

# SHOWA-KAN

We convey the life of Japanese during and after the World War II



## Museum Guide

### 7th & 6th floor Exhibition Room



The permanent exhibition displays objects reflecting the life of Japanese from 1935 to 1955.

(Admission fee required)

(The left item is a ceramic iron used during the Showa Era due to the lack of metals during the World War II.)

### 5th floor Audio Visual Room



You can explore the Showa Era through the audio-visual materials (photographs, news films, music, etc) from that time. (Free)

(The photo shows a temporary housing built in the ruins of Tokyo in September 1945.

Provided by U.S. National Archives & Records Administration.)

### 4th floor Library

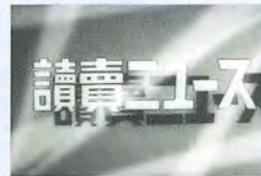


A wide range of literature gives you an opportunity to find out the situation and the background of life in the Showa Era. (Free)

The news films are playing every day.

### Showa-kan's News Theater

Free entry/At the 1st floor cinema  
(programs change every Saturday)



### 3rd floor Hall

Spaces for school groups, special exhibitions, etc.

### 2nd floor Square

This open space is for the multi-purpose use including the photo exhibition and events.

### 1st floor Entrance/ General information

## About Showa-kan

Showa-kan/National Showa Memorial Museum is a national facility for collecting, preserving, and exhibiting historical materials related to the hardships of citizens' lives (including bereaved families) during and after the World War II. We provide an opportunity for the future generations to know these hardships.

Showa-kan opened in March 1999 and is currently managed by the Japanese War Bereaved Families Association, which is commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

## Information

### Hours

Tuesday – Sunday, 10 a.m. – 5.30 p.m. (5 p.m last entry)

### Closed

Monday (if Monday falls on a public holiday, the museum is closed on the following day)

Year-end & New Year Holidays (December 28 to January 4)

### Admissions

(including tax)

	Individuals	Groups (20 persons or more)
Adults	¥400	(¥320)
Seniors (65 and over)	¥360	(¥300)
High School/ University students	¥200	(¥160)

\* Junior High school students and younger : Free

## Attention



Please do not touch the exhibits.  
(not including the hands-on exhibition)



For copyright and material protection, photography, filming, and recording are not permitted.  
(not including the hands-on exhibition)



Please refrain from talking on the phone inside the building.



Consumption of food is not permitted inside the building.  
(Beverages in closed or covered containers are permitted)



Please be quiet inside the building.



Smoking is not permitted inside the building.

## Access Guide



### By subway

1-minute walk from Exit 4 of Kudanshita Station (Tozai Line/Hanzomon Line/Toei Shinjuku Line)

### By car

1 minute drive from Nishi-Kanda Intersection on the Metropolitan Expressway. Please park by the Yasukuni Dori Street.

- Parking is limited to regular passenger cars.
- Please contact us beforehand if you intend to come by tourist bus.

### Parking fee

¥200 per 30 minutes (regular passenger cars only)

### Directions to entrance

Enter from the 1st floor entrance on Yasukuni Dori

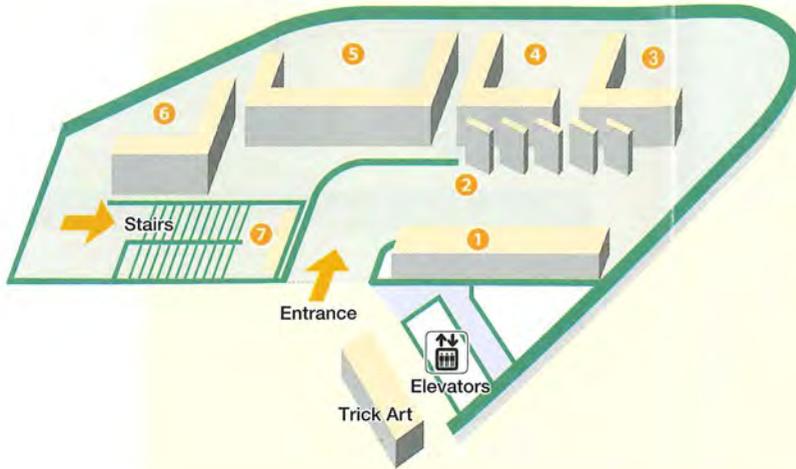
### For information



Showa-kan/National Showa Memorial Museum  
Kudan Minami 1-6-1, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 102-0074  
Phone: (03) 3222-2577 Fax: (03) 3222-2575  
<https://www.showakan.go.jp>

