



Museums of themselves: disaster, heritage, and disaster heritage in Tohoku

Andrew Littlejohn

To cite this article: Andrew Littlejohn (2020): Museums of themselves: disaster, heritage, and disaster heritage in Tohoku, Japan Forum, DOI: [10.1080/09555803.2020.1758751](https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2020.1758751)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2020.1758751>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 21 May 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Museums of themselves: disaster, heritage, and disaster heritage in Tohoku

ANDREW LITTLEJOHN 

Abstract: The 2011 disasters precipitated widespread concern among heritage scholars about the fate of Tohoku’s cultural properties, tangible and intangible. Damage to not only buildings and landscapes but also ‘formless’ heritage, some worried, could weaken social infrastructure and thus slow or undermine recovery. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in, and critical heritage studies of, the disaster regions, this article proposes 3.11 has in fact stimulated the expansion of heritage regimes and their associated culture industries in the Northeast: what, following Gerald Suttles, I call ‘museumification’. I illustrate this through case studies of unmarked rituals becoming ‘unregistered heritage’, the ‘experientialization’ (*taikenka*) of declining industries, and preservation of ruined buildings as a new category of disaster heritage, *shinsai ikō*. In all cases, museumification endows precarious folk arts, industries, and objects with a second life as assets through which locals can represent themselves not only to themselves, but also to tourists. This can help communities rebuild financially in the short-term. However, I argue that as a longer-term strategy for revitalizing regions, museumification amounts to building new economic structures around a ‘folk’ still vanishing due to the same political-economic forces driving heritage’s expansion pre and post-disaster.

Keywords: cultural property, disaster, Great East Japan Earthquake, intangible cultural heritage, museumification, tourism

Introduction

It is a bright mid-morning in 2015, and two figures are duelling. One is resplendent in a red and white kimono, his sleeves adorned with flowers. The other wears blue and cream, pale against the green of the surrounding forest. White masks whose eyes flash with gold hide their faces. One’s right hand clutches a sword, his counterpart wielding a fan; their lefts grip small wands dripping with *shide*: zigzag

Japan Forum, 2020

Vol. 0, No. 0, 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2020.1758751>

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.



paper streamers used in Shinto purification rituals. Behind them sits Horowa Shrine: a small wooden building deep in the forests carpeting Mount Horowa, which overlooks Shizugawa Bay. The ritual itself is a *hōin kagura*, a votive performance in which participants don masks of gods and demons and dance their stories to entertain the real deities, or *kami*. One has been brought from Shizugawa's principal shrine, Hachimangu, to witness the offering. After the *kagura* finishes, the shrine's parishioners load its palanquin onto a truck and drive down the terrifyingly steep track to a nearby hamlet, Horoke. Before returning the deity home, they will parade it through the lowland areas of Shizugawa, urban heart of Minamisanriku Town. In previous years, they would visit districts including Itsukamachi's shopping arcade, Nakasemachi, and Tajiribatake, whose residents would make small monetary offerings in return for *ofuda*, or protective amulets. But things are different this year. There is no Itsukamachi, no Nakasemachi, and no Tajiribatake. No town, in fact, at all. Just wide expanses of overgrown grass, and a palanquin tracing a path through empty space.

Four years earlier, on 11 March 2011 (commonly referred to as '3.11'), a tsunami destroyed Shizugawa following an undersea megathrust earthquake off Japan's northeastern shoreline. Its most traumatic, and enduring, legacy was the death of almost 22,000 people. In the wave's aftermath, however, the question of historical legacy, in the form of 'cultural property' (*bunkazai*), also became a nationwide concern. According to a survey by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the disaster damaged 774 designated national properties, including buildings and artworks registered as 'important cultural properties', historical sites, and 'intangible cultural properties' (Bunkazai-bu 2012). The state acted quickly to stymie physical losses, directing resources towards repairing ravaged buildings and other tangible artefacts. Concerned by the lack of funding for intangible cultural properties, however, academics from around Japan began surveying the condition of practices like Horowa's *hōnō kagura* in the disaster areas (Takakura and Takizawa 2014; Takakura and Yamaguchi 2018).

These were projects of 'urgent', even salvage, ethnography (Slater 2015) intent on making legible the damage to 'formless' (*mukei*) properties caused by the disaster displacing communities, killing practitioners and, in the low-lying regions, destroying costumes, implements, and sites. Any resulting loss of rituals like Horowa's *kagura* and procession would, scholars feared, weaken social infrastructure and, accordingly, slow or undermine recovery. According to anthropologist Hayashi Isao, for example, 'it's not certain people would be able to rebuild their lives (*kurashi*)' absent 'familiar, certain things' like festivals (2014, 32). These fears echo a wider concern that heritage, and thus cultural reproduction, is increasingly threatened by crises both manmade and natural. As early as 1972, such a 'heritage at risk' framework led UNESCO to establish a List of World Heritage in Danger (Rico 2014, 162). More recently, fear of disasters displacing, permanently or temporarily, the 'past, present and future

heritage of peoples and places' (Sharpley 2016, 274) has seen crisis-prone nations, like Japan, incorporate cultural property protection, tangible and intangible, into disaster response and recovery procedures.

Despite these trends, heritage scholars writing in English have paid comparatively little attention to how their objects pass through disasters. The few studies we do have, like the aforementioned Japanese literature, model the fear for heritage characterizing official heritage-at-risk discourses. Identifying damaged heritage, they suggest, is critical for understanding losses more generally (Kirsch 2001); once identified, displaced properties can, indeed must, be replaced (Sharpley 2016, 275). However, among the many heritage-at-risk surveys published post-3.11 one study, by folklorist Kodani Ryūsuke, suggests another perspective on peril and property. 'When we consider regional society after the Great East Japan Earthquake', he writes, 'we see a deeply interesting development. This is something we can call the cultural propertization (*bunka-zaiika*) of custom' (2018, 34). Folk arts (*minzoku geinō*) and festivals people did not consider heritage, he writes, are being reworked as such due to the disaster. Building on Kodani's insight, this article uses ethnographic data and critical heritage ethnographies from Minamisanriku and its environs to posit a different relationship between disaster and culture, including culture construed as 'heritage', in Northeast Japan. I argue 3.11 has compressed in time a wider trend: the region's 'museumification'.

I define this, building on Gerald Suttles, as attempting to fix in place cultural forms, tangible and/or intangible, in order to protect them from change, creating a commodifiable, 'storied landscape' (1984, 301). To understand why disaster should provoke this, we must understand what, exactly, heritage regimes, and the culture industries paralleling them, do. They transvaluate, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, 'the obsolete, the mistaken, the outmoded, the dead, and the defunct', their objects 'stag[ing] their own rebirth as displays of what they once were' (1995, 369–371). Unsurprisingly, such regimes often originated, historically, in response to catastrophe or crisis. Some were short, sharp conflagrations – Japan established its current cultural property laws after a series of fires devastated sites including Hōryūji Temple (Scott 2003). Other triggers have unfolded more slowly, like the modern crisis of memory Ivy (1995), Brumann and Cox (2011), and others argue underpins Japan's wider heritagization of rural culture. Negation and museumification form, in summary, two sides of the same coin. If people could live within memory, as Pierre Nora wrote, they would not need to consecrate museum pieces: 'we buttress our identities upon such bastions, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them' (Nora 1989, 8–12).

