

Nanking Massacre

The **Nanking Massacre** was an episode of mass murder and mass rape committed by Japanese troops against the residents of Nanjing (*Nanking*), then the capital of the Republic of China, during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The massacre is also known as the **Rape of Nanking** or, using Pinyin romanization, the **Nanjing Massacre** or **Rape of Nanjing**.

The massacre occurred over a period of six weeks starting on December 13, 1937, the day that the Japanese captured Nanjing. During this period, soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army murdered Chinese civilians and disarmed combatants who numbered an estimated 40,000 to over 300,000,^{[7][8]} and perpetrated widespread rape and looting.^{[9][10]}

Since most Japanese military records on the killings were kept secret or destroyed shortly after the surrender of Japan in 1945, historians have been unable to accurately estimate the death toll of the massacre. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo estimated in 1946 that over 200,000 Chinese were killed in the incident.^[11] China's official estimate is more than 300,000 dead based on the evaluation of the Nanjing War Crimes Tribunal in 1947. The death toll has been actively contested among scholars since the 1980s.^{[3][12]}

The event remains a contentious political issue and a stumbling block in Sino-Japanese relations. The Chinese government has been accused of exaggerating aspects of the massacre such as the death toll,^[13] while historical negationists and Japanese nationalists go as far as claiming the massacre was fabricated for propaganda purposes.^{[8][14][15][16]} The controversy surrounding the massacre remains a central issue in Japanese relations with other Asia-Pacific nations as well, such as South Korea and the Philippines.^[17]

Although the Japanese government has admitted to the killing of a large number of non-combatants, looting, and other violence committed by the Imperial Japanese Army after the fall of Nanking,^{[18][19]} and Japanese veterans who served there have confirmed that a massacre took place,^[20] a small but vocal minority within both the Japanese government and society have argued that the death toll was military in nature and that no such crimes ever occurred. Denial of the massacre and revisionist accounts of the killings have become a staple of Japanese nationalism.^[21] In Japan, public opinion of the massacre varies, but few deny outright that the event occurred.^[21]

Nanking Massacre (Rape of Nanking)

Part of the Second Sino-Japanese War



The corpses of massacre victims on the shore of the Qinhuai River with a Japanese soldier standing nearby

Date	December 13, 1937 – January 1938
Location	Nanjing, China
Result	50,000–300,000 dead (primary sources) ^{[1][2]} 40,000–300,000 dead (scholarly consensus) ^[3] 300,000 dead (Chinese government, scholarly consensus in China) ^{[4][5][6]}

Nanking Massacre

Chinese name

Traditional Chinese 南京大屠殺

Simplified Chinese 南京大屠杀

Transcriptions

Standard Mandarin

Hanyu Nánjīng Dàtúshā

Pinyin

Wade–Giles Nan²-ching¹ Ta⁴-t'u²-

Giles sha¹

Japanese name

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China

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Transcriptions	
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Military situation

In August 1937, the Japanese army invaded Shanghai where they met strong resistance and suffered heavy casualties. The battle was bloody as both sides faced attrition in urban hand-to-hand combat. By mid-November the Japanese had captured Shanghai with the help of naval bombardment. The General Staff Headquarters in Tokyo initially decided not to expand the war due to heavy casualties and low troop morale. Nevertheless, on December 1, headquarters ordered the Central China Area Army and the 10th Army to capture Nanjing, then-capital of the Republic of China.

Relocation of the capital

After losing the Battle of Shanghai, Chiang Kai-shek knew that the fall of Nanjing was a matter of time. He and his staff realized that they could not risk the annihilation of their elite troops in a symbolic but hopeless defense of the capital. To preserve the army for future battles, most of it was withdrawn. Chiang's strategy was to follow the suggestion of his German advisers to draw the Japanese army deep into China and use China's vast territory as a defensive strength. Chiang planned to fight a protracted war of attrition to wear down the Japanese in the hinterland of China.^[22]

Strategy for the defense of Nanking

In a press release to foreign reporters, Tang Shengzhi announced the city would not surrender and would fight to the death. Tang gathered about 100,000 soldiers, largely untrained, including Chinese troops who had participated in the Battle of Shanghai. To prevent civilians from fleeing the city, he ordered troops to guard the port, as instructed by Chiang Kai-shek. The defense force blocked roads, destroyed boats, and burnt nearby villages, preventing widespread evacuation. The Chinese government left for relocation on December 1, and the president left on December 7, leaving the fate of Nanking to an International Committee led by John Rabe.

In an attempt to secure permission for this cease-fire from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, a German national by the name of John Rabe who was living in Nanjing and had been acting as the Chairman of the Nanjing International Safety Zone Committee, boarded the USS Panay on December 9. From this gunboat, Rabe sent two telegrams. The first was through an American ambassador in Hankow to Chiang, asking that Chinese forces "undertake no military operations" within Nanjing.

The second telegram was sent through Shanghai to Japanese military leaders, advocating for a three-day cease-fire so the Chinese could withdraw from the city. The following day, on December 10, Rabe got his answer from the Generalissimo. The American ambassador in Hankow replied that although he supported Rabe's proposal for a cease-fire, Chiang did not. Rabe says that the ambassador also "sent us a separate confidential telegram telling us that he has been officially informed by the Foreign Ministry in Hankow that our understanding that General Tang agreed to a three-day armistice and the withdrawal of his troops from Nanjing is mistaken, and moreover that Chiang Kai-shek has announced that he is not in a position to accept such an offer."

This rejection of the Committee's cease-fire plan, in Rabe's mind, sealed the fate of the city. Nanjing had been constantly bombed for days and the Chinese troops that remained there were disheartened and had taken to drinking before the city's inevitable fall. On December 11, Rabe found that Chinese soldiers were still residing in areas of the Safety Zone, meaning that it became an intended target for Japanese attack despite the majority were innocent civilians. Rabe commented on how efforts to remove these Chinese troops failed and Japanese soldiers began to lob grenades into the refugee Zone.^[23]

Approach of the Imperial Japanese Army

Japanese war crimes on the march to Nanking

Although the massacre is generally described as having occurred over a six-week period after the fall of Nanjing, the crimes committed by the Japanese army were not limited to that period. Many atrocities were reported to have been committed as the Japanese army advanced from Shanghai to Nanjing.

According to one Japanese journalist embedded with Imperial forces at the time, "The reason that the [10th Army] is advancing to Nanking quite rapidly is due to the tacit consent among the officers and men that they could loot and rape as they wish."^[25]

Novelist Tatsuzō Ishikawa vividly described how the 16th Division of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force committed atrocities on the march between Shanghai and Nanjing in his novel *Ikiteiru Heitai* (Living Soldiers), which was based on interviews that Ishikawa conducted with troops in Nanjing in January 1938.^[26]

Perhaps the most notorious atrocity was a killing contest between two Japanese officers as reported in the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun* and the English language *Japan Advertiser*. The contest — a race between the two officers to see which could kill 100 people first using only a sword — was covered much like a sporting event with regular updates on the score over a series of days.^{[27][28]} In Japan, the veracity of the newspaper article about the contest was the subject of ferocious debate for several decades starting in 1967.^[29]

In 2000, historian Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi concurred with certain Japanese scholars who had argued that the contest was a concocted story, with the collusion of the soldiers themselves for the purpose of raising the national fighting spirit.^[30]

In 2005, a Tokyo district judge dismissed a suit by the families of the lieutenants, stating that "the lieutenants admitted the fact that they raced to kill 100 people" and that the story cannot be proven to be clearly false.^[31] The judge also ruled against the civil claim of the plaintiffs because the original article was more than 60 years old.^[32] The historicity of the



An article on the "Contest to kill 100 people using a sword" published in the Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun. The headline reads, "Incredible Record' (in the Contest to Cut Down 100 People)—Mukai 106—105 Noda— Both 2nd Lieutenants Go Into Extra Innings".^[24]

event remains disputed in Japan.^[33]

