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The Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident of 11 March 2011 were not the first disasters to hit Japan, but they became known as the worst catastrophe of the peninsula after World War II. Thousands of people had to find a way to deal with the trauma they experienced and pass on the lessons they learned. Many of the survivors turned to art and culture to cope with their experiences. Among these art forms is also kamishibai, Japanese paper theatre. This paper analyses how kamishibai was used after the disaster and argues that it became a tool to convey lessons learned and a coping mechanism for the survivors to deal with personal trauma and express their grief. Thus kamishibai dealing with the disaster does not fit into classical typologies of the paper theatre, but rather represents a hybrid of memorialisation practices and disaster risk education in the sense of classical educational kamishibai. For this reason, I propose the new term of memorialisation kamishibai (*kataritsugi kamishibai*) to highlight these distinct features.

Keywords: kamishibai, Japanese paper theatre, disaster risk education, memorialisation, 3.11, Great Japan East Earthquake, tsunami, radiation

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Beneath the invisible Cloud

Kamishibai After 11 March: Between Disaster Risk Education and Memorialisation

Julia Gerster

Introduction

> "A big earthquake occurs; a big earthquake occurs. Keep calm and make sure that your surroundings are safe."
> I thought the world would come to an end on 11 March. But the next day, the sun rose silently, and the morning came. (*Mienai kumo no shita de*; Beneath the invisible cloud)

These are scenes from a kamishibai, Japanese paper theatre, which describes the terrible events of 11 March 2011. A magnitude 9.0 earthquake triggered a tsunami that washed away entire villages along the coastline of north-eastern Japan. Almost 20,000 people died (of which more than 2,500 have not been found), 121,776 houses were destroyed, and 470,000 people continued living in temporary housing for many years – some still do as of August 2018 (Reconstruction Agency). In addition, the tsunami destroyed the cooling system of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear power plant, leading to the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl. Evacuation zones were declared and changed several times. Some people were allowed to return already half a year after the catastrophe; others still do not know if and when their former homes will be released from the evacuation order. More than eight years after the disaster, the consequences are still influencing the daily lives of the people affected.

In the aftermath of the disaster, many people turned to art and culture to deal with their experiences (Hashimoto and Hayashi; Hashimoto; Hayashi). Festivals were revived (Yamaguchi), and newly invented, paper cut projects like the *kiriko* of Kesennuma brought people together (Niwa), and dances such as the lion dance (*shishi mai*) and deer dance (*shika mai*) of disaster-stricken regions were performed all over Japan. When I visited the Tōhoku region during one year of fieldwork in 2017, I was surprised to see many people performing kamishibai about the disaster. Some of the performers also volunteered as so-called *kataribe*, storytellers who report about the calamity, thus taking kamishibai as a tool to express their experiences. Others had

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turned to kamishibai for the first time after 11 March. According to the International Kamishibai Association of Japan (Personal interview, 25 April 2018), there is a large number of kamishibai dealing with the disaster. Moreover, it is striking that the majority of kamishibai performers dealing with the disaster are female (Personal interview, 8 April 2019). Nevertheless, the International Kamishibai Association points out that the exact number of performers as well as the percentage of females is hard to estimate as many of the pieces are handmade and not officially published (*tezukuri kamishibai*).

Taking three stories that deal with the earthquake, the tsunami and the nuclear disaster of 2011 as examples, this paper examines how kamishibai is used to convey messages of risk education as well as personal experiences as part of the memorialisation culture after the disaster. I argue that paper theatre, like other art forms, is used by often marginalised people to have their voices and opinions heard and as a method for disaster risk education featuring elements of educational (*kyōiku*) kamishibai. At the same time, and unlike classical educational kamishibai pieces, most of the kamishibai are handmade (*tezukuri*), talk about individual experiences and have become part of memorialisation practices. While still aiming to educate or empower larger audiences, these practices are also used for personal trauma or stress release of the performers, who, as of the time of this article, are themselves mostly affected by the 2011 or other disasters. Participating in kamishibai gives the performers the chance to reach for mutual support among people with similar experiences and to challenge official narratives of recovery.

