

# Three generations of play in Taishido

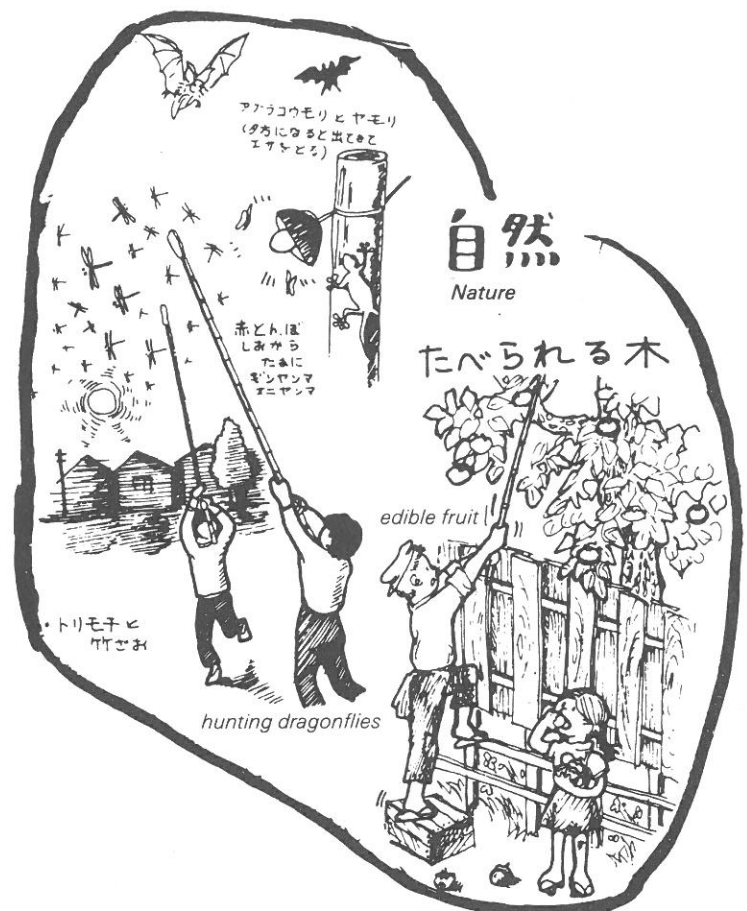
*Childhood memories of Taishido grandparents and parents compared to present-day children's play, illustrate both the continuity and changes in play behavior adapted to dramatic changes in the Taishido environment. The unique documentary achievement of the Taishido Study Group confronts us with murky issues of cultural consequences: is contemporary Taishido play-life better, worse, or just different to what it was before?*

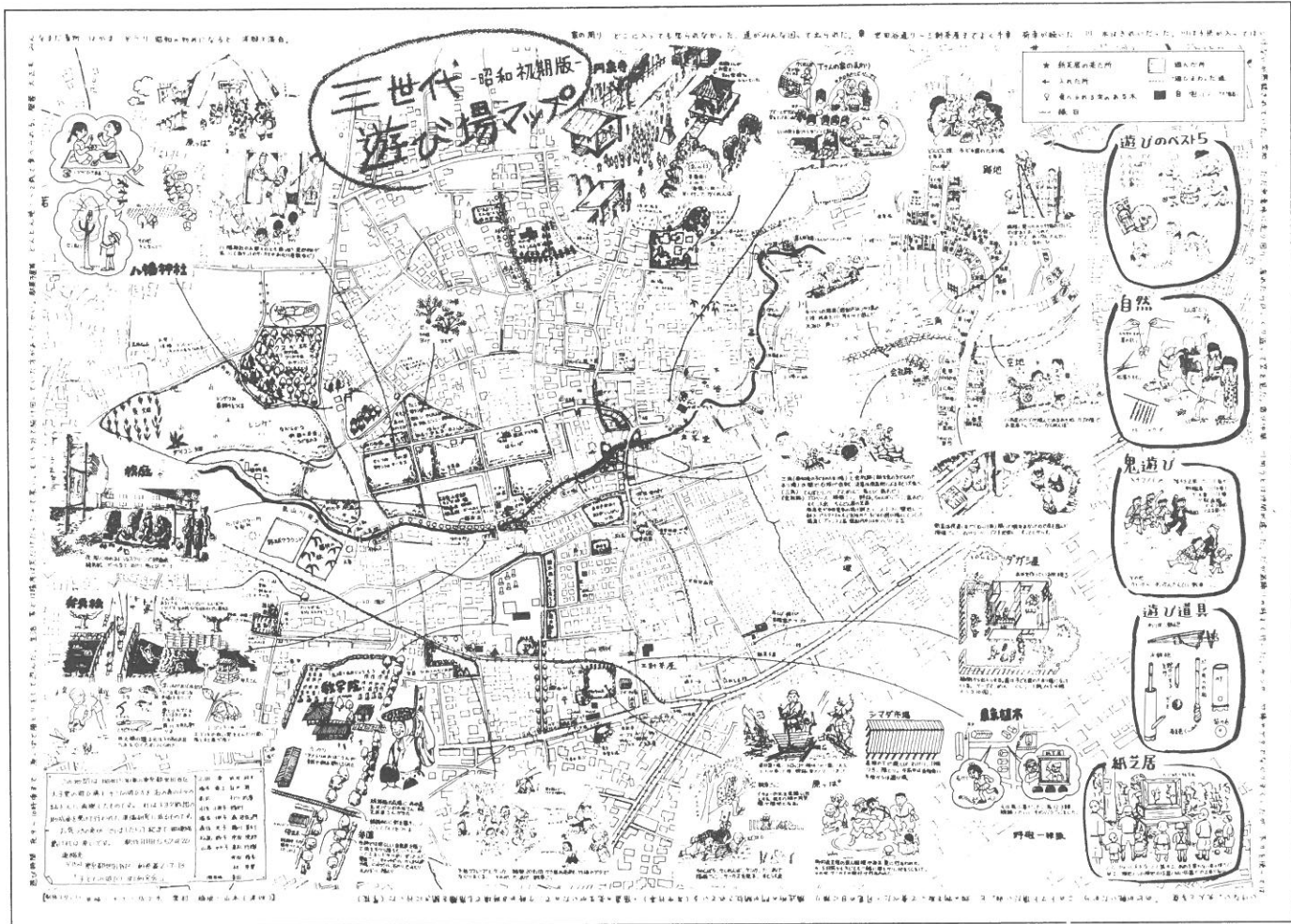
Taishido Study Group<sup>1</sup>  
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“We are struggling for community development through the view of child's play which everyone has in her/his memory. Our objectives deal not only with children's play but also town and community design. The largest problem in Japan's biggest cities today is *communication*. Have we forgotten the important sources of our imagination for living, such as imagination in nature, in places in our neighborhoods and towns? This kind of imagination is developed through children's play. It is an important factor in town and community design. To refresh of our memories of imagination in play, we have met with people of all ages in our town and listened to them talking about their childhood . . . .”

