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"A powerful, landmark book, riveting in its horror" —RICHARD RHODES

THE RAPE

OF

THE FORGOTTEN
HOLOCAUST OF
WORLD WAR II

NANKING



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INTRODUCTION

THE CHRONICLE of humankind's cruelty to fellow humans is a long and sorry tale. But if it is true that even in such horror tales there are degrees of ruthlessness, then few atrocities in world history compare in intensity and scale to the Rape of Nanking during World War II.

Americans think of World War II as beginning on December 7, 1941, when Japanese carrier-based airplanes attacked Pearl Harbor. Europeans date it from September 1, 1939, and the blitzkrieg assault on Poland by Hitler's Luftwaffe and Panzer divisions. Africans see an even earlier beginning, the invasion of Ethiopia by Mussolini in 1935. Yet Asians must trace the war's beginnings all the way back to Japan's first steps toward the military domination of East Asia—the occupation of Manchuria in 1931.

Just as Hitler's Germany would do half a decade later, Japan used a highly developed military machine and a master-race mentality

to set about establishing its right to rule its neighbors. Manchuria fell quickly to the Japanese, who established their government of Manchukuo, ostensibly under their puppet, the deposed emperor of China, but in fact run by the Japanese military. Four years later, in 1935, parts of Chahar and Hopeh were occupied; in 1937 Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai, and finally Nanking fell. The decade of the thirties was a hard one for China; indeed, the last Japanese would not be routed from Chinese soil until the end of World War II in 1945.

No doubt, those fourteen years of domination by the Japanese military were marked by countless incidents of almost indescribable ruthlessness. We will never know everything that happened in the many cities and small villages that found themselves prostrate beneath the boot of this conquering force. Ironically, we do know the story of Nanking because some foreigners witnessed the horror and sent word to the outside world at the time, and some Chinese survived as eyewitnesses. If one event can be held up as an example of the unmitigated evil lying just below the surface of unbridled military adventurism, that moment is the Rape of Nanking. This book is its story.

The broad details of the Rape are, except among the Japanese, not in dispute. In November 1937, after their successful invasion of Shanghai, the Japanese launched a massive attack on the newly established capital of the Republic of China. When the city fell on December 13, 1937, Japanese soldiers began an orgy of cruelty seldom if ever matched in world history. Tens of thousands of young men were rounded up and herded to the outer areas of the city, where they were mowed down by machine guns, used for bayonet practice, or soaked with gasoline and burned alive. For months the streets of the city were heaped with corpses and reeked with the stench of rotting human flesh. Years later experts at the International Military Tribunal of the Far East (IMTFE) estimated that more than 260,000 noncombatants died at the hands of Japanese soldiers at Nanking in late 1937 and early 1938, though some experts have placed the figure at well over 350,000.

This book provides only the barest summary of the cruel

and barbaric acts committed by the Japanese in the city, for its aim is not to establish a quantitative record to qualify the event as one of the great evil deeds of history, but to understand the event so that lessons can be learned and warnings sounded. Differences in degree, however, often reflect differences in kind, and so a few statistics must be used to give the reader an idea of the scale of the massacre that took place sixty years ago in a city named Nanking.

One historian has estimated that if the dead from Nanking were to link hands, they would stretch from Nanking to the city of Hangchow, spanning a distance of some two hundred miles. Their blood would weigh twelve hundred tons, and their bodies would fill twenty-five hundred railroad cars. Stacked on top of each other, these bodies would reach the height of a seventy-four-story building.

Using numbers killed alone, the Rape of Nanking surpasses much of the worst barbarism of the ages. The Japanese outdid the Romans at Carthage (only 150,000 died in that slaughter), the Christian armies during the Spanish Inquisition, and even some of the monstrosities of Timur Lenk, who killed 100,000 prisoners at Delhi in 1398 and built two towers of skulls in Syria in 1400 and 1401.

It is certainly true that in this century, when the tools of mass murder were fully refined, Hitler killed about 6 million Jews, and Stalin more than 40 million Russians, but these deaths were brought about over some few years. In the Rape of Nanking the killing was concentrated within a few weeks.

Indeed, even by the standards of history's most destructive war, the Rape of Nanking represents one of the worst instances of mass extermination. To imagine its comparative size, we must brace ourselves for a few more statistics. The death toll of Nanking—one Chinese city alone—exceeds the number of civilian casualties of some European countries for the entire war. (Great Britain lost a total of 61,000 civilians, France lost 108,000, Belgium 101,000, and the Netherlands 242,000.) Air bombing is considered by those who reflect on these things one of the most awesome instruments of mass destruction. Yet even the worst air attacks of the war did not exceed the ravages

of Nanking. It is likely that more people died in Nanking than in the British raids on Dresden and the fire storm that followed. (The figure 225,000 was accepted internationally at the time, but more objective accounts now place the number of Dresden casualties at 60,000 dead and at least 30,000 injured.) Indeed, whether we use the most conservative number—260,000—or the highest—350,000—it is shocking to contemplate that the deaths at Nanking far exceeded the deaths from the American raids on Tokyo (an estimated 80,000–120,000 deaths) and even the combined death toll of the two atomic blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the end of 1945 (estimated at 140,000 and 70,000, respectively).

