

Secure, Preserve, and Utilise Our Documentary Heritage: NAJ's Endeavours towards the Records and Archives Damaged by and Relating to Natural Disasters in Japan (1/2)

National Archives of Japan
2nd Global Policy Forum
2021.9.21-22

1. Rescue operations for records damaged by natural disasters

Dissemination of knowledge and skills

National Archives of Japan (NAJ) provides advice and practical guidance on the rescue of public records held by local governments that have been affected, while preparing for the occurrence of water damage caused by severe natural disasters.

Tohoku Earthquake occurred on March 11, 2011 caused extensive damage to the public records of many local governments. Upon the requests of the local governments affected by the disaster, NAJ implemented the "Restoration Project for Damaged Official Documents", which mainly supports the development of human resources who can clean, dry out, and restore public records damaged by the Tsunami. It enabled to enhance the environment which immediately conduct the rescue operations for public records in the affected local governments.

In March 2013, we prepared and publicized "Manual for the restoration of Damaged Public Records by the National Archives of Japan" which organizes basic knowledge and know-how relating to restoring damaged public records, and widely share in preparation for the future.

In Japan, public records have been damaged in various places, not only by earthquakes but also by typhoons and heavy rains. Therefore, we provide practical instructions and advice on how to clean and dry out public records to the personnel of local governments, which have been severely affected by a river flood.

NAJ strives to promote disseminating of knowledge and skills required to rescue records damaged by natural disasters.



Training session in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture
(January-March, 2012)



Training session in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture
(April, 2012)



Trainings in Joso City, Ibaraki Prefecture (December 2015)



~ International engagement in disaster preparedness ~

We are sharing the outcomes of our activities with international archival community.

At the ICA (International Council on Archives) Congress in Brisbane (August 2012), we provided a workshop on traditional Japanese methods of restoring the materials damaged by tsunami. After the Congress, as requested, we also provided another workshop for the members of Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM), an expert organization of restoration.

At the ICA Congress in Seoul (September 2016), we gave a lecture on the latest restoration techniques in Japan under the theme of "Restoration of Disaster-affected Documents," and conducted a demonstration and workshop for handling materials damaged by water.



Workshop at the ICA Congress in Brisbane (August 2012)



Workshop at the ICA Congress in Seoul (September 2016)



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2. Permanent preservation of records relating to "disasters and emergencies"

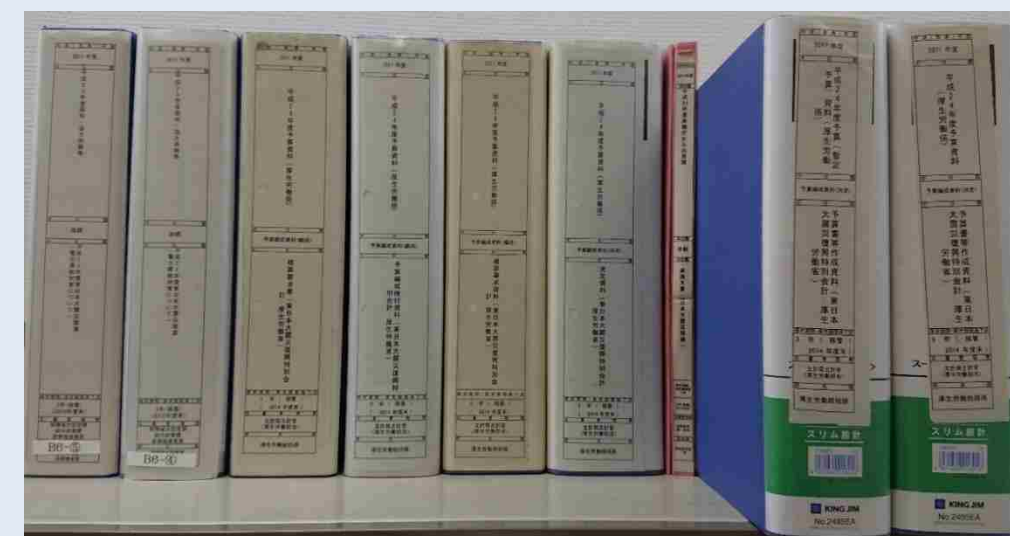
Professional and technical advice (appraisal and selection to administrative agencies) and acquisition

✓ In order for administrative agencies to manage administrative documents appropriately, which will become the documentary heritage in the future, we provide advice on the development of selection criteria for records, and its appropriate application. Administrative documents will be transferred after the expiration of a retention period and permanently preserved after taking the measures required.

✓ Preservation of disaster records:

Regarding records of the large-scale disasters that have had significant social impact, the selection criteria for preservation as documentary heritage is set in order to inherit lessons learned from the experience of disasters the government handled as a whole.

