

# Using Primary Sources To Clarify the Nanking Incident

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## Preface

The Second Sino-Japanese War began in 1937. In December of that year, the Japanese were victorious in the Battle of Nanking. The allegation that, when occupying Nanking, Japanese military personnel set upon the civilian residents of the city, raping and killing them, was later leveled against Japan. The accusers further alleged that the Japanese murdered 200,000-300,000 persons, including prisoners of war, in what is commonly known in Japan as the “Nanking Incident,” and in the West as the “Nanking massacre” and the “Rape of Nanking.” It is very likely that their position derives from unguarded acceptance of a book entitled *What War Means*<sup>1</sup> and from judgments handed down at the Tokyo Trials.<sup>2</sup>

*What War Means* was published by the Chinese Nationalist government. The book was the product of an intense propaganda campaign launched after the Chinese suffered devastating military defeats and retreated first from Shanghai, and then Nanking as well. The Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) government’s Central Propaganda Department hired H. J. Timperley, a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* to convince readers throughout the world that the Japanese were fighting a war of aggression in which they used abhorrent tactics. All the while, he masqueraded as a neutral foreign journalist.<sup>3</sup>

When the Pacific War ended, the US Occupation Forces made incapacitating Japan both

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<sup>1</sup> Timperley, Harold J., ed., *What War Means: Japanese Terror in China* (London: Victor Gollanz Ltd., 1938).

<sup>2</sup> Formally, International Military Tribunal for the Far East (May 1946-November 1948). While the war with China continued, Japan fought against the US and the other Allies in the Asian-Pacific region from 1941 until Japan’s surrender in August 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Kitamura Minoru, *The Politics of Nanjing: An Impartial Investigation*, trans. Hal Gold (New York: University Press of America, 2007); Higashinakano Shudo, *Nankin jiken Kokuminto gokuhi bunsho kara yomitoku* (Top-secret Chinese Nationalist documents reveal the truth about the Nanking Incident) (Tokyo, Soshisha, 2006); for English translation, see [http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL02\\_1/27\\_S4.pdf](http://www.sdh-fact.com/CL02_1/27_S4.pdf).

materially and spiritually their first priority. Materially, they stripped the nation of what remained of its combat capability. Spiritually, they implemented the WGIP (*War Guilt Information Program*), which used the media to inform the public that Japan had waged a war of aggression, and that its armies used combat tactics that were extremely brutal. As a particularly egregious example of Japanese behavior during the Second Sino-Japanese War, the WGIP cited the Nanking Incident, in which the Japanese allegedly murdered 200,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians. WGIP's version of the events that transpired after the fall of Nanking distorted perceptions of the war between Japan and China, but gained international acceptance nonetheless.

About 10 years ago, I made a careful examination of all primary sources available in Japan concerning the Nanking Incident. I then entered all relevant information (about 6,000 items) into a database. I used the computer to analyze the information in my database from every possible angle in my search to discover what really happened in Nanking. The results were published in 2003 under the title *Nankin jiken no kakushin* (At the core of the Nanking Incident). I believe that my findings represent the truth, i.e., what was at the core of the Nanking Incident, as the title suggests.

This paper is a summary of the essential points in that book. I have set aside all preconceptions, and have laid before the reader what I believe to be the true meaning of what the source documents reveal.

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## Chapter 1: The Venue of the Nanking Incident

### I. The popular perception

The Nanking Incident is commonly known as the “Nanking massacre” or the “Rape of Nanking” in the English-speaking world. The popular perception of it is, as stated in the Preface, that after capturing the Chinese capital, a huge Japanese army ran amok there, murdering and committing other criminal acts.

Here is how it is described in the judgment handed down by the IMTFE (International Military Tribunal for the Far East).<sup>4</sup>

#### THE RAPE OF NANKING

The Chinese Army retreated, leaving approximately 50,000 troops behind to defend the city.<sup>5</sup>

As the Japanese forces stormed the South Gate on the night of 12 December 1937, most of the remaining 50,000 troops escaped through the North and West Gate of the city. Nearly all the Chinese soldiers had evacuated the city or had abandoned their arms and uniforms and sought refuge in the International Safety Zone and all resistance had ceased as the Japanese Army entered the city on the morning of the 13 December 1937.

The Japanese soldiers swarmed over the city and committed various atrocities. According to one of the eye witnesses they were let loose like a barbarian horde to desecrate the city.

(...)

Individual soldiers and small groups of two or three roamed over the city murdering, raping, looting and burning. There was no discipline whatever. Many soldiers were drunk. Soldiers went through the streets indiscriminately killing Chinese men, women and children ... until in places the streets and

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<sup>4</sup> Also commonly known as the Tokyo Trials.

<sup>5</sup> Ancient Chinese cities were surrounded by high walls to protect them against invaders. Here “city” refers to the walled city of Nanking, which should not be confused with the larger Nanking metropolitan area, which included areas outside the walls as well.

alleys were littered with the bodies of their victims.<sup>6</sup>

In *What War Means*, American missionary Minor Searle Bates, posing as an anonymous foreigner, proceeds to describe the situation in Nanking immediately after the entry of the Japanese army into the walled city. The tone of this description, which I call “Bates’ Report,” reverberates through the entire book. Bates handed a similar account to foreign reporters who left Nanking on December 15, two days after the Japanese entry. Since it was the only Western news source, it colored all subsequent reporting on the Nanking Incident.

