

# History, Heritage, and Resilience

CASE STUDIES IN SAVING HISTORICAL HERITAGE AS  
PYSCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

EDITOR: J. F. MORRIS

# Foreword

This booklet contains four articles written by young historians, who participated in salvaging historical and cultural heritage in regions affected by the earthquake (Takahashi), resulting tsunami (Satō) and nuclear reactor accident (Momma, Izumita) that occurred along the coast of northeastern Japan on the afternoon of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

There are many articles, papers, books and other forms of media which deal with the events and the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, but the papers presented here are unusual for at least two reasons. Firstly, presuming that preserving cultural heritage and writing the history of disaster-affected communities can be a viable and valuable form of psychosocial support for individuals and communities is still very unusual in the field of disaster science. Secondly, all the four writers experienced directly the events and aftermath of “3.11” as this multiple disaster is called in Japan. They are not writing about how to react to a disaster that affected someone somewhere else: they are writing about how they themselves as community members with specialist skills and/or knowledge, can use those skills and knowledge to help themselves and their communities.

Any historian or other humanities specialist who has worked in helping disaster-affected communities recover their culture, history, identity and self-respect knows the importance of such work intuitively, but in order to make this intuition understandable to and convincing for other people, historians (and curators, and other protectors of heritage) need to become able to understand and explain what we do, and why it is important, in the language of disaster science and the practice of humanitarian aid. This message is currently being propagated by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, and anyone interested in pursuing this matter should start from the ICCROM website (ICCROM <https://www.iccrom.org/> ). It is in this context that the papers here gain significance.

Satō Daisuke’s paper, “Psychosocial Support and History: How Preserving Heritage Can Rebuild Communities” provides an introduction to the activities of Miyagi Shiryō Net (MSN), an NGO which brings together historians, archaeologists, art historians and curators, architects, preservation specialists and a wide variety of volunteers in a coalition to preserve

heritage at risk within Miyagi Prefecture. Satō locates the the story of the formation of MSN and its activities within the wider context of the formation of the first such network in reaction to the Great Hanshin Earthquake in the Kōbe region in 1995. He provides an introduction to how MSN dealt with the overwhelming situation of 2011, and moves on to explain how the activities of MSN provide psychosocial support for individuals and communities.

Momma Takeshi's "Preservation of Historical and Cultural Heritage by Local Government within the Area Affected by the Fukushima Nuclear Reactor Accident" is a multi-faceted document, which can be read at several different levels. Nominally, it is a report from a local government official on his workplace's engagement in preserving cultural heritage. But it is also much more. It is at once a personal narrative of how a young newspaper reporter who had majored in history became involved in reporting the secret voices of victims of the forced evacuation of towns near the nuclear power reactors in Fukushima, and then changed careers to serve in the town office of Tomioka Municipality. Tomioka was one of the towns where the whole population was forced to evacuate, disperse, and then the townspeople had to live through separation, dispersion, isolation, discrimination, self-recrimination, and the loss of their inner self-identity. Momma set about convincing the government of his newly adopted town that saving their disintegrating heritage was crucial to rebuilding the town in the face of overwhelming odds. It is not just a powerful statement of the importance of cultural heritage in rebuilding a shattered and disintegrating community; it is also a very objective and analytical record of exactly how Momma set about turning a personal vision into a concrete programme based on a community consensus.

Izumita Kunihiko's "Local Histories in Evacuated Areas around Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant: The Case of the Izumita Family in Morotake, Fukushima Prefecture" is an even more personal record. Izumita's family house was damaged by the tsunami, and was also close to the exploding reactors in Fukushima. As a graduate student in history at the time of writing, he gives a very personal narrative of having to convince his family that their history and the items recording this, were not "disaster debris" but "historical heritage," and should be salvaged along with more "practical" items. It provides an informed first-hand insight into the realities of owning a collection of "heritage," and how the triple disaster (earthquake, tsunami, nuclear accident) tore away at the fabric of things that his family and community had taken for granted.

Takahashi Yōichi's "Social Outreach in Historical Conservation Work: Giving Feedback about What We Learn" relates how an academic historians at Tōhoku University have explored ways of actively giving feedback to the community on what they can glean from old documents that they have preserved. Takahashi's story is located in the town of

Kawasaki, in inland Miyagi Prefecture. This town was saved the ravages of the tsunami and the nuclear accident in Fukushima. However, the community faces the long-term problems of depopulation, economic decline endemic to rural regions throughout Japan, and the slow disintegration of society that results. As a way of battling the corrosive linkage between socio-economic decline and citizens' negative image of their community, Takahashi has explored ways of getting more people within the community to become actively involved in discovering and preserving the heritage of their region. He provides a candid narrative of what he has achieved, and the limitations of he faces.

Together, these four articles provide compelling narratives of how people involved in various capacities in heritage preservation and/or history faced the monumental challenges of the triple disaster of "3.11" to use community heritage to help communities stand up, rally, fight and come back in the face of desperate odds. If Momma's story of Tomioka is the most extreme example, Takahashi's example of Kawasaki should reverberate with rural communities facing social disintegration throughout the world. I would also like to emphasise that the history that we are talking about here is not "History" with a big "H," but the seemingly mundane histories of ordinary people trying to get on with their daily lives. The overwhelming majority of "heritage" that Miyagi Shiryō Net has salvaged is very recent. The kind of history of communities that we are dealing with is overwhelmingly recent. Reading Momma's narrative shows this most clearly; for people from Tomioka, the most contentious part of their history is modern-contemporary history, and Momma's activities gain their relevance precisely because he faces this issue front-on. Read in this light, I believe that what the authors have to convey here has a relevance that goes far beyond the limits of Japan, to provide hints on the rationale for and examples of practical ways to implement heritage preservation as a viable and effective form of psychosocial support, for both individuals and communities at risk.

Satō Daisuke in his closing words hints at one aspect that at the time of writing, still lay in the future. A group of historians at the International Disaster Science Research Institute of Tōhoku University are currently conducting a collaborative research project with a group of clinical psychologists to psychometrically assess the impact of the kind of heritage preservation work described here in providing psychosocial support for owners of heritage collections. The results so far are promising, and sometime when the world becomes a safer place, we plan to expand this research to include volunteers participating in cultural salvage work as well. One thing that is becoming apparent is that, properly done, having clinical psychologists interview owners of heritage collections can create a translational synergy

further cementing the psychosocial benefits of the historians preservation work, and at the same time, enabling the psychologists to provide effective counselling for disaster victims in a guise which avoids the limitations (e.g. social stigma, negative images of counselling etc.) of conventional psychological approaches to disaster victims.

These papers were originally written as handout papers for two workshops on disaster and community resilience held at Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio in September 2016. The authors would like to thank Professor Scott Knowles of the Department of History, Drexel University, and Professor Philip Brown, Department of History, Ohio State University, for arranging and inviting us to these workshops, which provided a fertile forum for exchanging ideas and information about disaster and community resilience, and the very important role that history can play in promoting and supporting both. Professor Ann Sherif of Oberlin College, Ohio, translated Izumita Kunihiko's manuscript, but Morris is responsible for any oversights in proof-reading. I also would like to apologise for the inconsistency in formatting between papers: this is accidental, not intentional, but correcting the error would involve more editing work than I am capable of at this stage in my life.

We are making these papers public in the hope that they may encourage or inspire people, or even provide some concrete guidance for people trying to fight the seemingly unbeatable, and endure when hope seems lost, to make the effort to rediscover their own heritage as a starting point and guiding light on the stony road to rebuilding a home. These papers are not covered by copyright, but we do ask you to show your respect by acknowledging our work if you use it.

All Japanese names in this paper are given in Japanese order, surname first, personal name second.

J.F. Morris  
Professor Emeritus, Miyagi Gakuin Women's College,  
Visiting Professor, In'l Research Institute of Disaster Science,  
Tōhoku University,  
Sendai, Japan

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Key words: first aid to cultural heritage, preserving heritage in crisis, history as psychosocial support, Great East Japan Earthquake, Fukushima

# **Psychosocial Support and History: How Preserving Heritage Can Rebuild Communities**

SATŌ Daisuke

Associate Professor

International Research Institute for Disaster Science, Tōhoku Univ.

## **Summary**

The collections of historical heritage in private hands across Japan are facing a crisis of survival, due to natural and manmade causes. After the Great Hanshin Earthquake in Kōbe in January, 1995, historians began to consciously engage in conserving this historical heritage. Historians organized to begin this kind of conservation work in Miyagi Prefecture after a series of earthquake attacks in 2003. We started out working from the information that we had collected prior to the earthquakes, and the inter-personal networks that we had built up. We continued our activities, and this accumulation of information and networks played a large role in supporting our activities after the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

The task of preserving and conserving historical heritage has many different kinds of social significance. For the owners of such collections of documents etc., salvaging and preserving the documents can be a way of restoring the individual or family's connections to its ancestors and the regional community. For volunteers participating in such work, the meanings can be varied. It can give physically weak persons a place in supporting disaster areas, and give them a chance to learn about the history of their own region. For the affected region, it restores the historical and cultural integrity of the region, and furthermore builds up new interconnections between people. People who have participated in preserving historical and cultural heritage from loss due to natural disasters since the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995 have experienced these different kinds of social effects of our activities, but are severely limited in our ability to explain these effects to other people. By collaborating with psychologists, historians are now beginning to be able to analyze the social effects of our heritage preservation and conservation work and to explain its wider social significance.

## **Main Text**

### **Japan's Historical Heritage and Dealing with Disasters**

There are innumerable items of historical and cultural significance held in private hands scattered across the Japanese archipelago. These items are very varied, and include collections of old documents, antiques, and tools and equipment used in farming, fishing and forestry.

In particular, the amount of documentary material dating from the Edo period (16<sup>th</sup> to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century), most of which is held privately, exceeds both in quantity and quality the written records from this period in any other country or region. In the preservation activities I have participated in to date in Miyagi Prefecture alone, we have accumulated about 1,100,000 frames of digital photographs, amounting to about 200,000 documents, but this probably only represents about 10% of the total number of documents remaining in Miyagi Prefecture. An estimated 20 billion documents are still in private hands across Japan, and therefore do not get public protection. These collections of documents are still kept as the personal property of the descendants of local leaders or wealthy merchants. This flood of documents is a testament to the fact that in the Edo Period, society was based on the premise that both rulers and ruled shared the written word as a means of communication, and that people in general used writing to record their daily transactions, to express themselves and to write their history.

