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THE EXPLOITATION OF JAPANESE DOCUMENTS

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Section I. INTRODUCTION

1. JAPANESE DOCUMENTS AS A SOURCE OF INTELLIGENCE

a. General

In the war against JAPAN relatively few prisoners have been taken. However, the quantity of captured documents of military importance has steadily increased. Their numbers have grown as the Allied forces have turned the tide and progressed from outlying areas recently occupied by the JAPANESE to permanent bases long under the enemy's control. At KOKODA 268 documents were captured, at BUNA 1349, at LAE 1562, while at SAIPAN the figure reached 27 tons. Some indication of the total number of documents involved is given by the fact that ATIS, SWPA in September 1944 held more than 200,000 captured documents.

b. Percentages of Value

The experience of two years has indicated that these documents possess intelligence value in approximately the following proportions: 3½ per cent have immediate operational value; 16½ per cent have operational value; 40 per cent have general or technical intelligence value; 40 per cent are of no apparent military value.

c. Reliance on Written Record

Documents constitute the normal means of access to the JAPANESE understanding, which comprehends readily only those matters which are written down. It is customary, therefore, to commit every detail of military life and administration to paper without taking the security measures deemed imperative by Western standards. The psychological reasons therefor are as follows:

(1) *Visual*.—Not only in military matters, but in every phase of life, the JAPANESE rely to an extraordinary degree on the written record. This is no accidental dependence, but the necessary consequence of the entire system of national education. From earliest youth children are trained in the recognition of the thousands of ideographs which comprise the JAPANESE language. Every other aspect of education is subordinated to the visual. The average JAPANESE is habituated to the acquisition of knowledge principally through the eye. A stultification of other senses to the sense of sight results. Reliance on the written record is the natural consequence of this visual specialization. The following paraphrase of an instruction by a local commander shows the concern of JAPANESE authorities in this respect: "When withdrawal is necessary, every effort must be made to prevent orders from being lost, as without them we would be helpless."

(2) *Detail*.—The JAPANESE passion for detail in administration is well instanced by a casualty report captured at LAE. This told of

a soldier at KOKOPO leaving his unit bivouac at 1100 hours, proceeding southeast along the company street for the purpose of gathering firewood and, upon reaching a point 236 yards from the cross road at 1106 hours, being struck upon the head by a coconut which had been dislodged by a gust of wind. He was picked up at 1109 hours, arrived at the Line of Communications Hospital at 1123 hours, was diagnosed as suffering from a skull fracture, and died at 1617 hours that day. Of the same nature is a report of having broken a piece of 1 inch by 2 inches from the blade of an axe, filed by a superior private with his platoon leader at NADZAB, submitted at a time when his unit was surrounded, under constant fire, and in imminent danger of annihilation.

(3) *Homonyms*.—The nature of the spoken JAPANESE language is such as to render it unsuitable for the transmission of precise orders or instructions, particularly if the subject matter concerned is complex or technical. Homonyms are so prevalent that it is often impossible for the JAPANESE themselves to understand a spoken sentence. (See Paragraph 2c below for a fuller explanation of this difficulty). Its meaning becomes clear only after they have seen the ideographs by which the spoken words are represented. To insure the full and accurate comprehension of military instructions, it has, therefore, become necessary to commit an extraordinarily high proportion of communications to writing.

(4) *Security*.—The JAPANESE written language is one of the most difficult in the world (see Paragraph 2 below), amounting almost to a cryptographic system. The JAPANESE military authorities are well aware of this and, in practice, tend to place undue reliance upon the security offered by their language alone. In the earlier campaigns in the South West Pacific Area conventional field security measures appear to have been neglected, possibly upon the assumption that even if the Allied forces did capture JAPANESE documents, they would be unable to translate them.

The JAPANESE Armed Forces consider themselves the born servitors of a heaven-descended emperor. As such they partake of certain god-like qualities which set them above all non-divinely descended races and nations. National activities, and especially wars, are regarded as divinely ordained means of fulfilling their national destiny. As a result, the JAPANESE Army and Navy are portrayed as ever victorious. The national history has, until now, confirmed this theory. Official doctrine, therefore, has no place for such concepts as retreat, defeat or capture. To harbor any of these is to be guilty not only of treason, but also of sacrilege.

