

Mistranslations in Honda Katsuichi's *The Nanjing Massacre*

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This short paper aims at pointing out some mistranslations I discovered in the English version of Honda Katsuichi's *The Nanjing Massacre: A Japanese Journalist Confronts Japan's National Shame*, translated by Karen Sandness and published by M. E. Sharpe in 1999. By its historical nature, the original version in the Japanese language, *Nankin e no michi* 南京への道 (The Road to Nanjing) published by Asahi bunko in 1989, is full of old-fashioned Japanese and military jargon. I sincerely admire the translator for having completed such a difficult task rendering those difficult words and phrases into another language. However, as a native speaker of Japanese, I could not help noticing some discrepancies between the two versions when I read the book in English.

I believe the sentences indicated below should be revised in the event of a reprinting. Admittedly, some of the mistranslations are simply typos and of no consequence in the sense that they have not changed the essence of what Honda wrote, but, even so, they are not what Honda wrote in his book. Please note that the revised translations I have presented here are only an attempt to show what Honda actually wrote. There are probably better translations that would not change the meaning of the original book and would sound more natural to native speakers of English language.

Page 9, Line 15

Original Translation: There may well have been one million troops,

Revised Translation: In fact, there could not have been one million troops,

<Note> In the Japanese version, Honda notes that there is no way that the soldiers amounted to one million as the balloons claimed.

P. 9, L. 35

OT: Either of Hino's heartfelt memoirs,

RT: Either of Hino's heartfelt works,

<Note> I do not think Hino's works could be called memoirs since, as Honda indicates, they were fictional novels even though the stories were based on the writer's true experiences.

P. 16, L. 19

OT: ...from the accompanying vessels landed

RT: ...from the stern landed

P. 23, L. 21

OT: ...123 of 130 houses

RT: ...123 of 140 houses

P. 27, L. 36

OT: ...by China's 1st Route Army

RT: ...by China's 19th Route Army

P. 27, L. 4-5

OT: ...that happened at approximately the same time as the Hangzhou Bay landing.

RT: ...that actually happened before the Hangzhou Bay landing.

P. 27, L. 38

OT: ...Yangtze River, but eventually the situation calmed down and there was a ceasefire agreement.

RT: ...Yangtze River, which eventually turned the battle in Japan's favor and resulted in a ceasefire agreement.

P. 29, L. 9

OT: ...and the 11th Division (Tsūzenji)...

RT: ...and the 11th Division (Zentsūji)...

P. 30, L. 20

OT: Even the eyeballs bulged six or seven centimeters.

RT: Even the eyeballs bulged five or six centimeters.

P. 31, L. 15-17

OT: In short, it was this fighting in the northern outskirts of Shanghai and along the banks of the Yangtze that led up to the Hangzhou Bay landing operation.

RT: This concludes a short sketch of the fighting in the northern outskirts of Shanghai and along the banks of the Yangtze that took place before the Hangzhou Bay landing operation.

<Note> In this chapter, Honda promises to first summarize the battle in the northern outskirts of Shanghai and along the banks of the Yangtze and then to relate what he heard from Chinese survivors. The above sentence in the original Japanese version does not imply what the translation tells us. Rather, the sentence is there to clarify the structure.

P. 33, L. 5

OT: Gu's house was about five miles inland from...

RT: Gu's house was about five kilometers inland from...

P. 39, L. 30

OT: ...the experiences of a military unit during those times...

RT: ...the experiences of this military unit...

<Note> In this context, "Kono toki no" simply means "this." More specifically, "this military unit" refers to the 16th Division.

P. 41, L. 6

OT: [Suzhou, the 20th, Newspaper Union]

RT: [Suzhou, the 20th, Dōmei]

<Note> Just to be consistent with other quotes in the book (the translator uses the actual name of this newswire service, *Dōmei*, elsewhere).

P. 49, L.12

OT: It is thought that there were about 100 Japanese soldiers...

RT: He thought there were about 100 Japanese soldiers...

