

## Chapter Four

### Remaking Beijing as a People's Ideal Capital

#### *Changes in Chinese Society*

##### 1912-1949

When Beijing entered the Republican era in 1912, the Nationalist Party (Guomin-dang) controlled China. In Beijing, the Forbidden City still dominated the heart of city. But the imperial power it symbolized had ceased to exist. The last feudal society – the Qing Dynasty had ended; although Henry Puyi, the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), continued to live in the magnificent palaces until 1924, when he was expelled by Nationalist General Feng and the Forbidden City was turned into the Palace Museum. In 1914 the Municipal Council of Beijing newly created by the Nationalist government, publicized its mission of transforming the old urban infrastructure through city-sponsored public projects. As article in the inaugural issue of the *Municipal Report* (1914), the official publication of the Council, stated the purpose of politics,

“...is to promote the prosperity of both a country and members of that country. To make the country strong, we need to construct railroads, build arsenals and create state banks etc.; and to make the people prosperous, we need to develop modern industries, promote commerce and campaign for the people's livelihood. The kind of politics that has a direct bearing on people's needs is what we call municipal administration.”

From this declaration, we can see the end of China's last dynasty. With the founding of the Republic, people began to reconsider the meaning of the city. The idea of the city shifted from a symbol of imperial order to a city that emphasized secular and civilian use. (Shi, 1998)

Two observable changes in Beijing since the founding of the Republic 1911 are:

“the appearance of foreign quarters to the south-east Tian-an Men which accommodated the foreign embassies, banks, Western offices, number of Western churches, schools and hospitals in the city... During the nationalist government period Western architecture, such as the Senate and House of Commons and a number of municipal offices, public libraries and Western-style universities, was also constructed.” But the city “remained very much a consumer city, living still very much on its administrative and military role...” (Sit, 1996, p.83)

In 1927, Beijing lost its national capital status when the Guo-min-dang government chose Nanjing as the new capital, and Beijing was renamed Beiping. Under the threat of the Japanese, the city of Beiping declined in population and economy. From 1937 until 1945 the city was under Japanese occupation. Despite these events, the city plan did not change until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

### After 1949

China entered a new era when Mao Zedong declared on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, that “the People's Republic of China is founded!” Beijing was made the national capital of the People's Republic of China. The Chinese Communist party accepted Marxist theory as the official philosophy to carry out a socialist transformation of Chinese society. The remodeling and restoration of the ancient city—Beijing were strongly influenced by the ideology of transforming “consumer-cities into producer-cities”, vigorously promoted by Chairman Mao in 1949. Consumer-cities were the old commercial centers in the period of Nationalist control (1911-1949). They were viewed by the Chinese communists as parasitic. Thus, they should be changed into centers of production. As Mao said:

“Only when production in the cities is restored and developed, when consumer-cities are transformed into producer-cities, can the people's political power be consolidated. Other urban activities, for example, Party organization, public administration, trade unions and other people's organizations, culture and education, and the suppression of counter-revolutionaries, new agencies, newspapers and broadcasting stations—all these activities revolve around and serve the central task of production and construction.” (Mao, 1969, p.365)

Mao's policy resulted in substantial urban growth. Figure 4.1 shows the change of residential densities in the inner city of Beijing from 1851-1980.

During the time, the contrast between the Manchu City and the Chinese City dissolves gradually. Originally the Imperial city and the Manchu City were very much like garden cities, whereas the Chinese City was the crowded business center. After the First Revolution (1911), Chinese families began to move into Manchu City, relieving somewhat the pressure in the Chinese City. But as more and more people moved into Beijing, the densities in both the Manchu City and the Chinese City increased rapidly. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, workshops and small factories were developed in the inner city reflecting the “transformation from the consumer-cities

to producer-cities”, This drew more people into the central districts, so that the original distinction between the different parts of the city disappeared (Schinz, 1989). In Figure 4.1, we can see Beijing’s transformation from an imperial city to a people’s capital, this transformation expressed the change in society and in the ideology of the people. The difference between Manchu City and Chinese City no longer existed.