But in two days the whole outlook has been ruined by frequent murder, wholesale and semi-regular looting, and uncontrolled disturbance of private homes including offences against the security of women. Foreigners who have travelled over the city report many civilian bodies lying in the streets. In the central portion of Nanking they were counted yesterday as about one to the city block. A considerable percentage of the dead civilians were the victims ... of the 13th, which was the time of Japanese entry into the city. Any person who ran in fear or excitement, and any one who was caught in streets or alleys after dusk by roving patrols was likely to be killed on the spot. Most of this severity was beyond even theoretical excuse. It proceeded in the Safety Zone as well as elsewhere, and many cases are plainly witnessed by foreigners and by reputable Chinese.<sup>7</sup>

Bates continues with similar descriptions of looting and rapes.

## II. The actual situation in Nanking

Amazingly, when Bates took the witness stand at the Tokyo Trials on July 29, 1946, he gave completely contradictory testimony in his opening statement.

David Sutton, a prosecutor, asked him, “Did this Committee (the International

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<sup>6</sup> R. John Pritchard and Sonia Magbanua Zaide, ed., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: The Comprehensive Index and Guide to the Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1981), 49604; <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/PTO/IMTFE/>.

<sup>7</sup> Timperley, *op. cit.*, p. 17. For details about Bates writing this anonymous account and handing it over to foreign journalists departing from Nanking, see Tomisawa Shigenobu, *Nankin jiken no kakushin* (At the core of the Nanking Incident) (Tokyo: Tendensha, 1993), p. 158.

Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone) make reports from time to time?”<sup>8</sup>

Bates replied,

The actual event was very different [from what was expected by the committee], because the Japanese attack and seizure of the city was swift. But then the troubles began. The treatment of civilians was so bad that the chairman and secretary of the committee went regularly to any Japanese officials who could be reached and soon began to prepare daily reports of the serious injuries to civilians *that occurred within the safety zone*. Over a period of several weeks a total of several hundred cases, many of them compound cases, involving groups and large numbers of individuals, were thus reported in writing or orally to Japanese officials.<sup>9</sup> [Italics supplied.]

Note that Bates himself testified at this public forum, the Tokyo Trials, events later referred to as the “Nanking Incident” took place in the Nanking Safety Zone. (In 1939, reports of these incidents were published as a book entitled *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, which Bates quotes as proof of Japanese atrocities and mass murder in *What War Means*. Here also he states clearly,

It is to be noted that the incidents thus recorded cover only the Nanking Safety Zone, and that the rest of Nanking was practically deserted until the end of January and most of the time was without foreign observers during this whole period.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, since there was no one residing anywhere outside the Safety Zone, nothing untoward could have occurred there. There was nothing to report.

### III. Japanese soldiers encounter a ghost town

When the Japanese entered Nanking, they found themselves in what seemed like a ghost town, for the following reasons.

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<sup>8</sup> Pritchard and Zaide, *op. cit.*, 2626.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Timperley, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

1. As stated in the IMTFE judgment, the main strength of the Chinese defense forces had abandoned Nanking prior to the Japanese invasion. Soldiers who were left behind hid in the Safety Zone, among civilians. Therefore, the Japanese sighted no enemy soldiers as they walked through Nanking. Consequently, there was no fighting in the city's streets.

2. As the Japanese approached, residents began evacuating Nanking to avoid getting caught up in the conflict. In his diary, German businessman John Rabe wrote about carts passing day and night between Xiaguan and the Yangtze River, filled with the belongings of residents fleeing Nanking.<sup>11</sup> By the time the Japanese arrived, the population had shrunk from one million to about 200,000.

3. Foreigners remaining in the city organized the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone (hereafter referred to as the "International Committee"). They established a zone, insisting that both parties to the conflict consider it neutral. International Committee members then instructed all 200,000 remaining residents to gather in the Safety Zone, in an effort to protect them from anticipated warfare within the city walls. The International Committee's leading members were Americans, and the chairman was John Rabe, a German. George A. Fitch is quoted as follows in *What War Means*:

Our International Committee for Nanking Safety Zone had been negotiating with both the Chinese and Japanese for the recognition of a certain area in the city which would be kept free of soldiers and military offices and which would not be bombed or shelled, a place where the remaining two hundred thousand of Nanking's population of one million could take refuge when things became too hot ...<sup>12</sup>

Once the Safety Zone was established, the military and city police visited each household to urge them to go there. On December 8, the commander of the city's defense forces "decreed that all noncombatants must concentrate in the internationally supervised safety zone."<sup>13</sup> The residents obeyed.

These arrangements enabled the International Committee to make the following

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<sup>11</sup> Erwin Wickert, ed., *Der Gute Deutsche von Nanking: John Rabe* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1997), entries for November 17-18, 1937.

<sup>12</sup> Timperley, *op. cit.* p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Special cable from Tillman Durdin in Nanking to the *New York Times*, 08 December 1937.

announcement at a later date: “In other words, on the 13th when your troops entered the city, we had nearly all the civilian population gathered in a Zone ... .”<sup>14</sup>

All 200,000 remaining inhabitants of Nanking had taken refuge in the Safety Zone. It became a haven for Chinese Nationalist soldiers as well. Those unable to flee before the Japanese arrived went into hiding there. The Safety Zone was located at the center of the city, but it occupied only 3.8 square kilometers, or about one-eighth the area of Nanking. It was approximately equal in size to Central Park in Manhattan, New York. Two hundred thousand souls were packed into that space, going about their daily lives as best they could, but the zone was extremely crowded. In contrast, there was hardly a soul to be seen in other areas of the city, where the silence of a ghost town prevailed.<sup>15</sup>

Such was the situation in Nanking when Japanese soldiers entered. They were under strict orders from Commander-in-chief Gen. Matsui Iwane to adhere to “Procedures To Be Followed When Capturing Nanking” and “Warnings,” which he had issued.<sup>16</sup> The major points therein were as follows:

1. Entire divisions shall refrain from entering the city. Division commanders shall select and dispatch only one battalion, in principle, to explore the situation there.
2. Each division shall be entrusted with the capture of a particular area of the city. Divisions must refrain from entering other divisions’ assigned areas.<sup>17</sup>

(To comply with this order, the 7th Regiment of the 9th Division was assigned to the Safety Zone, which was filled to overflowing with the city’s residents and soldiers of the defeated army. All other units were instructed to secure uninhabited areas.)

