Chapter 1

Let the dead be remembered

Interpretation of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial

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The 'Memorial Hall for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders to China' (hereafter referred to as the Nanjing Massacre Memorial or the Memorial) is the first memorial in China commemorating Chinese victims of Japanese atrocities during World War II. Since its construction in 1985, this Memorial, designated by Central Government as a national site for patriotic education, has reportedly received over 10 million visitors (Nanjing Massacre Memorial official website).

The massacre remains large in the memory of Nanjing citizens. A negative event tends to impact people in such a way that it leaves a deep 'scar' in people's memory. This is because, psychologically, 'memory for traumatic and highly emotional negative events tends to be reasonably accurate and better retained over time than is memory for more routine experiences' (Goodman and Paz-Alonso 2006: 234). Yet in Freud's view, strong unpleasant emotions might be actively suppressed and inaccessible to consciousness. In his book *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence*, Andrew Rigby (2001: 1) observed that it would seem obvious that most people want to forget past pain and, therefore, opening up the past may not be the best way of healing. So how difficult is it for a society to discard, or to retain past traumas such as the Nanjing Massacre, even some seventy years after its occurrence?

The Nanjing Massacre is known worldwide, having attracted activists and campaigns in the West following the phenomenal sales of Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanjing: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* in 1997. It is a core historical issue affecting Sino-Japanese relations, reflected in the controversy over Japanese history textbooks (Askew 2002). In reviewing Masahiro Yamamoto's 2000 book *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity,* David P. Barrett (2003) contended that the focal points of dispute regarding this massacre were the number of people killed and the placing of responsibility. Japanese views regarding the scale of the massacre are widely divided. According to historian Hata Ikuhiko of Nihon University, people holding different views on this issue fall into three categories based on political orientation and assessment of the number of Chinese killed: radicals (the 'massacre faction'); conservatives (the 'illusion' faction); and moderates (the 'in-between' faction) (Hata 1998). In his analysis

of controversies about the Nanjing Massacre, Masahiro Yamamoto tags groups of people in the debate as 'extreme traditionalists', 'moderate traditionalists', 'moderate revisionists', 'extreme revisionists' and so forth. His research shows that opinions in Japan about the number of victims vary from 300,000 or more, held by 'extreme traditionalists', to 50, held by 'extreme revisionists' who deny that the Nanjing Massacre ever happened at all (Yamamoto 2000: 254).

The attempt to deny the Nanjing Massacre by the 'illusion faction' caused severe concern in China. This reached a height in 1982 when, following a bill conceived in 1981 to tighten government control over school textbooks, the Japanese Education Ministry screened history textbooks to make sure they played down reference to Japanese aggressive behaviour during the Asia-Pacific War (1934–45) (Yoshida 2000: 84). In response to the textbook controversy, a series of actions were taken on the Chinese side. These included officially protesting against the Japanese Education Ministry's attempt to water down the content about Japanese aggression and wartime atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre, publishing research findings on the massacre, introducing an annual commemorative ceremony on the anniversary of the fall of Nanjing, as well as building the Nanjing Massacre Memorial.

This chapter attempts to identify changes of attitude in China towards this atrocity; the identity of the victims; the objectives of the current interpretation of the massacre; and the internal and external factors contributing to the changes. It begins with a review of the way in which memories of the massacre were treated in China before the 1980s. The construction of the Memorial is examined with regard to the internal and external political environments, and the dispute between China and Japan over the textbook controversy. The interpretation of the massacre at the Memorial is then examined by analysing the rationale of the architecture and the exhibitions, and assessment is made regarding the message being communicated.

Discussions in this chapter relate to the status of the Memorial as at June 2006. The current site was erected in 1985 and renovated in 1995 but the site is being extended from mid-2006 and is due to be re-opened in December 2007, marking the 70th anniversary of the fall of Nanjing to the Japanese invaders. At the time of writing, the renovation project is still underway.

Memories of the Nanjing massacre

In July 1937 the Chinese and Japanese troops opened fire on each other at Lu Gou Qiao (Marco Polo Bridge) near Beijing. This event, known internationally as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, ignited full-scale Japanese aggression in China as well as the all-nation resistance to the aggression, referred to as the Anti-Japanese War, which ended with the Japanese surrender in 1945.