Flight of Chinese civilians

The Nanjing garrison force set fire to buildings and houses in the areas close to Xiakuan to the north as well as in the environs of the eastern and southern city gates. Targets within and outside of the city walls—such as military barracks, private homes, the Chinese Ministry of Communication, forests and even entire villages—were completely burnt down, at an estimated value of 20 to 30 million (1937) US dollars.^{[34][35][36]}

Establishment of the Nanking Safety Zone

Many Westerners were living in the city at that time, conducting trade or on missionary trips. As the Japanese army approached Nanking, most of them fled the city, leaving 27 foreigners. Five of these were journalists who remained in the city a few days after it was captured, leaving the city on December 16. Fifteen of the remaining 22 foreigners formed a committee, called the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone in the western quarter of the city.^[37]

German businessman John Rabe was elected as its leader, in part because of his status as a member of the Nazi Party and the existence of the German-Japanese bilateral Anti-Comintern Pact. The Japanese government had previously agreed not to attack parts of the city that did not contain Chinese military forces, and the members of the Committee managed to persuade the Chinese government to move their troops out of the area. The Nanking Safety Zone was demarcated through the use of Red Cross Flags^[38]

On December 1, 1937, Nanking Mayor Ma Chao-chun ordered all Chinese citizens remaining in Nanking to move into the "Safety Zone". Many fled the city on December 7, and the International Committee took over as the *de facto* government of Nanking.

Prince Asaka appointed as commander

In a memorandum for the palace rolls, Hirohito singled Prince Yasuhiko Asaka out for censure as the one imperial kinsman whose attitude was "not good". He assigned Asaka to Nanjing as an opportunity to make amends.^[39] It appears that Hirohito had never learned about, or had refused to admit, Asaka's role in the ensuing massacre.^[40]

On December 5, Asaka left Tokyo by plane and arrived at the front three days later. He met with division commanders, lieutenant-generals Kesago Nakajima and Heisuke Yanagawa, who informed him that the Japanese troops had almost completely surrounded 300,000 Chinese troops in the vicinity of Nanjing and that preliminary negotiations suggested that the Chinese were ready to surrender.^[41]

Prince Asaka is alleged to have issued an order to "kill all captives", thus providing official sanction for the crimes which took place during and after the battle.^[42] Some authors record that Prince Asaka signed the order for Japanese soldiers in Nanking to "kill all captives".^[43] Others assert that lieutenant colonel Isamu Chō, Asaka's aide-de-camp, sent this order under the Prince's sign manual without the Prince's knowledge or assent.^[44] Nevertheless, even if Chō took the initiative, Asaka was nominally the officer in charge and gave no orders to stop the carnage. While the extent of Prince Asaka's responsibility for the massacre remains a matter of debate, the ultimate sanction for the massacre and the crimes committed during the invasion of China were issued in Emperor Hirohito's ratification of the Japanese army's proposition to remove the constraints of international law on the treatment of Chinese prisoners on August 5, 1937.^[45]



Sword used in the "contest" on display at the Republic of China Armed Forces Museum in Taipei, Taiwan

Battle of Nanking

Siege of the city

The Japanese military continued to move forward, breaching the last lines of Chinese resistance, and arriving outside the city gates of Nanking on December 9.

Demand for surrender

At noon on December 9, the Japanese military dropped leaflets into the city, urging the city of Nanking to surrender within 24 hours, promising "no mercy" if the offer is refused.^{[46][N 1]}

In the meanwhile, members of the Committee contacted Tang and proposed a plan for three-day cease-fire, during which the Chinese troops could withdraw without fighting while the Japanese troops would stay in their present position.

John Rabe boarded the U.S. gunboat *Panay* on December 9 and sent two telegrams, one to Chiang Kai-shek by way of the American ambassador in Hankow, and one to the Japanese military authority in Shanghai.



Prince Yasuhiko Asaka in 1940

Assault and capture of Nanking

The Japanese awaited an answer to their demand for surrender but no response was received from the Chinese by the deadline on December 10. General Iwane Matsui waited another hour before issuing the command to take Nanking by force. The Japanese army mounted its assault on the Nanking walls from multiple directions; the SEF's 16th Division attacked three gates on the eastern side, the 6th Division of the 10A launched its offensive on the western walls, and the SEF's 9th Division advanced into the area in-between.^[22]



Iwane Matsui enters Nanking

On December 12, under heavy artillery fire and aerial bombardment, General Tang Sheng-chi ordered his men to retreat. What followed was nothing short of chaos. Some Chinese soldiers stripped civilians of their clothing in a desperate attempt to blend in, and many others were shot by the Chinese supervisory unit as they tried to flee.^[34]

On 13 December, the 6th and the 116th Divisions of the Japanese Army were the first to enter the city, facing little military resistance. Simultaneously, the 9th Division entered nearby Guanghua Gate, and the 16th Division entered the Zhongshan and Taiping gates. That same afternoon, two small Japanese Navy fleets arrived on both sides of the Yangtze River.

Pursuit and mopping-up operations

Japanese troops pursued the retreating Chinese army units, primarily in the Xiakuan area to the north of the city walls and around the Zijin Mountain in the east. Although most sources suggest that the final phase of the battle consisted of a one-sided slaughter of Chinese troops by the Japanese, some Japanese historians maintain that the remaining Chinese military still posed a serious threat to the Japanese. Prince Yasuhiko Asaka told a war correspondent later that he was in a

very perilous position when his headquarters was ambushed by Chinese forces that were in the midst of fleeing from Nanking east of the city. On the other side of the city, the 11th Company of the 45th Regiment encountered some 20,000 Chinese soldiers who were making their way from Xiakuan.^[22]

The Japanese army conducted its mopping-up operation both inside and outside the Nanking Safety Zone. Since the area outside the safety zone had been almost completely evacuated, the mopping-up effort was concentrated in the safety zone. The safety zone, an area of 3.85 square kilometres, was packed with the remaining population of Nanking. The Japanese army leadership assigned sections of the safety zone to some units to separate alleged plain-clothed soldiers from the civilians.^[22] The number of Chinese soldiers in plain clothes that were executed are estimated to be around 4,000.^[47]

Massacre

Eyewitness accounts of Westerners and Chinese present at Nanking in the weeks after the fall of the city say that, over the course of six weeks following the fall of Nanking, Japanese troops engaged in mass rape, murder, theft, arson, and other war crimes. Some of these primary accounts, including the diaries of John Rabe and American Minnie Vautrin, came from foreigners who opted to stay behind to protect the Chinese civilians from harm. Other accounts include first-person testimonies of Nanking Massacre survivors, eyewitness reports of journalists (both Western and Japanese), as well as the field diaries of military personnel. American missionary John Magee stayed behind to provide a 16 mm film documentary and first-hand photographs of the Nanking Massacre.

A group of foreign expatriates headed by Rabe had formed a 15-man International Committee on November 22 and mapped out the Nanking Safety Zone in order to safeguard civilians in the city. The city population of Nanking inflated drastically during the mid-1930s, as many refugees fled from the Japanese aggression in the north.^[48] Rabe and American missionary Lewis S. C. Smythe, secretary of the International Committee and a professor of sociology at the University of Nanking, recorded the actions of the Japanese troops and filed complaints with the Japanese embassy.