7<sup>th</sup>  
floor

## 1st Exhibition Room (The Life of Japanese During the War)



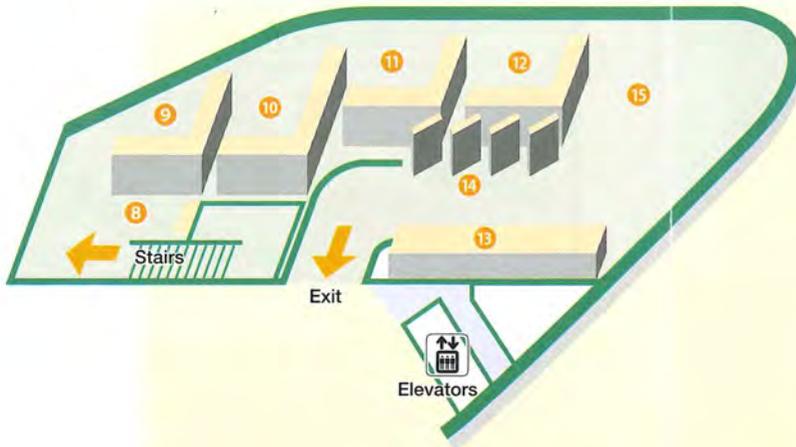
This exhibition room features objects reflecting the life of Japanese from 1935 to 1945.

- 1 Parting with family
- 2 Letters to the homefront
- 3 Family life around 1935
- 4 Life under wartime government control
- 5 Schoolchildren and students during the war
- 6 Homefront preparations and air-raids
- 7 August 15th, 1945



6<sup>th</sup>  
floor

## 2nd Exhibition Room (The Life of Japanese After the War)



This exhibition room features objects reflecting the life of Japanese from 1945 to 1955.

- 8 Japan immediately after the war
- 9 Rising from the ashes
- 10 Bereaved families
- 11 Childhood and postwar years
- 12 Postwar economic recovery
- 13 The changing times: 1935 to 1965
- 14 Memorial visits
- 15 Hands-on exhibition



# 5<sup>th</sup> floor

## Audio Visual Room

Data such as documentary photographs and videos, news films, and records, have been digitally preserved and can be viewed from any terminal.



In our database, there are documentary photographs and videos taken mainly from 1935 to 1955 by Japanese and foreign photographers, news films documenting people's lives during those times, and music recorded on standard playing records from that time. You can easily search and access to these data.

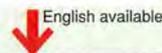
### How to use the search system (audio visual data)



Search by category: Photographs, Videos, Records, Drawings, or Themes. Cross-search is also available.



You can search by Title, Word, or Date. If you have a keyword for something that you are interested in, word search would be most useful.



English available



Data can be viewed on the terminals. (This photo, "Burnt Ruins (near Kudan Minami)" was taken by Ishikawa Koyo in March 1945.)

# 4<sup>th</sup> floor

## Library

Visitors have free access to the library for reading and research purposes. (Most of the collections are Japanese materials.) Please note: the collections are for in-library use only.



Here, we mainly have books and documents about the daily lives of Japanese people during and after the war. There are various types of resources you can use for study and research: books and magazines published from that time, war history publications, and books related to the history of municipalities, cities, and companies. In addition, maps, reduced-size edition newspapers and periodical literature are also available.

### How to use the search system (library data)



Search by category: Books, Magazines, Maps, or Digital Library. Cross-search is also available.