In what follows, I evince how the negation caused, specifically, by 3.11 has accelerated Tohoku's museumification through describing and analyzing three aspects of it. Firstly, although it often involves literally placing things in

museums, it can also refer to incorporating them, as ‘heritage’, into official inventories of cultural property. I consider how the tsunami and its aftermath have stimulated the latter through discussing how people re-signified ritual practices as ‘folk cultural properties’ (*mukei minzoku bunkazai*). I then examine how museumification operates through subtler but related procedures, like nonprofits and culture industries building tourist programs around not only threatened ritual practices but also aspects of daily life previously considered ‘quite ordinary and undistinguished’ (Suttles 1984, 299). I illustrate this incorporation of the everyday into heritage through data on how nonprofits are trying to ‘experientialize’ (*taikenka suru*) declining primary industries in and near Minamisanriku. Finally, in the third section I show how the tsunami created a new category of ‘museum piece’ in Japan, with implications for future disasters elsewhere in the nation: *shinsai ikō*, objects bearing the traces left by the disaster itself, around which town centers are becoming open-air disaster museums.

In all three cases, museumification endows precarious objects, practices, and places in Northeast Japan with what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls ‘a second life as exhibits of themselves’ – that is, as things representing what they, themselves, once were (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 370–371). This exhibition is oriented towards more than their communities of origin or practice: museumification intensified after 3.11, I show, not only due to scholarly fears regarding communal integrity but also the state (and many residents) embracing tourism as the motor of economic recovery. In arguing this, however, I present a more ambivalent view of it than many heritage-at-risk studies and state actors. The problem towns like Minamisanriku face, a consultant advising the local government told me, is how to balance improving or maintaining survivors’ well-being with stimulating inflows of people and, accordingly, capital. These two things, of course, deeply intertwine: people need money to survive. At the same time, they exhibit frictions, as I will demonstrate. Crucially, I do not suggest rejecting museumification: this is not an article ‘thinking against heritage’ (Gassner 2019). Rather, I employ what Kath Weston call ‘yes-and’ thinking, which opens space to critically reflect on propositions without refuting them (2016, 157). Museumification can, certainly, be useful in the short-term. However, it operates on phenomena whose vitality, in the dual sense of being central to and developing alongside the everyday life of places, is precarious. In late-modern Japan, the very forces producing heritage as an object of concern are, I contend, implicated in this precarization.

Uncertified heritage

As I described earlier, after the tsunami many ethnographers and folklorists began surveying ‘heritage’ across the coastline. They focused on places like Takeura, a

small hamlet south of Minamisanriku. Many of its displaced had been evacuated to a hotel in neighbouring Akita Prefecture, bringing with them whatever possessions they could salvage. This included a small flute owned by one of the community's leaders. One evening, an evacuee began playing a *taikō* drum they found in the hotel's banquet hall. The flute-bearer joined in, striking up a familiar tune: the hamlet's *shishi-odori*, or lion dance. This is a ritual performance, found across the Sanriku Coast, where people don fearsome, lacquered masks of Chinese Lions (*shishi*) and dance to drive out evil spirits. Powerful and energetic, it often involves people placing their heads briefly inside the lion's jaws for purification. Takeura's masks were, like its houses, lost to the sea. That night in the hotel, however, evacuees fashioned cushions and slippers into a makeshift head, dancing around the hall (Kodani 2018).

One finds many similar stories of rituals practiced shortly after the disaster (Takakura and Takizawa 2014). Often, survivors desired them to comfort the spirits of those who died or propitiate, even re-awaken, the deities (Foster 2017, 117). Performances also helped suture social networks fragmented by both the disaster and subsequent recovery. However, those wanting to perform often faced the same problem as Takeura: costumes, implements and, in some cases, performers lost. A few, like Ogatsu's *hōin kagura*, were officially certified and, accordingly, eligible for direct state aid. But most, including Takeura's lion dance and Horowa's *kagura*, were neither labeled 'heritage' by the state nor, crucially, considered as such by their performers.

As cultural sociologist Ogawa Nobuhiko observes, in Japan 'so long as [things] haven't received some form of designation (*shitei*), they are not cultural property' (2015, 71). Japan has been extremely active in registering intangible practices, with some performers acclaimed as 'living national treasures' (Brumann and Cox 2011). However, many regional folk arts like lion dances remain outside official frameworks. For their practitioners, they were, Kodani argues, 'matters of course' (*tōzen na mono*): things people did communally, at the appropriate times of year, as part of ordinary life (2018, 34). This very ordinariness, anthropologist Imaishi Migiwa argues, made them adaptable, and this, in turn, may have mitigated their heritage potential. When compared to the Northeast's inland regions, she writes, the coastline has fewer certified properties:

Many [practices] are comparatively new, or have been ceaselessly changing... Because their changing come from being 'alive' (*ikite iru*), they do not fit with the ways of thinking of heritage regimes, and this is why they could not become certified. (2018, 46)

For Imaishi, the comparative vitality of coastal rituals – their embedding within, and adapting constantly to, everyday life – made them resist museumification historically; as Raymond Williams theorized provocatively, 'a culture can never be reduced to its artifacts while it is being lived' (1983, 343). Whether

such liveliness – as opposed to, for example, relative marginalization vis-à-vis major cities (Hopson 2017) – really kept the Northeast’s rituals unregistered is debatable. What is clear, however, is that by damaging their materials and communities of practice, the disaster accelerated their transformation into what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995) calls heritage regimes’ constitutive matter: things no longer, or less, vital in and of themselves.

I say ‘accelerated’ because, despite claims by some that ritual revival both indexed and stimulated community vitality (Foster 2017), these practices had been growing precarious in Tōhoku long before 3.11. Ironically, many of them arose, historically, due to disasters. For example, the coastline’s ‘deer dance’ rituals (also transliterated as *shishi-odori*) emerged hundreds of years earlier to propitiate those who died during crises including the severe famines of the 1720s (Yamauchi 2016). Correlation may not be causation, but it is notable that the subsequent decline and, in some cases, disappearance of these rituals may have tracked the events to which they formed responses – famines, fires, deaths at sea – decreasing. Such speculation aside, their amenability to museification was driven by 3.11’s intersection with another, slower burn crisis: depopulation due to rural areas’ uneven development and relative marginalization vis-à-vis Southern metropolises. Before the tsunami, many groups already struggled to recruit members thanks to declining numbers; this worsened after, as Minamisanriku’s population fell by nearly 20% in the three years following (Minamisanriku Town 2015, 5). In this context, rituals became focal points not only due to the spiritual needs of practitioners, but also people’s need to represent themselves to themselves as enduring in a context of both sudden trauma and slow depopulation.