Massacre contest

In 1937, the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* and its sister newspaper, the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun*, covered a "contest" between two Japanese officers, Toshiaki Mukai and Tsuyoshi Noda of the Japanese 16th Division. The two men were described as vying to be the first to kill 100 people with a sword before the capture of Nanking. From Jurong to Tangshan (two cities in Jiangshu Province, China), Mukai had killed 89 people while Noda had killed 78 people. The contest continued because neither had killed 100 people. By the time they had arrived at Zijin Mountain, Noda had killed 105 people while Mukai had killed 106 people. Both officers supposedly surpassed their goal during the heat of battle, making it impossible to determine which officer had actually "won" the contest. Therefore, (according to journalists Asami Kazuo and Suzuki Jiro, writing in the *Tokyo Nichi-Nichi Shimbun* of December 13), they decided to begin another contest to kill 150 people.^[49] After the surrender of Japan in 1945, Mukai and Noda were both arrested and tried as war criminals, and both of them were found guilty and executed by shooting.^[50]

Rape

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East estimated that, in addition to children and the elderly, 20,000 Chinese women were raped during the occupation.^[53] A large number of rapes were done systematically by the Japanese soldiers as they went from door to door, searching for girls, with many women being captured and gang raped.^[54] The women were often killed immediately after being raped, often through explicit mutilation^[55] or by penetrating vaginas with bayonets, long sticks of bamboo, or other objects. Young children were not exempt from these atrocities and were cut open to allow Japanese soldiers to rape them.^[56]

On 19 December 1937, the Reverend James M. McCallum wrote in his diary:

I know not where to end. Never I have heard or read such brutality. Rape! Rape! Rape! We estimate at least 1,000 cases a night and many by day. In case of resistance or anything that seems like disapproval, there is a bayonet stab or a bullet ... People are hysterical ... Women are being carried off every morning, afternoon and evening. The whole Japanese army seems to be free to go and come as it pleases, and to do whatever it pleases.^[57]

On March 7, 1938, Robert O. Wilson, a surgeon at the university hospital in the Safety Zone administrated by the United States, wrote in a letter to his family, "a conservative estimate of people slaughtered in cold blood is somewhere about 100,000, including of course thousands of soldiers that had thrown down their arms".^[58]

Here are two excerpts from his letters of 15 and 18 December 1937 to his family:

The slaughter of civilians is appalling. I could go on for pages telling of cases of rape and brutality almost beyond belief. Two bayoneted corpses are the only survivors of seven street cleaners who were sitting in their headquarters when Japanese soldiers came in without warning or reason and killed five of their number and wounded the two that found their way to the hospital.

Let me recount some instances occurring in the last two days. Last night the house of one of the Chinese staff members of the university was broken into and two of the women, his relatives, were raped. Two girls, about 16, were raped to death in one of the refugee camps. In the University Middle School where there are 8,000 people the Japs came in ten times last night, over the wall, stole food, clothing, and raped until they were satisfied. They bayoneted one little boy of eight who [had] five bayonet wounds including one that penetrated his stomach, a portion of omentum was outside the abdomen. I think he will live.^[59]

In his diary kept during the aggression against the city and its occupation by the Imperial Japanese Army, the leader of the Safety Zone, John Rabe, wrote many comments about Japanese atrocities. For 17 December:

Two Japanese soldiers have climbed over the garden wall and are about to break into our house. When I appear they give the excuse that they saw two Chinese soldiers climb over the wall. When I show them my party badge, they return the same way. In one of the houses in the narrow street behind my garden wall, a



Photo taken in Xuzhou, showing the body of a woman who was profaned in a way similar to the teenager described in case 5 of John Magee's film.



Case 5 of John Magee's film: on December 13, 1937, about 30 Japanese soldiers murdered all but two of 11 Chinese in the house at No. 5 Xinlukou. A woman and her two teenaged daughters were raped, and Japanese soldiers rammed a bottle and a cane into her vagina. An eight-year-old girl was stabbed, but she and her younger sister survived. They were found alive two weeks after the killings by the elderly woman shown in the photo. Bodies of the victims can also be seen in the photo.^{[51][52]}

woman was raped, and then wounded in the neck with a bayonet. I managed to get an ambulance so we can take her to Kulou Hospital ... Last night up to 1,000 women and girls are said to have been raped, about 100 girls at Ginling College ... alone. You hear nothing but rape. If husbands or brothers intervene, they're shot. What you hear and see on all sides is the brutality and bestiality of the Japanese soldiers.^[60]

There are also accounts of Japanese troops forcing families to commit incestuous acts.^[61] Sons were forced to rape their mothers, and fathers were forced to rape their daughters.

Massacre of civilians

Following the capture of Nanking, a massacre, which was perpetrated by the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA), led to the deaths of up to 60,000 residents in the city, a figure difficult to precisely calculate due to the many bodies deliberately burnt, buried in mass graves, or deposited in the Yangtze River by the IJA.^{[62][63][64]} Japanese ultra-nationalists have strongly disputed such death tolls, with some claiming that no more than several hundred civilians were killed during the massacre.^[65] B. Campbell, in an article published in the journal *Sociological Theory*, has described the Nanking Massacre as a genocide, given the fact that residents were still slaughtered *en masse* during the aftermath, despite the successful and certain outcome in battle.^[66] On 13 December 1937, John Rabe wrote in his diary:

It is not until we tour the city that we learn the extent of destruction. We come across corpses every 100 to 200 yards. The bodies of civilians that I examined had bullet holes in their backs. These people had presumably been fleeing and were shot from behind. The Japanese march through the city in groups of ten to twenty soldiers and loot the shops ... I watched with my own eyes as they looted the café of our German baker Herr Kiessling. Hempel's hotel was broken into as well, as [was] almost every shop on Chung Shang and Taiping Road.^[67]



A boy killed by a Japanese soldier with the butt of a rifle because he did not take off his hat.

On 10 February 1938, Legation Secretary of the German Embassy, Rosen, wrote to his Foreign Ministry about a film made in December by Reverend John Magee to recommend its purchase.

During the Japanese reign of terror in Nanking – which, by the way, continues to this day to a considerable degree – the Reverend John Magee, a member of the American Episcopal Church Mission who has been here for almost a quarter of a century, took motion pictures that eloquently bear witness to the atrocities committed by the Japanese ... One will have to wait and see whether the highest officers in the Japanese army succeed, as they have indicated, in stopping the activities of their troops, which continue even today.^[67]

On December 13, about 30 soldiers came to a Chinese house at #5 Hsing Lu Koo in the southeastern part of Nanking, and demanded entrance. The door was open by the landlord, a Mohammedan named Ha. They killed him immediately with a revolver and also Mrs. Ha, who knelt before them after Ha's death, begging them not to kill anyone else. Mrs. Ha asked them why they killed her husband and they shot her. Mrs. Hsia was dragged out from under a table in the guest hall where she had tried to hide with her 1 year old baby.

After being stripped and raped by one or more men, she was bayoneted in the chest, and then had a bottle thrust into her vagina. The baby was killed with a bayonet. Some soldiers then went to the next room, where Mrs. Hsia's parents, aged 76 and 74, and her two daughters aged 16 and 14 [were]. They were about to rape the girls when the grandmother tried to protect them. The soldiers killed her with a revolver. The grandfather grasped the body of his wife and was killed. The two girls were then stripped, the elder being raped by 2–3 men, and the younger by 3. The older girl was stabbed afterwards and a cane was rammed in her vagina. The younger girl was bayoneted also but was spared the horrible treatment that had been meted out to her sister and mother. The soldiers then bayoneted another sister of between 7–8, who was also in the room. The last murders in the house were of Ha's two children, aged 4 and 2 respectively. The older was bayoneted and the younger split down through the head with a sword.^[67]

On 5 February 2009, the Japanese Supreme Court ordered Shyudo Higashinakano and the publisher *Tendensha* to pay four million yen in damages to Mrs. Shuqin Xia, who claims to be the 7- or 8-year-old girl who appears in Magee's film. Higashinakano had claimed in his book, *Thorough Review of Nanjing Massacre*, that she and the girl were different persons, and that she was not a witness of the Nanking massacre, but he was unable to prove this at trial.^[68]

Pregnant women were targeted for murder, as their stomachs were often bayoneted, sometimes after rape. Tang Junshan, survivor and witness to one of the Japanese army's systematic mass killings, testified:

The seventh and last person in the first row was a pregnant woman. The soldier thought he might as well rape her before killing her, so he pulled her out of the group to a spot about ten meters away. As he was trying to rape her, the woman resisted fiercely ... The soldier abruptly stabbed her in the belly with a bayonet. She gave a final scream as her intestines spilled out. Then the soldier stabbed the fetus, with its umbilical cord clearly visible, and tossed it aside.^[69]



Bodies of Chinese massacred by Japanese troops along a river in Nanjing.

