

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with three topics that are related to the re-emergence of volunteerism in Japan after the 1995 Kobe earthquake. The first topic is in the form of a “veteran’s field story”. It will provide readers with a sense of what is foreseeable and what is controllable during the emergency response period. The second topic is how the earthquake literally changed the way people constructed the reality of the society. Faced with the sudden emergence of an extreme number of volunteers, the mass media coined the term “Year One of Volunteerism”. It could be argued, however, that 1995 was not the “Year One”, but more accurately a “Renaissance” of volunteerism in Japanese society. The third topic is an attempt to provide an historic account of the socio-economic contexts in which the earthquake galvanized the transformation of Japan into a country empowered by a civil society. This paper aims to convey that although Japan is a non-Judeo-Christian nation, it nevertheless shares the common language of civil society, active citizenship and community involvement in preparation for the next millennium.