<Note> Clearly, it was the survivor, Wang Mugen, who gave this account.

P. 50, L. 17

OT: They soon found them, along with the remains of Chinese forced laborers. Wang also returned to the site and heard the villagers' stories.

RT: They soon discovered the bodies and also found out who buried them. Wang went to the site with them and even talked with those Chinese forced laborers.

<Note> According to the Japanese version, those laborers were not dead. In fact, it was they who told Wang what had happened.

P. 51, L. 9

OT: ...and 1 meter deep...

RT: ...and 1.2 meters deep...

P. 50, L. 32-34

OT: These hospitals are now known as the Suzhou Number One Hospital and the Buoxi Clinic.

RT: The hospital was called the Buoxi Clinic. It is the predecessor of today's Suzhou Number One Hospital.

<Note> Honda talks about only one hospital here and Buoxi is the old name.

P 59, L. 15-16

OT: Thus the battle formation took shape in the frosty moonlit fields of Jiangnan near Wuxi.

RT: Then the soldiers steadily laid siege to Wuxi from the fields of Jiangnan in late November.

<Note> Japanese word “Shimotsuki” is a traditional way to say November.

P. 62, L. 4

OT: As I turned to look, Hirao...

RT: As he turned to look, Hirao...

<Note> Ishikawa's *Living Soldiers* is written in the third person. Here, “he” refers to Second Lieutenant Kurata.

P. 71, L. 23

OT: ...shot in the heart and right thigh...

RT: ...shot in the heart and left lung...

P. 75, L. 2

OT: ...more than 20,000 of them for a population of this size.

RT: ...more than 20,000 people lived along the two streets.

P. 75, L. 30

OT: ...returned to Japan with silver rings...
RT: ...returned to the camp with silver rings...

P. 75, L. 36

OT: Sixty-year-old Zhang Xiyuan...
RT: Seventy-year-old Zhang Xiyuan...

P. 77, L. 25

OT: ...near the house of his eleven-year-old cousin...
RT: ...near the house of his seventeen-year-old cousin...

P. 79, L. 1

OT: ...the city of 100,000 people became an outpost...
RT: ...the city of 200,000 people became an outpost...

P. 85, L. 32

OT: ...they were all bayoneted to death.
RT: ...they were all shot to death.

P. 88, L. 32

OT: ...who was the younger sister of Cheng's sixty-year-old father...
RT: ...who was the elder sister of Cheng's sixty-year-old father...

P. 93, L. 12-15

OT: ...we gradually lost many of our military horses.... At the same time, we also rounded up...Chinese men helping us attack Nanjing...
RT: ...they gradually lost many of their military horses.... At the same time, they also rounded up...Chinese men helping them attack Nanjing...
<Note> Again, *Living Soldiers* is written in the third person.

P. 96, L. 6-8

OT: The frontline troops will reach Jiegang Garrison by 8:00 a.m. at the earliest, and they are pushing onward.
RT: The frontline reached Jiegang Garrison at as early as 8:00 a.m. and they are pushing onward.

P. 98, L. 16

OT: ...the men were made to sit down.
RT: ...the men were made to line up.

P. 101, L. 6

OT: ...not very many people came through this village...
RT: ...not very many Japanese soldiers came through this village...

P. 105, L. 32

OT: ...it's some sort of karma that we're talking about this...
RT: ...it's a destined coincidence that we're talking about this...

<Note> I personally do not think *karma* is the right translation for the Japanese word, *innen* 因縁, in this context.

P. 111, L. 40

OT: Zhang said that he undoubtedly was killed in the early evening.

RT: Zhang said that he undoubtedly was killed sooner or later.

P. 111, L. 30

OT: ...on the eighth and set up a battery in the vicinity.

RT: ...on the eighth and captured a battery in the vicinity.

P. 117, L. 36

OT: ...third (age 15), and (not yet 10)...

RT: ...third (age 15), and forth (not yet 10)...

P. 119, L. 34

OT: Testimonies and Reports from a Thousand People.

