

THE NANKING MASSACRE: Fact Versus Fiction

A Historian's Quest for the Truth

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Translator's Note

Japanese personal names have been rendered surname first, in accordance with Japanese custom.

The hanyu pinyin Romanization system has been used to translate Chinese personal and place names, with the exception of Wade-Giles translations that are still in common use (e.g., Yangtze River, Chiang Kai-shek).

PREFACE

In this book we present newly unearthed information pertaining to the occupation of Nanking by Japanese military forces in 1937. We also outline the points in dispute, in the hope of inspiring a fair debate on the subject.

Japanese military personnel have been accused of slaughtering great numbers of civilians and prisoners of war over a period of several weeks, beginning with the fall of Nanking on December 13, 1937, in what is referred to as the "Nanking Massacre." The conventional wisdom concerning this topic is typified by a review of Iris Chang's *Rape of Nanking* that appeared in the *Washington Post*. In it George Will wrote, "Japanese soldiers murdered tens of thousands of surrendered Chinese soldiers, and almost certainly more than 300,000 noncombatants."¹ The western world is beginning to realize that Chang's book relies on faked photographs and hugely exaggerated accounts. However, the myth of a massacre's having been perpetrated in Nanking, which has endured for several decades, remains largely unshattered.

If Japanese scholars had countered the massacre accusations with irrefutable evidence at an early stage, the current situation regarding this problem might be somewhat different. However, since they didn't, the "Nanking Massacre" has been accepted as fact to the point that it might as well have been etched in stone. Contemporary scholars hoping to discover the truth about events that took place a half-century ago are faced with tremendous challenge, requiring them to expend a huge amount of time and energy. The intention of this book is to establish a framework for the facts relating to situational and environmental factors prevailing in Nanking at the time of Japanese occupation. To that end, we have conducted a scrupulous examination of virtually every historical resource relating to the fall of Nanking in 1937, and a meticulous investigation of all available evidence. The results presented herein, substantiated by definitive historical records, are the fruit of research that consumed 15 years

The 13 fundamental facts laid out below describe the situation in Nanking when the city was occupied by the Japanese in 1937.

1. Most of the cities on the Eurasian continent were fortified or walled, hence the German word *Burg*, which means “fortified town.” Until the 20th century, Chinese cities were fortified for defensive purposes, as were ancient Athens, Rome, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Constantinople, Moscow, Hamburg and Paris until the February Revolution. Nanking was surrounded by immense walls. Once the city was captured, its gates were under tight military control. The Japanese did not allow ordinary citizens free access to those gates until two and a half months had elapsed. Nevertheless, 20 days before and immediately prior to the fall of Nanking, the city’s population was 200,000, according to Europeans and Americans who were there at the time. Eight days after the fall and on Christmas Eve, it was still 200,000. No one indicated a vast decrease in population due to mass slaughter. Confronted by these facts, how can anyone claim that 300,000 noncombatants were murdered in Nanking?
2. The situation in Nanking in 1937 was similar to that in Iraq in 2004: prior to the capture of the city, Chinese troops stripped off their uniforms and mingled with the civilian population. By doing so, they became *unlawful combatants* not protected by the Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land annexed to the Hague Convention. No Chinese military personnel inside the city walls surrendered to the Japanese. Accordingly, during the 11-year period spanning December 13, 1937, the day Nanking fell, to December 1948, when the Tokyo Trials ended, no one accused Japanese troops of having killed prisoners of war in violation of the aforementioned regulations. Confronted with these facts, how can anyone claim that the Japanese murdered prisoners of war?
3. The Japanese are accused of having murdered 7,000 persons each day, i.e., 300,000 persons over a period of six weeks. But according to “Daily Reports of Serious Injuries to Civilians,” the only killing witnessed by a European or American in Nanking was one “lawful execution.” The contents of these reports (issued on a daily basis and submitted to the Japanese Embassy in Nanking) are corroborated by data gathered from the testimonies of European, American and Chinese residents in Nanking, and from Japanese military records (all of which data has been computerized and analyzed).² How do we explain a massacre

with no witnesses?