3. Maintain strict military discipline.

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<sup>14</sup> Hsü Shuhsi, Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1939, Prepared under the auspices of the Council of International Affairs, Chungking), p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> See Note 10.

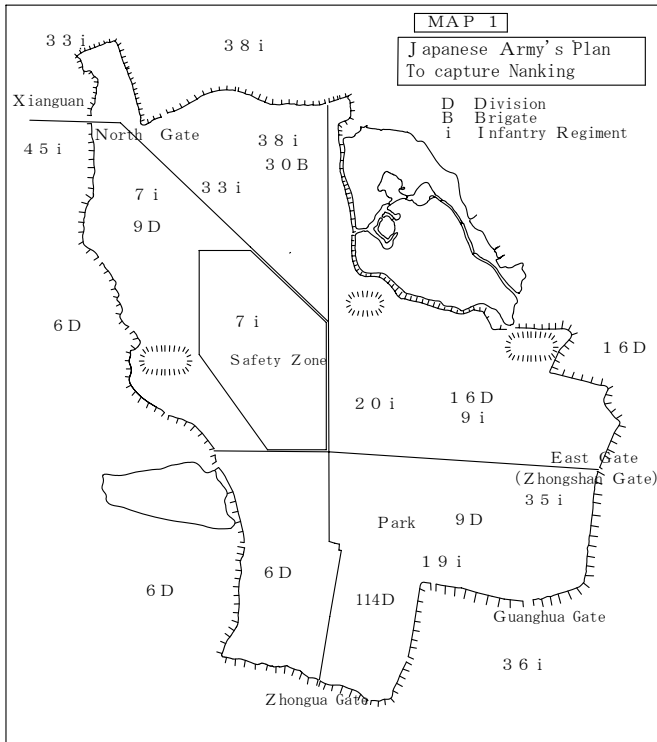
<sup>16</sup> Nankin Senshi Henshu Iinkai (Battle of Nanking Editorial Committee), ed., *Nankin senshi shiryoshu I*, (Source material relating to the Battle of Nanking I) (Tokyo: Kaikosha, 1993), ‘Course of action to be taken upon entering Nanking’, p.432.

<sup>17</sup> See Map 1.



MAP 1: Japanese Army's plan for the capture of Nanking, showing areas of assignment

D = division B = brigade i = infantry regiment



The map shows the Safety Zone at the center of the city. Nearly every civilian remaining in Nanking had taken refuge there. The 7th Infantry Regiment was put in charge of the Safety Zone. All other troops were assigned to different areas of the city, which the Japanese discovered were uninhabited.

#### IV. Testimonies of Japanese soldiers who entered Nanking

What were the impressions of Japanese soldiers upon entering Nanking? They report that they walked through an eerily silent, empty city, an experience they had never had before. I will go into some detail on this subject, as it is an important aspect of this paper.

The 16th Division was assigned to the northern area of Nanking. Its members had spent December 13 sweeping for enemy troops outside the city walls and at the river port of Xianguan; they entered the walled city on the 14th. Division Commander Nakajima

wrote in his journal that he saw very few enemy soldiers within the city.<sup>18</sup>

30<sup>th</sup> Brigade Commander Sasaki wrote in his personal diary that he saw not a single inhabitant, only skinny dogs.<sup>19</sup>

Signal Section leader Hirai and Pfc. Hata of the 33rd Infantry Regiment both testified that they encountered no enemy troops, saw no corpses lying about, and that the city was very quiet.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the 16th Division's 19th Brigade was assigned to the northeastern sector of the walled city. They entered from the East Gate (Zhongshan Gate) towards the evening of December 13. The soldiers were supposed to conduct a sweep operation the next day, but said they encountered virtually no stragglers or residents.<sup>21</sup>

The 9th Division was dispatched to the southeastern part of the walled city. Most of its members, however, stationed themselves in uninhabited areas, such as an air field or a park, or outside the city gates. The 4th Company of the 19th Infantry Regiment ventured as far as a built-up area inside the city. Company Commander Tsuchiya testified that "the farther we went into the city, the more we felt as though we were in a ghost town. Even my brave men hesitated to continue, and before we were even aware of it, I was at the head of the procession." War chronicles also show that neither the 19th nor the 36th Infantry Regiments engaged in any combat after entering the city on December 13, nor did they capture any prisoners.<sup>22</sup>

The 6th Division was assigned to the southern sector of the walled city, which it approached through Zhonghua Gate. The soldiers stated that they encountered no residents, much less enemy soldiers.<sup>23</sup> Tenth Army (formed from several divisions, including the 6th and 114th) Staff Officer Yamazaki wrote in his diary that all the shops were closed, displaying notices reading "Temporarily Closed: Owner Returned Home,"

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<sup>18</sup> Nankin Senshi Henshu Iinkai (Battle of Nanking Editorial Committee), ed., *Nankin senshi shiryoshu I* (Source material relating to the Battle of Nanking ) (Tokyo: Kaikosha, 1993), p. 219.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>20</sup> Nankin Senshi Henshu Iinkai (Battle of Nanking Editorial Committee), ed., *Nankin senshi* ( Battle of Nanking) (Tokyo: Kaikosha, 1993), p. 160.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 166, 167, *Nankin senshi shiryoshu I* , p. 415.

