

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

**The Nanking Massacre: Analysis of Japanese and Chinese  
Interpretation and Remembrance of Nanking 1940s-The Present**

By

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## Abstract

This study examines the 1937 Nanking massacre and the atrocities, it focuses on how the events that took place in Nanking have affected the way history in Japan and China is written. This essay will shed light upon the effects of the Nanking Massacre in Japanese and Chinese historiography of the event by examining the various historiographies of each country in regards to the massacre. This study takes an analysis of why there are failing parallels between how China and western societies review the incident versus Japan's interpretation. To help facilitate the dispute between what happened and how the massacre is remembered in regards to Nanking, this study will examine a court debate in the 1970's of a one hundred man killing contest amongst Japanese officers, Japan's education system of the early eighties and nineties where history textbooks used in Japanese high schools were found to have language that isolated, that is, the language used in Japanese texts books used language that perceived Japan as a non-aggressor in the Second Sino-Japanese War, as well as some of the knowledge of what happened in Nanking in 1937 not being fully analyzed studied to the extent of which the rest of the world remembered the incident. I will synthesize my own interpretation and provide my opinion on what reasons produced the failing parallels amongst Japanese and Chinese historians and politicians alike. Primary sources include *Wilson Family Papers*, *Documents on the Rape of Nanking* and *The Dissenting Opinion of Radhabinod Pal*. Some secondary sources include articles related to the Nanking Massacre and Japanese Education Ministry such as *Isolating knowledge of the Unpleasant: The Rape of Nanking in Japanese High School textbooks*, *The Nanjing Massacre: in History and Historiography*.

### *Historical Significance and Background*

Before heading into an analysis of my research throughout this essay, providing readers with a historical background of what happened in Nanking December 1937 is significant to understanding and synthesizing why the events happened and how they are historically significant. By doing so, readers will then be able to synthesize and reflect upon the analysis of my research and reach an opinion of their own or bring up questions to ponder for my audience, and provide for a better understanding of my analysis.

“War crimes and genocide,” when people think of this saying, surely the first incident that probably comes to mind is the Holocaust and with that the Nuremberg Trials and The Final Solution which in themselves are important historical events that students and scholars alike should recognize and respect. But, looking to the Nanking Massacre can provide interesting insight by examining the interpretations of the event afterwards, for nearly three decades the massacre was a forgotten event in much of Chinese history and Japanese history from 1940-1970, amongst Chinese scholars and politicians and their Japanese counterparts alike. These groups have affected the way history was written and how it has affected the relations between these two countries. Examining the differences in historiographies amongst Chinese and

Japanese scholars and politicians is what this thesis focuses in on, and why the Nanking Massacre did not become a stage of debate amongst aforementioned groups until the 1970's and how since the 70's the disagreement upon the Nanking Massacre, has affected the education and relationship between China and Japan. These are reasons why examining the Nanking Massacre is significant and worth studying.

During the month of December, 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army launched a full assault on the former capital city of China, Nanking which was controlled by the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-shek's rule.<sup>1</sup> During the Second Sino-Japanese War, which was an imperial war fought on the pacific theater of World War II where the Japanese Imperial Army was viewed as an aggressor becomes the hotbed for debate thirty years after the incident. The Japanese believed by occupying the capital city it would hopefully bring an end to the Second Sino-Japanese War.<sup>2</sup> These are significant to note because in the latter parts of this essay, the view of Japan as an aggressor during their occupation of Nanking becomes fodder for a heated argument amongst Japanese and Chinese educators and scholars from the 1980s-1990s.

This is where the massacre began, over a six week period the Japanese Imperial Army systematically raped, looted, and killed Chinese POWs, and civilians including women and children.<sup>3</sup> The atrocities that were carried out during this occupation of Nanking are unimaginable. Some of the examples of inhumane acts against peoples included rape. Lewis S.C. Smythe, an American Christian missionary who served as secretary of the International

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<sup>1</sup> Minoru Kitamura, Hal Gold, and Minoru Kitamura, *The Politics of Nanjing: An Impartial Investigation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007), pg. #26.

<sup>2</sup> Masahiro Yamamoto, "Fall of Nanking," in *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity*(Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), pg. #61.

<sup>3</sup> Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*(New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1997), pg. #46.

Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone, wrote in his *Cases of Disorder by Japanese Soldiers*. In these cases of disorder Lewis S.C. Smythe kept accounts of rape he witnessed within the Nanking Safety Zone. These documents were kept by Smythe to be later sent to Mr. Tokuyasu Fukuda the diplomat of the Japanese embassy of what he saw.<sup>4</sup> In document number eight, on example number four Smythe writes of an account of rape he witnessed:

On the night of December 15, last night, seven Japanese soldiers entered the University of Nanjing library building and took seven Chinese women refugees three of whom were raped on the spot. (Full details of this case will be filed by Dr. M.S. Bates Chairman of the University of Nanking Emergency Committee.)<sup>5</sup>

This is just one of the many other accounts of rape that had happened in Nanking. Providing insight upon the rape provides perspective on the kind of rape that the Japanese occupying Nanking were partaking in, which could be described as many different adjectives, but in this case describing the rape as systematic suits the best and is recognized more formally by scholars. This is significant in the way the historiography of the Nanking Massacre is remembered and written because in education textbooks used in Japan from the 1980s-90s some of the language used to justify these types of actions were changed from rape to Japanese soldiers using these women and victims as “comfort” women.

Systematic genocidal murder also assisted in making the Nanking Massacre to be a chilling atrocity. In an eyewitness account of F. Tillman, a correspondent for *The New York Times* wrote of what he saw in his reports:

Thousands of prisoners were executed by the Japanese. Most of the Chinese who had been interned in the safety zone were shot in masses. The

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<sup>4</sup>Timothy Brook, *Documents on the Rape of Nanking* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pg. #10..

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

city was bombed in a systematic house-to-house search for men having knapsack marks on their shoulders or other signs of having been soldiers. They were herded together and executed. Many were killed where they were found, including men innocent of any army connections and many wounded soldiers and civilians. I witnessed three mass executions of prisoners within a few hours Wednesday. In one slaughter a tank gun was turned on a group of more than 100 soldiers at a bomb shelter near the Ministry of Communications. A favorite method of execution was to herd groups of a dozen men at entrances of dugout and to shoot them so the bodies toppled inside. Dirt then shoveled in and the men buried. Since the beginning of the Japanese assault on Nanking the city presented a frightful appearance. The Chinese facilities for the care of army wounded were tragically inadequate, so as early as a week ago injured men were seen often on the streets, some hobbling, others crawling along seeking treatment.<sup>6</sup>

Tillman's account of what he saw is just a small example of what kinds of atrocities the Japanese Imperial Army endeavored during their six week occupation of Nanking, and it provides insight upon the incident which will help provide context of why there are disagreements amongst Chinese and Japanese interpretations of the event. This example is also important because amongst this heinous act and many others, Japanese revisionist, the conservative skeptics of the Nanking Massacre, created arguments that denounced the soldiers ability to carry out acts like that of Tillman's excerpt.

After the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II there was an International Military Tribunal for the Far East. This was a court held in Tokyo, Japan after the war, where war criminals were tried. In the court hearing of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, there was *The United States of America and Others versus Araki Sadao and Others*.<sup>7</sup> This provides some background information and sets the stage for the debates to come in the future in disputes between China and Japan in regards to Nanking. It does so because in this military

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<sup>6</sup> F. Tillman, "All Captives Slain," review, *The New York Times*, December 18, 1937, pg. #10.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Brook, *Documents on the Rape of Nanking* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pg. #257

tribunal, among the Justices serving, Radhabinod Pal had a dissenting opinion of the charges against Araki Sadao and Others by laying out various flaws and objections he saw in the tribunal such as: the constitution and jurisdiction of the tribunal, and the tribunal's loose rules of evidence and procedure. Pal wrote in his judgment:

There is no evidence, testimonial or circumstantial, concomitant, prospectant, restrospectant, that would in any way lead to the inference that the government in any way permitted the commission of such offenses. I would, therefore, at once say that so far as ARAKI, HIRANUMA, HIROTA...are concerned, I do not find any evidence which would entitle me to infer that they or any of them in any way ordered, authorized or permitted the commission of these offenses; or that there was any such inaction or omission on their part which would indicate that these were really pursuant to their policy or that they desired or intended that such acts be done.<sup>8</sup>

Looking to the IMTFE (International Military Tribunal for the Far East) and its justice is significant in my study for Pal's judgment. It is significant because Pal's judgment is praised by those who insist that the IMTFE victimized Japan rather than brought justice, and has been attacked from other quarters for dismissing the notion that Japan should be the ones to bear responsibility for the wartime actions.<sup>9</sup> Because of this, Pal's judgment of the incident lead to his judgment ignored by most scholars and politicians alike outside of Japan. This creates an interesting historiography which is what this thesis is focusing on, how the historiography has affected the interpretation of the event and examines debates amongst the historiography between Chinese and Japanese historians and politicians. It will also examine and analyze internal debates amongst these groups.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Timothy Brook, *Documents on the Rape of Nanking* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pg. #18

## *Historiography*

Studying the historiography of any historical topic is imperative to understanding the deeper analysis. The historiography is what this essay takes a main focus on. By looking at the different interpretations and the historiography of the Nanking Massacre and their effects provides, insight upon how the debate between Chinese and Japanese scholars and politicians birthed in the 1970s. To help facilitate this interpretation of events examples of: debates amongst historians and politicians, the use of textbooks that used language that isolated knowledge of the Nanking Massacre will foster an understanding for readers, and hopefully provide insight as to why there is such a disagreement throughout history between China and Japan upon the Nanking Massacre.