4. One of the foundation upon which the massacre myth is based is *What War Means*, edited by Harold Timperley. In it, he wrote that the “following selection of cases” (from the daily reports of serious injuries to civilians in Nanking) “completes the story of the first two months of the Japanese Army’s occupation of Nanking.”³ The aforementioned reports were appended to the book, but contained absolutely no eyewitness accounts of unlawful murders. The book, however, also includes a section (written under an assumed name) that refers to “frequent murder” attributed to Japanese. How do we explain this inconsistency.
5. Rev. Miner Searle Bates and George Fitch submitted material for *What War Means* (both used pseudonyms). The ostensible intent of the book, edited by Timperley, was to impress upon the reader the horrors of war via accounts written by disinterested parties (European and American residents of Nanking). But Timperley was, in fact, an advisor to the Nationalist government’s Ministry of Information. Rev. Bates, a famous Christian missionary who taught at the University of Nanking, was also an advisor to the Ministry of Information. And Mrs. Fitch was a close friend of Mme. Chiang Kai-shek.⁴

It has also become clear that *What War Means* is a propaganda book compiled and published by the Counterintelligence Division of the Nationalist Ministry of Information’s International Propaganda Section. Timperley was paid by the Ministry of Information for editing the book.⁵ Thus, *What War Means*, perceived as proof of the “Nanking Massacre,” was not written from an impartial standpoint. On the contrary, it can be viewed only as war propaganda.

6. Also perceived as proof of the “Nanking Massacre” are articles carried in the *Chicago Daily News* and the *New York Times*. They refer to reports of “frequent murder”⁶ committed by the Japanese during the three days following the fall of Nanking. However, it turns out that that Bates was the source of the reports. Bates’ report describing those three days was used in *What War Means* (Chapter 1), edited by Timperley. But a look at

the daily reports that Bates personally delivered to the Japanese Embassy reveals not one case of witnessed murder. Nevertheless, foreign residents of Nanking described “frequent murder.” Aren’t Rev. Bates’ report and American newspaper articles inconsistent with contemporaneous records?

7. Although we have learned that *What War Means* is a propaganda book issued by the Nationalist Ministry of Information, we cannot immediately dismiss its contents. But we must present some important information that cannot be ignored.

Rev. Bates inserted language to the effect that 12,000 civilians and 30,000 soldiers had been killed in Nanking into Chapter 3 of *What War Means*. The Ministry of Information should have been delighted to disseminate news of a massacre with some 40,000 victims. However, Bates claim was deleted not only from the Chinese translation of *What War Means* (published simultaneously with the English-language edition), but also from four other books published at about the same time.⁷ Doesn’t this deletion signify the refusal of the Ministry of Information to lend credence to Bates’ claim that 40,000 Chinese were massacred?

8. A top-secret document issued by the Ministry of Information in 1941 and entitled “Outline of the Operations of the International Information Department, Ministry of Information” never mentions a massacre. The document contains a summary of crimes (“rapes, arsons and lootings, violations of ... basic standards of human decency”) that are mentioned in the description of Nanking as a living hell in *What War Means*, but does not mention a massacre. Doesn’t this mean that the Ministry of Information had no knowledge of the “Nanking Massacre?”
9. According to the aforementioned top-secret document, the International Information Department (a branch of the Ministry of Information established not long before the fall of Nanking) sponsored 300 press conferences for foreign journalists between December 1, 1937 and October 24, 1938. During that time, emergency press conferences were called whenever important news broke (even in the dead of night, according to reports),

and the news was transmitted all over the world. But no press conference was ever called to announce a massacre in Nanking. Why not? Doesn't this information tell us that the Ministry of Information did not believe that there had been a Nanking Massacre?

