The Fearing and the Feared:

Baoan as Security Commodities in Gated Communities in Post-socialist China

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Table of Contents

Abstract. ii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: The Production of the Industry of Fear 38

Chapter 2: The Making of *Baoan* in Urban China. 67

Chapter 3: “Wolves” Guarding the “Sheep” 98

Chapter 4: The Conspicuous Consumption of Baoan’s Bodies. 130

Chapter 5: *Qunzu*—The Battle Over Space and Fear. 155

Chapter 6: We Are Not Heroes! 185

Conclusion. 220

Bibliography. 225

Abstract

Since the economic reform starting in 1978, nearly all of the new housing developments in China's cities have adopted the form of gatedness, and nearly all urban residential communities have been relying on *baoan* (security guards) for security service. This project started with my curiosity regarding why in urban China, a relatively safe space by international comparisons, *baoan* have such a strong presence in residential communities. Like the gated communities that are often regarded as "enclaves of fear" (Blakely and Snyder 1997), the industry of private security could also be viewed as an "industry of fear," and *baoan* are seen as a remedy for the upper-and middle-classes homeowners' fear of neighborhood crimes. However, at the same time, most *baoan* are migrant, informal workers belonging to the feared class that is blamed for increasing crimes in cities.

By studying *baoan* in the largest middle-class gated community in Shanghai, China and by proposing a hierarchical system of fear, this ethnography investigates the intertwined relations among power, space, and fear. It examines how the neoliberal-authoritarian state policies promote and regulate the industry, how the labor-leasing contract between property management and private security companies informalizes the work of *baoan*, and how the mistrust and fear of homeowners affect the experience of being a *baoan* on a day-to-day basis. It explores the daily routines and everyday resistance of *baoan*, and especially pays attention to the processes by which *baoan* interact with the grassroots state agencies that govern, the middle-class homeowners who consume, and the *qunzu* (group-renting) tenants who elude *baoan*.

This ethnography is the first empirical study in anthropology that examines the private security industry and the emotion of fear among the people in a society undergoing a post-socialist transition. By studying the role of *baoan* in the status of "liminality," this project dissects what security means for different actors and how they utilize and compete for the ownership of fear that is inherent in spatial orderings.

Introduction

On a winter evening in 2017, the temperature in downtown Shanghai was a little above zero degree Celsius. Three *baoan* (security guards) stood in front of the main gate of the east quarter of Dadi, one of the largest residential communities (*xiaoqu*) in Shanghai. In front of the main gate was a busy road on which many of the homeowners were driving home after work. Since the property management company had installed the "automatic car identification system" (ACIS) at the main gate one month before, any vehicle that did not pay the monthly parking fee in advance would be stopped from entering Dadi. This change had snarled up traffic in front of the main gate. Upset residents whose cars or whose visitors' cars were blocked by the system vented their anger by insulting and cursing *baoan* standing at the gates. The three *baoan* who had just started their nightshift were nervous.

Language dispute sometimes escalated into physical violence. A young man in his early twenties had come to visit his parents. His black Buick was also stopped at the gate because it was not registered in the system. The young man walked towards Jianhong, one of the three *baoan*, and asked him to remove the barrier with the remote controller. "Sorry, Sir, property managers do not allow us to do that," Jianhong, who was 47 years old, explained to him. The young man did not listen and became irritated when his request was repeatedly declined. "It's our place, our home! We pay your salary! Who gave you the right to stop us from going home?" He grabbed the walkie-talkie from Jianhong's hand and punched Jianhong's chest. Jianhong was terrified and tongue-tied; he tried mumbling an apology. All of a sudden, the young man took Jianhong to the ground. Jianhong landed hard on the cement and hurt his back. He could not get up. This violence made a big scene on the road. Some eyewitnesses called the police who arrived

and stayed for only five minutes. They merely asked both parties to resolve this issue on their own and took off. Jianhong was taken to a nearby hospital by his coworkers and the medical bill was paid from the pocket of Anquan. The young man's parents later took him to the hospital to offer an apology.

Jianhong was one of millions of people working in the industry of fear in urban China. Like most of them, he had been a farmer living in a less-developed province before he began making a living in cities. His hometown in Gansu province is over two thousand kilometers away from Shanghai. His family owned six acres of dry land that could only yield an annual income of less than RMB 10,000 (around USD 1,450). He came to Shanghai in 2002 and undertook different informal works—"jobs that pay wages but do not conform to labor laws and regulations" (Swider 2015:5). In his late thirties, after years of laying bricks on construction sites, he became a *baoan* for an office building.

Jianhong's mother passed away in 2017. In the industry of private security, the established practice is that *baoan* are not allowed to take a leave longer than a couple of days. Therefore, in order to take a train to go back to the funeral, Jianhong had to quit his job. After spending one month at home, he came back to Shanghai and found that his position had been filled. He could no longer find a *baoan* position in an office building because he was now over the age limit of 45 years old. He ended up being a nightshift *baoan* in Dadi where the age limit for *baoan* was not strict. His wife worked as a garbage collector in Shanghai; however, in order to save money, the couple had lived separately in their dormitories provided by employers for more than a decade. Just like Jianhong, most *baoan* I encountered during this research are rural migrants who are subjected to flexible exploitations and who lead transient and contingent lives (Solinger 1999; Zhang 2001).

The word "*baoan*" in Mandarin means "security guards." However, *baoan*, as an industry, an occupation, and a vocational group has distinctive Chinese characteristics. First, this industry of *baoan* came into being as a result of state policy. It has intimate relations with the state and works in close cooperation with state agencies. Second, *baoan* as an occupation is usually a type of informal employment and is generally of low pay and low status. Third, the people who work in this industry are mostly disenfranchised migrant workers who suffer discrimination and marginalization in urban spaces. In order to reflect the distinctions between *baoan* in post-socialist China and security guards in western societies, in this dissertation I use the word *baoan* instead of "security guards."

Even though one can find *baoan* in government buildings, hospitals, commercial places, at various social events, and so on, this dissertation will mainly focus on *baoan* in residential spaces, which is a unique phenomenon that emerges in China's historical, political, and socioeconomic context. Different from the private security services in western societies that are mostly provided to high-end residential compounds, *baoan* are present in the majority of residential communities in Chinese metropolises—from luxury condominiums to low-end, old public housing (*lao gong fang*). Their duties include gatekeeping, night watching, deterring crimes, regulating parking, assisting in emergencies, expelling "illegitimate" tenants, and assisting homeowners and property managers in doing all the chores in the communal sphere. Since the 1980s, nearly all of the commodity housing developments built in urban China have taken the form of gated communities (Miao 2003), creating a spatial and social context for *baoan*'s everyday routines. All of the homeowners behind the gates collectively and exclusively pay and use the *baoan*'s services as provided by the property management company. It is safe to

say that the prevalence of *baoan* in residential spaces is closely associated with the spread of gated communities.

To explain such a strong presence of *baoan* in residential spaces, one may surmise that the crime rates in Chinese cities are so high that only 24-hours of protection from *baoan* can ensure residents' security. However, official data negates such speculation and even makes the phenomenon more perplexing. The violent crime rate in urban China is indeed low compared to countries at a similar developing pace as well as to some developed countries (Messner et al. 2008). Meng Jianzhu, a member of the Communist Party's Politburo, announced in a government report that China's homicide rate in 2016 was 0.62 per 100,000 residents, one of the lowest rates in the world (Zhao 2017). By contrast, the United States had a homicide rate of 4.9 in 2015 according to FBI. Meng also mentioned in the same report that the severe violent crime in China had declined by 43% from 2012 to 2016. However, during the same period, the number of *baoan* working for residential communities increased rapidly. Shanghai, the city where I conducted fieldwork, was one of the safest metropolises in mainland China, whereas the rate of *baoan* present in residential communities was also among the highest.

The project on *baoan* started with my curiosity. I wondered, if China's urban spaces are generally safe, why has *baoan* become a necessity for urban living? Are the upper-and middle-classes homeowners genuinely so fearful? Can *baoan* help to alleviate their fear? What is the role of the state behind the prosperity of the industry of private security, that is, the industry of fear? What are these *baoan*'s duties in residential spaces? Can they effectively deter criminal activities? Are they a tool for enforcing order among residents who have disagreements about community affairs? With these questions, I studied two *baoan* teams in a massive gated community in Shanghai. Although there is some literature on private security throughout the

world (Diphoorn 2015; Larkins 2015), this empirical study is the first ethnography about the industry of fear in China and will add to the existing literature with a case study unique in post-socialist space.

This introduction consists of five parts: (1) social background of this research; (2) the background of the field site; (3) methodology; (4) theoretical framework; and (5) an introduction to six chapters.

Social Background: *Baoan* and Gates

The presence of *baoan* in nearly every gated community has become a part of the culture of China's urban dwelling. Both gates and *baoan* demarcate the boundaries of residential space. Walls, gates, and various high-tech access control systems enable *baoan*'s duties; and vice versa, *baoan*'s watch guarantees the function of these facilities. Therefore, in order to understand the occupation and industry of *baoan*, I also look at gated communities—the space that defines, limits, and facilitates *baoan*'s activities.

A gated community in western societies is defined as "walled or fenced housing developments, to which public access is restricted, characterized by legal agreements which tie the residents to a common code of conduct and (usually) collective responsibility for management" (Atkinson and Blandy 2006:viii). Even though there are various forms of gating in contemporary China, a typical middle-class gated community is a walled space containing a group of condominium buildings built by the same developer. Inside the walls or fences, there are also some shared facilities, typically, a lawn and playground. *Baoan* sit or stand in front of these gates. The authentic way to call such space in Chinese is *feng bi xiao qu* (sealed residential

quarter). Since "gated community" is more theorized and academically recognized, I will use this term in my dissertation.

Although access to these communities is namely restricted to residents and their visitors, the rules are impossible to implement in most communities in China because the number of residents and visitors are so significant that the security personnel cannot verify everyone's identity. In most communities, the gates remain open all the time. *Baoan* watch people coming in and out and only occasionally stop the ones who are obviously out of place based on their clothes, cars, appearances, manners, accents, and so on. In contrast to these semi-sealed or "pseudo-gated" (Yip 2012) communities, there are fully gated communities as well. However, such prestigious communities typically have a lower population density and a bigger security team.

The History of Residence in Shanghai

I chose to conduct fieldwork in Shanghai because both the real estate and the private security industry there are highly developed. Moreover, my six years of living and working in this metropolis after college brought me familiarity with the geographical, social, and cultural environment and helped me to navigate and to investigate this topic.

The Shanghai citizens' residence has gone through three phases since the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. **The first phase is the housing nationalization**. Immediately after 1949, most private property throughout China was nationalized, either through being purchased or being expropriated. In 1956, only 40 percent of housing was privately owned by citizens in Shanghai. By 1987, the number had even declined to 23 percent (Pellow 1993:399). During this period, most Chinese urban space was designed for industrial purposes and allocated to work units (*danwei*)—a place of state-owned employment—for building

factories and living compounds. Therefore, in the Maoist era, public housing built and provided by work units became an important form of accommodation for Shanghai citizens, on top of villas, lane housing (*linong*), and *shikumen*,[1] which had been built before 1949.

The second phase is the housing privatization. Since the economic reform and opening policy enacted in 1978, the Chinese state launched a series of privatizations, representing the start of the post-socialist era. As an important component of privatization, the housing reform began in Shanghai in 1998. In this phase, Shanghai citizens either bought public housing from work units or bought newly built commodity housing from real-estate developers based on their respective purchasing capacities (Davis 1995; Gaubatz 1995:2). Since the housing reform, commodity housing in the form of gated communities became the primary form of residence. At the same time, housing inequality and residential segregation rapidly increased in Shanghai, where the housing shortage has always been the most prominent housing problem (Pellow 1993).

The third phase is the urban redevelopment. Some research on China's urban spaces has mentioned a phenomenon of upscale communities and dilapidated migrant enclaves mixing in spatial proximity and being segregated by walls surrounding the former (Huang and Low 2008; White et al. 2008). However, this research was conducted a decade ago and does not apply to big Chinese cities today. The commodification of housing pushed the housing prices in Shanghai and other big cities up over ten-fold within two decades. Along with the skyrocketing of land price, almost all of these migrant enclaves, urban villages, and shanty towns have been pulled down and transformed into glamorous residential, business, and leisure spaces in the last decade. The rapid development of real estate in this third phase has not considered how to accommodate the large population of low-income migrant workers.

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[1] *Shikumen* is a traditional Shanghainese architectural style combining Western and Chinese elements. It first appeared in the 1860s.

The Crime Rate and The Privatization of Private Security

The crime rates in post-socialist China have shown three new features: first, the crime rate has risen yet remains low considering China's transforming pace; second, property crimes have increased disproportionately relative to violent crimes; third, corruption has become rampant compared to other countries at the same developing stage (Messner et al. 2008:278).

Based on research in Guangzhou, which was infamous for public insecurity among first-tier cities in China, Bakken believed that the Chinese police underreport crime statistic. He argued that the majority of criminal cases "disappear in irrational bureaucratic incentive structures and outright bans on publicizing data on violent and serious crime that diverges from the official dream logic" (2018:6). However, even if the official data does deviate from the actual number, it is still under debate that how big the difference is.

A general rise in the crime rate is understandable considering that the process of modernization and urbanization has worldwide stimulated criminal motivations, weakened traditional forms of social control, and generated opportunities for crime (Messner et al. 2008:279). In the case of China, some other factors have made things more complicated. First, the increased economic inequality since the reform has caused among the lower working class a sense of relative deprivation that may destabilize the society (Bakken 2005; Cai and Dai 2001). Second, the high levels of population migration and the prevalence of commodity housing have weakened the traditional mechanisms of social control such as work units and resident committees. Third, the availability of consumer goods to the general public makes property offenses more attractive (Messner et al. 2008).

The governmental controls have become weaker since the beginning of the reform era; however, the state continues to play a critical role in the operations of Chinese society and economy in the post-socialist era. A strong central government in China's social transition is believed to account for the disproportionate increase between violent/property crime and corruption (Bakken 2000; Messner et al. 2008). In seeking to hold the reins of modernization, the Chinese state monitors and controls the migration and activities of individual citizens, which helps to "mitigate some of the criminogenic pressures commonly associated with modernization" and to decrease the rate of violent crimes (Messner et al. 2008:280). On the other hand, the authoritative party-state excluded the possibility of supervision from media and other parties, creating "unique opportunities" for corruption and other economic crimes (Messner et al. 2008:280).

Because the police force could no longer sufficiently handle the new situations arising from fast urbanization and population growth, the state began developing the private security industry in the 1980s. *Baoan* service was first seen as "a special industry that was between government department and voluntary neighborhood watch, providing professional and paid security service to the society" (Zhu 2011:102). The first private security company in contemporary China is state owned and was founded by a police officer in Shenzhen in 1984. In 1995 the Chinese state reaffirmed that only public security bureaus can found private security companies in China. The state's disallowance of market competition limited the development of this industry. Not until the end of 2009 did the Security Service Management Ordinance explicitly acknowledge that the market of private security was open to private capital. This market opening of private security is a part of the nationwide privatization trend starting from the 1980s, even though it came much

later than other industries in China. According to official data, as of 2013 about 3/4 of the security service companies in Shanghai were privately operated.

After three decades of development, a rigorous system was established. By setting up a system that involves each level of state agency being responsible for each level of private security companies and by outlining the comprehensive details of regulation, the state closely monitored the activities of every enterprise and every individual in this industry. According to a media report, in 2014 there were more than 4,200 security service companies and 4,500,000 *baoan* in China (Liu 2014). Since a good portion of *baoan* did not register with the system, the actual number should be much bigger than this. Nevertheless, the number of *baoan* has far exceeded the number of police officers in China, and *baoan* have significantly contributed to public security and social order in urban space. For example, in 2004, *baoan* throughout China caught 107,000 criminal suspects and provided more than 100,000 useful leads for solving cases (Sina News 2005).

The Field Site: Dadi in Shanghai

I chose Dadi as my field site for a few reasons. First, Dadi is one of the three largest residential communities in Shanghai. A busy road divides it into an east quarter and a west quarter which contain more than 100 high-rise condominium buildings altogether. Second, Dadi was built on what had formerly been Shanghai's largest shantytown, where more than 10,000 urban underclass households dwelled before 2000. Third, Dadi is a typical middle-class community. Its homeowners mainly consist of local middle-class families and the new rich from other provinces. The price per unit in Dadi is about the median price for homes in downtown Shanghai, ranging from RMB 3.5 to 10.5 million (USD 0.5 to 1.5 million). Lastly, Dadi was

believed to have the highest rate of *qunzu* (group-renting) in Shanghai and was notorious for its disorder and chaos, which made the role of *baoan* more critical.

(The area where Dadi would be located in November 1998 before its construction)

(Dadi in 2018)

In 2001, the first phase of Dadi was completed. By 2006 the fourth and final phase was completed. The gated community is massive, containing 11,599 units in two quarters. A population of above 60,000 people live inside walls and are protected by almost 100 *baoan*. I conducted participant observations mainly in the east quarter that was built in the first two phases and that is more infamous for insecurity and chaos. Behind the four gates of the east quarter, there are 58 condo buildings, five grocery stores, two hair salons, two realtor offices, two restaurants, several gardens and playgrounds, one fountain, one kindergarten, one fitness club. Because of the large number and the heterogeneity of its residents, Dadi's gates are loosely guarded. *Baoan* at the four gates rarely stop pedestrians except for people who are obviously out of place, for example, beggars, rag pickers, and peddlers. Until October 2017 when ACIS was installed, any vehicles could enter Dadi by paying a temporary parking fee.

The New Baoan Team in Dadi

The property management company Zeze outsourced security service in the east quarter to the professional private security company Anquan in 2014. Before this contract, Zeze recruited only Shanghainese *baoan* directly from the labor market. The *baoan* Zeze previously employed in the east quarter were men from local neighborhoods, most of whom were older than 50. They worked eight hours a day and enjoyed the same social benefits and paid vacations as other individuals employed by Zeze. Since Anquan took over security service, the 64 local *baoan* were replaced by 41 migrant workers who do not have any social insurances through this work. The monthly income of those new *baoan* was RMB 3,800 (about USD 560) in 2017. In 2018 this salary increased to RMB 4,200 (about USD620). These *baoan* work twelve hours a day, seven

days a week without any holiday, vacation, or sick leave. If someone takes one day off for any reason, he will not get paid for that day. In other words, Zeze and Anquan, and the labor-subleasing between them, turned being a *baoan* in Dadi into an informal job that infringes the law and flaunts regulations.

Because of the long hours, low pay, low status, and lack of social mobility in this industry, it is hard for private security companies to recruit enough young men, especially in an aging society. Therefore, most *baoan* in Dadi during my observation were over 45 years old. Some of them had frail physiques and were even physically disabled. They do not receive any training and are not allowed to carry any type of weapon. In order to recruit as many people as possible, Anquan did not run the government-required background checks on employees. When Bing, a 30-year-old *baoan* in Dadi, lost his wallet and applied for a new one at the local police station, the police officer discovered that he had been arrested a dozen of times for stealing electric bicycles in Shanghai.

The crime rate in Dadi is representational of the national crime statistics: there were more property crimes than violent crimes and corruption is rampant. During the twelve months (from May 2017 to May 2018) of my stay, incidents did happen, including two fires, two suicides, a dozen instances of thefts (including electric bikes and valuables from cars), and some disputes between neighbors. No severe violent crime happened when I was there. At the same time, corruption permeated the system of private security. Anquan had to bribe the senior management of Zeze, the property management company, to seize the contract of labor-subleasing successfully. Once taking over the project, it has to continue bribing Zeze staff members to renew the contract every half a year. Since those large contracts have to be approved by the homeowners' committee, Zeze often pays a kickback to the members of the homeowners'

committee. Anquan's project leader developed a fake list of *baoan* and embezzled the salary belonging to those "ghost" *baoan* who had never existed. Some key figures in Zeze had their fingers in this pie and gave tacit consent to this scheme. The seamless corruption network deepens exploitation of *baoan* and increases their burden through assigning them the workloads of those "ghost" *baoan*. However, even *baoan* at the bottom of the power structure could also participate in some low-level corruption. Before the installation of ACIS, some of the boldest *baoan* embezzled parking fees from drivers who did not ask for receipts.

