

**Remembrance of Things Past:  
Cultural Trauma, the “Nanking Massacre” and Chinese Identity**  
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Over the last two decades a new approach has developed in the social sciences. It is called cultural sociology. Traditionally, the “science of society” has been associated with a resolutely objective and external point of view, and the object of this view has been to locate the invisible “social structures” that determine actors’ lives from outside of their consciousness, via political and economic coercion or reward. Karl Marx and Max Weber have each been responsible for creating parts of this modern social science legacy.

*A New Perspective*

Cultural sociology provides an alternative perspective on the social and how to study it.<sup>1</sup> Inspired particularly by an interpretation of the later ideas of Emile Durkheim, but also by the more cultural strand of Weber’s work, cultural sociology connects this legacy from social science with “humanistic” scholarship and theory, drawing from such thinkers as Wilhelm Dilthey, Ferdinand Saussure, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Northrup Frye, Victor Turner, and Clifford Geertz. The cultural-sociological perspective suggests that socially structured consciousness is, in itself, a highly significant “cause” of action. Individual actors are trying not only to avoid punishment or gain reward but to be faithful to their beliefs, to be emotionally engaged, and to be coherent in a moral sense.

From the cultural-sociological perspective, consciousness is not only individual. Social organizations from couples in love to peer groups, from gangs to political parties, from organizations to nations – each of these collectivities has a “consciousness” of its own. Every group has a collective consciousness, whether fragmented or integrated, which exerts as much power as social structure in the more traditional, external sense. But collective consciousness exerts its “force” differently. Composed of symbols rather than instrumental resources, it draws boundaries between inside and outside and protects the space in between. The symbols that compose collective consciousness are organized by binary codes that compose variations on “us” versus “them,” and by narratives that convert this religious-like division between the sacred and profane into stories about struggles between good protagonists and threatening or deviant antagonists, in which the life of the collectivity, its very collective identity, is at stake.

Cultural sociology has been applied to a range of empirical areas, from the impact of computers on society and environmental movements to musical performances and painting, from social movements for civil rights to movements for men’s rights, from studies of the transition from authoritarianism in Spain to studies of truth and reconciliation in the new South Africa. In these and other studies, *cultural* sociology has emerged as a distinctively “strong” program in contrast with the “weak” sociology of culture approach. The latter takes cultural phenomena as an object, understanding such

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

objects as reflections of social structure rather than as meaningful forces in themselves. It employs methods and models drawn from the more mechanistic social and natural sciences, rather than placing itself squarely inside what Dilthey called the *Geisteswissenschaften*, or the human studies.

Cultural sociology directs itself, not only to the effects of external, material objects, but also – and most distinctively — to representations of these objects, for in the empirical practices of social life objects and their representations are woven inextricably together. In this sense, cultural sociology addresses the “textual” dimension of social life; its object is to ferret out meanings, not mechanisms. Cultural structures are causal, but they are, in the first place, semiotic, not mechanical in their causal force. Cultural sociology employs rational methods, but these are primarily interpretive rather than experimental and statistical. When one studies meaning, it is impossible to achieve objectivity in the same manner as natural science, for it is one’s own experience and consciousness that make it possible for one to understand the meaning of social action. This experiential boundary limits the possibilities of cultural sociology, but it enables it at the same time.

### *The Theory of Cultural Trauma*

One recent area of cultural sociological research is collective trauma.<sup>2</sup> In the course of the twentieth century, the notion that individuals and groups can suffer harm became an enduring social and political trope in Western social thought. The idea of “trauma” first emerged in Western thinking in the aftermath of World War I, with notions of shell shock, and the psychoanalytic movement drew attention to deep emotional injuries whose effects could linger for years but whose origins and etiology remained unknown in the victims’ conscious life. The type case for collective thinking about trauma is the Nazi Holocaust against the Jewish people in Europe, in which six million Jews were murdered between 1940 and 1945. It was the postwar reaction against this horrendous event that introduced the concept of genocide into collective consciousness, a term that more recently has generated the associated idea of ethnic cleansing.

From a cultural sociological perspective, collective trauma should not be considered as natural or automatic. Painful experiences can happen to individuals, but they are not necessarily transferred to the level of the group. For example, individuals in an urban area can be victims of painful crimes, from theft to violence, but the collective consciousness of the city itself may not be affected; it may see itself as safe, progressive, or exciting. It took decades for non-Jewish people to feel that they, too, were somehow affected by the Nazi genocide. Eventually, the event came to be central to the collective existence of non-Jewish people in the West. It helped define them as a collectivity; they felt that the Nazis mass murder of millions of innocent people had somehow, in a symbolic manner, happened, damaging their sense of themselves as a moral collectivity. It was from this sense of collective trauma that such notions as international human rights arose, a collective, supra-national responsibility to prevent genocide and racial and ethnic cleansing in the present day. Of course, this responsibility is only very partially institutionalized, and only fitfully carried out.

In order to understand the contingency of the movement from actual event to collective trauma, we need to accept a fundamental, if seemingly paradoxical, theoretical

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<sup>2</sup> See Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

fact. A social event does not have any particular, determinate, or natural representation. In semiotic terms, there is a gap between the signifier (the symbol) and the signified (the social fact), and this gap can be bridged in a number of different ways. We see protestors gathering in a central city street, marching and waving signs. Is this a progressive protest or a reactionary betrayal of hope? Is this a well-organized and planned movement, or a riot of irrational, intimidated persons? Are they inspired by a thoughtful charismatic leader or are they dupes, manipulated by conspiring demagogues? The symbolic media of representation will always produce accounts of both kinds, and such competing signifiers can easily be attached to the same set of social signifieds.

Events are one thing, their interpretation another. We know this in our individual lives, how, after we experience something, we often need to think further about what it meant. On the collective level, it is the same only more so. Things happen, but their representation is up in the air. What determines the collective representation of a social event? One important element is the established understandings that precede it. These set a kind of base line, a broad language that supplies basic intuitions about what things mean. But pre-existing understandings are general; they must be interpreted vis-à-vis any specific event. There are always new and specific interpretations offered of every social event. They are proposed by individuals, but most often by institutions and carrier groups, by parties, ethnic, class, gender, and racial groups, by national representatives, by states. Via the symbolic media of communication, “claims” are proposed about what has just happened and what it means. If an event becomes significant, there is a struggle over representation, and in the course of this struggle meanings can be changed, sometimes in drastic ways.

What affects this outcome? One factor is how effectively such symbolic claims are made. In 1847, two relatively unknown social philosophers, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, were engaged by a small group of German émigré workers in London to make a claim on their behalf. They cast a complaint so broad and so big, and they wrote it so skillfully, that their claim resounded for more than a century, and it eventually changed the world. *The Communist Manifesto* defined a trauma (capitalist exploitation), identified victims (the industrial proletariat) and perpetrators (the bourgeoisie), and set forth a solution (communist revolution) that became fateful for Western and Eastern peoples alike.