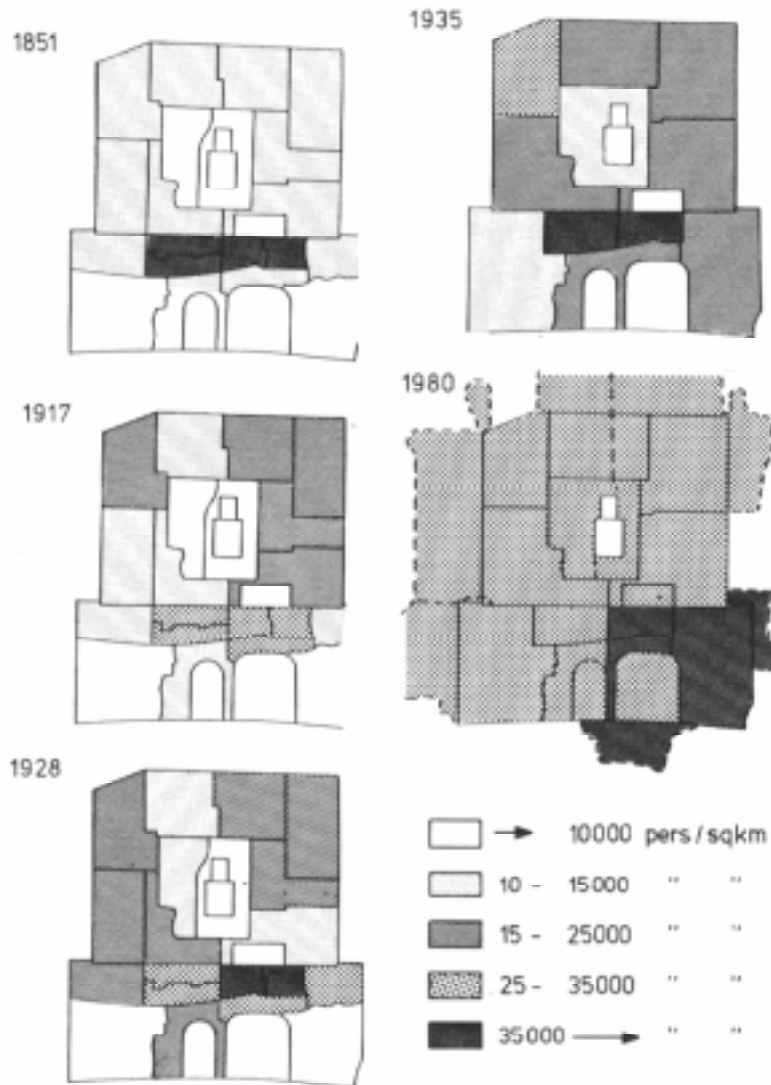


Figure 4.1 Changes of Population Density (from Schinz, 1989, p.89)

### *Changes to the Physical Elements*

#### *Liang’s Proposal*

During the last feudal dynasty –the Qing Dynasty and during the years prior to liberation in 1949, the old capital of Beijing saw little change. In early 1950, a local

planner and architect, Professor Liang Sicheng of Tsinghua University and his colleagues proposed a plan for a new city to be built to the west of the inner city of Beijing. This new city would house the PRC (People's Republic of China) central government headquarters, Liang proposed to preserve the imperial palace, the city walls and gates, temples, and altars, as well as the traditional urban residential areas in the form of *Hutong* (Sit, 1995)(Figure 4.2). Liang stated that the old city (within the wall) had preserved the essence of Chinese urban planning and should be completely preserved. He argued that the Chinese government should take the responsibility to protect the old city, a cultural artifact of historic and artistic value, for the people. (Liang and Cheng, 1950) Moreover, based on prevailing wind directions and the orientation of major drainage systems, new industrial districts were to be located outside the Outer City walls in the southeastern and southwestern suburb of the city. The northwestern outskirts were designated as high education and resort areas. (Figure 4.3)

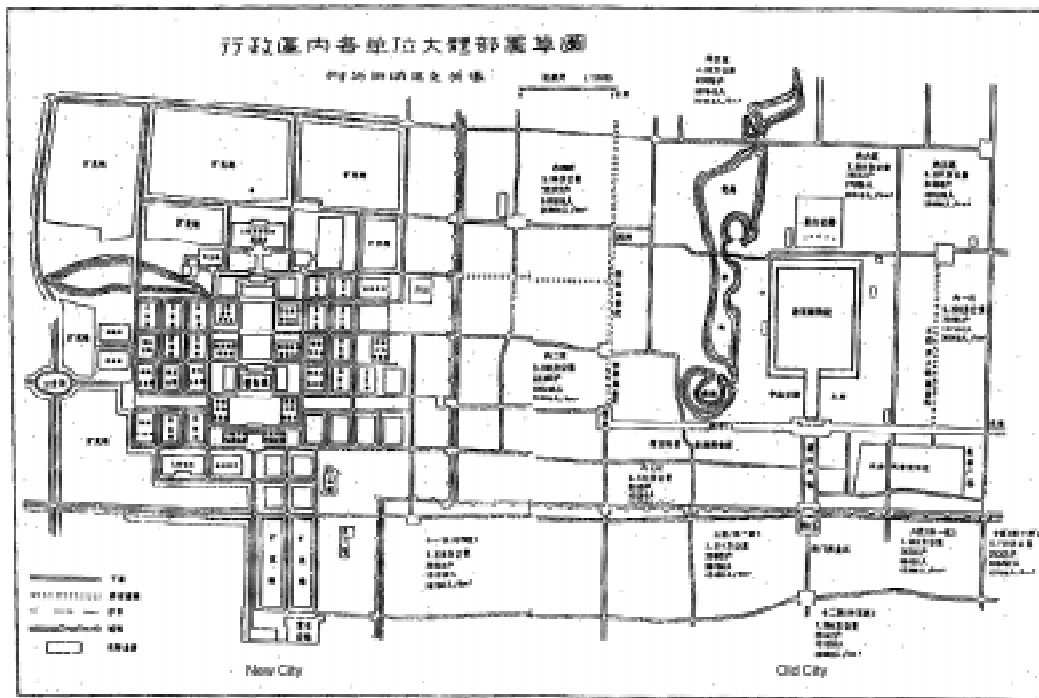


Figure 4.2 Liang's Proposal of Beijing (from Liang and Chen, 1950)

