

# **Primary Historical Sources Reveal the Truth about the Nanjing Incident**

**By Ikeda Haruka**

## **Introduction: Veiled Leading Characters of the Nanjing Incident**

More than seventy years have passed since the end of the War. During all this time, the Nanjing Incident has been studied from every angle and perspective and yet, even today, no consensus has been reached when it comes to the fundamental question of whether the Incident really took place, let alone the number of victims. Those who claim that the Nanjing Incident did take place (including middle-of-the-road advocates who claim victims in the order of tens of thousands, but not in the order of several hundred thousand) cite incidents of massacres committed by the Japanese military. However, among these claims, not one incident can be convincingly shown to be a “massacre” with clear information as to the time and place of occurrence, perpetrators, victims and how and why it took place.

On the other hand, those who deny the Nanjing Incident claim that the Nanjing Incident was merely anti-Japan propaganda created by China, showing activity records of Chinese international propaganda organs. However, there is no clear answer to the fundamental question: Why did many third-party Westerners present at the scene at the time leave records of the incident in one form or another?

In either case, of affirmation or denial, we will never reach a reasonable conclusion if we continue to study the issue in the same way as we have done so far. So, let us get back to the original point and reconfirm the present status and issues in question regarding the controversy over the Nanjing Incident, based on internationally acknowledged records of the time.

At a League of Nations conference in Geneva on February 2, 1938, Chinese Delegate Koo Vi Kyuin (well-known as Wellington Koo in the West) quoted from the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* of January 28, 1938: “The number of Chinese civilians killed by Japanese in Nanjing was supposedly twenty thousand and several thousand women including children were raped.” None have denied that this was reported. Thus, there are those who say that there was Nanjing Incident, based on this statement, and assert that the Nanjing Incident was known worldwide at the time. On the other hand, those who say that there was no Nanjing Incident assert that the League of Nations viewed Koo’s statement as unreliable, based on the fact that no sanctions were imposed on Japan following Koo’s allegation.

Judged from afar, it will be understood that both assertions lack the concrete evidence that will help us decide whether the Nanjing Incident really took place. What either side is fatally devoid of is an accurate analysis of the “source of information.”

So, first, let us confirm the newspaper article Mr. Koo Vi Kyuin cited at the League of Nations. Certainly, the newspaper article exists. Therefore, Mr. Koo’s statement was not groundless. Next, let us confirm the source of the newspaper article. The source was clearly indicated in the newspaper as “one missionary estimates.” The missionaries stationed in Nanjing at the time were entirely Americans (to be discussed in detail later). So, whether Mr. Koo’s statement that the Japanese Army killed twenty thousand civilians in Nanjing was true or not depends on the testimony of the “American missionaries.”

In fact, in checking other cases, the original disseminators of the Nanjing Incident were almost entirely American missionaries who were in Nanjing at that time. The source of information of the first newspaper report of the Nanjing Incident was an American missionary named Bates and it was also American missionaries who provided records of the Nanjing Incident to the *Readers’ Digest* (July and October 1938 issues). It was also exclusively American missionaries who later appeared before the Tokyo Trials and stated that the Nanjing Incident was an actual event. Records written by American missionaries accounted for an overwhelming part of the records that were submitted by Westerners.

Thus, the statements of American missionaries played a decisive role in substantiating the Nanjing Incident as factual. In other words, American missionaries were the lead figures of the Nanjing Incident.

To our amazement, there has been little study of the group of American missionaries who remained in Nanjing—their purpose and the context of their activities.

This is the main reason why the controversy over the Nanjing Incident can never reach a satisfying conclusion. There have been studies of some of the missionaries individually. However, many missionaries were in Nanjing, spreading information, in one way or another. So even if we can determine the trustworthiness of just some of the missionaries, in terms of their relation with the Chinese Government, this will not lead us to a complete resolution of the issue.

The American missionaries were a group of people with the shared mission—of spreading the

Protestant belief in China and most of them lived together under the same roof in Nanjing, conducting various missionary activities in unison. Therefore, it is appropriate to regard activities of individual missionaries as a part of larger conduct by a body of American missionaries who remained in Nanjing. By recognizing decisions and actions taken by organized American missionaries in Nanjing as such, we can envisage an overall picture of the Nanjing Incident.

