

There Is Not a Single “Real Photograph” Documenting the Nanking Incident

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1. Introduction

There has been an abundance of so-called evidential photographs allegedly depicting the Nanking Incident in the world. The institution in the city of Nanking, in the People’s Republic of China, popularly known as the Nanking Massacre Memorial Museum, in particular, is a treasure-trove of such popular yet groundless photos of vague origins.

Most of the photographs on exhibition at this “memorial museum” are of unknown sources. Some of those that are well-identified origins are either a composite or distorted from the original photos used in Japanese newspapers, magazines and elsewhere. Others are secretly reproduced or mis-captioned from the originals. At the Museum, voluminous photographic albums full of these dubious photos are sold as authentic to visitors.

Even in Japan, books using those photos, without any verification of their authenticity, are still sold at bookstores and are displayed on the bookshelves of many libraries nationwide. In recent years, it has been proved that those photos have nothing to do with the Nanking Incident. This notion is becoming increasingly common knowledge among us Japanese.

I joined a research group, led by Professor Higashinakano Shudo of Asia University, to examine and analyze a total of over 30,000 of these photographs. It took nearly three years to complete the research. The result was published as a book entitled *Nankin Jiken “Shoko Shashin” Wo Kenshosuru (Analyzing the “Photographic Evidence” of the Nanking Incident)* (Soshisha, 2005). This book became a bestseller at one point, attracting much public attention and interest. The entire translation of this book is available at this site.(http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL02_1/26_S4.pdf)

Now, I will take up some typical, so-called self-claimed evidential photos of the “Nanking Massacre” and verify that there is truly not a single photo which can be considered as evidence of the Nanking Massacre.

2. The whole scheme was war propaganda plotted by the Nationalist Party

The Nanking Incident generally refers to the sequence of events, namely, cases of mass murders, violence, rapes, plunder and arson, allegedly committed by the Japanese Army for six weeks after the fall of Nanking in December 1937 during the Sino-Japanese War. The issue came up at the Tokyo Trials (International Military Tribunal for the Far East), which started in 1946. At the time, the allegation was a bolt out of the blue to the Japanese.

Soon enough, in July 1937, about nine years prior to the Tokyo Trials, and six months after the fall of Nanking, *What War Means*, edited by Harold Timperley, and its Chinese-language version, *Japanese Military Atrocities Witnessed by Foreigners* were published for the first time in the world, thereafter propaganda suddenly started to spread, accusing the Japanese Army of atrocities.

Recently, top-secret documents entitled *The Outline of Operations of the International Propaganda Office* (published in 1941), “produced by” the Nationalist Party’s Propaganda Department during the time of the Republic of China era, were discovered by Professor Higashinakano Shudo of Asia University. It has turned out that the two books are referred in the documents, and the following facts have been verified.

- 1) *What War Means* was a propaganda book, contrived and published by the Propaganda Department of the Nationalist Party.
- 2) The “Nanking Massacre” was not mentioned in the description of this *Outline of Operations*. It mentioned “rape, arson, and plunder” of Japanese army as acts of most wicked injustice, but the word “massacre” is not found anywhere.

As part of this propaganda operation, the Nationalist Party’s Propaganda Department determined to have international friends of the Chinese people disseminate war propaganda on their behalf. The editor of *What War Means* was an Australian correspondent named Harold Timperley of the *Manchester Guardian*, and a major contributor to the book was Rev. Miner Searle Bates, an American professor at the University of Nanking and at the same time a missionary, who was an advisor to the Nationalist government. Rev. George Fitch, another contributor to the book, was also an American and YMCA secretary in Nanking. His wife was a close friend of Mrs. Chiang Kai-shek.

Furthermore, it has been already verified by *Autobiography by Zeng Xubai* (published in 1988), head of the International Propaganda Office of the Nationalist Party’s Propaganda Department, that the Nationalist Party’s Propaganda Department provided funds to publish such books as *What War means* and *War Damage in the*

Nanking Area, December 1937 to March 1938, edited by Lewis S.C. Smythe (1938).

3. Sources of the “photographic evidence” of the Nanking Incident

Numerous books claiming that a massacre actually took place in Nanking have been published. In many cases, frequently used “staple photos” are included in those books. Typical examples are Photos 1 and 2.



Photo 1: This photo is shown in *Record of Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Enemy*, edited by National Military Council of the Nationalist Government (1938). The shadows cast by the persons in the photo are directionally inconsistent. Also, it is common practice for a Japanese using his sword to step his right foot forward before the left foot when engaged in beheading someone, otherwise the left foot would be injured. But the man’s foot positions are the opposite. These lead to the conclusion that this is a composite and staged photograph.