Such a creed has direct implications where security is concerned. If victory is divinely decreed and if retreats do not take place, security training is a luxury which can be easily dispensed

with. In practice it has been. The almost total lack of security consciousness displayed by the average JAPANESE prisoner of war is ample evidence of this. Furthermore, recent attempts to enforce a greater degree of security in respect to the safekeeping or disposal of military documents do not appear at this writing to have met with an appreciable degree of success.

d. Reliability of Captured Documents

Captured JAPANESE documents inherently possess a high degree of reliability. In them the enemy is speaking for his own illumination and instruction. Self-interest and efficiency demand that the information contained therein be as accurate and complete as circumstances permit.

Such considerations do not preclude the necessity of assessing every document for failings attributable to error, ignorance or the bias of internal propaganda policy.

No evidence has yet been found to indicate that the JAPANESE deliberately plant faked documents.

2. THE LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY

a. General

Captured JAPANESE documents present linguistic difficulties which constitute the major obstacle to the prompt and efficient exploitation of available information. The following sections provide a brief survey of the written language and some indication of its difficulty and complexity.

b. Ideographs and Syllabaries

Written JAPANESE normally entails the use of some 6,000 CHINESE ideographs called KANJI and a syllabary composed of 73 ideographs, abbreviated and used only phonetically, which are known as KANA. The ideographs comprise the basis of the written language, while the KANA symbols are used to form verbal suffixes, conjunctions and particles. The KANA syllabary, which is discussed in detail in Sub-paragraph (2) below, is set forth as Figure 4. The difference in appearance between ideographs and KANA is illustrated by Figure 1, in which all symbols having small KANA signs written

然、川をせなんだから大事に至らず済んだのであつて、若しも血の氣の多い連中逃がしてなるものと飛び出したら
 どんな事になつたか知れないのであつた。逮捕された三名の取調等で判明した處では、一日反戦記念日のデモがセレッ
 て大衆製造を發見され特に警戒嚴重となつた爲め手も足も出せぬ事になり、窮餘の一策當局の意表外に出で日會襲撃を
 敢行したもので、最近には排日商賣人や主義者等全く相手にされない様になつたので、何か一嚇ぎして小使にありつかん
 せしたものであつた。大して根底あるものではなかつたらしいとも云はれるが、人間愈々食へぬとなればどんな事でもや
 るのだから時節柄相應警戒して居る必要はあらうと思ふのである。要するに食詰者の捨鉢的盲動に過ぎないから之をキ
 ヲカケに排日運動が各地に傳波するなんて事は斷じてないだらうと思ふのである。信するから、詰らぬ取越苦勞等すると物笑ひの種に
 なる。何にしても今は日本品でなければ賣る物がないのである。ボイコットの爲めにどれ程ひどい打撃を受けたかを思
 ひ出せば如何な華僑も北支の情勢や南京政府の態度を幾らたき立てた處で、再びボイコットや排日熱を煽らうとする如
 き愚を繰返さんとする者はないであらうと思ふのである。商賣上の損は判つておても昔は竹かされて仕方なく排日資金
 を嫌々絞られてゐたのだが、昨今はもうそんな事を云つて來ても相手にする必要もなければ、金もなくなつて仕舞ふた
 のだ、だから何かと問題を見付けては食つてゐた排日屋や主義者はどうにも食つて行く事が出来ない様になつて仕舞ふ
 た性質の悪いハイナム人には判らぬながら共産主義等を標榜して居る者もあるかも知れない、然し警戒は愈々嚴重になる。
 何處からも資金が出ぬとなれば當然消滅せざるを得ぬのである。デカ／＼新聞に書立てられ、ばそれだけ多く本部から
 金が澤山出ぬのだと誠にやかに云ふ者もあるが、果して此處等の黨員と稱しつゝある者が實際コミンテルン本部と連
 絡があるかは此だ疑はしいのである。恐らく飲の種に共産黨だなんて竹かして居るだけで主義も何もさつ張り判らない連
 中に過ぎないだらうと思ふのだ。随つて支那人の事だから郷黨的に各地と相應連絡はあらうが、目的が日本人でなくし
 て金持ちの華僑なんだから再び半島に對日熱が煽られる様な事があつたら大變だと杞憂する必要はないに極つて居る。

Figure 1. Text taken from JAPANESE book, illustrating the distinction between ideographs and KANA.