RT: Testimonies and Reports from a Hundred People.

P120, L. 21

OT: (Mrs. A, formerly in a pacification unit).

RT: (Mrs. K, whose husband was formerly in a pacification unit).

P. 121, L. 6-7

OT: “If you take care of the brat, you’ll be next, and I’ll do it slowly.”

RT: “When I’m done with the brat, you’ll be next. I *will* take my time with you.”

P. 121, L. 21-33

OT: ...from old women on down, they did them all. They’d come from Xiaguan...

RT: ...from old women on down, we did them all. We’d come from Xiaguan...

<Note> This is a rather well-known quote that has been cited by many researchers over and over again. The subject of each sentence in the entire quote should be “we,” because Private T is talking about his own experience as one of the rape perpetrators.

P. 122, L. 1-5

OT: We made them bring out.... When you’re talking about the Japanese military, thievery and rape just come with the territory.

RT: We mad him bring out.... Thievery and rape normally accompanied the Japanese military.

P. 126, L. 16

OT: ...in the newspapers about “the brave warrior from the provinces” and...

RT: ...in the newspapers about the brave warrior from our hometown and...

P. 126, L. 30

OT: ...Sasaki Shōjirō were all that common...

RT: ...Sasaki Kojirō were all that common...

P. 126, Footnote, L. 4

OT: Hori Tomio criticized...

RT: Hora Tomio criticized...

P. 127, L. 17

OT: It was at noon on the eleventh at Zhongshanling, which looks down upon Zijin Mountain.

RT: It was at noon on the eleventh in Zijin Mountain, which looked down upon Zhongshanling.

P. 130, L. 19

OT: Next, I went around behind the next forty or so village officials.

RT: Next, I went around behind a village official who seemed to be around 40 years old.

P. 131, L. 6

OT: ...but I never thought that even a strictly ornamental sword would bend like this.

RT: ...but I never thought that even cutting non-resisting objects would bend the sword like this.

P. 131, L. 14

OT: ...I lopped off the head of the ninth and last man.

RT: ...I lopped off the head of the last man, the ninth.

P. 133, L. 7-10

OT: At that moment, another Japanese came along and stabbed him in the chest, killing him instantly. Then the two soldiers simply left. This is what Chen's mother heard about her husband's death from the young man who had come with the Japanese as a conscript.

RT: Immediately, the Japanese soldier came close to him, pushed him hard and shot him dead in the chest. Then he simply left the scene. This is what Chen's mother heard about her husband's death from the young relative who lived near the work area.

<Note> This is a complete mistranslation. There was only one Japanese soldier and Chen's mother heard the story from the young relative mentioned in the previous page.

P. 139, L. 24

OT: ...Shanghai Expeditionary Force, Eleventh Army)...

RT: ...Shanghai Expeditionary Force, Tenth Army)...

P. 141, L. 38

OT: ...with the cavalry near Zhongshan Road

RT: ...with the cavalry near Zhongshanling

P. 142, L. 18

OT: ...Sakaguchi Ichirō's *Dokuritsu kikanjūtai imad mōshachū nari*...

RT: ...Sakaguchi Ichirō's *Dokuritsu kikanjūtai imada mōshachū nari*...

P. 144, L. 40-42

OT: ...occupied Zhongshan Road, and their shouts of *Banzai*.... Thus after an all-out attack...Zhongshan Gate and Zhongshan Road have fallen...
RT: ...occupied Zhongshanling, and their shouts of *Banzai*.... Thus after an all-out attack...Zhongshan Gate and Zhongshanling have fallen...

P. 144, L. 43

OT: ...Anticipating the dawn of the 13th ...
RT: ...At dawn on the 13th ...

P. 146, L. 2

OT: ...and Fujii units, which broke through into the city of Nanjing...
RT: ...and Fujii units broke through into the city of Nanjing...

P. 146, L. 43

OT: ...he heard later as an adult.
RT: ...he heard later from adults.

