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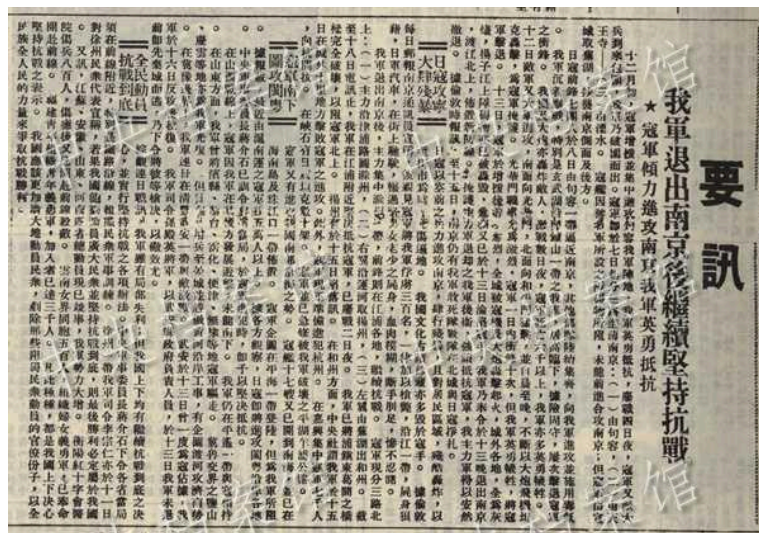
The Nanjing Massacre as Portrayed in International Media

_____The Nanjing Massacre, one of the bloodiest events of the Sino-Japanese War, was also one of the most heavily-publicized both in 1937 and the years to follow. While the massacre was reported by media around the globe, how it was portrayed varied widely from country to country, as each nation held its own stake in the war and had their own ideas about what messages and propaganda should be sent to the public via the media in order to best help their own country. For instance, while Chinese and American publications focussed on the tragedy and violence of the events of Nanjing in an effort to both inform the public and to gain support and sympathy, the Japanese media portrayed an entirely different picture of glory, triumph, and indeed, kindness, as they sought to persuade their own citizens and the international community that their actions were justified. By considering what images and headlines were published in China, Japan and the U.S. shortly after the Massacre of Nanjing, we can infer what messages the media in each location were attempting to convey in order to persuade the public to a given viewpoint.

The first Chinese newspaper that reported about the Nanjing massacre was *Jiuguo Times*. *Jiuguo Times* was founded by the Chinese Communist Party in 1935. They edited and wrote the content in Moscow and sent the stories to Paris for publication. After the Japanese occupied Nanjing, they started the massacre on December 13, 1937, which lasted for over six weeks. Because Japanese soldiers blocked Nanjing, stopping travel, it was hard for any Chinese media to report on the massacre in at the time. *Jiuguo Times* gathered and translated articles about the Nanjing massacre published by Western media. On December 20th, an article named *Our Army*

Keeps on Fighting after Withdrawal from Nanjing was published in the *Jiuguo Times*. It was the first article that reported about the Nanjing massacre in Chinese. This article had four parts in total. First, it spoke highly of the braveness of Chinese soldiers fighting against their Japanese enemies. Under the first subtitle *Crimes committed by Japanese after invading Nanjing*, there were description about the massacre: Japanese cars ran over peoples' bodies in the road, breaking their arms and legs in a bloody scene. The rest of the article focused on the future of the war and strategies Chinese armies should take to win the war. On December 31th, *War of Nanjing and Shanghai* and *Women participating in the war* were published in the *Jiuguo Times*. They gave more details about the Nanking massacre with images. It talked about murder and rape, calling all the women to participate in the war.

With all the limitations and lack of first hand information, Chinese media covered the Nanking massacre through translated articles from Western media. They focused on the cruelty and inhuman behavior of Japanese soldiers. The purpose of these articles was not only to make Chinese people fight against enemies together but also to want to draw the attention of the rest of the world. At the same time, they covered how the Chinese army fought back, which brought hope to the public.