SŌSHO	GYŌSHO	KAISHO	REISHO	SHŌTEN
教 騎 皇 鳥 負 良 知 食 得 問	散 騎 皇 鳥 負 良 知 食 得 問	散 騎 皇 鳥 負 良 知 食 得 問	散 騎 皇 鳥 負 良 知 食 得 問	散 騎 皇 鳥 負 良 知 食 得 問

Figure 2. Five ways of writing ten ideographs. Note particularly the great difference between the SHŌTEN, KAISHO and SŌSHO forms of the same ideograph, and the great similarity between the SŌSHO forms of different ideographs, the KAISHO forms of which bear no resemblance to one another. This similarity is frequently so close, that the SŌSHO form of one character can only be distinguished from SŌSHO forms of entirely different characters by context.

to their right are KANJI. The remainder of the text is written in KANA. KANA written beside an ideograph is called FURIGANA. It indicates the proper phonetic reading of the ideograph concerned, and is commonly used in newspapers and magazines to enable the average poorly educated JAPANESE, who knows relatively few ideographs, to read and understand them without having constant recourse to a dictionary.

(1) *Ideographs.*—(a) *Definition.*—An ideograph is a pictorial representation of an idea, but the exact form and limitations of the "idea" are often left vague. The same ideograph may be used to represent the idea in a verbal form, either active or passive, or as a noun, singular or plural, or as an adjective or an adverb. When in the 7th century A.D. the JAPANESE adopted the CHINESE written language, they took over at least one CHINESE pronunciation for each ideograph. To this they added various native JAPANESE pronunciations. As a result each ideograph has come to have several possible pronunciations, depending on the context in which it is used. In some cases these total as many as twenty-five.

(b) *Styles.*—There are three major styles in which all ideographs are written, known as KAISHO, GYŌSHO and SŌSHO. The distinction resides in the degree of cursiveness with which they are written.

KAISHO is a block style of writing corresponding to hand lettering and has a printed and written form. It is by far the most legible of the three forms and occurs in about 30 per cent of captured documents. It is usually encountered in documents originating at or above the battalion

level, in written form, and in printed form in magazines, newspapers, manuals, etc.

GYŪSHO, corresponding to handwritten script, is the considerably more cursive and abbreviated style of writing common to signal messages, company or platoon orders, letters and some diaries. Approximately 50 per cent of documents captured to date in this theatre have been written in this form.

SŌSHO is a cursive script so abbreviated and so difficult that it can be understood by only the most skilled translators. Relatively few JAPANESE can read it. It is a form used in hurried notes on orders or signals; in personal diaries and in letters. So far documents written in SŌSHO have comprised about 20 per cent of the total captured in this theatre and have yielded an unusually high proportion of information of immediate tactical value.

The military translator is apt to encounter two further minor styles of writing, SHŌTEN and REISHO. The first of these was current in CHINA more than two thousand years ago during the CHIN dynasty. It is still used in some seals and formal literary and religious writings. The second closely resembles KAISHO and is also encountered in formal literature.

For purposes of comparison the above-mentioned five forms of ten ideographs have been set forth in parallel text in Figure 2.

The difference between the common styles—KAISHO, GYŌSHO and SŌSHO—as they actually appear in a running text is further exemplified by Figure 3, which sets forth an identical text written in each of these three styles.

KAISHO	GYŌSHO	SŌSHO
<p>小舞隊ハ十三日〇四〇〇時ニ敵ノ トル川陣地左翼ニ奇襲セントス 月岡中佐</p>	<p>小舞隊ハ十三日〇四〇〇時ニ敵ノ トル川陣地左翼ニ奇襲セントス 月岡中佐</p>	<p>小舞隊ハ十三日〇四〇〇時ニ敵ノ トル川陣地左翼ニ奇襲セントス 月岡中佐</p>

Figure 3. Identical text written in KAISHO, GYŌSHO and SŌSHO styles. Text reads: "The KOMAI Unit will launch a surprise attack on the left flank of the enemy's TOR River positions at 0400 hours on the 13th. Commander TSUKIOKA." The selection has been written with pen rather than brush since the majority of handwritten captured documents are done with pen.

A competent translator must know the various readings and meanings of approximately 4,000 distinct ideographs in at least their KAISHO and GYOSHU forms.

(2) *KANA*.—(a) *Syllabary*.—KANA is a syllabary by means of which the JAPANESE can reproduce phonetically the 73 sounds occurring in the language. It is noteworthy that the sound "l" does not figure among these. The various pronunciations or readings of all ideographs may be written in KANA, and often are when the writer is unable to reproduce the ideograph itself. Suffixes which constitute the various inflections of the JAPANESE verb are also written in KANA, as are the majority of foreign words which have been adopted into the language.