A Typical Day of Baoan

The dayshift team assembles in the underground garage at 6:30 a.m. Because the dormitory where forty *baoan* live has only two washbasins and two toilets, *baoan* who work the dayshift negotiate to wake up at different times to avoid a long line. Some older *baoan* prefer getting up at the crack of dawn as they did back in their villages. They cook noodles or porridge in the shared kitchen, which is the cheapest way to have breakfast. Some young *baoan* use their smartphones into midnight and are willing to exchange anything for one more hour of sleep in the morning, especially in the cold of winter. They stay in bed as late as possible and skip breakfast or buy a steamed bun on the way to the garage. Because Dadi is massive, they usually ride electric bikes from the west quarter to the east quarter. At 6:40 a.m., the team leader calls the roll and trains fellow *baoan* to practice standing at attention for about 20 minutes. Afterward, everyone goes to his post.

The personnel are supposed to be arranged like this: two *baoan* for each of the four gates; one *baoan* staffs each of the six zones; one *baoan* checks for parking violations; two *baoan* patrol the whole quarter; two backup *baoan* (*ji dong*) wait for extra tasks; the team leader stays in *baoan*

office answering calls from Zeze and homeowners. Everyone has his routine tasks, for example: clearing all shared bikes out of the community; locking the tires of cars violating parking rules; removing garbage blocking the way; and reporting broken facilities. They use the walkie-talkies to connect with each other in real-time.

In the interval between tasks, the project leader, the team leader, and two backup *baoan* stay in the *baoan* office that is located in an underground garage. The small office is about 10 square meters and has no window and air-conditioning. It is hot and humid in the summer and cold and damp in the winter. The *baoan* office is always very smoky, because *baoan* are not allowed to smoke cigarettes during the working hours so they take every chance to smoke when they stay in the office. During my observation, they often put out their cigarettes when I walked into the office to show their respect for a female nonsmoker. However, if I stayed longer in the office, they could not help lighting up more cigarettes.

Ceaseless incoming calls bring in homeowners' concerns or Zeze's orders that should be addressed immediately. These requests are of a wide variety. Police officers require *baoan*'s assistance with case investigations. If there is a fire, it is *baoan*'s job to put it out or call 119 (China's emergency telephone number). However, most requests are irrelevant to security but merely errands. For example, Zeze staff members often ask *baoan* to move heavy devices or clear construction waste. Someone reported a burst pipe. Someone else called to complain about a puddle in the garage and wanted *baoan* to clean it up. Someone wanted *baoan* to stop get a noisy neighbor to quiet down, while another resident wanted *baoan* to rescue a trapped stray cat.

The nightshift team assembles in the underground garage at 6:30 p.m. After half an hour of assembly, nightshift *baoan* start to change shifts with dayshift *baoan*. The dayshift team assembles again around 7:00 p.m. in the underground garage. After their second training of the

day, they could eventually get off work around 7:30 p.m. Even though the dayshift *baoan*'s working hour is scheduled from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., they have to arrive at 6:30 a.m. and leave at 7:30 a.m. Supervisors' inspections may even prolong the working hours. The same is true for *baoan* in nightshift team.

After such a long and tedious day, most *baoan* are exhausted. They walk back to the dormitory to cook dinners for themselves. The shared kitchen can contain about seven people at the same time. They use their portable induction cooktops brought from home to cook some simple meals. A couple of hours before sleep usually slips away fast while some of them drink alcohol and chat together and some of them use smartphones on their beds. Although they live in the fashion capital of the country and the global financial hub, their lives seem to have nothing to do with the metropolis. They eat, work, shop, and sleep inside the gated community seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year.

Methodology

After I picked Dadi as the site for my fieldwork, I got in touch with Dong, the Vice President of Zeze, through an ex-colleague who was working for a party-state newspaper. Dong introduced me to Manager Yin. With the help of Manager Yin, I went through all the procedures of becoming a volunteer in the property management office and received three uniforms. During the 10-month project,[2] my main tasks were to help Zeze staff with making Excel forms and writing monthly reports. Because it was an unpaid position, Manager Yin allowed me much latitude in my time and work. I also got her permission to participate in and observe *baoan*'s activities

[2] I stayed from May 2017 to May 2018 but returned to UW-Madison for two months in 2017.

including their everyday routines, assemblies, the raids against *qunzu*, fire drills, emergency incidents, and so on.

Thanks to my established connections, I entered the field smoothly. However, using these connections also has shortcoming—the *baoan* believed that I was there on behalf of Zeze. They showed enough respect but did not open their minds. Even though I explained to them my role as a Ph.D. student and my research topic, most of *baoan* did not understand what I was doing and sometimes mistook my research for journalism. They told me that they were amused that someone would want to "study" them.

During my research, everyone, including *baoan* themselves, reinforced the social stereotype that this occupation denotes inferior status. When I first introduced myself to the *baoan* in Dadi, one of them said, "Why are you interested in us? We are nobodies, and people look down on us." The other *baoan* echoed his words. After Zhang Xi, the pervious project leader, was removed from his position, he texted me on WeChat[3]; "I don't understand why you picked such a topic for your dissertation. You are wasting your time by hanging around with *these people*." A female staff member at Zeze strongly recommended that I study *baoan* in a high-end office building, because "*baoan* there have higher *suzhi*." *Suzhi*, embodied in almost all everyday practices, is believed to be the minute social distinctions defining a person's quality (Anagnost 2004; Kipnis 2007). Qiangqiang, a 24-year-old *baoan* from Henan province, has been worried that his father would be disgraced if he knew about his position, so he has lied to him, telling him that he is a realtor in Shanghai.

It was not until I had spent a month hanging around them that they believed I was neutral in my position and they began to trust me more. The new project leader Delong befriended me. I

[3] WeChat is the largest social media app in China.

had opportunities to join *baoan* for lunches and dinners and to read Anquan's files including daily reports and labor contracts. I rented a room in a *qunzu* unit and moved into Dadi in September 2017. Thus, I observed and participated in *baoan*'s everyday practice both as a resident, a *qunzu* tenant, and a colleague.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten homeowners. The other conversations between me and various homeowners happened in more casual settings, such as evening chats with a group of people in the lobby. I also interviewed three sublessors who had been doing business in Dadi for almost ten years. Because the turnover rate of *baoan* in Dadi was very high, I met at least 60 *baoan*. Some of them stayed only for a brief time and I did not get chance to start a private conversation with them. In the latter half of my fieldwork, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 *baoan*, most of whom had known me very well from daily contact. I also interviewed Zeze's security team leader and Anquan's district manager Li Jian. Among those interviewees, I picked ten *baoan* and conducted life history interviews with them.

In addition to participant observation and interviews, I conducted archival research on the history of private security in China as well as on the laws, policies, and regulations on the spatial arrangement and private security industry since the economic reform. I collected media reports on high-profile *baoan*-related incidents in recent decades to investigate how the mass media represents the image of *baoan*. I collected *baoan*-related public information, for example, recruiting advertisements, Zeze's public announcements on security issues, and posts in Zeze's WeChat official account. With their permission, I also collected information from some *baoan*'s social media accounts, mainly their posts in WeChat Moments (*peng you quan*) and conversations in WeChat's groups. I used content analysis to analyze these texts to understand how different actors perceive security and express fear.

Theoretical Framework

Why has *baoan* become a necessity for urban living in China? The crux of this anomaly, I believe, is the "fear" rooted in the dramatically changing urban and social landscape. In China's political and social context, the vocation of *baoan* is shaped by a hierarchical system of fear involving the state whose top concern is maintaining regime stability, members of the upper and middle classes who are obsessed with playing the role of victims, and the feared class—that is, those who are deprived of the right to fear and of the space to live. To examine the hierarchical system of fear inherent in spatial orderings in contemporary China, this research builds its theoretical framework on the intersection of the literature on the social classes in post-socialist China, the anthropology of fear and danger, and social theories on space.

The Social Classes and the State-society Relation in China

The social classes in China have been restructured twice since 1949. The first restructuring happened after the founding of PR China in 1949. In the name of socialist egalitarian and through class struggle and nationalization, some social classes such as feudal landlords and capitalists were all eradicated. In this process, a closed system was established with a handful powerful elites being put in charge of political and socioeconomic resources. It was claimed that China had achieved the dictatorship of the proletariat and that Chinese society had only two vocational classes and a stratum—workers, peasants, and intellectuals (Goodman 2014). Even though there were a small number of managers, administrators, and teachers, they were not identified as "middle class" at that time.

The social classes in China were restructured again after the economic reform in 1978. The state-directed privatization and market economy redistributed the wealth among the populace. In one night: (1) the entrepreneur—"a new cadre-capitalist class" (Nonini 2008:145) emerged; (2) the professional middle classes and the managerial classes developed; and (3) the public-sector working class was "reduced in size" and "politically downgraded." These urban workers along with peasants and urban migrant workers became a large part of the underclass (Goodman 2014:3).

My study focuses on two social classes: the "new middle class" who live behind the gate and a feared class who is excluded by walls. I also explore both classes' respective relations with the state.

The Fearful—the Upper-and-Middle Classes Homeowners

In urban China, the homeowners in gated communities are mostly upper-and middle-classes citizens—the population who has generated most of the academic interests. The middle class in China is an accompaniment of social change "from a totalizing state socialism toward capitalist-style participation in the world market" (Farquhar 2002:13). Some economists predicted that the middle class in China would constitute 74% of the nation's population by 2030 (Kharas and Gertz 2010:43).

The definition of "the middle class" in China is still under debate. Due to China's special context, Weber's or Marx's theories that were developed based on western societies cannot be invariably applied. Zhang argued that the new middle class is a "complex and unstable social formation consisting of people with diverse occupations and social backgrounds" (2010:5). According to Zhang, China's middle class is an urban phenomenon that is distinguished by its

small proportion compared to the large population and its internal heterogeneity, meaning its members have different education levels, life trajectories, family backgrounds, occupation types, and even income levels (2010). The skyrocketing housing price does not only make housing most middle-class families' single biggest investment, but it also makes homeownership a social distinction for the new middle class (Tomba 2015; Zhang 2010).

Tomba believes that the new middle class is not politically *new* compared to classes in the socialist era because they still "have a longstanding relationship to the state" and "had been big beneficiaries of state policies" (2015). Chen noticed that the main difference between China's middle class and the middle class in the West is that "China's middle class has so far relied heavily on the state under the CCP or the party-state for its survival and growth since its birth" (Chen 2013:xiv), thus most members of this middle class are not in favor of dramatic political changes.

The Feared Class—The Migrant, Informal Workers

The feared class in China is located at the intersection of two categories: the floating population and the lower-working class. The *hukou* (household registration) system has existed in China since the 1950s. Following one's mother's *hukou* status, and registering in the *hukou* system after one is born, is the indispensable way of establishing one's official citizenship in China. In this context, the concept of "floating population" (*liu dong ren kou*) refers to all people who leave their *hukou* registered locations but have not yet moved their *hukou* to their new destinations. The floating population has become a mobile reserve of cheap labor for urban areas.

In a first-tier city such as Shanghai, there are four types of labor: *hukou* holders who are native residents, elite migrants who are relocated through merit-based channels and are entitled

to Shanghai *hukou*, migrants who have formal employment and have applied for residence permits,[4] and migrants who are informal workers. The last two types both belong to the category of the floating population but are faced with distinct situations. Informal employment refers to jobs that do not conform to labor laws, for example, jobs for which the employers do not arrange mandatory social insurance, make employees work extremely long hours, and terminate contracts at any time. Without *hukou* and formal employment, these migrant, informal workers in Shanghai are denied access to social entitlements such as social security, medical insurance, welfare housing, and public education for their children.

The lower working class is distinct from the working class that had a close relationship with the state and had high symbolic status in the Maoist era (Standing 2011). They are informal workers who work in privately owned manufacturing industries, construction sites, and the service sector. Informal workers consist of: (1) former socialist workers who had been laid off from work units during a series of privatization, (2) former farmers who were bankrupt due to continuously falling prices of grains or who lost their farmlands to industrialization and rural development, and (3) those farmers' offspring who do not have higher education. While those former socialist workers have been living in big cities and possess *hukou* and properties, most former farmers have to leave their towns or villages to seek new livelihoods in big cities in the more developed parts of China. Without *hukou*, capital, degrees, and connections, these domestic migrants always end up working in the informal economy.

The feared class are those migrant, informal workers who possess no *hukou*, property, or formal employment in an urban space. In some contexts, they are also recognized as "the precariat" (Swider 2015) and the "new dangerous class" (Standing 2011). Except for a few lucky

[4] According to Shanghai's regulation, anyone who has stable and lawful residence and employment can apply for a residence card. White collar workers from other provinces who do not have enough points to change their *hukou* belong to this type.

ones who have squeezed into the middle class, the majority of them have been trapped in a marginalized status in urban space. The fast-growing urban economy needed their labor but also saw them as "scapegoat[s] to be blamed for crime, disorder, over-crowdedness, squatter living or itinerant homelessness, traffic congestion, and other urban ills, as well as job competition and wage depression" (Zhou and Cai 2008:266).

Many ethnographies have been done on this feared class—for example, street vendors (Swider 2014), construction workers (Swider 2015), factory workers (Lee 2007; Kim 2013; Ngai 2005), domestic workers (Yan 2008), and so on. Due to low entry-barriers and plenty of job openings, *baoan* is one of the most common informal occupations that male migrants are able to find when they arrive in cities. Meanwhile, along with the increased number of property management companies that outsourced security service, more and more *baoan* currently in the industry belong to the feared population, who are strangers to the cities and who are economically unstable.

Fear and Danger

Fear is often defined as a private, internal, and natural emotion; however, it is also a sociocultural construction (Scruton 1986; Lutz 1988). Many fear theorists have explored the ways in which one experiences, manages, and displays fear and the process by which fear is produced, manipulated, and appropriated by the political and social power (Furedi 1997; Glassner 1999; Gusterson and Besteman 2010; Linke and Smith 2009). These theories often see the fearful ones as a passive and homogeneous group whose emotions are manipulated by a few "fear entrepreneurs" (Furedi 2007).

Humphrey (2013) disagrees with the association of fear with vulnerability and impotence but juxtaposes the right to fear with property ownership. By drawing on Breifel and Ngai's analysis (1996) of fear in the horror movie *Candyman*, she argues that since the fearing characters are always white families who own houses or cabins and who are engaged in middle-class routines, fear could also be established as "a form of emotional property" entitled to the groups' possession of power and wealth (2013:287). In the same light, victimage is informed by perceived membership through which people are "vying for official recognition and legitimacy" (Altheide 2002:181).

Fear is a "relation" (Furedi 2007)—one's fear varies according to spatial and social positions relative to others. Since it is always the powerful group which projects social fears onto the more vulnerable group, I propose "a hierarchical system of fear" that considers both the "in and out" of individuals' positions as well as the "up and down" of different categories. In this section, I will introduce the fear of the party-state, of the fearful middle-class homeowners, and of the feared class.

The Fear of the Party-state

The Chinese party-state, whose legitimacy has been under question from internal and external dissenters, is deeply afraid of political turmoil that may destabilize its regime. However, this insecurity about regime stability is generally unstated in political rhetoric. Like some other states that establish their political agendas through scenarios of threat and terror, the Chinese party-state addresses its topmost concern in the name of maintaining public security.

Studies based on western societies show that cultures of fear are formed, sustained, and normalized as tools of governance and as catalysts for policing, surveillance, militarism, and

other means of violence. In this process, refugees, foreign immigrants, and nonwhite races are often depicted as dangerous "others" in opposition to a putative "us" (Altheide 2006; Chomsky 2009; Hirsch 2010; Kwong 2010; Masco 2009; Wedel 2010). To the Chinese party-state, the migrant workers, who live in urban space but do not have access to urban resources and who do not possess stable jobs, social welfare, and properties, are one of the feared classes. Namely, these economically vulnerable and disenfranchised migrant workers are imagined to be politically unreliable as well.

Why does the state see this class as a danger threatening regime stability? First, in contrast to the upper-and middle-classes that came into being as the beneficiaries of the state policies, these migrant, informal workers' interests have been jeopardized by the economic reform, and they rarely benefit from state policies. As a result, the state naturally assumes that this class is more likely to be disgruntled with the regime. Second, people in this class do not have stable jobs and residences and have a transient relation with urban space; thus, it is more challenging to surveil them. Third, it is commonly believed that people in this class are destitute and would have nothing to lose if there is a political turmoil. While the fearing state carries out extensive surveillance of this class and imposes restrictions on their activities, the various propaganda campaigns have portrayed people in this class as being high-risk of turning to crimes and of endangering citizens' wellbeing.

When discussing the private security in São Paulo, Caldeira stated that citizens resorted to private security because they distrusted the police force and the justice system, therefore "the privatization of security has challenged the state's monopoly of the legitimate use of force" (2002:2). However, things are different in China; the birth and the prosperity of the private security industry are results of state policies, signifying the deep insecurity of the state. This

industry of fear serves the function of surveillance and prevention on behalf of state agencies in addition to providing security service to the middle-class homeowners. Consequently, the privatization of security provision does not suggest that the party-state gave up a monopoly on violence (Bakken 2000; White et al. 2008). Instead it suggests that the central and local authorities become more sophisticated in relying on informal coercive tactics for social control (Chen 2017). The authorities utilize the watchful eyes of *baoan* in private spheres as a supplement to its oversight in public spaces, so as to achieve a panoptic surveillance of civil life. Ironically, the majority of informal workers in the industry of fear also belong to the feared class.

The Fear of the Middle-class Homeowners

The pervasive atmosphere of fear among the upper-and middle-classes started with a series of privatizations as the core of the economic reform in the late 1980s. Accompanying the dissolution of Maoist solidarity and the increase of socioeconomic inequality (Logan 2008), the contest of climbing the social and economic ladder began. In real life "moving up in class position may actually increase a person's sense of potential victimization" and "sense of vulnerability" (Low 2003:118). The middle-class homeowners, who had gained their wealth after the reform, are mostly worried about falling behind on the ladder. The danger to them is anyone who may threaten their newly acquired status. Since most middle-class families in big cities are heavily in debt from owning a home, they detest those socioeconomic "others," e.g. *qunzu* tenants who may burden community facilities, undermine class homogeneity, and ruin the reputation of a "purified community." However, in line with the state, these homeowners also made an appeal for spatial segregation and private security through the claim of security concerns, which is demonstrated in their enthusiasm in talking about crimes in everyday

conversation. The talk of crime is contagious, fragmentary, and repetitive, and it symbolically reorders the world by "elaborating prejudices and creating categories that naturalize some groups as dangerous" (Caldeira 2000:2).

Why do *baoan* and *qunzu* tenants become a potential danger in the eyes of middle-class homeowners in Dadi? Douglas argues that the process of danger-making is tied to one's position to communities and society boundaries (2001). She believed that anyone who transgresses the internal lines of the system or stays in the margins of the lines are viewed as a danger by the system (Douglas 2001). The *hukou* system and other policies alienate the feared class from urban resources (Goodman 2014; Tomba 2002; Xiang 2005; Zhou and Cai 2008), making them have a marginal and contingent relationship with urban space. Due to their illegal renting practices, *qunzu* tenants are believed to have transgressed boundaries of gated communities. Even though *baoan* were invited by the homeowners' fear into the community, homeowners subconsciously perceive them as socioeconomic others. Thus, when *baoan* put on their uniforms and carry out their duties, they do not go through a transformation process, but rather temporarily enter a status of "liminality" (Turner 1967), in which the social order is disrupted. In turn, their socioeconomically transgressing or marginal positions make *baoan* and *qunzu* tenants dangers in the eyes of the state and the middle-class homeowners.

