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SIX WEEKS OF HORROR



BY THE TIME the Japanese passed through the gates of the city, all those residents who possessed any degree of money, power, or foresight had already left for parts unknown. Approximately half the original population departed: before the war, the native population of the city exceeded 1 million people, and by December it had fallen to about half a million. However, the city was swollen with tens of thousands of migrants from the countryside who had left their homes for what they believed would be safety within the city walls. Those who remained after the soldiers departed tended to be the most defenseless: children, the elderly, and all those either too poor or physically weak to secure passage out of the city.

Without protection, without personal resources, without a plan, all these people had was hope that the Japanese would treat them well. Many likely talked themselves into the belief that once the fighting stopped the

Japanese would of course treat them civilly. Some may have even convinced themselves that the Japanese would be better rulers—after all, their own government had clearly abandoned them in their hour of need. Weary of fire, weary of bombardment, and weary of siege, scattered groups of Chinese actually rushed out to welcome the Japanese invaders as they thundered into the city with their tanks, artillery, and trucks. Some people hung Japanese flags from their windows while others even cheered the Japanese columns as they marched through the south and west gates of the city.

But the welcome was short-lived. Eyewitnesses later claimed that the Japanese soldiers, who roamed the city in groups of six to twelve men, fired at anyone in sight as soon as they entered the capital. Old men were found face down on the pavement, apparently shot in the back on whim; civilian Chinese corpses lay sprawled on almost every block—many who had done nothing more provocative than run away as the Japanese approached.

In the war crimes transcripts and Chinese government documentation, story after story of what happened next begins to sound, even in all its horrific dimensions, almost monotonous. With few variations, the story goes something like this:

The Japanese would take any men they found as prisoners, neglect to give them water or food for days, but promise them food and work. After days of such treatment, the Japanese would bind the wrists of their victims securely with wire or rope and herd them out to some isolated area. The men, too tired or dehydrated to rebel, went out eagerly, thinking they would be fed. By the time they saw the machine guns, or the bloodied swords and bayonets wielded by waiting soldiers, or the massive graves, heaped and reeking with the bodies of the men who had preceded them, it was already too late to escape.

The Japanese would later justify their actions by saying that they had to execute POWs to save their own limited food supply and prevent revolts. But nothing can excuse what the Japanese did to hundreds of thousands of helpless Chinese civilians in Nanking. They had no weapons and were in no position to mutiny.

Not all Chinese, of course, submitted easily to extermination in Nanking. The Rape of Nanking is a story not only of mass victimization but of individual strength and courage. There were men who clawed their way out of shallow graves, or clung to reeds for hours in the icy Yangtze River, or lay buried for days under the corpses of friends before dragging their bullet-ridden bodies to the hospital, sustained only by a tenacious will to survive. There were women who hid in holes or in ditches for weeks, or ran through burning houses to rescue their babies.

Many of these survivors later gave their stories to reporters and historians or testified at the war crimes trials held in Nanking and Tokyo after the defeat of Japan. When interviewing several of them during the summer of 1995, I learned that many of the Chinese victims of the Japanese were apparently murdered for no other reason than pleasure. Such was the observation of Tang Shunsan, now in his eighties, a Nanking resident who had miraculously survived a Japanese killing contest back in 1937.

THE KILLING CONTESTS

Unlike thousands of hapless civilians who were bombed out of their homes and stranded on the streets of Nanking, Tang had actually secured a haven during the massacre. Then a twenty-five-year-old shoemaker's apprentice, Tang hid in the home of two fellow apprentices on Xiaomenkou, a tiny street in the northern part of the city. His friends (known to Tang as "Big Monk" and "Little Monk") had camouflaged the doorway of their house by removing the door and filling the open space with bricks so that it resembled, from the outside, a smooth, unbroken wall. For hours they sat on the dirt floor of the house, listening to the screams and gunshots outside.

Tang's problem began when he experienced a sudden urge to see a Japanese soldier with his own eyes. All his life he had heard that the Japanese looked like the Chinese, but never having been to Japan, he had been unable to verify this. Here was

a golden opportunity to see for himself. Tang tried to suppress his curiosity but finally succumbed to it. He asked his friends to remove the bricks from the doorway to let him out.

Not surprisingly, his friends pleaded with Tang not to go, warning him that the Japanese would kill him if they caught him wandering around outdoors. But Tang was not so easily dissuaded. Big Monk and Little Monk argued with him at length but finally gave up trying to change his mind. Risking their own safety, they removed the bricks from the door and let Tang out.

As soon as Tang stepped outside, he began to regret it. A scene of almost surreal horror gripped him. He saw the bodies of men and women—even the bodies of small children and the elderly—crumpled before him in the streets. Most had been stabbed or bayoneted to death. "Blood was splattered everywhere," Tang recalled of that horrible afternoon, "as if the heavens had been raining blood."

Then Tang saw another Chinese person in the street and, behind him, a group of eight or nine Japanese approaching in the distance. Instinctively, Tang and the stranger jumped into a nearby rubbish bin, heaping straw and paper over their heads. They shivered from cold and fear, causing the sides of the bin to shiver with them.