First, I will give a brief overview of the role of memorialisation practices after disasters. Then, I will summarise the historical background of kamishibai, before introducing three different kamishibai that deal with the 11 March disasters. Each of them was produced with a different background, while each of the authors is somehow connected to a catastrophic event. The interviews were conducted with the authors as well as the International Kamishibai Association of Japan. The paper concludes that kamishibai is used as a tool for memorialisation and to voice critical views which are otherwise difficult to mention. Moreover, new forms of presenting kamishibai emerged after the 2011 disasters. Therefore, introducing a new term such as memorialisation kamishibai (*kataritsugi kamishibai*)[1] may be useful to highlight the empowering and educational aspects of this art form and to distinguish such plays from other forms of kamishibai.

1 *Kataritsugu* in Japanese is better translated as "to pass something on" or "to keep talking about certain experiences." As these meanings are also encompassed in the term memorialisation, this could be a proper description of the kamishibai performances analysed in this paper.

Memorialisation of disasters

Japan has a long history of disasters. Strong earthquakes strike the country every few years. The Hanshin Awaji earthquake in 1995, which almost completely destroyed the city of Kobe, or the Kumamoto earthquake in 2016 are just two recent examples. Unfortunately, with the atomic bombings, the Fukushima nuclear disaster is also not the first Japan must face. When experiencing traumatic events, people have to find a way to deal with disaster, to grieve, or pass on their experiences to continue their life. Memorialisation culture can take many forms such as monuments, rituals or forms of art which serve as a way of expressing official and alternative narratives of disasters and their aftermath.

According to Boret and Shibayama, "societies develop various modes of grieving and remembering disasters and their victims. These modes are both tangible (monuments, gardens, museums, and archives) and intangible (ceremonies, rituals, storytelling, oral histories)" (1). The authors argue that memorial monuments give people a private place to grieve, while at the same time they are used for official statements of grieving as when politicians visit them, or they remind next generations of what has happened (Boret and Shibayama 1). Monuments "objectify memory" and "pre-empt alternative conceptions of the past" (Liebich and Myshlovska 751). Although memorial monuments can take many forms, these depend on who builds them; in contrast, memorial activities may be more individual and change over time. Governments may perform them differently than a family, those directly affected may have different rituals than those who have not been, and memorial activities directly after a disaster may be different than those performed decades after the actual event. Memorial practices can also be used to express political opinions or to voice critique. Examples are memorial services of Okinawan returnees from Micronesia after the Pacific War as examined by Iitaka. The scholar argues that the Okinawan personal memories challenge the official Japanese war memory (Iitaka 127–28). He concludes that one of the reasons for the continuation of these practices is a common identity as disadvantaged people in a larger system. He states:

> Okinawans had adopted a broader perspective due to their experiences [...] where they had been marginalized and suffered extreme hardships and traumas during the war. Recognizing that they shared historical memories of the war with other Asians and Pacific Islanders, they had closer relationships with Micronesians and displayed respect toward them. Micronesians, in turn, helped to maintain the observation of memorial services. (145)

Memorial practices help to build a common identity or a community that does not have to be linked to a nationality. Similar experiences during a disaster, or similar hardships in the aftermath of it, strengthen social ties of those who had to suffer from

them. The hardships people have to face are also unifying, as everyone "is in this together" (Oliver-Smith; Steger).

Art seems to play a special role within memorialisation practices but also concerning expressions of marginalised people. Regarding their work with photography and other forms of visual arts with members of sexual and gender communities, Barker et al. (63) stressed that "when it comes to artistic objects, there is a dominant cultural understanding that these do not all have to be the same: that vastly diverse pictures, sculptures and so on can be regarded as equally 'true' as representations of the same object or concept." Although this impression of art may vary depending on the political and social system the form of art is presented, it displays that different forms of art can give people a voice that they usually struggle to express.