The Chinese historiography of the Nanking Massacre is a very complex and interesting subject. In the Chinese historiography of the event there were two different phases of the interpretation and focus of the Nanking Massacre. The first phase which lead right after the end of the Second-Sino Japanese war is important to examine for it provides insight upon the agenda of the battling government groups in a civil war. The Kuomintang and the Communist Party were two groups that battled against each other in civil war. After the war (Second Sino-Japanese War) The Kuomintang and the Communist party did not focus on the massacre itself, but provides insight and reasoning behind how the actual historiography by the Chinese is birthed and how it shaped their historiographical view of the Nanking Massacre. By examining these factors of historical analysis and interpretation provides answers as to why the historiography is so complex.

In the years immediately after and before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, there was a civil war in China between the already established Kuomintang government

lead by Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist Party.<sup>10</sup> The Kuomintang who were in power and wanted to keep their power had an agenda that did not revel in victor's justice, but instead sought to defeat their communist rivals.<sup>11</sup> Victor's justice is a term used in describing the justice that had been brought to the Japanese during the IMTFE. China did not revel in the justice brought to Japan which was the court decisions by the IMFTE because the Kuomintang had an agenda that focused more on internal matters than the external ones (IMTFE Court Decisions). In order to keep up with their agenda, the Kuomintang were more interested in persecuting Han-Chien who were known as traitors to the Han race.<sup>12</sup> These were the Chinese that collaborated with the communist rivals of the Kuomintang. The Kuomintang from 1945-47 indicted 38,280 Chinese for treason as opposed to the 883 Japanese for war crimes in the IMTFE, and it sentenced 15,391 Chinese as to the 504 Japanese, to death or imprisonment on those charges.<sup>13</sup> They also refused to prosecute the Japanese responsible for massacres in the northern areas of China that were sympathetic to the Communists.<sup>14</sup> The Communist People's Republic prevailed in the civil war and took over the power of China in 1949<sup>15</sup>. The Chinese People's Republic had an agenda that prioritized anti-Kuomintang, anti-United States, anti-feudal, and anti-revolutionary ideas. The Communist People's Republic in the 1950's blamed Chiang for his incompetence as a leader because Chiang had fled from Nanking and abandoned the capital of the country. The Communist People's Republic also went to accuse United States resident in Nanking at the time of creating the Nanking Safety Zone as a place where Chinese could be easily targeted and rounded up for the atrocities, and "insinuated that United States residents of this time also

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<sup>10</sup> Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *The Nanking Atrocity, 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, vol. 2 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pg. #4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *The Nanking Atrocity, 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, vol. 2 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pg. #5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

entertained themselves during the massacre with wine, song, and dance, celebrated Christmas, and ate their fill of roast beef, roasted duck, sweet potatoes and other fresh food”.<sup>16</sup> China presumably had these interpretations of the event in this matter, for this period of time is during the Cold War, and America was seen as an enemy to communism and would hold negative connotations with that. Later in the 1980s, Communist People’s Republic leaders consolidated their regime, and regional Cold War tensions were eased which in turn lead to the Communist People’s Republic ease its anti-Kuomintang, anti-United States view despite the United States being an ally of Japan after World War II due to the fear of Communism.<sup>17</sup> This period of time is now when China and The Communist People’s Republic changed their focus of events, and instead of battling so passionately against the Kuomintang, now directed their agenda at putting the responsibility of the Nanking Massacre back to Japan where it should have been in the first place.