Of course, there are public institutions whose mission is to preserve historical documents and other heritage. However, there are not enough of these institutions to preserve all the millions of documents which still exist throughout Japan. Members of local communities or private individuals who hold collections of documents developed ways of both passing on their holdings and the understanding that these documents hold a public significance. However, as the pace of commercialization of society accelerated after the 1960's, and even more so in the 21st century, these social formations and people's appreciation of the worth of such heritage has been eroded seriously. Mega-disasters even further accelerate this erosion. Natural disasters not only damage items of heritage, but also often destroy the buildings which house them. When this happens, it becomes very difficult to preserve historical documents and other heritage within the community, and the community loses the greater part of its historical heritage.

Historians were made aware of this state of things after the Great Hanshin Earthquake which happened in Kōbe on 17th January, 1995. After that up until the Kumamoto Earthquakes of April 2016, 19 groups of networks have been founded throughout Japan to preserve historical heritage from disasters.

In Miyagi Prefecture, the Miyagi Shiryō Net was founded in response to a major earthquake which happened on 26th July, 2003. The network located collections of historical documents and other heritage in private hands, and created digital records of the contents of each collection. By the end of 2010, we had located and investigated 412 collections. Through these activities, we not only gathered information as to the location of such collections, we were able to build up a close working relationship with the owners of collections, people in local communities, and local governments.





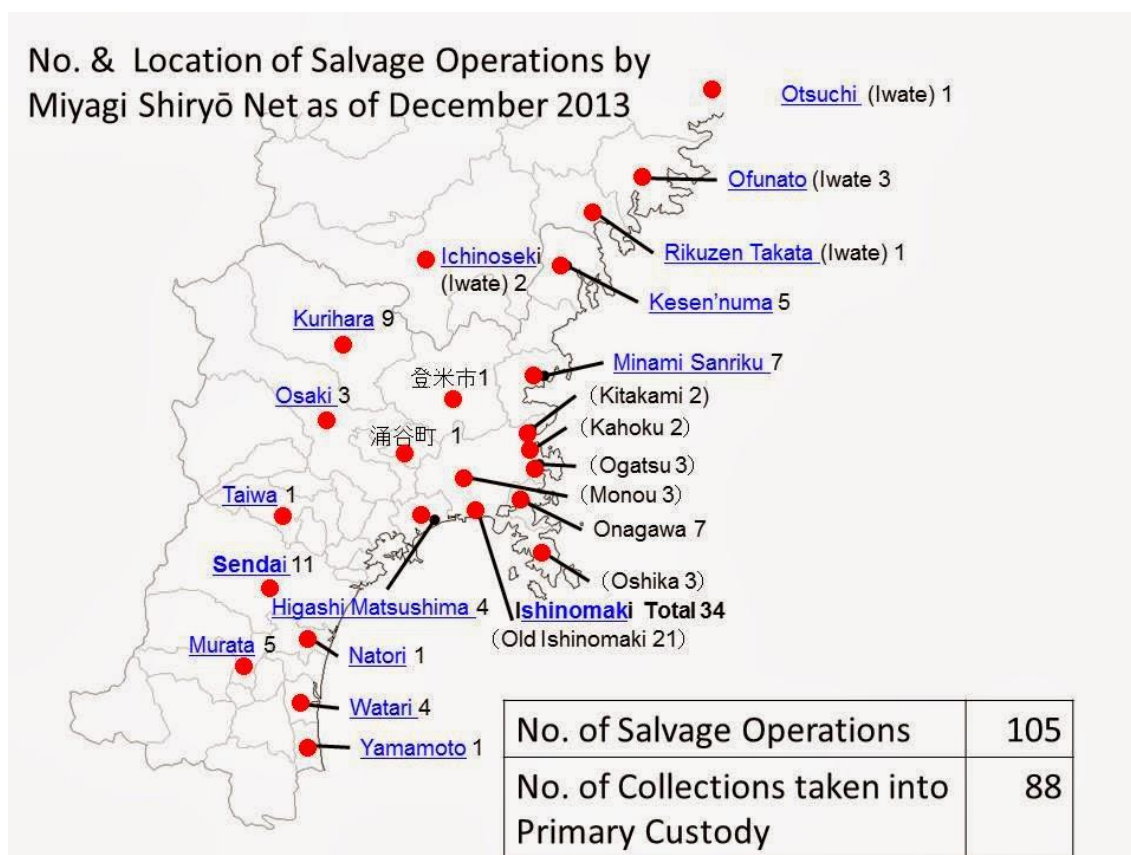
Carrying out old documents from an earthquake-damaged warehouse for temporary safe-keeping (31st August, 2003).

## **1 Preservation Work on Historical Heritage after the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Significance of Preservation Work.**

### **1) Outline of Our Preservation Activities**

The tsunami caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake of 11th March, 2011, not only took a great toll in human life, but it also wiped away the physical structure of towns and landscapes, and an innumerable amount of historical heritage recording the story of each town and hamlet along the coast. Since no one had ever conducted an exhaustive survey of the amount of historical documents and heritage held in each area prior to the disaster, there is no way to assess the full extent of the loss of historical heritage.

Notwithstanding, Miyagi Shiryō Net and other volunteer groups, and the national Agency for Cultural Affairs collaborated closely in conducting salvage operations for those collections of documents and heritage which survived the disaster. In conducting salvage operations, we found that the relationships that we had built up with local residents prior to the disaster, proved invaluable in leading us to information about heritage collections exposed to danger, and in gaining local cooperation. They shared with us a mutual understanding of what our salvage operations entailed, and it made consulting with locals on how to deal with disaster damage much easier.



Since March 2011, Miyagi Shiryō Net has conducted salvage operations for over 100 collections of heritage items, mostly old documents. At present (2016), we have about 900,000 documents in temporary keeping. Even five years after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, we are still receiving individual requests for assistance, and information about collections of documents damaged by the tsunami or otherwise at risk.

## 2 Why Salvaging Historical Heritage is Important

### 1) The Meaning for Owners of Collections

As example of the meaning of our work, I would like to introduce the case of Kitakami Town, Miyagi Prefecture. A group of historians conducted a survey of the historical heritage and documents held by townspeople, between 1999 and 2005. We used many of these documents to write an official history of the town, which was published before the town was incorporated into neighboring Ishinomaki City in April 2005. We located, sorted and cataloged, and digitally recorded about 15,000 documents held by 7 different families. All of the originals were lost in the tsunami of 11th March, 2011. Furthermore, the town office building was destroyed, and the digital photographs of the documents stored on the hard disk of the server computer there were also completely

lost. However, the digital data survived in the hands of the historians, including myself, who took the photographs. This case is sad evidence that, in order to preserve digital records of documents, it is important to save the data in several different places at the same time.

In December 2015, we were finally able to “return” printouts and digital copies of these lost collections of documents to their original owners. Some of them burst into tears. One person said that “Losing the documents passed onto me by my ancestors was what hurt me the most. Today is my happiest day.” Another person asked us to do something to create some kind of record of the story of their hometown. This experience taught us just how much these documents served as links to their family lines and community for the owners.

In January 2016, we mailed a questionnaire to 65 owners of collections of heritage which Miyagi Shiryō Net had salvaged; 37 people answered. Of these 37 people, 33 (89 percent) said that they valued our work. Furthermore, 28 people (78 percent) answered that they wanted to make their documents available to help their communities. Most of the owners were aware that their documents were also a valuable resource for their communities.

In contrast, 20 people (54 percent) answered that before the disaster of 2011, they did not know anyone they could consult about how to preserve their collections. This shows that the old support networks within local communities are being lost, and we need to move quickly to rebuild new support networks.

## 2) The Meaning for Citizen Volunteers

After we salvage documents damaged by the tsunami, we take them to Sendai where we treat them to stabilize their condition after immersion in sea-water. Many volunteers have participated in this work. We used to get money from the national Agency for Cultural Affairs to support this work so we could pay volunteers, but now our volunteers work without pay. By 2013, about 2,500 people had worked as volunteers on this task.

Doing this kind of volunteer work can become a form of psychosocial support for people. A women from Sendai interviewed by the Mainichi Newspaper<sup>1</sup> in March 2016, said that she could not do hard physical labor, and since she did not have a car she could not go to the disaster areas to help people, and living in the disaster area but not being a victim of the disaster made her feel guilty. But working together with other people at

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<sup>1</sup> Mainichi Newspaper, Evening Edition, 16th March 2016 (Japanese edition).

Miyagi Shiryō Net to treat damaged documents made her feel that she had found a place where she was doing something to help other people. Another women interviewed said that when the job was difficult and she felt like giving up, the other volunteers would encourage her, and this became a form of support for herself. The treating of damaged documents is mostly done by women and elderly people, and since this gives these people

### Meaning of our activities for Volunteers(Citizens)

“Participation itself become psychological support for me”



Miyagi Shiryō Net

Mainichi Shinbun March 16, 2016

a place where they can do something to help people in the disaster area, this in turn can serve as a form of psychosocial support for them as well.

Coming into daily contact with old documents makes the volunteers want to know what is written in the documents. I have set up a class for some of our volunteers to teach them how to read the old texts, which are illegible for modern readers. Some members have gone even further, and have published by themselves reports on some of the documents. Some members have also started to search for and investigate collections of documents. In other words, some of the volunteer members have become amateur scholars of local history. This is an example of “citizen science,” defined by HAYASHI Kazuo (2015) as science conducted by ordinary citizens, and which is often conducted in collaboration with professional researchers and research institutes.

At first I thought that this kind of volunteer work by ordinary people was simply a way of solving our serious labor shortage. However, five years on, I have come to realize that this way of looking at our volunteers does not do justice to the meaning of their work. To put it another way, the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake has turned

the work of Miyagi Shiryō Net into something truly based on the support of ordinary citizens.

### 3) The Meaning for Communities: the Case of the Honma Family Warehouse

Finally, I would like to introduce as an example of historical heritage and rebuilding communities, the case of HONMA Ei'ichi of Kadonowaki, Ishinomaki City.

The Honma Family had engaged in sea transport and brewing since the Edo Period (1600 to 1868) in Ishinomaki. The Honma Family house was destroyed by the tsunami of 11th March 2011. A warehouse in which the Honma Family documents were stored, survived the tsunami,



Miyagi Shiryō Net members salvage documents from the Honma Warehouse, 8th April, 2011. The worst of the debris around the warehouse has already been cleaned up.

despite having been repeatedly rammed by houses washed up by the tsunami. The very first heritage salvage operation that Miyagi Shiryō Net conducted in the tsunami-affected area was on 8th of April at this warehouse. The documents that we salvaged have been repaired and have now been returned to the Honma Family.