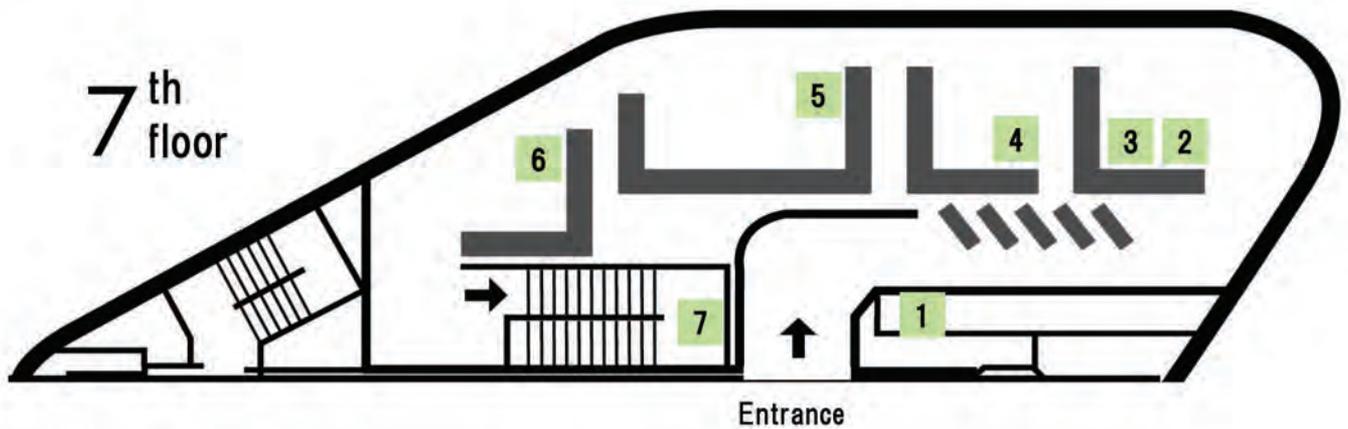
Choose the search category (Title, Author, Classification, Publication date, or Keyword) and type the words or date. Click the item you want to see to check the details.

Japanese only

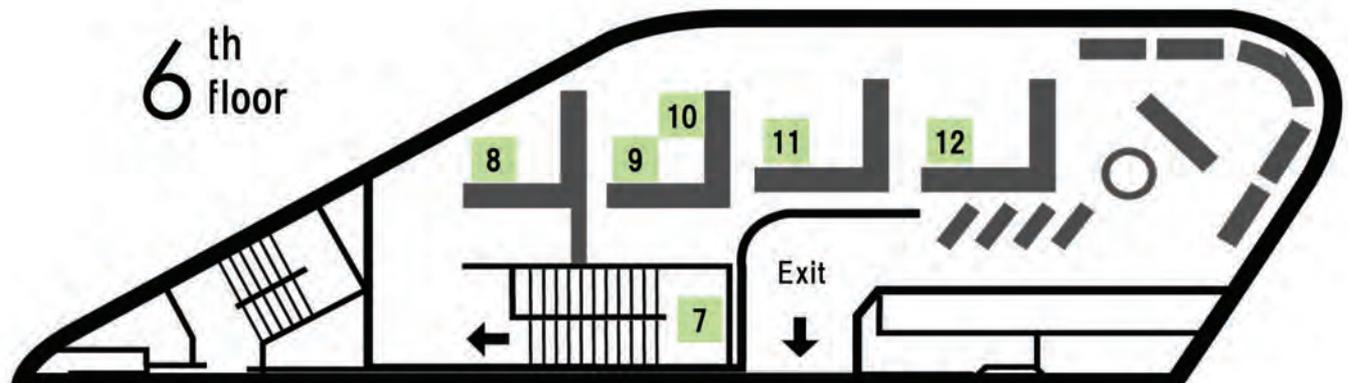


Books on the open shelves can be read and viewed freely.

For more information, please inquire at the reception.



