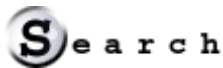


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Germ evidence found

(YAO LAN)
03/22/2002

SHANGHAI: Two US experts in history and medicine have proved that a bacterium called glanders was used by Japanese troops during World War II.

The finding by medical doctor Martin Furmanski and historian Sheldon Harris followed a fortnight-long trip to meet Chinese victims.

"Glanders was a disease first found in horses, and it could attack human beings," said Furmanski, who has specialized in research into the biological war waged by the Japanese.

Human beings' legs are most affected by the disease.

"Only one out of 20 people with the disease could survive," Furmanski said. "Medical records showed that the disease had already been wiped out in 1906, but new cases broke out in the 1940s in China."

The experts were accompanied by Wang Xuan, chairwoman of a group of Chinese survivors and the families of victims of Japanese germ warfare in World War II.

The group comprises 108 people, who filed a lawsuit against the Japanese Government in 1997 demanding an apology and compensation for the deaths of their relatives. The lawsuit says that thousands of people were killed by biological weapons and acts of brutality carried out by Japan's notorious Unit 731 and Unit 164. The thousands of victims included 2,100 civilians, whose personal details have been verified in China.

However, an in-depth study by Chinese and Japanese scholars have shown that at least 270,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed by Japanese germ-warfare troops between 1933 and 1945. The court case began in February 1998 and has yet to be settled.

The two US experts ended their journey this week with visits to villages in Jinhua, Quzhou and Yiwu in East China's Zhejiang Province - where the Japanese used biological weapons with different bacteria, such as cholera, the plague, typhoid and anthrax.

Historian Sheldon Harris is emeritus professor of history at California State University and has researched this field for 20 years. His book "Factories of Death" detailed stories of Japanese biological warfare during World War II.

The 75-year-old historian said: "We visited many victims in many different villages, but their stories were similar. Their legs began to rot after Japanese attacks in 1942 and 1943."

Since so many people were infected with a similar disease after the Japanese invasion of China, the two experts concluded that the phenomenon could largely be ascribed to germ warfare. In addition, the outbreak of the disease took place during the period when the Japanese were using biological weapons in these areas.

Wang said: "Moreover, Japanese documents also recorded that their army had produced glanders and did experiments on human bodies."

However, for quite a long time, anthrax was blamed for the disease in these areas.

The two US experts both said they were satisfied with their trip and were also glad to find that more local experts and university teachers and students had joined the research.

Harris said that uncovering the truth about the bacteriological warfare was an enormous undertaking but it should be made known to all.