The documents were saved, but Mr Honma, at first decided to dismantle the warehouse, which was built in 1905. However, after the architectural team of Miyagi Shiryō Net assessed the damage to the warehouse as minimal, and local historians in Ishinomaki started a movement to collect the money necessary to preserve the

## Meaning of our activities for the community

A wedding at the Honma Family warehouse (April 20,2014)



Honma Eiichi

warehouse, Mr Honma changed his mind. Today, the warehouse has become a venue for all kinds of local events, and Mr Honma has opened up the inside of the warehouse as a private museum. The museum receives visitors from around the world, and local people have started bringing old artefacts and items testifying to the tsunami to the museum. Today the warehouse museum serves as a focal point bringing together both people and records of the area's heritage.

In the area where the Honma warehouse is located, reconstruction work has changed the physical layout beyond all recognition. The Honma Family warehouse is more than a "101 year-old building;" it is a silent testimony to the community's past, and is also gaining a new role in the community as a focal point for bringing people together. Mr Honma has a website which shows these new roles of the warehouse.

The case of the Honma Family warehouse shows how history can serve to link people in a community to each other, help the community regenerate after a disaster, and create focal points where all kinds of people can come together and enrich their lives.

### 3 What the Future Holds

The members of Miyagi Shiryō Net, including myself, have learnt that there is much more to preserving the historical heritage of a community than just deciphering the contents of old documents; preserving heritage brings many different people together in many different ways. This means that people who cannot participate in other kinds of volunteer activities can find some role can in the process of preserving local heritage. Preserving even just some part of a community's historical heritage can give the community a base on which to regenerate their links to each other and to the physical place of their community. Furthermore, the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake has convinced me that participating in the process of preserving a community's heritage can be a life-changing experience. It certainly was for me.

This appreciation of the value of preserving historical heritage has been shared by all people who have participated in the actual process of doing so, in different parts of Japan for the past 20 years. However, we historians are limited when it comes to objectively evaluating the meaning that historical heritage, and the stories of communities that the heritage is witness to, can hold for people who have experienced a disaster. At present, Miyagi Shiryō Net has started a new project whereby a team of clinical psychologists have started to use psychometric methods to assess the value of our work as historians as an important form of psychosocial support for people in the disaster areas. I hope that by collaborating with psychologists, we will be able to reveal the social role that historical heritage can fulfil. This is a necessary step for everyone involved in preserving historical heritage throughout Japan, but for me personally, as a person who experienced the events of March 2011, and who is involved in passing on the story of the disaster areas to future generations, I see this task as my life work.

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Daisuke SATO "Historical Record Rescue Activities of the Miyagi Shiryō Network - Pre-Disaster Activities and Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake-" (*The Great Japan Earthquake 2011 Case Studies (Recovery Status Report)*(6))  
International Recovery Platform, 82-93





## Preservation of Historical and Cultural Heritage by Local Government within the Area Affected by the Fukushima Nuclear Reactor Accident

MOMMA Takeshi, Tomioka Municipal Government

### Introduction

This paper will examine the work done by the Municipality of Tomioka, Fukushima Prefecture as a local government body, to preserve local historical and cultural heritage held privately by local citizens, under the conditions of the whole township being evacuated due to the explosion of the nuclear power reactors at Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, and the damage suffered during the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11th, 2011.

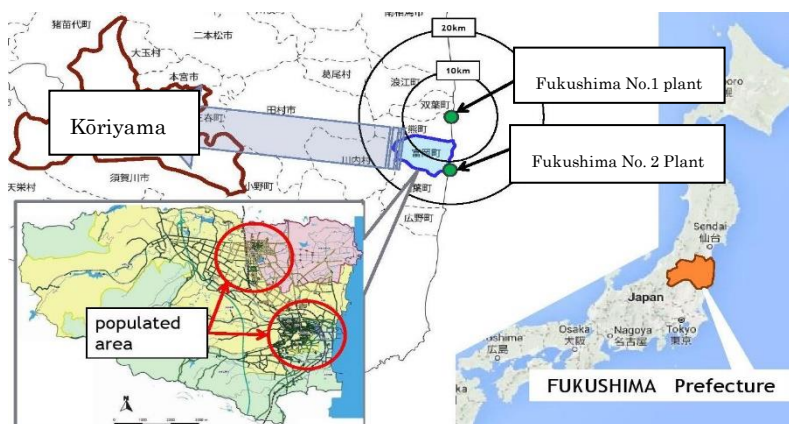
The municipality has organized a “Project Team to Preserve the History and Cultural Heritage of Tomioka” (hereafter “Project Team”) to locate and preserve items left in private homes within the town limits, and which provide a record of life as it was before the disaster and wholesale evacuation of the area.

This paper will deal with the following topics: (1) an outline of Tomioka Municipality, (2) the evacuation and rezoning of the evacuation areas, (3) how the town moved from evacuating publicly-held cultural properties to preserving collections held privately, (4) how and why the Project Team was founded, (5) the present state of the Project Team, (6) why records of local heritage are important, and (7) unresolved issues and the future. It will tell the story of how local citizens and local government are together confronting a crisis identity.

### 1. Tomioka: Location and Population

The municipality of Tomioka is located in Futaba County, near the center of Fukushima Prefecture on the Pacific coast. It is about 220 kilometers (137 miles) in a straight line from Tōkyō.

Tōkyō Electric Power Company’s (TEPCO) Fukushima No. 2 Electric Power Plant, which is still in cold shutdown, is located on the coast at the southern limits of the town. The distance between the town limits



and the damaged nuclear power reactors at TEPCO’s Fukushima No. 1 Plant is less than

15 kilometers (9.3 miles), and the whole population of the town has had to evacuate because of radioactive contamination.

From 16th March 2011, the municipal offices have relocated inland to Kōriyama, the largest city in Fukushima in the center of the prefecture, about 90 minutes away by car from Tomioka. Of the 140 municipal employees, about 30 now commute to the former municipal offices to clean up and restore them.

The population of Tomioka was 16,000 in 2010. As of 1st April 2016, the registered population has dropped to 15,100. The whole population now resides outside of the town, but people still remain registered as permanent residents of Tomioka, and access and receive public services from Tomioka municipal government in their current temporary residences.

## 2. Reclassification of the Evacuation Zone

Tomioka Municipality was designated a no-entry zone in April 2011, and access by the general public was allowed only by special permit. This meant that, other than for short limited visits under strict supervision, townspeople were not allowed to access to their homes for a full two years.

This situation was changed by the national government's reclassification of the evacuation zone in March, 2013. Based on the prevailing spatial radioactive dosage reading, the no-entry zone was reduced in size, and two new zones were set up to prepare the greater part of the evacuation area for re-habitation. The three new zones were: (1) no-return zone, (2) limited residence zone, and (3) preparing for declassification zone.

11 Mar.2011	Great East Japan Earthquake (14:46) Nat. Gov. declares State of Nuclear Emergency (17:03)
12 Mar.	Nat. Gov. orders evacuation. All population of Tomioka evacuates.
16 Mar.	Municipal offices relocated in Kōriyama
22 Apr	Tomioka Municipality is designated a total evacuation area
25 Mar.2013	Reclassification of Tomioka Municipality into 3 zones: (1) no-return, (2) limited residence, (3) preparing for declassification
19 Jun. 2014	Project Team to Preserve the Historical Cultural Heritage of Tomioka started.
17 Mar 2016	Special overnight stays in the evacuation zones 2 and 3 permitted.

The new evacuation zones in Tomioka, and the area of the town and population affected

are shown in Table 2.

Reclassified Zones	Area		Households		Population		Classification
No-return	10 km <sup>2</sup>	15%	1663	30%	4130	29%	Entry Permit from national gov. required
Limited residence	3 km <sup>2</sup>	50%	3396	61%	8470	61%	Free access during daylight hours from 25 <sup>th</sup> Mar. 2013
Preparing for declassification	24 km <sup>2</sup>	35%	490	9%	1346	10%	
Total	68 km <sup>2</sup>		5549		13919		Pop. & household statistics released by national gov. Oct. 2015

The most important point of the rezoning was that in zones 2 and 3, unlimited access during daylight hours was now permitted. This had far-ranging effects for both residents and the municipal government.

Almost all of the former residents of Tomioka experienced conflicting feelings in trying to decide whether to return to their former homes or not. Their reasons were each different, but some recurring concerns were whether they would be able to find jobs or make a living, and if they had young children or elderly to care for, whether they would be able to find the public services they needed to do this. There were people who wanted to return, people who had given up on ever returning to their former homes, and people who could not make up their minds. Nonetheless, however they envisaged their future in Tomioka, for almost everyone, the natural first step in setting about sorting out their conflicting emotions and rebuilding their lives was to go back and clean up their former homes.

However, when they returned, their homes had changed drastically. The unrelenting onslaught of earthquake tremors that continued for over a month after the initial quake on March 11<sup>th</sup> had left many homes damaged. Contaminated rainwater had leaked in through the roofs, dangerously raising the level of radioactivity inside the houses, and thick blankets of mold were everywhere, together making the houses uninhabitable. When people set about cleaning, they would throw out pell-mell anything that was not directly related to their new lives. Old documents, photographs, notebooks which provided an irreplaceable record of life in Tomioka before the disaster, were at grave risk. Later, by 2015, people started to tear down their old uninhabitable houses.

By this stage, it was not only old documents and photographs that were at risk; the buildings which housed them were being lost as well. From March 2013, the national government started permitting limited overnight stays outside zone 1, and the pace of reconstruction within the greater part of Tomioka Municipality has started to accelerate, and accordingly, the loss of records of life as it was in Tomioka before the disaster has accelerated in proportion.

It was against this background that I started up the Tomioka Project Team in June, 2014.

### **3. A Self-Introduction and Why I Am Concerned about Heritage Preservation**

On a personal note, I come from the city of Iwaki, on the coast at the southern extreme of Fukushima Prefecture. On 10th March, 2011, my wife and I registered our marriage at the city office, and on the 11th at 14:46, we were at Narita International Airport, waiting to board our flight for our wedding ceremony in Honolulu. Even if that flight ever did take off, we did not board it. My parents' home in Iwaki was just 150 meters from the beach, and was hit by the tsunami. We returned to Iwaki on the 12th, and had to face our new lives after the disaster.

My undergraduate education was in Japanese history at Ibaraki University, in Mito City in neighboring Ibaraki Prefecture. After graduation, I went on to do a master's course at Tōhoku University in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture. After completing my studies, I started out as a reporter for a local newspaper in Fukushima Prefecture in April 2009, and was stationed in the city of Kōriyama. However, even after starting to work as a reporter, I continued to write and publish papers on local history, and on my days off, to participate in preservation work on endangered historical collections conducted by my teachers at Ibaraki University.