No.	Title	Time
1	Parting with family	2'09"
2	Family life around 1935	1'29"
3	【The 1937 Japanese hit song】 (Only Japanese) "Life Boulevard" by Dick Mine	3'49"
4	Life under wartime government control	2'12"
5	Schoolchildren and students during the war	2'06"
6	Homefront preparations and air-raids	1'47"



No.	Title	Time
7	【A radio broadcast by the Emperor announcing the end of the war】 (Only Japanese)	4'39"
8	Departing from the ruins	2'11"
9	Bereaved family	1'27"
10	【Material 2: Written Essay Together with mother】	6'42"
11	The children's postwar years	1'48"
12	Towards revival	1'44"
	Sum total time of the 7th floor and the 6th floor	32'03"

Please find a green numbered sign.

**You can have Audio guidance whatever you choose.**

**Please follow "How to use" bellow.**

Earphones are available.

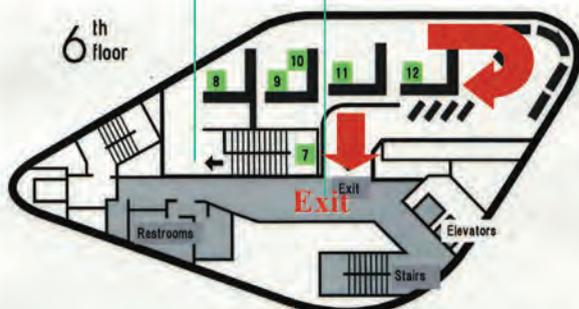
Please ask to our receptionists.

## - How To Use -



- ① Press the number which corresponds to the work.
- ② The number is marked on the wall next to the caption.
- ③ Hold AUDIO GUIDE near your ear.
- ④  There are 5 volume settings.
- ⑤ If you press the wrong number, press  to restart.

Each text stops automatically.



## - Notice -

Please return AUDIO GUIDE and this program to the reception desk on 6<sup>th</sup> floor by the gate.

*Thank you for your cooperation.*

## 1. Parting with family

Formerly in Japan there was a law for “military service” and as a rule every healthy male who reached the age of 20 took physical examination for military service. Military service meant that one serves in the army as a duty to one’s country. This law was revised in 1889 and continued until the end of the war, in 1945.

The men who took physical examination were divided into 5 classes which were first, second, third, fourth and fifth. Normally the candidates who were placed in the first class were assembled for active duty and spent 2 or 3 years in the army. However, once war began those other than the first class and even those who had completed their active duty time had to join the army. Once the people who were to become soldiers received call-up warrants, which signaled their duty to the army, they were given training in their respective units and then they were sent to the battlefield. Emergency call-up warrants were known as “Red papers” as they were printed on a light red colored form.

The mothers and wives who were sent this “Red paper” prepared a cloth called “Thousand stitches” in the hope for their sons’ and husbands’ safety. The “Thousand stitches” was a cloth sewn in a red-colored thread by a thousand women. It was a prayer for the soldiers to be uninjured, to fight bravely and for their safe return.

Patterns of “Tigers” were frequently used because according to legend, “A tiger runs a thousand miles and returns from a thousand miles”. Also women who were born in the year of the Tiger were allowed to knot the number of threads equal to their age. Many 5 sen coins were sewn in meaning “To overcome death” and the 10 sen coins meant “To overcome severe battle”.

## 2. Family life around 1935

The Sino-Japanese war began on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1937 due to the Rokokyo Incident but the effects of war were not felt so much in the home. People lived peacefully, though modestly.

During this time, electricity was spreading throughout the country but the only household electric appliances were the electric light and radio. Most of the housework such as the cleaning and washing were done by hand. The majority was still drawing water from wells for their cooking and washing even though water service and gas were beginning to spread mainly in the city. The washing method before the arrival of the washing machine was to put water in a wash tub, place a washboard at an angle, spread the laundry over it and wash vigorously with a bar of soap. It was tiring work, especially for families with many children.

The suits which men wore around 1935 were not so different from those of today and in the city, women also began wearing western-clothes to work. In elementary school, apart from certain areas, uniforms were unavailable but most boys and girls attended in school clothes.

