

## Unit 731: The proximal origin of the cover-up in microbiology

Hideki Kakeya

On September 9, 2024, an article titled [“Will we ever know where covid-19 came from?”](#) appeared in the BMJ, suggesting the origin may remain unknown because China will never allow a scientific investigation. Lack of transparency, however, is not limited to China.

For the past four years, virologists worldwide have lacked transparency, particularly regarding the origin of SARS-CoV-2. [In an email about the newly emerging virus to Anthony Fauci in January 2020](#), Kristian Andersen wrote that “some of the features (potentially) look engineered.” Two months later, Andersen et al. published [a paper in Nature Medicine](#), concluding “Our analyses clearly show that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.”

Andersen and one of his co-authors, Robert Garry, testified in [the U.S. Congressional Hearing in July 2023](#), stating they had changed their minds between the email and the publication of the paper when asked about the discrepancy of their private and public writings. After the hearing, however, [a trove of Slack messages between Andersen and his fellow virologists](#) was revealed, in which Andersen wrote in April 2020, “We can’t fully disprove culture... We also can’t rule out engineering... furin site still could have been inserted via gibbon assembly,” which clearly shows he did not change his mind even after the publication of the paper.

Subsequent papers advocating zoonosis have also been debunked by follow-up studies ([Massey, et al.](#), [Stoyan and Chiu](#)). In [the draft of the DEFUSE proposal](#), a blueprint for

synthesizing a SARS-CoV-2-like virus, [previously predicted](#), was included, in which Peter Daszak wrote, “I do want to stress the US side of this proposal so that DARPA are comfortable with our team. Once we get the funds, we can then allocate who does what exact work, and I believe that a lot of these assays can be done in Wuhan as well.”

Unfortunately, lab accidents have been repeatedly covered up in the field of microbiology. According to [a book by Alison Young](#), members of a research team led by Yoshihiro Kawaoka at the University of Wisconsin were exposed to engineered H5N1 viruses in 2013 and 2019. After the accident, Kawaoka did not report the incidents immediately, failing to take proper measures to quarantine the exposed researchers. Kawaoka is renowned for his work in 2011 when his team created H5N1 viruses that gained the ability to spread airborne among ferrets, the animal model used to study how flu viruses behave in humans.

Where does the secretive culture of virology originate? One of the most convincing answers to this question is [Unit 731](#), a covert biological and chemical warfare research and development unit of the Imperial Japanese Army led by Shiro Ishii, which engaged in lethal human experimentation and biological weapons manufacturing during World War II.

In the Nuremberg trials, [23 medical doctors were accused of having been involved in Nazi human experimentation and mass murder under the guise of euthanasia](#), with seven receiving death sentences and nine receiving prison sentences. In the Tokyo tribunals, however, Ishii was granted immunity in exchange for their full disclosure and was hired by the U.S. government [to provide American officers at Camp Detrick \(currently Fort Detrick\) with the findings through human experimentations related to biological weapons](#)

[conducted by Unit 731](#) Thus, the inhumane and secretive culture of Unit 731 was inherited by the microbiologists in the U.S.

The same culture was carried over to the virologists in the Wuhan Institute of Virology along with technology provided by Ralph Baric and funding provided by the National Institute of Health through the EcoHealth Alliance led by Daszak. Recently, [a HKU4-related-MERS chimera was identified contaminating agricultural rice RNA sequencing datasets from Wuhan, China](#), suggesting another covert bioweapon project. It is regrettable that the victims of Unit 731 have turned into the perpetrators of bioweapons after three quarters of a century.

The former team members of Unit 731, who all received immunity like Ishii, [infiltrated the academic community of microbiology in Japan after World War II](#), passing on the culture of Unit 731 to the next generation. One of the main institutions where they worked was the Institute of Infectious Diseases at the University of Tokyo, which was later divided into the National Institute of Infectious Diseases and the Institute of Medical Science at the University of Tokyo, where Kawaoka is currently affiliated.

Thus, the corruption in microbiology can be traced back to the Imperial Japanese Army that nurtured Unit 731 and the U.S. government that unduly granted Ishii immunity in exchange for information on its biological warfare program. What is needed now is to ensure that the virologists who cooperated in the cover-up operation during the COVID pandemic are held accountable. To grant them immunity again would risk another disaster, potentially claiming millions or billions of lives.

Author: Hideki Kakeya

Affiliations: University of Tsukuba

Competing interests: None declared

Social media accounts of post author:

X (Twitter) – <https://twitter.com/hkakeya>

Webpage: <https://visual-media-lab.github.io/jp/index.html>