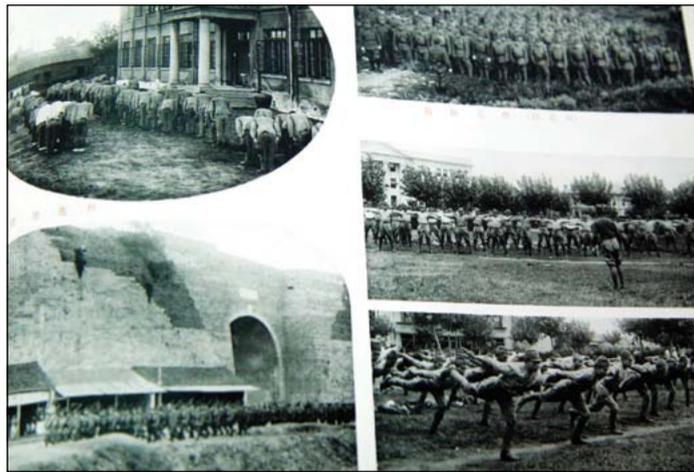




A condom manufactured by a Japanese army facility.



Photos taken by a Japanese soldier in Nanjing in 1937.

Tapes recorded by Iris Chang, author of *The Rape of Nanking*.

Nanjing images seared into memory

Former university technician is curator of a private museum dedicated to the estimated 300,000 killed by Japanese troops

By ZHAO XU
zhaoxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Wu Xianbing was 21 when he was asked to play a video cassette whose contents scarred him to this day.

"I was a technician at Nanjing University and Gao Xingzu, the professor I was assisting, was a member of the history department," the 53-year-old recalled.

Wu sat beside Gao as the black-and-white footage rolled. There were no sound bites or subtitles, but the images spoke — "cried out" in Wu's words — for themselves.

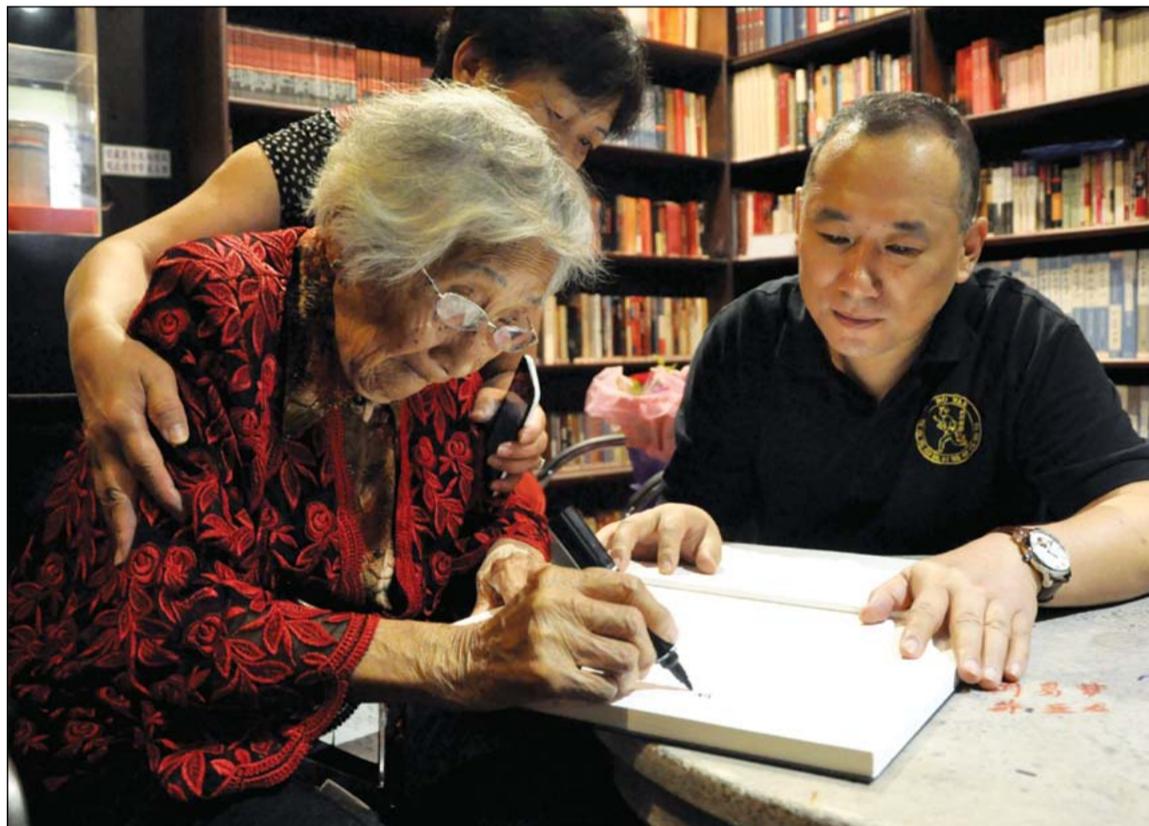
"An old man was holding a small boy, presumably his grandson, and standing amid a sea of human remains. This was quickly replaced by an old woman. She had bound feet and wore a traditional high-collared suit and an indescribable expression. Not far away from her lay a jumbled pile of bodies," Wu said. "I felt like my nostrils were filled with the stench of death. My stomach contracted in spasms."