Thus it may not be surprising that theatre, as another form of art, is also an important part of memorialisation and gives marginalised people or disadvantaged people such as victims of disaster the opportunity to express their opinions. Regarding performances on trauma, Haughton (2) writes "the staging involved, particularly via embodied knowledge and viscerally affective encounters, creates a shared space for the unspeakable to struggle in its desire for articulation and acknowledgment. The compulsion, and indeed inherent contradiction, to simultaneously express and suppress the traumatic is unfaltering in these performance contexts." Plays that deal with traumatic experiences thus can be a way for the victims themselves to express their feelings while simultaneously involving the audience by sharing their experiences. Like the abovementioned memorial practices (Iitaka), theatre can also be used to challenge official narratives. Such critique can go against a range of certain lifestyles such as heteronormativity (Halferty) or aimed directly at a political elite (Bhatia). Lukić, for instance, describes how the theatre plays by Croatian playwright Ivan Vidić criticised Croatian nationalism and national mythology after the fall of communism. To do so, his stories depict "enrichment of the new war-profiteer class" or "Croatian war veterans, destroyed by PTSD, neglected, living on the verge of poverty, giving into alcohol" (278), thus going against the official glorification of that period. Although theatre was and is also used to convey political ideologies or even propaganda (Bathia; Eisner; Kano), these and numerous other examples show how it is also a means of resistance and expression of self-identity.

This paper argues that kamishibai became a special tool that bridges several aspects of memorialisation practices and aspects of educational kamishibai. It is further used for the mental recovery of individuals, to pass on lessons learned from the disaster, and as a way to challenge official narratives. As the majority of kamishibai performers regarding post-11 March pieces seem to be women, the paper theatre also empowered them to express themselves in art.

The historical background and distinct features of kamishibai

In order to understand why kamishibai is used to convey messages about disasters, it is necessary to look at its history and how it was used over time. *Gaitō* (street corner) *kamishibai* became popular in Japan during the 1920s. The kamishibai performer would ride on a bicycle carrying a small stage for the paper sheets with him and stop somewhere to perform for children. Kamishibai performers made their living from the money they earned by selling sweets to the audience, as the performances themselves were for free (Ishiyama). Naturally, the often adventurous or emotional stories in combination with the colourful, sometimes hand-painted pictures contributed a lot to its popularity. From its emergence in the 1920s, kamishibai developed in close relation to early cinematic forms, such as shadow-theatre, magic lantern, and silent film (McGowan). Despite its popularity until the late 1950s, kamishibai was said to have lost the race against television, which was originally called "electric kamishibai" in Japan (Orbaugh 79).

Nevertheless, kamishibai never really died. As *kyōiku kamishibai*, educational paper theatre, it was soon used in schools to convey messages or to study material and make it more accessible for the children. Today, kamishibai is used in all kinds of subjects ranging from English lessons to history or even biology to make the subjects easier to understand. In disaster education, too, kamishibai is used to study, for example, which goods need to be prepared in case of a disaster or how to behave during an earthquake. Although videos are used as educational material in Japan as well, there are clear advantages of kamishibai, especially when working with young children. Here, the interactive parts of kamishibai proved to be handy to understand better and remember the lesson. The pace of the story can be adjusted to the audience, and the teacher, as well as the pupils, can ask questions in-between or add comments. Further, especially younger children find it easier to remember content if it is accompanied by colourful pictures. Hidenobu Fukumoto, a kamishibai director, sees the main difference to movies or Anime as follows: "Kamishibai waits for you. Anime doesn't." (*Kamishibai wa matte kureru. Anime wa matte kurenai kara*). Further, having somebody actively perform a piece and interacting with the audience creates a mutual influence that may change the performance, even though the content of the pictures does not.

The connection between the audience and the performer as well as the connection among the members of the audience (*kyōkan*, literally, "shared feelings") is seen as one of the most important aspects of kamishibai (Ishiyama; Suzuki; Orbaugh; Nash). Laughing and crying together or sharing a moment of surprise creates compassion and a group feeling. While this is another reason for its popularity as teaching material or merely entertainment, this aspect also made it a tool for propaganda purposes during World War II. Stories like *Kintaro* with cute looking animals as the main characters

"who defend Japan from foreign demons" (Nash 200) trivialised the horrors of the war and conveyed nationalist messages not only to the youngest.