It was the mass exodus of the populations of Tomioka Town and Kawauchi Village to Kōriyama after the earthquake and nuclear disaster that was to link my life with the evacuation areas. On 17th March 2011, I was assigned to cover Tomioka and Kawauchi, and continued to cover these two communities until March 2013. I covered the primary evacuation centers, people living in temporary housing, the relocated temporary municipal offices, negotiations between the national, prefectural and local governments, and everything else as well. For me, the biggest turning point during my reporting on the evacuated areas was the reclassification of the evacuation zones in 2013.

As I have already written, the rezoning of the evacuation areas now meant that people had free access during daylight hours to 85% of the former no-entry zone in Tomioka, and the first thing that many people did was to start cleaning up their houses.

In this process, they would throw out anything that looked dirty, old, and of no immediate relevance to their new lives. While the rezoning was a big step forward in that it meant the former residents of the evacuation areas could now start decontaminating and cleaning out their old homes, on the other hand, it also meant that all records of local heritage held in private hands were in danger of becoming lost forever.

In contrast, through my two years of doing interviews with people who had evacuated from Tomioka or elsewhere in Futaba County, I met many evacuees who were hiding their identity from the people around them. I wanted to know what such people were really thinking, and I kept on visiting them until some started to open up and speak their minds. What they began to talk about was the fear of discrimination because of their background, and of a loss of identity. For some people, this meant that they were driven into a psychological state where they had to deny their self-identity as inhabitants of Futaba County in order to avoid being discriminated against by the local people in their new homes, because as evacuees they were entitled to compensation money and special services such as free medical treatment. Moreover, even if they were not subjected to discriminatory treatment, there was a marked increase in the number of evacuees for whom the evacuation experience had led to hold increasingly negative feelings towards their background and their home towns.

There is no simple formula to express the feelings that people from the nuclear power plant sites have about nuclear power. Simple arguments framed in terms of good and bad, or right or wrong do not hold any meaning for them. It was the accident at the nuclear power plants which drove them from their loved home towns and turned them into evacuees. On the other hand, it was the nuclear power plants which brought them economic growth and population growth up until the earthquake, and opulent public services and facilities. If you include the local restaurant, entertainment, and retailing industries, the livelihoods and lifestyles of over half the population was either directly or indirectly connected to the nuclear power industry.

One-eyed criticism of the electric power plants will not help children who are proud of their father's jobs at the plants regain their shattered self-confidence. Unless we stop and listen to the conflicting emotions of the evacuees who have been forced to flee their homes and then live in fear of discovery and discrimination in their new homes, then both blind opposition to nuclear power and restarts of Japan's nuclear power plants without a proper investigation and clarification of the causes of the Fukushima accidents will only further deepen the psycho-emotional wounds of the evacuees.

This is what I learnt from listening to the evacuees. In contrast, the voices of politicians talking about "rebuilding the hearts and minds" of the people of Fukushima,

sounded meaningless. For me, it was obvious that in order for the people affected to “rebuild their hearts and minds,” they needed to be able to build a positive self-identity and become able to talk about their hometowns in positive terms. Both then and now in 2016, neither the national nor the prefectural government have ever shown any signs of paying attention to this problem. On the other hand, local government, which deals with residents daily on a face-to-face basis, is overstretched and has not had any breathing space to stop and think about this problem either.

I tried to find a way to solve this problem through my newspaper articles, but I could not find a fast solution there. Yet, as a part-time historian, I strongly felt the need to change this situation, even if only a little. I thought that if I could write the history of the Futaba County area as local history to explain how things had got this way, it would give the evacuees the groundwork on which to start facing up to the realities of their home district and the nuclear accidents.

It was in the middle of trying to find a way through this problem that Tomioka municipal government advertised that it would hire “several” new employees. I decided to stake my life on this chance and applied, and was luckily hired. So today, I am now working as an employee of Tomioka Municipality, and amongst my other work as a town employee, I am involved in working to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the town, and teach townspeople about what we have been finding.

However, I would like to emphasize that my approach based on preserving heritage is only one item on a long menu of possible programs to “rebuild the hearts and minds” of the evacuees. People all have their own personal set of values, and what works for one person will not necessarily work for another. I think that the best solution is to provide a wide variety of programs geared towards diverse groups so that we can reach as many different people as possible.

#### **4. Moving from Protecting Publicly-held Cultural Properties to Salvaging Heritage in Private Hands**

However, even after I became an employee of the municipal government, it was not a simple task to convince everyone in the town office of the importance of preserving privately-held local heritage.

Most civil servants are convinced without their being aware of it that they cannot start solving private citizens’ matters until they have solved all the governmental matters that they are concerned with. Tomioka Municipality finished evacuating all the cultural properties held by the town government to safe keeping outside of the town limits by September 2013, and this opened up the way to start work on preserving

heritage held in private hands.

The cultural properties held by the municipality were all kept in the repositories of the Tomioka Municipal Cultural Center. These amounted to some 700 items, mostly archaeological artefacts and historical documents. After the earthquake, the town Chief Curator Sanpei Hidefumi took the lead in collaborating with the national Agency for Cultural Affairs and Fukushima Prefectural government to relocate these items as part of a national government project to rebuild public museums damaged by the earthquake and tsunami. The relocation of the publicly-held artefacts and documents was completed by the autumn of 2013.

However, neither the national nor the prefectural government considered carrying out an investigation of the extent and location of historical and cultural heritage in private hands, much less take any steps to preserve such items. The municipal government was already overstretched dealing with the day-to-day problems of residents during the evacuation, and was locked into a mindset of believing that it did not have a sufficient number of employees nor staff with the requisite technical knowhow.

Despite this, the completion of the relocation of cultural properties held by the municipality marked a turning point in that it opened up the way to begin preservation work on historical documents, records, photographs and artefacts held in private hands. First of all, it was now possible to start convincing the town administration that the conditions necessary to start work on preserving heritage in private hands were now complete, and moreover, now that the repositories of the municipal Cultural Center were empty, we also had the physical space necessary to store any documents and artefacts that we might recover.

I began the task of convincing the municipal government by first enlisting the support of Sanpei, the town curator. Together, we began drawing up a plan to salvage heritage held in private hands. After negotiations, the municipal administration started exploring how to preserve the town's regional character as a matter of official policy.

## **5. The Founding of the Project Team to Preserve the Historical and Cultural Heritage of Tomioka**

Planning for the Project Team to Preserve the Historical and Cultural Heritage of Tomioka (Project Team) began from autumn 2013, and it started operations in June 2014. The team was headed by the vice-mayor, and the staff was made up of young members of the town office staff.

The object of the Project Team was to “explore and discover the past and present condition of the region, and transmit this to future generations and the world at large.”

This was to be accomplished by preserving the historical and cultural heritage and the character of the region, including historical documents and artefacts.”

At first, the team consisted of myself and Sanpei, the vice-mayor and six other managerial staff, and nine young staff in their 20's to 30's, who shared our concern about the loss of the town's heritage and identity. Today, there are sixteen active members of the team who have volunteered to join. For these non-specialist members, the most difficult problem they face is deciding what is cultural heritage, and what is just plain rubbish.

Members of the team come from a variety of sections within the town administration. The basic rule behind who participates on any day, is that when the need arises to conduct salvage operations in the field, only those members who can arrange their regular work schedules participate. The reason for this rule is that all the team members have to fulfil their regular positions, and if they neglect their regular work in order to participate, they will soon run out of breath and drop out.

Our fieldwork is done in Tomioka Municipality, 90 minutes from the relocated municipal offices in Kōriyama, which is where we take documents to do the time-consuming task of sorting and cataloging. Since we are all only part-time members of the Project Team, it is very difficult to allot time on a regular basis. Therefore, we depend on the support of the history faculty and students of Fukushima University to do our sorting and cataloging. As of 1st March 2016, we have finished sorting over some 12,000 items.

When we founded the Project Team, I identified a list of problems which needed to be resolved in preserving the cultural and historical character of the evacuation areas, including Tomioka, and problems in maintaining the disintegrating community bonds between the residents there. The problem areas I decided that we needed to target are as follows:

#### **The Preservation of Local Character**

- a) The loss of local culture due to the relocation of residents for more than 3 years (now 5) from the area.
- b) Since the dispersion of communities after the evacuation, residents have no opportunity to come together and reconnect with their community's dialect, cuisine, festivals and local customs.
- c) As people clean out or demolish their former homes, old documents and other records of the area will be lost.

#### **Maintaining Residents' Identity and Self-esteem**

- a) Both the fact of evacuation and friction with local residents after relocation leave



residents unable to see their hometowns in a positive light.

- b) Many residents have to hide their identity as residents of the Tomioka-Futaba region in their new daily lives.
- c) Residents believe that Tomioka has no culture, history or anything else to be proud of.

### **Maintaining Community Bonds**

- a) The municipal government needs to provide residents with the opportunity to feel that they are still connected to Tomioka Municipality and Futaba County.
- b) When residents of other municipalities within Futaba County have relocated side-by-side with Tomioka residents, the municipal government needs to give both parties the opportunity to think positively about their common identity as residents of Futaba County, and to interconnect with each other.

In the latest survey of Tomioka residents, only 13.9% said that they wanted to return in the near future. The majority responded that they were either undecided or would not return. Even after the national government starts returning residents to the former evacuation areas, the lack of any certainty as to whether former residents will return, and to what extent the local community will regenerate itself remains a major obstacle. There is also the problem of what to do about the remaining radioactive deposits. The demolishment of buildings and homes left uninhabitable after years of abandonment is resulting not only in the loss of old documents and other heritage that they contain, it is also rapidly changing the landscape of the region. There is a real danger that all remaining traces of the Tomioka and Futaba region from before the disaster will be erased.

The town commissioned the writing of a “History of Tomioka Municipality” 30 years ago, but this “History” has not been updated since then, and the last thirty years are an empty gap. After the Earthquake, reporting on Futaba County has focused solely on it as “the site of the nuclear reactor accident,” and this is how Futaba has become known to the whole world. This image of Futaba County has become a major component in the residents’ negative sense of identity, and there is a real danger that the starting point for all discussion about the region will be reduced to “the nuclear power reactor accident of 2011.”

It true that Futaba County did actively invite in the nuclear power plants. However, it is also true that our forebears did all they could to try to develop the regional economy. In other words, people should be proud of their region. Attracting nuclear power plants to the region was just one part of our forebears’ efforts to build up the region, and we need to objectively evaluate the fact that this resulted in the dispersal of

radioactive contamination. In order to do this, we need to preserve what we can of the region's historical record.

However, the reality we face is that very few residents provide us with information on records of historical and cultural heritage in their possession. Most of the residents are under the misunderstanding that only the kind of documents of any worth are those that are displayed in museums. We advertise ourselves as not only looking for "historical documents," but also "anything which tells us something about the region, such as old letters, notebooks, or photographs," in other words items which have "regional value." We want people to understand that in order to prevent the loss of our regional character and to pass on the story of our region to coming generations, the kind of records that we need are much more varied than the kind of items that are displayed in museums.

