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# The Chosen Traumas of Postwar Tōhoku Studies

Nathan Hopson\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nagoya Univeristy (NU) – Japan

## Abstract (in French and English)

I trace the roles of resentment and collective identity in postwar Tōhoku studies as it moved from intellectual to social movement. Said's remark, "nations... are narratives," is broadly applicable to collective identities. From Ernest Renan on, national identity has been understood as a process of mythmaking, of selective memory and interpretation; as Richard White wrote, "Myths are stories that tell why things and people are what they are [and] facts are rarely at the heart of historical disputes." Identity movements are often fueled by "chosen glories" and "chosen traumas," the latter of which bequeath "unfinished psychological tasks... to future generations" (Vamik Volkan). Defeat in 1945 spurred reimagination of Japan's history. In Tōhoku, intellectuals discovered "chosen glory" in a distinct, even independent, regional history and culture. Trauma was found in historical maltreatment by the Japanese "center(s)," and fused with rejection of Japan's imperial past as the Northeast was recuperated as a source of political and cultural legitimacy for the postwar. Though it began as an intellectual movement, postwar Tōhoku studies has spawned a wider social movement to validate regional identity, from the rehabilitation of "Noble Savage" antiheroes who fought against Japan to the glorification of rice-less cultural identity in popular cultural forms. The movement to see Tōhoku as "another Japan" was co-opted nearly in toto into popular and academic neo-Nihonjinron (discourses of Japaneseness) of the 1990s, but 3/11 and its aftermath have once again provided the emotional fuel for a regional reevaluation in sharp opposition to the national.

**Keywords:** collective identity, postwar, Traumas, Tōhoku Studies, movement

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\*Speaker