

= Death toll of the Nanking Massacre =

The total death toll of the Nanking Massacre is a highly contentious subject in Chinese and Japanese historiography . Following the outbreak of the Second Sino - Japanese War , the Japanese Imperial Army marched from Shanghai to the Chinese capital city of Nanking , and though a large number of Chinese POWs and civilians were slaughtered by the Japanese following their entrance into Nanking on December 13 , 1937 , the precise number remains unknown . Since the late 1960s when the first academic works on the Nanking Massacre were produced , estimating the approximate death toll of the massacre has been a major topic of scholarly debate .

A wide range of numbers have been proposed by historians but , in addition to differing interpretations of the evidence , there have been persistent difficulties in defining the scope of the massacre and determining who among the dead to include as " massacre victims " . Scholars who believe that the massacre took place over a larger geographic range and a longer period of time , and who define " massacre victim " more broadly , have generally produced larger estimates for the death toll . For example , the historian Ikuhiko Hata , who estimates the death toll at 400,000 , has argued that the Nanking Massacre took place only with the city of Nanking between December 13 , 1937 , and early February 1938 and that only civilians and disarmed POWs should be included as " massacre victims " . By contrast , the historian Tokushi Kasahara , who estimates the death toll at nearly 200,000 , has argued that the Nanking Massacre took place in both the city of Nanking and in surrounding rural areas between December 4 , 1937 , and late March 1938 and that some Chinese soldiers killed on the battlefield should be included alongside POWs and civilians as " massacre victims " .

Currently , the most reliable and widely agreed upon figures place the total between the broad range of 400,000 to 200,000 massacre victims in the entire Nanking Special Administrative District , though numbers even smaller or larger than this have been put forward by Japanese revisionists and the government of China respectively .

= = Background = =

In July 1937 war broke out in northern China between China and Japan , and by August the fighting had spread to the city of Shanghai . After capturing Shanghai the Japanese Army decided on December 1 to continue its military campaign to the capital city of the Nationalist government of China , Nanking , which is roughly 300 kilometers west of Shanghai . Although the Japanese succeeded in surrounding Nanking and defeating the Chinese garrison stationed there by December 13 , few of the Chinese soldiers within the city formally surrendered . Instead they threw away their uniforms and weapons and hid among the city 's civilian population . Over the course of its subsequent occupation of Nanking the Japanese Army hunted down the former Chinese soldiers within the city and in a large number of cases summarily executed them . At the same time soldiers of the Japanese Army also committed random acts of murder against civilians , and engaged in rape , arson , and looting . These events are collectively known as the Nanking Massacre .

= = Early estimates = =

The Nanking Massacre was reported internationally within a week of occurring and the first estimate of the full death toll was published on January 24 , 1938 , in the New China Daily . Here Australian journalist Harold Timperley was quoted as stating that 300,000 civilians had been killed . However , Timperley 's source for this number was the French humanitarian Father Jacquinet , who was in Shanghai at the time of the massacre , and it might also have included civilian casualties of the Battle of Shanghai . Timperley included a second estimate in his book published later the same year , Japanese Terror In China , which quoted " a foreign member of the University faculty " as stating that " close to 400,000 unarmed persons were killed within and near the walls of Nanking " . The source of this information was Miner Searle Bates , an American resident in Nanking who had used the burial records of the Red Swastika Society in his calculations .

Between then and the late 1940s these two estimates were commonly cited by reporters and the media . For example , Edgar Snow stated in his 1941 book , The Battle for Asia , that 42 @, @ 000 were massacred in Nanking and 300 @, @ 000 in total between Nanking and Shanghai , figures which were apparently based on these estimates . The 1944 film , The Battle of China , stated that 40 @, @ 000 were killed in the Nanking Massacre .