The Rape of Nanking should be remembered not only for the number of people slaughtered but for the cruel manner in which many met their deaths. Chinese men were used for bayonet practice and in decapitation contests. An estimated 20,000–80,000 Chinese women were raped. Many soldiers went beyond rape to disembowel women, slice off their breasts, nail them alive to walls. Fathers were forced to rape their daughters, and sons their mothers, as other family members watched. Not only did live burials, castration, the carving of organs, and the roasting of people become routine, but more diabolical tortures were practiced, such as hanging people by their tongues on iron hooks or burying people to their waists and watching them get torn apart by German shepherds. So sickening was the spectacle that even the Nazis in the city were horrified, one proclaiming the massacre to be the work of "bestial machinery."

Yet the Rape of Nanking remains an obscure incident. Unlike the atomic explosions in Japan or the Jewish holocaust in Europe, the horrors of the massacre at Nanking remain virtually unknown to people outside Asia. The massacre remains neglected in most of the historical literature published in the United States. A thorough examination of secondary-school history textbooks in the United States revealed that only a few even mention the Rape of Nanking. And almost none of the comprehensive, or "definitive," histories of World War II read by the American public discusses the Nanking massacre in

great detail. For instance, no photograph on the event, not even one word, appears in *The American Heritage Picture History of World War II* (1966), which for many years was the best-selling single-volume pictorial history of the war ever published. Nor can a word of the massacre be found in Winston Churchill's famous *Memoirs of the Second World War* (1959) (1,065 pages) or in Henri Michel's classic *Second World War* (1975) (947 pages). The Rape of Nanking is mentioned only twice in Gerhard Weinberg's massive *A World at Arms* (1994) (1,178 pages). Only in Robert Leckie's *Delivered from Evil: The Saga of World War II* (1987) (998 pages) did I find a single paragraph about the massacre: "Nothing the Nazis under Hitler would do to disgrace their own victories could rival the atrocities of Japanese soldiers under Gen. Iwane Matsui."

I first learned about the Rape of Nanking when I was a little girl. The stories came from my parents, who had survived years of war and revolution before finding a serene home as professors in a midwestern American college town. They had grown up in China in the midst of World War II and after the war fled with their families, first to Taiwan and finally to the United States to study at Harvard and pursue academic careers in science. For three decades they lived peacefully in the academic community of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, conducting research in physics and microbiology.

But they never forgot the horrors of the Sino-Japanese War, nor did they want me to forget. They particularly did not want

Throughout the book I use either pinyin or Wade-Giles for Chinese names, depending on the preference of the individual (as specified by business cards or correspondence) or the popularity of one name's transliteration over the other (for instance, "Chiang Kai-shek" instead of "Jiang Jieshi"). For Chinese and Japanese names of people, I use the traditional system of listing the surname before the given name. For cities and landmarks, I typically (but not always) use the form of romanization most commonly employed by Westerners during the era of the narrative, such as "Nanking" instead of the present-day name "Nanjing."

will not move forward until it too admits not only to the world but to itself how improper were its actions of just half a century ago. Indeed, I was surprised and pleased by the number of overseas Japanese who attend conferences on the Rape of Nanking. As one suggested, "We want to know as much as you do."

This book describes two related but discrete atrocities. One is the Rape of Nanking itself, the story of how the Japanese wiped out hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in its enemy's capital.

Another is the cover-up, the story of how the Japanese, emboldened by the silence of the Chinese and Americans, tried to erase the entire massacre from public consciousness, thereby depriving its victims of their proper place in history.

The structure of the first part of my book—the history of the massacre—is largely influenced by *Rashomon*, a famous movie based on a short story ("Yabunonaka," or "In the Grove") by the Japanese novelist Akutagawa Ryunosuke about a rape-and-murder case in tenth-century Kyoto. On the surface, the story appears simple: a bandit waylays a traveling samurai and his wife; the wife is raped and the samurai is found dead. But the story grows more complex when it is told from the perspective of each of the characters. The bandit, the wife, the dead samurai, and an eyewitness of the crime provide different versions of what happened. It is for the reader to pull all the recollections together, to credit or discredit parts or all of each account, and through this process to create out of subjective and often self-serving perceptions a more objective picture of what might have occurred. This story should be included in the curriculum of any course treating criminal justice. Its point goes to the heart of history.

The Rape of Nanking is told from three different perspectives. The first is the Japanese perspective. It is the story of a planned invasion—what the Japanese military was told to do, how to do it, and why. The second perspective is that of the Chinese, the victims; this is the story of the fate of a city when

the government is no longer capable of protecting its citizens against outside invaders. This section includes individual stories from the Chinese themselves, stories of defeat, despair, betrayal, and survival. The third is the American and European perspective. These outsiders were, for one moment at least in Chinese history, heroes. The handful of Westerners on the scene risked their lives to help Chinese civilians during the massacre and to warn the rest of the world about the atrocities being carried out before their very eyes. It is only in the next part of the book, treating the postwar period, that we deal with the convenient indifference of Americans and Europeans to what their own nationals on the scene told them.

The last part of my book examines the forces that conspired to keep the Rape of Nanking out of public consciousness for more than half a century. I also treat the recent efforts to ensure that this distortion of history does not go unchallenged.