For months after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Japanese military thrust southwards to expand its occupation of China. Having taken control of Shanghai, the Japanese troops began pushing towards Nanjing, the Chinese capital at the

time. The occupation of Shanghai and the invasion of Nanjing encountered fierce resistance from the Chinese army, but the defence of Nanjing was doomed. On 13 December 1937, Nanjing fell to the Japanese. The following six weeks or so witnessed atrocities that were later known as the Nanjing Massacre or the Rape of Nanjing, conducted under the pretext of searching for and executing Chinese soldiers. During this period of time, hundreds of thousands of Chinese, including civilians, were killed. Properties were looted and destroyed, and women were assaulted.

According to the judgement on the war crime of Tani Hisao by the Nanjing Military Tribunal in 1947, 300,000 people were killed in this massacre (Hu 2006: 389).[1] Mass burials began early in 1938 when the worst of the massacre eased. There were about 13 major mass burial sites, mainly scattered on the western side of Nanijing near the Yangtze River, where many bodies were disposed of.

Joshua Fogel (2000) stated that these atrocities have never been accorded the importance or status they warrant in modern history (Fogel 2000: 1–2). Indeed, over the decades, China, Japan and the international community said little about the Nanjing Massacre, a situation referred to by Caroline Rose (2005: 36) as 'collective amnesia'. Until the 1980s, memories of the massacre seemed to be buried with the victims. Public commemoration of the event was rare.

It has to be understood that up to the early 1980s, memories of the Anti-Japanese War in China were shaped by the strategic imperatives and official ideology of the time. Bob T. Wakabayashi (2007: 3–4) listed some contributing factors to the amnesia about the Nanjing Massacre until the 1980s: the Nationalist regime's priority after the war was to eliminate its Communist rivals; the Communist Party, after taking over power in 1949, was preoccupied with consolidating its regime as well as internal and external problems such as the Korean War, famine, the Sino-Soviet split and the traumatic Cultural Revolution. Official propaganda focused on the Chinese people's fight against the Japanese, and their ultimate victory over Japanese aggression. Discussions about the victimisation of China were discouraged. Records show that in the 1960s when a group of Nanjing-based historians conducted research on this massacre, their work could not be published, one of the historians being accused of stirring up national hatred against the Japanese people (Yang 1999).

There were more intrinsic factors contributing to this lack of attention and public commemoration. National pride and the determined self-reliance policy of the Chinese government during the post-1949 era are counted by researchers as key factors influencing the Chinese government's position on the past until the 1980s (Eykholt 2000, Fogel 2000). With the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong announced that China would no longer be subject to insult and humiliation. In the early 1950s, China was engaged in building a new national identity, anxious to shake off the image of the 'sick man of East Asia [*dong ya bing fu*]'. Ideological campaigns during that period aimed to consolidate the legitimacy of the new regime and to raise the confidence of the nation. The focus of history education at the time was on class struggle, promoting a

spirit of nationalism and heroism. This official interpretation of the past was in turn epitomised by numerous memorials to honour revolutionary heroes and martyrs nationwide. The 'Monument to the People's Heroes' in the middle of Tian'anmen Square, for example, was erected in 1958. As the inscription on the structure states, the monument is dedicated to 'those who gave their lives for the cause of Chinese revolution between 1840 and 1949'. In 1961 the first list of national heritage properties was released by the Central Government, and of 180 listed sites 33 were 'revolutionary relics'. In Nanjing, until the 1980s the official commemorative site was the 'Revolutionary Martyrs' Memorial' at Yuhuatai (the Rain Flowers Terrace), listed as national heritage in 1988. It is a cemetery for those who died as heroes for the revolution. In contrast, sites of the Nanjing Massacre were not marked until the 1980s, and not until 2006 were they listed as national heritage (Chinese State Administration for Cultural Heritage official website; Jiangsu Province Administration for Cultural Heritage official website).

During the 1950s and 60s, China was also troubled by border conflicts and saw foreign invasion as imminent. People were told to be prepared for war. While monuments to revolutionary heroes could boost national morale, past tragedies such as the Nanjing Massacre might create fear among the public about war. Memories of the past were therefore filtered so that victories were enlarged and highlighted whereas bloodshed and death were played down.

Policies regarding the past, as Caroline Rose observed, 'are the product of political situations and judgement of the time, and are open to manipulation or bargaining' (Rose 2005: 47). Revolutionary fever gradually cooled in the 1970s and China began to improve relations with the West as well as Japan. International recognition of Beijing as the sole legitimate government of China was a priority. The re-establishment of the Sino-Japanese relationship and the signing of the Sino-Japan Communiqué in September 1972 were significant diplomatic landmarks. While urging Japan to face up to its war crimes in China during the World War II, China chose to renounce its demand on Japan for war reparation.

