

HST 203: U.S. History Sp19 (Escobar)

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Historical Amnesia
by [Joe Escobar](#) - Friday, May 10, 2019, 11:24 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Historical Amnesia topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, which clearly describes the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Historical Amnesia

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Re: Historical Amnesia; Japan's denial of Nanking and what was in the textbook
by [Joe Kiefer](#) - Sunday, May 12, 2019, 9:19 AM

This is going to be an extremely hard post to write. While I have no problem admitting that what happened in Nanking was a terrible and horrific event to Japan’s history, I can understand why the country would have a hard time dealing with the truth of the event. No country wants to admit to a horrifying event such as this. To be able to wrap your head around how something like this could even happen, you first must understand the times you are dealing with and the culture of those times. In the period that we are discussing, Japanese culture was an imperialistic society where the final word was dictated by the Emperor, whatever came down from him was to be done or you would dishonor your entire family. Honor was the entire basis of the culture at this time in Japanese history, no one wanted to dishonor their family. In the “Rape of Nanking,” 2007 documentary, the narrator described the Emperor as a divine power that was to be obeyed and was the final word. As a soldier went on to describe immediately after, first year soldiers had reservations with some of the orders that came down from the top officers, but said “It was an order, we had to kill them. We knew we’d be killed if we weren’t capable of carrying out the order.”2:29 of the “Rape of Nanking 2007” video) In the culture of the time this was seen as dishonoring your family, all of them including your ancestors, and this was instilled into you for your whole life. So, while this seems to be unreal for some of us today to wrap our head around, at this point in time, it was part of the imperialistic empire mindset. No country wants to acknowledge such atrocities as those that occurred in Nanking, but it is necessary for a country to admit and accept the responsibility of its actions in their past and to realize that it is not representative of who they are as a country today. While these atrocities were horrifying, once you understand that they are not indicative of you are as a country today, it will become easier to admit to horrors in your past, just look at some of things other countries had have to deal with from their past, some of those are even worse than what happened here.

When it comes to what was in the textbook, I understand why more wasn’t put in. You must remember that this is a book on American history, not world history. While the book mentions that about 300,000 were killed and that it alarmed Roosevelt (textbook p.855, The Mounting Crisis end of paragraph 1), it was not an event that really shaped

our future or was significant enough to draw us into the war, remember we didn't get into the war until 1941, about four years later. Most people in the country at the time would have thought that while it is horrifying, it wasn't our concern as we had no appetite for war at this time.

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Re: Historical Amnesia; Japan's denial of Nanking and what was in the textbook
by [Dago Franck-Nathan Kouassi](#) - Wednesday, May 15, 2019, 1:06 PM

("Rape of Nanking", 2007 documentary, the narrator described the emperor as a divine power to be obeyed and that was the last word) you raised a point on which I did not pay attention listening to the documentary. in my argument, I argued that Japan must assume the atrocity they have done in China. in any case, these massacres have been carried out and can never be erased from history. For example, nowadays, in 2019, we continue to learn about the "Rape of Nanking" facts that were made in 1937. However, by your words, I have some questions? cannot be justified "the fact that Japan does not want to assume that its facts pass"? because, according to your remarks and the document "Rape of Nanking", the emperor was considered a king, divine supremacy that nobody should disobey. But is this the case today in Japan? Today, in Japan, the people have the right to vote for their ministers from the age of 18. the emperor plays a symbolic role. This means that the power is now to share with a political system. The final decision is not only for the emperor but also for the ministers of state who share power.

I think that to see this way, I understand that the Japanese do not want to assume that the facts of the "Rape of Nanking" can be because they say that the systems before were not the ones they would like to have for their people. And the actions made by the previous generation must be assimilated to the generation of before and not to that of today and the future generation of Japanese. they may be trying to erase old Japan forever from their generation as if, at that very moment, old Japan of 1937 with its system had never existed. I ask myself this question, is not it, the reason why Japan does not want to take the facts?

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Re: Historical Amnesia; Japan's denial of Nanking and what was in the textbook
by [Joe Kiefer](#) - Thursday, May 16, 2019, 1:15 PM

I was not trying to convey the point that I don't think the Japanese shouldn't take responsibility for what the atrocity that they committed in Nanking but addressing why the ordeal happened in the first place. I totally agree that they should take full responsibility for what they perpetrated there in Nanking. But I would remind everyone that sometimes it takes time for a country to come to grips with horrible acts committed in their past. How long did it take for the United States to come to grips with the interment camps we set up during the WWII, about 35 years.(class lecture)? Horrible things in a country's past, in the case of Japan, take time to come to grips with especially when they are as horrible as they were in Nanking. I agree that it will put a big black eye on Japan's past especially as I am sure that this is not the only horrible event in their past, one I can point to is the Bataan Death March.(class video and lecture) I have no doubt that some day they will acknowledge the Nanking incident, more that sometimes it just takes time for people to come to grips with the things that they have done in the past. We may also want to keep in mind that even worse events have happened in history by other countries and those countries have come to grips with the events they have perpetrated. Also, I would say that other countries are never going to let Japan forget about this incident, as you can never hide from your past. Thanks for the conversation, I like having the feedback.