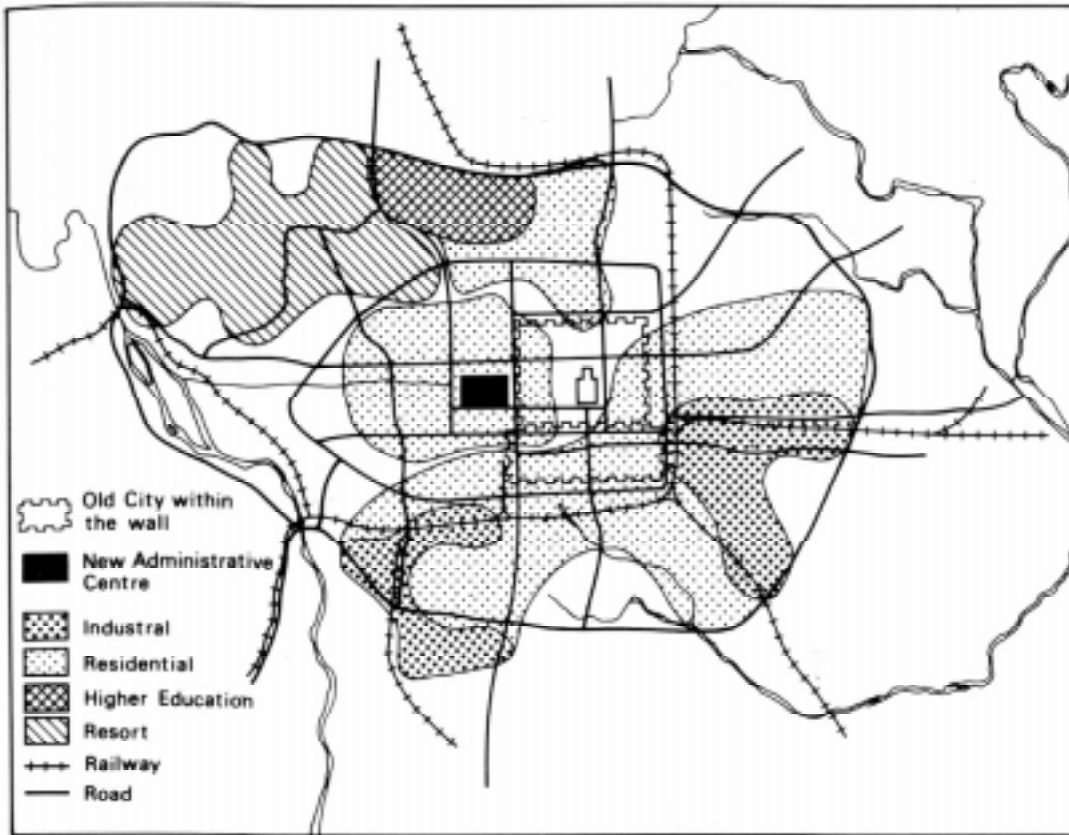


Figure 4.3 Liang's Proposal of Beijing (Sit, 1995, p.245)

Liang proposed a new administrative center that was in plan similar to the plan of the old city (Figure 4.2). The new administrative center extended the circulation system and street pattern of the old city, kept the old spatial organization and geometry—square, and preserved the old city within the city wall. Liang stated the new administrative area should be larger than the old Imperial City and retain the possibility to develop in the future, since it was impossible to find enough space for future development within the old city wall. (Liang and Chen, 1950) If we look at the Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3 together, the administrative area was in the center of the new city, Beijing would have two centers. The new Beijing would be divided in terms of the functional zoning; the existing chessboard pattern was kept in the central area; ring roads and radiating road were added to create a new circulation system with a new radial-concentric pattern; A ring road became the new city boundary. In the Liang's new city, the old city was completely preserved, the new center kept some characteristics of the physical elements in the old

city, but functional zoning and the plan's new circulation pattern expressed the ideology of people in the socialist era and the influence of functionalism.

Despite the strengths of Liang's plan, it faced opposition. At this time, the central government was influenced by Soviet experts. Based on their experience in the USSR, the soviet experts argued that setting up the new administrative center within the old city could minimize cost and save time compared to building it on a new site. In addition, the Soviet experts used Moscow as a successful example of reconstructing a new capital. Preservation of the old city was not their concern: "We have such type of suggestion too, i.e. to turn the old city of Moscow into a museum, and build a new city by its side. We had turned it down and reconstructed Moscow. The result is not bad at all. Demolition of old buildings in Beijing is a task that must be done somewhere in time." (Beijing Construction History, 1987) Ultimately, the Soviet experts won the argument, Liang's farsighted proposal was rejected by the Chinese communist leaders. Beijing followed the example of Moscow and became both a socialist city and the model of city planning for the entire country.

### **New Plan of Beijing**

The dominant ideology of the Chinese Communist leader was to transform consumer-cities into producer-cities. Beijing, in addition to reviving its administrative, governmental, cultural, educational and research functions, was also to add a new dimension of industrial production. The development plans of the 1950s, following the Moscow example, divided the city into functional zones where different kinds of activities were conducted. Beijing's industrial zones were located on the east and west sides of the city at the ends of Changan Boulevard. Industry became also to occupy the southern portion of Beijing's outskirts, adjacent to Yongding River. The city core became a center of national government and bureaucratic offices. The north-west quadrant of the city became the district for higher education and research facilities. These arrangements in part incorporated existing land usage patterns and took advantage of prevailing northwesterly winds that would keep factory smoke away from much of the city. (Wu, 1953) The functional zoning and circulation patterns were impacted by functionalism and are similar to Liang's plan, which also expressed the new ideology of "transforming the consumer-cities to producer-cities". There is an emphasis on bringing workers to the city,

the producer-city added one industrial function and provided more job opportunities for the workers. Therefore, providing more housing for the workers is another change in the new plan. New housing were added around the Inner City, especially in the northwest direction. But the new plan proposed by the Soviet experts had only one center. On July 22, 1982, the Beijing Municipal People's Congress approved a new "General Plan for Beijing Municipal Development" based on the soviet expert's plan would which will govern the future of China's national capital. (Figure 4.4) The results of the new plan led to a series of changes in the physical elements of Beijing.

