



BETWEEN STREETS AND MONUMENTS

Beijing! Beijing is a piece of barren desert: there are no mountains, no water, no flowers. . . . In this state of unbearable filth I see the four thousand years' doom of our ancient country. . . . When I walk alone in the deserted barren streets . . . I dream of the prosperity of Paris, the grandeur of Berlin, the skyscrapers and speedy cars of London.

—Tong Yiping, “Chun chou” (Spring sorrows)

A NEW SCHOOL IN THE OLD CAPITAL?

In the first decades of the twentieth century, “new” intellectuals who resided in or traveled to Beijing came to adopt and employ an increasingly uniform palette of colors, a shared set of adjectives, and a common array of metaphors when they described the capital in novels, memoirs, and essays. The Beijing of literature was an old, stuffy, and corrupt place.¹ Beijing, especially in comparison to Shanghai, and China’s port cities in general, was a backwater in which the self-described forces of the new felt they were in constant danger of drowning. The persistence of a long tradition of official habits seemed to be physically embodied in Beijing’s monuments, palaces, walls, and residences, which were a forceful reminder of the connection of the city with the imperial system, now discredited.² The air, filled with the dust of unpaved roads, was a living metaphor for the political and moral atmosphere of the capital. “The city,” as David Strand noted, “exuded what others more prosaically termed a ‘bureaucratic odor.’”³ To many modern intellectuals, the same objects and costumes that, in the eyes of the conservative scholar and the antiquarian, were cherished treasures of the past, looked like contaminated relics, miasmatic rotten carcasses.⁴ Literally in the midst of all this, in the

area marked by the physical resilience of the past, in the old Imperial City, stood the very symbol of the new, the citadel of modern learning, Beijing University.

This sharp contrast between the supposedly fossilized city and the new school also informs a large part of Beida's celebratory literature and of the historiography of the May Fourth period, mainly in Chinese, but also in English. The *new* university often stands as a foil to *old* Beijing, which besieges and dominates the former with its monumental landmarks, and from whose influence the modernity of the school can only be closely sheltered. In this perspective, Beida and its intellectuals appear to be paralyzed in a double bind in their relation with the city and its people. On the one hand, due to the constraints both of intellectual elitism and urban spatial division, New Culture intellectuals, despite their increasing awareness of and declared interest in the plight of the people (and of the urban population in particular) are depicted as incapable of achieving any contact or connection with them.⁵ On the other hand, while Beida intellectuals failed to overcome their division with urban residents, they also failed to clearly separate themselves from the basest element of city life, to set themselves apart from the corrupt customs of the capital and truly be the morally upright "shining citadel on the hill" in the center of urban decadence. Students at Beijing University allegedly continued (well into the 1920s) to indulge in the temptations the capital had to offer, in the sense both of expensive or dubious entertainment and of connections to officialdom and bureaucracy.⁶ In these narratives, the city is understood either as a source of danger or as unexplored territory, something from which the university either should be separated or cannot help but remain estranged.

In previous chapters I have argued how, during the May Fourth era, the idea of a clear-cut separation between Beida and the urban space of Beijing not only is untenable but also replicates the very argument the government used in its repression of student activism. In the following pages I will show how the relationship of Beijing University students with the urban space of Beijing before, during, and immediately after the May Fourth movement was not one of estrangement. Rather, urban space was a central factor in the political evolution of Beijing University student activists in that student politics was framed and shaped by the interaction with the physical, social, and economic structure of the city. A city, it must be noted, that was not at all "old," unchanging, or fossilized.

In his seminal study of city politics in Beijing, David Strand aptly criticized those descriptions in which "the city itself appears as so much masonry to be marched through and around, and ancient prop employed to deepen through contrast the colors of modern politics or to blend in with the atavism

of those intent on reestablishing the monarchy."⁷ Nor, I would add, can the entangled relationship between activism and the space of the capital be reduced to the unidirectional influence of the city on the students: activists used urban space, expressed their politics through it, but, in doing so, they also produced changes in how the urban space was lived in and represented. Student marches and protests traced and defined a new map for radical politics in the streets of Beijing, a map that survived and was followed at least until 1989. The activists' struggles truly prefigured "the social and political inscription of the geography of the city, through which urban space comes to represent and define the meaning of these struggles."⁸

Student activism changed the way the space of Beijing signified, in other words, how and what its buildings, streets, and monuments meant. This particular case therefore also points to a larger theoretical argument concerning how we describe and analyze urban space in general. We often tend to focus on the specificities of time and think of space as an "abstract, metaphysical concept, as a container for our lives rather than the structures we help to create."⁹ In such a perspective, then, space seems to imply and, in a sense, guarantee passivity, stasis, neutrality. Accounts of the history of Beijing and Beijing University that center on the simple new-old opposition precisely reduce the question of space to one of chronology and limit the issue of interactions and production of spaces to a question of modernity versus tradition. Students, intellectuals, and people in general appear to be more or less powerless vis-à-vis the city, its atmosphere, and the overwhelming historical weight of its monumental symbols. Monuments, unchanging fixed signs, overpower them intellectually, politically, and physically.

In these accounts, the city, which here is understood as the product not so much of an ever-controlling architect (as in other more "modern" cases) but of the unabated forces of culture and tradition, is the only true actor. People, no matter if they are marching, protesting, studying, or working, are without power to change the space they live in, and ultimately can only conform to this space and their position in it. However, when we describe the inhabitants of space as always passive and the architects of space as always active, we are not simply misrepresenting agencies in the city. By abstracting power to an elusive but omnipresent level, we are negating any political value to urban practices and denying agency to people to live in and make the city. Doing so, we are thus reproducing and reinforcing a conception that is part and parcel of an ideological belief, the power of abstract space.¹⁰

I propose instead to start from the position that space is not simply the abstract space of planners and architects, or the map of the city, or the symbolic representation of its monuments and palaces, but it is also *lived* space. Space is a "social process, an ever changing geometry of power and

signification—constantly produced and transformed through everyday practices.”¹¹ Or, in a slightly different formulation, “spatial structures, like other sorts of structures, are durable and constraining but they also are subject to transformation as a consequence of the very social action that they shape.”¹² Nothing in a city, not even monuments, and *especially not* monuments, can be assumed either to remain unchanged (even when physically untouched) or to produce meanings coherently, continuously, and by themselves. Rather, urban space is continuously recycled, remade, and rewritten by social practices and especially by political interventions. Urban (lived) space is the terrain of political practices.

The first aspect I consider is the urban environment of Beijing in relation to the university and its location. Reflecting its institutional status in its physical setting, Beida was indeed placed next to the symbolic centers of the imperial landscape. But it soon found itself very close also to those areas that were more clearly being marked by colonial domination and global capitalism. These spatial relationships were enacted and used when students marched through the city streets in May 1919. Students congregated in front of a symbol of the imperial legacy (Tanamen) and moved towards the center of colonial presence, the Legation Quarter. By rethinking the significance of this path, I challenge established notions on how power and history are embodied in monuments and buildings. Finally, May 4, 1919, was also literally a “movement,” a march that led students into the city en masse. In that, it was also the moment in which a particular kind of activism became public, and it did so by the students physically being in the city streets, interacting with the spatial hierarchy of Beijing, by occupying “a space.” It was only through this overt taking over of public space and through the symbolic inscription of specific areas of the city that the political category of “students” found its place.

THE PERSISTENCE OF MONUMENTS

In April 1917 an article in *Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang zazhi*) warned the new university president about the corruption that had allegedly seeped deep into Beida, and did so by pointing explicitly to the social and physical environment in which the University was settled:

I just want to say one word of advice to Cai Yuanpei: the reason why the state established the university is to produce the pillars of the state (*guzhijia*). These so-called pillars of the state were not supposed to rush out and get employed in the administration or pursue a bureaucratic career. Initially the state meant to use the university to train talent that could be at

the core of the country's strength. At Beijing University, *because of its position in the city*, bureaucratic thought has already penetrated deeply among scholars and cannot be eliminated. Besides, many Beida professors are holding (or are incumbent of) official posts, and because of this, they cannot but cultivate social relationships.¹³

In 1898, the new Imperial University had been strategically placed in a largely secluded section of the city in a building that had a direct connection with the imperial house. The university was located inside the Imperial City, a symbolically and physically restricted area, at that time still enclosed by walls. The closest access point through the walls was Donghamen immediately southeast of the school and it is difficult to imagine that any close integration with city life and people—such as we see in the May Fourth period—could have taken place under such spatial constraints.¹⁴ Despite attempts to move the university outside the city walls to a less cramped and newer location,¹⁵ the university managed only to expand in the same neighborhood, where, during the early Republic, new centers of power were located. The physical persistence of new institutions in old imperial or official buildings seemed to imply the persistence of traditional attitudes and to signal continuity between the imperial and republican states. Zhang Guotao recalls the atmosphere that enveloped Beijing and the university neighborhood in 1916: “The President's office, the Premier's office, Parliament, and other buildings bearing the Republic of China insignia were scattered about the city, all retaining the aura of official residences of past dynasties. They displayed nothing new. This applied also to Peking University, which retained much of the atmosphere of the old Imperial Capital Academy.”¹⁶ By 1918 the three main buildings that made up Beijing University all lay at a short walking distance from the red walls and yellow roofs of the Forbidden City. The first question is whether this physical proximity to what remained an enduring symbol of culture and power did or did not constitute a major influence in the political conscience of students and teachers at Beida.¹⁷

In the late Qing, the significance of placing the Imperial University (Jingshi Daxue Tang), the predecessor of Beida, next to the center of dynastic authority was not lost on the teachers and students. On several occasions they expressed their conviction that the university was a direct descendant of the imperial schools and, like the Taixue and the Guozijian, had a special relationship with the state.¹⁸ The legacy of these long-gone predecessors was reclaimed again in the late 1940s; in a speech commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Beijing University, then president Hu Shi identified the origins of a “national university” in the creation of the Taixue under the Han emperor Wudi in 124 A.D., making Beida de facto the oldest university in the world.¹⁹

But frames of comparisons that were viable and current before and long after the May Fourth period were not necessarily appropriate in the 1990s. Rather, by the early Republic, the imperial legacy had lost most of its prestige and, by 1917, the “special relationship” of Beijing University with the state was in contention as well. As shown in part II, a university whose main tenet was the withdrawal from state functions could not so easily call upon the heritage of the Taixue. In speeches, essays, and memoirs of the May Fourth years, there are almost no references connecting Beida to an imperial history of “state” institutions: comparisons were usually made with Western examples, and the brief life of the modern university in China was pitted against longer-lasting models in Europe and the United States.²⁰

As for the supposed influence exuding from the imperial walls, in memoirs from the 1920s or early 1930s concerning May Fourth Beida, there is almost no indication of the Forbidden City as a relevant presence for student life in the neighborhood.²¹ The first time the Forbidden City is mentioned as a central feature in students’ recollection is in a memoir by Zhu Haitao, who received his diploma from the Beida graduate school in 1935; he claims that it was under the imperial influence of the Forbidden City that “the people of Beida were molded.”²² Zhu’s memoir, however, was written in the 1940s (close to the time of Hu Shi’s statement on the Taixue), when Japanese troops had occupied Beijing and used Beida’s Honglou building as a lodging for the soldiers. Under such conditions and in the climate of wartime national crisis, it is quite understandable that a former student might have given centrality in his remembrances to one of the most important cultural symbols of national continuity and pride. One could indeed interpret these silences (regarding the Forbidden City) psychoanalytically, as part of a subconscious removal, as speaking of a (now forbidden or denied) nostalgia for the past legacy. However, the fact that the nostalgia is voiced and the legacy is claimed before and after the May Fourth period makes the omission of any reference to the imperial legacy significant, and one that echoes the students’ actions described in the previous chapters.

