

## Chapter 5: The Truth and Lies of Photography

### The Baby Photo from *LIFE* that Deceived the World



『ライフ』（昭和12年10月4日号）に掲載。「読者の選ぶ1937年ニュース物語ベスト10」に入る

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This photo was published in the October 4, 1937 issue of the American weekly photo magazine *LIFE*, and is said to be of a Chinese baby left alone, crying and screaming at Shanghai South Station, which was destroyed by Japanese bombers on August 28 of that year.

The photographer was H.S. Wong, a well-known Chinese-American photographer. At the time, Shanghai South Station was a distribution center for military supplies for the Chinese army. On the afternoon of August 28, Japanese naval planes bombed Shanghai South Station, destroying military supplies. Wong is said to have been the first person to witness this horrific scene.

The sight of a helpless baby left alone on the tracks of a destroyed station is shocking to anyone who sees it. This photo played a role in rapidly spreading the image in America of poor China, symbolized by this baby, and evil Japan which abused the Chinese in this manner.

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<sup>1</sup> *LIFE*, October 4, 1937. One of the top ten in newsworthy items voted by readers in 1937.

According to *LIFE* magazine, this photo was published in 25 million copies of Hearst newspapers and in 1.75 million copies in non-Hearst newspapers. Given that 800 newspapers across the US reprinted this baby photo and the people who saw it in newsreels, about 136 million Americans saw this image.

However, if you look closely at this photo, it is extremely unnatural. How did a baby, who could barely walk, end up sitting on these railroad tracks? How this came about becomes clear when you look at the following two photos.



「日寇暴行実録」はこの写真を「遭難後の父子」と説明している

An adult deliberately placed the baby on the railroad track. These photos appeared in the American propaganda film "Battle of China," which was made in support of China. In short, the baby photo was staged.

Many Americans were fooled by this photo and formed in their minds an image of "Japanese = cruel." It seems that President Franklin Roosevelt was one of those Americans. In 1938, an organization called the "American Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression" was formed, which created the pamphlet shown below and distributed it in large quantities to influential people in politics and the media. This organization attracted influential people, such as Henry Stimson, who would later

become Secretary of War, as its honorary chairman. The influence of this pamphlet was so great that it led the US government to terminate the Japan-US Treaty of Commerce and Navigation the following year, 1939. The unilateral termination of a commerce treaty by the US was such a serious matter that it could be considered a "quasi-declaration of war." The British newspaper *Manchester Guardian* (July 28, 1939) even wrote, "The abrogation of the Japan-US Treaty of Commerce is something never before seen in the history of the United States, and therefore its significance is both momentous and clear."



Roosevelt was quoted in this pamphlet:

"WHAT GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE SAYING... PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT: Without a declaration of war and without warning or justification of any kind, civilians, including women and children, are being ruthlessly murdered with bombs from the air... The peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort in opposition to those violations of treaties and those ignorings humane instincts which today are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality. "<sup>2</sup>

It seems that when Roosevelt said, "Civilians, including women and children, are being massacred by bombs falling from the sky," he had this photo in mind. In fact, on August 14, a poorly piloted Chinese military plane bombed the Palace Hotel, the Cathay Pacific Hotel, and other hotels in Shanghai, killing 1,741 people, including Robert Reischauer, the brother Edwin Reischauer, future US Ambassador to Japan. The Japanese military did not carry out such indiscriminate bombings.

### **"Fake Photos" Do Not Support a Massacre in Nanjing**

Publications on the Nanjing Incident are full of "massacre photos." The following photos

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<sup>2</sup> "America's Share in Japan's War Guilt", America's Committee for Non Participation in Japanese Aggression, 1937, p.7

are popular in various "massacre" books, included in Rigg's book.



