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Book Review: Down with Traitors: Justice and Nationalism in Wartime China, by Yun Xia.

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Down with Traitors: Justice and Nationalism in Wartime China, by Yun Xia. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017. vii+267 pp. US\$30.00 (paper).

Few Chinese phrases carry the emotional weight of the term *hanjian* (汉奸), meaning Chinese who were traitors giving aid and comfort to the enemy. In this important new study, Yun Xia examines the concept primarily in regard to Japanese aggression during the War of Resistance and its aftermath following Japan's surrender. The book goes far beyond the usual focus on well-known collaborators such as Wang Jingwei and Wang Kemin or the war crimes trials—though these are covered. Yun Xia's expansive study examines popular attitudes toward collaborators, the political and economic aspects of holding individuals accountable, and the uses of the term *hanjian*.

She begins with an examination of the complex history of the term. Fundamentally there is a contradiction within the phrase itself. Although *hanjian* is often translated as "traitor to China," it actually means traitor to the Han, the major Chinese ethnic group. In other words, one violates loyalty to one's ethnic group rather than a political state. Few challenged the use of this term. Xia cites a lone publication in the 1930s whose authors suggested the use of *Huajian* 华奸 (traitor to China) because the Republic of China was supposed to be a nation-state of five ethnicities—Han, Manchu, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans. How could a Tibetan, for instance, be patriotic when that meant loyalty to another ethnicity? But the use of *Huajian* gained no traction. *Hanjian* continued to be used, leaving the impression that minority groups had to fully assimilate to be patriotic. This debate raged from Sun Yat-sen's earliest notions of a republic until today's China, where Uyghurs are locked up in "re-education camps" to convert them into behaving as cultural Han.

Conversely, one could be a traitor to the Han if one were Han but not necessarily a citizen of the Chinese nation. After the war Taiwanese were widely considered *hanjian* (even when not charged with the crime) because of wartime actions at a time when they were actually subjects of the Empire of Japan. Yun Xia also explores the case of ethnic Chinese living in Vietnam who might be considered French subjects. Yet Guomindang authorities considered many guilty of treasonous offenses because they were ethnically Han.

Yun Xia notes that the concept of *hanjian* became widely known during the 1930s as Japanese aggression intensified in China. With the outbreak of war the Chinese government strengthened its campaign against treason. Laws were adopted, but much of the activity to counter traitors focused simply on assassinations and summary executions. When the war ended the government issued revised rules for trials of traitors. But Yun Xia finds that legal rules and actual events were quite different. A large portion of the Chinese population had lived under Japanese occupation up to the day of Japan's surrender. While a few individuals had prospered during the conflict through collaboration and were clearly *hanjian*, the vast

majority had simply survived the war and felt they were victims of Japanese aggression. Those who had left for “Free China” in the interior, by contrast, felt they were the true heroes and that those who had stayed were morally compromised.

Yun Xia describes the mad rush from the interior after Japan’s surrender. Whatever the laws and regulations, the returning authorities began a wild campaign to confiscate as much property and wealth as possible. “First come, first served” was the order of the day for these returning Guomintang officials. Legally, Chinese whose property had been seized by the Japanese were supposed to get their property back, but in reality this rarely happened. Businesspeople who had stayed in the occupied zone were especially targeted because they had property that could be taken.

Rivalry between two competing intelligence groups contributed to the chaos. Chiang Kai-shek often used competing organizations in order to maintain his control over the bureaucracy. Dai Li organized the Juntong (军统), a group that carried out numerous assassinations during the war and arrested many wealthy so-called *hanjian* after the war. The Chen brothers organized the Bureau of Investigation, which competed in trying to gain the assets of collaborators. The competition between the two groups became fierce, creating the popular impression that politics, not justice, determined who was guilty of treason.

Yun Xia argues that the returning Guomintang forces gave up the moral high ground because of their behavior in retaking eastern China. The population who had lived under Japanese occupation perceived the Guomintang as simply seizing property and wealth without bringing the real traitors to justice. The Communists meanwhile blended the concepts of *hanjian* and class enemy. Since most wealthy people in the occupied areas were presumed to have collaborated, the Communists combined the crimes of exploiting the people and being a *hanjian* into one campaign against class enemies. Yun Xia goes a step further and makes the provocative argument that the patterns of anti-*hanjian* campaigns during the Civil War of 1946–49 set the stage for the massive political campaigns of the People’s Republic.

Yun Xia closes with a section entitled “From Crime to Epithet.” Although the trials were over, the term *hanjian* as a pejorative phrase was more widely used than ever. Today it is particularly pervasive on the internet. Chinese who are too influenced by Western culture and styles, buy American products during a trade war, or favor foreign political ideals are attacked by nationalists on the internet as *hanjian*. The term lives on.

This study is well researched, using an array of archival sources, memoirs, and printed materials. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the continuing influence of the War of Resistance in today’s China.

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