

Memories and “Negative History”: *How to convey the 3.11 Disasters?*

September 23, 2023, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm (JST)

International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS), Tohoku University

Symposium Program

Abstracts

Shinzo Araragi

The Difficulties of the War and Colonial Experiences: How have they been Told and How have they been Passed on?

August 14, 1991, was the day that Kim Hak-sun, a former Japanese military "comfort woman," broke her silence. It was a landmark day for victims to speak out about the "negative history" of wartime sexual violence. The forced silence on negative history was broken. In the context of the Asian-Pacific War and colonial rule under the "Japanese Empire," these were "negative histories" for postwar Japanese society, and for a long time, they were difficult to talk about. The official narrative of postwar Japanese society has been one of self-denial of both war and colonial rule as the colonies were abandoned through unconditional surrender, the occupying forces dismantled the military, and Article 9 clause which renounced war was added to the Japanese Constitution. From the Asian-Pacific War to defeat, occupation, and the subsequent Cold War, people's diverse experiences have been suppressed. Those who were forced to remain silent include many peasant soldiers, student soldiers, and professional soldiers who were involved in the war; many ordinary people who were impacted by the Battle of Okinawa, the atomic bombing, and other damages of war; those who experienced bitterness after repatriation from the colonies; and Koreans in Japan who were forced to remain in Japan after liberation. While these groups of people could not speak openly about their experiences, they found other ways to pass along their stories to others. In my report, I will review how the experiences of war and colonialism were first told and passed on in postwar Japanese society, using as examples the theory of war responsibility, the activities of the Himeyuri Peace Prayer Group, and those of the Nagano Prefecture Association for Telling Live Lessons of the Manchurian Settlement.

Andrew Gordon*The Rhyming History of Disasters: Ashio and Fukushima*

With the opening in the past 5 or so years of a several public, corporate, and private museums, the public history of the Fukushima Dai Ichi power plant meltdown and its impact is beginning to be told. I find remarkable rhymes between this history and the way it is being told to the public, and the public history of the pollution disaster at the Ashio Copper Mine Refinery that began well over a century ago. The range of narratives and heritage sites of the Ashio disaster is tremendous. By introducing these rhymes, I hope to convey a sense of how the recent history of Fukushima is unfolding in a similar form, with potential to produce a similar or even richer memoryscape over time.

Ryo Morimoto*3.11 Devil's Archive or How to Erect TEPCO's Grave*

In what ways does the act or place of archiving embody the blurry boundary between the individual and the collective, or corporate agendas and personal experiences? Based on my fieldwork between 2017 and 2023, I will share my encounters with the hidden archive of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) in this presentation. As popular sentiment might have it, the archive is for and about a group of “evil people”: the company responsible for the 2011 nuclear accident and the inconsolable fear and suffering it has caused. However, TEPCO’s “3.11 Facts and Lessons” archive conveys their employees’ individual experiences and pain, which are real event though they have been socially, politically, and morally silenced from more official, public archives of the triple disasters. Should their stories of 3.11 be shared, and what can we learn from such individual narratives by entering into a closed corporate space?

Shosuke Sato*Current Situation of Disaster Storyteller Activities in Japan: An Analysis of Tohoku and Other Regions that Pass down Experiences of catastrophes, including Disasters, Wars, and Accidents*

This presentation provides a report on the recent activities of “disaster storytellers” who are living in the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and uses data taken from an annual survey of active organizations involved in the storytelling. This survey was conducted jointly by the Public Interest Incorporated Association 3.11 Memorial Network and the presenter. In addition, this presentation explores the issues faced by storytellers and the direction of their solutions based on the results of a survey of storytellers, which asked about their experiences with natural disasters and wars in Japan. This survey was jointly conducted by NHK Fukushima and the presenter.