The Nanjing Massacre, however, remained a bitter chapter in Nanjing's history, inflicting painful and shameful memories among its citizens. During this massacre, civilians, particularly women and children, died helplessly, but afterwards, memories were usually suppressed, partly because people preferred not to dwell on the trauma. When mass graves were located at Jiangdongmen, and bone deposits of victims unearthed during a test excavation, site workers were very distressed and felt reluctant to dig further. They decided to seal up the graves because 'they didn't want to reopen the scar in their memories' (personal communication with Director of Public Works, Jianye District, Nanjing, October 2005). As mentioned above, government manipulation of societal memory also discouraged any obsession with past misery. Officials preferred stories of resistance and fighting to those of bitterness and suffering. Alongside the promotion of national pride and revolutionary heroism, personal tragedy appeared pathetic and insignificant, even embarrassing, especially for the female victims who survived atrocities and sexual abuse.

1980s: memories of pain and shame versus the government's new agenda

Official narratives of the Anti-Japanese War were moderated in the 1980s and became more inclusive and objective. As well as glorious stories of victory, less heroic aspects of the war – including casualties and civilian suffering – were increasingly revealed to the public. Reports and monographs about atrocities by the Japanese troops were released as official documents, literature, arts and mass media. Sites of atrocities were identified and protected, and memorials in honour of victims of Japanese aggression were erected. Apart from the Nanjing Massacre Memorial, a number of other memorials and museums were identified, such as the Memorial Hall of the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese War at Lu Gou Qiao, and the site of the Japanese Germ Warfare Unit 731 in Harbin.

Such a change in attitude could be seen as a response to the political circumstances at home and abroad. Internally, the Chinese government began to allow China's victimisation to be discussed more freely, and encouraged research. The public was urged to learn from the past, particularly from tragedies such as the Nanjing Massacre, and to be aware that 'backwardness invites aggression'. In a sense, national humiliation serves as a catalyst boosting nationalism. In his research paper, William Callahan (2004: 202) noted that self-understanding in China had shifted from communism to nationalism and that Chinese nationalism today is largely based on national insecurity. 'Chinese nationalism is not just about celebrating the glories of Chinese civilization; it also commemorates China's Century of National Humiliation. Humiliation has been an integral part of the construction of Chinese nationalism.' Heroism and victimisation are inseparable antipodes complementing a collective identity. David Lowenthal (1996: 59–74) observes that, while martyrdom unifies a nation, misery forges lasting bonds. Fogel contends that a negative instance links an ethnic group in victimhood and bonds them in a way that cannot be questioned (Fogel 2007). Remembrance of the Nanjing Massacre is parallel to the government's search for a unifying ideology in the post-reform era: patriotic nationalism helping to achieve the government's reform and 'opening up' agenda. With China opening to the world, the Communist Party's ideological dogma was for the first time challenged by the influx of liberalism, individualism and consumerism. The rise of a market economy saw the collapse of the established value system. The government was concerned with the loss of traditional morality, the swelling of egoism and ignorance of Chinese history among the young generation. A patriotic campaign was seen by the top leaders as a valid substitute for the unpopular Maoist practice of class struggle, and seemed more effective in uniting the nation.

Externally, re-opening memories of past atrocities like the Nanjing Massacre signalled China's security concerns, especially its fear of the revival of Japanese militarism, which was deepened by the textbook controversy to be discussed in the following section.

The construction of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial

The remembrance of the Nanjing Massacre in China can be seen as nurtured by a range of factors. Apart from the need for patriotism education, the textbook controversy contributed to embedding the massacre in public memory on a national level, as noted by historian Yoshida Takashi (2006: 113).