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Nanking Massacres and textbooks
by [Anna McNutt](#) - Sunday, May 12, 2019, 11:25 AM

Whenever I hear "World War Two" my mind often goes to Hitler and the Nazis, as I think others do as well. Germany is highlighted, which I think it should be. However, as we just read, Japan did comparable things yet I had never heard about the Nanking Massacres. It didn't really surprise me to learn that Japanese text books don't go into great detail about the Massacre because I'm sure every country has done this. But it was disappointing to read that one book downplayed it as an "incident." (paragraph 4 of Article 2) Japan probably doesn't want it's people to look down on its past, but instead have pride for their country. I can understand why they brush aside the horrible things

they've done in the past, even though I think its horribly wrong to do that. I can't however, understand why our textbook would brush past it. It's not our pride to protect. Maybe its just easier to put all the blame and the focus on one country, or maybe it's not seen as important to talk about for some reason. It could be that it's just not widely known or discussed. I don't know why Nanking was not talked about in our textbook, but I think it should have been. I think it's important to know all sides of a story. Maybe if it was talked about more Japan would be more willing to take responsibility, and maybe China would have more support on the topic. I'm glad I learned about this now because maybe I never would have. It makes me wonder what else is swept under the rug, maybe even about our own country.

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Will We Eventually Forget?
by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 3:10 PM

This weeks forum is probably my favorite so far, as it touches on subjects that are very immoral, evoking more of a reaction of us students, as well as allowing us to see and read about sides of history that aren't usually very discussed. We also get to learn that different countries are less or more willing to admit atrocities that occurred within their history, and those that tend to suffer from the amnesia of their actions.

I believe that the greatest concern in my opinion regarding historical amnesia, is that this coming generation of people will forget (or lose access to) the actions that their ancestors committed for the better or for worse, potentially leading to dangerous decisions being made by those who are ignorant to history.. Many of these soldiers that are coming out about the raping of Nanking are doing so with the intention of making right where they felt was wrong, "Their testimony was fueled by atonement, compassion, and the need to fight what they saw as Japan's historical amnesia." (Article 1 of Forum 3 materials.) which shows that not even the people that committed these actions necessarily stand behind what they did.

In the modern day that we live in, horrible acts are committed nearly every single day, and I believe that it is the duty of all respective governments to give their people the honest and utmost truth, and it is the right of the people to access any type of information regarding the history of their respective country. I believe that no country has a clean slate in history, and all of them have to own up to the actions that they have committed, rather than trying to hide information and therefore lie to the people. The US just as others have committed our own fair share of frown-able offenses, and we aren't exempt from having to own our actions either, and it is my personal belief that it is the duty of the world to keep the generations to come informed of what has happened in our history. The sugar coating of history for the sake of personal image should not be something that is allowed in my opinion, and I think it does more to hurt your country than to help it in the long run; for example, Germany was shamed after WW2, but to this day we wouldn't walk up to a random German and start spouting about their fault in the war, we all realize their ancestors part as they do, and we move on as a society having learned more and become wiser in the end.

I will touch more on this in a future post, but instances such as, "One textbook refers to the murders as an "incident" rather than a massacre. The books also underplay the use of sex slaves, women brought from all over Asia to service the Japanese military." (Forum 3 Materials, Article #2) doesn't really do anything to help humans as a species, and in fact I believe it sets us farther back by fabricating situations and downplaying atrocities where they were and are committed.

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Re: This importance of remembering our past
by [Maddie Neale](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 6:32 PM

Even in modern day we know fairly well how often people like to leave out facts or avoid the facts in order to uphold the integrity of their statements, articles or beliefs. it becomes even more clear how far people are willing to go just to avoid clear facts in the short videos about the Rape of Nanking.

In the videos we learn that for many decades after the tragic ordeal textbooks were banned from writing about or mentioning the Rape of Nanking. Even now some traditional textbooks still refuse to acknowledge any part of it (Rape of Nanking 14 min video).

The worst part of the "historical amnesia" is that people refuse to acknowledge the historical events for so long that often they get lost and are only found by those specifically seeking them out. We lose imporant historical moments because of the shame that we feel for letting them happen in the first place.

Although I would never ever condone something like the Rape of Nanking, it is part of our history as a human race and to ignore it would be erasing anything that we might have potentially learned and essentially erasing the pain of all the people who suffered during that time.

If we were to try and "erase" the something like Holocaust from our history it would not only be losing a tragic but important part of Germany's past and our past as humans, but also in a way disrespecting everyone who lost their lives during that time.

The fact is although the past can be ugly and cruel. And although sometimes we want to pretend that we never did what we did and we want it to go away, it won't change the fact it happened and to ignore it or discount it is counter-productive. We need to learn from our mistakes as a nation and as humans in order to grow from them.

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Not Forgetting the Past
by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Wednesday, May 15, 2019, 1:19 PM

Hey there Maddie!

The idea that people often times do exactly what you're saying, and leave out the blatant facts of a situation in order to gain confirmation of personal belief or bias is simply elementary to me, and I personally believe (maybe you do, too) that it can get to a dangerous level if left unaccounted for.

"textbooks were banned from writing about or mentioning the Rape of Nanking." And that right there is where I believe that we cross the line into dangerous territory, and we all participate in will-full ignorance for the sake of personal or national image. No country is completely innocent 100%, and it is up to that individual country in my opinion to take responsibility for what actions have been committed.

The idea of history being lost through time is a legitimate concern, and something that as a species we should heavily fear; because as you touch on, those hard earned lessons tend to fade from the limelight for anyone but the people specifically trying to find it. Erasing any aspect of history IS disrespectful towards those that suffered during that time as you said, and shame shouldn't play a factor in what information a race of people has access to.

In the same way that slavery is a dark mark on the US' past, we still admit our mistakes, and make efforts to improve ourselves as all countries should in that situation; and that should go for all countries, just as the Germans (reluctantly, maybe) admit to the holocaust and internalize some of that blame, so too should Japan admit the blood they have spilled throughout history as most others do.

The sins of the father/mother should not get passed down to the son/daughter, they should be given a clean slate to work from, and should not be held accountable for anything their ancestors did. Therefore, it is the duty of that country to give its children access to any information that they may need to become the best people possible, then we will avoid any counter-productivity and be able to grow that much more as the human race.