Another early estimate was that of China 's state @-@ run Central News Agency , which reported in February 1938 that the Japanese had slaughtered 60 @, @ 000 to 70 @, @ 000 POWs in Nanking . The same month a representative of the Nationalist Government of China claimed that the Japanese had killed 20 @, @ 000 civilians during the Nanking Massacre . However , in a 1942 speech Chiang Kai @-@ shek raised that figure to " over 200 @, @ 000 civilians " . In 1938 the Red Army of the Communist Party of China reported the total death toll at 42 @, @ 000 massacred . John Rabe , the German head of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone , estimated that between 50 @, @ 000 and 60 @, @ 000 Chinese were killed in Nanking , though this estimate included both military casualties and massacred civilians .

After the end of the war between China and Japan in 1945 , these estimates were in turn supplanted by the findings of two war crime trials , the International Military Tribunal of the Far East and the Nanking War Crimes Tribunal . In one estimate the Nanking War Crimes Tribunal put the death toll at more than 300 @, @ 000 , though the Tribunal also recorded other estimates including one of 430 @, @ 000 . The International Military Tribunal of the Far East tallied up 155 @, @ 000 victims of the massacre , though in their verdict against General Iwane Matsui this figure was modified somewhat to " upwards of 100 @, @ 000 people " . However , the prosecution at these trials made little effort to verify the accuracy of their death toll estimates and a considerable amount of dubious and now discredited data was accepted by both tribunals .

The first historian to make an academic estimate of the death toll of the Nanking Massacre was Tomio Hora in his 1967 book Kindai Senshi no Nazo (" Riddles of Modern War History ") , who argued in favor of 200 @, @ 000 . Since then the death toll of the massacre has been a major topic of discussion among historians across the world . However , emotional arguments and political interference in the debate have tended to hinder the construction of an academic consensus on the number of people killed in the atrocity .

= = Debate on the scope of the massacre = =

In reference to the greatly divergent ways in which various scholars have delineated the massacre , Askew has affirmed that the debate on the death toll " is meaningless if two completely different definitions are being used " . Noting that different definitions produce vastly different estimates , he believes that even the significant disagreements between the historians Tokushi Kasahara and Ikuhiko Hata would disappear if they had been using the same definitions .

= = = Chinese soldiers and POWs as massacre victims = = =

The first academic accounts of the Nanking Massacre included as massacre victims all Chinese who were killed by the Japanese Army in and around Nanking , including Chinese soldiers who were killed in action . This definition was supported by Hora and other early scholars . In 1986 Ikuhiko Hata became the first historian to call this definition into question . Hata argued that Chinese troops killed on the battlefield were part of the Battle of Nanking rather than Nanking Massacre , and that only civilians and disarmed POWs should be counted as massacre victims .

Since then Kasahara has proposed a definition between these two . He agrees with Hata that Chinese soldiers actively engaged in combat were not massacre victims , but he also includes in his definition of the massacre any Chinese soldiers who were killed on the battlefield but not actively resisting , noting that many confrontations between the Chinese and Japanese Armies were more like one @-@ sided slaughters than battles . For instance , after routing the Chinese in Nanking , Japanese soldiers fired upon and killed a large number of Chinese soldiers who were attempting to escape the battlefield by swimming across the Yangtze River . Many historians including Kasahara

view incidents like these where the Japanese fired upon retreating troops to be atrocities , whereas Hata sees them as extensions of combat and not massacres .

By contrast Yoshiaki Itakura adopted an even stricter standard than Hata , advocating that only Chinese soldiers captured in uniform and then killed be included as massacre victims . He argued that Chinese soldiers who had thrown away their uniforms were legally executed because the laws of war at the time did not apply to them , though this line of reasoning is hotly disputed by other historians . Most Japanese ultranationalists who deny the Nanking Massacre admit that the Japanese Army killed a large number of Chinese POWs , though they consider these to be legal executions , an argument denounced by mainstream historians .

= = = Geographic range and duration = = =

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East stated that the massacre took place in the parts of Nanking captured on December 13 , 1937 , and after and lasted until early February 1938 . Though many still support the IMTFE 's geographic scope for the massacre , in 1984 the journalist Katsuichi Honda became the first individual to voice disapproval of this definition . Honda argued that the Japanese Army 's atrocities had not suddenly started when the Japanese reached the city of Nanking proper on December 13 , but rather were part of a continuous process which started soon after the Japanese Army left Shanghai early in November . Honda believes all those atrocities that were committed on " the road to Nanking " were part of the massacre .