Its use as propaganda eventually lead to the decision of the General Headquarters GHQ to ban kamishibai for a while after the end of World War II (Ishiyama; Nash). After the ban was lifted, however, kamishibai similar to those after the 11 March disasters emerged. Among the most famous is *The Peace Oath* (*Heiwa no chikai*) that talks about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and the life of the victims. A young girl finds herself in the midst of hellfire and loses her mother due to the bombing. Years later, she gets bullied by a group of boys because of a radiation burn on her face. An older student tells them about the background of her mark, and they apologise. Born after the bombing, they claimed to not know about its consequences. The story has clear parallels to the suffering of many evacuees from Fukushima prefecture, as more and more cases of bullying become apparent (Aoki).

The Peace Oath was breaking a taboo that exists until today: Japan as stained and the fear of the victims spreading contamination. Additionally, it speaks about mobbing by other Japanese that adds to the suffering of the victims. Here, the kamishibai produces an alternative narrative that goes against the country's national one of staying together and supporting the victims.

Although *gaitō kamishibai* was mainly (but not exclusively) used as an entertainment tool for children, the paper theatre's interactive aspects and colourful pictures prove helpful as an educational tool as *kyōiku kamishibai*. That the division between these categories can be blurry and how easily the evoked compassion (*kyōkan*) can be exploited for political purposes became clear during World War II when kamishibai was used for propaganda (Orbaugh; Suzuki). Nevertheless, stories like *The Peace Oath* show that kamishibai can also work the other way around: as a challenger of official narratives and a breaker of taboos. After the 11 March disasters, survivors thus turned again to paper theatre to convey their messages.

Kamishibai after 11 March

After the devastating earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident in 2011, many kamishibai were produced that revolved around the disasters. In the following three of such kamishibai plays, and different ways to perform the pieces are introduced. What they have in common is a prominent role of women – either as the author, performer or narrator of the original story. This needs to be highlighted as women are found to be in especially difficult situations in the aftermath of the disaster even compared to other victims. On the one hand, they were expected to support their communities

and husbands by joining in the official narratives of unity and compassion. On the other hand, especially mothers were also seen as responsible for their families' safety (Kimura; Morioka; Morris-Suzuki; Reiher; Slater et al.). This left them in the challenging situation to navigate between expectations and made it difficult for them to voice differing opinions on issues like recovery, food safety or problems regarding risk education. The following kamishibai pieces, however, address issues of disaster risk education as well as personal feelings of guilt and powerlessness.

Tsunami no ehon. Boku no furusato (Tsunami picture book. My hometown)

The kamishibai *Boku no furusato* (My hometown) was made by Mayumi Kudo, a priest who survived the earthquake and tsunami in her hometown, Shizugawa, Minamisanriku. The story was later turned into a picture book, thus the additional title *Tsunami Picture Book*.

The kamishibai introduces Kudo's personal experiences of 11 March. She and her family live in a shrine and care for the *Kami* (spirits) there. She leaves her son Yusuke with her grandparents to go grocery shopping. After the earthquake strikes, she runs home worried about her family. Kudo finds them all doing well but has to convince the grandmother to evacuate with them to higher ground. The grandmother wants to stay since the shrine has functioned as an evacuation shelter after previous earthquakes. Yet, Kudo insists on evacuating. On higher ground, they hear a woman repeating the evacuation order while they watch firefighters driving around the coastline. The tsunami is depicted as a brown hand that grasps the city. The voice of the woman fades. Along with other survivors, the family evacuates to an elementary school which serves as a shelter. The next day they realise that their hometown is gone. Their shrine, however, is not damaged. They continue to live in the shelter for several days until the health condition of the grandmother and Yusuke get worse, so they decide to stay at a relative's place in Sendai. One day, Yusuke tells his mother, "I have a broken hometown (*furusato*)." Kudo is surprised, as she thought they would not have a hometown anymore. "Even if it's broken, here will always be Yusuke's one and only hometown." The kamishibai ends with a call to take the right behaviour after a strong earthquake: to tell people to evacuate without hesitation in a loud and clear voice.