Suddenly the straw was knocked away. A Japanese soldier hovered overhead, glaring at them, and before Tang quite knew what was happening the soldier had decapitated the person next to him with his sword. Blood gushed from the victim's neck as the soldier reached down and seized the head as a trophy. "I was too frightened to even move or think," Tang remembered. "I thought of my family and knew that if I died here, they would never know what happened to me."

Then a Chinese voice ordered Tang out. "*Gun chu lai!* (Roll out!)," exclaimed a Chinese man whom Tang suspected was a traitor for the Japanese. "*Gun chu lai, or I'll kill you!*"

Tang crawled out of the trash bin. Seeing a ditch by the road, he wondered whether he should fling himself into it and attempt an escape but found that he was too frightened even to move his legs. Then he saw a group of Japanese soldiers herd-

ing hundreds of Chinese people down the street. Tang was ordered to join them. As he marched next to the other prisoners, he saw corpses sprawled on both sides of the streets, something that made him feel so wretched he almost welcomed death.

Before long Tang found himself standing near a pond and a freshly dug, rectangular pit filled with some sixty Chinese corpses. "As soon as I saw the newly dug pit, I thought they might either bury us alive or kill us on the spot. I was too frightened to move so I stood there motionless. It suddenly occurred to me to jump into the pit but then I saw two Japanese military wolf dogs eating the corpses."

The Japanese ordered Tang and the other prisoners to line up in rows on each side of the mass grave. He stood in one closest to the edge. Nine Japanese soldiers waited nearby, soldiers who presented an imposing sight to Tang with their yellow uniforms, star-studded caps, and shiny bayonets and rifles. At such proximity, Tang could see that Japanese men really *did* resemble Chinese men, although at this point he was too frightened to care.

Then, to Tang's horror, a competition began among the soldiers—a competition to determine who could kill the fastest. As one soldier stood sentinel with a machine gun, ready to mow down anyone who tried to bolt, the eight other soldiers split up into pairs to form four separate teams. In each team, one soldier beheaded prisoners with a sword while the other picked up heads and tossed them aside in a pile. The prisoners stood frozen in silence and terror as their countrymen dropped, one by one. "Kill and count! Kill and count!" Tang said, remembering the speed of the slaughter. The Japanese were laughing; one even took photographs. "There was no sign of remorse at all."

A deep sorrow filled Tang. "There was no place to run. I was prepared to die." It saddened him to think that his family and loved ones would never find out what happened to him.

Lost in such thoughts, Tang snapped back to reality when the commotion started. Two rows up from him a pregnant woman began to fight for her life, clawing desperately at a

soldier who tried to drag her away from the group to rape her. Nobody helped her, and in the end the soldier killed her, ripping open her belly with his bayonet and jerking out not only her intestines but a squirming fetus. That, Tang believes, should have been the moment for them all to rebel, to do *something*, to fight back and try to kill the soldiers even if they all died in the process. But even though the Chinese prisoners greatly outnumbered their Japanese tormentors and might have been able to overwhelm them, no one moved. Everyone remained eerily docile. Sad to say, of all the people around the pit, Tang remembers only the pregnant woman showing the slightest bit of courage.

Soon a sword-wielding Japanese soldier worked his way closer to Tang, until he was only one row up from him. Then Tang had a stroke of luck, which was nothing short of a miracle. When the soldier decapitated the man directly in front of Tang, the victim's body fell against Tang's shoulder. In keeping with the corpse's momentum, Tang also toppled backwards and dropped, together with the body, into the pit. No one noticed.

Tang ducked his head under the corpse's clothing. His ploy would have never worked had the Japanese stuck with their original game of decapitation. In the beginning the soldiers used the heads of their victims to keep score. But later, to save time, they killed prisoners not by lopping off heads but by slashing throats. That is what saved Tang—the fact that dozens of bodies were piling up in the pit with their heads intact.

The killing spree lasted for about an hour. While Tang lay still, feigning death, the Japanese pushed the rest of the bodies on top of him. Then, as Tang recalls, most of the soldiers left the scene except for one who thrust his bayonet into the mass grave repeatedly to make sure everyone was dead. Tang suffered five bayonet wounds without a scream, and then fainted.

Later that afternoon, at about 5:00 P.M., Tang's fellow apprentices Big Monk and Small Monk came to the pit, hoping to retrieve his corpse. Through a crack in the brick wall of their house, they had seen the Japanese herd Tang and the others away and assumed that he was now dead with all the others.

But when they found Tang moving under the heap of bodies, they pulled him out immediately and ushered him back to the house.

Out of the hundreds of people killed that day during the competition, Tang was the only survivor.

TORTURE

The torture that the Japanese inflicted upon the native population at Nanking almost surpasses the limits of human comprehension. Here are only a few examples:

—*Live burials*: The Japanese directed burial operations with the precision and efficiency of an assembly line. Soldiers would force one group of Chinese captives to dig a grave, a second group to bury the first, and then a third group to bury the second and so on. Some victims were partially buried to their chests or necks so that they would endure further agony, such as being hacked to pieces by swords or run over by horses and tanks.