Dr. Isami Kinoshita  
Taishido Study Group





First generation map of Taishido, showing grandparents' childhood memories, c.1930.

- 遊んだ所  
Areas where we played
- 遊びまわった道  
Paths, roads & streets where we played
- 自宅(ヒマリング対像者)  
Informants' houses
- ★ 紙芝居の来た所  
Paper slide picture show place
- ← 入れた所  
Hiding places
- 🍏 食べられる実のある木  
Tree with edible fruit
- ~~~~ 縁日  
Street stalls on festival days

**Open space.** "In the open space, we just ran and ran for nothing. Then, if we felt tired, we lay down on the ground and looked up at the sky."

**Playmates.** "We did not usually play with the kids across the river, but went there often at the time of the 'Bon Festival' dance."

**Fights.** "When we fought, we hit each other with a stick of bamboo or a *geta* (wooden clog), but we never used a wooden stick in the shape of a sword."

**Adults and children.** "When we got thirsty, we asked adults to give us something to drink. We picked tomatoes and ate them. Neighbors' gates were open on the Day of Moon Viewing in the Fall. We went to school even around 8:00 in the evening to ask about homework because a teacher kept night watch there."

**Play hours.** "Until 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. we were able to play in the field."

**Life style.** "Only charcoal was used to heat our houses. It was almost warmer to run about outdoors."

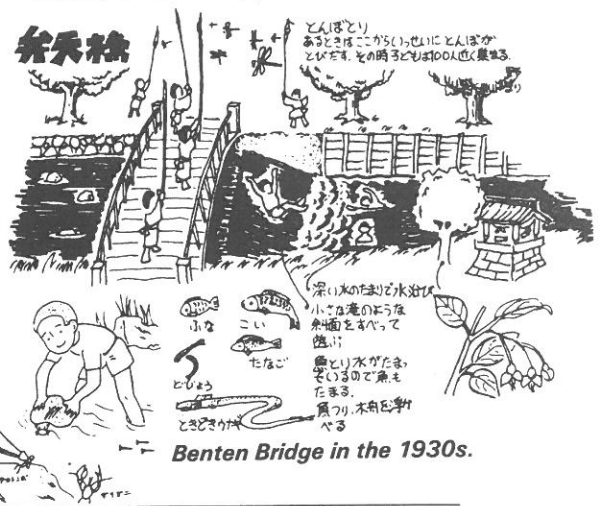