<sup>22</sup> Nankin Senshi Henshu Iinkai, *Nankin senshi*, p.179.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p.222.

and that he did not see a single resident.<sup>24</sup>

Those were the experiences of soldiers and officers entering the walled city via different routes. As an overall summary, I would like to offer the testimony of Inukai Soichiro, who participated in the Battle of Nanking, which I heard directly from him.

Inukai was the leader of the 19th Brigade's Signal Section. After gaining control of Nanking's East Gate (Zhongshan Gate), the 19th Brigade instructed the 4th Company of the 20th Infantry Regiment to advance deep into the city on a reconnaissance mission. According to orders from Gen. Matsui, a unit selected according to the strictest standards was to be sent into the city.

The 4th Company departed at 1:40 p.m. from the East Gate, but no news came from them, even after a long wait. The worried brigade commander ordered Inukai to investigate. Signalmen have their own horses, but since Inukai's horse was tired, he borrowed one of the commander's horses. It was a thoroughbred, and had won a derby at the Kyoto Racecourse. Inukai mounted the swift horse. He rode for eight kilometers straight, at a gallop, from the East Gate to the traffic circle at the city center, in order to avoid sniper fire. However, there was no one in sight; not even a cat crossed the street in front of him. Feeling slightly relieved, he slowed to a trot and arrived at the traffic circle. He looked around and noted that the area seemed peaceful; he heard no shots. He assumed that the 4th Company was safe, and returned to his commander to report his findings.<sup>25</sup>

Inukai Soichiro was only 20 years old at that time. His testimony provides the following information.

- a. Japanese military personnel entered the city in an orderly fashion, respecting the instructions of their Commander-in-Chief Gen. Matsui (there was no storming of the city by the entire invading army).
- b. Calm and quiet reigned; a young soldier without an escort was able to enter and exit the city unharmed.

The experiences of these Japanese officers and soldiers differ completely from the

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<sup>24</sup> Nankin Senshi Henshu Inukai, *Nankin Senshi Shiriyoshu I*, p. 292.

<sup>25</sup> Memoirs of Inukai Soichiro (in this writer's possession).

judgment handed down at the Tokyo Trials. They also differ from the arguments presented by proponents of the massacre theory, e.g., accounts contained in *Testimonies of the Nanking Massacre* (compiled in China), which allege that upon entering the city, Japanese soldiers killed everyone they encountered and raped every woman they saw.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Nankin shi bunshi shiryō kenkyūkai (Nanjing City Society for the Study of Historical Accounts), ed., *Shōgen: Nankin daigyakusatsu* (Testimonies of the Nanking massacre), trans. Kagami Mitsuyuki and Himeta Mitsuyoshi (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1984), p. 14.

## Chapter 2: The “Original” Nanking Incident

We have established with certainty that the scene of the Nanking Incident was not the entire city of Nanking, but the Nanking Safety Zone.

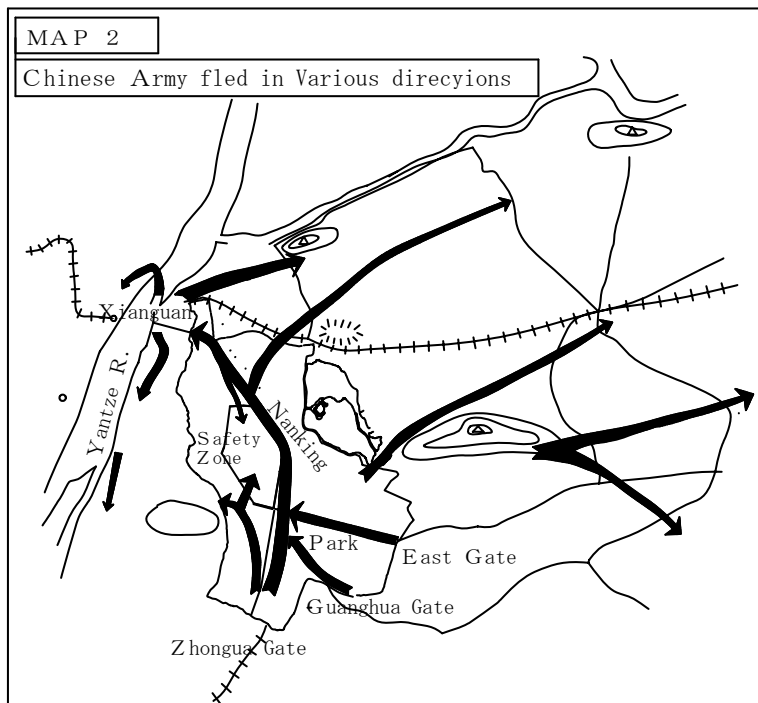
In that case, exactly what happened there? First, the Japanese conducted sweep operations to ferret out Chinese stragglers hiding in the city. Second, they allegedly committed crimes against Chinese civilians.

Let us comment first on the sweep operations:

### I. Sweep Operations

Before the Japanese army entered Nanking, Chinese troops defending the city retreated and fled in various directions (see Map 2).

Map 2: Flight of the Chinese army



Routes taken by fleeing Chinese soldiers

1. Southward between western Nanking and the Yangtze River
2. Eastward between northeastern Nanking and the Yangtze River
3. Eastward from Nanking
4. Into the Safety Zone, where they hid

Consequently, Japanese soldiers entering Nanking were surrounded by the enemy on all sides. They could not feel safe until they had subdued any enemy soldiers.