*Japan's Holocaust, p.71*



A Japanese soldier beheads a Chinese citizen at Nanking, December 1937. Note that several of the IJA soldiers are taking pictures with their cameras. Taking photos of crimes was common for the Imperial Japanese Army. *Second Historical Archives, Nanking, China*

*Japan's Holocaust, p.79*



A Japanese officer at Nanking proudly displays the head he has just cut off of a Chinese citizen. Notice how he is smiling holding the severed head and his bloody sword. *Second Historical Archives, Nanking, China and The Alliance for Preserving the Truth of Sino-Japanese War*

*Japan's Holocaust, p.80*



Japanese soldiers about to bayonet children in the Philippines, 1945. *National Archives, College Park*

*Japan's Holocaust, p.120*

That these are fabricated, fake photos has been definitely demonstrated in *Analyzing The 'Photographic Evidence' of the Nanking Massacre* (by Higashinakano Shuo, Susumu Kobayashi, and Shinjiro Fukunaga).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Nanking Jiken 'Shoko Shashin' wo Kenshosuru" by Higashinakano Shudo, Kobayashi Susumu and Fukunaga Shinjiro, Soshisha, Tokyo, 2005. English translation: "Analyzing The 'Photographic Evidence' of the Nanking Massacre", Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact, Tokyo, [Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact](#)

The total number of photos, excluding duplicates, that were allegedly taken of the Nanjing Massacre published in various media is 143. However, by investigating their origins and analyzing suspicious points in the photos, it has since been demonstrated that not one of these photos is evidence of a "Nanjing Massacre". For example, in the top left photo above, judging from the uniform the man is wearing, it appears to be that of a naval marine, a sailor, and not an army soldier. However, the white part of the collar appears to be the white line on the uniforms of Japanese sailors, but the width of this collar is significantly different from normal. It seems that the



person in this picture tried to impersonate a Japanese sailor, but this did not work. In the same way, in the bottom left photo, the military uniform, steel helmet, boots, and neckerchief are all very out of line for a “Nanking Jiken ‘Shoko Shashin’” a Japanese commissioned officer in Nanking. The collar is not the same as a typical Japanese military's stand-up type collar. He is holding a sword, but there is no sheath for the sword on his left hip. It is a very sloppily faked photo. As for the top right photo, there is a crowd watching what looks like a beheading, but would the Japanese army do something stupid like executing someone in front of so many spectators and allowing this to be photographed? The Japanese army is fairly naïve allowing such a spectacle to be photographed. In the bottom right photo, the person in the center appears many times in other photos.

In fact, these photos were fabricated by the "Photography Department" of the Kuomintang Central Propaganda Department. Furthermore, the Kuomintang created a news company in the United States called the Trans-Pacific News Service to disseminate these outrageous photos.

The American head of the Trans-Pacific News Service was none other than Harold Timperley. Timperley was a reporter for the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper, and edited a book called *What War Means: The Japanese Terror in China*, which was published by Victor Gollancz in the UK. Because it was compiled by a supposedly neutral journalist, it spread the impression around the world that the Nanjing Massacre was undeniably true. Many Japanese scholars who believe in a "massacre" also use it as evidence. The *London*

*Times* at the time praised *What War Means*, stating in a review that: "The evidence here put forward is clearly genuine and reliable." However, it turns out that Timperley was, in fact, a propaganda agent for the Kuomintang. Suzuki Akira was the first to discover that Timperley was a Kuomintang propaganda agent, and Suzuki went on to show the evidence in detail in his book, *The New Illusion of the 'Nanjing Massacre'* (Asuka Shinsha). However, the autobiography of Zeng Xubai, head of the Kuomintang's central propaganda department, revealed that he used Timperley as his agent and positioned him as the head of the Kuomintang's press release service in America.

The Kuomintang adopted a strategy of using propaganda to make up for its lack of battlefield advantage. Among these, the policy that was particularly emphasized was the use of foreigners for propaganda, as Zeng Xubai, head of the international propaganda department, stated: "Regarding our international propaganda at this time, we decided that we Chinese will never appear in front on our part but search for foreign friends who understand the truth of our fight and political goal and let them speak for us." <sup>4</sup>

There was a magazine published in New York called *The Lowdown*. In the January 1939 issue, Joseph Hilton Smyth wrote the following:

"Soon, along with propaganda "news" releases a variety of atrocity pictures started flooding the newspaper offices. Most of these emanated from the Trans-Pacific News Service, headed by a former Shanghai newspaper man. Few of the atrocity pictures bore close examination – the majority being manufactured by the same process used in the Belgium atrocity stories and pictures released by the Allies more than twenty years ago. One of the most lurid of them was given to the highly reliable Associated Press. Its subsequent publication raised the proper reaction in the gullible American mind. The photograph depicted a Japanese officer doing sword practice on the body of a Chinese prisoner tied to a cross. Another Japanese officer,



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<sup>4</sup> "Autobiography of Zeng Xubai", Zeng Xubai, LianJing (連經) publishing Business Co., Ltd., Taipei, 1988.