According to Navy veteran Sho Mitani, "The Army used a trumpet sound that meant 'Kill all Chinese who run away'".^[70] Thousands were led away and mass-executed in an excavation known as the "Ten-Thousand-Corpse Ditch", a trench measuring about 300 m long and 5 m wide. Since records were not kept, estimates regarding the number of victims buried in the ditch range from 4,000 to 20,000. However, most scholars and historians consider the number to be more than 12,000 victims.^[71]

The Hui people, a minority Chinese group who are mainly Muslim, also suffered during the massacre, after which one mosque was found destroyed and others found to be "filled with dead bodies". Hui volunteers and imams buried over 100 Hui following Muslim ritual.^[72]

Extrajudicial killing of Chinese prisoners of war

On 5 August 1937, deputy minister of Military of Japan notified of Japanese Troops in Shanghai that the army's proposition to remove the constraints of international law on the treatment of Chinese prisoners(Notification No: "Riku Shi Mitsu No.198") and this directive also advised staff officers to stop using the term "prisoner of war" (POW).^[73]



A Chinese POW about to be beheaded by a Japanese officer with a shin gunto during the Nanking Massacre.

Immediately after the fall of the city, the Japanese troops began searching thoroughly for Chinese soldiers and summarily arrested thousands of young Chinese men. Many of these men were taken to the Yangtze River, where they were machine-gunned to death. What was probably the single largest massacre of Chinese troops occurred along the banks of the Yangtze River on December 18 in the Straw String Gorge Massacre. Japanese soldiers took most of the morning tying all of the POWs' hands together; in the dusk, the soldiers divided POWs into four columns and opened fire. Unable to escape, the POWs could only scream and thrash in desperation. It took an hour for the sounds of death to stop and even longer for the Japanese to bayonet each individual. Most of the bodies were dumped directly into the Yangtze river.

The Japanese troops gathered 1,300 Chinese soldiers and civilians at Taiping Gate and killed them. The victims were blown up with landmines, then doused with petrol before being set on fire. Those who were alive afterward were killed with bayonets.^[74]

F. Tillman Durdin and Archibald Steele, American news correspondents, reported that they had seen bodies of killed Chinese soldiers forming mounds six feet high at the Nanking Yijiang gate in the north. Durdin, who was working for The New York Times, toured Nanking before his departure from the city. He heard waves of machine-gun fire

and witnessed the Japanese soldiers gun down some two hundred Chinese within ten minutes. Two days later, in his report to The New York Times, he stated that the alleys and street were filled with civilian bodies, including women and children. Durdin did mention that "It should be said that certain Japanese units exercised restraint and certain Japanese officers tempered power with generosity and commission," yet he continued "the conduct of the Japanese army as a whole in Nanking was a blot on the reputation of their country", and "Tank guns were sometimes turned on groups of bound soldiers."^{[75][76]}

According to a testimony delivered by missionary Ralph L. Phillips to the U.S. State Assembly Investigating Committee, he was "forced to watch while the Japs disembowled a Chinese soldier" and "roasted his heart and liver and ate them".^[77]

Theft and arson

One-third of the city was destroyed as a result of arson. According to reports, Japanese troops torched newly built government buildings as well as the homes of many civilians. There was considerable destruction to areas outside the city walls. Soldiers pillaged from the poor and the wealthy alike. The lack of resistance from Chinese troops and civilians in Nanking meant that the Japanese soldiers were free to divide up the city's valuables as they saw fit. This resulted in the widespread looting and burglary.^[78]

On 17 December, chairman John Rabe wrote a complaint to Kiyoshi Fukui, second secretary of the Japanese Embassy. The following is an excerpt:

In other words, on the 13th when your troops entered the city, we had nearly all the civilian population gathered in a Zone in which there had been very little destruction by stray shells and no looting by Chinese soldiers even in full retreat ... All 27 Occidentals in the city at that time and our Chinese population were totally surprised by the reign of robbery, raping and killing initiated by your soldiers on the 14th. All we are asking in our protest is that you restore order among your troops and get the normal city life going as soon as possible. In the latter process we are glad to cooperate in any way we can. But even last night between 8 and 9 p.m. when five Occidental members of our staff and Committee toured the Zone to observe conditions, we did not find any single Japanese patrol either in the Zone or at the entrances!^[79]

Nanking Safety Zone and the role of foreigners

The Japanese troops did respect the Zone to an extent; until the Japanese occupation, no shells entered that part of the city except a few stray shots. During the chaos following the attack of the city, some were killed in the Safety Zone, but the crimes that occurred in the rest of the city were far greater by all accounts.^[80]

The Japanese soldiers committed actions in the Safety Zone that were part of the larger Nanking Massacre. The International Committee appealed a number of times to the Japanese army, with Rabe using his credentials as a Nazi Party member, but to no avail. Rabe wrote that, from time to time, the Japanese would enter the Safety Zone at will, carry off a few hundred men and women, and either summarily execute them or rape and then kill them.^[81]

By February 5, 1938, the International Committee had forwarded to the Japanese embassy a total of 450 cases of murder, rape, and general disorder by Japanese soldiers that had been reported after the American, British and German diplomats had returned to their embassies.^[82]

"Case 5 – On the night of December 14th, there were many cases of Japanese soldiers entering houses and raping women or taking them away. This created panic in the area and hundreds of women moved into the Ginling College campus yesterday."^[82]

"Case 10 – On the night of December 15th, a number of Japanese soldiers entered the University of Nanking buildings at Tao Yuen and raped 30 women on the spot, some by six men."^[82]

"Case 13 – December 18, 4 p.m., at No. 18 I Ho Lu, Japanese soldiers wanted a man's cigarette case and when he hesitated, one of the soldier crashed in the side of his head with a bayonet. The man is now at the University Hospital and is not expected to live."^[82]

"Case 14 – On December 16, seven girls (ages ranged from 16 to 21) were taken away from the Military College. Five returned. Each girl was raped six or seven times daily- reported December 18th."^[82]

"Case 15 – There are about 540 refugees crowded in #83 and 85 on Canton Road ... More than 30 women and girls have been raped. The women and children are crying all nights. Conditions inside the compound are worse than we can describe. Please give us help."^[82]

"Case 16 – A Chinese girl named Loh, who, with her mother and brother, was living in one of the Refugee Centers in the Refugee Zone, was shot through the head and killed by a Japanese soldier. The girl was 14 years old. The incident occurred near the Kuling Ssu, a noted temple on the border of the Refugee zone ..."^[82]

"Case 19 – January 30th, about 5 p.m. Mr. Sone (of the Nanking Theological Seminary) was greeted by several hundred women pleading with him that they would not have to go home on February 4th. They said it was no use going home they might just as well be killed for staying at the camp as to be raped, robbed or killed at home. ... One old woman 62 years old went home near Hansimen and Japanese soldiers came at night and wanted to rape her. She said she was too old. So the soldiers rammed a stick up her. But she survived to come back."^[82]

It is said that Rabe rescued between 200,000 and 250,000 Chinese people.^{[83][84]}