These challenges are faced by every trauma claim if it is to be generalized as a wound to the broader collectivity. Claims may be made on behalf of this or that group, but they must then be convincingly projected to a broader collectivity. This cultural work is complex process. It begins with defining, symbolizing, and dramatizing what “happened.” In the course of this narration, the identity of the victims must be established, and so must the identity of the perpetrators, tasks which are related to defining the trauma but have independence from it as well. Finally, a solution appropriate to these three “facts” must be proposed. The stakes are obviously high, and cultural struggle ensues over each phase of this trauma-creating process. Social resources such as power, status, and money vitally affect, but do not by themselves determine, the outcome. If a trauma-interpretation succeeds, it can put the carrier group into power, and its

members have the chance to institutionalize their interpretation of past events in powerful ways.<sup>3</sup>

*The Nanking Massacre and Its Initial Constructions*

In Nanking, China, in December 1937, an event transpired that, sixty years later, a young Chinese-American author would characterize as “the forgotten Holocaust.”<sup>4</sup> After a six month struggle against Chiang Kai-shek’s armies in the Yangtze Valley, the Japanese army invaded the bustling coastal city of Nanking, and engaged in a premeditated, systematic campaign of mass murder. Using such primitive techniques as cannons, pistols, fire, and swords, the soldiers created a horrendous massacre in which blood literally flowed through the streets. Seven weeks later, more than one-quarter million Chinese lay dead.<sup>5</sup>

Certainly, what came to be known, in the West, as the “Rape of Nanking” was immensely traumatic for the individuals who lived in that tragically desiccated city. The cultural sociological question is why this event did not become traumatic on a more collective level as well. Why did it not become a major point of reference for China as a nation, searing itself into the collective memory, defining institutions, and demanding reform -- as the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki did for the Japanese

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<sup>3</sup> Communist and fascist revolutions can be thought of in this manner, allowing the aggrieved collectivity, whether the proletariat or the folk, or more specifically its political and intellectual representatives, to take power and fashion a new social system that supposedly will prevent such traumas from occurring in the future. We will develop this theme in the latter part of this essay in regard to the Chinese revolution of 1949.

<sup>4</sup> *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*. New York: Basic Books, 1997. Chang’s book has inevitably become a lightning rod for controversy, and this is apparently true, for reasons that should be evident, in some quarters of Japanese politics and scholarship. In terms of its reception in the Anglophone world, we are not aware of serious challenges to the general empirical claims advanced in Chang’s work. In his Forward to the book, William C. Kirby, Professor of Modern Chinese History at Harvard University, attests that “Ms. Chang shows more clearly than any previous account” the “bestial behavior” committed by “Japanese commanders and troops” during the seven weeks of confrontation at Nanking (Kirby, “Forward,” pp. ix-xi, in *ibid.*, quoting from p. x). Other expert analysts agree. Peter Li later called the Nanking Massacre the “best kept secret about World War II” (p. 57 in Li, “The Nanking Holocaust Tragedy, Trauma and Reconciliation”, *Society* 37 [2000]: 56-66). Referring to such events as the Nanking massacre, Eugene Sledge claims that “the best secret of World War II is the truth about Japanese atrocities” (in Sledge, “The Old Breed and the Costs of War,” in John V. Denson, ed., *The Costs of War: America’s Pyrrhic Victories*. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1998). See also Siyun Lin, *Nan Jing Bao Wei Zhan yu Nan Jing Da Tu Sha [The Battle for Nanking’s Protection and the Massacre in Nanking]*, Electronic Source: 2000 <http://www.mlcool.com/html/ns000548.htm> ) and James Yin and Shi Young, *Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable History in Photographs* (Chicago: Triumph Books, 1996). See also note 5, below.

<sup>5</sup> After the conclusion of the Pacific War, The International Military Tribunal of the Far East estimated more than 260,000 noncombatants. Some experts place the total over 350,000 (Chang, p. 4). When presenting this paper at Sophia University in Tokyo Japan, we were informed that some respected Japanese scholars have challenged these estimates, placing the number of victims at “only” 200,000. There is, inevitably, some controversy about such factual assertions in regard to long past historical events, and it is not the intention of this paper to offer definitive empirical estimates in quantitative terms. We believe, nonetheless, that the available historical evidence does not challenge our basic presupposition in this paper – that mass murder on a “world-historical” scale did occur during these weeks in Nanking. Assuming these historical events to have taken place, our aim in this essay is to offer new interpretations of the reaction to them.

people, the Jewish genocide for the Germans, and the enslavement for Africans for many groups in the West?<sup>6</sup>

The Japanese massacre in Nanking did not escape notice. For many contemporaries, inside China and outside, it was the subject of great consternation, despair, and dispute. Western observers were in and around Nanking, as diplomats, missionaries, and journalists. They broadcast alarmed and urgent representations of the event, and reports appeared in large black letters in newspapers and newsreels around the world. The horror was clear, the victims were observed, the perpetrators were clearly the Japanese.

This initial cultural construction of the mass murder does not, at first glance, seem cultural at all. The contemporary accounts, and retrospective histories such as Chang's, are angry descriptions that present themselves in an entirely naturalistic manner, as simply narrating a series of actually existing facts. If we step back from these accounts, however, we can see that the initial reports of alarm and outrage were deeply informed by the existing cultural structures of their time. We do not have to deny the brutal facts of the massacre, for example, to see that the reports were made in the context of the binary coding of "West" versus "East." The Second World War had not yet been declared, so that even representatives of the German Nazi government could criticize the massacre from within this centuries-long symbolic binary, and they did.<sup>7</sup> The barbarians from the East were at it again, acting in an unchristian way. For these Western observers, then, the massacre was seen against the backdrop of Japan's polluted rising sun, the shocking birth of an industrial Japan, its early victories over China and Russia, its occupation of Manchuria and Korea, its militarization from the 1920s onward, all of which were constructed as an unprecedented, and unjustified, Eastern challenge to the West.