More fundamentally, despite the seemingly overbearing presence of the Forbidden City and the symbols of imperial power in Beijing’s urban texture, we cannot take monuments as exercising an unchanging and almost irresistible influence over an environment and its inhabitants. That is, we cannot just assume that the formal continuity established by the imposing presence of monuments is an unequivocal sign of unchanged significance. While we are more ready to accept multiple possibilities of interpretation in the case of texts, buildings and monuments seem to have their symbolism sculpted in stone. However, as Lewis Mumford famously argued, stone “gives a false sense of continuity, a deceptive assurance of life.”²³ A building is probably

more complex than a text, not less. Some of the “Beida people” are described as “reading” (*yuedu*) the Forbidden City, like spectators or mesmerized tourists.²⁴ But monuments, as parts of urban space, are not like texts that can be simply “read,” nor is architecture just a language. From the very moment of their ideation, buildings, unlike texts, evolve through a series of transpositions, from paper, to stone, to inhabited space, “with meaning in each transposition shaped by the logic of the genre or medium in which it is located.”²⁵ They continue to evolve after completion, because buildings are also “lived,” their historical relevance and significance changing over time in relation to different people. The meanings of an edifice (and monument) change as it is planned, built, inhabited, and interpreted. “The meanings of place are created through practice.”²⁶

Following Henri Lefebvre, a monument is a “specific or indefinite multiplicity of meanings, a shifting hierarchy in which now one, now another meaning comes momentarily to the fore by means of—and for the sake of—a particular action.”²⁷ The production of space owes as much to those who consume it as it does to those who create it.²⁸ And as such, it can be understood only in its changing context. Clearly, “monument” here means something different from the paralyzing weight of stone and mortar that, in Nietzsche’s famous attack on German historicism, oppressed and almost literally crushed new life and history.²⁹ Rather, monuments are lived buildings, whose meaning can and does change according to the practices taking place in and around them. If we really want to employ the metaphor of buildings as texts, then we have to assume that, as with books, “the ‘reading’ of people acting in space is also a kind of ‘writing’ as new meanings are formed. The consumption of place becomes the production of place.”³⁰

This is clearly nothing new nor exclusive to the twentieth-century city. Susan Naquin has cautioned against the idea of an “eternal Peking,” producing a single, unified, and controllable response among its residents and its visitors. Rather than inferring that, faced with the impressive arrays of walls and gates, “all responded like the idealized tributary, overawed by the Son of Heaven,” we must assume that “Peking was many things to many people.”³¹ And if this is a safe assumption in general, it is probably even more so in the midst of the transformations that affected Beijing since the last years of the Qing.

Therefore, any consideration of the role of monuments in Beijing and the evolving political consciousness of its inhabitants must deal first with the physical but mainly with the social, economical, and cultural changes in the city. The urban spatial hierarchy of Qing Beijing, with its sequence of gates, buildings, walls, and streets, represented “powerful testimony and physical proof of the imperial order.”³² And it was indeed the case that, in imperial

times, "proximity to the emperor was a sign of rank: as a general rule, the closer a residence lay to the center of the city, the more privileged it was."³³ But with the decline and end of dynastic power, and the radical change this brought in the cultural and political sphere, we cannot assume that this urban hierarchy stayed the same. Rather, change in the cultural symbolism became evident and was in turn reinforced by the structural transformation of the city through public works in the early years of the Republic.

LIFE IN A CHANGING NEIGHBORHOOD

The permanence of monuments in their allotted place can obscure how the fabric of the city was transformed around them and especially how activities flourished in other, less visible places, how the cultural and social structure of the city developed often on the backdrop of this monumental landscape.³⁴ Richard Belsky has illustrated how, despite the physical permanence of the structure of the Ming cityscape during the 260 years of Qing rule, the social (and cultural) space of Beijing was dramatically reshaped following the Ming-Qing transition.³⁵ The changes were clearly no less radical when the imperial system itself ceased to exist. So while the Forbidden City and other physical remnants of the imperial past continued to occupy their fixed positions in the university neighborhood, other factors were also at play in redefining urban space and, in particular, the central area in which Beida was located. From both students' recollections and actions, it is evident that these spatial transformations had a much closer relationship with, and relevance to, student life and politics than the "immovable signs of tradition" had. These transformations, in turn, further contribute to alter the significance of the monumental legacy of the city. If the city can indeed be viewed as a palimpsest, as David Strand suggests, it is always a defective one, in which the newly inscribed texts insert themselves in the older layers, radically altering preexisting meanings.³⁶

For example, by the end of the nineteenth century, the imperial palace was no longer the unchallenged center of power in Beijing. After the second Opium War in 1860, foreign legations were established in Beijing. These Western-style buildings stood out in the imperial architecture of downtown Beijing, a noticeable reminder of a competing hierarchy of power.³⁷ They were concentrated in the southeast corner of the Imperial City, not far from Qianmen and just south of what is now Chang'an Avenue, in the area that became known as the Legation Quarter.³⁸ Western travelers to Beijing described their anticlimactic surprise when the first thing they saw of the Chinese capital after descending from the train was a modern European street with European houses.³⁹

The history of the Legation Quarter has been told elsewhere,⁴⁰ but some details are relevant here. The choice of this particular location for the foreign diplomatic corps in the Chinese capital did not please the Qing government, who offered first the old Summer Palace and later a tract of land outside the west wall as alternative sites. But the symbolic effect of a position close to the imperial palace did not escape the Western negotiators who insisted on this area, which had been previously host to delegations from Asian "tributary" states and Russia.

The Legation Quarter, however, did not exist as such until after the Boxer siege, which provided the residents with an epic of resistance versus the Chinese outside and made the idea of an enclosed and protected foreign enclave palatable.⁴¹ The Boxer uprising also marked an expansion of the foreign presence into buildings closely connected with the Qing imperial house, like the Hanlin College and the Imperial Carriage Park, which became part of the British Legation after 1900, thus making even more evident the symbolic shift of power in the physical landscape.⁴² Also, in many ways, a process of remaking of the city according to a concept of hygienic modernity started in concurrence with the acceptance of a Western presence within the walls and in particular with the restructuring following the Boxer Rebellion and the year-long occupation of the city by foreign troops.⁴³ "The cleansing fires [of the Boxer Rebellion], so cruel to the individual, benefited the city as a whole. The repulsive sights and vile odours disappeared and a higher ideal of municipal cleanliness began."⁴⁴ In this process of urban cleansing, the well-lit, organized, clean streets of the Legation Quarter were meant to play the role of a beacon and model for the whole city.

At the same time, changes affected the old imperial compound directly. Already in 1860 the barriers of invisibility that protected the Forbidden City had been raised, when Prince Gong, "anxious to propitiate foreigners,"⁴⁵ gave them (and commoners) permission to walk or ride horses on the inner city walls and peer (from afar) into the imperial compound.⁴⁶ This can be viewed as the first step of a process that transformed the imperial palace from a closed but lived "city"—one with a social structure, population, and economy—into a true monument, a memorial of its past glory. In 1912, while the deposed emperor was allowed to occupy the inner part of the palace, the outer quarter was taken over and destined to public use. At the end of 1924, with the expulsion of the imperial family from the palace, the transformation was complete: the Forbidden City became the Palace Museum, and the rear palaces were opened for the first time to the public in October 1925.⁴⁷ The May Fourth movement took place during this process of "monumentalization" (or museification), and, as we will see, had a profound effect on it.

The articulation of the walls, gates, avenues, and *hutong* (alleyways) of Beijing's Inner City survived in almost "pristine imperial conditions" up until the communist reorganization in 1949 (or even, one could argue, until the capitalistic cataclysm of the last two decades) but the transformations that affected the city structure during the late Qing and Republican period were not insignificant.⁴⁸ The transportation projects in the early twentieth century redefined Beijing's spatial order (including the old Imperial City), with thoroughfares replacing walls in defining the city structure. The unity of imperial walls was broken and city gates torn down in order to allow for avenues to run unobstructed along the main north-south and east-west axes.

Beyond these rather massive interventions in the central area of Beijing also lies a radical shift in the perception and discourse of urban structure—the city was no longer organized around monuments but instead along streets and avenues.⁴⁹ Already in 1910, Qing officials had proposed to remove the walls and substitute them with streetcars,⁵⁰ thus showing that, at least for some "modern-minded" Chinese, the organizing principles of the city were open to contention. It is in such moments of tumultuous change that, according to Henri Lefebvre, monuments lose prestige, the old weaves of the city unravel, and the aspects of life that take place at street level assume a new relevance.⁵¹ While political life was not absolutely restricted within the Forbidden City during the Qing, it was supposed to have the palace as its ultimate horizon. The discussion of politics outside the few formally empowered to this task was widely discouraged, if not outright prohibited; the great majority of people were encouraged not to care.⁵² The separation of the political was made evident in the few occasions in which the emperor moved inside the city: he was sheltered and hidden, as the significance of his political power rested also in his separation from common urban life.⁵³ This invisibility, protected by massive walls and literally enshrined in monumentality, was replicated at a more quotidian level in the relationship of the populace of Beijing with the government at large: there were very few possibilities of direct interaction with the many officials in the city, who were usually seen passing by in sedan chairs and palanquins, hidden from the gaze of the city dwellers.⁵⁴

When students demonstrated in May and June 1919, they chose the streets as the newly available locus of political intervention. They addressed people at street level and conducted political activities on the streets (whether promoting national products, marching, or lecturing). Students marched on the newly enlarged roads that connected different sections of the city. In contrast, the government, to prevent the students' movement, used other elements in the city structure, such as walls and gates, which were part of the organization of the imperial capital.⁵⁵

Judging from these few examples, it is clearly difficult if not impossible to speak of an eternal, unchanging Beijing. Rather, nostalgic views of "old Beijing" emerged only after the demise of the imperial system and the changes in the Republican era, changes in large part due to the insertion in a worldwide capitalist market and a modern state, something that affected both the physical shape of the city and its representations. Republican Beijing was a modern city, "especially if modernity is understood . . . to be a condition of existence structured by large-scale capitalist industrial production in an integrated world characterized by bureaucratic nation-states and a people's consciousness of, and actions to, define their position in this integrated world."⁵⁶ From this modernity, the nostalgia for the customs of the past, for "old Beijing," provided refuge.⁵⁷ Tradition, as it always does, emerged out of modernity.⁵⁸

Likewise, the university and its inhabitants did not sit like a modern alien body inside a hostile, alluring, or distant old city. Rather, the university was integrated with the surrounding city through a flow of people who took advantage of the lack of physical barriers between campus and community, and interacted with the space of this particular modern city, a space that combined the characteristics of the locale (the "tradition") and the overarching influence of an integrated world.

From Beida students' recollections, it seems that, at least until 1919, they concentrated their forays to the immediate neighborhood of the university, an area where they found accommodation, cheap food, as well as, as we will see, all kinds of entertainment and modern public spaces. The university neighborhood, however limited, was remarkable not only for the presence of the imperial monuments but because it had been heavily affected by the impact of capitalist economy on the socioeconomic equilibrium of the capital city. Despite the fact that for many Beijing still seemed incapable of projecting the image of a modern city, by the Republican period it was very much inserted in the world economy. The problem was rather how Beijing participated in this economic network: the city had never been an industrial center and the impact of the capitalist economy was subtle but no less profound. Local production in the city was limited to an artisan or preindustrial market, which barely sustained the city population.⁵⁹ With the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the production of high-end luxury goods dropped and the introduction of more fashionable Western merchandise changed the local equilibrium of commerce in the downtown area. In general, Beijing found itself at the receiving end of the market for commodities, which were mostly imported from outside.⁶⁰

Wangfujing in the east and Xidan in the west emerged as the new modern shopping centers and quickly rivaled the century-old shopping districts of Qianmen and Dazhailan. Wangfujing developed into the most famous

commercial street in Beijing during the early twentieth century, in part as an after-effect of the devastation brought by the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and a subsequent major restoration in 1906.⁶¹ Modern urban streets, as Peter Carroll has illustrated in the case of Suzhou, were much more than transport vectors, rather “they functioned as the premier instrument and site of modern urban life.”⁶² Street construction was viewed by state actors and planners as the favored instrument to enact political, cultural, and social change, but the streets (and the people in the streets) also embodied a larger significance in the international context, standing as synecdoche for Chinese national civilization.⁶³ For these reasons, “the modern macadam road was the defining artifact of Chinese modernity.”⁶⁴ In Beijing, Wangfujing was the quintessential modern road.

