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JACAR Newsletter Number.2 (March 29, 2011)

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Statement by the Director-General: JACAR's Response to the Earthquakes and Tsunami Disaster in Japan

# ♦From Editors

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♦ Statement by the Director General

Dear subscribers,

On March 11, an unexpected disaster occurred – massive earthquakes, a tsunami, and then a nuclear crisis. I would like to express my most heartfelt sympathy for the victims and people of Tohoku district suffering yet trying to overcome this challenging situation.

Warmest regards,

Kenichiro HIRANO, Director-General of Japan Center for Asian Historical Records

There are many JACAR users in the Tohoku region as well as in Sendai who teach and study history through JACAR's resources. While we had been worried about them, we were informed recently that all but one person is safe. I hope they will take good care of themselves and do their best at the school designated as an evacuation site.

<JACAR's Server was Undamaged>

Let us please confirm once again that everyone is safe.

Our office located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of a building in central Tokyo's Hirakawacho ward swayed wildly for a long time. Fortunately, all staff members safely escaped outside. Another piece of good news was that our server, the lifeline of our digital archives, kept working even after the great earthquake and during the consequent earthquakes. We have been able to continue operating.

# <International, Lateral Bonds >

We appreciated your emails from overseas saying this tragedy is felt by all of mankind. Some say Japan is no longer internationally isolated.

Let me share my personal experience. The day after the earthquake, I got an SOS email from a Taiwanese researcher. She said that an American mother of her friend whose son teaches at a high school in Osaki City is very anxious in Washington D.C. because she only received a short text message from him right after the earthquake and had not been able to again contact him. I searched for him though Google's Person Finder service and left a message asking him to call his mother. It turned out he could not charge his battery. He had been taking care of students who remained in the school. They suffered from power outages as well as a lack of water, food and medicine. I soon forwarded the message to an emergency office in Sendai. Also I could relieve his mother by informing her that the tsunami would not reach Osaki City, more than 30 km from the coast. Thus, even though I am elderly and nearly gave up in assisting those in the disaster area, I could lend a hand through my daily use of email communication.

## <Historical, Vertical Bonds>

On the JACAR website, I searched for "Kanto Dai Shinsai," the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. The search results related to laws such as the one proclaimed on September 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1923 in the Emperor's original script, since JACAR's dictionary specifies 'Kaigen-rei' or martial law as one of the keywords. You can refer to these historical records to learn how the government acts in emergencies as well as to identify problems in the Japanese manner of decision-making and the characteristics of Japanese organizations. Therefore, I believe that the JACAR will help facilitate an essential inquiry into the relationship between natural disasters and official documents.

Another thing that can be pointed out in looking at historical comparisons is that the Japan disaster revealed the importance of following two factors: electric power and computers. We realized how much highly developed modern societies rely on them. If you allow me to comment on a small bit of luck we had at JACAR, I suggest that computer servers be installed on solid floors so that earthquake and flood would not damage them. Also prepare a spare power supply just in case. I believe 'fail-safe' technologies have to be further pursued as much as possible.

### < JACAR's Mission>

More than ever, I feel that JACAR, as a digital archive, stands at the intersection of lateral, international relations and vertical, historical relations. We will continue our efforts to contribute to you who wish to learn from history.

♦From editors:

\*You are receiving this email because you had given your mail address to JACAR staff. Next issue will be delivered in the middle of July, 2011. If you wish to unsubscribe yourself from our email notification list, you may do so here: <a href="mailto:news@jacar.go.jp">news@jacar.go.jp</a>

\*\*JACAR is striving to promote the use of digital resources and to enhance our public service. If you have any suggestions or comments, please let us know: <a href="mailto:enquire@jacar.go.jp">enquire@jacar.go.jp</a>

\*\*\* JACAR provides home access to digitalized documents dating from the Meiji era through 1945. You can access the document search system through here: <u>http://www.jacar.go.jp/</u>

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