In the foreword of the book, Kudo writes that she turned the piece into a picture book so that the wealth of her hometown and the sadness would not be forgotten, and the life of the deceased would not be in vain. Adults all over the world should tell children that "after a big earthquake a tsunami comes. People need to evacuate to higher ground immediately and individually" (Kudo 2012 preface).

Kudo's kamishibai is based on her own experiences during and after the disaster. The Japanese audience is likely to recognise parts of the accounts which later became news. Thus, without a very detailed description, they understand that the young woman announcing the tsunami warnings did so until she was swept away and died. Her working place had a designated evacuation area on its roof, but it was not high enough to withstand the tsunami. The firefighters died because they were checking the water gates. The high embankment did not allow them to see the approaching wave. In other areas, people also died because they were trying to advise others to evacuate. These and other tragic cases lead to discussions about evacuation practices in Japan. For instance, Kudo's hometown as well as other municipalities committed to the promotion of evacuating individually, without searching for others (*tsunami tendenko*). Thus, it is not surprising that this principle is also raised in the kamishibai.

The author combines her personal experience with lessons learned from the disaster. In Minamisanriku, she was reading the kamishibai to the audience in front of her destroyed hometown. This adds another, immediate dimension to the theatre play, as the environment is included. The audience may recognise the buildings on the pictures and imagine the direct impact of the tsunami. This kind of surrounding impacts the understanding regarding the importance of immediate evacuation.

Regardless of the place of performance, before starting, Kudo asks for a minute of silence to remember the dead. This act emphasises that the kamishibai is based on true experiences while at the same time representing a clear cut to the every day as the audience is asked to remember the dead. This is a significant difference of the kamishibai version compared to the picture book.

My Hometown is an example of how kamishibai is used as a memorialisation practice and to pass on lessons learned from the disaster. The 11 March disasters, however, did not only affect people who lived on the coastline as the nuclear accident unfolded. In Fukushima prefecture *kamishibai* is also produced to talk about the consequences of the disaster.

Chichi Ushi Monogatari (The tale of the milk cows)

The Tale of the Milk Cows is part of the "Namie town kamishibai storytelling" project of Hidenobu Fukumoto, a director from Hiroshima. His project started with the purpose to collect stories from Namie town, which was evacuated completely after the nuclear disaster. Remembering the effects of the nuclear bombings, he feared that folklore and old stories vanished along with the evacuated people. Additional to legends and fairytales from the regions, he turns the real experiences of the evacuees into paper

theatre. The following is based on the memories of the main character's wife.

The Tale of the Milk Cows introduces the story of a dairy farmer and his cows. The story is told from the cows' perspective and begins shortly after the earthquake. In the beginning, the cows enjoy the freedom they have. Yet, after a week, their owner whom they kindly call "*Tō-chan*" (father) does not return, and the cows begin to worry. "Tō-chan never forgot us. Even when he had a high fever he was still feeding us," says one of the cows. "Something terrible must have happened in the world of the humans." After Tō-chan comes back to milk them, they are shocked to see the farmer throwing all of the milk away. Soon rumours begin to spread.

> "Have you seen the other herd? People dressed all in white came and gave them a shot. After a while, they were all falling to the ground."
> "Do you think they were sleeping?"
> "No, I think they are dead."

Finally, Tō-chan appears again and cries out loudly. When the cows realise that they are going to die, they start to cry as well. The piece ends with the cries of the cows and of their owner mingling in desperation.

