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# **Politics between Public and Private: Land Ownership Transfer in Socialist Beijing (1950s - 1970s)**

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Thesis submitted for the qualification of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Geography,  
Durham University

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## Abstract

This research concerns the relations and tensions among the state as an institutional public power, the people congregating as a collective, and private individuals. It intends to investigate these relations through two land politics cases in the Socialist Beijing, set against the historical background of the city and Chinese conceptual contexts.

Suggesting certain similarities to public/private demarcation, the thesis starts with a genealogy of the Chinese *gong-si* division, arguing the moral superiority of the abstract ideas of *gong* over *si*; it argues that changing understandings of *gong*/public and the intricate connections between various *gong* and *si* embodiments (i.e. state, collective, family, individual) contribute – and in some ways constitutes -- politics. Based on data acquired by archival work, in-depth interviews and literature reviews, the thesis then grounds the issue into two empirical cases: the land ownership nationalisation in the expansion of Tiananmen Square, and the struggles over property in the Bell&Drum Towers area from the 1950s to 1970s. The thesis argues that the significant power of the state, particularly the compulsory power to expropriate land, depends on moral and political authority attained by its status as a *gong* embodiment, is dependent on: its constant practice of constructing other bodies such as family and individual as *si* embodiments; constructing private property and private economy as flawed *si*; and also on its suppression of other public/*gong* entities, especially the collective and the city. However, it also argues, challenges from the private/*si* category and from other potential public/*gong* bodies always exist too. This is reflected in private people's strategic use of the normative *gong* in their daily practices related to property and in many collective practices. It is the divergence between *gong* and *si* and the simultaneous intimacy between them that generates politics.

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged. No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other learning institutes.

## **Statement of copyright**

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research Context

Inevitably, personal experience and political-social-cultural background have great influence upon the academic interests of a researcher. For me, it is the Chinese society where I grew up and my practice as an urban planner that shapes my specific research focus.

Due to rapid urbanisation and economic development in the last three decades, there has been extensive land expropriation in all Chinese cities. The first tide of the expropriation targeted the rural area, not least in facilitating urban expansion. The second wave was in the built-up downtown areas, usually in the guise of urban regeneration schemes. This process is still going on now. By the power of land expropriation and requisition, municipal governments obtained lands from dispersed private owners and then sold or leased them to big estate developers<sup>1</sup>. This can be seen as a kind of ‘privatisation’ or ‘reprivatisation’ parallel with the purportedly neoliberal practice occurring in the UK since the 1980s.

It is worth noticing that in China, it is the state that enables and dominates the ownership transfer. The Constitution of 1982 declared ‘land in the cities is owned by the state’ although in practice people retain the right to ‘use’ land and to own buildings<sup>2</sup>. This land ownership system is called *gongyouzhi* (public ownership system) or *guoyouzhi* (state ownership system). The government’s dual roles as landlord and land regulator have greatly facilitated its extensive intervention in land use and the operation of land expropriation.

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the developers are private, but there are also state-owned estate developing corporations but it is a relatively late and rare practice.

<sup>2</sup> And ‘land in the rural and suburban areas is owned by collectives except for those portions which belong to the state in accordance with the law’. Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, Chapter 1, Article 10. The current version was adopted in 1982, with further revisions in 1988, 1993, 1999, and 2004. And only the 2004 amendment version states citizens ‘lawful private property is inviolable’ but ‘The State may, in the public interest and in accordance with law, expropriate or requisition private property for its use and shall make compensation for the private property expropriated or requisitioned.’

Struggles against land expropriation are common, although unfortunately many times they appear as tragedies. One of the most famous cases is that of a Sichuan woman, Tang Fuzhen, who burned herself to death to protest forced demolition in 2009<sup>3</sup>. The residents of Enning neighbourhood, a historical district in Guangzhou, have resisted an official regeneration project for six years and many of them are still refusing to move (as of March 2014). As a student on urban planning, an activist championing for public participation in urban affairs and a person having heard and witnessed too many cases of compulsory land expropriation and of neighbourhoods demolition, I cannot move my eyes away from the tremendous power that the state exercises and the rhetoric it uses. Most notable here are the roles of the state as the landlord and governor of the city, the statutory planning power against which land control and intervention are realised, and ‘for the public interest’ are common justifications for the intervention.

## 1.2 Research theme

This research is concerned with the relations, tensions and conflicts between the state as an institutional public power, the people congregating as a collective or the public, and private individuals. It particularly concerns how these issues are reflected in urban land regulation, possession and ownership transfer. The multiple layers of the sense of ‘public’- being put in relationship with ‘private’- are the most important analytic focus.

The theme is explored in the context of the Chinese concepts of *gong* and *si* which are in a way comparable to English ‘public’ and ‘private’. Land ownership reorganisation from the 1950s to the 1970s in the city of Beijing is used as empirical case to further investigate the relationships and conflicts between the embodiments of *gong* and *si* ideas in reality.

The next section explains why the specific period is chosen for empirical study. Main arguments of the thesis will be given at the end of the Chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Tragedy reignites debate on forced demolitions’, *China Daily*, 08-12-2009, online source [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-12/08/content\\_9137322.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-12/08/content_9137322.htm) [accessed 04-03-2014].



### 1.3 Situating the research in socialist Beijing

While a subject applicable to all societies, interrogating it in specific cases in a specific society will provide us with more grounded and contextual understanding on the issues. My thesis will investigate the topic by examining land politics in Beijing from the 1950s to the 1970s. Similar to its counterpart Britain, China experienced parallel nationalisation during the 1950s and 1960s and then privatisation since the 1980s. My studied period covers the three decades from the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 to the economic reform launched in 1978. These three decades saw several tides of land nationalisation up to the declaration that all the land belonged to the state. This is also one of the most turbulent times in Chinese history. The Socialist Transformation, continuous political movements, three years of the Great Famine, the split with the Soviet Union, Cultural Revolution, Great Tangshan Earthquake... all these not only disturbed the country and people's life but also differently contributed to the reconfiguration of the city space. The current chaotic and confusing state of ownership composition in downtown Beijing and people's ambiguous and often contradictory understandings about property can be traced from these key historical events/moments. In addition, China, especially the capital Beijing was highly led by ideology in the time, which offers a great opportunity for us to investigate some important ideas and discourses (such as 'public', 'private', 'state') formed from traditional to communist China.

With the belief that every society should be understood in its own conceptual and cultural coordinate system, I start the thesis by exploring the thoughts around the ideas of *gong* and *si* in Chinese history from a linguistic perspective, with occasional reference to their European counterparts of 'public' and 'private' (Chapter 2). Then Chapter 3 discusses the methodological issues involved in the research. Chapter 4 and 5 investigate public-private relationship in two empirical cases, that is, the land expropriation for the expansion of Tiananmen Square in the 1950s and the reconfiguration of land possession and occupation in the Bell and Drum Towers area between the 1950s and the 1970s. The Conclusion chapter (i.e. Chapter 6) deepens the understanding of *gong* and *si* by a theorisation of the relationship between power and land, and the tension between the state, collective people and individuals. Main arguments in the thesis can be summarised as below:

Adopting the Chinese concepts of *gong* and *si*, with a reference to their English counterparts of public and private, I discuss three dimensions of *gong* and how each of them is related to the idea of *si*. I argue that it is the multiple senses of *gong*, or the multiple divisions and connections between *gong* and *si* that brings about tension, conflicts and politics. More specifically speaking, the idea of *gong* has three layers: *gong* as a universal principle and normative value, *gong* embodied in the collective, and *gong* embodied in the state. The first layer gives *gong* idea and its embodiments significant moral priorities, which is particularly distinct from the ‘public’ in other languages and societies. Each layer of *gong* can be connected to *si* bodies. The universality of the value of *gong* means it is a shared value of all the people. In fact, the Chinese believe that it is (private) person who can perceive the spirit of *gong* and therefore judge whether any acts are coincident with *gong* principle or not. For the collective dimension, the collective actually consists of individuals who are the smallest *si* units. In terms of the last layer, the state is considered to share the same structure and moral principles with those in the family, another important private entity. In reality, the state is the dominant *gong*/public body that claims the great moral and political advantage of *gong*, which often threatens the interests of *si* bodies and erodes the private sphere. However, because of the intricate conceptual connections between *si* and each dimension of *gong*, *si* bodies can also claim their intimacy with *gong* and then attain a kind of moral superiority to resist and even overthrow the state.

In the two cases of land ownership nationalisation in two places in Beijing (i.e. Tiananmen Square as an example of *gong* place and the Bell and Drum Towers area as *si* place), I argue that that the party-state could successfully persuade individuals and families ‘not to be restrained in their private interests’ and to contribute their properties to support the construction of the state highly relied on the moral priority of *gong* and the state’s status as an embodiment of *gong*. This can be seen from the expansion of Tiananmen Square and the Socialist Transformation of the households in the Bell and Drum Towers area. However, I also argue that, in the land ownership reorganisation in the latter case, private people and the masses played more significant role in dispossessing others’ private property. Especially during the Cultural Revolution the masses even overpowered the government. In addition, lacking of legal protection and regulation on private property, people and households,

as *si* actors, took occupation as a main strategy to enlarge their own interests by encroaching communal, sometimes private land. These *si* bodies, at the same time, expanded their customary rights to property by connecting themselves to *gong* (i.e. person-Heaven and family-state) and by stressing on the responsibility and promise of the socialist state.

To conclude, it is the multiplicity of the idea of *gong* and the multiplicity of the distinctions and connections between *gong* and *si* that result in the complexity of the land politics among different *gong* and *si* bodies. The most significant feature of the Chinese *gong* is its transcendent, moral and normative sense. This dimension gives huge moral priority to those that can successfully build connections to *gong*, and therefore contesting these connections is where the politics resides in. Not only the state, but also the collective and *si* entities (e.g. private persons, households) have big potential to be linked to the moral layer of *gong*. It is the intimacy between *gong* and *si*, rather than the distinction of the two that produces the conflicts.

## Chapter 2 Conceptual Framework

Having outlined the main issues concerned in the thesis, this chapter aims to lay the conceptual foundations for developing a framework to understand and interpret land politics in the communist Beijing. When talking about concepts, terms and language become essential. This chapter, therefore, starts by pointing out that the Chinese ideas of *gong* and *si* and the division between the two is in a way comparable to English ‘public’ and ‘private’. Drawing on Jeff Weintraub’s theorisation of different modes of public-private divides in western debates, I will focus on the particularity of the Chinese concerns around these two ideas against its specific social and intellectual contexts. Then the chapter will move on to a genealogy of *gong-si* ideas in Chinese history, exploring the ‘origin’, evolution, transformation as well as practise related to the two concepts. An interpreting framework applied to the thesis will be given at the end of the Chapter.

### 2.1 Public-private and *gong-si*: a parallel division?

Language structures and defines people’s expression, understanding and interpretation in a fundamental way. The differences between languages bring difficulties and challenges for us to discuss some similar practice and concepts in different societies, but at the same time, they also provide diverse perspectives to comprehend the issues. Chinese history and thoughts are different from the rest of the world. Chinese language, as a special grammar and meaning system distinct from all European languages, has not only shaped Chinese people’s specific understanding of the world, but also can serve as a living fossil for us to investigate how their understanding has been changing over time.

In terms of the topic with which I am concerned, it is significant that there is a linguistic similarity between the usages of the English words ‘public’ and ‘private’ (and their cognates in other European languages) and their Chinese parallels *gong* (公) and *si* (私)<sup>4</sup>. For example, ‘public space’ is translated into *gonggong kongjian*

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<sup>4</sup> About the language parallel in terms of public-*gong* and private-*si* in a more modern sense, see Mary Backus Rankin, ‘Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere’, and Frederic Wakeman, ‘The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture’. Both in *Modern China*, 1993, Vol. 19, No. 2,

(公共空间) in Chinese, ‘public sphere’ into *gonggong lingyu* (公共领域), and ‘public ownership’ into *gongyouzhi* (公有制). Alongside this, ‘private’, ‘private property’, ‘private ownership’ and ‘private sector’ are, respectively, translated into Chinese words (or compounds) as *sichan*(私产), *siyouzhi* (私有制) and *siying bumen*(私营部门). Just as there are multiple – and many times conflicting – definitions of public and private in English, the meanings of *gong* and *si* in Chinese are neither very stable nor very clear. For instance, there are no definite boundaries between the two fields. In our daily language, a public space like a city square can be either owned by public institutions or private holders, while private properties are always under public intervention such as urban planning regulation, regardless of the regime of a society. Another meaningful ambiguity is the intimate relationship between ‘public’ and ‘state’. Although there are varieties of theories that place the state in an opposite or threatening position to the public, in daily English, a publicly owned property usually refers to a property owned by the central or local government. In an analogous manner, *gongyou* (公有, publicly-owned) and *guoyou*(国有, state-owned) are interchangeable in most cases in modern Chinese.

The resonance of languages in different cultural backgrounds seems to suggest that certain social practices related to the ideas of ‘public’ and ‘private’ are particularly important and meaningful to all of us. In fact, just like the public-private dichotomy in the west, the distinction of *gong* and *si* penetrates through Chinese history and political discourse. Of course, these terms in the two languages develop in different trajectories, acquiring a range of meanings independently from each other. In fact the origin and evolution of the concepts are deeply rooted in their own historic and cultural contexts, thus some unique understanding and usages can only be found in that specific language and do not have a straightforward equivalence in another. It is undeniable that the import of western terms and theories in the late age of imperial China not only bridged but at the same time blurred the distinction of the concepts in different languages<sup>5</sup>. In this chapter, I will outline a primary genealogy of the idea

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Symposium: "Public Sphere"/"Civil Society" in China? Paradigmatic Issues in *Chinese Studies*, III, pp. 158-182 and pp. 108-138. Also in William T. Rowe, 'The Public Sphere in Modern China', 1990, *Modern China*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 309-329.

<sup>5</sup> Actually many of the words we are using now (just as the compounds with *gong* and *si* given in the last paragraph) are translated from foreign languages (especially from English and German, in many cases via Japanese). Yet people's understanding and daily usage of them still reserve very strong sense which these words/characters imply in Chinese traditions. And more importantly, similar concepts and practice do exist in

of *gong* and *si* in Chinese history, aiming to place a conceptual context to interpret the land politics in Beijing in its socialist period. Before doing this, I would like to build some connections to the existing discussions on public-private distinction in western scholarship.

Jeff Weintraub summarises four major ways in which public-private distinctions are drawn in social and political analysis in the ‘West’<sup>6</sup>. The first one is the classical republican-virtue approach which connects ‘public’ realm to political community and citizenship, distinct from both the market and the administrative state. The second one, the liberal-economic model sees the separation primarily based on the distinction between state administration and the market economy. The third approach views ‘public’ from the perspective of sociability, a sphere of public life. The last ‘feminist’ perspective puts the public-private division in the context of the distinction between the family and the larger economic and political order. In the following section I will explain that, these four models, mainly developed from the specific history and intellectual legacy in Western Europe and the US, cannot be straightforwardly used to explain the Chinese practice but some connections can be built between them.

Among the four, the first one, ‘citizenship’ perspective has the longest history. It is also associated with the very idea of ‘political’. Dated to the ancient time, Weintraub analyses two different models of ‘public’ realm which have largely contributed to the ambiguous understanding of ‘public’, ‘private’ and ‘political’ in modern thought. The first model, ‘citizenship’ model, is rooted in the context of the polity of ancient Greek *polis* and Roman Republic, emphasising collective self-determination of a political community and an individual’s participation as a member of the community; that is, as a *politai* in the *polis* or *civis* in the republic. The second model originates in the Roman Empire, from which we get the notion of ‘sovereignty’, of a centralised and unified apparatus, of a ‘public’ power ruling over the society composed by individuals and granting the rights of the citizens<sup>7</sup>. The two models of politics, the

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Chinese society (both the past and present), and these phenomena and understandings can be better described by the terms developed in their own language rather than those imported from another culture.

<sup>6</sup> ‘The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction Public and Private’ in *Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar eds, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> ‘The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction Public and Private’ in *Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar eds, Chicago: The University of Chicago

one based on a collective decision making process by collective citizens and the other on a type of sovereignty or domination, are interweaved with one another and developed many variations throughout the political practice and thoughts in the following history of the West.

The Chinese history and the ideas derived from it are a different story. Never having a self-governing polity, the collective of community members is present in another way. As I will elaborate in the later part of the chapter, collective ritual plays an important role in Chinese people's 'public' life since the antiquity. Those rituals, rites and ceremonies, including both religious and secular/political ones, display integration and harmony, which are based more on the presupposition of a whole rather than individuals. This puts an initial difference of the Chinese understanding of the collective, private person and political from the west. In terms of the dimension of sovereignty, a centralised and dominant ruling power over people has existed for long. In fact, since the Qin established a centralised empire in the second century BC, China has a centralised political system in most time of its history. Accordingly, the Chinese concept of politics (*zheng*, 政) is primarily centred on statecraft, rulership and administration, in which the 'political' based on self-determination and autonomy is largely absent<sup>8</sup>. In addition, this 'public' or political realm never disassociates from the private realm. On the contrary, the principles of the public realm, of the 'state' are based on and therefore compatible with those in the family and small customary communities. To some degree, this is similar to the situation in the Middle Age of Europe when the feudal system of rule was based on personal dependent ties, blurring the difference between 'public' and 'private' authorities. Yet the assuming idea of 'pre-established harmony' between different parts and scales of the human world (actually as well as between human society and the nature) in Chinese philosophy is significant, although in practice the tensions between individuals, collective and the ruling power never cease.

If deliberately building a connection with the four models of western public-private relationship, it is the issues involved in the classical model or the citizenship model

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Press, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> See Ames, Roger T., *The Art of Rulership: Study of Ancient Chinese Political Thought*, SUNY Press, 1994; Lindholm, Charles, 'Kinship Structure and Political Authority: The Middle East and Central Asia', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 28, no.2, 1986, pp 334-355; Mabbett, Ian, ed., *Patterns of Kingship and Authority in Traditional Asia*, Methuen, 1984.

to which my analysis on the case of China is most relevant. In spite of different historical contexts and conceptual assumptions, some common debates are shared by both China and the West. A very important one is the two different even ‘opposite’ notions about the source of public power: whether public power resides in the aggregation of people or comes from a ruling power standing above all<sup>9</sup>. These two notions justify public power in different ways and the divergence of the views can be found in both theories and practice. These two views also set different backgrounds against which the ‘private’ can be understood, and they plant different moral and political implication in the ideas of public, private and their relations. In the case of China, the divergence and contests between the two notions are associated with the core of the Chinese answer to the question of what is political. However, in the vein of Chinese thoughts, the tension between the two interpretations (i.e. authority is derived from the bottom/body or the top) is not because the two are totally separate in nature, but is rooted in the idea that both of them (i.e. the collective consisting of private people and the ruler) can find their particular ways to connect to the highest and universal principle of the world (i.e. *tianli*, ‘principle of heaven’). I will further explain this in next ‘genealogy’ section.

Here I also want to draw attention to another two related topics. The first is the dimension of ‘property’ in the ideas of public and private. For the Romans, *res (P)publica*, literally ‘public things (affairs or properties)’ is used to refer to both the Roman Republic and a type of property. The ‘*res*’ here is noteworthy. *Res* suggests the Republic is a substantive or concrete thing opposed to ‘*spes*’ which means something unreal or ethereal. For the Romans, the Republic is a thing, a property. Not having an abstract notion of the state, as what the *res* in *res publica* suggests, the Romans gave their own name *populus Romanus*, ‘Roman people’ to the Republic, defining it as the collectivity of Roman citizens, or used *res populi Romani*, ‘property of the Roman people’ of the Republic<sup>10</sup>. Considering the Republic as a concrete property resonates with some early Chinese understanding of *gong*, a concept used parallel to ‘public’ in this thesis for analytical purposes. In a similar way, the Chinese idea of *gong* or public is not abstract but instead is associated with specific belongings and properties in the early time. It even conveyed a more

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<sup>9</sup> Skinner, Quentin, ‘A Genealogy of the Modern State’, British Academy Lecture, 13 May 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Wood, Neal, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought*, University of California Press, 1991, p125.



geographical message: it often referred to a type of land or specific sites<sup>11</sup> owned by the master of a community and used for communal activities by all the members on certain occasions. With regard to the *publica* part, it can only be comprehended with reference to the idea of *privatae*, things belonging to individuals and families. In fact, there were various scales or types of ‘public’ things defined by Roman Law: *res communes (omnium)* was used to refer to natural things commonly enjoyed by all humans such as air, sunlight and ocean, *res publicae* to things built and set aside for public use by Roman people, such as roads, harbours and market place, and *res universitatis* to things owned by a corporate body such as the municipality of Rome<sup>12</sup>. The latter two increasingly overlapped with each other when people in other areas were recognised as citizens of Rome. Compared with the ‘common’, the ‘public’ things were mainly referring to artificial things which were constructed with human efforts. They were not something natural or something waiting for labour investment. They were built for public use. As constructing public buildings and infrastructure required collaboration and coordination, an agency organising the work and on behalf of people was then necessary. For me, regardless of the Republic or Empire, a sense of authority has been implied in the idea of public property.

I would like to outline the characteristics of early Chinese public-private ideas before continuing the urban dimension. First of all, *gong* and *si*, or Chinese public and private did not emerge as dual concepts from the beginning: *si* or private came up later than *gong* and they were used separately for long. Secondly, over history, the most significant idea related to *gong* was about land or land ownership, but it was concerned more about agricultural land. This is of course a consequence of the fact that China was a rural country for thousands of years and agriculture was always given first priority. However, this does not mean cities are inconsequential. On the contrary, cities play pivotal roles in governing the country and serving rural areas and agriculture. In both practice and thoughts, Chinese cities differ from those of Europe. In terms of city, some comparisons can be made to the ‘liberalism’ and ‘sociability’ theories of public-private division identified by Weintraub.

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<sup>11</sup> Here I would like to use more basic and plain words such as ‘land’ and ‘site’ to replace ‘property’ because at that time China did not have a similar legal concept or a mature civic law system as Roman law.

<sup>12</sup> Berger, Adolf, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, Vol. 43, 1968 pp. 677, 679, 680.

Typical Chinese cities (*cheng*, 城) in the imperial era were built as seats of imperial governments. Commercial activities, which were highly despised by Confucianism, flourished in cities for the consumption of the government, aristocrats, officials and their families. As the seats of political authorities and the nodes of a centralised governing system, cities for administrative purposes were neither freer nor more autonomous than rural areas but under much stricter regulation and control. This is different from the case of medieval cities in Western Europe that enjoyed many immunities and privileges and were relatively autonomous from the central authority. An interesting divergence between Chinese and European thoughts then emerged. The western liberal-economic model is based on the distinction between state administration and the market economy, praising the latter and questioning the ‘intervention’ of the former. Yet viewed from the experience of Chinese cities, it is hard to say that there has been a nongovernmental field or a well-developed market. As a result, neither a ‘free’ market place in traditional Chinese cities nor the ideal free market in theories ever existed in Chinese history. This results in particular Chinese understandings related to governmental intervention, on what the public and the private are and on the relationship between the two. Undeniably, as the case study city, Beijing, due to its capital status, displays the characteristics described above more evidently than those commercial towns developed from market settlements in southern China in the late imperial age. The situation of Beijing therefore should not be over-generalised, just like there is no single model of western cities. However, every study must find a starting point, and a more comprehensive understanding can only be built on the base of somewhat partial and schematic interpretation.

Besides the different position in a larger economic-political system, Chinese cities manifest particular spatial characteristics too. One noticeable feature is that there were no typical public spaces such as squares, market places and meeting halls in traditional Chinese cities. The history of Chinese city square and park does not exceed one century. This is not just a matter of spatial form, but also is consistent with the pattern of people’s social and public life. Existing theories based on western political and social culture such as the sociability perspective<sup>13</sup> in interpreting public-

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<sup>13</sup> Sociability perspective focus on sociability, seeing ‘social’ life as public life, such as what is described in Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York : Random House, 1961, and William Foote

private can hardly fit in the vein of the case of China. However, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, some traditional Chinese cities were experiencing a spatial and social transformation; Beijing may be the most predominant in this regard. In fact, it was also the time when the modern and westernised concept and practice of ‘city’ (*chengshi*) or ‘municipality’ (*zizhishi*) started to take shape in China. In this way, the Chinese cities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were more like a hybrid of Chinese tradition and western elements. But on a deeper level, as I will argue, they can be better understood if we put them back to their own historical and cultural trajectory.

To summarise, quite a few models and perspectives have been established to comprehend the remarkable distinction of ‘public’ and ‘private’ in the West. However, the fact that these theories are mainly based on the history and intellectual tradition of particular societies weakens their power to explain other societies. At the same time, intellectual legacies of other cultures have also been overlooked. This thesis tries to put the Chinese cases back into its own historical and conceptual contexts. In order to do this, I turn to Chinese language for help. As a living fossil, Chinese language records people’s views on the world from ancient time until now. Especially the graphic feature of Chinese characters carries a rich set of messages, such as what concrete thing a word referred to when it was created and how the understanding of it has evolved over time. Before starting the genealogy of *gong* and *si*, then, I would like to give an introduction of the meanings contained in the two words in daily language nowadays.

Table 2.1 illustrates the meanings of *gong* and *si* in modern Chinese. For *gong*, there are a few meanings overlapping its English counterpart. For example, *gong* can be used as an adjective, meaning ‘public’ and ‘common’, such as *gonggong*, publicly accessed, publicly used or collectively owned. This usage has been extended to some terms introduced from the West, implying more universal and international standards. For example, *gongchi* and *gongjin* means ‘meter’ and ‘kilogram’, which are distinct from Chinese measures, while *gongfa* and *gonghai* refer to international law and high seas. It can also be used as a verb. For example, the word *gongkai* literally means ‘making public and open’. As a noun, the single character *gong* can be used as a replacement for the state, government and people’s official duty. There are also

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Whyte’s *Street Corner Society: the Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1943.

some usages that ‘public’ does not have, such as ‘universal’ and ‘fair’. For example, *gongli* means ‘axiom’ or ‘universal principle’, and *gongzheng* means ‘just and fair’ or ‘justice and fairness’. Here the moral message *gong* connotes is noticeable. This characteristic is also one important focus of the thesis. In the ancient time, *gong* was also the title for the duke and then it became honorific title for respectable men. When it is put in front of species of animals, it simply means ‘male’<sup>14</sup>.

In the side of *si*, I have given some examples of its usage as a synonym of English private. Besides this, it can also be used as an adjective or adverb, meaning ‘secret’ or ‘secretly’; this use extends to words referring to some illegal activities such as smuggling (*zousi*) and lynching (*sixing*). Parallel to *gong*’s implication of fairness and justice, *si* has meanings like selfishness or self-interest, such as in the word *zisi*, *sixin*. When it is used as a noun, it can refer to personal belongings, personal interests, contraband and so on.

gong 公	si 私
adj. 1. public; 2. common; 3. universal; 4. open; 5. fair; 6. metric 7. international v. make public n. 1. the state; 2. official duty	adj. 1. private; 2. selfish; 3. secret  n. 1. something personal 2. personal interest 3. contraband
n. 1. Duke; 2. mister (Mr) adj. (of an animal) male	adv. secretly


**Table 2.1 Explanations of ‘Gong’ and ‘Si’ in Oxford Chinese-English Dictionary**

<sup>14</sup> From this point a Chinese feminist perspective of *gong* and *si* can be developed, and there is also a big space to build dialogue with existing western feminist research. But to sharpen the focus, I will not go into this aspect in this project.

## 2.2 Ideas of *gong* and *si* in Chinese history

### 2.2.1 Etymology of *gong* 公 and *si* 私

In spite of certain resonance between Chinese and English, Chinese is a distinct language system with its own rules. It is the Chinese character (*zi*, a ‘smaller’ unit than *ci*, ‘word’) that is the basic unit of the language<sup>15</sup>. Each single Chinese character occupies a specific space (like an English word); it expresses a group of meanings and at the same time is surrounded by a constellation of concepts. In contrast to English words’ more arbitrary combinations of meanings and letters (based on how the words are pronounced), Chinese characters, especially those basic ones, have graphic significance that is based on the ancient Chinese’s understanding of the objects that the earliest Chinese characters referred to. This divergence (i.e. European language-phonology; Chinese- a visual system) is also reflected in the difference that western (political) philosophy stresses on (human) logos and speech while Chinese philosophy follows an intrinsically distinctive trajectory that emphasizes humans’ ‘natural’ perception. This difference also contributes to some distinct spatial characteristics of Chinese cities and this thread will be developed throughout the thesis. Here I start my inquiry with examining the early pictographs of *gong*/公 and *si*/私, which are the base of the modern forms of the two Chinese characters.

According to the archaeological findings so far, *gong* (公) appeared earlier and was used much more frequently than *si* (私) in early writing scripts<sup>16</sup>. The earliest image of the pictograph of *gong* can be found in oracle bone writings and bronze inscriptions dating from the Bronze Age of China (3000-700BC)<sup>17</sup>. The ideogram of *gong* was expressed by images like  (figure 2.1). Shirakawa Shizuka interprets the

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<sup>15</sup> Pan, Wenguo argues that Chinese character plays an equivalent role in Chinese as word plays in Indo-European language. He also suggests using ‘sinigram’ as the academic term of ‘Chinese character’. For a comprehensive account of the fundamental status of sinigram/zi in Chinese with a comparison to European language, see Pan, Wenguo, *Zi benwei yu hanyu yanjiu (Sinigram as a basic unit and Chinese Study)*, Shanghai: East China Normal University, 2002, especially chapter 3 and 4. For an account more focusing on different linguistic traditions in Chinese and English, see Pan, Wenguo, *Contrastive Linguistics: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*, London and New York City: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Mizoguchi, Yuzo *China’s Gong and Si • Gong Si*, translated by Zheng, Jing, Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2011, p45.

<sup>17</sup> Oracle bone script (甲骨文, literally ‘shell bone writing’) refers to incised ancient Chinese characters found on animal bones or turtle shells used in divination at the last Shang dynasty capital near Anyang and dating from 1200 BC. These shell and bone inscription together with the contemporary characters cast in bronzes from the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600BC – c. 1046BC) to the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046BC – 256 BC) and even later constitute the oldest corpus of Chinese writing.

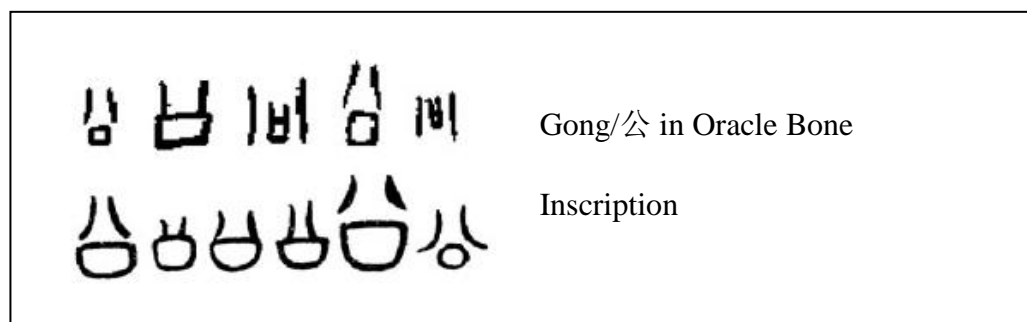
circle (sometimes a square) as the dwelling/palace of a tribal chief, and the 丿 \ on the top are two screens posed in front of the building when there was a tribal ceremony. Thus the whole image of *gong* was the plan of the place where communal ceremonies occurred. Shirakawa Shizuka then draws the conclusion that the original meaning of *gong* was the place where ancient community leaders lived and the temple where they were to be offered sacrifice after death<sup>18</sup>. This conjecture cannot be proved, but indeed in the unearthed oracle bone and bronze scripts, *gong* (公) was most commonly used together with its homophone *gong* (宮) which now means ‘palace’ or ‘temple’<sup>19</sup>. Xu Zhongshu<sup>20</sup>, however, explains the pictograph in a quite different way. Xu views 〇 as a bowl or jar, symbolising food for the community, and the symmetrical structure of 丿 \ meant ‘sharing equally’. In fact, 丿 \ was also the ideogram of the character meaning ‘to divide’ (fen/分 in modern Chinese)<sup>21</sup>. The character 𠂇, therefore, meant dividing the communal food and things in an equal manner. Of course, Xu adds, it was the tribal leader who did the distribution. According to this explanation, *gonggong* (公宮) was still the dwelling or temple of the tribal chief, but the first *gong* was now just the name of the building, meaning ‘people’s palace/temple’, implying that it was a place supposed to be commonly shared (Figure 2.2).

<sup>18</sup> Shirakawa, Shizuka *Character Dictionary (Zitong, 字统)*, Tokyo: Heibonsha Limited Publishers, 1984, p285.

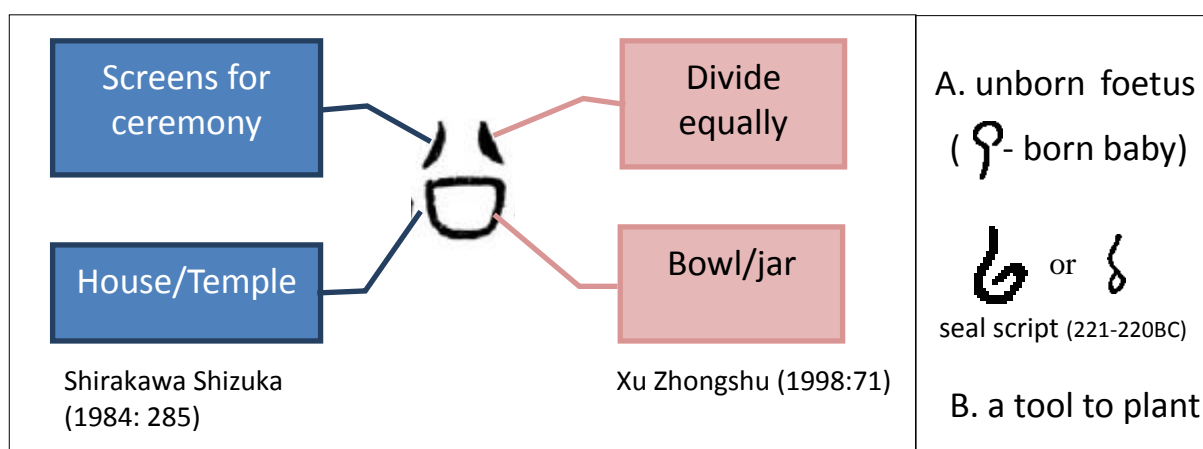
<sup>19</sup> It is common to see two homophonic Chinese characters with same or similar meanings are compounded together to emphasize the meaning that actually can be connoted by either of the two characters. Here again, *gonggong* (*gong*’s hall/temple) was found in many ancient inscriptions because of the noble and ritual status of these oracle bones and bronzes. In the city of Beijing, the place names with *gong* 宮 can be either a palace (i.e. *huanggong*, the Imperial Palace, also known as the Forbidden City) or a temple (i.e. *Yonghegong*, Yonghe Temple, Yonghe Lamasery, which was once used as official residence of Prince Yong).

<sup>20</sup> Xu, Zhongshu *Jiaguwen Zidian [Dictionary of Oracle Bone Scripts]*, Volume 2, Chengdu: Sichuan Dictionary Press (Sichuan Cishu Chubanshe), 1989, p71. See also Li, Leyi, *Tracing the Roots of Chinese Characters: 500 Cases*, Beijing: Beijing Language & Culture University Press, 1992, p.108.

<sup>21</sup> Here the symmetry of the pictography is essential, as it shows the initial idea of creating the word/character.



**Figure 2.1 Logograms of *Gong*/公 in Oracle Bone and Bronze Inscriptions<sup>22</sup>**





**Figure 2.2 Explanations of Early Logograms of *Gong*/公 and *Si*/私**

An undisputed meaning of the ancient *gong* was an honorific title for the leader or elite of a community<sup>23</sup>, somewhat like ‘sir’ in English, and this use lasted at least until the beginning of the twentieth century. From this point of view, *gonggong*(公宮) also meant a chief’s house, from which still we can find a clue that the word *gong* was associated with someone or something in a social and political dominant status. Yet it should be noted that a chief’s role in an ancient community and his relation to the common were different from a king at a later time. The two possible and potentially conflicted ‘origins’ of *gong*, that is, one related to the leader and the other

<sup>22</sup> Selected from *Jiaguwen Zidian* [Oracle Bone Dictionary], Volume 2, compiled by Xu, Zhongshu, Chengdu: Sichuan Dictionary Press (Sichuan Cishu Chubanshe), 1989, p71; and *Jiwen Bian* [Bronze Inscriptions], compiled by Rong, Geng, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985, pp.39-40.

<sup>23</sup> Xu, Zhongshu, *Oracle Bone Dictionary* (*Jiaguwen Zidian*), Volume 2, Chengdu: Sichuan Dictionary Press (Sichuan Cishu Chubanshe), 1989, p.71.

to common people as a collective have been preserved and developed through the history. In the meantime, the spatial characteristics of the words are also kept.

Given that the majority of the shell and bone scripts recorded royal divinations and a few recorded sacrifices, wars, hunting trips and other ‘public’ events, and that the bronze products with inscriptions were also bearing ritual significance (e.g. bells and tripodal cauldrons), it is not too surprising that we can find many *gongs* but no *si* in these scripts. The word *si*, sharing a range of meanings overlapping with English ‘private’, has not been found in any scripts earlier than the *Book of Odes* (*Odes* for short), the oldest collection of Chinese songs and poems dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. In the seal script version of the *Odes*<sup>24</sup>, *si* was written as  or . The picture is interpreted as a drawing of an unborn foetus<sup>25</sup> or an equipment to plough<sup>26</sup>, both of which connote a sense of ‘private’. In the following part I will use the *Book of Odes* as basic materials to analyse the ‘earliest’ usage and meanings of the words *gong* and *si* and the relationship between the two.

Before the analysis, I would like to introduce the status of the *Book of Odes*. This collection of folk songs (305 survived) is considered to be compiled by royal officials for the purpose of letting the King know the living conditions and voice of common people in different vassal states in the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 BC). Compared with other contemporary classical texts which recorded the speeches, thoughts and discussions of scholars (such as the *Analects* concerning Confucius’ teachings and his disciples’ words), the content of *Book of Odes* was much closer to ordinary people’s life (especially the 105 songs in the ‘Airs of the States’ section)<sup>27</sup>. That is the main reason for me to choose this book as a basic text to analyse. However, it is also worth mentioning that a considerable proportion of the contents

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<sup>24</sup> After Qin unified China in 221BC, the Qin variant of seal script was adopted as the formal script for all of China in the Qin Dynasty (778 – 207 BC) and ‘books’ (writings on bamboo) in other variants of seal script and on non-legalist thoughts were all burned. This event has resulted in the loss of a richer resource of ancient Chinese characters that can be used to trace the etymology.

<sup>25</sup> Kang, Yin, *Wenzi yuanliu qianxi (shilipian)* [*Origin and Development of Chinese Characters (with examples)*], Beijing: Rongbaozhai, 1979, p 301; Xu Zhongshu, *Jiaguwen Zidian* [*Dictionary of Oracle Bone Scripts*], Volume 14, Chengdu: Sichuan Dictionary Press (Sichuan Cishu Chubanshe), 1989, P1592-1594.

<sup>26</sup> Xu, Zhongshu, ‘Shilun zhou dai tianzhi jiqi shehuixingzhi’ [On the Land System and Social Characteristics of Zhou Dynasty], *Journal of Sichuan University*, 1955, no. 2, pp. 51-90.

<sup>27</sup> For a concise introduction of the status, contents and textual history of the *Book of Odes*, see Nylan, Michael *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001, chapter 2 “The Odes”, pp72-179. For the chronology of the pieces in the Odes see appendix II ‘Chronological Table of the Odes’ in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. 4: *The She King*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1871, pp.82-86.



were songs composed by officials, commenting on good or bad government (the majority of the 31 songs in ‘Daya’) or music played in banquets and ritual ceremonies (such as 74 songs in ‘Xiaoya’ and 40 in ‘Odes’). This may contribute to what Mizoguchi Yuzo<sup>28</sup> has noticed: *gong* was used far more frequently than *si* in *Odes* (*gong* appears 98 times while *si* just 8). The same case can be found in the *Book of History*<sup>29</sup> (*gong* appears 71 times and *si* just once), a later collection of early official documents.

In *Odes*, the use of *gong* can be classified into three categories. In most cases it was used as a single word or compounded with the name of a vassal state to refer to a nobleman. As a matter of fact, *gong* was the title granted to the noble of the highest rank in Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046 BC–256 BC). In *Odes*, there were expressions such as *Zhougong* (Duke of Zhou), *Qingong* (Duke of Qin), *Shaogong* (Duke of Shao), *wanggong* (princes and dukes), *gonghou* (dukes and marquises), *pigong* (the vassals or princes) and merely *gong* (the duke, his lordship). *Gongzi* (son of a duke) and *gongsun* (grandson of a duke) were another two similar usages<sup>30</sup>.

The second category referred to the places and belongings connected to *gong* (i.e. a duke or other nobleman). For examples, *gongsuo* (公所) referred to *gong*’s house or temple; *gongting* (公庭), *gong*’s yard; *gongtang* (公堂) *gong*’s hall; and *gongshi* (公尸) *gong*’s body. With the exception of the latter, they each had some elements of

<sup>28</sup> Mizoguchi, Yuzo, *Zhongguo de gong yu si • gong si* [China’s Gong and Si • Gong Si], translated by Zheng, Jing, Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2011, p.45. But it is also worth noting that songs and music were crucial compositions of rites and ceremonies in ancient Chinese society, which should be an important factor contributing to the result that the word ‘gong’ related to royal court and collective performance appears much more frequently than *si* in the *Odes* collection.

<sup>29</sup> *Book of History* (*Shujing* 书经 or *Shangshu* 尚书) is a compilation of speeches of major figures and records of events in the age before Qin Dynasty (221— 206 BC).

<sup>30</sup> The earliest extant redaction of the received text of the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing*, 诗经) were by Mao Heng and Mao Change, both of whom lived in Western Han (206BC- 9AD) and after them the *Odes* was also called *Maoshi* (*Mao Odes*). Zheng Xuan (127 - 200AD) made notes based on Mao version and Kong Yingda (574- 648 AD) wrote his commentary *Maoshi Zhengyi* (literally ‘orthodox interpretation of Maoshi’) to annotate the poems and Zheng Xuan’s exegesis from a Confucian perspective. Wang Xianqian (1842-1918) collected various commentaries through the ages since Western Han and compiled *Shi Sanjia Yi Jishu* [Exegesis on the Shih Based on Three Schools’ Understanding]. Kong and Wang’s volumes are the sources of the texts adopted in this thesis and my understanding on these verses is also greatly influenced by the interpretations in the two books. For English translation, I consult James Legge and Arthur Waley’s versions. The editions which I use are: Wang Xianqian, *Shi sanjia yi jishu*, collated by Wu Ge, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987; *Maoshi zhengyi* (3 Volumes), with exegetical notes by Mao Heng, Zheng Xuan and Kong Yingda, in the series of *Shisanjing Zhushu* (13 Classics of China), edited by Li, Xueqin, Beijing: Peaking University Press, 1999; *The Chinese Classics volume IV: the She King or the Book of Poetry*, translated by James Legge, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960; *Shih ching*, Waley, Arthur, trans, London : Allen & Unwin, 1937.

public space or common place. The poem of ‘Jianxi’ said ‘thousands of people are dancing in the ducal courtyard (*gongting*)’<sup>31</sup>, and the last verse of ‘The Seventh Month’ (*Qiyue*) described how serfs went to the hall of their lord to enjoy a banquet<sup>32</sup>. It seems that providing a space for the commoners in the community was at least one important function of these *gong*-places. Nonetheless these spaces were just open to people on certain occasions (e.g. ancestor worship and harvest celebration), and the activities there tended to bear a strong ritual sense. The limited ‘public’ nature of these spaces has been kept in the spatial structure of Chinese cities, which will be further discussed in the case of Beijing later.

In the last category *gong* was connected to governmental affairs. *Eulogies of Lu* was a group of poems<sup>33</sup> praising the state of Lu by celebrating the merits, success and the interest in the state of the dukes of Lu. In the fourth poem ‘Ancestral Temple’<sup>34</sup> (*Bigong*, 閼宫) there were *gong che* (公车) and *gong tu* (公徒) which meant the chariots and footmen of Duke of Lu literally but they also referred to the troops of the state. More examples can be found in the poem *Fenjuru*, in which *gong xing* (公行), *gong lu* (公路) and *gong zu* (公族) were all official positions: the first two were the title of the superintendent of the ruler’s carriage, and the last one was the title for whom governing the relations within the noble family<sup>35</sup>. Another case directly referring to official affairs is the poem of *Small Stars* (*Xiaoxing*, 小星), describing how a lower official complained that he worked day and night ‘at *gong* (place)’ and ‘on *gong* (affairs)’ (*su ye zai gong* 夙夜在公). Here the sense of *gong* had extended from the ruler and his place to the working place and public duties of his officers.

<sup>31</sup> Book of Odes- Part I Airs of the States (*Guofeng*)-Book 3 Odes of Bei (*Beifeng*)-Poem 13 *Jianxi* (诗经•国风•邶风•简兮). For a concordance table to different versions, see The Chinese Classics volume IV: the She King or the Book of Poetry, translated by James Legge, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960, pV-XIII.

<sup>32</sup> Book of Odes- Part I Airs of the States (*Guofeng*)-Book 15 Odes of Bin (*Binfeng*)- Poem 10 The Seventh Month(*Qiyue*) (诗经•国风•邶风•七月): James Legge’s translation: ‘Let us kill our lambs and sheep, And go to the hall of our prince, There raise the cup of rhinoceros horn, And wish him long life, -- that he may live for ever.’ in *The Chinese Classics volume IV: the She King or the Book of Poetry*, translated by James Legge, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960, p233.

<sup>33</sup> Book of Odes- Part IV Odes- Book 2 The Praise Odes Of Lu (诗经•颂•鲁颂).

<sup>34</sup> Book of Odes- Part IV Odes- Book 2 The Praise Odes Of Lu- Poem 4 *Bigong*(诗经•颂•鲁颂•閼宫).

<sup>35</sup> Book of Odes- Part I Airs of the States (*Guofeng*) -Book 9 The Odes of Wei (*Weifeng*)- Poem 2 *Fenjuru* (诗经•国风•魏风•汾沮洳). For an explanation of these terms, see Kong Yingda (574-648)’s *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi*, interpreting *Odes* based on the commentary from Du Yu(222-285), Taipei: Tanwan Shufang: 690; and Li, Xueqin *Maoshi Zhengyi*, Volume 2, Taipei: Tanwan Shufang: 2001, p.426.

Compared with *gong*, the early *si* was used less frequently and covered a narrower range of meanings. In the *Odes*, generally *si* denoted the people or belongings that had an intimate relation with a specific person. To refer to private items, there was ‘my *si*’ (*wosi* 我私), meaning ‘my clothes’<sup>36</sup>. In referring people, there were expressions like ‘*yan si*’ (宴私), meaning ‘treating your relatives’ in a family dinner, and in another occasion *si* referred to a woman’s brother-in-law<sup>37</sup>. Besides these two cases, *si* was also combined with *ren* (person, people), referring to household slaves or retainer servants: the former was to distinguish domestic labours (*siren* 私人) from normal citizens while the latter identified the people who worked for the king. In later history, the word *siren* gradually acquired its modern sense meaning ‘private person’ or ‘those privately owned’ in contrast with collective-owned and state-owned enterprises and assets.

The uses of *si* in the remaining three cases are significant, as it was compounded with *gong* and/or related to land. ‘Yixi (Oh! Yes!)’ was an ode to praise King Cheng’s contribution of developing agriculture. There was an imperative sentence: ‘go vigorously to work on your *si* (‘private’) fields’<sup>38</sup>. Here *si* was used to signify ‘private fields’ of the serfs, although ‘your private fields’ here was not necessarily a declaration on the ownership. With regard to the land system at that time, we can find more in the passage of ‘Big Fields (*Datian*)’

‘The clouds form in dense masses,  
And the rain comes down slowly.  
May it rain first on our *gong*’s fields (*gong-tian*),  
And then come to our private (*si*)!’<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Book of Odes - Part I Airs of the States (*Guofeng*) - Book 1 The Odes of Zhou and South (Zhounan) – Poem 2 Getan (诗经•国风•周南•葛覃).

<sup>37</sup> Book of Odes- Part III Daya- Book 3 Tang zhi shi- Poem 5 Songgao (诗经•大雅•崧高) and Book of Odes- Part II xiaoya- Book 5 Xiaomin zhi shi- Poem 9 Dadong (诗经•小雅•大东).

<sup>38</sup> Book of Odes- Part IV Odes- Book 1 The Praise Odes Of Zhou (ii)- Poem 2 Yixi (诗经•周颂•噫嘻). James Legge: the mention of the ‘private fields’ seems to imply that there were also ‘the public fields’, cultivated by the husbandment in common on behalf of the government; -- contrary to the view of Choo, that in the royal domain, in the portion of it here contemplated, the public revenue was derived from a different system. As the people are elsewhere introduced, wishing that the rain might first fall upon the public fields, to show their loyalty, the king here speaks only of the private fields, to show his sympathy and consideration for the people.

<sup>39</sup> Book of Odes – Part II Lesser Court Hymns (*Xiao Ya*) – Book 6 -- Big Field (*Da Tian*) (诗经•小雅•大田). James Legge’s translated *gong*’s field directly into ‘public fields’. *The Chinese Classics volume IV: the She King or the Book of Poetry*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960, p.381.

This passage seemed to suggest, first of all, a differentiation between *gong*'s fields and *si* fields. *Gong*'s field were the lands held by nobles and cooperatively farmed by serfs. Along with these big tracts of *gong*'s lands, there were small fields allotted to the serfs (i.e. *wo si*, literally 'my private', referring to my 'private' field) in the poem<sup>40</sup>. Secondly, the song said 'may it rain first on our *gong*'s fields, and then come to our private (field)'. Some scholars contend that the prayer order in the poem reveals the privilege of *gong*'s land over the private, and this argument can be supported by another passage in the song of 'The Seventh Month (*Qiyue*)':

‘The boars of one year are for themselves (*si*);  
Those of three years are for our prince (*gong*).’<sup>41</sup>

In fact, due to the limited source, the land system in Zhou Dynasty and before is still a highly controversial topic in Chinese history studies. Regarding *gong*-field/land (*gongtian*, 公田), there are several different, even contradictory understandings in broader literature and archaeological studies. The first one is led by Xu Zhongshu<sup>42</sup>, who has done a brilliant investigation on the early land system based on his rich knowledge on ancient Chinese scripts and historical geography. In Xu's explanation, *gongtian* was the land collectively 'owned' and shared by all the members of a community, somewhat similar to the commons in English medieval manors. Under the three-field rotation system in Zhou Dynasty, the field lying fallow was called *gongtian* (i.e. common field). According to Xu, during the Dynasties of Xia (c.2070—1600BC), Shang (1600—1046BC) and Western Zhou (1046-771BC), the Chinese society was built on the basis of ancient tribes and all lands were collectively 'owned'. Each household worked on the field allocated for them (*sitian*, a word meaning 'private field' in later time) by the community. The earliest Chinese logograms meaning field or land were 𠩺, 𠩻 or 𠩼 ('田' in modern Chinese, *tian* in Pinyin) and the crossing lines in these pictographs symbolised the drainage ditches.

<sup>40</sup> On the explanation of *gong*-field and *si*-field in the *Odes*, see He, Ziquan, *Zhongguo gudai shehui* [Chinese Ancient Society], Zhengzhou: Henan People Publisher, 1991, pp.73-76.

<sup>41</sup> Book of Odes- Part I Airs of the States (*Guofeng*)-Book 15 Odes of Bin (*Binfeng*)- Poem 10 The Seventh Month(*Qiyue*) (诗经•国风•邶风•七月). James Legge's translation, in *The Chinese Classics volume IV: the She King or the Book of Poetry*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960, p.230.

<sup>42</sup> Xu, Zhongshu, 'Shilun zhoudai tianzhi jiqi shehuixingzhi' [On the Land System and Social Characteristics of Zhou Dynasty], *Journal of Sichuan University*, 1955, no. 2, pp. 51-90.

This was a reflection of the fact that the earliest cultivating practice occurred in marshland areas near the Yellow River and draining the water out was an essential prerequisite for agriculture. Inspired by Marx's *Miner Asia Production*, Xu argues, the construction of drainage ditches could only be achieved by the collaboration of the whole community, the experience of which has immensely contributed to the communist idea and land practice in Pre-Qin Period<sup>43</sup>. From this perspective, *sitian* was actually a sub-type of *gongtian* since it was assigned and could be reassigned by the community. For other scholars, however, among whom Hu Shih (1891-1962)<sup>44</sup> is the most famous one, *gongtian* in Zhou Dynasty did not mean common field, but the king's land; the *sitian* in contrast with the king's *gongtian* was the noble's fields rather than the peasants'. Hu supposes that Western Zhou had a feudal system similar to that in Medieval Europe. Yet there was a transition of this system which bore some similar elements with the enclosure movements that occurred in England in the late middle ages. In the following Eastern Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046–256 BC)<sup>45</sup> characterized by the collapse of royal authority, the fields in many vassaldoms were institutionalized as the vassal's lands (i.e. as lands of the duke/vassal state rather than as the lands held by noble and/or peasants granted by the king). For example in the State of Lu<sup>46</sup>, peasants used to hold their 'own' fields and work on *gongtian* (i.e. *gong*'s land, the land of the duke/vassal) in exchange, which was very like the situation described in the *Book of Ode*. Now, however, besides contributing the products from *gongtian* to the vassal state/duke, they had to pay extra tax (like rent) for using *sitian* ('private' lands) - this change was called *chu shui mu* (初税亩, literally 'start to levy a tax on *si*-fields') in history. It is interesting that being taxed

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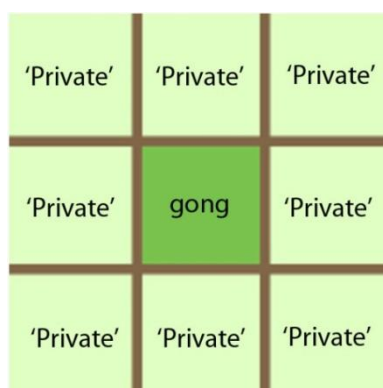
<sup>43</sup> In Chinese history study, the Pre-Qin Period (2,100 BC-221 BC) refers to the period preceding the first united and centralised Chinese empire called Qin (221-206). The unity of Qin is a very remarkable demarcation in Chinese history. For example, *The Cambridge History of China* narrates Chinese history starting from Qin Dynasty. *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 1, The Ch'in and Han empires, 221 B.C. - A.D. 220*, ed. by D. Twitchett and M. Loewe, general editors. D. Twitchett and J.K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

<sup>44</sup> Hu Shi in simple Chinese pinyin. See his correspondence with Liao Zhongkai and Hu Hanmin on 'well-field system' (four letters), i.e. 'Jintianbian sipian', compiled in *Collection of Hu Shi Wenji* [A Collection of Hu Shi's works] vol.2, Beijing: Peaking University Press, pp.305-326.

<sup>45</sup> The Eastern Zhou Dynasty includes the Spring and Autumn period (770-476BC) and Warring States period (475-221 BC).