Then in 1997 Kasahara formulated a definition between the two . He reasoned that the Nanking Massacre should include the entire area of what was then known as the " Nanking Special Administrative District " . This district encompassed not only the city of Nanking proper , occupied by the Japanese from December 13 , but also the six rural counties surrounding it , namely Jiangning , Lishui , Jurong , Jiangpu , Luhe , and Gaochun . This definition , though considerably larger than the IMTFE 's , keeps the massacre contained to " Nanking " without including cities on the outskirts of Shanghai like Suzhou and Wuxi which Honda does include . Kasahara believes that including massacre victims from the surrounding rural parts of Nanking adds 30 @, @ 000 victims onto the death toll .

However , the expansion of the definition of the Nanking Massacre to include areas outside of Nanking has not been without controversy . The argument in favor of this made by Katsuichi Honda in 1984 was seen by some scholars involved in the debate on the massacre as a " partial admission of defeat " by Honda . In their view Honda , who had previously put forward the idea that more than 100 @, @ 000 people were murdered in the city of Nanking alone , was failing to prove his argument and therefore sought to extend the boundaries of the massacre until a larger figure for the death toll could be achieved . French historian Jean @- @ Louis Margolin , for instance , has strongly criticized Honda 's argument , noting that " As , in our present knowledge , it is impossible to get convincing figures for such large areas , such methods may be considered as attempts to blur hopelessly the debate . "

Apart from geographical scope , some historians including Kasahara deny that the massacre ended in early February and instead put the end date at March 28 , though such a long time range is disputed by other historians . On the other hand , at least one historian has noted that the atrocity in Nanking could be equated with the entire war waged by Japan on China . By this definition the " Nanking Massacre " can symbolically be said to have lasted from 1931 to 1945 , extended over the whole of China , and included ten million victims .

= = Japanese views = =

In the early 1970s , Japanese historian Hora 's estimate of 200 @, @ 000 massacre victims was challenged for the first time by the journalist Akira Suzuki , who suggested that " several tens of thousands " had been killed . Soon after some revisionists claimed that no massacre had taken place at all . Nanking Massacre studies in Japan eventually became divided into three camps based on their death toll estimates : the " illusion " school of Nanking Massacre deniers , the " great

massacre " school which believes hundreds of thousands were killed , and the " middle @-@ of @-@ the @-@ road " or " centrist " school which puts the number in the tens of thousands .

However , when Shokun ! magazine surveyed members of each " school " for their opinions on the massacre , many of the so @-@ called " centrists " advocated extremely low figures for the total number of victims , including Dokkyo University professor Akira Nakamura , journalist Yoshiko Sakurai , and researcher Toshio Tanabe , who each counted about 10 @,@ 000 massacred , and military historian Takeshi Hara who selected 20 @,@ 000 . In reviewing this survey , Askew concluded that all of its " centrists " were effectively deniers of the atrocity except for Hara . By contrast Bob Wakabayashi sets the bar higher and believes that the estimate of 40 @,@ 000 victims put forward by Ikuhiko Hata is the lowest reasonable estimate of the total death toll and considers numbers below this to be attempts at minimizing the atrocity . Today most Japanese historians of the so @-@ called " great massacre " school have reduced their death toll estimates somewhat and now advocate the figure of " 100 @,@ 000 plus " in contrast with the old consensus of 200 @,@ 000 . According to historians Haruo Tohmatsu and HP Willmott , Japanese scholars generally consider the estimate of roughly 40 @,@ 000 massacre victims to be " the most academically reliable estimate " .

= = Stance of the Chinese government = =

The official stance of the People 's Republic of China is that 300 @,@ 000 or more Chinese were massacred in Nanking . Initially , this figure was generally accepted as including both massacre victims and Chinese soldiers killed in combat , though during the 1980s it came to be interpreted as including only massacre victims .