—*Mutilation*: The Japanese not only disemboweled, decapitated, and dismembered victims but performed more excruciating varieties of torture. Throughout the city they nailed prisoners to wooden boards and ran over them with tanks, crucified them to trees and electrical posts, carved long strips of flesh from them, and used them for bayonet practice. At least one hundred men reportedly had their eyes gouged out and their noses and ears hacked off before being set on fire. Another group of two hundred Chinese soldiers and civilians were stripped naked, tied to columns and doors of a school, and then stabbed by *zhuizi*—special needles with handles on them—in hundreds of points along their bodies, including their mouths, throats, and eyes.

—*Death by fire*: The Japanese subjected large crowds of victims to mass incineration. In Hsiakwan a Japanese soldier bound Chinese captives together, ten at a time, and pushed them into a pit, where they were sprayed with gasoline and ignited. On Taiping Road, the Japanese ordered a large number

of shop clerks to extinguish a fire, then bound them together with rope and threw them into the blaze. Japanese soldiers even devised games with fire. One method of entertainment was to drive mobs of Chinese to the top stories or roofs of buildings, tear down the stairs, and set the bottom floors on fire. Many such victims committed suicide by jumping out windows or off rooftops. Another form of amusement involved dousing victims with fuel, shooting them, and watching them explode into flame. In one infamous incident, Japanese soldiers forced hundreds of men, women, and children into a square, soaked them with gasoline, and then fired on them with machine guns.

—*Death by ice*: Thousands of victims were intentionally frozen to death during the Rape of Nanking. For instance, Japanese soldiers forced hundreds of Chinese prisoners to march to the edge of a frozen pond, where they were ordered to strip naked, break the ice, and plunge into the water to go “fishing.” Their bodies hardened into floating targets that were immediately riddled with Japanese bullets. In another incident, the Japanese tied up a group of refugees, flung them into a shallow pond, and bombarded them with hand grenades, causing “an explosive shower of blood and flesh.”

—*Death by dogs*: One diabolical means of torture was to bury victims to their waist and watch them get ripped apart by German shepherds. Witnesses saw Japanese soldiers strip a victim naked and direct German shepherds to bite the sensitive areas of his body. The dogs not only ripped open his belly but jerked out his intestines along the ground for a distance.

The incidents mentioned above are only a fraction of the methods that the Japanese used to torment their victims. The Japanese saturated victims in acid, impaled babies with bayonets, hung people by their tongues. One Japanese reporter who later investigated the Rape of Nanking learned that at least one Japanese soldier tore the heart and liver out of a Chinese victim to eat them. Even genitals, apparently, were consumed: a Chinese soldier who escaped from Japanese custody saw several dead people in the streets with their penises cut off. He was later told that the penises were sold to Japa-

nese customers who believed that eating them would increase virility.

THE RAPES

If the scale and nature of the executions in Nanking are difficult for us to comprehend, so are the scale and nature of the rapes.

Certainly it was one of the greatest mass rapes in world history. Susan Brownmiller, author of the landmark book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, believes that the Rape of Nanking was probably the single worst instance of wartime rape inflicted on a civilian population with the sole exception of the treatment of Bengali women by Pakistani soldiers in 1971. (An estimated 200,000–400,000 women were raped in Bangladesh during a nine-month reign of terror following a failed rebellion.) Brownmiller suspects that the Rape of Nanking surpasses in scale even the raping of women in the former Yugoslavia, though it is difficult for her to say for certain because of the unreliability of Bosnian rape statistics.

It is impossible to determine the exact number of women raped in Nanking. Estimates range from as low as twenty thousand to as high as eighty thousand. But what the Japanese did to the women of Nanking cannot be computed in a tally sheet of statistics. We will never know the full psychic toll, because many of the women who survived the ordeal found themselves pregnant, and the subject of Chinese women impregnated by Japanese rapists in Nanking is so sensitive that it has never been completely studied. To my knowledge and to the knowledge of the Chinese historians and officials at the memorial hall erected in memory of the Nanking massacre, not a single Chinese woman has to this day come forward to admit that her child was the result of rape. Many such children were secretly killed; according to an American sociologist in the city at the time of the massacre, numerous half-Japanese children were choked or drowned at birth. One can only guess at the guilt, shame, and self-loathing that Chinese women endured when

they faced the choice of raising a child they could not love or committing infanticide. No doubt many women could not make that choice. Between 1937 and 1938 a German diplomat reported that "uncounted" Chinese women were taking their own lives by flinging themselves into the Yangtze River.

We do know, however, that it was very easy to be a rape victim in Nanking. The Japanese raped Nanking women from all classes: farm wives, students, teachers, white-collar and blue-collar workers, wives of YMCA employees, university professors, even Buddhist nuns, some of whom were gang-raped to death. And they were systematic in their recruitment of women. In Nanking Japanese soldiers searched for them constantly as they looted homes and dragged men off for execution. Some actually conducted door-to-door searches, demanding money and *hua gu niang*—young girls.