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Re: Historical Amnesia
by [Dago Franck-Nathan Kouassi](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 9:07 PM

After viewing the Nanking rape videos and reading about a museum of the Japanese war and China's concerns about Japanese textbooks, what do you think are the most serious concerns about "historical amnesia" in this case? a special case of the Second World War? According to me, as my elementary school history teacher could tell me, "the writings remain, but the lyrics are flying", by that, the greatest concern for me will be based on the concerns of the Japanese textbooks. must be written, in the way that it has been lived, not in favor of a single people, or the

image of a nation. My teacher by his citation means without written, the story is lost, the words of the witnesses must be recorded and written, it allows to conceive the History, but if only it is to speak, nothing is written, we will lose the track on the past. I think that The Rape of Nanjing must be told, written in order to maintain the existence of the history between the relations which it had between Japan and China. Even if, this is a bad period that some Chinese or Japanese will like erases of their past, but that remains the beauty of history passes in General. the story reflects the real facts that are happening. But by modifying it, we lose all its values. The modification of Japanese handbooks on the massacre experienced by the Chinese during this period is a big concern related to " Historical Amnesia " we speak here of more soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army murdered Chinese civilians and disarmed fighters who numbered an estimated 40,000 to over 300,000 according to the video (3 minute overview of this wartime atrocity.) That can not just be forgotten in the story.

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Nanking Video Analysis
by [Eli Free](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 9:33 PM

The Rape of Nanking video was shocking, the greatest concern for "historical amnesia" in this case, to me, is the fact that the brutalization was forced upon the Japanese soldiers. They were literally forced to do all of those vile acts of killing or else they themselves would be killed for disobeying orders. As the video covered, these soldiers "closed their eyes before they shot the prisoners," because their acts of violence were so brutal. When it gets to the point that the own empire's soldiers are reluctant to follow the orders given because they are so inhumane, there is most definitely an issue at hand. This isn't even taking into consideration of the rape victims of Nanking. The soldiers' mindset was literally: might as well rape and torture the women since "We're going to kill them anyway." This quote directly portrays the type of mindset the WWII Era Japanese had. And yet, it has such little prominence when looking back at the history of the world. And if not documented by just a mere few photographers, the vile acts may even have gone mostly unnoticed and forgotten over the years.

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Re: Nanking Video Analysis
by [Kaylee Calvert](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 2:35 PM

I see where you're coming from but I'm personally not sure if that is the greatest concern for "historical amnesia" in this case honestly. In the Rape of Nanking documentary, one of the soldiers had said that only a few of the newer soldiers had this issue of having to close their eyes and such before shooting the prisoners but the soldiers that had been in the military for longer periods of time had no issue with being brutal. Although this is a huge concern and an awful thing I'm not sure it fits with historical amnesia. "Historical amnesia" refers more to the consequences that we are facing due to us not remembering this awful event that took place.

I would personally say that the greatest concern for "historical amnesia" in this case is that without being able to properly learn about this event we will not be able to properly learn from it to ensure that it won't ever happen again. The fact that textbooks either do not include this event or warp the information from what actually happened is dangerous and misleads people to believe it was not as big of a deal as it really was.

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Re: Nanking Video Analysis
by [Eli Free](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 5:58 PM

Right, and where I am coming from in this statement is the fact that because of how harsh it is, is why it is being forgotten about. Because of the fact that it is so gruesome and horrific, is why it is being forgotten about. Now, quite obviously, there are extreme cases in history that will be remembered forever (ie. Hitler), my intention with analyzing the video is to bring to light the horrific things that people did during the time and to include quite how far things were taken. Also, not to mention how cruel and ruthless these members of the Japanese military really were. The term "historical amnesia" is definitely relevant to an extent, but I feel as if it's almost so harsh that we deliberately try to ignore it and not shine any type of light on the issues that have been deemed as incredibly inhumane. The video analysis was more so intended to explain the events and portray really how bad they were, as for being forgetful about the events, that is up to each person's discretion.

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Revisionism and talking about all of history, even the uncomfortable bits

by [Aidan McNarie](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 11:21 PM

Reading and watching the sources on the Rape of Nanjing and the controversy surrounding its portrayal reminds me of a book I read a few years ago by the name of *The Souvenir*. The book is about the daughter of an american soldier and her quest to learn more about a japanese flag looted from the body of a japanese soldier by her father and to eventually return it to the family of that soldier. The passage I was reminded of is early on in the book. The author has just attempted to contact a group in japan who she believed, based on the name, could help her in her quest.

"In Japan, the loudest controversy centered on whether or not the government should issue an apology for Japan's brutal actions in asia during World War II. ("As mall dry cough of remorse," is how New York times correspondent Nicholas Kristof termed the government statement that was finally issued.) The newspapers were filled with new accounts of the Korean comfort women forced by the Japanese military to provide sex for Japanese soldiers during the war.

The Japanese War-Bereaved Families Association, I later learned, was one of Japan's most influential nationalist organizations, a potent lobby that was putting its muscle behind the fight to block a war apology in the Japanese Parliament." (Steinman, pp. 73)

This group and groups like it, while minorities, apparently, represent a very vocal minority. The Rape of Nanjing and subjects like it, are uncomfortable to talk about. Couple this with those groups like this one screaming for censorship of these topics; and oftentimes, they are just simply dropped or avoided.

These are nonetheless important topics and need to be discussed. In a way, the only way to truly ensure accountability for crimes like these on a deep, cultural level, is to ensure it retroactively. International laws and treaties only work when the world is united against them. When a power isolates itself like Japan or Germany did, it cuts itself off from these rules as well. It's tough to swallow, but these things happen and will continue to happen, and the best thing we can do to prevent it is to keep talking about it.