• In response to the Tohoku Earthquake occurred in March 2011, the NAJ issued the notice to administrative agencies together with the Cabinet Office in June 2012. In the notice, we showed the basic concept of the transfer of records relating the disaster, and strive to prevent accidental destruction and to ensure the records to be transferred. Since then, through training programs, we continue to provide supports for managing and securing disaster-related records, and to inform the specific selection criteria for the relevant administrative records and the importance of transfer to the NAJ.



▲ Records relating to the Tohoku Earthquake, permanently preserved at the NAJ

• In March 2020, with the global spread of COVID-19, the Cabinet Office designated it as the "Historical Emergency Situation" in the management of administrative records, which requires to be documented and shared as a nation and society. As a result, it has informed that the related records shall be, in principle, transferred to the NAJ after the expiration of a retention period, by showing examples of records which ought to be created.



▲ Training for the personnel of administrative agencies

Preserve

3. Promotion of the public access of records relating to "disasters and emergencies"

Exhibitions and Web Contents

✓ We promote the public access by introducing our holdings that documented how humans have been coexisting with disasters since the old days.



Utilise

(Left) Special Website of the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR)

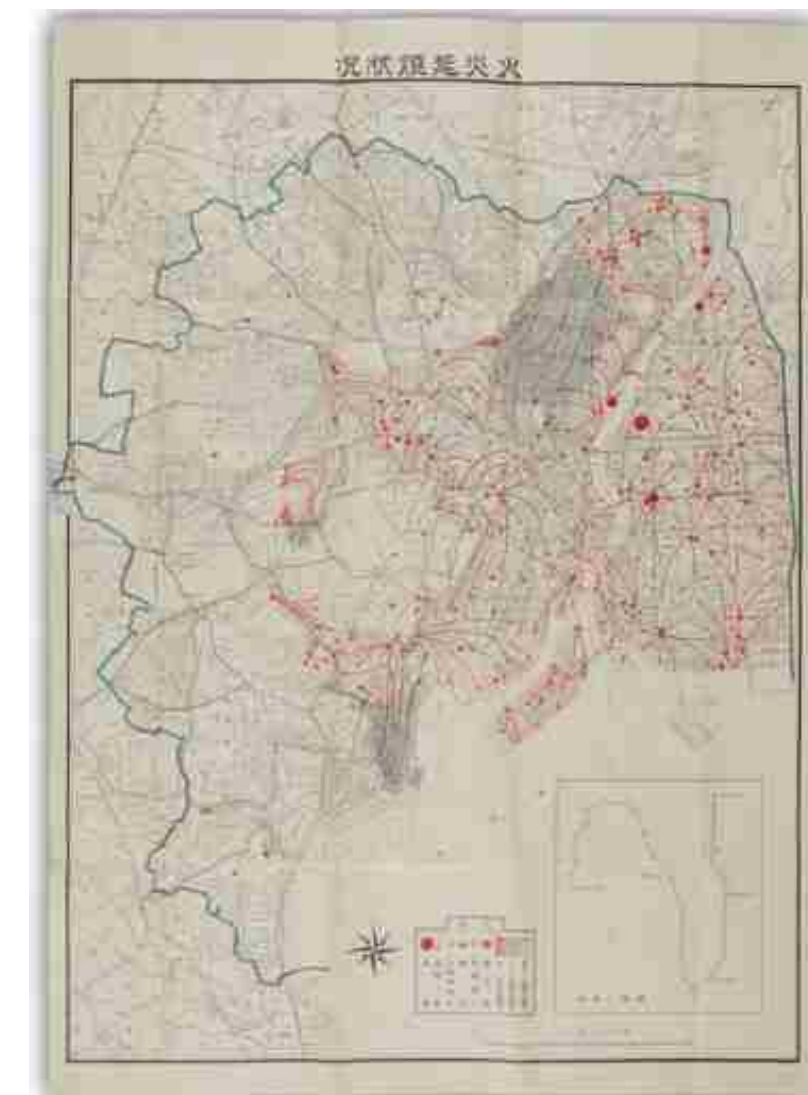
(Right) Photo of earthquake disasters in Sanriku District: March 1933 (Police Affairs Bureau, Home Ministry), Ref. A04010508600 (held by National Archives of Japan: Ref. 平9警察00665100)

▲ Some of the materials relating to the earthquakes and reconstruction were introduced as web contents, created by Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR)*, titled Special Collection: "Disasters and Resiliency: as seen in official documents" (published since June 2011)

▶ From September to October 2015, NAJ held the Autumn Special Exhibition "Learning from Disasters: From the Meiji Era to Modern Times" and reviewed Japanese disaster management history through materials relating to disasters and their rescue measures and reconstruction.



Poster of the exhibition "Learning from Disasters: From the Meiji Era to Modern Times"



Great Kanto Earthquake Record 1925 (Metropolitan Police Department), held by National Archives of Japan: Ref. 国史公文書館 369-0026

*Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR): Established in 2001 as a subsidiary institution of the NAJ. It is a digital archive that provides Asian historical records preserved by the 3 government archives including the NAJ via the Internet.