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Unit 731 and Preserving the History of Wartime Medical Atrocities
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On January 11, Japan's *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that groups in the northern Chinese city of Harbin have announced a six-year plan to preserve historical sites associated with the Japanese Army Unit 731 medical and germ warfare atrocities. According to Unit 731 Exhibition Hall curator Jin Chengmin, local groups will repair the sites, which were converted into factories and schools in the postwar decades, in preparation for a bid to have them registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site alongside Auschwitz and Hiroshima's Peace Memorial, both preserved as examples of human destructiveness and continued appeals for world peace. Elements of the Harbin plan stress both the importance of preserving and disseminating testimony in the face of denial by some Japanese neo-nationalists and the neo-nationalist attempt to avoid linking stories of past victimization with contemporary nationalism or thoughts of vengeance. The site will include both a "Monument of Testimony" inscribed with the confessions of Japanese war criminals and a "Forest of Peace and Friendship" which will stress positive future Sino-Japanese ties.

While the plan has existed in embryo since 2006, Jin reports that 288 houses and a middle school were moved from the site between 2009 and 2010, a prelude to the start of restoration work and construction in earnest.

Chinese groups are not alone in drawing attention to the atrocities associated with Unit 731 and other units engaged in biological and germ warfare. There have been recent attempts to draw attention to Unit 731 atrocities in Japan, including the fact that doctors and scientists associated with the war crimes became leaders in the Japanese medical establishment after the war. In 2009 doctors from across Japan formed the Senso to I no Rinri no Kensho wo Susumeru Kai (The Association for the Verification of Inhuman Conduct by Japanese Researchers and Health Care Professionals during the War). The association plans to hold a symposium and exhibition on medical war crimes in Tokyo in April 2011. Karita Keishiro, who leads the group, describes its primary goal as making the history of the Imperial Japanese Army's medical war crimes a part of ethics training for today's Japanese doctors and educating the Japanese public about war history. The association grew out of a "War and Medicine" exhibition held at the 27th general assembly of the Japan Medical Congress in Osaka in 2007 that attracted 18,000 visitors. The exhibited highlighted not only the Unit 731 war crimes, but explored how doctors and scientists associated with the atrocities were protected from prosecution by US authorities in exchange for their research results. Several subsequently rose to become leaders of the postwar Japanese medical association. A comprehensive brochure of that exhibition is available online in English, Japanese, Chinese and Korean.

The association's website can be found here.

As was reported first in the *Asahi Shimbun* on January 6, 2011 and then in English in *The Times* (linked here via *The Australian*) on January 15 the Japanese Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Labor is preparing to carry out its first comprehensive survey of the wartime Army Medical College site near what is now Toyama Park in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward. In 1989 human remains were discovered and a nurse who worked at the hospital in wartime has since testified that following the end of the war, bodies and body parts held as "specimens" were buried in secret to avoid discovery by US occupation forces. Relating the nurse's testimony to accounts of medical war crimes by Unit 731, the citizens group "Guni Gakko Atochi de Hakken sareta Jinkotsu Mondai wo Kyumei suru Kai" (The Assocation Demanding Investigation on Human Bones Discovered at the Site of the Army Medical College, homepage) headed by Kanagawa University Professor Tsuneishi Keiichi, a leading specialist on Unit 731, has demanded an investigation. Tsuneishi is quoted as saying, "it is conceivable that the remains discovered in 1989 were not related to Unit 731 [as they may have been legitimate medical specimens] but this time there is a very strong chance that something with clear ties to the unit will be found. It is necessary that the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Labor carry out a thorough investigation that will satisfy all critics."

In a remarkably similar case, an investigation has been launched in Austria into bodies found at a psychiatric institute in Tyrol. Many of the bodies are thought to be Nazi euthanasia victims. Tens of thousands of people with disabilities are thought to have been killed by German authorities near the end of the war.

Finally, the *Asahi Shimbun* is currently running a series on war testimony, "Relaying Recollections of the Battlefield", which stresses responsibility for reflection and honest acknowledgement of past crimes. The fifth installment of the series tells the story of Kamitsubo Tetsuichi, father of former Social Democratic Party Lower House member Ito Hideko, who as an officer in the Kempeitai (Military Police) sent Chinese captives to Unit 731.

Asia Pacific Journal articles about Unit 731 include:

- Frederick R. Dickinson, Biohazard: Unit 731 in Postwar Japanese Politics of National "Forgetfulness"
- Tsuneishi Keiichi (trans. John Junkerman), Unit 731 and the Japanese Imperial Army's Biological Warfare Program
- Tsuneishi Keiichi (trans. James Orr), New Facts about US Payoff to Japan's Biological Warfare Unit 731

In addition a collection of essays on Unit 731, Japan's Wartime Medical Atrocities: Comparative Inquiries in Science, History, and Ethics, edited by Jing Bao Nie, Nanyan Guo, Mark Selden, and Arthur Klienman containing essays by leading Chinese, Japanese, and international scholars, was released in August 2010. It provides extensive background on the themes discussed above and also details how following the war, the United States protected and even paid physicians and scientists associated with Unit 731 in exchange for information about their experiments for use in the US biowarfare program at Fort Detrick, Maryland.

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