We censor history when it comes to this too. When Germany was broken up, it was in our best interests to judge the Nazi officials harshly, so when we look at the deaths (specifically racially-motivated) incurred by the holocaust, they aren't swept under the rug. But when it comes to say, how we treated LGBTQ survivors of those camps (throwing many of them in jail and sweeping their story under the rug), it isn't really given as much coverage. Japan is our ally and our bulwark against China, in a way, and they have been for a while. It makes sense that this topic is treated differently in America. That doesn't mean it's right, though. One duty as students of history we have is to talk about all of it, even the uncomfortable bits.

I'll end with one final quote from *The Souvenir*

"As a young child, I was aware of the visceral horror of the Holocaust. By contrast, the Pacific War was distant and vague. There were no books, no photos that impressed upon me the barbarity of the campaign my father fought in northern Luzon against the Japanese. I saw no documentaries about emaciated American POWs in Burma or Bataan, no images of mass suicides of civilians on Okinawa. True, there was the other "H" -- Hiroshima -- that blasphemy tied to the anxiety hanging over us. But I never made the connection between that tragedy and my father's unmentionable experiences in the war." (Steinman, pp. 13-14)

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Historical Amnesia

by [Levi Savage](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 11:42 PM

Historical amnesia sounds like kind your forgetting who all participated in ww2 or who was the president of the confederate union. Not whether or not your country committed war crimes that make one want to vomit in their seat just by listening to these Japanese soldiers recall it. I knew the war in Asia was bad but this is a downright atrocity that that should be held up there with the Holocaust and what the Nazis did. I can't imagine what those people had to go through and for ultranationalist, today in Japan say it did not happen and rewrite the textbooks to reflect that

or downplay the “incident” as it says in article #2 is to spit in all of those who suffered and say that did not happen and the deaths of all those people did not matter. I can’t imagine someone today going up to a rape survivor and saying it did not happen even there was overwhelming evidence and photos and video to prove it. The only difference between today and ww2 is 75 years and 250,000 bodies and countless others who were raped that number in the tens of thousands. To say that should be forgotten is say the Nazis did not do what they did in the Holocaust. History I feel is the only that keeps us from war sometimes or causes us to go to war because we know what we are capable of doing and it should never be allowed to be forgotten and ever.

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Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Ethan Mcomie](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 11:54 PM

When it comes too historical amnesia there is nothing that demonstrates that more than the Rape of Nanking. Especially as Professor Escobar explained that we are getting more distant from World War II survivors are getting older and die. The survivors testimonys kept the events alive in the eye of history. Seeing as how there wasn't a Nuremburg type of trial of the war crimes that the Japanese committed, it's harder to point to it in history. While all countries commit heinous acts during war sometimes keeping to guidelines for war can keep them accountable for the worst acts. This is why the Chinese who were the victims of this horrible event are trying to keep Japan accountable through the teachings in the text books.

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Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Anna McNutt](#) - Tuesday, May 14, 2019, 6:49 PM

You bring up a really good point by saying: "The survivors testimonys kept the events alive in the eye of history." We can learn about the holocaust from the people who know it best, the survivors who went through all of those horrible things. These stories are documented. With a quick youtube search we can hear from them ourselves. The history of the holocaust has been told (even if some people still deny it.) My point is that without the stories from the survivors themselves we wouldn't know the details that we know today. You're right, they keep the history alive.

Even though I had never heard of the Nanking Massacres until this forum, there are videos about it, people alive to talk about it. These videos will most likely be somewhere on the internet forever. These videos, just like a book, lock in the story and the history. And in todays world any "incident" can be found somewhere online. But what about other killings or horrific crimes that weren't recorded? Things that may have happened and no one is alive to talk about. I said in my initial post that I wonder what else we aren't aware of. I also wonder what history we have lost. Events that haven't been recorded to share throughout the generations. A Massacre that doesn't have a video of the survivors experience, or maybe isn't even recorded at all. Obviously we have a clear example that huge events can be kept very quiet. Could something be kept silent?

Yes, I had never heard about the Nanking Massacres, until now. But what part of history will I **never** learn about?

PS- remember to change your subject line 😊

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Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Maddie Neale](#) - Wednesday, May 15, 2019, 9:52 PM

Hi Ethan,

I appreciate the fact that you brought up how in class it was mentioned that soon there will be no more people who were alive during WWII and events like the Rape of Nanking. I think that does make it even more important that we educate ourselves on the events that we have, in the past, turned a blind eye on things which we would rather forget. The testimonies of these war veterans, although sometimes hard to listen to, are crucial to our history and play a role in how we continue to grow in the future.

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Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Ethan Mcomie](#) - Monday, May 13, 2019, 11:54 PM

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Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Baylee Crowson](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 10:55 PM

Super good point bringing up that most of the survivors from WW2 will be dead, as that means the survivors of this will all be passed away soon too. It's super great that such documentaries were made and that some of the Japanese soldiers owned up to what happened that way we have documentation on what happened. They opened that building to archive the photos taken by a soldier and I think it's crazy that it has to have such high tech security because Japanese people threaten to burn it down. It really just goes to show how far their willing to go to act like it never happened. I think they shoulf DEFINITELY be held accountable for the horrendous actions.

