

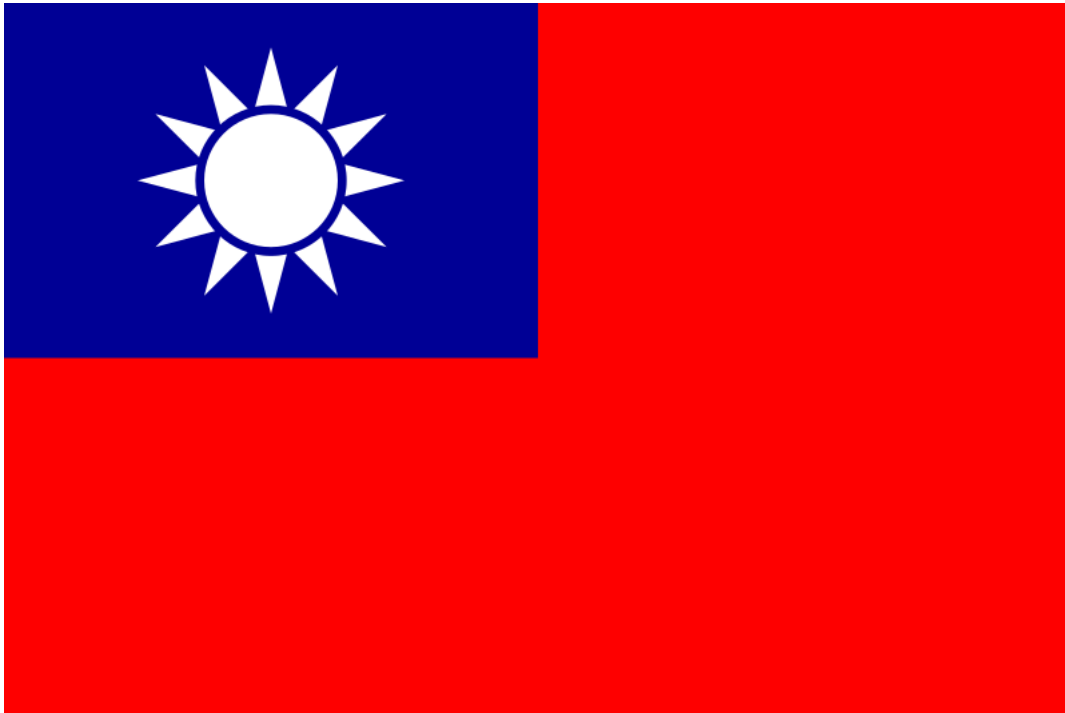
# 九

I packed up my suitcase  
and jumped on a plane  
it was off to Taiwan  
and an ocean of rain  
some called it “Free China”  
where KMT landed  
soldiers from China  
that Chiang had commanded



## Chapter 9 - Republicans in China

When Americans see the word, “Republican”, we immediately think of a political party in the USA. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in China, however, the term “Republican” also referred to the people who wanted to change China from a system ruled by emperors and their descendants, to a republican form of government where elected representatives of the people controlled the government. Many historians call the period between 1911-1949 in China, the “Republican Period” and the official English name of China during that time was “The Republic of China.”