However, as many of these practices were unregistered their practitioners could not access the same recovery funding as ‘owners’ of certified cultural properties. This began to change due to both scholarly anxieties regarding social recovery and official investment in tourism-centred economic reconstruction. Academics and regional governments started surveying and supporting select uncertified rituals, which they labeled ‘not yet registered cultural property’ (*mishitei bunkazai*). In Miyagi Prefecture, Kodani oversaw the establishment of the Cultural Property Rescue Project (*bunkazai resukyū jigyō*), which provided money for intangible practices irrespective of certification. Although funded through private donations, he wrote, the program was state-administered and thus represented one of the first instances where the government ‘cared’ (*kea suru*) for uncertified heritage (Kodani 2018, 28). Later, Miyagi Prefecture also established the Cultural Heritage Comprehensive Utilization Promotion Project (*bunka isan sōgō katsuyō suishin jigyō*), which financed other unregistered practices. Alongside these efforts, private organizations – some of which, like the Foundation for Cultural Heritage and Art Research, work closely with official regimes – began providing money for

uncertified cultural property preservation. In Miyagi Prefecture alone, at least 29 ‘not yet registered’ practices received funding to replace lost equipment or support their groups as a result, the majority of them animal dances (Miyagi Prefecture Board of Education 2018).

Those seeking support from these programs did not, as I’ve already indicated, do so because they considered their practices ‘heritage’. However, their rituals are now increasingly being understood as such thanks to their folding into official inventories of certified or certifiable practices (Kodani 2018). This includes Takeura’s lion dance, now listed by Miyagi Prefecture as ‘intangible folk cultural property’ (*mukei minzoku bunkazai*) on its public relations website alongside innumerable similar dances from neighboring hamlets in Higashi-Matsushima (Miyagi Prefecture 2015). Precarious rituals that were ‘*tōzen na mono*’ are becoming something closer to regional (if unofficial) cultural property characterizing discrete locales (and marketed as such to tourists).

This museumification has, undoubtedly, enabled their continued existence after 3.11. However, it has also accelerated another trend characterizing late Japanese modernity. For thinkers both Left and Right, post-war urbanization and modernization have seen rural areas and their ‘village societies’ (*mura shakai*) celebrated, paradoxically, in inverse proportion to their decline (Brumann and Cox 2011). As a result, they have increasingly become homes of a national past where, in Marilyn Ivy’s words: ‘Through tourism, folklore studies, education, and mass media ... Japanese of all generations seeks a recognition of continuity that is coterminous with its negation’ (1995, 10). Directing funding towards heritagizing such areas forms part of a strategy, contiguous with this trend, of ‘activating’ (*kasseika*) them through refocusing their economies around urban tourists seeking such continuity. Notably, one of the state’s first heritage support programs in 2012 was titled, ‘Reviving Regions and Promoting Tourism by Using Cultural Heritage’ (Hayashi 2014, 30).

Incorporating practices into heritage regimes like this not only ‘preserves’ them. By altering their contexts of presentation, it also creates ‘new’ objects, open to outside audiences, areas can use to add value. Such presentation is a requirement for national cultural properties: intangible practices funded as such, like Higashi-Matsushima’s Ōmagarihama Shishimai, had to perform far from their communities of practice following the tsunami. ‘Uncertified’ properties saw similar, if less drastic, re-orientations. In 2016, for example, I visited Shizugawa’s Areshima Island to watch one called The Dance of the Seven Lucky Gods. Historically performed to entertain the island’s deity and thus ensure both safety and bountiful catches for fishermen, it had not been seen for seven years. Once preparations were complete, the priest announced the dance to the deity and purified the participants, shaking a rustling wand of ritual streamers (*onusa*) over their heads. Each then stepped individually in front of the inner sanctuary, performing the stylized hops and turns unique to their

characters. Having performed for the deities the dancers then turned and, after a brief pause, began the entire ritual again for the waiting journalists, whom they knew would publicize its revival. Later, they would dance it on stage at other public-facing events, including Shizugawa's summer festival, accompanied by commentary on the Lucky Gods and their meaning. As a representation of itself, its performance involved not only propitiating the gods, and through them the revived community, but also the cameras whose holders would, hopefully, bring money into the area.

For the state, similarly, museumification after 3.11 was not only about reviving social networks. It would, they hoped, create a stock of assets (*shigen*) areas could use to market themselves. However, some of its advocates invested more in social recovery found this deeply uncomfortable. Kodani, for example, describes his unease 'at the prospect of calling ritual performances for [tourists], on stages cut off from local societies, "recovery"' (2018, 32). The things heritage regimes work with – *minzoku geinō*, or 'folk arts' – have two components, he writes: the 'folk', and the 'art'. Remove an art too far from its 'folk', and it might become a museum piece in the truest sense: something without an organic community. This is a latent possibility for heritage regimes and their objects. It is also germane, as the next section explores, to objects just outside those regimes. This is because museumification is not synonymous with heritagization, although it encompasses the latter. It also involves reshaping wider understandings of what cultural objects and practices *are*, and *are for* (Geismar 2015, 79), more generally. In the next section, we will look outside official regimes to consider this second dimension of museumification and how it turns not only ritual, but also everyday life, into assets.

Realizing assets

Since the economic downturn precipitated Japan's 'lost decade', a mode of community mapping called 'locality studies' has become increasingly prominent in efforts to revitalize rural regions. Allegedly founded by a retired municipal worker, locality studies, according to Bridget Love, promotes 'a vision of renewal... through resident initiatives to awaken dormant sources of vitality'. All regions, it asserts, have unique resources arising from their particular histories, cultures, and people that can be rediscovered through 'searching for what is there' (*aru mono no sagashi*) (2013, 113–120). This typically takes the form of events where residents identify potential resources they, or others around them, had supposedly forgotten. In Love's research, the desire of locality study activists to derive economic benefits from these 'realizations' (*kizuki*) went unrealized. '[it's] just a treasure hunt', one of her interlocutors stated, 'there's nothing in it as far as thinking that you can start this or that industry out of it' (2013, 121). In post-3.11 Tōhoku, however, it has been widely

claimed, alongside heritagization, that damaged areas can be ‘activated’ (*kas-seika*) through turning ‘what is there’ into assets (*shigen*) for recovery.

I first witnessed this in 2015, when I visited K-Port: a café opened by actor Ken Watanabe in 2013 in the main port of Kesenuma, some hour and half’s drive north of Minamisanriku. The room was packed with young people from towns and villages across the Sanriku Coast. The event, called Kesenuma Saihakken (Rediscovering Kesenuma), was organized by a local group called the Ba!Ba!Ba! Project. Its stated goal is revitalizing the city by rediscovering its qualities. At first, it wasn’t clear this meant crafting tourist programs, not least since the organizers didn’t use the word ‘tourism’ during the opening presentation. Once they split us into groups, however, the unspoken purpose became apparent. Our table’s moderator explained to us that our main goal was to come up with an itinerary or program. To do this, he said, we must ‘throw out’ (*dasu*) ideas for content. These could be unique foods, special activities or experiences (*taiken*), or even, he said, ‘feelings’ (such as the notion that ‘fishermen are cool’, and thus worthy of crafting programs around). He noted our ideas on sticky notes, encouraging us to arrange them into itineraries for visitors. One member, for example, pointed out that many people have never been on a boat; another recalled how young people today often don’t know how to fillet fish. I wondered about a filleting contest (*sabaki taikai*), which morphed, as we talked further, into an idea for combining fishing expeditions with filleting contests for visiting schoolchildren from other areas.