For the Western audience, this "cultural stuff" mediated the feeling and perception of the mass murder at Nanking for the Western audience; it was not only empathy for the Chinese victims or ethical outrage as such. As the cultural-historical

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<sup>6</sup> The reference to the atomic bombings as traumas that helped define postwar Japanese identity raises the obvious question of where, in this process of Japanese identity construction, a sense of responsibility for the Nanking Massacre might lie. The answer, many observers have suggested, is close to "no where at all." Chang provides a biting critical overview of Japanese denials, not only of their responsibility for the Massacre, but of its very empirical existence, characterizing this process as Japan's "second rape" of Nanking (pp. 199-214). To speak of the Japanese nation as a collectivity in this manner clearly runs the risk of effacing the controversies that divide the country in the struggles over how to remember its militarist past. Despite these divisions, however, the long-standing insensitivity of the Japanese government to such issues as the Nanking Massacre have indeed played a powerful role in textbook, scholarly, and media trauma construction for the Japanese people; in fact, it is playing an increasing role in Japan's inter-state relations in Asia today. Yet, while the case of Japan's relation to the Massacre is increasingly debated, China's relation to the Massacre of China has rarely been thematized, despite the fact that China's own attitude to the massacre in the decades after 1937 had enormous repercussions, even for the Japanese. See footnote 18, below, and Appendix I for further discussion of the contemporary Japanese relation to the Massacre.

<sup>7</sup> Chang treats this German involvement as evidence of the factual transparency of the massacre, but it can also, at the same time, be taken as evidence of the widespread appeal of the Orientalist frame, such that it could even provide a framework for bridging the gulf between Nazis and anti-Nazis. For the concept of orientalism, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

framework changed, the Nanking massacre faded from view. When Americans themselves became the object of “Japanese perfidy,” at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, it became, in the words of President Franklin Roosevelt, “a day of infamy” that would live “forever,” and it was, in fact, consecrated by the American people for the next fifty years. Yet, while the death of many hundreds of Americans on that sunny and peaceful morning in Hawaii truly was a human tragedy, it represented a mere asterisk in the history of human perfidy, a blip compared to the truly horrendous massacres in Nanking that had occurred only slightly more than four years before.

It is collective identity that matters in the construction of trauma, and the scope of this identity depends on identifying with a putative trauma’s victims. It was Americans who had died at Japanese hands in Hawaii, and their deaths had been claimed as a national wound by no less than the President of the United States. Constructed as further evidence of the barbaric “East,” the event immediately became a national American trauma. Its solution was the Pacific War and the achievement of Japan’s unconditional surrender, and it “required” inflicting revenge on hundreds of thousands of Japanese.

This shift from Western concern to Western silence about the massacre in Nanking makes cultural sense, then, even if it was unjustifiable from an ethical point of view and inexplicable from a purely rational, “naturalistic” perspective. What seems more difficult to perceive is why this trauma also disappeared from the consciousness of the Chinese.

### *The Disappearance of the Nanking Massacre*

Contemporary awareness of the massacre, and extraordinary concern about it, had also initially extended to the Chinese. On December 20, 1937, on the front page of *Jiu Guo Shi Bao* (*Saving the Country Times*), a newspaper produced by CPC members in Paris, there is a brief report on the retreat of the Nationalist army from Nanking, the capitol city. While most of this article reports on the action and strategy of the army, a short paragraph records eye witness testimony that three hundred Nationalist POW’s had been shot by the Japanese invaders and that their mutilated bodies had been piled high in the city’s streets. Fuller reports on the atrocity appeared in a later issue. In an article, entitled “The Killing and Raping by the Japanese Enemy are Inhuman Atrocities!”<sup>8</sup>, a writer listed dozens of horrendous atrocities, including the “killing competitions,” drawing mainly from published reports of foreign witnesses. At the end of the article, the writer cried out that such outrageous brutality must be revenged, that “those who do not want their own people to be wantonly murdered, who do not want their own sisters to be raped” – they must take action. To fight “until the last trench” would “be not only to defeat the enemy of China but also to wipe out evils against all of humanity.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly heightened rhetoric can be found in a short commentary in *Qun Zhong* (*The Masses*), a CPC weekly journal published in Hankou city, on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1938. Under the title “Enemy Atrocities Despised by Humanities,”<sup>10</sup> the massacre in Nanking is depicted as

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<sup>8</sup> This report appears on the first page of *Jiu Guo Shi Bao* on January 31st, 1938. The original Chinese title is “Ri Kou de Can Sha Jian Yin; Mie Jue Ren Xing!”

<sup>9</sup> *Jiu Guo Shi Bao*, page 1, January 31st, 1938

<sup>10</sup> Page 56 of the Volume One, *Qun Zhong*. The original Chinese title is “Ren Lei Suo Gong Qi de Bao Xing.”

the most “unprecedented bloody brutality that human history ever recorded,”<sup>11</sup> as a declaration of war not only against the Chinese nation but the human race. The last short piece on the Massacre appears in the January 29, 1938, issue of *Qun Zhong*, and briefly mentions the infamous “killing competition.”

These representations of the Massacre were crowded into the time immediately following the incident, the short period of active attention that usually characterizes the span of media coverage for important “news happenings.” After this brief window, the record goes virtually silent. Indeed, with the scant exceptions we will note below, there is virtually no reference to the Nanking Massacre, in the literature produced by the CPC, either before or after the 1949 revolution, indeed for almost half a century. It can fairly be said that the infamous incident, widely publicized and remembered at the time, virtually vanished from the Chinese nation’s tightly controlled mediascape after its intense but very brief initial coverage.

In what follows, we are primarily concerned with the Communist reaction to the Nanking Massacre, for it was on this left side of China’s twentieth century civil war that control of the national collective identity came to lay. The CPC’s “nationalist” opponents did, in fact, give to the Massacre more significant attention. In the International Military Tribunal of the Far East, in 1945, legal claims about the Nanking events were made by the anti-communist KMT, which had fought the CPC for decades and had represented the government of China both during the anti-Japanese war and afterward until 1949. KMT media also offered fervent representations of the Massacre on its tenth anniversary, in 1947. The first of these claims, however, were confined largely to the international legal-institutional sphere, and they were quickly dropped from the Nationalists’ priority as the government shifted its post-war energies back to the fight against the CPC. As for the second group of nationalist representations -- those which emerged around the Massacre’s tenth anniversary -- they were contextualized in a manner that relativized their significance, as we shall later see.<sup>12</sup>

When the Communists took power in 1949, the silence about Nanking continued. For three decades after the revolution, the massacre went virtually unmentioned in the new China’s middle school history texts. This silence applied, not only to students, but to the reference books that were made available to their teachers. In the 1958 middle school teachers reference guide, for example, only one sentence was devoted to the year 1937, and it read “the Japanese army occupied Shanghai and the Nationalist Party government moved its capital to Chongqing.”<sup>13</sup> In fact, it was not until 1979, forty years after the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 27, below. We must acknowledge, however, that our investigation of KMT representations of the Massacre is far from complete. We were able to look only at *Zhong Yang Ri Bao* (the *Central Daily*), the major news daily published by the KMT government, and for this source only for the dates before 1937 and after 1945. While we did closely examine this newspaper on the three memorial day periods of the Massacre -- on December 13<sup>th</sup> from 1945 to 1948 -- it is certainly possible that, in the period preceding, significant representations of the trauma at Nanking were made. We would expect, however, that such representations would reveal how, and why, the Nanking Massacre did *not* enter centrally into the KMT’s version of Chinese identity. Because it estimated the CPC enemy to be as insidious as the Japanese, and ultimately, indeed, a much greater danger, this nationalist carrier group could not weight perpetrator evil in the manner required by trauma construction. Our reasoning on this question is further elaborated below, in footnote 34.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Lin, loc. cit. page 1.

