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The Main Contents and Value assess-ment of the Unit 731 Archives Pre-served by the National Archives of Japan

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Abstract:
In recent years, huge progress has been made in research on Japanese bacteriological warfare. At present, major sources for scholars to make research mainly come from governmental agencies in China, civil societies in Japan as well as archives, libraries, and museums at central and provincial levels. Based on these documentations, scholars have made accordingly research and historical comments concerning Japanese bacteriological warfare, and medical crimes, hence accomplishing a great number of academic works. However, as current historical documents have been exhausted, works of concerned scholars have demonstrated convergent inclination. The excavation of documentation related to Unit 731 preserved in governmental agencies in Japan, such as the National Archives of Japan and the National Institute for Defense Studies has provided new ideas, clues, and directions for literature surveys and statistics and investigations into basic historical facts of research into Japanese bacteriological warfare.

Keywords:
National Archives of Japan; Unit 731; Bacteriological warfare; Documents and archives.

1. Introduction

Research on Japanese germ warfare units has been based on archival materials kept by official Chinese institutions, Japanese civil society, and archives, libraries, and museums at the central and local levels, and has been based on these materials as the basic basis for research on Japanese germ warfare crimes and human experimentation. Due to the secrecy and special nature of Japanese official institutions, the germ warfare archival documents kept in the National Archives of Japan have not been formally introduced into the academic research field for a long time. In recent years, through the joint efforts of Chinese and Japanese scholars, original archival materials on Japanese germ warfare have gradually surfaced. As far as I can see, the following studies have been conducted on the Japanese archives: Wang Xiliang's "The main contents, historical value, and significance of new information on germ warfare discovered in Japan" (Wang, 2012) analyzes the germ warfare thesis of Junichi Kaneko, a former member of Unit 731, and provides important clues to the "Army Medical School Epidemic Prevention Research Report Part 1". In addition, Chen Zhiyuan's " Bacterial warfare in Changde from Chinese, Russian, American and Japanese historical sources" (Chen, 2016) and "Bacterial Warfare in Southern China by the Japanese Invasion Forces" (Chen, 2015) conducted targeted research on

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the Japanese germ warfare crimes in southern China based on Japanese official archival historical materials.

2. Background and academic status of the establishment of the Na-tional Archives of Japan

The National Public Archives of Japan is the national archives of Japan, which is subordinate to the Prime Minister's Office and is responsible for managing state administrative documents and other documents, books, and ancient documents, as well as providing loans, conducting research, and engaging in archival foreign affairs activities. Kazumasa Inabashi, who was once the director of the National Public Archives of Japan, has positioned the background of the establishment of the National Public Archives and its position in Japanese academia and Japanese society as a whole: after World War II, there was a general social consensus on the need to establish a special archival institution to preserve official records and other archives. Based on this social consensus, in 1959 the Science Council of Japan, which was the academic advisory board of the Japanese government, proposed the “Proposal for the Protection of Official Documents from Destruction”. The Council was concerned that the development of academic research would be affected by this and that official documents of academic value needed to be placed under the unified management of the state, so they called for the establishment of a national archive, and the Japanese government gradually realized the importance and urgency of document management. In the following year, after ordering each department to formulate protective measures to prevent the loss of documents, the Japanese government began to study the form of national document protection and management system and organized the preparation of a national public document museum based on the experience of other countries by absorbing and learning from them. (Liu & Inabashi, 1999) In July 1971, the National Archives of Japan was located in Kitanomaru Park, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, with a floor area of 11,550 square meters, and the repository was installed with automated control and monitoring equipment, etc., and all of them were preserved by electric dense shelves. Subsequently, to cope with the increasing number of records received each year and to expand and improve the facilities for archival storage, the National Public Archives established a branch in Ibaraki Prefecture, northeast of Tokyo. In general, the archives in the collection are divided into two categories: the various types of official documents transferred from the Cabinet and provincial offices, i.e., clerical archives; and the Cabinet Library collection, i.e., important ancient books, documents, and cultural properties formed by history. The archives of Unit 731 mainly belong to the first category, the clerical archives.

The main contents of the 731 Archive are preserved in the Nation-al Archives of Japan. The archives of Unit 731 preserved in the National Public Library were formed from 1929 to 1945 and consist of two main parts: first, materials related to the Japanese germ warfare units, the core of which are the archives of the Rongzhi 1644 Unit in Nanjing and the 1855 Unit in Beijing; second, archives related to the Japanese Army Medical School, including the correspondence between various departments and the collection of medical papers.