Photo 2: This photo first appears in *Record of Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Enemy*. The figures in front and in back are dimensionally inconsistent, and the shadows are ambiguous as to who cast them. Therefore, it is determined that this is a composite photo.

Incidentally, the aforementioned *What War Means* written in English does not include photos, but its Chinese translation edition, *Record of Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Enemy*, edited by the Political Department of National Military Council of the Nationalist Government (currently housed in the Hoover Institution of Stanford University) holds 39 photos. Another Chinese-language version of Timperley's *What War Means* is titled *Japanese Military Atrocities Witnessed by Foreigners* (Hong Kong and Hankou editions exist and the latter was examined), and holds 31 photographs. So altogether a total of 70 photographs. Subtracting seven photos that appear commonly in either of the two books, we then have **63** source photographs.

The **63** photographs that appeared between 1937 and 1938 have the following characteristics:

- 1) For most of them, it is not certain who took them or, where and when they were taken. As few as ten photos are verifiable by the photographers' names, time and place of the photographing.
- 2) Many photos are judged to be reproduced or distorted from the original one, with fabricated captions.
- 3) Many of them appear to have been taken at a different time of the year other than winter, when the Japanese Army took Nanking. Moreover, the location cannot be identified as Nanking.
- 4) There is not a single photo that indicates a mass killing. Only two of them show ten or so bodies, while most photos show one or two bodies. In many cases, they are bodies of women and children.

4. “Photographic evidence” appeared in *Travels in China*

After the War, at the time of the Tokyo Trials and Nanking Trials, a book entitled *Pictorial History of the Chinese War against Japan* (1947) was published, in which the first description of the “Great Massacre of Nanking” appeared, together with photos, claiming that 300,000 were killed, outnumbering the atomic-bomb victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is allegedly a plot intended by the countries of the Allied Forces to offset the damage inflicted by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This *Pictorial History* carries seven of the aforementioned 63 photos, including Photos 1 and 2. Thereafter, it was not until 1971 that the Nanking Incident was an issue of controversy.

A year prior to the resumption of diplomatic relations between Japan and China, one Japanese newspaper in particular was allowed to station its reporters in China. That is the *Asahi Shimbun*, while other newspapers were not granted such a privilege. *Asahi Shimbun* reporter Honda Katsuichi wrote *Travels in China*, without verifying what the Chinese had told him. His serialized article, not having been based on historical facts, was subjected to some refutations from those who had been in Nanking at that time. Naturally, Honda could not satisfactorily respond. In spring of 1972, immediately before the resumption of Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties, Honda's serialized article was published as a book. Thereupon many photographs referred to as “evidence of the Nanking Incident” began to appear in various publications in Japan. The ominous ringleader that spread the groundless Nanking Massacre story is none other than famous Japanese reporter Honda Katsuichi.

In Honda's book, many of the "source photos" used in *Record of Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Enemy* were borrowed. Here, I will pick out Photos 3 and 5 out of the previously-mentioned 63 photos, and illustrate how Honda Katsuichi changed the original captions.



Photo 3: From *Record of Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Enemy*. This photo is also used in other publications including *Honda Katsuichi Zenshu 14 (Complete Collection of Honda Katsuichi's Works, Volume 14)*.



Photo 4: *Asahi Ban Shina Jihen Gaho (Asahi Edition: Pictorial of the Sino-Japanese Incident)* (December 5, 1937 issue, the back cover). The cover indicates that Japanese troops paid money and purchased chickens.

Photo 4 is the source of Photo 3. The former originally appeared in *Asahi Edition: Pictorial* (December 5, 1937 issue), published prior to December 13, 1937, when Nanking fell.

The caption of the photo reads: A Japanese soldier marches, carrying chickens around his neck, which were purchased at the homes of Chinese citizens. (Photographed by correspondent Ogawa on October 29 at Feng Yuezhen on Nanking-Hankou Railway)

However, in *Complete Collection of Honda Katsuichi's Works, Vol. XIV (Compilation: Travels in China)*, the same photo carries the caption: Livestock like goats and chickens have all been looted as war trophies.

Honda Katsuichi, ignoring the fact that Japanese troops duly paid money when purchasing things, makes up a different story.

