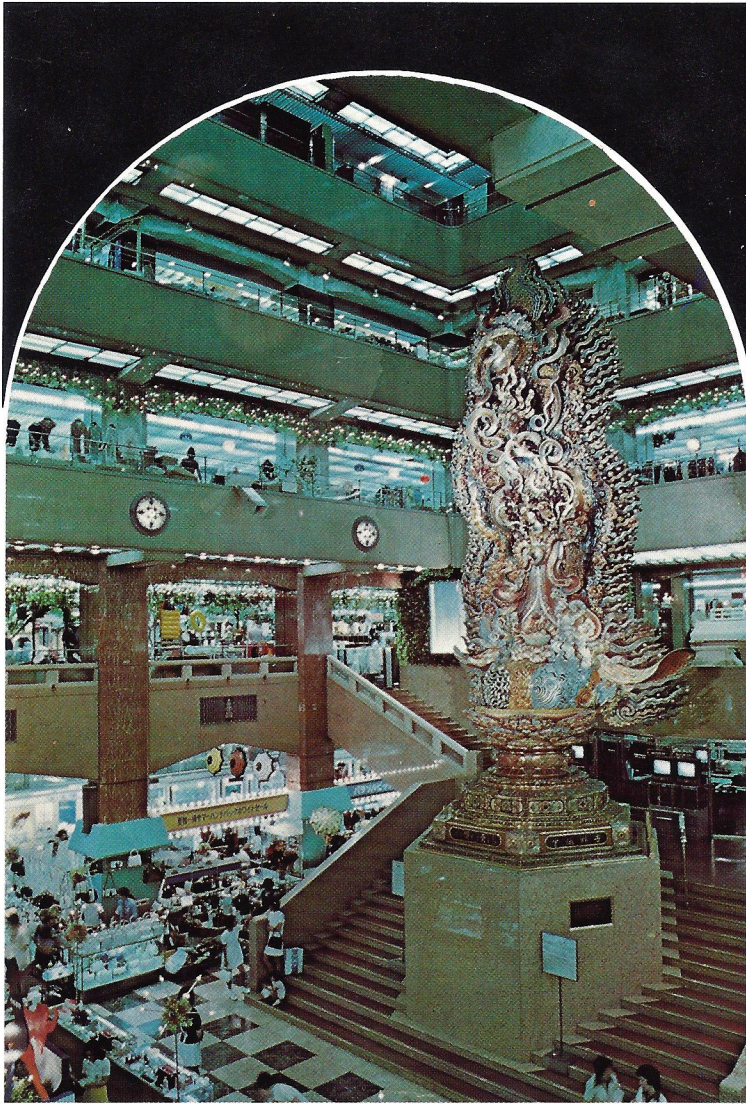


# WORLD'S LARGEST SHOPPING CENTER?

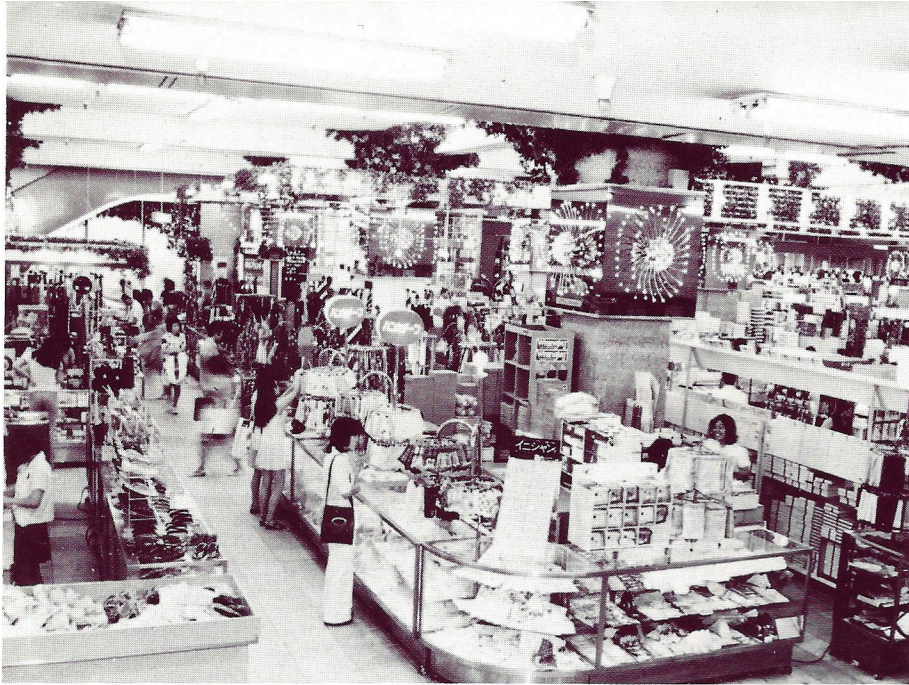


Story and pictures by Jack Goldfarb

When you go into a department store in Tokyo, you don't necessarily go to shop. You might also slam a golf ball down an 18-hole course, fix your teeth at the clinic, attend classes in flower arranging or tea serving, consult a child-care expert, buy property from a realtor, sell shares through a stockbroker, watch a theatre performance or sit in on a television show, quietly meditate in a rock garden, or even get married in a wedding hall — all part of the shopping scene.