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Re: Telling the Truth in History

by [Jessie Shafer](#) - Wednesday, May 15, 2019, 1:17 PM

War is always a nasty, terrible story in history books. The numerous deaths, and the recollections by soldiers, it always leaves a negative feeling on someone. The video interview with Tamaki Matsuoka (Rape of Nanking 2007), and the soldier that admitted to raping women every day (10:18), his wife eventually comes in to stop the interview because she didn't want to hear it anymore. One of the gravest concerns I have with this form of historical amnesia, is that when everyone has forgotten about the Rape of Nanking, and the atrocities that occurred there, then history will repeat itself. And as it always does repeat itself, it will be at least twice as horrific, because no one remembers that it had already happened.

The details of Nanking were left out of textbooks, because people would be offended, and Japan wants everyone to forget about this war. They are ashamed, as they should be, for the actions their army have committed. But this information should never be left out of textbooks, anywhere. People need to remember what happened, with all of the details, so it is hopefully never repeated again.

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Re: Telling the Truth in History

by [Anna McNutt](#) - Friday, May 17, 2019, 3:57 PM

Its interesting that you said history repeats itself. Like Joe has said, something won't ever happen twice, but there may be similarities. I agree that the Nanking Massacres need to be written in text books! And I get why Japan would be ashamed and try to erase it from their past, which isn't right. I don't think that the event should be included to prevent it from happening again, because there is only so much that can be controlled. I do think that it's important for everyone to understand history though. Events like these help to explain why we have discriminated against certain groups (although it does not excuse this), or who our enemies are. I think it's also important for Japan to take responsibility for their actions to be able to move forward. Luckily the story was told before it could disappear.

Sum of ratings:1(1) 1

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gravest concerns regarding historical amnesia
by [Kaylee Calvert](#) - Wednesday, May 15, 2019, 9:28 PM

I think that the gravest concern regarding “historical amnesia” in this specific case of the Rape of Nanking is that people may not learn their lesson. I think it is important to remember this event and learn about it so that we can learn from our mistakes and make sure something like this does not happen again, things like this need to be taken seriously. This situation in specific shows what can happen without enough supervision and repercussions/consequences for your actions. It shows what happens when rules are not enforced, especially in hectic situations.

Another concern of the “historical amnesia” of this event is the fact that it is causing conflict between Japan and China, even years later after the event. Like it was said in Article #2, “How history is written in textbooks and taught in schools is causing a major rift between two of Asia’s most powerful countries” (Paragraph 1). It is even causing violent protests in China.

Sum of ratings:[1\(1\)](#)

1

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Re: gravest concerns regarding historical amnesia
by [Baylee Crowson](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 10:45 PM

I think that people not truly learning from the past is DEFINITELY a big problem with this historical amnesia. The Japanese very well should acknowledge their wrongdoings and genuinely try to prevent things like that from happening again. Them not even acknowledging what they did kind of also leads me to believe those people don't think it was wrong what they did. Those violating the women and killing the innocent should have been punished and it could of prevented many other attacks.

If I was China, I would have an extremely hard time ever fully forgiving Japan for the terrible things they did, ESPECIALLY since they won't even admit what they did and that it was wrong. Not being allowed into the United Nations as one of the permanent members is just a big slap of karma to the face to Japan for the horrific crimes they committed against China.

Sum of ratings:[1\(1\)](#)

1

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Gravest concerns
by [Sidney Axtell](#) - Thursday, May 16, 2019, 11:17 PM

After watching the videos and reading the articles, it is clear that Japan wishes to avoid bringing up the disgusting events that took place in 1937. Army forces brutally murdered hundreds of thousands of people, including both soldiers and civilians in the Chinese city of Nanking. There are no official numbers for the death toll in the Nanking Massacre, but estimates range from 250,000 and 300,000 Chinese. (Article 2: China Says Japanese Textbooks Distort History)

The truth behind the massacre has been avoided for a long time, as well as exploited for propaganda purposes. While their existing photographs, films, diaries, interviews, and other sources from soldier themselves, that depict the tremendous atrocity committed by the Japanese towards the Chinese, Japan to this day either belittles the “Nanking incident” or denies it altogether. I found it absolutely astonishing that Japanese seemed annoyed that people are still dwelling on the past history. They even had the clip of the possible wife of the soldier who was admitting the horrible actions that him, and the soldiers did to citizens. She claimed that "he couldn't remember", to avoid giving out too much information. (Documentary by Tamaki Matsuoka)

Another gravest concern would be how in the video clips, in Japan, schools don't provide students with an accurate story, or even any at all of the Rape of Nanking, that took place in World War II. This is ridiculous considering it's one of the biggest, and greatest influence within the twentieth century.

Sum of ratings:[2\(1\)](#)

2

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Re: Gravest concerns
by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Friday, May 17, 2019, 1:51 PM

Hey Sidney,

Its crazy how an event like Nanking can still be attempted to be distorted to this day, and how Japan is still pushing the narrative of innocence or possible ignorance at every turn. I almost cant blame the Japanese (if i'm playing devil's advocate) for trying to downplay the events, it is lying to the people, but they are also attempting to avoid anything that could tarnish their patriotism and their peoples loyalty; I guess where i'm going with it is that I can see why the government is doing their best to hide these events, despite it being a despicable act to do so. On the flip side of that situation, i'm with you on how the Japanese find it appalling that we are dwelling on the past, and still trying to sweep it under the rug despite the modern access to technology that we all have; it is fairly obvious that no information that is on the internet will ever truly die out, and that concept definitely frustrates them.

And herein lies the true problem that I have with this whole situation on a personal level, and that is the brainwashing and mental subjugation of the following generation. The pushing of eradicating the information and history of Nanking from the newest generation is what I feel is unacceptable. Similar to how the Nazi's who worked in the death camps may deny the Holocaust until their deathbeds, the Japanese who participated have every right to deny the events until the day that they die (as we all know the real truth) but to spread that denial and misinformation to the following generation of children is where I feel we begin to cross the line, as those kids wont know that horror until they either learn about it in depth, or experience it personally.