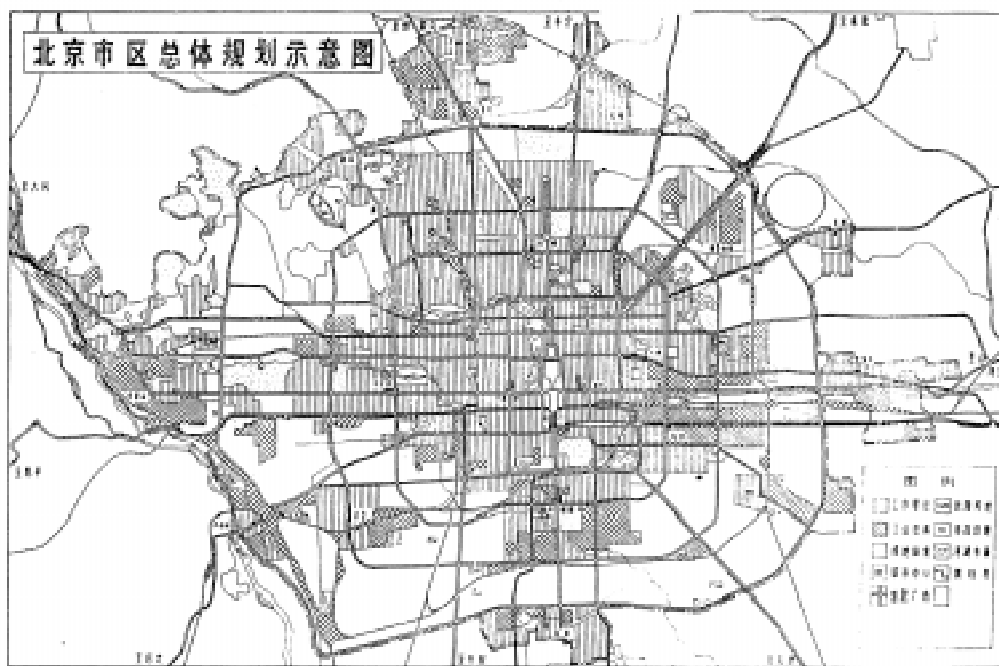


Figure 4.4 New Plan of Beijing

### **Changes to Five Elements**

#### *Boundary of City*

Alterations of the city's walls began during the Republican period. Demolition of the walls for urban expansion accelerated in the 1950s and was completed by 1962. The boundary of the imperial ideal city, which was maintained throughout the Ming and Qing Dynasties, less as a protective shield against barbarian attacks than a symbolic power of the emperor, was removed. The new contemporary socialist capital which rapidly developed was influenced by functionalism, No longer was there a clear physical boundary between the urban and suburb, and the whole city was divided in terms of

functional zoning. the fourth ring road out from the old Inner City became the boundary of the new capital.

### *The Important Institutions*

The old Imperial Palace – the Forbidden City was transformed to a public museum – the Palace Museum in 1924. The Forbidden City is still situated at the center of Beijing and its splendid architectural complex has been preserved. Large sums of money were voted for its upkeep. Today, it remains as glamorous as before, and symbolizes the pride the Chinese have in their history and culture. It attracts millions of Chinese and international tourists annually. Preserving the Forbidden City, one of the most valuable and spectacular art pieces in the world, could enhance its present value as the cultural and historic inheritance of China and maximize its positive impact on tourism and on the city’s role as the cultural center of the country. (Sit, 1995) But the Forbidden City lost the symbolic meaning of the emperor’s power and its position as “the heart of Beijing”. The real “heart of Beijing” today is Tiananmen Square, located south of Tian-an Men (Figure 4.4), designed over the past half century. Tiananmen Square is the largest public square in the world, with a capacity of more than half a million. It is used for ceremonial purpose to celebrate the achievements of socialist construction. Tiananmen Square represents a level of openness of society that contrasts with the walled spaces characteristic of imperial Beijing. It reflects the noticeable change of the city’s physical elements that has taken place under the socialist system. A detailed discussion of the transformation to its physical elements will be undertaken in case study I, from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men.



Figure 4.5 from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men



### *Spatial Organization and Circulation System*

The master plan of urban development for Beijing today (Figure 4.4) is based on an understanding of the old city. The significant north-south axis from Yong-ding Men to Bell Tower still exists, but not as strongly in the new plan. Most of the old spatial sequences which were achieved by a nesting of enclosures, one within the other, have been changed. The walls of the Imperial City were demolished. The T-shape walled imperial way before Tian-an Men was transformed to the large public open space – Tiananmen Square, and much of the housing on both sides of the north-south axis at Tian-an-men is gone. At Tiananmen Square, the Changan Boulevard, which extended from either side of the old palace, was lengthened to the east and west to form a strong cross-axis, breaking down the traditional north-south axis of the imperial city.

The new circulation system of radiating avenues and ring roads (Figure 4.4) was strongly influenced by functionalism and varied dramatically from the circulation system of the old imperial city. Like Corbusier's *Ville Contemporaine*, circulation is the most visible element in the new city plan. The old city with its chessboard system of roads was preserved but new concentric and radial roads were added to form a new network which includes: six east-west and three north-south arteries running through the old city, four concentric rings and a number of radial roads, together with many principal and secondary roads. The second ring road follows the general line of the old city wall, torn down in the 1950's. The Fourth ring road was finished in the 1990's. The ring road structure is used to bring greater coherency and improve the traffic flow in the city. The basic spatial pattern of Beijing – the square changed to a centrality-radial pattern for serving the utilitarian function of accommodating roads quickly (functionalism).

There was also significant change to the skyline of Beijing. To protect the historic core of the city, the high-rise buildings cannot be built within the area circumscribed by the second ring road. Inside the second ring road is the old imperial ideal city, some of the character of the old imperial capital survives in that core district, which continues to contain important government offices, national ceremonial grounds and some central shopping centers. (Lin, 1983) Prohibiting high-rise buildings at the city core has resulted in a skyline similar to that of Moscow mentioned in Chapter Two: As in Moscow, the

“International style” high-rise buildings on the perimeter of the core strongly contrast with the traditional foreground. (Comparing Figure 4.6 with Figure 1.11)



Figure 4.6 New Skyline of Beijing (from Schinz, 1989, p.87)

#### *Case Study I – from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men*

This case study addresses one of the most important sites in the city –from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men. It illustrates the transformation of the physical elements of the city and reflects the ideology of the people. This case study addresses this transformation at the national and public scale of city. The changes are related to three physical elements in the new city: the most important institutions; the spatial organization and circulation.

