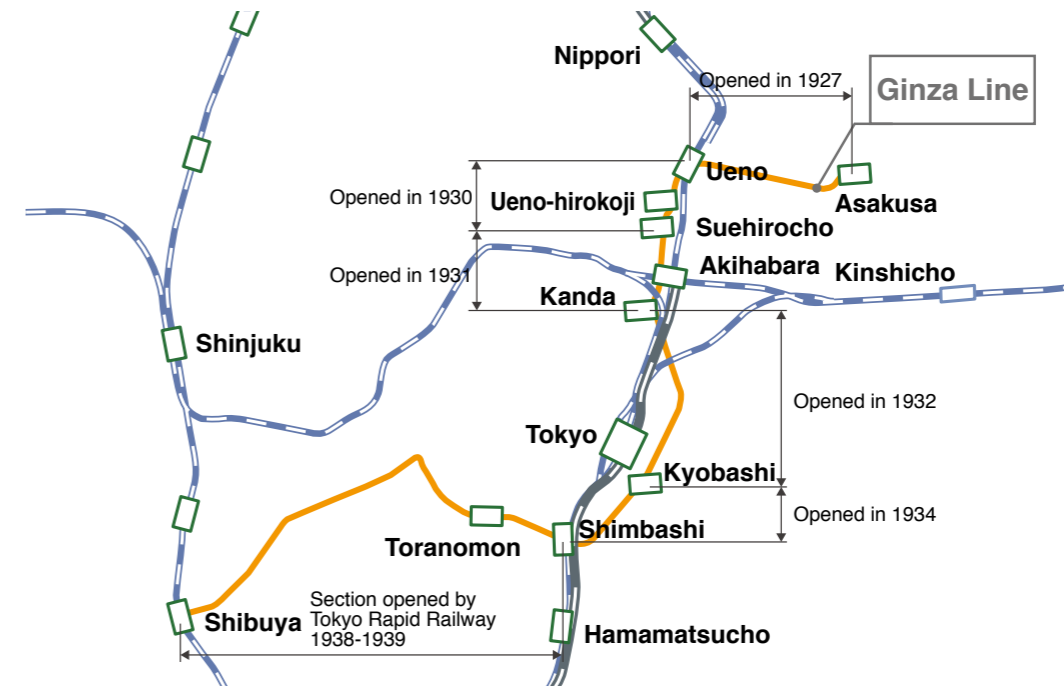


05 | The Orient's first subway starts service

Construction of a subway was already positioned within the 1903 Tokyo City Planning Ordinance. However, the plan lacked effectiveness at the time, and the Tokyo Underground Railway Company, established in 1920, was first to realize subway construction.

Although the Tokyo Underground Railway Company had originally planned on constructing a subway line between Ueno and Shimbashi (5.8km), the repercussions of an economic recession and the Great Kanto Earthquake made it difficult to fund the project. Approval for construction was obtained by changing the section to be constructed, reducing the size of the project. Construction commenced in 1924, with the Asakusa-Ueno section completed in 1927. And, by 1934, operation of the initially planned service between Ueno and Shimbashi started.

Meanwhile, the City of Tokyo was also planning construction of a full-fledged municipal subway as part of reconstruction projects following the earthquake, and acquired permission to build four lines (65.7km) in 1925. However, a lack of funding continued after the Great Kanto Earthquake and it was difficult for the city to start subway construction. Therefore, in 1934, the city of Tokyo ceded a portion of its lines to the Tokyo Rapid Railway Co. In 1938, the Tokyo Rapid Railway Co. opened the Toranomon-Shibuya section, and the following year, services began between Shibuya and Shimbashi. Through service with the Tokyo Underground Railway Company also began in 1939, making it possible for passengers to travel the full length of the line from Asakusa to Shibuya.



Map of the Ginza Line (1938-1939)
Today's Ginza Line was completed by overcoming a variety of difficulties, including construction challenges such as tunneling beneath the Kanda and Nihombashi rivers. Prepared from *Ginza-senrosenzu* (Ginza Line map), Tokyo Metro.



Start of service on the Ginza Line
(Above) Source: Tokyo Metro Museum
(Left) From the collection of the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library.
The start of service between Asakusa and Ueno in 1927 produced a response beyond expectations. On the inaugural day of service, passengers flooded the stations established at Asakusa, Tawaramachi, Inaricho, and Ueno prior to departure of the first train. It is said that the number of passengers exceeded 40,000 during the morning hours alone.



Poster commemorating the start of subway service
From the collection of the Kyoto Institute of Technology Museum and Archives (Collection number: AN2694-1).
At the time, this poster announcing the start of subway service became widely known and helped to make the subway popular as a stylish form of transportation linking bustling areas of the city.



First ticket gates (Ginza Line)
Turnstiles made in the United States were adopted to serve as ticket gates when service was launched. It was an innovative system at the time. Passengers dropped a ten-sen nickel coin into the fare collection box at the entrance to the turnstile and then pushed the cross-shaped wooden arm to enter.
Source: Tokyo Metro Museum.

Popular attractions of Asakusa

- Asakusa developed around Sensoji Temple. With Tokugawa Ieyasu's move to Edo, Sensoji was designated as a tutelary temple of the Tokugawa clan, and the temple bustled with activity as many commoners visited the *nakamise*, shops lining the approach to the temple from Kaminarimon Gate, which could also be considered a symbol of the temple town of Asakusa.
- In the Meiji era, Tokyo's first "high-rise building," the Ryunkaku (Asakusa Twelve Stories), and entertainment districts such as the Rokku Entertainment District appeared, making Asakusa a hub for amusement

and entertainment, a role it still carries on today.

- In the Taisho era, shops selling vintage and antique items continued to open on the west side of Asakusa, and tourists come for the specialized shopping district even today.

Asakusa has used the foundation of tradition passed down to it from the Edo period to establish its position as a popular entertainment spot for everyone.

Source: *Taitoku toshikeikaku master plan* (Taito-ku urban planning master plan).



Map of the Sensoji Temple grounds from *Toto Meisho* (Famous places of the Eastern Capital)
In the Edo period, Asakusa became a popular area visited by people to worship, have fun, or be entertained.
Source: Sensoji Temple.



Ryunkaku
From the collection of the Taito Ward Shitamachi Museum.
In 1890, Ryunkaku was an observation tower built in Asakusa Park. It was Japan's tallest building at the time.



A view of Asakusa Nakamise shops as they were from the Taisho era and Niomon Gate in the distance
From the Collection of the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library.
The Nakamise approach to the temple, red brick construction since 1885, was destroyed in the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, and rebuilt with reinforced concrete construction two years later in 1925 to be reborn as a proud shopping district.