10. The July 9, 1938 issue of *China Forum*, which was published by the Ministry of Information seven months after the fall of Nanking, carried a feature entitled "One Year of Sino-Japanese War: Review Questions for Study Groups." One of the questions was "What was the attitude of China after the fall of Nanking? The answer (intended to serve as a model) was "General Chiang Kai-shek said on December 16, 1937: 'No matter how the present situation may change, we must not surrender but march onward.'" The Ministry of Information never alluded to a "Nanking Massacre" Neither did Mao Zedong, who criticized Japanese military strategy in one of his famous lectures, stating that Japanese troops committed a strategical error by not annihilating enemy soldiers in Nanking. Wasn't Mao, too, refuting the massacre argument?
11. As we demonstrated in *Nankin jiken "shoko shashin" wo kensho suru* [Analyzing "the Photographic Evidence" of the Nanking Massacre],⁸ the photographs circulating the world, allegedly substantiating the massacre argument are fakes whose origins can be traced to propaganda books (*Japanese Military Atrocities Witnessed by Foreigners*, issued by the Ministry of Information in July 1938; and *Record of Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Enemy*, issued by the National Military Council of the Nationalist Government, also in July 1938). All the photographs are montages, staged, or falsely captioned. Not one of them is proof of a massacre in Nanking.
12. When Hitler rose to power in 1933, many Jews in Germany fled to other countries. Many nations refused to open their doors to the Jews, but Maj.-Gen. Higuchi Kiichiro, head of the Harbin Special Agency, welcomed them. Higuchi lent his support to the first conference of Jewish communities in the Far East, held at Harbin in December 1937. Three months later, he helped a great number of Jews who had traveled through Siberia to enter

Manchuria from Otpor, across the Soviet border. His name is inscribed in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund in Israel.⁹ Note that just a year later in May 1939, 936 Jewish refugees on board the German luxury liner *St. Louis* were denied entry to the United States. Eventually, the passengers reached Great Britain, France and the Netherlands, each of which agreed to accept some of them. The Jews who went to Great Britain survived, but the others were sent to the gas chambers when the Germans occupied France and the Netherlands.¹⁰ How could the same institution have risked Nazi retaliation by openly allowing Jews to enter Manchuria, which is not so distant from Nanking, in March 1938 and secretly perpetrated “the forgotten holocaust of World War II” between December 1937 and January 1938?

13. On January 27 and 28, 45 days after the fall of Nanking, the Japanese military transported approximately 1,000 refugees (from Shanghai and its environs) who had fled to Nanking and had expressed the desire to return to Shanghai. They also transported all displaced Chinese to their homes in the Nanking area, beginning on January 29.¹¹ The transport was in compliance with orders issued by the Japanese commander in chief, General Matsui Iwane to that effect (see p. 63). If the same people who showed such kindness also massacred thousands of Chinese, we would have to ascribe (incorrectly) a Jekyll-and-Hyde nature to the Japanese military.

As we stated at the beginning of this Preface, the conventional wisdom concerning the Japanese occupation of Nanking is that 300,000 persons were massacred in that city. This is a perception that is seemingly engraved in the annals of history, and thus is difficult to dispel. It is our hope that this book will serve to dislodge, however slightly, that perception. *The Nanking Massacre: Fact Versus Fiction* is based on “*Nankin Gyokusatsu*” no Tettei Kensho [An exhaustive examination of the Nanking Massacre] (written seven years ago and examining the situation in 1937 Nanking from every conceivable perspective) and two research papers that, combined, are the fruit of 15 years of research on my part. One of the research papers is “The Nanking Massacre as War Propaganda,” which I read at the International Commission of Military History held in Bucharest in August 2003. It is included in the *29th International Congress of Military History: War, Military and Media from Gutenberg to Today*, issued in

Bucharest by Military Publishing in 2004. The other paper was serialized in the *Sankei Shinbun* from January 3-8, 2005 under the title "Shin chikyu Nihon shi: 147 kai-152 kai" [New Japanese history from a global perspective: Nos.147-152]. It was subsequently included in *Shin chikyu Nihon shi 2* [New Japanese history from a global perspective 2], edited by Nishio Kanji and published by Fusosha in 2005. I recommend that readers begin with the final chapter (Chapter 17: New Evidence Leads to the Conclusion that There Was No Massacre in Nanking) on p.287.