In 1972, the Sino-Japanese diplomatic relationship was normalised. China valued highly the new relationship, seeing it as a major diplomatic achievement. Over the following decades, 'close neighbours separated only by a strip of water [*yi yi dai shui de ling bang*]' became a catchphrase connoting not only the geographic but also cultural closeness between the two countries; friendship was the keynote dominating Chinese media reports about Japan. However, Hidenori Ijiri, an East Asia expert, has pointed out that decades after the re-establishment of diplomatic friendship, both China and Japan still feel sensitive regarding their past, bitter confrontations (Ijiri 1996). Memories of the Nanjing Massacre resurfaced after the textbook controversy in 1982, when the Japanese Ministry of Education tried to play down Japanese war conduct when screening school textbooks. The textbook controversy was by no means an isolated episode, as it occurred in the context of the right-wing faction in Japan calling for the revision of the history between 1931 and 1945. It was regarded by Ijiri as the most serious dispute in Sino-Japanese relations in the two decades following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. The textbook controversy and the later Japanese revisionist claim that the Nanjing Massacre was a fabricated story were soon made known to the Chinese populace, provoking street demonstrations and other forms of public protest. Letters were written by survivors of the Nanjing Massacre, families of the victims, as well as university students and staff, to leaders at municipal, provincial and national levels, demanding the establishment of a memorial dedicated to the victims of the Nanjing Massacre. One of the protestors was quoted as saying in his letter to the Nanjing municipal government, that 'the blood drenched history of the Nanjing Massacre should be inscribed on the soil of Nanjing' (Zhu 2005).

The director of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial, on the Memorial's official website, contends that the construction of the Memorial was a response to the urges of both the public and the leadership (Zhu 2005). Indeed, the public voice exerted considerable influence on the building of a commemorative structure for the Nanjing Massacre, but the decision to build the Memorial was made at a much higher level. In 1982 when the textbook controversy was at its peak, Deng Xiaoping, China's supreme leader at the time, suggested that a monument should be erected to emphasise the fact of the Japanese invasion of China. In Deng's words, China 'should erect memorials to engrave the fact of Japanese invasion in response to attempts by Japanese politicians to cover up Japan's war crimes in China' (Zhu 2005).

The Nanjing Massacre left 13 major burial sites in Nanjing, but until the 1980s there was little commemoration in honour of the massacre victims and the burial sites were left unmarked and unattended. No purposeful excavation had been

conducted, although some mass grave pits were opened up accidentally, and bone deposits and other remains of massacre victims were unearthed. Usually the bones and remains were reburied or relocated so that they would not be disturbed again. As time passed, the burial sites faded from public memory. Despite oral and written records, the locations of mass burial pits were hard to track down and many might have been lost.

The Nanjing Massacre Memorial is located at Jiangdongmen in the Western suburb of Nanjing. Records show that it is one of the 13 major massacre and mass burial sites. Jiangdongmen used to be a small town outside the city wall and a fairly remote place. To the east of the town was Jiangdong Creek, with some swamps alongside.[2] During the invasion campaign, a number of massive shell craters were created through Japanese air raids. In the northeast corner of the town was a military jail run by the Nationalist army. It was recorded that on 16 December 1937, large groups of captured Chinese soldiers and civilians, who had been temporarily detained in the jail, were taken out and executed in the open field between the town and the swamps. The bodies of the dead were left unattended for a month or so until they were collected and buried by the Red Swastika Society and other charities in early 1938. Some of the bodies were buried in the shell craters, which served as convenient grave pits (Zhu 2002).

For decades, Jiangdongmen remained a somewhat remote, underdeveloped suburb of Nanjing. With the expansion of the city of Nanjing, Jiangdongmen urbanised rapidly. Compared with other massacre sites, Jiangdongmen was close to the city proper and was the most accessible. As development pushed ahead, it became hard to locate the mass burial graves of the Massacre victims. When the decision was made to build the Memorial, intensive research was organised in order to locate the site. Specialists from the Nanjing Cultural Relics Administration conducted test excavations and a burial pit was soon opened up and bone deposits unearthed. It was confirmed that the conditions of the pit were in accordance with the burial records made in early 1938. The site having been located, a foundation stone for the Memorial Hall was laid on 13 December 1983, to commemorate the fall of Nanjing 46 years before. Construction began in 1984, designated as one of the key projects of the year. The mayor of Nanjing at the time took direct charge of the project and construction progressed quickly. On 15 August 1985, the 40th anniversary of Japanese surrender in World War II, the construction was complete and the site was opened to the public. In 1995, phase two of the project was completed, with more structures and exhibitions added to the original site. These included a cross-shaped sign pole inscribed with the date of the fall of Nanjing (Fig. 1.1), a group sculpture named 'catastrophe in an ancient city', a wall for mourning, an evidence exhibition, and a small cinema. Further additions were made to the site in 2002. These included a gigantic bell named 'Peace' and a pavement engraved with the footprints of some witnesses. In 2003, a bronze panel, mounted on a marble wall, was inscribed with a poem by Wang Jiuxin, entitled 'Wild Snow,' dedicated to victims of the Nanjing Massacre.

