

# **Using Web Technologies to Share Japanese Official Documents Beyond Borders**

## **JACAR's Efforts to Provide English Metadata in Translation**

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# 1. Reflections on successes of JACAR offering documents to users internationally

August 14, 2015 : A statement on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

August 06, 2015 : A report by the Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan's Role and World Order in the 21st Century



[Photo from the website of Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet](#)

**This report indicates a variety of points which include...**

- Their evaluation of JACAR
- A necessity of upgrading JACAR

# 1. Reflections on successes of JACAR offering documents to users internationally

4. How did Japan pursue reconciliation with China, the Republic of Korea and other Asian countries in the 70 years after the war?

(1) 70 Years of Reconciliation with China

(c) Evaluation of the 70 Years of Reconciliation with China

**----- The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, established under the initiative (\*), is still widely utilized by researchers of both countries who wish to deepen their understanding of history. -----**

(\*) Note: This is the “Peace, Friendship, and Exchange Initiative” carried out by the Murayama administration on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war.

# 1. Reflections on successes of JACAR offering documents to users internationally

6. What are the specific measures that Japan should take on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II?
  - (1) “Deepening the Understanding of History”
  - (c) Upgrading Japan Center for Asian Historical Records

**The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, managed by the National Archives of Japan, is held in high esteem not only domestically but also by academics from other Asian countries. However, materials currently handled are limited to those from the periods prior to World War II. Thus, it is also necessary to collect and make public materials from the post-war years.”**

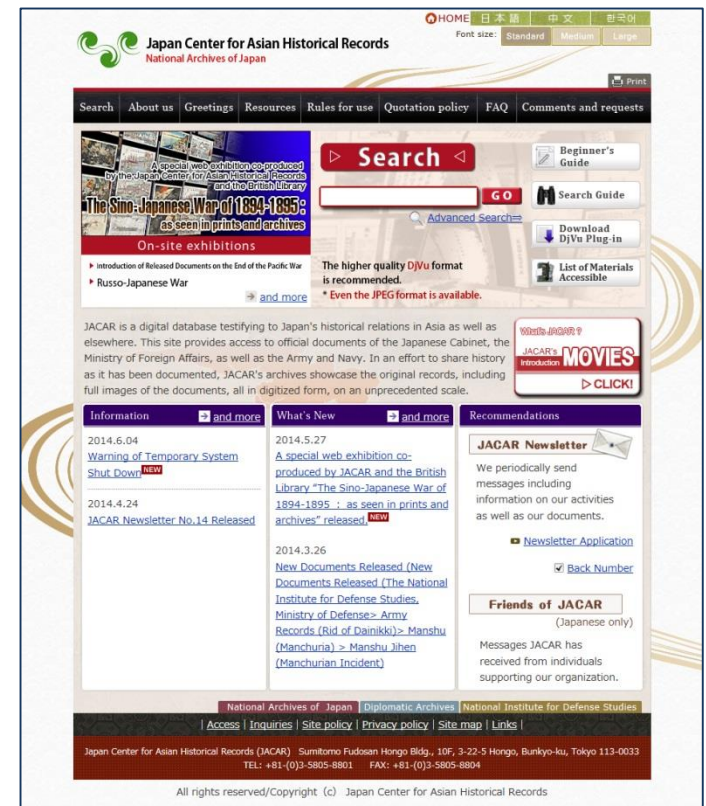
## 2. Development and situation of JACAR

August 31, 1994 : A statement of Prime Minister Murayama titled the “Peace, Friendship, and Exchange Initiative”

November 30, 2001 : JACAR established

### Situation of JACAR

- More than 29 million digital images
- Websites in Japanese (main), English, Chinese and Korean.
- Metadata of the English version for the search are fairly less than those of Japanese



JACAR Website  
<English Version>



## 2. Development and situation of JACAR

Special web exhibitions on subjects of interest to our users have largely been released in both Japanese and English.