The Fear of the Feared Class

While the middle-class homeowners express their concerns about neighborhood crimes, *baoan*, who are on the battlefront of security, are at a much higher risk of being exposured to danger. However, few people had asked *baoan* the question, "Do you fear?" Even if someone had formulated such a question, *baoan* and their counterparts are less likely to be intrigued by

this question. During the interviews, I found that nearly every interviewee was insecure about the future because they will not receive pensions and have no source of income once they are too old to work. Since informal employment does not offer social insurances, those workers are afraid of being sick and having to give up their jobs and go back to their hometown for medical treatments. They are afraid of being unemployed because they always have big families in their hometowns who live on their paychecks. Those authoritarian policies—including the *hukou* system and various social control tactics on the one hand and the neoliberal labor market and corporations following the logic of capitalist accumulation on the other—have put the migrant informal workers in a precarious status.

Why are they so unresponsive to fear in their everyday conversation and often reluctant to share their concerns of survival? While the middle-and upper-classes have the privilege of being afraid, the migrant informal workers are not only disbarred from being afraid but are often imagined as the feared ones. In China, the old saying, "The barefooted are not afraid of the ones in shoes," (*guang jiao de bu pa chuan xie de*) suggests that the people who have nothing to lose are fearless and could do anything dreadful. Because their fear is overlooked and even denied in the mass media and urban culture, even they themselves doubt the legitimacy of their fears. They know that they could by no means empower themselves by talking about fear but instead would show their weakness. It again proves that victimage is a status, a representation, and a membership. Not acknowledging the feared class's fear for survival "negate[s] shared humanity between privileged and disenfranchised populations" (Linke and Smith 2009:16), marginalizes the vulnerable, and disempowers the powerless (Giroux 2009; Kleinman and Kleinman 2009; Mirzoeff 2009; Ticktin 2009).

Power and Space

Physical space is not merely a container of social relations; it has become a means to create social space and to reproduce social relations (Soja 1980). Marxist theorists agree that space is political and strategic, and there is a dialectic relation between power relations and spatial production. Urban planning follows the logic of capitalist accumulation (Harvey 1973) as well as the state's intention to ensure its political control and its strict hierarchy (Lefebvre 2009). In this section, I will introduce the spaces of the state, of the middle-class, and the feared class.

The Space of the Fearing State

Lefebvre believed that the state uses space as a political instrument to "ensure its control of places, its strict hierarchy, the homogeneity of the whole, and the segregation of the parts" (Lefebvre 2009:188). The Chinese party-state's aim of maintaining political stability in cities has been reflected in three aspects of spatial orderings: (1) the surveillance on the public space, (2) the spatial strategies to control the feared class, and (3) the promotion of gated communities.

For Foucault, "space is a vital part of the battle for control and surveillance of individuals" (Elden and Crampton 2007:2). A panoptic design in architecture is a metaphor for modern "disciplinary" societies; this design individualizes the subjects and places them in a state of constant visibility while keeping the power invisible and anonymous (Foucault 1977). In order to discipline individuals and to create *docile* bodies, the Chinese state has initiated a "sky-net project" which has installed countless security and traffic cameras covering nearly 100% of the public space in first-tier cities. In addition, the *hukou* system, grassroots state agencies, the Internet real-name system, on-street ID checks, and the private security industry all help the state to create a ubiquitous gaze to monitor the urban space and the feared class.

The local authority also employs spatial strategies to achieve its explicit goals of maintaining public security and implicit goals of ensuring political stability. Take Shanghai as an example. The government: (1) takes away the living space of the feared class through demolishing urban villages, shanty towns, and illegal construction and through forbidding *qunzu* and (2) takes away the livelihood of the feared class by clearing away all street vendors and food stalls in downtown areas. These policies expect migrant laborers to go back to their *hukou* registration locations when they are old, sick, disabled, or no longer employed. In doing this, the authorities believed that they could prevent riots resulting from the competition for limited urban resources and push jobless migrants out of urban space—migrants who are seen as politically unstable factors in many incidents. The fearful governmentality diminishes civil society, abandons human rights, and reproduces fear.

While gating is a subordination to the ideology of free-market relations, it is also a value-laden system which imposes and maintains an ordered set of relationships. Some optimistic scholars see gated communities as an opportunity for the middle-class homeowners to escape state surveillance and to pursue privacy, freedom, and social distinction in addition to safety (Pow 2007; Wu 2005; Yip 2012). In contrast, Tomba argues that gating produces a "legible, orderly and easy-to-govern environment" (2010:28) for the state to effectively organize, watch, and regulate the population both inside and outside of walls without burdening the police system (Tomba 2015). In addition, "gated communities privatize what would otherwise be government responsibilities and place these burdens in the hands of homeowner associations" (McKenzie 2005:188). The authorities could still surveil the space inside gated communities through security cameras, grassroots state agencies, and *baoan*. Different from the state power that is

invisible, *baoan* are asked to stand in the most visible places such as transparent watch boxes or at the gates so that surveillance cameras and homeowners could also monitor them.

The Space of the Fearful Class

Gated communities are seen as fortified "enclaves of fear" (Blakely and Snyder 1997). However, many studies demonstrate that the distribution of fear is independent of the spatial distribution of danger but more related to perceived risks (Low 2001, Low 2003; Sardar 2010; Wilson-Doenges 2000). In many cases, people in a safe neighborhood are more fearful than those in dangerous ones (Ellin 2003; Flusty 1994; Tuan 1979). The spatial landscape—the pervasive gating—manifests the changing moral landscape in which the middle class is obsessed with fear and is experiencing the absence of social trust in post-socialist China (Yan 2009; Yan 2012).

Fear of crimes has also been regarded as the main reason for having gates and *baoan* in China's residential communities. Surveys in Shanghai and Nanjing show that security was the leading concern for homebuyers (Yip 2012). However, in addition to security, homeowners' needs for privatization of civic goods, homogeneity, and prestige are also reflected in their perceived need for *baoan*. Class-making is a long-term process, for it is slow to gain cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). Since Chinese society has gone through dramatic transitions, pre-established cultural norms for evaluating social distinctions are absent. As a result, "consumption becomes the main conduit to gain cultural and symbolic capital, and the key for claiming and authenticating social status" (Zhang 2010: 9). The consumption of residential space and of the engagement in a distinct way of life is indispensable to the making of the new middle class (Zhang 2010).

Gates are not only built for security against crimes but also to secure social status against contamination. On the other hand, more secured gates and a handsome *baoan* team, just like stone lions at the gates of ancient Chinese mansions, demonstrate homeowners' prestige and wealth. Hence, gates and *baoan* are desired not only for security purposes but also for conspicuous consumption as a form of social distinction.

The Space of the Feared Class

Many migrants arrive at big cities with plans to engage in small business, namely, selling small goods, foods fruits, and so on to citizens on streets. This is another form of informal work and has a bigger chance of social mobility than other kinds of informal work. Those migrants appropriate public space as a part of their everyday struggle for social power (Zhang 2001). However, street vendors and food stalls have been strictly forbidden in the last two decades, putting these people back on the neoliberal labor market. The conflicts between street vendors and *chengguan* (public security officers) often escalate into violence and have caused a few deaths to both parties according to media reports. As Zhang argued, the degree to which the state intervenes in one's private space and activities in the public space is "one of the obvious differences between being a floater and being a permanent urban resident" (2001:37). Based on my experience, young men who look like migrants and physical laborers also have a greater chance to be stopped by the police on the streets for identity checks.

Since many people in the feared class work long hours every day in the service sector, their first concern when looking for dwelling is to stay in close proximity to their patrons and work places. As low-income migrants, they are accustomed to aggregating in dilapidated migrants' enclaves—urban villages (Xiang 2005; Zhang 2001). However, since most of the urban villages

or slums have been razed in recent decades in Shanghai, these individuals have had to move into unauthorized structures attached to *linong* and *shikumen* buildings, *qunzu* units, and dormitories. The demolition of unauthorized buildings and the policies against *qunzu* leave the feared class with dormitories as the only option for living in cities. But living in dormitories keeps them away from a regular urban life and deepens social marginalization.

Baoan were the vital force in the raids against *qunzu*; however, their dormitories are often worse than *qunzu*. Many *baoan* said in their interviews that their primary reason for applying for this job was the immediate and free dormitory, which has become the feared class's primary concern when they seek jobs in big cities. Despite the apparent resemblance between *qunzu* units and dormitories, the property management companies and state agencies selectively apply local policy and strategically exclude dormitory from *qunzu*.

While academia has focused on the lives behind the gates, it has often overlooked the fact that the poor also seek protected spaces. Statistics showed that people from the low-income class were more likely to be the victims of violent crime and house-burglary (Blakely and Snyder 1997). However, this class's fear of losing a place to live and losing a livelihood have outweighed their fear of crimes, making their needs for security unexpressed in their spatial claims.

A Summary of Six Chapters

The industry of private security and the vocation of *baoan* are shaped by a hierarchical system of fear involving the state whose top concern is maintaining regime stability, the upper-and middle-classes that are obsessed with a variety of fears, and the feared class that is deprived of

the right to fear and of the space to live. The six chapters of this dissertation follow the structure of this hierarchical system from top to bottom.

The first chapter mainly discusses how the macro-environment, created by the fearful governmentality, shaped the industry of private security and produced a space of fear in post-socialist China. Following an introduction to the history of private security in China, it gives an account of the emergence and the privatization of this industry in post-socialist China. After that, it discusses how the central and Shanghai authorities produce an ordered and neatly controlled urban space which offered a political and spatial context for the prevalence of *baoan* in gated communities. Lastly, it explores the state's intentions behind their promotion and regulation of *baoan*—a form of informal coercion for social control.

The second chapter focuses on the informalization of the job of being *baoan*. The governmentality of authoritarian neoliberalism allows a weakly regulated labor market, making it possible for the management company and the private security company to infringe upon state and local regulations. This chapter reveals how the deal of *labor-leasing* between the two companies turned the position of *baoan* in Dadi into a form of informal employment (Tomba 2002:154) and established a hierarchical and corrupted system of security service. This, in turn, has created a micro-environment for double exploitation of the *baoan* in Dadi.

The third chapter examines the process in which the insecurities of the middle-class homeowners shape the industry of private security and affect the life of *baoan* on a day-to-day basis. It gives an account of the attitudes that homeowners take towards *baoan* in various incidents and analyzes the social and psychological impetuses behind homeowners' mistrust and fear of *baoan*. It points out that the contradiction between the socioeconomic distance and

physical proximity traps *baoan* in a status of "liminality" (Turner 1967) and makes them a potential "danger" (Douglas 2001) in a gated community.

The fourth chapter explores the reasons (beyond security concerns) behind the homeowners' cravings for a bigger *baoan* team and their obsession with *baoan* as being young and having robust bodies. This chapter argues that *baoan*'s bodies instead of their service have become the commodities of the fear economy. It examines how the conspicuous consumption of bodies in an aging society dignifies homeowners' social status and impacts the masculinity of *baoan* through creating docility-utility out of unruly migrant bodies. This chapter points out that it is fear, as a moral value, that makes the morally objectionable, conspicuous consumption of bodies permissible and desirable in urban China.

The fifth chapter gives a detailed account of the campaign against *qunzu*, in which *baoan* have played an indispensable role by performing all of the controversial tasks involved in these raids. As a part of the spatial strategies that the authorities adopt to expel this undesired population out of urban space, this campaign epitomizes the spatial struggle among different actors involved in the hierarchical system of fear. It explains why the *baoan*'s dormitory is not categorized as *qunzu* and analyzes the state's and the homeowners' motives behind their fear and detestation of *qunzu*.

The last chapter focuses on the fears, plights, loves, and aspirations of *baoan* who are a part of the feared class. This chapter also investigates *baoan*'s after-work lives and "everyday resistance" (Scott 1987) and refutes the common impression that *baoan* is a snobbish career. Finally, this chapter tells the life stories of five *baoan* in Dadi to reveal their life trajectories that have been influenced by central and local policies.

Significance

This ethnographic study untangles the intertwined relations among fear, power, and space through analyzing *baoan*'s role and practice in a contentious space: a gated community. It adds to the existing literature by proposing a system of fear that includes *baoan* and *qunzu* tenants in the dialogue and that exposes all actors' hierarchical relations in China's social context. Through the prism of spatial-fear relations, this ethnography seeks a better understanding of how the display of fear shapes spatial orderings and vice versa.

Reaching beyond contemporary Chinese studies, this study makes intellectual contributions to the theoretical development of the anthropology of emotion, to the ethnographic approach to private security service, to the cultural analysis of the migrant informal workers in China, and to the cross-disciplinary study of gated communities in reform-era countries. Beyond the academy, this study also has policy relevance by contributing to the heated debate among policymakers on whether the services of *baoan* should be local public goods provided by the authoritarian state or be private goods produced by the neoliberal market. Any policy neglecting the perspective and emotions of its targeted group will be futile. Therefore, in revealing the *raison d'etre* and implications of this occupation and in uncovering the fear of the unpropertied, this study aims to divert the academic and policymaking focus from the good lives of the middle-class residents to the socioeconomic, political, and even emotional inequities exemplified in the spatial orderings in reform-era China.

Chapter 1: The Production of the Industry of Fear

When I was watching the assembly of *baoan* in Dadi, Bing stuck out in the team. He was the shortest and smallest one, looked like an underdeveloped teenager, despite that he was already 30 years old. When I talked to him after work, his mandarin had such a strong accent that I had a hard time understanding him. I also noticed that both of his hands shook heavily. If he walked across the room with a full glass of water, there would be only half glass left. Bing was from a poor village of Fuyang, Anhui province, about 400 miles away from Shanghai. His mother gave birth to six children and took away three of them when she divorced Bing's father. Bing came to Shanghai to earn a living in 2008. He had set up a small booth fixing bicycles until one day he started to notice that his hands often shook for no reason. Soon his illness became so severe that he could not do any handwork.

He had gone back to hometown to see doctors who claimed that they were not able to treat him. The doctors suggested him to seek treatment in big cities where the medical resource is much more adequate and advanced. However, doctors in Shanghai could not get a conclusive diagnosis either. Some thought that he had Parkinson's disease or that his brain atrophied, both of which are rare for young people. One doctor believed that he had been misdiagnosed as hyperthyroidism in his hometown at an early age and his disease was a result of the wrong treatment, gene deficiency, and malnutrition in his childhood. Between 2010 and 2016 he was struggling with his illness and had spent up all his money on it. He ended up becoming a *baoan* of Anquan in 2016 in the hope that he could save some money for seeing a doctor again.

In the autumn of 2017 Bing lost his wallet and had to go to the local police station to replace his identity card. The police officer looked at the computer and found out in the system that he had been caught nine times and detained five times in different districts of Shanghai for stealing electric-bicycles. The police officer asked him where he was staying. Bing told them the truth—he stayed in the *baoan* dormitory. Immediately after Bing left the police station with a new identity card, the police officer called the property management office to inform them of Bing's criminal records. The property managers were outrageous and blamed Delong, the project leader from Anquan, for not conducting a background check for every *baoan*.

Even though Bing apologized many times, Delong had no choice but to fire him. Before Bing left, Delong lent him RMB300 (about USD44) to buy a one-trip railway ticket to his hometown. To everyone's surprise, Bing showed up in *baoan* office one month later. Bing was hoping that Delong would recommend him to a *baoan* position in any other gated community. The request was declined by Delong, "If I recommended someone with criminal records to my colleague and did not tell the truth, I would be deceiving my colleague on purpose." One week after Bing disappointingly left Dadi, I received a call from Beijing. "I am not able to find a *baoan* position in Shanghai. However, I got one in Beijing!" Bing sounded cheerful. His new position offered RMB 800 less than what he got in Dadi but provided three meals in addition to accommodation. Four months later, Bing came back to Shanghai again and found a *baoan* position in another gated community of Shanghai. Even though Bing's disability and criminal records disqualify him from being a *baoan*, he could always find his way back to this industry.

This chapter explores the reason behind the prosperity of the industry of private security from the perspective of the Chinese authorities and discusses how these policies and regulations might impact the life of Bing who belongs to the feared class. The first part focuses on the security

system and social control in Shanghai's history as well as the emergence and privatization of private security in post-socialist China. The second part discusses how the state and local government create a space of fear and a comprehensive surveillance network in the name of security. In analyzing the function of *baoan*, it discloses the state's intent behind the promotion and regulation of this industry of fear.

The History of Private Security in China

Dart Masters and Family Retainers: Baoan in History

Baoan service is by no means new in China. The occupation is very similar to *Jiading*, which can be literally translated into "family retainer". Throughout China's history and before the founding of PRC, the rich and prestigious families including big landlords, successful merchants, and high officials had hired family retainers to protect their homes, family members, and properties. These family retainers were like male servants because they ran errands and did all kinds of physical labor for their masters in addition to security duties. Some powerful families hired more than one hundred family retainers to form a security team, comparable to a well-equipped and trained private army.

In addition to family retainers, there was also professional service provider—dart bureau (*biao hang*)[5], which firstly emerged in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and achieved great prosperity in the Qing dynasty (1636-1912). Back in ancient China, long-distance transportation was inconvenient and dangerous—the safety of travelers and their goods was under constant

[5] Biao was a dartlike weapon that was very common in ancient China.

threat from bandits. Consequently, dart bureaus which ensured secure transportation of goods and people became popular. In a later period, big dart bureaus' services are beyond protecting the road. Their staffs were also sent to be bodyguards, to protect residences, and to guard businesses.

An employee of dart bureau was called "dart master" (*biao shi*). First of all, they had to have Kung Fu and know the jargon of gangs. If they could build some connections with the gangs, the journey would be much easier. Otherwise, they had to fight their way. The dart bureaus were ambivalent about the gangs. They wanted the gangs neither to robber their goods nor to disappear because they knew that the prosperity of this industry had been built on the rampancy of gangs. Therefore, the dart bureau would regularly grease the palms of the ringleader on a specific route. The ringleader who accepted bribes would restrain his people and let that dart bureau's goods pass unobstructedly on his land. Eventually, the dart bureaus and the gangs developed a cooperative and win-win relationship. In China's history, the line between the enlisted men and the bandits is always vague. The imperial courts often offer amnesty and enlistment to gangs and the rebelled soldiers sometimes become bandits wandering in the wild.

After Qing dynasty was overthrown after the Revolution of 1911, China society sunk into long-term chaos. At the same time, the advance of transportation such as railways, automobiles, and steamships made people travel much faster and much more safely. Against this background, dart bureaus were shut down one by one. *Huiyou*, the biggest dart bureau that had a history of over 300 years, was eventually closed in 1921. Its close represents the end of an era of dart bureau.

The Security System in Shanghai during the Republic of China (1912-1949)

In 1902 the politician Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) firstly set up a police force (*xun jing*) in Tianjin to maintain public security and to counterbalance the power of local elites, representing the emergency of the rudiment of the modern police system in China. Due to the good effect of police force, the Qing dynasty that was carrying out administrative reforms called upon local governments to follow suit and founded the Ministry of Police in 1905 (MacKinnon 1975). During the Qing period, the law and order in Shanghai was maintained by a Chinese garrison force functioning both as army and constabulary, as well as by yamens and yamen runners. These runners did not have formal income and often lived on bribes. Even some recidivists worked as runners, blurring the line between cops and robbers (Wakeman 1988).

After the Republic of China was founded, Shanghai's system of police "consisted of parallel structures locked in a complex form of mutual competition" (Wakeman 1988:409). The prosperous urban space was policed by four separate agencies: The International Settlement's Shanghai Municipal Police, French Concession's Police, the Nationalist Garrison Command's Military Police, and the Chinese Special Municipality's Public Safety Bureau. The first two agencies "were both part of a global colonial network of imperial control" (Wakeman 1988:412), and they mostly appointed Indians and Vietnamese as policemen. Even though these agencies had their own jurisdictions and political interests, their low-rank personnel were often associated closely and interact frequently with each other.