Our Army Keeps on Fighting after Withdrawal from Nanjing (Jiuguo Times, December 20th, 1937)



War of Nanjing and Shanghai and Women participating in the War (Jiuguo Times, December 31th, 1937)

Unlike the Chinese media, Japan was able to have both reporters and photographers on the ground during the Nanjing Massacre, and to publish pieces about the event with relative ease. They chose to frame the event as one of Japanese valor, strength, and showmanship in the article *'Incredible Record' (in the Contest to) Behead 100 People*, which showcased an intra-military rivalry between two lieutenants in an effort to be the first to kill 100 Chinese people with a sword. The *Nichi Nichi Shimbun* chose to publish an accompanying photograph of the two men posing with their swords, dressed in uniform against the background of Nanjing.

This piece was likely published to inspire pride and awe in Japanese citizens and to promote nationalism. The headline is startling and is very effective in promoting the Japanese military as an organization comprised of incredibly strong, almost super-human men. Similarly, the lack of photographs of the people killed by Noda and Mukai makes the event a statistic and removes any risk of the reader thinking about the victims as fellow human beings. Thus, the piece promotes awe and pride while simultaneously purposefully avoiding prompting responses of compassion or empathy in the readers.

This photograph shows the Rape of Nanking from a purely Japanese perspective, and demonstrates the Japanese media's focus at the time of the event - on the superiority of Japan's



military. It is a prime example of portraying an event in a controlled way in order to persuade the audience to think about it in a certain way. Even the phrase "incredible record" conveys a sense of awe and admiration. In this case, Nanjing was not portrayed as the site of a massacre or tragedy,

'Incredible Record' [in the Contest to] Behead 100 People—Mukai 106 – 105 Noda—Both 2nd Lieutenants Go Into Extra Innings". (Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun, Dec. 13, 1937).

but rather as a glorious victory and proving ground for valorous young Japanese soldiers. It is important to remember that these were the messages being shown to Japanese civilians at the time, which may help us understand why Japanese people at the time did not view the Massacre of Nanjing as a war crime.

Besides showing Japanese soldiers as brave and strong, Japanese media also made an effort to depict them as warm and caring, particularly when it came to women and children. The *Asahi Shimbun*, one of Japan's most widely circulated newspapers, published a collection of photographs in 1938 showing the softer side of Japanese soldiers. These images included soldiers receiving haircuts from locals, passing out cookies to delighted young women, and seen below, playing with Chinese children with toy tanks.



Japanese soldiers and Chinese children playing with toy tanks
(*The Complete Collection of Photographs from the Second Sino-Japanese War (China)*. Asahi Shimbun, 1938).

This photograph, published the year after the Nanjing Massacre, was most likely distributed in an effort to persuade the Japanese public that stories they had heard about Japanese soldiers' cruelty or barbarism during the invasion of the city were either lies or exaggerations. In the image, both the soldiers and the children are

beaming, clearly delighted. There is no hint of the setting being a war zone or of any death or destruction. The message is clear: even children (the most innocent and honest of all people) love the Japanese and are grateful for their presence in Nanjing.

Sources like this image and others in the collection are vital in understanding Japan's portrayal and perception of the *Nankin Jiken*, or "Nanking Event" as it is called in Japanese. This, like the photograph and article regarding the 100 kills contest, visually demonstrates what messages the public received during and after the war. By examining them, we can see the ways in which the violence of the event were downplayed or ignored and why these messages of valor, superiority, and kindness by Japanese soldiers were so effective in convincing the public of the righteousness of Japan's actions.

Meanwhile, in America, more neutral photographs of the massacre were being published. This photo was (according to this source) the first picture of the massacre to reach the United States. The author of the article with which this photo is associated in the American media is the magazine *Look*. This photo was sent to the magazine by W.A. Farmer of Lankow, who said that the photo was taken by a Japanese soldier at the time, and it was published in early 1938. Due to it being in a magazine, the author's background implies that they are trying to show something that may provoke people into action, or they may have used an image such as this for propaganda purposes. The audience is the American people; therefore, both the photo and caption along with it are promoting what may be a propaganda agenda or could even just be showing what is truly going on in the world. It would appear that the purpose of the image is to inform the people, or scare them into supporting possible U.S. involvement in the war. The caption describes how the troops are at a bayonet drill using Chinese prisoners as targets. It notes how, in the center, an unfortunate prisoner has just received a death thrust, and in the foreground, "a bound Chinese is being slightly pricked with the bayonet in order to get him into position for the coup de grace". It would appear that the piece is effective in achieving its purpose, as anyone who may see the



image and read about what is actually going on may become fearful that the same thing could happen to them, as civilians, if the Japanese turned their gaze upon them. The tone of the piece seems somewhat muted. The author passively and calmly described how the Japanese were brutally killing Chinese civilians, without