Figure 1.1 Sign pole at the entrance of the Memorial bearing the dates during which the Nanjing Massacre occurred. (Source: Qian, F.Q)

Since the opening of the Memorial, further archaeological discoveries have been made. In April 1998, another burial pit was discovered by the site staff. After confirmation that the skeletons belonged to the Massacre victims, the pit was protected and a new exhibition was built *in situ*.

In 1999, a submission by the Memorial's designer, Professor Qi Kang, was forwarded to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a national political advisory body, for the extension of the Memorial. Seven years later, in 2005, ground was broken for the extension project. Among new additions to the site will be a green open area named Peace Park to emphasise the theme of the

memorial. This project attracted a total investment of 493 million Yuan (US$62 million) (Wu 2006a), and will enlarge the original site by three times to cover an area of 7.4 ha (Wu 2006b).

The Nanjing Massacre Memorial: interpretation of the massacre

W. Scott Howard (2003: 50–1) argues that landscapes of memorialisation, while embedded with the memories of the past, have more to do with the present and future than with the past. While enacting the work of mourning, they

> manifest an imaginary world where the tragic past may be transformed into the desired present and/or future…. Memorials, unlike monuments that strive toward historical closure, concern the ongoing struggles of the living who confront losses that have yet to reach points of resolution.

The Nanjing Massacre Memorial was built amidst disputes between China and Japan regarding historical issues. As shown previously, its construction enjoyed strong government endorsement and is regarded as an important vehicle communicating the government's position on these issues. Apparently this building was intended to counteract the right-wing voices in Japan, who claimed that the Nanjing Massacre was an illusion, by presenting and interpreting the atrocities committed by Japanese invaders in Nanjing.

The Chinese idiom, 'The past, if not forgotten, will guide the future [*Qian Shi Bu Wan, Hou Shi Zhi Shi*]', inscribed on marble panels at the Memorial, underlines the objective for constructing the site. The Memorial, like other structures of this kind, was built as a place where the public memory about past tragedy and humiliation is acknowledged and activated. It is meant to be a site where, in Howard's words, 'we may place our sorrow in order to return with renewed strength to the known, imperfect world' (Howard 2003: 47). A memorial of this type is not only concerned with the past, but also with the present and future, and related to vital issues confronting both the governments and the populace of the two countries involved. For these reasons, the interpretation of the Nanjing Massacre involves emotions and compassion and represents what is referred to as 'hot cognition' of the past event (Uzzell 1989: 33–4), rather than being 'cool' and detached.

The Memorial was declared one of 'China's top ten architectural works of the 1980s'. Professor Qi Kang, an eminent architect and architectural educator in China, had been commissioned to create the design. A Nanjing native himself, Qi was exposed to the terror of the war at the age of six. Writing about his design, Qi Kang (Qi 1997: 8) argued that it was, and had to be, infused with compassion:

> Designers often find themselves remote from the historical past. But a designer should put his feeling in his interpretation of the past event ... In order to commemorate the tragic event of Nanjing Massacre and to educate

Figure 1.2 The number of people that China insists were killed during the Nanjing Massacre is engraved on the wall of the Memorial. (Source: Qian, F.Q)

> future generations, we tried to create an atmosphere, ... and to present the historical truth with some kind of metaphor and analogy, also to enact the past with a manmade scene.

The architecture of the Memorial, according to Qi Kang, adopts a classical style. It features a landscape where life and death are placed in contrast, and projects the identities of the victim and the perpetrator. The exterior of the memorial hall, together with its settings and art work, utilises strong symbolism embodying pain and sufferings.

The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall comprises three sets of interpretations: architectural monuments and other artwork including sculptures and reliefs; the display of the bone deposits of the Nanjing Massacre victims coupled with the open burial pit discovered in 1998; and the exhibition of other objects as massacre evidence.

