Disasters Memories in Practice and the Struggles Involved: a Focus on a Memorial Event at an Area Struck by Tsunami in the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster

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The objective of this report is to present the process of how a kamishibai (Japanese picture-card show) was created in an area struck by tsunami in the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster and to reveal how memories of the earthquake disaster comes to be one collective story. This kamishibai was created to be presented at a “3.11” memorial event held annually in the town of Shichigahama, Miyagi Prefecture, with the objective of relaying the events and lessons of the earthquake disaster to the next generation. For this reason, many disaster experiences told by residents of the town were included in the kamishibai. Volunteers who live in the town of Shichigahama (Memorial Event Executive Committee) played the main role in the creation of the kamishibai, however, researchers who had been conducting investigations related to the earthquake disaster (of which the writer is one) were also involved. This report first relates how the town of Shichigahama, Miyagi Prefecture was affected by the disaster, then describes what led to the creation of the kamishibai and the process of its creation by the Memorial Event Execution Committee, and finally examines the process of how disaster experiences are reconstituted as narratives.

In the end, the kamishibai was completed after much trial and error and became a narrative which could be collectively agreed upon by the executive committee members and the residents who viewed it. However, during the process of creating the story of the kamishibai, much struggle and conflict were seen among those creating as to the directionality of the story and the episodes to be selected. What the process of creating a kamishibai made clear is that the memories of the disaster in the town of Shichigahama are widely varied, and this was a sort of resistance to being included in a uniform group called “area struck by tsunami.” Whenever something is commemorated, memories and voices are selected and discarded and reformed into something which can be collective. I would like to continue to closely observe how the omitted memories are dealt with by the persons concerned.

Key words: Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster, disaster, memories, the Japanese picture-card show, struggle