<sup>46</sup> Here I keep the vague term 'state' mainly because this age is known as Warring States period (475-221 BC). These states were actually fiefdoms of Zhou but after a trend of conquest and annexation in the Spring and Autumn period (770-476BC), a few strong vassal states no longer depended on the legitimacy and protection of central authority. Qin was one of these states. Finally Qin unified the whole China and built a centralized empire in 221BC. Also the bureaucratic system developed and became mature very early. Therefore I think it is not too wrong to use 'state' here. Chinese concepts of state and nation will be explained later. where

here is not considered as an official recognition of the rights on ‘private’ fields, but a claim to the control by the (vassal) state.



**Figure 2.3 A well-field system (井田制) described by *Mencius***

Although contemporary academics debate the land system and the meaning of *gongtian* (*gong*-field) in the Western Zhou Dynasty, the thinkers and politicians after the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476) appeared more assertive about what the land system of Western Zhou was like. When being consulted by the Duke of Teng, Mencius<sup>47</sup> (372 – 289 BC) described an ideal ‘well-field’ system (*jingtianzhi*, 井田制)<sup>48</sup> based on his understanding and imagination of that in Western Zhou (Figure 2.3): one unit of land was divided among eight peasant families, and each family had its own outlying field around a central shared field (called *gongtian*), and all the families jointly worked a ninth central plot. Under this system, one should not work on their own field until the duty on the *gong*’s field had been fulfilled<sup>49</sup>. This conceived scheme was misinterpreted as the true situation of Western Zhou and the idea was enhanced by a series of later works<sup>50</sup>. It is significant that the ideology of

<sup>47</sup> Mencius lived in the Period of the Warring States (403–221 BC). His talk on ‘well-field system’ that has a profound effect can be found in Book V-3 ‘Duke Wen of Teng and the Taxation of Land’, in *Mencius*, translated by Leonard A. Lyall, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1932, pp.73-75. The texts and exegesis that I use is *Mengzi yizhu [Mencius the Annotation]*, vol. I, compiled and annotated by Yang, Bojun, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1960, pp.117-123.

<sup>48</sup> Or square - land system. It was called ‘well-field system’ because the word ‘well’(jing, 井) referred to field in ancient time (and its image reflected the spatial characteristic of fields). The use of well as field is extinct now.

<sup>49</sup> L Lyall’s translation: ‘If each Well is one mile square, the Well will be nine hundred roods. In the middle are the public fields. The eight households have each a hundred roods of their own. They feed the public fields between them. The dare not attend to their own work till the public work is done. The is how countrymen are divided from others’, in *Mencius*, translated by Leonard A. Lyall, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1932, p75

<sup>50</sup> ‘Reform under the cover of antiquity’ (*tuogu gaizhi*) is a common strategy used to attain the validity of a reform in different dynasties in China. Wang Mang and Kang Youwei are the most famous two among this kind of reformers.

dividing fields equally<sup>51</sup> based on a state ownership system was so strong and many reformers have tried to restore this system after the equal-field system (or land-equalization system, 均田制度) was first realized in the Northern Wei Dynasty (386 – 534AD).

To summarize this section: by tracing the etymology and examining the early uses of *gong* and *si*, we can see that *gong* and *si* were used to describe people or things in obviously different status: *gong* was related to both nobility and community, while *si* to some ambiguous meaning that can be developed into ‘private’. When being connected to land, although how *gongtian* worked in the early age is still debatable, people’s favour on this idea in later time was apparent. So far as it is concerned, the division of *gong* and *si* has emerged and sometimes we can better understand one concept by referencing the other. However, in most occasions they were used separately and the strong contrast between the two had not been constructed yet. How the potential tension between *gong* and *si* was transformed into explicit and systematic opposition/dichotomy will be discussed in the next section.

### 2.2.2 Following history: constructing *gong-si* opposition

The first influential interpretation on the relationship between *gong* and *si* is from *Shuowen Jiezi* (usually *Shuowen* for short)<sup>52</sup>, an early Chinese dictionary from the Dynasty of Han (206 BC – 220 AD). The author Xu Shen (c. 58 AD – c. 147 AD) cited Han Fei (c.280–233 BC), a philosopher of the Legalist School<sup>53</sup>, interpreting *gong* (公) etymologically as a compound of two simpler characters (one of which was *si* 𠂔) together, meaning ‘turning one’s back on *si*’ (*bei si*/𠂔, opposite to *si*/𠂔) (Figure 2.4). This (mis)understanding laid the foundation for the *gong/si* or ‘public’/‘private’ dichotomy throughout the whole later Chinese history<sup>54</sup>. Regarding *si*, Han Fei explained that ‘*si* was that which was enclosed’ and hence owned by someone. Xu Shen accepted this explanation and developed it into a more moral sense, saying

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<sup>51</sup> As we have mentioned before, the Chinese ideogram of divide implies a sense of dividing equally.

<sup>52</sup> Literally ‘Explaining and Analysing Characters’.

<sup>53</sup> The Legalist School is a political philosophy current starting from the Warring States period, emphasizing a strong government and strict application of the institution of law. It is usually put in contrast to Confucianism’s benevolence. The Legalist thoughts are often compared with those of Machiavelli.

<sup>54</sup> The notion that the term and concept of *gong* seems emerge earlier than *si* is based on the materials of modern anthropological excavation.

‘those crafty and iniquitous are *si*’. Given to the notable change of the writing of *si* from 厶 to 私, with an 禾<sup>55</sup>, the image of a cereal plant added on the left, Xu Shen further defined *si* (私) as ‘the crops under one’s name’<sup>56</sup> (Figure 2.4). As a consequence of this (re)interpretation, the sense of *gong* as commonly owned things and thus related to public interests was stressed ideologically, while in social practice and people’s collective (sub)consciousness, its elements directly linked to nobility and dominant status also remained.

**Figure 2.4 Explanation on the Structures of Characters of *Gong*/公 and *Si*/私/厶**  
(Drawn according to *Hanfeizi* and *Shuowen* )

<sup>55</sup> 禾(*he*) was used as a general name for rice and all the grains in literature.

[art.com/imgbook/view.php?word=%CB%BD&bookid=53&book\\_name=%CB%B5%CE%C4%BD%E2%D7%D6%D7%A2](http://art.com/imgbook/view.php?word=%CB%BD&bookid=53&book_name=%CB%B5%CE%C4%BD%E2%D7%D6%D7%A2) [Accessed 06.04.2013]



Han Fei and Xu Shen, commenting that the opposition of the two concepts was actually a ‘conspiracy’ penetrating throughout nearly 2000 years history of China<sup>58</sup>. According to Mizoguchi Yuzo’s examination, the (moral) opposition between the two had been well established in the period from Warring States Era (476BC–221BC) to Western Han Dynasty (202BC – 9AD), and in the process Han Fei’s theory played a pivotal role. In the following periods, the communist sense of *gong*’ and its ethical (and therefore political) priority over *si* were further configured and debated. As a result, the relatively pastoral understanding of the two words and the pre-assumed harmony between *gong* and *si*, like what was displayed in the *Book of Odes*, was gone<sup>59</sup>.

The political system, especially the changing forms of the state have greatly affected the evolution of *gong-si* understandings. In feudal China, mainly Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046 – 221BC), the king granted land to the nobles who became local lords (called *zhuhou*, like dukes and *gong* were their honorific title) as well as the rulers of different feudal states. Those feudal states were called *guo* which now is used as ‘state’ and ‘nation’. They were also called *gong-shi* which literally means ‘public hall’. The vassal states were quite independent from the Zhou kings and had their own tax and legal systems, currency and unique writing styles of characters. The vassal rulers also granted various districts to their own followers, and these sub-fiefdoms were called *jia*, of which the word now usually refers to family and home, or *si-jia*, literally means ‘private family’. Due to the decentralisation of the political system, it was the vassals of the ‘public halls’ and grandees of ‘private families’ that played the most active roles in political ground<sup>60</sup>. This formed the background to understand *gong-si* relationships in feudal China.

The three-layers fiefment structure became unstable in Warring States Era (476BC–221BC). This was also the age when the implication of *si* became obviously derogative and formed more apparent tension with *gong*. On the one hand, within

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<sup>58</sup> See Duan Yucai’s comments in Annotation of *Shuowen Jiezi*, [Online] Available from [http://www.gg-art.com/imgbook/view.php?word=%CB%BD&bookid=53&book\\_name=%CB%B5%CE%C4%BD%E2%D7%D6%D7%A2](http://www.gg-art.com/imgbook/view.php?word=%CB%BD&bookid=53&book_name=%CB%B5%CE%C4%BD%E2%D7%D6%D7%A2) [Accessed 06.04.2013]

<sup>59</sup> Mizoguchi, Yuzo, ‘The Etymology of *Gong* in Chinese’, in Mizoguchi, Yuzo, *Zhongguo de gong yu si • gong si [China’s Gong and Si • Gong Si]*, translated by Zheng, Jing, Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2011, p.230-240.

<sup>60</sup> Chen, Qiaojian, *Public (Gong) and Private (Si): Historical Study and Modern Interpretation*, Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2013, pp.37-8.

the vassal states, the grandees' 'private families' started to encroach the power of the vassals and the interests of 'public halls'. As I will show later, to a very large degree, the philosophy at that time was mainly political philosophy. Different schools argued their own blueprints of good politics and a just society. The disloyal behaviours of grandees were considered as morally bad, which contributed to the negative implication of *si* in its political and moral sense. From then on, *si* was connected to being treacherous and against standard hierarchical system, and therefore developed the meanings like 'in secret', 'privately' and 'illegal'<sup>61</sup>. On the other hand, some stronger state vassals, who used to pay ceremonious homage to the Zhou king, gradually disregarded the will of Zhou and declared themselves as kings. Finally, in 221BC, having conquered all other Warring States, the king of the state of Qin established the first centralised empire as the First Emperor. The decentralised feudal system completely collapsed. A lord of a vassal state with the title of *gong* now became the only ruler of the whole empire, the territory of which overlapped the former 'all-under-heaven' of the Zhou king. Compared with *gong* affairs of the vassal states, the government affairs of the empire were also much more complicated. In a hierarchical but highly centralised political system, people were in more direct confrontation with the government. Some of the previous tensions between *gong* and *si* ideas formed from the relationship between fiefdoms and sub-fiefdoms in reality was passed to the *gong-si* relationship between the centralised state and people.

Indeed, over the long imperial period, more compound words made up of *gong*, *si* and other characters were created to express new phenomena and ideas. Table 2.2 is a selection of the compounds with *gong* or/and *si*. These words emerged in the imperial age of China but most of them are still in use in contemporary Chinese.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.52.

**Table 2.2 Compounds with *gong* or/and *si***

Compounds of <i>gong</i>	Compounds of <i>si</i>
<p><b>related to the official</b> n.<sup>62</sup>.</p> <p><i>Gong-tang</i> 公堂 -- law court, tribunal  <i>Gong-an</i> 公案 -- court table  <i>Gong-han</i> 公函 -- official letters  <i>Gong-shi</i> 公事 -- government affair  <i>Gong-chai</i> 公差 -- official business  <i>Gong-liang</i> 公粮 -- agricultural tax paid by grain  <i>Gong-wu</i> 公务 -- official duty</p> <p>v.</p> <p><i>gui-gong</i> 归公 -- turn in to the state  <i>chong-gong</i> 充公 -- confiscate</p> <p><b>related to the common/public</b> n.</p> <p><i>Gong-lun</i> 公论 -- verdict of the masses  <i>Gong-de</i> 公德 -- public morality  <i>Gong-fen</i> 公愤 -- public indignation</p> <p>v.</p> <p><i>Gong-bu</i> 公布 -- announce, publish  <i>Gong-kai</i> 公开 -- disclose, to make public adv.</p> <p><i>Gong-ren</i> 公认 -- generally acknowledged  <i>Gong-ran</i> 公然 -- openly</p> <p><b>others</b></p> <p><i>Gong-lu</i> 公路 -- road  <i>Gong-guan</i> 公馆 -- mansion</p>	<p><b>related to non-government</b> n.</p> <p><i>Si-shu</i> 私塾 -- private school  <i>Si-jia</i> 私家 -- private family</p> <p><b>related to something personal</b> n.</p> <p><i>Si-chan</i> 私产 -- private estate  <i>Jia-si</i> 家私 -- personal effects  <i>Si-nang</i> 私囊 -- private purse  <i>Si-ren</i> 私人 -- private person  <i>Si-qing</i> 私情 -- personal preference  <i>Si-chou</i> 私仇 -- personal enmity</p> <p><b>v &amp; adv. secretly</b></p> <p><i>Si-ben</i> 私奔 -- to elope  <i>Si-fang</i> 私访 -- to make a secret inquiries  <i>Si-xia</i> 私下 -- privately, secretly</p> <p><b>related to something illegal</b> n.</p> <p><i>Si-xing</i> 私刑 -- illegal punishment  <i>Si-sheng zi</i> 私生子 -- an illegitimate  <i>Si-yan</i> 私盐 -- smuggled salt</p>
<p><b>Related to justice</b> n./adj.</p> <p><i>Gong-dao</i> 公道 -- justice  <i>Gong-ping</i> 公平 -- fair, just, impartial</p>	<p><b>related to moral corruption</b> n./adj.</p> <p><i>Si-yu</i> 私欲 -- lust, desire  <i>Si-xin</i> 私心 -- selfish motive  <i>Zi-si</i> 自私 -- selfish</p>
<p><b>Idiomatic expressions with <i>gong</i> and <i>si</i></b></p> <p><i>Gongkuan siyong</i> 公款私用 -- illegitimate use of public funds  <i>Jiagong jisi</i> 假公济私 -- exploit public office for private gain  <i>Gonger wangsì</i> 公而忘私 -- be so devoted to public service as to forget one's own interests  <i>Gongbao sichou</i> 公报私仇 -- abuse one's authority to revenge oneself on a personal enemy</p>	

<sup>62</sup> The lexical categories indicated here are those of the compounds rather than single *gong* or *si*. Most *gong* and *si* are used as adjectives and combined with a noun character to compose a new noun compound.

From the words above we can find that there were roughly three groups of meanings/uses of *gong*: the first group was related to the government and official affairs, which can be seen as a development of one of *gong*'s 'original' meanings which was connected to the tribal leaders, the prince of vassaldoms and then the rulers of the empire<sup>63</sup>. In the second group *gong* kept its connection to the masses, commoners and community, and in addition a meaning of 'public' as 'open' was also developed (such as *gongkai*, 'to disclose', 'to make public'; *gongran*, 'openly'). The third meaning of *gong* was more abstract and remarkable for its moral implication--it conveyed a sense of justice and fairness. This unique ethical dimension made the Chinese *gong* distinguished from its counterparts in other cultures.

From the side of *si*, it was used to refer to non-governmental bodies and illegal practice, which can be seen as a contrast to *gong*'s first meaning group. *Si*-compounds related to personal, private or secret things/activities seems to place *si* in the opposite position with *gong*'s 'public' and 'open' meaning. The remaining idea of *si* as selfishness, self-interest and partiality can be compared to *gong* as justice and impartiality. So far, the dichotomy between *gong* and *si* had prevailed in people's daily language as well as social ideology.

It is worth noting that, although emerging later, the third meaning group of *gong*, due to its connection to some basic principles such as justice and fairness became essential to comprehend all *gong*-related ideas and practice. A question can be made here: how was *gong* linked to justice? As we have known, etymologically *gong* was linked to the idea of dividing and sharing communal goods equally, and equality was absolutely essential for the Chinese value of justice and fairness. Besides this, the idea of *gong* was increasingly connected to the imagery of Heaven<sup>64</sup> (*tian*, 天) in Chinese thoughts, and Heaven was viewed as a perfect model to present the spirit and virtue of *gong* (i.e. justice and impartiality). The idea of Heaven and its relationship to impartiality (i.e. *wusi*, 'no *si*' or *gong*) can be reflected in the two similar classical passages below:

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<sup>63</sup> Qin was just one of the seven strongest vassaldoms in Warring States Era (476BC–221BC) and it conquered and merged six other vassal states and established the first centralised empire in 221BC. The titles of the ruler of Qin were *hou* (侯, marquis), *gong* (公, duke), *wang* (王, prince, king) and *huang* (皇, 皇帝, emperor).

<sup>64</sup> The Chinese concept of Heaven is, on the one hand, a naturalistic heaven, a synonym for the sky and nature; on the other hand, it is also a mythological and religious heaven, i.e. a place where the ancestors reside and from which emperors drew their mandate to rule.

‘Heaven overspreads all without any partiality (*si*), and so does Earth sustain all.’<sup>65</sup>

‘Heaven covers all without partiality; earth bears all up without partiality; the sun and moon shine on all without partiality; the four seasons alternate without partiality. Each bestows its power, and the myriad things attain thereby mature form.’<sup>66</sup>

Precisely because of its impartiality, the principles of Heaven were supposed to be the model that should be followed by the rulers to rule the kingdom. Im-partiality, or *wu-si*, (literally no *si*, no self-interest), or *gong* was regarded as the spirit of *gong* and therefore the most important character of the king<sup>67</sup>. A dialogue between Confucius and his student showed the importance of the virtue of impartiality to the king:

Zi-xia said, ‘(It is said that) the virtue of the kings (who founded the) three dynasties was equal to that of heaven and earth; allow me to ask of what nature that virtue was which could be said to put its possessors on an equality with heaven and earth.’ Confucius said, ‘They reverently displayed the Three Impartialities, while they comforted all beneath the sky under the toils which they imposed.’

Zi-xia said, ‘Allow me to ask what you call the “Three Impartialities (no *si*)”’. Confucius said, ‘Heaven overspreads all without partiality; Earth sustains and contains all without partiality; the Sun and Moon shine on all without partiality. Reverently displaying these three characteristics and thereby comforting all under heaven

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<sup>65</sup> Zhuang, Zhou, ‘The Great and Most Honoured Master’, in *Zhuangzi*, translated by Legge, James, [online] available from <http://ctext.org/all-texts?filter=285289%20-%20n2761> [accessed 07.04.2013]

<sup>66</sup> Lv, Buwei, ‘Dispense with Si/Partiality’, *Annals of Lvbuwei*, I/5.1, translated by Knoblock, John and Riegel, Jeffrey, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p.73.

<sup>67</sup> Sage-king is the ideal ruler in Chinese political thoughts. In legend China used to be ruled by five sage-kings in high antiquity.

under the toils which they imposed, is what is called “the Three Impartialities”<sup>68</sup>.

In fact, in the imperial period, the Emperor of China was called the ‘son of heaven’ (*tianzi*, 天子) and was recognized as the ruler of ‘all under heaven’ (*tianxia*, 天下, i.e. the world) rather than just a kingdom. He gained his kingship and ruling power against the ‘mandate of heaven’ (*tianming*, 天命) which was seen as the fundamental and hence highest principles of the world. His target was to keep the peace of the world, just like what heaven and earth did. Peace was considered as a natural state of the world and the peace could be maintained if the principle of impartiality was followed. Comparing the governing of the human world to the running of the natural world was very special here. There was no separation between human and nature as implicated in European understandings. The Chinese ‘politics’ (*zheng* 政), or governance more precisely, was connected to the maintenance or pursuit of peace which had been set by nature. The Chinese word to translate ‘politics’ and ‘political’ (*zheng* 政) was written the same with the word meaning ‘upright’, ‘central’, ‘regular’, ‘proper’, ‘standard’ (*zheng* 正) in ancient time<sup>69</sup>. It assumed harmony, standard and rules, the primary principle of which was impartiality (*wusi*), eliminating *si*, or *gong*. The connection between the king’s rule, *gong*-spirit (impartiality) and peace were expressed in the two passages bellow:

‘In the past, when the ancient sage-kings governed all-under-heaven, they invariably made impartiality their first priority, because if they acted impartially, the world would be at peace. This peace was attained by acting with impartiality.’<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Confucius at home at leisure’, in *Book of Rites*, 29-5, translated by Legge, James, Sacred Books of the East, volumes 27, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1885.

<sup>69</sup> When being asked by Ji Kangzi, a higher official of the state of Lu, Confucius gave a definition of (good) *Zheng* 政 or governance: ‘*Zheng* 政 means *zheng* 正’. The second *zheng* is a homophone of the first one and it is also the word where the *zheng* meaning governance or government derives from. *Analects*-Yanyuan-17. Online version from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/mozi/will-of-heaven-i> [accessed 05-08-2013].

<sup>70</sup> Lv, Buwei, ‘Honouring *Gong*/Impartiality’, in Knoblock, John and Riegel, Jeffrey eds. and trans., *Annals of Lvbuei : A Complete Translation and Study*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p.70.

‘When the Great Way/*Dao* prevails, a public and common spirit (*gong*) will rule all-under-heaven.’<sup>71</sup>

Throughout the Imperial China, the king was the core and the representative of the government. With the development of bureaucratic system, the expansion of governmental affairs and construction of government-*gong* connections, the ‘state’ (*guo* 国), the king (*jun* 君) and governmental officials (*guan* 官) were increasingly placed in a politically, socially as well as morally dominant position over family (*jia* 家), ministers (*chen* 臣) and civilians (*min* 民)<sup>72</sup> (Figure 2.5). Obviously, the former group was a *gong*-related category while the latter was *si*-related. It is not surprising to see collective-oriented Confucians to give all priority to things and people connected to *gong*; *gong* provided the principles of justice for the rulers to rule from which everyone would benefit while self-interested individuals and families would only act in favour of themselves. This theory gradually legitimised the realm of the state<sup>73</sup> as *gong*-sphere and justified the priority of the state over private affairs, interests and desires. The School of Principle of Neo-Confucianism (*songming lixue*, 宋明理学) in Song Dynasty (960 – 1279AD) pushed this notion to an extreme point, suggesting ‘keeping the principles of Heaven, exterminating (improper) human desires (*cun tianli, mie renyu*)’<sup>74</sup>. This idea became very influential since the School of Principle remained as the mainstream philosophy sponsored by the state until the Empire ended in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

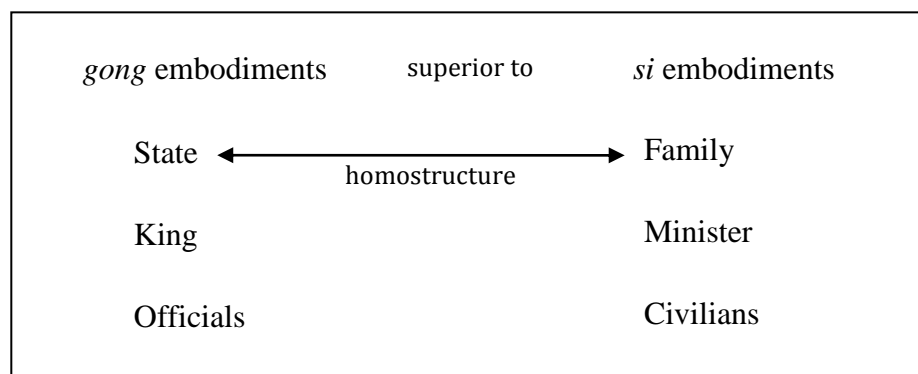
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<sup>71</sup> ‘The Conveyance of Rites’, in *Book of Rites*. All citations from *Book of Rites* used here are James Legge’s translation, with changing Grand course into Great Way. *The Lî Kî (The Book of Rites)*, Legge, James trans, The Sacred Books of China vol. 4, 1885, online source: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cfu/liki/> [accessed 05-08-2013]

<sup>72</sup> For a study on the relationship between the state and family, see e.g. Mitsuo, Moriya (守屋美都雄), *Family and state in ancient China*, HathiTrust Digital Library, 2010 (1968) .

<sup>73</sup> A typical Chinese understanding on their ‘state’ is all-under-heaven (*tianxia*) rather than a nation-state.

<sup>74</sup> See Zhu, Xi, *Zhuzi Yulei* (collection of discussions between Zhu Xi and his disciples), vol. 13, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981.



**Figure 2.5 Relative *gong-si* relationships between different embodiments**

### **2.2.3 A revolution?: slippery boundaries between *gong* and *si***

In spite of the constructed *gong-si* division and opposition, however, the boundaries between the two classes were unclear, unstable and sometimes even could be reversed.

As illustrated in the last section, gradually different actors and activities in political practice were theorised as either *gong* or *si* category. We can see the tension as well as connection between the two categories. One significant example reflecting the ambiguity between *gong* and *si* was the relationship between the state as a key *gong* embodiment and family as a *si* embodiment. In terms of state-family relations, although ordinarily the state was considered to be apparent as public/*gong* sphere while family was within private/*si* realm, Confucianism contended an internal homogeneity rather than contrast between the two. After the collapse of Western Zhou, a strict social structure and codes based on clans also broke down. Yet Confucians never ceased to (re)construct the connections between family, clan and nation. They argued that a country intrinsically shared the same structure with an extended family (*jia guo tong gou*, 家国同构) - the King was to the people what the father is to children, and everyone should do his or her devoir in a society just as family members did the duty for their families. In fact, the Chinese expression for ‘country’, ‘nation’ and ‘state’ is *guo-jia* (国家) which is made up of two characters: *guo*, ‘country’ or ‘state’ and *jia*, ‘home’ or ‘family’. This state-family homology confused the demarcation between the state, or public domain and domestic domain. This feature made state-domestic (or public-private) relationship in China distinct from the modern western liberal tradition which supposes a separated and relatively autonomous domestic and economic field.



Another property further complicating the public-private distinction was caused by the assumption that *gong* was the principle and natural law of the world. In this theory, *gong*-spirit (i.e. impartiality, equality and public ethos, etc.) was something that should prevail in all spheres, scales and activities, not just in government affairs and the public arena, but also in household and personal behaviours, which literally left no space for a pure private realm. To some extent, the omnipresent potential of *gong* makes it theoretically excludes nothing, rendering an 'opposite' *si* as an independent area impossible. As a result, on the one hand, it compromised the tension between different public and private bodies. Public interests and private interests were more compatible. For example, a private person could only fully realise his or her value by contributing to a broader society; for the government, certain local autonomy achieved by gentries (e.g. it was common that the local gentries rather than local authority built schools, roads and relieved the poor) was an effective complement rather than a challenge to its authority<sup>75</sup>. However, in reality, the omnipresence of *gong* and (extravagant) stress on *gong*-virtue and public interests had a risk of eroding private rights and space. Moreover, *gong*'s connection to justice, fairness, normativity, etc. gave all *gong* embodiments a moral priority over *si* embodiments. This moral privilege, when used to judge a person's motivation and behaviours, could be very excessive even dangerous, for it declared a person morally wrong and therefore denied his/her whole personality. This moral privilege of *gong* gave *gong* embodiments such as the Emperor and government extreme advantage. The mighty imperial power and the highly centralised state system can be seen as a manifestation of this.

More than a blurred boundary between *gong* and *si*, the moral positions between the embodiments of the two could be changed and even reversed. This was because all the bodies and activities in reality fell within the spectrum between an ideal *gong* and an ideal *si* as two poles. *Gong* and *si* in practice were relative, rather than absolute. For instance, while a local community (say, a city) was *gong* compared to a household, it was *si* to the whole country. Sometimes one thing might change from

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<sup>75</sup> Case study and theoretical analysis on active local autonomy in late Qing can be found in Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911*, Stanford University Press, 1986; and *The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China*, Smith, Joanna, University of California Press, 2009; also see Rankin, Backus, 'Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere,' in *Modern China*, 1993, Vol. 19, No. 2, Symposium: "Public Sphere"/"Civil Society" in China? Paradigmatic Issues in Chinese Studies, III, pp. 158-182.

one side to the other substantially. The king or the ruling group were usually seen as *gong* and ‘public’ authority, but if they failed to pursue the welfare for all-under-heaven and fall into partiality, then they were just one ‘self-enclosed’ family (*si*), and could be overthrown by the people on behalf of *gong*/heaven (*ti tian xing dao*, 替天行道).

More evolutionary thoughts emerged since the 17<sup>th</sup> century: *si* (such as property rights) and desire (*yu* 欲, including the desire to own and to develop, etc., similar to but not as strong as ‘right’)<sup>76</sup> were overtly justified. Gu Yanwu (1613–1682AD) argued that the king should see all the people’s *si* (private interests) together as his *gong*, and further suggested that we should aggregate all the *si* all over the world as the *gong* under heaven. This bottom-up understanding of *gong* altered the traditional top-down *gong* theory. It praised everyone (*ren ren*, 人人) and at the same time emphasised the all. As Mizoguchi Yuzo points out, ‘everyone’ can refer to individual and it is also a holistic concept. He contends that the idea that everyone is a part of *gong* and that the commonwealth of people takes precedence over the state was very radical, and he believes that this theory has immensely contributed to the revolution in the late Qing Dynasty<sup>77</sup>.

For me, the ‘new’ understanding of *gong-si* relationship and its revolutionary potential actually resonated with the tension between the two initial meanings of *gong*: *gong* could refer to the head of a community, but *gong* was also connected to the collectivity of the aggregation of everybody. These two purported ‘origins’ of *gong* actually reflect two notions of the source and essence of public authority: does it reside in the sovereign head or the body of a political community? Or, should a sovereign head or the union of the people take possession of public power. The debates between the two notions have existed for long, both in theory and in practice, both in China and the West. But not until the late imperial China, the value of private people and private desire were overtly justified. To be sure, collective and collectivity were still important, but more stress was put onto the dimension of individuals as basic elements of collectivity now. From this point of view, there was

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<sup>76</sup> Yu, Yingshi, *Xiandai ruxue de huigu yu zhanwang [Modern Confucianism]*, Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2004, p.158.

<sup>77</sup> Mizoguchi, Yuzo, *China’s Gong and Si • Gong Si*, translated by Zheng, Jing, Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2011, pp. 275-276.

not only a contest between government and collective as two *gong* embodiments, but also private people composing collective attained a kind of political privilege, against of which the state authority might be challenged.

Another challenge from the side of private relied on the intimate relationship between private person and Heaven, between innate moral sense and universal principles. The School of Mind/Heart<sup>78</sup>, founded by Lu Jiuyuan (1139--1192) and developed by Wang Yangming (1472-1529), was a major rival of Cheng-zhu's Neo-Confucianism (or School of Principle/*Li*) that approved 'eliminating selfish desires'. The Confucians in the Mind/Heart School believed that knowledge was intuitive and everybody, including sages and common people, knew the difference between good and evil. Because of the assumed unity of the mind/heart of humanity and the principle of Dao (or universal law), private people with innate moral goodness now were directly connected to the highest principle of Heaven and the highest goodness of *gong*. The implication was significant. In this theory, private people could access the virtue of the moral and abstract *gong* without any *gong*-embodiments like the state or a collective as media; human ethical codes were coincident with normative *gong*. This idea not only recognized private people's capability to know *gong* virtues, but also gave them the authority to judge whether the behaviours of the state and officials were conformable with *gong* principle or not.

Undeniably, the evolution of the concepts of *gong* and *si* and their relationships was influenced by its contemporary social, political and cultural conditions. The government of imperial China was a centralised hierarchical system with the emperor at the top. The scope of *gong* affairs related to administration was increasingly enlarged and the contents were also more comprehensive. As Confucianism, which attaches huge importance to morality, was promoted as official ideology in almost all the dynasties, the priority of *gong* in early Confucian thoughts was developed and utilised to justify for the enriched *gong* practice. The other facet of the emphasis on *gong* was debasing the value of *si*. As has been mentioned in section 2.2.2, the School of Principle of Neo-Confucianism getting popular from Song Dynasty (960 – 1279AD) pushed the opposition of *gong* and *si* into an extreme point, exaggerating

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<sup>78</sup> It is usually translated into School of Mind, but the Chinese name *xinxue* literally means the study of heart. Given the fact that there was no separation between mind and heart in Chinese philosophy, I translate it here as School of Mind/Heart.

the danger of private interests and private desire (*siyu*). However, it was not simply an ethical battle between the government as *gong* and normal people as *si*. It was more about moral requirements for officers of the empire. A civil service examination system (*keju*), based on knowledge of Confucian classics, was used to select imperial bureaucrats. The Neo-Confucian theory from the School of Principle was to cultivate scholar-bureaucrats' *gong* merits: impartiality, fairness, equality, dignity, restraining private desire and sacrificing for public interests, but it was pushed too far and distortedly employed by the rulers to suppress *si* aspects. Its austere scrutiny on personal morality and motivation also smothered society.

The influence of the School of Principle's ascetic views went into the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and things began to change. One change was that different perspectives from Daoism and Buddhism came to rectify the extremism of the Principlists. One example was the Mind/Heart School's belief on the connection between the principle of the Heaven and each person's heart, which revolutionarily brought private person with his/her own interests and highest *gong* together. They also considered *si*-desires could be moderate and justifiable. Critiques and reflections on despotism were also increasing. Power was too centralised to the emperor, and the emperor could be very nepotistic. Gradually, previous attacks on private desires of normal people and bureaucrats now were made more on the emperor. The direct connection between private person as *si* and the Heaven as *gong* broke the privilege of the emperor as the Son of Heaven and challenged the hierarchic order of the imperial system and Confucianist tradition. In terms of the models of *gong*-state, some thinkers openly expressed their preference for more even feudal system rather than the centralised imperial polity<sup>79</sup>.

The arising awareness of national states also assisted the evolution of *gong-si* ideas. Although employing many Han officers and following Han political and ritual system, the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) was founded not by Han Chinese, who composed the majority of Chinese population but by the Manchu people. This was seen as a foreign invasion by sinocentrists and there were ongoing rebellions aiming at restoring 'Chinese nation' over the long dynasty. From the late Qing, military attacks from the European empires shocked the country. The intrusion of other states

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<sup>79</sup> E.g. Gu, Yanwu, 'On the system of prefectures and counties' (Jun Xian Lun 1), in Works of Gu Yanwu (*Gu Tinglin Wenji*), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, p.12.

not only threatened the ruling government but also brought about disasters for normal people. The idea that private people's interests and collective interests of the nation were associated and consistent developed against these backgrounds. Gu's bottom-up *gong* model, that is, the aggression of *si* was *gong*, was an typical example<sup>80</sup>.

To summarise, in late imperial China, that the mind/heart of normal people was connected to abstract *gong* and thereby a kind of moral authority, with the idea regarding private desire as positive and the notion considering the aggregation of all the *si* all over the world was the *gong* under heaven (which actually can be seen as a development of the Mind/Heart School) together contributed to a bottom-up *gong* model. Compared with the previous top-down understanding of *gong*, which saw the normative principle of Heaven/*gong* was the starting point and all the *gong* and *si* embodiments and actors in the world should follow the principle, this new model affirmed the value of private people, and brought upward the position of private bodies in the moral ladder to the highest *gong*. However, the change was still within the vertical *gong-si* system. The new understanding enabled private bodies more mobility to move upward but did not build new relationship between different private bodies. In other words, the connection between private people and Heaven did not bring a horizontal collaboration between people, which did not help with the formation of a horizontal dimension of *gong* like 'the public' in English expression. A private person in Chinese understanding was living in a family and a state, and linked to Heaven and Dao, which was different from the understanding that a man lives a political life with his peers in a community. The *gong*/public spirit theorised from the bottom, might recognise each individual as *si* body and attach high importance to the gathering of individuals (i.e. collective), but it was ultimately not based on the 'horizontal' co-existence of different people but the 'vertical' connection between each person and Heaven<sup>81</sup>. In this sense, the political thoughts in China's late imperial period gave the *gong-si* relationship some revolutionary understanding, which has further complicated and confused the demarcation and

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<sup>80</sup> Gu, Yanwu & Huang, Rucheng, *Annotation of Ri Zhi Lu (Ri Zhi Lu jishi)*, Shanghai: Shanghai Rarebooks Publishing House, 2006, p.148.

<sup>81</sup> Lan, Hung-Yueh, 'Dongya zhong de "gonggong" gainian: Lishi yuanliu yu zhankai( "Public" in East Asian Contexts: History and Development)', in Huang, Junjie & Jiang, Yihua, eds., *Gong si lingyu xintan: dongya yu xifang guandian zhi bijiao (Exploring Public and Private Spheres: Comparing the Perspectives from East Asia and the West)*, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, pp. 57-84.

connection between the two idea groups, but the revolution still happened within its cultural and philosophical vein.

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

From the history of the ideas of *gong* and *si* given above, we can see there are different even conflicted notions of the two concepts and their relationship, and people's understanding of them has also been changing over time. However, it is not the case that a new understanding totally replaces the old one or this one triumphs over the other. Instead, various notions and different layers of understanding accumulate, influencing people's mind and practices nowadays. This section aims to summarise the characteristics of the ideas of *gong* and *si*, including the different aspects of each concept, the interrelationship of different aspects within each of them and the interaction between the two. The general distinction and connection between the two conceptual constellations will be used as a basic framework to understand land politics in the communist Beijing, and more specific interpreting structures will be developed through the two case studies in Chapter 4 and 5.

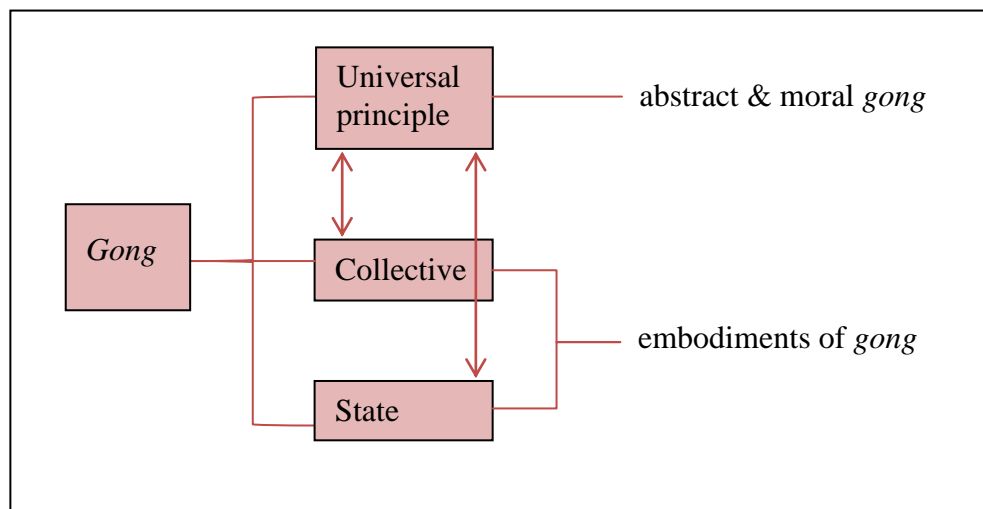
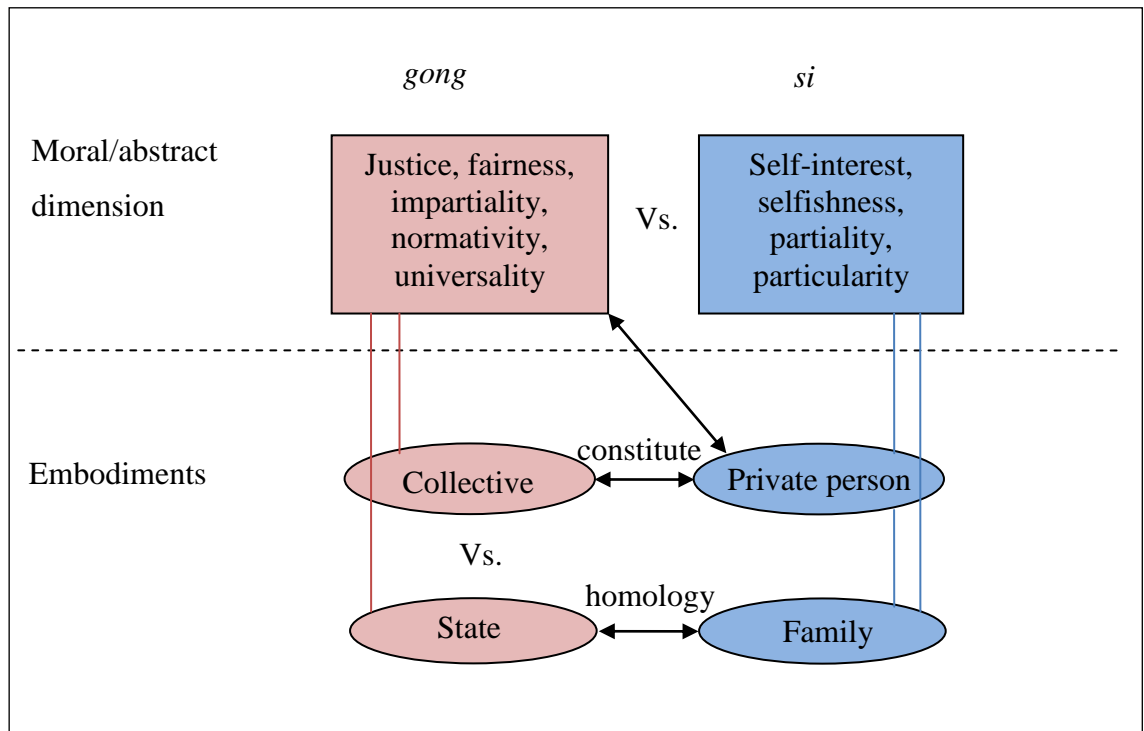


Figure 2.6 Three main aspects of *gong*

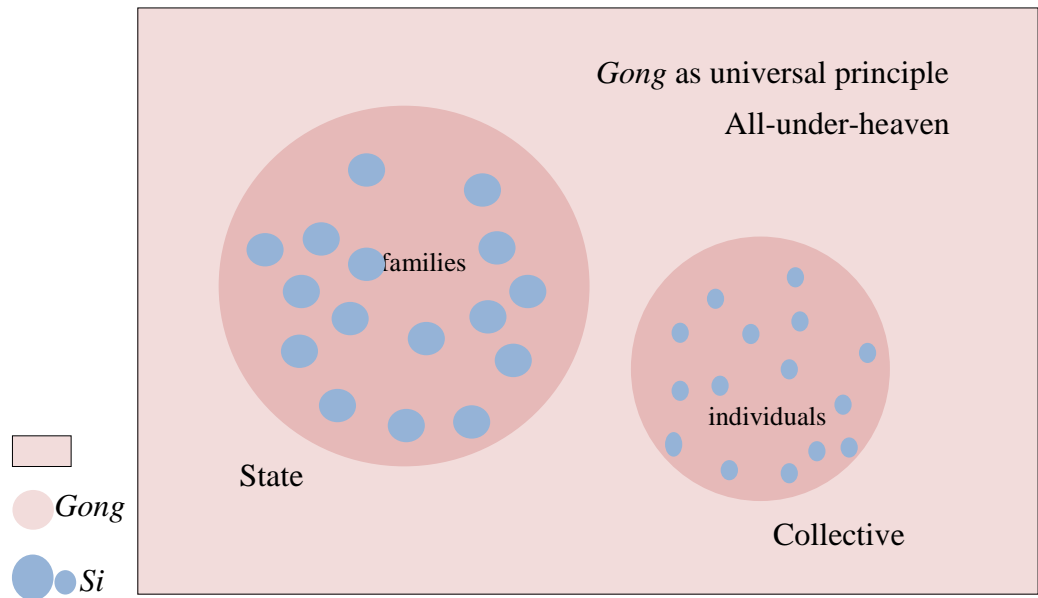


**Figure 2.7 General distinction and connection between *gong* and *si***

The tension between *gong* and *si* and the contest for the moral, normative *gong* will be the focus of my theoretical and empirical investigation. I will argue that the tension and the contestation rest on the features of each idea and the connections between the two. In terms of *gong*, three aspects are important: (1) universal principle, (2) collective embodiment, (3) embodiment in the state (Figure 2.6). Among the three, *gong* as universal principle, as normative value is unique and fundamental to the politics of *gong-si* relationship. This is also the most abstract dimension of *gong* ideas, implying justice, fairness, impartiality and other *gong*-merits and *gong*-spirit/public spirit. It is this abstract, moral sense of *gong* that gives all *gong* related bodies and activities moral and therefore political priority over their *si* counterparts. State and collective are two most important *gong* embodiments. The state is in a political advantage position in reality. An ideal state is considered to be ruled under the guide of *gong* and can represent the public interests of all the people in the country. Collective can be a community in reality but the Chinese understanding emphasises the pure aggregation of people and its superiority in numbers over individual persons.

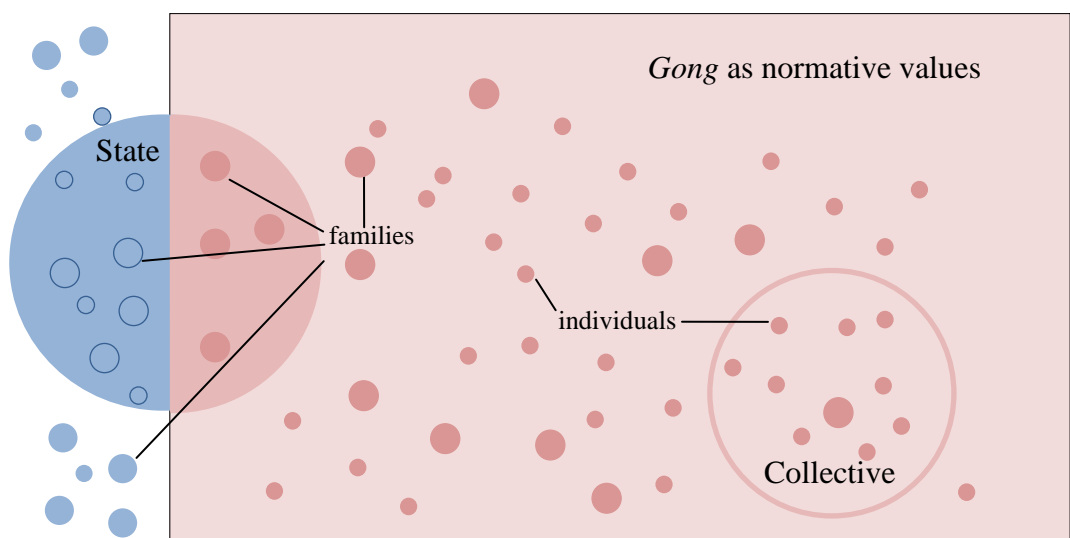
*Si* also has an abstract and ethical layer, denoting selfishness, self-interest, partiality, etc. Private person and family are two major embodiments of *si* (Figure 2.7). Because *si* is morally flawed, *si* embodiments are usually in a politically disadvantaged position especially when compared to the state that claims all the ethical superiority of *gong*. However, both family and private people can be linked to the *gong* side. For one thing, family and state are considered to share a homologous structure, which blurs the demarcation between *gong* and *si*. For another, the collective embodiment is an aggregation constituted by private persons, which also bridges the two parts (Figure 2.8). Even more, *gong* as the universal principle and moral law is connected to the perception and innate knowledge of private person, which linked the smallest unit of *si* to the highest, abstract dimension of *gong*. As a consequence of the private person's capability in judging whether something or some behaviour is consistent with the *gong* universal principle, the validity of any institutional organisation including the state can always be challenged. This forms a reversible relationship between the state and private person as *gong* and *si* embodiments. In history, it is not unusual to accuse the monarchy or government of falling into the private interests of some people, households or groups. In this moment, the collective of individuals can claim alternative authority as *gong* embodiments, such as peasant uprisings and revolutions (Figure 2.9).





**Figure 2.8 relationship of *gong* and *si* embodiments: model 1**

(state and collective as *gong* embodiments; individual and family as *si* embodiments; state and family share homologous structure; collective is the aggregation of individuals)



**Figure 2.9 relationship of *gong* and *si* embodiments: model 2**

(state may fall into *si*; individuals have innate knowledge and value of *gong*)

To summarise, there are multiple understandings, tensions and connections between *gong* and *si* ideas: the abstract and moral meanings of *gong* and *si* are contradictory to each other; the state and collective as *gong* embodiments are given moral as well as political priority over family and individual as *si* embodiments; the state and family share the same structure while collective consists of individuals, which connect the two categories; individual's inner connection with normative value of *gong* and the possibility of the state falling into *si* render the moral relationship between the state, individual and collective unsettled and changeable. The complicated and intimate relationship among various *gong* and *si* embodiments and their competition for the normative *gong* are fundamentally political.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The selection of research methods depends on the questions that the researcher aims to answer and the possible sources from which the data can be generated. Researchers' personal interests, values and preference also influence selection of research methods.

Concerned with public control over urban land and the tension between public power and private interests, this thesis investigates concepts of Chinese *gong-si* historically and, in particular, through two land nationalisation cases occurring in Beijing between the 1950s and 1970s. In order to achieve this, the research begins with a genealogy of *gong* and *si* ideas in Chinese history (chapter 2), and then the case studies (chapter 4 and 5). The empirical study focuses on the following questions: (1) how the land ownership was nationalised and how the land use was shaped by the state in the two cases; (2) what politics between public power and private person/family, between different public and private bodies these cases reveal; (3) to what extent we can use the *gong-si* conceptual framework to make sense of the politics and discourses displayed in the two cases.

In this chapter I will explain the selection for certain methods for this project and how I come to deploy them. Section 3.2 will discuss the genealogy method or history of ideas that I apply to trace the key concepts and the root, use and meanings of the terms. Sections 3.3 and 3.4 will then illustrate the approaches that I use in case studies for data collection and analyses, including archival study, in-depth interviews, etc.

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the methods of the study and put the ontological and epistemological hypotheses and research process under scrutiny; it also helps me reflect my cultural and personal positionality in academic inquiries.

## 3.2 Exploring conceptual contexts

### 3.2.1 History of ideas and genealogy

While my concerns and interests are developed from my observation on what is going on in our own time, I believe we can gain more proper historical understanding of the importance of the issues and how they formed out of the past by investigating them in a broader temporal structure. For my research, it is the history of ideas or genealogical method that I use to build a historical, conceptual and linguistic background for the whole research; and it also hopefully enables me as well as readers to enter into a proper context to understand the case studies.

In regard to the connection between history and present, Foucault, who provides perhaps the most significant examples on the genealogical method, remarks that his interest is not about ‘writing a history of the past in terms of the present’, but ‘writing the history of the present’<sup>82</sup>. Or we can formulate it into a Nietzschean question: how did we get here<sup>83</sup>? If I translate this into my own version, the questions would be: why is public power so immense and why do people feel that they cannot resist land expropriation that is justified by the name of *gong*, or by the discourse ‘for the purpose of public interests’? How China can manage to maintain its special state-owned landownership system? How did we get here? As such, genealogy is used as a strategy or a tool to analyse issues identified as problematic in the present.

On the issue that I am particularly concerned, *gong* and *si* are two interrelated terms and ideas frequently used in daily language, official reports and academic works. In order to comprehend what people mean by these two words, and to know how the understandings of them have affected practice and interacted with the reality, I investigated the evolution of the ideas of *gong* and *si* in Chapter 2.

The ‘history of ideas’ approach advocated by the Cambridge School, of which Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock are probably the most notable figures, provides methodological principles and techniques that I can follow to study the

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<sup>82</sup> Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, p31. For an analysis on this, see Roth, ‘Foucault’s “History of the Present”’, *History and Theory*, vol. 20, 1981, no.1.

<sup>83</sup> Bartelson, Jens, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.73.

(political) ideas around *gong* and *si*<sup>84</sup>. Adopting the notion that we should read texts back into the contexts in which they were formed, I try to use the specific words and expressions in each historical period rather than those invented in later time, and in the meanwhile, the social contexts are taken into consideration to form more situational understanding. In short, I try to understand the present historically, and to read the concepts both textually and contextually<sup>85</sup>.

Although *gong* and *si* are selected as the key terms to investigate, they cannot be seen as two words with well-defined meanings or two unit-ideas. Any concepts and ideas are woven into a larger, intricate net of meanings in relation to other ideas. For one thing, *gong* and *si* are not only used as single words but also combined with other characters to form compound words. For another, the usage and understanding of the two words are related to other ideas like state, family, individuals, etc. They are always used in specific social-political contexts, so the uses and understandings are changing over time. These facts increase the complexity of the meanings and connotations of *gong* and *si*, rendering them two conceptual constellations rather than two simple unit-ideas. Skinner disputes the influential thoughts of Arthur Lovejoy<sup>86</sup>, a pioneer of ‘histories of idea’ approach, and argues that Lovejoy’s unit-idea methodology-- that is, the intention to take the individual concept as a departure point-- implies an ideal type of the given doctrine which is presupposed immanent in history. From this perspective, ‘the history thus written becomes a history not of ideas at all, but of abstractions’<sup>87</sup>. Bearing this in mind, I try to avoid presuming any ‘essential meanings’ of the two ‘concepts’ of *gong* and *si* in abstraction but to study the use of them in different contexts first. It also resonates with the fact that early Chinese words with spatial implications were used initially to refer to very concrete things and more abstract ideas were later inventions. However, still I need to synthesize the use of them into several categories and summarise the ‘meanings’ of

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<sup>84</sup> See Skinner, Quentin, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, *History and Theory*, 1969, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 3-53; Skinner, Quentin, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978; J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History*, London: Methuen, 1972; and J. G. A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. A specific research on a topic very relevant to my concerns is Skinner’s ‘A Genealogy of the Modern State’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 2008, 162, 325-370.

<sup>85</sup> Another two works inspiring me by their methods are: Casey, Edward S, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997; and Elden, Stuart, *The Birth of Territory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

<sup>86</sup> See Lovejoy, Arthur, *The Great Chain of Being*, New York: Torchbook edn., 1960.

<sup>87</sup> Skinner, Quentin, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, *History and Theory*, 1969, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 3-53.

them. This does not mean that I believe there are stable, essential or coherent meanings of *gong* and *si*; instead, I attempt to show that the uses and understanding are complex, contradictory and open to changes and interpretations. I intend to demonstrate the multiple facets and rich layers of the meanings and implications of the two ideas. These sometimes contested meanings of *gong* and *si* emerged and evolved over time, but all of them, as the analysis in the case studies will show, have left their footprints on Chinese people's daily language and understandings nowadays.

However, I must say that, I do not give a complete history of the two concepts, though it might be more beneficial. A complete history will become too large a project which itself can be the whole topic of the thesis, but the genealogy here is just the conceptual context of the research. As I cannot give a full account, I must choose the episodes in history or philosophical thoughts that are most crucial to the formation of our current understanding. I have to acknowledge that my selection is somewhat arbitrary, as I placed large proportion of my original analysis on some very ancient texts. By 'ancient texts' here I refer to the earliest available Chinese writing incised in animal bones and casted in bronzes dating from around 1300BC, the earliest poetry *Book of Song (Shijing)*, a collection of songs between the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, and political thoughts formed during the Eastern Zhou period (c. 770-221BC), just before the centralised Qin unified the country. The last period is also known as the period of 'Hundred Schools of Thought' and is considered as the Golden Age of Chinese philosophy, since a broad range of thoughts and ideas were developed and flourished based on free discussion. Many texts at that time heavily influenced the dominant Confucianism later on but the thoughts were more diverse and free than the latter. Compared with later scripts, the thoughts in the early ones, having not been over-developed or over-interpreted yet, are also more 'plain', closer to the 'natural' sense of people living in this culture. Like the *Book of Song*, a song book of which a large proportion is folk songs, many contents reflect more about normal people's understanding based on their daily knowledge and common sense in that specific social background rather than scholarly theorisation. This is what I want to reveal. And studying the graphic symbols in oracle bones and bronzes is an attempt to explore what these symbols initially referred to. Of course, as Foucault

has expressed, there is no really ‘origin’ of words<sup>88</sup>. Yet these early meanings of words can be viewed like metaphors, evoking our comprehension of the thoughts around them later and now.