The verdict of 300,000 victims, reached by the Military Tribunal in Nanjing in March 1947 (Hu 2006: 389) and supported by the mainland Chinese scholarly community (Li and Sabella 2002: 35),[3] was inscribed on the stone wall facing visitors soon after they enter the Memorial, together with the word 'victims' in Chinese, Japanese and English (Fig. 1.2). The figure was further highlighted after the 1995 renovation with the addition of a sculpture to the site, whose abstract shape spells out the number 300,000. The inscription of the victim number, according to the designer, was inspired by the top authority of the Nanjing municipal government of the time, who initially suggested that the 300,000 figure be painted over the site in red to symbolise the bloodshed (Liu 2006).

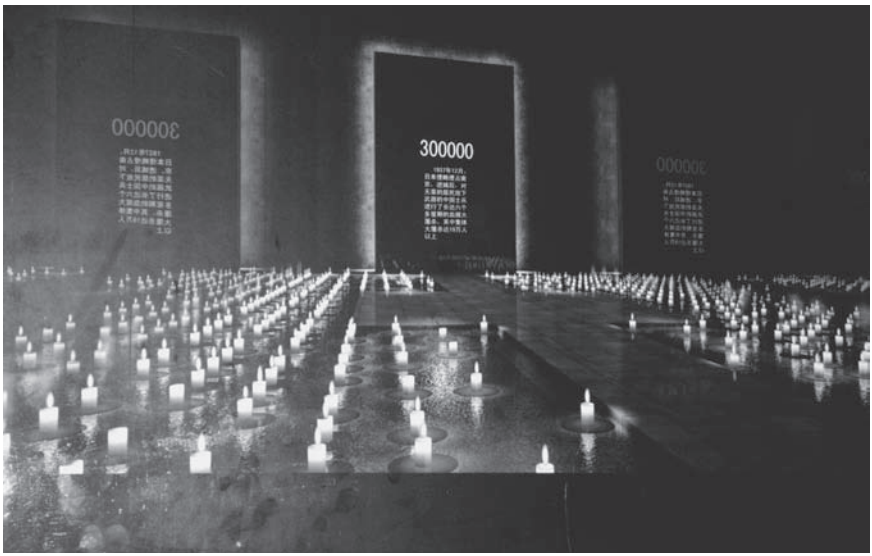

Figure 1.3 Promotional poster impression of the New Memorial Hall interior after the renovation in 2007. (Source: Qian, F.Q)

Special building materials and colour tone were utilised to symbolise the tragic loss of lives during the Massacre. Around the entrance to the exhibition 13 small rocks are purposefully placed, each representing one of the 13 burial sites across Nanjing. At the exhibition hall, a stairway leads to a gravel-covered open field referred to as 'Graveyard Square', which is scattered with a few dead trees. This carefully elaborated landscape has various connotations. According to the architect and the management of the memorial, the gravel-covered square represents barrenness and death, but also symbolises the sandy ground of the actual massacre and burial site at Jiangdongmen. Since the 1995 renovation, more art work has been added to the Memorial. This includes three groups of reliefs depicting scenes of atrocity and mourning. To the left, inside the gate, are marble panels engraved with the names of some of the victims that have been retrieved (obviously a full victim list will never be possible). In 2002, before the 65th anniversary of the fall of Nanjing, a new pavement was laid, which comprised 222 bronze panels engraved with footprints collected from surviving witnesses of the Massacre, each footprint being accompanied with the signature of the survivor.

On one side of 'Graveyard Square' is a small exhibition hall, whose eerie exterior resembles a coffin of Chinese style, which again reminds visitors of death. Scent sticks contributed by visitors burn at the entrance, a Chinese ritual in tribute to the deceased. Inside the hall is the exhibition of victims' bone deposits that were unearthed on the site. Interviews with Nanjing residents, conducted in October 2006, suggest that this exhibition, together with the open mass grave pit at its

side, is regarded by visitors as the most striking scene of the Memorial. Replacing the abstract symbolism of the architecture and art work, here a real place and objects allow the visitors' gaze to lock onto the scene of death.

The main exhibition hall houses objects and artefacts presenting visitors further details of the massacre. This exhibition, called 'Exhibition of Historical Evidence', is arranged under various themes, including atrocities by Japanese troops, the international aid, the Japanese surrender and the trials of war criminals, as well as confessions by former Japanese soldiers. Photos are displayed showing scenes of killing, torture and sex assaults, many of which are gruesome and disturbing. They are accompanied by objects such as a gasoline tank, nails and bayonets used by the Japanese soldiers in the massacre. Under the heading of 'The past, if not forgotten, will guide the future', books, articles and news reports are displayed as evidence of the atrocities.