Moreover, Photo 3 was not included in *Travels in China*, published in 1972, but 23 years after the publication of *Travels in China*, Honda added the photo in his *Complete Collection*, using a false caption.

Honda Katsuichi also includes Photo 5 in his *Complete Collection, Vol. XIV*. He introduces the photo, quoting the following caption: Japanese soldiers hunt and take women and children away. Victims of violent rapes and gang-rapes range from seven to eight-year-old little girls to old women over seventy.



殺！槍！辱！去，部司寇送的——，婦女農江
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Photo 5: This was printed in *Record of Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Enemy*. This photo first appears in *Asahi Graphic* (November 10, 1937). The photo shows Chinese peasants on their way home after laboring on farms, escorted by Japanese soldiers.

In *Complete Collection of Honda Katsuichi's Works, Vol. XIV*, Honda describes: This picture shows Japanese soldiers hunting and taking away women and children. It is reported that victims of violent raping and gang-raping range from little girls of 7 to 8 to old women over 70.

Kasahara Tokushi, then professor at Utsunomiya University, used Photo 5 in his book entitled *Nankin Jiken (The Nanking Incident)*, explaining the photo quite differently from the fact: Japanese soldiers abduct Chinese women in the Henan region.

Later, it was made clear by Hata Ikuhiko, former professor of Nihon University, that this very photograph was in *Asahi Graphic* (November 10, 1937 issue).

The true description of the photo reads: Fellow Japanese soldiers escort children and women back to their village of “Hinomaru” (Japanese National Flag) after a day’s farming on the field.

Honda, without fully examining the *Asahi Graphic* published by his own newspaper, intentionally inserts the photo with the altered explanation in *Compilation: Travels in China, Complete Collection of Honda Katsuichi's Works, Vol. XIV*.

5. Newly introduced “photographic evidence”

In 1982, over the issue of changing descriptions from “aggression” to “advance” with regards to Japan’s actions on the Chinese continent during the World War II, a misconceived newspaper article caused diplomatic friction between Japan and China. Suddenly at the time, publication of various books claiming that the Nanking Massacre actually took place began in Japan. Major books of this kind were mostly published by *Asahi Shimbun*.. The newspaper is well known among the Japanese for its anti-government articles.

Incidentally, in the book entitled *Nankin Daigyakusatu no Genba he (To the Scene of the Nanking Massacre)*, co-authored by Hora Tomio, Fujiwara Akira and Honda Katsuichi, and published in 1988, nearly 40 years after the Nanking Trials, the story of “An Album of 16 Photographs”(so to speak) is written. It roughly goes as follows:

“It’s difficult to definitely say when, but sometime between 1937 and 1939, a

Japanese soldier decided to have his photos printed. A clerk at a photo studio in Nanking printed an extra set of photos besides those requested by the Japanese customer. He kept the set for himself. In 1941, another Chinese happened to find those photos, and he secretly kept them until after the War was over and then he submitted the photos to the court of the Nanking Trials. This photographic evidence was used against Tani Hisao at the war criminal trial. (Author's note: Tani Hisao was 6th Division Commander of the Japanese Army and had led in the battle to take Nanking in 1937.)

Seven of these 16 photos are inserted in *To the Scene of the Nanking Massacre*. Photo 2 (already discussed) and Photo 6 are among the seven.



Photo 6: The acquirer of this photo reportedly kept it until the Nanking Trials were held in 1947. However, the photo already appeared in the January 10, 1938 issue of *Life* magazine.

Photo 2 appeared in *Record of Atrocities Committed by the Japanese Enemy*,

published in July 1938, while Photo 6 was shown in the January 10, 1938 issue of *Life* magazine. Therefore, the explanation of “secretly kept until after the War ended and then submitted to the Nanking Trials” is a sheer lie. This is the real story of the faked “Album of 16 Photographs.”

6. Shadows in the photos reveal in what season the photographing took place

Photo 7 also appears in “An Album of 16 photographs.”



Photo 7: From page 221 of *To the Scene of the Nanking Massacre*. This photo was reportedly kept in secret until the Nanking Trials were held in 1947. However, a photo with a very similar background is carried in the Chinese-language version of *Japanese Military Atrocities Witnessed by Foreigners*, published in July 1938.

At a glance one can easily see that the soldier is thinly clad, so it has been said the photo is not fit for the middle of December when Nanking fell. There has been no strong evidence offered to prove that it was not taken in winter (December).

There is another photo, namely, Photo 8, which represents very similar spectators and trees in the background. A close examination of Photo 8 reveals that there is a shadow clearly cast under the right foot of the standing man.