**Cheap sweets.** "There were sweets which we could buy very cheap."

**Clothes.** "Up until around 1925, most of us still wore *kimonos*, *bakamas* and *zori* (Japanese sandals), but thereafter we wore both Japanese and Western clothes."

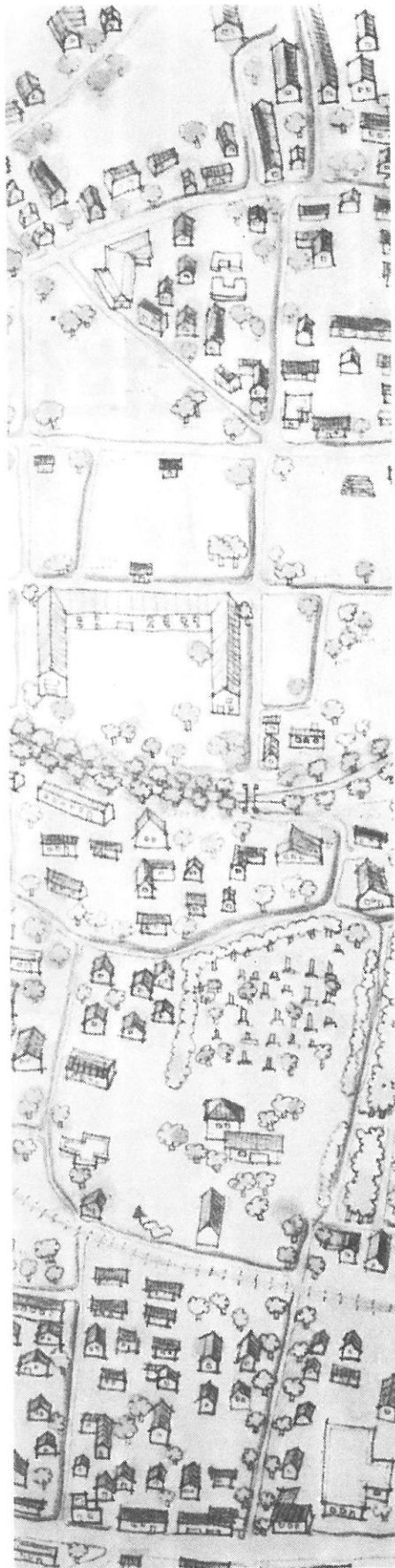
**Around the houses.** "Nobody scolded us no matter where we played. The paths were all connected with the streets."

**Vehicles.** "Handcarts and oxcarts were often seen."

**Water.** "Streams were clean. We were prohibited to get into the rivers, but actually it was tacitly permitted."



Benten Bridge in the 1930s.



# 遊びのベスト5

Top 5 play activities

1. バーゴマ
2. とんぼとり
3. 石けり
4. めんこ
5. 魚とり



1. Spinning tops

2. Dragonfly hunting

3. Stone kicking

5. Fishing



4. Hitting cards



Nature  
自然

wrestling

dragonfly

with

leaves

making ornamental hairpins

hunting

# 鬼遊び

鬼ヶケスライ

Tag play

帽子を正絹にかぶった者が  
蜘蛛の巣、ツバを獲る  
かまきり、ツバを捕  
かまきり、ツバを捕  
かまきり、ツバを捕  
かまきり、ツバを捕



その他  
かまきり、あかたんてい、戦争ごっこ

# 遊び道具

Play tools we made



木鉄砲 chopstick rifle



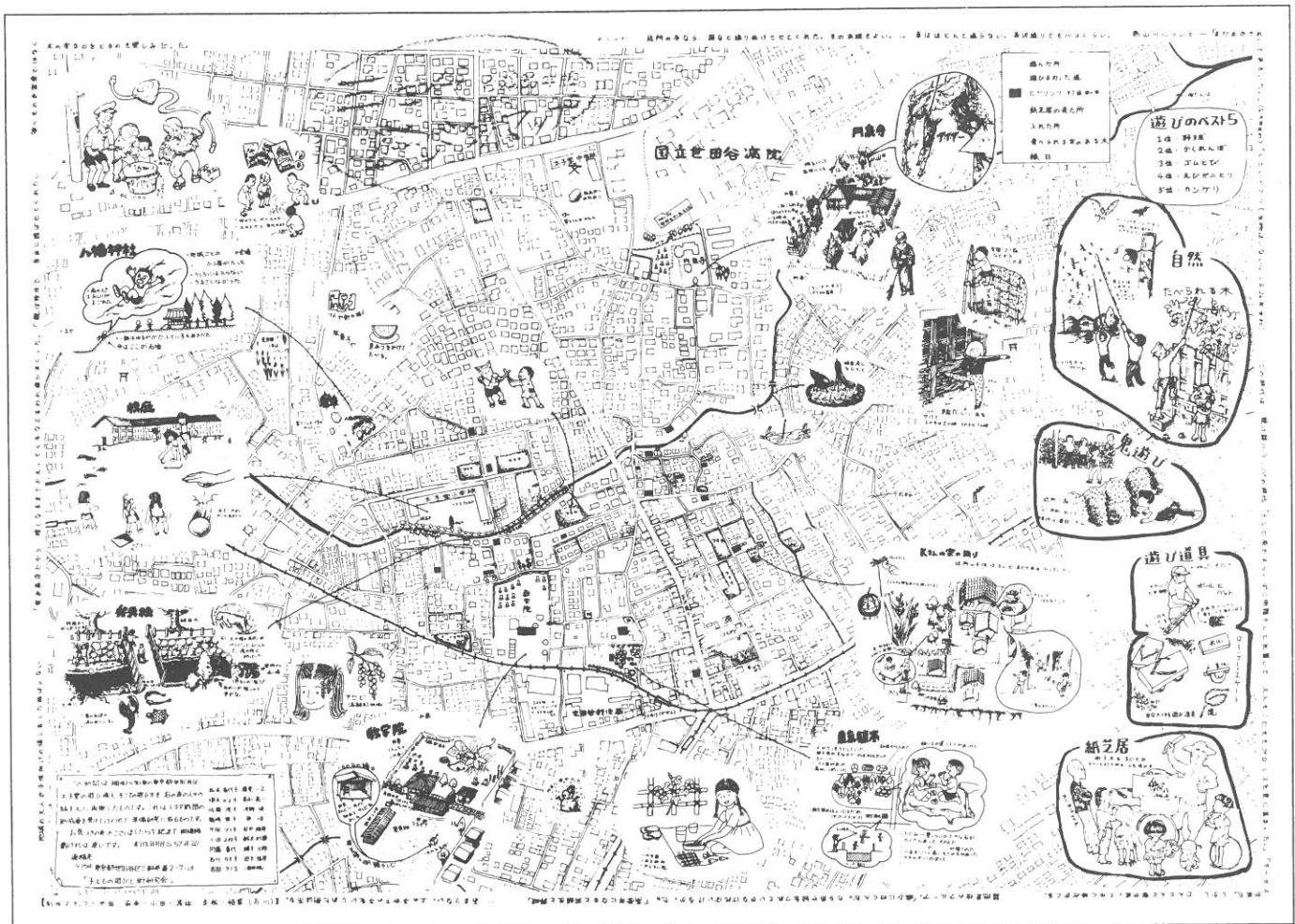
bamboo squirt gun