Tian-an Men Zheng-yang Men (“the gate that faces the sun directly”) is the south gate of the Inner City, Tian-an Men (“the gate of heaven peace”) is the south gate of Imperial City (Figure 3.4). They are both on the main north-south axis of Beijing. In the space between these two gates many important events in Chinese history took place: It was here that the Ming and Qing emperors held the grandest of all ceremonies, the issuing of imperial edicts. It was also here that the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement which marked the beginning of China’s new democratic revolution took place in 1919. Finally, it was here that Chairman Mao Zedong declared the establishment of People’s Republic of China on

October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949. The transformation of this space was always related to the transformation of the urban society and ideology of its people.

Before 1949

In Ming and Qing Dynasty, Zheng-yang Men itself was a composite, fortified gate consisting of a pair of strong buildings with lofty superstructures above connected by walls to form an interior courtyard (Figure 4.7). Three gates led into the southernmost tower building. The central gate was only for the use of the emperor when he traveled from his palace to the Temple of Heaven. The other two gates were used by the common people. The separate gates for the emperor and common people clearly reflect the social hierarchy in the imperial city. Chinese call this type of gate complex *Wengcheng* (“urn walls”) because in plan view they look like an earthenware jar. The Zheng-yang Men complex protruded from the wall in a somewhat semicircular form. This form is functional: it provided additional support against attack at this vulnerable location. When an attack occurred, all gates on both sides of the open courtyard would be closed. In the event that the outside gate was breached and troops penetrated the enclosed courtyard, they would find themselves vulnerable to attack by archers assembled on the confining walls linking the gate towers. Figure 4.8 shows the view from the east in 1914, the two towers of Zheng-yang Men are connected by a semicircular wall with a side gate that formed a center to link the activities between the Inner and Outer Cities.

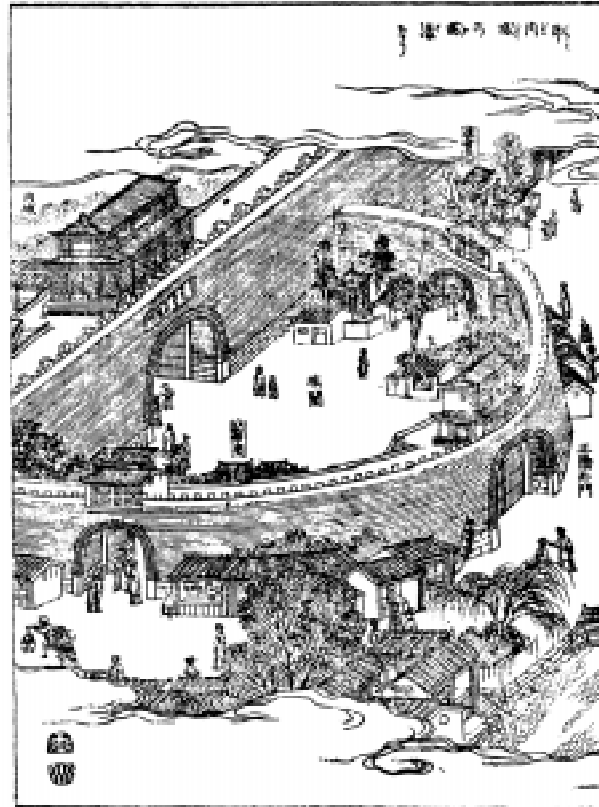


Figure 4.7 Zheng-yang Men in Ming and Qing Dynasty (from Arlington and Lewisohn, 1935)

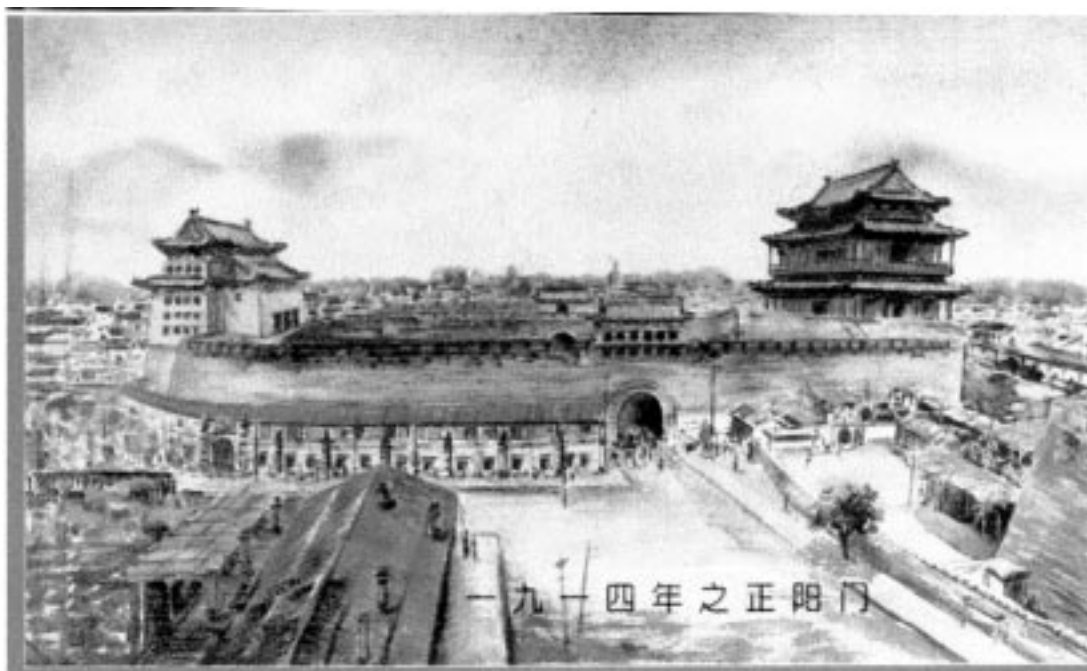


Figure 4.8 Zheng-yang Men in c.1914 (from Knapp)