event, that there appeared a brief documentation of the massacre, in the new middle school textbooks of post-Maoist China.<sup>14</sup>

This absence of representation in the identity-forming texts of young Chinese was matched by silence about the massacre in the public rhetoric broadcast to their parents. An examination of *People's Daily* articles between 1946 and 1982 finds only fifteen articles in which the key words “Nanking Massacre” ever appeared. Even these articles were mostly not *about* the Massacre, but, rather, arose in response to international conflicts, with reference to the Massacre being made in the course of reporting about them. These articles do not refer to the Massacre in their titles, and they take neither the event of the Massacre nor its memorization as a main theme.<sup>15</sup>

In the years after the Massacre, there may have been carrier groups inside Nanking making claims about the terrible events of 1937, and perhaps elsewhere in China as well. There can be no doubt that hundreds of thousands of person had to make individual sense of their calamitous losses. Whether some more collective efforts did emerge during these times is a topic for future research. We would have some reason to doubt, however, even if such efforts did occur, that they were able to push the trauma construction process very far. When Nanking was controlled by the Japanese occupier, the trauma creation process was subject to control by the very groups who had perpetrated the crime. Evidence of the Massacre was destroyed, observers silenced, and counter-narratives disseminated throughout the occupied territories. Certainly, foreigners were not allowed to visit, and dissemblance was the order of the day.<sup>16</sup> All this recalls German Nazis and the Holocaust. The concentration and death camps were located on Nazi occupied soil. It was impossible for these events to be consecrated and convincingly represented as evil as long as the perpetrators controlled the means of symbolic communication and the sites where the representation of genocide would have to be made.

This did not mean, however, that representations about trauma could not have been made from Chinese groups and areas outside Japanese control during the war period, and it certainly does not explain why the trauma process did not emerge after China's liberation from the Japanese in 1945, much less after the creation of a stable and more powerful Chinese state in 1949. What fascinates our historical and sociological imagination is that it did not. The reason is that the Chinese had other fish to fry. The potential carrier groups did not carry.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> These findings are the result of a computer search through the archives of *People's Daily* for references to “Nanking Massacre” in the 36 years between 1946 and 1982. There were two mentions in the *People's Daily* in 1950: page 1 March 14 (pg. 1) and December 8 (pg. 2); six mentions in 1951: February 24 (pg. 3), February 27 (pg. 1), March 4 (pg. 4), April 21 (pg. 4), May 1 (pg. 5); two mentions in 1952: April 9 (pg. 1), September 7 (pg. 1); and six mentions in 1960: May 16 (pgs. 1, 2), May 23 (pg. 4), May 26 (pg. 3), May 30 (pg. 6). In footnote 27, below, in the context of our explanation of why the Nanking Massacre did not enter centrally into Chinese collective identity, we will discuss the content of this handful of references and offer an interpretation of why they occurred when they did. In 1982, this long silence was broken with a surge of new articles and references, which continued over the course of the decade, for reasons which will, in that context, also become clear.

<sup>16</sup> See Chang's discussions of “Japanese Damage Control” (p. 147), “Japanese Propaganda” (149-153), and “The Occupation of Nanking” (pp. 159-167).

The Nationalists and the Communists each had significant control over the means of symbolic production.<sup>17</sup> They not only had mass followings but local, national, and world-wide audiences. If either had decided to make the Nanking massacre an issue -- if either leadership had chosen to represent the Nanking murders as a central trauma, projecting trauma narratives aimed at generating sympathy and interest -- they would surely have been able to do so. What the effects of such representation might have been belong to the world of counter-factuals, but they are still worthy of speculation. If either of these carrier groups had been successful in projecting the Nanking trauma experience, the Massacre might well have become inscribed in the collective memories of "China," in one or another of its national guises, and, as a result, the Massacre would be much more widely known in the world today. What might the results of such familiarity have been? The dissemination of a "Nanking Massacre" trauma drama might have compelled Japan's postwar leadership to confront, not only its own war-related traumas, but its neighbors as well, triggering an expansion of Japanese empathy and solidarity that would have had far-reaching consequences in contemporary Asia. A more widespread understanding of this trauma drama also would have provided another, and importantly different, lesson about ethnic cleansing and genocide from which the putative "world community" would have searched for lessons.

But these are counter-factuals. The historical reality was different. The mass murder in Nanking was not narrated as a collective trauma, and the opportunities to extend psychological identification and moral universalism were not taken up.<sup>18</sup> Again, the sociological question is why.

*Concentrating on Other Traumas: The Paradoxes of Solidarity*

The answer has to do with the paradoxes of solidarity, with boundary making and collective identity. Traumas are constructed, not only as threats to already existing collective identity, but as symbolic vehicles that allow collective identities to be formed. Neither for the Nationalist nor for the Communists did the Nanking Massacre fit with who they thought they were, and even less with whom they wanted to become. Before, during, and after the Nanking events, they were engaged primarily with one another, in a massive, continent-wide civil war. Despite the Japanese invasion, and the eight long years of what came to be known as the "Anti-Japanese War," neither side felt they were able to offer primary symbolic space to a powerful, massacring antagonist from the Japanese. The KMT had nominally controlled southern China in 1937, during the time and in the place the massacre had occurred. If they were to consecrate the massacre, they

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<sup>17</sup> For this concept, "the means of symbolic production," and a systematic discussion of broad range of elements required for successful symbolic performances vis-à-vis social audiences, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy." *Sociological Theory* 22 (4) 2004: 527-573. More broadly, see J. Alexander, B. Giesen, and J. Mast, eds., *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> As we finish this article, in April 2005, large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations have broken out in major cities throughout China. Among the major targets of these protests is the accusation that Japanese elementary and high school textbooks narrate Japan's military history against China in a distorted manner, one that neglects or denies Japan's war time atrocities against Asian nations, including the Nanking Massacre. While these actions have been stimulated and controlled by the Communist state, they also respond to mass sentiment. Whatever the source of the protests, that official Japanese accounts have avoided responsibility for the Massacre cannot be denied. See Appendix I.

would have had to portray themselves as weak and ineffective victims; such an imagery would not have sustained their all out war with the CPC. For the Communists it would have been different, but collectivizing and commemorating the trauma would have symbolically unified the Chinese nation and defined as evil another nation, the Japanese. This would have contradicted the culture structures that motivated the revolutionary movement, and which were already in place.