# 紙芝居

Paper slide picture show



どら、むかし木をならして紙を、あめを買わない者は後で  
見る。陣地とりの陣地の位置と同じ位置でやる事が多い



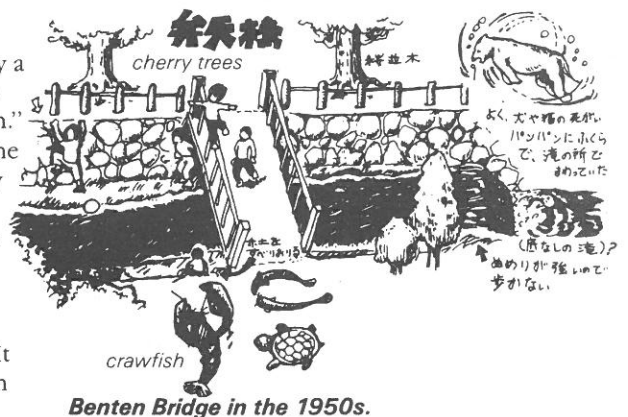
Second generation map of Taishido, showing parents' childhood memories, c. 1955.

-  遊んだ所  
Areas where we played
-  遊びまわった道  
Paths, roads & streets where we played
-  ヒヤリング 対象者の家  
Informants' houses
-  紙芝居の来た所  
Paper slide picture show place
-  入れた所  
Hiding places
-  食べられる実のある木  
Tree with edible fruit
-  縁日  
Street stalls on festival days

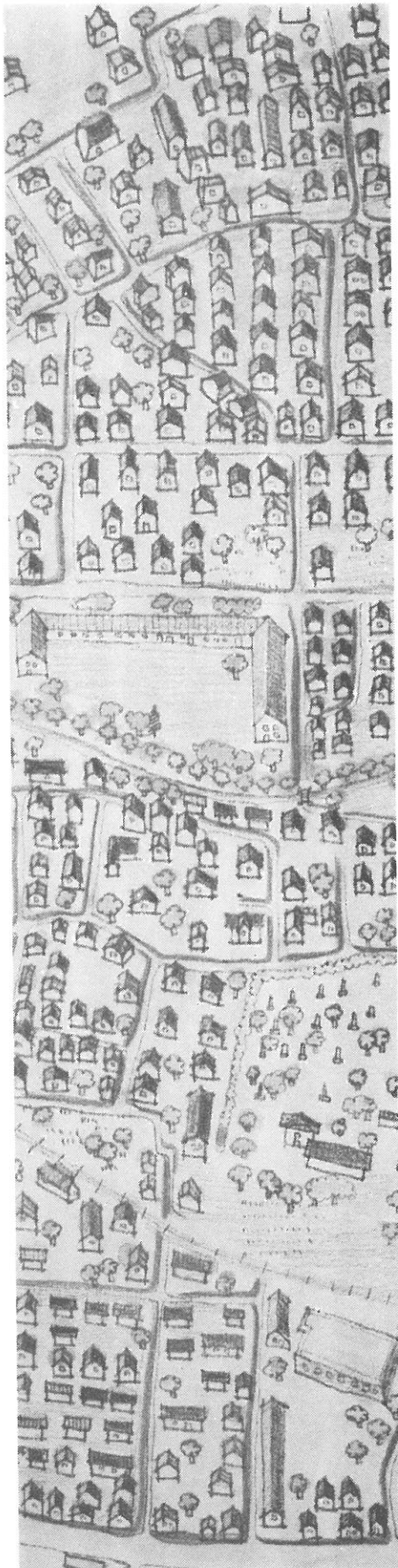
**Open space.** "It was the time of 'burnt fields' after the war. The TV people brought a TV set into the field and adults and children went there to watch the professional wrestling program. The circus came, too. But soon, more and more newly built houses took over the field."

**Playmates.** "A play group consisted of the kids living along the same alley. When we were in higher grades in elementary school, we played baseball with the kids in the same class. We were required (by our parents) to take our younger brothers and sisters with us when we went to play."  
**Fights.** "We rarely fought, but it happened that older kids bullied younger kids."  
**Adults and children.