Any attempt to set the record straight must shed light on how the Japanese, as a people, manage, nurture, and sustain their collective amnesia—even denial—when confronted with the record of their behavior through this period. Their response has been more than a matter of leaving blank spaces in the history books where the record would have been too painful. The ugliest aspects of Japanese military behavior during the Sino-Japanese War have indeed been left out of the education of Japanese schoolchildren. But they have also camouflaged the nation's role in initiating the war within the carefully cultivated myth that the Japanese were the victims, not the instigators, of World War II. The horror visited on the Japanese people during the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki helped this myth replace history.

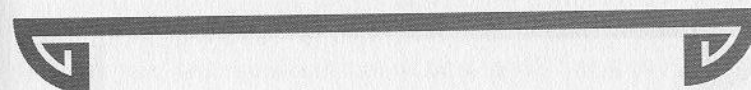
When it comes to expressing remorse for its own wartime actions before the bar of world opinion, Japan remains to this day a renegade nation. Even in the period directly after the war, and despite the war crimes trials that found a few of its leaders guilty, the Japanese managed to avoid the moral judgment of the civilized world that the Germans were made to accept for their actions in this nightmare time. In continuing to avoid judgment, the Japanese have become the ringleaders of an-

other criminal act. As the Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel warned years ago, to forget a holocaust is to kill twice.

My greatest hope is that this book will inspire other authors and historians to investigate the stories of the Nanking survivors before the last of the voices from the past, dwindling in number every year, are extinguished forever. Possibly even more important, I hope it will stir the conscience of Japan to accept responsibility for this incident.

This book was written with George Santayana's immortal warning in mind: *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*

PART I



among themselves, they shared a similar mission: to overhaul society and eliminate all bureaucratic, economic, and political obstacles to what they believed to be Japan's divine mission to avenge itself against the Europeans and dominate Asia.

Step by step, the interventionists forced a series of compromises from the moderate elements in government. But disappointed by the pace of change, they began to conspire among themselves to topple the government. In 1931 a coup was planned but abandoned. In 1932 a group of naval officers launched a terrorist attack in Tokyo that killed Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi but failed to secure martial law.

On February 26, 1936, a clique of young officers launched a bold coup d'état that took the lives of several statesmen. Though the coup paralyzed downtown Tokyo for more than three days, it ultimately failed and the ringleaders were jailed or executed. Power shifted from the extremists to a more cautious faction within the government, though it is important to point out that even this faction shared many of the young officers' fanatical views when it came to Japan's right to a dominant role in Asia.

It soon became apparent to some Japanese ultranationalists that if they wanted to control China, they would have to move fast. For there were signs that China, forced to submit to Japanese demands in 1894, was trying to strengthen itself as a nation—signs that gave the Japanese expansionists a sense of urgency in their mission.

China had indeed used the past two decades to transform itself from a disintegrating empire into a struggling national republic. In 1911 rebel armies defeated the Qing imperial forces and ended more than two centuries of Manchu rule. During the 1920s the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek successfully fought the warlords of northern China to unify the country. They also announced as a goal the elimination of unfair treaty agreements foisted upon the Qing dynasty by foreign powers. As Chiang's movement gained momentum, it threatened Japanese interests in Manchuria and Mongolia. Something had

to be done, and quickly, before China grew too powerful to be conquered.

With the approval of the Japanese government, the military began to intervene more aggressively in Chinese affairs. In 1928 they engineered the assassination of Chang Tsolin, the warlord ruler of Manchuria, when he failed to give them his full cooperation. The murder only served to infuriate the Chinese people, who organized more boycotts against Japanese goods.

By the 1930s Japan had launched an undeclared war with China. On September 18, 1931, the Japanese army blew up the tracks of a Japanese-owned railway in southern Manchuria, hoping to incite an incident. When the blasts failed to derail an express train, the Japanese killed the Chinese guards instead and fabricated a story for the world press about Chinese saboteurs. This incident gave the Japanese an excuse to seize Manchuria, which was renamed Manchukuo and where the Japanese installed Pu Yi, the last emperor of China and heir of the Manchu dynasty, as puppet ruler. The seizure of Manchuria, however, generated anti-Japanese sentiment in China, which was whipped up by Nationalist activists. Feelings ran high on both sides and erupted in bloodshed in 1932 when a Shanghai mob attacked five Japanese Buddhist priests, leaving one of them dead. Japan immediately retaliated by bombing the city, killing tens of thousands of civilians. When the slaughter at Shanghai aroused worldwide criticism, Japan responded by isolating itself from the international community and withdrawing, in 1933, from the League of Nations.

To prepare for the inevitable war with China, Japan had spent decades training its men for combat. The molding of young men to serve in the Japanese military began early in life, and in the 1930s the martial influence seeped into every aspect of Japanese boyhood. Toy shops became virtual shrines to war, selling arsenals of toy soldiers, tanks, helmets, uniforms, rifles, antiaircraft guns, bugles, and howitzers. Memoirs from that time describe preadolescent boys waging mock battles in the

establish this sublimation of individuality to the common good, superior officers or older soldiers slapped recruits for almost no reason at all or beat them severely with heavy wooden rods. According to the author Iritani Toshio, officers often justified unauthorized punishment by saying, "I do not beat you because I hate you. I beat you because I care for you. Do you think I perform these acts with hands swollen and bloody in a state of madness?" Some youths died under such brutal physical conditions; others committed suicide; the majority became tempered vessels into which the military could pour a new set of life goals.

