

Public Radio Receiver

In the early days of radio, when few households had their own receivers, people gathered around outdoor speaker towers like this one. The first public radio receiver in Japan is said to have been erected in 1930 in Osaka's Tennōji Ward. By 1943, there were approximately 450 of these towers in various locations around the country. Their designs varied widely, but many, like the one seen here, resembled traditional Japanese lanterns.

Most radio towers did not run constantly but were equipped with a button that turned on the AM radio for 10 minutes. Broadcasts of baseball games and sumo matches were apparently popular. Open-air radio was also ideal for group exercise, and these radios could be used to tune in to a short calisthenics program that was broadcasted early in the morning and several times each day. The program is still played every day throughout the country at 6:30 a.m., and at 5:50 a.m. in Osaka Castle Central Square, where a group of local residents gathers to go through the routine together.