(b) *Styles*.—The KANA syllabary may be written in five distinct styles. The military translator, however, is apt to encounter only KATAKANA, HIRAGANA and HENTAIGANA. KATAKANA is an angular script commonly used in official documents. HIRAGANA is a considerably more cursive form which is commonly used in letters and notes. The syllabary written in both of these forms is set forth as Figure 4. The HENTAIGANA syllabary is written by means of the original ideographs from which the preceding forms were derived. It is extremely difficult and seldom encountered.

バ	バ	ダ	ザ	ガ	ワ	ラ	ヤ	マ	ハ	ナ	タ	サ	カ	ア
ば	ば	だ	ざ	が	わ	ら	や	ま	は	な	た	さ	か	あ
pa	ba	da	za	ga	wa	ra	ya	ma	ha	na	ta	sa	ka	a
ビ	ビ	ヂ	ジ	ギ	キ	リ	イ	ミ	ヒ	ニ	チ	シ	キ	イ
び	び	ぢ	じ	ぎ	き	り	い	み	ひ	に	ち	し	き	い
pi	bi	ji	ji	gi	(w)ri	(y)i	mi	hi	ni	chi	shi	ki	i	
ブ	ブ	ヅ	ズ	グ	ウ	ル	ユ	ム	フ	ヌ	ツ	ス	ク	ウ
ぶ	ぶ	づ	ず	ぐ	う	る	ゆ	む	ふ	ぬ	つ	す	く	う
pu	bu	zu	zu	gu	(w)u	ru	yu	mu	fu	nu	tsu	su	ku	u
ヘ	ヘ	テ	ゼ	ゲ	エ	レ	エ	メ	ヘ	ネ	テ	セ	ケ	エ
へ	へ	て	ぜ	げ	え	れ	え	め	へ	ね	て	せ	け	え
pe	be	de	ze	ge	(w)e	re	(y)e	me	he	ne	te	se	ke	e
ホ	ホ	ド	ゾ	ゴ	ヲ	ロ	ヨ	モ	ホ	ノ	ト	ソ	コ	オ
ほ	ほ	ど	ぞ	ご	を	ろ	よ	も	ほ	の	と	そ	こ	お
po	bo	do	zo	go	(w)o	ro	yo	mo	ho	no	to	so	ko	o

シ (Kata-kana), し (Hira-gana) n (end of syllable).

Figure 4. KATAKANA and HIRAGANA forms of the syllabary. KATAKANA forms are above the HIRAGANA.

c. Homonyms

A further element of confusion is added by the prevalence of homonyms in JAPANESE. Where ideographs are used this difficulty is not present, but in documents such as signal messages, which are written completely in KANA, possibilities of error are present in an acute degree. For example, a single verb such as "KAKARU" has as many as twenty-two distinct meanings. The word "TO" has twenty-five possible meanings as diverse as: "and," "if," "when," "a door," "a party or gang," "a grindstone," "a

way," "a fence," "justice," "a sword," "a flowering stalk," "a lamp," "a tube" or "a grade." Instances of this sort are extremely common in JAPANESE.

d. Style and Terminology

(1) *Style*.—Complexities of style add to the translator's problems. Written JAPANESE is a highly formalized language with innumerable conventions and traditions which rigidly determine the style of expression to be adopted in a given situation. These styles are numerous and so widely variant in structure that a person able to read a newspaper with ease will be completely unable to understand many literary, religious or professional works, or even letters written in the conventional epistolary style. The more abstruse forms are not usually encountered, but formal speeches by commanders, personal letters and the reports of some meetings do raise very considerable difficulties of style with which a competent translator must be able to cope.

(2) *Thought Pattern*.—All persons dealing with JAPANESE sources must also be prepared to make adequate allowance for the manner in which the JAPANESE pattern of thought, in itself utterly foreign to Western concepts, is expressed in writing. It is often extremely difficult to put an idea, reasonably clear in the JAPANESE original, into accurate and precise ENGLISH. Paraphrase is a necessity, but the greatest care must be exercised to insure accuracy. The scope of this difficulty is instanced by Figure 5.