The disjointed legal environment made Shanghai a favorable city for organized gangs. For example, the notorious Green Gang controlled almost all the criminal activities of drug trafficking, extortion, gambling, and prostitution in Shanghai during this period. In order to perform duties well, these police agencies had to cooperate with the Shanghai's underworld, which "consisted of an estimated 100,000 hoodlums" (Wakeman 1988:414). The police force in

the International Settlement and the French concession tolerated the activities of Green Gang partially because Green Gang could organize criminal activities in order. Huang Jinrong, the bigshot of Green Gang, had also been the highest-ranked Chinese detective in the French Concession Police force from 1892 to 1925. Green Gang also had an intimate relationship with the Kuomindang government by providing financial support and by being involved in the suppression of the Communists movements.

Baojia was a neighborhood administrative system firstly appeared in the Song dynasty. The system was based upon neighborhood mutual responsibility—if one of the households' members committed a crime, the other households in the *baojia* would also suffer punishment (Wakeman 1975). It was expected to make every member of *baojia* guarantee the other members' lawful behavior or political allegiance. The Republic of China's government officially enacted it in 1931 mainly for the purpose of suppressing the Communists in some areas of China. During the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Japanese and its puppet government once took over all the police force in Shanghai, and adopted *baojia* system in Shanghai, in order to tighten its control on the Chinese citizens.

The Security and Spatial Control in the Maoist Era (1949-1978)

The private security did not exist in the Maoist era. The socialist state ensured urban security through establishing a space-based surveillance system combining the *hukou* system, the work unit (*danwei*) system, and grassroots state agencies. The *hukou* system, modeled from the Soviet propiska (internal passport), was introduced officially in the 1950s in China to "differentiate residential groups" and to "forestall rural-to-urban migration" (Kuang and Liu 2012). Registering in the *hukou* system after born is a must-do to establish one's official citizenship in China. One's

hukou is predetermined by one's mother's status. Since non-agricultural and urban *hukou* holders were entitled with welfare package that agricultural and rural *hukou* holders did not have, the *hukou* system literally formed "spatial hierarchies" (Kuang and Liu 2012) in which "it was easy to move down but not up" (Pellow 1993:398). The *hukou* system in the Maoist era reflected the socialist state's belief that "confining the activities of social actors to a particular physical space" was "the most effective means of regulating order" (Xiang 2005:172).

As a form of social organization in cities, the work-unit system turned each state-owned enterprise into a self-sufficient entity that provided housing and other social facilities to its employees. Some work units—factories, universities, and other institutions—built large, self-contained, and walled compounds. Workers were allocated housing depending on their dwelling conditions, family compositions, work duties, and political performances (*zheng zhi cheng fen*). Since egalitarianism was the dominant ideology in that period, the gates and walls had nothing to do with social and economic exclusion. Instead, the cellular structure in socialist cities embodied the idea of a scientific rationalization of urban space and an aspect of long-term anti-urban policies that significantly limited urban growth during the 1960s and the 1970s (Tomba 2010:29). Moreover, walls around enclosed work-unit compounds reinforce political control of grassroots, state observation, and collective consumption organized by the state (Wu 2005).

A great portion of the Shanghai citizens were not able to move in work-unit compounds but remained in lane housing, *shikumen*, pre-1949 condos, and shanty town (*peng hu*). Shanghai has been the city that having the most serious problem of housing shortage in China. It was very common at that time that three generations living in a room of only ten square meters. The large population of residents in these residential spaces were overseen by the grassroots state agencies—the sub-district office and the resident committee.

The suggestion of setting up sub-district offices for the purpose of "strengthening the tie between the movement and the residents" firstly appeared in an official document in 1954. Till the end of 2016, there was a total of 8150 sub-district offices in mainland China. These sub-district offices are responsible for dealing with political, educational, and social welfare tasks and for advising the work of resident committees. The resident committee emerged in the 1950s with the original aim of effectively managing those urban citizens who did not work for state-owned work units. As a self-governing organization, the resident committee was supposed to be elected from the people and was expected to mediate disputes among the people, to maintain public security, to educate the public on the laws, regulations, and policies, and to reflect people's opinions and suggestions to the government. In 1982 the Constitution stipulated that each city should set up a resident committee in each residential area. As a descendant of the *baojia* system of the Republic of China, it goes without saying that resident committees also carry out surveillance over the residents in its area (Messner et al. 2008:281).

The First Private Security Company in Contemporary China

In Maoist China, people living in the same work-unit compound or in these crowded lane-housing and *shikumen*, often know each other for long time; therefore, the safety was ensured by a real form of neighborhood watch. After the reform policy in 1978, the socioeconomic stratification and the urbanization led to a wave of internal migration from rural to urban areas. These domestic migrants became "strangers" in living space and made the socialist surveillance network collapse, bringing about new challenges to public security and political stability. Being expected to assist the police force to handle the new situation, China's first private security company was born in December 1984 in *Shekou*, Shenzhen, China's first special economic zone.

Zhang Zhongfang, a police officer, started the first private security company in China in a cabin on the hill and selected three young men from more than 400 applicants as his employees. Before being sent to perform their duties, the three *baoan* had been trained for arresting and wrestling and taught legal knowledge, duties, and good manners (Zhu 2011). Hu Hongrong, then 23 years old, was among the first three *baoan*. He was sent to a high-end restaurant to start his duty two days after he was employed. Ten years later, Hu started his own business of producing fire-fighting equipment and is still the CEO of that big growing company. Whenever Hu talked about his experience as *baoan*, he was always very proud. He believed that this work experience had helped him to improve his communication ability and to build social connections, which was helpful for him as a businessman. The contrast between Hu and *baoan* in Dadi shows that the social status of *baoan* has declined dramatically within three decades. Bing's story also indicates that *baoan* has probably become one of the jobs that have the lowest entry-barrier for men.

From the State-owned to the Private-owned

Before the twenty-first century, nearly all private security companies in China were founded and operated by the government. For example, the first private security company that still functions today is an enterprise owned by the whole people (*quan min suo you zhi*), a type of state-owned company. The founder Zhang Zhongfang was a police officer when he started this company by borrowing RMB100,000 from local government and still works for Shenzhen Public Security Bureau. Later on, the government allowed the property management companies to recruit *baoan* from the market but disallowed private capital to enter this industry. In 1995 the Chinese state introduced a few regulations, reaffirming that "only public security bureaus can set up private security companies in China." In reality, the positions of the heads of those private

security companies are often taken on by middle-level cadres in public security bureaus. In this sense, the public security bureaus played both roles of athletes and judges—they managed and supervised this industry while at the same time providing paid service.

Many countries in the world including the U.S., Japan, Singapore, and Korea had passed laws in the 1970s to regulate private security industry. When the policy-makers saw the massive demand of the market and realized that it was better to guide and utilize the resource of privately-operated companies than to hold them back, the state enacted the Security Service Management Ordinance (《保安服务管理条例》) in January 1st, 2010. The Ordinance specified and validated the regulations, while at the same time tacitly acknowledged that the market was open to private sectors, representing the official start of the marketization of private security. Since then, the role of the public security bureau has transited from the part-time service provider to the supervisor.

The privatization of security service could be viewed as a part of the privatization trend starting from the 1980s, despite that it came much later than other industries. According to data in 2013, about 25% of security service companies in Shanghai are state-owned, and about 75% of them are privately operated. In Sichuan province, the ratio of the state-owned to the private-owned is 1 to 4.3. In Jiangsu province, the ratio is 1 to 3.6. The proportion of public security bureau in this industry is rapidly decreasing, with the final goal to decouple itself from private security companies completely. The state looks forward to an ideal process that the public security bureau calculates how many shares they have based on previous investment and gets the money corresponding to the share from the privatized company year by year, till the final quit (Zhu 2011). The existing state-owned private security companies are usually not competitors of the private-owned ones because they primarily take over the security projects in government

buildings, banks, power stations, and other facilities that have adequate funds for security. “They (state-owned companies) are not interested in providing service in residential communities,” Li Jian, the district manager of *Anquan* told me, “because the profits on these projects are much smaller than on official projects.”

The Spatial Tactics of Security in Post-socialist Shanghai

The *Shanghai Master Plan 2016-2040* depicts in its preface an ideal scene in the future, “children could play freely around neighborhoods without worry of being hit by the running vehicles because there is no negative space or dead corner, all people look attentively at each other, care for each other, and watch for each other.” The “production of space” (Lefebvre 2009:186) that prioritizes security is consistent with the state’s long-term goal of creating a panoptic view of urban space and a comprehensive surveillance on citizens. It to some extent coincides with Foucault’s “modern disciplinary societies” that place every individual in a state of constant visibility while keeping the power invisible and anonymous (Foucault 1977). *Baoan*, as an industry, is a key component of the surveillance system.

Space was not an objective and neutral container, but has always been strategic and ideological, because “it is embedded within direct and indirect strategies” (Lefebvre 2009:174). The spatial strategies in Shanghai are fear-orientated, demonstrating the insecurity of the middle-class and the authorities. The state and the Shanghai government use the *hukou* system in combining with the social security system to direct and regulate the domestic migration and to select the population who can legitimately stay in urban space. In this context, the sky-net project, which is supplemented by identification check, surveils nearly 100% of public space in Shanghai while the grassroots organizations along with gates and walls monitor every resident in

private space. In doing this, the authorities can discover any politically-unstable factors as soon as possible and nip any riots in bud; they can also prevent social turmoil arising from the competition for limited urban resources.

The Hukou System and the Social Security System

After the economic reform, the national market in China was unified, and the rural population started to flow into cities to escape poverty in rural areas and to pursuit job opportunities (Kuang and Liu 2012). Since the reform, the mechanism of the *hukou* system turned from a "discipline" (Foucault 1977)—ordered individuals to stay where they were born, to a "bio-power" that exercised on a whole population to intervene in issues such as the birth rate, longevity, public health, housing, migration, and so on (Foucault 1976). As a bio-power, the *hukou* system allows one to domestically migrate but not to enjoy certain social benefits such as social security, healthcare, education, job opportunity, and housing-purchase right, outside of one's *hukou* registration location.

Since the mid-1990s, the state has given local authorities of the receiving place the final say in many decisions involving domestic immigrants. Many favorite receiving places devised a residence card system to monitor and to police the floating population who live in cities but do not have urban *hukou*. From 1992 to 2003, in "promoting" public security, the residence card system had worked together with the shelter and repatriation system (*shou rong qian song zhi du*). The system stipulates that anyone who did not have either ID, temporary residence card (*zan zhu zheng*), or formal employment should be brought to the shelter and sent back to their *hukou* registration locations. In order to identify these people, the police in big cities conducted frequent street patrol and identification check. In one night of 2003, Sun Zhigang, a college graduate and

clothes designer, was taken to the police station on his way to an internet-café, because he forgot his ID at home and had yet applied for the temporary residence card. The next day, Sun was sent to the shelter and was beaten to death there by sheltered people and *baoan* working for the shelter. The tragedy of Sun brought about the nationwide discussion on this system and led to the abolishment of the shelter and repatriation system in the same year.

The temporary residence card system still exists in some cities. The floating population should submit ID cards, employment proofs, and leases to apply for this type of permit. Not long ago, they were also required to obtain "marriage and fertility certificate for the floating population" (*liu dong ren kou hun yu zheng ming*) to prove that they had not previously violated one-child policy. In recent years, some cities like Shanghai have abandoned "temporary residence card" and only keep "residence card", which is designed mainly for migrants who had formal employment yet qualified to change their *hukou* registration.

The *hukou* system in Shanghai since 2013 has allowed anyone who has stable and lawful residence and employment to apply for residence cards and calculated how many points each residence-card holder can get from educational degrees, the rank of colleges, employment types, English and Computer levels, ages, social security premiums, and so on. Once the residence cardholder gains 120 points continuously for seven years, they can apply for moving their *hukou* from hometown to Shanghai. The merit-based channel does not only prefer people of "*high suzhi*", but also people who are politically trustworthy. When I graduated from Nanjing University in 2004, I successfully moved my *hukou* from a second-tier city to Shanghai. However, my classmate who had exactly same points on everything expect for "employment types" could not change his *hukou*. That was because the points assigned to his employer, a well-known multinational company, was less than my employer, a magazine. Since all TV stations,

magazines, and newspapers in mainland China are owned by the state or the local government, the formal workers such as editors and journalists in these work units are regarded as public sector (*shi ye dan wei*) staffs like civil servants, who are less likely to be politically rebellious.

It is the tenth year that Jiangqian came to work in Shanghai, and he has applied to join the waiting list for changing his *hukou* registration. "As I know, there were already hundreds of thousands on the list. No progress has been announced, and no one knows how many years we would stay on the list," Jiangqian told me. In fact, there is a way to expedite the process. If someone's employer would like to pay three times of standard social insurance premiums for the last three years of seven years, that person can immediately be entitled *hukou*. "It is like 'sell' *hukou* at an expressly marked price—three times of premiums for three years equal to RMB 400,000 (about USD 63,500)," Jiangqian said, "anyone who is willing to pay this amount of money jumps the queue."[6]

The residence card seems not difficult to apply for. However, according to the statistic from Shanghai Public Security Bureau in 2016, among over 11 million non-*hukou* residents, only 1.07 million people had applied for residence cards. Why did not the majority of migrants apply for residence card? Mostly because they could not prove that they had stable and lawful residence or employment, which are the prerequisites to residence cards. To prove that they have stable and legal residence, their landlords should prove with signed lease that they have lived in this address for at least six months. Since most of migrant informal workers live in dormitories or *qunzu* units, they were not able to provide such proofs. To prove that they have stable and lawful employment, their employers have to prove that the employment conforms to the labor law; however, since the informal employment usually infringes the labor law in many ways—the

[6] Considering few employers will be willing to pay three times of social security premiums, the employee often gives this amount of money back to his/her employer under the table.

commonest violation is that they do not buy mandatory social insurances for workers, these employers would neither be able to nor be willing to prove that. Without either proof, migrant informal workers are not qualified to apply for residence cards. From the proportion of how many people did not apply for residence cards in Shanghai, we can infer that the majority of the migrant workers in Shanghai were working in the informal economy, namely, they belong to the feared class in urban China.

Why does the residence card have to be tied with social security? It is surmised that due to the aging of the population, the social security reserves in many cities are in crisis unless more people put money in and fewer people take money out. Therefore, the Shanghai government has devised this "smart" system: if these people with residence cards left Shanghai due to job-hopping or were out of employment for any reasons, their retirement could not be processed in Shanghai. The portion of premium (usually 8% of their salary) paid by themselves could be transferred to their *hukou* registration location while the portion of the premium paid by their employer (usually 22% of their salary) would stay in social security reserves of Shanghai. In other words, they contribute to Shanghai's financial system by paying tax and social security premiums when they are young and healthy and become the burden of their hometowns by receiving social security and healthcare when they could no longer contribute to the urban economy.

The *hukou* system in combining with the social security system effectively controls the population distribution and protects urban resources by favoring people who are politically reliable and who can most contribute to the social security reserves while disenfranchising the feared class. It provides a basis for the state's social control in public and private spaces.

The Sky-net Project and the Identity Check in Public Space

Due to the promotion of the state and rapid urbanization, China has accomplished the most extensive video surveillance network in the world—sky-net project (*tian wang gong cheng*). It was also called "Eyes in the Sky" (*tian yan*) by many Chinese people. According to data from 2017, the Chinese government has installed more than 20 million high definition video cameras in public places and has applied cutting-edge technologies of artificial intelligence and big data. The sky-net system could monitor and recognize the motor vehicle, non-motor vehicle, and pedestrian in real-time and could tell vehicles' models and pedestrians' clothes, genders, and even ages (Chen and Li 2017). In addition to those public traffic and security cameras, there are other sources of video and images that could be acquired by the authority if the occasion should arise. The factories and storefronts usually set up cameras monitoring the space in front of them; The property management companies installed video cameras monitoring the shared space within communities; and it is ubiquitous for Chinese citizens to install video camera monitoring the gates of their condos.

According to HIS Markit, China is the largest video surveillance market in the world. It had 176 million surveillance cameras in operation in 2017, compared with about 50 million cameras in the U.S.A. In China's first-tier cities such as Shanghai, the public space has nearly 100% of coverage of surveillance cameras (QDaily 2017). The "sky-net project" that has installed countless security and traffic cameras helps the state to conduct panoptic surveillance of urban space while the power itself remains invisible to its populace.

Thanks to the vast market in China and the high quality of its product, the Chinese manufacturer, Hikvision Digital Technology, has become the world's largest supplier in this industry for six years. It made up 21.4% of the world market share of CCTV camera and video

surveillance equipment (IHS markit 2017). Since the Chinese state owns a 42% stake of Hikvision, the rapid growth of the business of Hikvision in the U.S. has raised concerns that these Chinese-made cameras might be used to monitor U.S. citizens.

The official data from China showed that the system has greatly increased the detection rate. According to the public data from the Shanghai public security bureau, surveillance cameras helped them to seize 6,000 suspects. The public security bureau in Changsha, Hubei claimed that video cameras had helped to solve more than 1,200 cases in recent four years (QDaily 2017). The video surveillance system potentially intimidates some criminals too. The serial killer Gao Chengyong who murdered at least 11 women between 1998 and 2000 was executed according to the law on January 3, 2019. In his last interview, he told the journalist that he stopped killing after 2000 only because he was afraid of "Eyes in the Sky". When the journalist asked him, "What do you think we should do to avoid being hurt by people like you?" He replied, "Hopefully the government would install more eyes in the sky. That works best" (People's Public Security News 2019). Nowadays *baoan* and security cameras become supplement to each other in office buildings and residential communities.

Identification check in cities is a common supplement to the state's surveillance in public space. The police would stop pedestrians and compare their ID with the information in the electronic system on their mobile device. Since 2016 the frequency of ID check has increased. When I was walking with a few friends in Shanghai's subway station in an evening of 2017, a friend Liu was stopped and asked for an ID by a police officer. However, Liu himself happens to be a police officer in Xi'an, a city in the northwest of China. Instead of presenting his ID, he took out his police ID card, which seemed embarrassing the Shanghai police officer. The noteworthy part is that it was the second time that Liu was picked for an ID-check during his short trip to

Shanghai. Did these police officers follow the same rule to look for suspicious people? We discussed why Liu would be the one among us that had been singled out by the police twice. One friend pointed out that Liu was thin and tanned, and wearing a simple T-shirt and a backpack, which was a typical look of a migrant worker who was involved with physical labor. Many *baoan* told me that they also had experience of being stopped on the street of Shanghai by the police officers. The public surveillance targets people who are not only regarded at a higher risk of committing crimes but also as politically unreliable ones.

Gated Communities and Grassroots Organizations in Private Space

The commonness of *baoan* in residential communities is closely associated with the prevalence of gated communities. Both gating and *baoan* demarcate the boundaries of private space. Walls and gates facilitate *baoan*'s duties; vice versa, *baoan*'s watch guarantees the function of walls and gates. Rapid globalization, market liberalization, privatization in service provisions, and increasing social inequality and security concerns are often considered driving forces for these walled communities. Gating also has a deep root in Chinese culture and urban history—for example, the work-unit compounds in Maoist era, which explains why both residents and the government accept it so quickly.

After the housing privatization, Shanghai citizens have been moving into different gated communities based on their respective purchasing capacities. The "spatialization of class" (Zhang 2010) shows that people of similar economic status aggregate in the same space. With the transformation of the mechanism of spatial sorting, the meaning of walls of gated communities also changed from "state redistribution" to "market-based allocation" (Wu 2005:249). Financially the local government welcomes the idea of gating because it could retreat

from providing certain public service and ease the financial burden. For example, the security, traffic, and public order in the lanes and on the roads among residential buildings used to be ensured by the policemen; however, after they were contained in the walls, the homeowners have to hire a *baoan* team to carry out these duties at their own cost.