It took a long time for those feelings to subside. By then, the footage had finished and Gao had left the room.

"Before he left, he told me that this had happened in our city in December 1937. The images had been filmed by a man from the United States named John Magee. It was the Nanjing Massacre. I'd heard about it long ago from my grandfather, but believe me, nothing prepares you for that sort of brutality," he said.

On Dec 13, 1937, after a number of fierce clashes with Chinese troops, members of the Imperial Japanese Army occupied the city of Nanking (now Nanjing, capital of East China's Jiangsu province) during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

For the next six weeks, they went on a killing spree, butchering an estimated 300,000 civilians and unarmed soldiers, while maiming



Wu Xianbing (right) speaks with the widow of a Chinese soldier who died fighting the Japanese in 1941.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From left: Wu's museum is dedicated to the memory of the massacre; Two accounts of the massacre expose the inhuman actions.



and raping countless others. The tragedy was followed by nearly eight years of Japanese occupation, the end of which marked Japan's defeat in China and the wider Asian theater of war.

Today, Wu is the curator of a

memorial museum in Nanjing dedicated to the darkest chapter in the city's contemporary history. It is the only private museum in the country dedicated to the Nanjing Massacre.

"If the shock I felt that winter afternoon represented some sort of

call, it was too faint for me to answer. I waited another 20 years, during which I quit my job at the university, started my own business, opened a factory and began dabbling in collecting," he said.

Then came another winter day, this time in 2005. While conducting his usual treasure hunt in one of Nanjing's open-air antiques markets, Wu's eyes fell on an old photo album.

"While containing no scenes of violence, the grainy black-and-white pictures were somehow familiar," he said.

"There was little of interest in the photos — just rather mundane depictions of army life. But for a discerning pair of eyes, the background spoke for itself. Before December 1937, it was the campus of Southeast

University (in Nanjing), but after that, it housed the camps of the occupying troops," he said.

Today, the album shares a 2,000-square-meter space with more than 1,000 other exhibits in Wu's dimly lit third-floor factory workshop-turned-museum, though there are 5,700 items in the collection in total.

In December 2007, a year after the museum opened, it received its first serious donation: Five tapes recorded by Iris Chang, a Chinese-American writer and author of *The Rape of Nanking*, which sold 500,000 copies in the US in the first few months after publication in 1997.

During July and August 1995, the 27-year-old Chang was in Nanjing, interviewing survivors. The five tapes were recorded during those few weeks.

Chang committed suicide on Nov 9, 2004.

"The tapes contain the writer's interviews with nine survivors, along with what now appear to be the only shots of her at work in Nanjing," Wu said.

The few seconds in which Chang is seen were the result of an accident.

"The camera fell off the tripod in the middle of an interview with Xia Shuqin, who witnessed the horrifying deaths of seven family members — her parents, two grandparents and three sisters — on the morning of Dec 13, 1937. Picking it up from the ground, Chang looked into the lens while trying to make an adjustment," Wu said. "Wearing a checkered, pale-blue, one-piece dress, she said 'Sorry' to the old woman who was sitting behind her."

Xia's family tragedy — all of the women except her grandmother were raped before they were killed — was also recorded by the camera of John Magee (1884-1953), a US missionary who was in Nanjing during the massacre. After World War II, he testified against the Japanese at the Tokyo War Crimes Trials.

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