Sum of ratings:[2](#) (1)

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Re: Gravest concerns

by [Eli Free](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 7:50 PM

I completely agree with you Zach. I really appreciate the fact that you choose to acknowledge a possible perspective of the Japanese's thoughts on the issue and how it may tarnish their image in today's world. They are most definitely trying to downplay the events of what has happened in their history. As mentioned above, the article speculates hundreds of thousands of Asian casualties from both the Chinese and Japanese, and as the Japanese are responsible for these terrible events, why would they want to teach their people about what they have previously done? They don't want to show the past cruelty of the Japanese government. Which is logical right? We all have those little things that we don't want to flaunt to the world, and in Japan's case, a very rough history that I'm sure they are fine with attempting to sweep under the rug for as long as they can. I just hope that people have learned their lessons and will be a little more humane in future conflicts.

Sum of ratings:[1](#) (1)

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Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Sidney Axtell](#) - Friday, May 17, 2019, 2:01 AM

It's evident that our textbook chose to leave out many details of the Nanking, especially the gruesome parts because, technically it's more along the lines of China and Japan's historical background. I also believe that since the subject of Nanking is such a touchy, and offensive discussion for Japan, the U.S left the most disturbing factors of the Nanking out to not anger anyone. It is evident that when reading the article that addressed the main points that Japan puts in the countries school textbooks, you can tell how the country wants to keep the information about this horrific time out of its citizens knowledge. "One textbook refers to the murders as an "incident" rather than a massacre. The books also underplay the use of sex slaves, women brought from all over Asia to service the Japanese military." (Forum 3 Materials, Article #2) I find this very disturbing. It's like if the United States decided to take out any information about the Holocaust and say that it was merely a "myth". Or if they changed the history on the numerous lynchings in the U.S, and say they weren't nearly as bad as they looked. You can't cover up a country's history to make it seem better!

Sum of ratings:[1](#) (1)

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Re: Historical Amnesia

by [Zach Edmiston](#) - Friday, May 17, 2019, 2:07 PM

Hey again Sidney,

Both of your posts were very informed and make good points, that's why I wanted to respond to both of them in turn.

While yes Nanking is directly related to the history of Japan versus the history of the US, it had no small part to do with the ramping up and the official start of WW2, which is likely why it was mostly skimmed over, and for the most part hardly mentioned at all. As you say, the government is trying very hard to make sure that none of the citizens are informed of the events that happened during that time, and likely are putting indirect political pressure on other countries to "forget" about the time period and the acts.

The more we all discuss and the more posts I read, the more I begin to wonder if our textbooks and our very narrow teaching of Nanking (as a whole, not specifically this class) is a form of appeasement. Like we have discussed in class already, there are many examples of appeasement in the world to this day, and I could see us downplaying those events, and using words that you mentioned like "incident" that simply don't carry the same weight as "massacre" or "slaughter", as well as the downplaying of the use of sex slaves as being a form of appeasement to the Japanese government.

I do agree with your point, you can't change or cover up your countries history to make it seem better, it is up to all of us (including the Japanese) to own the acts that our ancestors committed, and to use that information to make ourselves better people and better countries. When that government attempts to change or cover up that history to the children, I find that abhorrent, and when other nations begin to help in muffling the details, I find that to be the worst form of appeasement.

Sum of ratings:[1 \(1\)](#)

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Acknowledging past actions

by [Owen McCoy](#) - Friday, May 17, 2019, 2:52 PM

Historical amnesia is dangerous. The refusal to acknowledge past atrocities is to forget the victims. It would be like denying the occurrence of the Holocaust. At first, I was very supportive of the Chinese who were protesting the new Japanese textbook, but when the article mentioned that China itself had perpetrated numerous human rights violations, it made me think again. "School books in Beijing leave out significant historical events including the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy demonstrations in which Chinese troops killed thousands of unarmed protestors and the three-year famine between 1958 and 1961 when communist policies led to the starvation of an estimated 30 million Chinese." (Article #2)

I still think that if such atrocities are committed, attempts should be made not to let it slip through the cracks. We saw the Japanese internment during WWII in the U.S. in which "Japanese American evacuees were confined in flimsy barracks, enclosed by barbed wire and under armed guard" (textbook p. 877) and how the federal government later apologized for it and offered financial recompense to the victims (class lecture notes). Such apologies do not necessarily right historical wrongs, but it is a way to make sure that we are learning from our mistakes in the past. Interestingly, according to an article from the *Los Angeles Times* about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, "A 2015 opinion poll by a Russian news agency found that 60% of the Japanese public wanted an apology for the bombing." It then went on to explain why the U.S. was not going to offer an apology and furthermore why the Japanese government didn't want one anyway. One of the reasons for the Japanese officials not wanting an apology was that the Japanese might, in turn, be pressured to apologize for their own war crimes. Still, it is important for mistakes to be acknowledged even if there are consequences because these events are an important part of history that mustn't be forgotten.

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to the starvation of an estimated 30 million Chinese.” (Article #2)

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3

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Voluntary and Involuntary Historical Amnesia

by [Alexander Marx](#) - Friday, May 17, 2019, 10:35 PM

I believe the greatest risk of historical amnesia, either voluntary or involuntary, is the increased probability of similar events being perpetrated again. Without being aware of an atrocity such as the Rape of Nanking, there is a higher chance that soldiers may find themselves in a situation where it is too late to consider the morality of your actions and you either obey or you die. This is reflected by one of the soldiers being interviewed in the video at 2:50, where he states they would be killed if they did not carry out the order to kill the villagers. An example of voluntary historical amnesia is shown in the same video at 12:50, where the presumed wife of an interviewee intervenes, demanding the interviewer stop asking questions and that he “doesn't remember anything.” It is understandable to wish to forget such a dark moment of your history, but I do not believe that should result in the suppression of information and truth, which would then lead to involuntary historical amnesia. I define this as the lack of information being provided for those learning about history, such as in Japanese school textbooks. The downplay of such events can lead to the same thing happening again without knowing it before it is too late.