Wangfujing was just a few minutes’ walk from the Beida buildings. Along the street, fashionable stores specialized in imported commodities and catered to the tastes of the residents of the Legation Quarter nearby, as well as to those of more prosperous Chinese customers.⁶⁵ “Here, among other things, are treasures we will hesitate to afford—watches made in Europe, gorgeously enameled, wreathed in pearls, studded in diamonds, tiny timepieces set in thumb rings, larger ones such as Chinese princes delighted to hang from their belts in days when belts fitted loosely over satin robes.”⁶⁶ This description of a curio shop in Wangfujing in 1922 is followed by the author’s complaints on the quite exorbitant prices and by her fond recollection of the times around the turn of the century, when, before the full-blown expansion of the Legation Quarter, everything was much more affordable.

Western-style and foreign-owned boutiques did not exhaust the array of attractions of Wangfujing, whose inherent hybrid character was epitomized by one of the most famous and diversified shopping locations in the whole city, the Dong’an Indoor Market. The market was originally built in 1903 when Wangfujing was undergoing renovation (it was being paved, thus becoming a modern “horse-road” or *malin*) and the various open-air stalls were transferred to a new location indoors.⁶⁷ Among the characteristics that made Dong’an unique was precisely the fact that it was “covered”: rebuilt in 1912, it was one of the first examples of modern architecture in Beijing, noticeable for its use of glass, steel, and iron.⁶⁸ This set it apart from “traditional” markets, usually held in the open on temple grounds.⁶⁹ Also, unlike temple markets, Dong’an was managed by the police.⁷⁰ Dong’an was also different from the bazaars that would later open in Beijing (which sold exclusively Chinese products), as it not only sold upscale luxury goods and rare objects, but also household items.⁷¹ Its stalls ranged from the stylish to the shabby

and included entertainment (marital arts, art exhibits, magic shows), restaurants, and shops.⁷²

It was truly an eclectic, exciting place, dazzling to the eyes, ears, and probably the nose: “shops selling almost every imaginable article, toys, jewelry, furniture, furs, clothing, books, pictures, candles, cakes, are on each side of the big passageway, while in the center are tables of stalls on which are spread out brassware, notions [sic], tongue scrapers, combs, chopsticks, fruit, candies. All of the tables are cleared every night, the unsold goods being carried away in big baskets.”⁷³ It included restaurants, specializing both in regional Chinese and Western cuisine, an active billiard club, famous bookstores, teahouses, and *laoziguan* (Northern-style cabaret or teahouse). The Jixiang Theater, in the northern side of the market, could seat over a thousand spectators and hosted some of Beijing’s most famous performers (including opera star Mei Lanfang).⁷⁴ The area reserved for acrobats was over a thousand square meters (about nine thousand square feet). A 1933 survey lists 923 stores in the market, 267 with permanent stand and a storefront as well as 658 carts.⁷⁵

The clientele was as diverse as the merchandise on sale: Dong’an “was a place where scholars in long robes would mingle with coarsely jacketed workers along the market’s narrow passageways and rub shoulders with dandy flaneurs, busy housekeepers and curious foreigners.”⁷⁶ While I would not go as far as to describe it as a “true place of democratic encounter,”⁷⁷ the Dong’an Market, in its modern yet not strictly rational organization, in its diverse customer base, in its geographical and typological variety of products, did embody the unprecedented and multifaceted transformations that had affected the *locale* of downtown Beijing through the intervention of the global (in the form of capitalist modernity).⁷⁸

For many Chinese citizens, a trip to Wangfujing, if not “a journey to an exotic land,” was at least an encounter with the effects of modernity in city space. It provided the rare opportunity to see foreigners, to admire the latest in international fashion and shopping facilities, and “to become familiar with the tastes and the lifestyles of the modern world.”⁷⁹ To Beijingers of all classes, Wangfujing offered a chance to experience modern urbanity, not simply as they knew it existed in Europe, but in the specific forms it had taken in their own city.

Beijing University students figured conspicuously among the visitors to the new shopping areas—they lived just a few blocks away. Deng Xihua recalls the impressions the varied street life left on a young student from rural Sichuan: “With my countrymen I wandered along the quiet alleys and through the mad business streets of Peking—streets echoing with bells and

shouting and a gleam with golden signs. Streets where the penetrating noise of tambourines burst from the doors of smelly theaters, streets with stores dressed upon and lacquered like brides on their wedding day.”⁸⁰

Similarly, Beida students seemed to have grown fond of another modern space born out of the transformations in central Beijing. The first public park in Beijing, Central Park (Zhongyang Gongyuan), was inaugurated in 1914 on the site of the Altar of Earth and Grain, one of the most restricted imperial altars and part of the Forbidden City complex, to provide the capital with what was perceived to be an essential attribute of a modern city, a public green space for leisure, health, and education. Despite the drab and desolate conditions in which it allegedly remained for a large part of this period, Central Park was extremely popular among students and Beijing residents in general.⁸¹ An admission fee was charged at the park gate and this automatically excluded the poor majority of Beijing residents. However, an American missionary survey conducted in 1918 through 1919 concluded that “in spite of the admission fee, four thousand to five thousand people a day went to the Park during the summer, and a hundred or two in the winter. When there were festivals or special occasions, admission to the park was usually free, and on these days 10,000 people would fill the park’s sixty acres.”⁸² Indeed the park population seems to have been quite inclusive, ranging from petty merchants and peddlers to prostitutes and concubines. As Deng Xihua recalled:

I wandered with my friends in Central Park. . . . We laughed importantly and joked in a business-like manner. We shot bold glances at passers-by—at the shy daughters of merchants, fat and rosy-checked, who wore blue trousers and gold bracelets; at the plain-looking, bobbed-haired girl students in short, foreign-style skirts, and at the prostitutes with their exquisite stone-like faces and perfect bangs. The latter went past us without looking. Neither our robes nor eye-glasses could hide from their experienced eye the thinness of our pocket-books.⁸³

Other students and teachers had less pleasant memories of the atmosphere of the park, precisely because this strange mixture of professions, tastes, and social strata highlighted the still “uncivilized” character of Chinese population.⁸⁴ However, these recollections all seem to point to the fact that, at least in public parks and similar modern areas, the level of segregation between intellectuals and the rest of the people was low. Shi Mingzheng, in his essay on Republican Beijing’s parks, defines them as “public spaces,” caught in a tension between state control and possible utilization by varied sectors of society.⁸⁵ Parks were indeed public spaces—not unlike the Dong’an Market—in the sense that they presented a chance to interact with an ample selection of

the changing Beijing society and gain a first-hand knowledge of its transformations. Significantly, on the eve of the May Fourth demonstrations, one of the New Culture leaders, Li Dazhao, called for a lifting of the admission fees to all Beijing parks, with the goal of making them truly “public” and inclusive.⁸⁶

The passion of university students for theater is also quite (in)famous. Theaters were one of the main attractions of Beijing, and the great historian Gu Jiegang figures as probably the most notable theater fanatic in the university history.

I made a practice, during the ten minute recess between classes, to walk from the old Translation Bureau (where the Preparatory Department of our school was located) to look at the announcements and determine which play I should attend that afternoon. There were comparatively few classes in session in the afternoon, and when there were, I never bothered to get an excuse. During the two years or more in which I was enamored with the theater, it goes without saying that I became careless in my personal habits and that my scholarly standing was very poor.⁸⁷

If Gu Jiegang managed to turn his youthful passion for theater into a more respectable devotion to the study of popular culture as a foundation for the historical profession, for most of his colleagues, theater was a kind of entertainment that ranked almost at the same level as prostitution and gambling, and in which they continued to indulge even after the moral reforms introduced by Cai Yuanpei in 1917. This was not high theater. While there probably was a small group of Beijing University students who had a more intellectual approach toward theater, went to expensive venues, and were undoubtedly capable of writing reviews and literary analysis, the large majority went to second- or third-level performances, “often sitting in unhygienic boxes and stalls, yelling to this or that actor.” Then, once home, they took their *huqin* and start singing the arias.⁸⁸ Theaters of this kind were not expensive: according to Sidney Gamble’s 1919 survey of Beijing, a first-class box in a theater (possibly a decent establishment) was about four hundred coppers (52.90) while one could obtain the cheapest available ticket for about one-twentieth of that.⁸⁹ It was definitively affordable for “poor” university students as well for a large section of Beijing population, probably not unlike movie theaters today.

From this brief description of the immediate Beida neighborhood, we get a picture of an area that was not at all dominated by vestiges of the past, but was rather vibrant in entertainment (low and high) and marked by the ever-changing spectacle of an evolving modern urban culture, in which students took evident pleasure in partaking. Students enjoyed an in-between position

in the city. Beyond their individual class and economic status (which varied widely, from extremely rich to relatively poor), finding “the standard of dress and deportment no major impediment,”⁹⁰ they could move freely between Western-style boutiques and the eclectic Dong’an Market, allegedly modern public parks, and supposedly traditional theaters. In this area, then, students were taking on another identity: they were consumers and were probably viewed as such by shopkeepers and vendors. Except maybe for those involved in frugal experiments, students seemed to be consuming voraciously and with pleasure. Students’ consumption was not a political, or particularly modern, act.⁹¹ Nonetheless, it was in their role as consumers that students gained knowledge about areas of the city where the impact of the capitalist economy and state project of modernization was the greatest. And while it is undeniable that Beida students did not have much interaction with the majority of the population, which was too poor to partake in the city’s amenities,⁹² it was relying on their experience with this particular urban space that students were able to expand their activities beyond the university neighborhood.

On the one hand, the interaction with these areas made students feel part of a consumerist, open commercial culture that must have appeared (at the time) equalitarian and liberating: equality in front of the commodity masked the extension and inscription of social differences in city space. On the other hand, the fact that these areas were affected by economic changes singled them out for student political actions during and after 1919. Boycotts, lectures, and demonstrations explicitly targeted these places. Wangfujing became one of the main stages for the Popular Education Lectures aimed both at foreigners and common citizens. Soon after May Fourth, Beijing University students were caught distributing leaflets to the soldiers who frequented Central Park.⁹³ It is in relation to these places, rather than the imperial palace—still largely inaccessible—that the May Fourth demonstrations should be understood.

PROTECTING THE SANCTUARY

The university administration was not pleased with the degree with which students participated in the life of the area around the school: with some ambivalence, some of Beida’s “new” intellectuals saw the city as a “corrupting influence” and were concerned with the effects that students’ individual forays into this world might have. This was a concern, we will see, that extended from the students’ souls to their bodies. In 1918, stricter and more direct regulations were proposed, addressing the very issue of the place of the university in the city. In January, the Evaluating Committee (Pingyihui) passed a proposal that called for the formation of a University Club (Daxue Julebu), a

University Quarter (Daxue Qu), and the enforcement of a dress code for students. The three initiatives shared a double goal of enhancing the specificity of the university environment while increasing the control of its inhabitants.

The University Club was thought of as a general meeting place for students and faculty that could provide possibilities for exchange and “wholesome” entertainment. All student associations were supposed to move their activities in the club. In the intention of the supporters of the proposal, this would have helped overcome the divisions along the lines of regional provenance or intellectual proclivities, thus shaping a unique “Beida atmosphere.” A market, where healthy, good-quality food and groceries could be bought at reasonable prices, as well as various forms of entertainment were to be housed in the club. The aim was to “foster the autonomous spirit of the students,”⁹⁴ but it is obvious that the club also represented an attempt to channel this spirit and keep student activities inside the university by reducing possible pretexts to venture into the streets of Beijing.