By the later part of the Qing Dynasty the Zheng-yang Men is generally called Qian Men (“front gate”). During the Ming and Qing dynasty, another prominent but lower gate was established beyond Zheng-yang Men, this lower gate was earlier called the Da-ming (“great Ming”) gate and then later during Qing dynasty the Da-qing (“great Qing”) gate. This gate opened on to a T-shaped “thousand paces” (*qianbulang*) walled imperial way and then on to an elongated open space that ended at reached the magnificent Tian-an Men and the entrance of the Imperial City (Figure 4.9). The Tian-an men and its lofty tower were erected in 1420 as a formal entry to the Imperial City and were rebuilt in 1651 in order to repair damage incurred during the change of dynasties. With its crimson walls and yellow glazed-tile double roof, the Tian-an Men gate tower is a fine example of palace- style wooden architecture. Nine bays wide and five bays deep, this lofty and impressive structure served as an elevated platform from which imperial edicts were issued. The *yamen* (administrative offices and bureaus) were located on both sides of *qianbulang* (Figure 4.10, 4.11).

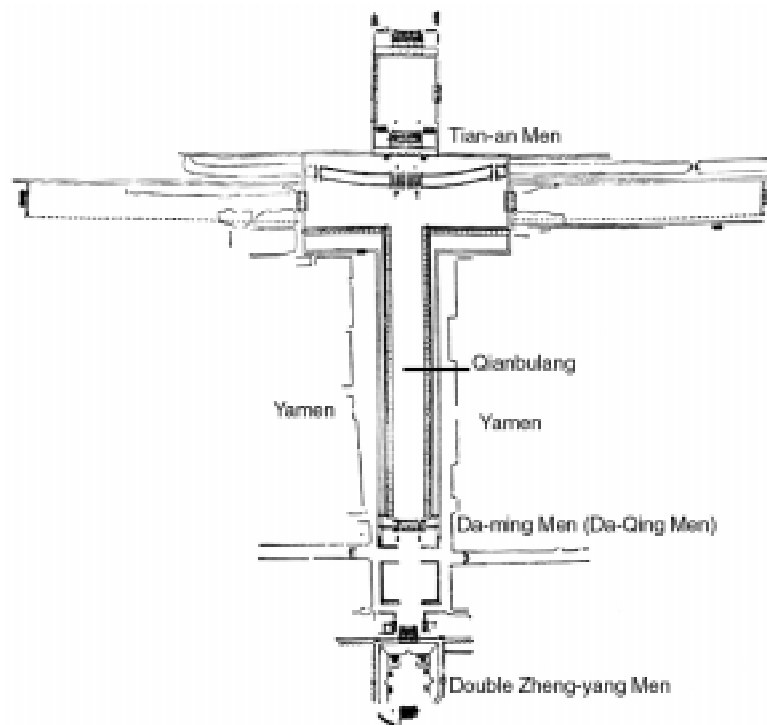


Figure 4.9 Plan from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men at Ming and Qing Dynasty (from Building in China, Feb, 1984)

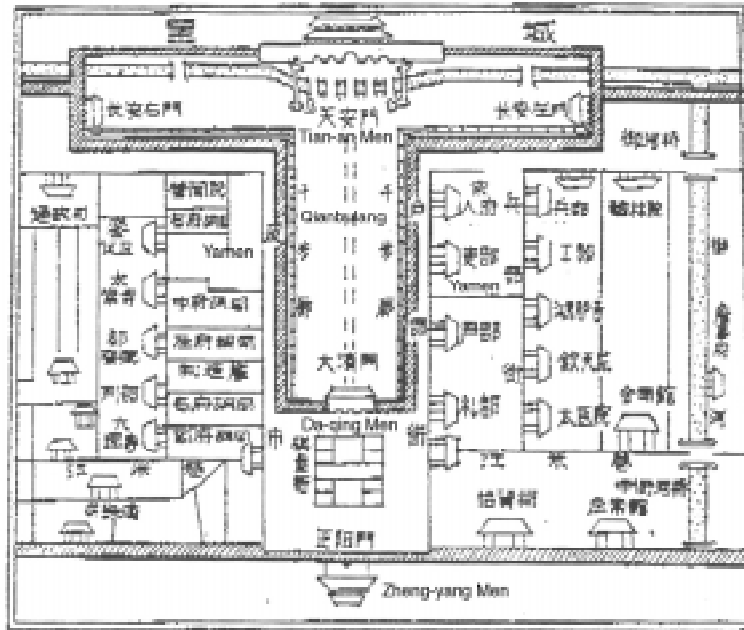


Figure 4.10 Plan from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men at Ming and Qing Dynasty (from Dong, 1988)



Figure 4.11 Perspective from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men at Ming and Qing Dynasty (from Knapp)

The spatial organization from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men clearly demonstrate two characteristics discussed earlier (p.48): axial alignment and nesting of enclosures. The linkage between the double Zheng-yang Men, the low Da-qing men, the T-shaped *qianbulang* and magnificent Tian-an men, and the visible imperial palaces beyond, formed part of the important main north-south axis of imperial Beijing. Upon penetrating the outside gate of Zheng-yang Men, you entered the interior courtyard. A tower building with brilliant purple roof, red doors, is at the northern end of the courtyard. Beyond the tower building is a small square. Across this open space, is the lower gate – Da-qing Men. The Da-qing Men led on to a T-shaped walled imperial way (*Qianbulang*) and then an elongated open space that extended to the gate of the Imperial City – Tian-an Men. A series of open and closed of spaces clearly inscribes the symbolic north-south “longitudinal axis of the imperial city and the imperial processional path.” (Knapp, p.49) This path was used by the emperor when he held ceremonies.