This posed a terrible dilemma for the city's young women, who were not sure whether to remain at home or to seek refuge in the International Safety Zone—the neutral territory guarded by Americans and Europeans. If they stayed in their houses, they ran the risk of being raped in front of their families. But if they left home in search of the Safety Zone, they ran the risk of being captured by the Japanese in the streets. Traps lay everywhere for the Nanking women. For instance, the Japanese army fabricated stories about markets where women could exchange bags of rice and flour for chickens and ducks. But when women arrived on the scene prepared to trade, they found platoons of soldiers waiting for them. Some soldiers employed Chinese traitors to seek out prospective candidates for rape. Even in the Safety Zone, the Japanese staged incidents to lure foreigners away from the refugee camps, leaving women vulnerable to kidnapping raids.

Chinese women were raped in all locations and at all hours. An estimated one-third of all rapes occurred during the day. Survivors even remember soldiers prying open the legs of victims to rape them in broad daylight, in the middle of the street, and in front of crowds of witnesses. No place was too sacred for rape. The Japanese attacked women in nunneries, churches, and Bible training schools. Seventeen soldiers raped

one woman in succession in a seminary compound. "Every day, twenty-four hours a day," the *Dagong Daily* newspaper testified of the great Rape of Nanking, "there was not one hour when an innocent woman was not being dragged off somewhere by a Japanese soldier."

Old age was no concern to the Japanese. Matrons, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers endured repeated sexual assaults. A Japanese soldier who raped a woman of sixty was ordered to "clean the penis by her mouth." When a woman of sixty-two protested to soldiers that she was too old for sex, they "rammed a stick up her instead." Many women in their eighties were raped to death, and at least one woman in that age group was shot and killed because she refused a Japanese soldier's advances.

If the Japanese treatment of old women was terrible, their treatment of young children was unthinkable. Little girls were raped so brutally that some could not walk for weeks afterwards. Many required surgery; others died. Chinese witnesses saw Japanese rape girls under ten years of age in the streets and then slash them in half by sword. In some cases, the Japanese sliced open the vaginas of preteen girls in order to ravish them more effectively.

Even advanced stages of pregnancy did not render women immune to assault. The Japanese violated many who were about to go into labor, were in labor, or who had given birth only a few days earlier. One victim who was nine months pregnant when raped suffered not only stillbirth but a complete mental collapse. At least one pregnant woman was kicked to death. Still more gruesome was the treatment allotted to some of the unborn children of these women. After gang rape, Japanese soldiers sometimes slashed open the bellies of pregnant women and ripped out the fetuses for amusement.

The rape of women frequently accompanied the slaughter of entire families.

One of the most notorious stories of such a slaughter was recorded in detail by American and European missionaries in

Nanking. On December 13, 1937, thirty Japanese soldiers came to the Chinese home at 5 Hsing Lu Kao in the southeastern part of Nanking. They killed the landlord when he opened the door, and then Mr. Hsia, a tenant who had fallen to his knees to beg them not to kill anyone else. When the landlord's wife asked why they murdered her husband, they shot her dead. The Japanese then dragged Mrs. Hsia from under a table in the guest hall where she had tried to hide with her one-year-old baby. They stripped her, raped her, then bayoneted her in the chest when they were finished. The soldiers thrust a perfume bottle in her vagina and also killed the baby by bayonet. Then they went into the next room, where they found Mrs. Hsia's parents and two teenage daughters. The grandmother, who tried to protect the girls from rape, was shot by revolver; the grandfather clasped the body of his wife and was killed immediately.

The soldiers then stripped the girls and took turns raping them: the sixteen-year-old by two or three men, the fourteen-year-old by three. The Japanese not only stabbed the older girl to death after raping her but rammed a bamboo cane into her vagina. The younger one was simply bayoneted and "spared the horrible treatment meted out to her sister and mother," a foreigner later wrote of the scene. The soldiers also bayoneted another sister, aged eight, when she hid with her four-year-old sister under the blankets of a bed. The four-year-old remained under the blankets so long she nearly suffocated. She was to endure brain damage for the rest of her life from the lack of oxygen.

Before leaving, the soldiers murdered the landlord's two children, aged four and two; they bayoneted the older child and split the head of the younger one with a sword. When it was safe to emerge, the eight-year-old survivor, who had been hiding under the blankets, crawled to the next room where she lay beside the body of her mother. Together with her four-year-old sister, they lived for fourteen days on rice crusts that their mother had prepared before the siege. When a member of the International Committee arrived at the house weeks after the slaughter, he saw that one young girl had been raped on the table. "While I

was there," he testified later, "the blood on the table [was] not all dry yet."

A similar story, no less grisly, involves a fifteen-year-old Chinese girl whose family was murdered before her eyes. The Japanese first killed her brother, whom they wrongly accused of being a Chinese soldier, then her brother's wife and her older sister because they both resisted rape, and finally her mother and father, who knelt on the floor begging the Japanese to spare the lives of their children. Before they died under the thrusts of Japanese bayonets, their last words urged the young girl to do whatever the enemy soldiers wanted from her.