Will gated communities be blind spots of a surveillance network and raise the concern of social rebellion? There are two different interpretations of the walls in terms of state-society relations. The first one believes that the walls around commodity housing enclaves give the residents more privacy and freedom. Pow (2007a) examined the evolving notions of private life and privacy in Shanghai and proposed that gated communities have become potential sites where residents can temporarily stay away from "the hegemonic control of the Communist Party-state" and realize "greater household autonomy and personal freedom" (2007:813). Wu argued that gated communities give residents a chance to escape all-inclusive relations of an all-encompassing social role of work unit system and to retreat towards anonymous and "purified" residences (2005:248).

The second standpoint instead believed that the Chinese state promotes gating as a need for political stability and surveillance, which is fundamentally different from gating in western societies. Miao believed (2003) that during the transition from a planned economic system to a market-oriented one, gating has become a quick and easy solution to crime control for the government. Tomba also argues that gates produce a more "legible, orderly and easy-to-govern environment," through "reducing or containing the social conflicts expected in times of rapid urbanization" (Tomba 2010:28). Even though there are a lot of conflicts between homeowners and developers or management companies, as long as these protests are contained within the walls, these activities remain a form of mobilization acceptable to the state (Zhang 2010). In

addition, even though many service provisions inside walls are privatized, the state still ensures they are "politically reliable forms of urban self-administration" (Tomba 2010:28).

Gated communities in China were enclosed by walls or fences to stay away from the sight and reach of the outsiders. They seem like an anti-panoptic design. However, the lives in private space are nevertheless subjected to the surveillance of authorities. Those video cameras installed in the communities are properties of private neighborhoods, but their records could be obtained by the authority for various purposes. Besides, the sub-district offices (*jie dao*) and resident committees (*ju wei hui*) still function as part of the infrastructure of the grassroots social control in post-socialist China (White et al. 2008:121). Since Dadi is massive, two resident committees have been set up in each quarter.

The organization's functions have been weakened in the urban transformation due to the high level of population migration and the prevalence of professional service-provider: property management companies. Homeowners are also allowed to organize and elect their own homeowners' committees (*ye zhu wei yuan hui*) that make important decisions on behalf of all homeowners, which also make homeowners enjoy a higher degree of autonomy. However, I want to point out that the grass-roots level of party control still exists. For example, the establishment of homeowners' committees has to be approved by resident committees. No matter in the activisms that aimed to dismiss the homeowners' committee or in the campaigns against *qunzu*, these state agencies still play a decisive role.

These fear-orientated tactics are ubiquitous and inclusive, weaving a network of surveillance capturing everyone in it. The orderly and neatly controlled space in Shanghai offered a political and spatial context for the prevalence of *baoan* in gated communities. Because *baoan* are physically present in residential space, they are regarded as a convenient tool for surveillance

and coercion. They are asked to keep an eye on residents and visitors' activities, not only for personal and property safety but also for social and political stability. At the same time, *baoan* themselves are contained in the system and are being watched and disciplined. While they watch the crowds, they must stand in these most conspicuous positions such as at the gates and in transparent watch boxes. Thus, they are not only visible to potential criminals, they are also overseen by security cameras, supervisors, and residents.

Baoan **as an Informal Coercion**

Since the "spatialization of class" (Zhang 2010) as a result of housing privatization, the upper-and middle-classes homeowners living in expensive communities have been fearing that their homes become the targets of crimes. Thus, they desire gates as well as also 24-hour protection from *baoan* to guarantee their personal and property safety. They expected that *baoan*'s high-visibility presence could deter some illegal and inappropriate actions and ensure their exclusive entitlement to facilities. However, the private security industry in residential space appears and develops not merely as a remedy for the fear of the middle-class homeowners, but also for the fear of the state. As a typical form of informal coercion, *baoan* have also been utilized by the state to perform controversial coercive tasks, to surveil the citizenry, and to assist with day-to-day public order.

The industry of fear cannot prosper without the promotion of the state. For example, in those lane-housing and *shikumen* communities where residents do not pay HOA fees and no management company exists, the sub-district offices in those neighborhoods often hire a couple of local *baoan* for each community and pay the wages from their own funds. Another example is that, Changsha's (the capital of Hunan province) Public Security Bureau even explicitly

stipulated that, each community having 100 or more households must be "equipped" with at least four *baoan* (Wang 2015).

The central and local authorities develop this industry because the private security has become an important informal coercive tactic that state agencies rely on for social control. Chen pointed out that "the state structure in China is conducive to informal coercion" (2017:67). The central authorities restricted local officials' use of force while giving them various tasks that required strong coercion; against this background, local authorities only utilize the third party to overcome procedural barriers and to pursue local or private interests.

Baoan perform controversial and semi-legal tasks of surveillance and coercion that the state agencies were not allowed to perform by law. For example, *baoan* are often used to prevent and deter skip-level petition (*shang fang*), which is crucial for regime stability in the state party's opinion. Some claim-makers who are unsatisfied with the response from local authorities will travel to capital cities and appeal to higher authorities. In order to attract the attention from party-leaders, they sometimes employ a variety of "troublemaking" tactics including pulling the banners, disrupting major political meetings, obstructing the traffic, or threating to commit suicide in public. The central government is afraid that these tactics will damage the reputation of the Communist Party, shake the populace's confidence in the governance of the party-state, and even cause political and social turmoil. Although local officials have high pressure in preventing skip-level petition, they are constrained by multiple regulations to use police force in petitioning control. Against this background, the local officials sometimes hire ill-trained thugs and private security companies to handle petitioners (Chen 2017). The media had exposed Beijing's notorious private security company *Anyuanding* whose primary business was to hinder and detain petitioners and to send them back.

Since *baoan* are physically positioned in communities 24-hours every day, all the year around, the authorities also expect them to discover and report to the police any politically and legally suspicious activities, so that the state agencies could nip any crimes in the bud. During sensitive times such as the National People's Congress and the Chinese Political Consultative Conference (NPC&CPPCC) or when the party-state leaders visit Shanghai, the local police station would ask *baoan* in Dadi to keep an eye on two types of people: residents with critical criminal records and residents who are politically untrustworthy such as Muslins and skip-level petitioners. For example, if a *baoan* noticed that many people gathered at a petitioner's home, he should immediately report it to the local police station. The state utilizes the watchful eyes of *baoan* in private spheres as a supplement to its oversight in public spaces, to achieve a panoptic surveillance of civil life.

Baoan have the obligation to cooperate with and assist the police in all ways of solving cases. In addition to that, the local police stations also utilize *baoan* to fake the number of cases that are reported to the police. Each local police station in Shanghai has a quota for 110 calls[7] from each community. If the number exceeds the quota, the police station will give a warning to the legal person of the private security company that is providing service for that community. Before 2016, there were at least three 110 calls every day from the residents in *Dadi*. Because the number far exceeded the quota, the police officers had warned the legal person of *Anquan* a few times. In order to lower the number of 110 calls, *Anquan* required its *baoan* to arrive at the scene before the residents called 110 and to call the direct line of local police station instead. Since calling the police station directly would not be reflected in the report to the superior department, the police station could pretend that the public security in its district was well maintained. Li

[7] 110 is the emergency telephone number that mainland Chinese can call to report crimes and accidents, except for fire and medical emergency.

Jian, the district manager of *Anquan* commented that "we help the police is indeed helping ourselves; they help us is also helping themselves."

The Mistrust of Private Capital and Baoan

Even though the *baoan* and the police work closely with each other and share some commonalities in duties, the two occupations have distinct statuses. Max Weber differs from Karl Marx in the notion of class that he did not see economic position as the supreme factor in stratification. He also introduced two essential concepts—status, which refers to a person's prestige, social honor, or popularity in a society and power, which refers to a person's ability to get their way despite the resistance of others. The status and power of *baoan* is nothing comparable to those of the police, mainly because the two occupations have distinct relationships with the state in China.

As we discussed above, the state developed and promoted the industry of private security to cater to the middle class's needs for security, as well as its own needs for more flexible tactics to address its fear. However, due to the same fear, the state mistrusted the private capital and those informal workers in this industry. The mistrust and fear are also reflected in the Security Service Management Ordinance, which is designed to "regulate private security activities, to reinforce the management of private security companies and *baoan*, to ensure personal and property safety, and to maintain social security and order."

Close Supervision

The Ordinance formulates very detailed rules for the private security companies and other employers of *baoan* to follow. First, it stipulated that the Ministry of Public Security is

responsible for the supervision and management of nationwide private security activities; the Public Security Bureaus of the county-level and above are responsible for the supervision and management of local security service activities; and the local security associations[8] followed the guidance of public security bureaus and exercised self-discipline.

Second, it stipulates that the companies or organizations that directly recruit *baoan* from the market should report to and register in city-level Public Security Bureaus within 30 days after it started or stopped to hire *baoan*. The Ordinance also stipulates that the private security companies should have no less than one million RMB of registered capital; the one who is interested in setting up a private security company should apply to a city-level public security bureau. After reviewing the documents, the bureau should report their opinions to a province-level public security organ, and that organ should decide to decline the application or to issue a permit. Currently, there are about 350 private security companies in total in Shanghai. According to Li Jian, because of the market saturation, the Shanghai government has not issued new permits since 2017 no matter how much the applicant is willing to pay. Anyone who still wants to found a new private security company may apply for a permit in other provinces. However, it is most likely that none of the local property management companies in Shanghai are willing to contract with a security company holding a non-local permit.

The Baoan License

The Ordinance also establishes rules to control individual *baoan*. It stipulates that the applicant must obtain a *baoan* license before they can start to work. In order to obtain the license, they should take the test written by city-level public security bureaus, pass the

[8] Each city is asked to set up a security association, e.g., Shanghai security association.

background check, and leave biometric information such as fingerprints in the system. However, to my knowledge, most of the *baoan* in *Anquan* do not have licenses, even though *Anquan* does encourage them to apply and even helps them to cheat in the test. The high proportion of license-holders is beneficial to *Anquan* because if the public security bureau found during an inspection that one *baoan* did not have a license, they would impose a fine of RMB 50,000 on Anquan.

In theory, holding a license is beneficial to *baoan* themselves as well because it would be easier for them to find another *baoan* job with a license. However, less than half of the *baoan* in Dadi had licenses. I had asked why they showed little interest in getting the license. Their answers all made one point—the license is not useful for them. First, as I mentioned previously, there are plenty of job openings in this industry and job-hopping is easy for them anyway; second, many of them do not plan to stay in this industry for long and they are not motivated to do it. However, some of them may have the third reason which is the most important one but are not willing to talk about. A good portion of them tried to avoid the procedure because they neither wanted their background to be checked nor wanted to leave their fingerprints in the government's system. Some of them may have criminal records; some of them may be dodging creditors and do not wanted to be found; and some of them just do not trust the authority in general. Eventually, Anquan gave up requiring *baoan* to get licenses and adopted the implicit rule of "Do not ask, do not tell" towards *baoan*'s background. Because lots of private security companies are violating the Ordinance in order to recruit enough hands, it becomes possible for Bing and other people with criminal records to stay in this industry.

Since so many *baoan* in Anquan did not have the licenses, I asked Li Jian how often the public security bureau conducted inspections and whether *Anquan* had ever been fined. Li replied with a smile, "Don't you understand the China society? Everything relies on the *guanxi*

(personal connection). If you do not have *guanxi*, it is impossible for you to found a *baoan* company in the first place. To be frank, we would be notified every time before the inspection and would provide the police with a name list on which were only the names of *baoan* who have licenses. Even if the police do catch someone without a license, *guanxi* could make big trouble smaller, and make small trouble disappear (*dashi hua xiao, xiaoshi hua wu*)." Since local police officers were aware that many *baoan* in Dadi did not register with the system, they came to Dadi a few times a year to collect all *baoan*'s fingerprints. At that time, it is mandatory for every *baoan* on duty to cooperate.

The Uniform

The state agencies want to lend their authority to the third parties, e.g. *baoan*, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their task-performance; on the other hand, the state agents want to distance themselves from these controversial tasks performed by the third parties. Therefore, in order to help the populace to distinguish *baoan* from the formal staffs working for state agencies, the Ordinance stipulated that *baoan*'s uniform and logo should evidently differ from those of administrative law enforcement agencies such as People's Liberation Army, People's Armed Police, and Industrial and Commercial Bureau as well as from those of People's Court and People's Procuratorate.

Before the Ordinance, the *baoan*'s uniforms were often dark blue or green and with decoration on the shoulder or on the chest, which imitated the uniforms of the police and the army in mainland China. This imitation often confused the visitors and homeowners, which I believe is precisely what the designers want. When the *baoan* enforce orders among the middle-class homeowners, the biggest difficulty that they encounter is the lack of authority. Thus, the

uniform had been a symbol of authority and power that *baoan* can borrow when they perform duties. It was very common that even when *baoan* were temporarily away, they would leave their uniform in a conspicuous place as a warning that "This area is being watched". After the issue of Ordinance, *baoan*'s uniforms in more and more communities have changed into ordinary black shirts or business suits.

The Security Service Management Ordinance acknowledged the legitimacy of private investment in this field; however, its rules also indicate that the most outstanding characteristic of the *baoan* industry in China was its intimate relationship with the state. Through setting up a system in which each level of a state agency is responsible for each level of security service and through outlining the comprehensive details of regulation, the state closely monitored the activities of every enterprise and every individual in this industry. The close relationship between the state and this industry also complicates the interactions among homeowners who pay for *baoan*'s service, the property management company that contracts with the private security company, and the grass-roots state agencies that advise the job of the property management company.

Conclusion

The authoritative state and local government play essential roles in Bing's fate through many ways. The uneven development between rural and urban areas and among different parts of China make the population flows in one direction to big cities where most of them could only work in the informal economy and became the feared class in urban space. The *hukou* system and the informal nature of their work made Bing unable to obtain a resident card in Shanghai, and made the medical treatment much costlier for him than for people with formal employment.

Because only doctors in Shanghai's hospitals could treat his disease and because there was no job opportunity in hometown, Bing managed to stay and survive in Shanghai by resorting to all methods including stealing.

The state has promoted the private security industry via opening the market to private capital, so as to address the fear of the middle class and its own concern of political stability. The fast development of the industry of fear creates lots of job openings in urban China, making nearly every private security company experience the shortage of hands. However, the solution that the industry seeks is not to raise salary and benefits to attract more qualified applicants, but to lower the entry-barrier again and again and to skip running background checks on them. Therefore, even though the fearing state disallows people with criminal records to enter this industry and the middle-class homeowners desire strong and tall *baoan*, Bing could easily come back to the industry of fear in big cities.

Chapter 2: The Making of *Baoan* in Urban China

On an early spring night in 2017, *baoan* Lao Lu, who was from Shanghai, came to the west quarter of Dadi to work a late shift. He had just drank strong liquor (*baijiu*) at home, and probably felt a little tired. He went to the locker room to take a nap around 10:30 p.m. At 6:00 a.m. the next morning another *baoan,* arriving for his early shift, found Lao Lu still sitting on the chair, dead. Lu was 56 years old when he died of a heart attack. According to his family, he had not been aware at all that he had heart disease. Lao Lu's employer—the property management company Zeze paid his family compensation of RMB 700,000 (about USD100,000). Half a year after the incident, Zeze contracted the security service in the west quarter to a private security company called Kexin. Three years before that, another private security company, Anquan, had the contract for the security service in the east quarter.

In this chapter, I will explore how the neoliberal-authoritarian governmentality creates a macro-environment for the informalization of employment and how the contract between the property management company and the private security company makes it possible for the two enterprises to infringe on state and local regulations and thereby transform the job of *baoan* in Dadi into informal work. It also discusses the process in which the labor-leasing comprises a hierarchical power structure of security service and a seamless, yet highly-corrupted network, that creates a micro-environment for the exploitation of *baoan* in Dadi.

The Informalization of Employment in Private Security

There are two trends in private security industry in China. First, the proportion of residential communities relying on *baoan* has continued to grow in recent decades, despite the fact that the official crime rate has not grown. Since a decade ago, even those lane-housing and shikumen, which have neither the clearly-demarcated entrances nor property management service have been guarded by *baoan*. The second trend is that, property management companies increasingly contract with private security companies instead of hiring and managing *baoan* directly from the market. This decision is market-directed and is consistent with the economic interests of property management companies, which are able to incur significant cost savings while providing the same or even better security service to homeowners.

Due to the second trend, a number of big private security companies are in charge of security service in hundreds of communities. The concentration of business goes with the will of the state—to guarantee the political loyalty of this industry, as it is much easier for the local authority to monitor and to regulate a few hundreds of registered security companies than hundreds of thousands of property-management offices. The state's preference for this trend is also reflected in the Security Service Management Ordinance, which stipulates that all of the entertainment venues such as nightclubs and KTVs should not hire *baoan* directly from the market but have to contract with professional service providers.

The state's intention of surveilling and regulating this industry will eventually be realized through the practices of private security companies on a day-to-day basis. However, those privately-owned companies often infringe the regulations related to political stability and public security. For example, even though the state orders every company to run background check on every *baoan*, Anquan did not follow the rule. It is more often for those companies to contravene regulations that protect the interests of employees and that ensure employment security. In a

largely deregulated and neoliberal labor market (Tomba 2002), the property management company and the private security company both try to maximize profits while minimizing risks, which consequently turns the majority of the jobs in this industry into informal works.

The Economic Interests behind the Replacement

Since the contract in 2014, Anquan has been managing a new *baoan* team consists of all migrant workers. When I was doing fieldwork in the summer of 2017, I worked in the east quarter while living in the west quarter. Every evening when I left Zeze office and walked across the busy road, I could see the contrast between *baoan* at the gates of the west quarter and the east quarter. At that point, all the *baoan* in the west quarter were still Shanghainese *baoan* employed by Zeze. When I passed by, those local *baoan* always looked relaxed and sluggish, sitting back on chairs in front of the watch box and smoking cigarettes sometimes. In contrast, the *baoan* across the road always stood in front of the gate, looked vigilant and disciplined. That contrast continues until Zeze outsourced the security service in the west quarter as well in October 2017.

All of the *baoan* who had previously been employed by Zeze had Shanghai *hukou*. Most of them lived in nearby communities or Dadi. Although Zeze merely paid them Shanghai's legal minimum wage RMB 2,600, it bought them at least three social insurances: medical insurance, unemployment insurance, and pension, costing around RMB 3,000 for each person each month. Also, those *baoan* from Zeze offices work eight hours a day and five days a week; thus, they formed four teams working three shifts—the early shift was from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., the middle shift was from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., and the late shift was from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Since each team had 16 *baoan*, there were 64 *baoan* in total. These Shanghainese *baoan* also enjoyed paid leave for sickness and vacation in every holiday as other staffs in Zeze. In other words, the job of

baoan in Dadi was a formal employment precisely conforming to labor law and regulation. Zeze's total expense on security service would be over RMB360,000 (about USD52,000) each month at an estimate.

After contracting with Anquan, all of the 64 *baoan* were laid off and replaced by *baoan* hired by Anquan. Anquan hires one dayshift team and one nightshift team, either of which is supposed to have 19 *baoan* and one team leader (*ling ban*). The personnel in the two teams were all under the management of one project leader (*dui zhang*). Therefore, Anquan totally provides 41 *baoan*, and Zeze only needs to pay RMB 4,500 (about USD662) per *baoan* per month to Anquan. Thus, Zeze's total expense on security would be RMB184,500 (about USD27,132) each month, nearly half of the previous expense. Zeze's payment usually arrives at Anquan's bank account at the end of the month. Consequently, Anquan delays one month to pay its *baoan*. The arrears of wages have become a standard practice in the private security industry and *baoan* working for small private security companies run the risk of not getting the paycheck for the last month after they left the company.

In sum, Zeze could cut the cost by saving social insurances around RMB 3,000 (about USD441) for each *baoan*, by cutting the number of the personnel from 64 to 41, by canceling the policy of paid leave, and by shifting the risk of various accidents to Anquan. If a thing like Lu's death happened again, Anquan would have to be responsible for the compensation and Zeze would only need to pay a small amount of money as a consolation to the family.