**A joint exhibit held with the British Library “The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: as seen in prints and archives”**

- The first exhibit opened to the public simultaneously in Japanese and English.



The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895:  
as seen in prints and archives

## 2. Development and situation of JACAR

JACAR Newsletter (since January, 2011)

- The Japanese and English versions have been issued simultaneously.



Answers to telephone, snail mail, and e-mail inquiries from overseas



### 3. Purpose of the establishment of JACAR

The mission of JACAR is offering its records for the use of the people in and outside of Japan.

- It supplies a foundation for debate concerning the interpretation of history.
- We need to have the vision such as the historical records are common property of humanity.

----- Concerning the history between Japan and Asian neighboring nations and areas, (JACAR's) purpose is to make easier the use of the documents possessed by the Japanese government for Japanese and for other relating people, as well as to enhance the mutual understanding with these (neighboring) countries.-----

- The Cabinet Decision of the Government of Japan on November 30, 1999  
“Promotion of the Project to Service Asian Historical Records”



## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

- (1) Search function in English and establishment of the “Data Verification Committee”

The documents released by JACAR are ...

- The official documents of the Japanese government
- Mainly written in Japanese
- Some diplomatic documents contain certain amount of foreign language pages

**How offer the documents in Japanese for the use of non-Japanese people?**

## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

- (1) Search function in English and establishment of the “Data Verification Committee”

Translation of all the texts into English is almost impossible.

- i) Certain difference of nuance between the source text and target language for translation
- ii) Indispensability of strict academic verification of the translation
- iii) Difficulty to guarantee the exactitude of the huge amount of the translated texts
- iv) Need of huge amount of financial and personnel resources

**This measure is not realistic at this time.**

## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

- (1) Search function in English and establishment of the “Data Verification Committee”

**JACAR started to translate basic document information with metadata, including title and author.**

November, 2001 : Only searches in Japanese were available.

June, 2002 : English search functions were available.

- Translated metadata allowed us to begin running searches.

## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

- (1) Search function in English and establishment of the “Data Verification Committee”

Since 2003, JACAR established the “Data Verification Committee”

- 6 to 7 experts in the fields of international politics, history of diplomacy, military history, and others
- The main mission is to verify provisionally translated English terms
- Often discusses how to translate official military ranks and other matters in newly translated metadata
- The goal is to guarantee the exactitude, objectivity and credibility of English terms in the JACAR database

**A file of confirmed term translations including about 17,000 words are accumulated.**

## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

### (2) Some points to be considered on translation of information into English

For a translation ...

- It is surely needed to select the English terms that most fit the original language's nuance.
- It is not always easy to encounter a word whose meaning is completely the same with original Japanese.

**It is inevitable to meet with some certain difference of nuance between original and translation.**

## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

- (2) Some points to be considered on translation of information into English

The 2 points on the process of translation of metadata:

**i) Select English words that are academically verified.**

- Accountability is needed in case that original words have some subtle and tacit political.
- We need to be careful to not abuse the use of obscure academic words that will be unfamiliar for many non-specialists.

**ii) Select English words familiar to English speaking people.**

- Some familiar translated words may cause international dispute or political confusion when they lack an academic basis in translation.

## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

- (2) Some points to be considered on translation of information into English

The Data Verification Committee discusses and studies both of these two points thoroughly.

**Another point is “What is needed for the search to run well in English is not a translation of sentences or paragraphs, but rather an exact and credible translation of keywords”.**



## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

- (2) Some points to be considered on translation of information into English

An example of efforts on translation considering these points.

Reference Code	C13010320800
Title (Japanese)	東北陸軍被服廠（含製革廠）善後処理要録 関東軍参謀部
Title (English Translation)	Main procedures for disposal of <b>Northeast China Army</b> Clothing Depot (including Leather Manufacturing Factory) Depot <b>Kanto-Gun (Kwantung Army) Staff Office</b>

## 4. Efforts of JACAR to promote its database usage outside of Japan

### (2) Some points to be considered on translation of information into English

Established translations were also used for English versions of web exhibitions.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895:  
as seen in prints and archives

- Created in English through consultation with the British Library



A Window into the Early Showa Period  
- *Shashin Shuho*: Weekly Photographical  
Journal, 1938-1945 -

## 5. Challenges and Perspective

The accumulation of these established translated English terms has been progressively advancing.

