

Nihonbashi is Edo

The Nihonbashi Bridge as a Symbol of History and People



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1. Nihonbashi Bridge before the expressway



The Fish-market at Nihonbashi, Tokyo.

2. The Fishmarket at Nihonbashi, Tokyo.

Historical Significance of Nihonbashi Bridge

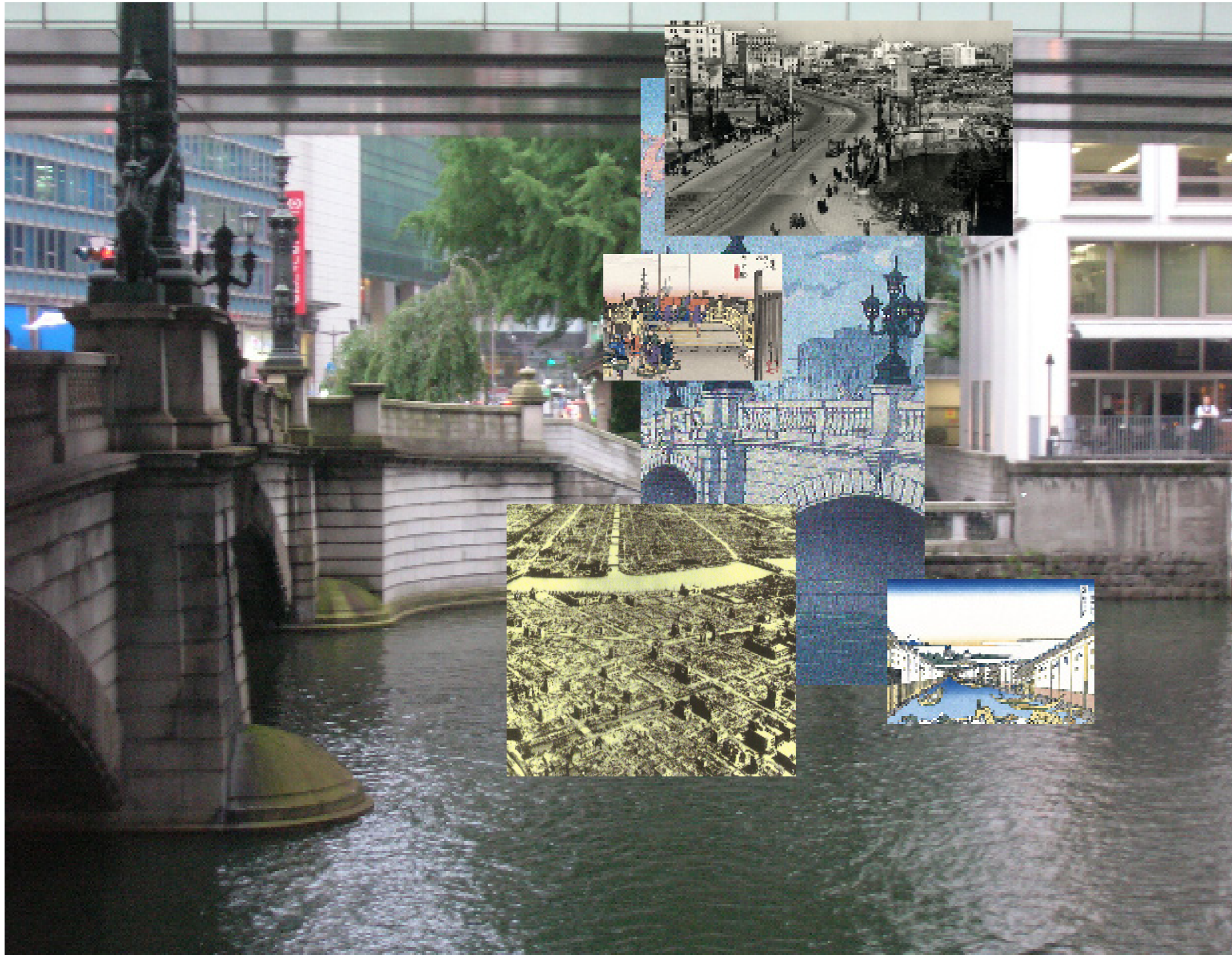
The Nihonbashi Bridge was commissioned for construction, by the Shogun Ieyasu, in 1603. The bridge represented two things in feudal Japan. The first, the Nihonbashi Bridge was the starting point from where all distances in the country were measured. The second, Nihonbashi Bridge marked the starting point of the Go-Kaido, the five famous post roads like, Nakasendo and Tokaido Roads. These roads connected Edo, the Shogun's administrative capital, to the Imperial capital, Kyoto, and the other outlying provincial districts.

The Transformation of Nihonbashi

After the bridge was first built, it allowed mobility over the river, at a time when traversing the river was difficult. The area around the Nihonbashi Bridge quickly grew into a commercial, cultural and entertainment area. Nihonbashi is recognized as one of the first real marketplaces in Japan. Many riverside shophouses, warehouses, fishmarkets, and goods and services businesses, during the Tokugawa Era, would remain in Nihonbashi, until the last of the fishmongers were relocated to Tsukiji following the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake.

The Problem of the Expressway

A 2006 questionnaire done by the Nikkei BP asked people about whether they thought the expressway should be removed. About two-thirds of the respondents said they wanted it removed. But the most important problem facing this proposal is the cost. Prime Minister Koizumi asked a private consultive committee to study the possibility of removing the expressway in Dec. 2005. The proposal by the committee in Sept. 2006, for the expressway to be put underground would cost \$4- 5 billion dollars.



Future Proposal

The Nihonbashi bridge is one of only two Meiji Era bridges remaining in Tokyo. The structure maintains its original presence. But the expressway does diminish the historical significance of the area.

The proposal we came up with was to put up pictures of the history of Nihonbashi. In one of the four corners off to the side of the bridge are areas that signs describing the history of Nihonbashi. These are areas that wouldn't interfere with the ambiance of the bridge.

The Edo-Tokyo Museum is close, but to put up some historical pictures of the bridge in the area would be a great way for people to visually learn the history of Nihonbashi. It would be a great place for families to come and enjoy the area.

By using pictures to tell the history of Nihonbashi so it convenient and not disturbing the area around the bridge is very important. The Nihonbashi Bridge is not something you can highlight and it already has a natural beauty and history to it. It is not a theme park area that needs drastic change but something subtle like telling the history through pictures of Nihonbashi.