This period of time (1947-1980) in regards to the historiography of Nanking is important to examine for it provides insight upon the original views of historical actors in Nanking. The government’s agenda is a good explanation why the Nanking Massacre had been left on the backburner for so long in China. The country of China right after the end of the Second Sino-Japanese war was in turmoil for it was fighting in a civil war that kept governments more focused on internal issues and instilled a feeling of “forgive and forget” in regards to Nanking. In addition to this, China being a communist country during this time of the Cold War

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #9

<sup>17</sup> Joshua A. Fogel, *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pg. #41.

created this image of America and westerners depicted as enemies to communism which in turn provided little insight about what happened in Nanking for the country of China in the years leading up to the 1980's. For many of the historical actors that kept accounts of what they saw in Nanking and helped run the Nanking Safety Zone, were kept classified which would hinder any sort of new information coming to light. An example of this is of an eight chapter manuscript written and researched extensively by historians at Nanjing University in the 1960's which was compiled of photographs, new statistics, and interviews with survivors; and this manuscript of course had touched on the briefing of Nanking Safety Zone leaders meeting with the Japanese Imperial Army. It also described the briefing of the Nanking Safety Zone by Nanking Safety Zone leaders where they provided a tour to Japanese soldiers of the zone. Unfortunately, this manuscript was under control of the communist government, and the government exercised its direct political power. The Communist People's Republic turned these manuscripts into works used to condemn the western humanitarians by saying that the Safety Zone leaders were refusing to protest atrocities to the Japanese and even wined and dined while the Japanese carried out the massacre, but the Chinese government classified the manuscript instead of allowing its publication.<sup>18</sup>

The next phase or period of time (1980s) is important in discussing the historiography of the Nanking Massacre because this is where a shift in placing the responsibility of the massacre begins to become more of a focus. The Communist Party during this period had eased its relationship with their anti-United States views, and in turn created a new focus on Japan taking the responsibility of the Nanking Massacre.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #41

Now the Japanese creation of historiography of the Nanking Massacre. Japan's historiography of the events that happened in Nanking is also another interesting and complicated story, like the Chinese. The Japanese also had undertones from the Cold War effecting their historiography of the Nanking Massacre. This birthed a rift in how the massacre would be remembered. This created two different groups the first group known as progressives. This is the group that believes and takes responsibility for the Japanese Imperial Army's actions for the Nanking Massacre. Then there is the opposing group known as the revisionist who believe that the massacre was a lie and that some of the atrocities that happened in Nanking are fabricated or illusions. These groups were the two trains of thought known by scholars in history and by the politicians writing in the laws for education. But, nonetheless, it is important to examine because it helps set the stage for debates in the future of these two groups.

After the end of World War II and The Second-Sino Japanese war, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East is where Japan begins its historiography of the Nanking Massacre. The tribunal served as a stage for openly displaying Japanese wartime atrocities to the Japanese public. Japanese newspapers circulated the trial's detail throughout the country, and accounts of the Nanking Massacre finally became headline news.<sup>19</sup> Due to the punishments of the military tribunal, there was a mass purge of wartime political, economic, and social leaders from national and local offices, in the press, and private companies in conformity with guidelines established within the tribunal in 1946.<sup>20</sup> A result of this mass purge, teachers and administrative staff were relieved of their jobs from schools and school boards. Since Japanese educators were relieved of their positions: Japanese history, moral education, and geography were prohibited from being taught in school because of the prewar content of the subjects were regarded as

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #73

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*,pg. #76

militaristic and nationalistic by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (Douglas MacArthur, general of the United States army in the Pacific).<sup>21</sup> But, nearly a year after the International Military Tribunal for the Far East outcomes, and Douglas MacArthur banned the teaching of the Japanese history and took control of their historiography away. Japan in November of 1946 was permitted the instruction of their history to resume. Due to Japan being enabled to teach their history again, Rekishigaku Kenkyukai (Rekken, the Historical Science Society of Japan) engaged in their postwar meeting and reflected upon wartime national historical education that was used to lead Japan into the war. Unanimously the group agreed that they had to take responsibility for historical education, in order to keep the nation from engaging in war again. The people that were part of Rekken, the Historical Science Society of Japan will become known as progressive historians in Japanese historiography section of this essay. This is the group that questions the Nanking Massacre and raise questions of what happened during the occupation of the city. The progressive historians questioned why or how the revisionists came to the conclusions they did in regards to the Nanking Massacre. This group's historical train of thought is important, for they are a participant for debates to come. Before covering the debates, we must focus on more of what else is happening in Japan at this time. By doing so it helps provide an understanding of where the opponent of the progressives are derived from.