The girl fainted. She revived to find herself naked on the floor in a strange, locked room. Someone had raped her while she had been unconscious. Her clothes had been taken from her, as they had been taken from other girls in the building. Her room was on the second floor of a building converted into barracks for two hundred Japanese soldiers. The women inside consisted of two groups: prostitutes, who were given their freedom and treated well, and respectable girls who had been kidnapped into sexual slavery. Of the latter group, at least one girl attempted suicide. For a month and a half the fifteen-year-old was raped two or three times a day. Eventually she became so diseased the Japanese left her alone. One day a kind Japanese officer who spoke Chinese approached her and asked why she was weeping. After hearing her story, he took her to Nanking by car, set her free inside the South Gate, and wrote down the name of Ginling College for her on a piece of paper. The girl was too sick to walk to Ginling the first day and took refuge in a Chinese house. Only on the second day did she reach Ginling, where International Committee members immediately rushed her to the hospital.

That girl was considered fortunate. Many other girls, tied naked to chairs, beds, or poles as permanent fixtures for rape, did not survive such treatment. Chinese witnesses described the body of an eleven-year-old girl who died after she was raped continuously for two days: "According to eyewitness reports, the blood-stained, swollen and ruptured area between

the girl's legs created a disgusting scene difficult for anyone to look at directly."

During the mass rape the Japanese destroyed children and infants, often because they were in the way. Eyewitness reports describe children and babies suffocating from clothes stuffed in their mouths or bayoneted to death because they wept as their mothers were being raped. American and European observers of the Rape of Nanking recorded numerous entries like this one: "415. February 3, about 5 P.M. at Chang Su Hsiang (near Ta Chung Chiao) three soldiers came and forced a woman to throw away her baby and after raping her they went away laughing."

Countless men died trying to protect their loved ones from rape. When the Japanese dragged away one woman from a mat shed and her husband intervened, they "stuck a wire through his nose and tied the other end of the wire to a tree just like one would tie up a bull." There they bayoneted him repeatedly despite the pleas of his mother, who rolled around on the ground, crying hysterically. The Japanese ordered the mother to go into the house or they would kill her. The son died from the wounds on the spot.

There seemed to be no limit to the Japanese capacity for human degradation and sexual perversion in Nanking. Just as some soldiers invented killing contests to break the monotony of murder, so did some invent games of recreational rape and torture when wearied by the glut of sex.

Perhaps one of the most brutal forms of Japanese entertainment was the impalement of vaginas. In the streets of Nanking, corpses of women lay with their legs splayed open, their orifices pierced by wooden rods, twigs, and weeds. It is painful, almost mind-numbing, to contemplate some of the other objects that were used to torment the Nanking women, who suffered almost unendurable ordeals. For instance, one Japanese soldier who raped a young woman thrust a beer bottle into her and shot her. Another rape victim was found with a golf stick rammed into her. And on December 22, in a neigh-

borhood near the gate of Tongjimen, the Japanese raped a barber's wife and then stuck a firecracker in her vagina. It blew up and killed her.

But not all of the victims were women. Chinese men were often sodomized or forced to perform a variety of repulsive sexual acts in front of laughing Japanese soldiers. At least one Chinese man was murdered because he refused to commit necrophilia with the corpse of a woman in the snow. The Japanese also delighted in trying to coerce men who had taken lifetime vows of celibacy to engage in sexual intercourse. A Chinese woman had tried to disguise herself as a man to pass through one of the gates of Nanking, but Japanese guards, who systematically searched all passing pedestrians by groping at their crotches, discovered her true sex. Gang rape followed, at which time a Buddhist monk had the misfortune to venture near the scene. The Japanese tried to force him to have sex with the woman they had just raped. When the monk protested, they castrated him, causing the poor man to bleed to death.

Some of the most sordid instances of sexual torture involved the degradation of entire families. The Japanese drew sadistic pleasure in forcing Chinese men to commit incest—fathers to rape their own daughters, brothers their sisters, sons their mothers. Guo Qi, a Chinese battalion commander stranded in Nanking for three months after the city fell, saw or heard of at least four or five instances in which the Japanese ordered sons to rape their mothers; those who refused were killed on the spot. His report is substantiated by the testimony of a German diplomat, who reported that one Chinese man who refused to rape his own mother was killed with saber strokes and that his mother committed suicide shortly afterwards.

Some families openly embraced death rather than participate in their own destruction. One such family was crossing the Yangtze River when two Japanese soldiers stopped them and demanded an inspection. Upon seeing the young women and girls in the boat, the soldiers raped them right in front of their parents and husbands. This was horrifying enough, but what the soldiers demanded next of the family devastated them. The soldiers wanted the old man of the family to rape

the women as well. Rather than obey, the entire family jumped into the river and drowned.

Once women were caught by Japanese soldiers, there was little hope for them, for most were killed immediately after rape.