P. 153, L. 8

OT: ...house, where her she had left her surviving second daughter.
RT: ...house, where she had left her surviving second daughter.

P. 165, L. 25

OT: ...a female worker about twenty-two or twenty-three years old...
RT: ...a twenty-two-year-old female worker...

P. 165, L. 35

OT: It was 1955 before he returned to Nanjing.
RT: It was 1995 when he returned to Nanjing.

P.169, L. 11

OT: Several days after I finished my inquiries and returned...
RT: Several days after I finished my visit and returned...

P. 169, L. 14

OT: These days, I am sometimes asked whether the Nanjing Massacre was a fabrication...
RT: These days, some people say the Nanjing Massacre was a fabrication, but...

P. 169, L. 27

OT: ...killed the some of the soldiers with blows.
RT: ...killed a soldier with a blow.

P. 179, L. 5

OT: ...decided to dig a trench and bury all the bodies in it.
RT: ...decided to bury all the bodies in the trench dug parallel to the river.
<Note> The burial squad did not dig the trench. According to the Japanese version, it was already there.

P. 180, L. 41-42

OT: ...with two or three comrades. The bodies at Bajiangmen had all...

RT: ...with two or three colleagues. The bodies at Yijiangmen had all...

P. 181, L. 8

OT: (Maeda Yūichi, *Amidst the Flow...*)

RT: (Maeda Yūji, *Amidst the Flow...*)

P. 183, L. 39-43

OT: ...at the man's shoulder. "That's no soldier."

"Still, plain-clothes soldiers are hiding in the streets. Take him away for now."

Privates with bayonets led the man away, and then they reappeared in a noisy throng.

RT: ...at the man's shoulder.

"That's no soldier," I said to him.

"Still, plain-clothes soldiers are hiding in the streets. We have been told to take every man just to make sure."

Again, the soldiers with bayonets piled out of the scene, leading the man away.

P. 186, L. 23

OT: ...celebrating the assault on Nanjing...

RT: ...celebrating the fall of Nanjing...

P. 190, L. 3

OT: ...there was a large moat, and we encircled it with barbed wire and constructed a complete encampment.

RT: ...there was a large moat, and they had encircled it with barbed wire, making a field for a perfect position.

P. 191, L. 43-45

OT: If other writings in this genre are any indication...by the ___ regiment were killed.

RT: Assuming from this context and antecedents...by the ___ regiment were probably killed.

P. 192, L. 2

OT: ...held by General Iwane on the 17th...

RT: ...held by General Matsui on the 17th...

<Note> Iwane is Matsui's given name.

P. 192, L. 17

OT: ...taking eight or more of them...

RT: ...taking ten or more of them...

P. 193, L. 28

OT: ...and stayed up all night as snow fell.

RT: ...and spent the night there to find it was snowing in the morning.

P. 194, L. 15

OT: Ishikawa Tatsuzō, author of *Living Soldiers*, was a part of this division.

RT: The main characters in Ishikawa Tatsuzō's *Living Soldiers* took after the soldiers belonging to this division.

<Note> Ishikawa was not in the Army. He went to Nanjing as a correspondent for a magazine about three weeks after the fall of the city and interviewed soldiers in the 16th Division there.

P. 195, L. 8-18

OT: For the most part, it is our policy not to take prisoners, so we have decided to tidy up. If we capture a group of one thousand, five thousand, or ten thousand, we can't even divest them of their weapons. It's just that they completely lose the will to fight and come after us in big groups, and even though they are safe, once they do make a disturbance, finishing them off is a problem, so I get reinforcements with trucks, and make them responsible for guarding and guidance. On the evening of the 13th, we need the trucks for large-scale operations. Even so, since it is just after our victory, we are quite unable to implement things very quickly. From the beginning, I never imagined that we would have to deal with it in this way, so the staff officers are extremely busy.

