

Analysis of the Current Translation and Dissemination of the Rape of Nanking: the Forgotten Holocaust of the World War Two - Based on Library Collection, Translator Identity and Reader Acceptance

Peng Ke^{1*}

¹ School of Foreign Languages, Xinjiang University, Urumqi, China

Email Address

1245974383@qq.com (Peng Ke)

*Correspondence: 1245974383@qq.com

Received: 11 February 2024; Accepted: 28 February 2024; Published: 15 March 2024

Abstract:

In this paper, the influence of *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of the World War Two* is evaluated based on three perspectives - world library collection, translator identity and reader acceptance as 16 language versions were translated. By collecting book reviews and reader comments through quantitative and qualitative analysis, it is found that both library holdings and the scope of dissemination in countries from the west are higher than Asia. The process also linked the author, translators and readers as one, making them witnesses, critics, reflectors, and inheritors of the same history memory. To remember *The Rape of Nanking* is to commemorate Iris Chang, sooth human wounds, conceal historical truth, and to build human world peace in the collective memory of mankind via translation.

Keywords:

The Rape of Nanking, Translator Identity, Reader Comment, Iris Chang, Nanjing Massacre

1. Introduction

Iris Chang, a Chinese-American writer, published *The Rape of Nanking - The Forgotten Holocaust of The World War II* (hereinafter: *The Rape of Nanking*) in 1997. It skyrocketed to the top of bestseller list of *The New York Times*, becoming the most favored book of the year. It is a documentary book in three perspectives: the Japanese, the Chinese victims, and the Westerners who stayed in Nanking. The Nanjing Massacre was revealed through her extensive research in historical materials, field investigations in Nanjing with surviving witnesses. George Will, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, said that Iris Chang's book put an end to the "second Nanjing Massacre" [1]. In October 2015, China applied for "The Archives of Nanjing Massacre" to be one of the "Memory of the World Register", making the horrors of

the Nanjing Massacre, a human catastrophe, become consensus and memory of all mankind, not just in China.

In 1998, the book's copyright was introduced in Chinese mainland and the first simplified Chinese version was published by the Oriental Press. Retranslated versions were respectively released by China's Oriental Press and CITIC Press in 2005, 2007 and 2015. Nanjing Massacre, the human catastrophe that took place in East Asia during the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, is definitely part of WWII. Since its publishment, its academical values added as the increasing language carriers, exposure of the world media, and Ms. Chang's travels to seminars and book signings, as well as translation release by world publishers. As Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel warned: forgetting the Holocaust is equivalent to a second massacre. Therefore, to sort out documentary monographs that generated multilingual translation versions about translations and translators in each language is of significant values.

2. World Library Collection

The collection data of the translated versions of *The Rape of Nanking* were sourced from the WorldCat Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) system's universal catalog database. The captured data included below translators, publishers, publication year, and collection size, etc.

Table 1. Library Collection of *The Rape of Nanking* (1997-2023).

Language	Publisher	Year	Country	Library Collection
English	New York, NY: BasicBooks	1997	America	2585
Persian	Unknown	1997	Persia	1
Traditional Chinese	Taipei: TianXia Culture	1997	China	1
Chinese	Beijing: Oriental Press	1998	China	1
Czech	Praha: Ivo Zelezny	1998	Czech	3
German	München: Pendo Verlag	1999	German	1
Italian	Milano : Corbaccio	2000	Italy	22
Chinese	Beijing: Oriental Press	2005	China	16
Finnish	Helsinki: WSOY	2006	Finland	1
Thai	Bangkok : Matichon	2003	Thailand	3
Korean	Seoul: Midas Books.	2006	Korea	2
French	Paris : Payot & Rivages,	2007	France	46
Swedish	Lund: Historiska Media	2007	Sweden	1
Japanese	Tokyo: Doujidaisya; Same Era Press	2007	Japan	6
Chinese	Beijing: Oriental Press	2007	China	21
Danish	Kbh.: Politiken	2008	Denmark	3
Polish	Warszawa: "Wielka Litera"	2013	Poland	2
Estonian	Ilmapress	2014	Republic of Estoni	1
Bengali	Songho Prokashon Books	2014	Bengal	1
Chinese	Beijing: CITIC Press	2015	China	20
Spanish	Madrid: Capitan Swing	2016	Spain	7

First, as show in Table 1 and Figure 1, in terms of translated language and country, *The Rape of Nanking* has been introduced in both Western and Eastern countries since its publication, covering more than 16 languages. Started in China and Persia, translations have been published in Czech, German, Italian, Finnish, Thailand, Korean, French, Swedish, Japanese, Danish, Polish, Estonian, Bengali, Spanish, etc. However,

there are only five Asian language translations, which is less than the 11 Western version. In addition, the French version published by Payot & Rivages in Paris in 2007 has the most holdings with 46 copies in the western countries.