Causes

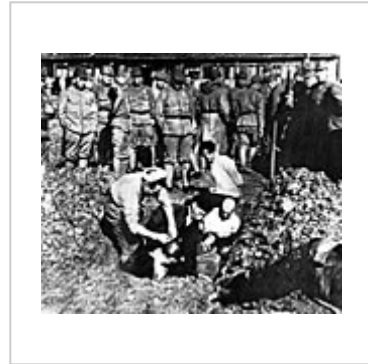
Jonathan Spence writes "there is no obvious explanation for this grim event, nor can one be found. The Japanese soldiers, who had expected easy victory, instead had been fighting hard for months and had taken infinitely higher casualties than anticipated. They were bored, angry, frustrated, tired. The Chinese women were undefended, their menfolk powerless or absent. The war, still undeclared, had no clear-cut goal or purpose. Perhaps all Chinese, regardless of sex or age, seemed marked out as victims."^[85]



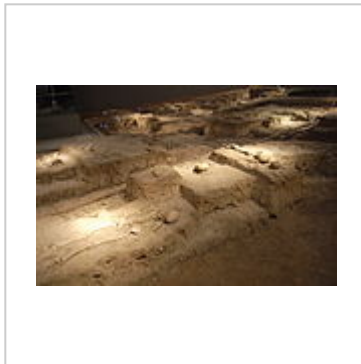
Photo in the album taken in Nanjing by Itou Kaneo of the Kisarazu Air Unit of the Japanese Navy.



A picture of a dead child. Probably taken by Bernhard Sindberg.



Prisoners being buried alive.^[86]



Skeletons of the massacre's victims.

Matsui's reaction to the massacre

On December 18, 1937, as General Iwane Matsui began to comprehend the full extent of the rape, murder, and looting in the city, he grew increasingly dismayed. He reportedly told one of his civilian aides: "I now realize that we have unknowingly wrought a most grievous effect on this city. When I think of the feelings and sentiments of many of my Chinese friends who have fled from Nanking and of the future of the two countries, I cannot but feel depressed. I am very lonely and can never get in a mood to rejoice about this victory ... I personally feel sorry for the tragedies to the people, but the Army must continue unless China repents. Now, in the winter, the season gives time to reflect. I offer my sympathy, with deep emotion, to a million innocent people."

On New Year's Day, over a toast he confided to a Japanese diplomat: "My men have done something very wrong and extremely regrettable."^[87]

End of the massacre

In late January 1938, the Japanese army forced all refugees in the Safety Zone to return home, immediately claiming to have "restored order". After the establishment of the *weixin zhengfu* (the collaborating government) in 1938, order was gradually restored in Nanking and atrocities by Japanese troops lessened considerably.

On 18 February 1938, the Nanking Safety Zone International Committee was forcibly renamed "*Nanking International Rescue Committee*", and the Safety Zone effectively ceased to function. The last refugee camps were closed in May 1938.

Recall of Matsui and Asaka

In February 1938 both Prince Asaka and General Matsui were recalled to Japan. Matsui returned to retirement, but Prince Asaka remained on the Supreme War Council until the end of the war in August 1945. He was promoted to the rank of general in August 1939, though he held no further military commands.^[42]

Death toll estimates

Estimates of the number of victims vary based on the definitions of the geographical range and the duration of the event.

The extent of the atrocities is debated,^[64] with numbers ranging from some Japanese claims of several hundred,^[65] to the Chinese claim of a non-combatant death toll of 300,000.^[62] Historian Tokushi Kasahara states "more than 100,000 and close to 200,000, or maybe more", referring to his own book.^[88] This estimation includes the surrounding area outside of the city of Nanking, which is objected to by a Chinese researcher (the same book, p. 146). Hiroshi Yoshida concludes "more than 200,000" in his book.^[89] Tomio Hora writes of 50,000–100,000 deaths.^[90]

Mainstream scholars consider figures from 40,000 to over 300,000 to be an accurate estimate. According to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, estimates made at a later date indicate that the total number of civilians and prisoners of war murdered in Nanking and its vicinity during the first six weeks of the Japanese occupation was up to 200,000. These estimates are borne out by the figures of burial societies and other organizations, which testify to over 155,000 buried bodies. These figures also do not take into account those persons whose bodies were destroyed by burning, drowning or other means, or whose bodies were interred in mass graves.^[63]

According to the verdict of the Nanjing War Crimes Tribunal on 10 March 1947, there are "more than 190,000 mass slaughtered civilians and Chinese soldiers killed by machine gun by the Japanese army, whose corpses have been burned to destroy proof. Besides, we count more than 150,000 victims of barbarian acts buried by the charity organizations. We thus have a total of more than 300,000 victims."^[91] However, this estimate includes an accusation that the Japanese Army murdered 57,418 Chinese POWs at Mufushan, though the latest research indicates that between 4,000 and 20,000 were massacred,^{[92][93]} and it also includes the 112,266 corpses allegedly buried by the Chongshantang, a charitable association, though today mainstream historians agree that the Chongshantang's records were at least greatly exaggerated if not entirely fabricated.^{[94][95][96]} Bob Wakabayashi concludes from this that estimates of over 200,000 are not credible.^[95] Ikuhiko Hata considers the number 300,000 to be a "symbolic figure" representative of China's wartime suffering and not a figure to be taken literally.^[97]

Some researchers estimate that between 40,000 and 60,000 people were killed, which corresponds to the figures from three sources; one is the Red Army's official journal of the time, *Hangdibao* and another is that of Miner Searle Bates of the International Safety Zone Committee, and the third is the aforementioned figure written by John Rabe in a letter.^[1] John Rabe, Chairman of the International Committee and Nanking Safety Zone, estimated that between 50,000 and 60,000 (civilians) were killed.^[2] However, Erwin Wickert, the editor of *The diaries of John Rabe*, points out that "It is

likely that Rabe's estimate is too low, since he could not have had an overview of the entire municipal area during the period of the worst atrocities. Moreover, many troops of captured Chinese soldiers were led out of the city and down to the Yangtze, where they were summarily executed. But, as noted, no one actually counted the dead."

The casualty count of 300,000 was first promulgated in January 1938 by Harold Timperley, a journalist in China during the Japanese invasion, based on reports from contemporary eyewitnesses.^[2] Other sources, including Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking*, also conclude that the death toll reached 300,000. In December 2007, newly declassified U.S. government archive documents revealed that a telegraph by the U.S. ambassador to Germany in Berlin sent one day after the Japanese army occupied Nanking, stated that he heard the Japanese Ambassador in Germany boasting that Japanese army killed 500,000 Chinese people as the Japanese army advanced from Shanghai to Nanking. According to the archives research "The telegrams sent by the U.S. diplomats [in Berlin] pointed to the massacre of an estimated half a million people in Shanghai, Suzhou, Jiaxing, Hangzhou, Shaoxing, Wuxi and Changzhou".^{[98][99]}

In the 2010 Japan–China Joint History Research Committee meeting, scholars from the Japanese side set the maximum possible number of civilian victims at 200,000, with estimates of around 40,000 or 20,000. The Chinese scholars of the committee maintained that at least 300,000 were killed.^[100]

Range and duration

The most conservative viewpoint is that the geographical area of the incident should be limited to the few km² of the city known as the Safety Zone, where the civilians gathered after the invasion. Many Japanese historians seized upon the fact that during the Japanese invasion there were only 200,000–250,000 citizens in Nanking as reported by John Rabe, to argue that the PRC's estimate of 300,000 deaths is a vast exaggeration.

However, many historians include a much larger area around the city. Including the Xiaguan district (the suburbs north of Nanking, about 31 km² in size) and other areas on the outskirts of the city, the population of greater Nanking was running between 535,000 and 635,000 civilians and soldiers just prior to the Japanese occupation.^[101] Some historians also include six counties around Nanking, known as the Nanking Special Municipality.