The NewsHour Extra article we are provided with makes an interesting point on the motivations and hypocrisy behind China's attack on Japan for it's lack of acknowledgment of the Rape of Nanking. As of 2005 when the article was written, with Japan seeking a seat on the U.N. Security Council, China opposes this with the stand that Japan is irresponsible about it's own accountability of past actions and until they can make amends with what they have done, they do not deserve to hold such a position. However, China is infamous for the Tienanmen Square Massacre with the slaughter of it's own people followed by a similar attempt to cover up the terrible event from it's citizens to this day. This is another example of voluntary historical amnesia on a large scale, making it easier for those in power to perpetrate something similar if deemed necessary, as the past events wouldn't be in the minds of it's people.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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The Codes of War

by [Alexander Marx](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 11:26 AM

The idea of moral “guidelines” when it comes to war is an interesting one. For a strict rule regarding combat to come about, it seems it would first have to be witnessed and then deemed inhumane. It would also be necessary for both sides of the conflict to agree on banning certain tactics or treatments of combatants and civilians. Finally, whatever agreements are made would ultimately need to be enforced. I think this last part is the trickiest, needing an outside party to be in charge of keeping those at war in check. There appear to be many examples of these codes of war being broken with little more than a slap on the wrist as retaliation. While the information we've been seeing on Nanking seems to universally imply that Japanese soldiers were committing rape and other humanitarian atrocities, one interviewed soldier in the video states that this was not allowed according to his supervisors (Interview Video 12:25). There were military police in other areas, though they apparently didn't come to Nanking despite knowing that rules were being broken. This “look the other way” approach really detracts from any potential agreements made on the treatment of people during wartime. The Wikipedia entry on the Geneva Conventions and Geneva Protocol also outline some issues regarding enforcement. The Geneva Protocol, which prohibits the use of chemical and biological weapons, has drawn criticism for the various loopholes it doesn't appear to protect against, such as the use of these weapons within a country's own borders as we've recently seen in the Syrian Civil War, as well as the use against parties not in agreement with the treaty. With rules such as these in place, I believe the main factors that will determine the actual codes of war are determination and desperation.

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Re: The Codes of War
by [Maddie Neale](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 1:12 PM

I appreciate the fact that you brought up how the soldiers were raping the women knew it was something they weren’t allowed to do. However the soldiers also went on to say that although there were rules in place, it just wasn’t possible for them to be enforced strictly because of how large a number of men were breaking them regularly. I think that this sort laying down the rules then backing off when someone walks all over them usually comes from of a two things:

- 1) there are such a large number of people consistently breaking the rule that to punish anyone would result in a the need for every person who broke said rule to be punished.
- 2) There is a sort of fear of large retaliation if a punishment does follow the breaking of rules. Or punishing the offender will only make it worse. (Which is what I believe happened with The allies not retaliating when Germany broke the treaty)

The idea of codes in war is a good theory, that we could regulate different sides and make the outcome cleaner and relatively better for both sides, but without enforcement of the rules then we just end up in, one could argue, a worse place then before.

Now whoever you let off the hook, because fear of confrontation or inability to punish everyone, thinks or knows that when you make rules they don’t need to be followed because they believe that once again you won’t enforce them.

Sum of ratings:[1 \(1\)](#)

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Re: The Codes of War
by [Levi Savage](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 11:02 PM

With respect to the Syrian conflict once it came out what the Syrian Regime did the U.S. responded with missile strikes against the air base that apparently launched the bombers that used the chemical weapons. When it comes to a response in modern day times we could see the UN denouncing the attack but we also got the U.S. which kind of acts like a de facto enforcer of these rules launching a missile strike only 3 days later. Compared to what we have seen of the past I believe we have not the forgotten what these weapons can do we try to enforce these rules even if it means military action. Which is good because it means we at least have been moved from a state of complete inaction that we have seen in the past to one where it will not be tolerated.

Sum of ratings:[1 \(1\)](#)

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Our Textbook's Contribution
by [Amanda Francis](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 2:35 PM

Although I think it makes sense for our textbook authors to not go into too much detail about Japan’s treatment of the Chinese in Nanjing, “Japan’s brutal occupation of Nanjing-where perhaps 300,000 Chinese civilians were killed-alarmed Roosevelt” seems like unfair brush over of a significant historical event (textbook p.855). Considering the fact that our textbook’s focus is on “A History of the American People”, it’s understandable why they would choose not to go into too much detail about Nanjing. Similarly, our textbook doesn’t give too much detail about the Holocaust since neither event directly involved the United States. The quote, “Japan's brutal occupation of China from 1931 to 1945, including the 1937-38 Nanking massacre -- sometimes referred to as the Rape of Nanking -- that resulted in the deaths of between 250,000 and 300,000 Chinese. Many civilians were hacked to death, and thousands of women were raped”, from *China Says Japanese Textbooks Distort History* is two sentences that portray much more of the brutality that happened in Nanjing. Our textbook authors could have elaborated on the violent event that wouldn’t have filled a whole paragraph. In this way, I think our textbook is contributing to “historical amnesia”

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Re: Our Textbook's Contribution
by [Dago Franck-Nathan Kouassi](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 4:22 PM

Considering the fact that your textbook focuses on "A History of the American People",