Training was no less grueling a process for aspiring officers. In the 1920s all army cadets had to pass through the Military Academy at Ichigaya. With its overcrowded barracks, unheated study rooms, and inadequate food, the place bore a greater resemblance to a prison than a school. The intensity of the training in Japan surpassed that of most Western military academies: in England an officer was commissioned after some 1,372 hours of classwork and 2,145 hours of private study, but in Japan the standards were 3,382 hours of classwork and 2,765 hours of private study. The cadets endured a punishing daily regimen of physical exercise and classes in history, geography, foreign languages, mathematics, science, logic, drawing, and penmanship. Everything in the curriculum was bent toward the goal of perfection and triumph. Above all the Japanese cadets were to adopt "a will which knows no defeat." So terrified were the cadets of any hint of failure that examination results were kept secret, to minimize the risk of suicide.

The academy was like an island to itself, sealed off from the rest of the world. The Japanese cadet enjoyed neither privacy nor any opportunity to exercise individual leadership skills. His reading material was carefully censored, and leisure time was nonexistent. History and science were distorted to project an image of the Japanese as a superrace. "During these impressionable years they have been walled off from all outside pleasures, interests or influences," one Western writer observed of the Japanese officers. "The atmosphere of the narrow groove along which they have moved has been saturated with a special

national and a special military propaganda. Already from a race psychologically far removed from us, they have been removed still further."

In the summer of 1937 Japan finally succeeded in provoking a full-scale war with China. In July a Japanese regiment, garrisoned by treaty in the Chinese city of Tientsin, had been conducting night maneuvers near the ancient Marco Polo Bridge. During a break several shots were fired at the Japanese in the darkness, and a Japanese soldier failed to appear during roll call. Using this incident as an excuse to exercise its power in the region, Japanese troops advanced upon the Chinese fort of Wanping near the bridge and demanded that its gates be opened so that they could search for the soldier. When the Chinese commander refused, the Japanese shelled the fort.

By the end of July, Japan had tightened its grasp on the entire Tientsin-Peking region and by August the Japanese had invaded Shanghai. The second Sino-Japanese War was no longer reversible.

But conquering China proved to be a more difficult task than the Japanese anticipated. In Shanghai alone Chinese forces outnumbered the Japanese marines ten to one, and Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Nationalist government, had reserved his best troops for the battle. That August, while attempting to land thirty-five thousand fresh troops on the docks of Shanghai, the Japanese encountered their first setback. A hidden Chinese artillery emplacement opened fire and killed several hundred men, including a cousin of the Empress Nagako. For months the Chinese defended the metropolis with extraordinary valor. To the chagrin of the Japanese, the battle of Shanghai proceeded slowly, street by street, barricade by barricade.

In the 1930s, Japanese military leaders had boasted—and seriously believed—that Japan could conquer all of mainland China within three months. But when a battle in a single Chinese city alone dragged from summer to fall, and then from fall to winter, it shattered Japanese fantasies of an easy victory. Here,

The city of Suzhou (on the way to Nanjing):

of Tai Hu Lake. One of the oldest cities of China, it was prized for its delicate silk embroidery, palaces, and temples. Its canals and ancient bridges had earned the city its Western nickname as "the Venice of China." On November 19, on a morning of pouring rain, a Japanese advance guard marched through the gates of Suchow, wearing hoods that prevented Chinese sentries from recognizing them. Once inside, the Japanese murdered and plundered the city for days, burning down ancient landmarks and abducting thousands of Chinese women for sexual slavery. The invasion, according to the *China Weekly Review*, caused the population of the city to drop from 350,000 to less than 500.

A British correspondent had the opportunity to record what was left of Pine River (Sungchiang, a suburban city of Shanghai), nine weeks after the Japanese had passed through it. "There is hardly a building standing which has not been gutted by fire," he wrote. "Smoldering ruins and deserted streets present an eerie spectacle, the only living creatures being dogs unnaturally fattened by feasting on corpses. In the whole of Sungchiang, which should contain a densely packed population of approximately 100,000, I saw only five Chinese, who were old men, hiding in a French mission compound in tears."

ASAKA TAKES COMMAND

But the worst was still to come.

On December 7, as the Japanese troops zeroed in on Nanking, General Matsui grew feverishly ill in his field headquarters at Suchow—and her flare-up of his chronic tuberculosis. The illness struck Matsui right when power shifted from his command to that of a member of the imperial family. Only five days earlier Emperor Hirohito had promoted Matsui out of the action while dispatching his own uncle, Prince Asaka Yasuhiko, to the front to replace him. Under the new order, Matsui would be in charge of the entire central China theater, while Asaka, a lieutenant general with a thirty-year tenure in the military, would take responsibility as the new commander in chief of the army around Nanking. As a member of the royal

family, Asaka possessed power that would override all other authority on the Nanking front. He was also closer to Lieutenant General Nakajima and General Yanagawa than to Matsui because he had spent three years in Paris with them as a military intelligence officer.

