleries, Ueno Park, the Tsukiji fish market, restaurants, shopping and even a Sumo Wrestling event.

We traveled to Kamakura twice, an easy train trip from Tokyo, and took the Nozomi Shinkansen to Kyoto. Travel also included Nara and Nikko. We stayed in small family run inns, enjoyed Japanese food and the many travelers both Japanese and gai-jin we met along the way. Travel was funded in part by professional development funds and a Faculty and Librarian Research Grant.



### **"Condomania"**

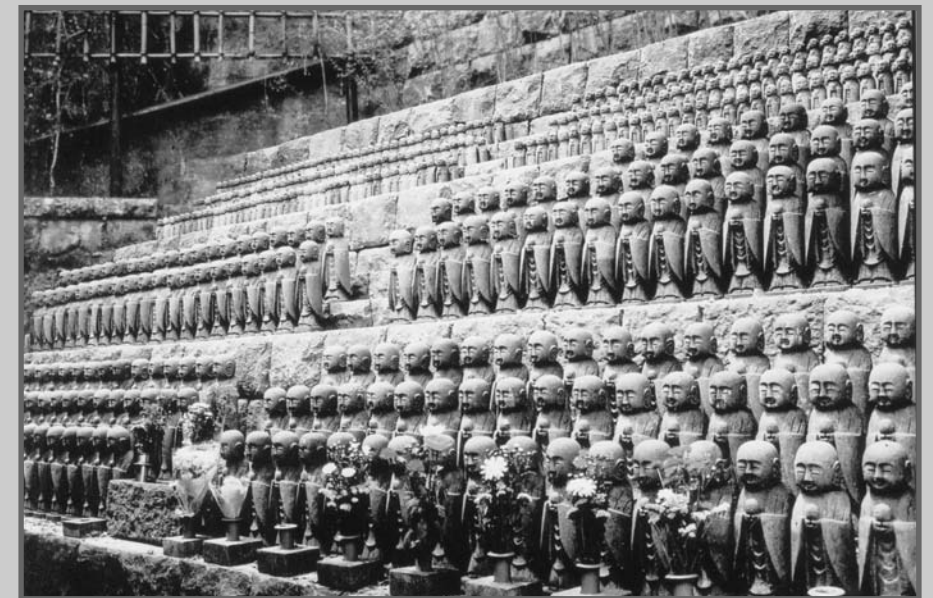
The bright colors, energetic clutter of the shops and activity of the people capture the tenor of life in Tokyo. I particularly enjoy the young woman in the foreground clearly finding humor in the setting.

**Right, Kamakura Daibutsu—The Great Buddha of Kamakura**  
Cast of bronze in 1252 during the Kamakura Period (1185–1573) this Buddha is an impressive technical accomplishment. 37 feet high and weighing 93 tons its scale is impressive. It was originally housed in a great hall which was destroyed by a tidal wave in 1369. Although not quite as large as the Buddha at Nara, this Buddha, being out in the open is more easily enjoyed from many perspectives.

The Kamakura Daibutsu belongs to the Kotkuin temple of the Jodo sect of Buddhism.

**Below, The Daibutsu Den or the Great Buddha Hall at Todai-ji Temple in Nara** was first built in 734AD as a national temple. It has been rebuilt twice after being destroyed by fire. The present structure built in 1567 although smaller than the original is still the largest wooden structure in the world.

**Center, Photos of Zojoji Temple and the Tokyo Tower** were digitally modified to produce this image. I particularly liked the contrast between the traditional architecture of the temple and the 20<sup>th</sup> century structure of the Tokyo tower. The youngsters leaving the temple add to the meaning of this image as the young Japanese come to understand their nation's ancient past and meld it to the technological future. I purposefully created the strong value contrast to dramatize the image as well as the symbolism.



**Upper Right, Lanterns of many types are found in temples and in areas surrounding them.** It seems to me that for the Japanese the sense that if one of something is pleasing then having many is certainly much more pleasing. This photo, taken in Nara, shows one of the many walkways between the temples lined with lanterns. The gardens in Nara are also well known for the hundreds of large stone lanterns that line the paths.

**Lower Right, At Hase-Dera Temple in Kamakura there are hundreds of statues of Jizo,** the deity who guides the spirits of unborn or deceased children, easing their suffering. Often these statues are clothed in tiny garments placed on them by grieving mothers or sometimes a hat or bib is given as a gift from a parent rejoicing because a child has been cured thanks to Jizo's intervention. This popular deity is also the guardian of expectant mothers, firemen, travelers and pilgrims and can be found everywhere, but especially in graveyards, often adding a colorful accent with brightly colored clothing.





**Above left and right, Located in Tokyo's Rappongi Hills, the newly built 54 story Mori Tower**, business and residential complex has recently been in the news for the opening of the Mori contemporary art museum.

Noted in several sources was the fact that the Japanese are not avid museum goers. The developer Minoru Mori hopes to begin changing this by creating a dramatic architectural setting for his new museum. When I visited, the museum was still not complete but there were long lines waiting to visit the city view floor on the top of the tower as well as many people enjoying the architecture and beautiful grounds surrounding the buildings. The images of the Mori tower shown here have been digitally manipulated to enhance the drama of the structures.

**Right, A blessing from a red robed deity greets the visitor to the Great Buddha Hall at Todai-ji.** In this image the dark cross of the architectural elements behind the sculpture create an accidental yet interesting connection with Christianity.



—Dorothy Pulsifer is  
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