The angle (θ) formed by the line connecting the tips of his heel and the shadow, and the ground level is measured at 78 degrees.

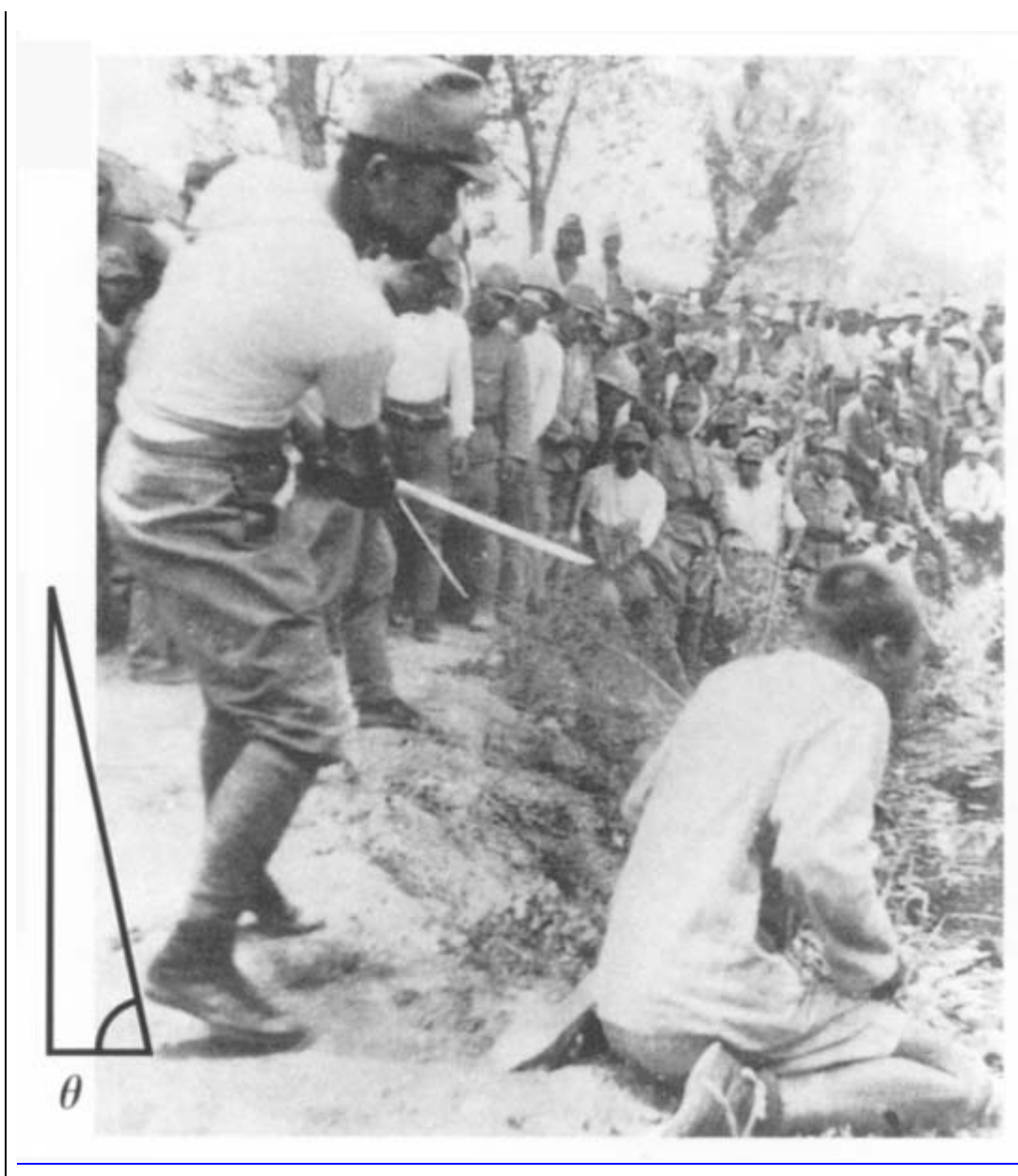


Photo 8: From page 119 of *The Rape of Nanking*, co-authored by Shi Yong and Yin

Jijun. The angle θ is 78 degrees and the sun's position is very high up. It is probably May or June.

Judging from the theoretical angle at the time of meridian transit (nearly at noon), it turns out that the angle of 78 degrees cannot occur in December, the month Nanking fell. Specifically, it is decided that the actual time of year when the photo was taken is May or June (Chart 1).