Therefore, this book seeks to clarify the intentions, activities and backgrounds of the American missionaries who remained in Nanjing, mainly based on the European and American primary historical sources.

Specifically, it will be first demonstrated that the American missionary group disseminated the “Nanjing Incident” (Chapter 1). Next, it will be clearly demonstrated that the American missionaries’ real intention in establishing the Nanjing Safety Zone was to support the Chinese Army (Chapter 2). Thus, the American missionaries’ activities in support of the Chinese army in the Nanjing Safety Zone will be illustrated. In relation to this it will be demonstrated that the dissemination of the “Nanjing Incident” was indispensable in order to maintain the Nanjing Safety Zone, which was not an officially sanctioned “safety zone” (Chapter 3). The book will deal with China’s propaganda strategy toward the international community and how China used the dissemination of information by American missionaries in its favor (Chapter 4). Next, the book will discuss the problems related to the Tokyo Trials which sustained the American missionaries’ assertions as third-party statements (Chapter 5). Finally, it will be demonstrated that there was a resolution of the Protestant Church in China, with highly political overtones, to support Chiang Kai-shek’s movement to create a new China<sup>1</sup>, as the collective will of the Protestant Church (which included the American missionary group in Nanjing) and it will also be demonstrated that the American missionaries’ activities as a group were aligned with the resolution supporting Chiang Kai-shek (Chapter 6).

Through this book, I hope that readers will understand the simplicity of the true mechanism of the “Nanjing Incident”, which at first glance may seem too complicated to grasp. I truly wish that my book will end the long-lasting, totally futile controversy over the Nanjing Incident, once and for all.

---

<sup>1</sup> Chiang Kai-shek’s movement to create a new China: it was called 'New Life Movement', seemingly an educational movement to create a modern China. However, on February 19, 1935, the first anniversary of the founding of his New Life Movement, Chiang Kai-shek presented his “Message to Compatriots” in which he submitted the three transformations as new objectives for the Chinese life style. First is the Militarization of Life, the second is Making Life More Productive, and the third is Beautifying Life. The New Life Movement has strong military implication because it reflected Chiang Kai-shek’s military back ground.



## Table of contents

Introduction: Veiled leading characters of the Nanjing Incident

Chapter 1: The original disseminators of the Nanjing Incident were American missionaries

1. The stage of the Nanjing Incident
2. Identification of the third-party civilians (Europeans and Americans)
3. Identification of the original disseminators of the “Nanjing Incident”

Chapter 2: The true purpose of establishing the Nanjing Safety Zone

1. What was the International Committee of the Nanjing Safety Zone?
2. Characteristics of the Nanjing Safety Zone
3. The true purpose of establishing the Nanjing Safety Zone was to support the Chinese Army.

Chapter 3: The “Nanjing Incident” needed by the American missionary group

1. The true situation of support for the Chinese Army within the Safety Zone
2. The “Nanjing Incident” to justify the unauthorized Safety Zone
3. Cooperation with the American missionary group and its concealment by China
4. What did mission activities by a religious body mean?

Chapter 4: The composition of international propaganda of the Nanjing Incident

1. Cooperative relationship between the American missionaries and China in international propaganda
2. China’s international propaganda policy

Chapter 5: Verdicts at the Tokyo Trials induced by “neutral, third-party” American missionaries

1. Fictitious view of history held by an American missionary
2. Existence of forged papers
3. Issues related to the burial and population matters

Chapter 6: The backgrounds of the American Missions in Nanjing supporting the Chinese Army

1. Action guidelines of Protestant Church in China
2. The reason why the Protestant Church meddled in politics
3. The key figure to connect the resolution to support Chiang Kai-shek by the National Christian Council with activities by the American missionaries in Nanjing—Huang Ren-lin, Chiang Kai-shek’s right hand
4. Missionary Bates’ concerns come true

Conclusion/ chronological summary of the Nanjing Incident

References