Anna Wiemann

Kataribe and Zeitzeugen: Storytelling of Historical Events

Dating back to ancient times, oral transmission of history has a long tradition in all parts of the world. Today, stories of individuals who witnessed a historically relevant event is the methodological core of the Oral History discipline. First discussed in the 1940s, Oral History rapidly developed in the 1960s. In Europe, especially in Germany, this paralleled the extensive documentation of Nazi crimes by individual storytelling by so-called *Zeitzeugen*, contemporary witnesses providing testimony of what they experienced. In Japan, the tradition of storytelling or storytellers, *kataribe*, has a long history as well. For the longest time, storytelling primarily referred to tellers of folk tales or local history. Since the end of WWII, in Japan too, the meaning of storytelling shifted to people who speak, as historical witnesses, about their experiences with disastrous events such as war, atomic bombs, natural hazards, or infectious diseases. Such witnesses of historical events are often well organized and they offer testimonies for educational purposes. In Germany, after the end of WWII, *Zeitzeugen* gained prominence in school curricula, as well as in museums and memorials. Students and visitors could easily relate to people providing testimonies about historic events, and the message to 'never let anything similar happen again' resonated. However, *Zeitzeugen* of WWII are dying out. This presentation examines how civil society organizations and school curricula in Germany integrate *Zeitzeugen* into their educational programs and how they deal with the issue of generational change.

Julia Gerster

Challenges in Transmitting Disaster Memory in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima after 3.11

Like other disasters, after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster ("3.11"), many disaster survivors followed their predecessors to become *kataribe*, who shared their experiences through storytelling with visitors. Such activities are highly valued as a form of vivid and engaging disaster education, and *kataribe* are in high demand to speak at schools, disaster memorial facilities, and educational tourism. Yet, more than 12 years after 3.11, *kataribe* face various challenges in continuing their missions. Comparing the differently affected prefectures, this presentation discusses practical and social challenges of which some are unique to the hazard and recovery types, such as the changing landscapes that make it hard to convey the impact of the disaster, varying opinions on disaster memory within the communities, or the difficulties in speaking out on the nuclear disaster which connects to invisible hazards and the risk of stigma.

Taketoshi Yamamoto

Kamishibai Propaganda

This presentation explores the success of *kamishibai* (paper plays) as a propaganda tool in the Japanese archipelago and its failure in the Japanese colonies and occupied territories. The success of *kamishibai* as a propaganda tool in Japan bewildered the Allied powers while they attempted to direct control over Japanese media during the occupation period. *Kamishibai*, a uniquely Japanese performing art form, was beyond the Allied powers comprehension or control, even as they hastily set up a *kamishibai* post to handle this enigmatic medium. Most of the *kamishibai* propaganda operations located in the Japanese occupied territories and colonies did not deliver satisfactory results to the Japanese local authorities. The exception was Indonesia, where local Indonesian performers and artists contributed to the popularity of *kamishibai*.

Sharalyn Orbaugh

Selling the War to the People: The Storylines of Propaganda Kamishibai

This presentation examines *kamishibai* plays created by Japanese governmental agencies between 1938 and 1945, to reveal the kinds of images, plotlines, and storytelling techniques in plays intended to mobilize Japanese citizens and inhabitants of Japan's colonies and occupied territories to support the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Asia Pacific War (1941-1945). *Kamishibai* play production increased dramatically between 1942 and 1944, even though the war itself was going increasingly badly for Japanese forces, suggesting that the medium of *kamishibai* was seen as effective in conveying encouraging messages that would keep people committed to the war effort. One interesting point is the degree to which the plays depict the pain of that war: the suffering of people on the home front and, even more frequently, the painful and often pointless deaths of Japanese soldiers. *Kamishibai* from the World War Two era therefore offer a view into real-time attempts to capture and memorialize tragedy, even as the tragedy continued to unfold, in ways perhaps similar to the current storytelling about the ongoing effects of the 3.11 triple disaster.

Kaoru Ueda

Digitizing Kamishibai: from Group Consumption to Individual Experience

Kamishibai are interactive live performances where the narrators (performers) engage with their audiences. The performers will adjust the tone of their voices, use tools to create sound effects, make gestures, etc., and time the changing of the slides based on an audience's reactions. *Kamishibai* performances are often held in places where groups can interact and bond over a shared experience, and where the negotiation of social hierarchy would occur. However, the digitization of *kamishibai* and its availability on digital platforms introduce a different experience to users where it is more individual, custom-catered, and compartmentalized. This presentation discusses this major shift of experiencing *kamishibai* from live group experiences to pre-made customized personal viewing, and considers its impact on the current and future understanding of *kamishibai* by showcasing various types of digital *kamishibai* performances made available on the "[Fanning the Flames: Propaganda in Modern Japan](#)" digital exhibition website, and the digital users' behavior of how they navigate through the online exhibit.