With the onset of the Cold War in 1946, there was a "red-purge" initiated by the American occupying force in Japan in the 1950's, and more than ten thousand members and sympathizers of the Japanese Communist Party were purged from the government, mass media, and the private sector.<sup>22</sup> Due to this newly perceived communist threat of the 1950s, Japan gained support from the United States and were encouraged to stop communism. The Japanese

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #78

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #74

Democratic Party sought to build a positive relationship with the United States. Additionally, they demanded that school textbooks are to be compiled by the state. The Japanese Democratic Party published a booklet in 1955 which insisted that Japanese textbooks were polluted by dangerous distortions and should be called “red textbooks.”<sup>23</sup> Due to this new communist threat, The Ministry of Education in Japan increased its control over textbook authorization and publication. The ministry demanded that all textbooks omit tough criticism of Japan’s role in the Pacific War in 1955. The Japanese government, regarded any descriptive language of Japan of invading China, as inappropriate. As a result of the new legislation, one-third of school textbooks were rejected by the government for not meeting new government standards.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, the Nanking Massacre disappeared from school textbooks due to its coinciding with language that implicates Japan was invading China. Due to the newly found support of the United States, the previously mentioned progressive historians of Japanese historiography played a major role in the birth of their opponent. In 1960, The Liberal Democratic Party pushed a bill through the House of Representatives that ratified the United States Japanese Security Treaty.<sup>25</sup> This bill was met with strong public opposition and birthed the opposing side of historians in Japanese history, known as the revisionist group who discredit the Nanking Massacre. These revisionist thinkers were scholars and politicians who were nationalistic and were opponents to the United States Japanese Security Treaty. In the wake of the signing of the United States Japanese Security Treaty, Japanese intellectuals began writing works that sparked new nationalism, in reaction to the political upheaval of the treaty’s ratification. Hayashi Fusao, a novelist, published a series of articles titled, “Dai-to-A senso koteiron” which translates to English as “The Affirmative Thesis

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<sup>23</sup> Fei Fei Li, Robert Sabella, and David Liu, *Nanking 1937: Memory and Healing* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), pg. #156.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #157

<sup>25</sup> Joshua A. Fogel, *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pg. #76.

on the Greater East Asian War.” In these articles, Fusao argued that the tribunal was simply an act of vengeance by the victors. It had nothing to do with justice, humanity, or civilization but was seen as part of the Hundred-Year war against western aggressors. Fusao argued that Japan was not involved in a war of aggression, as claimed by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.<sup>26</sup> Examining this epoch of historiographical time is significant for it sheds light upon the birth of the revisionist historians of Japan. There are now two trains of thought when studying the Nanking Massacre in Japan, the progressives, and the revisionist. In the years to follow the Nanking Massacre these two groups will meet each other on the battlefield of debate. This is important to recognize for when examining these two groups, looking at the progressive train of thought and arguments in taking responsibility for Nanking progressives used the IMTFE as a jumping off point for their arguments. Whereas looking towards the revisionists, they did not use the IMTFE as a starting point because they saw the Nanking Massacre as a larger picture than just an event during the Second Sino-Japanese War, but instead saw it as a one-hundred year war against western aggression. Looking at where the two trains of thought are basing their arguments off of provides insight as to why there is so much discussion and debate upon the Nanking Massacre.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #77

### *Historical Examples of Disagreement*

First, I would like to start by discussing a debate amongst Japanese scholars and journalists. In 1967, Hora Tomio a historian at the private Waseda University produced an essay, “Nanking Incident” in which he noted two sub-lieutenants began a one hundred man killing contest. In a story from a Chinese Communist Party official which stated, “They competed to see who would be first to kill one hundred men with military swords. Mukai scored eighty-nine and Noda seventy-eight by the time they reached the suburb of T’angshan, two kilometers from the city. There, they resumed the contest with permission from a superior officer, and upon reaching Chung-Shan-Ling, Mukai had 107 and Noda 105.”<sup>27</sup> Note that this excerpt omits the official’s name who gave this testimony to Hora Tomio, but later down the road it is suspected that a fellow progressive train of thought thinker found the same official and was able to put a name to the testimony. This piece of work is considered epoch-making, in that, previous survey histories only had passing references to the Nanking Atrocity. This ignited a heated debate. Looking at Hora Tomio’s work that he produced in capturing the memory of the Nanking Massacre paved the way for other members of Japan to begin a debate in 1971 over this one hundred man killing contest. This debate was started by Honda Katsuichi, a reporter for the liberal Asahi Shinbun, a nationwide daily with a circulation of eight million at that time. He was a journalist in the progressive train of thought. Yamamoto Shichihei a former imperial army officer, and Imai

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<sup>27</sup> Fei Fei Li, Robert Sabella, and David Liu, *Nanking 1937: Memory and Healing* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), pg. #157.

Akira a freelance writer who went under the pseudonym of Suzuki Akira.<sup>28</sup> The two latter mentioned historical actors of this debate were members of the revisionist train of thought.