1. Chinese troops fleeing southward encountered the Japanese 6th Division, which had been assigned to that area; they were defeated after intense fighting.
2. & 3. Chinese troops fleeing eastward were dealt with by the 16th Division of the Japanese Army.
4. Japanese soldiers in charge of the Nanking Safety Zone conducted a sweep of Nationalist troops hiding there. This situation is described accurately in *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*;

The International Committee made the following request to the Japanese Army:

So we disarmed all these soldiers and put them into buildings in the Zone. We beg your merciful permission to allow these men to return to peaceful life as is now their desire.<sup>27</sup>

Next, they requested that the disarmed Chinese troops be treated as prisoners of war:

No.4 LETTER TO MR. FUKUDA dated December 15, 1937

The INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE for NANKING SAFETY ZONE is very much perplexed by the problem of soldiers who have thrown away their arms.

(...)

[T]he Committee was unable to keep the disarmed soldiers from civilians,

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<sup>27</sup> Hsü, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

particularly because some of the soldiers had abandoned their military clothing.

The Committee fully recognizes that identified soldiers are lawful prisoners of war. But in dealing with these disarmed soldiers, the Committee hopes that the Japanese Army will use every precaution not to involve civilians. The Committee further hopes that the Japanese Army will in accordance with the recognized law of war regarding prisoners and for reasons of humanity, exercise mercy toward these former soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

The Japanese reply to this request was straightforward and unambiguous:

Document No.6 Memorandum of Interview with Chief of Special Service Corps

It was in answer to our letter of December 14th.

1. Must search the city for Chinese soldiers.

(...)

4. Trust humanitarian attitude of Japanese Army to care for the disarmed Chinese soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

The reply meant that the Japanese would deal with enemy soldiers who had hidden from the Japanese in the same way they would enemy soldiers hiding outside the Safety Zone.

After this exchange, the International Committee made no further comments about soldiers who had infiltrated the Safety Zone and gone into hiding there.

The sweep of the Safety Zone was carried out in an orderly manner over three days (December 14-16). Apparently, the Japanese discovered approximately 6,500 soldiers and executed them.<sup>30</sup>

## II. Movement of Japanese troops after capture of Nanking

I would like to address the topic of crimes committed by Japanese soldiers against

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<sup>28</sup> Hsü, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> Hsü, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Nankin Senshi Henshu Iinkai, *Nankin Senshi Shiriyoshu I*, "Dai nana rentaicho nikki" (7th Regiment commander's diary), p. 334.

civilians in Nanking. But first, I will summarize the movements of Japanese troops after entry into the walled city.

Gen. Matsui did not allow troops to remain in Nanking. After their missions were accomplished, they were assigned to new operations outside the city.

1. The 6th Division was ordered to advance toward Wuhu, after gaining control of Zhonghua Gate and eliminating Chinese soldiers fleeing southward along the western wall of the city. Their journey took place from December 16-20.

2. The men of the 114th Division cooperated with the 6th Division to gain control of Zhonghua Gate. However, immediately after that, they were transferred to Hangzhou, since they were not needed for further military or sentry duties in Nanking.

3. The 9th Division had entered the city from the southeast gate (Guanghua Gate); some of its members had been assigned to guard the Safety Zone. They, too, were ordered to leave, and departed eastward for Suzhou on about December 24.

4. The 19th Brigade of the 16th Division, having dealt with enemy soldiers escaping to the east and northeast, was ordered to move further eastward. Its men did not return to Nanking.

5. This left only the 30th Brigade of the 16th Division to guard Nanking. One unit, the 3rd Battalion of the 33rd Regiment, was sent to guard Jiangningzhen, located to the south of Nanjing. Two thousand men from the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 33rd Regiment were ordered to guard the southern sector of Nanking, and about 2,000 men from the 38th Regiment, the northern sector. Of the latter group, approximately 1,000 men were ordered to guard the Safety Zone, replacing the 7th Regiment.

To summarize, although an army of nearly 100,000 men attacked Nanking, only 4,000 soldiers from the 30th Brigade remained to guard the city after December 24. They, too, were replaced by the 12th and 22nd regiments (Amaya Detachment) on about January 20.

6. The Safety Zone was initially guarded by the 1st and 2nd battalions (790 and 812 men, respectively) of the 7th Regiment. This group stationed itself outside the Safety



Zone for the first two days of the occupation. On the first day, December 13, they performed only a night inspection, and then left immediately. On the second day, December 14, they conducted a sweep operation, but returned to their barracks outside the Safety Zone by evening. On December 15, they assumed guard duty within the Safety Zone for the first time. On December 24, they were replaced by the 39th Regiment, which consisted of about 1,000 men. Beginning on about January 20, this group was in turn replaced by the Amaya Detachment, also about 1,000 men strong. Maj.-Gen. Amaya strongly urged that the Safety Zone be dissolved.

### III. Crimes against civilians in Nanking

Now I will examine crimes against residents of Nanking allegedly perpetrated by Japanese soldiers, based on my analyses of cases numbered and recorded in *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*. Other references from this period are John Rabe's diary,<sup>31</sup> Minnie Vautrin's diary,<sup>32</sup> *What War Means: The Japanese Terror in China*,<sup>33</sup> and material written by foreigners who remained in Nanking, which can be found in Vol. 1 of *Nanking Incident Source Material*.<sup>34</sup>

I counted a total of 1,038 cases in the source documents, including reports of crimes that are obvious duplicates. About half the cases (517) are recorded in *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*. Many of the remaining incidents mentioned in other references overlap with these 517 cases. *What War Means* includes 200 of the cases recorded in *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, introducing these citations as follows:

THE FOLLOWING SELECTION of cases reported to the Japanese Authorities covers the period from January 14 to February 9 and so completes the story of the months of the Japanese Army's occupation of Nanking.<sup>35</sup>

*Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* consists of two volumes containing 444 numbered cases. However, one case report sometimes describes several incidents. In actuality, there are 517 separate cases recorded.