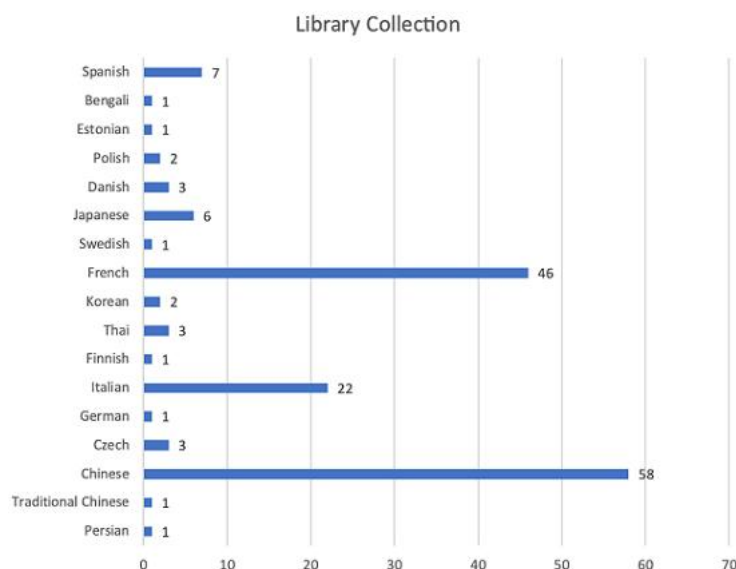


Figure 1. Library Collection of *The Rape of Nanking* (1997-2023).

Second, in terms of the publication year, 2007 saw the publication of multiple versions, including French, Japanese, Chinese, and Swedish, coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre, a significant selling point for world publishers. Thus, the anniversary of major historical events calls upon world publishers' attention and drives activities of translation, reprinting and publishing.

Third, as per the number of library collection, although *The Rape of Nanking* has been translated into 16 languages, the number of translation holdings still lags behind the original English version of 2,585. Reasons involve factors such as media exposure, publishers support, dissemination efforts, and audience reach, etc.

3. Translator Identity

In different language versions, translators have relevant historical, linguistic, and socio-academic backgrounds, e.g. the Czech translator Jiří Gojda, the French translator Laurent Cesari, and the Chinese translator Yang Xiaming.

As show in Table 2, the identity of translators has a significant impact on translation and dissemination. In 2012, the first Chinese researcher, Liu Fang from Nanjing Agricultural University published the first master thesis, titled "A Case study of translation on *The Rape of Nanking* from the perspective of the Polysystem Theory" in 2012 [3]. In 2019, Wang Pu from Beijing Foreign Studies University published his master's thesis titled "From Passionate Writer to Selfless Patriot". and suggested that Iris Chang is repositioned from a neutral humanitarian writer to a passionate fighter and loyal patriot [4]. In 2020, Fu Lina from Shanghai International Studies University chose the 2007 translated version by Yang Xiaming, finding that specific narratives of the original work are restructured, including the cover, illustrations, and annotations [5]. The book's author has gradually moved from the role of a journalist to a historian who uncovers historical truths; similarly, translators' identity also overlaps in different fields: they are not only translators or cultural communicators, but also researchers who stepped into the history.

Table 2. Translator Information (1997-2023).