The duration of the incident is naturally defined by its geography: the earlier the Japanese entered the area, the longer the duration. The Battle of Nanking ended on December 13, when the divisions of the Japanese Army entered the walled city of Nanking. The Tokyo War Crime Tribunal defined the period of the massacre to the ensuing six weeks. More conservative estimates say that the massacre started on December 14, when the troops entered the Safety Zone, and that it lasted for six weeks. Historians who define the Nanking Massacre as having started from the time that the Japanese Army entered Jiangsu province push the beginning of the massacre to around mid-November to early December (Suzhou fell on November 19), and stretch the end of the massacre to late March 1938.

To many Japanese scholars, post-war estimations were distorted by "victor's justice" when Japan was condemned as the sole aggressor. They believed the 300,000 toll typified the "Chinese-style exaggeration" with total disregard for evidence. Yet, in China, this figure has come to symbolize the justice, legality, and authority of the postwar trials condemning Japan as the aggressor.^[102]

Various estimates

Japanese historians, depending on their definition of the geographical and time duration of the killings, give wide-ranging estimates for the number of massacred civilians, from several thousand to upwards of 200,000.^[103] The lowest estimate by a Japanese historian is 40,000.^[104]

Chinese language sources tend to place the figure of massacred civilians upwards of 200,000.^[103]

200,000 Nanking population debate

Japanese sources claim that there were only 200,000 population in Nanking, thus the 300,000 death toll is impossible. In 2003, Zhang Lianhong, professor of Nanjing Massacre Research Center in Nanjing Normal University, published an article in Beijing Daily, in which he used historical fact to show that the population of Nanjing urban area was between 367,000 and 467,000, and the overall Nanjing population was between 535,000 and 635,000 to refute the 200,000 population claim.^[105]

War crimes tribunals

Shortly after the surrender of Japan, the primary officers in charge of the Japanese troops at Nanking were put on trial. General Matsui was indicted before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East for "deliberately and recklessly" ignoring his legal duty "to take adequate steps to secure the observance and prevent breaches" of the Hague Convention. Hisao Tani, the lieutenant general of the 6th Division of the Japanese army in Nanking, was tried by the Nanjing War Crimes Tribunal.

Other Japanese military leaders in charge at the time of the Nanking Massacre were not tried. Prince Kan'in, chief of staff of the Imperial Japanese Army during the massacre, had died before the end of the war in May 1945. Prince Asaka was granted immunity because of his status as a member of the imperial family.^[106]

^[107] Isamu Chō, the aide to Prince Asaka, and whom some historians believe issued the "kill all captives" memo, had committed suicide during the Battle of Okinawa.^[108]



The International Military Tribunal for the Far East was convened at "Ichigaya Court," formally Imperial Japanese Army HQ building in Ichigaya, Tokyo.



General Iwane Matsui^[109]



General Hisao Tani^[110]

Grant of immunity to Prince Asaka

On May 1, 1946, SCAP officials interrogated Prince Asaka, who was the ranking officer in the city at the height of the atrocities, about his involvement in the Nanking Massacre and the deposition was submitted to the International Prosecution Section of the Tokyo tribunal. Asaka denied the existence of any massacre and claimed never to have received complaints about the conduct of his troops.^[111]

Evidence and testimony

The prosecution began the Nanking phase of its case in July 1946. Dr. Robert O. Wilson, a surgeon and a member of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone, took the witness stand first. Other members of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone who took the witness stand included Miner Searle Bates and John Magee. George A. Fitch, Lewis S. C. Smythe, and James McCallum filed affidavits with their diaries and letters.

Another piece of evidence that was submitted to the tribunal was Harold Timperley's telegram regarding the Nanking Massacre which had been intercepted and decoded by the Americans on January 17, 1938. One of the books by Hsü, Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone, was also adduced in court. According to Matsui's own diary, one day after he made the ceremonial triumphal entry into the city on December 17, 1937, he instructed the chiefs of staff from each division to tighten military discipline and try to eradicate the sense of disdain for Chinese people among their soldiers.

On February 7, 1938, Matsui delivered a speech at a memorial service for the Japanese officers and men of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force who were killed in action. In front of the high-ranking officers, Domei News Agency reported, he emphasized the necessity to "put an end to various reports affecting the prestige of the Japanese troops."

The entry for the same day in Matsui's diary read, "I could only feel sadness and responsibility today, which has been overwhelmingly piercing my heart. This is caused by the Army's misbehaviors after the fall of Nanking and failure to proceed with the autonomous government and other political plans."

Matsui's defense

Matsui's defence varied between denying the mass-scale atrocities and evading his responsibility for what had happened. Eventually he ended up making numerous conflicting statements. In the interrogation in Sugamo prison preceding the trial Matsui admitted that he heard about the many outrages committed by his troops from Japanese diplomats when he entered Nanking on December 17, 1937.

In court, he contradicted the earlier testimony and told the judges that he was not "officially" briefed at the consulate about the evildoings, presumably to avoid admitting any contact with the consulate officials such as Second Secretary (later Acting Consul-General) Fukui Kiyoshi and Attaché Fukuda Tokuyasu who received and dealt with the protests filed by the International Committee.

In the same interrogation session before the trial Matsui said one officer and three low-ranking soldiers were court-martialled because of their misbehavior in Nanking and the officer was sentenced to death. In his affidavit Matsui said he ordered his officers to investigate the massacre and to take necessary action. In court, however, Matsui said that he did not have jurisdiction over the soldiers' misconduct since he was not in the position of supervising military discipline and morals.

Matsui asserted that he had never ordered the execution of Chinese POWs. He further argued that he had directed his army division commanders to discipline their troops for criminal acts, and was not responsible for their failure to carry out his directives. At trial, Matsui went out of his way to protect Prince Asaka by shifting blame to lower ranking division commanders.^[112]



Harold John Timperley's telegram of 17 January 1938 describing the atrocities.

Verdict

Kōki Hirota, who had been the Foreign Minister when Japan conquered Nanking, was convicted of participating in "the formulation or execution of a common plan or conspiracy" (count 1), waging "a war of aggression and a war in violation of international laws, treaties, agreements and assurances against the Republic of China" (count 27) and count 55. Matsui was convicted by a majority of the judges at the Tokyo tribunal who ruled that he bore ultimate responsibility for the "orgy of crime" at Nanking because, "He did nothing, or nothing effective, to abate these horrors."

Organized and wholesale murder of male civilians was conducted with the apparent sanction of the commanders on the pretext that Chinese soldiers had removed their uniforms and were mingling with the population. Groups of Chinese civilians were formed, bound with their hands behind their backs, and marched outside the walls of the city where they were killed in groups by machine gun fire and with bayonets. --- From Judgment of the International Military Tribunal

Sentence

On November 12, 1948, Matsui and Hirota, along with five other convicted Class-A war criminals, were sentenced to death by hanging. Eighteen others received lesser sentences. The death sentence imposed on Hirota, a six-to-five decision by the eleven judges, shocked the general public and prompted a petition on his behalf, which soon gathered over 300,000 signatures but did not succeed in commuting the Minister's sentence.^{[113][114]}

General Hisao Tani was sentenced to death by the Nanking War Crimes Tribunal.^[112]

Memorials

- In 1985, the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall was built by the Nanking Municipal Government in remembrance of the victims and to raise awareness of the Nanking Massacre. It is located near a site where thousands of bodies were buried, called the "pit of ten thousand corpses" (*wàn rén kēng*). As of December 2016, there are total 10,615 Nanjing Massacre victim names inscribed on a memorial wall.^[115]
- In 1995, Daniel Kwan held a photograph exhibit in Los Angeles titled, "The Forgotten Holocaust".
- In 2005, John Rabe's former residence in Nanking was renovated and now accommodates the "John Rabe and International Safety Zone Memorial Hall", which opened in 2006.
- On December 13, 2009, both the Chinese and Japanese monks hold religious assembly to mourn Chinese civilians killed by invading Japanese troops.^[116]
- On December 13, 2014, China held its first Nanjing Massacre memorial day.^[117]

On October 9, 2015, Documents of Nanjing Massacre have been listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.^[118]



Yanziji Nanjing Massacre Memorial in 2004.