After 1912, during the Republican period, Da-qing Men was renamed Zhong-hua Men after the Chinese name for the Republic of China. The name changes from Da-ming Men (great Ming), Da-qing Men (great Qing), to Zhong-hua Men (Republic of China), expressed the changes of the urban society: and the changes from the imperial Ming and Qing Dynasty to the Republic era.

Qian Men (Zheng-yang Men) sits on the northern end of the Qianmen Boulevard, a major street in the Outer City (from Qian Men to Yong-ding Men, see Figure 3.4). In the early republic, Qian Men was no longer used by the emperors, and was opened to public. But its walls, moats and gate formed a bottleneck, making circulation between Inner City and Outer City difficult. In 1915, a plan for the rearrangement and modernization of Qian Men to rationalize traffic flow, proposed by Zhu Qiqian, present of the Municipal Council, was approved by national government. (Shi, 1998) *Wengcheng* of Qian Men was dismantled to allow direct passage between the Tian-an Men area and the Outer City (Figure 4.12, 4.13, 4.14). Two physical elements changed: First, the traffic congestion was alleviated in the busiest district of the city – the middle section of the important north-south axis, improving the circulation between the Inner City and Outer City. Second, the spatial organization in the axis changed, because the interior courtyard between the two towers of Qian-men was gone, the enclosed space was transformed into

a square. Until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the area between Qian Men and Tian-an men was still marked by an open space at its core and *yamen* on both sides.

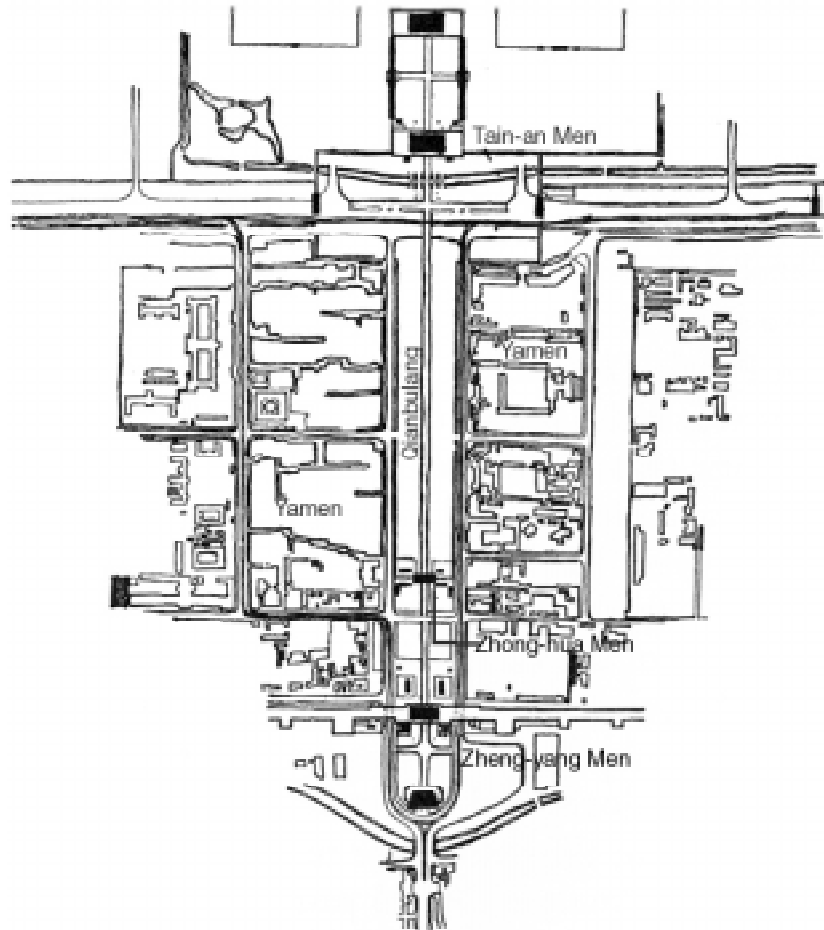


Figure 4.12 Plan from Zheng-yang men to Tian-an Men c1920-c1948 (from Hou and Wu, Wenwu, no.9, 1977, p.10)





Figure 4.13 Photo from Zheng-yang Men to Tian-an Men c 1945 (from A Brief History of Ancient Chinese City Planning)



Figure 4.14 Photo of Zheng-yang Men (1995)

### After 1949

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949, Mao Zedong raised the five-star red flag at Tian-an men, proclaiming the People's Republic of China. The main concern of the Chinese Communist leader was the transformation of imperial space into people's space. Tian-an Men, as an elevated platform from which imperial edicts were issued, symbolized Beijing as a sacred and imperial city. In the process of transforming Tian-an Men, it was designed as the new center of the socialist nation.

When the founding ceremony of the People's Republic of China was celebrated in 1949, the T-shape area beneath Tian-an Men was still "confined on all sides by walls which seriously hindered popular activities by obstructing their sight and confining the exhilarating atmosphere of rejoicing" within the space. "Tian-an Men represents the essence of ancient Chinese architecture whereas the walls represent an obnoxious symbol of feudalism. We must preserve the essential part and weave it into the urban life of present day so that it may better serve the people." (Hou, 1986, p.14) After 1949, the T-shape area beneath Tian-an Men that had developed during the imperial past was altered to a *guangchang* or square. The clearing of dilapidated *yamen* buildings adjacent to the passageway created the first broad open space in the main south-north axis of the city. At the same time, Changan Boulevard running past the square was widened, Changan Boulevard was now the main artery and the new west-east axis of the whole city, overshadowing the old north-south axis.