This wide variety of facilities, and more (catering to what is likely the world's largest shopping crowds) are offered in the new-old shopping complex of Tokyo that consists of twenty-five huge and imaginatively appointed stores clustered around the Ginza and Shinjuku districts. (continued)





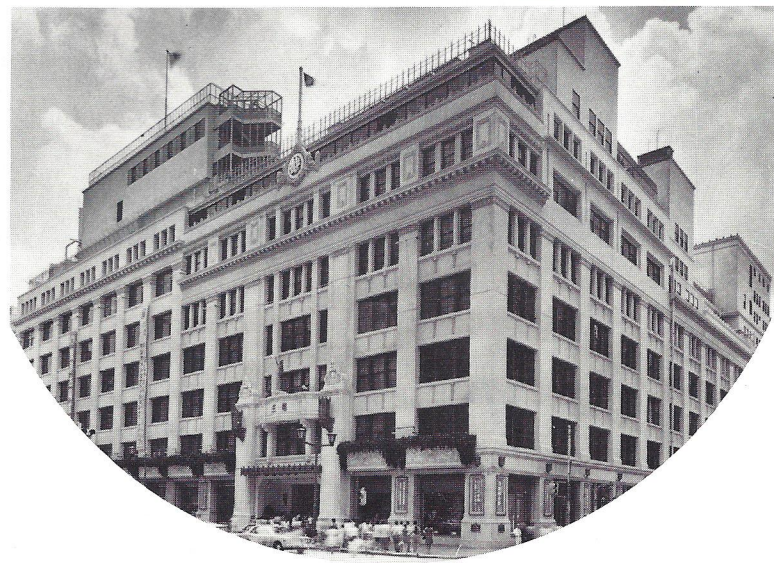
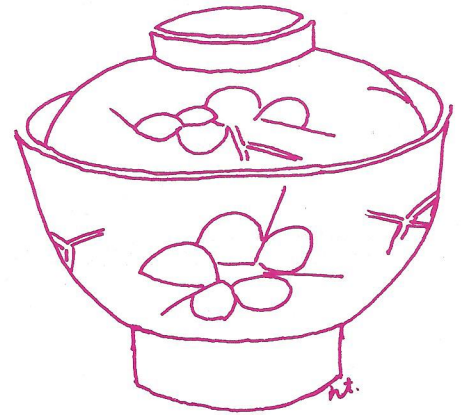
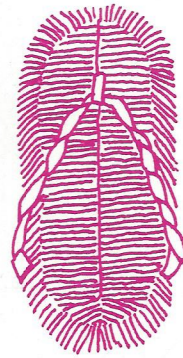
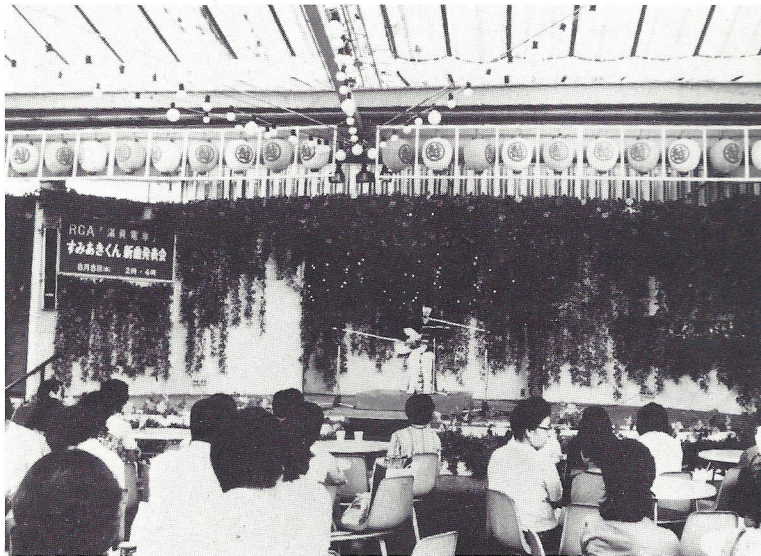
## WORLD'S LARGEST SHOPPING CENTER?

(continued)

Whether or not these various ornate and bustling emporiums make up the world's largest shopping center, it's been estimated that as many as 250,000 persons may squeeze together under one roof in the course of a business day! Included in the complex are stores (like the oldest one shown below) that have been around for over 300 years. A goodly share of the 75 billion dollars a year the public spends here may get calculated on the abacuses as well as rung up on the modern cash registers.

Still, it's difficult to realize that there was a very long period when Japan isolated itself from the rest of the world. Today, East meets West gracefully as merchandise on the artistically arranged sales counters in all of the stores. In fact, products designed by or for the "namban" (visitor) are crowding in with ever-increasing quantities.

In close proximity one finds bamboo chopsticks and Danish silverware, tatami straw mats and American innerspring mattresses, geta wooden clogs and Italian doeskin shoes, classic woodblock prints and Rock Festival posters, Happi coats and Pierre Cardin suits, cultured pearls and Swiss watches, traditional kimonos and trendy Carnaby Street garb.





The mammoth food departments, on the other hand, mainly feature Oriental items. The variety and volume of such viands is almost overwhelming. Packaged and freshly prepared foodstuffs comprise 18% of the total sales (compared to an average 2% in the U.S.A.) Places to eat and drink likewise abound on the premises, from sumptuous Kobe beef steakhouses to tiny, hushed tearooms. One Shinjuku store alone boasts more than forty eating spots scattered throughout its huge building.

There are "Luxury Item" departments where one might buy a hand-painted porcelain vase for half a million yen (about \$2,000). To be found in the complex, too, are departments showing handmade deluxe kimonos ranging from 18,000 to 2 million yen.

The rooftops are mostly devoted to children's playgrounds and adult recreation areas. They offer zoos, fishing ponds, waterfalls, gardens — even shrines for the day's prayers. In many sections of the busy stores, however, you would almost think you were in any large metropolitan shopping center — except, perhaps, when it comes to such things as trading stamps or credit cards.