Honda Katsuichi was inspired by his experience with the Vietnam War. He travelled to China in 1971 where he toured China to interview victims of Japanese aggression. He then published serialized work, “Chugoku No Tabi” (Travels in China) which he interviewed Chiang Ken-Fu, a local Communist People’s Party official who corroborated the story Hora Tomio wrote about four years prior to Honda Katsuichi’s, “Chugoku No Tabi”.<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that in Honda Katsuichi’s essays he omitted the names of the aforementioned sub-lieutenants who participated in this killing contest, this is important because it becomes a basis of the revisionist’s argument in this debate. In these essays written by Honda Katsuichi he had sought to portray the behavior of the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second Sino-Japanese War from the Chinese perspective. Honda Katsuichi explained that there were three objectives in his essays: He sought to stress that neither the government nor journalists had made an effort to face up to Japanese atrocities in China, to investigate what really occurred there, and lastly he hoped to put Japan’s own history of committing atrocities during the Fifteen-Year War (Second Sino-Japanese War) into light since it was living in the shadow of the widespread domestic movement to preserve the history of Japan’s own sufferings from the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Through this, Honda Katsuichi believed that it would perhaps create an understanding of China’s wartime experience and China’s nervousness about a revival of militarism in Japan in the early

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<sup>28</sup>Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *The Nanking Atrocity, 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, vol. 2 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pg. #115.

<sup>29</sup> Joshua A. Fogel, *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pg. #79, 80.

1970's due to the effects of Japan regaining control over its educational printing and revival of nationalism.<sup>30</sup>

Intellectuals that challenged Honda Katsuichi and Hora Tomios' interpretations came from the revisionist train of thought, in the Japanese historiography of the Nanking Massacre. The two earlier mentioned revisionist, Yamamoto Shichihei and Suzuki Akira wrote intense rebuttals to the essays of Honda Katsuichi and Hora Tomio. Yamamoto Shichihei claimed that the competitions had no basis in fact and he criticized Honda for reporting this myth as truth, according to a calculation based off his own military experience, Yamamoto Shichihei stated that in order for Mukai to have killed eighty-nine people in a 6.25 miles, he would have had to kill a person every one minute and thirty-six seconds which Yamamoto Shichihei concluded to be physically impossible. He also pointed out Honda Katsuichi's inability to disclose the names of the officers in his essay which lead to the assertion that the story was a fabricated illusion.<sup>31</sup> In the rebuttal of Suzuki Akira, instead of a denial like that of Yamamoto Shichihei's and his use of military calculations. Suzuki Akira sought to focus on how such "illusions" like the killing competitions were created. In Suzuki Akira's rebuttal he noted that Honda Katsuichi had distorted the event by fabricating the story as if "the game" had happened outside of battle, and furthermore argued that the Nanking Massacre had become a disputed myth and a symbol of the cruelty of the Japanese people throughout the period because the people of Japan wanted to forget rather than study the full truth revealed by the Tribunal.<sup>32</sup> Suzuki Akira insisted that the testimonies like the ones recorded by Honda Katsuichi and Hora Tomio were exaggerated stories by Chinese survivors. Suzuki Akira in his own essays used the perspective of Japanese soldiers

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #83.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #81.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #83.

by interviewing former soldiers, and former war correspondents, but failed to use any Chinese perspective of his rebuttal. Suzuki Akira sympathized with the two sub-lieutenants who were sentenced to death for their involvement in the killing contest reported by Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun and in both Hora Tomio and Honda Katsuichis' reports.<sup>33</sup>

In response to this revisionist interpretation of the one hundred man killing contest, Hora Tomio revised his original documents and provided a rebuttal to Yamamoto Shichihei and Suzuki Akiras' arguments. In Hora Tomio's rebuttal to Suzuki Akira and Yamamoto Shichiheis' arguments, Hora noted that it took eight days for the Japanese Imperial Army to advance the distance cited in the first killing competition (6.25 miles) and that for two men to kill and travel this distance in all of only one-hundred and fifty minutes was an incorrect calculation on Yamamoto Shichihei's behalf. Hora had also denounced Suzuki Akira's argument by pointing out he had used a biased study group by only conducting interviews with participants consisting of ten soldiers and officers, and by not constructing his story with the collaboration of Chinese survivors.<sup>34</sup>

This debate is important to examine because it sets the next twenty years of debate between China and Japan in regards to the interpretation of the Nanking Massacre. The debate shot the massacre into the public spotlight of the 1970s, and the Nanking Massacre appeared again into some school textbooks after being omitted for so long. After the debate, Ienaga Saburo, who brought a case to the Tokyo High Court in which he demanded that the Ministry of Education withdraw its disapproval of the high school history textbook, *Shin Nihon Shi* (A New History of Japan) which he had edited because Saburo had used language that had more of progressive undertone to it by putting in a numerical value (being one of the only textbooks that