Little is known as to why Hirohito chose at this critical moment to give Asaka this position, though Bergamini believes it was done to test Asaka, who had sided with the emperor's brother Chichibu against Hirohito on a political issue during the February 1936 army mutiny. On the palace rolls, Hirohito had singled out Asaka as the one member of the royal family who possessed an attitude that was "not good" and apparently gave his uncle the appointment at Nanking as an opportunity to redeem himself.

At the time it seemed like a trivial change, but later, for the lives of hundreds of thousands of Chinese, it would prove to be a critical one.

It is hard to describe what really happened behind the scenes in the Japanese army because many of the details were given by Matsui and his colleagues years later at their war crimes trial, or by sources who may be unreliable, and they are therefore cited with caution. But if their testimony can be believed, this is what we learn. Wary of the imperial newcomer and the potential for abuse of power, Matsui issued a set of moral commandments for the invasion of Nanking. He ordered his armies to regroup a few kilometers outside the city walls, to enter the Chinese capital with only a few well-disciplined battalions, and to complete the occupation so that the army would "sparkle before the eyes of the Chinese and make them place confidence in Japan." He also called a meeting of staff officers before his sickbed and proclaimed:

The entry of the Imperial Army into a foreign capital is a great event in our history . . . attracting the attention of the world. Therefore let no unit enter the city in a disorderly fashion. . . . Let them know beforehand the matters to be remembered and the position of foreign rights and interests in the walled city. Let them be absolutely free from plunder. Dispose sentries

and around Nanking were slaughtered at Mufu Mountain, yet the cleanup there took days. Burial was one method of disposal, but General Nakajima complained in his diary that it was hard to locate ditches large enough to bury heaps of seven to eight thousand corpses. Cremation was another, but the Japanese often lacked sufficient fuel to do a proper job. After the Mufu Mountain massacre, for instance, the Japanese poured large drums of gasoline on the bodies to burn them, but the drums ran out before fires could reduce the remains to ashes. "The result was a mountain of charred corpses," a Japanese corporal wrote.

Many bodies were simply dumped into the Yangtze River.

THE MURDER OF CIVILIANS

After the soldiers surrendered en masse, there was virtually no one left to protect the citizens of the city. Knowing this, the Japanese poured into Nanking on December 13, 1937, occupying government buildings, banks, and warehouses, shooting people randomly in the streets, many of them in the back as they ran away. Using machine guns, revolvers, and rifles, the Japanese fired at the crowds of wounded soldiers, elderly women, and children who gathered in the North Chungshan and Central roads and nearby alleys. They also killed Chinese civilians in every section of the city: tiny lanes, major boulevards, mud dugouts, government buildings, city squares. As victims toppled to the ground, moaning and screaming, the streets, alleys, and ditches of the fallen capital ran rivers of blood, much of it coming from people barely alive, with no strength left to run away.

The Japanese systematically killed the city dwellers as they conducted house-to-house searches for Chinese soldiers in Nanking. But they also massacred the Chinese in the nearby suburbs and countryside. Corpses piled up outside the city walls, along the river (which had literally turned red with blood), by ponds and lakes, and on hills and mountains. In villages near Nanking, the Japanese shot down any young man

who passed, under the presumption that he was likely to be a former Chinese soldier. But they also murdered people who could not possibly be Chinese soldiers—elderly men and women, for instance—if they hesitated or even if they failed to understand orders, delivered in the Japanese language, to move this way or that.

During the last ten days of December, Japanese motorcycle brigades patrolled Nanking while Japanese soldiers shouldering loaded rifles guarded the entrances to all the streets, avenues, and alleys. Troops went from door to door, demanding that the doors be opened to welcome the victorious armies. The moment the shopkeepers complied, the Japanese opened fire on them. The imperial army massacred thousands of people in this manner and then systematically looted the stores and burned whatever they had no use for.

THE JAPANESE JOURNALISTS

These atrocities shocked many of the Japanese correspondents who had followed the troops to Nanking. A horrified *Mainichi Shimbun* reporter watched the Japanese line up Chinese prisoners on top of the wall near Chungshan Gate and charge at them with bayonets fixed on rifles. "One by one the prisoners fell down to the outside of the wall," the reporter wrote. "Blood splattered everywhere. The chilling atmosphere made one's hair stand on end and limbs tremble with fear. I stood there at a total loss and did not know what to do."

He was not alone in his reaction. Many other reporters—even seasoned war correspondents—recoiled at the orgy of violence, and their exclamations found their way into print. From Imai Masatake, a Japanese military correspondent:

On Hsiakwan wharves, there was the dark silhouette of a mountain made of dead bodies. About fifty to one hundred people were toiling there, dragging bodies from the mountain of corpses and throwing them into the Yangtze River. The bodies dripped blood, some of them still alive and moaning

weakly, their limbs twitching. The laborers were busy working in total silence, as in a pantomime. In the dark one could barely see the opposite bank of the river. On the pier was a field of glistening mud under the moon's dim light. Wow! That's all blood!

After a while, the coolies had done their job of dragging corpses and the soldiers lined them up along the river. Rat-tat-tat machine-gun fire could be heard. The coolies fell backwards into the river and were swallowed by the raging currents. The pantomime was over.

A Japanese officer at the scene estimated that 20,000 persons had been executed.