** "There were only a few occasions when adults in the area could plan entertainments for children."  
**Play hours.** "My parents run a store (the house and store are together) and they said I could stay out until dark. So I played for a long time. My parents left me to myself. I was able to play as I wanted to."  
**Food.** "There was not much food available in the market in those days. It was a pleasure for us to pick fruit from the trees."

**Around the houses.** "Adults allowed neighborhood kids and their friends to pass through their yards."  
**Streets, roads and paths.** "Automobiles were rarely seen. If seen, a bus was usually on Chabawa Street."  
**Water.** "The streams were still clean and there were fish in the water."



Benten Bridge in the 1950s.



# 遊びのベスト5

Top 5 play activities

- 1位・野球  
Baseball
- 2位・かくれんぼ  
Hide-and-go-seek
- 3位・ゴムとび  
Rubber jump rope
- 4位・えびガニとり  
Catching crawfish & crabs
- 5位・カンケリ  
Kick-the-can



## 円家寺

We caught insects in the cemetery. If a priest saw us we escaped through the backside.

・墓に隠る  
（おじいさんや  
いっしょに  
うらから出る）

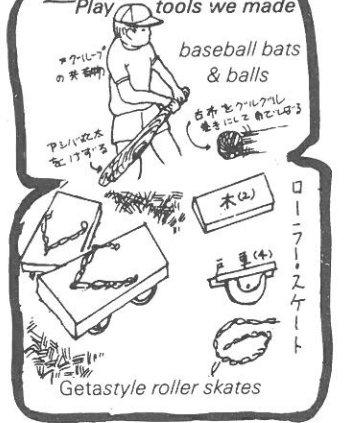


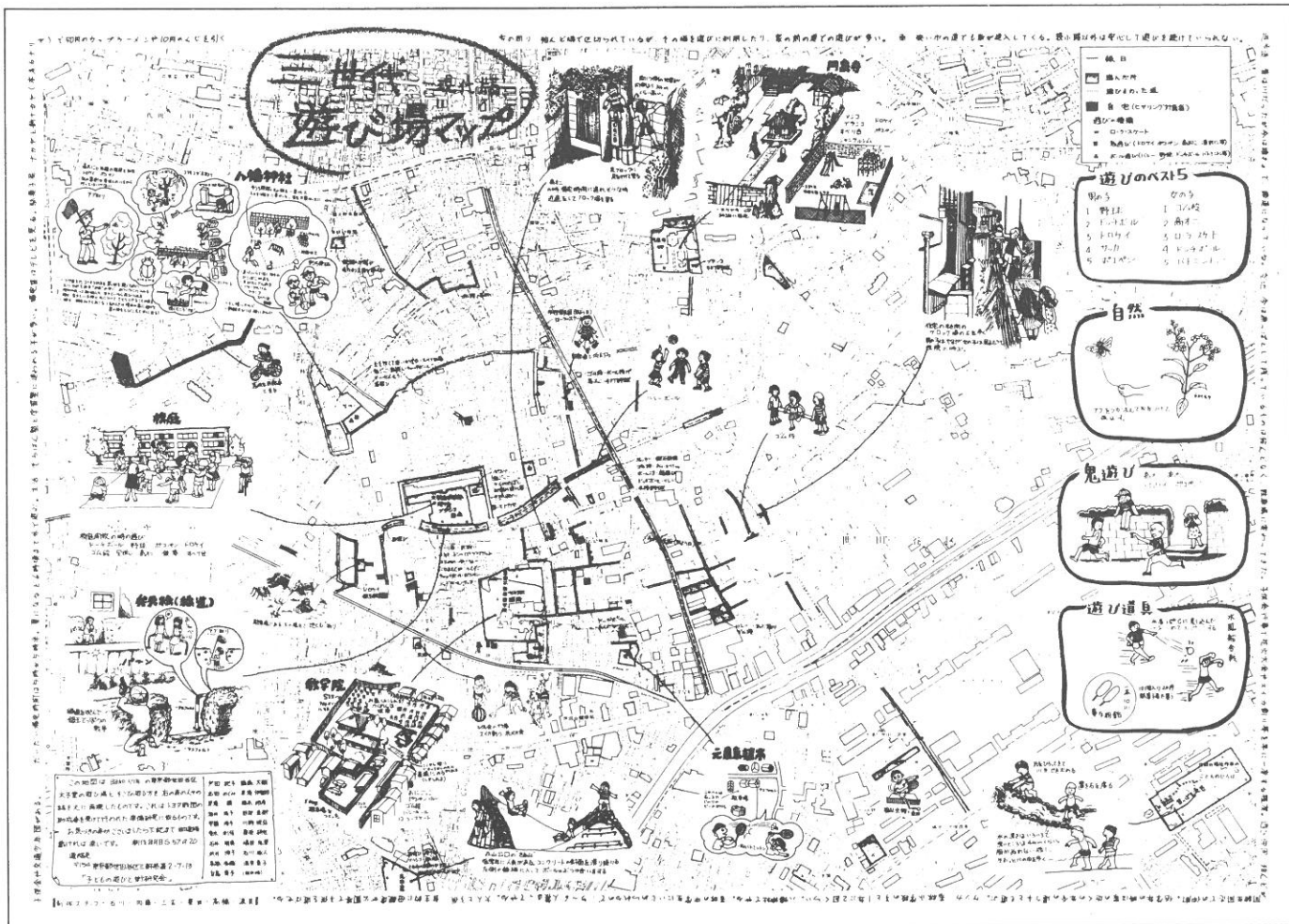
Ensenji Temple



## 遊び道具

Play tools we made





Third generation map of Taishido, showing present day children's perceptions.