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<sup>33</sup>Masahiro Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), pg. #236.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, pg. #238.

used an actual statistical value) on the number of Chinese killed during the Nanking Massacre at forty-two thousand residents, including women and children were killed during the massacre.<sup>35</sup> This in turn sparked a new passion for the revisionists. Leading into the 1980's, Okuno Seisuke, then the Minister of Justice commented that the absence of patriotic language in the current textbooks was quite troublesome.<sup>36</sup> As a result, Japan and its government shifted with the revisionist outlook and the Liberal Democratic Party Sub-committee agreed to write a bill that would tighten government control over textbooks. This in turn changed the textbook's content in the 1980's. Language in the textbooks shifted from Japan's aggression during the Second-Sino Japanese war to Japan's occupation of Manchuria. This leads to the next part of this essay, where the disagreement on the memory and interpretation of the Nanking Massacre between China and Japan is derived from, which is, these debates amongst progressive and revisionist trains of thought.

In light of the new legislation that changed the language used in textbooks in the Japanese education system, it would only be a matter of time until the rest of the world found out. China specifically would catch wind of this and would create a dispute that would last through two decades between Japan and China in regards to historiography of the Nanking Massacre.

Summer 1982, Asahi Shin-Bun reported in a front page article, "Textbooks Return Further 'Toward Prewar' Position; the Ministry of Education Tightens the Standards of Textbook Authorization, Especially on High School History; the Term 'Aggression' Toned Down;

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<sup>35</sup> Joshua A. Fogel, *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pg. #84.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #85.

Honorific Language Added to Descriptions of the Emperors in the Ancient Period.”<sup>37</sup> That same summer, China heard news of this headline and the Chinese government officially began protesting the attempts by the Ministry of Education in Japan of their revisions of the Nanking Massacre in their textbooks. During this period Japan had acknowledged the Nanking Massacre during the Second-Sino Japanese War, but their view of the incident had undertones that downplayed the incident. Much of the language used in their textbooks at this time used language that portrayed Japan as a non-aggressor during their occupation of Nanking. Due to international pressures, Japan needed to make a change quick in their publication of information and knowledge of the Nanking Massacre. Late in the summer of 1982, Miyazawa Kiichi the cabinet minister of education promised that the government would correct descriptions in textbooks.<sup>38</sup> This in turn angered the revisionists for it challenged the history they had written in regards to wartime Japanese history and went against the nationalistic agenda of the revisionists. Revisionist articles then began to appear more frequently, Tanaka Masaaki a revisionist who served as secretary to General Matsui Iwane, the commander in chief during the Nanking Massacre, wrote a book that encouraged conservatives and nationalists (parties that align with the Revisionist’s train of thought) that progressive’s view of Imperial Japanese history emphasized Japanese atrocities and inhumanity as well as demonized Imperial Japan. Despite large resistance to the progressive view, the revisionists in the latter years of the 1980s came to the realization that it was becoming impossible to completely denounce the Nanking Massacre due to the progress in studying the Nanking Massacre among academics, and an influx of war veterans admitting their actions in Nanking during the massacre in the decades after the Nanking Massacre leading up to the 1980’s. This is where the revisionist finally took a different stance on

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<sup>37</sup>Masahiro Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), pg. #239.

<sup>38</sup> Joshua A. Fogel, *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pg. #87.

their stubborn outlook of the Nanking Massacre, after nearly a decade of defending it. Because of this, the revisionists now finally took some responsibility for the Japanese Imperial Army's actions. But, this did not end their view of the massacre. Revisionists were just lightening the mood, if you will. The Japanese revisionists now approached the Nanking Massacre with accepting that some killing happened, but it was not to the extent of which the numbers recorded by the Tokyo Trial of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East had listed with a range of 200,000 to 300,000 at the death toll of the Nanking Massacre during its three month campaign.<sup>39</sup>

Moving into the 1990's is where we see this debate from the 1980's still resonating in Japanese revisionists. Christopher Barnard investigated the how the Rape of Nanking in December of 1937 by the Japanese Imperial Army is referred to in high school textbooks in 1995. Barnard found that eighty-eight history textbooks used in Japanese high schools that had passed the Japanese Ministry of Education screening, before their authorization of publication, used language that still softened the atrocities of the Nanking Massacre, despite the heated debate and outcry from the Chinese of the 1980s.<sup>40</sup> In this case study, Christopher Barnard sheds light upon the lingering revisionist implications still seen in the Japanese Educational system. Upon Christopher Barnard's analysis, he found that: first there were an absence of perpetrators, he found that the soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army are not portrayed by the textbooks as being present at Nanking on an individual human level, but are only present on an organizational level, Second he found that objects of criticism lacked in these textbooks and that a Japanese soldiers and individuals are never criticized for perpetrating the atrocities in the Nanking

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<sup>39</sup> Fei Fei Li, Robert Sabella, and David Liu, *Nanking 1937: Memory and Healing* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), pg. #160.