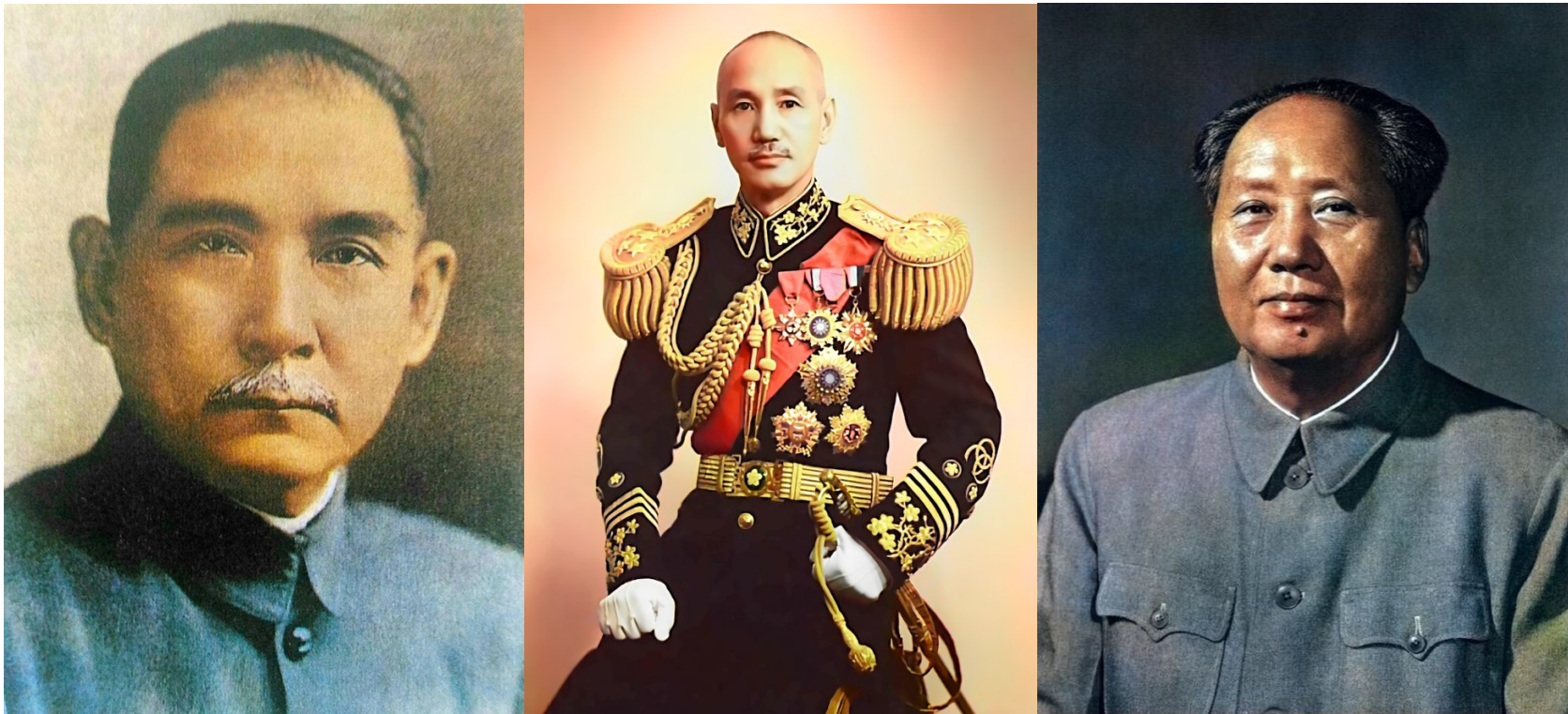
Before the Republican Period, China was ruled by a succession of dynasties. Some dynasties, like the Han Dynasty lasted for centuries. Others, like the Qin Dynasty, only a few years. What all dynasties had in common was that they were led by emperors who ruled with a “mandate from Heaven.” In Chinese, the word for revolution (革命 gé mìng) literally means “removing the mandate”. When an emperor no longer had the “mandate from Heaven,” the dynasty was toppled and a new dynasty began.

The 清 Qīng Dynasty aka Ch'ing Dynasty aka Manchu Dynasty was the last imperial dynasty in China. A coalition of anti-Qing forces from both inside and outside of China culminated with the Wuchang Uprising (武昌起義 Wǔchāng Qǐyì) in Hubei on October 10, 1911, and forced 溥儀 Pǔyí, the last emperor of China to abdicate his throne on February 12, 1912 at the ripe old age of six.