The system of cultural representations against which the CPC perceived the events of those days was sharply bifurcated. It could not be itself without imagining a frightening and polluted antagonist on the other side. Mao famously made this a cardinal principle: “Who are our friends, and who are our enemies? This is the fundamental question of the revolution.”<sup>19</sup> Marxist philosophy gave Mao a format for concretizing this cultural necessity in terms of the social contradictions – the signifieds -- of that day. In his theoretical essay, “On Contradictions,” Mao was flexible about how this binary logic could be applied.<sup>20</sup> There were, he suggested, major and minor contradictions, and the relationship between them changed continuously over historical time.<sup>21</sup> The sacred was always the proletariat, represented by the identity and behavior of the Party. But alliances could be made with other parties, too, and the profane other could shift and change. Generally, the CPC’s enemies included all those who opposed communism and revolution; during the Japanese occupation, however, the Party formed a pragmatic alliance with the Nationalists, allowing Japanese imperialists to become the main antagonist for the nation as a whole. But this marked only a temporary reconfiguring of the major contradiction. The main story line was different -- publicly for many years before the occupation, privately inside the Party during the years of occupation, and publicly after the occupation and for decades after that.

#### *Revolution as a Response to Trauma Construction*

China had indeed suffered great traumas, but these were represented as injuries to the Communist collectivity itself and to the Chinese people insofar as they were signified symbolically through the Party’s texts. According to official CPC histories, there had been a series of systematic persecutions and mass murders for more than 20 years, from 1927 to 1949. These had been perpetrated by the Nationalists. As one of these histories recounts, hundreds of thousands of the CPC’s most “distinguished” members – the “most elite part of the Chinese nation” – had been arrested, tortured, and mercilessly murdered during the dark age of the “White Terror.” This was not even to count the enormous number of “revolutionary masses” and other “progressive activists” who had been persecuted and massacred as well.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mao Tse-tung, Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “On Contradiction,” pp. 214-241 in Anne Fremantle, ed., Mao Tse-Tung: An Anthology of His Writings (New York: New American Library, 1962).

<sup>21</sup> “Among the big and small contradictions determined or influence by the basic contradiction,” Mao writes, “some become intensified, some are temporarily or partially solved or mitigated, and some emerge anew; consequently the process reveals itself as consisting of different stages” (ibid., p. 225).

<sup>22</sup> These and all quotations in the paragraphs following are translations from a representative Chinese high school textbook, authored by the Teaching Committee of the Department of History in Beijing Normal Institution: Contemporary History of China (Zhong Guo Jin Xian Dai Shi), Beijing: China’s Youth Press, 1985.

To have focused on the 1937 massacre of Nanking's Chinese population – which included members of all classes, and a large dose of Nationalist militia as well -- would have defined the victims in the wrong way. For narrative purposes, the oppressed and traumatized had to be not just national compatriots but forces of progress. To have made the Japanese the principal perpetrators of this trauma would, from the perspective of the CPC, been equally wrongheaded in a symbolic sense. The perpetrators, like the victims, had to be part of the major contradiction, the core binary that identified pollution in terms of Marxian class analysis. Only if this binary and narrative were in place would the trauma story seem naturally to resolve itself in social revolution. In the alternative construction of massacre-induced trauma, by contrast, the story could have resolved itself in the defeat of the Imperial Japanese army and international peace.

These underlying cultural forces were made visible immediately after the Anti-Japanese war ended. The rapid return and powerful illumination of the chief enemy was made strikingly conspicuous by the contents of the *People's Daily* on August 15 and September 3, 1946, the dates, respectively, of the memorial day for the defeat of Japan and the victory in World War II. One might have imagined that on these early anniversaries of such a devastating, almost decade-long war, the CPC would have paid homage to the memory of those who died in the struggle and denounced the Japanese as perpetrators of unspeakable war crimes. It is striking that this was not the case. Forty-two articles appeared in the *Daily* on those two days. Thirteen were devoted to fierce condemnation of the Nationalist Party and its U.S. master for their evil doings against the Chinese people. One article, for example, was headlined “the Nationalist Army Committed Looting, Raping and Killing Everywhere They Went!”<sup>23</sup> Another was entitled “The Nationalist Government Insisted on Waging Civil War and the Economy Pushed to the Verge of Collapse.”<sup>24</sup> Trauma-making and defining were clear themes, but the perpetrators were the Nationalist civil enemy, not the foreigners, the Japanese. It was not the “rape of Nanking” that was targeted, but the “raping” and “killing” that were “everywhere,” and which had been committed by other Chinese. The trauma was also economic; it involved poverty and exploitation, not only death and physical destruction. The antidote for these traumas was clear. Only the Communist Party could save the Chinese people. Indeed, the majority of the forty-two stories appearing in these anniversary issues were devoted to extolling how the Party had been saving “the people” from their misery.

To “liberate” the nation from trauma, to mobilize as many people and resources as possible for the revolution, there could only be one big devil, one single target towards which hatred and bitterness could be aimed. So attention shifted quickly away from bitterness against Japan to the urgent struggle against international and domestic class enemies. In this battle to overcome the great trauma, even the old devil could be recruited for help. The Marxist narrative suggested that the Japanese “people” could be split off from Japan's ruling oligarchy and aligned with the progressive forces on the Chinese side. Two articles from the war-ending memorial issues did, in fact, deal with Japan. One suggested that “under the manipulation of the U.S. Army, the Yoshida Government of

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<sup>23</sup> The original Chinese title is “Jiang Jun Dao Chu An Wu Tian Ri, Jian Sha Jie Lue Tu Tan Ren Ming.”

<sup>24</sup> The original Chinese title is “Jiang Zheng Fu Jian Chi Du Cai Nei Zhan, Jing Ji Mian Lin Quan Mian Beng Kui.”

Japan became more reactionary and there was a demonstration [against it] by more than 12,000 Japanese people in Tokyo.” The second recorded that, “refusing to be utilized by the nationalist reactionaries, seven Japanese soldiers escaped to our army.” Faced with the true trauma of capitalist domination, the Japanese masses were joining the “world people” in their struggle for socialist and democracy. Such culturally induced splitting of “Japanese” into polluted ruling class and purified proletariat had already been visible in the immediate aftermath of the Nanking Massacre itself. On February 12, 1938, a long essay in *Qun Zhong* was entitled “Unite with the Anti-War People in the Enemy Country.”<sup>25</sup> Two weeks later, in the same journal, another article was headlined “7500 Anti-War Youths Were Arrested in the Enemy Country.” Indeed, on the second anniversary of the Massacre, December 18, 1939, while not a single word about the earlier mass murder appeared in *New China News*, a lengthy article entitled “The Anti-War Voice of the Japanese People”<sup>26</sup> occupied a conspicuous position on page two.<sup>27</sup>

Under the sign of this Marxist binary, moreover, it made cultural sense that, as the Japanese perpetrators were demoted as antagonists, the weighting of evil would increasingly fall on the American side. In the civil war, the Americans had given tacit and

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<sup>25</sup> The original Chinese title is “Tuan Jie Di Guo Fan Zhan Ren Min.”