## **6. What the Project Team Has Done**

### Outline of the Current Situation

As of 31st March 2016, the Project Team has conducted 14 salvage operations, has sorted and cataloged 6 collections of documents, and has held an exhibition on the history of Tomioka/Futaba in Kōriyama.

When we first started out, we had no information on who held material of cultural or historical value. We started out by sending out letters to those families who had lent documents etc. for the writing of the town history. We then began to build up a track record by conducting salvage operations for those families that were willing to cooperate with us. At the same time, we also made a point of using mass media as a way of spreading information about our operations and educating people. Recently, residents have started to give us information, although the number is still small.

Our first priority is to target houses which are due to be demolished. As I explained earlier, many of the houses within the former evacuation zone are being demolished. We negotiate with the owners to donate items of "regional value" to the town, rather than throw it away. As of March 2016, almost 1,000 Tomioka residents have signed contracts to have their houses demolished. The number of residents who say that they will return to live in Tomioka is small, and this number is expected to decrease further. Unless we intervene, demolition of houses will mean that the cultural and historical heritage in these houses will also be lost. It is imperative that we salvage this material before the cleanup and demolition begins.

In reality, only local government can conduct salvage operations in buildings due to be demolished. We are in a special position because we are used to dealing with

personal information, and we are working hard to salvage material before the cleanup and demolition begins.

The problem of houses and buildings being demolished is a problem not just for Tomioka but for all of the area affected by the nuclear reactor accident, and I want other local governments within the region to learn from our Project Team. Local history is not a matter of just one single town; it can only be understood in terms of wider regional cultural, economic and social contexts.

### Salvaging and Preserving Materials

There are six steps that we follow in our work.

- 1) Contact the owner of a collection and decide on a time and date to start operations.
- 2) Before starting operations, visit the site to measure the level of radiation inside the site and estimate the amount of material to be salvaged.
- 3) On the day of operations, with the owner present, measure the onsite level of radiation, and then pack and remove the historical material.
- 4) Take the salvaged material to the municipal Cultural Center repositories for temporary keeping, and measure the radiation level of the items.
- 5) If the radiation level of the items is safe, we take the items to the Team's office in the municipal offices in Kōriyama for sorting and cataloging.
- 6) After the sorting and cataloging is finished, we return the collection to the repositories in the Cultural Center in Tomioka, and take another unsorted collection to Kōriyama and repeat the same process.

Finally, once a year we fumigate the repositories to prevent deterioration of the materials.

### Salvage Operations

Since we conduct all our salvage operations within Tomioka municipality, we wear protective clothing, masks, and helmets. Unless we have been entrusted to take all items inside it before demolition of a building, our rule is to conduct our operations with the owner present to prevent any trouble if something of value to the owner gets lost. However, in fact, even when the owner has entrusted us with everything left inside the building, to date, the owners have always been present when we have conducted salvage operations.

Since we work in badly deteriorated houses and damaged warehouses, we always conduct our salvage operations with great caution. We are more concerned about the danger to health and injury from mold, buildings collapsing, or running into feral

animals, rather than exposure to radiation. Most houses we enter with our shoes on, and in two years we have entered into four warehouses with collapsed walls.

The decision on what we should salvage as “heritage” is made on site by the curators in the group. We are always aware that even if items do not have any apparent “worth” now, they might become “valuable” in the future. In this case, “value” does not mean “commercial value,” but worth in terms of passing on information about the region to the future. We take all old photographs, including family photographs, and we give precedence to old tools and records of local events and gatherings.

#### What Have We Salvaged to Date?

The majority of what we have salvaged is either documents dating from the Edo Period (1600 to 1868) to the mid-20th century, and photographs dating from the late 19th century to today. The largest single collection we have found amounts to some 6,000 items from a family of merchants, who operated a soy sauce and miso paste brewery, and retailed clothing. The collection includes old documents, old records of the region, and photographs. The biggest find in this collection was the accounting records for a brick factory and a “habutae” (smooth silk cloth) weaving factory which operated in the area in the modern era (1868 on). Until this find we only knew that the factories used to exist in the region, but these documents can give us a more concrete picture of the scale of industry in the Tomioka region in this period. Other finds include documents from a long-established shrine, administrative records from a family that served as village mayor in the latter half of the 19th century, and documents from a local mathematician from the mid-19th century.

#### Sorting and Cataloging

The task of sorting and cataloging the documents that we salvage is mostly done by students studying history at Fukushima University. From the outset, our Project Team has received support from the university in terms of both personnel and specialized skills. In August 2015, the municipality and the university signed a formal agreement on the preservation, research on, and dissemination of results from our work.

When working together with university students, the most important task for us is to accurately measure and contain the radiation dose of the material we work with. We are very aware of the danger of exposing young people to radiation, and we measure and confirm the readings of radiation dosages with great caution. To date, we have not found any material with a high radiation dosage: most of the material we work with is lower than 1/100th of the standard set by the government for taking items out from the

evacuation areas, and about 1/10th of the safety standard set by the National Institute for Cultural Heritage. Nonetheless, we re-measure the material at every stage of the handling process.

Since the members of the Project Team all have their regular positions to fulfil, we are always short of hands. However, we have to get in ahead before buildings are demolished, and therefore our salvage operations get priority over sorting and cataloging material. Getting support from Fukushima University means that we can proceed with salvage, sorting and disseminating results all at the same time.

#### Preserving Records of the Disaster

The events of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Nuclear Reactor Accident together are disasters of historic scale, and I am also working to preserve records of these two disasters, and to disseminate information about them. I believe that preserving records of these disasters is necessary to pass on to future generations the reality that the region became the site of both a natural mega-disaster and a nuclear mega-disaster, and these events also are part of the regional story. Records of these events cover a wide range of such things as traces of the earthquake and tsunami, clocks which have stopped, documents, photographs, videos, and posters.

#### **7. What the Project Team Aims to Achieve**

What the Project Team can achieve is not a lot. I would like to introduce the direct outcomes that we expect from our work.

Our first step is to preserve, either physically or as digital data, a range of materials (paper documents, physical objects, memories, customs, scenery, etc.) which relate something of daily life and society as it used to be in the area. In other, simply preserving these records is in itself an important goal.

Our next step, which we do in parallel to the first, is publish or hold special exhibitions using the materials we have salvaged. We hope that residents who see the exhibitions or what we have written will give us new information about the location of items of historical or cultural heritage. If we continue to send out the message that the governmental administration closest to residents is working to preserve local heritage, then the chance that residents will respond will increase. As a matter of fact, residents are beginning to respond by giving us new information.

Then, by analyzing and researching what we have salvaged, we can go one step further and send out the message that we have learnt this or that about our community from the salvaged items. By repeating this process of analysis and research, the range

of information that we can draw on to pass on and inform people about the regional character of Tomioka increases, and we tie this together to recreate the story of the community and the reality of life as it was there, and the process by which the regional character was created.

Our Team is based on the hope that residents who see us involved in these various projects will start to appreciate the value of maintaining our local heritage and preserving and passing on the local character. If people can start to see this, then this should provide a basis for regenerating and reconstructing the community of Tomioka.

Finally, some more stages ahead, lies the task of trying to “rebuild the hearts and minds” of residents of the community. I earlier touched upon this task in a rather abstract way, but “rebuilding hearts and minds” is a very important matter. However, very little is known about what we really need to do to “rebuild hearts and minds.” Certainly, the government and politicians have never told us what to do about this, and in reality I do not think that they can, either.

One serious problem that Tomioka faces is that the negative effects of the nuclear reactor accident are so overwhelming that residents cannot feel any local pride, or are not in a situation where they can express it. I still hear people saying that they cannot feel proud inside of their own hearts that they come from Tomioka or Futaba County.

If I may speak without fear of being misunderstood, I think that people cannot accept their identity as residents. I believe that if the Project Team can create an environment where residents can build up a positive self-image, then this will be the first step towards “rebuilding hearts and minds.” Even for those people who do want to return to live in the area again, we need to do things such as rewrite the old town history written 30 years ago and face up objectively to the realities of the town’s past, so that these people too can come to take pride in their roots.

The old town history does not tell the story of how Tomioka grew, but for the most part either focuses on how the region connected to the central government and culture, or else just blindly sings the praises of the region. I believe that writing the story of how the region of Tomioka built its own history, and without moralizing or being judgmental, straightforwardly tell how our forebears struggled to build up the local economy and society, is a precondition for residents being able to accept the contents and move on towards “rebuilding their hearts and minds.”

## **7. Current Challenges**

We face very many challenges. For example, finding space to store the material

we salvage, a chronic shortage of participants, the race against time in beating the demolition crews to the scene, controlling radiation levels are just some of them, but here I want to talk about two problems caused by the prolonged evacuation of residents and the resulting absence of residents inside the municipality boundaries.

### Heritage Gone Missing

First of all, there are many historical documents and other items that were used in the writing of the old municipal history but which we do not know the whereabouts of today. This has happened due to one or a combination of the following reasons.

- 1) The family headship has passed on to a new generation, who do not know about their heritage materiel.
- 2) The whole family has evacuated and cannot find the time to go back and look for their heritage materiel.
- 3) Even if the family can go back, the condition inside the house is so bad that they cannot search for the documents and other materiel.
- 4) The family does not want to have their heritage materiel. salvaged, due to reasons such as the chaotic state of furniture and belongings inside, the deterioration of the building or the radiation levels inside it.
- 5) The building housing the documents etc. has been lost to the tsunami or other causes.

Of the above, loss of historical heritage due to generational change is a problem across the whole country, and the loss of heritage due to the tsunami is a problem common to all coastal areas affected by the tsunami, but the other causes are unique to the evacuation brought about by the nuclear power plant accident.

### Finding and Locating Unconfirmed Heritage

Another problem caused by the prolonged evacuation is that we cannot discover previously unconfirmed collections of heritage by going out into the field and combing an area, since not only is no one living there, but some of the former residents are now scattered all over Japan. If people do not actually currently reside in the area, this means (1) that we cannot locate collections by going there and asking for leads, (2) all the families of former village heads and mayors have left the area, and we cannot locate the administrative documents for the old administrative units within the town, (3) people still believe that the only documents and heritage of worth are the kind that one finds on display in museums, and so do not supply us with information about other kinds of heritage items.

In order to overcome these problems caused by the evacuation, the Project Team needs to show results, to (1) the municipal administration, (2) townspeople, and (3) the mass media.