For the following imperial era (i.e. AD 221-1911), I use more secondary literature to acquire a very concise account of the evolution of *gong-si* ideas, with a bit more stress on the transformation in the late Qing Dynasty when China and the West clashed militarily and intellectually. I give the examples and explanations of the new terms and ideas around *gong* and *si* by employing certain thoughts reflected in dominant orthodoxy and influential thinkers in history as well as some given conclusion from contemporary scholarship. This non-exhaustive method can be justified by the following reasons. First, the unchangeable orthodox status of Confucianism during imperial China in a way simplified the intellectual history. Second, genealogy can be exemplary. As Jens Bartelson puts it, relying on examples ‘does not assume these examples to be transhistorically valid, since this necessarily would presuppose a cyclical recurrence of historical events or a cyclical concept of time, or both’, but genealogy does ‘presuppose cyclical recurrence at the level of narrative time’<sup>89</sup>. What I want to show by the genealogy thus is about the accumulation and recurrence of various ideas around *gong* and *si*, even though some of them are conflicted with each other and some old orthodoxy seems to have collapsed. Again, although I try to keep the coherence of my focus and intend to make plausible connections between different examples and ideas, I do not assume an ontological coherence inherent in the examples and ideas. Like my attitude to the ‘roots’ or the ‘original’ meanings of the words, I recognise their evocative values for our thinking and reflection, but I will leave out the highly disputed normative implication of genealogy and etymology.

As a result, the history or genealogy of the ideas of *gong* and *si* is not complete. It is also not a Foucauldian genealogy or knowledge archaeology either. One important reason is that *gong* and *si*, or even English ‘public’ and ‘private’, in spite of their richness in meaning and understanding, are not like concepts such as state,

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<sup>88</sup> Foucault, Michel, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984, pp. 87-90; more on Foucault’s genealogy, see Sembou, Evangelia, ‘Foucault’s genealogy’, paper presented at the 10th Annual Meeting of the International Social Theory Consortium, University College Cork, Ireland on 16-17 June 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Bartelson, Jens, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.73.

sovereignty, subject, etc., which have been much better developed and constructed in philosophical thinking and political discourses. For those concepts, ideas and metastories that have been well-constructed, perhaps a history of the knowledge of them, in a Foucauldian sense, will be necessary: so we can proceed to question the seemingly timeless and unproblematic qualities of the knowledge<sup>90</sup>. Yet a (meta)narrative around *gong* and *si* which can render them intellectually debatable has not been established. Maybe my efforts are the first step to bring them into the academic and intellectual vision. At this stage, I do not aim at discourse analysis on some statements and political thoughts in the genealogy, but at explaining the philosophical and historicographical backdrop against which I can address my academic concerns. However, I am not denying that language and power have intimate relationship. In fact *gong* is a good example reflecting this intimacy and discourse analysis will be used as an important tool in my case studies to scrutinize political statements as well as people's daily language. But in the genealogy part, it is not the focus and purpose.

Another reason I do not fully develop a Foucauldian genealogy is the different assumption or inclination of a Chinese epistemology. With regard to the notions that everything is socially constructed and that our understanding and society are shaped by language, which in turn reflects power relationship. This can be 'true' and I will not try to dispute this, but I would like to point out that these understandings are based on the particular intellectual trajectory of the 'West' and perhaps also related to the more logical linguistic system of European languages. For Chinese<sup>91</sup>, whose ancestors directly pictured what they saw onto solid material as 'text' and who believe there are universal principles which cannot be changed by human efforts or social construction, human's language is less powerful<sup>92</sup>. In fact there is no parallel

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<sup>90</sup> See Foucault, Michel, 'Truth and Power' in C. Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* by Foucault, Michel, New York: Pantheon, 1980; the idea is also reflected in his other works, such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1972; Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London: Routledge, 1991.

<sup>91</sup> I have to admit that it is always too general to claim anything for 'Chinese'. I can deliberately cite literature but still it will still be far from sufficient to prove an argument is valid. Some statements that appear too general may be majorly based on my 'feeling' and 'perception' on my culture and on myself rather than on any 'solid knowledge'. I know this approach cannot be justified as 'academic', but it is a (Chinese) way of thinking. And maybe just because of this, I do not choose to deal with Chinese concepts and ideas as Foucault with knowledge.

<sup>92</sup> In regard of the last point, perhaps the most well-known expression is the opening sentence of the Taoist classics *Laozi (Tao Te Ching)*: The Tao (Dao/ The Ultimate / Absolute indefinite/ Way/ Universal Law) that can be described is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name. Following James Legge's translation.



Chinese history of subject and subjectivity in accordance with what we know of Europe; therefore we just do not have that kind of targets to analyse or think critically, or we have not constructed a subject yet to reflect and analyse all these. Of course, methodologically, we can put all these Chinese thinking ways and thoughts under the scrutiny of Foucault's knowledge archaeology, and I believe that attempt can be proved fruitful. But again, this is neither the target of the research nor the means that I want to use in the research. What I intend to exhibit here is that certain methods and methodologies are based on particular ontological and epistemological assumptions that may not be shared by other cultures. I want to show that my research not only displays specific notions on the issues from a particular perspective by its content, but also shows a different thinking pattern by the methods that it adopts.

### 3.2.2 Etymology and semiotics

My analysis on the earliest scripts focuses not only on the use of the words but also on the writing forms of the characters. Etymology and semiotics are employed to study the signs and symbols of the key words. Besides *gong* and *si* which have been studied in Chapter 2, etymological and semiotic analysis will also be applied on other important characters/words such as state (*guo* 国), family (*jia* 家), politics (*zheng* 政), square (*chang* 场), etc. in the following chapters. Etymology does suppose an 'origin' of a word although not necessarily in a temporal sense. Here in a way I agree with the theory from Martin Heidegger, who believes that we can reveal the concealed meanings of words (rather than the past) through etymology<sup>93</sup>. Different from the position of Foucault's discourse analysis and the Cambridge School's history of ideas, which doubts an essence of a concept, Heidegger's etymon is immanent in terms of linguistics. The root of a word may have been concealed by our practical, political even philosophical use of the word, but it still exists<sup>94</sup>. To Nietzsche, a world of symbols is distinguished from a world of things, and the word

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<sup>93</sup> On Heidegger's etymology approach, see Eiland, Howard, 'Heidegger's Etymological Web', *boundary 2*, 1982, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 39-58; Steiner, George, *Martin Heidegger*, New York: Viking, 1978, pp. 5-12, 21-28; Aler, Jan 'Heidegger's conception of Language in Being and Time', in *On Heidegger and Language*, ed. and trans. J. Kockelmans (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 37-44; King, Matthew, 'Heidegger's Etymological Method: Discovering Being by Recovering the Richness of the Word', *Philosophy Today*, 2007, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 278-89.

<sup>94</sup> Eiland, Howard, 'Heidegger's Etymological Web', *boundary 2*, 1982, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 39-58

masks, kills things; but to Heidegger, the word maintains, evokes and yields things<sup>95</sup>. The Chinese language, as I have shown, is significant in its graphic characters. Many of them were invented directly to portray a thing or an idea. In this sense, the word or language is considered to be linked to the thing and to reveal the thing. When people put two or more characters together to form a new word to refer to something new or a concept introduced from other languages, the ‘original’ meanings and connotations of the characters do matter. Besides, traditional Chinese philosophy does not particularly separate subject from object, word from thing, human from nature or essence from phenomenon. Adopting the etymology and semiotics methods, therefore, highly depends on the characteristics of Chinese language (and of course, also on my personal interest). Just like the depth and transparency of the German language and the fact that the feeling for word-roots (radicals, suffixes, etc.) is stronger in German than other modern languages (e.g. French), as noted by Saussure<sup>96</sup>, may contribute to Heidegger’s etymological method.

To summarise, given the features of Chinese language and philosophy, I would say certain Chinese words are very suitable for etymological and semiotic analysis, but I will not try to ontologise the roots or symbols of the words that I study; rather, I keep them as starting points to leave and keep the evocative value of them in a metaphorical and methodological dimension.

### 3.3 Case studies

#### 3.3.1 Case selection and the focus

The conceptual paradigm given at the end of chapter 2 is a preliminary and general framing of the understanding of the two concepts. This paradigm is about to be evaluated, revised and enriched in empirical studies. Here I would like to clarify the relationship between the cases and prior theoretical assumptions.

The core status of *gong-si* ideas in the research is not because I ‘selected’ them from existing theoretical assumption; it is more the case that they emerged from everyday language, from my cases, from the lines of the government reports and the words of

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<sup>95</sup> Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*, Pfullingen: Neske, 1961, vol. 1, pp. 620-621; Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sections 21 and 268, Aziloth Books, 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Bally, Charles and Sechehaye, Albert, with Riedlinger, Albert, trans. Wade Baskin, New York: McGraw Hill, 1966, pp. 167-168, 186-187.

my interviewees. I value the richness of daily language more than philosophical texts. That is also why I put more efforts on the analysis of the *Book of song*, a collection of folk songs and court songs, than other classics specifically on political thoughts in the genealogy part. The genealogy is an attempt to dig into the meanings, implications and historical formation of the words and ideas involved in their current use and understandings. Concepts, having been extracted from empirical evidence and investigated in a more abstract and theoretical level to form a conceptual framework now need to return to empirical world, where the vagueness and ambiguities in theory can be better understood through case studies.

I have two case study sites: Tiananmen Square and the Bell and Drum Towers area. I choose them for the following reasons. First of all, I planned to choose two different types of space to examine public-private/*gong-si* relations in both spatial and political dimensions. The Tiananmen Square area perhaps is the most remarkable for its *gong* or ‘public’ status: a former palace square with the imperial central administrative quarter and a market place nearby, now a magnificent city square and a symbolic space of the nation. In contrast, Bell and Drum Towers area is a long-established ‘ordinary’ residential neighbourhood filled with courtyard houses, winding lanes and some dotted common space. Secondly, both sites are political. It is indisputable that Tiananmen Square is probably the most politically sensitive space in China, and will of course be familiar to readers outside China. Less well known is the Bell and Drum Towers area: here, an on-going regeneration scheme situates it within more locally-scaled public debates. That is also the accidental chance for me to notice its richness and suitability to be a case, and the fieldwork proved that not only it was an interesting place to study but also it was a right time to enter into the site and engage intellectually. Another reason is the availability of the data sources. Many archives of Tiananmen Square were opened to public access several years ago. And there were still many residents who had witnessed (or at least heard from their parents) the historical events discussed in this research living in the Bell and Drum Towers neighbourhood when I did my fieldwork. It was perhaps one final chance to ask them for the details of the events, their life history and their opinions, as most of them were elderly and the neighbourhood was going to be demolished. I do feel I have the responsibility to record something about the people

and the place. In fact, it is worth noting that, as I write this chapter, the neighbourhood is being destroyed.

Besides the sites, I also need to choose my time focus. I deliberately try to distance my research from the present. It is partially because of my interest in history, partially involving an attempt to defamiliarise the phenomena and understandings that now are usually taken for granted. I am most concerned with the myth of public power and the idea of *gong*, and the communist era is the climax of the superiority of *gong* idea in all its important dimensions: *gong* as the state, collective and moral principles. It is also the furthest time from now about which we can still get knowledge from living people. The gap in current academic interrogation is another consideration. There have been a range of works on China and Chinese cities focusing on the last three decades during which a dramatic process of modernisation, urbanisation and privatisation has occurred; perhaps there has even a process of neoliberalisation<sup>97</sup>. These works raise many issues that cannot be totally understood by merely focusing on the current time. Some confusions, doubts and contradictions must be put in a broader temporal context, thus historical investigation is required. For the reasons above, I choose the period between 1949, the founding of the People's Republic of China, and 1979, the year when the economic reform started, as my empirical focus.

In spite of a further and detailed investigation on the same issues, the aim of the case studies differs from the genealogy. As we have seen, *Gong-si* concepts and their relationship are complex and multifaceted. One attempt of the case studies is to ground it onto something solid. I finally chose land, or more precisely, landownership. The boundaries of *gong* and *si* are unclear, but the boundaries of land and landownership are, at least in principle, supposed to be clearly defined. In this sense they are helpful to fix the floating, suspended concepts of *gong* and *si*. The questions of the case studies then become how the landownership of the two sites changed from *si* to *gong*, or from private ownership (*siyouzhi*) to public ownership (*gongyouzhi*). At the same time, the aspatial, political dimension is also critical: how different bodies of *gong* and *si* (i.e. the state, city government, collective in the *gong* side; household, individuals in the *si* side) enable the change and react to the change,

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<sup>97</sup> Harvey, David, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

how they conflict with each other, and how they strategically utilise *gong, si* discourse.

### **3.3.2 Archival study**

The characteristics of the two cases result in different methods for data collection and analysis. For the Tiananmen Square case, archival work is the most important approach to get the data, with newspapers, magazines, secondary literature and other visual material as complements.

During my fieldwork in Beijing from November 2012 to April 2013, I visited Beijing Municipal Archives to collect all possible information for the extension of Tiananmen Square in the 1950s. Available sources include: records on the decision of the project, the planning documents, reports on the construction progress, reports from the city mayor to the central leaders, the texts of the motivating speeches addressed to the local residents whose houses were to be demolished, the reports of the investigations on the complaints from ‘the masses’, visual materials like photos, maps, plans, etc.

Besides those records on the extension of the square, there are other official records helping me know more about the administration and control over the square, such as the records on the big ceremonies happening in the square, the report on the cleaning work of the square and the police records on crimes happening in the area and so on. The governmental documents beyond the geographical and temporal focus of this case also provide rich information about the operation, administration and changes of the city. The information from these official documents, together with other secondary literature, helps the historical account of Beijing in an earlier period in Chapter 4. In addition, records on the Socialist Transition in the industrial sectors (changing the private industry into public-private joint ownership), although lacking of records of cases in the Bell and Drum Towers area (perhaps the changes of those household factories were too small to be recorded), are also very useful for me to gain an impression on the political atmosphere and people’s mentality at that time. This helps me understand and analyse the testimony from the interviewees in the Bell and Drum Towers case.

There are advantages of utilising archival study on the Tiananmen Square case. As the information in the records is not influenced by the fact that these sources will be used for research, the discourse of the government and their specific perspectives are very evident, which is an advantage for me to know the views and rhetoric of the government. However, I am also aware that the records may ‘conceal as much as they reveal’<sup>98</sup>, especially on such a politically sensitive area. It is a pity that I could not find any people who were evicted from the area 60 years ago, which makes cross-checking the information from the side of the residents impossible.

Data analysis starts simultaneously with data collection rather than after it. In the process of reading the records, I have done both coding and analysis. I paid attention to the rhetorical organisation, discourses and ideologies reflected in the official documents<sup>99</sup>. I asked the following questions: to whom were the texts addressed? And how did this influenced their choice about what to record and what to erase? What kind of reality did these texts intend to construct? What definable discourses -- especially those around *gong*, *si*, state, private family and person -- did the texts affirm? How did the authority utilise these discourses to justify their behaviours? Were the discourses used in these official documents contested with the versions in an earlier time or from other actors? How did the authority deal with them? What power relations does the material reflect and reveal? And if I synthesise other sources, including the more ‘private’ narratives from the other case, what kind of conclusion on *gong-si* relationship can we generate?

For Tiananmen Square, due to the availability of the source, the case is more like a story about a ‘public’ space based on written, official sources. However, the lack of a perspective ‘from below’, from private, ordinary people can be complemented by the other case of the Bell and Drum Towers area.

### 3.3.3 In-depth interviews

Very different from the archival study in the Tiananmen case, in-depth interviews are used as the major approach in the case of Bell and Drum Towers.

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<sup>98</sup> Hoggart, Keith, Lees, Loretta, Davies, Anna, *Researching Human Geography*, London: Arnold and NY: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.147.

<sup>99</sup> See Tonkiss, F. ‘Analysing discourse’. In Seale, C. ed., *Researching Society and Culture*, London: Sage, 1998, 245-60; Potter, J and Wetherell, M, ‘Analyzing discourse’, in Bryman and R.G. Burgess, eds., *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, London: Routledge, 1994:47-66.

In the winter of 2012, I participated in a survey aiming to collect basic information of the residents living in the neighbourhood with other members of an activist group called 'Bell and Drum Towers Area Focus Team' (*Zhonggulou Pianerqu Guanzhu Tuandui*). Engaging in the survey and writing the report for the group provided me with a preliminary impression on the precinct and offered me some basic knowledge about the composition of the population. Our frequent presence in the neighbourhood and shared concerns with the regeneration project also helped me build contact and trust with the residents. In the spring of 2013, I did in-depth interview on 19 people from 6 households, focusing on the stories of their lives, families and property. Most of the interviews were semi-structured with a few exceptions using a more unstructured approach. These people either participated or witnessed the big movements occurring from the 1950s to the 1970s. To avoid unnecessary guidance for the interviewees, I did not directly ask questions about their memories of a particular event, but let them freely talk about their life experience and saw what kind of experience and time structure emerged from their narrative. I visited the neighbourhood at least three times per week, and usually stayed there the whole day (from 10am to 6pm)<sup>100</sup>, so I had lots of chances to revisit the interviewees and to ask more questions. After I returned to the UK and found confusion when doing analysis and writing up, colleagues in Beijing followed up further interviews.

The neighbourhood was not experiencing normal circumstances when I did the fieldwork. The local authority Dongcheng Government (literally East District Government) had just initiated a regeneration project in the area at that time, a consequence of which was that the residents were urged to move out. The first deadline to have the reward of the compensation (150,000RMB, about 15,000 pounds) was the Chinese New Year in February 2013. The personnel of the Demolition and Relocation Office motivated the residents from one household to another. As the compensation for each meter square and the measure of the area of the properties were not transparent, the residents, especially those retired, unemployed and self-employed came to the squares, one between the two towers and the other north to the Bell Tower, to chat and exchange information. Yet because the

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<sup>100</sup> When I did not do any interview, I chatted with people in the square between the two towers or in a cafe where I could observe people's activities in the square, walked around the neighbourhood to count how many residents were still left (because the relocation of the regeneration project) and took photos even drew some plans of the courtyard houses (most of them are free to enter in because a courtyard is shared by many households with a certain proportion of 'floating immigrants').

contracts between the government and property owners had ‘confidential’ restrictions, the owners could not tell others of the offer that they got. In fact in most occasions they did not want to let other people know. This may be because of the purported corruption: people who knew or bribed someone working in the government gained higher compensation. Thus the atmosphere was somewhat strange. People chatted outdoor in below freezing temperatures in the winter, exchanging information and rumours, but were still hesitant to talk about their own situations or to ask other people’s.

In this context, people were sensitive about the questions related to their properties, especially after 12 CCTV cameras were installed by the local government around the two squares in January 2013. Even in normal time, topics around property and ownership are sensitive. This is partly because the ownership of the properties in this area is highly complicated and controversial. As I will explain in more detail in Chapter 5, many people got their houses from the government or from the previous owners in the political movements (e.g. The Cultural Revolution) that caused during the second half of the last century. And in this sense, not least, the legitimacy of their occupation and possession is highly disputable. For some other people, the shadow of history is generated from the fact that they lost their property, and sometimes family members, just because they were ‘private owners’ (*sifangzhu*). How can we expect people experiencing this to talk about their ‘true’ or genuine opinions on property and on the state even though several decades have passed? Also this area has a very high proportion of ‘self-constructed buildings’ (*zijianfang*)<sup>101</sup>, the legal status of which had not been recognised by the government. They were also the most controversial type of property in regard to the compensation caused by the regeneration project. For the reasons described above people were not always willing to talk about their history or answer questions about their properties.

Nonetheless, it was possible for me to gain some degree trust from some residents, and they accepted requests to my interview them. Although I tried my best to elicit their words by unobtrusive and nondirective manners<sup>102</sup>, I realise that the sampling cannot avoid being problematic to some degree: Isn’t there any bias if we just get the information and opinions from those who are willing to tell? How can we know what

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<sup>101</sup> According to our survey on 40 samples, 57.5% households have self-constructed buildings.

<sup>102</sup> McCracken, Grant, *The Long Interview*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988, p21.



has happened to those who are reluctant to speak out their stories? As Paul Thompson has stressed, the self-selected group cannot be fully representative of a community<sup>103</sup>. I can, to some degree, fill the information gap by putting together the fragmented stories that I heard from other people and that I read from literature to form a more complete picture, but I am fully aware that, the cases which I have gathered and (re)presented in the thesis are not wholly representative, and these individual experiences and the process described by the interviewees may not even be typical<sup>104</sup>.

In acknowledging all these shortcomings, though, the individual and family stories are still valuable; their storytelling and explanation about the events, and the perspectives and discourses reflected from their words are helpful in understanding the complexity of the 'facts' and opinions<sup>105</sup>. Furthermore, the story of the Bell and Drum Towers area based on the data acquired from interviews is a complement to the Tiananmen story that is mainly based on official documents. Somewhat like oral history, 'the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction'<sup>106</sup>, my in-depth interviews attempt to deal with the big events happening in the second half of the twentieth century from the lens of normal people's everyday life. In fact in many other countries, the second half of the twentieth century has already seen a worldwide revival of oral history or everyday history. Many of them fill in the gaps of the history: for instance, the stories of the survivors of the Nazi regime in Germany, the witnesses of the Stalin period in Russia and the participants of the Algerian war in France<sup>107</sup>; Others aimed to discover the stories from the ordinary, the subaltern, those 'hidden from history'<sup>108</sup>, to build more democratic history<sup>109</sup>. China even has a much greater gap in the reconstruction and representation of the history of the eventful 20<sup>th</sup> century. How to narrate the wars, revolutions and political movements is associated to the

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<sup>103</sup> Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p19.

<sup>104</sup> Lummis, Trevor, 'Structure and validity in oral evidence', *International Journal of Oral History*, 1983, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 109–120.

<sup>105</sup> Bryman, Alan, *Quantity and quality in social research*, 3rd ed., London: Routledge, 1994.

<sup>106</sup> Grele, Ronald J., 'Directions for oral history in the United States', in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 2nd ed., ed. Dunaway, David K. and Baum, Willa, Walnut Creek, Calif.; London; New Delhi: Altamira Press, 1996, pp. 64–65.

<sup>107</sup> Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 1–8.

<sup>108</sup> Rowbotham, Sheila, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It*, London, Pluto, 1973.

<sup>109</sup> For a survey of oral history literature on different subjects, see Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 274–283.

strength of the ruling party and government, which renders it never a free field to be investigated or discussed. In fact, government organising the compilation and writing of history is a practice with long history in China<sup>110</sup>. With this tradition and the dominant Marxist perspective on history, historical accounts are highly filtered and ideological after 1949. All narrative and interpretation of any historical events must be ‘politically right’. After the Tiananmen Event in 1989, some sensitive events and topics are even forbidden to be discussed in the mass media or in academic field, which has muted more history.

However, people never give up writing their history. A genre mixing with history with literature emerged in the late 1970s and became popular in China during the 1980s and 1990s. These works contain the memory of personal experiences of writers, including those of sensitive political events<sup>111</sup>; but at the same time they did not exclude fictional elements. Although usually categorised as literature, they can be viewed as a special type of historical accounts within a particular political atmosphere. I use this type of literature for reference in several places in my research. There is also non autobiographical oral history from the late 1980s, the themes of which range from the old cadres’ memory of the former top leaders such as Mao, to the Memoirs of famous scholars, to the ordinary people’s stories of their suffering in the political movements<sup>112</sup>. But they are all literature works rather than academic. Only at the turn of the new century can an increasing interest be identified in academia, especially when the historians and social scientists realise that it is the last chance to interview those eye-witness participants of some important events such as the Second Sino-Japanese War (most commonly known as the War of Resistance Against Japan in Chinese) between 1937 and 1945, the civil war between 1945 and 1950 and the land reformation in the 1950s. It is an effort to save private memories, which are a part of the national history, to build more detailed accounts of some events and to know more diverse perspectives of understanding and interpretation of

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<sup>110</sup> See Beasley, W. G and Pulleyblank, E. G., *Historians of China and Japan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang with contributions from Supriya Mukherjee, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2008.

<sup>111</sup> For example, ‘the literature of the wounded’ (or ‘scar literature’, *shanghen wenxue*) that portrays the sufferings of cadres and intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution.

<sup>112</sup> E.g. Quan, Yanchi, *Mao Zedong: Man, Not God*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1989 (in Chinese), 1992 (in English); Feng, Jicai, *Voices from the Whirlwind: An Oral History of the Chinese Culture Revolution*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1991.

certain history<sup>113</sup>. In this sense, in spite of the non-representative sampling, my historical study on the landownership transfer based on the stories of some people and their families is still useful in revealing the personal and household history in the Bell and Drum Towers area, which can help portray the neighbourhood, the city and even the country over a transformative period.

### 3.3.4 Analysis and interpretation

In terms of dealing with the data from the interviews and analysing the land politics of the Bell and Drum Towers area, I pay attention to the following issues: how people's understanding on some key concepts are distinguished but at the same time influenced by official explanation or dominant ideology; the inconsistency between people's verbal expression and their practice; different people's alternative conceptualisations of their understanding and behaviours.

For the first concern, the words, narratives and interpretation from private person form a complementary and also a comparative perspective to the official one reflected in the documentary records of the Tiananmen Square case. In coding the transcripts, I paid special attention to the words and ideas used by the informants associated with *gong*, *si* and their embodiments such as state, family, state-owned property, private property, etc. By making their discourses recognisable, I tried to comprehend not only the specific understanding on particular things from each person, but also the connection between the private understanding and the dominate ideology. As Luisa Passerini has stressed, it is facile and complacent to think the oppressed can be easily made to 'speak for themselves', because people's memories can be influenced by dominant history<sup>114</sup>. Indeed, in the Bell and Drum Towers case, I find that interviewees provide rich details of what has happened, but their wording is highly influenced by official statements. Therefore, the private narrative, on the one hand, forms a different and sometimes conflicting story to the meta-story propagandised by the state, but on the other, is also a part of the hegemonic ideology.

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<sup>113</sup> For an introduction of the development of oral history in China, see Qin, Han, 'The Development and Cultural Identity of Oral History in Contemporary China' [*Dangdai zhongguo koushushi de fazhan jiqi wenhua shenfen*], China Book Review, 2006, no.05, pp. 10-15; see also Liu, Jianping, *On Modern History of China*, Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2011, chapter 3.

<sup>114</sup> Passerini, Luisa, 'Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism', *History Workshop*, 1979, 8 (1), pp. 82-108. On this topic, also see Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?': revised edition, from the 'History' chapter of *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, Morris, Bosalind, ed. Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 21-78.

The connection and distinction between ideology/discourse, cognition/‘true’ opinion and behaviour are also meaningful. People who grew up or experienced the communist era often use some expressions typical in that age. Undeniably, the dominate ideology not only affects their thinking but also their behaviours. For instance, there are cases like people donating their properties to the state voluntarily. It is very difficult to understand the motivation and logic of this behaviour merely from the perspective on property or on state-individual relationship in our age. Only when we put the behaviours back to its historical background and see the interviewees as bearers of a specific culture of a time, can these ‘abnormal’ behaviours be comprehend<sup>115</sup>. People’s understanding of certain ideas and their own behaviours in the past is dynamic too. The interviewees have their own vision of the past and they rationalise their behaviours by popular or their own discourses but not always in a consistent way. In this case, I do not try to find out a true or coherent meaning of the interviewees’ understanding but try to reveal the ambiguity of discourses and ideas and thus figure out how people utilise them strategically in a given condition. In addition, the ‘conversational narrative’ produced in the interviews has a ‘performative’ aspect<sup>116</sup>, which also requires awareness and analysis. Especially when the regeneration project was on-going and the neighbourhood attracted lots of attention from the outside, the interviewees’ had their own interests to safeguard and fight for; thus their answers to my questions, even to those more about history, could be rhetorical, performative and perhaps even strategic. For example, sometimes the interviewee used a discourse similar to the one advocated by the government but his or her actual practice might be opposite. In this case, I need to carefully study what they did in certain circumstance rather than just what they said. One target of the interview process and analysis work is to reveal the contradictions between dominate ideology and other discourses, between testimony and practice.

The status of the 6 households and 19 people who participated in the interviews is also different. The varieties of visions on the historical events and *gong-si* ideas reflected by different people, especially according to the status of house ownership, are also a focus of the analysis. As the political movements affected different

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<sup>115</sup> Grele, Ronald, ‘Movement without aim: methodological and theoretical problems in oral history’, in Perks, Robert and Thomson, Alistair eds., *The Oral History Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 38-52.

<sup>116</sup> See also Grele’s edited collection: *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, New York, Praeger, 1991.

families to different degrees, I do not give a full account of the story of each family covering all the studied periods; instead, I select a main case study household in each period which I think has the richest information to reconstruct a version of the historical picture of that time, but at the same time I use the cases of other households as a complementary account.

Because the household is designed as the unit to describe the situation of the Bell and Drum Towers area, my analysis and interpretation, although very much based on the information provided by individual informants, may not give much emphasis on the distinction of family members in different status within a family. For example, in the representation of the Bell and Drum Towers case, I formulate the time in a way similar to the Tiananmen case: dividing the period into four by the significant events. This narrative structure is a ‘masculine’ one I would say. I find the time perception and structuring of female interviewees are different. Female interviewees tend to describe time as: when I get married, when I had (sometimes lost) my second baby; it should be 1962 because it’s the year I had a big operation on my stomach; etc.<sup>117</sup>. However, for convenience and to form a coherent narrative style with the Tiananmen case, I do not choose a particular feminist pattern, although it can be very interesting and fruitful especially in studying public-private relationship; rather, I use the more official, masculine and also roughly the preconceived one to formulate the time, events and accounts. In a similar way, I use both men and women’s testimonies to reconstruct people’s conceptualisation and interpretation on some concepts; the particular understanding from the perspective of particular genders is important, but it is not the concern in this thesis.

### **3.4 Other methods and ‘spatial analysis’**

Apart from the sources and methods illustrated above, I also utilise secondary literature, articles in newspaper and magazines, blogs and other internet sources, and visual evidence to form a clearer vision on my research objects.

As a human geographer, I pay particular attention to the spatial dimension of both thoughts and reality. Spatial observation and analysis is important in both cases. In

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<sup>117</sup> In the contrast, men described time as: ‘in the second year of Cultural Revolution’; ‘when our factory was handed over to the district government’; ‘when Khrushchev visited China’, etc.

the case of Tiananmen Square, historical changes of the landscape of the square will be reviewed, from which we can see how *gong* space changed according to specific political, social and cultural backgrounds of the society. For the case of the Bell and Drum Towers area, I will illustrate the plans of the ownership and occupation in courtyard dwelling units to help with the analysis of the relationship between different property holders. In fact, standing in their courtyards, it is not difficult to tell the age, condition and builder of the houses (those built by the government are in a uniform style); details of how different families utilise, enclose and thereby ‘privatise’ the common space tells not only the tension between common interests and private interests, but also the conflicts between different private actors.

As has been already illustrated in the genealogy part, spatial features of Chinese characters are significant. The writing forms of the characters reflect the spatial characteristics of the things that these words initially refer to. Besides *gong* and *si*, the symbols of state (*guo*, 国), city (*cheng*, 城), household (*jia*, 家), domestic (*shi*, 室), land (*di*, 地), field (*tian*, 田), square (*chang*, 场), space (*kong*, 空), time (*shi*, 时), all of which imply specific spaces, will be examined. Conversely, the real space formed in reality also reflects the ideas. For instance, the relevant *gong* or *si* space and buildings, such as square, palace, official building, market place, temple, household, etc. reveal the people’s idea and understanding of *gong* and *si*. This kind of discussion will be given along with the two case studies. Space here is used as an analytical perspective to bridge the concepts, the abstract and the reality, the concrete.

Space can also connect the past and the present and at the same time reveal the transformation. The historical evolution of related spaces can be seen as changing spatial representation of certain ideas in a time. The analysis of the changes of the space of Beijing city and Tiananmen Square will show this. Moreover, the spatial experience also reshapes people’s understanding and conceptualisation. For example, we will see in Chapter 4 how the spatial transformation of the city of Beijing has changed people’s understanding of the object and idea of ‘city’, and of the relations between state, city and household, etc.

## Chapter 4 Case Study I:

### Spatial and Political Transformation in the Birth and Expansion of Tiananmen Square

I have two empirical cases: Tiananmen Square and Bell and Drum Towers area. This chapter explores the spatial politics of the birth and expansion of Tiananmen Square and the *gong-si* tension by prioritising the view of *gong*. Section 4.1 introduces Beijing as the case study city through an account of its spatial characteristics, especially its peculiarity in terms of urban public space. This section forms the historical and geographical background for the understanding of both empirical cases. Section 4.2 looks at the historical geography of the Tiananmen area before it transformed into Tiananmen Square. I argue that it was a typical place of *gong*. This can be seen from its status as a royal square attached to the Palace City, its ceremonial use and the surrounding administrative quarter. But all these state-related-*gong* features of the place were complicated by the symbolic presence of collective people, another type of *gong*, and the exceptional location of the market place nearby, the activities of which are usually excluded from *gong* category. Section 4.3 is about the birth of Tiananmen Square. The administrative characteristics of Beijing in both late imperial and republican periods are introduced, with an emphasis on the emergence of the city as an important governmental scale, and in effect therefore, a new embodiment of *gong* during the republican era. This process also sees a transformation of people's understanding of politics and the political as well as a shift towards popular political practice. Section 4.4 investigates the expansion of Tiananmen Square in the 1950s under the communist regime and ideology based on the data gathered from archival work; it discusses how the case reflects the party-state's triumph over the city, *gong* over *si*, and the proliferation of intimacies and tensions between the state and private people. Etymology and semiotics are deployed as important approaches to ground the analysis of the case onto its linguistic and cultural contexts. Key terms like city (*cheng*), state (*guo*), politics (*zhengzhi*), political (*zhengzhide*), etc. are examined to enrich the conceptual grid of the research and also deepen the comprehension of the ideas around *gong* and

si. A more concrete conceptual framework of *gong-si* based on this case study will be provided at the end of the chapter.

## 4.1 Spatial characteristics of Beijing City: a city without public space?

Since Kublai Khan made Beijing (*Dadu* or Khanbaliq at that time) the capital of the Mongol-led Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368), Beijing has served as the seat of power for the Ming Dynasty (1421–1644), the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), the early Republic of China (1912–1928) and now the People's Republic of China (1949–present) (for the change of the city boundaries see Figure 4.1). The basic spatial structure of the Beijing city that we see today was constructed in the Yuan Dynasty and extended and enhanced in the Ming.

As the capital of the empire, the plan of Beijing was based on the prescriptions of ‘*kaogongji*’ (Record of Trades) in *Zhou Li* (*Rites of Zhou*), an Eastern Zhou (770–221BC) text describing the activities of various craftsmen, including builders. Here is the famous passage about the principles of building an imperial city:

The craftsmen (*jiangren*) construct the state capital (*guo*)<sup>118</sup>. They make a square nine *li*<sup>119</sup> on each side; each side has three gates. Within the capital are nine<sup>120</sup> north-south and nine east-west streets. The north-south streets are nine carriage tracks in width. On the left (as one faces south, or to the east) is the Ancestral Temple, and to the right (west) are the Altar of Soil and Grain (i.e. Altar of the State<sup>121</sup>). In the front is the Hall of the King (*chao*, or State Court) and behind the market place.<sup>122</sup>

Beijing is the Chinese city built closest to the orthodox model of a capital in *Zhou Li*<sup>123</sup>: the grid of the city roads, the arrangement of gates<sup>124</sup>, and the designated

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<sup>118</sup> *Guo* is the word for the feudal states and the kingdom in the old time. Here *guo* is used to refer to the capital of the state and we can see the construction of the capital was considered as great importance for the country.

<sup>119</sup> 1 *li* = 500 meters.

<sup>120</sup> Nine is a number symbolising royalty in China.

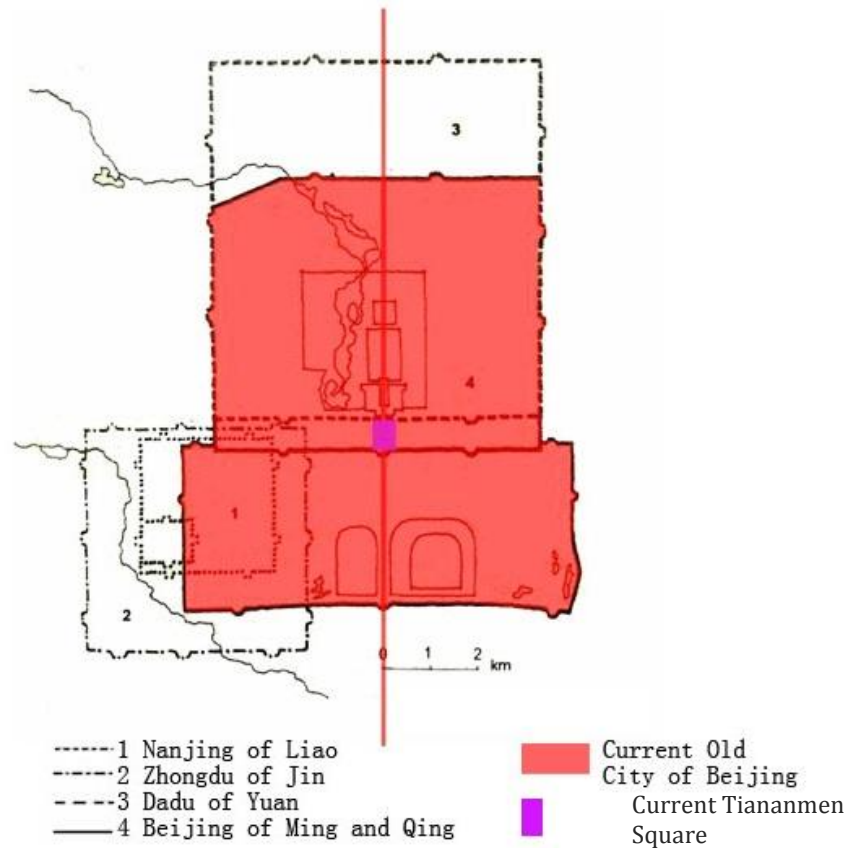
<sup>121</sup> Soil and grain (*sheji*, 社稷) was a term for the state in many East Asia countries such as China, Japan and Korea.

<sup>122</sup> ‘*Kaogongji*’ (Record of Trades), in *Zhou Li* (*Rites of Zhou*), quoted from Steinhardt, Nancy S., Chinese imperial city planning. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990, p33, with minor changes

<sup>123</sup> The model of a capital city is also considered as the paradigm of normal cities.



location of the palace, temples and market places were built nearly identical to those described in the book. Figure 4.2 is drawn on the Google-earth map of Beijing city today and its connection with the guidance from *Zhou Li* still can be easily observed.



**Figure 4.1 Sites and Sizes of Beijing City in Different Dynasties** (source: based on Hou, Renzhi, 1979)

The most striking feature of the old Beijing city was that it contained a concentric set of three walled cities, each enclosing the other: the Outer City surrounded the Imperial city, which itself contained the Forbidden City (also called the Palace City) (Figure 4.2). It is crucial to recognise that, notwithstanding a grand and integrated spatial structure of the plan, there was no ‘public’ space in a western sense (such as a classic plaza or a signature square) designed or built in the traditional city<sup>125</sup>. To be

<sup>124</sup> Influenced by Daoism, just two gates were designed in the north. There used to be three gates in the each side of the east and west in Yuan Dynasty, but the number reduced to two each side because the city moved to the south in Ming Dynasty (figure 4.5 shows this change). Most of the city gates were demolished with the city walls to give way to the modern development of the city after 1949, and some of them were rebuilt in recent years.

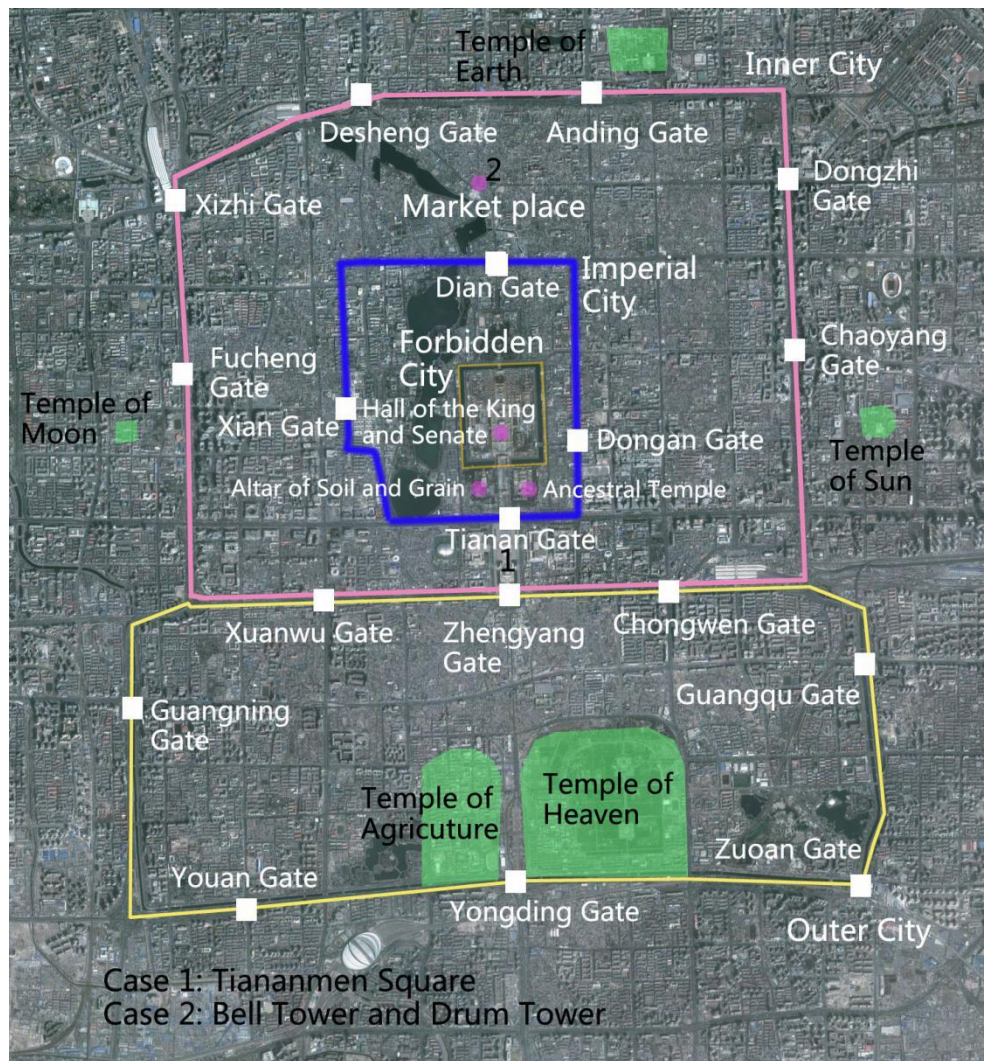
<sup>125</sup> Shi, Mingzheng, ‘From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: the Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing’, in *Modern China*, Vol.24, No.3, July 1998, 219-254; Rozman, Gilbert, *Urban*

more precise, first of all, most of the big open-air spaces in the built area were located within the central Palace (and notably 'Forbidden') City. There were big court yards in the Palace area where the emperor worked with his ministers and resided with the royal family. Many important rites and events (such as coronation ceremonies and final national civil servant examinations) occurred in certain yards but they were in no way open to the larger public. On the contrary, just as the name of the Palace City suggested, it was a 'forbidden' city, where the commoners were strictly restrained from entering. Some scholars such as Victor Sit<sup>126</sup> believes that locating the Royal Palace in the central area of the city was based on the model of *mingtang* (明堂, literally 'a bright hall'), the prototype of the temple for ancestral worship; *mingtang* was also called *gong* (宮), a homophone and a suggested origin of the *gong* (公) meaning 'public'. The model (a group of buildings in the centre with big yard around) was adopted not only for temples, but also for the royal palace and then the whole city. This notion has been supported by archaeological findings. It is easy to associate it to the etymology of *gong* (公): in oracle bone scripts *gong* (公) usually appeared with its homophone *gong* (宮) to refer to the dwelling or temple of the tribe leader. The temple and yard of *gong* were also the places where community ceremonies occurred. We can imagine that with historic development, the functions for ancestral worship, communal ceremonies, government affairs and royal accommodation gradually separated from each other and settled in different places of the (capital) city. As a consequence, the *gong*'s hall that used to treat common people and the *gong*'s yard where commoners could dance became just history (see 2.2.1). Even though common people were banished from the Forbidden City, it did not deny that in 'origin' as well as in people's mind, the imperial palace, including the buildings and the authority that it symbolised, was placed in a *gong* position and was expected to promote the well-being of people and keep the country in peace. The late Qing Empire was considered to have lost its mandate from Heaven, one consequence of which was that an important palace yard was (re)claimed by the people and transformed into the famous Tiananmen Square in the 1920s. This transformation will be elaborated in the following two sections.

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*Networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973, P.73.

<sup>126</sup> Xue, Fengxuan (Sit, Victor Fung-Shuen), *Beijing: the nature and planning of a Chinese capital city*, Hong Kong University Press, 1996, pp.10-15. The English version was published in 1995 by John Wiley & Sons.



**Figure 4.2 Beijing: a capital city designed under the guidance of Zhou Li<sup>127</sup>**  
(source: drawn by the author based on Google earth map)

Another spatial characteristic of Beijing that I want to highlight relates to its spaces for common activities. There were altars and temples particularly for the natural gods and the common ancestors of the nation (Figure 4.2), but only the royal family could access them. Of course, there were other temples for civilians and in fact these temples played a key role in people's social and private life. Daily worship, common ceremonies and regular fairs were held in and around these temples. Yet usually people only appeared collectively in these places for rites (including secular festivals) rather than political activities. In the 'republican' understanding of public described by Jeff Weintraub<sup>128</sup>, the political importance of collectivity is signified by the

<sup>127</sup> The names of the gates marked on the map were those reset from Qing Dynasty. They are still in use to refer to the remaining gates or places.

<sup>128</sup> 'The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction Public and Private' in *Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar eds, Chicago: The University of Chicago

active participation of people in collective decision making. In this sense, as Hannah Arendt<sup>129</sup> suggests, the public space/realm is a field of action, and politics is citizens' participation in the process of conscious collective self-determination. But in the case of Beijing, the importance of collectivity is connected to its quantity, to the notion that a collective is larger and has broader interests than those of private individuals and smaller groups. It does not create another quality like collective self-determination. The aggregation and presence of people do display the collectivity and field of *gong*, but these happen symbolically and ritually, and do not necessarily lead to real participation and political actions. The 'non-political' trait of Chinese collectivity and of the ways that ritual performance and symbolic participation have influenced urban space and people's understanding of 'the political' will be further discussed in the two empirical cases.

Besides temples, the market places offered another space for common life. However, during most of the imperial era, the locations of market places were designated and their opening time was strictly regulated by law. In the beginning, these trading places were enclosed by walls but this system did not last long. The regulation of the market places varied from one period to another, but neither a free market place in practice nor a free market in ideology ever existed. Even after commercial activities broke the restraint of the designated area and spread to broader streets, no space like a public square ever formed in the city.

The last category to be analysed in comparison with the western public space is the tea house. Public tea houses emerged in the late Qing Dynasty and often served as a centre of social interaction. Beijing was particularly famous for its lively tea house culture from the beginning of the twentieth century. People gathered at the tea houses to enjoy tea and food, watch performances, chat, meet friends and socialise. But somewhat strangely, and very differently from the cafes and public houses in European countries<sup>130</sup>, people in Chinese tea houses rarely engaged in conversation on political topics, not to mention criticizing politics and inspiring revolutionary thoughts. In Lao She's well-known play *Tea House*<sup>131</sup>, it was the stereotype of the

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Press, 1997.

<sup>129</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

<sup>130</sup> Habermas, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 1991[1962]), Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

<sup>131</sup> *Teahouse* is a play by Lao She. It was completed in 1956 and first staged in Beijing in 1958. For an English

tea house in early twentieth century Beijing to have a sign on the wall, saying ‘Do not talk about state affairs’ (*motan guoshi*, 莫谈国事). Here, ‘state affairs’ were considered as typically political topics. State affairs of course were related to the idea of sovereignty, but the stress here was not that the state apparatus, or the public power, granted and guaranteed rights to citizens, like the understanding inherited from the Roman law. It seems the Chinese politics as state affairs was about its scale: in or beyond a national scale. It also said ‘do not talk’. I have explained that political actions were absent in the collective presence of people in traditional Chinese cities. Here political speech and discussion were discouraged and even banned in the tea house. We can say that the talking was forbidden means it is political. However, this is an interpretation from a particular western perspective. In Chinese thoughts, speech and discussion were not theorised as ‘political’, and speaking was not viewed as something of great importance. We can imagine that the eclipse and humiliation experienced by the country (especially its failure to gain respect in international dialogue) from the mid-nineteenth century have contributed to people’s disinclination to talk about public affairs and therefore kept political discussion away from the tea house. But this aversion to political discussion and the absence of public speech can also be read as particularity of the Chinese presumptions on the nature of human being. Heidegger understands Aristotle’s definition of the human as the *zoon ekhon logon*<sup>132</sup>, commonly translated as the ‘political animal’, or the being that speaks. From this point of view, speech, or discourse is central to people’s approach to living together, to engaging in a political community<sup>133</sup>. This notion is absolutely alien to the Chinese tradition. In a Chinese version, only the sages speak, and the purpose of their speech is to reveal the mystery of the world; the words of the sages bridge the mysterious ‘nature’ and the common people. Moreover, according to Laozi, the *Dao* (also as *Tao*), that is, the ultimate truth of the universe or the underlying principle of the world, is nameless and unspeakable, and is distinguished from all the named things<sup>134</sup>.

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translation of the play, see Lao, She, *Teahouse: A Play in Three Acts*, translated by John Howard-Gibbon, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980.

<sup>132</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a9, English trans. Sinclair, E. T. and Trevor Saunders, New York: Penguin Classics, 1981.

<sup>133</sup> For a discussion of this, see Elden, Stuart, *Speaking Against Number: Heidegger, Language and the Politics of Calculation*, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, chapter 1.

<sup>134</sup> Lao Tzu (Lao Zi), *Tao Te Ting (Dao De Jing)*, chapter 1 & 32, for an English version, see ‘The Tao Teh King’ or ‘The Tao and Its Characteristics’, translated by James Legge, Project Gutenberg, 1891.

This difference can also be detected from the languages: European words are spelled on the basis of their phonetic characteristics and the expressions are more reliant on 'artificial' grammar, whilst Chinese convey meanings more via the written forms of the characters, and the expression is less reliant on grammar. For Aristotle in Heidegger's translation, the *phone semantike*, that is the logos, is particular to human, and voice and speech are magic talents to distinguish human being from animals and make them powerful<sup>135</sup>. Yet for Chinese people, pictographs (re)build the connection between human beings and the world/nature to be referred, rather than split the two; but at the same time, words and speech have their limits, and to some extent they separate human from the ultimate truth which is supposed to be more possibly approached by perception, intuition and living. Therefore, theoretically, normal people's speech and discussion is not something of great importance, is not the core or manifestation of the political. State affairs as politics are top-down arrangements, which discourage public participation and engagement either verbally or bodily. This places a different foundation for Chinese understanding of politics and their practice of political space.

Apparently, the lesser stress on speech and verbal communication in the Chinese (political) tradition has a big impact on the types of 'public space' of the cities. From the case of Beijing, we have seen that there was no public square where people could give speeches to public audiences, and the tea house as a focal meeting point in a way rejected open discussion on politics. However, political discussion was never extinct. Besides the *gong*'s hall, conversation occurred in the chambers of the officials' houses and in the private gardens of the educated class (public parks did not appear until the 1920s). But these two types of place were attached to the domestic and usually categorized as private space. It seems that there was no normative public space in Chinese cities where people could appear collectively with their political property in a western sense. If this distinction is true, a question needs to be asked: how do the Chinese people politically exist in the city? Has the way of their political existence changed? They are the questions I try to answer in this and the following chapter.

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<sup>135</sup> Elden, Stuart, *Speaking Against Number: Heidegger, Language and the Politics of Calculation*, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp.24-25; Heidegger, Martin, *Einführung in die Phänomenologische Forschung*, Frankfurt: Klostermann Vittorio GmbH, 1994, 14-16.

In the rest of the chapter, a significant ‘public’ space in Beijing city will be investigated: Tiananmen Square, a space transformed from a former royal yard to a city square by the efforts of the new government and collective actions of the people. The birth and change of the space reflects the complex relationship between *gong* and *si*, public and private: the birth of Tiananmen Square was the triumph of the *gong* of the masses over the *gong* of the government, while the extension of the square reflected how the families and private persons in the *si* side sacrificed much to the public interests of the state. It also reveals the changing understanding and practice of Chinese politics. Therefore, by studying the spatial and political history of the area, not only will the abstract *gong-si* framework introduced in Chapter 2 be developed into more concrete terms, but also a more contextual and diverse understanding on the nature and practice of human political society can be advanced.

## **4.2 Pre-Tiananmen Square as a place of *gong*: palace square, administrative quarter and market place**

Now Tiananmen Square (*Tiananmen guangchang*, literally ‘Square of the Gate of Heavenly Peace’) is a massive and symbolic square located in front of Tianan Gate (*Tiananmen*, Gate of Heavenly Peace) in the heart of Beijing city. For the country and normal Chinese people, Tiananmen Square is regarded as a symbol of the New China, identified with two significant moments in the history of the twentieth century: it was on the Tiananmen Tower where Chairman Mao proclaimed the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the emancipation of Chinese people in 1949; three decades before that (in 1919) it was the protest in Tiananmen ‘Square’ that started the May Fourth Movement --the Chinese Enlightenment that has helped radicalise Chinese intellectual thoughts, and the protest is also officially declared as a mark of the first appearance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Tiananmen Square caught the rest of the world’s attention by the anti-government activities and the crackdown that occurred in spring 1989. From then on the name of Tiananmen has been bound up with to the violence and suppression enabled by the military power of the state.



#### 4.2.1 A place dominated by *gong* functions

But the square was not a square, even as late as the 1920s. As shown in the last section, the original plan of Beijing did not contain any spaces designed for public assembly and mass movement. But this does not mean an equivalent absence of the Chinese ‘*gong*’. On the contrary, as the capital of the empire, the virtue of *gong* or justice was presented by the spatial and spiritual disposition of the city. Following the highly ordered Chinese cosmology<sup>136</sup> and Confucianism, *gong*’s land, at that time the emperor’s dwellings and the government, was arranged in the centre, while alters of heaven, earth, sun, moon, grain and ancestors were placed around it. People were settled in a hierarchical structure from the centre to the marginal area according to their social status (for example, only the Manchu people and Chinese high officials were allowed to live in the Inner City during the Qing dynasty). The moats, walls, gates, fences and compartments constrained everybody, from the royal to commoners, to live in a ‘proper’ place in natural world as well as a socio-political system. The order is spatial as well as political. The empire spared no effort to keep the order, attempting to attain the so called ‘heavenly peace’.

