The Chinese Revolution Of 1911
And The Establishment Of The Nanking Government

The Revolution of 1911 (辛亥革命) is a significant event in Chinese modern history. For it led to the overthrow of two hundred and sixty-eight years of Manchu rule in China (1644 - 1911). Historically, the year 1911 marks the beginning of a period known as Republican China. Monarchy, to which China had been subjected to for more than two thousand years, became an illusion of the past.

Beginning from the Opium War of 1839 - 1842, China had succumbed to a series of foreign invasions, resulting in the loss of territories, the payment of indemnities, the granting of extra-territorial, and other privileges to Western powers. Moreover, national prestige was at its lowest when China was defeated by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 - 1895. Under these circumstances, people in China, especially intellectuals, struggled extremely hard for political reformation.

The prophet of the revolution is the well-known revolutionary leader Dr. Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙). Dr. Sun's idea of political revolution was formed a year after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895.

The period 1895 - 1911 in China witnessed a rapid change which facilitated revolutionary activities: the growing impotence of the central government, the increasing disaffection of intellectuals to the Manchu rule, turbulence of the masses, and above all, the apparent inability of the Manchu Court to resist foreign pressure were the major themes of the Chinese political mood.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sun founded two important revolutionary organizations. One was Hsing Chung Hui (興中會), the Revive China Society, organised in 1894; the other was Tung Meng Hui (同盟會), the Revolutionary Alliance, organised in 1905. The latter was of great significance. Between 1905 - 1911, under the direct influence of Tung Meng Hui, the revolutionists made a total
of ten revolutionary attempts. Though all these attempts were suppressed by the Manchu government, it had important effects on the Revolution of 1911, especially on the Canton Revolution of 29th March (based on the lunar calendar in 1911), which was the immediate cause of the 1911 revolution in Wuchang, Hupeh.

Immediately after the Canton Revolution of 29th March, Sheng Hsuan-huai (沈相桂) announced the policy of nationalizing the main railway lines. This announcement brought the people in Szechwan into open revolt against Peking. Fighting between the local militia and government forces occurred in September, 1911, forcing the authorities to bring in additional units from Wuchang (武昌). At this moment, the revolutionists in Wuchang decided to take advantage of this situation, and as a result, a revolution was successfully carried out in Wuchang on 10th October, 1911.

It is no doubt that the Revolution of 1911 was sparked by the revolt of New Army Units (新軍) in Wuchang in October, 1911 which enabled the revolutionists to make the first successful bid to overthrow Manchu rule. After the outbreak at Wuchang, the three Yangtse cities of Wuchang, Hankow and Hanyang fell to the revolutionists. By mid-October, all the other provinces, with the exception of Chihli (直隸), Honan (湖廣), and Shantung (山東) had joined in the revolution by declaring independence from Peking. After these events, on 1st January, 1912, the Chinese Republic with its capital in Nanking (南京) was established and Dr. Sun Yat-sen was elected the provisional president. Forty-two days later, the Manchu Emperor issued an adict abdicating his throne. However, the Nanking government was dismissed on 1st April, 1912 and the authority had been taken over by the strongman of North China, Yuan Shik-k'ai (袁世凱). It was because of his superior manipulation of the real politik and astute strategy that Yuan Shik-k'ai was able to emerge from the complicated struggle with the support of the North and the South, and finally became the President of Republic of China, marking the end of the Revolution of 1911.
The aim of this academic exercise is to give a full account of the Revolution of 1911 in China, in the hope that we will understand its full significance in the Chinese modern history.

This exercise consists of seven chapters in total. Chapter one deals with the immediate causes which led to the outbreak of the Wuchang Revolution - the Canton Revolution of 29th March, 1911 and the railway trouble in Szechuan. Chapter two gives a full account of the Wuchang Revolution, which triggered off the Revolution of 1911. Chapter three is a discussion of the circumstances of the uprisings in the various provinces following the Wuchang outbreak in 1911. Chapter four deals with the establishment of the Nanking government. Chapter five gives a full insight into the peace negotiations between the North and the South, including the abdication of the Manchu Emperor. Chapter six deals with the dissolution of the Nanking government which was highlighted by the resignation of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the assumption of authority by Yuan Shik-k'ai. Chapter seven is the conclusion of this exercise and provides an over-all analysis of some aspects of the Revolution.

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