(3) *Terminology*.—The JAPANESE flair for extravagant terminology provides still further opportunity for ambiguity. Therefore, too-literal adherence to the dictionary meanings of some JAPANESE words must be avoided. The activities of their own forces are sometimes described in misleading terms. For example a JAPANESE unit seldom retreats, it "changes the direction of the advance"; a JAPANESE plane is rarely shot down in combat, rather is it "self-exploded." Similarly, whatever the scope of the JAPANESE victory, or sometimes defeat, Allied forces are usually "stricken and annihilated."

e. The Problem of ROMANIZATION

(1) *Unsuccessful Attempts*.—KANJI and KANA when transliterated into ROMAN letters are known as ROMAJI. The JAPANESE have tried unsuccessfully for thirty years to substitute ROMAJI for KANJI and KANA. Several systems governing the transliteration of terms into ROMAJI do exist, the most common of which are known as the HEPBURN and KOKUTAI Systems. The HEPBURN system was devised primarily for the use of foreigners and reproduces the JAPANESE spoken sounds as closely as possible. For example, it reproduces the KANA symbols シ, チ and ツ as SHI, CHI and TSU respectively. The KOKUTAI system was intended primarily for JAPANESE use and attached relatively arbitrary ROMAJI to certain KANA symbols for the sake of uniformity. According to this system the ROMAJI for シ, チ and ツ are SI, TI and TU respectively, although a JAPANESE in pronouncing these will perforce say SHI, CHI and TSU.

(2) *Difficulties of Transliteration*.—As long as the translator is dealing with ROMAJI versions of JAPANESE terms, he is confronted with only the usual difficulties. The situation is far

<p>此 頃 ニ 到リマシテ 佛教 Kono goro ni itarimashite, Bukkyō This period at having-arrived, Buddhism</p> <p>ト 申ス モノ ハ 唯 下等 to mosu mono wa, tada katō that (they) say thing as-for, merely low-</p> <p>人 民 ノ 信ジル 處 ト ナツ jinmin no shinjiru tokoro to nat - class-people's believing place that having-</p> <p>テ 中 等 以 上 デ te, chūtō ijō de become, middle-class thence-upwards in</p> <p>ハ 其ノ 道 理 ヲ 辨ヘ テル wa sono dōri wo wakimae-teru as-for, its reason (accus.) discerning-are</p> <p>人 ハ 少 ナク 宗 門 ト hito wa sukunaku; shūmon to people (nom.) being-few, religion that</p> <p>言ヘバ 葬 式 ノ 時 バカリ ニ ieba, sōshiki no toki bakari ni if-one-says, funeral-rite's time only in</p> <p>用イル 事 ノ 様 ニ 思イマス mochiiru koto no yō ni omoimasu. employ thing's manner in (they) think.</p>	<p>"At the present day, Buddhism</p> <p>has sunk into being the belief</p> <p>of the lower classes only. Few</p> <p>persons in the middle and upper</p> <p>classes understand its fundamental</p> <p>ideas, most of them fancying that</p> <p>religion is a thing which comes</p> <p>into play only at funeral services."</p>
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Figure 5. Example of JAPANESE word order and construction.

different when one encounters a foreign word which has been phoneticized into JAPANESE. This word can be readily retransliterated into ROMAJI, but the chances are that it will bear but slight resemblance to its original form. Due to the peculiar syllabic structure of KANA, it is impossible for the JAPANESE to reproduce a great majority of the consonant combinations so common in Western languages. Consequently an original English name such as STUART might be variously romanized as SUTSUARUTO, TSUARUTO or TSUATO. In no case can the translator tell whether the original was spelled STUART, STEWART, STUARD or STEWARD. Such variations can be exceedingly serious as well as time-consuming when applied to foreign place-names appearing in despatches or on maps. This problem becomes acute in technical documents, where the JAPANESE often use transliterations of foreign scientific terms, and requires extremely careful study on the part of the translator.

f. Abbreviated Terms

The habit of abbreviation is extremely prevalent throughout JAPAN as well as in the JAPANESE Army. In addition to standard military abbreviations, which will be discussed later, there is another type based on ideographs.

When abbreviating according to this method, the author represents a lengthy term by setting down its key ideographs. Thus in the title 支那總方面軍陸軍部普通命令 i.e., Army Department Routine Order of the Main China Army Group, which is written with thirteen ideographs, the whole is represented by the three underlined ideographs, 陸支普, set forth in a partially inverted order. The application of the same technique is apparent in the abbreviation of 航空輸送 (Air Transport) as 航輸, or 重爆撃機 (Heavy Bomber) as 重爆. Abbreviations of this sort can be very obscure, particularly when applied to abstruse technical terms.

g. Forms of Reproduction

Captured documents are commonly printed, typed, mimeographed, blueprinted; written with pen, pencil, brush; stamped or branded. Some of these techniques add considerably to the translator's normal problems. Printing is clear and ordinarily causes little difficulty, but sometimes unusual and highly stylized CHINESE type is encountered which is hard to read. In mimeographed documents, the stencil is sometimes poorly cut and blurred. Blueprints may not register clearly; while in the case of pen, pencil or brush the handwriting is often almost illegible.