- (1) Making the municipal administration aware that we are getting results relates directly to us being able to continue our work.
- (2) If residents can feel that we are getting results, this will help us get further information on the location of unconfirmed collections which is what we need to be able to further carry on our current salvage operations.
- (3) Getting the mass media interested in our work means that town residents living elsewhere in Japan can get to learn about our activities through media coverage. I repeat myself, but this is why it is very important to conduct salvage operations, sorting and cataloging, and dissemination of information all together.

## **9. The Place of Local Heritage in the Future**

In conclusion, I would like to tell you how I see the place of local heritage in the future. In particular, in the case of the Tomioka/Futaba region, because this is a region where people cannot live yet, the role of local heritage is all the more important.

- 1) Preserving local heritage will give us the source data to write and publish books etc. about the region. When it becomes possible to return to live in the area, residents who decide to not return or to relocate elsewhere, will be able to read this material and feel a connection to their roots.
- 2) This heritage will provide the basis for people born and raised in the region to start to see their identity in a positive light.
- 3) Studying and re-evaluating the “process of formation” of the Futaba region as locality-centered history will increase the credibility of any individual information that we disseminate about the region.

In order to achieve this, we have to clear the following tasks.

- a) Record the development of the Tomioka/Futaba region, and fill in the 30-year blank since the publication of the old municipal history.
- b) Examine why the town accepted hosting the nuclear power plants, in terms of the background to the decision and the region’s characteristics.
- c) Next examine what the nuclear power plants brought to the region. This must be done as an “evaluation,” and not be judgmental.
- d) After completing all the above, the next step must be to record the story of the municipality from after the Earthquake up until the town is rebuilt, and to pass on to future generations the “lessons” learned from this process.



I believe that doing this is the responsibility of Futaba County as a region which is experiencing the effects of a nuclear reactor accident. Gathering and preserving the source data to do this is the mission of the Tomioka Project Team.

In conclusion, I would like to add that friends from my former profession as a reporter are proving to be very supportive of the Project Team. As a result, Tomioka now is adding to the town's image a reputation as "the town which is collecting historical heritage and records of the earthquake and its aftermath, and holding exhibitions." These are the words that I have heard on numerous occasions from residents of other towns and villages. I hope to be able to carry on this work in the future.

### ***Translator's Afterword***

In a personal email communication dated March 29th, 2020, Momma-san reports that he has been assigned to the Continuing Education Department of the Tomioka Town Office. One of Momma's roles in his new position is to prepare an exhibition to be displayed in the Tomioka Municipal Archives building, which will become open to the public sometime in the middle of 2021. Another of his roles will be to develop the content of the activities and services provided by the Continuing Education Department. This rather bureaucratic description of his new role means that he will now be able to devote time, as part of his work portfolio, to tackling the tasks that he outlined in this article in 2016.

JFM



**Local Histories in Evacuated Areas around Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant:  
The Case of the Izumita Family in Morotake, Fukushima Prefecture**

IZUMITA Kunihiro, Ph.D Candidate  
Tōhoku University  
Translation Ann SHERIF Professor  
Oberlin College

As a resident of Fukushima prefecture and a student of history, I became involved in historical and heritage preservation efforts for both personal and professional reasons. After the explosion of the nuclear reactors at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster that started on March 11, 2011, the Japanese government designated areas exposed to radioactive contamination as restricted zones, and ordered residents to evacuate. My family's home lies in an area called Morotake, which is part of Futaba Municipality, on the coast of Fukushima Prefecture, and is only 2.8 miles away from the exploding reactors. Until today, it is still located within the restricted coastal zone (Figs.1, 2). As a result, more than five years after the disasters, my family is still not able to live in the home where I was born and grew up.

In the first days after the triple disasters (earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear contamination), I was in a state of shock, anxious and uncertain, but it was not long before I also felt determined to somehow help the people living in the disaster area, and to contribute to the recovery of the region. Gradually, I realized that I had the power to help change things. So when I heard that my professors and students at Ibaraki University were working to rescue historical materials and cultural properties, I decided to join them. We went out together to salvage historical objects at risk; they taught me how to handle and conserve the objects. These experiences convinced me that I needed to dedicate myself to preserving the history and culture of my hometown for future generations. In August 2011, when my family and I returned temporarily to our home, we had our first opportunity to rescue materials that had been passed down in the Izumita family for many generations.

As a researcher and as a former resident and community member, I see tremendous value in ongoing efforts to preserve local history and culture for future generations. In this paper, I will discuss the current status of historical preservation efforts in the affected areas around the Fukushima Nuclear Plant, with a focus on the area where my family home is located. Because former residents have all been forced to leave, communities that thrived in this area for centuries have scattered. Studying

the history of the place we still think of as home, but cannot be at home in, is an important way to connect to our past.



Fig. 1: Izumita home, March 11, 2016



Fig. 2: Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, seen from Morotake

## 2. The Great East Japan Earthquake and the Izumita Family Home

I will start by offering more detail about the geographical setting and history of my family's home in a small area called Morotake, which I will refer to as the "Izumita home." About half of Morotake lies in Futaba Municipality and the other part lies in neighboring Namie Municipality.

Before the disasters, 26 households each resided in the Futaba and Namie sides. The community is located 4.5 kilometers from the Fukushima Nuclear power plant (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Map of my home & Futaba Municipality

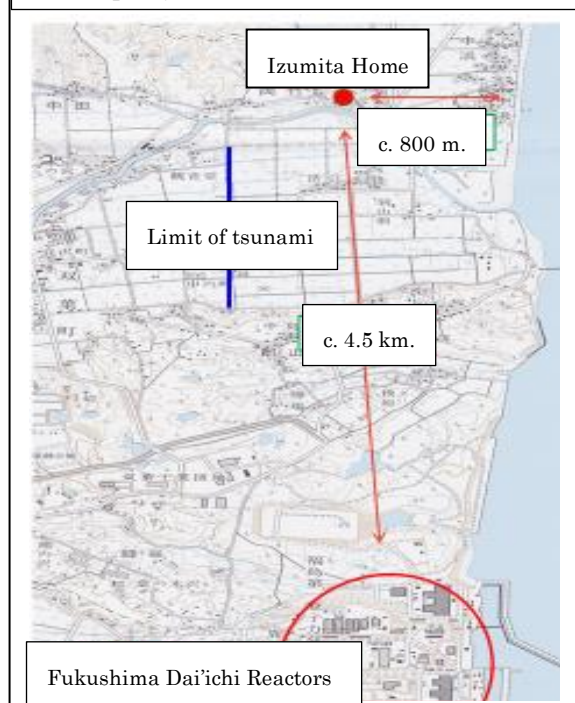


Fig. 4 Tsunami seen from Izumita Home, 2011



Fig. 5 Morotake after the Tsunami (June 6, 2011)



Homes in the Morotake area suffered extensive damage from the earthquake, which measured a seismic force of 6 in this area. At the Izumita home, the force of the earthquake cracked and broke ceiling beams, shattered glass windows, compromised the ridge of the roof, and the building was assessed as suffering “major damage”. The tsunami hit the coast less than an hour later and totally destroyed all of the houses in neighboring Namie Municipality, and a majority of houses in Futaba Municipality (Figures 4 & 5). The photographs that I took looking out from my family’s home, one before and one after the tsunami (Figures 6 & 7), clearly show the utter devastation of this area in Morotake, as well as the enormity of the tsunami.

Fig. 6 Shore Viewed from Izumita House, Dec. 2010



Fig. 7 Morotake before the Tsunami, c. 2001



Despite its location just 800 meters from the coast, the Izumita Home suffered relatively minor tsunami damage, compared to the homes nearby. There are several reasons for this. First, the house sits at a slightly higher elevation than the neighbors. In addition, the house has a wall on its east and south sides, with a

sturdy gate on the south wall. While some water did flow into the house, the gate and the wall along the perimeter of the property blocked the massive volume of debris that the tsunami swept along in its path. In other words, there were physical barriers that sheltered both the house and the warehouse (Figures 8 & 9).

Fig. 8 Gate to my Home and Piled-up Debris



Fig.9 Izumita Home and Warehouse viewed from road



As if the earthquake and tsunami were not enough, we also found ourselves confronted with a nuclear power plant “accident.” This event turned out to have a profound impact on our lives. Although the radioactivity levels around the Izumita home were relatively low (0/25 to 0.6 microsieverts), areas within the radius of the power plant were designated as restricted, which meant that all residents had to evacuate. As a result, there was no one to repair the homes and structures that had survived the major earthquake and tsunami but had sustained some level of damage. During the five years since 3.11, some of these structures have collapsed, putting into jeopardy the historical artifacts inside. As an example, I will discuss a small Shinto Shrine called the Suwa Shrine, located in Morotake.

Suwa Shrine, located on a hill that used to be a medieval earthen-work fortress, was a well-known landmark and focal point for people in the community. While the shrine suffered some damage from the earthquake, it escaped the tsunami because of its location on high ground. On March 11, people ran straight to the shrine to escape the rising waters. These are photographs of the shrine on that I took in March 2013 (Figures 11 and 12). Two years after the disasters, the main sanctuary (*honden*) had collapsed, as you can see here. In the hall of worship (*haiden*) behind the main sanctuary, the main column had slipped off its stone base, the front door had fallen off, and part of the ceiling was damaged, but the structure somehow was still standing. In this way, buildings in the restricted areas that had moderate or little damage from the huge tsunami and earthquake ended up in a state of near collapse



two years later. When I visited again in January of 2014, Suwa Shrine had totally collapsed (Figure 13).

Fig. 10 Front of Suwa Shrine (before the disaster),

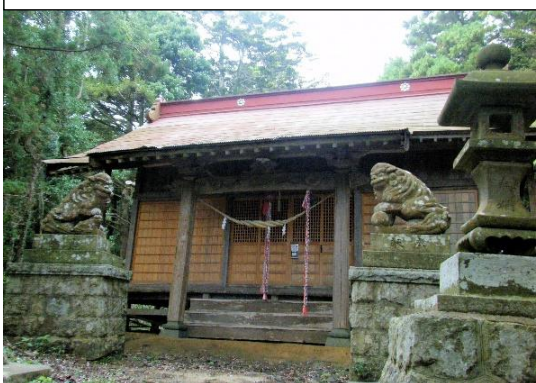


Figure 11: Hall of Worship, Suwa Shrine (March 10, 2013)

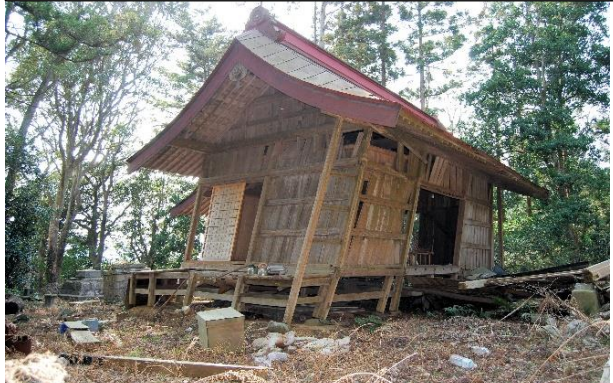


Figure 12: View from inside the Hall of Worship, Suwa Shrine.