From the Japanese military correspondent Omata Yukio, who saw Chinese prisoners brought to Hsiakwan and lined up along the river:

Those in the first row were beheaded, those in the second row were forced to dump the severed bodies into the river before they themselves were beheaded. The killing went on non-stop, from morning until night, but they were only able to kill 2,000 persons in this way. The next day, tired of killing in this fashion, they set up machine guns. Two of them raked a cross-fire at the lined-up prisoners. Rat-tat-tat-tat. Triggers were pulled. The prisoners fled into the water, but no one was able to make it to the other shore.

From the Japanese photojournalist Kawano Hiroki:

Before the "Ceremony of Entering the City," I saw fifty to one hundred bodies drifting down the Yangtze River. Did they die in battle, or were they killed after being taken prisoner? Or were they slaughtered civilians?

I remember there was a pond just outside Nanking. It looked like a sea of blood—with splendid colors. If only I had color film . . . what a shocking shot that would have been!

Sasaki Motomasa, a Japanese military correspondent at Nanking, observed, "I've seen piled-up bodies in the Great Quake in Tokyo, but nothing can be compared to this."

THE RAPE OF NANKING

Next, the Japanese turned their attention to the women.

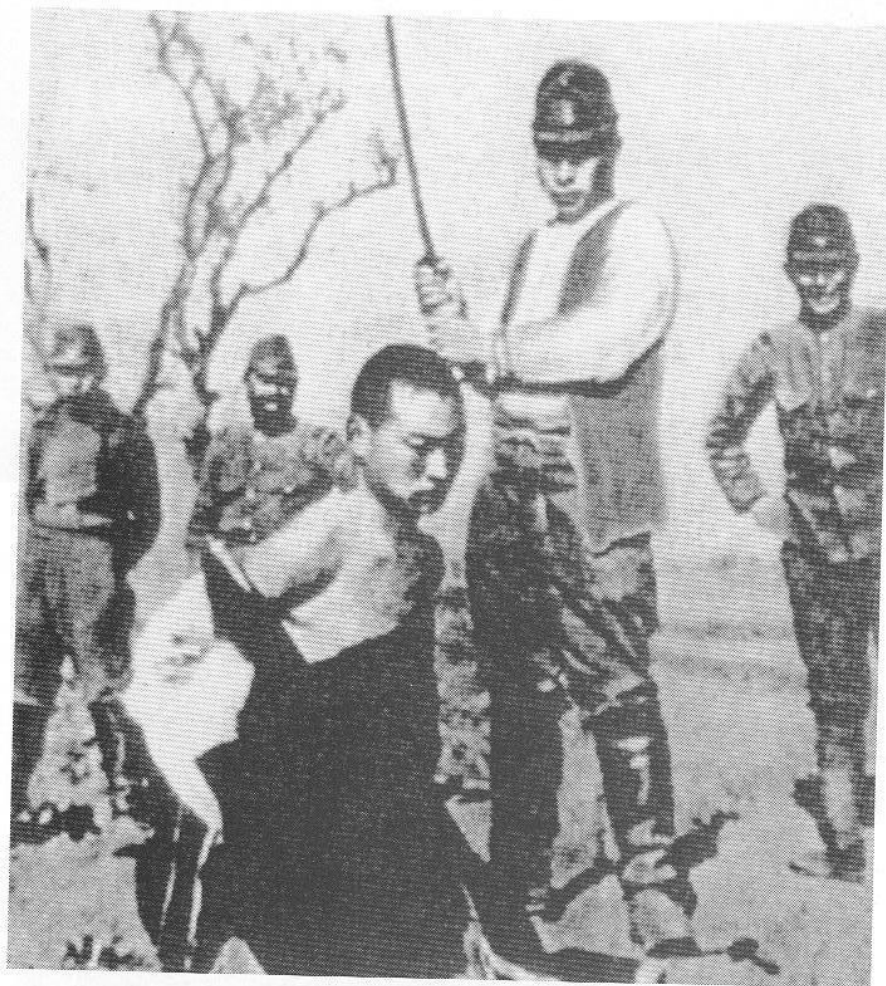
"Women suffered most," Takokoro Kozo, a former soldier in the 114th Division of the Japanese army in Nanking, recalled. "No matter how young or old, they all could not escape the fate of being raped. We sent out coal trucks from Hsiakwan to the city streets and villages to seize a lot of women. And then each of them was allocated to 15 to 20 soldiers for sexual intercourse and abuse."

Surviving Japanese veterans claim that the army had officially outlawed the rape of enemy women. But rape remained so deeply embedded in Japanese military culture and superstition that no one took the rule seriously. Many believed that raping virgins would make them more powerful in battle. Soldiers were even known to wear amulets made from the pubic hair of such victims, believing that they possessed magical powers against injury.

The military policy forbidding rape only encouraged soldiers to kill their victims afterwards. During an interview for the documentary *In the Name of the Emperor*, Azuma Shiro, a former Japanese soldier, spoke candidly about the process of rape and murder in Nanking:

At first we used some kinky words like *Pikankan*. *Pi* means "hip," *kankan* means "look." *Pikankan* means, "Let's see a woman open up her legs." Chinese women didn't wear underpants. Instead, they wore trousers tied with a string. There was no belt. As we pulled the string, the buttocks were exposed. We "pikankan." We looked. After a while we would say something like, "It's my day to take a bath," and we took turns raping them. It would be all right if we only raped them. I shouldn't say all right. But we always stabbed and killed them. Because dead bodies don't talk.