However, the spatial and ideological order of Beijing city collapsed with the downfall of the Qing Empire and the shift of the mentality from Confucianism to modern western thoughts at the turn of the twentieth century. Since then, the influence of westernisation was gradually imprinted on the governmental and spatial structure of the city. Even a tide of public space in a western sense was emerging. Shi<sup>137</sup> describes a ‘public park movement’ between 1908 and 1926. Since the opening of the Altar of Soil and Grain in 1914<sup>138</sup> (named Central Park then and renamed as Zhongshan Park from 1928), nearly all former imperial gardens and temples were transformed into public parks within two decades<sup>139</sup>. The movement was initiated by the western-minded gentry-merchants of Beijing but did not succeed

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<sup>136</sup> See Wright, Arthur, ‘The cosmology of the Chinese city’, in G. William Skinner (ed.), *The City in Late Imperial China*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1977, pp33-73; Meyer, Jeffery F., *The Dragons of Tiananmen: Beijing as a Sacred City*, Columbia Press, 1991.

<sup>137</sup> Shi, Mingzheng, ‘From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: the Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing’, in *Modern China*, vol.24 No.3, July 1998, 219-254.

<sup>138</sup> Before the Central Park in the republican era, the Qing government had built a zoological garden called Land of Ten Thousand Animas (*Wanshengyuan*) and opened it to the public in 1908. This zoo can be seen as a precursor of public parks in Beijing. Shi, Mingzheng, ‘From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: the Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing’, in *Modern China*, vol.24 No.3, July 1998, 219-254.

<sup>139</sup> An early account of this transformation can also be found in Bredon, Juliet, *Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description of Its Chief Places of Interest*, Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1922.



until getting the support from the republican government, especially from the municipal level. We can interpret this loosely as a big *si-gong* shift in urban space: those previously royal private spaces<sup>140</sup> were now transformed into modern parks belonging to the Republic and, by inference, to the people. And now people were not present symbolically in these places or just for ritual purpose; they came for leisure, social and then increasingly for political participation. Although the admission charges of these parks compromised their public nature, these entirely new spaces greatly affected the shaping of modern-urban bourgeois lifestyle, the formation of city political arenas for mass rallies, and then the spreading of the radical thoughts of revolution<sup>141</sup>. Under the influence of the first generation public space and with an effort to break its limits, the Tiananmen Square was given birth.

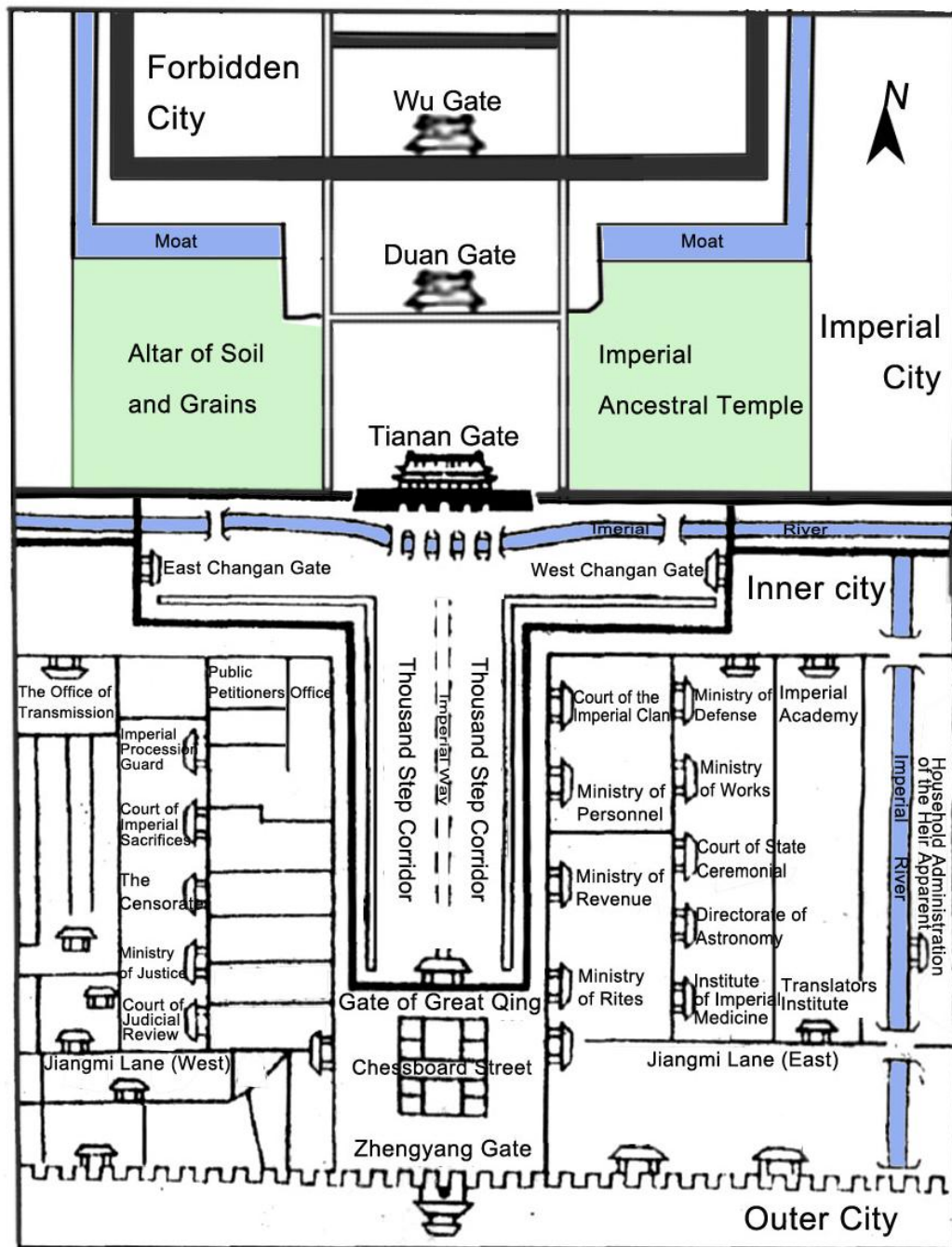
I would like to introduce what the Tiananmen area was like before its transformation into a public square. During the Qing and Ming dynasties, the area that we call ‘Tiananmen Square’ now was an enclosed T-shaped imperial ‘square’ flanked by imperial administrative quarters in both east and west sides. Figure 4.3 illustrates the plan of this area in the late Qing dynasty before 1900. The east-west road of the ‘T’ ran in front of Tianan Gate (*Tiananmen*) and ended with East and West Changan Gates (*Changan zuomen* and *Changanyoumen*). The meridional stem of the ‘T’ was a walled passage called Imperial Way (*yudao*) linking the Tianan Gate and Great Qing Gate. It contained two covered walkways called ‘Thousand Step Corridors’ (*Qianbulang*) defining the passage used by the emperor between the Imperial City and the Inner City. The whole T-space was enclosed by walls. Behind the walls were the central departments of the imperial government, including the Six Ministries (i.e., Ministries of Defence, Personnel, Revenue, Rites, Works and Justice) and other important central boards (see Figure 4.3)<sup>142</sup>. Yet even the officials working in the

<sup>140</sup> According to an agreement between the Qing imperial family and the republican government in 1911, the last emperor, Puyi, was allowed to continue living in the Forbidden City and kept many buildings and lands, the Ancestral Temple was one of which, his personal property.

<sup>141</sup> Shi, Mingzheng, *Zouxian jindaihua de Beijingcheng – Chengshi jianshe yu shehui biange* [The Modernizing Beijing City – City Construction and Social Change], Beijing: Peking University Press, 1994, pp136, 140-141 and 151-156.

<sup>142</sup> For the plans and functions of this area in the Ming and Qing dynasties, see Hou, Renzhi, ‘Tiananmen guangchang: cong gongting guangchang dao renmin guangchang de yanbian he gaizao’ [Tiananmen Square: evolution and transformation from imperial square to people’s square], in *Lishi Dilixue de Lilun yu Shijian* [Theory and Practice of Historical Geography], Hou, Renzhi, ed., Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1979, pp 227-250. For the functions of the ministries and boards in the area, see Hou, Renzhi & Tang, Xiaofeng eds, *Beijing Chengshi Lishi Dili* [Historical Geography of Beijing], Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Press, 2000, p151-153.

administrative quarters could not access the T-square directly due to the enclosure of the walls. For ordinary people, of course, it was an extremely exclusive space.



**Figure 4.3 Tiananmen 'Square' in the Qing Dynasty before 1900**  
(source: based on Cao, 1971, p21)

The square also played other roles besides an imperial passage. It was the site for military reviews and ceremonial offerings before embarking on military campaigns. On some occasions the Emperor issued proclamations, which were conventionally lowered from the Tianan Gate Tower to the government officers kneeling before the

gate<sup>143</sup>. This imperial courtyard was also the site for celebrations of the selection of the country's top scholar-officials. Both the Ming and Qing selected their officials through an elaborate examination system. The highest national examination, 'court exams' (*dianshi*), was held within the 'T' space in front of Tianan Gate (Chengtian Gate at that time) at the beginning ages of the Ming, and relocated to the Hall of Protecting Harmony (*Baohedian*) within the Forbidden City in the Qing dynasty. Candidates entered the Forbidden City via the East Changan Gate<sup>144</sup>. After the exam, the results written on yellow paper were carried in the Dragon Pavilion (*longting*) through the Tianan Gate and finally posted out of the East Changan Gate to make public to the people outside the Imperial City. Thus the East Changan Gate was also called 'Dragon Gate' (*longmen*) which conveyed an auspicious meaning. On the contrary, the West Changan Gate was related to death and punishment. A high court was held inside the gate to review death sentences twice a year. Because the accused was brought in and out of the Imperial City via the West Changan Gate, the gate acquired its nickname 'Tiger Gate' (*humen*)<sup>145</sup>.

From the functions of the Tiananmen area, we can see that it was predominantly a space of *gong*. First of all, it was a space associated to 'state affairs', including military, national examination, high court and the central government. As a state-*gong* space, it excluded ordinary people; it was used by the emperor and was surrounded by highest administrative institutions. Theoretically, however, it was supposed to be separated from the private interests of the emperor, royal family and any particular political groups. It symbolised the public interests of the nation. Furthermore, designated as a *gong* space, it unavoidably contained *gong*'s moral implications. Judging the cases in the high court or the theses in the national examination especially required the merit of impartiality, a merit of Heaven (*tian*) and *gong*. The exclusive use of the Imperial Way (Thousand Steps Corridors) of the emperor was connected to his role as the one who took the mandate of heaven: the emperor used the Way to go to the Temple of Heaven in the south of the City to pray

<sup>143</sup> Meyer, J. F., *The Dragons of Tiananmen: Beijing as a Sacred City*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991; Hershkovitz, Linda, 'Tiananmen Square and the politics of place', *Political Geography*, vol.12, no.5, 1993, pp. 395-420.

<sup>144</sup> The Imperial Way was just reserved for the emperor. Other people, including the highest officials could only use other gates to enter the T-space then the Imperial City. In the Ming period there was even debate over whether the mother of the emperor was allowed to use the passage. Hershkovitz, Linda, 'Tiananmen Square and the politics of place', *Political Geography*, vol.12, no.5, 1993, pp. 395-420.

<sup>145</sup> Wu, Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the creation of a political space*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp19-20; Zhao, Luo and Shi, Shuqing, *Tiananmen*, Beijing, 1957, p25.

for the country to be blessed and to get a ‘heavenly peace’, which is also the meaning of the name of Tiananmen. The moral and abstract dimension of *gong* was represented in the space in a very symbolic and ritual means; even the common people, who were excluded from the space physically, could also be interpreted as having been included in the *gong* spirit of the place in a symbolic sense.

Therefore, the royal square, the precursor of Tiananmen Square in the late empire was highly enclosed, exclusive and ritualised. It was not a contested space but rather a space presenting privilege, supremacy and unchallengeable authority of *gong* and its state embodiments. This is not just the history of Tiananmen Square, rather the history of all Chinese city squares. The Chinese word used to translate ‘square’ is *guangchang* (广场) which literally means a ‘wide/big ground’ or ‘open place’. The second character *chang* (場 in traditional Chinese, 场 in simplified Chinese, usually translated as ‘ground’ or ‘square’) combines a 土 (*tu*), meaning ‘land’ or ‘soil’ and a 易(*yang*), meaning ‘to disperse’, ‘to scatter’ or ‘to spread’. It originally described a ground used for winnowing grain out of chaff, which implies filtering, separating and purifying. *Guangchang* also referred to occasions when people gathered, which was associated to people in collective, like the connotation contained in ‘the public’<sup>146</sup>. The word did not attain its modern sense (i.e., as a ‘public’ square) until the 1920s. Urban spaces physically analogous to a square in traditional Chinese cities were: first, the space in front of a government office building, which usually excluded normal people not to mention mass rallies; second, the ground in front of a temple, used for religious activities, folk festivals and as regular play arena. Both types of these ‘squares’ echoed the etymology of *gong*, the Chinese ‘public’: in ancient time a typical *gong*-space was either a place attached to the building of the ruler or a field out of a temple (which was built for the rulers after they died). The Tiananmen T-square can be seen as a result of the evolution of the former case. In fact the word for the building of the ruler and temple, *gong* (宫), now translated into ‘palace’ was also another name of the Forbidden City (*zijincheng*, 紫禁城, literally ‘purple forbidden city’<sup>147</sup>) : Palace City (*gongcheng*, 宫城)<sup>148</sup>.

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<sup>146</sup> Zheng, Yutin, ‘Shitan “guangchang” ciyi de yanbian’ [The evolution of the meaning of Guangchang], *Wenxue Jiaoyu [Literature Study]*, 2008, p3.

<sup>147</sup> Purple is a colour symbolising royal in Imperial China.

<sup>148</sup> Another interesting comparison that can be discussed is the definition and understanding of ‘city’ in

#### 4.2.2 *Si* (market & market place) as a part of *gong*

Indeed, the Tiananmen was a space of regulation, taming, rites and performance. It reflected an ambition to control people, physically and mentally. It attempted to rule all activities, including the presence and absence of certain people. This spatial control was also the aim of the whole city. However, exception always exists. Space and functions in the realm of *si* survived and even flourished under the domination of *gong*. Just in front of the gate of Great Qing, the south end of the Imperial Way was a market place called ‘Chess Board Street’ (*qipanjie*, 棋盘街). As described before, according to the orthodoxy of the plan of an imperial capital, markets should be placed in the north of (‘behind’) the palace and the king’s halls. But the Chess Board Street was a market place ‘in front of’ the imperial palace and central government departments. The formation of the peculiar market place owed to several factors. First of all, it was a crucial cross connecting the east and west of the Inner City. As the Imperial City occupied the core area of the Inner City, normal people could only travel between the east and west through three roads. Jiangmi Lane (*jiangmi xiang*, 江米巷, literally ‘Lane of River Grain’) was one of the three and the Chess Board Street was located in the intersection of Jiangmi Lane and the north-south axis of the city. This rendered the place a trade area convenient for people from both the east and west city to buy daily goods. Secondly, as illustrated in Figure 4.3, there was the Imperial River (*yuhe*, 御河) nearby. Revenues in the form of grain were transported into the capital via the Imperial River and downloaded in Jiangmi Lane; that was why the street got its name *Jiangmi*, literally ‘river grain’. The whole Jiangmi Lane was prosperous for grain transport; and because of its status as the entrance of the West and East Jiangmi Lane, the importance of the Chess Board Street was consequently enhanced. Last but not least, the administrative quarter made this intersection space more prosperous. Wealthy officials consumed and exchanged their treasures there. Moreover, the civil servants working in the central departments and the examiners for the annual national examination in the Forbidden City composed the main consumer group, and they nurtured the Chess Board Street as a famous book market<sup>149</sup>. It is also worth mentioning that partly influenced by the commerce of Jiangmi Lane and Chess Board Street, the adjacent area immediately out of Zhengyang Gate (also

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different European and Chinese contexts. I shall elaborate this later.

<sup>149</sup> For a history of the Chess Board Street, see Li, Wei, ‘Evolution of the Chess Board Street in the Ming and Qing dynasties’, in *Journal of Capital Normal University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2010 supplement, pp132-136.

called Front Gate, *Qianmen*, the central south entrance from the Outer City to the Inner) gradually developed into one of the most flourishing commercial streets in the capital and also served the whole country as a financial centre in middle and late Qing<sup>150</sup>.

The Chess Board Street as a significant market place adjacent to the Tiananmen area provides an interesting perspective to understand the situation of economic activity, which is considered as private domain in the liberal-economistic model and as *si*-behaviours in Chinese *gong-si* framework, and its relation to public power and state administration. As described above, the location of the market place followed the principle of convenience and market economy. It broke the orthodoxy of the plan of the capital, challenging the spatial domination of public/*gong* power. It was a space for private people and their exchange between one another; these economic activities were under jurisdiction of individuals rather than public power. Although the state intended to control all space and activities, and although private interest and commerce were seen as inferior, the operation of the city had to allow activities for business that might happen not in the designated market places. The Chess Board Street also eroded the class boundaries. It contained people covering a wide range of social status: civilians, merchants, scholars, high officials and the nobility. This was very rare in the city. Usually middle and high officials were forbidden to enter the market places even those established by the government (e.g. the one in the Bell and Drum Towers Area). It is a pity that not much literature recorded the activities and interactions between people from different classes in the Chess Board Street in detail. But undoubtedly this market place disturbed the strict discipline over space, activities and people.

Nevertheless, the market forming in the Chess Board Street relied on the *gong*-related institutions and functions nearby. In fact, this is a common characteristic of Chinese 'administrative cities': these cities developed because they were the seats of governments, and the flourishing of industry and commerce was highly dependent on the consumption of the governments, aristocrats, officials and their relatives. In addition, the regulation was still powerful. Not only would all the stalls and people be

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<sup>150</sup> See also Hou, Renzhi & Tang, Xiaofeng eds, *Beijing Lishi Dili [Historical Geography of Beijing]*, Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Press, pp233-234 and 237-238; and Gao, S. F., Historical changes in Markets and their location in Beijing, *Chinese Geography and Environment* 3, 42-60.

cleared when the emperor needed to use the Imperial Way, but also coffins (even empty ones) were banned from the Chess Board Street.

Later, the T-shaped square, the Chess Board Street and a part of the administrative quarter composed the area covering the current Tiananmen Square. In the process of transforming it into a public square, the May Fourth Movement in 1919 played a pivotal role<sup>151</sup>. Even before the May Fourth protest, many changes in the city had emerged.

### **4.3 Birth of Tiananmen Square and emergence of an integral city: foreign force, municipality, police and the people**

#### **4.3.1 Geopolitics of Tiananmen area**

Tiananmen area experienced several significant changes in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The year of 1900 is a turning point for the city of Beijing. Although the hierarchical spatial system itself had already started to break down with the disintegration of the Qing Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was the foreign armies who shook the Tiananmen and, in doing so, openly challenged the spatial order of Beijing for the first time. In the summer of 1900, the military force of the Eight-Nation Alliance<sup>152</sup> invaded Beijing to protect their legations threatened by the Boxer Uprising<sup>153</sup>. In the military conflicts, the Tiananmen Tower was damaged and the Thousand Step Corridors were burned. But they were repaired and restored immediately after the war. From 1900 on, all the foreign legations in Beijing were concentrated in the southeast corner of the Inner City, displacing part of the administrative departments west to the trunk of the T-shaped square. Furthermore, they walled the Legation Quarter and governed it independently from the Qing government, forming the fourth ‘city’ of Beijing (Figure 4.4). Some of their buildings even broke the monopoly of the palace on

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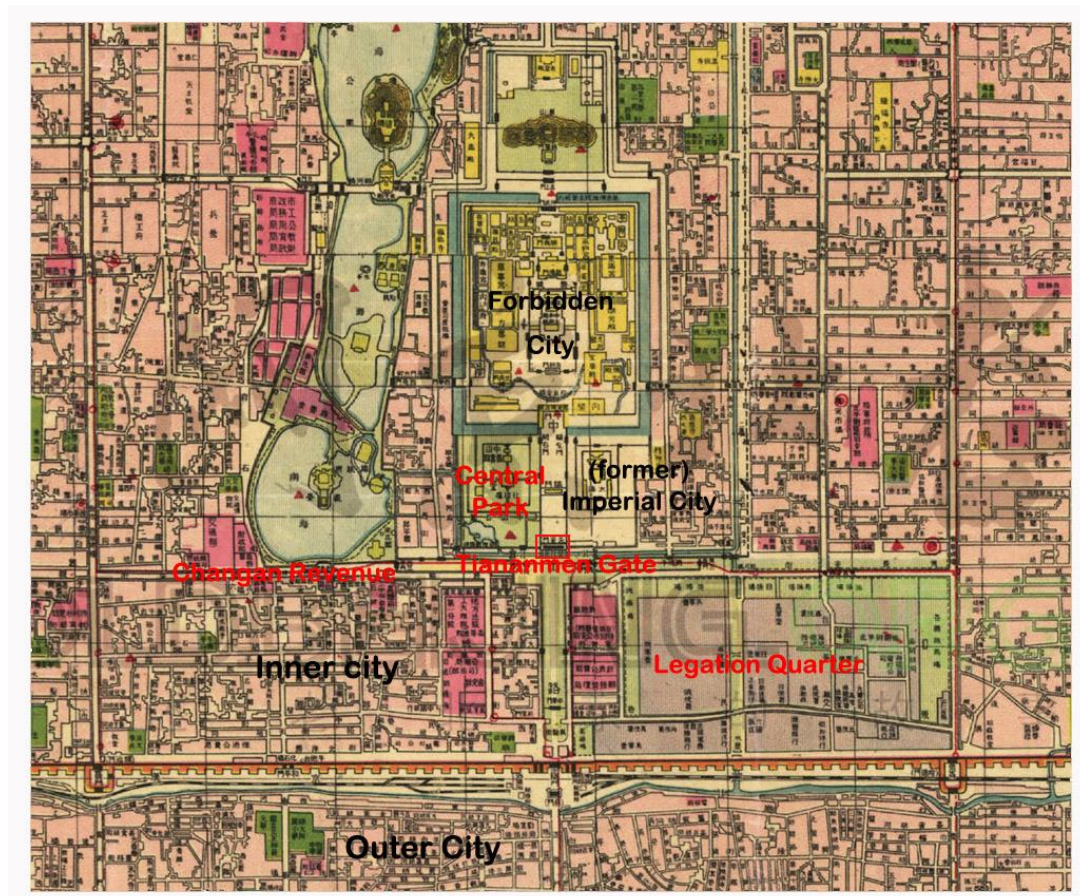
<sup>151</sup> Lee, Nelson K, ‘How is a political public space made?- The birth of Tiananmen Square and the May Fourth Movement’, *Political Geography*, 2009, vol.28, pp 32-43.

<sup>152</sup> The Eight-Nation Alliance or the Eight Power Expedition was an alliance of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

<sup>153</sup> The Boxer Uprising (Boxer Rebellion, *Yihetuan* Movement) was an anti-imperialism, anti-Christianity, proto-nationalist movement by the Righteous Harmony Society (*Yihetuan*) between 1899 and 1901. It also opposed the Qing government in the early stage.



height<sup>154</sup>. To some extent, the big compound of the Legation Quarter greatly challenged the authority and controlling power of the Empire, in both political and spatial senses. The presence of the foreign force also made the adjacent Tiananmen area a more sensitive, political space.



**Figure 4.4 Geopolitical environment of Tiananmen in the early 20th century**  
(drawn by the author based on Map of Beijing, 1921)

The new transport structure of Beijing also helped the Tiananmen area to gain a more prominent status. After the 1911 revolution, Beijing ended its history as the imperial capital. The Republican government sought to establish a more modern spatial design to adapt to city development in the twentieth century. Following the opening of Tianan Gate and the administrative quarters, Changan Avenue opened in 1913. It ran

<sup>154</sup> Dong, Madeleine Y., *Republican Beijing: The City and Its History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003, P31; Bredon, Juliet, *Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description of Its Chief Places of Interest*, Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1922, p18.



in front of Tiananmen Tower, extending the east-west wings of the 'T' to make a thoroughfare through the city. As a consequence, the formerly private palace square was now completely open to the public, and the spatial importance of Tiananmen Gate was enhanced by its location as the intersection point of the north-south axis and the east-west artery. In addition, the wall surrounding the Imperial City was demolished in the years between 1917 and 1927, which further improved the accessibility of the Tiananmen area.

### **4.3.2 Urban space, public sphere and municipality as a new embodiment of *gong***

Another factor contributing to the birth of Tiananmen Square as a political space was the emerging public spaces and a public sphere that had been cultivated. As described before, many royal gardens and temples were transformed into public parks in the late Qing dynasty and early republican period. The Central Park, north-west to the Tiananmen, was the most prominent park since its opening in 1915 (Figure 4.4). In addition to its recreational, cultural and social functions, this former sacred and access-limited altar for state ceremonies now was a foremost political space: not only was it a venue where intellectuals gave public speeches for educational purposes and political activists held their meetings, it also served as a place for mass rallies<sup>155</sup>. For example, more than 3,000 Beijing citizens gathered in the park to protest the Twenty-one Demands of Japan and the compromise by the Beiyang government in 1915<sup>156</sup>. In fact, in the decades of political turmoil, city space, including parks, universities and streets became unprecedentedly political. By lecturing, leafleting, public forums, demonstration and other activities in these places, the intellectuals and students attempted to educate the commoners, to awaken people's self-consciousness and to promote the public's concerned with public affairs<sup>157</sup>. A public sphere in Harbemannian sense was burgeoning<sup>158</sup>. In the past, public-spirit or *gong*-virtue had been associated with Confucian elites. But in this period, the public spirit was

<sup>155</sup> Lee, Nelson K, 'How is a political public space made?- The birth of Tiananmen Square and the May Fourth Movement', *Political Geography*, 2009, vol.28, pp 32-43.

<sup>156</sup> Gamble, Sidney D., *Peking: A Social Survey*, New York: George H. Doran, 1921, p237.

<sup>157</sup> Strand, David, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989, pp168-170; Zhang, G. Wo canjia wusiyundong de shimo [How I participated in the May Fourth Movement], in Chen, S. ed, *Wusiyundong de huiyi* [Memory of the May Fourth Movement], pp. 111-139, Taipei: Baijie Publishing Co.

<sup>158</sup> Rankin, Backus, 'Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere,' in *Modern China*, 1993, Vol. 19, No. 2, Symposium: "Public Sphere"/"Civil Society" in China? Paradigmatic Issues in Chinese Studies, III, pp. 158-182.

intimately connected with the mobilisation of the urban popular, the city public<sup>159</sup>. In this process, we can see remarkable development of civic activities and a 'united' city (municipality) emerging as a unit bearing *gong* interests and values.

The autonomy of civil society grew significantly. When talking about the proliferation of a variety of self-governing organizations (*zizhi tuanti*), professional societies (*fatuan*) and guilds (*huiguan*), Shi<sup>160</sup> declares that civic activities in the 1910s and 1920s were 'unparalleled in their diversity and pluralism by any other period in twentieth-century China'. Actually, the Central Park was chiefly funded by private sponsors and managed by a consortium of private citizens and merchants under the supervision of the city government. Even as early as 1906, a local gentry-merchant organisation called the Inner City Municipal Assembly for Public Welfare (*Neicheng Shizheng gongyihui*) had actively championed for a public park in Shishahai<sup>161</sup>. As Mary Rankin and William Rowe<sup>162</sup> have pointed out, the weak state in the late Qing and early Republic created a vacuum that could be filled by private gentry groups in the name of public interests, which nurtured the growth of the civil society.

One profound institutional change related to this phenomenon was the creation of the Beijing Municipal Council in the early republican period. This was the first time Beijing had a single government at the municipal level. In the imperial era, Beijing was the capital under the direct control from the central but was by no means one united city unit. The Forbidden City (i.e., Palace City), Inner City and Outer City were dominated by multiple bodies and governed in different ways. Beijing never existed as 'one' city, as there was no single local government of the whole area. In

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<sup>159</sup> The ultimate target of mobilising the mass, however, was saving the country rather than empowering the citizens. The complex connection between the people and the nation was just as what the previous name of the Central Park, i.e. 'Soil and Grain' Altar suggested: soil and grain were worshiped due to their great importance for the people (and hence the country) in an agricultural society, but when put together, 'soil grain' (*sheji*, 社稷) composed a special Chinese expression for country/nation/state, standing for an imaginary entity beyond the people.

<sup>160</sup> Shi, Mingzheng, 'From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: the Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing', in *Modern China*, vol.24 no.3, July 1998, pp219-254. Also see Strand, David, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989, pp178-181.

<sup>161</sup> Shi, Mingzheng, 'From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: the Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing', in *Modern China*, vol.24 No.3, July 1998, 219-254.

<sup>162</sup> Rankin, Mary Backus, 'Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere', in *Modern China*, 1993, Vol. 19, No. 2, Symposium: "Public Sphere"/"Civil Society" in China? Paradigmatic Issues in *Chinese Studies*, III, pp. 158-182. 108-138; Rowe, William T., 'The Public Sphere in Modern China', 1990, *Modern China*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 309-329.

terms of administrative zoning, Beijing was co-governed by the counties of Daxing and Wanping (split by the axis of the city), two of the twenty-one counties under Shuntian Prefecture<sup>163</sup>. But at the same time most of the administrative and juridical power of Beijing was exercised by other institutions appointed by the central government or directly by specific ministries and central boards. The Manchu Qing made its seat in Beijing in 1644, a post with immense power named Nine Gates Infantry Commander (*bujun tongling jiumentidu*, 步军统领九门提督) was created, in charge of the traffic control of the nine gates of the Inner City and the safe guarding of the capital (of course primarily the safety of the Forbidden City). The Nine Gates Infantry Commander also had other judicial responsibilities, including night patrol, fire fighting, security checking, criminal arresting, prison keeping, etc. This position was always held by Manchu ministers, commanded directly by the emperor. Along with the Nine Gates Infantry Commander, there were Eight Banners governors in charge of the military and administrative affairs of the Inner City. Eight Banners governors could be Manchus, Chinese and Mongolians but all under the command of the emperor. For the Outer City, which was also within the administrative zone of Daxing and Wanping county governments, was further divided into five districts (called *wucheng*) supervised by five censors (*wucheng yushi*, 五城御史) dispatched by a central board the Censorate (*duchayuan*, 都察院) on a yearly basis. The censors administered a range of works concerning supervision, juridical administrative, public security, civil affairs and others. But their juridical power was only limited to the civil cases of minor offenses; those related to imprisonment and higher punishments were handed over to the Ministry of Justice. In both the Inner and Outer Cities, cases involving the retainers working for the emperor and his family would be transferred to the Imperial Household Department (*neiwufu*, 内务府), and the suits involving the royals were judged by the Court of the Imperial Clan (*zongrenfu*, 宗人府) (Figure 4.3 shows the locations of these central boards)<sup>164</sup>. All these diminished the autonomy of Beijing. Only the surrounding rural areas, the two Capital Counties, Daxing and Wanping, had relatively complete power on administration and jurisdiction.

<sup>163</sup> Theoretically, Shuntian Prefecture had the highest local jurisdiction.

<sup>164</sup> Zhu, Yong, 'Shilun qingdai beijingdiqu de sifa jianzhi jiqi jindai de bianqian' [On the jurisdiction system in the Qing dynasty and its modern change], *Beijing Wenbo [Beijing Culture and Archaeology]*, 2005, 4.

To summarise, the imperial Beijing was administered by a complex network of overlapping and redundant bureaucracies. As David Strand<sup>165</sup> puts it in *Rickshaw Beijing*, ‘imperial practice, as a general principle, denied cities, including the capital, political status as integral units and encouraged overlapping jurisdictions’. Moreover, the governance power was highly centralised due to Beijing’s capital status. During the imperial period, Beijing was by no means an autonomous or self-governing city. It was even not *a city*, as the idea of a city as an administrative unit was still a totally alien concept at that age. The word for traditional Chinese ‘city’, *cheng* (城), referred to settlements surrounded by walls from the beginning. That was why Beijing was seen as the capital with four ‘cities’ with four sets of walls: the three concentric cities of the Palace City (i.e., Forbidden City, *gongcheng*), Imperial City (*huangcheng*) and Inner City (*neicheng*); plus the Outer City (*waicheng*) (see figure 4.2). Each city (*cheng*) had its city walls (*chengqiang*) for defence purpose. The word for modern Chinese ‘city’ as an administrative unit is *chengshi*, adding the character of *shi* (市), which referred to the market place, to the walled settlement *cheng*. In the old time, the settlements developed from trading and commerce were called *zhen* (镇, like ‘town’) or *shizhen* (市镇, ‘market town’), rather than *cheng*. Before the new administrative system was introduced in the republican period, no Chinese city had ever formed a governmental unit or an autonomous community.

Inspired by western experience of municipal administration, the republican government founded the Municipal Council of Beijing (*shizhenggongsuo*) in 1914. Compared with previous governing bodies that made security maintenance the most important task, the newly established Municipal Council concentrated more on ‘urban’ affairs, such as infrastructure construction and city facility modernisation. Many local affairs that had formerly been dominated by gentry and merchant groups were now controlled by the municipal institutions. In practice, as I mentioned in previous sections, the Municipal Council made great efforts to modernise transportation and urban space. Many gates, city walls and fortress towers were demolished; roads were widened and extended. They also built public parks, public bathrooms, city library and museums. The *Municipal Gazette* (*shizheng tonggao*), an official publication of the Municipal Council, campaigned for urban public space.

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<sup>165</sup> Strand, David, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989, p.66.

Tramways and buses were also developed in the 1920s<sup>166</sup>. In discourse, the Municipal Council deliberately distanced itself from the institutions set up by the imperial government, and focused on city residents' rights and public interests, as evidenced by the frequent reference to 'public money' (*gonggong zhi jingji*, 公共之经济) and 'public welfare' (*gonggong zhi leli*, 公共之乐利) in the official reports<sup>167</sup>. In rhetoric and to some extent in reality, the city had become a unit for administration and limited self-government. Also for the first time, the city was viewed as an important embodiment of *gong*-related interests and activities. The concerns of the politics (*zhengshi*) were not just state affairs, but also local city affairs.

To summarise: in republican Beijing, a public sphere in a Habermasian sense was developing. For example, the public forum, political discussion, emerging mass media, voluntary associations and popular protests sprouted in the city. Meanwhile, the city also became an important governmental unit and a new embodiment of *gong*. The relation between city/municipality and *gong*-ideas is reflected in the language. The Chinese expression of 'municipal council' (or city government) at that time was *shizheng gongsuo* (市政公所). The word for council/government was *gongsuo* (公所), literally 'public place' or 'public hall', referring to the government building but also conveying a strong meaning of 'of the public' and 'for the public (interests)'. In the section 2.2 I introduced the earliest recorded use of the word *gongsuo* in the *Odes*. It said '...with bared arms he (Shu) seizes a tiger, and presents it in *gongsuo*'<sup>168</sup>. *Gongsuo* in this verse referred to the duke's house, but now the word was adopted by the republican government to refer to municipal government. Its connection to the ruler remained, but a new sense linked to 'urban public' was added. Therefore, the spirit and value of *gong* was not only present in a tribal community, the nation, the kingdom, all-under-heaven or a group of people without a territorial definition, it now also existed in the city, a municipality, a specific spatial and governmental area.

<sup>166</sup> *History of Beijing*, History Department of Peking University ed, 1999, pp445-451; Shi, Mingzheng, 'From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: the Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing', in *Modern China*, vol.24 No.3, July 1998, 219-254.

<sup>167</sup> *Jingdu shizheng huilan* [Collected reports on city administration in Beijing], Beijing: Jingdu shizheng gongsuo [Beijing Municipal Council], 1919, p184, [Online] Available from [http://book.xuexi365.com/ebook/detail\\_10499679.html](http://book.xuexi365.com/ebook/detail_10499679.html) [Accessed 06-07-2013].

<sup>168</sup> *Book of Odes*- Part I Airs of the States (*Guofeng*)-Book 7 Odes of Zheng (*Zhengfeng*)-Poem 4 Dashu in the field (*Dashu yutian*) (诗经•国风•郑风•大叔于田：檀褐暴虎，献于公所)。

### 4.3.3 Policing, city order and the penetration of state power

Beijing was also a policed city. During the imperial era, among the multiple governance institutions, the gendarmerie (or ‘Military Guard’ used by Sidney Gamble<sup>169</sup>) under the Nine Gates Infantry Commander guarded the Inner City, and the sensors of the Five Districts (*wucheng*) administering the Outer City functioned as pre-modern bureaucratic policing<sup>170</sup>. The difference was that the former was essentially a military force while the latter was a mix with juridical power. But both of them focused on the security of the city and public order among other more general governmental duties. The gendarmerie continued to function until 1924, twelve years after the collapse of Qing; and a considerable number of the former gendarmes were absorbed into the new-established professional police team<sup>171</sup>. During the Boxer Uprising, the trained police introduced under the Japanese occupation in the northern part of the Inner City provided an inspiration for the Qing government to create modern police force in the capital<sup>172</sup>. Finally in the New Policies (or Late Qing Reform, *Xinzheng*, a reform program between 1901 and 1911), a new police system was established in the Inner City in 1902 and extended to the Outer City three years later<sup>173</sup>. This marked the separation of the police power from military. But the modern police inherited the very broad understanding of ‘order keeping’ from the old gendarmerie. With the idea of ‘preventive policing’<sup>174</sup>, they regulated all manner of economic, cultural and political activities beyond crime prevention. Strand notes

In displacing the gendarmerie, the Beijing police seem to have absorbed their predecessor’s taste for a broad-gauged approach to the

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<sup>169</sup> Gamble, Sidney, *Peking, A Social Survey*, assisted by John Stewart Burgess, New York: George H. Doran. Gamble Company, 1921, pp.70-80.

<sup>170</sup> Dray-Novey, Alison J., 1993, ‘Spatial order and police in imperial Beijing’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 52, no. 4, 1993, pp. 885-922.

<sup>171</sup> But Gamble emphasizes the sharp competition between the Police Board and the old gendarmerie (Military Guard) in the early 1920s, particularly in the Outer City. For the operation of the gendarmerie in its last two decades and its connection with the new police force, see Dray-Novey, Alison J., ‘The Twilight of the Beijing Gendarmerie, 1900-1924’, in *Modern China*, 2007, Vol. 33, pp. 349-376. For a more complete account on the gendarmerie throughout the Qing dynasty, see her Ph.D. thesis, *Policing Imperial Peking: The Ch’ing Gendarmerie 1650–1850*, Ph.D. diss., Harvard University.

<sup>172</sup> For example, in B. L. Putnam Weale’s diary, the Japanese-occupied area was described as the ‘best policed’ and ‘most tranquil’. Putnam, Weale, B. L., ed., *Indiscreet Letters from Peking*, New York: Dodd, Mead, 1907, p. 435.

<sup>173</sup> Strand, David, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989, pp.67-8.

<sup>174</sup> Dray-Novey, Alison J., ‘The Twilight of the Beijing Gendarmerie, 1900-1924’, in *Modern China*, 2007, Vol. 33, pp. 349-376.

maintenance of order. Policemen enforced hygiene standards in the food businesses, made sure that public toilets were cleaned regularly, gave licensing exams to medical practitioners, regulated the storage in temples of coffins awaiting shipment back to the deceased's hometown or village, and tried to prevent the indiscriminate dumping of toxic or contaminated waste. Policemen censored public entertainments and political expression. They supervised a variety of institutions designed to administer and control the city's poorest residents....

Gamble<sup>175</sup> comments that the police were 'responsible for most of the work done in the city and touch almost every side of the life of the people'. The wide range of the duties of the police weakened the function of the Municipal government. The Capital Police Board (*jingshi jingchating*)<sup>176</sup> was directly supervised by the central Ministry and was not under the control of the Municipal Council (which was reorganised as the Beiping<sup>177</sup> Special Municipal Government in 1928 and Beijing Municipal Council in 1937). Compared with the Municipal Council, whose work majorly on city construction and development, the police played a more comprehensive role in terms of city administration and management. Even the property tax (*fangjuan*)<sup>178</sup>, the most important local tax, was levied by the policemen and specifically used for the expense of the Capital Police Board<sup>179</sup>. In fact, the Police Minister (*xunjingbu*) established in 1905 became the Ministry of Civil Affairs (*minzhengbu*) in 1906 and later the Ministry of the Interior (*neizhengbu*) in the Republic. As the name change suggests, the police system was responsible for domestic administrative affairs. Even

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<sup>175</sup> Gamble, Sidney, *Peking, A Social Survey*, assisted by John Stewart Burgess, New York: George H. Doran. Gamble Company, 1921, pp.

<sup>176</sup> The name were the *Gongxunju* (Bureau of Public Works and Patrol), 1901–02; the *Nei/Wai cheng xunjing zongting* (Inner/Outer City Central Police Bureau), 1902–05; and in 1905 the *Xunjing bu* (Ministry of Police), which became the *Minzheng bu* (Ministry of Civil Administration) from 1906 to 1911 and after. The name *Jingshi jingcha ting* (Capital Police Board) was used from 1914 onward. Note 8 in Dray-Novey, Alison J., 'The Twilight of the Beijing Gendarmerie, 1900-1924', in *Modern China*, 2007, Vol. 33, pp. 349-376.

<sup>177</sup> Beijing is only called Bei-jing (literally 'north capital') when it is the capital. The name changes to Bei-ping (literally 'north peace') when it does not serve as the capital.

<sup>178</sup> *Fangjuan* (literally 'house tax'), also called *fangjingjuan* (literally 'house-police tax') was taxes levied onto the people who owned or rented properties. The idea was very similar to the 'council tax' in England. After the Capital Police Board became the Bureau of Public Security in 1928, it kept the power to collect property tax until all taxing power was transferred to the Bureau of Finance in 1948. Beijing Municipal Archives: J001-005-00046, J001-005-00161, J001-005-00177, J001-005-00207, J010-005-00145, J181-020-026655, J181-020-09069.

<sup>179</sup> As the capital, the operation of Beijing was primarily supported by the central revenues. Of course, this situation changed in 1928 when the central administration moved to Nanjing. But the city had hardly developed a self-sustaining economy. See Dong, Madeleine Y., *Republican Beijing: The City and Its History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003, P78.

after the Capital Police Board was incorporated into Beiping Special Municipal Government as the Public Security Bureau (when Beijing was not the capital any more) in 1928, it still controlled much administrative power along with its security duties, and it was not uncommon to see the head of the Public Security Bureau also serve as the mayor of Beijing municipality<sup>180</sup>. What I want to stress here is that, although Beijing was a special city for many reasons, the combination of its police power and governmental power was not an exception, but instead revealed the nature of state power. In Max Weber's famous definition, the (modern) state is the entity that detains 'the claim of monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order'<sup>181</sup>. The force was primarily exerted by the military and police, both of which were precursors (even the essence) of the modern government<sup>182</sup> in the Beijing case.

If we go back further to an earlier, broader and also more positive presumption of the idea of the police in Europe, we can find more in common. Nicolas Delamare's *Traité de la Police* (Treatise of the Police) published between 1705 and 1738 treated the object of the police as 'the general and common good of society'. Mark Neocleous comments that from the beginning, police was 'a form of *governing* rather than the exercise of law'<sup>183</sup>. In the conceptualisation of the German *Polizeiwissenschaft* (Science of Police), the police also had an economic and social duty, including public health concerns, town planning, surveillance of prices, etc<sup>184</sup>. For the 'free-born Englishman', although disliking the term as well as the idea of 'police' (more precisely, French military police)<sup>185</sup>, they established their civil police force in 1829 in London<sup>186</sup> and empowered them to apprehend the suspects who disturbed the

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<sup>180</sup> Of course, it is not difficult to imagine that in a period full of political turmoil and war (especially during the civil war among warlords between 1916 and 1928), those who controlled the army and police also were also easier to be appointed and promoted to some crucial administrative posts.

<sup>181</sup> Weber, Max, 'Politics as a Vocation' [1919], in *The Vocation Lectures*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004.

<sup>182</sup> In Chinese political practice and political thoughts, the site selection, plan, construction, control and management of the capital city are essential to the formation and maintenance of the nation/state/kingdom. In a certain way, controlling the territory of the capital area was controlling the whole. That is one reason why the capital was changed so many times in different dynasties in Chinese history. For an account, see Tang, Xiaofeng, 'Zhongguo gudai wenming shi dadiyu wenming' [The Ancient Civilisation of China is a Big Territorial Civilisation], in *Jiuzhou* (vol. 1), Tang Xiaofeng & Li, Ling, eds, Beijing: China Environmental Science Press, 1997, pp1-4.

<sup>183</sup> Neocleous, Mark, *The Fabrication of Social Order: A Critical Theory of Police Power*, London: Pluto Press, 2000, p4.

<sup>184</sup> Foucault, Michel, *Security, territory, population: lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, ed. by Senellart, Michel, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p298.

<sup>185</sup> Gregory, Frank E.C., 'The British Police System: with Special Reference of Public Order Problem', in *Police and Public Order in Europe*, Roach, John and Thomaneck, Jurgen eds, London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1985, p36.

<sup>186</sup> With the exception of the City. Before this, there were parish constables and watchmen for the purpose of



*'public Peace'*<sup>187</sup>. Behaviours such as lying and loitering in the public place at the 'wrong' time were seen as 'public nuisances', the idea of which extended from people's manners and behaviour to built environment at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: those buildings failing to reach the health standards were to be demolished, and at the same time, new construction should only occur in designated places. One remarkable case is *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.* in the US in 1926, in which a lawyer and planner, Alfred Bettman, argued that zoning was a form of nuisance control and therefore a reasonable police power, which explicitly declared the kinship between the town planning and police power, drawing an Anglo-Saxon legal history<sup>188</sup>. In addition, another significant state power, the compulsory purchase power in the UK or eminent domain in the US, was also intimately connected to town planning power and therefore police power. The administrative history of Beijing and the two land expropriation cases in a way echoed all these. The city, on the one hand, had its public order and peace to maintain, and the government of Beijing was historically connected to police power. This power, on the other, was not a power within the city; in contrast, it indicated the state power beyond the city, implying the penetration of the state into the city.

To summarise, around the year 1919, some important changes can be seen in the city of Beijing, showing the disintegration of the former political and spatial order and the emergence of a new one<sup>189</sup>. The intervention of the foreign force not only built their enclosure in the core of Beijing but also served as an impetus for the Chinese to form their understanding of the modern nation-state. Although still fairly weak, the municipality/city started to emerge as a new scale in city governance and in people's daily life, which can be found in the development of varied municipal facilities and public space and in the police that regulated people's illegal and selfish (*zisi*) behaviours and kept public peace. All these institutional features inevitably affected people's thoughts, perception and practice. The newly-emerging vertical (e.g. state, city, body) and horizontal (e.g. city space) dimensions had opened up more political possibilities for the Beijing people as both individuals and as collectives. The May Fourth Protest, which gave birth to the Tiananmen Square, was one prominent case.

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private and public security.

<sup>187</sup> Metropolitan Police Act 1829, section 7.

<sup>188</sup> *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.*, 272 US 365, Supreme Court, 1926.

<sup>189</sup> For another account on this, see Shi, Mingzheng, 'Rebuilding the Chinese Capital: Beijing in the early twentieth century', in *Urban History*, 1998, 25 (1), pp. 60-81.

#### **4.3.4 The May Fourth Protest and the people emerging as a bearer of gong**

The May Fourth Protest (or May Fourth Movement for the broader event) was a student demonstration held in the ‘empty space’ in front of Tianan Gate in 1919. The movement was sparked by the dissatisfaction over the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I. The Treaty awarded Qingdao (historically known as Tsingtao) in Shandong Peninsula, formerly under the control of Germany, to Japan instead of giving it back to China. This diplomatic failure of China, known as the ‘Shandong Problem’, generated public anger towards the Beiyang government<sup>190</sup>. The Chinese people suspected that the government made a secret deal with Japan for a big loan and thus did not stand firm in defending the interests of the nation in the Conference. The movement started in Beijing and then spread to the major cities of the whole country. Given the domestic pressure, the Chinese delegates refused to sign the treaty on 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1919, which was viewed as a primary victory of the Movement<sup>191</sup>.

While examining the process is not the main target here, I would like to outline the events of the May Fourth based on the narrative of existing literature, and then I shall analyse the political and spatial implication of the birth of Tiananmen Square by putting it in a broader political and cultural context of Chinese understanding on ‘politics’. Nelson Lee’s paper<sup>192</sup> depicts why and how the ‘empty space’ in front of the Tiananmen Square was chosen for the protest. It was not a natural choice. Usually students from Beijing and from other provinces tended to choose New China Gate, the entrance of the Middle and South Seas where the Beiyang Government was located, as the destination of their petitions. For example, on the 21<sup>th</sup> May, 1918, more than 2,000 students gathered there to protest the signing of the Sino-Japanese Military Mutual Assistance Convention. Although there was a kind of connection between the New China Gate and the empty space of the Tianan Gate-- those planning to demonstrate outside New China Gate would gather at Tianan Gate first-- it was doubtless that for both the government and the public, Tianan Gate was of

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<sup>190</sup> Beiyang Government is the name of the Beijing-based warlord government which ruled most of China from 1912 to 1928.

<sup>191</sup> For the history of the Movement, see Chow, T. T., *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 100-110.

<sup>192</sup> Lee, Nelson K, ‘How is a political public space made?- The birth of Tiananmen Square and the May Fourth Movement’, *Political Geography*, 2009, vol.28, pp. 32-43.

secondary importance. That was why New China Gate was under much stricter and closer police surveillance, which increased the difficulty to access the site.

The intent of the May Fourth demonstration organised by the students was to attract the attention of the general public and to mobilise them into political action, after which they believed they could exert pressure on the government. Wakening the public and educating the commoners were also the themes of the lecturing activities usually held in the Central Park, a regular space for people's political actions<sup>193</sup>. However, there were constraints on a rally in the Central Park. One was the entry fee. Although not very expensive, the admission charge still prohibited the lower-class people, who were the focus of the students, from using the park. A common strategy was to buy tickets and distribute them to the participants for free<sup>194</sup>, but this was unaffordable for the students. Another problem was the permission to hold a public gathering. Notwithstanding that the park was managed by a consortium of private citizens and merchants rather than the government, social organisations still had to seek permission from the Capital Police Board to have an assembly, which gave the authority a chance to deny the application or to seal the park in advance<sup>195</sup>.

Given its secondary importance and no entry fee, the Tiananmen space was therefore considered a better place to have the demonstration. Moreover, it was located exactly in the centre of the city and was the intersection point of the north-south and east-west axial roads, rendering the place equally accessible for the citizens from all areas of Beijing. In addition, the Tiananmen space was very near to the Legation Quarter. To petition the embassies of the Western powers to win their sympathy and help with regard to the 'Shandong Problem' was one important purpose of the demonstration<sup>196</sup>. On the afternoon of May 4, 1919, over 3,000 students from 13 universities in Beijing gathered in front of Tiananmen, shouting slogans such as 'Struggle for the

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<sup>193</sup> Wang, T, 'Huiyi Beijing xuesheng wusi aiguo yundong' [Memorizing Beijing student's patriotic movement in the May Fourth], in Institute of History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, ed., *Wusiyundong huiyilu* [Memories on May Fourth Movement], Beijing: Zhonghua Book Co. Ltd, 1959, p.33.

<sup>194</sup> Peng, M, *Wusi yundong shi* [History of May Fourth Movement], Beijing: Beijing People's Publishing House, 1984, p.265.

<sup>195</sup> Strand, David, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989, p.175; Lee, Ka Kiu, *Tiananmen Square 1919 — 1959: How A Space of Politics Was Constructed? Proposing A Political Theory of Space*, Ph.D thesis of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006, pp.118-9.

<sup>196</sup> Qingdao chao [the surge in Qingdao], in Institute of History, Chinese Academy of Science, ed., *Wusiyundong huiyilu* [Memories on May Fourth Movement], Beijing: Zhonghua Book Co. Ltd, 1959, p.40; Chow, T. T., *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960, pp. 109-110.

right/sovereignty of the nation externally, get rid of the national traitors at home' (*waizheng guoquan, neicheng guozei*) and 'Refuse to sign the Versailles Treaty' (*juqian ershiyitiao*). The initial plan was to march to the Legation Street and then to the Chongwen Gate commercial area to enhance their exposure to the public: but the demonstrators were led to the residence of an official who was accused of being a collaborator with the Japanese. After burning the official's house and beating his servants, student protesters were arrested, jailed, and severely beaten<sup>197</sup>. The next day, students in Beijing as a whole went on strike and over time, students, patriotic merchants, and workers in other larger cities joined in the protests. From June, the movement's centre of gravity shifted to Shanghai, the most industrialised city with great number of workers and businessmen at that time. After the May Fourth, almost all large-scale public gatherings in Beijing were held in the space in front of Tianan Gate. For examples, a protest against Japanese militaristic activity in Fujian province gathered around 30,000 students on November 29, 1919, and on December 7, more than 100,000 citizens demonstrated there against the Fujian Incident<sup>198</sup>. In the meantime, the government began taking action to recapture the space. A reconstruction scheme for Changan Avenue, facing Tianan Gate, was implemented in late 1919, and in 1925 and 1926, the ground of the Square was paved and trees were planted to reduce the space for gathering<sup>199</sup>. But public assemblies and demonstrations were still happening there from time to time (e.g. the one in June 1925 against the Fujian Incident, and another demonstration on March 1926). Tiananmen eventually became a public square, a space where the power of the state and the people were contested.

On the relation between the May Fourth protest and the formation of Tiananmen Square, Lee adapts an Arendtian approach, arguing the case reflects how action precedes public space (not vice versa), and that it was the concerted action of people that created and maintained the public space. This perspective does shed light on the connection between people's action and the making of political public space.

<sup>197</sup> See Wasserstrom, Jeffrey N., 'Chinese Students and Anti-Japanese Protests, Past and Present', *World Policy Journal*, Nov. 18, 2008.; Hao, Zhidong, 'May 4th and June 4th Compared: A Sociological Study of Chinese Social Movements', *Journal of Contemporary China*, Nov. 21, 2008.

<sup>198</sup> 'Beijing gejie lianxihui wei minan zhaokai guomin dahui bugao'[Report by the Union of All Circles of People in Beijing on the citizens' meeting against the Fujian incident], in Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences & The Second Historical Archives of China, eds, *Wusi aiguo yundong dang'an ziliao [Archival materials of the May Fourth Movement]*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1980, pp. 463-464.

<sup>199</sup> Lee, Nelson K, 'How is a political public space made?- The birth of Tiananmen Square and the May Fourth Movement', *Political Geography*, 2009, vol.28, pp. 32-43.

However, I would like to interpret the May Fourth Movement and the birth of the Tiananmen Square by referring to the broader historical and cultural contexts. This is also the background to understand the bizarre stories happening later.