<sup>26</sup> The original Chinese title is “Ri Ben Ren Min de Fan Zhan Hu Sheng.”

<sup>27</sup> It was, in fact, under the camouflaging cover of such references to the polluted American enemy that the brief references noted earlier (n. 15, above) to the Nanking Massacre in post-Revolutionary China appeared. Both mentions of the Massacre in 1950 in *People's Daily*, for example, appeared in news reports decrying the evil-doings of the “American imperialists” who had not only robbed the “world’s people” of postwar victory but now threatened the hard-won world peace. One article (*People's Daily*, page 1, March 14, 1950), entitled “The Monstrous Crimes of MacArthur,” (Mai Ke A Se de Tao Tian Zui Xing) accuses the American general of abusing power in the proceedings of the International Military Tribunal of the Far East by shielding the Japanese war criminals -- including those who were perpetrators in Nanking, which is where the Massacre was mentioned. In 1951, the Massacre was briefly mentioned in an article (*People's Daily*, page 5, May 1, 1951) entitled “Oppose Invasion by the U.S. and Defend World Peace (Fan Dui Mei Guo Qin Lue, Bao Wei Shi Jie He Ping).” The point was that such a tragedy would be repeated if the Americans got their way and were able to rearm the Japanese imperialists. Both these stories tellingly demonstrate how the post-revolutionary focus of attention had effectively shifted to the new enemy of the nation, the American imperialists. The Nanking Massacre was relevant only as a piece of indirect evidence for the evilness of this new target.

Just as the Massacre had been recruited as part of the war propaganda in the Korean War in the early 1950’s, it was incorporated, and subordinated, into the larger framework of class struggle in news coverage about Japanese student movement against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1960. In each of the six articles that mentioned the Massacre during this year the dominant motif was the students movement and, more broadly, the Chinese people’s positive responses to it. The point, in other words, was not to make the Massacre a trauma drama for the Chinese people, but to make use of its memory to recall the trauma of the anti-Japanese struggle and to transform the memories of that trauma into a struggle against the Japanese alliance with the United States. The war crimes were constructed as having been committed by the Japanese imperialists, so that the proletariat, the Japanese “people,” remained innocent victims. The more evil the Japanese imperialists were, as powerfully illustrated by their unforgivable crimes in the Massacre, the more justified the current struggle of the Japanese people against them would be. Therefore, to fight against the current Japanese imperialists, who were supported by the most dangerous enemy of all, the American imperialists, the Chinese people must ally themselves with the righteous struggle of the Japanese people -- as one of the article suggested, “Let’s unite and fight together!” (Hu Xiang Tuan Jie, Hu Xiang Zhi Chi, Gong Tong Dou Zheng) (*People's Daily*, page 2, May 16, 1960).

often explicit support to the Nationalists. In cultural if not historical terms, it made sense to align the Americans with the KMT as perpetrators of China's national trauma, and to allow any reference to the former Japanese enemies to fall away. Throughout the post-1945 Civil War period, and extending well into the Korean War, CPC mass media highlighted how "U.S. Fascists" conspired with the Nationalist Party in exploiting and killing the Chinese people, suppressing progressive causes all over the world, including the righteous struggle of the Japanese proletariat.

CPC representations of the Nationalists evolved in a parallel manner, from "robbers," "thieves," "bandits," and "pirates" to "traitors," "tyrants," and "fascists," and a series of heinous atrocities were attributed to them. Between 1946 and 1949, the *People's Daily* reported that it was Nationalist airplanes that "bombed Yanan and murdered innocent civilians;"<sup>28</sup> that it was their spiteful spies who "came to sabotage the liberated areas;"<sup>29</sup> that it was their corruption that "causes the masses of people to languish in the despair of starvation and poverty;"<sup>30</sup> that their callous apathy had "risked millions of people's lives by digging out the bank of the Daqing river;"<sup>31</sup> that their stupidity had "harmed the interests of the nation in their negotiation with Japan;"<sup>32</sup> and that their government had "corrupted the country and sold the country out to please its U.S. master."<sup>33</sup>

As our discussion suggests, the trauma-history constructed by the post-war CPC was generated less by "true events" of the time than by their emplacement inside a free standing, already existing binary code and revolutionary narrative.<sup>34</sup> This interpretation is

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<sup>28</sup> *People's Daily*, Aug. 15, 1946, page 1.

<sup>29</sup> *People's Daily*, Sep. 3, 1946, page 2.

<sup>30</sup> *People's Daily*, Dec. 13, 1946, page 1; Sep. 13, 1947, page 1.

<sup>31</sup> *People's Daily*, Sep. 3, 1947, page 1.

<sup>32</sup> *People's Daily*, Aug 15, 1947, page 1.

<sup>33</sup> *People's Daily*. Aug 15, 1946, page 1; Sep 3, 1947, page 1.

<sup>34</sup> The same can probably be said, more conditionally, for trauma construction by the KMT. We have not, as we mentioned earlier, had sufficient access to Nationalist media to make a secure judgment on this matter. Certainly, we have reason to believe that the conservative side paid more attention to the mass murder. They were, after all, in control of Nanking, then the Chinese capitol, when the Massacre took place. Nonetheless, it does not appear that the Nationalists widely publicized the Massacre; they did not make it central to their collective identity, to the identity of (one national variant of) modern "Chinese." On the tenth anniversary of the Massacre, on December 13, 1947, on the second page of *Central Daily*, we found a feature story titled "This Day of Nanking Ten Years Ago: Massacre! Massacre!" With the help of accompanying photos, this article communicated a traumatic event replete with vivid and gruesome details of atrocities, and was filled with phrases such as "tragic beyond compare in this human world," "atrocities of unparalleled savage," and "unprecedented in the human history."

At the same time, however, and we believe this marks a telling parallel with the cultural logic of the CPC, this Nationalist construction of "atrocities" linked them to enemies whose evil was weighted just as heavily as the Japanese perpetrators. These were the civil enemies inside China. Only one week after the anniversary issue, on the third page of the *Central Daily* of Dec 19, 1947, there appeared an essay that depicted the means of killing and torturing in as gruesome detail as the descriptions employed in the story about the Massacre. This time, however, the antagonists in the plot were the "communist bandits," not the

supported by the fact that this postwar construction fit neatly inside two broader, more general, and pre-existing trauma stories, whose cultural structure it continued and helped complete.