2.1 Archives related to Japanese germ warfare units

During World War II, Japan established a series of germ warfare units, including Beijing Unit 185, Nanjing Unit 164, Guangzhou Unit 864, and Singapore Unit 942, in addition to Unit 731. From the date of its estab-

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lishment to the date of its defeat, the Bacteriological Warfare Unit, under the guise of epidemic prevention and water supply and medical research, was engaged in bacteriological experiments, human experimentation, and development of bacteriological weapons, and waging germ warfare against humanity. During this period, at least thirty types of germ warfare agents were developed, which affected northeast, north, northwest, central, east, south, and southwest China, directly causing the epidemic and spread of epidemic infectious diseases such as cholera, plague, and typhoid, and causing great harm to the Chinese people and ecological environment. However, Japan had twice destroyed wartime archival materials in an organized and premeditated manner from top to bottom on the occasion of its defeat. Unit 731 received orders to organize a full retreat at the first opportunity and gave orders to blow up buildings and destroy incriminating evidence, and Unit 1855, Unit 1644, and others did the same. In addition to the post-war Japan-U.S. transactions, very few archival materials about the Japanese germ warfare units have survived, and the archives directly related to 1855, 1644, and 9420 units are rare, which makes it very difficult for us to restore the historical truth and reveal the maximum extent of Japan's germ warfare crimes against China so that the basic historical facts about the organizational structure, personnel composition, and scope of research have yet to be clarified.

(1) The archives of the Unit 1855

As the excavation of historical documents of Japanese germ warfare progressed, the official Japanese institutions such as the National Archives of Japan and the Institute for Defense Studies discovered the "Brief Calendar of the North China Epidemic Prevention and Water Supply Department" (Defense Research Institute, 1963), the "Memorial of the Completion of the Compilation of the North China Epidemic Prevention and Water Supply Department" (Collection of the International Research Center on 731), the "Roster of the Unit 1855" (National Archives of Japan, 1945), and the investigation reports on the Taiyuan and Zhengzhou branches. The research reports and detailed reports on the operations of the Taiyuan and Zhengzhou branches of the Unit 1855 provide an important breakthrough in sorting out the historical history and institutional setup of the Unit 1855, and also help to supplement the chain of evidence of Japan's germ warfare against China.

(2) The archives of the commander of the Unit 1644

The city of Nanjing has been the focus of research on the history of Japan's invasion of China, and the Nanjing Massacre, in particular, has become the focus of international public opinion; however, because of the lack of historical materials and the secrecy of the unit, war crimes concerning the Nanking 1644 Bacterial Unit have often been overlooked. Previous studies on the Nanjing Bacteriological Unit have mainly focused on the institutional setting and testimonies of the original members of the unit, but there have not been any special studies conducted from the perspective of medical papers. The “Army Medical School Epidemic Prevention Research Report” and the “Journal of the Army Medical Corps” contain a large number of medical papers that contain detailed data on "human experimentation" and "special epidemic prevention," with a strong military aggressive purpose, and openly cite several experiments against humanity. The article has a strong military aggression purpose and openly cites many experiments against humanity. The "Fifth Ishii (4th) Unit Research Conference", which is kept by the National Public Library, is the first time that the term "Ishii (4th) Unit " has appeared, and no previous academic research on the subject has been found. The name "Ishii (4th) Unit" was the name of the unit used in the early days of the establishment of the 1644 Unit, which distinguished it from the headquarters of the Ishii Unit in Harbin and showed its close relationship with the

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headquarters. The successive commanders of unit 1644 were also closely associated with Unit 731, such as Chizane Masuda, who knew Shiro Ishii from the time of the Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory and was directly involved in Japanese germ warfare as an initial advocate and participant throughout. Or, as in the

case of Sumi Ota, who served in Unit 731 for a long time and engaged in germ research and experiments, and even participated directly in germ warfare attacks. Or, as in the case of Shunji Sato, who was reassigned from unit 8604 in Guangzhou and, after serving as a unit commander in the 1644 Unit, was transferred to the Fifth Army Medical Service of the Kwantung Army as a chief, during which time he was captured. Chizane Masuda and others were not only the commander of the unit 1644, but also experts in bacteriology and biology who had studied and worked for many years, so the special characteristics of the 1644 unit were made clear: a research team consisting of successive unit commanders as the core and technicians and military doctors as the periphery constituted the research force of the unit 1644, and these medical elites not only carried out large-scale human experiments and bacteriological research, but also applied the research results These medical elites not only conducted large-scale human experiments and bacteriological research, but also applied their research results to actual germ warfare, and perfected their academic research at the expense of countless Chinese lives.