with a theatrically wide grin, is looking on. The Associated Press insisted that the picture was genuine; later, however, it was forced to back down and confess to have been duped. The history of that one picture is interesting, in that it shows light on the history of most of such pictures. It was first placed on sale, such as a post card, in Shanghai in 1919. At that time, it was presented as propaganda against one of the war lords who was ravaging an interior province. A year or so later, it was brought out again depicting Communist Chinese officers torturing a Chinese prisoner of one of the northern provinces. It did not rest for long, as it was soon hauled out again as propaganda against the Japanese when they went into Manchuria. When the Manchurian crisis had ceased to be news it was put away only to be unearthed again to illustrate the atrocities committed by the Chinese Soviets when Chiang Kai-shek was attempting to wipe out the Chinese Red Army in 1934. In its most recent appearance, it was used for customary purpose of enlisting American sympathies – and arousing anti-Japanese sentiment in this country.”<sup>5</sup>

**A photo taken by the Japanese was of a defeated soldier.**

Rigg's book contains the following photo, which is used by Japanese enthusiasts of a "Nanking Massacre" as evidence of civilian massacre. This photo was taken by Private Murase Moriyasu, 17th Motor Vehicles Logistics Company .

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<sup>5</sup> *THE LOWDOWN*, January, 1939, New York, p.19.



*Japan's Holocaust, p.75*



*Japan's Holocaust, p. 76*

These were taken outside the city on the north side of Nanjing, on the banks of the Yangtze River, a little upstream from Xiaguan. On December 13th, the day the city gates fell, Chinese soldiers on the banks of the Yangtze River in Xiaguan took off their military uniforms and tried to flee to the opposite side of the river. Not a single body in regular Chinese army uniform seen, even though they were carrying rifles and machine guns. The Chinese soldiers wiped out by the advancing Japanese army washed up on the riverbank. Details of the battle at that time are well known and we will not go into them here. In short, these photos show dead Chinese soldiers.

In other words, there are neither faked or real photos that document a massacre of Chinese civilians.

### **There are photos that show the truth of Nanjing**

At least 150 newspaper reporters and photographers followed the Japanese troops into





Nanjing, enthusiastically covering the city and sending the news back to headquarters in Japan. Among them, the *Asahi Shimbun* sent as many as 50 reporters and photographers to Nanjing. In the month after the city was occupied by the Japanese army, they published six special photographic series.

The first of these was the photo series shown above, entitled “Peace revives in Nanjing”, subtitled <Joy rises as the Imperial Army is welcomed>. The photos were taken on December 17 by special correspondent Kawamura--the name of the photographer is clearly stated.

The photos show the following:

- ① Soldiers shopping. By the fifth day of the occupation, street vendors were out, and soldiers, without their weapons, were shopping.
- ② Farmers, relieved that the Imperial Army enters the city, work their fields.
- ③ A group of civilian refugees protected by a few Imperial Army soldiers.
- ④ A peaceful scene at a barber shop. This is a street barber shop, a widespread feature of Nanjing.

The next set of photos is the third in the series, titled "Nanjing Smiles", subtitled <Sketches of the City>, and was published on December 25. (Photos by Correspondent Hayashi)



- ① Soldiers playing with children with toy tanks (Zhongshan Road, Nanking)
- ② Once the fires of war die down, horse-drawn carriages become a fun playground for children (in a residential area of Nanking).
- ③ The activities of the Imperial Army's medical team lead to friendship between Japan and China (in a refugee evacuation area).
- ④ Hymns echoing from a Chinese churchyard, enduring the light of peace (Ninghai Road, Nanking).

The churchyard is of the same church Reverend John Magee attended. As a witness for the prosecution at the Tokyo Trials, Magee accused the Japanese Army of committing hundreds of massacres and assaults over two days. However, under cross-examination by the defense, Maggie admitted that he had only witnessed one murder and two rapes. Moreover, the murders were of captured soldiers who escaped after being questioned. Furthermore, he himself had not actually seen the murders. Although Maggie was a

missionary who claimed countless massacres occurred, in reality, he saw nothing of the sort.

As you can see in the churchyard photo, the group is made up of mostly young women gathered together and singing hymns. It is indeed a peaceful scene. How can one see Nanjing as a place filled with murders?

**This was the true state of Nanjing, as seen in these photos (写真). (写真 means *reflect truth*.)**