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<sup>31</sup> Rabe, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Minnie Vautrin, *Nankin jiken no hibi* (Diary of Minnie Vautrin), trans. Okuda Ryonosuke and Ihara Yoko (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> Timperley, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Nankin Jiken Chosa Kenkyukai, *Nankin jiken shiryoshu 1: Amerika kankei shiryō hen*.

<sup>35</sup> Hsü, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

1. Table 1: Type of offense

Murder	Rape	Abduction	Assault	Looting	Arson	Breaking & entering	Other	Total
26	175	43	39	131	5	24	74	517

Note that there are very few cases of murder and many cases of rape and looting recorded here, unlike later descriptions of the Nanking Incident.

2. What is referred to as the “Nanking Incident” allegedly occurred in the Safety Zone in the city of Nanking. The following two tables testify to that fact.

Table 2-1: Number of incidents recorded between December 13 and January 22:

Safety Zone	Outside Safety Zone	Total
239	23	262

During this period, most incidents reportedly occurred inside the Safety Zone. These statistics demonstrate the facts of the Nanking Incident.

However, beginning on January 23, the picture changes completely.

Table 2-2: Number of incidents recorded between January 23 and February 7

Safety Zone	Outside Safety Zone	Total
61	194	255

During this period, more incidents occurred outside the Safety Zone. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that Maj.-Gen. Amaya and his men, charged with guarding Nanking in late January and thereafter, were determined to dissolve the Safety Zone, and attempted to introduce measures to accomplish the dissolution (see Chapter 2). The International Committee vehemently opposed their plan. In order to prevent the refugees from returning to their homes, International Committee members scrambled to collect reports of crimes in areas where they were to return. They made every effort to spread the word that the area outside the Safety Zone was a living hell where Japanese soldiers were lying in wait for the residents of Nanking to rape and rob them.

However, it was unlikely that Japanese military personnel would resort to such behavior, since it would obviously hamper their efforts to have the refugees return safely to their homes. In actuality, the crime reports were coerced from residents by the International Committee; the great majority of them were fictitious.

The editor of *What War Means* cites many cases contained in *Documents of the Safety Zone* as proof of his argument, but refrains from referring to most cases dating from this period, for lack of credibility. (There are 255 cases recorded for this period (see Table 2-2), but Appendix C of *What War Means* cites only 21 cases.)

By this time, the residents of Nanking were aware that administrative power over the Safety Zone and the city of Nanking was now in the hands of the Japanese Army. They gradually stopped cooperating with the International Committee, and eventually ceased to report disorderly conduct on the part of Japanese soldiers. The Nanking Incident had come to an end.

Most of the 517 case reports are slipshod, for the following reasons:

### 3. Table 3: Time of occurrence

At no time were Japanese soldiers permitted to leave their quarters at night. Therefore, it is hardly possible that all nighttime incidents, or incidents occurring at unspecified times were caused by Japanese soldiers.

Incidents for which no date is specified	Nighttime incidents	Subtotal	Daytime incidents	Total
17	107	124	393	517

### 4. Table 4: Writer of case report

Throughout the entire period in question, many reports were recorded anonymously and not verified by a committee member.

Anonymous records	Signed records	Total
252	265	517

#### 5. Table 5: Witnessed crimes

Very few of the crimes reported to the International Committee were actually witnessed or verified by a committee member or other responsible member of society.

Witnessed crimes	Unwitnessed crimes	Total
30	487	517

Only one murder case, a legal execution, was witnessed (Case No. 185).

#### 6. Table 6: Names of victims

No names of victims are given in 202 out of 283 cases of murder, rape, abduction, and assault.

Cases with unnamed victims	Cases with named victims	Total
202	81	283

#### 7. Table 7: Place of occurrence

A total of 234 cases involving property damage (looting, arson, breaking and entering, etc.) were reported, but many reports do not mention where the incident occurred.

Location not specified	Only vague location given	Location specified	Total
36	76	123	234

8. *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* is careful about claiming that crimes requiring concrete proof were committed.

It is difficult to substantiate an accusation of murder without physical evidence. If the International Committee wanted to report a murder committed by Japanese military personnel to Japanese authorities, they needed to be able to show proof in the form of a body, if asked to produce it. Therefore, the Committee was necessarily careful about submitting accusations of murder. Accusations of arson required a fire, or the ruins of a fire. Accusations of assault required proof of injury. Therefore, *Documents of the Safety Zone* lists only 26 cases of homicide, four cases of arson, and 39 cases of assault. These figures stand in stark contrast to 175 cases of rape and 131 cases of looting, which do

not require proof. At the Tokyo Trials, the accusations were reversed; the Japanese were accused of killing over 200,000 people and raping 20,000 women. Normally, concrete evidence would be required to convince people who were actually there in Nanking, but after 10 years had elapsed, even false testimony sufficed.

*Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* is contemporaneous, and therefore, is what in historical research is called a primary source. It mentions only a few cases of arson, but at the Tokyo Trials, they ballooned into the conclusion that the Japanese burnt one-third of the city. This sort of accusation would have been considered preposterous if it had been made to someone in the same place at the same time as the accuser, without physical proof.

Accusations of rape and looting would have been difficult to deny even if there was no physical proof. A great deal depended on the credibility of the accuser. The International Committee could have reported such crimes to Japanese authorities without providing proof.

#### IV. Conclusion

*Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* can be considered official records of events that transpired in Nanking in late 1937. Recorded therein are all crimes allegedly committed by Japanese soldiers. Considering the situation in Nanking then, I do not believe that crimes other than those reported to the International Committee were committed at all. Furthermore, after analyzing the cases, I concluded that the evidence is too weak to attribute all but a very few of the crimes recorded to Japanese soldiers.

