



TSEN Shui-Fang

1875-1969

China

TSEN Shui-Fang was born in 1875 and graduated from Wuchang Nursing School. After finishing school, she took up the roles of nurse and then administrator at the local Methodist Women's Hospital. From 1910 to 1924, TSEN was director of dormitories and then principal at St. Hilda's High School. Then in 1924 she moved to Nanking and became the director of dormitories at Ginling College. She was in charge of students' room and board as well as serving as the college's nurse.

When Japanese forces approached Nanking in 1937, most of Ginling College's staff fled. However, 62-year-old TSEN stayed of her own accord to assist Minnie Vautrin in protecting the campus. TSEN was appointed to the Emergency Committee, helped move the college's books and other valuables to safer locations, burned documents that could be used against them by the Japanese Army, stocked the college with food staples, and attended to wounded Chinese soldiers housed outside the city walls.

Once Ginling College was designated as a refugee site, TSEN assisted Vautrin in preparing 8 of the buildings on campus for refugees, guarding the gate, managing the refugee camp, providing first aid to refugees, and teaching classes for refugee children and widows without job skills. She was instrumental in saving the lives of thousands of refugees during the Nanking Massacre, and her diary is the only known account written by a Chinese national during the massacre.

Excerpt from TSEN Shui-Fang's Diary
December 18, 1937

All the girls, except one, who were taken away last night were released and came back. [I have] no idea where the missing girl is or if she feels too ashamed to come back [...]

These [Japanese soldiers] were extremely ruthless; they committed all kinds of crimes, killing and raping whomever they like, no matter young or old. One family has mother and daughter. The mother, over 60 years old, was raped by three soldiers consecutively, and daughter, 40-some years old, by two soldiers. Both of them are widows. It is extremely inhumane!

Now, Ginling has over 9,000 refugees. Outside and inside, walkways and hallways, people slept everywhere as if sardines packed in boxes [...]

Source: The Undaunted Women of Nanking – The Wartime Diaries of Minnie Vautrin and Tsen Shui-Fang, edited and translated by Hua-Ling Hu and Zhang Lian-Hong, Southern Illinois University Press, 2010.

Excerpt from TSEN Shui-Fang's Affidavit to the International Military Tribunal of the Far East
Dated April 8, 1946

[...] Japanese soldiers would enter the grounds on the pretext of looking for soldiers but were in fact looking for our girls. Miss Vautrin was the foreign lady in charge here and she did a marvellous work in keeping the soldiers from carrying off our girls. In spite of all that she and I and the rest of us could do on the night of December 17, 1937, the soldiers entered the grounds and carried off eleven girls. Nine of these girls horribly raped and abused by Japanese officers later made their way back to our grounds. Mr. Mills saw them. We never heard any more of the other two girls.

One girl was brought to our grounds. She could not walk and she was terribly bruised and swollen and stated that she has been repeatedly raped and abused by four or five soldiers. She was a nervous wreck.

[...] The soldiers would burn private houses at night throughout the city just for sport or to keep themselves warm. We have a woman working at the village now whose husband, a merchant, was killed by Japanese soldiers and her home with her little child 3 months old burned by the Japanese soldiers [...]

Source: <http://lib.law.virginia.edu/imtfe/content/page-1-3814> & <http://lib.law.virginia.edu/imtfe/content/page-2-2340>