RT: To begin with, it is our policy not to take prisoners, so we decided to get them out of the way. But when it became a group of one thousand, five thousand, and finally ten thousand, we couldn't even disarm them all. We were safe simply because they had absolutely no will to fight back and followed us slovenly. But in case they should make a disturbance, it would be a problem. So, I reinforced the unit by bringing in more soldiers in trucks and assigned them to guard and guide the prisoners. On the evening of the 13th, we tried to mobilize the trucks for the operation but couldn't get it done very quickly because it was just after our victorious battle. I never imagined that we would have to deal with this large-scale disposition. The staff officers were extremely busy.

<Note> In his diary here, Nakajima is talking about the prisoners of war they have already captured. Thus, the description should be in the past tense.

P. 195, L. 19

OT: ...what a huge task it is to kill...

RT: ...what a huge task it was to kill...

P. 195, L. 26

OT: ...quite a large trench is needed. So as not to be seen in the act, one plan is to...

RT: ...we needed quite a large trench but were not able to find one. Thus, my plan is to...

P. 195, L. 36

OT: ...nameplate that said "Division Commander." Even so, when I went...

RT: ...nameplate that stated "Division Headquarters." Even so, when I went...

P. 196, L. 5-7

OT: ...and appealing to their commanding officers gets one nowhere. To my surprise, I have found that they act as thieves for the eminent officers.

RT: ...and supervising the privates wouldn't be of much help since, to my surprise, even high-ranking officers are candidly acting as thieves.

P. 196, L. 11

OT: ...designated for the commander...

RT: ...designated for the headquarters...

P. 196, L. 28

OT: ...his sword on them.

RT: ...his sword on them. He also tested my sword as well, which decapitated two heads first-rate.

<Note> It seems that the English version accidentally omitted the second sentence.

P. 198, L. 39-41

OT: Perhaps because it was dark, and perhaps because they were unable to guess how many people there were, the Japanese troops who surrounded Wangfu Lane missed some victims.

RT: Because it was dark, he was unable to tell how many Japanese troops surrounded Wangfu Lane.

<Note> The subject of this sentence is not the Japanese troops. It is Zuo who could not figure out how many Japanese were there because it was dark.

P. 202, L. 19-21

OT: ...the arriving Japanese soldiers appeared to respond to the welcome, but then they appeared to be conducting some sort of investigation.

RT: ...the arriving Japanese soldiers did not respond to the welcome at all. Rather, they took away those flags and stuck them into nearby haystacks and conducted some sort of investigation.

P. 202, L. 22

OT: ...most of whom were from the western end...

RT: ...many of whom were from the western end...

P. 202, L. 29

OT: ...chased them back home, as if this were no more serious than stealing pigs or chickens.

RT: ...chased them back home so that the older people could cooperate with the Japanese soldiers in requisitioning their pigs and chickens.

P. 204, L. 19-20

OT: ...to Qixia, a refuge run by some Americans.

RT: ...to a refuge set up by some Americans in Qixia.

P. 205, L. 16

OT: ...in the small notebook notebook diary...

RT: ...in the small notebook diary...

P. 208, L. 22-25

OT: ...civilian clothes. They were startled, and when they ran in to check upon the situation, they saw that these were prominent officers. And what do you know...

RT: ...civilian clothes. And what do you know...

<Note> There is no equivalent sentence or implied meaning in the Japanese edition.

P. 209, L. 11

OT: ...and buried 318 stragglers.

RT: ...and buried 328 stragglers.

P. 220, L. 6-8

OT: ...Tang Shengzhi, who later collaborated with the Japanese.

RT: ...Tang Shengzhi.

<Note> There is no equivalent explanation in the Japanese edition. Furthermore, Tang Shengzhi did not collaborate with the Japanese. He fled Nanjing before the city was completely occupied by the Japanese troops.

P. 220, L. 24

OT: ...at two or three in the morning.

RT: ...at one or two in the morning.

P. 224, L. 4

OT: Another soldier then sat down...

RT: The soldier then sat down...

<Note> It was the same soldier who ordered Tang to kneel on the ground, not another one.