### 3. STANDARD PLAYING RECORD

【The 1937 Japanese hit song】 (Only Japanese)  
"Life Boulevard" by Dick Mine

### 4. Life under wartime government control

With the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War, the whole country agreed to cooperate with the war and in 1938 it began a movement for spiritual mobilization of citizens. A sense of patriotism was raised and every area of life such as education, events, physical education and entertainment was centered on war. After 1939, one day in a month was designated as Asia-Development Public Service Day, which meant that on that day, meal consisted of a modest miso soup, rice with one side dish such as the "box lunch with a pickled plum in the center of the rice". People referred to this box lunch as the rising sun boxed lunch like the sun in the Japanese flag, the red plum is centered against the white rice. The aim of this event was to turn ones thought to the hardship of the soldiers in the battlefield and to live plainly as they did.

The government began to collect metals from the public to build battleships and weapons and made many rules to withdraw mailboxes, benches and so on, which were made of metal. The iron and copper from gates and billboards of factories and shops were collected as well as temple bells.

During this time, the country was facing a food-shortage. Imports from overseas decreased due to war, and as many of the men who were growing crops had to leave for war, the women and children who were left behind were not able to reap a satisfactory harvest. In order to solve the problem, rice was conserved and people were encouraged to skip meals. Still the food shortage was serious and a rationing system was introduced. Furthermore, as the government encouraged the cultivation of crops in vacant areas, people grew potatoes and pumpkins in parks, sports grounds and empty areas of factories to stave off their hunger.

### 5. Schoolchildren and students during the war

The Pacific War started in 1941. In April of that year, elementary school as it was called for a long time, changed its name to “National elementary school” and even the contents of the textbooks were altered. The children were also called “Little nationals” so that, in the future, the boys could grow up to be soldiers who could fight in the war and the girls could protect the country. They received various training from school. The boys had martial arts training and the girls had nursing and Naginata (longsword) training.

Childrens’ play gradually changed from playing “tag” and sword fights to playing soldiers wearing toy helmets and carrying guns.

Also popular magazines for boys such as “Boys’ Club” increasingly brought up the subject of war.

Once the air raids on the city started, from 1944, children were encouraged to evacuate to the country where there were less air-raids. At first, people relied upon their relatives but as there were many children who did not have relatives in rural areas, children from third year to sixth year National primary schools were brought together and taken to the country. These were called “Group school children evacuation” and over 400,000 children nationwide went to places which they did not know, and in an environment which they were not used to, they helped with farm work, preparing meals and studied at temples and local branch schools.

Moreover as the conditions of war worsened, children were required for labor work and in March 1945 it was decided that students from National higher education department which is equivalent to today’s junior high school were to work in munitions factories for a year without taking classes.

## 6. Homefront preparations and air-raids

In 1942 on 18<sup>th</sup> April, the first air-raids on the Japanese mainland took place. The cities that were damaged were Tokyo, Kawasaki, Yokosuka, Nagoya, Yokkaichi, Kobe and others. The air raids became harsher by the day. People dug holes in the ground to build air-raid shelters to protect themselves from bombs and incendiary bombs that were dropped by enemy planes. Apart from air-raid shelters that were made for homes, collective shelters were made in schools, offices, parks and roadsides. Fire started from houses and shops, which were caused by the air raids, and in order not to let fire spread to public offices, military buildings, factories and railway stations, the neighborhood houses and shops were destroyed or removed.

From December 1944 towards the end of the war, the air raids worsened and the numbers of deaths approached nearly 470,000 people and the numbers of damaged buildings reached about 2,280,000. In order to prepare for the air raids, government and ordinary people had fire prevention training, shelter training and simulation training on a daily basis, but they were not effective.

Foreseeing the night air raids, the lights in homes, factories and shops were covered and the curtains were drawn.