Figure 13: Foreground is Hall of Worship, Main Hall in

Now that five years have passed since the disasters, some municipalities like Tomioka and Naraha are making preparations for residents to return. In contrast, the residents of Futaba and Okuma Municipality, to mention a few examples, have no prospect of moving back home. As the case of Suwa Shrine shows, the implications of these long-term evacuations for historical preservation are huge. As long the total evacuation of the town is maintained, there is a danger that the historical and cultural heritage of the area will be lost without anyone knowing that this is happening.

### 3. Preservation Efforts and the Izumita Collection

Let us turn to the heritage and historical materials of the Izumita Family. The Izumita Family was established by Araki Hakuryūshōsei. Araki donated a sum of money to the local domain (Sōma Domain) in 1825, and was rewarded by being granted rural samurai status and the privilege of taking the name Izumita. The painting here dates to this donation and change of status. The family originally were doctors of Chinese medicine, and the lineage can be traced back about two centuries.



Fig. 14 Founder of Izumita Family, 1825

..Most of the Izumita family collection was stored in a traditional Japanese warehouse (*kura, dozo*) built during the Meiji Period (1868 to 1912).

Fig. 15 Warehouse before the disasters (March 7, 2009)



Fig. 16 Warehouse 4 years after the disasters (Dec. 13, 2015)



Each time my family and I were permitted to go back to our home, we would test some objects for radiation levels (13,000 pm or below), and then take them to Ibaraki University, where I was a student. As part of Ibaraki Shiryō Net salvage operations, we catalogued and photographed the items. At present, we have catalogued and digitized 1,300 objects for the online catalog.

The documents and materials of the Izumita Family Collection we have studied thus far will be of interest to scholars in a wide range of disciplines. The collection includes a variety of Edo period materials, such as genealogies of the Izumita and Araki families, correspondence, and early modern medical books. Perhaps of even greater significance are records of the local village assembly for the period between 1912 to 1926, documents relating to the local Suwa Shrine, and battle flags and



*haori* jackets related to Sōma Domain wild horse roundup<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, the collection provides a record of the original history and culture built up over the ages in the disaster-affected areas.



Fig. 17 Izumita Family battle flag, jacket and armor

The tsunami swept away many of the homes and any records of the history of Morotake that were held there. Furthermore, as a result of the nuclear accident, the people who were the bearers of the culture of Morotake have also had to desert the region. In areas affected by the nuclear accident, salvaging and preserving private collections, like that of my family, is necessary to pass on knowledge about the history and culture of these regions.

Unfortunately, one sees few examples of salvage and preservation by the owners of individual collections of historical and cultural heritage in

areas affected by the nuclear accidents. In my family's case, such preservation efforts happened because I happen to be a student of history, and happened to be involved in rescue and conservation initiatives in another region (Ibaraki Prefecture). Unsurprisingly, people from contaminated areas have often chosen to devote energy to overcoming the challenges of living as evacuees. There are, furthermore, barriers to historical preservation efforts, such as the brevity of visits to their homes in the evacuation zones, and the lack of people who can help with salvage operations in these areas. For those reasons, salvaging of historical materials is less common than one might think, no matter how old and rare the objects may be.

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<sup>2</sup> The Sōma wild horse roundup was an annual festival conducted in Sōma Domain. Samurai will don full battle armor and round up untamed horses from the Domain's horse ranches, and the event was a form of military training conducted as a religious event. After the abolishment of the domains in 1871, the festival was revived as a purely religious event in 1878, but the festival still centers on massed bodies of armored warriors competing against each other.

For example, I recall vividly the arguments I had with my family when I found a suit of armor (Edo Period) in a wooden box on the second floor of our warehouse (Figure 18).

Because I thought that the armor was a valuable artifact in telling the history of our family, I tried to take the armor out. My family reacted with surprise. “Why are you dragging out that old piece of junk? We don’t have any place to put it at home, and we have no use for it. Put that back where you found it,” they told me. Reluctantly, I did as I was told. I am an historian, so I am fully aware of the potential significance of the objects. But I also know that most people have no idea what most of these things are, much less how they were used, who owned them, and what they can tell us about our history and the places where we live—or places we think of as home, even if we cannot live there anymore.



Fig. 18 Wooden box containing suit of armor



Fig. 19 Contents of the armor box as found

From my own experience, I know that the local people who own collections of heritage, and local government officials in both Ibaraki and Fukushima Prefectures, in most cases do not know of the existence of historical and cultural heritage at risk within their areas. Even in those cases where the owners of collections know what they own, they usually have little understanding of the significance of these “old things” in understanding and reconstructing the history of their area. Even my family, the Izumitas, knew little about what was in our warehouse, much less why those things matter. When I was growing up, I often heard relatives mention that we owned old things handed down from our ancestors. One of the few positive aspects of the 3 11 disasters was that it prompted us to think about and learn about these things that had been threatened by, and survived all that had happened. I am happy to say, as my family watched the rescue process, they became interested in both the “old things” in our home, and more broadly in the importance of identifying and studying heritage objects as a means of creating a fuller understanding of the history of our hometown and region. My family now appreciates the reasons that I dragged out that old suit of armor, and indeed we have all been working together to rescue the Izumita family heritage objects.

I would like to emphasize here that historical preservation projects should never take the act of preservation as its sole goal. Researchers must be able to bring to life the outcomes of those efforts for the local people. Historians need to be able to show the ways the heritage salvage projects can create new narratives and meanings about local history. By bringing life to “old things” and promoting the understanding and knowledge of local people, we can demonstrate why history matters, and why historical materials are so important.

#### **4. Surveying Place Names around Morotake**

Another project I undertook was a survey of place names in Morotake. In communities that had been forced to evacuate and disperse because of the nuclear accident, there is a real danger of losing the local place names, expressions, and tales that were part of daily conversation in those places. This would also constitute a rupture of history. I wanted to record intangible properties such as local language, which constitutes an essential aspect of “local memory”.

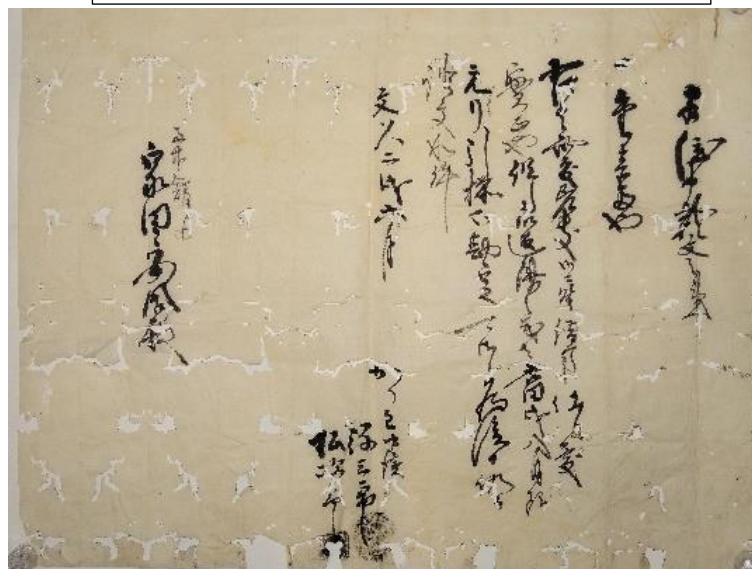
One example of local memory expressed linguistically that I surveyed was the locally used place names used to refer to the medieval earthwork fortress called Morotake-tate. Very little is known about this fort or its former masters. One document dated 1543 mentions the existence of the fort, and an old chronicle described the structures as being used as a fort up to around 1600. For the past half century—at least before the 2011 disaster—however, hardly anyone living in Morotake knew the fortress existed. However, in my survey, I found that many of the local residents referred to the area around the area where the fortress had stood as *tate* or *tojō* (both words connected with “fort”), even though they had no idea why. Another place name, *matoba*, means “target range” where samurai would hone their firing skills, and is connected with the fort. On the site of a defunct temple nearby, which local tradition says was the family temple of the lords of the fort, I have found tombstones belonging to members of the family of the former lords, further evidence that a fort actually existed here. Furthermore, in the addresses written on letters dating from 1862 and 1932, we can find the word *tate* (fort) used as part of the address of my ancestors.

In other words, local people have used these colloquial terms related to the fort as place names for more than four centuries.

Fig. 21 Letter from 1862 with *Tate* as part of the Address



Fig. 20 Tombstone of Lords of Morotake



All of these local uses of language related to place are part of local memory, providing evidence of the people who lived here and their links to their home place and ancestors. In my project, one goal is to make a record of these intangible aspects of local memory, and to transmit these emotionally potent aspects of local identity to future generations.

##### 5. The Significance of Transmitting Culture and History in the Nuclear Contaminated Areas

In radiation-contaminated areas around the Fukushima nuclear power plant, local communities have already disintegrated. Salvaging and preserving historical materials, and passing on the historical and cultural heritage of these communities, is a necessary component in enabling former residents of these areas to regain their local identity.

It took over a month after the 3.11 disasters (April 22, 2011), for the authorities to put up barricades on roads within a 20 kilometer area around the power plants. Even though most residents had evacuated soon after the events, some returned to their homes in the weeks before the area was barricaded. My mother and grandmother both went to our home the day before the restricted area rules went into force. Their goal was to bring out the Buddhist mortuary tablets of the Izumita ancestors. In their eyes, not to do so would have been a sign of disrespect for the ancestors.

Our community may remain a restricted zone forever, so we may never be allowed to go home. It is also possible that the authorities will lift the restrictions and allow us to move back home. In that case, however, how can we know whether we will really be safe living there? Some former residents feel an attachment to the land passed down by the ancestors, and do not want their generation to be the last to steward that land. To them, the land, that place, is a core part of their identities.

Before we were hit with earthquake, tsunami, and radioactive contamination, I myself assumed that my hometown would always be there. But when I found out that we could not live there any more, the idea of leaving the land that my ancestors had tended for generations very much upset me. I felt a great sense of loss to be separated from the place where I was born. My involvement in historical rescue and preservation efforts has helped to lessen those feelings of loss, and to confirm my sense of connectedness and belonging to that place, even though I cannot be there. I am certain that learning about the history of the place we were born and grew up, and knowing about where we come from, has helped many other former residents (evacuees) move forward in their lives.