The proposal for the creation of an officially marked University Quarter pushed this concept a step further by postulating a clear-cut division between the school and the city. The area around Beida—no specific borders were indicated in the proposal—was to be placed under the sole and direct administration of the university. The university would have been in charge of landscaping, transportation, an intradistrict phone service, and even public order. Firefighter squads were to be composed of student volunteers. The city police was supposed to have an office in the quarter, but students could not be arrested inside the University Quarter and even in the city (if wearing the uniform) other than for serious felonies. The students would have been at the same time sheltered from the authority of the state and separated from urban society. Parks, a hospital, and a stadium were to be part of the project. The University Quarter was meant to provide a “good atmosphere for student activities, thus developing in them a noble spirit”, to foster a spirit of mutual exchange and feelings of community by having faculty, students, and employees live close to each other, and to function as a model for other areas of the city.⁹⁵ In this project, a large part of the authority would have resided with the university president: he was, in a sense, in charge of not simply the university area but also, almost literally, the body of each and every single student. He had to consent before any student could be arrested, and he had the power of intervening whenever something menaced the physical health (diseases, lack of hygiene, etc.) or the moral sanity (bad customs) of the student body. In these cases, he could ask the police to act (or at least discuss with them the appropriate measures).

The space of the quarter would have been marked by the mandatory use of uniforms, which were described in painstaking detail. Because the uniform

had to fit people young and old, be comfortable in winter and summer, and accommodate those not used to Western clothes, it was decided to adopt a black "cap and gown." Both the brimless hat and the gown carried markers—a tassel for the hat, different length of sleeves and pockets for the gown—signaling the hierarchy of students, professors, and president. The proposal suggested that uniforms be worn for all activities inside the university quarter, between 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (with the exception of physical education classes and sport activities, which required a different kind of dress code). Nonteaching employees did not have a uniform.⁹⁶

This project reproduced in a smaller scale (an institution and its neighborhood instead of a city) the modernist project of urban change, that is, "to transform the *conditions* in which people ordered their everyday lives, by reaching into the realms of their daily practices, right down to the level of hygiene and patterns of entertainment."⁹⁷ By taking control of the whole university area, down to the minimal details, the proponents of the university district aimed to free the students from pernicious habits, shelter them from physically and morally bad influences, thus allowing a full, unencumbered development. We see here at play the same dual logic of emancipation and discipline that Michael Tsin has identified as crucial in modern urban reform.⁹⁸ The attention paid to food, clothes, and the physical environment recalls Haussmann's obsession with salubrity,⁹⁹ the idea of a city as a medicalizable object, translated into the modern Chinese with the term *weisheng*, a hygienic modernity according to which people's bodies and minds can be improved if we change the way they dress, eat, clean, walk, and interact.¹⁰⁰

However, even if the project constituted an attempt "to transform the university into a model community, a sanctuary for upright scholars pursuing the higher things in life,"¹⁰¹ it never went beyond the stage of ideation. The proposal never amounted to anything more than a document approved by the administration and had little or no relevance in the general evolution of the university. The club and the quarter were not further debated and, as for the uniforms, it was finally decided in April 1919 to keep the dress code to the strict minimum: a six-person committee agreed that only students in the preparatory courses had to wear a uniform (from an army store) while undergraduates were only to wear a hat and a pin.¹⁰² It was a step back not only from the grandiose project of just a year earlier but also from the dress code imposed upon unruly university students in the late Qing.¹⁰³

It is difficult to ascertain what became of this 1918 proposal, whether its realization was ever attempted and, if implementation was envisioned, what obstacles stood in its way. But one can guess that, while it was consonant with the Chinese and global discourse of urban modernity, this proposal went against too many practical interests and social-cultural trends. First, the uni-

versity did not have the economic means to sustain such a project. It depended fully upon the state for its finances, and it is difficult to imagine a scenario where the city government would abdicate control of a part of its central area while financing the university to take care of it. In the same way, how could the state have tolerated (and subsidized) the existence of a public institution and its community in an area that was sheltered from its own authority?

The proposal of a disciplined, secluded university district also ran against the Beida student ethos of undisciplined, antiritual behavior, which, by 1919, had already taken ground and had become one of the salient characteristics of the school. Finally, the project went against the general transformation of the city, which, by the Republican period, was moving toward an increasing integration in transportation and ease of communication. If anything, this project is striking for how much it was at odds with the openness that stood as one of the defining traits of Beijing University. The proposal looks like a late reaction to the increasingly disproportionate number of auditors that populated the campus, its porous borders, and the expansion of student activities outside the university.

This proposal also clearly illustrated the ambivalence in the university administration's evaluation of the relationship between students and the city. While the faculty and the academic leadership remained fearful of student involvement in the "lowest level" of city life, they were otherwise supportive of the student initiatives that took them (usually in an organized fashion) outside the school. The streets then (as now) embodied both the bright side of social commitment and learning, and the dark areas of the unethical, the base, the dirty. The project of the quarter thus highlights a contradiction that lay at the foundation of Beida and of many urban universities: it was born out of a particular relationship with state power and local society, its space carved out of the urban space, and while separated by a task that was beyond the scope of the locale, its life—both in the sense of liveliness and of intellectual and political vivacity—relied on a connection with the streets of the city itself. This contradiction was to be explored and exploded on May 4, 1919.

FACING A GATE (BACKWARD)

There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument.

—Robert Musil

The demonstrations of May Fourth have been seen as a turning point in the history of Chinese nationalism, the overwhelming of culture by politics, or a spectacular example of political theater. In many of the recollections of the

Beijing University students of 1919, May Fourth was described first and foremost as a process of learning, a movement toward the city and its people that radically affected the consciousness of the demonstrators. But the movement of students in the streets of Beijing also acted on the city itself. The path of the demonstration and the actions of the students targeted monuments and specific areas, thus earmarking and retracing an emerging hierarchy of urban spaces. Moreover, students further transformed the meanings of these places by locating them on a new map of radicalism that would be followed for the rest of the twentieth century.

The “May Fourth” events—the developments at the Versailles Peace Conference, the meeting at Beida on May 3, the hasty preparations throughout the night, and the Beijing demonstration itself—are well known.¹⁰⁴ Yet, a few moments of that day still remain open to contention. Many of the intellectuals and students who joined together in the May Fourth demonstrations split a few years later along differing political lines, giving rise to a series of contrasting claims as to who did what during the peak period of activism in May and June. Many of these contested points are minor, and it is easy to dismiss the overall narrative of Zhang Guotao or Luo Jialun, to give two notable examples, each of whom portrays himself as *deus ex machina* not only with regard to the May Fourth events but also in a broader political story.¹⁰⁵

In other cases, details are both more complicated and more relevant to the development and the significance of the student movement. For example, how the plan of the protest, its route, and its aim were decided—an element crucial to understanding the relationship of the demonstration to urban space—remains largely an open issue. The May Fourth protest was hastily planned: Beijing students were trying to get organized for May 7, National Humiliation Day, commemorating the fourth anniversary of the “twenty-one demands” in a citywide protest against Japanese imperialism. The sudden acceleration of the plan was due to news coming from the Versailles Peace Conference, whose final decision was to transfer German territories in Shandong to Japan.¹⁰⁶

In light of these developments, student representatives convened at the Beida School of Law at Beihayan on the evening of May 3 and decided to hold the demonstration the following day. They sent telegrams both to the Chinese representative in Paris and to students and associations in other provinces calling for a nationwide protest on May 7.¹⁰⁷ No mention of the route was apparently made in the resolutions of the May 3. Preparations were feverish during the night to craft leaflets and letters addressing both the city residents and the representatives of the foreign powers, who—students thought—could influence the outcome of the Versailles negotiations. The route was further discussed

in the morning of May 4 when student representatives from thirteen schools gathered once again at Beida School of Law—they agreed to march from Tiananmen to the Legation Quarter and then to the commercial district of Hatamen (Chongwenmen), further east.¹⁰⁸ When, in the early afternoon of that same day, thousands of students convened in front of Tiananmen, they declared that they intended “to march and demonstrate in order to let our fellow countrymen know what the situation is. Then,” they continued, “we will march to the English, American, French, Italian embassies and all the other embassies at the Legation Quarter to make clear our intent. Finally, we will reconvene here and discuss what to do next.”¹⁰⁹ The students reassured the Beijing infantry garrison commander of this “peaceful” plan and were allowed to go on with their demonstration.

The first question that the process of students in urban space poses is, “Why start there?” Tiananmen had been historically a point of communication between the imperial authority and (at least some of) its subjects. Used by the emperor himself only in the rare occasions when he left the Imperial City to participate in sacrifices, wars, or tours, it was however the place where imperial edicts were announced, “when a new emperor was enthroned or a royal heir was born.”¹¹⁰ It is unclear whether the emperor himself was present at these occasions.¹¹¹ It was also the entrance to the Imperial City traditionally used by petitioning officials.¹¹² Focusing on this last use, Rudolph Wagner argues that by choosing this particular location for the start of their first massive public action, students arrogated the right to “speak for the people” as petitioning officials representing the whole nation. By centering their effort around the adjacent symbol of power, they made (or remade) the imperial palace the center of the nation.¹¹³

Wagner is right on the last point. By placing themselves against the background of the vermilion walls and yellow roofs of the imperial palace, the May Fourth students did indeed make Tiananmen the central symbol of national politics. But this process had very little or nothing to do with the legacy of imperial power. Or, at least, not until the sun set on the day of May 4, 1919.

Nobody can dispute that Tiananmen had a long association with power and authority—although, as we will see, its symbolic relevance increased exponentially in the twentieth century. Nor will I go so far as to argue that the students picked the place at random. But I do believe that, on May 4, 1919, Tiananmen had been largely unhinged from any stable set of references, its meaning largely unsettled and open to challenges. In a sense, Tiananmen did not signify what it does now (nor did it convey meaning in the same way), because it was only the demonstration of May Fourth that started the process of resignification that gave the Gate its modern symbolic power. We cannot

assume continuity of meaning in monumentality either forward or backward in time: in 1919 the gate did not embody the power of either the past emperors or of Mao Zedong.¹¹⁴

In the 1930s, Tiananmen does not seem to have been either important or particularly noticeable. It is not mentioned in most guidebooks, even those that provide lavish details and explanations for other magnificent imperial gates, Qianmen in particular. Tiananmen was almost “lost” between the Imperial City and the Forbidden City.¹¹⁵ In 1922, it was the last gate open before those gates that gave access to the Forbidden City, at the time still the residence of the dethroned emperor.¹¹⁶

The relative position of the gate in Beijing urban and symbolic space had been gradually transformed during the first few years of the Republic. Before the revolution, Tiananmen and the space in front of it were part of the Forbidden City, which was surrounded by walls and completely off limits to the majority of the people in Beijing. In 1912, the emperor issued the last edict from Tiananmen, his abdication, and the “dethronement of the emperor jarred political authority loose from the symbolic design of the city’s walls and palaces.”¹¹⁷ Then, from a gate, part of the complex system of gates and walls that constituted the imperial compound, Tiananmen became progressively more connected to the city. At the same time, it remained also more isolated from its original architectural system. In 1914, Central Park was created just west of the gate, further altering the old imperial order and separating Tiananmen from what lay behind it. In 1917, the walls of the Imperial City started to be demolished and Tiananmen lost its identity as a city gate.¹¹⁸ Or rather, by becoming increasingly accessible, it gained a new identity, apart from the walls. As for what lay in front of the gate, it was in a state of flux as well. Despite any claim of symbolic continuity between imperial and communist Tiananmen, the space in front of it did not have any independent identity before the twentieth century.¹¹⁹ In 1919, Tiananmen Square was decades away from being created and the T-shaped open area just south of the gate functioned and looked more like a portion of a street than what we think of as a “square.” Nowhere in the students’ statements or in newspaper articles is this area identified as a (*guangchang*)—through the 1920s it was referred to as the “empty space outside Tiananmen.”¹²⁰ It is reasonable to think that the location of the area, if not the size, played a role in the students’ decision. The Tiananmen area was in fact close to some of the places we have identified as being more drastically influenced by the modernization of the city and by a burgeoning consumer culture. Central Park lay just north of the gate on the west side. It opened onto Chang’an Avenue, one of the major thoroughfares that shaped the new transportation network of the Republican city. For Beida students, Tiananmen was defini-

tively not just a distant symbol of authority; one could easily argue that it was also very much a feature that figured into students’ excursions in the area around the university.