Family Retainers, Gate Keepers, and Baoan

The job of *baoan* has joined the downward trend of workers' employment security since the economic reform. Even though there was no *baoan* or private security companies in the Maoist

era, many work-unit compounds had gatekeepers sitting at the gates. Those gatekeepers working for residential compounds differed from *baoan* today in two major ways: first, in most cases, their only duty was to guard the gates, which is merely one of the dozens of duties *baoan* perform today. Second, they were often formal employees of the work units and were residents of the same compound; thus, there is not much difference in social status between gatekeepers and other residents. In a sense, those gatekeepers function as a form a neighborhood watch rather than providing paid service.

Since the economic reform, "the accumulated result of economic liberalization has been a drastic shift in the structure of employment", which smashed "iron rice bowl"[9] and made "employment in state sector decrease[d] from 78.3 to 21.9 percent of the total urban employment" from 1978 to 2008 (Kuruvilla 2011:2). The public-sector working class, that used to have a close relationship with the state and have high symbolic status in the Maoist era (Standing 2011), has been "reduced in size" and "politically downgraded" (Goodman 2014:3). When Dadi was completed in the 2006, many of those Shanghainese *baoan* hired by Zeze were former workers laid off from work units.

Those Shanghainese *baoan* mainly consists of two types of people: laid off workers and people having always been living on subsistence allowance provided by the Shanghai government. Because those jobless men were over 50 and lacked the skills or degrees to compete in the labor market, the grassroots state agencies that work in their communities often recommended them to work as *baoan* in lane-housing and *shikumen* communities or these newly-emerged residential space—gated commodity housing. These *baoan*'s workload was as light as those gatekeepers' in the Maoist era; therefore, the Shanghainese homeowners are used

[9] "Iron rice bowl" (tiě fàn wǎn) is a Chinese term used to refer to an occupation with guaranteed job security, as well as steady income and benefits.

to call them gatekeepers (*men wei*) instead of *baoan* in daily conversation. The low pay and the easiness of this job, as well as unsuccessful lives of those people in general make the vocation less appreciated and respected in the post-socialist society that has been experiencing dramatic economic stratification.

When the first private security company was founded in 1984, the first three *baoan* in contemporary China was selected from hundreds of applicants and they were very proud of their career. However, when *baoan* became ubiquitous and available for all urbanites' lives, the works in this industry are being informalized. The symbolic status of this vocation deteriorates due to three changes: (1) those workers hired by private security companies mostly belong to the feared class that was at the bottom of the social ladder. (2) Those workers do not only receive low pay but are also deprived of any social entitlement, which suggests their alienated relationship with the state. (3) Even though the tittle of this job is still "*baoan*", they have to do many kinds of chores for homeowners, management office, and state agencies, from checking broken facilities to clearing garbage. Their role was more like the family retainer (*jiading*) that existed before the foundation of PRC. The nature of informal employment has degraded this vocation, even making those formal workers in this industry suffer discrimination. In a sum, the relatively equal relation between *baoan* and residents started to change when commodity housing became the mainstream and when *baoan* were recruited from the market, and eventually collapsed when *baoan* became an informal work.

The Traps in the Labor Contract

Private security companies such as Anquan profit from the difference between the fee they receive from Party A and their expense. The cost of Anquan in the project of Dadi includes

wages—RMB 4,200 per *baoan* per month and other expenses such as uniforms for different seasons, traffic signs, anti-riot equipment, and all other articles for duties. Besides, Anquan has to afford some *baoan*'s training cost and rewards. For example, the two team leaders could attend physical training held in Changxing island every year. After all the expense, the profits that Anquan make from this project could be very little or even to none, not to mention the risks it takes—in case of any accident happening to an employee, the compensation for injury and death could bring a significant loss.

One day when I discussed Lu's death with Li Jian, he surprised me by saying that, "If that deceased *baoan* were an employee of our company, the compensation would be much less." How could Anquan minimize the risks that it faces? How does Anquan operate the project when the profit is so marginal? The answers may lie in the labor contract that contains multiple agreements.

Physical Examination

Before signing the contract, Anquan tells its employees that they have the right to have a physical examination in local hospitals at their own expense. A report that shows no pre-existing conditions may bring the *baoan* more compensation when health-related accidents happen during work. The failure of providing a report does not prevent the *baoan* from getting the job. However, Anquan would ask him to sign an agreement, explicitly saying that Anquan would not take the responsibility of his injury or death from potential disease during work. This agreement could protect Anquan from paying a hefty bill of compensation when such accidents occurred.

To my surprise, most *baoan* voluntarily give up their rights to have physical examinations, reflecting their weak consciousness of risk. When I asked them the reasons, they either answered that they were pretty healthy and did not see it necessary, or that they wanted to save the trouble

and the fee for examinations. It took me a while to figure out the reasoning behind their "indifference." A good report does assure the employer of their healthiness; however, they are worried that if the result of the examination shows any health risk, they might not be hired. They knew that they might get more compensation if something terrible happened; however, if the report said that they were healthy, then what health-related accidents would happen? They were struggling with survival and did not have the resource and energy to prepare for such small probability event. Moreover, I noticed that those migrant workers were usually reluctant to walk into hospitals because they were bread-winners for big families back in hometowns and did not have healthcare insurance in the cities. Even if they had a feeling of illness, they would like to be an ostrich and avoid seeing a doctor.

Agreement on Safety

Under the agreement on safety (安全责任书), the *baoan* promise to follow the code of conduct. The first rule that Anquan taught its *baoan* in the face of crimes is always: "protecting yourself." Anquan explicitly discourages its employees from confronting criminals. *Baoan* are required to call the police instead of intervening or stopping the crime by themselves. It may contradict with many homeowners' expectation that *baoan* must throw themselves into the breach and even die for the homeowners. Why does Anquan care so much of *baoan*'s interest rather than the homeowners'? If we know the respective risks that Anquan and Zeze take, we will understand it more easily. According to the deal between Zeze and Anquan, any loss of homeowners resulting from the failure of security service should be compensated by Zeze because homeowners are Zeze's patrons, not Anquan's; any injury or death of *baoan* will be compensated by Anquan because *baoan* are Anquan's employees, not Zeze's. This form of allocation of responsibility has its limitation—Zeze does not consider the wellbeing of *baoan* as

important as the satisfaction of homeowners, while Anquan does the opposite. Li Jian disliked the idea that Anquan's *baoan* should put themselves in risk for protecting homeowners' properties. He confided in me that, "We do not want to see our employees to hurt our company's interest for protecting Party A's interest."

Another important code is "no weapons." A few years ago, a *baoan* of another private security company stabbed his team leader to death with a knife kept in the office after the team leader had criticized him in front of other *baoan*. In learning a lesson from this incident, Anquan forbids its *baoan* to keep any dangerous tools including batons in watch boxes and dormitories. That, on the one hand, suggests that the environment is generally safe, and weapons are not necessary for their duties; On the other hand, because the conflicts usually happen between *baoan* and residents as well as among *baoan* themselves, the forbidden of weapons can prevent minor conflicts from escalating into fatal violence.

Fighting among *baoan* was not allowed either. According to the code of conduct, both parties involved in the fighting will be fired. Fighting did happen from time to time among *baoan*. In an evening, Lao Fan, a *baoan* who had a reputation of bad temper, picked a quarrel with Xujiang, a newcomer. When Delong walked into the office, five *baoan* including the day-shift team leader Xiao Fan were beating Xujiang fiercely. Delong stopped the violence. However, he felt that it was difficult to solve the incident according to the code of conduct. Xiao Fan was Lao Fan's son, and all of the five *baoan* involved were from the same family and brought to this project by Meng Qi. Delong was worried that if he fired Lao Fan, the other family members would not accept his decision peacefully. Since the two teams were short of hands, he would not take the risk of firing all of the five, nor want to fire Xujiang, making the power balance in the team

worse. Eventually, he had to let it go. After this incident, Delong realized that Meng Qi's family had become a big headache.

The code of conduct forbids alcohols during work and in the dormitory. However, it was another code that was very hard to implement. Many *baoan* in Dadi was over 50 years old and were from the rural area of the northern part of China. During most of their lives, drinking spirits (*baijiu*) had been a common way to entertain themselves and to kill time. Thus, many of them threatened to quit the job if they could no longer drink in the dormitory, because "a life without spirits is boring to death." Delong had to give in again. He commented behind them, "they are using spirits to numb their disappointment in lives." Occasionally drunken *baoan* make troubles such as smashing things, but fortunately, these troubles have been contained in the dormitory.

Agreement on Overtime

In signing the agreement on overtime (顶岗申请协议), the employees agree to work overtime when the employer needs them to do it. Those Shanghainese *baoan* hired directly by Zeze offices worked eight hours a day and five days a week, perfectly obeying the Labor Law. In contrast, *baoan* hired by Anquan work 12 hours a day, seven days a week without any holidays yearly-around. If they took one day off for sickness or personal affairs, they would not be paid for that day. Li Jian explained to me how it is possible that Anquan makes *baoan* work an unusual long hour and does not violate the new Labor Contract Law. *Baoan*'s salary of RMB 4,200, in fact, consists of two parts: the base salary of RMB 2,600 and overtime pay of RMB 1,600. Thus, the wage for all the extra hours they work after eight hours is counted as overtime pay.

During a couple of important holidays such as the Spring Festival, the most important traditional holiday for a family reunion in China, *baoan* in Dadi could earn double wages for three days. The design of the rules encourages *baoan* to stick to their posts during these holidays.

If they stayed, they would not only earn RMB 420 (about USD 62) more for three days[10], but also save a lot on double fare because all the expense of traffic is much more expensive during the Spring Festival. Therefore, many of them chose to visit family before or after the Spring Festival.

Agreement on Social Insurances

Lastly, in signing the agreement on social insurances, *baoan* (falsely) claimed that they were already covered by social insurances back in their hometowns. Thus, they acknowledge and accept the fact that Anquan does not arrange any social insurances for them. Social insurances, especially medical insurance and endowment insurance had been the most important reason why those Shanghainese *baoan* had taken this job. I had chatted with *baoan* Xin at the gate of the west quarter in the summer of 2017. Xin, 54, proudly told me that his family owned in a nearby gated community two condos that were worth ten million RMB. He claimed that he did not care much about the salary, which is not even enough for him to lose on the mahjong table in one week; he accepted this job only because the workload was very light, and he did not have to pay social insurance premium out of their own pocket as what he did when unemployed.

When I asked Li Jian how Anquan could avoid paying a mandatory social insurance for its employees, he smiled, "Most *baoan* working here hold rural *hukou*, thus they most likely already join the New Cooperative Medical System (NCMS)." NCMS, a healthcare insurance system subsidized by the state and local governments, has covered nearly all rural residents since 2010. The peasants can join NCMS by only paying a meager fee, about RMB 100 per year as a premium. NCMS has dramatically relieved the peasants' economic burden of seeking healthcare and generally improved their health condition. At the same time, NCMS has the same function as

[10] The wage for each person each day is RMB 140 and is doubled during the Spring Festival. Therefore, the wages for three days during the Spring Festival is RMB 840 versus RMB 420 in regular days.

the *hukou* system—to regulate population distribution and to protect urban resources. NCMS could cover medical bills in Shanghai but the portion that can be reimbursed was much smaller than the portion of bills generated in hometown hospitals. For example, if Bing sought treatment in a hospital in his town, most of the bill could be reimbursed; however, if he saw a doctor in Shanghai, only a small portion of the bill can be reimbursed. Thus, it is much more expensive for them to see a doctor in Shanghai compared to formal workers who are provided Shanghai social insurance. Because of this, when *baoan* Wang Qingjia was diagnosed as appendicitis in a Shanghai hospital, the doctor estimated that the surgery should cost above RMB 20,000 (about USD2941). Wang had to take unpaid leave for 20 days and took a train back to his hometown to have the surgery, which cost only a few thousands. Since medical resources such as doctors, knowledges, and equipment in small towns and third-tier cities by no means match for those in big cities of China, some people who are severely sick such as Bing have no choice but coming to big cities for treatment.

Anquan uses NCMS as an excuse not to provide health insurance for *baoan*. I asked Li Jian what if a *baoan* from Shanghai required the employer to buy social insurances for him. Li Jian gave me a familiar smile, "We decline any applicants from Shanghai." That also explains why the private security company like Anquan could cut the cost while the property management office could not. Without social insurances, these *baoan* will not receive pension when they are retired nor unemployment benefits when they are laid off; they could not apply for residence cards, which led to their transient and contingent relations with urban space.

Shanghainese *Baoan*: 64 People **Nonlocal *Baoan*: 41 People**

Regular pay	RMB2,600 for 160 hours/month (8 hours per day, 5 days a week, 4 weeks a month)	RMB2,600 for 160 hours/month (8 hours per day, 5 days a week, 4 weeks a month)
Overtime pay	No overtime work	RMB1,600 for 176 hours/month (4 extra hours on every workday, plus 24 hours on weekends)
Social insurances	RMB3,000 for medical insurance, unemployment insurance, and endowment insurance	None
Vacation, sick leave, and holidays	Have all of them	One's income will be deducted ￥140 per day for any leave for vacation, sickness, or holidays.

(The contrast between two different types of *baoan* in Dadi)

The Labor Market under Neoliberal Authoritarianism

Since the economic reform, China "has shown a hybrid governance that has combined earlier Maoist socialist, nationalist and developmentalist practices and discourses of the Communist Party with the more recent market logic of 'market socialism'" (Nonini 2008:145). The Chinese state was no longer observe the planned economy of the state socialism. A series of neoliberal restructuring and economic liberalization have reorganized the Chinese society. However, at the same time, many key institutions of the Maoist era such as the *hukou* system does not change and the central government still plays an authoritarian role in many aspects of political, economic, and civil lives. Therefore, the governance could be called "authoritarian neoliberalism" or "neo-authoritarianism" (Lim 2017).

During the Chinese society's transition from state socialism to authoritarian neoliberalism, the employment has also shifted from an "iron rice bowl" system to a "market-determined employment system characterized by considerable variation in wages, welfare provision, labor law enforcement, and job security" (Kuruvilla et al. 2011:4). Informal employment has been representing over 60% of total urban employment (Swider 2015). It is undoubted that most of these works are performed by migrant workers. According to survey, 84.3% of migrants were employed informally in cities and only 2.1% of migrants had access to pension benefits in 2005 (Kuruvilla et al. 2011:1). From the proportion (90.3%) of migrants who did not apply for resident cards in Shanghai in 2016, we can infer that a considerable portion of migrant workers in Shanghai do not have formal employment or formal residence, two prerequisites for applying for resident cards (see Chapter one).

Although the proportion of informal employment may be lower in the state and collectively owned sectors, "it abounds in the private sector, where it now exceeds 80 percent of all workers" (Kuruvilla et al. 2011:3). According to Li Jian, the district manager of Anquan, nearly every privately-owned private security company is asking *baoan* to sign alike agreements. "Otherwise, it would not be able to survive," he said. Designing those well-considered agreements is the first step that Anquan did to avoid risk. However, these agreements shift risk to *baoan* and push them into a precarious status.

The authoritarian neoliberal state enacted the National Labor Law in 1995 to permit and require short-term labor contracts in the hope that the labor contract system could facilitate the termination of the practice of life-term employment in public sectors as well as could legalize the rights of workers in the private sector. However, "the inability of the state legal system to adequately enforce the law" make the law exist in name only (Kuruvilla 2011:5). For example,

even though the state has made it mandatory for all enterprises to buy social insurances for its employees, Anquan and many other private security companies do not obey the law. In order to constrain the trend of increasing informalization, the state enacted in 2008 the new Labor Contract Law in an effort to force enterprises to contribute to the social security system and to undertake social responsibility. The drastic law also reflects the state's fear that the employment insecurity of the feared class may eventually destabilize the society and regime.

No matter how strict is the labor law and the Security Service Management Ordinance that related to the private security industry, all of these state policies can only come into force on a micro-level through the enforcement of local authorities and the lawful practices of privately-owned enterprises including property management companies and private security companies. However, the "fiscal decentralization" that has been initiated by the state, "has generated vested interests amongst local officials to nurture a pro-capital climate…and to allow a weak regulatory regime for labor" (Friedman and Lee 2010:515). In such a weakly-regulated system, these companies always found their ways to get around or infringe laws governing the industry of fear. At the same time, the state could also benefit from taxation and revenue from local governments. In the following part, I will go into detail about how the macro-structure of authoritarian neoliberalism may influence the power structure of security system in Dadi.

The Power Structure of Security Service in Dadi

The History of Anquan

Anquan was founded in 2009 in Shanghai by Jianglin and his friends, who were all *baoan* at that time and saw the boom of the market and the promising future of the industry. A few months later, the Security Service Management Ordinance was issued, representing the policy-makers'

intention to officially open the market to the private capital and to regulate and utilize the resource of privately-operated forces. Due to the beneficial environment, Anquan has grown very fast. Ten years later, through the acquisition of dozens of small companies, it has expanded into a big enterprise that provides service for 775 projects throughout China and hires more than 10,000 staffs. Currently, Anquan cooperates with many large property management companies, and its business scale ranks around 20th among all private security companies in Shanghai. All these original business-partners of Jianglin have become vice presidents of Anquan. Because of its fast expansion, many employees in Anquan have a favorable chance to be promoted. For example, Li Jian who is in his late-twenties joined Anquan in 2012 as a *baoan* and has become the district manager in charge of more than a hundred of projects.

On the other hand, because the real estate development has cooled down, the expansion of the market in first-tier cities has slowed down since 2016, making the competition in these cities even more intense. Therefore, Anquan has marched into the market in many second-and third-tier cities. However, *baoan* and gated community are both products of urbanization and are not desired in small towns as much as in big cities. The leaders in Anquan are also considering exploring foreign markets mainly in Africa.

At the same time, the advancing security technologies are replacing *baoan* at the scene. For example, thanks to the popularity of electronic payment in China, the needs for security service for charge money car is diminishing; Many high-end gated communities and commercial buildings are protected by high-tech equipment such as face-recognition, fingerprint lock, elevator access card and so on. Li Jian predicted that in the near future each community would need only two *baoan* sitting in the surveillance room, watching all the screens, and operating all equipment. Reducing hands may save private security companies many expenses especially

when the cost of labor is increasing year by year. However, private security companies are after all companies that profit from providing trained people to clients. The bigger the number of *baoan* they provide the more they earn and vice versa. Thus, the decrease in needs for *baoan* may eventually endanger the survival of these companies. A private security company that is not able to switch into providing security technologies may be knocked out in the future.

The Rivalry between Anquan and Kexin

Three years after signing the contract with Anquan, Zeze contracted security service in the west quarter with Kexin, another security company based in Shanghai. Zeze tacitly encourages the competition between Anquan and Kexin. Ke, the founder and president of Kexin, was an old pal as well as a business partner of Jianglin, the founder of Anquan. However, they had disputes over the business and broke up a few years ago. Ke left Anquan, taking several high-level staffs with him and started the new private security company. Another version of the story is that Ke was kicked out of Anquan by Jianglin; he has been upset about what Jianglin has done to him and set himself against Jiang Lin on every occasion.

Baoan from the two companies guard respective gates and look at each other across a busy road every day. The *baoan* working for Anquan started to feel discontent when they saw the winter uniforms of Kexin. One complained to me, “their hats are much warmer than ours” and “their jackets are cotton-padded.” The temperature of Shanghai in the winter could be below 0 degree Celsius. A warm outfit is very important for a person who stands 12 hours in the open air, especially at night. When the *baoan* of Anquan became familiar with *baoan* across the road, they started to compare wages. The *baoan* from Anquan were even more displeased when they got to know that the monthly salary of *baoan* from Kexin was RMB 400 (about USD59) higher than

theirs. “There are fewer residents in the west quarter, so their workload is lighter than ours,” One *baoan* remarked, “but they got paid even more than us.” It was no doubt that some of them had asked if Kexin was still hiring. In order to stem discontent among its employees, Anquan raised the salary of *baoan* in Dadi from RMB 3,800 (about USD559) to RMB 4,200 (about USD618) at the end of 2017. In this sense, the competition is beneficial to *baoan* in both zones.