7. 【A radio broadcast by the Emperor announcing the end of the war】 (Only Japanese)

8. Departing from the ruins

The war ended and Japan finally returned to a peaceful life. However, people's homes were burnt down by air raids and Tokyo for example, was covered with burnt fields. People who had nowhere to go, began to live in shacks called "Barraku" or "Barracks" as a temporary shelter. The water supply and drainage was in poor condition and as contagious diseases spread by fleas, lice and mosquitoes were prevalent, the Occupation forces decided to provide medicine and chemicals. Powerful insecticides called DDT and vaccines were used to stop the spreading of the diseases.

In 1945, the year the war ended, crops like rice and vegetables were not sufficiently grown. This was because of the bad weather and the lack of adequate fertilization during the war. Meanwhile, the 6,500,000 soldiers who fought in places like the Southern isles, Taiwan, Korea, and China, came back to Japan, thus temporarily worsening the shortage of food and supply.

In order to pull through these crises, the government requested the GHQ the General Headquarters of the Allied Forces in Japan at the time for imported food. In turn, the headquarters supplied a large quantity of grain, bottled and canned food as well as rice.

With the return of workers and the establishment of a new constitution, signs of recovery from the war began to be seen. This constitution which remains even to this day, upholds three main principles: the fundamental human rights, sovereignty of the people and permanent peace.

9. Bereaved families

After the war, although people no longer had to be afraid of air raids, a hard life was still awaiting them. That is to say, their homes were burnt down and they could not buy food readily. During this time, the hardships of bereaved families who lost their husbands or fathers at the front were even worse. Until the war ended, the bereaved families were regarded as "house of honor" and were given respect. This was also the neighbors' way of giving encouragement. The government also gave them a pension. However, after the war when people were forced to worry about their own lives, the treatment of bereaved families changed completely. Following the orders of the General Headquarters, the pensions from the government were stopped or reduced.

The wives who lost their husbands, some of whom even carried children, earned a small amount of money by sewing clothes or kimono. Again, children who lost their fathers during the war could only know about them through remaining photographs or letters. Children helped their mothers by delivering newspapers or doing the housework. There were also many children who wanted further education but had to give up due to financial reasons.

## 10. 【Material 2: Written Essay Together with mother】

Together with mother

First grade Class Five number 30

Toshio Miyawaki

Today, again, as the rain looks as though it is about to fall, I see my mother off as she places a large luggage on her bicycle and leaves the house. I stand still at the entrance hall until I lose sight of her behind the fences. My mother always carries clothes and goes to sell them like this, for us.

In 1945, I lost my father in that war. So I do not even know what he looks like. I look at a photograph of him and think, "Oh, so this is what my father was like". My mother brought me up by herself so that I faced no inconvenience. She has already begun to be crowned with grey hair here and there.

Last summer, as a posthumous child, I went to worship at Yasukuni shrine, to meet my father though silent as he was. On a night train, I sleeplessly remembered how my mother saw me off when I went to Yasukuni shrine and her faintly gleaming eyes which glistened with tears as she said "Please pray my share too". While I recalled the scenes of my childhood days, which were nightmarish but also heart warming, I felt an intense hot burn that rose from the bottom of my heart.

It must have been 2 or 3 years before I entered primary school. It was the time when I finally remembered how to buy things at shops. My family evacuated to the country where we had relatives on my mother's side, as war started to become more severe. There was not much in the lonely farm village that a child can find consolation in, apart from "top-spinning". However having lost the sole support of the family, my mother had no time on her hands and could not afford to buy me a top. Once my mother taught me how to write my name, "Toshio", I was so happy to have finally learnt how to write that I was constantly scolded by my mother for writing my name enthusiastically on the wall. However it was not long after new year's day, I started a fight with my "House-play" friend over a top which he owned and with a fiery competitive spirit I exclaimed "I can buy myself a top too!" and bought a top with money which was kept in the desk drawer of the house. I was spinning the top by

myself at a community center. The top span outside by unexpected timing and I looked up and saw the leaden colored winter sky covering the houses that was giving off smoke as night was falling. I ran home from fear and from the cold. The cracked charcoal brazier in the house was red with whirling fire. However, I could not approach the brazier for the desk drawer was left open violently under the dim electric light. My mother who was lighting the fire did not say a word. No, she could not say anything as she must have been tired from a day's farm work and what must she have thought having seen the desk drawer as she entered the house which had no light. As she remained silent with her head down, the sight of her white hair stabbed piercingly into my eyes. After a short while, she softly looked up at me trembling and swung her neck to one side as if to say "It doesn't matter, don't worry so much!" and her eyes which smiled for me were shining with tears.