Confessions by former Japanese soldiers and items expressing regret from Japanese visitors are highly appreciated in China. In the exhibition hall, written confessions and apologies by former Japanese soldiers and visitors are carefully placed for easy viewing. Flowers and artefacts presented by Japanese visitors are displayed at conspicuous spots. Behind the mass grave pit is a stone tablet engraved 'Atonement', presented to the Memorial by an aged Japanese visitor whose identity remains anonymous.

To Nanjing citizens, the best-known Japanese war veteran is probably Shirō Azuma, known as the 'conscience of Japan' (Wu 2007). Azuma served in the Japanese Imperial Army in 1937. In 1987 he published his wartime diary to make public the atrocities committed by Japanese troops in China. He was sued for libel in 1993, and ultimately lost the case. In February 1999, two months after he lost the lawsuit, a special exhibition was launched at the Memorial to show support. Azuma's diary was displayed, together with documents and archives and witness statements related to its publication and the lawsuit. The curator of the Memorial recalled that:

> The special exhibition was attended by Shirō Azuma himself, researchers and officials from both provincial and municipal governments. Visitors contributed their signatures on a banner that read 'Shirō Azuma , you have the support from people of Nanjing'.
>
> (Zhu 2007)

David Lowenthal (1996: 75) contends that atrocities are invoked not only to forge internal unity but also to enlist external sympathy. Given both the internal and external factors that provide the context in which the Memorial was established, it can be argued that it was built on the one hand to urge the nation to learn from history, and on the other to urge Japan to face up to its war conduct so that the tragedy will not be repeated, and to gain moral support from the international community for this stance. However the interpretation of the Memorial is not free from controversy and remains problematic.

Since the 1980s, research on the Nanjing Massacre has flourished. The government's 'opening up' policy, together with rapidly increasing globalisation, has

led to a changed research environment in which major historical issues are being revisited and new findings achieved. In 2005, Sun Zhaiwei published his current research into the Nanjing Massacre. Compared with the conventional position held in past publications of this kind, which attributed the massacre entirely to the brutality of the Japanese troops, Sun's research encompasses a broader scope, investigating a set of complex factors that contributed jointly to the tragedy. These factors included the morality, the logistic faults, the military tradition and the psychology of the Japanese troops on the one hand, and poor coordination among the Chinese defending troops, failure to withdraw the remaining Chinese troops from Nanjing, and the consequent mixing of combatants with civilians on the other. Regarding the number of victims, Sun affirms the 300,000 figure, arguing that the actual number could be even higher if killings in the area of Greater Nanjing were taken into account. Nevertheless, Sun (2005: 274–6) agrees that inconsistency and duplication did exist in the statistics 70 years ago, and that there remains room for further investigation and revision in this matter.

Academic research on the Nanjing Massacre is becoming more rational and independent, with historians agreeing that the focus of the interpretation of the massacre should be on 'making sense of history' (interview with Director of the Research Centre for Nanjing Massacre, Nanjing Normal University, October 2006). In other words, their research is going beyond the question of 'what happened during the massacre?' to enquire 'why did the massacre happen?' However, the Memorial's interpretation of the massacre does not necessarily reflect this shift of research focus, as it remains very much centred on the question of 'what happened during the massacre'. The multi-dimensional enquiry advocated by historians seems missing in the interpretation of the massacre by the Memorial. Striking images are being impacted on the audience at the site. Massacre and torture are presented through item displays and photographs (some obviously too gruesome for a young audience). The poem 'Wild Wind', inscribed on the wall of the site, is very realistic in its depiction of atrocities, including even cannibalism by the Japanese soldiers. It remains emotion-fuelled and is therefore, as noted by Daqing Yang (2000), emotion-stirring. Inspecting the role of public emotion in Sino-Japanese relations, Wan Ming (2006: 156) notices the process of the development of national emotion and is concerned that due to the socialisation of emotions, the current generation of young people in China appears to have become even more emotional about Japan than the previous generation.

The interpretation of the Memorial, together with that of other war museums in China, has caused new international disputes. News reports claim that the conservative Japanese lawmakers launched a campaign in June 2007 urging China to remove photographs and exhibits from museums that they say distort the truth about Japan's war record, claiming that some exhibits and photographs at Chinese war museums are fake. China reacted promptly to this accusation, denying that photographs exhibited at Chinese war memorials have an anti-Japanese bias. On 14 June 2007, *China Daily* reported that at a regular news conference, a

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman contended that the displays reflect what really happened and that Japanese critics should face up to historical facts.