But not all women submitted easily. Many were able to hide from the Japanese for months—in fuel stacks, under piles of grass or straw, in pig pens, on boats, in deserted houses. In the countryside women hid in covered holes in the earth—holes that Japanese soldiers tried to discover by stamping on the ground. One Buddhist nun and a little girl avoided rape and murder because they lay still in a ditch filled with bodies and feigned death for five days.

Women eluded rape using a variety of methods. Some used disguise—rubbing soot on their faces to appear old and diseased or shaving their heads to pass themselves off as men. (One clever young woman disguised herself as an old woman, hobbling about on a cane and even borrowing a little boy of six to carry on her back until she safely entered the Safety Zone at Ginling College.) Others feigned sickness, such as the woman who told Japanese soldiers she had given birth to a dead child four days before. Another woman took the advice of a Chinese captive to force her finger down her throat and vomit several times. (Her Japanese captors hastily expelled her from the building.) Some escaped by sheer quickness, ducking in and out of crowds, climbing over walls, with the Japanese in hot pursuit. One girl barely avoided assault by tripping up a Japanese soldier on the third floor of a house and sliding down a bamboo pole that a Chinese man propped up for her from the garden.

Once caught, women who struggled faced the possibility of torture as a warning to others who dared to resist the Japanese. Those who defied the Japanese were often found later with their eyes torn out, or their noses, ears, or breasts cut off. Few women dared fight their assailants, but there were scattered accounts of resistance. A schoolteacher gunned down five Japanese soldiers before being shot to death. The most famous story involves Li Xouying, a woman who not only suffered

thirty-seven bayonet wounds during her struggle against the Japanese but survived and remained robust enough to narrate and play-act the story almost sixty years later.

In 1937, eighteen-year-old Li Xouying was the bride of a military technician. When the government evacuated the capital, her husband left Nanking on the top of a train packed with Chinese soldiers. Li stayed behind because she was six to seven months pregnant and believed it was dangerous in her condition to board a crowded train.

Like many other Chinese civilians in Nanking, Li and her father fled into the foreign-run Safety Zone. They hid in the basement of an elementary school that had been converted into a refugee camp. But this camp, like others in the zone, was subject to repeated Japanese inspections and invasions. On December 18, a group of Japanese soldiers broke in and dragged the young men out of the school. The following morning they returned for the women. Fearful of what the Japanese would do to a pregnant housewife, Li made an impulsive decision. She tried to kill herself by slamming her head against the basement wall.

When she regained consciousness, she found herself lying on a small canvas cot on the floor of the basement. The Japanese were gone, but they had taken several young women with them. Wild thoughts raced through Li's head while she lay in a daze on the cot. If she ran out of the building, she might be throwing herself at Japanese rapists. But if she did nothing and waited, they would probably come back for her. Li decided to stay. If the Japanese did not return, all would be well and good, but if they did, she would fight them to the death. She would rather die, she told herself, than be raped by the Japanese.

Soon she heard the heavy footsteps of three Japanese soldiers coming down the stairs. Two of them seized a couple of women and dragged them screaming out of the room. The one who remained eyed Li intently as she lay immobile on the cot. Someone told him Li was sick, and he responded by kicking all the other people out of the room into the corridor.

Slowly the soldier walked back and forth, appraising her. Suddenly—before he quite realized what was happening—she made her move. She jumped from the cot, snatched his bayonet from his belt and flung her back against the wall. "He panicked," Li recalled. "He never thought a woman would fight back." He seized her wrist that held the bayonet, but Li clutched his collar with her free hand and bit his arms with all her might. Even though the soldier wore full battle gear and Li wore only a cotton *chipao*, which impeded movement, she put up a good fight. The two of them grappled and kicked until the soldier found himself overwhelmed and screamed for help.

The other soldiers ran in, no doubt incredulous at what they saw. They lunged toward her with their bayonets but failed to stab her effectively because their comrade was in the way. Because her opponent was so short and small, Li was able to jerk him completely off his feet and use him like a shield to parry their thrusts. But then the soldiers aimed their bayonets at her head, slashing her face with their blades and knocking out her teeth. Her mouth filled with blood, which she spit into their eyes. "Blood was on the walls, on the bed, on the floor, everywhere," Li remembered. "I had no fear in my mind. I was furious. My only thought was to fight and kill them." Finally a soldier plunged his bayonet into her belly and everything went black for her.

The soldiers left her for dead. When Li's body was brought before her father, he could not sense any breath coming from her and assumed the worst. He asked someone to carry her behind the school and to dig a pit for her grave. Fortunately, someone noticed before the burial that Li was still breathing and that bubbles of blood foamed from her mouth. Friends immediately rushed Li to Nanking University Hospital, where doctors stitched up her thirty-seven bayonet wounds. While unconscious, she miscarried that evening.

Word of Li's fight somehow reached her husband, who immediately asked the military for three months' leave and borrowed money to get back to Nanking. In August 1938, he returned and found his wife with her face swollen and cross-

hatched with scars and her newly shorn hair growing from her head like bristles.