In particular, the proximity to the new public (or at least partially public) space of Central Park is significant. The park had already been the location of organized mass rallies in the previous years and had thus been identified as a place for political expression. In 1915, “a rally was held in Central Park to protest against the Twenty-one Demands of the Japanese and the compromise by the Beiyang government” and over three hundred thousand Beijing citizens gathered in the park on one day.¹²¹ In 1918 (on November 15 and 16) another rally was held in front of Tiananmen and in Central Park to celebrate the Allies’ victory in the First World War, one that was enthusiastically attended by students and foreign dignitaries.¹²² Cai Yuanpei delivered two speeches, in which he optimistically interpreted the victory of the Allies as foreseeing the triumph of Mutual Aid, the worldwide diffusion of the ideals of the French Revolution, and the success of Wilson’s doctrine of self-determination.¹²³

Therefore, when the students gathered in front of Tiananmen, they convened in an area of the city that had already been earmarked for political gatherings, not so much because of its connection with past imperial power but for the presence of modern public spaces, like Central Park. And it should not be overlooked that the students chose the area just in front of Tiananmen and not the gate itself. The palace and gate functioned only as a backdrop and were virtually ignored in that students literally turned their backs on them. Moreover, choice of location notwithstanding, protesting students were essentially different from petitioning imperial officers of the Qing. The messages they read and the signs they carried were not addressed to a failing government; nor were the centers of official political power, the presidential palace and the Parliament, included in the route of the protests. Both literally and figuratively, students were looking neither upward (to rulers standing on top of the gate) nor backward (to the imperial legacy), but forward to the streets ahead of them. As in Robert Musil’s famous statement, for the protestors in 1919 the monument behind them was largely invisible, conspicuously inconspicuous.¹²⁴

If “insurgents produce space above all by changing the meanings and strategic uses of their environments,”¹²⁵ then it was only after and because of the May Fourth protests that this space in front of Tiananmen—and, as a reflection, the gate itself—assumed its modern symbolic significance, its identity defined not so much by a past legacy but by “the public demonstrations and political opinions manifested there.”¹²⁶ The May Fourth process literally produced public space, to use Lefebvre’s terms, by appropriating a representation of space (a monumental area) largely void of meaning and transforming

it through use into a representational space, lived space, truly public space. "Public space is thus socially produced through its use as public space."¹²⁷ Moreover, it is only by claiming a space as public that social groups, in this case, "students," can become public. It was only by claiming the area in front of Tiananmen, by producing it as space for political gatherings, by making it *the place of the May Fourth student protests*, that students could claim their existence as a political category in modern China.¹²⁸ There were no students before 1919, also because no public space for student activism had yet been appropriated.

It is only after the creation of this space that Tiananmen—the gate itself—assumed its distinctive feature, that is, to stand between a public space and a symbol of authority and to lend authority to a new public space.¹²⁹ It is only during the Republican era, and specifically because of a process started in 1919, that Tiananmen took the place of the Imperial Palace as a symbol of unity, authority, and power.¹³⁰ However, unlike the palace in the imperial era, Tiananmen was a much more complex, contested, and polysemic sign: while it remained connected (physically and abstractly) to the imperial structure, it was also the center of a public space of a different order. If the desire for the monumental is always a search for origins,¹³¹ then Tiananmen, from 1919, configures an incomplete and contradictory synthesis of a double search of origins. It signals at once a mythical, almost ahistorical origin inscribed in the successions of imperial dynasties (the gate as metonymic of the palace, a symbol of the continuity of Chinese history) and the historical origins of the modern state, deriving legitimacy from mass movements.¹³²

We can describe the process of resignification of Tiananmen as one by which a monument—intimately connected with a discredited state—morphed into a site of memory. In Pierre Nora's famous formulation, *lieux de mémoire*, even when sites are institutionalized, dominated, and sanctified by the state, remain "hybrid places," "mutants," and as such always open to carry alternative significations. "For although it is true that the fundamental purpose of a *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to inhibit forgetting," Nora writes, "it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* thrive only because of their capacity for change, their ability to resurrect old meaning and generate new ones along with new and unforeseeable connections (that is what makes them exciting)."¹³³ Hence the polysemy that inhabits a site like Tiananmen since May 4, 1919, and that has never been fully harnessed by the Republican or the Communist state. The connection with the imperial tradition of power was rehearsed over and over again when state authorities spoke from the top of the gate—for the proclamation of the People's Republic or for Mao's and Deng's official celebrations—but the space in the shadow of Tiananmen continued to be occupied by people staging a street-level challenge to those standing at the top of the gate. And in many

cases, as in 1919, protesters spoke *from* the streets to the people *in* the streets. At Tiananmen, the sociological distinction between place-appropriate social behavior (to be violated by contentious movement) and place-based symbolism (to adhere to) is always murky and contradictory.¹³⁴ The symbolic layering of this space legitimizes people to stand in front of the Gate *both* when summoned in rituals of belonging by the state authority *and* when protesting (sometimes the same state authority). Most of the movements that traversed Beijing in the twentieth century, from the 1930s to the Cultural Revolution and 1989, played with the symbolic contradiction inscribed in the Gate and the urban space in front of it. A contradiction that exists precisely because both Tiananmen as a modern symbol and the public space of protests were created at the same time, in 1919, as the result of the same event.

MAPPING THE CITY

In the late morning of May 4, Beijing University students from various departments convened at the Honglou and waited in the courtyard in the back of the building. Just as they were starting off toward Tiananmen, Cai Yuanpei, and then envoys from the military and the Ministry of Education, came and tried to convince them to call off the protest. These negotiations took some time, but finally Beida students were able to go out along what is now May Fourth Avenue and head south along Beichizi toward Tiananmen.¹³⁵ That was why Beida students were the last to arrive at the meeting point, despite the proximity of the school to the gate.¹³⁶ For about an hour, students demonstrated in front of the gate, a message to citizens was read aloud and thousands of leaflets with the text were distributed.¹³⁷ After further negotiations with military and civil authorities, students began to march.

The plan of the demonstrators was very simple. From Tiananmen they moved south, in the direction of Zhongnanmen, then east, where they stopped in front of the entrance to the United States Embassy (see figure 6.1).¹³⁸ Students had prepared letters that they planned to hand directly to the representatives of the various Western nations, asking for support in the struggle for national rights over territory. The Chinese police force guarding the Legation Quarter, however, blocked the students; they needed a permit from the government or from the legation authorities to let the students march inside the quarter. Apparently phone calls were made to the presidential palace and the legation authorities asking for directives but, after two hours, no permit was obtained. Meanwhile, students were waiting outside the Legation Quarter under the scorching sun. May 4 had started as a cloudy spring day, but by the time the students from thirteen different schools arrived at their meeting

point around noon, the weather had cleared up. Students were hot, probably tired, and definitely angry. Finally, a group of representatives led by Beida's Luo Jialun was allowed into the U.S. Embassy only to discover that since May 4 was a Sunday, the embassy was officially closed, the ambassador was not there, and the same was probably true for the other foreign missions. The U.S. functionary who received the student delegation accepted the letter and promised to convey the message to the ambassador.¹³⁹ The letter made reference to China's role in the war and called upon the Americans to uphold and respect the principles of national self-determination and human rights for which the war had been fought.¹⁴⁰ A Japanese presence in Shandong, they

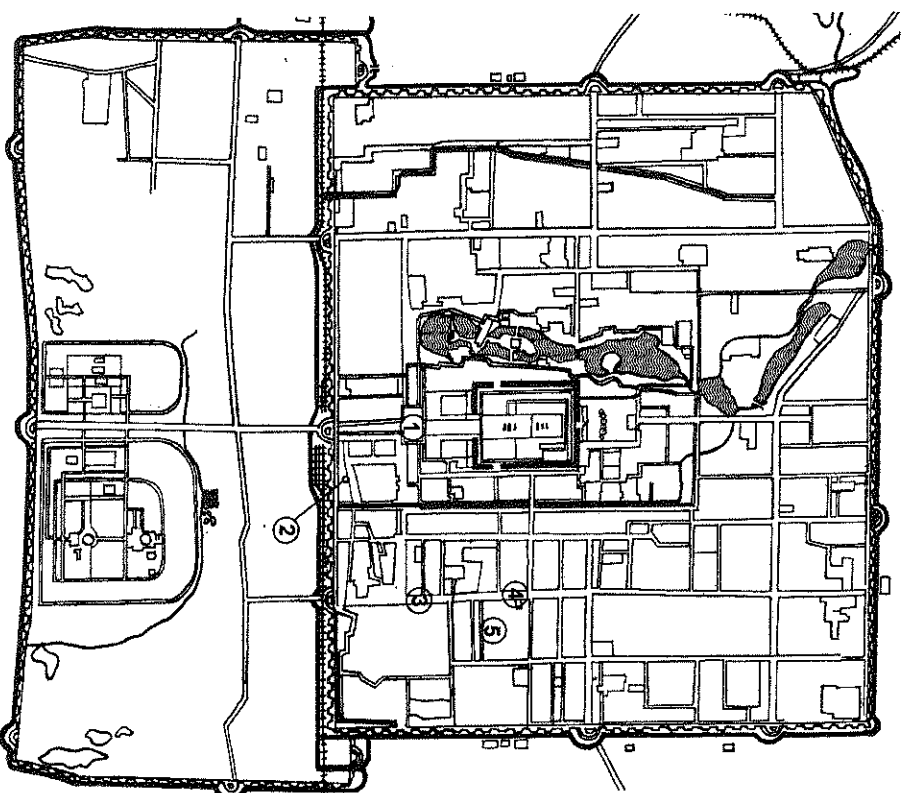


FIGURE 6.1.

Path of the student march on May 4, 1919: (1) Tiananmen; (2) U.S. Embassy; (3) Dongdan; (4) Mishi Avenue; (5) Cao Rulin's house.

Source: Adapted from Cook's skeleton map of Beijing, 1920.

suggested, prophetically enough, was a continuing menace for Asia and world peace.¹⁴¹

The stalemate at the Legation Quarter was the turning point in the demonstration, and one in which the interaction with the city space was a fundamental factor. Students waited, became increasingly impatient, and when access was denied, it was probably easy for the more "radical" elements to direct students to express their rage against the "traitors."¹⁴² When they were denied entrance in the Legation Quarter, students encountered—or rather, collided with—a portion of urban space that was closed, separated, and "forbidden."¹⁴³

The idea that foreign embassies are interdicted to the general public and enjoy a form of extraterritoriality is logical and not surprising. However, in this case, an entire neighborhood in the very center of the city had been carved out and transformed into a secluded, exclusive foreign enclave, where Chinese were forbidden to reside and own property. It had its own police force, its own electric lights. It had been rebuilt¹⁴⁴—ironically enough, mostly with the money from the Boxer indemnity—into "Ghetto-like fortresses," "a fortified stronghold with glacis and walls,"¹⁴⁵ in which the diplomats and foreign residents could "live in a manner compatible with their own civilization."¹⁴⁶ The foreign presence, as Beida students knew very well, had in turn affected the whole neighborhood, with commercial venues catering mainly to foreign customers. The Legation Quarter thus stood as a "city within the city," a physical remainder of the dispossession and the colonization of the city space.¹⁴⁷ If there is a symbolic aspect in the progress of the student protest, it should be identified not so much with its starting point (Tiananmen and the Forbidden City), but with its first destination, a more recently forbidden area, symbolically and practically connected to the global transformations that had affected the neighborhood and city at large.

The relationship with foreigners and the colonized urban space during the May Fourth demonstration was not exhausted by the interplay of hope, confrontation, and delusion in the standoff at the Legation Quarter. First, foreigners, both the official and unofficial representatives of Western countries, were among the intended recipients of the students' remonstrations. The original plan for the protest consisted of two parts, each addressed to a specific audience. In front of Tiananmen and while marching on their way to the Legation Quarter, their banners, slogans, and leaflets spoke directly to the people of Beijing, whom they met at street level. Then, through the foreign embassies, students tried to address a world audience by employing the rhetoric of principled internationalism and self-determination. What made this demonstration radically different from earlier (and some later) examples was the lack of any appeal to the Chinese state.

