**ABSTRACT:** Can the Past Serve the Present? The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall

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The memorialization of the Nanjing Massacre, constructed almost fifty years after the event, poses challenges for historians. This article asks the simple question: why? Why has the evolution of memory in China and Japan circumvented the issues of Nanjing for nearly half a century before letting it erupt onto the international stage in the past few decades? By examining the circumstances surrounding the opening of Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall and its ensuing impact, this article not only attempts to shed light on how the memorial has been misconstrued in global historical memory, and the fundamental historiographical debates surrounding it, but also the utility of memory in historical narrative. When dealing with the ghosts of the past in the politics of the present, is it ever possible to purge historiography and memory of government?

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