- ~~~~ 縁日  
Street stalls on festival days
- 遊んだ所  
Areas where we played
- ..... 遊びまわった道  
Paths, roads & streets where we played
- 自宅(ヒマリング対象者)  
Informants' houses
- 遊びの種類
- ▼ ローラースケート  
Roller skating places
- 鬼遊び(ドロイ、ホコヤン、高おに、漢おに等)  
Tag play places
- ▲ ボール遊び(バレー、野球、ドッボール、バドミントン等)  
Ball play places

**Open space.** "Most of the open space, which used to be children's 'play-grounds' has disappeared. What used to be an open space is now used as a parking lot. About once a year the open space is used for children's games such as watching fireworks or watermelon hitting."

**Playmates.** "Most of the time we play without classmates; but when we were in the lower grades, we played with other kids."

**Fights.** "We fight with the kids from

Wakabayashi Elementary School (a different district), in Yahata shrine, about twice a year. When we fight, we fight in groups of five or six kids, against the Wakabayashi students who bully us."

**Adults and children.** "Mothers let children play in the park, where there are children's organizations."

**Play hours.** "We usually play until five or five-thirty in the evening. In the summer we play until six o'clock."

**Life style.** "Many children go to private schools, after 'school,' for study or to practice calculations. After they come home from the private school, they watch television."

**Cheap sweets.** "We buy a cup of noodles for 50 yen or a lot for even 10 yen at Nakaya's."

**Around the houses.** "Most houses are surrounded by fences or walls. We use them all for play, but most often we play on the fence or wall in front of the houses."

**Vehicles.** "Automobiles come into our

narrow streets. We cannot play safely, except in a cul-de-sacs."

**Water.** "The river became dirty and smelly. No fish lived there anymore. It is now in a culvert, but some plants were planted along it. We can stroll along where it used to be"



Where Benten Bridge used to be.



A new, popular style of street play.



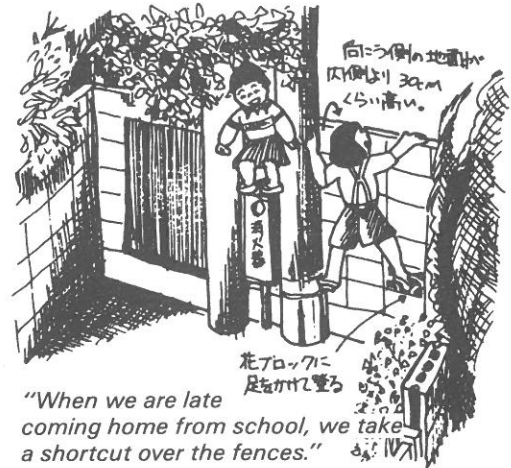
Public playgrounds are small and have many prohibitions.

**Children's play in present day Taishido:**

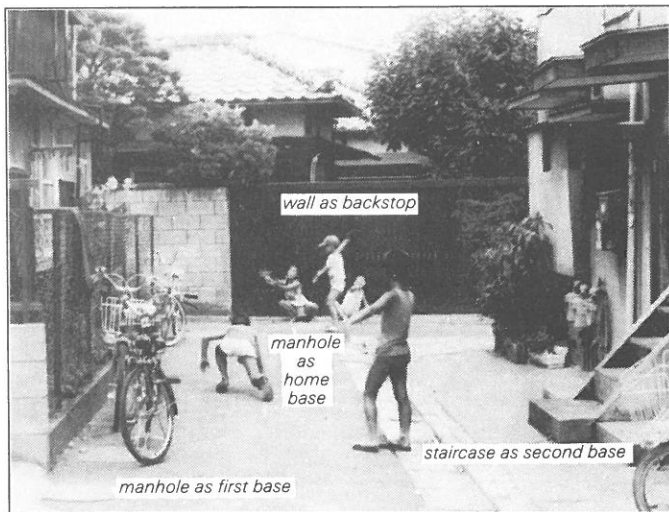


Sidewalk games by an apartment building.

on sidewalks  
in streets  
vacant lots  
playgrounds  
playparks.