Similar nonprofits running similar workshops could, and can, be found across the disaster regions. During my fieldwork, I attended several, most of them run by either young ‘u-turners’ – locals that moved to the city for education and/or work, returning some time later to their birth towns – or urbanites that came to Tohoku as volunteers and decided to stay. Many of their organizations espoused the rhetoric of locality studies: on its website, for example, the Ba!Ba!Ba! Project writes of ‘unexpected “surprises” and “realizations” in our intimate surroundings’ (Watanabe Kazuhito 2016) waiting to be rediscovered. The young head of a new non-profit in one town explained these realization’s asset potential to me when I visited his offices in 2015. Once you realize what there is in your area, he told me, those things become your ‘stock’: objects and practices that, embedded or packaged within new structures and stories, can then be leveraged financially.

For example, you could take a local product, like Shizugawa’s octopus, and create from it a mascot (or *yuru-chara*) marketing the area, like Minamisanriku’s Octopus-kun. Or you might, like the leader of the above-mentioned nonprofit, realize that the town is full of abandoned rice paddies that, if repurposed, can produce rice for a new sake company. You might also construct new channels through which existing commodities can be marketed beyond their area, like Itō Takahiro: a Sanriku native who quit his job working

for a restaurant chain in China after the tsunami and set up a web store selling branded Minamisanriku produce to customers from Okinawa to Hokkaido. Prior to the disaster, of course, Sanriku goods did move across Japan through the ‘grooved channels’ of wholesale networks (Bestor 2004); most, however, were consumed, with little fanfare, within the Prefecture. For consumers elsewhere, then, the proliferation of online shops like this selling branded locality means one no longer has to travel to ‘Discover Japan’ or maintain a phantasmic connection to places in Tohoku one has visited (Ivy 1995).

You might also, as I alluded to earlier, create new programs or ‘experiences’ (*taiken*) for those tourists that do make the journey, like the Ba!Ba!Ba! Project’s ‘half a day as a fisherman’. I experienced something similar in the south of Minamisanriku, where one enterprising family had begun offering ‘aquaculture experiences’ (*yōshoku taiken*) after 3.11 to supplement their income. We boarded the husband’s boat at 2 pm, long after his morning’s work had finished, and headed into Shizugawa bay, where he keeps his underwater pastures. On our way, he handed us small bags of crisps, like the ones sold on boats touring Matsushima, to throw to following seagulls: we were unable to exhaust our supply, as the birds lost interest (distracted, perhaps, by tastier fish guts). When we arrived at buoys marked with his seal, he tossed a hook down, caught the line suspended beneath the surface, and hauled up a wall of seaweed (*wakame*). Everyone onboard gasped. With small, practiced flicks of the wrists he cut several lengths and dropped them into a basket to cook later, on our return to land. One by one, he hauled up other lines from which hung scallops or huge, circular clumps of oysters, a few of which he hacked off with a cleaver. Afterwards, we circled briefly around a silver salmon pen before returning to shore around 3 pm. We finished the tour by eating seaweed *shabu-shabu* and oysters steamed on top of a small wood-burning stove by his workshop overlooking the bay. Today, one can ‘experience’ aquaculture this way in towns across the disaster regions, including Minamisanriku, Kesenuma, Ishinomaki, Onagawa, and Rikuzentakata.

Efforts post-tsunami to revitalize damaged fisheries by increasing and formalizing such ‘experiences’ work to commodify industries whose primary status – producing the raw materials from which commodities are made – kept them from tourist gazes historically. Once ‘experientialized’ (*taikenka sareta*), they become part of the ‘storied landscape’ (Suttles 1984, 301) marketed to tourists, like in Kesenuma’s Karakuwa district, where the local tourism association advertises fishing experiences as an opportunity to see ‘a traditional culture handed down from the past’ in an area ‘where we have lived with the sea since ancient times’ (Karakuwa Tourism Association n.d.). They can also be packaged in itineraries alongside more traditional ‘heritage’ objects, including, depending on time of year, rituals like those discussed in the previous section. Minamisanriku’s Tourism Association, for example, has offered tours

combining aquaculture experiences with ‘traditional events’ (*dentō gyōji*) like summer *matsuri* (Minamisanriku Tourism Association 2017). These associations between industry and ‘heritage’ are not merely coincidental or opportunistic. The extension of locality studies’ logic of ‘re-discovering’ dormant resources to primary industries indexes those professions, like threatened ritual practices, also becoming the raw matter for museumification: things outmoded, defunct, or on the verge of disappearing. In transforming work into ‘experience’, it produces fishermen’s precarious local existence for export, again like rituals, by reconstituting their labor as an exhibit of itself (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 369).

Many residents I spoke to, however, were skeptical such efforts could help Minamisanriku. Locality studies claims all regions have unique resources, but as a man working in local tourism told me, ‘If we’re talking about seafood, next door you have Kesenuma, and in Ishinomaki there’s the No. 1 port in Japan, and then if you head further South from there, there are the famous oysters of Matsushima, so whichever way you look at it, we’re losing when it comes to produce, losing when it comes to products’. One could say the same thing about the rituals I discussed I earlier whose preservation, the state argued, could help stimulate tourism. Particular lion dances, deer dances, or tiger dances may have their own histories – and mean a great deal to the local people dancing and watching them. But to the outsider, they appear similar enough in form to make their competitiveness questionable.

A more fundamental problem with adding value through museumifying declining industries, however, came up during the Ba!Ba!Ba! workshop. The organizer assigned to our table was explaining, enthusiastically, their ‘half a day as a fisherman’ program. One young man working in the polystyrene industry asked him a pointed question. How can we build tourist programs around the fishing industry when the number of boats is falling year on year? This highlights a paradox at the heart of museumification in Tohoku. Since the late nineteenth century, Japanese cities’ growth has come at rural economies’ direct expense in both the economic and, increasingly, population sense. In the 1980s, urban industry’s need for labour accelerated both; in lieu of state support, planners expected municipalities to stimulate new civic and private initiatives drawing on their unique cultural assets (or, failing that, engage in a deregulatory race to the bottom to attract industry). While pitched as an opportunity to become self-reliant, critics saw this as a final ‘cutting off and throwing away’ (Love 2013, 114) of rural areas by a centre no longer viewing them as productive. Today, both economy and population in places like Minamisanriku and Kesenuma continue to shrink as young people leave for the cities seeking education and employment. The result is a worsening manpower shortage in industries like aquaculture that, despite being profitable, echo with a common complaint: ‘we don’t have any successors’ (*kōkeisha ga inai*).

Like the rituals it is sometimes packaged with, turning fishing into an ‘experience’ for urban tourism makes it, ironically, resemble less a revitalized profession than a phantasm dependent on the very economic forces driving its own decline. The state’s devolving of responsibility for regions and rise of approaches locating future viability in marketing cultural resources has gone hand in hand (Love 2013). This is equally true post-tsunami, where museumification is, in a sense, the only thing being offered to regions to revitalize and sustain themselves economically. For industries whose problem, however, is less selling their products than loss of labour, museumification changes little. Things might have been different if young people returning from the cities to help their hometowns, or urbanites moving to the disaster regions as aid workers, had sought to participate themselves, or boost participation by others, in industries like fishing – and, to be fair, a small number have. But to return to Kodani (2018), if for argument’s sake we construe labour, like ritual, as a kind of ‘folk art’ (*minzoku geinō*), then most efforts to support the art – fishing – constitute building new economic structures around a folk continuing, one death or departure at a time, to vanish due to the same forces drawing youth away from Tohoku.