Through collective action and by making the space public, the Chinese model of political participation shifted. In the past, typical political or public affairs were the concerns of the elites, especially the emperor, ministers and scholar-officials. Popular movements or mass politics changed this traditional notion that only certain groups or a class of people could engage in politics. Since the Sui dynasty (581–618 AD), civil servants were selected by an imperial examination system (*keju*); those who passed the examinations, regardless of their bloodline, would be appointed as government officers in a hierarchical system and govern the affairs of the kingdom with the king and the aristocracy. Yet once entering the bureaucratic system, these scholar-officials became *shi* (士), a class separated from other ordinary people and therefore they divorced from the class backgrounds that they were born into. Of course, as Confucian scholars, they had their specific ethical-political philosophy and values. Statecraft was the core of their study; teaching the rulers especially the king the statecraft was perhaps the highest duty of *shi*. This was similar to the aims of the ‘mirrors for princes’ in Europe. Governing and politics were nothing related to the grassroots. But the May Fourth Movement represented for the first time that scholars and students set the common people as the targeted group that they wanted to enlighten. Phrases like ‘going to the masses’ and ‘educating the commoners’ were their slogans. Having been disillusioned with the traditional Chinese culture, the May Fourth intellectuals resorted to western values, especially ‘democracy’ and ‘science’, leading a revolt against Confucianism. This was the cultural facet of the May Fourth Movement, by which its name of ‘New Culture Movement’ (*xinwenhua yundong*) was attained. In the political aspect, the alliance between the scholar class and the lower class city dwellers not only changed the history, but also marked a fundamental shift of the Chinese understanding on ‘political’ and ‘politics’.

#### **4.3.5 A transformation of Chinese politics (*zhengzhi*)**

This section will discuss the transformation of the understanding and practice of politics implied by the mass movement of the May Fourth Protest. As noted, political engagement, used to be the governing activities of the officials and elites, now turned

to ordinary people, to the masses. The people emerged from popular movement in the square, becoming an important *gong* embodiment and forming a bottom-up perspective on politics. In the process, they disrupted the previous harmonious and ordered picture of the world. Political struggle now was considered necessary and important for both the people and the state. This changed the understanding of the nature of politics. Before a further discussion on this transformation, I would like to introduce the ‘traditional’ understanding of the Chinese ‘politics’.

When translating ‘politics’ into Chinese, people could not find an existing term with an equivalent meaning. Sun Yat-sen<sup>200</sup>, the founding father of the Republic of China, suggested to combine two Chinese characters, *zheng* (政) and *zhi* (治) together to form a new word to refer to ‘politics’. In Sun’s explanation, *zheng* is ‘affairs of the multitude (*zhongren*)’, and *zhi* is ‘to govern’; therefore *zhengzhi* means ‘to govern affairs of the multitude’. That is his and also many of his contemporaries’ understanding of politics<sup>201</sup>. Although not a compound before, *zheng* and *zhi* had been used separately for a long time<sup>202</sup>. In early historical literature, *Zheng* referred to the institution and order of the kingdom (e.g. ‘[Huanchen] greatly disturbed the Song’s *zheng*’<sup>203</sup>), a means of rule and governance (i.e. one of the ruling tools among rites [*li*], music [*yue*], punishment [*xing*] and *zheng*<sup>204</sup>) or more commonly, the governmental activities of the sovereign and his officials. The term *zheng* conveyed a strong sense of top-down governance. Mozi (or Micius, c. 470 BC - c. 391 BC), for example, believed that governing (also *zheng*) could only operate in a top-down method, rather than the opposite<sup>205</sup>. In W. P. Mei’s version of the chapter ‘Will of Heaven I’ in *Mozi*, the verb *zheng* is translated into ‘to give the standard’ or ‘to make

<sup>200</sup> Sun is bilingual. He was sent to Honolulu in the US for school education from 1878 to 1883, and studied Western Medicine in Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese (the forerunner of The University of Hong Kong) between 1897 and 1892.

<sup>201</sup> Sun Yat-sen, *Sun Zhongshan Xuanji (A Collection of the works of Sun Yat-sen)*, vol.2, Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe (The People’s Publishing House), 1981, p661.

<sup>202</sup> *Encyclopedia of China • Political Science*, Beijing The Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, 1992, p482.

<sup>203</sup> *Zuo Zhuan (Chronicle of Zuo)*- Duke Xiang 17<sup>th</sup> Year- 558BC: ‘Huachen, who not only rode roughshod over the royal family (*zongshi*), and also disturbed the *zheng* of the state of Song, must be expelled’. *Zuo Zhuan* is traditionally attributed to Zuo Qiuming, as a commentary to the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)*. The Chinese version I use is *Chunqiu zuozhuan xiudingben (Revised Version of Zuo Zhuan of Spring and Autumn Annals)*, compiled and annotated by Yang, Boxun, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990, p.1032; for English translation, I consult Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, reprinted by Hong Kong University Press, 1960.

<sup>204</sup> *Zhouli (Rites of Zhou)*- Yueji (Records of Music): ‘...Thus rites is for expressing the intension/aim, music is for harmonise the voice, *zheng* is for unifying the behaviours, and punishment is for preventing the corruption’.

<sup>205</sup> Mozi- Book 7- Will of Heaven I- 3.

the standard'. Here is a key text talking about *zheng*, in which the character appears as many as 17 times:

Moreover, righteousness is the standard (*zheng*, *n.*). A standard is not to be given (*zheng*, *v.*) by the subordinates to the superior but by the superior to the subordinates. Therefore, while the common people should spare no pains at work they may not make the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) at will. There are the scholars to give them the standard (*zheng*, *v.*). While the scholars should spare no pains at work, they may not make the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) at will. There are the ministers and secretaries to give them the standard (*zheng*, *v.*). While the ministers and secretaries should spare no pains at work, they may not make the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) at will. There are the high duke and feudal lords to give them the standard (*zheng*, *v.*). While the high duke and the feudal lords should spare no pains at work, they may not make the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) at will. There is the emperor to give them the standard (*zheng*, *v.*). The emperor may not make the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) at will (either). There is Heaven to give him the standard (*zheng*, *v.*). That the emperor gives the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) to the high dukes, to the feudal lords, to the scholars, and to the common people, the gentlemen (*junzi*) in the world clearly understand. But that Heaven gives the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) to the emperor, the people do not know well. Therefore the ancient sage-kings of the Three Dynasties, Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu, desiring to make it clear to the people that Heaven gives the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) to the emperor, fed oxen and sheep with grass, and pigs and dogs with grain, and cleanly prepared the cakes and wine to do sacrifice to God on High and the spirits, and invoked Heaven's blessing. But I have not yet heard of Heaven invoking the emperor for blessing. So I know Heaven gives the standard (*zheng*, *v.*) to the emperor<sup>206</sup>.

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<sup>206</sup> Mozi- Book 7- Will of Heaven I- 3. Translated by W. P. Mei. Online version from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/mozi/will-of-heaven-i> [accessed 05-08-2013].

From the passage, besides the top-down governance connoted in the character/word of *zheng*, standard and order was also involved. It was a typical Chinese notion of political practice. *Zheng*, understood as the standard ultimately from Heaven and a practice to pass the standard from the superior to the subordinate implies something like ‘proper’, ‘upright’, ‘fair-minded’, ‘orthodox’. In the *Analects*, the collection of the discussion of Confucius and his disciples, *zheng* was an important topic and viewed as the art of governance or statecraft in most cases. When being asked by Ji Kangzi, a higher official of the state of Lu, Confucius gave a definition of (good) *Zheng* 政: ‘*Zheng* 政 means *zheng* 正’<sup>207</sup>. The latter *zheng* 正, a homophone and the left part of the former *Zheng* 政, is usually used as an adjective, meaning ‘upright’, ‘central’, ‘regular’, ‘pure’, ‘proper’, ‘standard’, etc. It can also be used as a verb with meanings like ‘rectify’, ‘renovate’ and ‘correct’<sup>208</sup>. But here Confucius did not mean that governance was to rectify the ruled, but stressed the importance of the self-regulation and self-rectification of the rulers. ‘If you (Ji Kangzi) behave in a proper way, who else dare not?’<sup>209</sup> Confucius and Confucianism advocated governing people by virtues, by acting as a model for people to follow. An ideal authority should combine the sovereignty with the power of virtue. The requirement of morality here is as obvious as that of *gong*. In later history, the two characters, *zheng* 政 as ‘to govern’(v.) and ‘governance’(n.) and *zheng* 正 as ‘standard’ (adj.) and ‘correct’ (v.) were increasingly used separately and the former became the main sphere of the Chinese ‘political affairs’, that is, the activities of the governors. Its association to top-down governing is also reflected by other *zheng*-compounded translations; concepts in western political science such as government (*zheng-fu*), policy (*zheng-ce*), party (*zheng-dang*), politician (*zheng-ke* or *zhengzhijia*), regime (*zheng-quan*), etc. are all translated into words with the character *zheng*.

The other character, *zhi*, in Chinese ‘politics’ also reflects the top-down approach and the concerns about order and peace. *Zhi* in classic texts was used as a verb in tackling floods (*zhi-shui*)<sup>210</sup>, administering and governing the kingdom or its people<sup>211</sup>,

<sup>207</sup> *Analects*-Yanyuan-17. Online version from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/mozi/will-of-heaven-i> [accessed 05-08-2013].

<sup>208</sup> <http://www.chinese-tools.com/tools/sinograms.html> [Accessed 22-07-2013].

<sup>209</sup> *Analects*-Yanyuan-17.

<sup>210</sup> E.g. ‘In the past, Yu tackled the floods’, in Li, Daoyuan, *Shuijingzhu [Commentary on the Waterways Classic]-Heshui -66, 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC*, online version <http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=568295&if=gb&en=on&searchu=%E6%B2%BB> [Accessed 05-08-2013].



training horses<sup>212</sup>, managing property<sup>213</sup>, curing illness<sup>214</sup>, punishing offenders<sup>215</sup> and interrogating a case or a question<sup>216</sup>. It was also used as an adjective, describing a peaceful and stable state of a country under good governance, the state of which was usually understood as the contrast of a chaotic state or a war-like state (*luan*). For example, in ‘Will of Heaven I’ in *Mengzi* (also known as *Mencius*), it says that ‘with it (righteousness) the world becomes orderly (*zhi*) and without it the world becomes chaotic (*luan*)’<sup>217</sup>. *Zhi* also can be a noun, used to refer to the place of the seat of a county or prefecture. Therefore, similar with *zheng*, *zhi* also had a strong relation to top-down management and at the same time connoted that a good result of the governance was possible. It is also worth noting that the normative sense of standard, uprightness, order and peace, etc. of *zheng* and *zhi* had strong moral implication. In a way, it created a non-political sphere that was closely associated with the private realm and seen as inferior and less desirable.

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<sup>211</sup> E.g. *Mengzi* (The Works of Mencius)- King Hui of Liang II (Liang Hui Wang Xia) -16: ‘when you come to the governing (*zhi*) of the State....’; Annual of Lvbuwei – Book15 Shendalan – Chapter 8 Exam the Present(Chajin)-2: Hence, to govern (*zhi*) the state without having laws results in anarchy (*luan*); to preserve the laws without modifying them with the times results in rebellion and anarchy, Knoblock, John and Riegel, Jeffrey trans, *Annals of Lvbuwei : A Complete Translation and Study*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p.370; *Mengzi* (The Works of Mencius)- Duke Wen of Teng I (Teng Wen Gong Shang) -4: ‘is it the government (*zhi*) of all-under-heaven which alone can be carried on along with the practice of husbandry’, and ‘Some labour with their minds, and some labour with their strength. Those who labour with their minds govern (*zhi*) others; those who labour with their strength are governed (*zhi*, in passive voice) by others. Those who are governed (*zhi*, in passive voice) by others support them; those who govern (*zhi*) others are supported by them’, Legge, James trans, <http://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-i/zh?searchu=%E6%B2%BB&searchmode=showall&en=on#result> [Accessed 05-08-2013].

<sup>212</sup> E.g. *Zhuangzi*- Outer Chapters (Waipian) - Webbed Toes (Pianmu) - Horses's Hoofs (Mati): ‘I (Bole) know well how to manage (*zhi*) horses’, <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi/horsess-hoofs/zh?en=on> [Accessed 05-08-2013].

<sup>213</sup> E.g. Sima, Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji)* (109-91BC)- Biographies of the Feudal Houses and Eminent Persons (or Genealogies, *Shijia*) - 41 House of King Goujian of Yue (*Yuewang Goujian Shijia*) - 19: The father and the son collaboratively managed (*zhi*) the properties and business, and not for many years they had accumulated hundreds of thousands of wealth.

<sup>214</sup> E.g. Hengkuang, Discourses on Salt and Iron (Yan Tie Lun) (c.81 BC) – Book 8 World Affairs (Shiwu)-1: Hun to Han (Empire) is what worms to wood. Like a person with illness will get worse without treatment (*zhi*).

<sup>215</sup> E.g. Zhuge, Liang, The Memorial concerning the Military Expedition (*Chu Shi Biao*): ‘If I fail, Your Majesty should punish (*zhi*) me in order to answer to the Late Emperor's spirit’, online text from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chu\\_Shi\\_Biao](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chu_Shi_Biao) [Accessed 05-08-2013].

<sup>216</sup> For the use of *Zhi* in classics, see <http://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=gb&char=%E6%B2%BB> [Accessed 05-08-2013] and <http://images.gg-art.com/dictionary/dcontent.php?word=%D6%CE> [Accessed 22-07-2013];

<sup>217</sup> E.g. *Mozi*- Book 7- Will of Heaven I-2 : ‘with it (righteousness) the world becomes orderly (*zhi*) and without it the world becomes chaotic (*luan*)’, Online version from Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/mozi/will-of-heaven-i> [accessed 05-08-2013]; also in Xunzi – On Heaven (Tian Lun) -6, 7 &8: Ask: Does *zhi* or *luan* depends on the heaven? Answer: The sun, the moon, stars and calendar were all the same during the reign of Yu and Jie, but Yu ruled well (*zhi*) while Jie did not; therefore (that a society is) *zhi* or *luan* is not due to the heaven’, my translation according to online text from <http://ctext.org/xunzi/tian-lun/zh> [Accessed 05-08-2013]; also in *Book of Changes (Zhouyi)* - The Great Treatise II (Xi Ci II) -2: ‘Therefore the superior man, when resting in safety, does not forget that danger may come; when in a state of security, he does not forget the possibility of ruin; and when all is in a state of order (*zhi*), he does not forget that disorder (*luan*) may come’, translated by James Legge, online version from <http://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-xia> [accessed 05-08-2013].

In comparison with European political thought, there was something absent from the Chinese ‘politics’ *zhengzhi*. Although invented to introduce new concepts, politics and political translated as *zhengzhi*<sup>218</sup> inevitably lost some meanings that the Chinese political tradition did not afford and could not convey. Significantly, the idea that politics is connected with normal citizens and citizenship was lost in the Chinese *zhengzhi*. The ancient Greek πολιτικός (*politikos*) meant amongst other things ‘of, for, or relating to citizens’, ‘belonging to the *polis*’, in turn from πολίτης (*polites*), ‘citizen’ and that from πόλις, *polis*<sup>219</sup>. Aristotle's work *Politics* (*Politika*, Πολιτικά) was on the governing and governments of the *polis*, a natural political community, and for the democratic polity of Athens, all citizens had an equal chance to perform the governing role. Thus politics was not only related to the status and affairs of citizens, but also was practiced by citizens. Although in later history the association between politics and more centralised government and state greatly increased, the idea of politics and being political as something related to citizen and citizenship were kept. For China, in contrast, before the twentieth century, the bodies supposed to be eligible to engage into ‘politics’ were just the elites, and governance from the rulers<sup>220</sup> was the most important part of, if not the entire politics (*zheng*). ‘Political’ was considered as a virtue that should be achieved only by a minority, excluding the commoners.

Traditional political thoughts and the transformation were also reflected in the space of the city. Aristotle wrote in the *Politics*, ‘a citadel (an akropolis) is suitable to oligarchy and one-man rule, level ground to democracy’<sup>221</sup>. Aristotle imagined citizens in an equal, horizontal plane<sup>222</sup>. Beijing was built on a plain, but it used a concentric structure and walled system to show the dominant status of the rulers and to distinguish the sacred and non-sacred, the rulers and the ruled. The spatial change in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the May Fourth event in Tiananmen Square marked a shift from this political tradition. The former sacred spaces, including the palace, imperial court yards, altars and imperial passage were not

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<sup>218</sup> The adjective ‘political’ is translated as *zhengzhide*. *De* is the suffix following the none *zhengzhi* to compose its adjective form.

<sup>219</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott eds, entries of πολιτικός, πολίτης and πόλις, Perseus Digital Library.

<sup>220</sup> For a meritocracy society that can mean self-governance of the rulers.

<sup>221</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, trans by Richard Makeon, vol. 7, New York: Random House, 1968, p1330B.

<sup>222</sup> Sennett, Richard, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, W. W. Norton & Co., 1996, p10.

sacred and hence not exclusive any more. The failure of the late Qing and Beiyang governments and the acceptance of western political theories meant that the Chinese people (mainly the scholar class) did not grant the government the singular power to lead and to provide (good) governance. It called for a broader ‘public’; more diverse groups should be included. Young students stepped into the streets, parks and squares, engaging in *political* activities, and they invited lower class people (first the working class, then the peasants) to join in political actions. This drastically enlarged the spectrum of people involved in political participation; the creation of ‘the people’ as *gong* embodiment and the practice of mass politics have changed Chinese history. But there was a hidden danger. Once the movement politics<sup>223</sup> become normal or is even used as a main approach in daily politics, the result could be catastrophic. That is exactly the lesson of the Socialist Movement in the 1950s and Cultural Revolution between 1967 and 1976, which will be discussed through the lens of land politics in the Bell and Drum Towers area.

The attempt to adapt western ideas and the emerging mass politics, however, did not simply lead to any existing mode of westernisation and modernisation, but rather made the distinctiveness of China more remarkable. Specifically, the Chinese experience did not display the vigilance of the citizens against the state, nor a strong tension between the state and society. On the contrary, we see an intimacy between the state and the people, between interests of the state and those of citizens. The first time the mass taking took political action was not to struggle for ‘private’ interests or to guard their independence against state intervention, but rather to struggle for the interests of the nation, for a stronger state. Before the May Fourth, the foreign invasion had tarnished idea of a harmonious ‘all-under-heaven’ (*tianxia*). The awareness of China as a nation-state among other parallel state powers narrowed the over-broad boundary of *gong* from ‘all-under-heaven’ down to the national scale. Demonstrations in front of Tiananmen showed a simultaneous process of the formation of political citizens and the formation of state awareness. More accurately speaking, the salvation of China was the real goal of these political actions; the shaping of the people and the masses was just a means, a by-product. The specific situation of China (i.e., under the threat of the imperialism) rendered the survival of

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<sup>223</sup> Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Hoare, Quintin and Smith, Geoffrey N., eds. and trans., New York: International Publishers, 1971, pp. 229-239.

the individuals and the strengthening of the state fused into one, which actually fitted into the traditional model of the homology of private person, family and nation (*guo* or *guojia*). This intimate dependency between the individuals/citizens and the idea of the state was unique. To some extent, state affairs as the most important theme of political life were never suspended. And as a consequence, emerging political scales such as city, community and guild became of secondary importance and were in the shadow of people's strong concerns about the state. From this point of view, Tiananmen Square was born as a national symbol rather than a municipal square. However, the tension between the state and the people as a whole still existed. The assembly of the people in the Tiananmen Square was an embodiment of the theory that the aggregation of the individuals was the ultimate legitimate power for *gong*, was the declaration of being the public interests and was the supposed origin of public power. This potency of the presence of collective people was an apparent challenge to any existing government power. Thus in the following history, the authority had to show their alliance with the people (*gong*) and at the same time tried to disband the organised collective into scattered individuals, and hence *si* again.

#### **4.4 Expanding Tiananmen Square: party-state, city, household and private persons**

In this section I will focus on the expansion of Tiananmen Square in the 1950s, especially the *gong-si* or state-family/private people relationship reflected in the process. Before entering into argument, I would like to shortly outline what had happened on this area between the May Fourth movement and the expansion scheme.

Japanese occupation in 1937 ended all large-scale protests since the May Fourth in 1919 and introduced the modern police system to the city. In 1945 Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Kuomintang Party and the President of the Republic of China, celebrated the defeat of the Japanese at the forecourt of the Throne Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Forbidden City. Then the Communist Party (CCP) defeated the Kuomintang, and on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1949, Chairman Mao stood atop the Tiananmen Tower and declared the founding of the People's Republic of China to the tens of thousands of Chinese cheering on the Square. The simultaneous presence of the highest leader and the people was very different to the previous 'symbolic' contact

between the emperor and his subjects in the Imperial era<sup>224</sup>. Mao also openly proclaimed himself as a follower of the May Fourth legacy and laid great stress on the power of the masses<sup>225</sup>. Since 1949, the Gate and the Square have been symbolically associated with Mao, the Communist Party and at the same time the people. Beijing also regained its capital status in the People's Republic era. In the following decade, one major aim of the Communist Party and the newly established central government was to transform the post-imperial city into a socialist one. This intention has greatly changed the urban space of Beijing and its residents.

#### 4.4.1 Communism, the masses and *gong*

The People's Republic of China between its establishment in 1949 and the economic reform in 1978 was usually described by westerners as a communist state, which was rarely used by Chinese people. The ruling Communist Party defined the period as a transformative time toward socialism, an early stage of communism; the country then was building and working for a socialist state. However, the ideal of communism have shaped not only the practice of the state but also the ideology of the whole country, including the understanding of *gong-si* ideas.

'Communism' and 'communist' are translated into Chinese as *gongchan dang* and *gongchan zhuyi* respectively. *Gongchan* literally means 'common ownership of property', which is actually quite close to what communism means in western political thoughts (e.g. Marxism). *Gong* (共) in communism is a homophone of the *gong* (公) for 'public'. The former conveys meanings like common, communal, joint, mutual and altogether, which can be seen as a layer of the intricate meanings of the latter *gong*. There are both common ownership (共有制) and public ownership (公有制) in Chinese; they have the same pronunciation and both are latinised as *gongyouzhi*. Like the confusions of the two concepts in their English expressions, the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. But if we distinguish them more

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<sup>224</sup> A detail here is that Mao proposed to adapt the Tiananmen Tower after the founding ceremony in 1<sup>st</sup> October 1949 so that he could stand nearer to the people in the future ceremonies, in Wang, Jun, Beijing Record, p.166; also see Meyer, J. F., *The Dragons of Tiananmen: Beijing as a Sacred City*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991, p47, and Hung, Chang-tai, 'Mao's Parades: State Spectacles in China in the 1950s', *The China Quarterly*, 190, June 2007, pp. 411-431, *Mao's New World: Political Culture in the Early People's Republic*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, and 'The Politics of National Celebrations in China', in *The People's Republic of China at 60: An International Assessment*, ed. by William C. Kirby, pp. 357-372. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011.

<sup>225</sup> Mao, Zedong, 'The May Fourth Movement', in Mao, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, 5 vols., Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1966-77, vol. 2, p. 237.

precisely in Chinese contexts, 共有制 (common ownership) is joint ownership by all individuals in a society or collective ownership by all members in a community, and 公有制 (public ownership) can be either common ownership or state ownership. This resonates with the two senses of *gong*/公: *gong* from bottom and from top, or *gong* embodiments as collective and state.

The success of the Communist party relied on their alliance with peasants and workers, or in their own words, ‘the masses’. ‘The masses’ were common people, normal people, but it referred to commoners in a collective way, rather than just the individuals. Once connected to collective, it gained a *gong* quality and therefore all related moral power. In a way, the success of the bottom-up method of the Communists was an expression of the idea ‘the aggregation of *si* is *gong*’ in reality.

After the Communist Party came into power, like all previous governments, the party-state proclaimed itself on behalf of the interests of the whole country. But here the validity of the Communist government was not from Heaven but from the masses, from the people. The government then combined the superiority of the communist *gong* status as the aggregation of commoners as well as the *gong* priority as the state. We will see how this dual status endowed the party-state huge moral power in the two empirical cases.

Besides cleaning the ‘residue of Kuomintang’ and developing economy, the most important task of the new established governments was to ‘socialise’ the resources and means of production, among which land was a key focus. By socialising or nationalising land ownership, collective ownership and state ownership were constituted in the rural areas and the cities respectively. The two cases studies are about the transformation of the ownership of urban lands in Beijing, from which the conflicts between *gong* and *si* embodiments and the *gong-si* relationships in the socialist period can be investigated.

#### **4.4.2 Conflicts between the state and the city in a hierarchical *gong* system**

There has been a certain amount of literature to describe the planning of Beijing and Tiananmen Square in the 1950s<sup>226</sup>. I will not repeat the process but just make one

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<sup>226</sup> Such as Watson, Rubie, Palaces, Museums, and Squares: Chinese National Squares, Museum Anthropology,

point which has not been explicitly stated in previous research: that is, the triumph of the state/party over the city. As explained in 4.3, in spite of strong intervention from the state and foreign powers, the city had become an important container for governance, civic activities, and political participation in the republican era. After 1949, however, Beijing regained its capital status and the power of the city in governance and construction was reduced again. In the case of the expansion of the square, the power of the central state thoroughly penetrated into the city, resulting in the situation that private people directly confronted the state, without the city in-between either as a *gong* power or a scale of an aggregation of private people and their interests.

The planning of Tiananmen Square has reflected the conflicts between the central state and its Soviet assistant planners on the one side and the municipal professionals and experts on the other. Due to the fact that the success of the Chinese Communists owed much to the support of the Communist Party of the USSR, three batches of Soviet town planners and construction experts were invited to take part in the planning of Beijing between 1949 and 1957<sup>227</sup>. There were wide divergences and long debates between the Soviet experts introduced by the central government and local architects of the Municipal Planning Commission<sup>228</sup>. Finally it was the Soviet experts' plan as well as their methodology and ideology that won the battle and dominated the post-War construction of Beijing<sup>229</sup>. Having abandoned the famous 'Liang-Chen Proposal' that intended to develop a new city out of the old core, the official plan located the new country's administrative centre within the old city and set Beijing as not only the political and cultural centre but also an industrial city. This spatial overlapping of state institutions and the city of Beijing laid the foundation of the following land conflicts between the state and Beijing residents.

Tiananmen Square area, as the very heart of Beijing and the symbol of the revolutionary history of the Party, understandably became the most important focus of the post-war (re)construction. The plan and construction of the Square were under

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1995, 19 (2). pp.7-19.

<sup>227</sup> Sit, Victor F. S., Soviet Influence on Urban Planning in Beijing, 1949-1991, in *Town Planning Review*, 1996, Vol. 67, No. 4, pp. 457-484.

<sup>228</sup> Hu, Xiao, 'Preserving the Old Beijing: The First Conflict between Chinese Architects and the Communist Government in the 1950s', in James A. Rawley Graduate Conference in the Humanities, 2006.

<sup>229</sup> For a very detailed account of this history, see Wang, Jun, *Beijing Record: A Physical and Political History of Planning Modern Beijing*, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2011, especially Chapter 3 & 4.

powerful control and intervention from the central party-state. With regard to the Monument to the People's Heroes, the first building deemed to be built on Tiananmen Square, a special Construction Committee of the Monument was established. The special Committee led by the Party Secretary of Beijing was actually a 'national' committee and hence independent from the planning work of the Municipal Planning Commission<sup>230</sup>. The design of the rest of Tiananmen Square was organised by the Municipal Planning Commission. They produced 14 designs in 1954 and another 11 in 1955, but could not decide until getting the concrete guidance from the central authorities<sup>231</sup>. The outline of the plan of the Square was roughly set in 1957, and at the outreach session of the meeting of the Central Politburo of the party in October, 1958, the expansion of Tiananmen Square was confirmed as one of the 'Ten Grand Projects' to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of China. The final plan was settled around one month before construction began, and the square, the Museum of Revolution History and the Great Hall of the People were built with incredible efficiency and succeeded to complete by the National Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1959.

#### **4.4.3 Conflicts between the state as *gong* and private person and household as *si***

There is literature on the planning and construction of Tiananmen Square, including the participation of the Soviet experts, their conflicts with local architects, the order from the senior leadership and the details of the design and construction of each building on the square. Yet nearly all the existing literature seems to treat the space as a blank canvas, as though the expansion of the square did not require any further land or the ground was empty<sup>232</sup>. But this is far from the reality.

In 1952, Beijing government demolished Changan West Gate and Changan East Gate to facilitate the traffic of Changan Street, especially to make sure the grand parade would not be blocked<sup>233</sup>. After removing the two walls confining the trunk of the 'T'

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<sup>230</sup> Hung, Chang-tai, *Landmarks: Politics of Space in Beijing*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2011, p.459.

<sup>231</sup> Introduction on the Preliminary Version of the Master Plan of Beijing (guanyu Beijing zongti guihua chubu fangan de shuoming), Beijing Municipal Archives, 1957; also see archives Nos.150-001-087, 1954 and 151-001-010, 1955.

<sup>232</sup> As far as I know the only scholar mentioning this is Hung, Chang-tai, 'Space and Politics: Expanding Tiananmen Square', in *Parting Ways: Politics and Economics across the Taiwan Straits since 1949*, ed. by Chen Yung-fa, pp. 207-259, Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2006; also see his *Landmarks: Politics of Space in Beijing*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>233</sup> Beijing Record, pp.163-165.



shape in 1955, the size of the square reached 12 hectares; in the expansion starting from the end of 1958, New China Gate was first demolished, where the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall was located from 1976<sup>234</sup>. Due to the historical value of these buildings, the three demolitions sparked heated debate within and outside the circle of heritage preservation. In contrast, the decision to demolish a large number of 'ordinary' houses around the T-shaped square seemed to cause no controversy, or at least it can be hardly found in either official records or news reports.

According to the records of the Beijing Municipal City Construction Committee<sup>235</sup>, 10869 rooms were demolished to give way to the project of Tiananmen Square<sup>236</sup>, including the building of the Great Hall of the People (i.e., the parliament house) at the western edge of the Square and the Museum of the Chinese Revolution and the National Museum of Chinese History (merging into the National Museum of China in later age) at the eastern edge. The removal of the people and demolition of the houses were achieved in merely one month, from 10<sup>th</sup> September to 10<sup>th</sup> October in 1958: an unbelievable speed.

During the short life the Republic, the former imperial administrative legations flanking the T-shaped square had been partly transformed into residential area. By the end of the first decade of the People's Republic, the institutions of the public sector still occupied most of the buildings of the eastern side; in the area immediately west to the square, there were schools, official buildings, state-owned companies, street commercial buildings as well as courtyard residential dwellings. But in socialist Beijing, many people were living in the houses allocated by the government via their employers such as government departments, state-owned enterprises, etc. (called *danwei*, usually translated as 'work unit'). A portion of these state-owned estates were previously 'public properties' (*gongchan*) taken over from the Nationalist government, and some of them were reclaimed by the Communist government from private hands for various reasons<sup>237</sup>.

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<sup>234</sup> Hung, Chang-tai, 'Space and Politics: Expanding Tiananmen Square', in *Parting Ways: Politics and Economics across the Taiwan Straits since 1949*, ed. by Chen Yung-fa, pp. 207-259, Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2006.

<sup>235</sup> Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00092, 047-001-00061.

<sup>236</sup> At that time, nearly all the buildings were one storey houses, and room (*jian*, 间) was used as the unit to count the amount of properties.

<sup>237</sup> Beijing Municipal Archives, 002-001-00005, 002-001-00088.

In a report from the Demolition and Resettlement Office of the Tiananmen Expansion on the 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1958, the ownership of these affected houses can be observed<sup>238</sup>: in the emptied 56.06 ha area 16365.5 rooms were torn down<sup>239</sup>, covering floor area as much as 240642.7 square meters. A bit more than 65% of the buildings were under public ownership (*gongfang*) and the rest (4781 rooms) were private (*sifang*)<sup>240</sup>. Half of the demolished buildings were offices of public institutions, 40% were residential, and the remaining 10% were industrial, commercial and school buildings.

Mobilizing the masses was a key ingredient in the Communists' revolutionary victory. The strategy continued to be used in the (re)construction period. When preparing for the Founding Ceremony in 1949, the government demanded that all the trucks leaving Beijing should carry some rubbish accumulating in the city. At that time the Tiananmen space was full of wild plants and waste, some of which were as high as the 'red walls' of the Imperial City<sup>241</sup>. It took three months to remove all the wastes, and then the student volunteers helped with further clean-up<sup>242</sup>. In the expansion project of the square, the government also mobilised the citizens to help with the demolition. This proved very efficient, although 269 rooms were torn down by mistake<sup>243</sup>.

With regard to the resettling of the residents, the policy was: for those working for public institutions, such as government departments, army, schools, social organisations and state-owned enterprises, the institutions or the higher bodies that they were affiliated were responsible for the new office and housing their employees; normal residents were encouraged to solve the housing problem by themselves, such

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<sup>238</sup> Report on the Removal and Relocation of the People in the Expansion of Tiananmen Square and other Projects (*Kuojian Tiananmen Guangchang dengchu gongcheng chiqian gongzuo baogao*), 20.10.1958, Demolition and Resettlement Office of the Tiananmen Expansion of Beijing (*beijingshi kuojian Tiananmen guangchang chiqian bangongshi*), Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061.

<sup>239</sup> This figure not only covered the Square, the Great Hall of the People and the two museums mentioned above but also included other part of the project, the land of which was emptied at the same time but the construction did happen immediately. One example is the National Opera House which was planned in the 1950s but was not finished until 2007.

<sup>240</sup> These terms in legal sense will be articulated in 4.3.

<sup>241</sup> Guo, Dequan, 'Zuofu Hutong- Clear the Rubbish Hill for the Founding Ceremony', <http://cn.obj.cc/article-14773-1.html> [retrieve 10-08-2013].

<sup>242</sup> *Memorandum of the Beijing Clean-up Movement Committee*, Beijing Municipal Archives, 002-001-00112.

<sup>243</sup> Report on the Removal and Relocation of the People in the Expansion of Tiananmen Square and other Projects (*Kuojian Tiananmen Guangchang dengchu gongcheng chiqian gongzuo baogao*), 20.10.1958, Demolition and Resettlement Office of the Tiananmen Expansion of Beijing (*beijingshi kuojian Tiananmen guangchang chiqian bangongshi*), Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061.

as asking help from relatives, friends or employers; only for those unable to sort out some other way, the government would try to allocate them in public housing in other areas or new-built houses for the resettlement. The authority also mobilised private property owners in the whole city to ‘fight against the (housing) drought’ (*kanghan*)<sup>244</sup>. Owners were required to contribute their ‘redundant’ rooms to help accommodate people moving out from Tiananmen area. Finally in the 7732.5 rooms of 157239.5 m<sup>2</sup> for relocation, 83.3% (in area) was provided by public sector; this was mainly distributed to public institutions as both office and housing; the rest 16.7% of 26259m<sup>2</sup> was sort out in private way<sup>245</sup>. Those who found new accommodation by themselves got no compensation for losing their houses except for a small resettlement allowances. Some residents refused to accept the allowance.

It is difficult for us to understand this if we fail to see the mechanism in the 1950s and the culture in which the regime was rooted. Socialism, as the first stage of communism, was the dominant ideology at that time. Similar to the welfare states in the west of Europe, there was a tide of nationalisation in both enterprises and property ownership, but in a more radical way. One marked feature was its attack on private ownership. In rural areas, the Communists had delivered their promise of (re)distributing the lands of the gentries to the landless poor. This was undertaken in a sometimes quite brutal and violent way. In the cities, the government claimed to protect private owners when the Communist Party came into power in 1949. On 1953, however, a movement called ‘Socialisation Transformation’ (or Socialist Transition, *shehuizhuyi gaizao*) was launched, in which the state (both central and local) ‘bought out’ private enterprises. Because there were a great many household factories (as we will see in the Bell & Drum Towers case) and many residential spaces were actually attached to industrial or commercial buildings, a large numbers of properties were transferred into state ownership. The land expropriation of Tiananmen area in 1958 occurred in this socio-political atmosphere. In bargaining with the government, the status of private owners and holding property were not advantages at all. On the

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<sup>244</sup> *Report on the Demolition and Resettlement Work of Beijing in 1958 (guanyu 1958nian beijingshi chiqian gongzuo de jiancha baogao)*, reported by the Mayor Wan Li to the Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, 1958, Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061.

<sup>245</sup> And also the replaced houses shrank by 31% in area in total. *Report on the Removal and Relocation of the People in the Expansion of Tiananmen Square and other Projects (Kuojian Tiananmen Guangchang dengchu gongcheng chiqian gongzuo baogao)*, 20.10.1958, Demolition and Resettlement Office of the Tiananmen Expansion of Beijing (*beijingshi kuojian Tiananmen guangchang chiqian bangongshi*), Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061.

contrary, private owners occupied an inferior position. The disadvantage of ‘private’ has deep cultural roots as explained in 2.2. *Si* (private), been viewed as inferior and deficient, and was interpreted as selfish, self-obsessed and lacking of selfless *gong* spirit. The idea that private is deficient does not only appear in traditional Chinese thoughts. In the Greek contrast between *idia* and *demoisa*, *idia*, usually translated as ‘private’, means self-obsessed, separate, ignoring the outside community. It is also the word from which we get ‘idiot’<sup>246</sup>. The Latin *private* is evident in some English words like deprive, deprivation, privation. The derogatory tincture of these words is evident. While the inferior status of the European ‘private’ was largely reversed by modern liberal thought, its Chinese counterpart had a different fate. The moral inferiority of private was pushed to the extremes under the Communist ideology. During the socialist era, all things relating to private, including private property, private enterprise, private owner and the market economy, were viewed as wicked capitalism and thereby the enemy of socialist China<sup>247</sup>. Under these circumstances, the taking of the properties in the Tiananmen area did not meet much resistance from the private part. Even more, the private owners were eager to be integrated into the realm of *gong*, and contributing to the new construction provided an available approach.

Mr. Xu was one householder of the properties to be removed. He refused to accept a small amount of money offered by the government for reallocation. When being asked why, he said:

‘We are just one family. Small families (*xiaojia*) should give way to big family (*dajia*). The interests of the state have all priorities. Personal interests are limited and must be subordinated to collective ones, the interests of the part to those of the whole. We are conformable to majority. I support the decision of the government.’<sup>248</sup>

Here the interests of a person or a family were considered as limited and particular, and therefore ‘private’. In contrast, the expansion of Tiananmen Square was connected to collective interests, overall interests, public interests. The distinction of quantity (i.e. small vs. big, part vs. whole) was also the distinction of quality (i.e.

<sup>246</sup> For an account and analysis on the etymology, see Neocleous, Mark, ‘Privacy, Secrecy, Idiocy’, *Social Research*, 2002, Vol. 69, No. 1, pp. 85-110

<sup>247</sup> More stories of private bodies will be given in the Bell & Drum Towers case.

<sup>248</sup> ‘Report of opinions of the masses in Tiananmen Project’, 1958, Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061.

particular vs. universal, private vs. public). Personal and private interests were inferior. Justifying for them would render people into the same (morally) inferior position.

The socialist ideology enhanced the ethical implications of public and private bodies and practises. In *gong-si* framework, the state was a *gong*-agency on behalf of public interests, and household was a container of private interests. Compared with *gong* and the state, *si* and its embodiments were subordinate and imperfect. But from the Communist view of socialism-capitalism dichotomy, private ownership was capitalist and wicked. The aim of Tiananmen project was to expand the square, not to ‘eradicate capitalism’, but as what we will see in the case of the Bell and Drum Towers Area, the socialisation movement targeting directly at private property and private owners were more radical, and caused more fierce conflicts.

#### **4.4.4 Intimacy between the state and people, between *gong* and *si***

In the communist propaganda, as well as in the minds of many Chinese people, the doom of the Qing Empire and the Kuomintang government showed the mandate of Heaven. Now the state, the communist government and the Party<sup>249</sup> gained their status as the representation of *gong*. They were also directly connected to the ‘nation’ (*minzu*, 民族), the Chinese people united as a community, the *People’s Republic*. The state as *gong* realm worked in both practical and psychological dimensions. Like the European welfare countries, the Chinese state provided housing, health care, work opportunities and other social welfare for city residents. But the speciality of China was that the state was also necessary to make the survival of the nation as a whole possible. People believed that Mao and his party brought the independence of the country, and that the founding of the PRC saved the nation and Chinese people from doom. The intimate relation between the survival, the sustenance and the living of the people and the shaping of the state was a historical consequence and was further enhanced by the official rhetoric and people’s daily experience. This has immensely influenced the interaction between the state and people, between the public authority and private individuals. Individuals and ‘small families’ (*xiaojia*) were required to make a contribution or sacrifice for the maintenance and construction of the ‘public family’ (*gongjia*), a nickname for government institutions.

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<sup>249</sup> The three were and are confused together. In some places I may just use ‘state’ to refer to the three.

A mobilising speech from the chief-mayor Mr. Feng to the ‘progressive’ residents involved in the projects commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the PRC in the Labour’s Cultural Palace (former Imperial Ancestral Temple) in August 1958 clearly showed this logic:

‘All the Party members, League<sup>250</sup> members, activists and comrades with leading minds present at the meeting have very high communist consciousness and enthusiasm on socialist construction. I believe most of you will understand the temporary difficulties of the government, follow the call of the Party, conform to the collective interests, overcome difficulties, bear the inconvenience, and perform the leading role and the backbone. You should actively collaborate with each other and lead your neighbours to achieve this task of combat with great honour...’<sup>251</sup>

In the speech, ‘communist consciousness’ was equal to conforming to ‘collective interests’, and sacrificing for collective interests was very honourable, from which the priority of collective, an embodiment of *gong* and its connection to communist ideology was apparent. The chief-mayor also personalised the government: requiring the residents ‘understand the temporary difficulties of the government’. In this way, he not only laid stress on the state’s status as an agency dealing with collective interests, but also made the *gong-si* ethics more perceivable by private persons by personalising the embodiment of *gong*. The combination of the personalisation and ethicisation of the government, increasing the intimacy between the state and people.

When talking about the moving of thousands of households, Mr. Feng put it as it was such an easy thing:

‘Due to the emergency of this big task, the government didn’t get enough time to prepare sufficient houses for resettlement. Thus the main resolution is to rely on all of you. Please just take the accommodation that you can find. Please do not mind the crowdedness

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<sup>250</sup> That is, the Communist Youth League.

<sup>251</sup> He, ‘Outline of the Mobilisation Report to the Residents in the Area of the Anniversary Projects’, August 1958, Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061. My translation.

(of the living condition)... For those who can't find any other solution we will try to solve it by some newly built housing....' <sup>252</sup>

Here again, the government needed to be understood like a person and the residents should be considerate. The relationships between the government and individuals and households were not only formal, institutionalised relations, but rather like ethical relations, like those between family members. Many of the duties and rights of the two sides were not clearly stated in formal contracts like the law, but very flexible and relying on situations and understanding. We will see the residents of the Drum and Bell Towers areas also require 'understanding' from the state.

Ethics is true politics. Having been linked to *gong* interest, the construction of the capital had overwhelming moral superiority, compared to which, all private interests were too slight to be cared about. This logic made the same sense even from the perspective of the residents. Mr. Hou, a director of a residential committee,<sup>253</sup> used to live with another 8 family members sharing 3 rooms, but now he and his family just got one room. When being asked why accepted this, he used the word 'politics in command' (*zhengzhi guashuai*), meaning the political standing point was the centre of all gravity. In fact, both the government and normal people often used the expression 'politically right'. Politics became a moral requirement. It was not just a realm, but covered everything. It could define the ethical quality of a person.

Especially for the people living in the Socialist era (i.e. from the 1950s to the 1970s), politics was about right or wrong, left or right, friend or enemy; actually Chinese politics was always about 'standard' (*zheng 正*) and morality. For the propertied class, the 'bourgeois', it took longer to accept the idea and practice of the 'proletarian' Communist. Mr. Zhang, an independent personage<sup>254</sup>, had a three-person family and owned 12 rooms. The government had tried for years to persuade him to let some rooms to the people who were in need but never succeeded. Yet this time, he made four rooms available to the families moving out from Tiananmen area. This story was recorded in a report on the removal work of the project. They

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> A residential committee is the lowest administrative body (i.e., in a neighbourhood level) in the administrative system.

<sup>254</sup> 'Independent personage' or 'non-party patriot' (*minzhu renshi*, literally democratic personage) was the title for the people without party affiliation but having made big contribution to the society.

also noted down some ‘bad’ examples. One was Mr. Bai, who owned more properties than average but set eight hard rules to resist the call for ‘fighting against the (housing) drought’:

‘hiring a nanny is not allowed; putting a division is not allowed; visitors are not allowed; cooking at home is not allowed; washing in the courtyard is not allowed’, and he would not let the rooms to ‘those with children, those who could not bear his wife’s curse or those without a health certificate’<sup>255</sup>.

The report commented that ‘the trash of the propertied bourgeois has not been swept’<sup>256</sup>. From the political-ethic point of view, being a harsh landlord was not just morally flawed, but also politically wrong. It was connected to the division between capitalism and socialism, between approving the government or not. With the upgrading of the battle against private properties and the predominance of equalitarianism, more and more people ‘voluntarily’ handed over their properties or enterprises to the government<sup>257</sup>. The details of the process will be reviewed in the case of the Bell and Drum Towers area.

From the case of the Tiananmen Square expansion, we can see that, on the one hand, it was a process by which the ‘public’ space encroached upon the private, and a manifestation that the public power intervened into the domestic sphere. But on the other hand, it also reflected the particular cultural psychology and the private people’s anxiety to *gong*. *Gong* was more like a complement or a promotion to the defiant *si*, rather than an opposite part or an enemy that private people needed to look out. *Si* was not regarded as a positive realm that should be guarded, but a self-enclosed selfishness which should be opened up and an inferior human condition that needed to be salvaged. The cultural psyche to be in line with *gong* was so deep that people lost their critical eyes when the state or the party declared to be the representative of *gong*-interests. In a sense, the Chinese *gong* and *si* did not exist as two horizontally separated spheres, either in idea or in practice. The picture was

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<sup>255</sup> *Report on the Removal and Relocation of the People in the Expansion of Tiananmen Square and other Projects* (*Kuojian Tiananmen Guangchang dengchu gongcheng chaiqian gongzuo baogao*), 20.10.1958, Demolition and Resettlement Office of the Tiananmen Expansion of Beijing (*Beijingshi kuojian Tiananmen guangchang chaiqian bangongshi*), Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Beijing Municipal Archives kept many application letters from owners and entrepreneurs who required contributing their properties or factories to the ‘state’. Such as 022-010-01245, 022-010-00875, 004-010-00514.



more like that the higher and larger *gong* realm floats onto the area of *si*, with its shadow casting onto the *si* scope. It is even hard to say if *si* had a specific sphere. It seemed that *si* was just scattered fragments, and once they gathered or united into one, they automatically converted to a kind of *gong* and hence the status as *si* would dissolve. A Habermasian private realm separated from the public one, either a purely domestic domain or an autonomous society based on commodity exchange, did not exist in Chinese thoughts. The critical-political public sphere residing in the separation and conflicts between the public and private, that is, the battlefield in a letter world between the public authority and educated bourgeoisies did not exist in this case either, even though it might have emerged temporally during the short republican period<sup>258</sup>. In terms of theorisation, unlike the case in the west that both public and private have highly conceptualised and theorised, in Chinese thoughts *gong* has been much more discussed than *si* – it is common to see that *si* is only touched as a reference or contrast of *gong*. We can see the priority of *gong* idea over *si* in theory, political discourse and reality. What was happening in the communist era showed us exactly how *gong* triumphed over *si* in reality.

Yet consolidating the victory was not easy. Although having been implanted in people's mind by Confucian education before, the spread or omnipresence of *gong* was still more like a moral ideal or a social utopia. Once being forced into practice, especially in such a radical way, it would destroy many people's living space. This might succeed temporally in an abnormal period, but could not be sustained long. When the government revisited half of the removed households, many of them complained about the new living conditions<sup>259</sup> like crowdedness, poor sanitation, long commuting distance and schooling. Under the specific political atmosphere at that time, it was not common to speak about their dissatisfaction on the government's work<sup>260</sup>. Yet the sense of moral superiority could not help with the difficulties confronted by the people in their daily life. In these circumstances, the government still continued trying to ensure people believe that they were part of the state (re)construction and national symbolic space. After the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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<sup>258</sup> Habermas, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Burger, Thomas with the assistance of Grederick Lawrence, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1989.

<sup>259</sup> 5.1% of the sample. But as we can imagine, this figure should have been underestimated.

<sup>260</sup> *Review on the Resettlement of the Households of the Anniversary Project (guoqing gongcheng chaiqian zhuzhu anzhi qingkuang fucha baogao)*, 25.11.1958, Beijing Expanding Tiananmen Square Office, Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061.

Ceremony, 1620 families were invited to visit the Great Hall of the People and 1604 representatives made the trip. ‘They dressed their best costume and everyone looked very excited...’, ‘they were very moved about the comment that their cooperation was the first support to the construction’ and ‘the removal and relocation actually made the relation between the Party and the masses even closer....’<sup>261</sup>. Although the propaganda in the report was very apparent, we can detect the particular mentality of the people then. It seemed that even just being temporarily and symbolically admitted to be a part of *gong* could compensate people’s cost in their private interests. This psychology had helped strengthen the power of the state and private rights and interests were further encroached.

Compared with the Tiananmen Square, the case of Bell and Drum Towers discussed in the next chapter also reflected the penetration of *gong* into *si* realm, but in a different form. This time, not the public authority but the masses composed by private people violated other people’s private property in the name of *gong*. The backwash of the *gong*’s invasion into *si* can be observed too. To survive, the private space finally overspread common space, rendering the shared space between private people in real danger.

## 4.5 Conclusion

To conclude, the case of the birth and expansion of Tiananmen Square provides concrete contexts and texts for us to understand the ideas of *gong* and *si* and the relationship between the two. More specifically, the birth of Tiananmen Square and the republican Beijing displayed a new system of *gong* bodies (Table 4.1): the imperialist invasion led to disillusionment of the ideal of a harmonious world and a peaceful ‘all-under-heaven’ shared by all the people; the significance of the state as an embodiment of the public interests of the nation was enhanced by the international tensions and wars; with the introduction of the municipal system and the forming of urban public space, the city emerged as a united entity bearing *gong*-interests and conducting governance; and at the same time, we also see a transformation in the understanding and practice of politics. The shift was fuelled

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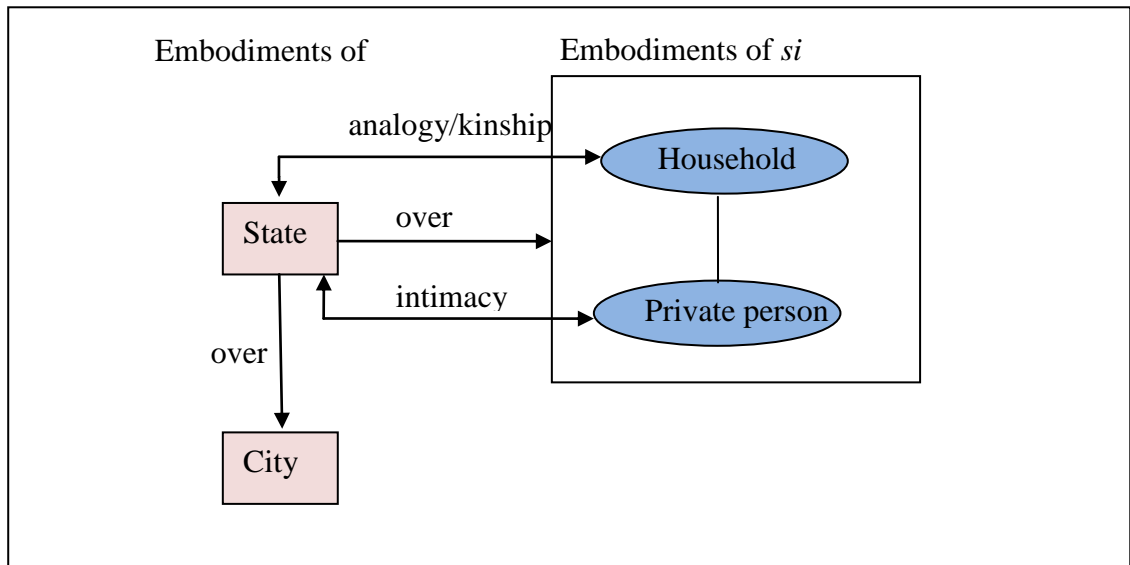
<sup>261</sup> Report on Organising the Households Moving out of Tiananmen Area to Visit the Great Hall of the People (*guanyu zuzhi Tiananmen diqu chaqianhu canguan renmindahuitang qingkuang de huibao*), Housing Management Bureau, 1959, Beijing Municipal Archives, 047-001-00061.

by popular politics and mass movements then, and the protest giving birth to Tiananmen Square was one of them.

The expansion of the square in the 1950s shows not only the tension between *gong* and *si*, but also the conflicts between different *gong* embodiments (Figure 4.5). The powerful communist state claimed its great political and moral supremacy over the lower *gong* bodies such as the Beijing municipal government as well as over the households and private people in the *si* side. This was reflected in the planning of the square and the removal of the residents involved. Notwithstanding the conflicts, still we can see a kind of intimacy between the state and people which was formed especially from the theory of the homology of state and family, the co-survival and co-existence of the state and people in that extreme time and also from the political discourse and propaganda.

Changes of the understanding of <i>gong</i> in the case of the birth of Tiananmen Square		
Dimensions of <i>gong</i>		Changes reflected from the birth of Tiananmen Square
<i>Gong</i> as normative value and universal law		Almost unchanged
<i>Gong</i> embodiments in different scales	All-under-heaven ( <i>tianxia</i> )	All-under-heaven as a scale of <i>gong</i> broke down because of the intervention of the foreign force
	state	The idea that state as the most important embodiment of <i>gong</i> interest was enhanced
	city	City emerged as a new governmental body, container for <i>gong</i> -interests and arena for political actions
	collective	Playing an important role in popular politics

**Table 4.1 Framework of the case of the birth of Tiananmen Square**



**Figure 4.5 Politics in the expansion of Tiananmen Square**

## Chapter 5

### Case Study II: Property Struggle in the Bell & Drum Towers Area

#### 5.1 Introduction

Unlike Tiananmen Square area, which has been intimately connected to the state power and state space, the area around Bell Tower and Drum Tower was and now still is a residential quarter mixed with certain commercial functions (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). In this sense, the case of the Bell and Drum Towers (B&DTs) area is an interesting comparison and complement to the case of Tiananmen Square. Having investigated the *gong-si* tension in a significant *gong*-dominated space, this chapter examines the issue through the lens of property disputes between *gong*-bodies (i.e. the state and the mass) and *si*-bodies (i.e. family and individuals) in a neighbourhood with more *si*-related-elements.