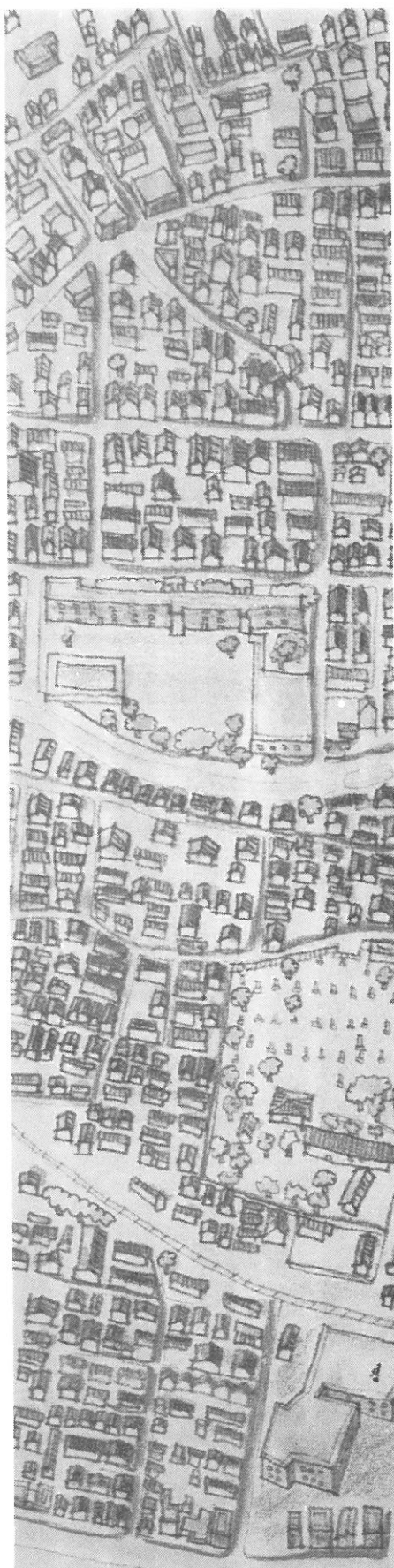
"When we are late coming home from school, we take a shortcut over the fences."



Children playing baseball in the street in front of their houses—using elements of the street as bases and backstop.



Playing in front of their home on the side of the street.



# 遊びのベスト5

Top 5 play activities

## 男の子 Boys

1. 野球  
Baseball
2. トーナボール  
Dodgeball
3. ドロケイ  
Cops-and-robbers
4. サッカー  
Soccer
5. ポコポン  
A kind of tag play

## 女の子 Girls

1. ゴム段  
Rubber jump rope
2. 高オニ  
A kind of tag play
3. ローラースケート  
Roller-skating
4. ドッチボール  
Dodgeball
5. バドミントン  
Badminton



hit-the-watermelon

子供会の行幸  
スイカ割り 花火大会

## 遊び道具

Play tools we make

水道の蛇口に裏返し、水を入れてぶっつけする

水風船合戦

water bombs made from balloons filled with water



一本10円  
黄色粉飾

10個入り20円  
駄菓子屋で買

## 自然 Nature

catch a horsefly  
tie it with a string  
let it fly

アブをつかまえて糸を付けて飛ばす。



playing with insects

庭球場にある木の根元で地ぐも取り

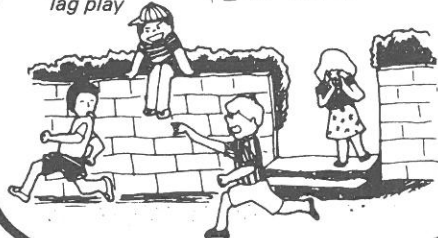


climbing on fences

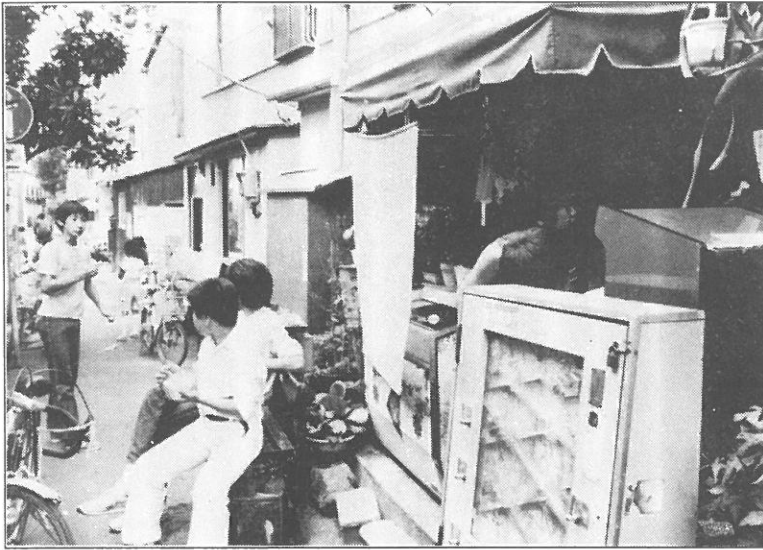
## 鬼遊び

Tag play

高オニ 凍オニ  
ドロケイ ポコポン







*Children playing in front of the Dagashiya—the traditional Japanese children's store selling everything they need.*