A memorial stone at Yanziji in Nanjing, for victims in Nanjing Massacre.



John Rabe's former residence, now the "John Rabe and International Safety Zone Memorial Hall", in Nanking, July 2008.

Controversy

China and Japan have both acknowledged the occurrence of wartime atrocities. Disputes over the historical portrayal of these events continue to cause tensions between Japan on one side and China and other East Asian countries on the other side.

Cold War

Before the 1970s, China did relatively little to draw attention to the Nanking massacre. In her book *Rape of Nanking*, Iris Chang asserted that the politics of the Cold War encouraged Chairman Mao to stay relatively silent about Nanking in order to keep a trade relationship with Japan.

Debate in Japan

The major waves of Japanese treatment of these events have ranged from total cover-up during the war, confessions and documentation by the Japanese soldiers during the 1950s and 1960s, minimization of the extent of the Nanking Massacre during the 1970s and 1980s, official Japanese government distortion and rewriting of history during the 1980s, and total denial of the occurrence of the Nanking Massacre by some government officials in 1990.^[119]

The debate concerning the massacre took place mainly in the 1970s. During this time, the Chinese government's statements about the event were attacked by the Japanese because they were said to rely too heavily on personal testimonies and anecdotal evidence. Aspersions were cast regarding the authenticity and accuracy of burial records and photographs presented in the Tokyo War Crime Court, which the Japanese government claimed were fabrications by the Chinese government, artificially manipulated or incorrectly attributed to the Nanking Massacre.^[120]

During the 1970s, Katsuichi Honda wrote a series of articles for the *Asahi Shimbun* on war crimes committed by Japanese soldiers during World War II (such as the Nanking Massacre).^[121] The publication of these articles triggered a vehement response from Japanese right-wingers regarding the Japanese treatment of the war crimes. In response, Shichihei Yamamoto^[122] and Akira Suzuki^[123] wrote two controversial yet influential articles which sparked the negationist movement.

In 1984, in an attempt to refute the allegations of war crimes in Nanking, the Japanese Army Veterans Association (Kaikosha) interviewed former Japanese soldiers who had served in the Nanking area from 1937–38. Instead of refuting the allegations, the interviewed veterans confirmed that a massacre had taken place and openly described and admitted to taking part in the atrocities. The results of the survey were published in the association's magazine, *Kaiko*, in 1985 along with an admission and apology that read, "Whatever the severity of war or special circumstances of war psychology, we just lose words faced with this mass illegal killing. As those who are related to the prewar military, we simply apologize deeply to the people of China. It was truly a regrettable act of barbarity."^[20]

Apology and condolences by the Prime Minister and Emperor of Japan

On August 15, 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the Surrender of Japan, the Japanese prime minister Tomiichi Murayama gave the first clear and formal apology for Japanese actions during the war. He apologized for Japan's aggression and the great suffering that it inflicted in Asia.

He offered his apology to all survivors and to the relatives and friends of the victims. That day, the prime minister and the Japanese Emperor Akihito pronounced statements of mourning at Tokyo's Nippon Budokan. The emperor offered his condolences and expressed the hope that such atrocities would never be repeated. Iris Chang, author of *The Rape of Nanking*, criticized Murayama for not providing the written apology that had been expected. She said that the people of China "don't believe that an... unequivocal and sincere apology has ever been made by Japan to China" and that a written apology from Japan would send a better message to the international community.^[19]

Denials of the massacre by public officials in Japan

In May 1994, Justice Minister Shigeto Nagano called the Nanjing Massacre a "fabrication".^[124]

On June 19, 2007, a group of around 100 Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers again denounced the Nanjing Massacre as a fabrication, arguing that there was no evidence to prove the allegations of mass killings by Japanese soldiers. They accused Beijing of using the alleged incident as a "political advertisement".^[125] ^[126]

On February 20, 2012, Takashi Kawamura, mayor of Nagoya, told a visiting delegation from Nanjing that the massacre "probably never happened". Two days later he defended his remarks, saying, "Even since I was a national Diet representative, I have said [repeatedly] there was no [Nanjing] massacre that resulted in murders of several hundred thousands of people."^[127]^[128] On April 1, 2013, Kawamura said his position remained unchanged when the issue came up during an election debate.^[129]

On February 24, 2012, Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara said that he also believes that the Nanjing massacre never happened. He reportedly claims it would have been impossible to kill so many people in such a short period of time.^[130] He believes the actual death toll was 10,000.^[131]

On February 3, 2014, Naoki Hyakuta, a member of the board of governors of Japan's public broadcasting company, NHK, was quoted as saying the massacre never occurred.^[132] He said that there were isolated incidents of brutality but no widespread atrocity, and criticized the Tokyo Trials figure of 200,000.^[133]

Legacy

Effect on international relations

The memory of the Nanking Massacre has been a stumbling block in Sino-Japanese relations since the early 1970s. Bilateral exchanges on trade, culture and education have increased greatly since the two countries normalized their bilateral relations and Japan became China's most important trading partner.^[134] Trade between the two nations is worth over \$200 billion annually. Despite this, many Chinese people still have a strong sense of mistrust and animosity toward Japan that originates from the memory of Japanese war crimes such as the Nanking Massacre. This sense of mistrust is strengthened by the belief that Japan is unwilling to admit to and apologize for the atrocities.^[135]

Takashi Yoshida described how changing political concerns and perceptions of the "national interest" in Japan, China, and the U.S. have shaped collective memory of the Nanking massacre. Yoshida contended that over time the event has acquired different meanings to different people. People from mainland China saw themselves as the victims. For Japan, it was a question they needed to answer, but were reluctant to do so because they too identified themselves as victims after the A-bombs. The U.S., which served as the melting pot of cultures and is home to descendants of members of both of Chinese and Japanese cultures, took up the mantle of investigator for the victimized Chinese. Yoshida has argued that the Nanking Massacre has figured in the attempts of all three nations as they work to preserve and redefine national and ethnic pride and identity, assuming different kinds of significance based on each country's changing internal and external enemies.^[136]

Many Japanese prime ministers have visited the Yasukuni Shrine, a shrine for Japanese war deaths up until the end of the Second World War, which includes war criminals that were involved in the Nanking Massacre. In the museum adjacent to the shrine, a panel informs visitors that there was no massacre in Nanjing, but that Chinese soldiers in plain clothes were "dealt with severely". In 2006 former Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi made a pilgrimage to the shrine despite warnings from China and South Korea. His decision to visit the shrine regardless sparked international outrage. Although Koizumi denied that he was trying to glorify war or historical Japanese militarism, The Chinese Foreign Ministry accused Koizumi of "wrecking the political foundations of China-Japan relations". An official from South Korea said they would summon the Tokyo ambassador to protest.^{[137][138][139][140]}

As a component of national identity

Yoshida asserts that "Nanking has figured in the attempts of all three nations [China, Japan and the United States] to preserve and redefine national and ethnic pride and identity, assuming different kinds of significance based on each country's changing internal and external enemies."^[141]

Japan

In Japan, the Nanking Massacre touches upon national identity and notions of "pride, honor and shame". Yoshida argues that "Nanking crystallizes a much larger conflict over what should constitute the ideal perception of the nation: Japan, as a nation, acknowledges its past and apologizes for its wartime wrongdoings; or ... stands firm against foreign pressures and teaches Japanese youth about the benevolent and courageous martyrs who fought a just war to save Asia from Western aggression."^[142] Recognizing the Nanking Massacre as such can be viewed in some circles in Japan as "Japan bashing" (in the case of foreigners) or "self-flagellation" (in the case of Japanese).