The first was the story the CPC told about itself from its founding in 1921 to the 1949 revolution, almost thirty years later. This history provided a familiar narration of traumatic collective experiences, with the Party and the people represented as victims and the Nationalist Party as perpetrator. A series of famous phrases – speech genres, in Bakhtin’s sense<sup>35</sup> – condensed this cultural message. For example, *xue yu xing feng*, which translates as “bloody rain and gory wind,” was coined by the CPC to evoke the incessant and heartless hounding and slaughter of revolutionaries by the KMT. The years immediately following this first chapter of CPC history, the “Great Revolution Period” of 1924-1927, was concluded by a bloody massacre of CPC members by the nationalist “traitors” in 1927. This was followed by another “Great Revolution Period,” from 1927 to 1937, known also as the Land Reform War time, which was memorialized by the epic Long March, the horrendously difficult thousand mile progress during which more than half the CPC army perished. During the ensuing period of Japanese occupation, when the Communist army was “devoted to resisting the invaders and to liberating the nation from the slavery of Japanese imperialists,” the Nationalist regime was represented, not only having failed to resist the invading army, as having repeatedly “turned its guns towards its own people and the patriotic CPC members.”

This second trauma story, which recounted the CPC’s tragedy and triumph, was itself adumbrated inside the authorized history of the entire century-long period of China’s encounter with Western modernity. *Sang quan ru guo*, literally “losing the sovereignty and mortifying the nation,” communicates the collective trauma induced by the series of unequal treaties that China was forced to sign under the threat of more violent aggression. *Shui shen huo re* and *min buy liao sheng* – respectively “in deep water and burning fire” and “there was no way for people to make a living” – figuratively evoked the inexpressible pain suffered by ordinary people under the stifling oppression of the “Three Big Mountains,” imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism, suggesting that they were “constantly drowned in the depth of the water, and burned in heat of fire.” Describing how the nation had sunk into a spiral of a dark abyss of despair, the CPC narration spoke about *duo zai duo nan*, which translates as “being plagued with manifold disasters,” and *qian chuang bai kong*, “thousands of ulcers and hundreds of

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Japanese. This parallel version of the Nationalist narrative was just as powerfully bifurcated into good and evil; it employed the image of hell on earth and even evoked the language of class struggle: “The North-Western Part of Shangxi Province Has been Transformed into Hell: People were Moaning under the Class Struggle.” There was even a sensational news report that these “communist bandits” in Shangxi province had forced their Nationalist POWs to eat the bodies of their fellow prisoners (*Central Daily*, page 4, Dec 21, 1947). The displacing effect of such a construction seems clear. The construction of trauma drama depends on weighting evil; the perpetrator must be constructed as such having committed a unique and unparalleled crime that it becomes engorged with evil, a sacred monster set apart from everything human. This cannot happen if a traumatic event is relativized by placing it side-by-side with another, committed by an entirely different party, but which is constructed in very similar terms. When one asks, which protagonist is truly evil, the one who tortures, kills, and commits cannibalism against individuals or small groups, or the one who commits mass massacre, the answer is not so clear.

<sup>35</sup> M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

holes,” which describes the traumatic effects in a metaphorically wrenching physical way.

*Memorializing the Revolution:  
Communism as the Trauma Drama's Resolution*

From definitions of trauma – the reconstruction of injury, victims, and perpetrators – visions of ameliorating and transcending action arise. In 1949, the triumphant new national anthem proclaimed that “from each one” of China’s earlier traumas “the urgent call for action comes forth.” By asserting the dreadfulness of its enemies and the awfulness of its wounds, the Party could highlight the heroic sacrifices it endured and the Herculean feats it had achieved, strengthening its savior status among the Chinese people. It was the Party and Chairman Mao who had come to the rescue of the dying nation and salvaged the masses from their miserable fate. The days of the “old society” were tragic and dark. The revolution brought light into this gloomy China sky. As one of the most widely circulating songs of that era proclaimed, “the East is red and the sun has risen; there came a Mao Tse-tung from China who is the great savior of the people.”

After the revolution, the trauma stories of these tragic but eventually triumphant struggles were disseminated via the media of mass communication, in newspapers, magazines, radio, movies, plays, and novels, all of which promoted the vicarious experience of suffering and symbolic identification with the victims. Memorial day rituals and museums allowed these sentiments of trauma to be crystallized in more concrete, long-lasting ways. The most frequently visited and conspicuous was the sculpture standing in the center of *Tian'an men* Square, which was inscribed in this way: “Long live the people’s heroes who have died in the various struggles since 1840 for the cause of resisting enemies inside and outside China and the independence of the nation and the freedom and happiness of the people!” Memorial museums were erected to preserve and display the torture chambers and prisons where traumas had taken place. They became popular sites of pilgrimage. One of the most widely known, in Sichuan province, came to be regarded as a sacred shrine which every party member felt compelled to visit.

*Hong Ri*, the “Red Sun,” was one of the most famous of the “revolutionary novels” to appear in the 1950s. Widely read and beloved by young people of that time, it remains even today required reading for millions. The story is about the civil war, and is based, with one small alteration, on a true story. Its major antagonist is Zhang Lingfu, a general in the Nationalist “reactionary army,” an archetypically evil figure who is depicted as cruel, rash, and stupid, and has stubbornly persisting on the road to self-destruction in the fight against his own people. The Nationalist army was predictably defeated, and Zhang Linfu was killed in battle with the heroic protagonist of the People’s Liberation Army.

The evil figure of Shang was so vividly delineated that he became one of the most widely known historical figures for generations of Chinese after 1949. Recently, however, there has circulated a “rumor” on the Chinese internet that this polluted historical figure, Zhang Lingfu, actually was a great hero in the anti-Japanese war, who had led the Nationalist army in some of its toughest victories against Japan’s invading army. It seems likely that this rumor will turn out to be historical fact. Even if it does not, it serves to illustrate the distance between cultural representations of trauma and their

“history.” In terms of cultural logic, if not in historical fact, it is possible for brave soldiers who fought against the perpetrators of the Rape of Nanking to become known by the victims of this atrocity as perpetrators themselves. It is no wonder that a memorial museum for the massacre at Nanking was not built until 1985, and that this dark day of human history has remained relatively unmarked up to the present day.

*After Communism:*

*Writing “Nanking” into China’s Trauma Drama*

This does not mean, however, that CPC representations vis-à-vis the Nanking Massacre have not changed. As we have mentioned briefly earlier in this paper, in 1982 there was a sudden eruption of articles about the Massacre in *People’s Daily*, and articles and reports concerning the incident have increasingly appeared. They have reported on such activities as the building of the 1985 memorial, the publication in 1987 of an historical book on the Massacre, and on subsequent conferences and discussion panels about its history.