Translator	Nation	Identity	Published Works
Jiří Gojda	Czech	Linguist, translator, writer, editor of the military press (1953-86), educator	[1996] Dorr, Robert F. - Lake, Jon - Thompson, Warren: <i>Stíhací esa korejské války</i> (Korean War Aces; LF, Plzeň, Mustang) [1999] Weir, Alison: <i>Šest žen Jindřicha VIII.</i> (Six Wives of Henry VIII.; LF, Praha, Melantrich)
Xiaming Yang	China	Professor of the Department of World Economy and Politics, Jiangsu Provincial Administration Institute; Researcher of the Nanjing Massacre History and International Peace Research Institute.	[2005] Compilation of "Research on the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Troops in US Diplomatic Documents" and editor of "Collection of Nanjing Massacre Materials", "Tokyo Trial" [2010] "US Diplomatic Documents"
Laurent Cesari[2]	France	Professor of contemporary history	[2013] <i>Le problème diplomatique de l'Indochine, 1945-1957</i> , Paris, Les Indes savantes, 419 pages, 2013. [1995] <i>L'Indochine en guerres, 1945-1993</i> , Paris, Belin, collection Sup, 1995

4. Reader Acceptance

Analysis on reader acceptance are delved in different groups by both media professionals and the mass readers from Amazon and Goodreads. Book review with the most collection data is a book review entitled *ASIA - Fury over the Rape of Nanking* published in *The economist* in 2000 [6], with a world collection of 4404. The number of articles on "The Rape of Nanking" reached its top from 1997 to 2007.

Yet, in the database of the Shanghai Institute of Science and Technology Information, it is found that the latest foreign journal article on "The Rape of Nanking" was published in 2019 by Shan, T.-H. by the journal *Inter-Asian Cultural Studies*, entitled: "Narrativizing trauma, activating awareness: Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking* and its afterlives" [7]. Writing is waning in terms of book reviews, book abstracts, and academic journal.

As for the number of reader reviews referred in Table 3, until May 16, 2023, there were 3,193 general reader reviews of the original version on Amazon; 3,102 reviews on Goodreads. Most readers are interested in topics such as the Second World War, history, war, and ethnicity. On Goodreads, language type of readers' review includes: English (2974), Spanish (17), Polish (4), Chinese (7), Portuguese (4), German (2), Italian (4), Turkish (1), Estonian (2), Bengali (3), Persian (10), Indonesian (6), Thai (3) Japanese (1), Dutch (1), etc. From the angle of history, reader is not a passive receiver, but rather an active participant who reflects on chronological truth through history while reading.

Table 3. Reader Comments and Ratings List (1997-2023).

Author	Book Name	Year	Publisher	Review	Comments	Ratings
Iris Chang	<i>The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust Of World War II</i>	1997	New York, NY: Basic Books	4.6 (Amazon)	999	3,193
				4.18 (Goodreads)	3,102	36,957

5. Conclusions

The *Rape of Nanking- The Forgotten Holocaust of the WWII* is a book with academic values. It has been translated and disseminated in 16 languages, including German, French, Spanish, Estonian, Czech, and Bengali. The history of Nanjing Massacre has become human's collective memory. However, after a short spring in 1990s, relevant research has almost come to a halt, especially in the west. Over thirty years, both translation and publicity have linked the author, translators, and readers as one. These three identities become witnesses, critics, reflectors, and inheritors of the same segment of human history. Future dissemination of *The Rape of Nanking* still requires joint efforts from the publishing, academic, and translation communities, thus renewing human memory, and tracing human repentance, redemption, and compensation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

Please provide details of all funding sources, please use the following format: "This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors."

References

- [1] Wang, S.C. From 'be Forgotten' to 'be Concerned', then to 'become Human Memory' - Analysis of the Process of Media Dissemination of Nanjing Massacre. *Journal of Fuyang Normal University (Social Science)*, 2016, 3, 148-151.
- [2] Laurent Cesari. [EB/OL]. Available online: <http://crehs.univ-artois.fr/equipe/les-membres-titulaires/laurent-cesari> (accessed on 3 May 2023).
- [3] Liu, F. A Case study of translation on The Rape of Nanking from the perspective of the Polysystem Theory. Nanjing Agricultural University, 2012.
- [4] Wang, P. From A Passionate Writer to A Devoted Patriot: A Repositioned Authot Iris Chang in the Retranslation of the Rape of Nanking. Beijing Foreign Studies University. 2019.
- [5] Fu, L.N. Narrative Representation and Re-framing: A Comparative Case Study on Narrative Framing of The Rape of nanking and Its Chinese Ttranslation. Shanghai International Studies University, 2020.
- [6] Anonymous, ASIA - Fury over the Rape of Nanking, *The Economist*, 2000, 84.
- [7] Shan, T.H. Narrativizing trauma, activating awareness: Iris Chang's The Rape of Nanking and its afterlives. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 2019, 20(4), 610-619.



© 2024 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)