The government of Japan believe it can not be denied that the killing of a large number of noncombatants, looting and other acts by Japanese army occurred. However, the actual number of victims is hard to be determined according to government of Japan.^[143] In the 2010 Japan-China Joint History Research Committee meeting, scholars from the Japanese side set the maximum possible number of civilian victims at 200,000, with estimates of around 40,000 or 20,000. The Chinese scholars of the committee maintained that at least 300,000 were killed.^{[100][144]} Range of death toll estimated by Japanese historians are from tens of thousand to 200,000.^{[145][146]}

According to a brief reference to Nanking at the Yasukuni museum in Tokyo, the Japanese general in charge gave his men maps showing foreign settlements and a civilian "safety zone", and ordered them to maintain strict military discipline. The visitor is left to assume they did. The museum notes only that "Chinese soldiers disguised in civilian clothes, which numbered around 4000^[47] were severely prosecuted".

This nationalist view does not, however, represent a widely shared understanding of what happened at Nanking, as illustrated by Japanese textbooks' rather different treatment of the atrocity. While the books' take on Nanking is stilted and feels like the product of a committee, in various versions they acknowledge the deaths of thousands of Chinese including women and children, as well as looting, arson and assaults by Japanese soldiers. They do not spell out the sexual nature of these assaults.

"During this period, when the Japanese Army occupied Nanjing it killed a large number of Chinese and carried out looting, arson and assaults. In regard to the number of victims of this Nanjing Massacre... the Tokyo (War Crime) Trials later found it in excess of 200,000, and prosecuted Japan's responsibility severely," reads one Japanese textbook.^[147]

Another history textbook prepared by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, which had been approved by the government in 2001, attempts to whitewash Japan's war record during the 1930s and early 1940s. It referred to the Nanjing massacre as an "incident", and glossed over the issue of comfort women.^[148] Indeed, there is only one sentence that refers to this event: "they [the Japanese troops] occupied that city in December."^[149]

China

The Nanking massacre has emerged as one fundamental keystone in the construction of the modern Chinese national identity.^[150] Modern Chinese (including citizens of the PRC, Taiwan, and overseas) will refer to the Nanking Massacre to explain certain stances they hold or ideas they have; this 'national unifying event' holds true to middle-school educated peasants and to senior government officials alike.

In popular culture

Digital archive

- "The Nanking Massacre Project: A Digital Archive of Documents & Photographs from American Missionaries Who Witnessed the Rape of Nanking" (<http://divinity-adhoc.library.yale.edu/Nanking/Photographs.html>). *The Special Collections of the Yale Divinity School Library*.

Films

- *Nanking* (1938), a war propaganda film released by the Japanese government. This film, rediscovered in 1995, appears to portray a peacefully occupied Nanking, but the film professor Jinshi Fujii has expressed doubts that the location being shown is actually Nanking, and about the content of the film generally.^[151]
- *The Battle of China* (1944) a documentary film by American director Frank Capra.^[152] The footage of Nanking atrocities in this film may be sourced to a Chinese-made documentary which Prince Mikasa showed to Hirohito, but which has since been lost.^[153]
- *Black Sun: The Nanking Massacre* (1995), by Chinese director Mou Tun Fei, recreates the events of the Nanking Massacre.
- *Don't Cry, Nanking aka (Nanjing 1937)* (1995) directed by Wu Ziniu is a historical fiction centering on a Chinese doctor, his Japanese wife, and their children, as they experience the siege, fall, and massacre of Nanking.
- *Horror in the East* (2000),^[154] a documentary film produced by Laurence Rees for BBC, an examination of atrocities and depredations committed by Imperial Japanese military forces, from 1931 to 1945. Includes Japanese film of indoctrination (Emperor worship, Chinese as subhuman) and brutal training of their armed forces, as well as film of

the Nanking Massacre itself taken by John Magee.

- *The Tokyo Trial* (2006) is about the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.
- *The Children of Huang Shi* (film) (2008) is inspired by the story of the English journalist George Hogg who took pictures of the Nanking Massacre, escaped death by beheading, and fled to the orphanage in Huang Shi.
- *Nanking* (2007), directed by Bill Guttentag and Dan Sturman, that makes use of letters and diaries from the era as well as archive footage and interviews with surviving victims and those involved in the massacre.
- *The Truth about Nanjing* (2007),^[155] a documentary by Satoru Mizushima denying that any such massacre took place.
- *City of Life and Death* (2009) directed by Lu Chuan, a dramatization of the Nanking Massacre.
- *John Rabe* (2009) directed by Florian Gallenberger, a Sino-German co-production about the life of John Rabe, featuring Ulrich Tukur in the title role and Steve Buscemi in a supporting role.^{[156][157]}
- *Torn Memories of Nanjing* (2009) directed by Tamaki Matsuoka. Documentary featuring interviews with Japanese soldiers who admit to raping and killing Chinese civilians, and accounts by Chinese survivors.
- *The Flowers of War* (2011) directed by Zhang Yimou and starring Christian Bale and Shigeo Kobayashi based on *The 13 Women of Nanjing* by Geling Yan

Literature

Fiction

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Music

- Norwegian thrash metal band Blood Tsunami also wrote a song about the incident, titled "The Rape of Nanking"
- American thrash metal band Exodus wrote a song about the incident titled "Nanking"; the song was featured on their album *Exhibit B: The Human Condition* (2010).
- Chinese composer Bright Sheng wrote a piece titled *Nanking! Nanking! (A Threnody for Orchestra and Pipa)* (2000); he intended the piece to be "written in memory of the victims, not a recreation of the barbarity"^[158]

TV series

- *War and Destiny* (2007) is a story about life in Nanking up until and during the Japanese invasion

Records

In December 2007, the PRC government published the names of 13,000 people who were killed by Japanese troops in the Nanking Massacre. According to *Xinhua News Agency*, it is the most complete record to date.^[159] The report consists of eight volumes and was released to mark the 70th anniversary of the start of the massacre. It also lists the Japanese army units that were responsible for each of the deaths and states the way in which the victims were killed. Zhang Xianwen, editor-in-chief of the report, states that the information collected was based on "a combination of Chinese, Japanese and Western raw materials, which is objective and just and is able to stand the trial of history."^[159] This report formed part of a 55-volume series (Collection of Historical Materials of Nanjing Massacre (*南京大屠杀史料集*)) about the massacre.

See also

- [2005 anti-Japanese demonstrations](#)
- [Bataan Death March](#)
- [Burma Railway](#)
- [Changde chemical weapon attack](#)
- [Comfort women](#)
- [Finding Iris Chang](#)
- [Japanese human experimentation on the Chinese](#)
- [Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform](#)
- [Jinan Incident](#)
- [Kaimingjie germ weapon attack](#)
- [Masanobu Tsuji](#)
- [Red Swastika Society](#)
- [Three Alls Policy](#)
- [Shiro Azuma](#)
- [Sook Ching](#)
- [Unit 100](#)
- [Unit 731](#)

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Notes

1. Quote: "The Japanese Army, one million strong, has already conquered **Changshu**. We have surrounded the city of Nanking... The Japanese Army shall show no mercy toward those who offer resistance, treating them with extreme severity, but shall harm neither innocent civilians nor Chinese military [personnel] who manifest no hostility. It is our earnest desire to preserve the East Asian culture. If your troops continue to fight, war in Nanking is inevitable. The culture that has endured for a millennium will be reduced to ashes, and the government that has lasted for a decade will vanish into thin air. This commander-in-chief issues [b]ills to your troops on behalf of the Japanese Army. Open the gates to Nanking in a peaceful manner, and obey the [f]ollowing instructions."

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External links

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This page was last edited on 20 May 2018, at 21:51.

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