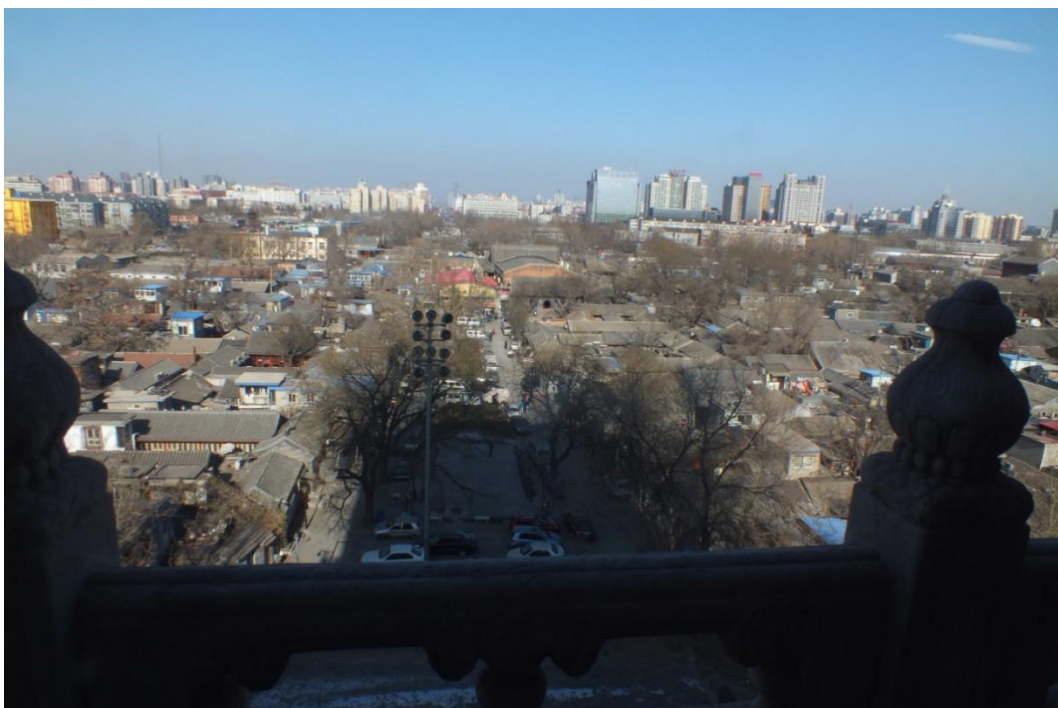
In this chapter, I will first introduce the situation of the neighbourhood; it was under a regeneration project which generated many controversies over property ownership. By investigating the land ownership reorganisation and struggle from the 1950s to the 1970s, I will elaborate how the Socialist Transformation in the 1950s, the Cultural Revolution between 1967 to 1976 and the auto-construction activities (especially after the Tangshan Earthquake in 1976) gave birth to three types of controversial properties: government-managed-and-let houses (*jingzufang*), Cultural Revolution properties (*wengechan*) and self-build houses (*zijianfang*).

The *gong-si* relationship, especially its representation in terms of property, is a constant focus of the chapter. I will make the following key arguments: the mixed economic and domestic functions of the household in the B&DTs area assisted the state intervention and the nationalisation of private properties in the 1950s; the complicated and reversible moral and power relationship between the state, the masses and private person can help to explain some extraordinary phenomena in the Cultural Revolution that seem incomprehensible now; the public involvement in the legislation of the auto-constructed buildings by private people reveals another type

of the politics between *gong* and *si*, displaying the difficulty of transforming the customary rights generated by occupation to formal property rights in the new state law and regulation system.



**Figure 5.1 Two Towers and the neighbourhood in the 1920s**  
(source: *Zhonggulou*)



**Figure 5.2 The neighbourhood in 2012, viewed from the Bell Tower to the north**  
(source: author)

### 5.1.1 The regeneration project

When I did my fieldwork in 2012, the B&DTs area was experiencing the powerful intervention of the state. The local authority, Dongcheng District (*dongchengqu*, literally ‘east city precinct’) government launched a new regeneration scheme, Renovation Project of the Bell and Drum Tower Squares (*zhonggulou guangchang zhengzhi gongcheng*), from 2011. The claimed purpose of the project was to recover the environment around Bell Tower and Drum Tower, especially the two squares, one north of the Bell Tower and the other between the two towers (Figure 5.3 and 5.4), to its appearance in Qing Dynasty under the reign of Qianlong Emperor (1736-1795). This was also an effort to help ‘the traditional axis of the old Beijing’ compete for UNESCO World Heritage status. Although the government purported that the aim of the project was to renew the two squares, which just needed to expropriate some properties immediately next to the squares, many more properties and households were involved in the expropriation plan. As shown in Figure 5.5, houses in red colour were under ‘compulsory purchase’ for renovating the squares; those in yellow were the redeveloped zone, which meant the residents could choose whether to sell their properties to the government or not. But in practice, the government ‘encouraged’ the residents to move to give way to the redevelopment. The project involved 66 *siheyuan* (courtyard house units) and 136 households, covering more than 4,000 square meters.

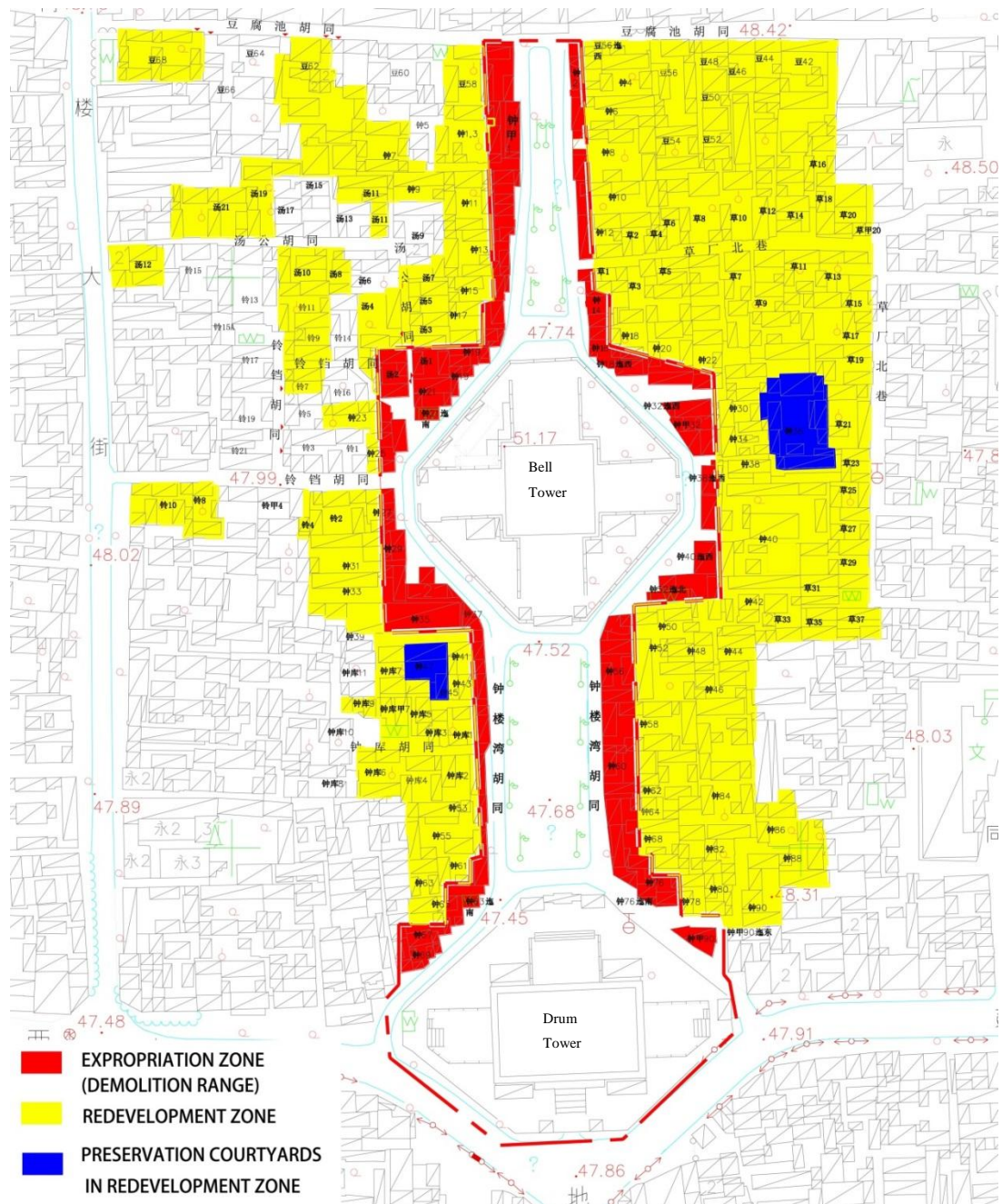


**Figure 5.3 The Bell Tower and the north square** (source: author)



**Figure 5.4 The Drum Tower and the south square** (source: author)





**Figure 5.5 Expropriation plan of the Renovation Project of the B&DT Squares**  
(source: Dongcheng District Government, official notice, 2012, No. 40)

The project brought many controversies. One was about the complicity of the occupation and ownership of the properties.

The format of the residences here is vernacular courtyard dwellings (*siheyuan*, sometimes translated as Chinese quadrangle) linked by *hutong* (lane) system. Compared to the ‘standard’ courtyard houses unit, which tend to be occupied by single (extended) families, the courtyards in this area are much more cramped and

overcrowded. Most of them were shared by up to 20 small families. The complex composition of the population is primarily because historically it was an inferior living area, but it is also a result of the influx of new residents and the displacement caused by several political movements since the 1950s. The displacements of the residents in the political movements created legal problems when the law and policies changed. For instance, many families owned properties, but they were expropriated by the state or the owners gave up their properties in the previous political movements (mainly the Socialist Transformation and Cultural Revolution). The government has admitted that some expropriation was illegal and people can have their property back if they can prove that they owned the property<sup>262</sup>. However, in practice, people may have problems proving ownership. One common case is that they just do not have the land ownership certificate, which may have been lost or handed over to the ‘government’ in the political movements. Some people have regained the title of their lost properties, but because the government still allows the tenants of public houses to continue living there, the previous owners still cannot hold their properties in reality<sup>263</sup>. In the regeneration, all these affect the entitlement to compensation.

Many private owners who think they are the owners of the property believe that they should have compensation for both the properties that they own now and properties that were confiscated previously. Public tenants often consider the houses they are living as their own property because they were allocated the housing in the socialist

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<sup>262</sup> The relevant policy from the central and municipal governments includes: ‘Guanyu chuli jiguan budui jizhan sifang jinyibu luoshi sifang zhengce de tongzhi’ [Notice of further addressing issues of private properties occupied by government and army], Beijing Municipal Party Committee, [1980] No. 140, 18-09-1980; ‘Guanyu jinyibu zhuahao luoshi sifang zhengce gongzuo de yijian de tongzhi’ [Notice of Further Implementing the Policy of Addressing Private Property Issues], Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection, [1982] No. 445, 30-10-1982; ‘Beijingshi renmin zhengfu guanyu luoshi wenge zhong jieguan de sifang zhengce de ruogan guiding’ [Provisions for the Resolution of Private Properties Taken Over in the Cultural Revolution], Beijing Municipal Government, [1983] No.38, 11-03-1983; ‘Guanyu luoshi wenge zhong jieguan de sifang zhengce de ruogan guiding de shishi xize’ [Detailed Provisions for the Resolution of Private Properties Taken Over in the Cultural Revolution], Beijing Municipal Leading Group of Resolving Private Property Issues (Beijingshi luoshi sifang zhengce lingdao xiaozu), [1983] No.013, 20-03-1983; ‘Guanyu jinyibu chuli hao chengzhen sifang yiliu wenti de tongzhi’ [Notice of Further Addressing the Remaining Issues of Urban Private Properties], Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection, [1987] No. 575, 28-10-1987.

<sup>263</sup> This is very common in my case study area. For accounts of the general situation of Beijing, see two articles of Zhihui Guan, a lawyer focusing on property disputes based in Beijing: Guan, Zhihui, ‘Beijingshi wege qijian jizhan jieguan siren fangchan (wengechan) ji luoshi zhengce de falv wenti yanjiu’ [A study on the Private Property Issues Caused by the Cultural Revolution in Beijing], 2010, online source, [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_5d1b2c830100wia1.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5d1b2c830100wia1.html) [Accessed 10-11-2013], and Beijingshi chengshi siyou chuzu fangwu shehuizhuyi gaizao de zhengce yu falv wenti yanjiu [A study on the issues of policy and law on the socialist transformation of private houses], 2011, online source, [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_5d1b2c830101883p.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5d1b2c830101883p.html) [Accessed 10-11-2013].

period, when housing was considered an essential aspect of welfare that they deserved. Those people believe this feature of the houses should not change, even though the old socialist system has been abandoned. By contrast, the government only compensates one owner for each square meter. This different understanding on the ownership and rights of the properties cause many disputes and conflicts in the expropriation stage of the regeneration.

Another property issue is related to self-constructed houses. Many houses in the area were built by the residents without a building license. But under specific circumstances, the government acquiesced in the construction and even supported it at that time. However, they are recognised as illegal buildings now and the owners cannot get compensation. This has caused considerable discontent and many complaints, and it slows the progress of the project. In addition, many residents feel the compensation standard offered by the government is too low; with that compensation, they cannot afford to buy a property to house the whole family, even in the suburbs of Beijing<sup>264</sup>. Besides, the purported corruption also brings the project more controversies. From the outside, the most high profile debate is around preservation. For the activists, including students, architects, planners and experts, etc., the problem was that the government did not follow a legal procedure to initiate the project and the scheme was in contravention of many laws, regulation and upper city plans. The support for Beijing *hutongs* preservation is always very strong. According to the activists' report, the B&DTs area was 'the last precinct on the traditional axis of Beijing left for ordinary people', since all other places on the axis were initially designed as or had been later transformed into grand public buildings or national symbolic space (among which Tiananmen Square is a significant example); the fabric of the area, which was dated from Yuan Dynasty, was also considered to be part of 'authentic' Beijing<sup>265</sup>.

The champions for preservation have generated heated debates on the internet, but the debate did not really influence the government's decision. The traditional mass media in Beijing was controlled by the government and content verged on

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<sup>264</sup> Although the housing condition is not good in the B&DTs area, but the transportation, environment, views and facilities are one of the best places of Beijing. Living near the Imperial City also has an important symbolical meaning for Beijing natives.

<sup>265</sup> Song, Zhuangzhuang, from my interview.

propaganda<sup>266</sup>. As it was the Dongcheng District Government that launched the project, activist groups complained to the municipal and central departments that the law was violated, but they did not get a reply. Instead, the government continued to urge people to move out and to demolish the emptied houses. In early 2012, the activists wrote letters to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and submitted a report, stating that the B&DTs area, which was within the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site Forbidden City, was under threat (see Figure 5.6). UNESCO replied and said they would send somebody to investigate, but did not take any actions. When I left Beijing in April 2012, about 40 households had signed contracts with the government and moved out. By July 2014 all the houses immediately adjacent to the towers and squares had been demolished.



**Figure 5.6 B&DTs within the buffer zone of the Palace City**  
(source: Brief Report about the Recent Situation in Bell and Drum Towers Square Area and Its Impacts to World Heritage Site, 2013)

### **5.1.2 B&DTs area in history: city towers, market place and residential precinct**

The B&DTs area is famous for the two towers. The current Drum Tower was built in 1539 and the Bell Tower in 1745. In fact, when Kublai Khan made Beijing (or Khanbaliq) the capital of Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368), he located the first Drum

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<sup>266</sup> Beijing is a very extreme case. In the cities in the south of China such as Guangzhou, the traditional media like newspapers is much more independent and very critical to the government. The civil society there is also much stronger. All these make the preservation champions and protests there are much more fruitful than those in Beijing.

Tower, known as the Tower of Orderly Administration (*qizhenglou*)<sup>267</sup>, at the very heart of the capital, and the Bell Tower a little bit north to the Drum Tower (see Figure 5.7). Since then, although reconstructed several times, the two towers did not change their locations and served as the official time-keeping and time-telling centre of the city during Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, until they were replaced by the western-style clockworks in the early twentieth century. Because of the height and central location of the towers, they were also used to monitor the city and for emergency alerts<sup>268</sup>.

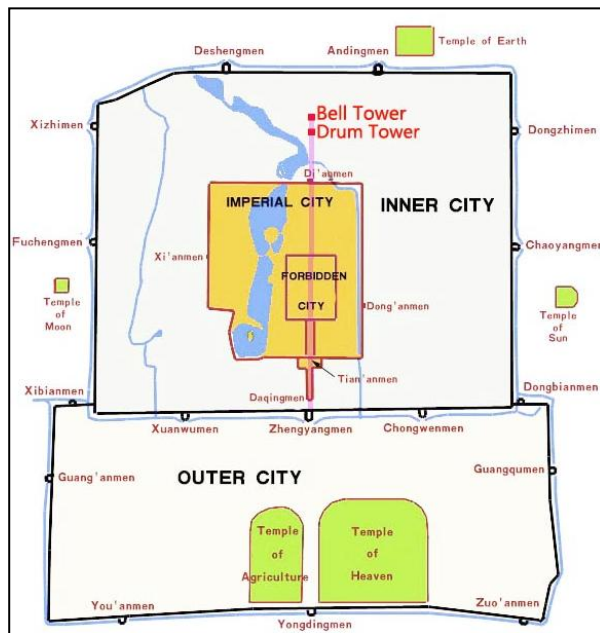
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<sup>267</sup> The name of the central tower Orderly Administration also can reflect that order was an target of Chinese cities and the governance.

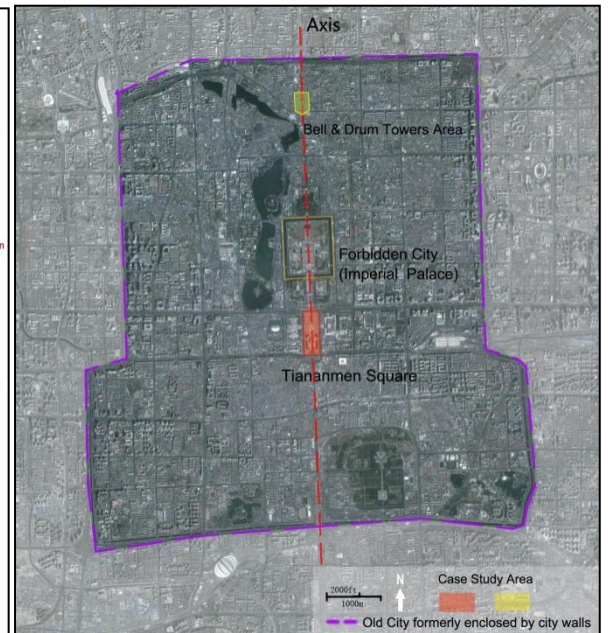
<sup>268</sup> Wang, Canzhi, 'Yuandadu Zhonggulou kao [Identifying the Bell Tower and Drum Tower of Khanbaliq]', in Historical Study Institute of Beijing Academy of Social Science, ed., *Jinian Beijingshi Kexueyuan jianli shizhounian lishiyanjiusuo yanjiu chengguo lunwenji [Ten Years Anniversary Collection of Beijing Academy of Social Science]*, 1988.







**Figure 5.8 Locations of the B&D Towers and the city axis in Ming and Qing Dynasties**<sup>270</sup>



**Figure 5.9 Locations of the Bell Tower and Drum Tower based on the map of current Beijing (drawn by the author based on Google earth map)**

As illustrated in Chapter 4, the plan of the Chinese cities has a ritual significance. Bell and drum towers were essential elements to compose traditional *cheng*, those walled cities built as government seats. The capital cities of the country, province (*sheng* or *fu*) and prefecture (*zhou*) must have both a bell tower and a drum tower, and a county seat just had one of them<sup>271</sup>. Originally as court musical instruments, bells and drums were connected to rites and ceremonies. Since the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220), they have also been used for telling the time. There is a Chinese idiom called 'the morning bell and dusk drum', describing their functions of telling time and governing city: city gates were opened at the toll of the bell early in the morning and closed with the strike of the drum in the evening<sup>272</sup>; the proverb also connotes the flowing of time, and enlightening words making people alert and sober. To serve the whole city, the towers were usually built in the central place of a city<sup>273</sup>. In the case of Beijing, the Drum Tower was the exact central point of Yuan Beijing city, and as

<sup>270</sup> (drawn based on 'Fortifications of Beijing city' [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing\\_city\\_fortifications](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing_city_fortifications))

<sup>271</sup> Chu, Jin, *Research on Spatial Pattern of Bell & Drum Towers Historical Site in Historic Cultural City*, master thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology, 2011, p.8.

<sup>272</sup> The time-telling system of bell and drum is also used in temples.

<sup>273</sup> Usually the bell tower is located in the east while the drum tower west, but Beijing is an exception.

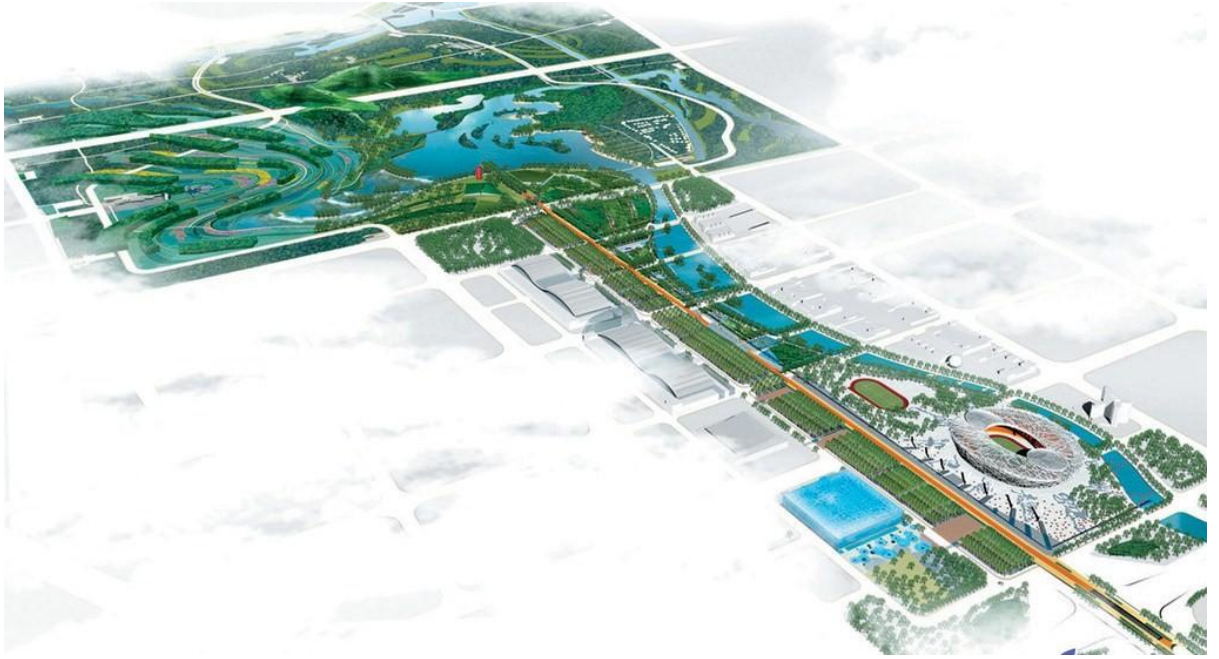


the city moved and expanded towards south over time, the two towers became the north end of the axis of the old Beijing city until the government extended the axis' north end to the Olympic Park in 2008 (see Figure 5.8, 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11). Undeniably, the prominent visual effect and public function of the two towers, and the symbolic meaning of them as either the centre of the city or the ending of the axis, gave the two buildings significant *gong* features. The city blocks around the two towers, however, were in a very different situation.



**Figure 5.10 Axis of Beijing (south part, from the perspective of Tiananmen Square)**





**Figure 5.11 Axis of Beijing (north part, from the perspective of the Olympic Park)**

The area around the two towers was a living area for lower classes, especially small merchants and craftsmen, dotted by lively markets selling small commodities. The lake east to the area was the end of the water transportation from the south of China to the capital, which contributed to the flourishing commerce of the area nearby, including the Drum Tower Street (*gulou dajie*) and *Di'anmen* (literally 'Gate of Earthly Peace', pairing with Tiananmen, Gate of Heavenly Peace) (see Figure 5.8). When I visited the B&DTs neighbourhood, people often mentioned a common saying '*Dongsi, Xidan, Gulouqian*' which were the names of the three busiest market streets in old Beijing and *Gulouqian* literally means 'in front of Drum Tower'. As illustrated before, Chess Board Street in front of the Tiananmen space was not a designated market place. Market places, according to the orthodoxy, should be located 'behind' the imperial palace, that is, in the north. The Bell Tower Market was one of these markets. But compared with other commercial streets nearby specialising in things like tea, silk and jewellery, the market here served the lower class and sold daily necessities and particularly specialised in rice, flour, cloth and hats<sup>274</sup>. Now there is still an indoor market at the north side of the square north to the

<sup>274</sup> Chu, Jin, *Research on Spatial Pattern of Bell & Drum Towers Historical Site in Historic Cultural City*, master thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology, 2011, p13.

Bell Tower. Therefore, the B&DTs area, in terms of its residential and commercial status, is a place connected to ordinary people rather than the aristocrats and the rich.

The idea that north is inferior also contributed to this. With an inauspicious sense, the north wall did not have a gate in the middle like another three directions, so that there was no main road from the north straight to the Forbidden Palace (Figure 5.8). That is also why the axis ended at the Bell Tower rather than reached the city wall<sup>275</sup>. Living ‘under the north wall’ was unfavourable. In the imperial era, many wealthy businessmen lived in *Shichahai*, near to the lake and northwest of the study site, while high officials and aristocrats lived in the area south to the Drum Tower, which was closer to the Imperial City. As illustrated before, the socio-spatial structure of Beijing was a horizontally hierarchical system. The more centrally people lived, the higher classes they were likely to be. As a consequence, most of the inhabitants in the neighbourhoods in the vicinity of the two towers were urban lower class such as craftsmen, small business owners, rickshaw drivers, street acrobats and buskers, etc. In the early twentieth century, an informal ‘labour market’ (*renshi*) was at the open space attached to the Drum Tower, where masons, woodworkers, casual labourers and unemployed, etc. waited to be hired; it was also a place where rickshaws gathered<sup>276</sup>. After 1949, most of the people migrating into the area during the political movements were also socio-economically disadvantaged groups, which complicated the composition of the population and property ownership, but the area’s status as a lower class inhabiting place did not change. All these seem to have shaped this case study site a *si* place; that is, a residential space predominated by domestic and small economic activities, detached from the state and the political realm.

However, all this changed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a century of revolutions. Especially after the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the B&DTs area became a battleground not only between public power and private households, between *gong* and *si*, but also between different households, that is, within the realm of *si*. It is this history that resulted in the ownership ambiguities and land disputes that have been uncovered in the process of the government-led regeneration scheme. In the

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<sup>275</sup> More account on this, see Liang, Sicheng,

<sup>276</sup> *Zhonggulou [Bell & Drum Towers]*, Culture and History Committee of Political Consultative of Dongcheng District of Beijing (*Beijingshi dongchengqu zhengxiexuei he weishiweiyuanhui*) ed., 2009, chapter 2.

following section, I will outline three key periods/events contributing to the land ownership conflicts, and also highlight how they can be analysed within the *gong-si* framework.

### 5.1.3 Key events of the land conflicts and struggles

The social and spatial shifts of the neighbourhood started from the 1950s. I will follow the thread of time and focus on three key events happening between the 1950s and the 1970s that led to the current complicated property situation of the area.

The first event is the ‘Socialist Transformation’ (*shehuizhuyi gaizao*) in the 1950s. Despite a movement primarily targeted at ‘socialising’ private enterprises and industry, a great number of household properties were nationalised or municipalised in the process. Courtyard houses of B&DTs area, for their mixed domestic, industrial and commercial functions, were reorganised, economically, socially and spatially in this transformation. Adopting the *gong-si* framework, we can see the powerful penetration of *gong* into *si*, of the state into the domestic realm. In this socialisation movement, not only private properties were expropriated by or handed over to the state, but also nearly every aspect of people’s life was integrated into the state governance and welfare system. The realisation of the socialisation was not just because of the powerful party-state and the ideological wind at that time, but was also facilitated by the long-standing recognition of the priority of *gong* over *si*. In socialist China, the selflessness and impartiality virtue of the *gong*-spirit was reformed in the guise of communism and egalitarianism. With regard to property, private property and the real estate market were demolished and a public ownership system (*gongyouzhi*, 公有制), an ideal since Mencius<sup>277</sup>, was taking shape.

The second period addresses the redistribution of property ownership during the Cultural Revolution (1967-1976). In the Socialist Transformation, it was the state that socialised (i.e., nationalised and municipalised) private properties and redistributed them to the employees of the government and state-owned enterprises. Yet in the turbulent decade of the Cultural Revolution, it was collectives of individuals, rather than the state, that occupied the private properties left after the Socialisation Movement. As I will explain, the stories of the B&DTs neighbourhood

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<sup>277</sup> See Chapter 2.

reveal chaotic conflicts over the property between the masses as *gong* embodiment and private owners of *si*-interests; it also shows the inherent tension among different *si* bodies (e.g. different individuals, households) in spatial contests.

The third focus is about the self-building activities after the Cultural Revolution. To house newly independent family members, there was on-going self-building of houses. But after enormous buildings were destroyed by the Great Tangshan Earthquake on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 1976, this area saw an even bigger surge of self-build. These constructions were allowed and supported by the government at the time. The common space of the yards and some open spaces beside the lanes and squares were occupied for private use. This spatial privatisation was somewhat a revenge of *si*. With the reestablishment of the order of the state and society, spatial contests between households in everyday life became increasingly significant, and occupation or 'quiet encroachment' turned into a key strategy for people to hold a property against the background that ownership was neither well-defined nor well-protected<sup>278</sup>.

The *gong-si* and *si-si* relationship in each period will be illustrated by specific stories of households and properties happening in the B&DTs area. In the last section of the chapter, I will try to link what was happening in the events back to the property issues uncovered by the regeneration project. In fact, these three periods give birth to the three types of properties in ownership dispute nowadays: government-managed-and-let-properties (*jingzufang*), Cultural Revolution properties (*wengechan*) and self-constructed buildings (*zijianfang*). To a large degree, it is the ambiguities and conflicts displayed in current practice that helps me identify the key historical events shaping the present. In this sense, these stories of the past of the neighbourhood are actually a journey to discover the relation between the past and the present.

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<sup>278</sup> Bayat, Asef, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

## 5.2 Socialist transition of the household in the 1950s: domestic realm and the state as an embodiment of *gong*

### 5.2.1 ‘Socialist Transformation’

This section addresses the changes of the domestic realm, including private property and personal life, in the ‘Socialist Transformation’ movement (*shehuizhuyi gaizao*). The ‘Socialist Transformation’, targeting industrial and commercial sectors at the beginning, did not involve household property. However, due to their mixed economic and residential functions, many courtyard houses in B&DTs were ‘socialised’, that is, handed over to the government. This empirical study will show how the household space and ownership were reorganised, and how the relationships between the state, families and individuals have changed in the process.

Between 1953 and 1956, a campaign was launched by the Party to realise the ‘Socialist Transformation’ of capitalist industry and commerce. This was a part of the country’s march to socialism. Before this, under the Agrarian Reform Law of 1950, the properties of rural landlords had been confiscated and redistributed to poor peasants by coercion. Many landlords were punished and persecuted in the rural Land Reform<sup>279</sup>. In the city, the principle of socialising industry and commerce was claimed to be voluntary<sup>280</sup>. In March, 1954, the CPC Central Committee issued a document entitled ‘On the Gradual Transformation of the Capitalist Industries with More than Ten Employees into Public-private Ownership’<sup>281</sup> to guide the transformation, whereby the state would buy the enterprises from private hands and leave a certain percentage profit to the previous owners. Amid the revolutionary atmosphere, in January 1956<sup>282</sup>, business and factory owners in Beijing collectively appealed to implement public-private partnership (*gong-si heying*, 公私合营) onto

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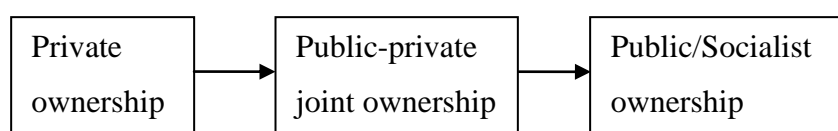
<sup>279</sup> Land reform in 1949-1950 had caused an estimated 1 million deaths in landlord families. Spence, Jonathan D, *The Search for Modern China*, New York: W.W.Norton, 1999, pp. 447-8, 492.

<sup>280</sup> ‘...it must also be voluntary on the part of the capitalists, because it is a co-operative undertaking and co-operation admits of no coercion’, quoted from Mao Tse-tung, ‘The Only Road for the Transformation of Capitalist Industry and Commerce’, a talk to representative personages from the democratic parties and industrial and commercial circles on September 7, 1953, [Online] Available from [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5\\_33.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_33.htm) [Accessed 10.11.2013].

<sup>281</sup> ‘Opinion on Transforming the Capitalist Industry with over Ten Employees into Public-private Ownership Enterprises’ [*guanyu youzhuzhoude jiang shige gongren yishangde zibenzhuyi gongye jibenshang gaizaowei gongsihaying qiye de yijian*], 03-04-1954.

<sup>282</sup> Socialist Transformation of industry and commerce (or public-private ownership) in Beijing started later than other cities.

all industry sectors, and many of them ‘donated’ their properties to the state. State capitalism was considered as the ‘only road’ to realise the socialist transformation of private industry and commerce<sup>283</sup>. Therefore, the state, including both central and local governments, eventually became the major (public) partner of the previously private enterprises. The route can be illustrated as the diagram below (Figure 5.12).



**Figure 5.12 Route of transforming private enterprises into public ownership**

Here the ultimate target was to transform private ownership (*siyouzhi*) of the enterprises into public ownership (*gongyouzhi*), or enterprises owned by and serving for all the people of the country. Private capitalists were condemned for their ‘profits-before-everything’ mentality. Being associated with private, profit (which is usually called *sili*, meaning ‘private profit’ or ‘private interest’) was considered derogatory. The state here was seen as trustee for the public to control the commerce and industries on behalf of the people and for the public interests, and it collaborated with private owners to form public-private partnership, the first stage of the transformation. From September, 1969, without any legal procedure, the state unilaterally stopped paying the fixed rate of interest to the private partners, which completed the nationalisation of industrial and commercial sectors started in the 1950s. This is the outline of the Socialist Transformation of private industry and commerce<sup>284</sup>. The story of private houses is very similar to this, although whether it is a part of industrial and commercial transition or an independent movement is still debatable.

Before discussing the fate of private household property, I would like to introduce the situation of previous public property in the 1950s. In the Republican time (1912-

<sup>283</sup> Mao Tse-tung, ‘The Only Road for the Transformation of Capitalist Industry and Commerce’, a talk to representative personages from the democratic parties and industrial and commercial circles on September 7, 1953, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong Xuanji)*, Vol. V, People's Publishing House, 1977, pp. 98-100.

<sup>284</sup> For a general accounts of the transformation, see, e.g. Hsueh, Su Hsing, Lin, Tse-li & Mu-Chiao, *The socialist transformation of the national economy in China*, Foreign Languages Press, 1960; for specific cases, see, e.g. Chen, Zhengqing, ‘Socialist Transformation and the Demise of Private Entrepreneurs Wu Yunchu’s Tragedy’, *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp.240 – 61.

1949), ‘publicly-owned land’ (*gongyou tudi*) was a legal term, encompassing the land owned by the state (*guoyou*), province (*shengyou*), municipality (*shiyou*) and county (*xianyou*)<sup>285</sup>. Here the state, province, municipality and county were seen as collective entities, and the hierarchical governments were the ‘governing agencies’ (*guanyou jiguan*) of the publicly-owned land. ‘Government-owned property’ (*guanchan*) also appeared in official documents, referring to the buildings officially used by the governments. This term, often used with ‘publicly-owned property’ (*gongchan*), suggested that it was a different type of property from those like roads, bridges and the open spaces of the cities. There was also ‘publicly-used land’ (*gongyong tudi*) which was held by public or *gong*-related organisations other than the governments. One example was the property owned by religious institutions. The area around the two towers used to be very diverse in terms of religious expression. There featured a Daoist temple (*guan*) and an Islamic mosque within the researched area, with a temple of worship of the God of Fire (*huoshenmiao*) and a Confucian college nearby. Before the nationalisation of private enterprises, the Communist Party, having seized control of Beijing in early 1949, had taken over both the ‘government-owned property’ and ‘publicly-owned land’ from Kuomintang government. However, at the beginning of the new PRC, the private and corporate ownership in the city was recognised and remained, although many private properties of Kuomintang members were confiscated<sup>286</sup>.

At the early stage of the ‘Socialist Transformation’ that aimed at nationalising industry and the economy, household property was not the target. But many household spaces were not merely for living but also mixed with economic activities, and thus were involved in the socialist transition. That was the case of the Ms. In 1958, a movement targeting private properties for renting was initiated, transforming the fate of enormous households<sup>287</sup>, among which Mrs H was a typical example. In

<sup>285</sup> ‘Beijingshi gonganju guanyu zhixing xingzhengyuan zhanyou tudi chuli guize de xunling’ [Order of Conducting the Principles of Dealing with the Land Occupied by the Executive Ministry], Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau, 01-01-1934, Beijing Municipal Archives, J181-020-13086.

<sup>286</sup> Report on the Housing Issues, addressed by the Beijing Municipal Government to the Central Government and the Northern China Bureau [*Beijingshi renminzhengfu dangzu guanyu fangwu wenti xiang shiwei bing zhongyang, huabeiju de baogao*], 14-01-1952, in Selections on Important Material of Beijing Municipality [*Beijingshi zhongyao wenxian xuanbian*], compiled by Beijing Research Institute on the History of the Communist Party, Vol.4, 2001, pp. 27-32.

<sup>287</sup> The transformation of private properties was launched by the party by the ‘Opinions on the Current Situation of Urban Private Property and Socialist Transformation’ (*Guanyu muqian chengshi siyou fangchan jibenqingkuang ji jinxing shehuizhuyi gaizao de yijian*), Second Office of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPC (*zhongyang shujichu jier bangongshi*), 18-01-1956. Yet in Beijing, the plan was still

the meantime, citizens were integrated into the socialist system, which further changed the private realm. In the following two sections, I will use the stories of the Ms and Mrs. H to give a picture of the domestic transformation in the socialisation movement, in order to investigate the changes of the relationship between the state, families and individuals in the specific course of property ownership transfer.

### **5.2.2 Story of the Ms: how *gong* penetrated through *si***

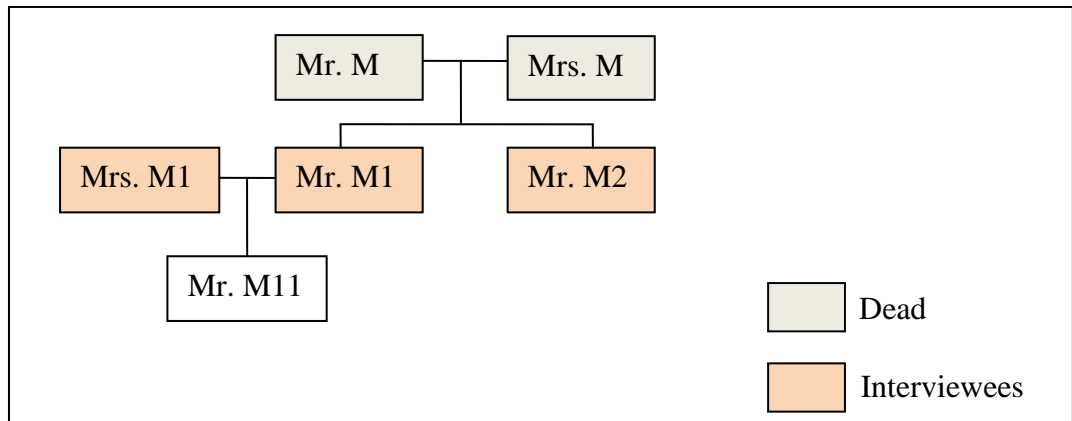
The Ms, including Mr. M, Mrs. M and their two sons Mr. M1 and Mr. M2, owned a large courtyard (more than two times of an ordinary courtyard dwelling unit) in the 1950s in the B&DTs area (Figure 5.12). In contrast to most people who tended to build as many houses as they could afford on their land, Mr. M, the father of my interviewers Mr. M1 and Mr. M2, used his courtyard as a coal ball factory<sup>288</sup>. It was a household factory with a big ground in the centre, where the coal balls could be produced and dried. The family lived in two houses (six rooms), with another two simpler storage houses that were used to store the coal balls (Figure 5.13). Mr. M's whole family, including Mr. M, Mrs. M, and their two sons (i.e. M1 and M2) relied on the profit of the factory before the Socialist Transformation.

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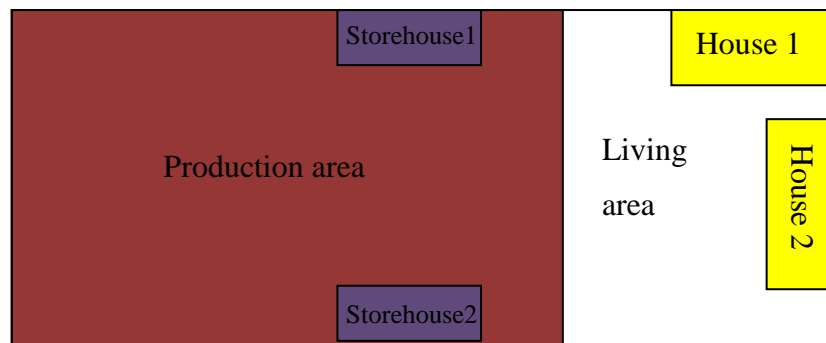
suspended in 1958 when many of other cities had completed the stransition. An article on the 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1958, entitled 'A Talk on the Socialist Transformation of Urban Private Property by the Director of the Central Responsible Department' (Zhongyang zhuguan jiguan fuzeren jiu chengshi siyou fangwu de chuzu de shehuizhuyi gaizao gongzuo fabiao jianghua) from an official newspaper of the Party and government, *People's Daily*, urged to begin the transformation. Then the private property socialisation of Beijing was advanced very rashly.

<sup>288</sup> Coal balls were the most important fuel for cooking and heating in the old days. They were solid balls like the size of walnuts made with coal dust, soil and water. Coal ball factories usually had a very large ground to dry coal balls.





**Figure 5.12 Family structure of the Ms**

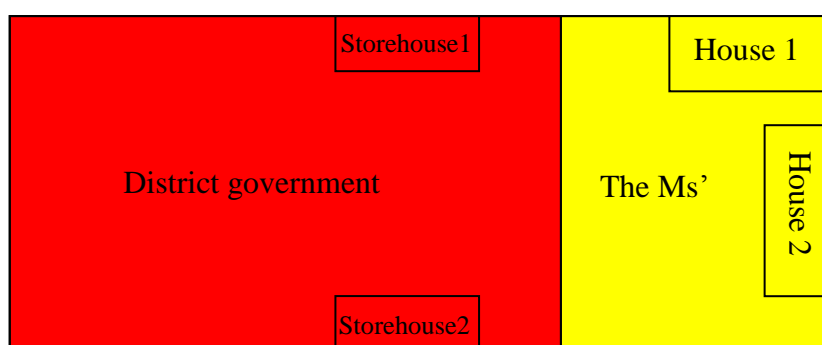


**Figure 5.13 Land use of the Ms' courtyard in the 1950s**  
(according to the description of Mr. M1)

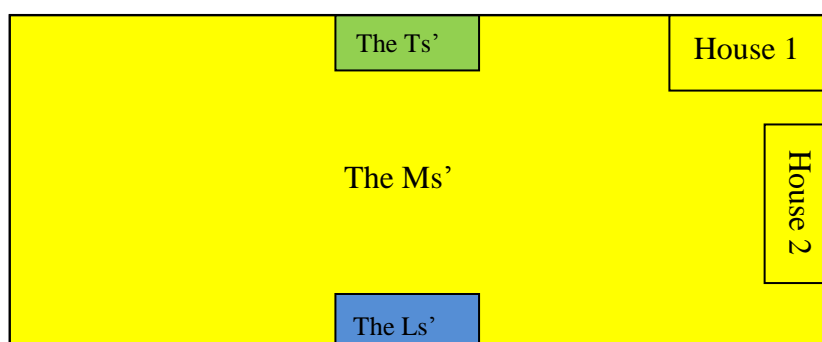
In the 1950s, the newly established national industrial system was a hierarchical one, including national, municipal, district and street (*jiedao*, the smallest unit in the city administrative system) levels. Which level's joint-partnership or state-owned factory a private factory should join depended on the size of the factory. The Ms' household factory was incorporated into a district-level coal ball factory with another two coal ball factories in the area. As a consequence, the land used for production (i.e., the empty ground of the courtyard dwelling and two storage houses) in the yard became the government-owned factory's property (Figure 5.14) and Mr. M and Mrs. M became its employees. Young M1 and M2 were also transferred to a new school in the district where the new joint factory was located<sup>289</sup>.

<sup>289</sup> The joint factory was also in the B&D area but in the other side of the axis. The west and east parts of the area were belonging to two administrative districts.

According to the policy, the work unit (*danwei*, here the factory) was supposed to not only pay the labour but also provide housing, health care and child education for the employees<sup>290</sup>. Given the fact that the Ms already had their own house, the factory did not distribute them new property, but arranged for another two families of Mr. T and Mr. L, both of whom were also working for the joint factory but possessing no properties, to live in the two storage houses previously owned by Family M. However, although the yard belonged to the factory theoretically, it was still used by the M Family at least until 1961(Figure 5.15). In the interview, Mr. M1 told about how the family survived during the Three Years of Great Famine between 1959 and 1961, during the time of which millions of the Chinese starved to death. They grew cereals and vegetables in their big yard to feed themselves when getting no food allocation from the government.



**Figure 5.14 Ownership of the courtyard and the houses after the Socialist Transformation**



**Figure 5.15 Occupation of the courtyard and the houses in the late 1950s**

The occupation of the yard had its first significant change when Mr. T, one of the tenants of the government-owned factory, built a new house for his eldest son in the

<sup>290</sup> Walder, Andrew G, *Communist Neo - traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

early 1960s. As mentioned above, housing the employees was seen as the responsibility of the government. However, considering the reality that the city government and the factory had very limited housing resources and there were too many people on the waiting list before him, Mr. T built the house himself on the land of the state-owned factory; that is, the yard that belonged to the M Family before<sup>291</sup>. Mr. T's behaviours were permitted and encouraged by the factory. In fact it was a common model to solve the housing issue then. Mr. L, another tenant did the same when his son reached the age of marriage. Mr. M, the previous owner of the whole estate did not build any new houses, but instead gave each of his two sons two rooms to set up their families while keeping another two rooms for his wife and himself<sup>292</sup>. In the following years, the factory and the city government also started to build houses in the yard to accommodate more families. From then on, the yard was used and perceived as the government-owned factory's property (*gongfang*) but occupied by individual families (Figure 5.16). Both in title and reality, the Ms had lost the control of the estate except their two houses.

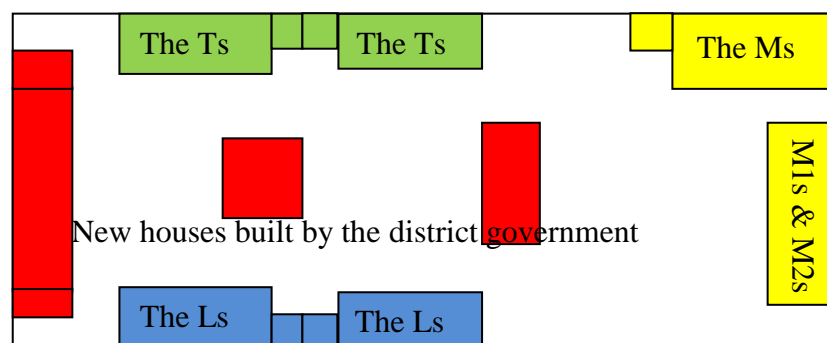


Figure 5.16 Occupation of the courtyard and the houses in the middle 1960s

The case of the Ms reveals the complexity of the *gong-si* relationship and of the private-public transition. In the first place, the space and activities of production and of living were highly mixed within a typical *si* space in a pre-industrialisation age. In other words, *si* realm and space at least contained domestic and economic two interrelated aspects. As a result, the socialist transition aimed at transforming the economy and industry could not avoid affecting the living space. In the Ms' case, the courtyard and the surrounding houses were at the same time used for living and

<sup>291</sup> It was a joint partnership factory but became a state-owned one several years later.

<sup>292</sup> Providing house for sons were seen as a responsibility of parents in traditional China even now.

producing functions. It was impossible for the state only intervening into the production part while leaving the other untouched. Furthermore, the state did intend to transform the domestic and personal realm too. By integrating people's work, housing and education into the national socialist system, the relative autonomy of household and personal life was destroyed. These two changes, that is, state intervention into both economic and domestic realms, reveal a deep penetration of *gong* into *si*.

Why could this happen? As has been explained, the *si* related-activities were considered as morally negative during this period. Private economic activities, including household industry, in pursuit of profits and private interests (*si-li*) were not only seen as morally inferior in the traditional sense, but also interpreted as exploitation from the Marxist ideology promoted by the communists. Socialism fitted in the morality and spirit of *gong*, advocating selflessness and egalitarianism. Even more, in its blueprint, socialism did not truly deny economic and industrial activities, but organised them in a specific way, that is, through public ownership (*gongyouzhi* or *guoyouzhi*). It also recognised people's needs for work, education, housing and other necessities, but again, with the expectation that they should be coordinated by the state planned system. In fact, fulfilling these needs was explicitly claimed as the responsibility of the government for the first time in Chinese history. Mrs. M1 talked about how the whole family became members of the 'gong-family' (*gongjia*, referring to administrative institutions and state-owned factories and companies):

'They (the District Government) took over the factory, and my parents-in-law worked for the new established joint factory. When you worked for *gong*-family, you got the welfare from the state. They changed primary school for the two children (M1 and M2). After graduated, they worked for the joint factory too. I married M1, and the District Government also arrange me a job. I worked for a street-level factory, making paper works. Just a few minutes walk from home. It went bankrupt later. I could work for another factory, but because of health issue I didn't. I applied for early retirement. My husband's waist got injured before he retired, and he got industrial injury compensation. If you don't work for state's factories, who will pay medical fee for you?

Impossible. Both of us have retired now and are paid the state pension.

Not much but better than nothing....’

When being asked ‘if the factory was kept private, would the family live better’, Mrs. M answered ‘very difficult’, and ‘following the state policy is safer’. Here, public ownership and a welfare state were seen as good because they could sustain economic and domestic functions. The state with its great power was even considered more capable to take these functions than private ways. In other words, the superiority of these *gong* embodiments resided in the notion that they went beyond the limit of *si* and at the same time could take care of *si*. By incorporating *si* realm into *gong*, the state as a *gong*-embodiment could also become legitimised in these everyday senses vis-à-vis work, family and lived spaces, etc.

However, in reality, this *gong* system (i.e. public ownership and state intervention) could not cover everything nor completely eradicate people’s spontaneity in organising their domestic and private life. That is why the self-construction of Mr. T’s and Mr. L’s happened and were accepted. In a sense, there was always space for private activities that primarily focused on the private actors’ *si*-interests. Public power penetrated through the household realm, but did not erase it. The tension between the two was still there; the boundary between the two changed, but the ambiguity remained.

### **5.2.3 Story of Mrs. H: socialisation targeting private property**

The expropriation of the M’s household property in the Socialist Transformation of the urban commerce and industries was because of the production function involved, but there was parallel movement in particular targeting private residence. This was the ‘managing and letting’ (*jingzu*) movement.

Urban proprietors, especially landlords living on the rent from letting their properties were seen as part of the exploiting class. In 1956, the CPC Central Committee drafted a document, *Opinions on the Current Situation of the Private Properties in the Cities and Their Socialist Transformation*, proposing that the state should ‘manage and let’ (*jingying* and *zulin*, or *jingzu* for short) private properties by paying the owners ‘reasonable interest’<sup>293</sup>. In June 1958, Beijing enforced a policy, applying

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<sup>293</sup> Opinion on the Current Situation of Urban Private Property and How to Conduct Socialist Transformation

the socialist transformation unto those with private properties over 15 rooms (*jian*) or over 225 square meters<sup>294</sup>.

Mrs. H, who inherited 37 rooms from her husband, was asked to hand over her 'surplus' properties to the Real Estate Management Bureau (*fangguansuo*, REMB) of Beijing, and the latter promised to help her let and maintain the houses and also to share the rent income with her. Considering that all her children were serving in the army out of Beijing and worried whether she could manage the estate by her own, Mrs. H agreed. Consequently, the REMB took over 25 rooms from Mrs. H, and she kept the remaining 12 rooms. As many other owners, Mrs. H got 40% of the rent paid by the tenants and the REMB got 60% until the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. After the Cultural Revolution, landlords did not get payments from the tenants any more<sup>295</sup>. Strangely, Mrs. H did not feel losing control of the property in the Socialisation was very unfair:

'Their (REMB's) attitude was good. They treated me well, perhaps because I was a widow. They agreed to pay for the maintenance of the houses and I could share the rent income. That would be good for me. I didn't have anybody to help me. My sons were all in the army, far from Beijing. It's hard for me to manage all the properties.... They (REMB) did what they promised. They also repaired the houses I was living in.'<sup>296</sup>

When talking about losing the 40% rent profit in the Cultural Revolution, Mrs. H was a bit more resentful:

'They just stopped paying me. The country was in great chaos at that time. You didn't know how things happened. Private owners could say nothing. Can you say anything? I was lucky because I was always very

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(*guanyu muqian chengshi siyoufangchan jibenqingkuang ji jinxing shehuizhuyi gaizao de yijian*), 18-05-1956, Beijing Municipal Archives.

<sup>294</sup> Rules on the Socialist Transformation of Privately Letting Houses (*dui siyou chuzu fangfu jinxing shehuizhuyigaizao jige jutiweni zhengce de guiding*), 04-06-1958.

<sup>295</sup> The state stopped to share the rent with private owners at the same time (i.e. September 1966) with the end of the 'fixed interest' enjoyed by the private partners involved in the Socialist Transformation of Industry and Commerce. This is usually considered as the landmark of the state declaring itself as the single owner of these previously private enterprises and properties although the legitimacy of the action is highly debatable.

<sup>296</sup> From interview.

cooperative. I was always in line with the Party and government....

The state admitted mistakes afterwards.<sup>297</sup>

But the government did not restart pay the 40% rent to the Mrs. H after the Cultural Revolution:

‘They (REMB) said they spent too much in repairing and rebuilding the houses. I still had my part. The children had their place to live as well. The government said they could repair my houses together with the public part. It’s not too bad.’<sup>298</sup>

During the period when a free property market was abolished, people in the cities were housed by the government and property letting and exchange could make money as much as usual. When the economic loss of handing over properties to the government was not great, we did not see strong resistance from the landlords. Many interviewees expressed they were ‘content’ because they still could maintain their own life with the remaining properties. In fact, due to rigid ideological control and various ‘movements’ (*yundong*) initiated by the party-state, surviving in the new regime was even an issue. To be safe gained the highest priority and economic consideration was rendered secondary. Politically right was always important, but at that extreme time it was especially crucial for life safety. In this context, the purpose of the ‘transaction’ between the state and private owners were not according to economic fairness, but a part of the highly ideology-ethics-oriented ‘socialisation’ movement.

From the words of Mrs. H, she accepted her identity as a ‘private owner’ and the derogatory meanings and inferior social status this identity carried. This kind of expression appeared in her interview several times: ‘I can’t do that. I am a private owner (*sifangzhu*)’, or ‘that’s impossible for proprietors’. It seemed ‘private’ was a mistake, a sin. Socialist Transformation was to correct the mistake and to save people from the sin. In the name of public interests and *gong* agency, the government controlled and managed private properties like Mrs. H’s.

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<sup>297</sup> From interview.

<sup>298</sup> From interview.