Takokoro Kozo shared Azuma's bluntness in discussing the issue. "After raping, we would also kill them," he recalled. "Those women would start to flee once we let them go. Then we would 'bang!' shoot them in the back to finish them up."



end. He had stepped down, Okuno said, only under pressure from the government, not because he wished to retract his statements.

In August 1994, Sakurai Shin, the director general of the Japanese environmental agency, remarked that Japan did not go to war with the intent to commit aggression. In response to China's angry protests (a PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman announced that "the Chinese government regrets that, once again, a Japanese cabinet minister has brazenly made remarks which distort historical facts"), Murayama Tomiichi ended up apologizing for Sakurai's remarks. He also rebuked Sakurai by calling the remarks "inappropriate" and forced the director general to hold a midnight press conference to retract his statement.

In 1995 Hashimoto Ryutaro, the minister for international trade and industry and a powerful man in the Liberal Democratic Party (he would later become the prime minister of Japan), announced that it was Japan's intention only to fight the United States, Britain, and "others" during World War II. While Japan was aggressive toward China, he said, it really had no intention of invading other Asian countries.

The official denials continued even as this book was going to press. Kajiyama Seirolu, the Japanese chief cabinet secretary, outraged several Asian countries when he stated that the sex slaves and rape victims of the Japanese imperial army during World War II were not slaves at all but willingly engaged in prostitution. In January 1997, he proclaimed that the comfort women of the Japanese army "went for the money" and were no different from the Japanese prostitutes who were working legally in Japan at the time. Amazingly, these comments came on the eve of weekend summit talks between Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro and South Korean President Kim Young-sam, both of whom expressed deep anger over Kajiyama's remarks.

Kajiyama later made a gesture to apologize, though he infuriated critics because the apology seemed insulting and insincere. The cabinet secretary regretted that his comments "caused some unpleasantness at the Japan-South Korean summit, and

misunderstanding among the South Korean people," but he refused to retract his original comments. This was not the first time Kajiyama's mouth had landed him in trouble. In 1990 he was forced to resign from his position as Japanese justice minister after comparing African Americans to prostitutes who come in and out of a neighborhood.

THE TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY

Perhaps one of the most sinister aspects of the malaise in Japanese education is the deliberate obstruction of important historical information about World War II through textbook censorship.

Almost from birth, Japanese children fight for footholds in the slippery pyramid of education, striving to reach the tip, which is admission to Todai, or Tokyo University. There are cram elementary schools to get into the right high school, where kids study from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.; cram preparatory kindergartens to ensure admission into the right elementary school; even exclusive maternity wards that guarantee babies a ticket into the right nursery school.

But despite the "examination hell" for which the Japanese are famous, what do their schoolchildren learn about World War II?

Very little, as it turns out. The entire Japanese education system suffers from selective amnesia, for not until 1994 were Japanese schoolchildren taught that Hirohito's army was responsible for the deaths of at least 20 million Allied soldiers and Asian civilians during World War II. In the early 1990s a newspaper article quoted a Japanese high school teacher who claimed that his students were surprised to learn that Japan had been at war with the United States. The first thing they wanted to know was who won.

How does this happen? All textbooks used in Japan's elementary and secondary schools must first be approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education. Critics in Japan note that social studies textbooks come under the heaviest scrutiny. For ex-

from my superior officer that every person in this place must be killed."

The result was a massive terrorist campaign in 1941 designed to exterminate everyone in the northern Chinese countryside. It reduced the population there from 44 million to 25 million people. At least one author on China, Jules Archer, believes that the Japanese killed most of the 19 million people who disappeared from the region, though other scholars speculate that millions must have fled to safer ground. R. J. Rummel, author of *China's Bloody Century*, points out that even if only 5 percent of the population loss consisted of murder victims, that would still amount to nearly 1 million Chinese.

The Japanese also waged ruthless experiments in biological warfare against the Chinese. Some of it was retaliatory and directed against Chinese villages suspected of helping American fliers during the April 1942 Doolittle raid of Tokyo. In areas that may have served as landing zones for the bombers, the Japanese massacred a quarter-million civilians and plowed up every Chinese airfield within an area of twenty thousand square miles. Here as well as elsewhere during the war, entire cities and regions were targeted for disease. We now know that Japanese aviators sprayed fleas carrying plague germs over metropolitan areas like Shanghai, Ningpo, and Changteh, and that flasks of disease-causing microbes—cholera, dysentery, typhoid, plague, anthrax, paratyphoid—were tossed into rivers, wells, reservoirs, and houses. The Japanese also mixed food with deadly germs to infect the Chinese civilian and military population. Cakes laced with typhoid were scattered around bivouac sites to entice hungry peasants; rolls syringed with typhoid and paratyphoid were given to thousands of Chinese prisoners of war before they were freed.