In 2006, the mass burial sites left by the Nanjing Massacre were listed as national heritage by the Chinese government. Since 1996 comments and submissions have been made suggesting the site should bid for the World Heritage listing. These comments and submissions are based on the argument that the atrocity is comparable to the Holocaust and the Hiroshima bombing in terms of the scale of casualty, and that the site in Nanjing deserves a World Heritage status, given that the Genbaku Dome of Hiroshima and Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial have both been inscribed as World Heritage sites. The extension of the Memorial site is therefore speculated by the media as a step towards that end.[4]

Conclusion

In their 1996 book on 'dissonant heritage', Tunbridge and Ashworth noted the experience of atrocity in the building of a group identity. They observed (p. 107) that a political identity, underpinned by a victim-group identity built around an atrocity such as the Holocaust, could be a powerful means to obtain foreign support, to achieve internal coherence, and prevent a recurrence. The phrase engraved on the wall of the Memorial reflects the Chinese stand on the memories of the past atrocity, 'the past, if not forgotten, will guide the future'. By safeguarding memories of the massacre, the Memorial is intended to achieve a number of officially set goals. The first goal is to reach a determination in the nation for self-strengthening. The slogan 'Backwardness invites aggression' is being reinforced through the interpretation and communicated to the public. This helps to achieve a national coherence and to further legitimate the government's 'opening up' agenda. The second goal in commemorating this massacre (as well as other atrocities) aims to reinforce the 'never again' promise from Japan. Thirty years after the Sino-Japanese Communiqué, China still fears a revival of Japanese militarism and remains sceptical about Japan's sincerity about peace. Likewise, Japan remains afraid of the escalation of national emotions against Japan among the Chinese populace. The third goal aims to internationalise the Memorial and memories of the massacre. The proposal for the World Heritage bid, whether it is to be put into action or not, reflects the intention to further internationalise the Nanjing Massacre and its memories, as well as competing for the status of one of the major tragedies in World War II, alongside the Holocaust and atomic bombing.

Joshua Fogel (2007: 273–4) believes that today's younger generation in China choose to focus on China's victimisation at the hands of foreigners. He refers to this generation as the 'Fourth Generation', whose members somehow face a crisis of identity. They 'have championed China's status as a victim', Fogel concludes, 'in order to compensate for the very insecurity produced by their lack of anything substantive on which to build an identity'. This is probably true. It is noteworthy, however, that China's past victimisation is often utilised by the government to project the country's present status as a rising power. In this sense, the new-found

national pride is bolstered by thoughts that the Nanjing Massacre is being internationalised. It is also arguable that the demand for Japan to face up its wartime behaviour and to make a 'never-again' promise, apart from anything, reflects China's confidence that it is equal to any nation in the world.

Distrust and fear between China and Japan have been addressed by Chinese and international researchers whose work aims to identify historical responsibilities, and to establish a framework within which a common, trans-national understanding about the shared past can be achieved (Sun 2005, Yang 1999). In China, research on the Nanjing Massacre is now moving beyond the tragedy into a multi-dimensional enquiry in order to make sense of history. By comparison, the interpretation at the Nanjing Massacre site remains somewhat single-minded, functioning mainly as a vehicle to communicate public emotion and government positions.

The Nanjing Massacre Memorial has the highest profile of its kind in China, and has so far successfully won large government funding. However it has to be noted that not all the sites of this kind are properly protected. In fact, simultaneous with the extension of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial is the erection of commercial high rise buildings adjacent to the site, and their impact on the site and its environs is self-evident. While 13 December becomes a public commemoration day in Nanjing, and commemorative ceremonies are being held each year, both public and official attitudes and approaches towards this heritage of pain and shame are still in a process of change.

Notes

1 This figure was cited in the indictment against Lieutenant General Tani Hisao by the Nanjing Military Tribunal, 10 March 1947.
2 The creek no longer exists. It was filled up in the 1990s.
3 For example, leading researcher Sun Zhaiwei, Jiangsu Academy of Social Science and Vice President for the Nanjing Massacre (see Sun 2005: 177–265).
4 See for example, the Shanghai daily newspapers *Jie Fang Ri Bao (Jiefang Daily)*, 11 March 2004 and *Wen Hui Bao* (*Wenhui Daily*), 11 March 2004.

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