Ruin towns

In its two modes described thus far, museumification after 3.11 represents the steepening of already-existing trend lines. But in the material realm, the tsunami also precipitated a new mode of museum piece’s emergence. Given what it wrought on the coast’s built and natural environment, it might appear perverse to claim it produced new physical objects. Buildings and artifacts suffered huge damage: cracks appeared in stone walls; parts of buildings collapsed; temples, shrines, and museums located near the coast were completely washed away; and storage facilities for artifacts were drowned in mud, oil, and organic waste (Okamura et al. 2013, 260). In Miyagi Prefecture, 66% of certified heritage buildings were affected; some of their losses were, of course, permanent. By 2017, however, the Prefecture reported that 74% of national, 31% of prefectural, and 50% of municipal properties had been fully restored, with restoration scheduled for those remaining. In total, only 8 certified buildings in Miyagi were irreparably lost (Miyagi Prefecture Board of Education 2018, 31). Existing heritage regimes, while certainly highly stressed, proved efficient in protecting and restoring their objects. At the same time, the disaster stressing them led to the genesis of new objects of preservation: the remains left by the tsunami itself.

3.11, of course, was not the Northeast’s first tsunami; in the Sanriku Coast catastrophe is always within living memory (Duus 2012, 175). Between the Meiji Restoration inaugurating Japanese modernity and 2011, the area has

suffered three major tsunamis: the Meiji Sanriku Tsunami in 1886, Shōwa Tsunami in 1933, and Chile Tsunami in 1960. One can find echoes of these in places names like Minamisanriku's Obunozawa's (Large Boat Creek), a deep inland district whose name's origin is ascribed, perhaps apocryphally, to a tsunami having washed a large boat there (Chiiki Shinkō Jigyō-bu 2015). Losses from such events are also detailed by stone monuments erected after them, often marking the limits of the inundation zone with inscriptions like 'don't build houses below this point', or 'when an earthquake occurs, prepare for a tsunami' (Shizugawa-chō shi henshū-san shitsu 1989, 344–350). Aside from such nominal and textual traces, however, no physical evidence of the disasters themselves has survived. This was due, in no small part, to the prevalence of wooden architecture. Since the 1960s, however, concrete and steel has dominated coastal construction; the result was when the wave withdrew on March 11, it left a landscape of half-broken buildings.

Many became, in the early days, sites of 'simple, spontaneous, anonymous remembrance' (Bestor 2013, 777). A makeshift altar where people could offer prayers for the departed would appear in front of a ruined building, like the Disaster Prevention Center. Later, perhaps, somebody would place votive statues and other ritual implements in front of it, as well as with folded cranes and flowers. Alongside relatives of those who died there, or thereabouts, volunteers would detour to offer prayers at the altar. Soon, tour buses bringing 'voluntourists' and, in time, regular tourists would park in front, disgorging their occupants to snap photographs and listen to the *kataribe*, or guides, commissioned to narrate what happened. Several such sites developed, in this manner, across the disaster areas, alongside innumerable smaller, personal ones marked by the planting of sunflowers, say, or a line of small statues carefully placed along a wall. Large or small, most had their icons consigned, albeit with respect, to the furnace (Peterson 2015), their structures recycled into raw materials for use during reconstruction. A few, however, were retained, including, in Miyagi, former school buildings, a toppled police box (*kōban*), the platform of a now-defunct railway station, and Minamisanriku's famous Disaster Prevention Center (Bōsai Taisaku Chōsha).

Their continued existence echoes a wider turn towards 'difficult' (Xu 2018) or 'dark' heritage preservation (Han 2016): that is, keeping 'places of pain and shame' (Logan and Reeves 2009) as part of regional or national heritage. It also, however, diverges somewhat from this trend. Although disasters certainly feature among the ever-growing list of dark sites, more common are those commemorating overtly human or political acts: massacres and genocides, wartime internment, civil and political imprisonment, etc. (Logan and Reeves 2009). The remains left by catastrophes are typically disassembled or covered up, precisely because they highlight histories of inappropriate development making the events not 'natural' at all. State actors, specifically, are often unwilling to

memorialize what Shannon Dawdy calls ‘the forensic ruins of [their] nation’s failure’ (2010, 774). In Japan, similarly, many people argued *shinsai ikō* revealed official errors, including what Minamisanriku’s Mayor called the ‘great mistake’ (*taihen na shitten*) of developing vulnerable coastal areas (Satō 2014, 107). However, it was the state that led preservation, the Prefecture selecting, from the panoply of available sites, several conducive to official reconstruction plans.

In doing so, it created an entirely new category of museum piece subject, like cultural property, to processes of official certification and control. Miyagi Prefecture, for example, appointed a committee of experts to create a working definition of *shinsai ikō* and evaluate objects the Prefecture intended to preserve as such. Only publicly-owned structures bearing ‘traces of the tsunami’, useful for propitiating the dead (*chinkon*) and preventing (*bōsai*) and mitigating (*gen-sai*) future disasters, and conserved on site were eligible, they said (Miyagi-Ken Shinsai Ikō Yūshikisha Kaigi 2015, 3). While they stressed other things could also, culturally, be considered *shinsai ikō*, in practice this has not happened. Almost all sites rejected by the Prefecture have since been demolished and recycled. In the years since, more committees have convened to discuss and formalize management structures, network retained sites with other institutions, like archives and museums, and discuss their role within a renewed tourist economy. In other words, a full bureaucratic apparatus concerned, like heritage regimes, with keeping ‘indispensable links in the developmental chain of [history] ... alive and present in the consciousness of future generations’ (Riegl 1996, 69–71) is emerging to certify and manage *shinsai ikō* for purposes both communal and economic.

Why was the government interested in museumifying such remnants, given their tortured exteriors could be – and, in some cases, were – seen by residents as indexing pre-tsunami failings? The answer given by Miyagi Prefecture was two-fold. On the one hand, as already suggested, they argued *shinsai ikō* could be mobilized for future disaster prevention. They would achieve this, officials and affiliated academics argued, through demonstrating to imagined future generations the tsunami’s destructive force, fermenting a ‘disaster prevention mindset’ among communities living within their orbit (Miyagi-Ken Shinsai Ikō Yūshikisha Kaigi 2015, 3). On the other hand, the same buildings would also function, literally, as an archaeological record: ‘evidence’, another group of supportive academics and nonprofit workers wrote, ‘that towns and livelihoods were here’ before reconstruction wiped all traces of their existence (3.11 Shinsai Denshō Kenkyūkai 2012, 2). *Shinsai ikō* thus work to sustain cultural worlds across generations (Geismar 2015, 72) by encrypting memories of both the places existing before the disaster and the tsunami visiting ruin upon them.

