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# The Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami A Guide



# The Culture

## The History of Aizu

During the Edo period, Aizu was a feudal domain known as Aizu Domain and part of Mutsu Province.

The daimyo over much of the Edo period was from the Hoshina family. They had been senior retainers of the Takeda family, and in the early 17th century the head of the family, Hoshina Masamitsu, adopted the illegitimate son of the second Tokugawa shogun Hidetada. As a result, the Hoshina family's fortunes rose, with larger and larger fiefs being given to them, until finally they were moved to Aizu, then rated at 240,000 koku, in the mid-17th century. Hoshina Masayuki, the adopted head of the family, rose in prominence while his half-brother Tokugawa Iemitsu was shogun, and later acted as a regent for his successor, the underage fourth shogun Tokugawa Ietsuna. By the end of the 17th century, the Hoshina family was allowed the use of the Tokugawa hollyhock crest and the Matsudaira surname, and from then on was known as the Aizu-Matsudaira clan, with the name Hoshina being used mainly for internal documents.

In the house code set down by Masayuki, there was an injunction to serve the shogun with single-minded devotion, and it was this injunction which the family took great pains to show its adherence to, even if its true objectives were those of improving status and prestige.

Aizu was known for its martial skill, and maintained a standing army of over 5000. It was often deployed to security operations on the

northern fringes of the country, as far north as southern Sakhalin. Also, around the time of Commodore Perry's arrival, Aizu had a presence in security operations around Edo Bay.

The domain's two sets of formal rules for its army, the Rules for Commanders (kinrei) and Rules for Soldiers (shisotsu kinrei), written in the 1790s, laid down a professional, modern standard for military conduct, including the following two items in the Rules for Soldiers which codified the human rights and protection of enemy non-combatants, over 70 years before the first Geneva Convention of 1864:

"Regardless of whether it belongs to the enemy, trampling and ruining rice fields is forbidden."  
"In enemy territory, it is forbidden to rape women, harm the elderly and children, desecrate graves, torch the homes of commoners, slaughter live-stock needlessly, pillage money and rice, fell trees without reason, and take crops in the field."





# The History

## The History of Soma

Hibarigahara, Ota Shrine and Odaka Shrine (both located in Minami-Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture) and Nakamura Shrine (Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture)

In the Soma District of Fukushima Prefecture, which is a famous horse-breeding region, a festive event called Soma-Nomaoi has been held since ancient times. This is a festival jointly organized by three shrines in Fukushima Prefecture - Ota Shrine and Odaka Shrine in Minami-Soma City, and Nakamura-Shrine in Soma City. It has also been designated as a significant intangible folk cultural asset\* of Japan.

The highlights of the three-day festival are the Koshiki Kacchu Keiba, in which twelve samurai horsemen clad in armor and helmets, and carrying katana swords all race over a distance of 1,000 meters, and the Shinki Sodatsusen, in which several hundred samurai horsemen compete for

40 shrine flags shot into the air with fireworks. Both take place on the vast Hibarigahara field on the 24th. There are many other events also worth seeing. These include the solemn opening ceremony at each of the shrines on the 23rd, the procession heading towards the Hibarigahara venue three kilometers away upon a

signal sounded from a horn made by boring a hole in a large conch shell and war drums on the 24th, and the Nomagake ritual in which men dressed in white capture horses barehanded and present them as offerings to Odaka Shrine on the 25th. All these events offer such spectacular sights that you will feel as if picture scrolls of the Sengoku Period (1477-1573) were unfolding before your very eyes.

The Soma-Nomaoi is said to have its origins in the early 10th Century when samurai warriors of this land secretly commenced their military exercises.

\*A significant intangible folk cultural asset refers to manners and customs related to food, clothing and shelter, vocation, faith, annual events, and folkloric performing arts, etc., which have been established by the people in daily life and passed down through generations, deemed especially valuable by the State.







## Obama's Address to the World

Good afternoon, everyone. Over the last several days, the American people have been both heartbroken and deeply concerned about the developments in Japan.

We've seen an earthquake and tsunami render unimaginable -- an unimaginable toll of death and destruction on one of our closest friends and allies in the world. And we've seen this powerful natural disaster cause even more catastrophe through its impact on nuclear reactors that bring peaceful energy to the people of Japan.

Today, I wanted to update the American people on what we know about the situation in Japan, what we're doing to support American citizens and the safety of our own nuclear energy, and how we are helping the Japanese people contain the damage, recover and rebuild.