Today many mainstream historians concur that this estimate is exaggerated . The figure was originally based on the verdict of the Nanking War Crimes Tribunal which added the burial records of 155 @,@ 300 bodies with 72 @,@ 291 destroyed corpses to arrive at a total of 279 @,@ 586 , though there was an apparent adding mistake in this calculation . Furthermore , this estimate includes an accusation that the Japanese Army murdered 57 @,@ 418 Chinese POWs at Mufushan , though the latest research indicates that between 4 @,@ 000 and 20 @,@ 000 were massacred , and it also includes the 112 @,@ 266 corpses allegedly buried by the Chongshantang , though today many historians agree that the Chongshantang 's records were at least exaggerated if not entirely fabricated . Bob Wakabayashi concludes from this that estimates over 200 @,@ 000 are not credible . Ikuhiko Hata considers the number of 300 @,@ 000 to be a " symbolic figure " representative of China 's wartime suffering and not a figure to be taken literally .

Nevertheless , the Chinese government has maintained a hard line on its estimate of 300 @,@ 000 victims . Within China scholars focus on defending the official figures and in the past the government has imposed censorship on historians who have suggested alternative numbers . Joshua A. Fogel , a historian of China at York University , has decried the efforts of many Chinese to exaggerate the death toll of the atrocity and then " silence anyone who disagrees " .

In 2006 , Kaz Ross , a historian with the University of Tasmania , anonymously interviewed a number of university researchers in the city of Nanking to learn their private views on the death toll of the Nanking Massacre . She found that Chinese historians favor estimates between 40 @,@ 000 and 150 @,@ 000 and that they " speculated that reducing the official Chinese estimate of victims would pave the way for greater reconciliation between Japan and China " . However , they feared that speaking out openly " would be detrimental to their careers . " In contrast with the People 's Republic of China , the official history of the Second Sino @-@ Japanese War released by the Republic of China states that the death toll of the massacre was " more than 100 @,@ 000 people " .

= = Western views = =

By the year 2000 very little research had been done by Western scholars concerning the death toll of the Nanking Massacre , and instead most Western sources simply repeated the early death toll

estimates , including those proposed in the 1930s and 1940s by the International Military Tribunal of the Far East , which put the toll at 100 @,@ 000 or more , and by Miner Searle Bates , who said roughly 40 @,@ 000 . In The Cambridge History of China , historian Lloyd Eastman asserted that the death toll was " at least 42 @,@ 000 " , whereas military officer Frank Dorn wrote in his book The Sino @-@ Japanese War , 1937 @-@ 41 that the death toll was " over 200 @,@ 000 civilians "

According to Canadian scholar David Bruce MacDonald , the higher range of estimates of over 100 @,@ 000 victims are more likely to be accurate , whereas by contrast the Irish historian LM Cullen argues that the lower range of estimates , which put the death toll in tens of thousands , " are probably the most credible . "

= = Death toll estimates = =

Currently , the most reliable and widely agreed upon figures place the total death toll of the massacre between the broad range of 40 @,@ 000 to 200 @,@ 000 massacre victims in the entire Nanking Special Administrative District . Some individual estimates by scholars and eyewitnesses are included in the following table .

= = Concerns about victim counts = =

The debate on the death toll has gone on for many decades to the point where some historians have begun to question its usefulness on the grounds that excessive quibbling over the precise death toll has distracted from the study of other more important facets of the massacre . Daqing Yang , a historian at George Washington University , believes that " an obsession with figures reduces an atrocity to abstraction and serves to circumvent a critical examination of the causes of and responsibilities for these appalling atrocities " and Carol Gluck concurs that " The crucial historical question remains the moral one : how could ordinary Japanese have done what they did ? Numerological arguments about the death count and distinctions of comparative atrocities do not address this point . " However , Masahiro Yamamoto printed a rebuttal of Gluck 's statement in his book Nanking : Anatomy of an Atrocity , arguing that " To determine the extent and nature of [Japan 's] responsibility , the ' numerological arguments about the death count and distinctions of comparative atrocities , ' which [Gluck] termed as irrelevant to the moral question , are essential . Only after firmly establishing ' historical particularities ' can one clearly define Japan ? s responsibility . And based on a clear definition of the responsibility there can be an answer to the ' moral ' question . "