Li Jian had complained to me,

> “Although we increased *baoan*’s salary, Zeze does not increase the fee that they paid to us. You may not believe that we can only earn a little over RMB 10,000 in total every month from such a big project. It’s not even enough to buy three seasons’ uniforms for every *baoan*. Our company manages some small projects in Shanghai that may yield a profit of more than RMB 20,000 per month. In those small communities, there are only five *baoan* altogether, and of course, we can buy each *baoan* a nice suit.”

Since the profits for managing the security service in Dadi has been marginal, Delong could not understand how Kexin, the size of which is smaller, could manage the cost. Did Ke want to revenge Jianglin so severely that he would not even mind of losing money in this project? Soon an unconfirmed story was disseminated among *baoan* that Dong, the vice president of Zeze, holds 20% of the share of Kexin and thus Zeze pays RMB 500 (about USD73) more per baoan per month to Kexin than to Anquan; therefore, the higher profits could make Kexin sustain the operation.

I questioned the credibility of the story, “If it is true, why not Dong let Kexin take over the service in the east quarter as well?” “It (Zeze) will not let us take over the west, nor let Kexin take over the east,” Delong answered, “The management in Zeze is happy to see us compete with each other, as what resourceful leaders often do to their subordinates.”

Li Jian emphasized a few times that Anquan does not profit from this project; I became curious that why Anquan would still be so enthusiastic in taking over the project in Dadi. According to Li Jian, the most important reason for sticking to the project was to seize market

share. Anquan did not want its competitors especially Kexin to take it over. Also, since Dadi is one of the largest gated community in Shanghai and is well-known for its size and disorder, Anquan could advertise itself as "the security service provider of Dadi." The other clients may think that if Anquan could handle such a complicated and massive project, it must be competent for smaller communities, where the projects are much more profitable.

The Power Struggle

In the spring of 2018 Zeze started a division to manage security service in both east and west quarters. The daily duty of the new department is to supervise and to oversee the activities of *baoan* from Anquan and Kexin. The new department consists of one manager (*jing li*), two project directors (*zhu guan*), and four team leaders (*ling ban*). All of them are from Shanghai and are formal employees of Zeze. The new department, along with the security teams from Anquan and Kexin, forms a hierarchical structure that with the Shanghainese manager Lao Yan at the top and 78 nonlocal *baoan* at the bottom.

(Graph1: The organization of security service in Dadi,

Yellow=staffs from Shanghai and Zeze; black=staffs from other provinces.)

Before outsourcing security service, Zeze had been struggling with the complaint from the homeowners about the quality of security service. The managers in Zeze often felt impotent in disciplining these Shanghainese *baoan* who had strong social connections with the community and were more demanding than migrant workers. Since Zeze signed the contract with Anquan, its managers have enjoyed being Party A—If they received any complaint about security service, they would urge the project leader from Anquan to solve the problem.

In order to create a sense of crisis among Party B, Zeze renews the contracts with the two private security companies every half a year, for believing that the worry of losing the contract to their competitors would push them to improve their service and to keep their prices competitive. Whenever approaching the date to renew the contract, Anquan had to play to its full strength in making the renewal process smooth. At that time, Li Jian, who is in charge of Anquan's all projects on the west side of Huangpu River[11], frequently visited Dadi to oversee the performance of the *baoan* team. Zeze would also take these chances to put forward suggestions for improvements and to manipulate Anquan's appointment of personnel.

During the period for contract renewal, team leaders and project leaders had been kicked out of this project as scapegoats of the power struggle. One of the renewal dates was January 1st, 2018. One month before the date, the former project leader Zhang Xi was removed from this project by these property managers. Taking it as an alarm signal of losing the contract, Anquan sent to Dadi two instead of one new project leaders: Liu Qiang and Delong. The two men have

[11] Shanghai is divided by the Huangpu River into the east side and the west side.

distinct characters. Liu Qiang always wore a suit, bossed around, and spoke in a bureaucratic tone. He followed the rule that business is business and was hard-hearted in interpersonal relations. Liu Qiang showed his ambition in reforming the two teams that had been loosely managed by Zhang Xi, bringing the catfish effect[12]. His seriousness and sternness make him a good employee for the company, while his conceit and arrogance made him unwelcome among his co-workers. He accused Meng Qi of slacking off at work and discharged him. Before left for the hometown, Meng Qi complained to me that Liu Qiang made every *baoan*'s life harder.

Liu Qiang believed that he should be the only project leader and did not know why Delong was there. One day when Delong went to the headquarter of Anquan for a meeting, Liu Qiang filed a dispatch note to ask Delong to leave. His action upset Delong. The conflict between the two ended up that the senior management of Anquan transferred Liu Qiang to a different project as a regular *baoan*. Delong has stayed and been the project leader in Dadi since then.

There were two team leaders under the supervision of Delong—Jin Zheng for the day-shift team and Da Xiong for the night-shift team. Delong treated them like brothers. In late April 2018, Anquan started to prepare for the contract renewal on June 1st, 2018. Li Jian was asked to come for a meeting with those property managers. After the meeting, Li Jian came to *baoan* office and told Delong that he had both good news and bad news. The bad news was that the managers in Zeze had been dissatisfied with Jin Zheng and Da Xiong and wanted both of them to leave this project immediately. To Delong's surprise, the good news was that these managers praised Delong's work.

Since these managers did not elaborate on the reasons for their decisions, Delong was confused about this sudden change, "How is it possible that I had done a great job while both of

[12] The catfish effect is the effect that a strong competitor has in causing the weak to better themselves..

my men had performed their work badly? These managers are just playing politics!" Delong told me that he was sick of the tricks that those Shanghainese property managers had been playing. The other reason that Delong was so distressed was the constant interference. "If Jin Zheng and Da Xiong had done anything wrong, Zeze should have told me and let me make the decision and issue the order," Delong said, "They are employees of Anquan, not of Zeze." Delong once considered leaving with the two team leaders. However, Li Jian persuaded him to stay in this project at least until the contract was renewed.

The Labor-leasing Contract

These property managers in Zeze often manipulate private security company's personnel appointment and have a hand in the management of *baoan*. A staff in Zeze, even one in the lowest rank, could give direct orders to *baoan*. Some *baoan* were exhausted by carrying out the orders from both companies. During one casual chat in the *baoan* office, a *baoan* wanted Delong to help him to solve the puzzle, "Didn't we sign the contract with Anquan? I think we are the employees of Anquan and only need to follow your order." Delong paused for a while and answered, "Zeze is Anquan's patron. So, of course, they can order you around."

The contract between Zeze and Anquan is a form of labor dispatching or labor-leasing (*laowu paiqian*) that has existed in western countries for long time and started to emerge in China in the 1990s. The labor-leasing forms a "typical triangular employment relationship in which workers employed by a contractor are sent to work at client firms on a contingent basis" (Kuruvilla 2011:2). The private security companies and the cleaning companies are commonly sending staffs to provide service in gated communities. In outsourcing these services, the property management companies could save the expense by shrugging off their legal and social

responsibilities towards peripheral leased workers and only guaranteeing the welfare benefits of their formal staffs. The labor-leasing creates a hierarchical structure of private security in Dadi, placing *baoan* at the bottom of the structure.

The Conflicts within the Team

Anquan transferred Jin Zheng and Da Xiong to two other projects in Shanghai. Those *baoan* did not stop guessing why both of them had been removed. One theory was that Da Xiong had a romantic relationship with a married female staff in Zeze office, who had resigned two weeks before. That Shanghainese woman had been on bad term with her co-workers and had quarrels with the vice-president and the managers. Some surmised that the affair was why managers in Zeze disliked Da Xiong too. If that is the case, then why did Jin Zheng get fired? He recalled that he might have offended one of the managers in Zeze by mistakenly reporting the parking fee collected in zone No.3 to the Zeze office. According to some news he overheard, the parking fee collected in that zone was a secret income of that manager. Jin Zheng truly believed that this had been the reason that he got fired and blamed himself for not being smart. However, there was another theory. Some surmised that Meng Qi might have played a role in this incident by rating on both of Jin Zheng and Da Xiong.

Meng Qi, 40, from Heilongjiang province, did have a personal grudge with both of them. After Liu Qiang had been transferred, Meng Qi received a call from Delong and happily returned to Shanghai. He did not come back alone but with three relatives who were also interested in being a *baoan*. Later on, three more men from Meng's family—Meng's cousin, Meng's younger son, and Meng's nephew—joined the *baoan* team. Thus, there are seven out of forty *baoan* in Dadi from the same family, including Lao Fan and Xiao Fan. It is very common that *baoan*

firstly came to Shanghai or found the job in Dadi through townsmen or kinship networks (Tomba 2002). Such networks offer them a habitat of "a city of villages" and a bounded solidary (Swider 2015) and these people are "community-connected" transients in cities (Solinger 1999).

One day Meng Qi intentionally ignored the order of Jin Zheng, the then day-shift team leader. Jin Zheng was irritated by Meng's arrogance and punished him to do 20 push-ups in front of other team members. Meng Qi felt humiliated in front of his family members, especially his 19 years old son. The next day Jin Zheng sent Meng Qi, who had been the backup *baoan*, to guard gate No. 4 that locates on the corner of the east quarter. After Meng Qi's complaint, Delong asked another *baoan* to replace Meng Qi's duty at the Gate No. 4, even though he did not think Jin Zheng did anything wrong. "Meng Qi is like my friend and Jin Zheng is like my brother. When they have conflicts, I have to ask my brother to compromise," Delong said. Since Da Xiong and Jin Zheng were good friends, Meng Qi was hostile to both of them.

At the same time, Delong found that Meng Qi frequently went to Zeze office and whispered into the ear of a female manager. His close relations with Zeze's staff made Delong uncomfortable and nervous. Wenfeng, the team leader of Zeze, warned Delong that Meng Qi might be a spy of Zeze and might have spoken ill of the *baoan* team. "No one knows what he had said about the *baoan* team, but these managers trust him and believe what he said," Wenfeng told Delong. "That is why the managers in Zeze seem knowing everything in the team," Delong said, "I cannot think deep. The whole theory made me feel creepy." Although the guess was unconfirmed, the fissure already appeared between Meng Qi and Delong.

In February 2019, Meng Qi took one month off and went back to his hometown for the Spring Festival. When he came back to Shanghai, he was told by Delong that the two teams have hired enough hands and no vacant position was left for him. Delong later told me that he only used it

as an excuse to stop Meng coming back to the team because he did not trust Meng's moral standing. Meng was angry about Delong's decision and applied to work for Kexin in the west quarter. He was the first *baoan* who hoped to Anquan's deadly foe company across the road. Soon after that, all of his family members left Anquan. However, only after a couple of months, Meng left Kexin again and worked as a *baoan* for a factory located in the suburb of Shanghai. He also successfully persuaded another *baoan* Wang Qingjia who are from the same province to hop to that factory. Delong and other remaining *baoan* called the leaving of Wang a "defection" (*pan tao*).

The Gray Income

Delong is capable of getting along with people of different backgrounds, from street peddlers to managers in Zeze. He exhibits his high Emotional Quotient by making everyone surrounding him feel his sincerity and easy-goingness. He soon befriended with me too. As a project leader, he does have some benefits: he has his own bedroom and does not have to stand under the sun and in the rain for most times; he can order people about. However, he has much more responsibilities on his shoulder, and his salary is much the same as *baoan*. One day when we discussed the salary system, he taught me with a serious look on his face, "In China, do not ask one's salary, you should ask how much she/he earns each year. The salaries of those property managers may only be a few thousand per month, but their yearly income could be as much as one million." I was astonished when I first heard this. I have known that the new rich in China have gained most of their fortune from the housing market, the stock market, or other investment instead of salaries. However, his words impressed me that lots of Chinese families thrive not because of their salary or investment, but of undeclared "gray" income. Delong gave me an

example: the salary of the former project leader Zhang Xi was merely RMB 4,500 (about USD662) per month. However, he earned around RMB 700,000 (about USD10,2941) during the three years in Dadi.

What could be the "gray income" for a project leader who does not have much power in reality? Delong laughed at my question: "Even a *baoan* has his gray income. The easiest one to get was the parking fee." Before the introduction of the ACIS a couple of years ago, *baoan* in most communities had been the ones who recorded every visiting car and collected parking fees. It was very common that if the drivers forgot to ask for receipts, *baoan* on duty would embezzle this portion of parking fees. This source of income has become a public secret in this industry. The project leaders usually got a piece of the action and turned a blind eye to it. However, since 2016 most communities that offer paid parking spaces in Shanghai have installed ACIS. Since this system was installed in Dadi in the autumn of 2017, Zeze has banned temporary parking. The system could recognize whether or not the vehicles have paid quarterly or yearly parking fees to Zeze office and automatically open the gate to the vehicles that have paid. The *baoan* at the gates could not permit through those vehicles that have not paid fees to Zeze. In this way, Zeze forfeited *baoan*'s right of handling parking fees while limiting the number of cars into the gated space that has already been too crowded.

The embezzlement of parking fees still happens in Dadi. In March 2018 Delong fired *baoan* Guo after learning from Zeze's managers that, Guo had manually opened the gate for visiting cars and kept tips (in the name of parking fee) in his own pocket. Since every car coming into Dadi left a record in the system, the staffs in Zeze soon discovered this theft. "I had caught him doing this last month and warned him. If he did only once or twice a week, no one would notice it. However, he went too far. He did this dozens of times this month," Delong commented. He

seemed not thinking the embezzlement per se was wrong. Without the electronic system, Zeze had no way to find out how much parking fees had been stolen. Since the system does exist nowadays, what Guo had done only shows his stupidity and greed in the eyes of Delong.

In addition to getting a piece of the action in parking fees, a project leader could also profit from "eating heads" (*chi ren tou*), that is, lying about the number of *baoan* they are hiring and "eating" that portion of salary. As I introduced before, Party A (property management company) usually calculates the contract amount based on how many *baoan* Party B (private security company) provides. This mechanism gave the project leader a chance to fake up a name list and to embezzle the salary belonging to those "ghost" *baoan* who had not ever existed. Delong heard that Zhang Xi had "eaten" at least six to seven heads every month when he was working in Dadi. Since the turnover rate is exceptionally high and the project leader is the one who manages the security teams on a day-to-day basis, those property managers can hardly track the numbers of *baoan* and to detect the fraud. Moreover, some key figures in Zeze had fingers in the pie and gave tacit consent to it. An unconfirmed story was that the person who took bribes from Zhang Xi was Dong, who was one of the most influential persons in Zeze. No matter who took the bribes, it is very likely that other Zeze staffs who were involved in the security service knew the deal. Thus, they stood by. Based on the information I got from different property management companies, it is not uncommon in this industry that *baoan* leaders and property managers embezzle the homeowner's association fees by lying about the number of *baoan* in service.

Many residents in Dadi are discontented with the service of Zeze, which has served this project since the birth of Dadi. In 2017 some residents organized a few protests to terminate the contract with Zeze. Against this background, Zeze made some moves to improve its management and service. One move among the many is to set up the new division to manage the security

service in both east and west quarters. When we got to know each other better, Delong complained to me that by the time he filled the position, the profitable time had gone.

Lao Yan, the newly-promoted manager for the division of security service, focused on cracking down on "eating heads." In the name of overseeing the jobs of *baoan*, the team leaders from Zeze inspected the process of duty-shifting between the dayshift team and nightshift team every evening and took photos while *baoan* counted off in a line. When many *baoan* left for hometown before the Spring Festival of 2018, both the dayshift team and the nightshift team experienced a severe shortage of hands. Delong had to play some tricks to pull himself through. He hired several hourly-paid *baoan* to work only for the evening to make up the difference. However, the daily inspection has gone far beyond walking through the motion.

In one midnight, Lao Yan and two other staffs from the new security department abruptly came back to Dadi to count how many *baoan* were on duty that night. They brought a notebook with them to write down every *baoan*'s name in every post. After getting a notice from *baoan*, Delong had to immediately wake up two *baoan* who were in the dayshift team and sent them to the east quarter. The two *baoan* pretended to be a part of the nightshift team. After the nightshift, they had to work in the daytime as well, so they work continuously for 36 hours. Although Delong barely passed the inspection, he was also upset by the fact that Zeze meant business this time. The next day as I walked into the *baoan* office, he was complaining to his supervisor Li Jian on the phone. After the call, he also told me his plight and sought my advice.

Delong wished that he could "eat heads" as his predecessor Zhang Xi. He claimed that he did that mainly for his men's benefits—if one *baoan* was sick or too tired to work, he could offer him one day of paid leave. To his knowledge, the other management companies usually turn a blind eye to such an arrangement as long as it does not affect the overall performance of the

security team. However, Zeze did not allow Delong latitude in rewarding his men with paid leaves. It would deduct the wage from the fee paid to Anquan once it found out the absence.

Delong believed that the staffs in the new security department put obstacles in his way only because he had not divided up profits with them.

"Did they give you such a hint?" I felt it was hard to believe.

"Of course."

"Had you ever offered them any?"

"Oh, yes. However, I had no experience. In the past two months, I used one-month of salary to invite them to dinner and to buy them gifts. I fed up two imps (*xiao gui*)[13], but not the big joker (*da gui*). Now it is these big jokers who are making difficult for me. I have no money left. What can I give them?"

"Maybe you can ask your supervisor to pay them?"

"Li Jian? No. he has no money either, and he asked me to solve it by myself."

A few days later Delong told me in order to survive this tight control, he decided to bribe these staffs in the new security department every month from then on. He had two plans: Plan A is to give all of RMB 6,000 (about USD882) to the manager Lao Yan; Plan B is to give Lao Yan RMB 2,000, two project directors RMB 1,000 each, and four team leaders RMB 500 each. Delong asked me which plan was better. A few days later, he told me that he had decided to choose Plan B because Kexin had been implementing plan B as well. "So that everyone in the new department would be happy," he said. I wondered where he could get RMB 6,000 (about USD882) of spare money every month since his salary was only RMB 5,000 (about USD735). He told me that he would "eat" two heads to pay for the bribes.

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[13] In the conversation, *xiao gui* refers to team-leaders in Zeze while *da gui* refers to managers in Zeze.

So far things became absurd. The new department was set up to oversee the security service and to combat corruption; however, after a couple of months, everything was eventually dragged back to the old track—the staffs from Anquan and Zeze were complicit in embezzlement. To my greatest astonishment, everyone seemed quite at ease when they talked about this topic. When Delong discussed how to "eat heads" with me or with Li Jian on the phone, he did not try to avoid other *baoan* in the office. The audience did not show any signs of surprise or disapproval. I was also surprised that when Delong told me that he racked his wits about "eating heads," I, myself, did not regard him as morally wrong. His ideas or behavior seems justified or even quite "normal" in that context.

One feature of China's crime rate is that the corruption in China is rampant compared with that in other countries (Messner et al. 2008:278). A gated community may be like an epitome of Chinese society. During the interviews, I learned that every party that is involved in managing the space of gated community might take part in the corruption. For example, Party B including security service, gardening, construction, and cleaning usually have to bribe the senior management of Party A, so as to defeat competitors and to successfully seize the contract. Once taking over the project, the leaders of these companies have to continue bribing the staffs in the property management company so that the latter will not stop their embezzlement. Since those large amount contracts or big projects have to be approved by the homeowners' committee, the property management often pay kickback to the director or members of the homeowners' committee, so that the homeowners' committee would approve its expenses, endorse those contracts, and protect that property management from being fired, despite that these decisions may betray other homeowners' interests.