P. 225, L. 7

OT: ...their shoulders touching.

RT: ...with their arms wrapped around each other's shoulders.

P. 226, L. 25

OT: ...almost in a handstand position.

RT: ...in a position a little bit like standing on his hands.

P. 229, L. 15

OT: ...turned themselves in, although not before Luo had gotten rid of his hand grenade.

RT: ...turned themselves in. Before doing so, Luo got rid of his hand grenade.

P. 229, L. 25-26

OT: ...there was not much water in the river, and although the Yangtze was 100 meters wide, the Sancha was less than half of that.

RT: ...there was not much water in the river, only 30 or 40 meters wide, although the width of the Sancha was about 100 meters.

P. 230, L. 12

OT: ...but they were summarily shot.

RT: ...but they were summarily stabbed to death.

P. 237, L. 16

OT: ...15,000 men, we ended up...

RT: ...15,000 men, they ended up...

<Note> Throughout the English version, the translator uses inconsistent style for newspaper articles. As it is a characteristic of the Japanese language, many sentences in Honda's book do not have a subject. But I personally do not think adding "we" or "I" for any sentence in a news reports constitutes a proper translation.

P. 241, L. 40

OT: ...if they might they be from some international intelligence organization.

RT: ...if they might be from a certain foreign intelligence organization.

<Note> In this context, "Kokusai chōhō kikan" 国際諜報機関 means a foreign intelligence organization that covers the world.

P. 262, L. 18

OT: They held the ceremony marking...

RT: They will hold the ceremony marking...

P. 262, L. 21

OT: ...nearing completion, we anticipate that perfect order will be maintained with the cooperation of the Self-Government Committee's police officers and our military police.

RT: ...nearing completion, perfect order will be maintained with the cooperation of the Self-Government Committee's police officers and the military police...

P. 273, L. 37 – P. 274, L. 1

OT: Another man lay motionless next to him. Some distance away, some Japanese soldiers were building a bonfire.

RT: Some Japanese soldiers were building a bonfire. There was one soldier so close to Cui that he couldn't make a move.

P. 277, L. 5

OT: Since the birth of the restored government....

RT: Since the birth of the Restored Government....

P. 277, L. 14-15

OT: ...direct control, and before long, as more companies go back into operation, the economy will be completely functional.

RT: ...direct control, but soon it will be handed over to a corporation as a part of the Restoring Chinese Economy campaign and the water system will be more functional.

P. 281, L. 4

OT: ...beheaded to set an example.

RT: ...beheaded in a "set-up" killing.

<Note> Here, Honda is referring to a common practice to tie up prisoners of war and decapitate them as if testing Japanese swords by cutting steady objects.

P. 283, L. 41

OT: ...on July 24.

RT: ...on July 23.

P. 284, L. 42 – P. 285, L. 2

OT: Since equal numbers of Chinese and Japanese people died in the war, we can't say that the Japanese were unscathed. In fact, imperialism was completely counterproductive for them.

RT: Even if we killed the same number of Japanese people as Chinese victims now, it wouldn't affect the culprit. Rather, it would be counterproductive.

<Note> In the second sentence, “the culprit” refers to Japanese imperialism.

P. 285, L. 17

OT: ...230,000 civilians and 110,000 military personnel.

RT: ...230,000 civilians and 200,000 military personnel.

P. 285, L. 26

OT: Yoshida Hiroshi estimates that...

RT: Yoshida Yutaka estimates that...

P. 287, L. 4

OT: ...between April 12 and October 5, 1984.

RT: ...between April 13 and October 5, 1984.

P. 292, L. 11

OT: ...*The Nanjing Incident* (Chūō Shinsho, 1986), which expresses fundamental doubts about definitions and the number of victims, and he points out that parts of the materials are unclear, but...

RT: ...*The Nanjing Incident* (Chūō Shinsho, 1986). His definitions of the Massacre and the number of victims are highly questionable, and some people point out that a part of his research material is unclear, but...