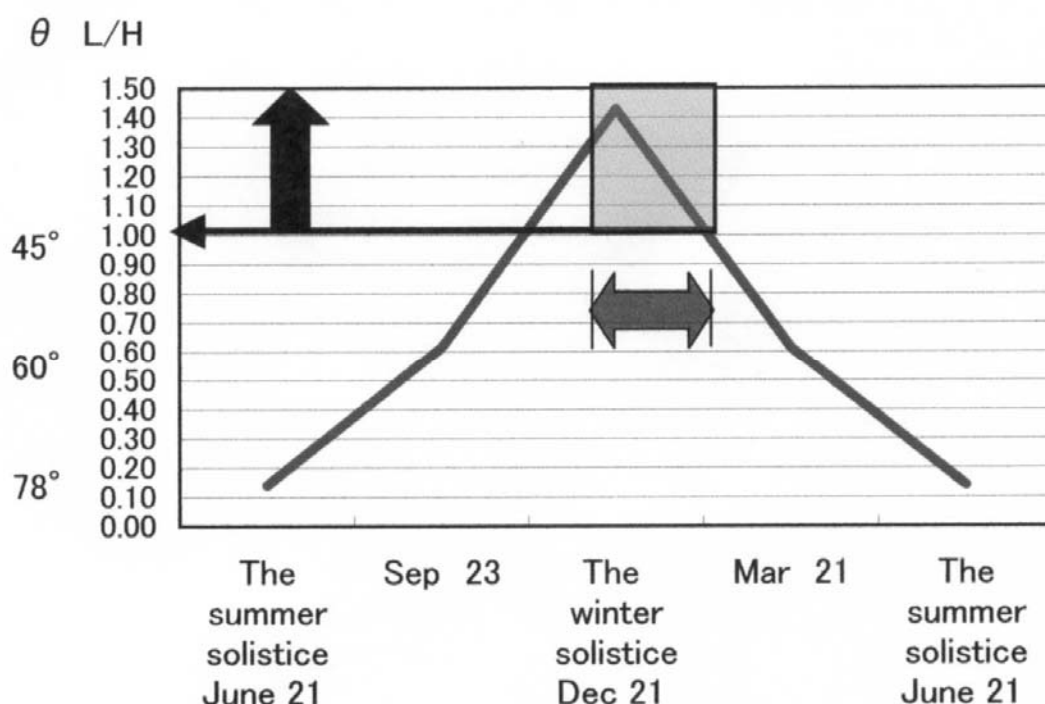


Chart 1: The Relation between L (length of shadow) and H (height of object)

The fluctuations of the ratio of the shadow's length to the object's height over the year (In the city of Nanking at the Meridian Transit)

The summer solistice	June 21	the autumnal equinox	September 23
The winter solistice	December 21	the vernal equinox	March 21
The summer solistice	June 21		

There is a confidential report among the aforementioned top-secret documents of the Nationalist Party's Propaganda Department, entitled *The Outline of Operations of the International Propaganda Office of the Central Propaganda Department*. The report goes as follows. Here, "this office" refers to the Nationalist Party's International

Propaganda Office.

“This office started to take up photographing mission under such circumstances, as in the spring of 1938, International Newspaper Photography Company, following our instruction, transferred all the photographic equipments, apparatus and materials, together with several thousand photos which had already been taken during news coverage activities, to the photography section of Central News Agency, and then we provided monthly fees so that all those involved in the work would fully cooperate and do their best to produce the maximum photographic effects.”

In other words, a full-scale operation to produce and circulate propaganda photos was launched in the spring of 1938, about four months after the fall of Nanking. This may explain why people in the photos apparently wear short-sleeved garments or are thinly dressed, quite unfit for winter. We can also feel quite convinced as to why the dead bodies shown in the photos were rarely dressed in warm winter clothes. Ordinarily, in December in the midst of severe winter, most citizens of Nanking would wear thickly-textured Chinese garments.

7. Conclusion

If they claim that 200,000 to 300,000 Chinese were massacred in six weeks after the fall of Nanking, then, no doubt there will be evidential photos to prove that such a massacre took place.

However, there are no such photos that unquestionably suggest a massacre that claimed 200,000 or 300,000 lives. Let alone a massacre, there is no “photographic evidence” showing acts of rape, arson or plunder at all.

In any case, the truth is that any photograph valid enough to be used as evidence of the Nanking Incident is nowhere to be found in the world.

[References]

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