In a personal interview (5 November 2017), Kinue Ishii, who is the wife of the farmer and also the author of the piece, talked about the reasons to turn her experiences into kamishibai. To her and her husband, the cows meant everything, and he always made sure that they were well. She could not forget them, and she was sure that she heard them crying. The sorrow she felt was evident during the interview as she had to cry several times. "This kamishibai is my way to apologise to them. I am so sorry," she stressed (5 November 2017).

The group produced several kamishibai that highlight the horrific events which resulted from the nuclear accident. Ishii, however, did not stress this point, despite the fate of her cows being clearly linked to the accident. For her, the foremost reason to create the play was to face what she calls her "personal guilt regarding the cows' death". Creating the play thus meant to revisit what had happened in the wake of the disaster. Even without mentioning the tsunami or showing pictures of the crippled power plant, *The Tale of the Milk Cows* conveys the aftermath of the nuclear accident, while engaging with personal feelings of directly affected people.

Tsunami wo ikinobita Gen-chan (Gen-chan who survived the tsunami)

The last kamishibai shows another side of the paper theatre after 11 March. Although *Gen-chan Who Survived the Tsunami* by Yuiko Tsuno was not based on her own experiences, it is based on a true story which unfolded in Fukushima prefecture.

The story begins with a picture showing Gen-chan, a big, white dog, living a happy life with his owner on the coast somewhere in Fukushima prefecture, when suddenly the earthquake strikes. After the quake stops, the owner makes sure that Gen is not harmed, before he starts cleaning his house. Gen-chan starts to worry after hearing the neighbours calling for evacuation because of a tsunami warning. When his owner finally finishes putting together the goods needed for the shelter, it is already too late. The tsunami surpasses the dyke and washes them away. After fainting in the black wave, Gen-chan dreams of a being carried on the back of a golden deer. The dog wakes up in the middle of devastation, where the city once used to be. Gen-chan decides to search for the way back home to find his owner. "Is life such a hard thing?", he wonders. After four months, people finally manage to catch the dog whose white fur has turned pitch black. Gen-chan is kept at a shelter for lost pets but is suffering from several diseases as a result of his long travels. Remembering his owner and the golden deer, Gen gains new strength and does not give up. Finally, a man decides to adopt him. To support the dog who always looks sad and ill, the new owner decides to call him "Genki", shortened Gen ("to be full of energy"). Because of Gen's story, the owner starts to teach people in their neighbourhood about the importance of disaster preparedness. The last picture shows Gen living happily with his new family in Tokyo.

Tsuno's kamishibai shows many elements which can be found in other post-11 March kamishibai as well. The main characters are first unsure about evacuating. People who spend too much time cleaning the house or searching for utensils are swept away by the tsunami. Unlike Kudo's kamishibai, the need to evacuate to higher ground or evacuation instructions are not strongly emphasised with words but conveyed by the actions the characters take and their results (not evacuating right away may lead to the loss of life). In contrast to the human characters, Gen does not know what a tsunami is. He thus resembles children who may not have heard of tsunamis yet.

Despite the similarities regarding the advised behaviour, there is a huge difference to the other Disaster-*kamishibai*. Tsuno lived in Yokohama, close to Tokyo when the earthquake struck. Thus, she did not experience the tsunami and hesitated when she was asked by a friend to create a kamishibai about the disaster. Yet, when she heard the story of the dog, she changed her mind and decided to make Gen-chan the main character. Nevertheless it was another catastrophe that made her see more in the kamishibai and gave her the final push. Tsuno had just moved to Paris when she was suddenly confronted with traumatic experiences herself. On 13 November 2015, the Paris terrorist attacks on Bataclan and other public places happened close to where she lived. In an interview she described the weeks that followed: "It was horrible. Almost all cultural activities were cancelled. People were afraid and suspicious. It was then, when I realised that there is more that Gen-chan can do and I changed many things in the story" (Tsuno, Yuiko. Personal interview, 20 October 2017).