In doing so, like the ‘cultural properties’ whose logic they model, they represent ruined towns as much to outsiders as their residents. As with ritual

‘revival’ and the museumification of declining industries, stimulating tourism lurked behind efforts to preserve ruined things. One member of Miyagi Prefecture’s expert committee expressed their thinking on this succinctly: many ‘people from the disaster regions don’t want to see *shinsai ikō*... but people from outside want to learn about the disaster, so they come and look [at them]’ (Miyagi-Ken Shinsai Ikō Yūshikisha Kaigi 2013, 3). By museumifying things bearing tsunami traces, municipalities could also create, in the words of Miyagi Prefecture’s certificating committee, ‘assets’ (*zaisan*) leverageable as tourist attractions (Miyagi-Ken Shinsai Ikō Yūshikisha Kaigi 2014, 2). One can hypothesize this, alongside routine commemoration, forms part of the reason towns including Minamisanriku, Ishinomaki, and Natori set aside large tracts of land around *shinsai ikō* for disaster memorial parks incorporating both iconic ruins and more traditional monuments, photo archives, and exhibition spaces.

However, the latter is also leading, Ogawa argues, to a changing relationship between objects preserved as *shinsai ikō* and the towns they emerged from. ‘Say, for example, “in town X, there is [*shinsai ikō*] A,” a symbolic damaged building’ he writes. ‘Through preserving it as a “*shinsai ikō*,” the town becomes “A’s town, X”’ (Ogawa 2015, 79). In other words, towns and even regions are becoming increasingly subordinated in the popular imagination to the *shinsai ikō* around whose nodal negativity they are rebuilding. Little wonder some experts worried about what becoming open-air disaster museums would mean going forward. Even within the expert committee tasked with rubber-stamping Miyagi Prefecture’s preservation plans, some members, like the Tohoku Regional Advancement Center’s Ushio Yōko, expressed concern, ‘Is it OK if this “*shinsai ikō* town” image takes hold?’, she asked; ‘I worry whether such a town can be one attracting people’ (Miyagi-Ken Shinsai Ikō Yūshikisha Kaigi 2014, 6).

For many already living in ‘*shinsai ikō* towns’, however, ‘attracting people’ itself is problematic as a goal. By highlighting the dead’s propitiation (*chinkon*), municipalities and the Prefecture obliquely acknowledged, as already mentioned, that they were often sites of not only ruination but also death. This includes the Disaster Prevention Center, where 43 people lost their lives. Many of their bodies were never found. Today, a significant number of the dead’s relatives and other residents see their spirits as haunting the building, like those still tethered to their resting places beneath the water or rubble (Kanebishi 2016). This led some to agitate for buildings like the Disaster Prevention Center to be demolished. ‘We cannot leave the dead in that place’, one wrote in 2015 to the local government’s consultation on its future; tear it down and build a memorial instead, somewhere quiet and peaceful, to soothe both the departed and their relatives. The latter, many others writing to this consultation said, suffer profoundly when they see the Center: that day (*ano hi*) comes back to them, with visions of the departed rising before their eyes.

The year following the disaster, Minamisanriku's town council voted to recommend demolishing the building out of respect for relatives of the dead. However, three years later they reversed this decision following pressure from Miyagi Prefecture and a campaign by pro-preservation academics and residents concerned losing it would imperil both future disaster prevention and economic recovery ('if you ask [the people in the shopping mall] their thoughts', a local guide told me, 'I think most would probably be in favor of preservation'). During the years when preservation was debated, the Disaster Prevention Center was, depending on your point of view, haunted and not haunted, place to pray for or cage imprisoning the dead, sacred site and tourist spectacle. Preserving it meant, as with heritage more generally, collapsing the multiplicity of narratives surrounding it into a singular, authorized rendering (Geismar 2015, 72), whereby a product of particular local histories and conditions became, in supporter's terms, a ruin 'for all humanity' (*jinruu*) – including tourists.

Over time, many supporters wrote to the public consultation, relatives of the dead's feelings about the structure might change. In the present, however, their anger at its monetization is palpable. More than quarter of the letters to the public consultation on its future, which I received through a freedom of information request, spoke of the author's pain on seeing the Center today. 'When I look on the spectacle, with [tour] buses coming', one wrote, 'I think it has completely transformed into a tourist site. In my heart, I can't help but feel like, "this isn't for sightseeing, fools."' Another enclosed in their letter a photocopy of a beer bottle label bearing the Center's image. I myself had seen this bottle for sale in Shizugawa's temporary shopping arcade, which served almost exclusively tourists. Better to tear it down, people wrote, then allow a place of death to be so literally consumed. Museumifying disaster's traces may 'add value' to rebuilding economies – although even this is debatable. In Sichuan, for example, following the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake the Chinese government preserved some ruins to attract tourists; tourist numbers, however, have steadily fallen as memory of the event dwindles (Le Mentec and Zhang 2017). Whatever happens in Minamisanriku, for the communities those economies serve museumifying sites of death may, even if effective, come with other, perhaps more profound, kinds of cost.

Concluding thoughts

Following the tsunami, many academics in Japan argued that the disaster caused, or might cause absent action, significant heritage loss in the Northeast. Certainly, people suffered severely, and much that could be called heritage in a vernacular sense – things sustaining social worlds across generations – was lost in the flood. However, the tsunami also precipitated further museumification of the disaster regions, with unmarked folk arts becoming cultural properties,

industries becoming experiences, and damaged buildings becoming new monuments to the region and its repetitive experience of disaster. I say ‘further’ because the Northeast, like other rural areas, was already on its way to becoming an open-air museum. Modern ideological trends like the anti-modernist *nōhonshugi* (back to the land), essentialist *minzokugaku* (folklore studies), and commercialized *furusato* (hometown) movements have all celebrated such regions as hosting authentic Japanese pasts (Brumann and Cox 2011, 9). And as depopulation drives them into decline, this has seen increasing efforts to protect those pasts from the rapid changes wrought by modernity.

The Northeast’s amenability to museumification derived, I’ve suggested, from how its situation post-tsunami articulated with these deeper space-times of abandonment and collapse both rendering it vulnerable and producing the wider drive towards museumification itself. I do not intend, here, a quantitative comparison between things lost and things made, or remade, in the area. My point, simply, is that the territory museumification claims as its own has expanded in Northeast Japan due to this intersection of disaster and depopulation, and such expansion remakes the ground newly covered, with places no longer viable in their own terms becoming, one object and practice at a time, museums of themselves. In the short term, this can provide people with assets for rebuilding. However, as Love aptly puts it, ‘no initiatives of local branding or heritage renewal seem adequate to overcome the demographic and economic decline that are legacy of the region’s uneven development’ (2013, 121) vis-à-vis the urban centres whose residents consume rural heritage.