Students were extremely aware of the presence of foreigners in the section of the city they traversed that afternoon. Memoirs stress how the demonstration, at least in its early part, was extremely well-ordered and organized, and how “all the Westerners who witnessed this praised it and approved.”¹⁴⁸ A British correspondent reported that even when they moved to the residence of Cao Rulin, the minister of communications—considered to be pro-Japanese—students marched “in an orderly procession, quite worthy of the students of an enlightened nation.”¹⁴⁹ Similar reactions were recorded later in the day, when, after the violence and the fire at Cao Rulin’s house, arrested students were being dragged to the police station. Westerners in passing cars who encountered them applauded and cheered the students, and they applauded back.¹⁵⁰ In general, demonstrating students were trying to present an orderly spectacle, disciplined and organized especially for foreign eyes. They were stressing through a disciplined action the fact that they were part of the same international community of rights and reason, and the sympathy of Westerners was duly noted as indirect proof of the righteousness of the students’ claim.

Second, the seclusion of the colonized space of the Legation Quarter stood as an obstacle and a symbol of dispossession but, like the case of the concessions in Shanghai, the foreign presence also provided alternative possibilities for political action. In the immediate aftermath of the incidents, Cao Rulin allegedly tried to prevent the spread of the movement by ordering all post offices in the city to refuse telegrams from students. However, the students had already circumvented this obstacle by using the foreign post office.¹⁵¹

The path that the students followed after the stalemate at the Legation Quarter, however, and the reasons why they did so, is still a point of contention. In particular, it is unclear whether the final destination of the protest, the house of Cao Rulin, one of the “three traitors of the country,” was part of the original plan.¹⁵² Students ransacked and set fire to the house, while sending Zhang Zongxiang (one of the other “traitors”) and his Japanese guest to the hospital.

The violent escalation of the May Fourth protests looks like an understandable but incongruous act in a demonstration that was planned as a civic and civil spectacle for both the Chinese people, via the population of Beijing, and the world, via Beijing’s embassies and foreign residents. Some of the recollections point to one or more “radical groups” among the students that were supposedly responsible for inciting the protestors and moving them toward Dongdan and Cao’s house. Luo Zhanglong mentions a small group of Hunan students who had secretly planned the attack and had even scouted out the location and the possible entrances in advance.¹⁵³ Cai Xiaozhou and Yang Lianggong recall instead another meeting at Beida on the very morning of

May Fourth in which they decided to go find Cao Rulin and “list the crimes of the traitors of the country.”¹⁵⁴ Other sources highlight the figure of Kuan Husheng, a student from Beijing Higher Normal School, who is blamed for both breaking into the house and starting the fire.

While most of these reconstructions sound farfetched and seem to be part of the process of ex-post appropriation of the merits and value of radicalism, they are not completely implausible. A portion of the students might have decided, from the beginning or *in medias res*, to redirect the demonstration and shift its goals, taking advantage of the general disillusionment, fatigue, and anger generated by the long hours waiting outside the Legation Quarter. However, a violent assault does not seem to have been the shared goal of the protest. On a side note, while it might apparently be difficult to reconcile the image of a well-ordered, “rational” march with the fire and the brutal beating of two dignitaries, this kind of event should remind us how emotions play a crucial role in determining the involvement and the personal commitment of each participant to collective action. Rational behavior is easier to document, describe, and analyze, but political rationality does not necessarily stand in contradiction with, nor can it be completely separated from, emotions.¹⁵⁵

Disgruntled students left the Legation Quarter probably around 4:00 p.m., retraced their steps back north along Hubu Road, and turned east on Chang’an Avenue. They walked past the Dong’an intersection, walked north on Mishi Avenue, and finally entered the Shidaren *hutong*, a small alley where Cao Rulin’s residence was located and where the three pro-Japan ministers of the Chinese government were rumored to be holding a meeting.¹⁵⁶ Here, following the assault on Cao’s house, the organized movement of disciplined protesters ended and from here students either went back to the school individually or in small groups, or they were brought to police offices and army garrisons.¹⁵⁷

This area of the Inner City was still not served by the majority of public transportation and was unfamiliar to most students, especially those who were newcomers to Beijing. While close to the commercial area of Dongdan, the area was a residential district, typically structured as a maze of narrow alleys or *hutong*. Yang Zhongjian, one of the protesters from Beida, recalls how he got lost while running away after the assault on Cao’s house. “Even though I had spent more than a year in Beijing, I was not familiar with those streets, and there was nobody I knew to go with. So I headed north on a north-south street, until I got to the neighborhood of the Dongsi archway, and only then turned west to get to the school.”¹⁵⁸ In his memoir, Yang describes the demonstration as his first political experience and a drastic turning point in his activism. From this perspective, the image of a protesting

student lost in the streets of Beijing stands as a poignant metaphor for the changes May Fourth brought. Not only did it present for many students the first direct contact with associations and collective activity, but it was also a direct experience of the city: students began in well-known areas (the Tiananmen and Qianmen neighborhoods), collided with the newly imprinted markers of colonization and imperialist authority, and finally moved to less frequented, almost alien sectors of urban space. In this sense, May Fourth epitomizes the shifts and expansion of student activities in the city in the following months and it identifies clearly the most radical and dangerous characteristics of student activism, the capacity to cross borders. On May Fourth, students were, both physically and figuratively, in places where they should not have been.

May Fourth also mirrors the evolution of the political actions of following months in that it was the first movement toward, through, and ultimately with the residents of Beijing. It reshaped the connection among the large majority of the schools in the capital. Such a coordination of efforts among the various schools had never been attempted, and students were brought out of the confines of their classmates' circles. The lecture groups, in particular, were a Beida initiative that, in large part as a consequence of the protests of May and June, soon expanded to the larger community of Beijing students. This community comprised students from both universities (Zhongguo Daxue, Yanjing Daxue, Minguo Daxue, etc.) and specialty schools, with a wide range of ages and geographical provenance. The position of Beida in this community was central, not simply for the prestige of the school—it was still the only “national university”—but also for the sheer number of its students, who constituted by far the most sizeable contingent during the activities of May Fourth and the following months.

When the students directly addressed the city people, these apparently responded wholeheartedly and supported the demonstrators, at least according to the students' own recollections. And this was, for the vast majority of the students, one of the first experiences of action involving sectors of the population other than themselves.¹⁵⁹ This characteristic was identified as crucial both by the supporters and enemies of the movement. When Cai Yuanpei and Beida became the main target of government attacks in the aftermath of May Fourth, many saw in this a very subversive attempt to reduce “a movement of tens of thousands people” to the efforts of one school and one man.¹⁶⁰ In a similar vein, the Shanghai newspaper *Shizuo*, which had been supportive of the demonstration, criticized the waves of school strikes conducted by the students in May and June: they were actions whose impact remained strictly inside the school environment and whose significance failed to be understood by people outside the narrow student group.¹⁶¹

Thus May Fourth represented an interaction with, and ultimately an intervention in, Beijing's spatial hierarchy. Students moved from Tiananmen to the Legation Quarter, marking and making visible the shifts in colonized and monumental space, and ventured in a first exploration of the possibilities for social interaction and political action that these shifts had opened. In doing so, students—and in particular Beida students—added another dimension to the political life they had been producing in the university: student politics was brought outside and immediately became “public.”¹⁶² Students themselves became visible as a category of public opinion and political activism.

- impossible. Reportedly, they were also worried about the hygienic situation inside the school. See "Yinian zhi huigu—san."
72. "Yanjushi yu jianyu" (The research institute and the prison), *Meizhou pinglin* 25 (June 8, 1919), reprinted in *Chen Duxiu zhu zao xuan* (Chen Duxiu's Selected Works), vol. 2, ed. Ren Jianshu, Zhang Tongmo, and Wu Xinzhong (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1993).
 73. "Jiaoyubu decree di sanhu hao" (Ministry of Education Decree no. 36), January 1920, Beijing Municipal Archive. Beijing University administration replied to the indictment on February 2 stating that Beida students had not been involved in boycott activities.
 74. "Jiaoyubu xunling di yibajiu hao" (Ministry of Education Decree no. 189), April 14, 1920, Beijing Municipal Archive. Apparently, the case of the *Student Weekly* had been pointed out to the ministry by the Tianjin police. Emphasis mine.
 75. "Jingji weishu zong siling" (Order of the Beijing garrison commander), February 27, 1922, Beijing Municipal Archive.
 76. "Zhi Jiaoyubu," March 4, 1922, Beijing Municipal Archive.
 77. "Xiaozhang bugao" (Notice of the university president), *BDRK*, March 28, 1921, reprinted in *BDSL II* r:624.
 78. Huang Jue, "Sui'gan lu" (Expressing my feelings), *BDXSSZK*, no. 7, (February 15, 1920): 3.
 79. Suinting, "Fei shejian zhi" (Abolish the system of dormitory supervisors), *BDXSSZK*, no. 3 (January 18, 1920): 7.
 80. Jingan, "Fei shejian zhi" (Abolish the dormitory supervisor system), *BDXSSZK*, no. 3 (January 18, 1920): 8.
 81. See "Dishi'ju zi zongwu weiyuanhuiyi jishi" (Report on the nineteenth meeting of the general affairs committee), *BDRK*, December 10, 1920 and "Diershi zi zongwu weiyuanhuiyi" (Twentieth meeting of the general affairs committee), *BDRK*, December 24, 1920, both reprinted in *BDSL II* r:622–23.
 82. Tian Jiongjin, who was a student at Beida during May Fourth, attributes the movement for the abolition of the exam more to the severity of exams than to the political upheaval of 1919. See "Beida huinian suyi."
 83. Min Jinyuan, "Du Tao Zhixing xiansheng de Xuesheng zizhi wenli zhi yanjiu" (A review of Tao Zhixing's Study of the issue of student self-government), *BDXSSZK*, no. 6 (February 8, 1920): 4–6.
 84. Cai Yuanpei, "Beida shiyue ershiwuri dahui yanshuoci" (Speech at the Beida general meeting on October 25), *CYQJ* 4:272–74. See also "Cai Yuanpei fuzhi hou zai Beida zhi yanshuo" (Cai's speech at Beida after resuming his post), *Chenba*, October 26, 1922), reprinted in *BDSL II* r:250–51.
 85. Da Bai, "Xueshao de shenghuo dang ruhe gaige" (How school life should be reformed), *BDXSSZK*, no. 15, (May 9, 1920): 6–8.
 86. *Ibid.*, 7.
1. Madeleine Yue Dong, *Republican Beijing: The City and Its Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), in particular chapter 9. Epigraph quote from Dong, *Republican Beijing*, 271–72.
 2. Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 686.
 3. David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 12. The expression was used in *Yizhibao*, April 22, 1920, 7.
 4. Strand reminds us that in the late 1920s the Nationalists similarly harbored a profound dislike for Beijing, a city they saw as completely corrupted by a mix of Manchu, militarist, and Communist influences, "and expressed concern lest their own movement become contaminated by contact with the old capital" (*Rickshaw Beijing*, 10). One should also keep in mind, however, that a massive literary production on "old Beijing" developed after the 1920s, depicting the city in terms that, when not straightforwardly nostalgic, were clearly more appreciative. Over time, as Susan Naquin notes, the new literature on Beijing "combined to inflect the twentieth-century city with both a heightened sense of its imperial past and a manifest affection for its local culture" (*Peking*, 687). The ambiguity of the literary Beijing between cherished celebration and social criticism is best embodied in the work of Lao She.
 5. Timothy B. Weston, *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898–1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 202. See also Feng Lijing, "Democracy and Elitism: The May Fourth Ideal of Literature," *Modern China* 22, no. 2 (April 1996): 170–96.
 6. See for example, Tao Xisheng, "Cai xiansheng ren Beida xiaozhang dai jindai Zhongguo fasheng de juda yingxiang" (The great influence Cai Yuanpei had on modern China when he assumed the presidency of Beida) in *Beida jishi* (Old facts about Beida), ed. Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong (Beijing: Sanlian shidian, 1998), 46; Cheng Houzhi, "Huiyi wo zai Beida de Yiduan xuesheng shenghuo" (Remembering a part of my life as a student at Beida) in Chen and Xia, *Beida jishi*, 256–69. See also Weston, *The Power of Position*, 201–5, 209–14; Chow T'se-tung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 49–50.
 7. Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing*, xiii.
 8. Neil Smith, "Homeless/global: scaling places" in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, ed. Jon Bird (London: Routledge, 1993), 93. Cited in Steve Pile and Michael Keith, *Geographies of Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 13.
 9. Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 8.

10. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 41.
11. Anne-Marie Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing* (London: Routledge, 2004), 8.
12. William H. Sewell Jr., "Space in Contentious Politics," in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, Ronald R. Aminzade et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 55.
13. "Beijing Daxuexiao zhi yange" (The reform of Beijing University), *Dongfang zazhi* (April 1917), reprinted in *BDSL II* 3:153. Emphasis mine.
14. The Huangcheng walls were initially breached (to open thoroughfares) in 1916 and were completely demolished by 1927.
15. Weston, *The Power of Position*, 45.
16. Chang Kuo-t'ao, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party, 1921-1927* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1971), 139.
17. Chen Pingyuan, "Lao Beida de Gushi (dai xu)" (Stories from old Beida: Introduction), in Chen and Xia, *Beida jishi*, 12. Chen argues that this proximity was indeed crucial.
18. In 1903, students protested and submitted a petition to the throne, making explicit reference to the heroism of Northern Song students. See Weston, *The Power of Position*, 62; Xiao Chaoran, *Beijing Daxue xiaoshi 1898-1949* (History of Beijing University, 1898-1949) (Beijing: Beijing Daxue chubanshe, 1988), 29-30.
19. *Gaoli Beijing Daxue wushi zhou nian jilan* (An overview of the fiftieth anniversary of National Beijing University), (Beijing: Beijing Daxue chubanshu, 1948), reprinted in *Wo yu Beida: Lao Beida hua Beida*, (Beida and me: Former students talk about Beida), ed. Wang Shiru and Wen Di (Beijing: Beijing Daxue chubanshe, 1998), 550-52.
20. See, for example, the speeches delivered at the celebration of the twentieth anniversary, in *Gaoli Beijing Daxue ershi zhou nian jinan* 20. Students and teachers did make reference to the educational experience of the recent past (e.g., to the model of the *shuyuan*) and to an ancient tradition of student or intellectual activism and independence (the Northern Song protests or the *qingjia* streak in literati thought), but not to any institutional or organic relationship with the state.
21. *Ibid.*, 18. In his famous interview with Edgar Snow, Mao Zedong mentions strolling through Beihai admiring the spring blossoms during his brief stay at Beida in 1918. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 152.
22. *Ibid.*, 12 and Zhu Haitao, "Beida yu Beidaren" (Beida and its people), *Dongfang Zazhi* 39, nos. 12-13; 40, nos. 3, 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 40 (1943-44), reprinted in Chen and Xia, *Beida jishi*, 361.
23. Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1938), 434.

24. Chen, "Lao Beida de Gushi (dai xu)," 12.
25. William White, "How do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture," *History and Theory* 45 (May 2006), 155.
26. Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 17.
27. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 222.
28. White, "How Do Buildings Mean," 167.
29. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 14-17.
30. Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*, 165.
31. Naquin, *Peking*, 7-8 and xxxi.
32. Shi Mingzheng, "Beijing Transforms: Urban Infrastructure, Public Works, and Social Change in the Chinese Capital, 1900-1928" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1993), 177.
33. *Ibid.*, 394.
34. Naquin, *Peking*, 622.
35. Richard Belsky, *Localities at the Center: Native Place, Space, and Power in Late Imperial Beijing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), chapter 4.
36. Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing*, 7.
37. Dong, *Republican Beijing*, 31.
38. On the Legation Quarter see Chen Pingyuan and Xia Xiaohong, eds., *Chumo Lishi: Wusi renwu yu xiandai Zhongguo* (Touching history: The protagonists of May Fourth and modern China) (Guangdong: Guangzhou chubanshe, 1999), 31-32.
39. Michael J. Moser and Yvonne Wei-Chih, *Foreigners Within the Gates: The Legations at Peking*, (Chicago: Serindia, 2007), 29. Henri Borel, *The New China: A Traveler's Impressions*, trans. C. Thieme (London: Adelphi Terrace, 1912), 31.
40. In particular see the beautifully illustrated volume by Moser and Wei-Chih, *Foreigners Within the Gates*.
41. Juliet Bredon, *Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description of Its Chief Places of Interest*, 2nd ed. (London: T.W. Laurie, 1924), 40. Originally, Chinese-owned residences separated the various legations.
42. *Ibid.*, 44. Moser and Wei-Chih, *Foreigners Within the Gates*, 140.
43. Government and private offices dealing with urban issues were created between 1860 and 1900. Naquin, *Peking*, 667.
44. Bredon, *Peking*, 14.
45. *Ibid.*, 18.
46. Chen and Xia, *Chumo Lishi*, 30. "City walls" here refers to the Inner City walls, not those of the Forbidden or Imperial City. See Naquin, *Peking*, 492-93.

47. See Geremie Barne, *The Forbidden City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). It is worth noting that the plan to make a museum out of the imperial palace was originally formulated by Cai Yuanpei in 1912, at the time minister of education.
48. Wu Hung implies that it was only with the advent of the PRC that the city structure was radically (and irremediably) altered. See his *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005). In 1949, Beijing, he argues, still retained nearly all its traditional character and splendor. But I believe this assessment depends in large part on his limited focus on Tiananmen. Shi Mingzheng instead maintains that, precisely with the exclusion of the area of Tiananmen, Beijing at the end of the Maoist period was not much different from 1930s Beijing. Shi, "Beijing Transforms," 22. Other authors contend that the radical destruction of the city structure (with the significant exception of the city wall and the Tiananmen Square area) did not take place before the 1980s. See for example Wang Jun, *Chengji* (An account of the walled city) (Beijing: Sanlian shidian, 2003).
49. In this respect, it is interesting that one of the first Qing maps, in 1723, only provided names for buildings, not streets, because it was only for use by the imperial household. Naquin, *Peking*, 456. We have to wait for the mid-nineteenth century for new kinds of city guides to come along.
50. Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing*, 4.
51. See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 222.
52. Naquin, *Peking*, 623. See also her reference to a prohibition against discussing politics in Beijing teahouses at the turn of the century *Ibid.*, 674.
53. Takashi Fujitani has discussed a similar approach to the representation of political power in modern Japan, showing how the particular relationship of invisibility with authority was not just "traditional." See his *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Paganry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
54. Naquin, *Peking*, 357–59.
55. See the following section. David Strand describes how modernity was articulated precisely through new social figures at street level (rickshaw pullers and policemen). *Rickshaw Beijing*, chapters 3 and 4.
56. Dong, *Republican Beijing*, 297.
57. Naquin, *Peking*, 701.
58. Incidentally, this is the case for other cities besides Beijing. Liping Wang makes a similar argument for Hangzhou's "tradition," which took shape when the city, deprived of other means of development, had to rely on its "antiquity." Tradition and modernity were constructed or invented simultaneously. Liping Wang, "Tourism and Spatial Change in Hangzhou, 1911–1927," in *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950*, ed. Joseph W. Escherick (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 107–20. See also Peter Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).
59. A similar process took place in the financial markets. The activity of large foreign banks in Beijing was limited almost exclusively to loans to government or state agencies and had no relationship with the business of the city. Banks therefore did not bring Beijing's local businesses into the new system of circulation. See Dong, *Republican Beijing*, 125–29.
60. *Ibid.*, 106. Descriptions of Beijing after the establishment of the PRC point insistently on the lack of "productive activity" in Beijing, which is described as a "consumer city" (*xiaofei chengshi*). Planners in the early 1950s (guided by Soviet experts) were entrusted with the task to transform Beijing into a "productive city," the largest industrial center of the country. See Wang Jun, *Chengji*, 68–69. See also *Jianguo yilai de Beijing chengshi jianshe ziliao*, di 1 jian, *Chengshi ziliao* (Documents on the rebuilding of Beijing after 1949, vol. 1, City planning) (Beijing: Beijing jianshe shi shu bianji weiyuanhui bianjibu, 1987).
61. Jiang Weitang, "Qibai nian lai Wangfujing" (Seven hundred years of Wangfujing) and Wu Yimin and Mi Yongyi, "Wangfujing zaiji" (Miscellaneous notes on Wangfujing), both in *Wangfujing*, ed. Beijing shi zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui et al. (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1993), 27 and 61. The development of Wangfujing into a modern shopping area does not imply that there was a dearth of commercial life in the Inner City during the Qing. Despite the prohibition for non-bannermen to reside there, by 1851 there were over fifteen thousand shopkeepers in the Inner City. Naquin, *Peking*, 398.
62. Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity*, 72.
63. *Ibid.*, 77.
64. *Ibid.*, 24.
65. Lillian M. Li, Alison J. Dray-Novoy, and Halli Kong, *Beijing: From Imperial Capital to Olympic City* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 149.
66. Bredon, *Peking*, 413.
67. Dong Shanyuan, Chen Bokang, and Ma Xiangyu, "Shuohua Dong'an Shichang" (Speaking of the Dong'an Market) in *Wangfujing*, 104. On the modern value of "horse roads," see Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity*, part I.
68. Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling*, 103.
69. Temple markets survived into the twentieth century but their place in the city had changed. Compared to Dong'an and the new department stores, they "sold more handicrafts and Chinese goods and now seemed old-fashioned." Naquin, *Peking*, 632.
70. Li, Dray-Novoy, and Kong, *Beijing*, 149.
71. Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling*, 103.
72. Dong, *Republican Beijing*, 148–50 and 152.