## Social Outreach in Historical Conservation Work: Giving Feedback about What We Learn

TAKAHASHI Yō'ichi, Assistant Professor

Department of the Uehiro Tōhoku Historical Materials Research

Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tōhoku University

### 1. Introduction: A Case Study in Social Outreach

The Department of the Uehiro Tōhoku Historical Materials Research to which I belong was founded as an endowed chair at Tōhoku University in 2012, one year after the Great East Japan Earthquake. Its mission is to promote the conservation of historical materials, mainly old documents, and through outreach activities, to provide feedback on and from the material conserved, but in reality, we concentrate on the latter. After the earthquake and tsunami of 2011, both Miyagi Shiryō Net and some local governments have conducted many salvage operations to preserve historical materials at risk in Miyagi Prefecture, but there remains the huge task of giving feedback to each local community about the content and relevance of the materials preserved. By informing society at large about the results of our work and what we can learn from the materials we preserve, we hope that people will become aware of the worth of the local historical heritage around them, and start to think about protecting the region's heritage by themselves.

In today's presentation, I want to introduce as a case study, the preservation and outreach work that my Department conducted on the SATŌ Niemon Family Collection of Documents, from Kawasaki Municipality, Miyagi Prefecture.

Map of Tōhoku Region



Map of Sendai and Kawasaki





## 2. The SATŌ Niemon Family and the Family Collection of Documents

Kawasaki Municipality is a town with a population of about 9,000 and lies about 30 kilometers (19 miles) west of Sendai. The Satō Family runs an inn in the hot-spring spa of Aone, nestled in the foot of the Zaō Mountains, a range of the most active volcanos in the Tōhoku Region. The hot-springs at Aone were reputedly discovered in the 16th century, and the Satō Family has run an inn there from at least the early 17th century until today. Part of the existing building has been classified as an Tangible Cultural Property by the national government. The building suffered only light damage from the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, but the number of guests temporarily decreased. Furthermore, in April to June 2015, increased volcanic activity higher up in the mountains led to another drop in the number of guests.

The Department of The Uehiro Tohoku Historical Materials Research (hereafter, “Department”) began preservation work on the Satō Family Collection at the request of Kawasaki Municipal government in 2012. Miyagi Shiryō Net, Kawasaki Municipality, and the Department have been collaborating since then to digitally photograph and catalog the whole collection. At present we know that the collection extends to some 3,000 documents, and we expect that this number will increase as we discover new material. The documents date from the early 17th century up until the 20th century, covering a span of four centuries. Deciphering the contents of the documents has revealed that they cover topics such as, management of the spa during the Edo Period (1600 to 1868), relations between the Satō Family and the Date Family, the daimyō of Sendai Domain, and relationships between the spa and local residents. The documents give us concrete information about hitherto unknown aspects of the history of the Kawasaki region. By informing as many people as possible of the historical worth of the documents, we hope that people will come to recognize the collection as a common valuable asset of the community, and that the collection will also add to the market appeal of the inn.

The Gate to the Inn



The Main Building





Documents from the Early 17th to 19th Century from the Satō Collection



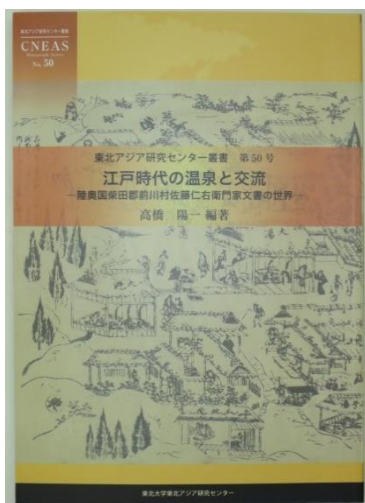
### 3. Disseminating Information: Publishing and Public Lectures

The first step we took in making public the results of our preservation work with the Satō Family Collection was publishing. In 2013 we published a selection of the documents with commentary as *Social Interaction and Hot-Springs: the World of the SATŌ Niemon Family Documents, Maekawa Village, Shibata County, Province of Mutsu*. In 2014, I published *Bringing Back the Steamy Mists: Recovery from Famines in the Edo Period* as part of the Miyagi Shiryō Net “Historical Regeneration Project. *Social Interaction and Hot-Springs* is an academic work published with a grant from the Northeast Asia Research Institute of Tōhoku University. Only 300 volumes were published, and the book can only be read in libraries and other public academic institutions within Miyagi Prefecture. *Bringing Back the Steamy Mists* was published in 1000 volumes, costs only about \$8, and is selling well in bookstores in Sendai. However, this is still a long way from informing a wide range of people about the value to society of the Satō Family Collection.

In July, 2014, the Department held a public lecture series entitled “The Pride of Kawasaki: the Culture and History of our Hometown,” in conjunction with Miyagi Shiryō Net and Kawasaki Municipality. As part of this series, I gave a lecture on what we can learn about the history of Aone Spa from the Satō Family Collection. This lecture was attended by about 200 people. Members of the audience who answered the questionnaire we distributed replied that after hearing the lecture, they wanted to learn more about the history of their hometown. We can say that the lecture was effective in reaching a somewhat wider audience. However, the publicity required for a public lecture series is expensive, and it also requires the full support of the town government, so we cannot expect to hold public lectures very frequently. In order to tell a much wider audience about the social value of the Satō Family Collection, we needed to take a different

approach.

Publication *Social Interaction*



Public Lecture “The Pride of Kawasaki”



#### 4. Exhibiting Documents and Workshops on Reading Old Documents

The next step we took was to set up an exhibition of the actual documents. We started work on the exhibition in spring 2015, and it was ready by the 24th of June. We set the exhibition up in three triple-tiered glass cases in a room in the annex of the Satō Family’s inn. The exhibition featured 20 selected documents from the collection, with commentary on acrylic plates explaining the contents of each document and its significance. The documents covered matters such as visits to the inn by members of the Date Family, how the Satō ancestors helped the community survive during famines, a family precept on hospitality, and other matters related to the history of the Aone Hot-Springs during the Edo Period (1600 to 1868).

In preparing the exhibition, we were indebted to the cooperation of the Satō Family and the municipality. Mrs Satō provides a guided tour of the exhibition every morning for guests. We believe that this adds extra value to the inn’s appeal, other than the spa and other hospitality.

When we planned this onsite exhibition, the inn was suffering another drop in business due to the news of the increase in volcanic activity in the Zaō Mountains. We hoped that the exhibition would provide just even some small bright news for the area. The exhibition was reported in the major local newspaper for the Miyagi-Tōhoku region on 6th July in an article which explained the contents of the exhibition, the drop in business due to the news of the increased volcanic activity, and how it was hoped that the exhibition would serve in some way to bring back guests.

At present, we are planning to renew the contents of the exhibition in order to

let even more people know about the worth of the Satō Family Collection and how interesting it can be to learn about local history from contemporary documents.

Another project we are engaged in is holding workshops in Sendai to teach non-specialists how to decipher old hand-written documents. We hold two workshops a year, in spring and autumn, and for the autumn 2015 series of eight classes I used documents from the Satō Family Collection as the course material. Some fifty people attended each class, so that over the whole series 400 people attended classes. I believe that the experience of not just passively listening to a lecture or looking at an exhibition, but rather actively reading the original documents for themselves and using that to reconstruct the past will help people to get a deeper understanding and appreciation of the worth of old documents. I further hope that this in turn will lead to more members of the general public gaining a deeper appreciation of historical preservation work.

The Onsite Exhibition



The Contents of a Display Case



## 5. Getting Results: Gaining Local Participation

In order to get local residents interested in preserving the historical heritage of their region, such as collections of old documents, by themselves, we must communicate the results of our historical preservation work in ways that the general public can understand and relate to. Our various outreach activities for the Satō Family Collection represent one example of this kind of engagement. One significant result that we have gained to date has been that interested residents of Kawasaki formed a local history study group in the autumn of 2015. The group was formed at the instigation of employees of the municipal administration who were impressed by our work, and brought together residents interested in history to cooperate in supporting cultural projects in the municipality.

In October 2015, we started to digitally photograph the Satō Family Collection, on site in the inn. Some ten members of the local history study group participated in this session. From May 2016 we have started to digitally record the contents of the collection on a regular monthly basis, and members of the study group have continued to participate. The regular members have started to become proficient in setting up the cameras and handling the documents, and the work is proceeding very smoothly now.

About 40 cartons of documents still remain to be recorded, and we plan to continue our current work for the foreseeable future. We hope that the residents who are participating in this project will acquire the skills and knowhow they will need so that they can locate, preserve and record other collections of old documents sleeping in their area by themselves. Our end goal is to build the basis for empowering local residents to be have the interest and skills necessary to preserve their own heritage.

Photographing the Satō Family Collection (18th May, 2016. With the cooperation of Kawasaki History Study Group, Miyagi Shiryō Net, Kawasaki Municipal Hall)



## **6. The Future: Problems to be Resolved**

It is important for local residents to take the initiative in preserving local regional heritage, such as collections of old documents, because this heritage can provide the basis for people's mental and emotional well-being. When communities lose familiar landscapes or interpersonal bonds, due to natural disasters and other causes, local heritage which tells people about what their community was, can serve as a shining ray of light in the darkness to link people's minds and hearts to the community.

In order to get a wider understanding of the significance of preserving historical and cultural heritage, we need to bring as many people as we can to appreciate the "intrinsic value" of such heritage. In the case of collections of old documents, their

contents can tell us not only the history of the family that owns them, but also in many cases they are invaluable in unravelling the story of the local community or region. On the other hand, it is not only natural disasters that threaten the survival of such private collections: a much more prevalent threat is generational change within the family. The more extensive and valuable a collection is, the more difficult it is for a private owner to properly preserve and maintain it. We need to convince owners of such private collections of documents of the importance of preserving the collections not just for themselves, but for the community as well. Then we also need to gain the involvement of residents and local government, to get communities as a whole to appreciate the significance of preserving local historical and cultural heritage. The example of the Satō Family Collection is a model case of this kind of involvement of all parties.

One other major problem we face is getting younger people actively involved in the process of preserving heritage. This is essential if we want to pass this heritage on to future generations. People have been concerned about the spreading lack of interest of young people in anything to do with history, and as a matter of fact, the volunteers participating in photographing the Satō Family Collection are nearly all over 65 years old. While it is probably not realistic to ask to have classes on deciphering old documents introduced into the school curriculum, we really should have local history introduced into the school history curriculum, and give school students a chance to experience firsthand the process of preserving local heritage which serves as the basis for putting together the story of their region. Getting young people in their 10's and 20's to think about the story of their region may be one very big step towards assuring a future for the region.