The Qing Dynasty had begun when Jurchen forces from Manchuria (what is now the three northeast Chinese provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang) defeated the Chinese Ming armies in 1644. At that time, Manchuria was not considered a part of China, so China felt that it had been occupied by a foreign power. Early emperors of the Qing were strong, but by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Qing Dynasty was on the decline. The first Opium War (1839-1842) led to an ever increasing European presence and the British acquiring a foothold in Hong Kong. Movements to resist the Qing included the 14-year long Taiping Rebellion where a deluded failed scholar by the name of 洪秀全 Hóng Xiùquán, who thought he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ, led a rebellion where upwards of 20 million people died between 1850-1864. The Boxer Rebellion (义和团运动 Yìhétuán Yùndòng), which occurred at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, promised followers that China could rid itself of the scourge of foreign invaders who seemed to be dividing China up like a pie. Finally, the infamous Empress Dowager (慈禧太后 Cíxǐ Tàihòu) rebuilt a marble party boat (石舫 Shí Fǎng) with money originally earmarked for building up a new Chinese imperial navy. Although the boat remains today, China was definitely sinking.



Dr. Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙 Sūn Yìxiān) aka 孫中山 Sūn Zhōngshān is often referred to as the father of modern China. Sun Yat-sen is one of a small number of “modern” Chinese to be revered in both Taiwan and in the People’s Republic of China. Dr. Sun had a vision of China as a constitutional republic based on three principles: Democracy 民權 Mínguán, Nationalism 民族 Mínzú, and Welfare of the People 民生 Mínshēng. When the Qing forces were defeated, Sun Yat-sen became the provisional President of the new Republic of China. Although Sun ruled for less than a year, his “3 Principles of the People” continued to serve as the political backbone of the fledgling Republic. Taiwan’s “National Anthem” today starts with the words “三民主義” Sān Mín Zhǔyì – “The Three Principles of the People.”



The Republican period in China was a time of turmoil. In the beginning, “warlords” with their own militaries both divided and controlled large portions of China. The Nationalist Party (國民黨 Guómíndǎng, formerly spelled “Kuomintang” hence the initials KMT) was made legitimate by Sun Yat-sen and ultimately recognized by his followers in 1919, and a young Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek (蔣介石 Jiǎng Jièshí, aka 蔣中正 Jiǎng Zhōngzhèng) was rapidly establishing himself as Sun Yat-sen’s successor and as the emerging leader of the KMT.

At the same time, a former librarian at Beijing University and primary school history teacher in Changsha, by the name of 毛澤東 Máo Zé Dōng, joined the fledgling Chinese Communist Party. At the time of Sun’s death in 1925, the Communists and Nationalists seemed to be coexisting amicably, but in 1927, with the help of the infamous 青幫 Qīng Bāng aka the Green Gang, Chiang Kai-shek ordered a campaign in Shanghai where more than 5,000 Communists were killed. This and other similar communist purges continued until 1934 when tens of thousands of communist troops followed Mao and other communist leaders nearly 4,000 miles in the “Long March” from Fujian to Shaanxi, with Chiang Kai Shek and the KMT in hot pursuit.

Besides the ongoing civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists, China was also being invaded and occupied during this period of time by the Japanese. An incident in 1937 at the Marco Polo bridge just south of Beijing was the spark which would lead to the Japanese domination of much of eastern China, the Rape of Nanjing, and the eventual occupation of Hong Kong by the Japanese on Christmas day, 1941. Although the Allied troops in WW2 tried to get the Communists and the Nationalists to team up against the Japanese, this idea met with very little success. In one incident in Xi’An in 1936, the Communists actually did kidnap Chiang Kai Shek and forced him to team up with the Communists and fight against the Japanese.

With the retreat of the KMT to Taiwan in 1949, and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of China ceased to exist in mainland China. The Republic of China is NOT the official name in English for China. The official name for China is The People’s Republic of China. However, the Republic of China remains the official name in English for Taiwan.