

Why Is It so Easy for the Chinese to Lie?
Examining the mystery of the keyword “*bihui*”
by
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(Summary)

Minoru Kitamura and Lin Siyun discuss Chinese psychology and how it relates to Chinese interaction with Japan. Chinese thinking can apply to countries beyond Japan. Understanding the Chinese way of thinking is critical not only in understanding their current and past actions, but to forecast their future actions. The key behavior is *bihui*, the tendency to ignore inconvenient facts, or even to lie about them, for the sake of preserving stability of the state and the good name of the group: “the reputation of your group can’t be dishonored”. In fact, such a view of history has been expressed by both the Nationalist and Chinese Communist Party in that both sides exposed the others grave short comings while taking great pains to conceal their own “dirty laundry”. Given the prevailing Chinese way of thinking, the authors feel that it is highly unlikely that, even if presented with the facts, the Chinese will be persuaded to change their hostile attitude towards Japan.

Kitamura points out that the concept of “aggressive war,” which Japan was accused of at the Tokyo Trials, was not considered criminal before the Second World War. President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed that aggressive war in the name of justice is in fact noble. Furthermore, there are those today who favor “aggressive war” as legitimate state policy, but it is usually cast in more favorable terms such as “preemptive strike”. In order to punish Japan for waging “aggressive war,” it was necessary to accuse the Japanese military of committing atrocities on the scale of that committed by Nazi Germany. Thus, Japan was painted with the same brush used against Germany, even though the facts on the ground in Japan and Germany were completely different.

Indeed, the Chinese accusations nicely illustrate the concept of *bihui*. For example the authors point out that the Nationalists received heavy military support by National Socialist Germany and that common soldiers were treated as nothing more than cannon fodder despite public pronouncements to egalitarianism. There was little if any support of the Nationalists or the Communists from the peasantry before the Second Sino-Japanese War. Rather than nationalist sentiment, the peasants ended up supporting the Nationalists and Communists because of Japanese forced ration activity—of taking food from the countryside to feed the urban areas. At the core, one could say that the peasants only wished to be left alone. More recently, while the Chinese Communist Party confessed that 70 million people starved to death under Mao’s rule, this admission was made only to attack Mao for the purpose of fortifying their rule rather than to denounce communism in general. One can see then that Chinese “truths,” such as the “300,000 massacred” in Nanking, are formed on the basis of *bihui*, of loyalty to the group, and not on the basis of objectivity. To uncover the truth one must view documents from both the Communists and Nationalists since neither side needed to *bihui* to the other side. Such is the convolutions one must undertake to uncover historical truth in China.

An additional way of thinking peculiar to the Chinese is that they see no expiation for any crimes, including “war crimes”. Even the death of those who committed crimes does not erase those crimes—thus to the Chinese, the Japanese are “war criminals” forever. Such thinking is indeed counter to Japanese and even Western thinking. In total, given such Chinese thinking, it is unlikely that any accommodation will occur between China and Japan or between China and any of her enemies.