

*A History of Massacres in China: What Makes the Chinese Such Lovers of Murder?* by SEKI Hei

Mr. Seki's book documents the use of mass slaughter by the Chinese as a normal method of political and social control. In the past, dynasties have been both heralded and terminated with massacres of thousands of soldiers and civilians. The current communist regime in Beijing is unexceptional in this regard and Mr. Seki details its long association with mass murder. In fact, based on the historical use of massacres as a means of control, the Tiananmen Square Incident of 1989, in which hundreds if not thousands of civilians were killed, was an appalling but nonetheless predictable Chinese response to social unrest.

The Qin Dynasty set the stage as far as the use of massacres to obtain and maintain power. Winning armies would routinely massacre the losing armies. In addition, the victorious armies would indulge in large-scale looting and raping, and following these atrocities, they would kill everything that moved. Such atrocities punctuated Chinese history into the present.

More recently, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) continues the horrific tradition and Mr. Seki suggests that they even outdid the ancient emperors. Mao Zedong allowed millions of his own countrymen to starve to death in a disastrous attempt to get agrarian China to out-produce the industrialized west. Ghastly torture and rapes by communists were common during the Cultural Revolution. Numerous public executions were held before major Chinese holidays, as a bizarre form of entertainment. Although a few common criminals were included, the overwhelming majority of victims executed in these "festivals" were "class enemies" and "counterrevolutionaries" – people tried in kangaroo courts and found guilty based merely on hearsay.

Interestingly, CCP denouncement of the "Nanking Massacre" relates to their own manner in which massacres were conducted in Chinese history. In other words, the CCP believe that Japan should have behaved as they have. In contrast to China, however, thorough out its history, Japan has never perpetuated massacres of the magnitude seen in China. In the case of "Nanking," there was no such massacre of the magnitude as they have claimed. The denouncement of "Nanking" has two aspects; 1) accusations against Japan and ignoring the history of Japan, which had no experience with mass murder, and 2) camouflaging its own massacres by denouncing others.

Mr. Seki speculates as to why Chinese history is replete with massacres, despite widespread acceptance of Confucian values such as benevolence and compassion. He points out that political power throughout the Dynastic eras was centered on the emperor, which led to constant struggles between those around the emperor and those outside that elite circle. Violent struggle was also seen within the emperor's inner circle, usually between relatives of the emperor. Not only those plotting against the emperor were executed but "nine grades" of kin were also executed.

Mr. Seki notes that there has not been a notable massacre committed by the CCP since the Tiananmen Square Incident, but this does not mean that they have stopped utilizing it as a means of enforcing order. Given the CCP's willingness to disregard "individual lives," it is likely that future threats to their rule will be dealt with in the same, ruthless manner as past Chinese emperors have dealt with threats, real or imagined.