<sup>40</sup> Christopher Barnard, "Isolating Knowledge of the Unpleasant: The Rape of Nanking in Japanese High-School Textbooks," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 22, no. 4 (December 2001): pg. #523.

Massacre, and the third observation he found was location of knowledge of Nanking and by this he means, the knowledge of Nanking is located in the spectrum of space and time in a way that the knowledge of the Nanking Massacre is not something depicted as Japanese peoples possessed, until after the end of the war.<sup>41</sup> In Christopher Barnard's concluding statement, he expresses the thought that the historiography of the textbooks tells far less than the truth and says that the language used in these textbooks is just a reluctant interpretation of what needs to be told. Barnard presents a question, that the brutality of Japanese aggression together with the teaching a type of history that shies away from pinning the responsibility for the atrocity, creates a climate of opinion within modern Japanese society that allows the historical facts of the Nanking Massacre to be a topic of discussion that questions the Nanking Massacre or at least its magnitude to be doubted.<sup>42</sup> Based off of this analysis by Christopher Barnard, it is clear throughout history even after a number of debates amongst Japanese and Chinese scholars, there is still a failing parallel in the interpretation of the Nanking Massacre despite the debates and increased study on the issue of Nanking, becoming more of a focus for scholars.

### *Conclusion*

December 1937, The Japanese Imperial Army launched a full assault on the former capital of China, Nanking. During this three month campaign the Japanese forces murdered and raped thousands of victims in a six week time period. The end of the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II lead to the court hearings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. In short, the IMTFE overlooked the individual level of crimes that took place in Nanking and instead turned their attention to the administrators overseeing the operations in Nanking. At the IMTFE the indictment consists of fifty-five counts, the first thirty-six are grouped under

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #525.

“crimes against peace,” the next sixteen under “murder”, and the final three under “war crimes and crimes against humanity.”<sup>43</sup> The trial narrowed in on two targets: Matsui Iwane, the overall commander of the Central China Area Army, and Hirota Koki, the foreign minister. Narrowing in on these two particular men is what led to justice Radhabinod Pal’s dissenting opinion on the verdict of the IMTFE. Both the prosecution and the bench were more interested in applying evidence from Nanking to the general charge of “conspiracy to commit conventional war crimes and crimes against humanity,” specifically counts fifty-four and fifty-five.<sup>44</sup> Under count fifty-four Matsui, and Hirota were charged with conspiracy to order, authorize or permit their subordinates to commit breaches of the laws and customs of war, and under count fifty-five these men were charged with violating the laws of war by deliberately and recklessly disregarded breaches thereof.<sup>45</sup> Neither of these counts named Nanking specifically within them, therefore the prosecution used evidence from the Nanking Massacre as its basis for arguing that Matsui and Hirota be found guilty under this section of the indictment which lead to convictions for the Nanking Massacre being argued on general scopes of analysis rather than within a specific or individual scope. This, along with Radhabinod Pal’s dissenting opinion, lay the foundation for the debates that followed throughout history after the Nanking Massacre. The Cold War played a significant role in the diminished study of the Nanking Massacre until the 1970s in both China and Japan. In China the Communist party reign supreme with an agenda that was unfriendly to the United States, who allied with Japan, which lead to China not fully cooperating with western testifiers which in turn led to little scholarly work done with these historical actors until the 1980s. Endeavoring towards internal matters is what also put Nanking on the backburner for

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<sup>43</sup> Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *The Nanking Atrocity, 1937-38: Complicating the Picture*, vol. 2 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pg. #151.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. #152.

Chinese scholars since the Communist Party sought to first purge the traitors of the Han-race lead to China taking the judgment of the IMTFE verdict at face value. In the case for Japan, they were subjects to American rule of their own education and historiography which inhibited Japan to create its own historiography of the Nanking Massacre until the increased level of hysteria in 1955 with the “red scare” when Japanese educators were finally released from under the thumb of the United States and were able to publish and create their own history of the Nanking Massacre. These are the issues that lead to the Nanking Massacre being inhibited in scholarly work. In the 1970s the new wave of progressivism in Japan versus Japanese revisionists sparked a battlefield of debate in which throughout the rest of history amongst Japanese scholars and Chinese scholars find themselves failing to find a common ground in regards to the Nanking Massacre still today.

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