2.2 Documents on the Army Medical School

As an important part of the Japanese germ warfare system, the Japanese Army Medical School has a close relationship with Unit 731 and has played an irreplaceable role in the history of Japan's invasion of China. However, due to the lack of historical materials, the Japanese Army Medical School has long been neglected. The newly discovered archival documents provide a new direction to solve this problem, mainly including three aspects: first, the early documents about the Bacteriological Research Laboratory of the Army Medical School, which was established with the direct approval of the Japanese Ministry of the Army and was set up under the Army Medical School as an institution specializing in bacteriological research, and later received continuous financial and human resources support; second, the relationship between the Army Medical School and the Ministry of the Army, the Shanghai The second is the correspondence between the Army Medical School and the Ministry of the Army, the Shanghai Dispatch, the Kwantung Army, and the Independent Guard, concerning the provision of inoculations against plague, cholera, typhoid, and dysentery. The third is a collection of medical papers, "Report of the Army Medical School's Research on Epidemic Prevention". Although the report is an internal publication of the Army Medical School, it is also a major platform for learning and exchange among the biological and medical communities in Japan. The format of the results includes seven categories: original writings, original notes, assorted reports, comprehensive reports, miscellaneous reports, transcriptions, and translations. The time of publication of the reports, all of them were published after Japan's total invasion of China and before the beginning of germ warfare; from the content of the reports, the main contents about the serum, bacterial culture, water filter use, and vaccine research can reflect the preparation of germ warfare research for germ warfare. (Li & Zhang, 2020)

Considering the concealment and specificity of the 731 Unit and the fact that evidence was destroyed at the time of the defeat, it is rare that the “Research Report” has been preserved as an important academic material, and at the same time, the Report reflects the scope of research, the extent of research, and the academic trajectory of the members of Unit 731 and its detachments as important historical evidence. What is even more

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noteworthy is that a large number of papers in the report have a strong military purpose of colonial aggression, openly citing a large number of anti-ethical germ warfare human experimentation data, and the scope of research covering both attack and defense aspects of germ warfare, and the relevant results played a vital role in promoting the development of germ warfare in Japan.

3. Assessment of the value of the 731 Archive kept by the National Public Archives

As the official administrative department of Japan, the germ warfare archives kept by the National Archives of Japan are different from those obtained from Chinese and Japanese private citizens, universities, and private collections in the past, and are little-known new evidence and discoveries with special historical evidence, academic value, and application value.

3.1 Academic value

From the perspective of the contents of the archives, the secrecy system of Japanese official institutions has restricted the research on Unit 731 and other germicidal units by Chinese and foreign academics, resulting in long-standing doubts about the relevant historical issues and even some basic historical facts. The archives of Unit 731 preserved in the Japanese Public Library, especially the 1855 and 1644 units, and the fact that there is no public record of them, are cutting-edge, groundbreaking, and innovative, and are an important supplement to the existing historical materials. The archives are an important addition to the existing historical materials. The archives span the period from 1929 to 1945, covering the entire process from the establishment, growth, and development of the 731 Bacteriological Unit to its defeat, and help to reveal the historical facts of the 731 Bacteriological Unit's long-term preparation and implementation of germ warfare, as well as its vivisection and human experimentation. From the viewpoint of the departments involved in the archives, there are mainly the Japanese government, military, medical institutions, schools, and other departments, which helps researchers to confirm from a new perspective that the Japanese germ warfare system was a top-down, organized, and systematic common crime, an act of war aggression in which all levels of government, military institutions, and civil society participated actively from the Japanese emperor to the Japanese government, and has important historical evidential value.

From the perspective of archival scarcity, due to the special and hidden nature of Japanese germ warfare archives, as well as the preservation status, degree of attention, research base, and other reasons, archives are quite scarce in academic circles, and it is not easy for the average researcher to seek and see them. We have been working on the collection of Japanese germ warfare archives for a long time, seeking important clues in the vast amount of archival materials, thus conducting targeted tracking and investigation, and further examining the newly discovered archival documents based on the existing research results in the academic community, continuing to explore and repeatedly examining them, and then reaching several conclusions that are well documented and as reliable as possible, further clarifying other It also clarifies the basic facts related to other germ warfare units and the Army Medical School and presents documentary clues to enrich existing historical research.

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3.2 Social application value

From the perspective of deepening academic research and innovating research models, the 731 Archive kept by the National Archives of Japan is rich in content and detailed information, reflecting the historical truth of Japan's invasion of China from different angles and aspects, and providing important first-hand historical clues for expanding the research field of Japanese germ warfare. From the perspective of serving national strategic and diplomatic needs, the National Archives of Japan is an important official institution in Japan. Making the germ warfare archives kept by Japanese official institutions available to the public in the form of media publicity, public release, and printing and publication are conducive to exposing the crimes of Japan's invasion of China on a global scale, and thus providing a reference for decision-making on current and future Sino-Japanese relations. From the perspective of promoting the protection and utilization of the 731site and the inscription project, this study is not only based on the current need to carry out in-depth academic research, but also focuses on the future goal of rationalizing, standardizing, and scientificizing the display of the 731exhibition hall, and is conducive to further enhancing the international influence and visibility of the 731site and effectively cooperating with the preparation of the inscription of the 731site.

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