The story which she originally designed to convey disaster risk reduction methods (Personal interview, 20 October 2017) turned into a more general tale about survival and hope. The children should get inspired by Gen-chan. If he was able to overcome such hardship, they could do it too. Tsuno chose animals as the main characters because children are familiar with dogs and they are often treated as family members. The deer that appears in Gen-chan's dream tells him (and the children) where to find safe places in case of a tsunami and to carry on. Further, animals do not resemble a certain nationality, although the story is set in Japan. "I wanted to do something for French children, too, as many were stressed after the terrorist attacks," said Tsuno. "Also, there are many refugees in France now, and they are facing many problems, too. Many of them had traumatic experiences when they fled. I wanted them to recognise themselves in Gen-chan. He should give them hope."

Post-disaster kamishibai: Memorising the disaster, dealing with trauma and speaking out

All three introduced kamishibai deal with the disaster and yet do so in diverse ways regarding technique and story-telling. *My Hometown* and *The Tale of the Milk Cows* are based on real experiences and were turned into a theatre play by the victims themselves, although the latter received support by a third party, namely the director from Hiroshima.

Whereas *Gen-chan Who Survived the Tsunami* is based on a true story, it was not produced by a victim of the tsunami. Nevertheless, another catastrophe – the terror attacks in Paris, November 2015, turned Tsuno's everyday into a "post-terror France." This is when she saw new possibilities for kamishibai. Despite Tsuno performing in France for an international audience, her kamishibai performance is the most traditional among the three introduced. She uses a traditional frame and turns the pictures while reading the story that is written on the back. She emphasises that *kyōkan* (shared feelings) help the children to deal with the experiences – be it French children who suffered from the post-terror situation; or refugees who reached France after often long and fearful journeys. The colourful pictures and animals as main characters seem to work for children from different cultural backgrounds as they themselves can more easily associate with the main characters.

Mayumi Kudo, the writer of *My Hometown*, explained "the power of kamishibai" in a similar way: "I was originally writing poems and short stories about the disaster, but children could not read them and there are also many foreigners who had difficulties with that. Kamishibai is much easier to understand" (Personal interview, 25 April 2018). Nevertheless, she does not stick to the traditional way of performing the theatre

and introduced a minute of silence in the beginning as a new element. This act clearly marks the paper theatre as a practice of memorialisation and at the same time evokes *kyōkan* among the audience as they turn their heads down together to remember the victims. Further, when performing the kamishibai within places in Minamisanriku which were destroyed by the tsunami, she integrates her surroundings into the play – something that was already common in the 1950s when *Gaitō kamishibai* was performed outside in the streets. These acts also show the different possibilities in kamishibai compared to the picture book version.

Fukumoto's and Ishii's kamishibai is performed in several versions. A conventional kamishibai with one performer reading and turning the pages, an animated version to reach a larger audience and to make it consumable at any time (Personal interview, interview Fukumoto 10 November 2017), and what Fukumoto calls "*Kami-oto-shibai*" (paper-music-theatre). The latter is a combination of traditional kamishibai which is additionally projected on a screen and accompanied by an orchestra, to reach larger crowds (such as in Tokyo). Fukumoto emphasised that these measures are necessary to make kamishibai suitable and accessible to a larger audience that would still see the paper theatre as mainly for children (Fukumoto, Personal interview, 15 April 2017). Yet, the kamishibai version of *The Tale of the Milk Cows* again showed the important aspect of shared feelings when watching the play together – in this case even conveying more forcefully as the play is conducted by the victims themselves. Whenever I saw an audience watching the play, they started crying in the end and thus joined the performers in their sorrow.

Nevertheless, not only the performances were impacted by the disaster, but also the stories themselves. Whereas all stories reflect real experiences, some of them share the normative approach to disaster risk education (as in what people should or should not do). Kudo is explicit about it with her call for immediate and independent evacuation following the *tsunami tendenko* practice. In Tsuno's story, the advice is more implicit, but still, it is important to her that children learn about the importance of fast evacuation and also about more universal aspects of life like "not to give up." Although, according to the International Kamishibai Association of Japan, these stories do not fall into the category of educational kamishibai as they are not produced for schools with an explicit goal of teaching a certain content (Personal interview, 25 April 2018), performers like Kudo stated that teaching lessons learned from the disaster and engaging in disaster risk education were her most important achievement and one of the reasons for relying on the theatre (Personal interview, 25 April 2018). Hence, while not overtly following the rules of *kyōiku kamishibai* (educational kamishibai), some elements are included in the plays on purpose.