Civilians being bayoneted by Japanese soldiers: Look Magazine.

using aggressive wording that we see in other cases. It seems that with this piece the author was merely trying to relay information and hoped people would see what was happening and form their own opinions about it, rather than trying to force the author's own opinions down the audience's throat. This source is significant because this was the first time the American people had the opportunity to actually see what was going on in Nanjing, and it may well have been the first time they ever heard how cruel the Japanese actually were. Up to this point they may have believed the Japanese when they stated that they were just "liberating" and not conquering China. It is at this point that Americans may have started to seriously consider potential involvement in the war if they were to prevent this event from happening to both more Chinese people and themselves. This source is important to historians because it shows primary material from the time period and what Americans were publishing about foreign affairs. It shows what Americans may have been thinking and is an example of what they truly cared and thought about during their period of isolationism from the world.

The next image, while conveying an entirely different tone, was also published in *Look* magazine in early 1938. Therefore the author would have had a similar perspective to the one who published the previously discussed photograph. This one however, was accompanied by a

more provocative title: “Hundreds of Thousands Slaughtered in New Wave of Bestial Jap Atrocities”. The audience of this piece was again the American public, and that influenced the way in which this product took shape as it used more aggressive wording to attract the attention of the people. The purpose of this piece, it seems, was to provoke the people. Based on the part that says “new wave” it seems that *Look* may have previously publicized similar events in the Sino-Japanese war. In using words like “bestial” and “slaughtered”, the author seems to be dehumanizing the Japanese and calling them animals for their actions. Even using the term “Jap” was considered a racial slur at the time. In using a headline like this and showing an image of what appears to be Japanese soldiers forcing Chinese villagers to bury a man alive to repair a road by filling in the ditch, one can see that the author was trying to get a rise out of and provoke the American people. This piece is effective in achieving its goals, and factors such as the language used and the image depicted help support their purpose. The tone is very aggressive, and one can almost hear the author yelling at you through the page to “wake up!”. The author is telling the public to wake up and realize what is going on in the world around them while they are stuck in their isolationism, and he is showing the public what could happen to them if they don’t stand up and do something about it. In contrast with the last image, here it appears that the author is trying to use this tone to attack the Japanese and persuade the American public to also attack the Japanese for their actions. This is a significant source because it shows that Americans



weren’t just standing on the sidelines with nothing to say about the war in Asia. It shows that there was both passive and aggressive thoughts in the country and

there was indeed great fear in the minds of Americans of what could happen if the Japanese turned their gaze toward the U.S. Scholars should use this source because it helps to show what people may have been thinking at the time, and it can, for example, show a contrast with the previously discussed photo. This source gives us an actual image and text from the time period, it shows

what people were seeing and what they were saying about the world around them.

Soldiers force Chinese to bury man alive: Look Magazine

In conclusion, depending on what nation's media someone was subjected to, they would have seen a different portrayal of the Nanjing Massacre. In China, the Japanese were portrayed as monsters who were out to kill, rape, and plunder, while in Japan the media portrayed their soldiers as heroes and people who were just there to help the Chinese. Images such as those of soldiers playing with children were seen, and images such as those of the beheading competition were celebrated. Meanwhile in the U.S., a sort of ambivalence can be seen. They show the horrible images of what is going on in the war overseas, but they aren't quite sure what to make of it. In one example we see an author calmly describing the stabbing of civilians for bayonet practice, yet in another example the author cries out for the American people through to wake up. It is here in these sources that we can truly see the manipulation of the media for propaganda; the media and government has the ability to decide what they will show to their people and whatever they decide to show is most likely going to fit some kind of agenda. The Chinese looked to rally their people, perhaps gain sympathy from other nations, and condemn the Japanese for their actions. The Japanese fooled their own people into believing that their cause was just and righteous in the name of the Emperor. Meanwhile, the U.S. had a mix of both

simply relaying information and allowing civilians to make their own opinions, or trying to strike fear into them by means of these images. It can be seen through these sources to this day the way in which images of this time were used to sway the public opinions, and that alone is a reason why these images are significant to both the general public and scholars who are researching this subject.

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