Li would suffer both pain and embarrassment from her wounds for the rest of her life. Mucus leaked from a gaping hole on the side of her nose, and tears ran down her eyes during bad weather or bouts of illness. (Miraculously, although the Japanese had stabbed the whites of her eyes with their bayonets, Li did not go blind). Every time she looked in a mirror, she saw the scars that reminded her of that terrible day, December 19, 1938. "Now, after fifty-eight years, the wrinkles have covered the scars," she told me during my visit to her apartment in Nanking. "But when I was young, the scars on my face were obvious and terrible."

Li believes it was the combination of her personality and unique family background that gave her the will to fight back. Unlike other Chinese women, typically taught at an early age to be submissive, she came from a family completely devoid of feminine influence. Her mother died when she was only thirteen, forcing Li to grow up among men in a tough military family. Her father, brother, and uncles were either soldiers or policemen, and under their influence she became a tomboy. As a young girl, she also possessed a temper so short that her father dared not teach her kung fu, no doubt out of fear that she would terrorize the other kids on the block. Almost sixty years later, surrounded by her numerous children and grandchildren, Li had retained her health and passion for life—even her reputation for being ill-tempered. Her one regret, she said, was not learning kung fu from her father; otherwise, she might have enjoyed the pleasure of killing all three of the Japanese soldiers that day.

THE DEATH TOLL

How many people died during the Rape of Nanking? When Miner Searle Bates, a history professor at Nanking University, was asked during the International Military Tribunal of the Far East (IMTFE) to give an estimate of the deaths, he answered:

"The question is so big, I don't know where to begin. . . . The total spread of this killing was so extensive that no one can give a complete picture of it."

The Chinese military specialist Liu Fang-chu proposed the figure of 430,000. Officials at the Memorial Hall of the Victims of the Nanking Massacre by Japanese Invaders and the procurator of the District Court of Nanking in 1946 claimed at least 300,000 were killed. The IMTFE judges concluded that more than 260,000 people were killed in Nanking. Fujiwara Akira, a Japanese historian, gives the figure of approximately 200,000. John Rabe, who never conducted a systematic count and left Nanking in February, before the slaughter ended, estimated that only 50,000–60,000 were killed. The Japanese author Hata Ikuhiko claims that the number was between 38,000 and 42,000. Still others in Japan place the number as low as 3,000. In 1994 archival evidence emerged from a former Japanese-owned railway company in Manchuria to reveal that one burial squad alone disposed of more than 30,000 bodies in Nanking between January and March 1938.

Perhaps no one has made a more thorough study of the statistics than Sun Zhaiwei, a historian at the Jiangsu Academy of Social Sciences. In a 1990 scholarly paper entitled "The Nanking Massacre and the Nanking Population," he reports that, according to census reports, the population in Nanking in 1937 exceeded 1 million before hostilities broke out between Japan and China. Using Chinese archival material, memoirs from Chinese military officials, and reports of the Nanking branch of the Red Cross, Sun determined that at the time of Japanese occupation there were at least half a million long-term residents in the city (the rest had already left the city), plus 90,000 Chinese soldiers and tens of thousands of migrants—a total of approximately 600,000 people in Nanking, perhaps even 700,000.

Sun gives his estimate in a second paper. The Nanking city archives and the No. 2 National Archives of China contained burial records submitted by private families, local charitable organizations, and the *Nanjing zizhi weiyuanhui*—the Chinese puppet government under the Japanese. After carefully examin-

ing these records, Sun found that charitable organizations in Nanking buried at least 185,000 bodies, private individuals at least 35,000, and the Japanese-controlled local government more than 7,400. (Some of the burial records are so detailed they include categories for even the sex of the victims and the location of the disposal.) Using Chinese burial records alone, Sun calculated that the number of dead from the Rape of Nanking exceeded the figure of 227,400.

However, this statistic balloons still larger if one factors in a stunning confession made by a Japanese prisoner almost four decades before Sun's paper was written. In 1954, while awaiting trial at the Fuxuan war criminal camp in the northeastern province of Liaoning, Ohta Hisao, a Japanese imperial army major, submitted a forty-four-page report in which he confessed that the Japanese army burned, dumped, or buried bodies in a massive disposal effort. Most of the bodies came from Hsiakwan, the area near the river northwest of Nanking. On the waterfront the Japanese piled fifty bodies onto each waiting boat, then took them to the middle of the river to dump overboard. Trucks carried bodies to other areas where they were burned and buried to eliminate evidence of the massacre. For three days starting on December 15, 1937, Ohta's army unit dumped 19,000 bodies of Chinese victims into the Nanking River, while a neighboring unit disposed of 81,000 bodies and other units got rid of 50,000—a total of some 150,000 bodies. By adding Ohta's figure to his tally of Chinese burial record statistics, Sun concluded that the total number of corpses amounted to a staggering 377,400—a figure that surpasses the death toll for the atomic blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.