By transforming the rural into commodifiable representations of itself, museumification may shore up, for a time, the boundaries of threatened communities – though it may also, as with *shinsai ikō*, cause significant pain in doing so. But, to return to Kodani’s ‘folk’ and ‘art’ distinction, it does not provide ‘a sign of, and a catalyst for, community vitality’ (Foster 2017, 114) as long as the folk continues to diminish, taking the art with it (Kodani 2018). We see this in Horowa, where this article began. Within the hamlet, depopulation had long been causing participation in the *kagura* to decline. The disaster and reconstruction that followed dramatically intensified this. When, in 2015, I joined Horowa’s parishioners for the ritual, I overheard one of their representatives complaining to the priestess that as a result they lacked people to carry the palanquin. Youth from other parts of the town could help, she said, but he quickly rebuffed the suggestion. ‘This is our festival’, he said. ‘If that stopped, what would be the point?’ This refusal to countenance other districts’ involvement led, however, to experienced performers from neighboring Ishinomaki stepping in to fill the growing skills gap. Today, they dance the *kagura*; parishioners keep hoping, meanwhile, that young people from their area will return (Minamisanriku Now! 2017). A practice celebrated by heritage scholars forewarns us, paradoxically, of a potential future for Tohoku in an era where

museumification is asked to achieve things, like revitalizing economies, it cannot. A future where there are many preserved arts, but no folk left beneath the mask.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Andrew Littlejohn  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3983-0645>

References

- 3.11 Shinsai Denshō Kenkyūkai. 2012. “‘3.11 Shinsai Denshō Kenkyūkai’ dai ichiji teigen: shinsai ikō no hozon ni tsuite” [First Proposals from the ‘Study Group on Conveying Knowledge on the 3.11 Disaster’: Concerning Preservation of Shinsai Ikō]. <http://www.tsunami.civil.tohoku.ac.jp/hokusai3/J/shinsaidensho/pdf/20120924teigen2.pdf>.
- Bestor, Theodore. 2004. *Tsukiji: The Fish Market at the Center of the World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bestor, Theodore C. 2013. “Disasters, Natural and Unnatural: Reflections on March 11, 2011, and Its Aftermath.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72 (4): 763–782. doi:10.1017/S0021911813001770.
- Brumann, Christoph, and Rupert Cox. 2011. *Making Japanese Heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Bunkazai-Bu Dentōbunka-ka. 2012. “Higashi Nihon Daishinsai kara no fukkyū-fukkō ni okeru bunkazai hogo” [Preserving Cultural Heritage during Recovery and Reconstruction Following the Great East Japan Earthquake]. *Bunka-Chō Geppō*. http://www.bunka.go.jp/pr/publish/bunkachou_geppou/2012_06/special_01/special_01.html
- Chiiki Shinkō Jigyō-bu. 2015. *Higashi Nihon Daishinsai: higai to fukkyū fukkō·4 nen* [The Great East Japan Earthquake: 4 Years of Damage and Recovery/Reconstruction]. Minamisanriku Fukkō Station: Miyagi-Daigaku Chiiki Renkei Sentā.
- Dawdy, Shannon Lee. 2010. “Clockpunk Anthropology and the Ruins of Modernity.” *Current Anthropology* 51 (6): 761–793. doi:10.1086/657626.
- Duus, Peter. 2012. “Dealing with Disaster.” In *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan: Response and Recovery after Japan’s 3/11*, edited by Jeff Kingston, 175–87. London: Routledge.
- Foster, Michael D. 2017. “The Intangible Lightness of Heritage.” *Fabula* 58 (1–2): 105–121. . doi:10.1515/fabula-2017-0007.
- Gassner, Günter. 2019. “Thinking against Heritage: Speculative Development and Emancipatory Politics in the City of London.” *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability* 12 (3): 279–295. doi:10.1080/17549175.2019.1576757.
- Geismar, Haidy. 2015. “Anthropology and Heritage Regimes.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44 (1): 71–85. doi:10.1146/annurev-anthro-102214-014217.
- Han, Jung-Sun. 2016. “Relics of Empire Underground: The Making of Dark Heritage in Contemporary Japan.” *Asian Studies Review* 40 (2): 287–302. doi:10.1080/10357823.2016.1140719.

- Hayashi, Isao. 2014. "Saigai fukkō ni okeru minzoku bunka no yakuwari: Minamisanriku-Chō Utatsu-chiku no minzoku gyōji no saisei Kara" [The Role of Folk Culture in Disaster Reconstruction: Reviving Folk Rituals in Minamisanriku's Utatsu District]. In *Mukei minzoku bunkazai ga hisaisuru to iu koto: Higashi Nihon Daishinsai to Miyagi-Ken enganbu chiiki shakai no minzokushi* [When Intangible Cultural Heritage is Damaged: The Great East Japan Earthquake and Ethnographies of Regional Society in Miyagi Prefecture's Coastline], edited by Hiroki Takakura and Katsuhiko Takizawa, Shohan, 29–38. Tokyo: Shinsensha.
- Hopson, Nathan. 2017. *Ennobling Japan's Savage Northeast: Tohoku as Postwar Thought, 1945–2011*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Imaishi, Migiwa. 2018. "Ikita bunkazai wo keishō suru: mukei bunka isan to hisai/fukkō" [Inheriting Living Cultural Properties: Intangible Cultural Heritage and Disaster Reconstruction]. In *Shinsaigo no chiiki bunka to hisaisha no minzokushi: firudo saigai jimbungaku no kōchiku* [Regional Culture and Ethnographies of Victims after the Disaster: Towards an Anthropology of Disaster Fields], edited by Hiroki Takakura and Mutsumi Yamaguchi, Shohan, 38–52. Tohoku Ajia Kenkyū Sensho, Tokyo: Shinsensha.
- Ivy, Marilyn. 1995. *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kanebishi, Kiyoshi, ed. 2016. *Yobisamasareru reisei no shinsaigaku: 3.11 sei to shi no hazama de* [The Disaster Study of Returning Spectrality: 3.11 in the Gap between Life and Death]. Shohan. Tōkyō-to Chiyoda-ku: Shin'yōsha.
- Karakuwa Kankō Kyōkai (Karakuwa Tourism Association). (n.d). "Taiken shiyō!" [Let's experience!]. Accessed 28 August 2019. <http://www.karakuwa.com/experience/>
- Kirsch, Stuart. 2001. "Lost Worlds: Environmental Disaster, 'Culture Loss', and the Law." *Current Anthropology* 42 (2): 167–198. doi:10.1086/320006.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1995. "Theorizing Heritage." *Ethnomusicology* 39 (3): 367. doi:10.2307/924627.
- Kodani, Ryūsuke. 2018. "Bunkazaika suru chiiki bunka: daikibo saigai-go no minzoku bunkazai wo meguru taiō Kara" [The Heritagization of Regional Culture: Responses to Folk Custom Cultural Properties after a Large-Scale Disaster]. In *Shinsaigo no chiiki bunka to hisaisha no minzokushi: firudo saigai jimbungaku no kōchiku* [Regional Culture and Ethnographies of Victims after the Disaster: Towards an Anthropology of Disaster Fields], edited by Hiroki Takakura and Mutsumi Yamaguchi, Shohan, 24–37. Tohoku Ajia Kenkyū Sensho, Tokyo: Shinsensha.
- Le Mentec, Katiana, and Qiaoyun Zhang. 2017. "Heritagization of Disaster Ruins and Ethnic Culture in China: Recovery Plans after the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake." *China Information* 31 (3): 349–370. doi:10.1177/0920203X17736508.
- Logan, William Stewart, and Keir Reeves, eds. 2009. *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with "Difficult Heritage"*. London: Routledge.
- Love, Bridget. 2013. "Treasure Hunts in Rural Japan: Place Making at the Limits of Sustainability." *American Anthropologist* 115 (1): 112–124. doi:10.1111/j.1548-1433.2012.01539.x.
- Minamisanriku Now! 2017. "Machi ga genki ni naru yō ni' no negai wo komete/Horowa Jinja shunki reisa" [Praying That 'the Town Will Become Healthy Again': Horowa Shrine's Summer Ritual]. *Minamisanriku Now!* (blog). Accessed 19 June 2017. <http://m-now.net/2017/06/kyodogei-no-2.html>
- Minamisanriku Tourism Association. 2017. "Minamisanriku wo meguru tsūā" [A tour around Minamisanriku]. Accessed 17 June 2017. <https://www.m-kankou.jp/program/190844.html/>
- Minamisanriku Town. 2015. "Minamisanriku-Chō tōkeisho" [Minamisanriku Town statistics]. <https://www.town.minamisanriku.miyagi.jp/index.cfm/10,793,c,html/793/20160323-161759.pdf>