Even if we accept all cases reported in *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* at face value, the accusations of later years are unequivocally false. For instance:

a. Japanese soldiers did not massacre 200,000<sup>36</sup> or 300,000<sup>37</sup> people in Nanking, since Nanking's population of 200,000 never decreased during the Japanese occupation (see Appendix).

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<sup>36</sup> Transcript of Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, Chapter VIII: Conventional War Crimes (Atrocities), p. 1015, <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/PTO/IMTFE/IMTFE-8.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Written on the wall of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Museum in Nanking.

b. Japanese soldiers did not rape 20,000<sup>38</sup> women.

c. The following charge is patently false: “Soldiers went through the streets indiscriminately killing Chinese men, women, and children<sup>39</sup>” ... “and raped 1000 women in one night.”<sup>40</sup> (Only 1,600 Japanese soldiers were stationed there.)

d. Japanese soldiers did not burn one-third of the city of Nanking,<sup>41</sup> since most fires occurred at night, and refugees returning to their homes outside the Safety Zone found them intact.

e. Japanese soldiers did not steal everything the inhabitants owned. Since Japanese per capita income was much higher than that of China, Japanese soldiers would not have coveted the possessions of Nanking’s residents.

f. It should be noted that *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* mentions only crimes against civilians; in later years, accusations of atrocities against Chinese military personnel were tacked on.

I have named the collective incidents recorded in *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* the “original Nanking Incident.” In later years, this original Nanking Incident grew into a huge, unsubstantiated massacre in Timperley’s *What War Means* and the judgment handed down at the Tokyo Trials. Furthermore, the actual co-editors of articles in *What War Means*, Bates and Timperley, exaggerated the crimes by inserting blatantly paradoxical articles into the same book: Bates writes, early in the book, of wholesale murder all over the city of Nanking.<sup>42</sup> However, he later states that the incidents took place within the Safety Zone, since the rest of Nanking “was practically deserted.”<sup>43</sup>

The Nanking Incident, as popularly perceived, never took place. First of all, it should be

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<sup>38</sup> Timperley, *op. cit.*, p. 61; IMTFE, *op. cit.*, p. 1012.

<sup>39</sup> Nankin Shi bunshi shiryō kenkyūkai, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Nankin Jiken Chosa Kenkyūkai, *op. cit.*, p.242. See also James Espy’s report to the US Ambassador in Hankou dated January 25, 1938, and McCallum’s account dated December 19, 1937, p. 256.

<sup>41</sup> Transcript of Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, Chapter VIII, p. 1013.

<sup>42</sup> Hsü, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

referred to as the “Nanking Safety Zone Incident.” Even then, many of the case reports in *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* are questionable. Only one murder case (a lawful execution) was witnessed.<sup>44</sup>

Why did the International Committee compile *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, which contains many allegations that rest on an extremely weak foundation, as shown in my tables?

The International Committee encouraged Chinese citizens to report crimes and rumors of crimes committed by Japanese soldiers. They recorded these reports, which they presented to the Japanese Army as protests. What motivated them to do this? It is my theory that such behavior enabled them to claim that they helped the Chinese, and exercised leadership in the Safety Zone. It should be noted that the dominant members of the Committee were American missionaries, who wished to pave the way for future missionary work.

My conclusion is that the original Nanking Incident is the product of a power struggle between the missionaries and the Japanese Army, rather than the result of a conflict between the Chinese and Japanese.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Case No. 185, p. 78.

### **Chapter 3: Dissolution of the Safety Zone, the International Committee, and the Nanking Incident**

Japanese military officials grew increasingly annoyed with the International Committee, which continued to solicit and spread slanderous rumors about Japanese soldiers and Army authorities. They believed that because the Committee “was controlling the refugees, spreading malicious propaganda, and doing much harm and no good,”<sup>45</sup> its activities should be suppressed.

The International Committee had announced to the Japanese Army that it would take charge of distributing food, allocating housing, restoring public utilities, and policing the residents of Nanking ,<sup>46</sup> responsibilities entrusted to them by the city’s mayor, who had departed.<sup>47</sup> The Committee was also in control of the only operating hospital, headed by John Magee.

On January 1, the Japanese set up the Self-Government Committee, all of whose members were Chinese, and arranged for it to take over the various functions previously performed by the International Committee. One of the most important changes was that, as of January 10, 1938, the Self-Government Committee became the sole distributor of food, which provoked furious protests from the International Committee. One Chinese commented that this move was intended to bring about the collapse of the International Committee.<sup>48</sup>

The final goal of the Japanese Army was to dissolve the Safety Zone, the *raison d’être* of the International Committee. The latter protested vigorously, but the residents’ loyalty had already diminished greatly. The Committee was no longer able to control the refugees, whose departure from the Zone in increasing numbers further sapped the Committee’s political power. On February 4, the Safety Zone was dissolved. Eventually, the Committee abandoned its political activities and focused on relief efforts.<sup>49</sup> The citizens no longer submitted accusations about Japanese crimes; the Nanking Incident had ended.

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<sup>45</sup> Higashinakano, *op. cit.*, “2nd Report on Nanking by Japanese Army’s Special Service Corps,” p. 82.

<sup>46</sup> Hsü, *op. cit.*, Document No. 1, p.1.

<sup>47</sup> Wickert, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>48</sup> Nankin Jiken Chosa Kenkyukai, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>49</sup> Its name was changed to Nanking International Relief Committee on February 18, 1938. See Hsü, *op. cit.*, Document No. 69.



By then, John Rabe, the chairman of the Committee, fancied himself the mayor of Nanking.<sup>50</sup> In his diary he describes his anger at the tug-of-war for control over the residents of Nanking.