First, we are bringing all available resources to bear to closely monitor the situation, and to protect American citizens who may be in harm's way. Even as Japanese responders continue to do heroic work, we know that the damage to the nuclear reactors in Fukushima Daiichi plant poses a substantial risk to people who are nearby. That is why yesterday, we called for an evacuation of American citizens who are within 50 miles of the plant. This decision was based upon a careful scientific evaluation and the guidelines that we would use to keep our citizens safe here in the United States, or anywhere in the world.

Beyond this 50-mile radius, the risks do not currently call for an evacuation. But we do have a responsibility to take prudent and precautionary measures to educate those Americans who may be endangered by exposure to radiation if the situation deteriorates. That's why last night I authorized the voluntary departures of family members and dependents of U.S. officials working in northeastern Japan.

All U.S. citizens in Japan should continue to carefully monitor the situation and follow the guidance of the U.S. and Japanese governments. And those who are seeking assistance should contact our embassy and consulates, which continue to be open and operational.

Second, I know that many Americans are also worried about the potential risks to the United States. So I want to be very clear: We do not expect harmful levels of radiation to reach the United States, whether it's the West Coast, Hawaii, Alaska, or U.S. territories in the Pacific. Let me repeat that: We do not expect harmful levels of radiation to reach the West Coast, Hawaii, Alaska, or U.S. territories in the Pacific. That is the judgment of our Nuclear Regulatory Commission and many other experts.

Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and public health experts do not recommend that people in the United States take precautionary measures beyond staying informed. And going forward, we will continue to keep the American people fully updated -- because I believe that you must know what I know as President.

Here at home, nuclear power is also an important part of our own energy future, along with renewable sources like wind, solar, natural gas and clean coal. Our nuclear power plants have undergone exhaustive study, and have been declared safe for any number of extreme contingencies. But when we see a crisis like the one in Japan, we have a responsibility to learn from this event, and to draw from those lessons to ensure the safety and security of our people.

That's why I've asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to do a comprehensive review of the safety of our domestic nuclear plants in light of the natural disaster that unfolded in Japan.

Finally, we are working aggressively to support our Japanese ally at this time of extraordinary challenge. Search and rescue



teams are on the ground in Japan to help the recovery effort. A disaster assistance and response team is working to confront the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami. The U.S. military, which has helped to ensure the security of Japan for decades, is working around the clock.

To date, we've flown hundreds of missions to support the recovery efforts, and distributed thousands of pounds of food and water to the Japanese people. We've also deployed some of our leading experts to help contain the damage at Japan's nuclear reactors. We're sharing with them expertise, equipment, and technology so that the courageous responders on the scene have the benefit of American teamwork and support.

And the American people have also opened up their hearts. Many have given generously to support the ongoing relief efforts. The Red Cross is providing assistance to help meet the immediate needs of those who've been displaced. And I would encourage anybody who wants to lend a hand to go to [usaid.gov](http://usaid.gov) to learn more -- that's usaid.gov -- to find out how you can be helpful.

As I told Prime Minister Kan last night, and reaffirmed at the Japanese embassy here in Washington today, the Japanese people are not alone in this time of great trial and sorrow. Across the Pacific, they will find a hand of support extended from the United States as they get back on their feet. After all, we have an alliance that was forged more than a half century ago, and strengthened by shared interests and democratic values. Our people share ties of family, ties of culture, and ties of commerce. Our troops have served to protect Japan's shores, and our citizens have found opportunity and friendship in Japan's cities and towns.

Above all, I am confident that Japan will recover and rebuild because of the strength and spirit of the Japanese people. Over the last few days, they've opened up their homes

to one another. They've shared scarce resources of food and water. They've organized shelters, provided free medical care, and looked out for their most vulnerable citizens. One man put it simply: "It's a Japanese thing. When hard times hit, we have to help each other."

In these hard times, there remains, nevertheless, hope for the future. In one small town that had been flattened by the tsunami, emergency workers rescued a four-month-old baby who had been swept out of her parents' arms and stranded for days among the debris. No one can say for certain just how she survived the water and the wreckage around her. There is a mystery in the course of human events.

But in the midst of economic recovery and global upheaval, disasters like this remind us of the common humanity that we share. We see it in the responders who are risking their lives at Fukushima. We show it through the help that has poured into Japan from 70 countries. And we hear it in the cries of a child, miraculously pulled from the rubble. In the coming days, we will continue to do everything we can to ensure the safety of American citizens and the security of our sources of energy. And we will stand with the people of Japan as they contain this crisis, recover from this hardship, and rebuild their great nation.