- Miyagi Prefecture. 2015. *Onagawa shishi buri* [Onagawa Lion Dance]. <http://www.thm.pref.miyagi.jp/fukkou/shishifuri.html>
- Miyagi Prefecture Board of Education. 2018. *Higashi Nihon Daishinsai ni yoru hisai bunkazai no fukkyū/fukkō no kioku (chūkan hōkoku)* [[Interim Report] Recovery/Reconstruction of Cultural Property Damaged by the Great East Japan Earthquake]. Sendai: Miyagi Prefecture Department of Education Heritage Protection Division.
- Miyagi-Ken Shinsai Ikō Yūshikisha Kaigi. 2013. “Dai 1-kai Miyagi-Ken shinsai ikō yūshikisha kaigi hatsugen yōshi” [Minutes of the 1st Meeting of Miyagi Prefecture’s Expert Committee on Disaster Ruins]. Accessed 26 April 2020. <https://www.pref.miyagi.jp/uploaded/attachment/247115.pdf>.
- Miyagi-Ken Shinsai Ikō Yūshikisha Kaigi. 2014. “Dai 2-Kai Miyagi-Ken shinsai ikō yūshikisha kaigi hatsugen yōshi” [Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of Miyagi Prefecture’s Expert Committee on Disaster Ruins]. Accessed 26 April 2020. <https://www.pref.miyagi.jp/uploaded/attachment/247118.pdf>
- Miyagi-Ken Shinsai Ikō Yūshikisha Kaigi. 2015. “Miyagi-Ken shinsai ikō yūshikisha kaigi hōkokusho” [Report of Miyagi Prefecture’s Expert Committee on Disaster Ruins]. Accessed 26 April 2020. <https://www.pref.miyagi.jp/uploaded/attachment/288105.pdf>
- Nora, Pierre. 1989. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.” *Representations* 26: 7–24. doi:10.2307/2928520.
- Ogawa, Nobuhiko. 2015. “Kotoba to shite no ‘shinsai-ikō’: Higashi-Nihon Daishinsai no hisai kōzōbutsu hozon mondai no bunka shakaigaku” [The Invention of ‘Shinsai-Ikou’ (Earthquake Disaster Remains): Social Construction of a Category after the Great East Japan Earthquake]. Annual Report on Research and Education, Faculty of Letters. Nara Women’s University, 67–82. no. 12.
- Okamura, Katsuyuki, Atsushi Fujisawa, Yasuhisa Kondo, Yu Fujimoto, Tomokatsu Uozu, Yumiko Ogawa, Simon Kaner, and Koji Mizoguchi. 2013. “The Great East Japan Earthquake and Cultural Heritage: Towards an Archaeology of Disaster.” *Antiquity* 87 (335): 258–269. doi:10.1017/S0003598X00048778.
- Peterson, Nathan. 2015. “Adapting Religious Practice in Response to Disaster in Iwate Prefecture.” In *Japan Copes with Calamity*, edited by Tom Gill, David Slater, and Brigitte Steger, 77–98. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Rico, Trinidad. 2014. “The Limits of a ‘Heritage at Risk’ Framework: The Construction of Post-Disaster Cultural Heritage in Banda Aceh.” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 14 (2): 157–176. doi:10.1177/1469605314527192.
- Riegl, Alois. 1996. “The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Development.” In *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, edited by Nicholas Stanley-Price, Mansfield Kirby Talley, and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, translated by Karin Bruckner and Karen Williams. Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute.
- Satō, Jin. 2014. *Minamisanriku chōchō no sannnen* [Three Years as Mayor of Minamisanriku]. Sendai: Kahoku Shimpō Shuppan Sentā.
- Scott, Geoffrey R. 2003. “The Cultural Property Laws of Japan: Social, Political and Legal Influences.” *The Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal* 12 (2): 315–401.
- Sharpley, Richard. 2016. “Displaced Heritage: Responses to Disaster, Trauma and Loss.” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22 (3): 274–275. doi:10.1080/13527258.2015.1112947.
- Shizugawa-Chō shi henshū-sanshitsu, ed. 1989. *Shizugawa-Chō shi II* [a History of Shizugawa Town II]. Shizugawa: Shizugawa Town.
- Slater, David. 2015. “Urgent Ethnography.” In *Japan Copes with Calamity*, edited by Tom Gill, David Slater, and Brigitte Steger, 25–50. Oxford: Peter Lang.

- Suttles, Gerald D. 1984. "The Cumulative Texture of Local Urban Culture." *American Journal of Sociology* 90 (2): 283–304. doi:10.1086/228080.
- Takakura, Hiroki, and Katsuhiko Takizawa, eds. 2014. *Mukei minzoku bunkazai ga hisaisuru to iu koto: Higashi Nihon Daishinsai to Miyagi-Ken enganbu chiiki shakai no minzokushi* [When Intangible Cultural Heritage is Damaged: The Great East Japan Earthquake and Ethnographies of Regional Society in Miyagi Prefecture's Coastline]. Tokyo: Shinsensha.
- Takakura, Hiroki, and Mutsumi Yamaguchi, eds. 2018. *Shinsaigo no chiiki bunka to hisaisha no minzokushi: fūdo saigai jimbungaku no kōchiku* [Regional Culture and Ethnographies of Victims after the Disaster: Towards an Anthropology of Disaster Fields]. Tokyo: Shinsensha.
- Watanabe Kazuhito. 2016. "Watanabe Kazuhito." *Ba!Ba!Ba! Project Kesennuma* (blog). Accessed 7 June 2016. http://ba-pro.jp/?page_id=1443
- Weston, Kath. 2016. *Animate Planet: Making Visceral Sense of Living in a High-Tech, Ecologically Damaged World*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Williams, Raymond. 1983. *Culture and Society, 1780–1950*. New York: Columbia University Press. doi:10.1086/ahr/64.4.934.
- Xu, Bin. 2018. "Commemorating a Difficult Disaster: Naturalizing and Denaturalizing the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake in China." *Memory Studies* 11 (4): 415–483. doi:10.1177/1750698017693669.
- Yamauchi, Akemi. 2016. "Sanriku sekai' to shishi-odori no hajimari: saigai to mukiau kurashi" [The Origins of 'the Sanriku World' and the Deer Dance: Living with Disaster]. *The Taishō Journal of Humanity and Environment* 3: 53–62.

Andrew Littlejohn is an assistant professor at Leiden University's Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology. Prior to joining Leiden, he held a Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs' Program on U.S.-Japan Relations at Harvard University, where he also received his PhD in Social Anthropology with a secondary field in Critical Media Practice in 2017. The core question motivating his current research is how to live sustainably in a world damaged by both intensifying hazards and the technologies we develop to mitigate them. Email: a.littlejohn@fsw.leidenuniv.nl