On December 30, two days before the establishment of the Self-Government Committee, he writes, “[I]t looks to us as if they simply want to take over our money.<sup>51</sup> I’ll not voluntarily hand over anything. I’ll yield only under great pressure, and then only under loud protest.”<sup>52</sup>

On January 31, exasperated by the imminent dissolution of the Zone (scheduled for February 4), he comments, “You grow weary in this constant battle against a demoralized Japanese soldiery!”<sup>53</sup>

On February 3, he writes, “I won’t be able to accomplish much if the Japanese force their way in, but at least I can be there and watch the whole thing so that the world can be told about it.”<sup>54</sup>

However, “[e]verything was quiet”<sup>55</sup> on February 4, when the International Committee had no more administrative functions to fulfill, and therefore ceased to exist. Now that the Committee was defunct, it had no need for a chairman. John Rabe returned to Germany.<sup>56</sup>

In Document No. 1, on the first page of *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, the International Committee announces that its members have administrative authority over the Safety Zone (the authority to allocate housing, distribute food and police the refugees, etc.), and requests that the Japanese recognize that authority. In the final

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<sup>50</sup> Wickert, *op. cit.*, pp. 54, 169.

<sup>51</sup> The International Committee had been selling rice, provided by the mayor of Nanking, to the refugees. The proceeds were used to defray the Committee’s operating costs.

<sup>52</sup> Wickert, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>53</sup> Wickert, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>56</sup> Roughly one-third of Part II of *Documents of the Safety Zone* (covering January 10 – February 19, 1938) describes the power struggle between the International Committee and Japanese authorities, particularly concerning food distribution. One-half concerns crimes allegedly committed by Japanese soldiers, and the remainder, the general situation in the city and the dissolution of the Safety Zone.

document (Document No. 69), the Committee reports that since it has lost its administrative authority, it will adopt a new name, “Nanking International Relief Committee,” on February 18, 1938.

Accordingly, *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* chronicles the battle between Japanese military authorities and the International Committee. By accusing Japanese military personnel of disorderly conduct, the Committee was attempting to gain the upper hand in that battle. It was not the nature of the Japan-China conflict that was at issue, and certainly not the character of Japanese soldiers. Additionally, the Nanking Incident was confined to the Nanking Safety Zone.

It was the Chinese government’s war propaganda machine that expanded the venue of the Nanking Incident to include the entire city, advertised the brutality of Japanese soldiers, and accused them of perpetrating a massacre. The problem was compounded, as described previously, by the policies adopted by the US Occupation Forces, and by totally unwarranted prejudices. Today both the Japanese and Chinese governments spout platitudes about building truly reciprocal relations between the two nations, but China has not made a serious attempt to correct misconceptions about the Nanking Incident. Until a genuine effort is made in that direction, “truly reciprocal relations” will remain nothing more than empty words.

## Appendix: Population Statistics for Nanking from Contemporaneous Records

### 1. Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone

Page	Date	Excerpt	Thousands of people
17	12/17/37	It is hard to see how starvation may be prevented among many of the 200,000 Chinese civilians ... .	200
18	12/18/37	... the sufferings and needs of the 200,000 civilians for whom we are trying to care ... .	200
20	12/18/37	We 22 Westerners cannot feed 200,000 Chinese civilians and protect them night and day.	200
48	12/21/37	We come to petition that ... the following steps be taken for the welfare of the 200000 civilians in Nanking	200
49	12/21/1937	In view of the fact that ... the International Committee has reserve food supplies to feed these 200,000 people one week only ... .	200
57	12/27/1937	[W]e plead that you allow us to get these 20,000 tan <sup>57</sup> for feeding the 200,000 civilians	200
84	1/14/1938	Therefore there are probably 250,000 to 300,000 civilians in the city.	250-300
87	1/17/1938	We trust that this amount will soon be increased to 1000 bags of rice per day in order to more adequately meet the needs of 250,000 people.	250
90	1/19/1938	You have each individually expressed a friendly interest in the problem of seeing That the 250,000 civilians in this city are fed.	250
90	1/18/1938	Only twenty-two bags rice one thousand bags flour released for sale from large stocks on hand to two hundred fifty thousand people since December thirteenth.	250
93	1/19/1938	A regular supply of rice to the extent of 2,000 tan ... <i>per day</i> ... (250,000 people at the normal daily consumption of ... .)	250
95	1/22/1938	The International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone is now operating as a relief committee for the welfare of the 250,000 Chinese civilians living in the city.	250
97	1/22/1938	It is estimated it would take 1.600 bags of rice per day to feed the 250,000 people.	250
112	1/28/1938	Of the 250,000 refugees in Nanking, a large proportion are homeless due to the extensive burning that has taken place in the city and its vicinity.	250
112	1/28/1938	But even this \$157,000 will not go very far toward relieving the distress among the quarter of a million people now in the city.	250
164	2/10/1938	A population of 250,000 should have at least 2,000 tan of rice or 1,600 bags of rice per day.	250

<sup>57</sup> Chinese unit of weight equivalent to 133.33 lbs.

## 2. *What War Means*

22	12/24/1938	We have only enough rice and flour for 200,000 refugees for another three weeks and coal for ten days.	200
23	12/24/1938	You will recall ... that our International Committee for Nanking Safety Zone had been negotiating with both the Chinese and Japanese for the recognition of a certain area in the city ... where the remaining two hundred thousand of Nanking's population of one million could take refuge ... .	200
62	1/10/1938	[S]ome 250,000 are here, almost all in the Safety Zone and fully 100,000 entirely dependent on the IC [International Committee] for food and shelter.	250

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