- **JACAR is working to unify terms and to improve translations of organizations and ranks.**

There was an initiative to compile a complete list of the established translated terms for the convenience of research and study.

- It is not complete yet because of the huge volume of information and terms to be translated and the heavy burden of finance and persons to do so.

## 5. Challenges and Perspective

### Special web exhibition “End of War on Official Documents, the Records of Demobilization and Repatriation”

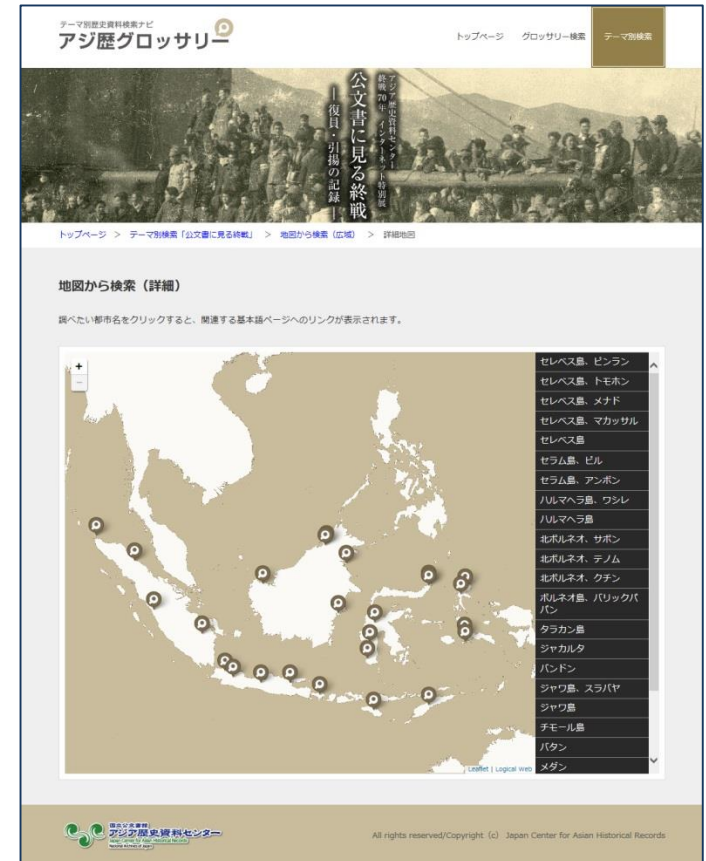
- Introducing documents concerning the end of WWII and its subsequent soldier demobilization and the repatriation of Japanese nationals after August 1945.



- End of War on Official Documents
- The Records of Demobilization and Repatriation -

## 5. Challenges and Perspective

- Users can search documents not only with the ordinary search function but also through maps, timelines, and charts on organizations.
- This kind of feature was motivated by users who have asked for help to trace the movement of their conscripted family members, particularly grandparents, at the end of the war.



End of War on Official Documents

- The Records of Demobilization and Repatriation -

## 5. Challenges and Perspective

- For the English version, JACAR is planning to translate all the terms such as troops and organizations concerned which are already compiled in the Japanese version.
- **They will be part of a comprehensive list of English terms relating to demobilization and repatriation, and so they will be useful for Anglophones.**



- End of War on Official Documents
- The Records of Demobilization and Repatriation -

## 5. Challenges and Perspective

JACAR would like to continue to take measures to improve the accessibility of our database.

**It will help JACAR carry out its mission of providing an intellectual tool for passing on and learning from our historical legacy.**



# Thank you for your attention