I understand your reasoning, but I do not quite agree, because I think that nowadays, some books or historians want us to understand, or learn from them what is important. For example in chapter 23 book "war and Society", if I remember well, after the victory of the US and its allies, the book was praising American soldiers of them, for their victory and their allies, but had never mentioned the crucial participation of the "Negro" African American black who fight on the side of France and to prevent the invasion of the city of Paris. These blacks were American. France, government praise them and recognize their participation. But the book had never really mentioned their efforts or talked about their accomplishments. I think that nowadays, books are manipulated to do so that people are focusing on what for the authors or system, which is important to them. And that is a pity for History because we are losing the true value of History.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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why was Nanking missing from our textbooks
by [Kaylee Calvert](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 2:54 PM

Personally, I think that the Rape of Nanking was missing from our textbooks because since it was such a horrific act, I think that they would just rather everyone forget about it. Although forgetting about this event and not learning about it could be potentially dangerous for a number of reasons I think that Japan does not want to continue to be blamed for the things the Japanese soldiers did years and years ago. I think they might be ashamed of what had happened in Nanking. We even learned in class that some of the elders in Japan will completely disregard the Rape of Nanking and argue that it did not even happen at all. Again, as I said, I think it is out of shame for what happened. Although it was an awful act I do not think people should feel ashamed nowadays to talk about it and I do not think it is okay to hold it against the Japanese people since they played no part in it. I think it is incredibly important to talk about it and spread awareness.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: why was Nanking missing from our textbooks
by [Anna McNutt](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 8:30 PM

I would think that since it's not this generations mistakes, Japan would be more willing to talk about the Nanking Massacre, however it is not the case. I do however think they should take responsibility and in a way it should be held against them. If they were willing to take responsibility and talk about it now I wouldn't have that same mindset. Because of their lack of details, or even straight up denial, I hold it against them. I don't think we should be denied of history because a nation is embarrassed or ashamed. Every country I'm sure, has something they wish they could take back. I also believe there are people with any event that will deny the existence of it. Like you said, soldiers have denied Nanking. This instantly reminded me of Holocaust deniers, one even representing his country that we talked about in class. If someone can deny the holocaust, anything could be denied.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: why was Nanking missing from our textbooks

by [Amanda Francis](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 9:20 PM

I don't think our textbooks chose to reduce the brutality of Nanking to intentionally create "historical amnesia", but I do think our textbooks omitted some important details that made the incident seem less significant. Our textbook has done a good job to keep the focus on information pertinent to United States history, but some horrific acts need more detail even if it's an international event. Oversimplifying the Rape of Nanking in our textbooks is disrespectful and a contribution to "historical amnesia", intentional or not.

It is interesting, though, that the articles explained how Japan has chosen to downplay the Rape of Nanking which has led to "an estimated 20,000 demonstrators hit the streets of China's capital city Beijing and other smaller cities around the country to protest the approval of new Japanese junior high school textbooks that critics in both countries say gloss over Japan's atrocities against the Chinese during World War II, which ended 60 years ago in 1945" (article #2). The same article goes on to explain that China has also been criticized for being "a country infamous for smoothing over its often-harsh human rights policies" specifically in regard to killing thousands unarmed protesters and starving 30 million of its own citizens (article #2). What we've learned through history is that the majority of countries in the world have committed acts that they would like to be erased from history or at least down played, but it's incredibly important that the truth is out there and taught to generations as the generations who witnessed it first-hand begin to die off completely.

Sum of ratings:[2 \(1\)](#)

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"Forgetting History" and the problems

by [Baylee Crowson](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 9:40 PM

I think a big concern is that the Japanese just act they didn't massacre thousands and rape thousands of women. This is a problem because 1. Chinese people aren't getting the respect they deserve by being acknowledged and their attackers refusing to acknowledge their wrong doing. 2. It's immoral and unethical, that's deserves an apology and then some. 3. History, good or bad, is important to help us learn from the past and potentially help guide us in a better direction, which definitely won't happen if it's not even acknowledged as truth.

Sum of ratings:[0 \(1\)](#)

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What Codes of War

by [Baylee Crowson](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 10:10 PM

I really couldn't figure out exactly what "codes of war" meant, so the closest thing I think I found is law of war and it's like the international war laws like declaration of war, surrenders, and the treatment of prisoners. I think the codes are written by that country's main leader, depending on the type of government that country has. Like I don't think it would be acceptable in the eyes of our country if Trump decided to lock Canadians or people from Mexico up and allow them to rape and kill them, that wouldn't really work here seeing as America seems to typically fight for peoples' rights and the president don't have complete control over our country, but that's not the same. But the Imperial Japan army on the other hand? Different story as it seems. If this doesn't give the right answer, I think it may be what type of codes of conduct there should be world wide during war. Which would be like, not killing innocents just to kill them, no torture, and definitely not doing rape to thousands of women. I don't know how you could go about enforcing that worldwide because your enemy really isn't going to give a shit if you don't want your people tortured, you're enemies.

Sum of ratings:[1 \(1\)](#)

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Everything They Can Own(up to) in the Box to the Left

by [Baylee Crowson](#) - Saturday, May 18, 2019, 10:29 PM

I believe it was left out of the textbook because it is denied by Japan and also because it wasn't happening directly to the United States, so it hasn't seemed important since it goes along the timeline of WW2, Nazis, and the Holocaust. But I believe it is DEFINITELY something that needs to be covered in detail when talking about the brutality that the Japanese displayed. Even though it's a textbook for a U.S. History class, the history of other counties will help us understand why we took the actions we did.

6/12/2019

HST 203 Sp19 (Escobar Meta 44706 47037): Historical Amnesia

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