The final death count was almost incredible, between 1,578,000 and 6,325,000 people. R. J. Rummel gives a prudent estimate of 3,949,000 killed, of which all but 400,000 were civilians. But he points out that millions more perished from starvation and disease caused in large part by Japanese looting, bombing, and medical experimentation. If those deaths are added to the final count, then one can say that the Japanese

killed more than 19 million Chinese people in its war against China.

It is impossible for most people to imagine exactly what went through the minds of Japanese soldiers and officers as they committed the atrocities. But many historians, eyewitnesses, survivors, and the perpetrators themselves have theorized about what drove the naked brutality of the Japanese imperial army.

Some Japanese scholars believe that the horrors of the Rape of Nanking and other outrages of the Sino-Japanese War were caused by a phenomenon called "the transfer of oppression." According to Tanaka Yuki, author of *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, the modern Japanese army had great potential for brutality from the moment of its creation for two reasons: the arbitrary and cruel treatment that the military inflicted on its own officers and soldiers, and the hierarchical nature of Japanese society, in which status was dictated by proximity to the emperor. Before the invasion of Nanking, the Japanese military had subjected its own soldiers to endless humiliation. Japanese soldiers were forced to wash the underwear of officers or stand meekly while superiors slapped them until they streamed with blood. Using Orwellian language, the routine striking of Japanese soldiers, *okubentatsu*, was termed an "act of love" by the officers, and the violent discipline of the Japanese navy through *tekken seisai*, or "the iron fist," was often called *ai-no-muchi*, or "whip of love."

It has often been suggested that those with the least power are often the most sadistic if given the power of life and death over people even lower on the pecking order, and the rage engendered by this rigid pecking order was suddenly given an outlet when Japanese soldiers went abroad. In foreign lands or colonized territories, the Japanese soldiers—representatives of the emperor—enjoyed tremendous power among the subjects. In China even the lowliest Japanese private was considered superior to the most powerful and distinguished native, and it is easy to see how years of suppressed anger, hatred, and fear of

the Japanese as a nation are still trying to bury the victims of Nanking—not under the soil, as in 1937, but into historical oblivion. In a disgraceful compounding of the offense, the story of the Nanking massacre is barely known in the West because so few people have tried to document and narrate it systematically to the public.

This book started out as an attempt to rescue those victims from more degradation by Japanese revisionists and to provide my own epitaph for the hundreds upon thousands of unmarked graves in Nanking. It ended as a personal exploration into the shadow side of human nature. There are several important lessons to be learned from Nanking, and one is that civilization itself is tissue-thin. There are those who believe that the Japanese are uniquely sinister—a dangerous race of people who will never change. But after reading several file cabinets' worth of documents on Japanese war crimes as well as accounts of ancient atrocities from the pantheon of world history, I would have to conclude that Japan's behavior during World War II was less a product of dangerous people than of a dangerous government, in a vulnerable culture, in dangerous times, able to sell dangerous rationalizations to those whose human instincts told them otherwise. The Rape of Nanking should be perceived as a cautionary tale—an illustration of how easily human beings can be encouraged to allow their teenagers to be molded into efficient killing machines able to suppress their better natures.

Another lesson to be gleaned from Nanking is the role of power in genocide. Those who have studied the patterns of large-scale killings throughout history have noted that the sheer concentration of power in government is lethal—that only a sense of absolute unchecked power can make atrocities like the Rape of Nanking possible. In the 1990s R. J. Rummel, perhaps the world's greatest authority on *democide* (a term he coined to include both genocide and government mass murder), completed a systematic and quantitative study of atrocities in both this century and ancient times, an impressive body of research that he summed up with a play on the famous Lord Acton line: "Power kills, and absolute power kills absolutely."

The less restraint on power within a government, Rummel found, the more likely that government will act on the whims or psychologically generated darker impulses of its leaders to wage war on foreign governments. Japan was no exception, and atrocities such as the Rape of Nanking can be seen as a predictable if not inevitable outgrowth of ceding to an authoritarian regime, dominated by a military and imperial elite, the unchallenged power to commit an entire people to realizing the sick goals of the few with the unbridled power to set them.

And there is yet a third lesson to be learned, one that is perhaps the most distressing of all. It lies in the frightening ease with which the mind can accept genocide, turning us all into passive spectators to the unthinkable. The Rape of Nanking was front-page news across the world, and yet most of the world stood by and did nothing while an entire city was butchered. The international response to the Nanking atrocities was eerily akin to the more recent response to the atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda: while thousands have died almost unbelievably cruel deaths, the entire world has watched CNN and wrung its hands. One could argue that the United States and other countries failed to intervene earlier to prevent the Nazis from carrying out their "final solution" because the genocide was carried out in wartime secrecy and with such cold efficiency that until Allied soldiers liberated the camps and saw with their own eyes the extent of the horror, most people could not accept the reports they had been getting as literally true. But for the Rape of Nanking, or for the murders in the former Yugoslavia, there can be no such excuse. The Nanking atrocities were splashed prominently across the pages of newspapers like the *New York Times*, while the Bosnia outrages were played out daily on television in virtually every living room. Apparently some quirk in human nature allows even the most unspeakable acts of evil to become banal within minutes, provided only that they occur far enough away to pose no personal threat.

Sad to say, the world is still acting as a passive spectator to the second Japanese rape—the refusal of the Japanese to apologize for or even acknowledge their crimes at Nanking, and the