However, the ownership was unclear and vague. ‘Managing and letting’ and the 60%-40% rent division were not a complete ownership transfer. The ownership of these houses after socialisation was neither full private nor full public. It was in-between. The government controlled 25 rooms of Mrs. H’s, but the previous tenants continued to live there, although later more government tenants were arranged in. The state intruded into private and domestic realm but not simply wiping it out (which is impossible); instead, the state built up new relations with people and their families and life. This means made the Socialist Transformation of household properties more feasible, and it also in a way promote the moral sense of the state behaviours in residents’ perception. Many of REMB’s promise were just oral and the specific arrangements were negotiable. The procedure and flexibility were actually very ‘informal’, but this not necessarily let residents feel more unsafe. Mrs. H and many other interviewees said they ‘believe(d)’ the government/ state/ Party. The state as a moralised gong actor, its personalisation in the daily contact with people and the ethical sense and belief all these caused together assisted the property ownership reorganisation in the Socialisation.

Mrs H’s story is actually a typical story of the fortune of private property of the neighbourhood in the 1950s. Among all the courtyard houses units that I visited in 2012, about one third of them were privately owned, one third owned by the government and the rest were of mixed ownership (see Figure 5.17)<sup>299</sup>. All the houses currently owned by the government were privately owned before 1949 and the changes started from the 1950s. Those privately owned properties involving industrial and commercial functions, like the case of the Ms, were transferred directly into joint ownership or public ownership (*gongyou*), meaning collectively owned by all the people of a society. The public ownership (*gongyou*) enterprises and properties changed into *guoyou*, that is, state-owned in 1966 without a proper legal procedure<sup>300</sup> and nowadays these two words are often interchangeably used. If the houses were just used for residential functions, like the case of the Ms, the rented spaces were usually handed over to the government for management in the 1950s

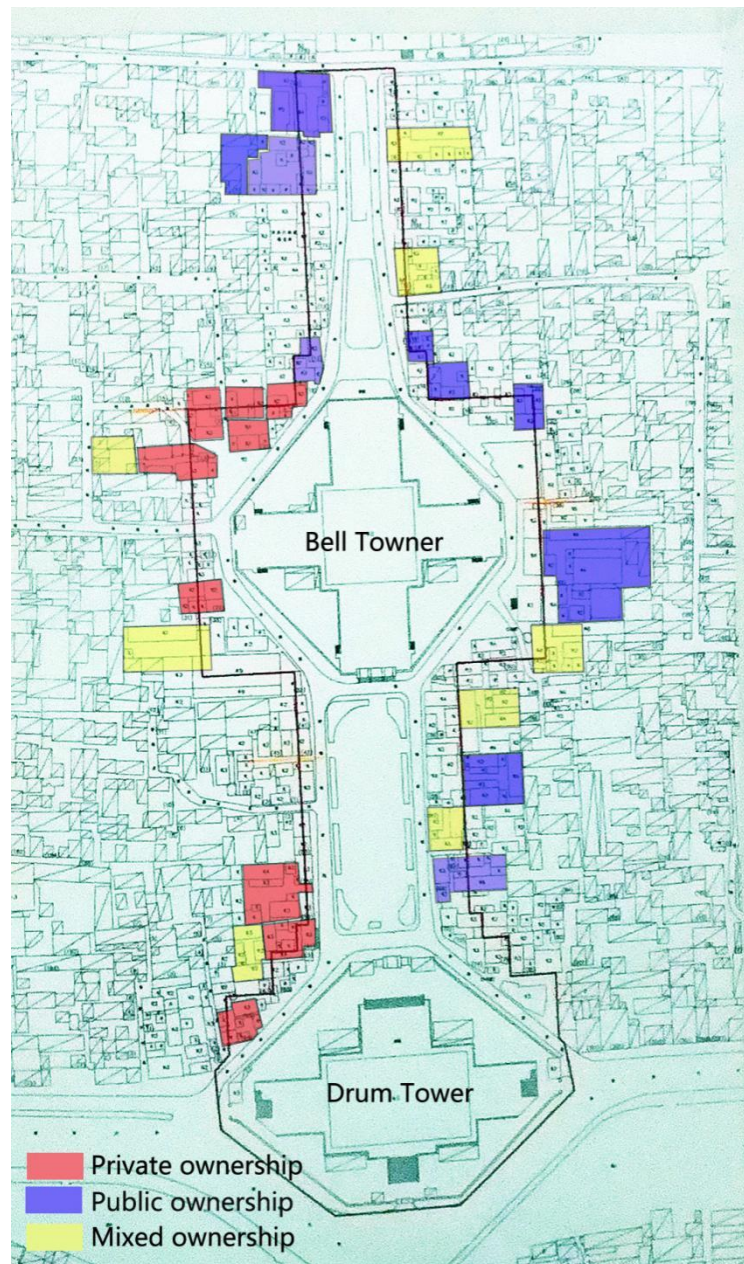
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<sup>299</sup> Here property refers to the buildings on the ground. All the urban land is owned by the state according to the law.

<sup>300</sup>



and many owners not only lost their sharing of the rent, but also lost the remaining properties for self-living during the Cultural Revolution.



**Figure 5.17 Ownership composition of the studied courtyard houses** (draw by the author based on the map provided by the Beijing Urban Planning Department )

#### **5.2.4 Property in the context of state-family analogy**

As explained in the genealogy in Chapter 2, *gongyouzhi*, or public or collective ownership of land, has been a social ideal for a long time (see 2.1.2). There were many land reforms in different dynasties aiming to establish a non-private land

system in which the state owned all land and divided them equally to households. The slogan of Xinhai Revolution in 1911 that overthrew China's last imperial dynasty also claimed 'to distribute land equally among the people'<sup>301</sup>. Yet almost all these land equalisation schemes were concerned with agricultural fields, for China was primarily an agrarian society. Only with the onset of the Republican era did urban land and housing become an issue for the authorities. The Republican government did not really nationalise the land as Sun Yat-sen initially planned; instead, they created 'land tax' to guarantee the public interests in private properties. As a matter of fact, in spite of an ideal for some politicians and thinkers, the public land system was never fully realized. The private ownership system was deeply rooted in ordinary people's minds. This was also one reason why the Republican government could not actualise their goal of 'distributing land equally'. However, state intervention in urban land and private ownership was significant. The land tax was just one example. The republican government not only held a great amount of urban land like a private owner, but also limited the amount of land that individual private owners could hold. In some cases private people also tried to put pressure on the authorities to intervene in private property and housing issues. For example, there were 'lowering rent' movements in many big cities in the republican era; people struck and urged the government to control the unaffordable rent increasing between the two World Wars<sup>302</sup>.

In the Socialist Transformation under the Communist government, the traditional understanding of the privilege of *gong* and admiration for collective ownership together with the newly introduced socialist ideology served as philosophical premise for the reorganisation and redistribution of land ownership. The Communists' practice was much more cautious in the cities than rural areas. In rural areas, landless peasants were allowed to try and to persecute their landlords as well as to distribute the lands by themselves. This led to serious violence and deaths. Yet in the cities, it was the government that dominated and implemented the land redistribution. At least in the early stage, confiscating private properties without compensation was not seen as valid. Like the case of Mrs. H, the government got the

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<sup>301</sup> The complete version is 'to expel the Tatar barbarians, to revive Chinese nation (*Zhonghua*), to establish a Republic, and to distribute land equally among the people (*quchudalu, huifuzhonghua, jianliminguo, pingjundiquan*).

<sup>302</sup> 'Reducing rent mobilisation' (*jiandi fangzu jinri qi zongdongyuan*), *Shun Pao*, 17-06-1934.

40% rent at the cost of maintaining and managing the property. Although unfair and compulsory to a very large degree, it was viewed as a deal between the government and the landlord<sup>303</sup>.

Another characteristic of the practice of government 'managing and letting' private properties was its connection to housing issues, which has been considered as a typical public issue in modern state practice. Housing is a very particular field that connects public and private realms. In Britain, the concerns of housing have greatly facilitated the expansion of public power since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, the concerns of 'non-habitable' living environments helped to encourage the birth of modern urban planning and the use of compulsory purchase power<sup>304</sup>. It seems that the social dimensions of housing make intervention in it particularly justifiable<sup>305</sup>. However, the underlying ideology and discourse in Britain and China were different. For instance, compared with China, public housing provision in Britain was more associated with citizen rights; despite the involvement of the state, housing retained strong linkage with security, autonomy and independence, and family life was a place of retreat, of privacy<sup>306</sup>. The economic and financial advantage of owning a house was also much more obvious<sup>307</sup>.

In China, notwithstanding the importance of a private ownership system before 1949, use value was still the main value of houses. Many elderly interviewees mentioned that rent in the republican Beijing was very low, because people were just generally poor, and also because 'people didn't have much economic awareness' at that time. After the 1950s, the real estate market was totally abolished. Occupation rather than the title, therefore, was more essential. In fact, in my interviews, nearly all the government tenants living there for decades felt they were living in their 'own' houses although they never had the ownership certificates. For many previous owners who lost their ownership, it was not until the 1990s, when the commercial

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<sup>303</sup> Because it was seen as a deal, these properties are not supposed to be returned to the previous owners under the current government policies, but the landlords can get the properties confiscated in the Cultural Revolution back.

<sup>304</sup> Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act, 1919; Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1919.

<sup>305</sup> Somerville, Peter, 'The social construction of home', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, Vol.14, No. 3, 1997, pp. 226-245.

<sup>306</sup> Després, Carole, 'The meaning of home: Literature review and directions for future research and theoretical development', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1991, pp. 96-115.

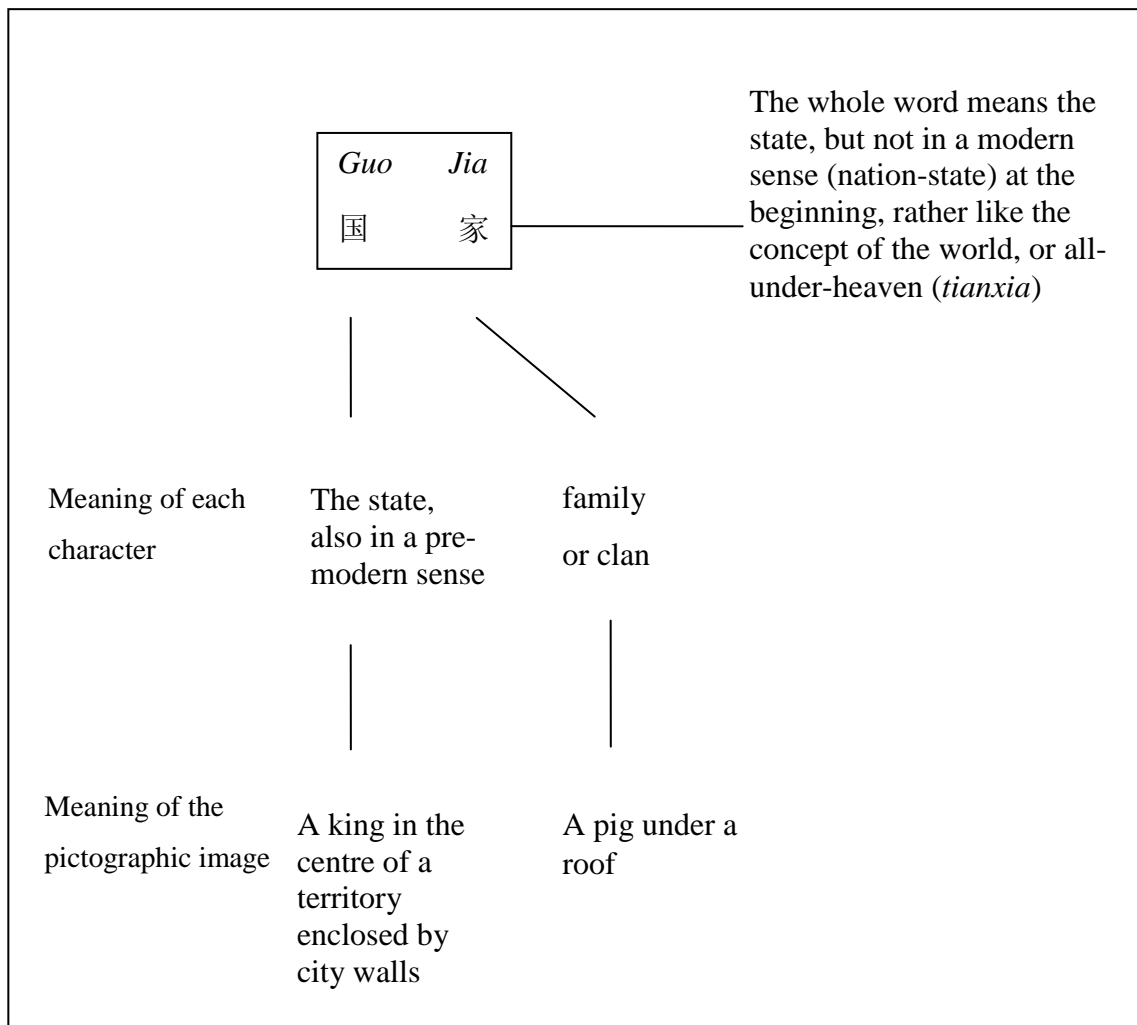
<sup>307</sup> Ronald, Richard, *The Ideology of Home Ownership*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.119-125.

value of houses was released after the restoration of the real estate market, that they realized their huge loss and became much more eager to get their property back.

The symbolic meanings of a house or home were also different in Chinese society. In European history, especially via liberal thoughts, there was a notable demarcation between political and economic/domestic spheres, which can be dated from the time when Athenians contrasted the *polis* (state) to the *oikos* (household). But in the Chinese tradition, home or family did not imply being autonomous, independent and retreating from the state. On the contrary, it was intimately connected to the state<sup>308</sup>. In modern Chinese, the word for country, nation and state is *guojia* (国家), composed by two characters: *guo* (国), referring to the kingdom in ancient and imperial times and *jia* (家), home or family. The combination of *guo* and *jia* to form a single word 'state' reflects the homological structure between country and family in traditional Chinese thoughts (Figure 5.18). In this theory, the state is actually a 'macrocosm' of a family, built upon the same principles of a patriarchal clan system that reflected natural/universal law. Thus, the King was to the kingdom what the father to a family; citizens and bureaucrats were subjected to the King, were equivalent to children and their fathers; the loyalty to the King was like the filial piety to parents. Accordingly, organising a country was like organising a family, and a public power managing the properties of a country or a city was not substantially different to householders managing their properties by themselves. While county and family share analogous structures and principles, however, they are different in scales. The country had the priority over families because it was larger and involved more. From this point of view, 'public ownership' and 'collective property' means going beyond the self-interests of a small family and following the principles of *gong*. This is the distinction between private ownership and public ownership in terms of symbolic value. To summarise, while the exchange value of properties was limited in this period, use value predominated in practise and the symbolic value of public ownership was superior to private. As a result, the socialisation of household properties, though a shift from the previous system, is not too difficult to imagine and accept.

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<sup>308</sup> A comparative account can be found in Arendt, Hannah, 1998[1958], *The Human Condition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 22-26, 33.



**Figure 5.18 The idea of state-family homogeneity**

In fact, the homology of the state and family, and the integration of the state as the embodiment of *gong* and the household as the embodiment of *si* have its typical institutional presentation in the new age, that is, the work-unit (*danwei*) system. A work-unit refers to a kind of workplace that is an extension of the state apparatus and, at the same time, is the institution organising people's work, housing, education, medical care, food quota and even marriage etc. in the context of state socialism and a planned economy<sup>309</sup>. It can be state institutes and agencies, the state enterprises or the collective sector. The Socialist Transformation was actually a process that integrated all urban residents into a national work-unit system. As we will see in a case in the following section, even street acrobat performers became affiliated to a

<sup>309</sup> Wu, Fulong, 'Changes in the Structure of Public Housing Provision in Urban China', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 9, 1601-1627.

formal work-unit, which means to become (indirect) state employees from the 1950s. Moreover, work-unit is not only an institution of social integration, but also a system of spatial integration. In most cases, people working in the same work-unit lived near to each other, but the most common form is not the courtyard houses in the old city of Beijing, but gated communities built by the work-units, which are usually enclosed by walls, like separate independent ‘cities’ (*cheng*)<sup>310</sup>.

Although not a typical spatial form of work-unit, B&DTs area was still reorganised through the work-unit system. After the socialisation, Mr. M and later his two sons Mr. M1 and Mr. M2 became employees of the joint factory. The two families first moving in (the Ts and Ls) were also from the same ‘work-unit’, the coal ball factory. Subsequent newcomers, however, were not Mr. M’s colleagues, but were from other work-units under the leadership of the same local authority (i.e. the district government). In a sense, the transformation from household to (a part of) work-unit further blurred the boundaries between *gong* and *si*, and the perception of the ownership of the properties became more ambiguous too.

### **5.3 Spatial reorganisation during the Cultural Revolution (1967--1976): the masses, public power and private properties**

During the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, the whole country was in an unprecedented turmoil. In fact, the Cultural Revolution not only redrew the house ownership and occupation map of Beijing but also reshaped people’s understanding of the crucial concepts of property, private property, ownership and, owner occupation of housing, etc. At the same time, the experience around properties also induced some fundamental changes in state-individual, collective-individual and individual-individual relations. B&DTs area, a neighbourhood in the capital, experienced significant spatial and social reconfiguration in the ten years of political turmoil. This process is what I attempt to illustrate in this section.

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<sup>310</sup> I was living in a work-unit of a local army until 18. It is very typical in China. We lived in an apartment provided by the army with other families of my father’s colleges. We have our own hospital, collective bath, canteen, heating system and even barber house. All the children studied in the same primary school and a bus of the work-unit sent and picked up us together every day. Because of the interference of the work-unit, the marriage of my parents was kept until my father left the army.

Some general changes in terms of property occurred during this period: the REMB stopped sharing rent income with the landlords, among whom Mrs. H was one case; many property owners ‘donated’ their houses by handing over their land title certificates to the REMB; in some very radical cases, the masses, involving the Red Guards and tenants evicted the landlords from their houses and sometimes even caused death.

In the case of the M’s, the government built more houses in the yard, accommodating another four households whose members worked for state-owned factories. The tenants paid no rent and the house was regarded as a non-wage benefit gained from their work-units. However, the occupiers did not ‘own’ the houses. The houses and the land were still properties of the government and the tenants could be relocated to other houses controlled and managed by their work units or the local government. The M Family, including three smaller families of five people, still kept their two houses in title and in reality.

Here I would like to use another case, the story of Mrs. N and Mrs. D who have been living in one courtyard dwelling for more than a half century to give more details about what was going on and people’s mentality towards (private) property during the Cultural Revolution.

### **5.3.1 Property title and occupation changes: different stories**

Mrs. D and her family lived in a house previously owned by Mrs. N from the republican period until now. Mrs. N’s mother-in-law inherited two houses of six rooms from her husband’s family after her husband died. But in the entitlement certificate, the property was under the name of her son, Mr. N. In the republican period, Mr. N and his mother were living on the rent from one of the houses. Mrs. N married Mr. N in 1945 when she was 14. After Mr. N dead, she became the owner of the property in title.

Mrs. D moved into the courtyard unit in 1943, two years before Mrs. N. At that time, the D’s family had been tenants of Mr. N’s mother for quite long time. Therefore, as a tenant, Mrs. D actually had lived there longer than her later landlady, Mrs. N. The relations of the people involved in the case can be found in Figure 5.19. The story

here is restructured from the oral accounts of Mrs. D, Mrs. N and Mrs. N's two daughters.

**Figure 5.19** Relations of people involved in the case of Mrs. N

Elder daughter: My dad is that kind of person...Super loyal to the state and the party. I would say, he is the person having highest awareness in the party. Ha ha ha...



Elder daughter: My dad thought he was a private owner, ha ha ha. He was timid, and dared not accept.<sup>311</sup>

The entitlements of the properties were changed during the Cultural Revolution. One day, a person from a branch of REMB visited the N's and asked them to hand over their three letting rooms to the government to manage and maintain. Partly considering the government would maintain the house that had been in a state of disrepair and partly afraid of the risk of refusing, the Ns accepted the proposal. The original tenants were still allowed to live there, but from then on, they paid their rent to REMB instead of Mrs. N. In this way, the D family became the tenants of state-owned property or public housing tenants (*gongfang zuhu*). The government did what they promised, repairing and maintaining the house. As the Ns could not afford to repair their own three-room house, their property continued to be in a state of deterioration. Finally, they decided to give their remaining house to the government too so that the government would help them with maintaining the property and they could still continue to live there. As a consequence, by the early 1970s, both of their two houses had been transferred into public ownership, and the N's family became the tenants of the local government, not the owner anymore.

The younger daughter of Mrs. N told me the situation:

Younger daughter: My mum handed over the two houses left. It's my mum who did that. She said my dad was lazy and didn't manage the houses. She also thought the houses were too old. Leaking was very often. All the houses were in a bad state of disrepair and my parents were very worried.

Interviewer: Was it the landlords who should be responsible for the maintenance?

Younger daughter: Yes, but landlords were poor. Their houses (a neighbour) were also private properties, but they were poor as well. We got very little rent: around 10 yuan (around 1 pound) every month under the current rate.

Interviewer: Was this common?

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<sup>311</sup> From interview.

Younger daughter: It depends on the conditions. There were good houses, but you couldn't afford. And rich landlords even didn't want to let their houses. Having tenants caused lots of trouble. Old houses were cheap, but people were too poor to repair the leakage.

Interviewer: So the REMB repaired and maintained the house after the handover?

Younger daughter: Yes, they came whenever you asked, because they were afraid of causing damage and death. Now you can't find them, because the rent is too low and not enough to maintain the houses. Raising the rent of public housing is not allowed.<sup>312</sup>

It is worth noticing that the change in the Cultural Revolution is different from that in the Socialist Transformation. In Socialist Transformation of private enterprise, like the Ms' factory, the policy was 'redemption and purchase' (*shumai*), which meant theoretically the government should 'buy' enterprises from private hands. In reality, the government did compensate the owners in varied degrees, such as in money, a certain percentage of the shares in the joint enterprises, or promising jobs for the owners' close relatives. The owners could accept the money or the share, but many of them just 'donated' the compensation 'to the state'. In this sense, in spite of the flexibility and inequality of the contract, it was still a kind of deal. In the case of Mrs. H, a 'big landlord', the government 'managed and let' her 25 rooms, but there was still a share between the two parties (Mrs. H got 40% rent and the government 60%). In both two kinds of cases in the Socialist Transformation, 'private' property was not completely denied. Yet in the Cultural Revolution, the ideas and practices were more radical. Mrs. H not only lost her 40% rent income but also was required to relinquish the 12 rooms that she was allowed to keep in the 1950s. The final result was that Mrs. H held on to the 5 rooms that her family was using, and gave the rest to the government. The government became the owner of the property in title at the cost of nothing.

Mrs. N, owning 6 rooms before, was just a 'small landlord' and her 'attitude' was good so she was not treated in a very harsh way. In the interview, Mrs. N and her elder daughter seemed very willing to offer their estate to the state, and they felt the

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<sup>312</sup> From interview.

changes of the ownership made no difference in the occupation or in the daily use of the properties. 'We can live in the state-owned houses generation by generation', they said.

When I talked with them, I could not fully understand this and doubted whether that was their true attitude. The following story may reflect something that they did not explicitly express. Mrs. N's daughter recalled the striking scene that she saw in an organised trip watching the outcome of 'private property owners'; they were beaten and tortured by the Red Guards, many of whom were just middle school students in the same age as her, in a room with lots of blood on the floor and walls. She did not join the crazy masses as her classmates did, but gave an owner who she knew a hand to help him up when all other people left. When she told me the story almost four decades after it happened, I could feel her deep fear and sympathy to the private property owners. Now it is difficult to know, whether the trust in or the fear of the party-state contributed more to private owners' decision to give up their rights to their properties<sup>313</sup>. This extract from interview reflects some of the situation and people's mentality at that extreme time:

Younger daughter: In the Cultural Revolution, I was following the Red Guard. They criticized and denounce people like capitalists, property owners and small business owners and so on before the public... At that time, the masses were 'revolutionist' (*zaofanpai*) and leaders were the 'establishment' (*dangquanpai*).

Interviewer: Did they attack you?

Younger daughter: Yes. They attacked you if you were a tech guru. People earning more money, better in job were attacked.

Interviewer: But your family was not attacked as private owner?

Younger daughter: We were still proletarians. You must protect yourself. Joining or not joining a group. In this area, many private house owners were prosecuted, beaten or forced to have their hair shaved. To be honest, timid people dared not to go out. I can tell you, Beijing First Secondary School was famous (for prosecution). They have a basement, and students fought with students there. All around

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<sup>313</sup> An experienced scholar examining the property issue of Beijing warned me that the old generation who experienced the Cultural Revolution might not tell their true thoughts towards properties because many of them were afraid that it might happen again.

the wall was blood. It was too cruel to see. We were organised to visit the basement, and I felt very sad. Why were children beaten like this? They were younger than you and fought with each other.

Interviewer: Why were you people organised to visit this?

Younger daughter: To teach you. We were still proletarians, not capitalists. The organisation (*zuzhi*) wanted you to see it. I felt bad. So many people died. You didn't experience this. I'm scared, so scared, shaking every time I recalled this. You are lucky for not experiencing it, or else you wouldn't come to Beijing.

Interviewer: I heard that many private house owners dared not to ask their properties back after the Cultural Revolution.

Younger daughter: During the Cultural Revolution, private owners dared not say they had properties. For example, this house was ours, but we gave it (to the government), and they became property of the gong-family (*gongjia*, i.e. government).

Interviewer: Is that for this reason you didn't buy a property afterwards?

Younger daughter: That was different. You can buy property as you will now, as long as you have money. We didn't buy new houses because we had too many children. We don't have so much money.<sup>314</sup>

The most appalling story that I heard in the neighbourhood is about Mrs. B, the wife of a 'big landlord'. She was beaten to death by her tenants and the Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution because she refused to move out from her property<sup>315</sup>. Mrs. B's family has been evicted from the area for about 40 years. After the Cultural Revolution, along with political rehabilitation advocated by the Party, there were also policies in returning the properties confiscated in the Cultural Revolution to their original owners. From early 1980s, some previous owners or their near relatives regained their properties and moved back to the neighbourhood, and there were many cases like this in the B&DTs area, but Mrs. B's family did not. I was told this story by other neighbours and they also said some 'murderers' were still living in Mrs. B's houses. I visited one of her courtyards which was jammed by self-built

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<sup>314</sup> From interview.

<sup>315</sup> It is significant that usually the wife manages family property. It was common in the imperial era especially because the court required all the officers to take posts in the places other than their hometown, leaving the duty of managing property to their wives. It is also a common case in the B&DTs area, and Mrs. N's mother in law, Mrs. N and Mrs. B are three examples among many. This can be an interesting topic for feminist study.

houses. Like people in other courtyards, only few people would answer my questions. I did not ask about the story of Mrs. B.

### 5.3.2 Attack derogatory *si*

The relationship between *gong* and *si* and the implications in the Cultural Revolution are different from the Socialist Transformation.

*Si*, connected with selfishness and narrow private interests, was seen as deficient and derogatory. *Gong* was viewed as a powerful weapon to overcome the faults of *si*. An idiom, *dagong wusi*, literally ‘enlarging *gong* and eradicating *si*’, meaning ‘selfless’ or ‘putting the interests of the all before one’s own’, was frequently used not only in official propaganda but also in people’s daily language. In terms of property, private properties embodied *si* elements. Public ownership, collective ownership or state ownership could convert the deficiency of private property. By transforming the property into publicly-owned (*gongyou*), the property and the previous owners could become a part of *gong*, therefore cleaned the sin of *si*. This is the implication in the Socialist Transformation.

However, in the Cultural Revolution, the attack was not merely on property and ownership, but more on the morality of private owners. When the relevance is more about the embodiment of *si*, the nature of the embodiment can be changed (e.g. private property being socialised). But if something is deemed as *si* in abstract and moral senses, the whole character is denied. Similarly, once a person is deemed as selfish and self-interested (*zisi zili*) in nature, his whole personality has been negated<sup>316</sup>. There will be no way to redeem the moral deficiency. This logic can partially explain why the urban proprietors who previously had been incorporated into socialism were treated in an extremely harsh way in the Cultural Revolution.

The moral dimension of *gong* and *si* also contributes to the particular intimacy between the two, which renders the demarcation of the public and private realms even more obscure. In Patrick Joyce’s account of the changing role of police in Britain from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the responsibility of the police, colloquially referred to as the ‘watch’, was indeed to ‘watch’ the private premises in order to secure property; from the nineteenth century, therefore the police secured

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<sup>316</sup> Mizoguchi, Yuzo, *China’s Gong and Si • Gong Si*, translated by Zheng, Jing, Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2011.

public space such as streets and squares in the interests of law and order. Joyce comments that this transformation contributes to the distinction between public and private space<sup>317</sup>. Joyce also argues, an important technique of liberal governmentality is to distinguish what should be known and what should be not know; for instance, the gaze of the map never penetrates the home, but rather leaves it as a self-circulating private sphere<sup>318</sup>. But the trajectory of China is different. In Chinese cities, the Bell Tower and Drum Tower afforded the function of watching both the public and private from the beginning. The ‘police’ (military guards in early time) regulated the peace of the public by regulating people. The public part of a person was not just about his/her behaviour but also about his/her morality. For example, in some dynasties, filial piety and obedience to parents was most important when recommending or promoting a government officer. Because the *gong*-spirit is primarily concerned with morality and ethic, it actually has touched the most ‘private’, inner part of a person. This feature of *gong* leaves individuals nearly no autonomy or privacy. The power of *gong* principles and embodiments relies on the fact that it judges you, not only in a narrow public sphere, but also as a person.

However, I need to point out that in the Cultural Revolution it was private people rather than public power that played the major role of judge. An individual or a family can be judged as either selfless or selfish, depending on their relationship to the abstract and moral *gong*. The state may claim ability to judge, but the final judge is still people. The universality of *gong* resides in the assumption that it can be perceived, understood and judged by everyone. Private persons have this capability, and largely because of this capability, the aggregation of private people even can threaten the validity of the governmental authority. This is the point that I would like to stress in the next section.

### **5.3.3 Discontinuation of public power and the masses as *gong***

During the Cultural Revolution, especially the first three years (1966-1969), the whole country was in an extremely chaotic state. Many city governments were overthrown by the radical Red Guards. Beijing, as the place where the Revolution

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<sup>317</sup> Joyce, Patrick, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City*, London & New York: Verso, 2003, pp. 110-111

<sup>318</sup> Joyce, Patrick, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City*, London & New York: Verso, 2003, pp. 22, 53.

surfaced, was one of the victims. Although the mass organisations (i.e. Red Guards and workers) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers formed revolutionary committees as the new government, they did not really know how to govern, and the city remained in constant conflicts and had no public services for years<sup>319</sup>. The stories described above were within the context of this chaotic background.

The masses played a pivotal role in the Revolution. Consisting of 'proletariat' and radical youths, encouraged by Mao and assisted by the army, the masses overthrew and replaced many municipal governments. In many cases, it was not the legal public power that expropriated private properties, as in the 1950s or now, but the masses-- the aggregation of private individuals—that forced the owners to give up their properties. A typical plot from what I read about or heard about is that, private owners found their names in the Red Guards' 'big-character posters' (*dazibao*), asking them to give up their properties in a commanding and harsh tone<sup>320</sup>. In the B&DTs area, many proprietors handed in their estate certificate to the REMB that had been replaced or dominated by the revolutionary committees. Some were just kicked out by radical Red Guards.

The mass movements have changed both the Chinese classical definition of politics and the relationship between private people and *gong*-embodiments. As explained in Chapter 4, politics (*zheng*) in the traditional sense was an area for elites, and it was about giving the standard, maintaining the order and peace. The elites who knew the order of the universe as well as human society were the authority; they were not only political authorities but also intellectual and moral authorities. Yet all this changed in the 20th century. From the protests in Tiananmen Square in 1919, common people, or the masses, participated in politics. Guided by adapted Marxist theories, the workers, peasants, students and all the classes were involved in class struggles. The masses were increasingly motivated as the key actors in 'political struggles' (*zhengzhi douzheng*) in Mao's era, including the turbulent Land Reform in rural areas between 1947 and 1952, several campaigns to Suppress

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<sup>319</sup> The revolutionary committees were established from 1967. They were legalised as permanent fixtures of the country's administration at the Fourth National People's Congress in 1975, but the post-Mao government abolish them in 1978. See Meisner, Maurice, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic Since 1949*, New York: The Free Press, 1986, pp. 312-351.

<sup>320</sup> For examples of these 'big-character posters' targeting private owners, see Hua, Xinmin, *Weile buneng shiqu de guxiang* [For a hometown we can't lose], Xindian, Taiwan: New Century Publishing Company, 2009, p.97; and Jiang, Fei, 'Bufuqian de shumai' [Buying without paying], *China Youth Daily*, 17-12-2003.

‘Counterrevolutionaries’ (i.e. Kuomintang party members) after 1949, Three-Anti/Five-Anti campaigns targeting capitalists and business owners in urban area in the 1950s, an Anti-Rightist Movement, a purge within the Communist Party in the late 1950s, and then the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the Destruction of Four Olds targeting ‘old’ traditions and religions from the 1960s. Here the aim of politics was not to give and to maintain the order but to destroy the old order. Top-down, administrative methods were abandoned; bottom-up mass movements and mass politics swept. Orthodoxy, intellectual authorities and political authorities were not something or someone to follow and respect any more, but targets to overthrow. The linkage between norm, peace, authority and good politics broke.

This shift in the understanding and practice of politics was significant. But can we say it was something completely revolutionary? Was it a substantial break with the traditional understanding? I would say no. I shall explain this according to the *gong-si* structure given in Chapter 2, especially the direct and essential connection between private person and Heaven, the highest, abstract and moral *gong* (diagram 2.5).

The ruler (e.g. emperor) could claim that he gets the mandate from Heaven, and it was true that the elites were considered more capable, and therefore had more ‘rights’ to engage in political affairs than ordinary people. Yet the ability to judge whether the ruler implemented or lost the mandate of Heaven, or whether the governing from the elites was desirable, was owned by everyone. ‘Universal law of Heaven is in human heart’ (*tianli zizai renxin*), as Chinese people often say. In this way, private persons, regardless of their intellectual and social status, became the unit to perceive the law of Heaven. This position gave people, especially when they were in the collective, a potential to challenge and even to overthrow any existing public authorities. From this point of view, the structure of *gong-si* system was very unstable, and the reversal between the ruled and the ruler was always possible.

Referring to the land politics in the Cultural Revolution, the private owners were seen as bonded to the moral faults of *si*, which resulted in the upgrading of conflicts between the tenants and new occupiers on the one side and the landlords on the other<sup>321</sup>. And because the masses overturned the (local) government as a type of

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<sup>321</sup> Of course, the tension between tenants and landlords varies from case to case. Mrs. B’s tragedy is an



*gong*-embodiment, private owners were also confronted by the masses, another type of *gong*-embodiment. In the exploration of the genealogy of *gong*, we have seen, besides the highest *gong* spirit and principles, there are two forms of *gong*-embodiments: the state and the collective. The ambiguity between the two can be dated from the time when the word *gong* was used as the title of the tribe leader and at the same time as the house and the yard for collective rights and activities of the community. The two are interrelated but also can be contradictory. The Tiananmen Square populous movement challenging the authority is one example. The fact that the Red Guards overthrew many local governments is another. Private people, are not only under the shadow of the over-powerful state, but can also be threatened by the masses that actually consist of private people. That is what the property confiscation and struggle during the Cultural Revolution showed to us. Thus, the B&DTs stories display both the conflicts between *gong* and *si* and the contradictions embedded in the structure of *gong*.

## **5.4 Self-building activities before and after the Great Tangshan Earthquake (1976): revenge of *si* ?**

### **5.4.1 Self-building activities**

I have mentioned that some people in the neighbourhood built houses by themselves, a process referred to as ‘self-building’. In the 1950s, the policy was to change Beijing from a consumption city into an industrial city, which brought a large number of worker migrants into Beijing and caused huge housing deficits. By the principles of socialism, it was the state that should solve the housing problem for everyone, and the state did house a great many by building new houses and by expropriating and redistributing private properties. Yet it was not enough. Thus people constructed houses by themselves and these behaviours were accepted by the government.

Self-building happened intensively during the Cultural Revolution. Because of the anarchic state of Beijing in that period, there were no town planning, land use or

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extreme case. But like Mrs. N and her tenant Mrs. D, both over 80 now, are good friends for over 60 years. Their children all live away from the neighbourhood and they look after each other like sisters. Another tenant, who was a rickshaw when young, has been treated like a close relative by the two families. But in the case of The M, Mr. M1 and Mr. M2, in the last four decades, rarely spoke to the people moving in their courtyard houses in the Cultural Revolution, as they see them as invaders and bad people.

construction regulations for many years. In 1964, the town planning sector was marked as ‘capitalist road’, and the Beijing Urban Planning Committee was abolished in 1968 and not restored until 1972. The abolition of city planning was to have wider implications. As discussed before, planning is not just a tool for the state to govern and regulate; its assumption of the compulsory control over all and its intention to actualise the control can be seen as a symbol of the state, of governmentality. On Foucault’s explanation inspired by its semantic composition, governmentality is not just the technologies of governing (*gouverner*), but also *mentalité*, the modes of thoughts, political rationality and maybe also political impulse<sup>322</sup>. In a sense, modern planning history is also the process of the state enhancing its role as a state in terms of both techniques and mentality. Patrick Joyce uses John Stuart Mill’s term, ‘discovery of the state’, to describe how the administrative apparatus recognised its potential to carry out reform and management by applying spatial interventions<sup>323</sup>. The planning history of Britain since the late nineteenth century, especially the impressive ‘state (trans)formation’ after the Second World War, is an example<sup>324</sup>. For China, as I have shown in the last chapter, the spatial layout of a city was important and meaningful from the very beginning. The plan of a city was connected to standards, to the rule of nature, of universal law and of public power. It gives guidance, gives the location of everything and the way that everyone conduct himself/herself. For socialism, planning became even more significant, not only in space, but also in the economy<sup>325</sup>. In fact, planning has been used in numerous ways to ensure spatial, social, economic and ideological control. But in the Cultural Revolution, the planning department and its crucial planning power was abolished. I would argue that it was an important sign of the paralysis of the state during the populist movement. The Red Guard, popular groups and the military overthrew the authority of the city government, whilst immediately establishing themselves as the new authority.

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<sup>322</sup> Lemke, Thomas, ‘The birth of bio-politics: Michael Foucault’s lectures at the College de France on neo-liberal governmentality’, *Economy and Society*, Vol.30, No.2,2001 pp. 190-207; Foucault, Michel ‘Governmentality’ (Lecture at the Collège de France, Feb. 1, 1978), in: Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, & Peter Miller eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp. 87-104.

<sup>323</sup> Joyce, Patrick, *Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City*, London & New York: Verso, 2003, pp. 110-1.

<sup>324</sup> Hall, Peter, *Urban and Regional Planning*, 1992, London: Routledge, pp. 71& 219.

<sup>325</sup> Even for so-called ‘neo-liberal’ state, economy is also always political economy. See Lemke, Thomas, ‘Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique’, Paper presented at the *Rethinking Marxism Conference*, University of Amherst (MA), September 21-24, 2000.

The absence of urban planning and regulating authorities contributed to the boom of random, self-build construction. As I have shown, the masses were allowed to expropriate private properties, and in many cases, people occupied them for private use. Thus, the displacement of the residents and disordered construction occurred simultaneously, and this changed the spatial fabric of the B&DTs neighbourhood. The space became more fragmented. The houses were divided into smaller units and occupied by more residents. This was not just a result of the replacement of the private owners by proletarians, but was also caused by the need for spaces to house new, independent families. The living area per person in Beijing did not increase, but actually was reduced in the three decades after the founding of the new China, from 4.75 m<sup>2</sup> in 1949 to 4.45m<sup>2</sup> in 1976<sup>326</sup>. The yards were now crowded with more houses (consider the M's yard in the 1970s). The land might have been owned by the state in title, but these spaces appeared as domestic space for private use.

The 'public' space of the neighbourhood was also eroded. Some open spaces, the ground used for drying coal balls in Mr. M's yard, for example, were now occupied by houses. Also parts of the square north to the Bell Tower and of the one between the two Towers were 'privatised'. After the socialist transition in 1953, stall vendors were incorporated into collective enterprises and moved out from the squares. The space was now occupied for residential use<sup>327</sup>. To some extent, in spite of a strong socialist orientation and the critique of private property, both the private and common space of the area tended to be developed for private use due to the increase of the population. In fact, to fill the huge gap between housing demand and provision, the Beijing government encouraged work-units and private people to build houses in any open space of the inner city<sup>328</sup>. 'Lowering standard' (*gandalei* and *dishuiping*) was openly promoted as a principle in building new houses between 1966 and 1972. Since the Planning Committee was disbanded and plans and regulations were suspended, construction in this period was very poor quality and took place nearly everywhere.

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<sup>326</sup> Dong, Guangqi, *The Changes of the Ancient Capital Beijing during the Last 50 years* (Gu du Beijing wu shi nian yan bian lu), Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 2006, p197.

<sup>327</sup> *Bell Tower and Drum Tower* (Zhonggulou), Culture and History Committee of Political Consultative of Dongcheng District of Beijing (Beijingshi dongchengqu zhengxiexuexi he weishiweiyuanhui) ed., 2009, p280.

<sup>328</sup> It was called 'insert the needle in any chinks' (*jianfeng chazhen*). See Xue, Fengxuan, (Sit, Victor Fung-Shuen), *Beijing: the nature and planning of a Chinese capital city*, Hong Kong University Press, 1996, p90. The English version was published in 1995 by John Wiley & Sons. And Dong, Hongjian, *History of Building Chinese Cities* (*zhongguo chengshi jianshe shi*), 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, China Architecture and Building Press, 2004, p398.

The Great Tangshan Earthquake occurring on the 28th July, 1976 led to a surge of self-building in the area. The epicentre of the earthquake was near Tangshan in Hebei, 140 kilometres from Beijing. Due to the high magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter Scale<sup>329</sup>, Beijing was greatly affected and more than 30,000 houses were destroyed<sup>330</sup>. As noted earlier, buildings in the old town of Beijing were poorly maintained and most were constructed at very low standards. Many private owners could not afford to repair their houses, like Mrs. N. For the properties managed by the government, buildings were only repaired when they were really unsafe to live, and usually the tenants did not maintain the houses by themselves. According to my interviews of the residents in the B&DTs area, nearly everyone who experienced the earthquake remembered the big shaking, loud noise and how the area had been destroyed: one dragon head on the top of the roof of the Bell Tower fell down and many residential buildings' roofs and walls were damaged if not completely collapsed. Besides the old houses in disrepair, many new, poorly constructed buildings fell into ruins.

Having lost their houses or being worried about aftershock, many people moved into temporary shelters. The government started to provide building materials for the reconstruction one week after the earthquake. With these materials, the residents in the B&DTs area rebuilt their houses and some built more houses than they had before. The rebuilding of the devastated area resulted in a more complicated spatial occupation and land ownership. Mr. F, who built his house immediately west to the north square was living in another neighbourhood, but moved to this area after the earthquake because he could not clear up the ruins in his previous land. There were also cases in which people built new houses in their own yards and sometimes even in their neighbours' yard if the neighbour had moved to other areas or other cities. All these buildings, together with those that people built for their children were labeled as 'illegal'. Although criticised in many ways, the government insists that only the houses distributed by employees' workplaces and houses managed or built by the branches of REMB can be recognised as legal.

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<sup>329</sup> This is the official figure stated by the Chinese government, but some other sources listed it as high as 8.2. See Stoltman, Joseph P., Lidstone, John and DeChano, Lisa M. eds, *International Perspectives On Natural Disasters*, Springer publishing, 2006.

<sup>330</sup> According to a report by the Prime Minister Hua Guofeng to Mao Tse-Tung in the 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1976. Online <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/68742/70423/70424/5411665.html> [accessed 28.01.2013 ]

### 5.4.2 Private people and the dual roles of public power

In the case of self-building, we can observe that ‘private’ needs for housing are actually recognised by public power. It is not only because housing is essential for labour reproduction. It relates to the validity of the system and the government. The moral priority of the state as a *gong* embodiment relies on its role of taking care of each private person (*siren*), and the advantage of socialism can only be proved by the fact that it can at least fulfill everybody’s basic needs. Thus, it is a moral as well as political requirement for the state to meet the housing demand.

However, when the state could not afford this, even after having redistributed a great many private properties, it could only resort to the spontaneity of private people. That is why self-building activity was allowed and even encouraged at the time. Here the socialist state had a kind of personalised character. The state had the responsibility to ‘look after’ each family and everyone. When ‘the state had difficulties’, people were required to ‘consider and understand’ the state (like in the expansion of Tiananmen Square). Then people also expected the state to understand them. The ethical requirements were mutual. For example, in my interviews, it was very common to hear opinions like ‘it is impossible for the government to ignore the poor situation of my family’, ‘they must solve out the housing problem for us and our children’, and ‘we have sacrificed so much for the country so they should consider our difficulties’. The confidence of the residents did not rely on legal protection of property and citizen rights but on the belief that the party-state shared the same perception and moral principle with ordinary people. This again reflects the specific Chinese understanding of the analogy between the state and household, between the state and people.

This understanding has a significant influence on people’s perception of their rights to property. For the tenants of public houses in B&DTs area, they did not feel they had fewer rights than the private owners<sup>331</sup>. In fact, even the government admitted their equal rights: in the regeneration project, the government tenants got same compensation for each square meter as the private owners. Those private owners might not agree with the calculation of the area of their property, or want to get their

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<sup>331</sup> This is very distinct from other regions where the market principles have been developed more. For instance, in the redevelopment projects of Guangzhou, the government tenants can just get a compensation for ‘giving up’ renting a public property rather than a full price of the property, but in Beijing, those people living in state-owned housing are treated nearly the same with private owners.

previously confiscated property back, but they did not question the same compensation standard applied for the government tenants. This was not merely because of the promise of the previous socialist state, but also because a morally *gong* state had been an idea firmly rooted in people's mind. In this way, on the one hand, the immature law and ownership system failed to protect people's property rights; on the other, private people's incomplete rights to the property were actually enlarged by their understanding on the ethics of the state.

The paternalist state, however, has another face as a regulator. After the Cultural Revolution, government's functions such as urban planning were gradually restored. The residents' conventional understanding on the status of their properties and their rights to the properties were challenged. The confusions and ambiguities on the legality of the status of their properties uncovered in the regeneration project revealed this. Self-construction was deemed as unauthorised and therefore illegal. Respondents used the word *sida luanjian*, which literally means 'privately building and disorderedly rigging up'. Here *si* means acting illegally, secretly and without official permission or authorization. Similar use can be found in words like *zousi* (smuggle), *siben* (elope) and *sixing* (lynching). This meaning of *si* is contrast to *gong* as legal (adj.) and making things public, open (v.). In practice, the institution to judge legality and make things public is the state. Legitimate ownership is subject to the government's sanction. The state in this sense is closer to the rational-legal authority described by Max Webber<sup>332</sup>. As a consequence, the traditional paternalist and ethical state on the one hand and the legitimising state on the other form a tension within *gong* area. It also challenges (private) people's perception on the legality of their occupation, which is actually a conflict between *gong* and *si*. The next section will discuss this in further detail.

### 5.4.3 Occupation

In the case of the B&DTs area, we can see that occupation served not just as a strategy for the daily use of space, but also had great influence on people's perception and understanding of the ownership of the property and their rights.

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<sup>332</sup> Weber, Max. 'The three types of legitimate rule', translated by Gerth, Hans, *Berkeley Publications in Society and Institutions*, 1958, Vol. 4, No. 1: 1-11.

One important characteristic of Beijing's vernacular dwellings was the courtyards. For those inhabited by several families, the yard was naturally a shared, communal space for all the households. This communal land was different from publicly owned property (i.e. government property). From the 1950s to the 1970s, the ownership of the yards was quite unclear<sup>333</sup>. The houses were considered owned either by private owner or by the government (sometimes via the agency of *danwei* work-units), but the ownership of the yards was not clearly stated. The perception of its ownership was more conventional and customary. The residents, sometimes all government tenants, sometimes mixed with private owners and government tenants, shared the rights to use the yard at an early stage. But as Harold Demsetz shows, one big issue of communal ownership is that it has great externalities, which greatly increases the cost of negotiation among members<sup>334</sup>. As we can see from the case of the B&DTs area, gradually people started to 'privatise' the communal space. It was understandable that people used the space around their own houses more frequently than others did. The most common case was that some families began to use certain spaces next to their houses as storage or as cooking areas. Then they sheltered the area- a sign of the occupation and belonging of the space. Because nearly all the families did this similarly and the encroached area of the common space was not excessive, people did not feel much tension and unfairness. Yet when one family built a house, like Mr. T built a house for his son, the occupation of the space became contested and led to conflicts. In spite of some controversies, the division of the yard was gradually stabilised (Figure 5.20). Even the previous private owners also accepted the occupation reluctantly. This process is somewhat similar to the change from *communio* to *dominium* in the state of nature described by Hugo Grotius: those primarily commonly shared 'could not be turned to use except by private occupation (*nisi privatim occupando*), it necessarily followed that what had been seized on should become his to each', and such seizure is *possessio*<sup>335</sup>. According to this, it is occupation that results in possession and then the idea of property.

<sup>333</sup> Not until 1982 it is explicitly expressed in the Constitution that all the urban land is owned by the state.

<sup>334</sup> Demsetz, Harold, 'Toward a theory of property rights', *American Economic Review*, Vol. 57, No.2, 1967, pp. 347-359.

<sup>335</sup> Grotius, Hugo, *De iure praedae commentarius*, G.L. Williams and W.H. Zeydel trans., Vol. 2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950, p.11.



**Figure 5.20 Self-build in the courtyard**

After the Tangshan Earthquake, the neighbourhood was in ruins. This led to another tide of self-construction. Again, occupation became the main strategy. In some cases, people occupied land different from their previous one. This period was also the time when the occupation of the public space happened most. The most obvious phenomenon was that the edge areas of the two squares were occupied for residential use. Construction caused by the earthquake did not cause as many conflicts between neighbours as normal time. When people's basic life was at stake, it seems that the occupation of any possible space for the purpose of self-preservation became more justifiable. In fact, as time went by, the new spatial arrangement of the neighbourhood after the earthquake was gradually accepted by all the people. A constant possession is easily transformed into property, as Rousseau argued<sup>336</sup>. Indeed, by constant living in and use of these self-build houses, people feel that the houses are their properties, and occupation and possession have been accepted by the neighbours and the whole community customarily.

<sup>336</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, part II, Trans. G. D. H. Cole, 1754.



However, property is a relationship not just between people, but also between people and the state<sup>337</sup>. Property rights, according to Rousseau, are guaranteed by the laws of the sovereign. The ‘fragile’ and provisional possession can only become ‘stronger and more irrevocable’ when it is cemented in law<sup>338</sup>. In contrast, the possession of the properties in the B&DTs case lacked of the sanctions of a lawful institution. Especially under the circumstance that both the institution and the law have changed, the residents’ right to their self-constructed buildings has never been legally guaranteed. This divergence between the perception of private people and the recognition of the public power finally brought about the controversies over the legitimacy of these properties that we see in the regeneration scheme.

Here the public authority, a *gong* embodiment, plays a critical role in the affirmation and negation of private behaviours related to property. The legitimating function of the state becomes increasingly important in the modern society of the post-socialist China, departing from the traditional system in which *gong* and *si* could be harmonised, or at least understood in an integrated logic. With the establishment of the modern state and the introduction of a modern property system since the late 1970s, the disputes became more distinct. I would like to emphasise two points to help comprehend the transformation. The first is about the separation between the logic of the state and that of the household. As illustrated before, the traditional idea supposes that the state shares the same structure and follows the same logic of the household. This understanding may work in the ancient, imperial and even socialist China, but faces challenges in contemporary Chinese society. In terms of property, the ideas that parents should prepare house for children and the state has the same responsibility to house all the people now is questioned. Following the old logic, it is justifiable that people build their own houses when the state fails to do that. Self-construction seems natural, conventional and morally understandable if it does not harm others. But the new system requires formal and official sanction and recognition on possession. Here property rights are not primarily customary, but need a negotiation with the state law system. The issues of property are unavoidably exposed to the public realm.

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<sup>337</sup> Hale, Robert, ‘Coercion and Distribution in a Supposedly Non-Coercive State’, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1923, pp. 470-494.

<sup>338</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, ‘The Social Contract’ in *Discourse on Political Economy and the Social Contract*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994 [1762], pp. 43-175.

Secondly, one meaning of *gong*, that is, making public and open carries more importance. This is in contrast with the meaning of *si* as secret and covert, which is also seen as a flaw of *si*. In this sense, the private occupation and ‘quite encroachment’ of the public or communal space lacks legitimacy because it is conducted in secret (*sixia* or *simi*)<sup>339</sup>. The residents hold the property but never openly claim the property, which means the customary holding is never checked with the current law system. Of course, the process of occupation and construction can be done secretly, but the result must be made public in a certain way to gain the ‘public recognition’. This principle also works on public affairs. The rulers can make decisions in a non-transparent method and without a democratic process, but the result needs to be made public to claim its status as *gong* affairs and then gain a kind of validity. In the past and even in many people’s mind in the present, private people should be the final judge of whether the claim really fits the principle of *gong*. This potential has been actualised by revolution and popular movements in the history of China, but the democratic system, which is based on a different European tradition of citizen political rights, also resonates with this idea in a certain way. However, the vital importance of the judgements of private person is usually just realised at a transforming moment, either in a democratic (when election occurs) or non-democratic system (overthrowing the current system). During normal times, especially on the issues of property ownership, it is the state and the law that do the formal and legal judgement.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter investigated the relationship between *gong* and *si* via the lens of property conflicts and struggles in the neighbourhood of the B&DTs. The case study displays how *gong* and *si* elements are interrelated and are therefore a source of politics in terms of property in an area that appears a typical *si* place.

The Socialist Transformation shows both the two aspects of the household, that is, the economic and domestic respects, can be heavily intervened, and under specific political regime can even be thoroughly penetrated through by the state, an embodiment of *gong*. This is reflected in the nationalisation of private industrial and

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<sup>339</sup> Bayat, Asef, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

business, the socialist reorganisation of the people and the expropriation of private property from the 1950s.

The Cultural Revolution gives an example of the tension not only between *gong* and *si*, but also between two types of *gong* embodiments. On the one hand, the state continued to confiscate private property. On the other, the local governments was overthrown by the masses composed by private persons to some extent. The complexity showed in the Cultural Revolution resonates with the traditional idea that the collective and aggregation of people can gain even more powerful moral validity than the state. I also point out that this power resides in the supposed intimate connection between private person and the principle of Heaven.

The self-build activities in the normal time and after the Tangshan Earthquake address the non-movement event and the public relevance of private behaviours around property. The case shows the inherent conflicts between the dual roles of the state, that is, between an ethical paternalist state that has similar moralities with household and private person, and a regulator that holds the legitimating power beyond people. This complexity is reflected in the disputes between the private perception and public recognition of the ownership of privately occupied space and auto-constructed buildings.