After the reconstruction of Tiananmen Square, an entirely new square, much larger than before, presented itself to the public. The first post-liberation structure erected at Tian-an Men Square was the Monument to the People's Heroes, completed by May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1958, in time for the tenth anniversary of the People's Republic. Then the Great Hall of People on the west of Tiananmen Square and Museum of Chinese Revolution and Chinese History on the east were built. Instead of being the approach to the Imperial palace, Tiananmen Square became the most important institutions of the city. Even the Forbidden City lost its commanding position and seemed to be the annex of the expanded square. The erection of the mausoleum of Mao Zedong in 1977 brought a further extension to the square (Figure 4.15, 4.5). "With the completion of these buildings, the

square has become the heart of political life of China's various nationalities.” (Hou, 1986, p.14)

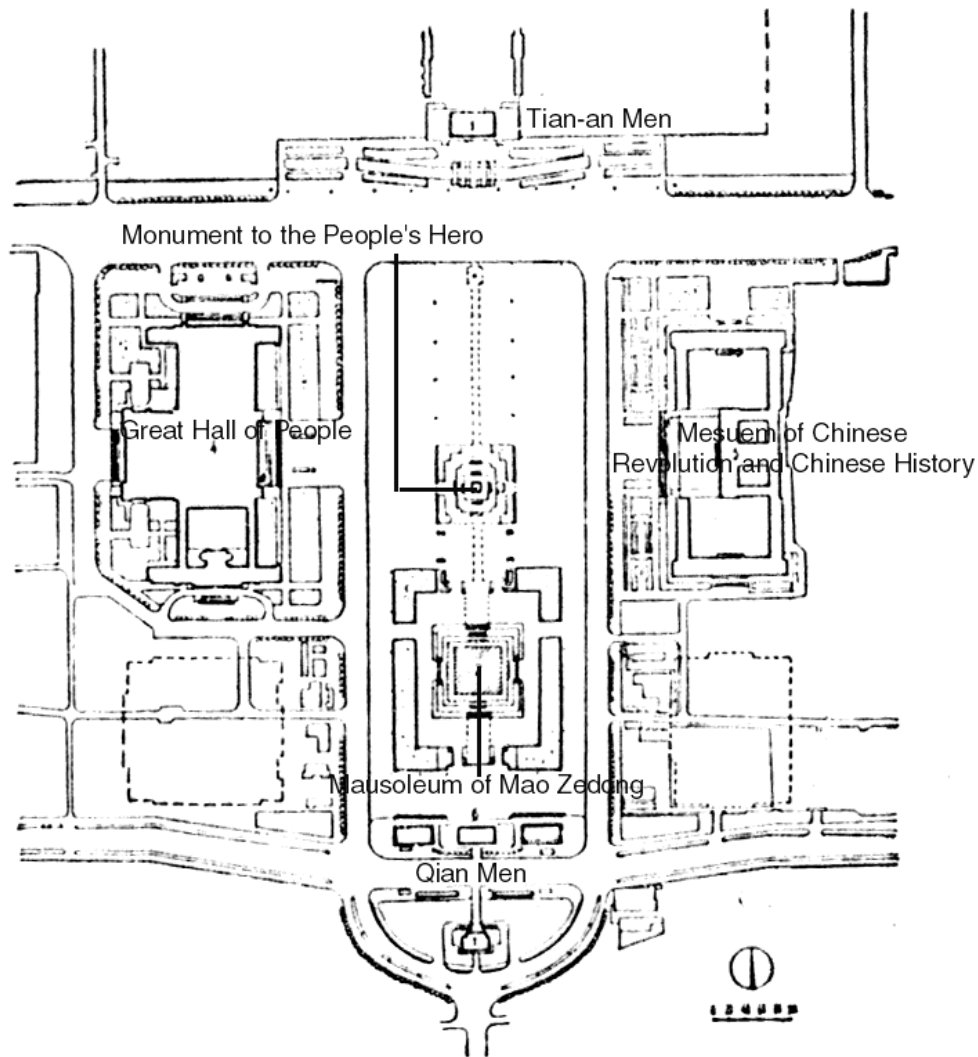


Figure 4.15 Plan of Tian-an Men Square (from Building in China, Feb, 1984)

Tian-an Men, as seen in Figure 4.16, was transformed from an imperial gateway to the socialist podium. The socialist slogans “Long live the People’s Republic of China” and “Long Live the Unity of People of the World” frame an immense portrait of Chairman Mao. Before 1911, only the emperor could pass through the central gate of the five gates that pierce the wall beneath Tian-an Men. Today, anyone may walk leisurely through this 45 meter tunnel-like portal (Figure 4.17, 4.18). This change also reflects the transformation of Beijing from an imperial ideal city to a socialist capital. Looking south

from the recess of the central portal of Tian-an Men, the recess formed the foreground of Tiananmen Square, the symbol of the new nation, where one finds the Monument of the People's Heroes and Mausoleum of Mao Zedong.



Figure 4.16 Tian-an Men Today



Figure 4.17 View from the Portal of Tian-an Men (from Knapp)



Figure 4.18 View from North of Tian-an Men (from Knapp)

The reconstruction of Tiananmen Square resulted in three important changes to the city. First, the heart of Beijing moved from the Forbidden City to the Tiananmen Square, and the Forbidden City became an annex of the people's square. Second, the spatial organization of Tian-an Men changed. Two walled spaces – the *wengcheng* of Zheng-yang Men and the T-shaped courtyard space were removed, and the first broad open space in the middle of north-south axis was created. Two towers of the Inner City Gate – Qian Men and the majestic Tian-an Men were preserved along the north-south axis, and the placement of the Monument to the People's Hero and the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong intensified the traditional north-south axis. In maintaining and reinforcing the north-south axis, the square serves as an example illustrating how to retain the historic and aesthetic value of traditional elements while reflecting the new ideology of the people in the socialist era. The changes to Changan Boulevard illustrate the change to the third and the last physical element in the city – the circulation system, But Changan Boulevard, which extended from either side of the old palace, was extended to the east and west to form a counter-axis, breaking down the traditional simple north-south axis of the imperial city. Changan Boulevard now serves as the city's main west-east artery. Five more west-east and three north-south arteries were added through the city. These new