When I was at primary school, I also wrote during essay writing, "Since my father died, it's just me, my mother and my brother and I feel lonely". The comments that my teacher wrote were, "Even if you don't have a father, have hope and live on with your mother". Also at the end of a letter that my teacher gave to me when I passed senior high school entrance exam, it was written, "You are fatherless. However please overcome this pain and persevere. You have a good mother. Don't forget that there are those without both parents and try to make things easier for your mother quickly". When I read this I felt that I learned something good and my heart suddenly felt lighter. I was even embarrassed that I felt that I was wronged up until that point. In the evening, On the way back from picking up my mother who had gone shopping, I helped her onto the luggage carrier and pedaled the bicycle. When I looked up at the sky, which cleared up in the afternoon, a poem by the well known poet Ishikawa Takuboku surfaced in my mind.

Kidding around

Carried my mother

Piggy-back

I stopped dead, and cried.

She's so light...✧

It repeated it over and over and I thought how true that was. When I looked back slightly, on a background of mountain ranges which had turned red with autumn leaves, my mother was smiling.

However much hardship I face from now on, I will dream of the future and go my own way. With the belief that there is always "light" after pain and loneliness. -Together with my mother!

✧translation by Carl Sesar "Takuboku: poems to eat" Kodansa International,

## 11. The children's postwar years

Children lost their fathers and mothers in the war due to air raids and so forth and had no one to depend on. These children are called War Orphans. As bombing from the sky burned down homes and schools, the war orphans had to sleep in railway stations or under railroad overpasses with empty stomachs. They earned money by shining shoes or picking up used cigarette stubs. The American soldiers and foreign support groups who saw these unfortunate war orphans provided them with food like canned food and powdered milk.

Gradually the children started going to school to study. However as the buildings were burnt down, sports grounds or riverbanks were used as classrooms. These classrooms were called "open-air classes" because the classes were held under the sky.

Until the production of new textbooks in March 1946, "Ink painted Textbooks" were used in which sections upholding militarism were painted over in ink. After April 1947 the new textbooks began to be used.

After the war, under a new constitution, the Fundamental Law of Education was established. A new education system started where amongst other changes, required education was extended to third year junior high school, bringing required education to total 9 years and co-educational schools became standard.

Baseball was the popular game among children. As leather gloves were expensive they had gloves of cloth made by their mothers and they played with bats made of wood or bamboo sticks.

## 12. Towards revival

Two years after the war ended, in 1947, private trade resumed. Export goods were light industry products such as textiles, toys, tableware and small-sized cameras. In contrast, import articles consisted of daily necessities such as food and oil.

At home, electrical products were gradually starting to be used. In 1952 the popularity ranking of electrical goods were, First place Radio, Second place the Iron, Third place the electric cooker, Fourth place desk lamp, Fifth place Kotatsu (which is a covered table with a heat source underneath). People's objects of admiration were the electric washing machine and electric refrigerator. In 1953, the introduction of television started with a black and white, 17 inch television costing about 180,000 yen. As the starting salary of a senior high school graduate working for the government was 5,900 yen, the television was difficult to get hold of for the average person.

As Japan started to see signs of recovery, public interest began to focus on culture. At the time, cinema was one of the most enjoyed forms of entertainment. People were certainly interested in Japanese films but they also began to be interested in foreign films, which were not allowed to be shown during the war.

The popularity of professional wrestling was heightened after the spread of television and the wrestler, Rikidozan's karate chop revived the whole of Japan.