

# Tsunamis and Place Names

## The history of tsunamis communicated in place names

### Sannintachi

(Meaning: Three people standing)

A pointy mountain with an altitude of 412 meters in the hinterland of Mt. Doji. About 1,800 years ago, three men from an army that came from the capital to conquer people living in this area holed themselves up in this mountain. It is also said that this place name came to be used because of a tsunami in ancient times that washed everything away, and that the only survivors were the three people who scurried up this mountain.

### Nokoriya

(Meaning: The valley that remained)

The Jomon period ruins along the river are called Nokoriya Ruins. During that time, sea levels were higher than they are today, so it is thought that this area, which is now a mountainous area, was also flooded.

### Funakubo

(Meaning: A depression with a boat)

It is said that a ship ended up in this depression during a great tsunami long ago.

### Funagawara

(Meaning: A dry riverbed where boats arrive)

Boats were washed ashore here.

### Yoppazawa

(Meaning: A stream where waves came)

Commonly called Yoppasa.

### Oobunnezawa

(Meaning: A stream with big ships)

During a tsunami, a large ship got washed up the Iriobune River at the upper reaches of the Mizushiri River.

### Iri-Oobunnezawa

### Takozawa

(Meaning: Stream where octopus appeared)

It is said that octopus were carried to the upper reaches of the river by a tsunami.

### Hadenya

(Meaning: Valley from where waves travel)

It is said that the seabed rose overnight and the sea became land; boats overturning by the waves that were created is what gave this place its name.

Area flooded by the tsunami that accompanied the Great East Japan Earthquake

The land in the areas around Minamisanriku has a long history of human inhabitation. Inland areas are dotted with ruins from the Jomon period, and the Hiraizumi Fujiwara clan prospered later in the Heian period. Meanwhile, the area is sensitive to the movements of the Pacific Plate. It has been hit by many tsunamis since time immemorial.

Before the earthquake, the flatlands downstream of the river were highly populated. Before the mid-19th century, however, people had tended to live further inland. Here, they were kept alive thanks to high-quality water that springs from deep forests and the resources that can be found in satoyama undeveloped woodlands. In the past, there were no embankments. Downstream areas near river mouths were not suitable for inhabitation, and tsunamis reached places far from the coast by traveling up rivers. This can be understood from place names and legends that have survived to this day. The ancestors passed down place names associated with disasters as a way of helping later generations remember threats posed by nature even after a long time has passed.