73. Gamble, *Peking*, 213.
74. The theater, originally called a "teahouse" (Jixiang Chayuan), was renamed Jixiang Xiyuan in 1949. See Wang Zhong and Yao Deren, *Wangfujing* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2005), 50.
75. Dong, Chen, and Ma, "Shuohua Dong'an Shichang," 107–18.
76. Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling*, 104.
77. *Ibid.*
78. The market survived, albeit with much less glamour, until 1993 when it was demolished to make room for the new Sun Dong An Market, at the time the largest shopping center in Beijing. Financed by a Hong Kong developer, it claims to integrate elements of the local architecture with a modern international style. It is, as others have noted, just a gigantic mall, which pays perfunctory and superficial homage to the history of the urban environment of Wangfujing. See Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling*, 112–17.
79. *Ibid.*, 101.
80. Sergei M. Tretakov, *A Chinese Testament: The Autobiography of Tan Shih-hua, As Told to S. Tretakov* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934), 240.
81. Shi, "Beijing Transforms," chapter 3 on the organization and management of the park, as a private-public enterprise.
82. *Ibid.*, 208.
83. *Ibid.*, 241.
84. See Dong, *Republican Beijing*, 269.
85. Shi Mingzheng, "From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: The Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing," *Modern China* 24, no. 3 (1998): 219–54.
86. Li Dazhao, "Beijing shimin yinggai yaouin de xinsheng hui," (The new life Beijing residents should ask for), *Xin Shenghao*, May 1919: 15–16.
87. Gu Jiegang, *The Autobiography of a Chinese Historian: Being the Preface to a Symposium on Ancient Chinese History* (*Ku shih pien*), trans. Arthur W. Hummel (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1931), 31.
88. Minu Jinyuan, "Beijing Daxue de xuesheng shenghuo" (Student Life at Beijing University), *Xuesheng zazhi*, no. 7 (July 1922): 2. *Hayin* is a generic term for a family of Chinese musical instruments. They usually have two strings and are played with a bow.
89. Gamble, *Peking*, 25–26. To give a point of comparison, a family of four was considered "very poor" if their yearly income was below 100. This sector of the population was obviously cut off even from the cheapest kind of entertainment.
90. Dong, *Republican Beijing*, 157.
91. During the Qing, exam candidates and officers enjoyed the city also as a place of consumption: they ate, shopped, and enjoyed the entertainment the capital had to offer. See Belsky, *Localities at the Center*.
92. Dong, *Republican Beijing*, 157.
93. "Jiaoyu bu xunling" (Decree of the Ministry of Education), *BDRK*, June 16, 1919, reprinted in *BDSL II* 3:2824.
94. No location is proposed for the club. "Niqing zuzhi daxue julebu, huafen daxue qiyu, zhiding jiaoyuan xuesheng zhifu an" (Proposal to create a university club, form a university quarter, and set student and faculty uniforms), *BDRK*, January 16–17, 1918, reprinted in *BDSL II* 1:25–16. The proposal was supported, among others, by Shen Yinnuo, Qian Xuantong, Zhou Zuoren, Tao Menghe, and Chen Duxiu. See Weston, *The Power of Position*, 142–43.
95. *Ibid.*, 216–17.
96. *Ibid.*, 218.
97. Michael Ts'in, "Canton Remapped," in Escherick, *Remaking the Chinese City*, 24.
98. *Ibid.*
99. On Haussmann, see David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), in particular chapter 1.
100. Ruth Rogaski, "Hygienic Modernity in Tianjin," in Escherick, *Remaking the Chinese City*, 30–31. See also her *Hygienic Modernity: Meaning of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
101. Weston, *The Power of Position*, 142.
102. "Xiaozhang bugao" (President's notice), *BDRK*, April 21, 1919, reprinted in *BDSL II* 2: 2097–98.
103. Weston, *The Power of Position*, 59 and 73.
104. For detailed descriptions of the events of May Fourth, see Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*; Chen and Xia, *Chumo lishi*; Cai Xiaozhou and Yang Liang-gong, *Wusi* (May Fourth) (Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe, 1982 [1919]).
105. Luo, "Beijing Daxue yu Wusi yundong" (Beijing University and the May Fourth Movement), in Wang and Wen, *Wo yu Beida*; Chang, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party*.
106. Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 99–103.
107. Xiao, *Beijing Daxue yu Wusi yundong*, 174.
108. Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 105. Besides being a commercial district, Hatanen was also the place where the monument to slain German ambassador Von Ketteler had been placed (under pressure of foreign powers) after the Boxer Rebellion. The monument had been removed in November 1918 at the end of WWI. "Ketteler Monument Being Removed," *New York Times*, November 18, 1918. On the building of the monument see James L. Hewia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 245–46, 309–311.
109. *Chenba*, May 5, 1919, quoted in Chen and Xia, eds., *Chumo lishi*, 17–18.
110. Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing*, 59.

111. Wu Hung holds that the emperor was not present (*Remaking Beijing*, 59) while Shi Mingzheng quotes Jeffrey Meyer who argues he was ("Beijing Transforms," 111).
112. See Chen and Xia, *Chumo lishi*, 25–26; Rudolph G. Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, ed. M. Dolezalová-Velingerová and O. Král (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 93–94.
113. See Nelson K. Lee, "How Is a Political Public Space Made?—The Birth of Tiananmen Square and the May Fourth Movement," *Political Geography* 28 (2009): 32–43.
114. Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," 93–94.
115. Shi, "Beijing Transforms," 111.
116. Bredon, *Peking*, 122.
117. Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing*, 8.
118. Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing*, 60.
119. *Ibid.*, 18.
120. Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing*, 172.
121. Shi, "Beijing Transforms," 202.
122. *Ibid.*
123. See Weston, *The Power of Position*, 161–62. Cai's speeches are in *CYQJ* 3:215–19. This was not in any way a student demonstration, or at least not one organized and planned by students. The event was carefully prepared and announcements were printed to invite students to participate, but also to explain the desired form of their participation. The announcement on November 14, 1918, instructed participants about which slogans to shout: "Beijing Hurrah, We-Wai Beijing Hurrah, We-Wai Beijing Daxue, Real!" Beijing University archive.
124. Robert Musil, "Monuments", in *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*, trans. Peter Wortsman (Hygiene, CO: Eridanos Press, 1987), 61.
125. Sewell, "Space in Contentious Politics," 56.
126. Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing*, 62.
127. Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 129.
128. *Ibid.*, 129.
129. Chen and Xia, *Chumo lishi*, 18.
130. *Ibid.*, 18.
131. Dennis Hollier, quoted in Andreas Huyssen, "Monumental Seduction," *New German Critique*, no. 69 (Autumn 1996): 191–92.
132. The famed Beijing scholar Hou Renzhi points out that the reason why Mao proclaimed the founding of the PRC from the top of Tiananmen was related to the history of activism in the area, and specifically to the May Fourth Movement (and not to any claim to the imperial legacy). Hou Renzhi: "The Transformation of the Old City of Beijing, China," in *World Patterns of Modern Urban Change*, ed. Michael Conzen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 234.
133. Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History" in *The Realm of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. Pierre Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996–1998), 1:17.
134. Deborah G. Martin and Byron Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics," *Mobilization: An International Journal* 8, no. 2 (2003): 148.
135. Xiao Chaoran, *Beijing Daxue yu Wusi yundong* (Beijing: University and the May Fourth movement) (Beijing: Beijing Daxue chubanshe, 1995), 174–75. The precise number and provenance of students involved in the May Fourth incident are difficult to ascertain. See Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, appendices B and C.
136. Beida's location in downtown Beijing stands in contrast to Qinghua's suburban character. Qinghua, mainly because of its position on the outskirts of the city, did not take part to the May Fourth protests. Its position proved to be a liability in the following months as well, when the police managed on a few occasions to prevent Qinghua students from entering the city walls.
137. "The Manifesto of All the Students of Peking" was written by Luo Jialin in vernacular Chinese. A second, longer text was prepared by Xu Deheng and appeared in the press during the following days. This was written in literary Chinese and charged with much more violent rhetoric. Both texts are translated in Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 106–8.
138. The student route to the Legation Quarter was not obvious. They could have taken a much more direct path (east on Chang'an Avenue and then south). Lacking any evidence to justify this choice, I can only suggest that students opted to march toward Qianmen for a couple of reasons. First, the structure of the T-shaped space in front of the gate formed something like a wide corridor that would have "channeled" the students; second, this space opened to Chessboard Street, which was full of stores, and probably more crowded and lively than any alternative path. I am thankful to Richard Belsky for pointing out this issue.
139. Cai and Yang, *Wusi*, 17–18.
140. Wilson's speech at Versailles Peace Conference had a direct effect on Korea's March First movement in the same year. Korean protestors called on the principle of self-determination upheld by Wilson. Wilson's position in international relations (however misinterpreted by the Chinese or the Koreans) was probably one of the reasons why the U.S. legation was chosen by the May Fourth students.
141. Cai and Yang, *Wusi*, 18. The letter is reprinted in Xiao, *Beijing Daxue yu Wusi Yundong*, 178.
142. For a description of the movement from the legations to Cao Rulin's house, see Yang Hui, "Wusi yundong yu Beida" (The May Fourth Movement and Beida), in Chen and Xia, *Beida jinshi*, 55–58.

143. Xu Daheng, "Huayi Wusi yundong" (Memories of the May Fourth Movement), in *Wusi yundong qinli ji* (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1999), 29.
144. Bredon, *Peking*, 16.
145. Borel, *The New China*, 40.
146. Bredon, *Peking*, 16.
147. Chen and Xia, *Chumoishi*, 30–31.
148. Cai and Yang, *Wusi*, 16.
149. Quoted in Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, III.
150. *Chenbaa*, May 8, 1919, reprinted in *BDSL II* 3:2807.
151. Cai and Yang, *Wusi*, 23. Chow Ts'e-tsung reports a similar episode taking place in the city of Tianjin. Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 124.
152. Cao Rulin was minister of communications, Zhang Zongxiang had been minister to Japan since 1916, and Lu Zongyu was the director general of the Currency Reform Bureau, chairman of the Bank of Communications, and Chinese director of the Chinese-Japanese Exchange Bank. See Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 103–4.
153. See Luo Zhanglong, *Chunyuwan zuyi* (Memories of the Chun garden) (Beijing: Sanlian shidian, 1984), 41–42. He describes the activities of *xingdong xiaozu* (action group) of the Hunan Student Association in Beijing, which had a secret plan to turn the May Fourth demonstration to a violent outcome. On May Fourth they allegedly managed to redirect the students to a violent outcome. On May Fourth they attacked Luo claims that nobody outside the *xiaozu* knew what the secret plan was.
154. Cai and Yang, *Wusi*, 15.
155. On this topic, see Ron Aminzade and Doug McAdam, "Emotions and Contentious Politics," in *Silence and Voice*, Aminzade et al., 14–50.
156. Cao's house was in the eastern section of the Inner City, in Zhaojialou *hutong*.
157. Thirty-two students were arrested (twenty of them from Beida) and taken either to the police headquarters or the army garrison. The second group apparently fared much worse. Chen and Xia, *Chumoishi*, 42–43.
158. Yang Zhongjian, "Liuinian Beida xuesheng shenghuo de huayi" (Recollections of six years of student life at Beida), in Wang and Wen, *Wo yu Beida*, 377. Cao Rulin's house was really not that far from Beida but apparently at least some students had a knowledge of the city that was strictly limited to the university's immediate neighborhood.
159. It is difficult to gauge how many among the students at Beida participated in associations of different kinds, especially those based on regional provenance (*fanguan* and *tongxianghui*).
160. Cai and Yang, *Wusi*, 29.
161. *Ibid.*, 116–17.
162. See Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space*, 42.

7. THE PEDAGOGY OF THE CITY

1. Or as part of other networks in which their "student" identity was less relevant, like native-place associations.
2. *Chenbaa*, April 20, 1919, reprinted in *BDSL II* 3:2647. According to the newspaper, about one thousand people attended the concert, which was meant to have an "educational" aspect. The article concluded: "I believe that this kind of event is truly unprecedented in the muddy society of Beijing, and if only we could have concerts from time to time, it would benefit the people's ability to appreciate beauty and foster a noble spirit."
3. See, for example, Rudolph G. Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, ed. M. Dolzalová-Velingerová and O. Král (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 66–120.
4. *BDRK*, January 26, 1918, reprinted in *CYQJ* 3:128–29.
5. "Wei kaishhe Xiaoyi Yeban xiaozhang gaobai" (Notice of the president about the opening of the Night School for University Personnel), *BDRK*, March 18, 1918, reprinted in *BDSL II* 2:1231. Classrooms were located in two university buildings at Jingshan and Beihayuan.
6. The students were to call the professors *xiansheng* while the students were to call each other *xuetu*. "Xiaoyi Yeban jianzhang" (Concise regulations of the Night School for University Personnel), *BDRK*, April 9, 1918, reprinted in *BDSL II* 2:1233.
7. *Ibid.*, 1232.
8. Cai Yuanpei, "Beida Xiaoyi Yeban kaixue shi yanshuo ci" (Speech at the opening ceremony of the Beida Night School for University Personnel), *CYQJ* 3:146–47.
9. Cai Yuanpei, "Beida Xiaoyi Yeban kaixue shi yanshuo ci."
10. "Xiaoyi Yeban jianzhang," 1232.
11. The *guowen* class was to stress *bahua*, while the ethics course was to rely on lectures and not on reading. "Xiaoyi Yeban jiaoyuanhui jishi" (Report of the faculty meeting of the Night School for University Personnel), *BDRK*, March 29, 1918, reprinted in *BDSL II* 2:1231.
12. "Xiaoyi Yeban guowen jiaoshouhui baogao" (Notice of the Chinese language faculty meeting of the Night School for University Personnel), *BDRK*, April 20, 1918, reprinted in *BDSL II* 2:1235.
13. *Ibid.*, 1236.
14. "Xiaoyi Yeban guowen jiaoshouhui baogao shu" (Notice of the Chinese language faculty meeting of the Night School for University Personnel), *BDRK*, May 1, 1919, *BDSL II* 2:1237–38.
15. *Ibid.*