

*Puyi* (Chinese: 溥儀; Pronounced *P'oo-y'ee*) (February 7, 1906 - October 17, 1967) of the *Manchu Aisin-Gioro* ruling family was *Emperor of China* between 1908 and 1912, the tenth and last emperor of the *Manchu Qing Dynasty* to rule over *China*.

### **Emperor of China (1908-1924)**

Chosen by Cixi on her deathbed, Puyi ascended to the throne at age 2 years 10 months in December 1908 following his uncle's death on November 14. The "Act of Abdication of the Emperor of the Great Qing" was signed on February 12, 1912, under a deal brokered by *Yuan Shikai* for the new Republic of China with the imperial court in *Beijing* and the republicans in southern China. Puyi was to retain his imperial title and be treated by the government of the Republic with the *protocol* attached to a foreign monarch (as *Italy's Law of Guarantees* (1870) which accorded the *Pope* certain honors and privileges similar to those enjoyed by the King of *Italy*). Puyi and the imperial court were allowed to remain in the northern half of the *Forbidden City* (the Private Apartments) as well as in the *Summer Palace*. A hefty annual subsidy of 4 million silver dollars was also granted by the Republic to the imperial household (never fully paid and abolished after just a few years).

### **Brief restoration (1917)**

In 1917, the warlord general *Zhang Xun* restored Puyi on his throne for twelve days from July 1 to July 12. *Beijing* male residents hastily bought some false queues (long *plaits*) to avoid punishment for cutting off their queues in 1912. The restoration failed due to large opposition across China, and the decisive intervention of another warlord general. In mid-July, the streets of *Beijing* were strewn with the thousands of false queues that had been discarded as hastily as they had been bought.

### **Private citizen (1924-1932)**

On November 4, 1924, the warlord government in Beijing revised the "*Articles of Favorable Treatment*" stating that Puyi was to be stripped of his imperial title and henceforth made a regular citizen of the *Republic of China*. The following day, November 5, troops surrounded the Private Apartments of the *Forbidden City* and forced Puyi to sign the revised articles. Puyi and the small imperial court were expelled from the *Forbidden City* that same day.

In the beginning of 1925, he escaped the surveillance of the government and the Japanese organized his flight to the Japanese territory of *Tianjin* (near Beijing). He set up a "court-in-exile" there until 1932 when he became the ruler of the Japanese puppet state *Manchukuo* in Japanese controlled Manchuria.

### **Ruler of Manchukuo (1932-1945)**

In 1934 he was officially crowned the emperor of *Manchukuo*. He was constantly at odds with the Japanese in private, though gushingly submissive in person. He resented being "Emperor of *Manchukuo*" rather than being fully restored as Qing Emperor.

### **Later life (1945-1967)**

At the end of *World War II*, he was captured by the *Soviet Red Army* (1945) and turned over to the *Chinese Communists* in 1950. He spent ten years in a *reeducation camp*, where he was eventually declared "reformed", and claimed to become a supporter of the Communists. Afterwards, he worked at the *Beijing Botanical Gardens*. He wrote an *autobiography* ("The former half of my life", translated in English as *From Emperor to Citizen*) in the 1960s and died in *Beijing* of cancer in 1967 during the *Cultural Revolution*.