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CHAPTER 1:

THE ROAD TO THE CAPTURE OF NANKING

The 1930's: A Divided China

In the 1930's, China was fraught with internecine strife, with the exception of Manchuria. Consequently, foreign nations with Chinese concessions stationed troops in North China to protect their citizens. Chiang Kai-shek controlled less than half the mainland at that time, a fact that, apparently, has escaped even some specialists. For instance, Utsunomiya University Professor Kasahara Tokushi, an East Asian history scholar, has asserted that Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government had unified all of China by 1931.¹ Accordingly, we believe that it would be useful to provide an overview of the political situation in China in the 1930's.

The *Atlas of World History* published by Ringensha includes a map entitled "China Under Nationalist Rule: 1928 - 1937."² According to that map, only four provinces (Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, and Jiangxi) were controlled by Chiang and his Nationalist Party in 1928. In 1929, Hubei Province fell into Nationalist hands, followed by Henan in 1930, and Fujian in 1934. By 1937, the Nationalists also controlled Guizhou and Guangdong provinces. Between 1935 and 1937, Guangxi and Sichuan provinces, more than half of Gansu Province, and nearly half of Shaanxi Province entered the Nationalist sphere. However, Shandong Province was controlled by Han Fujun until 1938. Shanxi was ruled by Yan Xishan, Xinjiang by Soviet sympathizer Sheng Shicai, and Hunan by He Jian. According to Hallett Abend's *Tortured China*,³ Manchuria, the homeland of the Nuzhen (Manchurian) people, was unaffected by the turmoil that plagued China.

Conversely, Mao Zedong had been defeated by Nationalist forces and, in October 1936, finally succeeded in establishing a base at Yan'an, in northern Shaanxi Province. The Communist Party was unable to regroup until after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. Thus, China was clearly a divided nation in the mid-1930's.

The Marco Polo Bridge Incident

In 1937, foreign troops from Japan, the United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy were stationed in North China to protect the citizens of their respective nations. Their authority to be present there was based on an agreement concluded between foreign powers and Li Hongzhang in 1901, subsequent to the Boxer Rebellion (1900). The agreement, the Final Protocol Relating to the North China Incident, afforded nations affected by the rebellion the right to station troops at 12 locations between Beijing and Shanhaiguan, a town on the coast of the Bo Hai.⁴ Foreign troops were permitted to hold maneuvers, without reporting where and when they were to be held, as long as they did not use live ammunition.⁵

That is how Japanese troops came to be stationed at Marco Polo (Lugou) Bridge, situated 12 kilometers west of Peiping (Beijing), as well as in other areas. On July 7, 1937, they were engaging in final maneuvers on the left bank of the Yongding River, which is spanned by the Marco Polo Bridge, in preparation for a company training inspection to be held two days later.⁶ The soldiers were using blanks. At 10:40 p.m., they were attacked without warning by Chinese troops, who were using live ammunition.⁷

It was difficult for the Japanese soldiers to gain access to their ammunition because it was stored, as usual, in heavy cardboard boxes securely bound with yards of cotton string. To make matters worse, they were not wearing helmets. Nevertheless, the Chinese continued to fire on them. The fourth attack occurred on the following day at 5:30 a.m., when the sun had risen and visibility was good. Seven hours had elapsed since the first shots were fired.

Not until then did the Japanese retaliate by firing against the 29th Chinese Army. The battle between Japanese and Chinese troops, or the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, took place not on July 7, as has so often been reported, but on July 8.

Jin Zhenzhong, commander of the garrison guarding the Marco Polo Bridge, wrote his recollections of the incident in *The July 7th Incident*, compiled by the Historical Accounts Committee of the National Political Consultative Conference, People's Republic of China (1986). Jin claims to have heard the "thundering of tanks" and "loud gunfire" on July 7.⁸ However, the Japanese artillery unit did not arrive on the scene until 3:20 a.m. on July 8. Additional reinforcements, a tank unit, did not appear until about July 10.⁹

Divided China