Even if skeptics dismiss Ohta's confession as a lie, one should keep in mind that even without his testimony the burial records at Nanking offer convincing evidence that the death toll of the massacre was, at the very least, in the 200,000 range. Sun's research is corroborated by court exhibits that I unearthed from IMTFE records (see table on page 102). By adding together the burial estimates of charitable organizations (later mentioned in Sun's paper) and the body counts made by other individuals (not mentioned in Sun's paper), the tribunal

concluded that approximately 260,000 people were killed during the Nanking massacre. It is important to remember that the IMTFE number does not include Japanese burial statistics of the Chinese dead, which could push the figure into the 300,000 or even 400,000 range.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VICTIMS OF
JAPANESE MASSACRE IN NANKING

Tsun-shan-tang	112,266
Red Swastika Society	43,071
Shia Kwan District (sic)	26,100
Stated by Mr. Lu Su	57,400
Stated by Messrs. Jui, Chang, and Young	7,000 or more
Stated by Mr. Wu	2,000 or more
Stated on the Tomb of the Unknown Victims	3,000 or more
TOTAL (approximately)	260,000

SOURCE: Document no. 1702, box 134, IMTFE records, court exhibits, 1948, World War II War Crimes Records Collection, entry 14, record group 238, National Archives.

In recent years other scholars have bolstered Sun's study and given credence to the argument that the death toll at Nanking may have surpassed 300,000 people. For instance, in his paper "Let the Whole World Know the Nanking Massacre," Wu Tien-wei, professor emeritus of history at Southern Illinois University, estimates that the population of the city before its fall was approximately 630,000 people, a figure he concedes is far from exact but may be relatively close to the actual figure. After providing a detailed historiography of the body count research and examining the numbers carefully, he concludes that the

death toll of the massacre exceeded 300,000 people—probably 340,000 people, of which 190,000 were killed collectively and 150,000 individually.

The authors James Yin and Shi Young obtained a number on the same scale—approximately 355,000—after conducting their own investigation. Although their figure already represents the high end of the spectrum of death toll estimates, Yin and Young believe that the actual number of people killed in Nanking far exceeds the number they have been able to unearth from the records. They dismiss arguments from other experts who believe that considerable overlap may exist between death statistics and who suggest, for instance, that many of the bodies the Japanese dumped in the river were washed onshore, reburied, and tallied twice in the body count. Any corpse that washed up on land, they contend, would have been buried next to the river rather than in some remote location far from the river, but according to their research, most of the burial grounds were miles away from the banks of the Yangtze. It defies common sense, they argue, that the corpses, in advanced stages of decay from exposure, would be transported up hills or mountains or across fields for burial. Moreover, Yin and Young discovered through interviews with survivors that family members of rape-and-murder victims usually buried their dead immediately and neglected to report the burials to the authorities. Since their study tabulates numbers only from the reports of mass killings—rather than individual, random murders—Yin and Young believe that the total number of deaths from the Nanking massacre lies well in the 400,000 range.

There is even compelling evidence that the Japanese themselves believed at the time of the massacre that the death toll at Nanking may have been as high as 300,000. The evidence is significant because not only was it generated by the Japanese themselves but it was done so during the first month of the massacre, when the killing was far from over. On January 17, 1938, Foreign Minister Hirota Koki in Tokyo relayed the following message to his contacts in Washington, D.C., a message that American intelligence intercepted, deciphered, and later translated into English

on February 1, 1938 (parentheses in the original):

Since return (to) Shanghai a few days ago I investigated reported atrocities committed by Japanese army in Nanking and elsewhere. Verbal accounts (of) reliable eye-witnesses and letters from individuals whose credibility (is) beyond question afford convincing proof (that) Japanese Army behaved and (is) continuing (to) behave in (a) fashion reminiscent (of) Attila (and) his Huns. (Not) less than three hundred thousand Chinese civilians slaughtered, many cases (in) cold blood.

It is tempting to suggest that if Chiang Kai-shek had pulled out his armies during the mass government evacuation from Nanking in November and left behind a defenseless city, perhaps wholesale massacre could have been averted. But a minute's thought shows the weakness in that argument. The Japanese, after all, had spent the preceding few months systematically destroying entire villages and cities on their warpath to Nanking and committing similar atrocities elsewhere. Clearly they needed no provocation from the Chinese for their actions. All we can say for certain is that a city devoid of Chinese soldiers would have—at the very least—taken away the Japanese excuse that serial executions were necessary to eliminate the soldiers hiding among the civilian population. But there is no evidence to suggest that it would have changed their actions.

It is also tempting to suggest that if Chiang had refrained from ordering a senseless last-minute withdrawal from Nanking and had instead fought to the last man to save the city, the city's fate would have been different. But here again we must be careful. Head-to-head combat would certainly not have worked. The Japanese were much better armed and trained and would surely have overcome the Chinese forces sooner or later. But a lengthy, drawn-out struggle using guerrilla-style tactics might have demoralized the Japanese and elevated the Chinese. If nothing else, many more Japanese soldiers would have died fighting the Chinese and their arrogance toward the Chinese soldier would have been muted by a fierce resistance.