

## CULTURE

# Enter Keyword

**Matsuoka Tadaaki** describes the remarkable ongoing efforts in Japan to digitize ancient texts and other historical materials.

**M**ore and more historical texts in Japan are being converted to digital format, enabling a deepening and broadening of historical scholarship for researchers who may otherwise be unable to view the documents in question.

In November 2006, the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR), an institution of the National Archives of Japan that is working on converting modern-day Japanese texts into digital format and making them available over the Internet, celebrated its fifth anniversary. Currently, JACAR has some 12.6 million images available online, which probably makes it the world's leading database of digital images. It takes the original documents held in the collections of three institutions—the National Archives of Japan, the Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and the National Institute for Defense Studies—and first puts them page-by-page onto microfilm before converting these images into digital format. Ultimately, JACAR will have digitized some 30 million images.

JACAR had its beginnings in a speech by Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi in 1994. In this speech, the then prime minister expressed regret over Japan's invasion of its Asian neighbors during the war and over the hardship caused as a result, also promising to establish an organization that would be dedicated to investigating and making public the historical facts. After many twists and turns, JACAR was eventually established in November 2001 as an information center that would be attached to the National Archives of Japan and that would make resources held by the three aforementioned institutions available in digital format.

Naturally, documents can be searched for using keyword searches, with hierarchical searches and cross-searching across all three institutions possible as well. Even without knowing the keyword, you can use the hierarchical search functions to search for resources. For example, by first selecting the National Archives of Japan, and then "Cabinet," "Sumitsu-in,

Privy Council Documents," and then "Council member records," you can work through the hierarchy of information to view documents. Using these documents, you can see the debate that went into deciding on the Imperial House Law, for example, which specifies the Emperor's successor.

In the Sumitsu-in, Privy Council (1888–1946) Documents, for example, there is record of the entry made that specified that the Emperor's successor must be a male. Although we do not know who made this entry, you can really feel the power that is inherent only in the original source document.

At present, JACAR has some special exhibitions on its website, such as its "U.S.-Japan War Talks" exhibition, where public documents have been used to trace the lead-up to the start of the war between the United States and Japan. Included here are some historical facts that have not been fully brought to light to date, with the exhibition providing some information that is an absolute must-see for researchers in the field.

## Ennin's Diary

However, the historical materials available for viewing online are not just limited to modern-day documents. The oldest document on record dates back to the middle of the ninth century and is a copy of the manuscript entitled "Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law," written by Ennin (794–864 CE), a Tendai-sect Buddhist monk who traveled to China with the Japanese envoy to China and who traveled on foot around Tang-Dynasty China over a period of more than a decade. This manuscript was made publicly available online in June this year.

It took some five years to make this manuscript available to the public. The original copy of Ennin's Diary had already been lost. The whereabouts of most of the copies of the manuscript were also unknown, with only one copy remaining; that handed down to Kanchi-in, To-ji during the Muromachi period (1338–1573) (a national treasure

now held in a personal collection). The Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library) made a copy of the manuscript and published a facsimile edition of the work in 1926, and it is this that was used for conversion to digital format.