Lastly, the examples of the "Namie town Kamishibai storytelling project", to which

belong *The Tale of the Milk Cows* and *Beneath the Invisible Cloud*, which was cited in the beginning, show that the plays can be used to challenge "official narratives" of the disaster and recovery. Fukumoto emphasised how he regards it his duty to pass on the stories of the victims of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, as they faced the same kind of discrimination that the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs had to endure. He stressed that like *The Peace Oath*, kamishibai were among the first mediums to openly talk about the discrimination. Whereas *The Tale of the Milk Cows* does not voice critique openly, the audience is likely to remember that contaminated milk had to be disposed of after the disaster and that rumours led to ongoing disposal even after the milk was declared consumable again. Other kamishibai from the project talk about the consequences more drastically: people from Tokyo throw away products from Fukushima in fear, and those directly affected by radiation are afraid of possible health effects and left alone in uncertainty.

It is remarkable that the majority of the kamishibai performers are female. Although one of the reasons certainly is that many of them are housewives or pensioners and thus have more free time, the practice allows them to express their thoughts through art. Just as other scholars have noted (Kimura; Morioka; Morris-Suzuki; Reiher; Slater et al.), women were facing exceptional challenges and often found it hard to voice concerns or opinions that would question the recovery efforts. Being also a memorialisation practice and used to represent individual narratives, kamishibai worked as a "soft challenger" to the official narrative of the disaster almost being overcome. For example, Kudo's and Tsuno's works remind of the mistakes that people made by not evacuating. Ishii's piece can be seen as a critique of nuclear power and also as a critique of people not trusting food safety. Without explicitly stating their discontent with how history is represented, the creators and performers of the kamishibai can present alternative views through their personal stories. This reminds of Iitaka's description of the Okinawan memorialisation practices and also of other theatre forms that were used to express differing opinions (Bathia, Lukić) and empower people in marginalised positions (Halferty).

Another important point is the social aspect of practising and performing in front of an audience. Although the time spent together is relatively short regarding pieces that are performed by just one person, like Kudo's or Tsuno's pieces, the stories can encourage questions and discussions about the situation of the disaster affected people. Especially in the case of the Namie-machi kamishibai group, however, the practices and performances as a group are turning into a space where socialising and exchange among people facing similar hardships are possible. As Oliver-Smith and Steger noted, traumatic experiences can work as a unifier and strengthen social ties of the affected, even if it is just for a short time. This was expressed by Fukumoto as well, who was not affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, but coming from Hiroshima,

he still considered it his duty to support others similarly affected by radiation. Connecting to kamishibai after the bombing of Hiroshima, the paper theatre was his choice to convey the hardships of people suffering from the disasters.

Finally, each of the three presented stories which stand for a variety of kamishibai after the 2011 disasters feature elements of educational kamishibai (*kyōiku kamishibai*), disaster risk education, and memorialisation. They mingle personal experiences with messages to future generations: to learn from the past and to never give up hope. These distinct features show that the common labels of various kamishibai might be too narrow to grasp the features of Japanese paper theatre after catastrophic events. Hence, I propose that the introduction of the term memorialisation kamishibai (*kataritsugi kamishibai*) may be an appropriate way to emphasise the coping, learning and memorialisation aspects kamishibai offers to performers, producers and the audience. The term could be used to distinguish paper theatre dealing with disastrous and traumatic events that happened in the past from other stories purely meant for entertainment or education. Highlighting these aspects could further promote this particular kind of kamishibai as its performances contribute to disaster risk education of generations who did not experience the disaster and support the mental recovery of the survivors themselves. Kamishibai was influenced by the 11 March disasters, and at the same time it became a coping mechanism for those affected to deal with their experiences.

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