Thanks very much.





# The Disaster

## 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and Tsunami

The 2011 earthquake off the Pacific coast of Tohoku, also known as the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, or the Great East Japan Earthquake, (Japanese: “Eastern Japan Great Earthquake Disaster” (Higashi Nihon Daishinsai) ) was a magnitude 9.0 (Mw) undersea megathrust earthquake off the coast of Japan that occurred at 14:46 JST (05:46 UTC) on Friday, 11 March 2011, with the epicenter approximately 70 kilometres (43 mi) east of the Oshika Peninsula of Tōhoku and the hypocenter at an underwater depth of approximately 32 km (20 mi). It was the most powerful known earthquake ever to have hit Japan, and one of the five most powerful earthquakes in the world overall since modern record-keeping began in 1900. The earthquake triggered powerful tsunami waves, which reached heights of up to 40.5 metres (133 ft) in Miyako in Tōhoku’s Iwate Prefecture, and which in the Sendai area travelled up to 10 km (6 mi) inland. In addition to loss of life and destruction of infrastructure, the tsunami caused a number of nuclear accidents, primarily the on-going level 7 meltdowns at three reactors in the Fukushima I Nuclear Power Plant complex, and the associated evacuation zones affecting hundreds of thousands of residents.

Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan said, “In the 65 years after the end of World War II, this is the

toughest and the most difficult crisis for Japan.” The Japanese National Police Agency confirmed 15,840 deaths, 5,950 injured, and 3,642 people missing across eighteen prefectures, as well as over 125,000 buildings damaged or destroyed. The earthquake and tsunami caused extensive and severe structural damage in Japan, including heavy damage to roads and railways as well as fires in many areas, and a dam collapse. Around 4.4 million households in northeastern Japan were left without electricity and 1.5 million without water. Many electrical generators were taken down, and at least three nuclear reactors suffered explosions due to hydrogen gas that had built up within their outer containment buildings after cooling system failure. Residents within a 20 km (12 mi) radius of the Fukushima I Nuclear Power Plant and a 10 km (6.2 mi) radius of the Fukushima II Nuclear Power Plant were evacuated. In addition, the U.S. recommended that its citizens evacuate up to 80 km (50 mi) of the plant.

Early estimates placed insured losses from the earthquake alone at US\$14.5 to \$34.6 billion. The Bank of Japan offered ¥15 trillion (US\$183 billion) to the banking system on 14 March in an effort to normalize market conditions. The World Bank’s estimated economic cost was US\$235 billion, making it the most expensive natural disaster on record.

The earthquake moved Honshu 2.4 m (8 ft) east and shifted the Earth on its axis by estimates of between 10 cm (4 in) and 25 cm (10 in).

The degree and extent of damage caused by the

# How You Can Help



earthquake and resulting tsunami were enormous, with most of the damage being caused by the tsunami. Video footage of the towns that were worst affected shows little more than piles of rubble, with almost no parts of any structures left standing. Estimates of the cost of the damage range well into the tens of billions of US dollars; before-and-after satellite photographs of devastated regions show immense damage to many regions. Although Japan has invested the equivalent of billions of dollars on anti-tsunami seawalls which line at least 40% of its 34,751 km (21,593 mi) coastline and stand up to 12 m (39 ft) high, the tsunami simply washed over the top of some seawalls, collapsing some in the process.

Japan's National Police Agency said on 3 April 2011, that 45,700 buildings were destroyed and 144,300 were damaged by the quake and tsunami. The damaged buildings included 29,500 structures in Miyagi Prefecture, 12,500 in Iwate Prefecture and 2,400 in Fukushima Prefecture. Three hundred hospitals with 20 beds or more in Tohoku were damaged by the disaster, with 11 being completely destroyed. The earthquake and tsunami created an estimated 24–25 million tons of rubble and debris in Japan.

An estimated 230,000 automobiles and trucks were damaged or destroyed in the disaster. As of the end of May 2011, residents of Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures had requested deregistration of 15,000 vehicles, meaning that the owners of those

vehicles were writing them off as unrepairable or unsalvageable.

## How You Can Help

est and most effective way for Americans to help is to give cash. One person's informed donation decision can make a big difference for many victims. The single American dollar often goes much further abroad, particularly in disaster-stricken areas, so monetary gifts in any amount - big or small - are absolutely essential to swift, efficient and successful international disaster relief efforts.



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Helping Japan Heal