These articles have continued to operate within the binary Japanese people/Japanese elite. The former putatively share the innocent and righteous status of victims of the war with the Chinese people, while the latter are constructed as remnants who have somehow inherited the prewar imperialist ideology and who are responsible for all its evil-doings. According to this binary logic, for every article accusing the Japanese government of irresponsible behavior there must be a counteracting article demonstrating how the ordinary Japanese people have shown sincere repentance and are now the true friends of Chinese people. Such symbolic opposition between the majority “people,” who must be sacred according to communist ideology, and the minority “rulers,” who remain the source of all evils, continues one strand of the cultural logic that has regulated the representation of the Massacre ever since 1937, and reminds us that in China such mass mediate representations continue to be controlled by the party state.

Yet, while the construction of this new attention remains entwined with earlier frames, the return to “Nanking” marks a response to deeper concerns about collective identity.<sup>36</sup> The debacle of Cultural Revolution, the death of Mao, the repudiation of revolutionary activism, and the clear, if resigned, acceptance of capitalist relations in production – these intertwined events have severely, if gradually, eroded the Chinese nation’s cultural foundations. The response has been the current, highly fraught process of negotiating and constructing a new collective Chinese identity. It was at such an intersection of history that the Massacre began to appeal. The old narrative of collective trauma has gradually lost its persuasiveness. Perhaps the story of the Massacre harbors the potential for constructing a new traumatic history for the Chinese nation, whereby a post-communist, more nationalist collective identity might come into being?

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<sup>36</sup> This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the fact that, besides the media coverage, there has also been growing internet space dedicated to the Massacre and its memorization. Such websites as [www.nj1937.org](http://www.nj1937.org), [www.njmassacre.org](http://www.njmassacre.org), [www.china918.org](http://www.china918.org), [www.china918.net](http://www.china918.net), though not singularly devoted to the Massacre, all specialize in the Anti-Japanese War. Many are radically nationalistic and they seem to represent a spontaneous collective attempt to build a new sacred national identity that is negatively rooted in the profaned memory of the war.

## Appendix I

### The Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo Exhibition Hall 10: The “China Incident”

The Tokyo Shinto Memorial Shrine is dedicated to the souls of the Japanese who have died in national wars. In the 1980s, a private veterans’ association funded an ambitious reconstruction project there. The result is an elaborate multiroom museum that narrates Japan’s foreign policy from a conservative perspective thoroughly justifying Japan’s military campaigns from the Meiji Restoration onward, campaigns against Russia, Korea, China, Europe and the United States. In the Exhibition Hall 10, entitled, the “China Incident,” half the display is devoted to chronological description of the “China Incident 1937-1938.” This display includes seven different illustrative panels, each of which is accompanied by both Japanese and English descriptions. The fourth of these seven concerns the Nanking “Incident.” It is preceded by panels concerning the “China Incident” and the “Nanking Operation.” The narrative depicts the Chinese as the aggressors, and Japan as reluctantly responding on the basis of self-defense. The Japanese invaders of Nanking are constructed as civil and concerned with limiting violence. Rather than innocent victims of mass murder, the dead are constructed as “heavy casualties” that resulted from a two-sided military contest, in which Chinese soldiers were vulnerable because their generals had either deserted or surrendered, even while ordering them to fight to the death. According to the narrative denouement, “the Chinese were soundly defeated” and “inside the city, the residents were once again able to live their lives in peace.”

Below is a transcription of the relevant displays. We are grateful to Ms. Haruna Yamakawa, an undergraduate student at Sophia University, for fact-checking this account and providing us with these transcriptions. (See also : <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp>.)

#### China Incident

Sino-Japanese relations improved with the conclusion of the Tangau Agreement in 1933, but worsened again when Chinese Terrorist acts followed the CPC (Chinese Communist Party) Declaration of August 1935. The Xian Incident (December 1936) convinced Chiang to join the communists in a united front against Japan, and hostilities escalated thereafter. In extending the hostilities to Shanghai and Nanking, Chiang hoped to sap the strength of Japanese troops by turning all of China into a battlefield. Chiang fought fiercely for eight years, until the end of World War II, when he joined the ranks of the victors.

#### 南京攻略作戦

中国の戦争意思を挫折させる目的で首都南京を包囲攻略した作戦。日本軍の開城勧告を拒否した防衛司令官唐生智が部隊に固守を命じて自らは逃走したため、

戦闘が始まると指揮官を失った将兵は潰走または投降して壊滅。南京城は 12 月 13 日に陥落した。

### **Nanking Operation**

The purpose of the Nanking Operation was to surround the capitol, thus discouraging the Chinese from waging war against the Japanese. Tang Shengzhi, Commander-in-Chief of the Nanking Defense Corps, ignored the Japanese warning to open the gates of the city. He ordered his troops to defend Nanking to the death and then escaped. Therefore, when the leaderless Chinese troops either deserted or surrendered. Nanking fell on December 13.

### 南京事件

昭和 12 年 12 月、南京を包囲した松井司令官は、隷下部隊に外国権益や難民区を朱書した要図を配布して「厳正な軍規、不法行為の絶無」を示達した。敗れた中国軍将兵は退路の下関に殺到して懺滅された。市内では私服に着替えて便衣服となった敗残兵の摘発が行われたが、南京城市内では、一般市民の生活に平和がよみがえった。

### **Nanking Incident**

After the Japanese surrounded Nanking in December 1937, General Matsui Iwane distributed maps to his men with foreign settlements and the safety zone marked in red ink. Matsui told them that they were to observe military rules to the letter and that anyone committing unlawful acts would be severely punished. He also warned Chinese troops to surrender, but commander-in-chief Tang Shengzhi ignored the warning. Instead, he ordered his men to defend Nanking to the death, and abandoned them. The Chinese were soundly defeated, suffering heavy casualties. Inside the city, residents were once again able to live their lives in peace.

### 支那事変全般作戦図

昭和 12 年 7 月 7 日夜の盧溝橋事件を契機に、昭和 20 年 8 月の終戦まで続いた日本と中国との全面衝突である。日米開戦以降は大東亜戦争に含まれる。盧溝橋事件が北支全域の戦いとなり、8 月に第二次上海事変が勃発すると、蒋介石は総動員を下令して国共合作に踏み切り、日本政府も従来の不拡大方針を放棄した。ここに日中両国の全面戦争が始まり、蒋介石は重慶に移って徹底抗戦を決意し、日本軍は首都南京、さらに徐州、武漢や南支一帯を攻略した。しかし、双方共に宣戦布告はせず、日本は「支那事変」と称した。