## Chapter 6 Public Power, Urban Land and Politics

Having explored the relationship between *gong* and *si* in two concrete land politics cases in socialist Beijing, this chapter aims at drawing some conclusions from the empirical studies as well as theoretical discussion in the previous chapters. I will formulate the conclusions with respect to the key words of the title of the thesis. More specifically, I offer: a summary of the demarcation of public and private, or in the Chinese context, the *gong-si* division; the public and political characteristics of urban land and property; the understanding of ‘politics’ in the Chinese vein; and some new political possibilities generated by the practice of property and the ‘city’.

### 6.1 *Gong-si* division: the political and moral aspects

This section will summarise the characteristics of the Chinese *gong-si* division, including the several layers of the senses of each idea and how they are connected to each other. A particular stress will be laid on the moral implication of the abstraction of *gong-si* demarcation. I will argue that ethically oriented theorisation has greatly influenced the political practice in reality. The immense power of the Chinese state highly relies on its status as both political and moral authority.

#### 6.1.1 A summary of *gong-si* division and relation

A distinction between *gong* and *si* exists in Chinese thought and practice. This distinction overlaps many aspects of the divide of public and private, and the different frameworks of the distinction are comparable to some extent. However, the particularity of the Chinese understanding is also significant. Compared with the models of western public/private divide, I would suggest that, the Chinese *gong-si* divide is primarily manifested by the all-encompassing nature of the abstract idea of *gong*, which is further strengthened by the intricate connections between the embodiments of *gong* and *si*.

I would like to summarise the division first and then the connections. The distinction between *gong* and *si* is evident in linguistic, conceptual, and practical fields. As an abstract concept, *gong* conveys justice, fairness, impartiality, normativity, universality, etc., while *si* connotes selfishness, self-interest, partiality, particularity, etc. The demarcation has a strong ethical implication, which bestows moral privilege

on *gong* and demeans *si* as pejorative and flawed. In practice, there are entities that are considered to embody the quality of *gong* or *si*. The most important *gong* bodies are the state and collectives, while *si* bodies are generally individual and family. However, the positions of these entities in the spectrum between the two poles of ideal *gong* and *si* are relative and relational, and therefore ambiguous and unstable.

First of all, the state, as the most powerful *gong* body, is considered to share a homologous structure with family, a typical *si* body. This understanding blurs the *gong-si* divide between the state and family, and also resonates with the fact that the Chinese state is paternalist. Under some circumstances, however, the *gong* status of the state is changeable. For example, the state usually is seen as the agency of public power and as working on behalf of public interests, but it can also be accused of being manipulated by certain private interest groups. Secondly, a collective is understood to gain its *gong* status as the aggregations of individuals, of ‘private’ people. This definition connects a genuine *gong* body to a private person. Thirdly, perceiving the spirit of *gong* and judging whether any behaviour conforms to *gong* spirit or not is believed a capability embedded in each person, which again connects the most abstract *gong* value to the smallest *si* embodiment: individuals. In addition, the relativity of the scale and some particular functions of the embodiments can also result in the change of their *gong-si* relevance. For instance, compared with the state or larger community, family is a *si* body, but for some functions it affords – for instance, the education of children – can be viewed as essentially important for the public interests of the country: in sum, it enters a *gong* domain.

Given the analysis above, I would argue that *gong* is an encompassing concept. *Gong* and *si* are not two spheres or realms, but two ideal and abstract concepts. Notwithstanding a contrast between the two, they are in no sense equivalent or comparable in weight. *Gong*, as universal law, is actually all-embracing. *Si* is conceptualised as the opposite of *gong* but it is not considered to have its own independent principles and mechanism. To some extent, it is an idea with no territory. All the *gong* and *si* embodiments, theoretically, are under the influence of the normative *gong* and each can build its specific connection to *gong*. The universality of *gong* makes it omnipresent: *gong* is of course embodied in governmental activities, but the household, individuals, economic activities, and even personal choice and psyche can also be a part of *gong*. For the moral implication of *gong* gives *gong-*

bodies priority over others, all embodiments in reality, regardless of usually being categorised into *gong* or *si* group, compete with each other for the symbolic meaning of the abstract *gong*. One prominent example is the contest between the state and the collective of people. The Tiananmen popular protest that shook the authority and the mass movements in the Cultural Revolution reflect this conflict. The contest for symbolic meanings of *gong* generates politics in reality and further suppresses *si* in discourse. Moreover, as has been emphasised, when the moral judgment involved in *gong-si* division applied on private bodies, especially on a person, it judges the very internal part of a person (e.g. motivation), and therefore it denies all the value and the whole personality of the person. In this way, again, *gong* does not leave any space for a relatively independent *si*.

This all-encompassing characteristic of *gong* is distinct from the models of public/private division. The boundaries between public and private in different models are also ambiguous and unstable, but each model still demarcates a core area for the private part. For example, using Weintraub's categorisation again (see Section 2.1), the republican model contrasts household to political community, and the liberal model contrasts the market to the government. The private realm in each model has its own domain and is attached with great importance. In the liberal model, the private (i.e. market economy) is even given some 'moral' privilege in relation to the 'intervention' of public power.

But in the Chinese *gong-si* conceptual framework, *gong* is overwhelming, although it does not obliterate *si*. This is not just in concepts and ideology; it also has its salient manifestation in reality. That is the tremendous political and moral power of the state, the most significant *gong* embodiment. The empirical study has showed this. The next section turns to a theorisation of the role of the state within the *gong-si* framework.

### **6.1.2 State as political and moral authority**

Among all the most important *gong* and *si* bodies, the state is the most powerful one in practice. The power of the Chinese state, because of the regime formed from its particular cultural and political history, is even more overwhelming. I will argue that the authority of the Chinese state highly relies on the moral privilege attained by its *gong* status and on its practice of continuously constructing other bodies as *si*.

However, the *gong-si* frame also provides a mechanism to ‘counterbalance’ the prominent power of the state, that is, the state-family analogy requires the state massive responsibilities along with its power, the internal contests between the state and collective within *gong*, and the challenge from individuals against their direct connection to the moral principles of *gong*.

I hope the case studies have made it clear that the state claims as well as acts itself as both political authority and moral authority. This is the mystery of why the immense power of the state possible. The priority of the state is also always in relation to the disparagement of *si* bodies such that *gong* almost requires *si*. For examples, the land expropriation in the expansion of Tiananmen Square praised the public interests of the country and debased the *private* interests of individuals and families; the Socialist Transformation of the industry and commerce in the 1950s was an attempt to eliminate the market economy and capitalism which pursued *private* profits; the property confiscation and the illegalisation of the self-constructed houses in the B&DTs area can be seen as a denial of *private* property ownership and *private*, unauthorised occupation. By constructing the *si* bodies and activities as morally flawed and even illegal, the state enhances its moral and political advantage as a *gong* body for the public good. It is worth noting that the state’s connection to public interests is not based on the assumption of a representative government as in many democratic systems but for its status as an embodiment of the abstract and normative *gong*.

Pierre Bourdieu explains the distinctive power of the modern state from the perspective of symbolic capital, which is insightful for us to understand the moral sense of *gong* and public. For Bourdieu, the quasi- magical power of the state is based on its monopoly of legitimate physical and symbolic violence. Yet different from Max Webber, he believes that the monopoly of symbolic capital is the condition for the possession and exercise of physical violence<sup>340</sup>. For Bourdieu, the modern state emerged from the ‘culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital’, especially the symbolic capital<sup>341</sup>. This symbolic capital

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<sup>340</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, ‘Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field’, trans. Wacquant, Loïc J.D. & Farage, Samar, *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1984, pp. 1-18; Pierre, Bourdieu, *On the State*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014.

<sup>341</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, ‘Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field’, trans. Wacquant, Loïc J.D. & Farage, Samar, *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1984, pp. 1-18.

here conveys a strong moral sense of normativity and universality like the discourse of *gong* and public. With the constitution of symbolic capital, the state transforms the particular into the universal, shapes the collective belief, values and cognitive structures and also produces principles of classification and social recognitions. Bourdieu then gives a specific stress on the juridical capital, an ‘objectified and codified form of symbolic capital power’<sup>342</sup>:

The universal is the object of universal recognition and the sacrifice of selfish (especially economic) interests is universally recognized as legitimate. (In the effect to rise from the singular and selfish point of view of the individual to the point of view of the group, collective judgment cannot but perceive, and approve, an expression of recognition of the value of the group and of the group itself as the fount of all value, and thus a passage from ‘is’ to ‘ought’). This means that all social universes tend to offer, to varying degrees, material or symbolic profits of universalization (those very profits pursued by strategies seeking to ‘play by the rule’). It also implies that the universes which, like the bureaucratic field, demand with utmost insistence that one submits to the universal, are particularly favourable to obtaining such profits<sup>343</sup>.

Bourdieu’s theorisation overlaps some of my concerns about the state as both moral and political authority, especially his attention paid to universalization. The legitimisation of the universal involves an illegitimation of the particular, of the private. It is also parallel to the construction of the idea of public interest and the notion that government is oriented in principle to the common good. The physical power relations between the state and people are simultaneously symbolic relations, and people’s acts of submission or obedience are cognitive acts<sup>344</sup>. This interpretation echoes the universality of *gong* and its priority over *si*. In the case of China, the state power also has a marked impact on mentalities. The state never

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.



ceases to try to convince people that the state follows the value and spirit of *gong*, and government helps maintain the order of the world. To a large degree, people do take this notion for granted. However, neither Bourdieu's France nor the socialist Chinese state that I study can monopolise the symbolic capital or moral power completely. There are always 'conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing the vision of legitimate divisions'<sup>345</sup>; there are also contests among different bodies for a specific type of symbolic power.

In the case of China, the combination of symbolic power and physical violence is undeniable. Yet the immense power of the state attained by its dual status as both moral authority and political authority does have its counterbalance. For one thing, the morality of *gong* requires responsibility. But the responsibility of the state is not because of the rights of the citizens; instead it is derived from the state-family homo-structure. Just as parents have authority as well as duties for their children, the state is considered to be responsible for the welfare of the people. *Gong* morality does not only give power but also means moral obligation. That is why the residents in the Bell & Drum Towers area would like to give their properties to the government but at the same time had requirement of housing, jobs and children education. Second, the collective shares the moral power of *gong* with the state, which forms a potential challenge to the authority of the state. As the case studies demonstrate, under specific circumstances, the collective is able to use its moral power as well as physical violence to challenge-- even overthrow-- the state (e.g. many municipal governments were overthrown during the Cultural Revolution). Third, individual's moral perception and judgment is also potentially able to damage or dismiss the moral authority of the state. In Bourdieu's interpretation, the state plays a role as the ultimate source of symbolic power and as the ultimate referee<sup>346</sup>. Yet from the notion of *gong*, Heaven is the source of the universal law and moral power, and everyone, against their inborn perceptive and intuitive capability, is the referee. Of course, in practice, the state saves no efforts to monopolise moral power, but still we can see the moral judgments from common people are also influential. The B&DTs case shows that individuals can utilise the

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<sup>345</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1989, pp. 14-25.

<sup>346</sup> Swartz, David, 'The State as the Central Bank of Symbolic Credit', *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Hilton San Francisco & Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel, San Francisco, CA, Aug 14, 2004.*

private, but also common people's moral sense, genuinely or strategically, to guard their interests even when this means they confront a powerful state.

From the analysis above, we can identify two significant tensions: the tension between the state and collective, and the tension between the state and individuals. These two challenge the moral as well as political authority of the state within the area of *gong* and from the side of *si* respectively. It is also interesting to see that these two tensions in a way respond to the two traditions of the western political thoughts on public/private. The separation of the state and collective, or between the sovereign and the common, resonates with the coexisting traditions of the notion of sovereignty inherited from Roman Empire and the understanding of collective self-determination from Greek *polis* and Roman Republic. However, the collective power in China has never been well institutionalised. There are cases of collective actions like uprising or revolutions which changed history, but the collaboration of people has never been integrated into the political system. The suppression of any form of organised collective exactly reflects the pivotal moral contests between the state and collective.

The tension between the state and individual is also an interesting comparison to the liberal notion of the contrast between state action and private individuals' contractual activities. In the liberal tradition, the private sphere, or the market, adopts a defensive and watchful gesture towards the public power. It emphasises the difference and separation from the public sphere or sector. But in the Chinese *gong-si* division, the private people's potential to challenge the state is not because it is in a separate realm and inclined to keep the autonomy, but based on the notion that they are connected to *gong*, on their intimacy rather than separation with the other realm.

Thus, although theoretically the collective and individual have their own moral power and they do restrict the moral authority of the state, collective and individual moral power is never transformed into political power in practice as efficiently as the state.

## **6.2 The public and political feature of land and property**

Land ownership, or property, is an issue on the interface of public and private; it is also a debate constantly connected to *gong-si* relationship. This section discusses the

public, private and political elements embedded in urban land and property. It focuses on the following aspects: first, the public aspects of land, including the state as the landlord of 'public' property and as sovereign to intervene into land issues; second, the social, interpersonal character of land use and land ownership, including the externality of land use, the economic dimension of property and the cultural, moral and customary understanding of property and ownership; third, the intimate relationship between private people and property, involving labour investment, occupation, life activities and people's psychic perception on their rights. I will also discuss the conflicts and politics caused by the interweaving public and private features of land and property, especially how the different understanding of ownership and property rights are reflected in legitimization.

Some important controversies brought by *gong-si* division over land and property are revealed in the thesis. One is about the debates on public and private ownership. Chapter 2 outlined the role of state and collective ownership in Chinese history, and empirical studies demonstrated how it, combined with socialism, resulted in the reorganisation of land ownership in Beijing after the establishment of the PRC in 1949. As has been emphasised many times, once associated with *gong-si* division, property ownership raises moral and political issues. In the land politics of socialist Beijing, we can see that attacks on private ownership and private owners were very fierce. This was associated with the moral judgements on *si* and on all its variations. To achieve socialisation, the authority disparaged all private elements and exaggerated the moral inferiority of *si*. In order to eliminate private elements and thus the defective *si*, the public power expropriated the space of private bodies and activities, that is, the confiscation of private corporate properties and household properties. The belief was that, by transforming ownership from private to public, all the activities and people on the land would become more 'public' and then more morally right. In this sense, land is hyper-political because it is about the interplay of *gong* and *si*. It is the arena for both public and private bodies and activities, and therefore it cannot avoid the conflicts brought about by the morality of *gong-si* relationship. I would like to theorise this by interrogating land and property in its relationship to the state, community and private people.

The modern state is an entity integrating sovereignty and territory. When we say the territory of a country, it first appears as a territory in relation to the external world, to

other countries. But internally, it is also *the state's* territory; the sovereignty of the state is not just relational to other sovereign powers, but also is over its domestic land and people. In practice, the state is the owner of so called 'public' lands, which shows the face of the state as landlord. It is also the sovereign, no matter whether it claims the embodiment of *gong* from the top or the embodiment of 'the people' from the below. This is reflected by the state's monopoly power to compulsorily expropriate property as the public authority. In fact, only the state can enable the ownership transferred from private into public. Moreover, for those lands that the state does not own or does not intend to transfer, the state still has the power to regulate. As the case of *City of London v Samede and Others* (Chapter 1) and the case of Beijing (Chapter 4 & 5) showed, unlike the private property rights to exclude others, the power of the government over land is the rights to interfere. This power is reflected in urban planning, land use control and various regulations. In addition, the legislative power of the state defines the different bodies' ownership of and rights to properties, and demarcates the boundaries between legal and illegal.

The coerciveness of the state power here is apparent. Especially the coercive power of compulsory acquisition, that is, taking private property for a purportedly public use, is exercised exclusively by the state or the functional equivalent of the state. It is also one of the three major inherent powers of the state (i.e. taxation, police power and eminent domain)<sup>347</sup>. As has been explained before, land expropriation and planning are actually associated with police power in the historical traditions of certain societies (Section 4.3.3). In this point, the power to intervene into land ownership and land use is extremely important in terms of both presenting and actualising state sovereignty. The significance of land for state sovereignty renders land and property a salient political theme.

Moreover, the state sovereignty over land does not only display coercion but also indicates legitimacy. This is the normative and moral dimension of public power. It is also the base of the legislative power of the state. State intervention is of course primarily a political reality. We at least partially agree that it is necessary to have public power, an authority to deal with the common issues and interpersonal conflicts. To some extent, the state interference implies that a completely private

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<sup>347</sup> Willis, Hugh Evander, *Constitutional Law of the United States*, Bloomington: The Principia Press, 1936, p. 224.

world is flawed if not impossible. It reflects a particular pursuit for the universal, normative standard, etc. Legislation of property rights is an attempt to unify particular property practice into one ordering system.

However, property has its private facet, that is, people's personal and interpersonal relationships with land and property. People occupy a piece of land, live their life on the land and invest their labour and money into the land. All these, life, labour and occupation, build a very personal and intimate relationship with the land. These practices also shape people's perception and understanding of the ownership of the land and their rights to the land. This perception and understanding may be controversial with the legislation, but just like the B&DTs case has showed, they exist and work. In the summary of *gong-si* relationship in Section 6.1.1, *si* is interpreted as a concept without its own territory. But in practice, *si* bodies and activities have their own land. They happen somewhere. They 'privatise' space and bestow private attributes upon land. The moral flaws (from a Chinese perspective) of *si* in conception may render *si* bodies disadvantaged in reality, but they never eliminate private activities.

Even more, the interactions among private bodies over land forms a type of publicness. First of all, compared with other properties, a special aspect of real estate is its ability to create externalities. The occupation and use of the land have an external effect. It is the embedded public nature of land, regardless of whether the state intervention has been established or not. Secondly, property can be exchanged as other commodities in the estate market, which is within the contractual practice among private bodies. Usually this is still viewed as a private field from the perspective of liberal thought, but the inter-subjectivity forms a 'common' area between private bodies. Last but not the least, the recognition of occupation, ownership and rights are social, conventional and cultural. Ownership is not just a completely personal relation between the occupier or holder and the land, but also a constant negotiation between neighbours, as well as a communal, customary perception and recognition from all other members of a community. Rather than the *public* realm of the state, this is the *common* realm of the people. The customary law

and social norms are another type of powerful legislation, parallel to and at the same time contesting the legislation of the state<sup>348</sup>.

These three layers of property-- that is, state control, private use and social contract, with their respective legislative logics -- bring about controversies and conflicts. In this sense, the politics of property resides in the complex qualities of land: land is both private and public, and it is public in at least two different senses. To summarise, on the one hand, all lands, including private lands, are within a territory and under the influence of the sovereign. Land, especially private land, on the other hand, is held and used by private bodies. Even non-private land like city roads, squares, parks, etc. enjoyed by the public, it is (private) people's daily use of these spaces that sustains its public character. The overlapping public and private authorities on the same land, and the confusion of *gong* and *si*, lead to the conflicts between the state and individuals, between public power and private rights.

The legitimation of ownership, including different legitimate logics from the state, community and private people, cause further politics and further (con)fusion of *gong* and *si*. Following Robert Hale's idea that property is a relationship between two people and the state<sup>349</sup>, we can say that property is a relationship between different private bodies and public power. In other words, property is an issue involving a profound interaction between *gong* and *si*, and between *si* and *si* (- the latter create another type of *gong*). It also expresses that ownership needs legislation, or ownership actually fuses different kinds of legislation. Property rights are on the one hand socially recognised, but on the other, as Rousseau suggested, property rights must be given legitimately. Especially in modern society, property rights need legal recognition from the state. Because property rights are attached to legal codes and at the same time to customary and moral codes, conflicts are unavoidable. This is also a manifestation of the controversy between 'public' and 'common', between the moral, political and legislative power of the state and collective consisted of individuals as two types of *gong* embodiments.

This contradictory understanding of ownership and property rights has been demonstrated by the land politics in the B&DTs area. Local residents' perception of

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<sup>348</sup> For a discussion on this, see Staeheli, Lynn A. & Mitchell, Don, *The People's Property?: Power, Politics, and the Public*, New York & London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 146-154.

<sup>349</sup> Hale, Robert L., 'Property and Sovereignty', *Law and the Social Order*, Vol. 41, 1933.

the ownership and their rights to the property were largely based on the actual holding of the property, on the constant occupation and utilisation of the land and also on the acquiescence or recognition of their neighbours and the community; their understanding of their rights was also affected by their understanding of the duty of the state, rather than just based on legal codes or arbitrary explanation from the state.

Against is important to underline that customary or perceived ownership and rights were unprotected, but not necessarily powerless. In contrast, they were very strong and have worked for decades. This is of course because of the specific social-political conditions, and especially the immature legal system of China at that time, but even in the recent regeneration project, we still see the moral, customary codes, which are actually in opposition to present legislation, take effect. China is very much still a society in transition, with traditional, customary codes and modern legal system working simultaneously. The case of B&DTs shows the conflicts between the two systems. Yet it is also a reflection of the notion that private people are intimately connected to the moral *gong*, to the law of Heaven. The state as *gong* embodiment and the state law are just second to the ideal *gong* and the highest law. Private people can perceive the universal law of the moral *gong* and do the judgement. This forms a big challenge to the authority and to the legislation of the state. As has been argued, moral power has a potential to be converted into political power; in our political world, moral power is political power. Private persons, as bearers of morality and as referee, together with his/her role as land occupier and user, can define ownership and rights not less powerful than the state in some circumstances.

To summarise, the issues of land ownership and property rights displays the tensions between public and private, between private and private and the conflicts within public. Land and property also ground the politics of *gong-si* relationship. The state sovereignty in transferring land ownership and in regulating land use is in conflict with or resisted by private people's daily use, occupation of land and their perception of the rights. The divergence between the formal, legitimate recognition of property rights from the state and the moral, customary understanding of property rights from the people/community further makes property/ownership an extremely political issue, as it is the contest for standards, for principle, for 'the right'. The next section will continue the discussion from the Chinese perspective of politics.

### 6.3 Rethinking politics in Chinese contexts

This section discusses the particular Chinese understanding of politics. This is also a response to the question that I proposed in the introductory chapter: what do ‘the political’ and politics mean for Chinese people, and how is politics practised in the Chinese society?

I have put a lot of stress on the normative and moral sense of *gong*. In the etymology of the Chinese word *zhengzhi* for ‘political’ and ‘politics’, I pointed out that the word primarily meant standard, just, upright, etc. (see Section 4.3.5). In the empirical study, we also see that people attached great importance to the morality of both private and public bodies in reality. All these lead up to the following argument: the traditional Chinese ‘politics’ is about standard and normativity, and it particularly pursues order. This is very different from the political tradition of Europe. Derived from the Greek word *politika* and its Latinisation *politicus*, politics referred to ‘affairs of the *polis*’ and those ‘of, for, or relating to citizens’. It was about government and governance indeed (though a democratic or republican type), but there was no particular implication of order or normativity in the words. In contrast, politics from the Greek tradition was related to debates and disagreements around public affairs, was about how to solve out the disagreements via participation and discussion. Rather differently, the Chinese perspective believed universal standards and assumed something normative and right, thus politics was to keep the normative and the right and to correct or remedy the wrong, which was in a sense lacking of ‘democratic’ tradition.

The emphasis on standards in thoughts laid a different foundation for Chinese political practice. Since standards were assumed, the contests for standards became the real politics in reality. Standards or principles were considered to be set by Heaven and to be the source of moral as well as political validity. As the discussion of *gong-si* relationship showed, different actors’ capabilities to approach these standards were not the same. More specifically speaking, in the imperial era, the emperor declared to be the Son of Heaven and to afford the mandate from Heaven, and *zhengzhi* was to govern ‘all-under-heaven’ and to keep the order and peace. The modern state also tried to set itself as the embodiment of *gong*, but not in the sense as representative of the citizens or the public from below, but rather as the media to



convey the spirit of *gong* and to demonstrate its standards from the top. As it was explained, the state could claim that it represents *gong* due to its political advantage, but ordinary people had the quality to judge whether the claim was true or not. However, these ordinary people did not engage in ‘politics’ in a narrow sense (i.e. government), although their judgement could result in very political consequences (e.g. uprising or revolution). The traditional governing group was intellectual officials or elite class. Selected from normal people by a national examination system, they were seen as more eligible to understand the universal standards and to use them to govern the country. It was this group, rather than ordinary people (not even the emperor), that governed the country and exercised statecraft, the Chinese *zhengzhi*.

Above is an account of Chinese ‘politics’ based on individual actors. The image will be different if we aggregate individuals into collective as a whole. As has showed in genealogy, *gong* idea started to take shape from a very early time, compared with which Heaven and statecraft in Confucianism was a rather late theorisation. Primarily, *gong* was connected to multiple people, regardless of referring to all the people or more to the head of these people. The commonality sense of the *gong* idea reflected the fact that people lived with each other in a society. However, it did not necessarily lead to Arendt’s definition of politics as activities and actions of people in plural<sup>350</sup>. In a world with presumed harmony, people were supposed to keep or restore the order and the universal law of the world. A harmonious world was not a politically active world. It did not encourage collective actions. As the history of Beijing city and Tiananmen Square showed, collective rites played a more important role in most of the time. Yet the idea of collective was still very powerful. As has been explained, it was a possible ‘origin’ from which the word of *gong* derived, and then it became a key embodiment of the moralised *gong* idea parallel with the state. It was also a hybrid of *gong* and *si*. It was viewed as a typical *gong* because it related to multiple people, while it also had a linkage to *si* because collective consisted of individuals. In this way, collective had the judging capability of private person but at the same time it took priority over individuals as it was larger in quantity.

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<sup>350</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

The collective's combination of the advantage of *gong* and *si* can be very powerful. It may challenge the priority and validity of the state. The protests in Tiananmen Square and the mass movements in the Cultural Revolution showed this potential. In a sense just because of the huge political potential of collective, the state always keeps a wary eye on its formation. There are many examples expressing the tension between the state and collective and how the state suppresses collectives. For instance, the collective ownership and collective corporations created in the Socialist Transformation were finally claimed to be state-owned. At present, the state is still very cautious of any collective actions or alliances. One example is that Chinese people still do not enjoy the freedom of association and assemblage although they are prescribed in the Constitution. Collective actions such as protest, demonstration and strikes are rigorously controlled; organising political parties<sup>351</sup> and independent work and trade unions are highly restrained. The government in no way encourages people's organisational ability. Even many social media (like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) are banned in China for their potential to organise people. The political power and moral power of organised collectives are seen as the largest threat to the rule of the communist party-state.

In this way, people, in spite of their capacity for moral judgement and their political potential as collectives, are still kept in the private realm and debased as *si* bodies, therefore excluding from a *gong* and political world. By dismissing the collective power of organising other *gong* embodiments, the state enjoys its exclusive privilege as *gong* embodiment. After the 'Reform and Opening up' starting from 1978, the economy of China has rapidly developed, but all economic activities are also categorised as merely *si* activities. Politics keeps its narrow and rather closed terrain.

However, there are changes that can be detected within the system. Now the state, although it still is the overwhelmingly dominant political authority and constantly claims itself on behalf of public interests, is not a moral authority as powerful as before. This is partially a result of the rationalisation and bureaucratisation of the governmental system, and partially because the understanding of Chinese people is departing from tradition and creating a new social, economic and cultural background. Since the 1980s, the market economy was (re) established, and

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<sup>351</sup> Apart from the CPC in power, China has eight non-Communist parties.

economic development has been attached increasing importance, and even becomes ‘public interests’. But in recent years (i.e. 2008-present), a policy called ‘the state advances, the private sector retreats’ (*guojin mintui*) has been carried out, advancing state-owned enterprises and discouraging pure private enterprises, which shows the great advantage of the state even in economic field and again reflects the all-encompassing character of *gong*<sup>352</sup>.

Another significant change is the (re)emergence of the ‘city’. The city has not only (re)emerged as an important governance unit, as was the case during the republican era, but it has also emerged as a field or a site for para-collective political actions. These actions are mainly concentrated in protests for urban environmental issues, resistance to urban redevelopment schemes and collective actions for the preservation of heritage buildings and historical neighbourhoods, etc. In these struggles, for one thing, *si* elements are increasingly recognised and enhanced, including private rights and interests as proprietors, such as the protests of property owners against pollution projects initiated by the governments<sup>353</sup>. The protesters not only strategically utilise the moral power of ‘public interests’ but also use the discourses like property rights and citizenship, which are quite different from the traditional *gong* discourse. For another, both ‘rights protection’ (*weiquan*) activities to safeguard private interests and the ‘right to the city’ actions more for the sake of public interests see a growth of the public sphere of the city<sup>354</sup>. Concerns for the environment, history, culture and justice of the city are explicit. This encourages a more grounded public domain in the scale of the city. As I have discussed, in 2000 years’ imperial history, China did not have a unit as ‘city’, either in the sense of community or in the sense of government. But growing participation in city affairs helps the *citizens* advance their perception of the city and capabilities to engage in city affairs. In addition, compared with the popular movements in the last century, urban collective actions nowadays are more compatible with the modern legal

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<sup>352</sup> See ‘Guo Jin Min Tui’, New York Times, 26-03-2009; ‘The State Advances, the Private Sector Retreats - Crisis Economic Policy in China’, 14-05- 2010.

<sup>353</sup> For examples, see ‘China orders petrochemical plant shutdown after protests’, Watts, Jonathan, *The Guardian*, 14-08-2011; Anti-incinerator campaigns and the evolution of protest politics in China, Lang, Graeme and Xu, Ying, *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 5, 2013, pp. 832–848; Johnson, Thomas R, ‘Regulatory dynamism of environmental mobilization in urban China’, *Regulation & Governance*, 2014;

<sup>354</sup> For example of the ‘right to the city’ activism in China, see He, Shenjing, ‘Two waves of gentrification and emerging rights issues in Guangzhou, China’, *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 44, 2012, pp.2817 – 2833; Shin, Hyun B, ‘Elite Vision before People: State Entrepreneurialism and the Limits of Participation’, in Altrick, U. and Schoon, S., eds., *Maturing Megacities: The Pearl River Delta in Progressive Transformation*, Springer, 2013.

system, which means that they are more likely to be tolerated by the state and therefore more able to contribute to the institutionalisation of these individual as well as collective political participation.

Within the administrative system, the rise of municipality -- which is described as localism, regional decentralization or financial federalism -- is even more remarkable<sup>355</sup>. The urban economy, very much based on estate development, has become pivotal to the development and stability of the state, and the municipalities have gained their independent interests distinct from the state and also found their way to resist or play with the central government. In the hierarchical administrative system, city government has become the most efficient level. By constructing urban infrastructure, (re)developing urban lands, dealing with the welfare of people and all other urban affairs, the city has become the most perceivable governance scale for normal people. We can expect that the city, as both a governance unit as well as the common area of the people of a city community, contributes more in the transformation of the Chinese political system.

It is also worth noticing that urban land, or property, plays a pivotal role in all these changes: the (private) citizen rights struggles, including the resistance to land expropriation and pollution industry, are much based on the organisation of property owners; the 'right to the city' activism focuses mainly on urban regeneration projects, historical neighbourhood preservation and public participation in urban planning, etc.; and the growth of the city government is highly dependent on the huge profits acquired by the city governments against their compulsorily purchase power over urban lands. Urban land grounds the private interest of property owners (or occupiers), the common interests of the city community and the public power of the city government in relation to the central government. From urban land politics we can see the blurring or integration of *imperium* and *dominium*. Undeniably, the conceptual and ideological power of the ideas around *gong* and *si* are fundamental, and centuries' history shows how the state *gong* suppresses *si* and other possible *gong* embodiments. However, land also shelters and opens other political possibilities. Land preserves *si* elements and cultivates them, expanding and creating territories for *si* activities and other *gong* practice. By constant grounded practices

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<sup>355</sup> Jin, Hehui, Qian, Yingyi and Weingast, Barry R., 'Regional Decentralization and Fiscal Incentives: Federalism, Chinese Style', *Journal of Public Economics*, Vol. 89, 2005, pp. 1719-1742.

and struggles, we can expect a reconfiguration of *gong-si* relationship in both the conceptual and empirical world.

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## Appendix I

### Chronology of China

Date	Dynasty	
Pre-history		
c. 27-22 cent. B.C.	Age of the Five Rulers 皇帝至舜	High Antiquity
c. 22-16 cent. B.C.	Xia 夏	Ancient China
c. 1600-1046 B.C.	Shang 商	
c. 1046-771 B.C.	Western Zhou 西周 (feudal)	
770-221 B.C.	Eastern Zhou 东周 (feudal) 770-476 B.C. -- Spring and Autumn Period 475-221 B.C. -- Warring States Period	
221-207 B.C.	Qin 秦	Imperial China
206 B.C.-A.D. 9	Western Han 西汉	
A.D. 9-24	Xin (Wang Mang interregnum)	
A.D. 25-220	Eastern Han 东汉	
A.D. 220-280	Three Kingdoms 三国 220-265 – Wei 魏 221-263 – Shu 蜀 229-280 – Wu 吴	

A.D. 265-316	Western Jin 西汉	
A.D. 317-420	Eastern Jin 东晋	
A.D. 420-588	Southern and Northern Dynasties 南北朝	
A.D. 581-617	Sui 隋	
A.D. 618-907	Tang 唐	
A.D. 907-960	Five Dynasties 五代	
A.D. 907-979	Ten Kingdoms 十国	
A.D. 960-1279	Song 宋	
	960-1127 -- Northern Song 北宋	
	1127-1279 -- Southern Song 南宋	
A.D. 916-1125	Liao 辽	
A.D. 1038-1227	Western Xia 西夏	
A.D. 1115-1234	Jin 金	
A.D. 1279-1368	Yuan 元	
A.D. 1368-1644	Ming 明	
A.D. 1644-1911	Qing 清	
A.D. 1911-1949	Republic of China (mainland China) 中华民国 (until now for Taiwan area)	1840- Modern China
A.D. 1949-	People's Republic of China 中华人民共和国	



## **Appendix II      Interview Schedule**

### **1) First Round: Interviews for General Information**

**Purposes:** To build the contact with the interviewees; to get the general information of the interviewees and their properties; to select suitable interviewees for the next round interviews.

**Aspects and questions:**

(1) Current situation: what's the situation of your property in the current regeneration project? Ownership? Compensation? Are you satisfied? If not, why? How does the government communicate with you? What's your basic appeal? What's your attitude towards the regeneration programme? What's your plan for the next step?

(2) Family and property history: When did your family first moved here? What's the situation of the neighborhood at that time? What types of house did they live? Ownership? What changes have happened after settling here? Could you tell me the stories of your family? Let them tell their stories in their own ways. Don't lead them but pay attention to what happened to their families and properties in the following key events: time of moving in, the end of Qing Dynasty, Republican era, the establishment of PRC, Socialist Transformation, Great Leap Forward, Cultural Revolution, Tangshan Earthquake, Reform and Opening up, several regeneration schemes.

(3) Personal history: tell me some of yourself? Impressive experience? Not necessarily related to property. To know the interviewees' life stories and his/her particular understandings and perceptions of some events. Try to understand the position, subjectivity and personality of the interviewees.

## **2) Second Round: Interviews for more details about the history of the interviewees, their families and properties and the neighbourhood**

If the interviewees are willing to tell their stories, the interview can go to the next round.

**Purposes:** to get more detailed information of the interviewees, their properties and the neighbourhood; to know their specific opinions on some crucial events and key concepts; to select cases for the next round interviews.

### **List of questions:**

(1) What's the ownership of your property in title? Do you agree? How did the government assess the value of the property and the compensation level? Any problems in the process?

(2) Have you ever considered the possibility that this area would be redeveloped and your property might be expropriated? What was your consideration and plan at that time? Is it the same with what is going on now? Why? Examples? Who do you contact directly in the regeneration projects? Do you think they are on behalf of the government? See how the interviewees think about the district government and street Community Committee. Pay attention to their understanding of the state and hierarchical government.

(3) What's your plan now? Why do you plan like this? Do you have any demand that must be met? What is the most important thing? Do you know any other people whose properties are also included in the regeneration scheme? Experience of them? Do you communicate with other residents? What are their opinions? Do you or anybody think of doing something together?

(4) What do you know about the regeneration project? How do you get the information? Do you like the plan? Why? How do you think of the possibility of not regenerating the area? Do you think it is possible? How long do you think it can sustain. If the area and your property is in a secure situation, what do you plan to do about your property?

(5) May I ask some history of your house? When did the first person of your family move into the area? What did he do at that time? Why did he move here? How was the area like then? How was the location chosen? How many houses were built/bought/rented then? How about the certificate of the title of the property? Do you know there was a temple there? Were there many private properties then?

(6) The changes of their families and properties: What are the main changes happening to your family and property? See how they recollected the history and the logic. Pay attention to what is impressive for them. These are important for my analysis. Don't give them my presumed historical line and key events, but after they have told their stories, I can ask more about what was happening in the following events: Republican era (1912-1949), Sino-Japanese War(1938-1945), the establishment of PRC (1949), Socialist Transformation(1950s), Great Leap Forward (1950s), Cultural Revolution (1967-1976), Tangshan Earthquake (1976), Reform and Opening up (1978), several (proposed) regeneration schemes (1980s, 1990s, now).

If they know or heard a lot of the history of the neighbourhood, their families and properties, and at the same time they are willing to tell, ask **more detailed questions**:

(7) How many generations of your family have lived here? How many people roughly were living in the neighbourhood in the late Qing and Republican era? Could you describe the extension/area change of your family property? Any interesting stories about your family? Any changes caused to your family by the replacement of the state authority? Any changes about the status and careers of your family members? How did the new government recognize the property ownership? Anything changed?

(8) Have you ever heard of the commercial and residential situation of the area around Bell and Drum Towers in the Republican era? How did people rebuild or repair their properties? How was the relationship between neighbors? Any public or common spaces in the area? When and how did people use them?

(9) The significant changes happening regarding your family members and the house after 1949? What's the influence of the Socialist Transformation? How was your house handed over to the government to let and manage? Rent control by the

government? How did you/your family think at that time? How was the agreement between your family and the government made? The general mentality of people?

(10) What changes of your property in the Cultural Revolution? How many rooms did the government leave to your family? Other changes in the unit of your yard settlement? Different or similar stories in the area? Who moved in and moved out? How was the relationship between the private property owners and tenants of public housing?

(11) What's the influence of the Tangshan Earthquake? Any self-constructed houses? How to do that? What was the attitude of the government towards this? Other self-building activities in other time? More in the Cultural Revolution, normal time or after the restoration of the market since 1980s? What's the recent changes regarding your house?

(12) What do you do now? What did you do before? What's your first memory about this neighborhood? When were you born? Did you have your school education in the area? What do you usually do in your free time? Do you like Beijing? What experience or people do you think have greatly influence you? Do you have children? How do they like to live in the 'old' area of Beijing? What's their opinion on the regeneration? What's your expectation on your children? What are the changes of Beijing? The most important changes? What changes of the area you live? Do you like new developed communities? How is your feeling about the house here and the area? How do you think of living in the new area of Beijing? What will you get and lose if you move to the reallocated community provided by the government?

### **3) Third Round: In-depth interview designed for each selected case**

Purposes: in-depth interviews about the significant events or aspects of each case selected from the last round, to know more details of the property changes and to better understand the relationship between political and personal experience on the one hand and personal understanding and perception of ownership on the other.

#### **Case 1:**

**Status:** private property; moving from Qing; big business family; moving out in the Cultural Revolution

**Interviewees:** Mr Y and his mother

#### **Question:**

(1) Commercial history of his family enterprise ‘Southern Textile Manufacture’ (Jiangnan zhizao) in Qing Dynasty. Further questions: were there lots of wealthy people living in the area in the late Qing? How large of their properties? Social status of businessmen?

(2) Changes brought by the founding of the Republic and the PRC? Especially those related to the enterprise and the property of the family.

(3) The influence of the Socialist Transformation: Any property rented out then? How many houses/rooms were handed over to the government to let and manage? How did you/your family think of this? Were they happy? Did they resist? How did the government use the property? New tenants? How many households and people were living together? Relationship between you, old tenants and new tenants? What did the government do (e.g. repairing, rebuilding, building) about the property? How did people use the yard? Who owned the yard? Any conflicts between different households? Any tension between the government and your family? Your perception of the ownership of the houses and yard.

(4) Changes during the Cultural Revolution? How many rooms did the government confiscate in the Cultural Revolution? What’s the difference between this property expropriation and the one in the Socialist Transformation? How was the process like?

Who represented the government? What was the (illegal) procedure? Any damages caused for the property? How was people's attitude towards them? New people moving in? The advantages and disadvantages as private owners? Stories? Other stories heard about the owners in the neighborhood? How was the relationship between your family, old government tenants and new comers? How did the government manage and repair the public property? New building? How did people use the common area of the yard?

(5) What is your earliest memory about the Bell and Drum Towers area? Any changes of the landscape? Changes of people and neighbor relationship? Changes of the sense of community? Changes of people's life?

(6) After the Cultural Revolution, the state had policy of returning the properties confiscated in the Cultural Revolution. Did you/your family know this? How did you/they think of this? Did you/they do anything? Do you know any other cases in which the owner got their property back? Mentality? How did the government dealt with the public tenants? The tension between the owner and the tenants?

(7) Self-building activities. When? Why? How? The policy and regulation from the government at that time? General situation of the neighborhood? How did the government say about the self-constructed houses? Did the government also build new houses? Legalization?

(8) When did you/your family leave the area? Why? How to deal with your property? How to manage the property in distance? How to choose tenants? Requirements for the use of the property? Repair and rebuilding of the houses? How to get an agreement with the tenants? Any engagements with the government? What's the situation of the government managing properties? Better or worse than private ones?

(9) How did you heard of the regeneration project for the first time? Dialogue with the government? Doubts and discontents in terms of the planning, expropriation, compensation and relocation? The ascertainment of the ownership? Any conflicted understanding? How about the compensation for the public tenants?

(10) What are your requirements for the compensation and relocation? Hope for the future of the neighborhood?

## Case 2:

**Status:** private property; an important public function of the property: it has the only sweet well in the area

**Interviewee:** the inheritor of the property (in controversy) who knows lots of the family history

### Question:

(1) When did you start to live in the area? When did your family moved to Beijing and the area? Why? How to get the property?

(2) Do you have any memories of the well? Its look? Other (bitter) wells nearby? For people or for cattle? When did your family start to manage the well? How? Any relations with the government? Private? When was the most flourishing time of the well? Can you describe? How large area did the well served? How many *hutongs*? Who lived with your family at that time (e.g. accouter)? Where did the labour carrying the water live? How to calculate the volume of the water? Price? Compared to your neighbors, what's the difference of your life brought by the well? From when the well was not used?

(3) Did the public-private ownership affect the business of the well? When did the running tap water was installed? How has it influenced the business of selling water?

(4) When was the house immediately near to the street/square built? For what use? When did it change into a shop? How the Socialist Transformation affected the shop and your family?

(5) Memories of the area around the two towers: living space like the rice and flour store, restaurants, communal activities. Do you remember anything about the filming of the movie *Rickshaw Boy* in the 1980s. Why did they choose here? Many rickshaws living in the area? The general status of the people living here and their ways of earning their life?

(6) Festivals in your memory? What temple fairs did you have nearby? Difference from normal time? Difference from nowadays? How did people use the two squares

in the past? Do you know there was an Islamic temple nearby and many Uygurs lived here? Any changes?

(7) Any underground public shelters were built in your yard? From when the yard became a 'tenement courtyard' (*dazayuan*)? Would you like to tell some of the stories of your family members in the Cultural Revolution? Any persecution? Do you remember the day that the Cultural Revolution ended? Anything special?

(8) In 1983, the government planned to redevelop the area. Do you have any memories about this? What did the government do at that time? Any other proposals for the redevelopment after that?

(9) How did you find your job after graduated? Allocated by the government? What's the job of your wife? Do your children go to the school(s) nearby? How do you feel about living in the area?

(9) When did the tourism rise in the area? How did it affect your property and the shop? How did it change the neighborhood?

(10) From when there were private tenants? What did they do? Were they migrants from country area or other cities? Why did they come here? What's their life like? Could you describe the main building activities occurring in the courtyard? How many times? When and why?

(11) From when 'private property' became sensitive? How was your property occupied by other people? Your feeling towards this at that time and now? How about the daily maintenance of the houses? The use of the yard and other common space?

(12) When did you move into new building? Allocated by the work-unit? How did the status as private owner affect this? Did you get the same housing subsidy as others as the owner of the courtyard house?

(13) How do you feel about the part of your property to be compensated as 'public' property? What do you know about the regeneration? You have done refurbishment for your property, any compensation? Did you anticipate the regeneration? If it is possible, would you live to stay or move? What kind of regeneration do you think is good for the neighborhood?



(14) How do you feel about the personnel of the Removal and Reallocation Office? Do you feel they represent the government? What's the relationship between them and the Real Estate Management Institute and the Street Residential Committee? What problems do you feel about the regeneration project and the behaviors of the government? Did you complain? How?

### **Case 3:**

**Status:** Previous private property with household factory which was expropriated in the Socialist Transformation; now it is occupied by the previous owners and many government tenants

**Interviewees:** M Brothers and Mrs M (owners); Mr T and Mr L (government tenants)

#### **Question list:**

(Note: because of the interesting details given by the interviewees, the interview questions changed a lot from the designed ones, and many new questions were added too. Here is the questions extracted from the transcripts)

#### **Questions for public tenants:**

(1) Why didn't you accept the new apartment distributed by your work-unit? Was it private property? Could you buy it from the work-unit? Other cases of your colleagues in your work-unit? What were the criteria to get an apartment from the work-unit? What were other welfare from the work-unit? Any changes since the reform in the 1990s?

(2) How do you feel about living here? There are many houses crowded in the yard, are they affecting the light of your house? Do other people living here (including private owners and government tenants) get the same compensation standard as you? Do you think it is fair?

(3) Where is your kitchen? Where do your children live? Where did they move out? How did they live before moving out?

(4) Did the Real Estate Management Bureau repair the houses that they own/manage? When? How? Who pays?

- (5) Are people worried about living in public housing because the ownership is not yours? Can you let or sell the house allocated by the government? How the rent is paid?
- (6) When were the houses in the yard built? How did people decide how large and how high of the houses? How did the Real Estate Management Bureau build new houses?
- (7) Any changes of the tenants? Why? Are they all from the same work-unit?
- (8) What's the name of your work-unit? Did you experience the 'up to the mountain, down to the village' (*shang shan, xia xiang*) movement? Where did you go? Who looked after the property at that time? How did you come back? Did you do the same work? How about the experience of your siblings?
- (9) Did the Cultural Revolution affect you? How?
- (10) How did the housing reform affect the house you lived? Any changes of the ownership? What's the job of your wife were doing? Did she get any housing allocation from the work-unit?
- (11) How did you buy the apartment for your child? Is it a commercial apartment? How do you feel the difference of the rights between it and the house you are living?
- (12) What's the ownership type of the apartment provided by the government because of the regeneration project? Can you sell it? Can your children inherit it?
- (13) How does the government assess the area of your house? Is the yard included? How about the standard for the self-built houses? Are they legally recognized? Does the government require ownership certificate? Any disagreement from the government?
- (15) How is the relationship between you and other tenants? How is the relationship between you and the previous owner?
- (14) What's your plan? Will you move? Do you know how other tenants think about the expropriation and the project?

(15) I heard of a tenant moved out from this courtyard, do you know why? Where did he move to? Is that also a government property? How does the government or the work-unit reallocate people?

(16) It seems there is something called 'right to rent'? Does that mean the government and the work-unit can't end the tenancy with the tenants? Can you buy the property? How? Do you have any certificate or contract for the use of the house?

(17) What's the difference between the public housing directly managed by the government and those managed by work-units?

(18) It seems the government allow the tenants to buy the public houses now? How? Does that mean you can get the same compensation as private owners?

(19) Other people complained about the principles of the compensation. They think it is more reasonable to compensate according to the small households rather than area. Do you agree?

(20) You solved out the housing issue for your children. How about other tenants or your colleagues?

(21) How about the rent you pay? How much at the beginning? Have it changed much? How about the rent for public housing in the multiple-stored buildings?

(22) Do you know anybody living here having other property? Do they prefer to be compensated by money or apartment?

(23) The government requires that all the households in one courtyard unit must sign the agreement together. How do you and other people feel about this? Do you know whether the people who have signed the contract are satisfied about the compensation or the new apartment?

(24) I heard of a tenant who lived here for years but has been kicked off by other tenants, do you mind telling me a bit more about the story?

(25) Do we have people relying on the benefit from the government living here?

(26) You mentioned many cases about public housing from Hong Kong and Singapore, do you pay lots of attention to this?

(27) Do mentioned your mum also has a house co-owned with her brothers but couldn't get the compensation because she could find all her brothers. Could you tell me more about this?

(28) Were your mum and grandparents, as private owners, affected by the political movements between the 1950s to the 1970s? How did your grandparents solve the housing issue for their children? Who are living in your mum's property now? Will your do something to help your mum to get her proportion of the property?

(29) Have you ever thought of saving for buying new property? Or you feel satisfied and secure with the public housing? How did your attitude change since the reform in housing and medical service? How has the expropriation caused by the regeneration changed your mind?

#### **Questions for private owners:**

(1) Could you tell me some of your early memory about the area (living space, market, commercial space, school, surgery, communal activities)? Could you describe a typical day of yours? How about the consumption? Anything impressive about the Bell Tower and Drum Tower? How did people use the two squares? Did you read newspaper, listen to radio? Exhibition in the Drum Tower?

(2) When was the Residents Committee and the Street Office established?

(3) When your family moved here, how did they feel about Beijing and the area? How did they feel about the difference between urban dwellers and people from the countryside? How do you feel about the 'capital' and living 'behind the Imperial Walls'?

(4) How many people in your big family? What do they do? What are the changes of their jobs? Do you know your neighbors? Their jobs? How do people get along with each other?

(5) Do you have the memory that many people were sent to the countryside from Beijing? Any of your family members involved? Could you tell me some stories?

(6) What changes happened about your family and the area (don't lead the interview but try to cover all these periods): Republican era (1912-1949), Sino-Japanese War(1938-1945), the establishment of PRC (1949), Socialist Transformation(1950s), Great Leap Forward and Commune Movement (1950s), The Great Famine (1958-1961), Cultural Revolution (1967-1976), Tangshan Earthquake (1976), Reform and Opening up (1978), Tourism development (1990s-), several (proposed) regeneration schemes (1980s, 1990s, now).

(7) When did the public tenants move in to your courtyard? What's your parents' attitude on this? Where are they from? How did they earn their life? When did these houses in the courtyard built? Any tension between your family and tenants? Why didn't your family build more houses? Is housing always an issue?

(8) From when 'private property' and 'private owner' became sensitive? How was the property of your family sold to the state? Procedure? How much money did they pay? Is your case typical? How did the government maintain the property? How did you engage with the Real Estate Management Bureau? Why didn't you get the property back after the Cultural Revolution?

(9) Do you know the several housing construction movements (e.g. *Gandalei*, *zhongzilou*, *jianyifang*)? Any influence on the people living here?

(10) Any changes since the housing reform in 1988? Have you ever thought of rearrange the use of the yard or rebuilt/repair your houses?

(11) When did you start to feel the *hutongs* here might be demolished? Do you admire the people who living in modern buildings? How did you solve the housing issue for your children? How did they think of the demolition of the neighborhood?

(12) Have you get the housing benefit from your work-unit? Any difference because of your private owner status?

(13) Your parents were running a coal-ball factory before the transformation. Could you tell me how the factory was like? Why and how did they sell/give it to the government? Public-private partnership? How many percent of the profit did your family share with the public part? Any changes in the past more than a half century?

(14) Festivals? Temple fair? Mosque? Square and Street vendors?

(15) How is the area and value of your property assessed for the compensation? Are you satisfied with this? The public tenants get the same standard, how do you understand this? How do you feel about the personnel of the Removal and Reallocation Office? Do you feel they represent the government? How will you rate the interaction between you and the government? Any problems from your perspective?

#### **Case 4:**

**Status:** Private property handed over during and after the Cultural Revolution; the previous owner became government tenants; other tenants have been lived here for more than 50 years

**Interviewees:** Mrs N (previous owner) and her daughter; Mrs D (tenant)

#### **Question list:**

- (1) You have told me that your father-in-law owned six rooms before the Cultural Revolution, and then three were left after that. Could you tell me more details about how this happened?
- (2) How was the three left to your family changed into public ownership as well? Do you pay the rent? To whom?
- (3) Why do you trust the government so much? Don't you worry that they may expropriate the house and you can't live in it anymore?
- (4) Who occupied other houses? Who are responsible to maintain the houses? How frequently? Do you need to report? Do you need to share the cost?
- (5) What did you do? Did you go to school? How were you incorporated into the state work-unit system? What's the welfare as a formal work-unit employee?
- (6) Were there lots of street performers like you before or even after 1949? Did they all become state employees? How was the process? Did you earn more after the nationalisation?
- (7) How did your colleagues get their houses?
- (8) When were these self-built house built? For what purpose? Did the government agree? The effect of the Tangshan Great Earthquake?

- (9) What are the jobs of your children? Why didn't their work-units solve the housing issue for them?
- (10) What's the influence of the Cultural Revolution? Did you perform during the Cultural Revolution?
- (11) Did you experience any prosecution meetings? How was it like? Were private owners important target?
- (12) There are policies that you can get your property confiscated in the Cultural Revolution back, but why you didn't do that? Why many people not do that?
- (13) Do you want to move? Do you want to live in a modern building and new community?
- (14) You want to move and feel the allocated apartment by the government is good, but why do you refuse to sign the agreement with the government?
- (15) What kind of compensation standard for the self-constructed houses do you think fair? How about other people's opinion?
- (16) How many heads of your household? How are they arranged in the three rooms?
- (17) Do you think the government should compensate for the three rooms confiscated in the Cultural Revolution? What's the difference of the right to the three rooms you are living in if they are still your property in title?
- (18) It seems the B&DTs is an area inhabited by lots of government tenants. Why?
- (19) The relationship among people living in these two courtyards is particularly good. Why?
- (20) Who clean the yard? Who paint the entrance door? Who hanged that national flag?
- (21) Do you know the compensation for other residents? Did you ask anybody?
- (22) The government compensate for the houses but not for the yard. How do you understand this? Who owns the yard? Who have the right to use the yard? What's the difference between the yard and the houses?
- (23) Where is the bathroom? Is it shared? Who built that?

(24) You said one tenant has lived longer than you. When did she move in? Why didn't you collect rent from her? What the change of the relation between you and your tenants after the handing over the property ownership to the government?

(25) Were you forced to give your property to the state? How did you think about this at that time? Do you regret?

(26) Do you have memory of the Commune movement?

(27) You mentioned your husband was offered a house by his work-unit but he refused, why? Was this typical?

(28) Your daughter bought an apartment from her work-unit? What type of the ownership of the apartment? Is it private now? Could the work-unit sell the public property? Did your daughter pay the rent before she bought it?

**Questions for the daughter:**

(29) Your mum said you were a support of the Cultural Revolution. What did you do? Did the status as a private owner's daughter affect you? Did you see many Big Character Posters in the neighbourhood?

(30) Do you agree with your mum, feeling living in the public house has no difference from living in self-owned property?

(31) Could you tell me some stories of other tenants?

(32) Could you tell me when were different houses in the courtyard added? When did people start to use separate kitchens?

(33) What's the contrast of life between the planned economy period and the market economy period?

(34) When did you have electricity and tap water? Heating system?

(35) Were you satisfied with the conditions here before moving out? What kind of blue-print you would expect about the neighbourhood?