



▲ In May 2013, a moai statue made by the people of Easter Island was presented to Minamisanriku.

Photo courtesy of Minamisanriku Tourism Association

Minamisanriku and Chile have deepened their friendship across a distance of some 17,000 kilometers. This started with the Chile earthquake and tsunami that occurred on May 24 1960, which resulted in the death of 41 people in Minamisanriku. Thirty years later, in 1990, Chile sent Minamisanriku a monument of its national bird, the condor, in an attempt to communicate the memory of this tsunami to future generations. In 1991, Minamisanriku commissioned a Chilean sculptor to create a moai statue of the kind found on Easter Island. It was installed in Matsubara Park, Shizugawa district.

On April 28, 2011, in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, Patricio Torres, then ambassador of the Republic of Chile to Japan, drove himself to Minamisanriku to visit the town. He stopped by Shizugawa Junior High School to give sweets to students and teachers and visited again on June 1 to offer encouragement to the students. On March 30, 2012, then President Sebastian Piñera visited the town and made a promise to donate a new moai statue. The Chilean National Board of the Japan-Chile Business Cooperation Committee sought out the cooperation of the Easter Island Elders' Association to gift a new moai statue to Minamisanriku, which had been destroyed by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Carved from Easter Island stone, the giant moai statues are 3 meters high and 2 tons in weight and have never left the island. Donated to Minamisanriku in May 2013, this is a precious moai statue that left the island for the first time in history.

Moai means "living in the future" in the Rapa Nui language of Easter Island. This statue is sure to watch over the people of Minamisanriku in the future, offering them encouragement that extends well into the distant future.