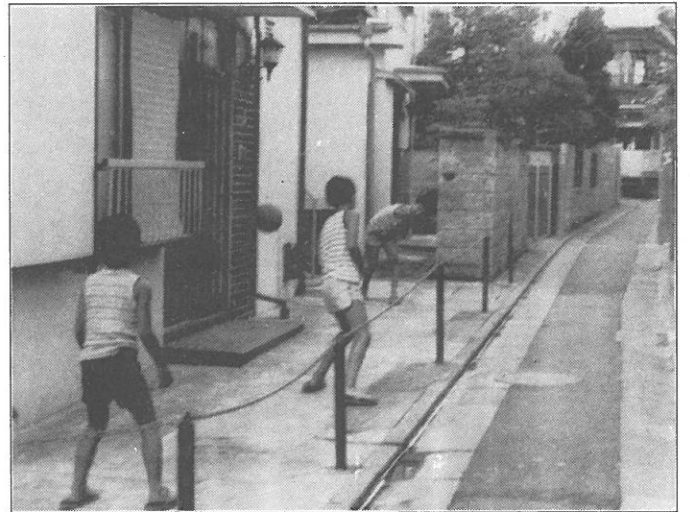
*On Sundays and holidays, mothers become play leaders in the Playpark. In this picture they are teaching children to make traditional Japanese handmade toys—an art that modern children have lost.*



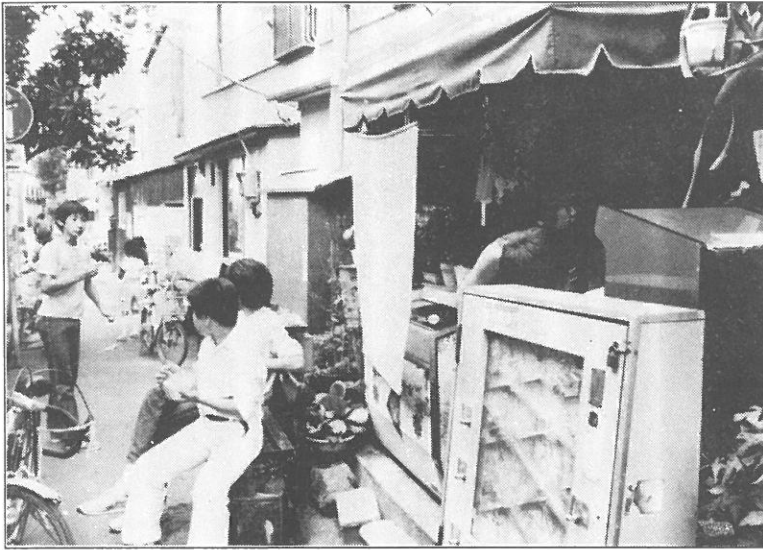
*Playing under benevolent adult eyes, on a vacant lot behind the furniture store.*



*Streets in Taishido are not wide enough for cars—a problem for traffic circulation, but a humane environment for children's play.*



*Ball play on a street corner.*



*Children playing in front of the Dagashiya—the traditional Japanese children's store selling everything they need.*



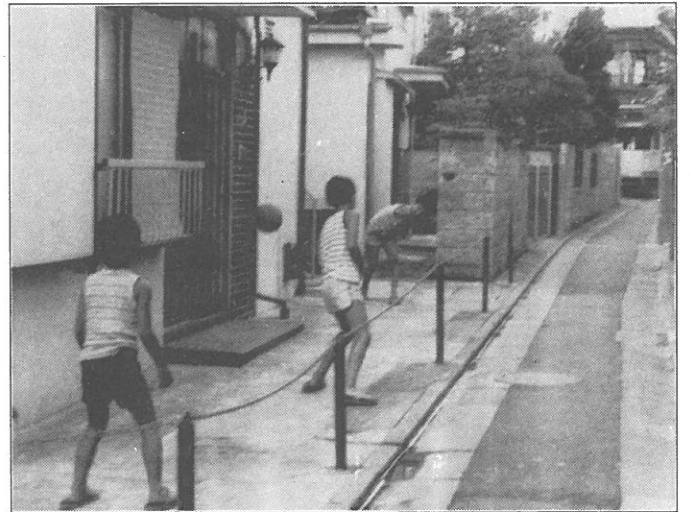
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*Ball play on a street corner.*

## NOTES

1. The editors are grateful to Dr. Kinoshita for his cooperation in assembling the Taishido material. The selection published here is small. A vast volume remains yet to be translated. For those who read Japanese, the Study Group recently published (1984) *The Book of Three Generations of Play* (no price given), available from the Group (address at the back of this issue). the book contains the mapped information and new material from the neighborhood interviews, organized under more than fifty topic headings.
2. This article would not have been possible without the generous assistance of Keiko Shimamura, who, via Denis Wood, introduced us to the Taishido Study Group. She gave freely of her time to translate part of the material. The assistance of her colleague, Ms. Hiroko Naito, a member of the Study Group, is also acknowledged.



*Taishido children playing where they have always played—for these children, the only space available—the gardens of the Ensenji Temple.*