According to Li Jian's suggestion, the founder of Anquan must have *guanxi* with civil servants in the public security bureau to get a permit for establishing a private security company in the first place. Because of the protective umbrella, Anquan could evade regulations and could design a labor contract in legal grey zone. Many homeowners believed in the story that Zeze also pays kickbacks to staffs in resident committees, so that the latter would nevertheless veto the requests for terminating the contract with Zeze.

In such a seamlessly corrupted system, *baoan* and other workers at the bottom of the power structure are the ones who suffer the consequence. Under many layers of peeling—embezzlement, the homeowners' association fee becomes so small that it could only pay a meager salary to *baoan*, dustmen, gardeners, and so on, who actually provide service to the middle-class homeowners; and those workers had to share the workload of those "ghost" employees without having their work being recognized and appreciated.

Conclusion

Despite of two drastic Labor Laws since 1995, the neoliberal-authoritarian governmentality and the rampant corruption and networking make the system incapable of enforcing the regulation and make the labor market largely deregulated. More and more formally employed *baoan* are replaced by informal workers who are faced with all kinds of Labor Law violations: low pay, long hours, lack of social insurance, arrears of wages, unlawful firings, and so on. The co-employment or labor-leasing also reduces employment security and make *baoan* who are at the bottom of the power structure subjected to double exploitations from two "employers". Eventually the precariousness in their lives makes *baoan* a highly-discriminated job and make the people working as *baoan* an underclass feared by the authorities and the citizens.

Chapter 3: “Wolves” Guarding the “Sheep”

On an evening in 2017, I came across a couple in the garden of Dadi when they had a walk after dinner. The female homeowner in her fifties recognized that I was working in the Zeze office and started to complain to me about many things that Zeze failed to do. During the conversation, she described how she felt insecure about the new baoan team consisted of all nonlocals—“You don’t know who they are and where they had done in the past.” Her husband standing by us nodded his head, and said, “There are many media reports on crimes done by nonlocal (wai di) baoan. You should read them.”

I had read a report on a hideous murder case in Nanjing in 2011. A female homeowner was raped and murdered in the underground garage of her community at night, and her jewelry and smartphone were robbed of. Her bodies and clothes were hidden in two different places. It turned out that the slayer was Zhu, who had been a baoan in that community for three months not long before. During the time he was working there, he got familiar with the layout of the gated community and the schedule of baoan, so that he managed to avoid all the security cameras and on-duty baoan, and knew where to ambush the victim. More astonishingly, the policed found that Zhu just hit and killed a man on a bicycle four months before and he was a convicted robber on parole after 13 years in jail (People's Court Daily 2011).

I have collected dozens of Chinese media reports on baoan and the private security industry. Besides these scary stories about *baoan*, there are also many positive ones. For example, when a residential building in Shenzhen was on fire, a nonlocal *baoan* who was off duty came back with a fire extinguisher. After he gave his gas mask to the two homeowners who were trapped in the bathroom and saved their lives, he himself was killed in a blast (China Civilization Website

2015). Wang Qingjia, a *baoan* in Dadi, returned homeowners' lost valuables more than once and was also interviewed and reported by local media. Since the mass media in China is tightly controlled by the central and local publicity departments, I do not see that the media has any reason in creating public fear about the vocation that is endorsed by the state. However, the fearful middle-class homeowners incline to select adverse information for memorization and circulation. They use part of the media's representation to enhance their own negative impression about those nonlocal baoan, so as to cater to their own fear.

When *baoan* in Dadi perform daily duties, misunderstandings and conflicts happen from time to time between *baoan* and homeowners. This chapter introduces the overall security condition in Dadi and describes homeowners' attitudes toward baoan in some incidents: the theft of electric-bicycles, the installation of ACIS, and the activism against Zeze and so on. It explores all of the possible reasons behind homeowners' mistrust and fear of nonlocal *baoan* and points out that the liminality (Turner 1967) and the marginality of their position make them a danger in Mary Douglas' sense.

The Overall Security in Dadi

Dadi was notorious for insecurity and chaos as well as the predecessor on its site—the shanty town. In many Shanghainese' imagination, this vast community is like a wild "jungle" (Tuan 1979) that has tangled spatial arrangement as well as deviant and dangerous population. Its reputation for a high frequency of accidental death even got the attention of some Fengshui masters who believed that the site selection of Dadi violated the ancient laws of Fengshui and brought too much yin to its occupants.

The Theft of Electric-Bicycles

The numbers of different types of crimes and accidents vary significantly in Dadi. Among all, the theft of bicycle and electric-bicycle has been the most common crime in Dadi and maybe in most gated communities of urban China as well. The high frequency of this crime—receiving reports almost every week before 2016—was partially due to the high owning rate of bicycles and electric-bicycles among Chinese citizens. For instance, most *baoan* working in Dadi commuted from dormitory to the *baoan* office on electric-bicycles as well. Since bicycle and electric-bicycle are not expensive, the police usually make no effort to investigate. Zeze installed gates for all sixteen bicycle-garages in the east quarter in mid-2017. These gates are open in the daytime and closed at night, and can only be accessed by card-keys. The gates for bicycle garages have effectively decreased the number of thefts of bicycles and electric bicycles. However, those bicycles that did not park inside the bicycle-garages are still exposed to thefts.

The Theft of Valuables in Cars

In comparison with the theft of bicycles, the other crimes happened much less frequent. The thefts of valuables in the cars probably rank the second. It happened six times from mid-2017 to mid-2018. The thieves broke the windows of the cars parking in underground garages and stole the valuables that the car owners forgot on back seats. The car owner of a MINI Cooper claimed that a bottle of wine, a Burberry scarf, and a box of ginseng that cost more than RMB10,000 were stolen. The owner of an Audi Q5 claimed that he lost two cartons of cigarettes costing RMB1,400 and he did not go through the trouble of reporting it to the police.

Burglary and Robbery

No burglary and murder have been reported in Dadi since 2017. Baoan can only recall one case of burglary that happened in 2016. A family had gone to Japan for half a year, and when they came back at the end of 2016, they realized immediately that their condo had been broken in. Expensive wines, cigarettes, and cash, totally costing RMB 40,000, were stolen. Evidence shows that the thieve even made himself/herself at home by drinking wines and having a bath inside the unit. One attempted rape and robbery happened in the west quarter in autumn 2017. When a female tenant was waiting in front of the lobby for her roommate to open the gate for her around midnight, a man approached her from the back, dragged her to the dark garden, and attempted to rape her. She fought back and screamed. The man grabbed her purse and ran away.

Suicide and homicide

The only reported homicide happened in May 2013. A homeowner killed his cohabited girlfriend with a kitchen knife and then threw himself out of the balcony of the 13th floor. According to the news report, the man had divorced with his wife, and the girlfriend was the kindergarten teacher of his five-year-old daughter (Jian 2013). The frequency of suicides was high in Dadi. According to staffs of Zeze, during ten years before 2016, there were about 3 to 4 cases of suicides happening in Dadi every year. Most of the suicides jumped from those high-rise residential buildings.

Drug and Gambling

During my fieldwork, the police raided condos and arrested drug users or gamblers many times. Since baoan are not asked to participate in every raid, Zeze and Anquan do not have an accurate number of how many these cases have happened in Dadi. In spring 2018 a senior

homeowner reported to the baoan office loud and unusual noise from the upstairs unit. When two baoan went to check on this unit, there was sex noise behind the door, but no one came to answer the door. The two baoan wanted to leave, but the homeowner insisted them to stay and called the police. The police arrived and found a woman and a man were high on drugs in the unit. The young woman was a married homeowner living with her family in another building of Dadi. She rented this one-bedroom unit for her lover from Xinjiang province so that they could meet every day. The police arrested the couple, and the scandal was exposed.

Later Delong told me that if the downstairs homeowner had not insisted on opening the door, he would have asked the two baoan to leave because drugs and love affair was none of their business. Since Anquan's success is primarily built on the satisfaction of homeowners, baoan are restrained from interfering in the private lives of residents unless the police or other state agencies ask them to assist or property managers decide that those activities threaten the security and wellbeing of other homeowners.

The other types of incidents are very occasional. For example, a young woman whose cat had been missing lost her mind at midnight and covered the lobby and the elevator with hundreds of copies of posters with pictures of her cat, a tube of wasabi, and trashes. The fire happened twice, and a kitchen was burned down for the homeowner forgot to turn off the gas stove. Because all the buildings in Dadi are taller than 28 floors, it happened a few times that the objects thrown from windows injured pedestrians and damaged vehicles.

During the nine months I lived there, I perceived that space was generally safe and quiet, and the crime number was not high, considering that it contains 11,599 units and more than 60,000 residents.

Homeowners' Mistrust of Zeze and HOC

In October 2017, *baoan* Meng Qi shared in his WeChat Moments an article titled "Dadi—Your Homes in the Park." The article, which included dozens of breathtaking aerial photos of Dadi, was written by a realtor Su who specializes in selling condos in Dadi. Meng Qi proudly remarked in his Moments, "the community where I am working is really beautiful." However, he must have not read dozens of embarrassing comments from homeowners below the article. The majority of these comments were accusing Zeze of destroying the beautiful community and making the housing price of Dadi lag behind surrounding communities. Some comments required more secured gates while one comment called those baoan "bullies" because they did not allow his visitor's car to go inside.

A considerable proportion of homeowners in Dadi were dissatisfied with Zeze's performance. One online article widely-circulated among homeowners blamed that the poor management of Zeze has turned Dadi into an "urban slum" in the eyes of Shanghai citizens. Their discontent mainly focused on three issues: (1) many facilities in the communal area were broken, and Zeze did not maintain them well or fix them promptly; (2) Zeze did not do its job in controlling *qunzu*; (3) Zeze did not hire a decent baoan team.

Zeze attributed all of these problems to the lack of funds. However, homeowners suspected that the staffs in Zeze office embezzled the HOA fee and the maintenance funds that were supposed to use on homeowners. Some homeowners became paranoid about the idea that Zeze was wasting their money. One day in winter a senior man entered Zeze office in which the heating was on. He felt the warmness in the room and started to shout, "Why do you guys turn the temperature so high? Don't you know that homeowners are the ones paying your electricity bill? You guys are shameless!" All of the staffs pretended not to listen. Only after the man left, a

female staff said quietly, “Such an idiot!” Manager Yin once mocked herself, “We should no longer call ourselves property management company because homeowners do not believe that we are in a position to manage anything. We should call ourselves a property service company.”

The Maintenance Funds

The property managers and the homeowners’ committee in Dadi have proposed to install more facilities to enhance the security in Dadi. All such expenditure is drawn from Dadi’s accounts of maintenance funds. All residential buildings in Dadi have their own bank accounts for maintenance funds, and Zeze manages all of these accounts. According to government regulation, whenever a new construction is sold, both the buyer and the real estate developer should put money into an account following a ratio of 3:4. In Dadi, the homeowners paid RMB 36 per (about USD 5) square meter, while the developer paid RMB 48 (about USD 6.7) per square meter. The funds are reserved for future maintenance, repair, and update of Dadi’s facilities in shared areas. Any expenditure from maintenance funds higher than RMB 2,000 (about USD 286) must be approved by more than 2/3 of households in the building or the zone that requires the project. It is said that there is nearly RMB 200 million (about USD 28,600,000) altogether in those accounts, generating millions of interests every year. The tremendous amount of money and the inadequate supervision challenge the honesty of people who manage the income and expenditure of these accounts. Some activists who wanted to terminate the contract with Zeze openly accused property managers and members of the homeowners’ committee of complicity in embezzlement.

The second day after I started my internship in Dadi, a senior man jumped from the balcony of his apartment on the 33rd floor and landed on the platform of the second floor, causing a crack

on the marble platform. The homeowner who lived on the second floor saw the body and was psychologically traumatized. She insisted on replacing the piece of marble outside of her balcony and put intense pressure on Manager Yin, who was in charge of the east quarter. Manager Yin was a middle-aged woman, decisive and capable. Her power in Zeze was only secondary to Vice President Dong. Replacing a big piece of marble cost far more than RMB 2,000, thus the expenditure had to be approved by more than 2/3 households in that building. However, the other homeowners were not willing to pay for the marble platform that was only visible to the homeowners on the second floor. Manager Yin came up with an idea to get herself out of the predicament. She found a contractor who was able to lower the price of the project under RMB 2,000 and promised to cover the contractor's loss by paying a higher price for future projects that he would contract. This case shows that the property managers in Zeze have many ways in using the funds around the supervision of homeowners.

The closed-circuit monitoring system that Dadi has since it was first launched on the market in 2001 was a cutting edge at that time. In the surveillance and control center, dozens of screens occupied a vast wall, playing pictures from all the cameras installed around the community. However, the system became broken many years ago. All the video cameras are damaged, and none of the screens could receive signals. Nowadays the only thing that is still working in surveillance and control center is an old telephone on the table.

(The surveillance and control center)

A Zeze staff sits in front of the telephone day and night and answers residents' calls, which address various concerns such as lost keys, vandalism, leaking pipes, fire, and so on. The telephone operator writes down the building number and unit number and forwards these requests to the baoan team. The team leader sends baoan to have a look if necessary. The system is very low-efficient. Zeze had suggested to replace and update the whole security system, which may cost RMB 2 million (about USD 286,000). Because Zeze was not able to get approval from more than 2/3 homeowners in Dadi, the plan has been laid aside. Despite that there are no surveillance cameras monitoring gates, roads, and other public areas, Zeze did get approval from 2/3 homeowners in each building and use the maintenance funds in each account to install over 1,000 security cameras surveilling all lobbies, elevators, and garages.

The Divergences Over the New Gating System

When more and more households in Dadi own cars, the conflicts over parking spaces among residents become a big headache to Zeze. Since mid-2017, Zeze installed magnetic auto-control barrier gates for all six underground garages in the east quarter. Because no car had ever been stolen and barriers were not able to block thieves who walked into the underground garage to steal valuables in cars, the goal of the system was irrelevant to security but meant to reserve parking spaces only for vehicles that had purchased parking spots.

Dadi is located in downtown Shanghai and closed to the railway station where all the public parking is expensive; therefore, some nonresidents would have parked their cars in Dadi before they took the trains and was gone for days. Homeowners who were not able to find parking spaces often blame baoan for letting nonresidents' cars into the community. In order to get rid of these freeloaders, Zeze installed ACIS for four gates of the east quarter in the autumn of 2017. Every car owner must come to Zeze office to register their cars and to pay either quarterly or yearly parking fees so that their cars could enter Dadi after the system was applied on October 1st. Each household could at most register two cars. Thanks to the new system, Dadi took one step closer to the "gated community." The ACIS could not only relieve the tension of competing for limited parking spaces but also ensure that Zeze receives parking fees. Since the system could automatically record the license plate of every car coming in and out of Dadi, those property managers could quickly discover any theft of parking fees conducted by baoan at the gates.

The new system was sponsored by the businesses inside Dadi such as restaurant, fitness club, and grocery store. Since the money for the project was not from the maintenance funds, the installation did not go through the process of voting among all homeowners; instead, it was only approved by all of 25 members of the homeowners' committee (HOC). Since October 1st, 2017, all the vehicles for visiting, moving, picking up the elderly or the sick, and shipping construction

materials and so on have been blocked outside of the community. Some homeowners welcomed it while some hated this system due to the inconvenience it caused. Lots of homeowners were not even aware of this project until they were stopped at the gate. Due to the general discontent, Zeze had to revise the rule after one month of trial. It allowed some visiting cars to come into Dadi by paying a temporary parking fee upon the approval of the Zeze office in advance.

More than one year after the new system was installed, the disputes over the system continue. I joined the WeChat group of homeowners of the building No. 53 in the west quarter and saw homeowners frequently arguing with each other on this issue in the group conversation. A senior homeowner did not drive and frequently entertained friends to play mahjong together. It was very inconvenient for those elderly visitors to get off the taxi at the gates and walk ten to fifteen minutes to the building he lived. He angrily wrote, "Now we had to get permission from Zeze to invite our friends to come home. The order is completely upside down—masters have to act according to servants' mood." Another middle-aged male homeowner echoed, "How could Zeze install the system without asking homeowners' opinions? Those members of HOC were bought off by Zeze, and they are complicit!"

A female homeowner defended the new system in the WeChat group. She did not own a fixed spot in the underground garage and used to spend more than half an hour in looking for an on-ground parking space every day after work. After the new gating system, she found that the cars in Dadi decreased significantly and it became much easier for her to find a space to park. "There is not even enough parking space for homeowners, shouldn't Zeze and baoan limit the number of visiting cars?" She asked. Such an argument usually leads to nowhere because everyone favors a plan that is most beneficial to herself/himself.

The Rights Activists

Many homeowners plot terminating the contract between Dadi's homeowners and Zeze. Since only the HOC has the right to fire property management company upon the approval of the resident committee, their first step is to replace the HOC that they believed had a dirty deal with Zeze's managers under the table. It is hard to found the HOC in the first place in a community having such a large population. After three years of absence, the second HOC was founded in 2014. However, some homeowners soon discovered that the son of the female director of the HOC was a vice president of Zeze's parent company. The disclosed nepotism led to the resignation of the director. Since then, there have been three different people taking this position.

Before achieving the goal, these homeowners had been boycotting Zeze by refusing to pay HOA fee. Zeze referred to these people as "rights activists" (wei quan fen zi). It is interesting to see that whenever these activists posted a notice to call upon more people to join them, Zeze would soon cover it by its own notice for collecting HOA fee. According to data from Zeze office in 2017, there were 20% to 30% homeowners in every building not paying HOA fee every month for different reasons. About 2% to 5% of homeowners who refused to pay HOA fees were activists. Thus, the number of activists accounted for about 0.4% to 1.5% of all households. These activists became the biggest worry of the senior management of Zeze that could do nothing but asked baoan to monitor their moves closely.

In order to carry out their plan under the nose of Zeze, the activists had to keep in touch with each other through the WeChat group and gather secretly at night when Zeze's staffs were off work. When Zeze managers were notified about such gatherings, they would immediately send baoan to the scene to monitor the process in the name of security. Although baoan just stood

there without using coercion, their presence has already disrupted the gatherings of activists who do not want baoan to eavesdrop on their discussion.

The tension between Zeze and activists grew when these activists moved forward their plan. Because the then-director of the HOC refused to initiate a procedure to terminate the contract with Zeze, those activists wanted him to leave his seat, which was also declined. At one midnight, a few activists broke into his condo, woke him from the bed, and tried to force him to sign on a resignation letter. Once got notified, Delong hastened to the scene with a few baoan in an attempt to stop these activists. Those activists locked all these baoan out of the lobby of the residential building. When two parties were at a stalemate, the police, and the party branch secretaries of two resident committees arrived. Only under the mediation of state agencies, these activists agreed to leave. The managers of Zeze were shocked by the "coup" and were outrageous at those activists. "They can pursue their ends in following the law, but they cannot get there by such base (xia san lan) means!" One manager said.

Four months after the incident, more than 6,000 homeowners signed a letter asking for recalling the homeowners' committee. Eventually, the four resident committees approved homeowners' request to vote. However, they did not allow activists to propagandize this vote. Before the voting date, all members of the HOC resigned. Since then, it has been more than one year that Zeze operates the huge community without the supervision of the HOC. Li Jian, the district director of Anquan, predicted that these activists' effort would eventually be in vain. "Zeze is a subsidiary of Dadi's developer company, that has been allied with resident committees. Even if those activists voted for a new HOC, the resident committees still had the power to veto their decision of replacing Zeze," Li Jian said.

Many projects that need approval from HOC had been laid aside. For example, the two elevators in the building where I lived was over 15 years old and frequently stopped working and trapped residents. These homeowners were desperate because they could not use their maintenance funds to fix or replace elevators without the approval of the HOC. They have to live in constant worry of danger every time they took elevators. However, the date of setting up a new HOC has not been decided by the date I am composing this paper.

Baoan, the Role in Between

Baoan receives salary directly from Anquan; Anquan got paid by Zeze; Zeze survived on the HOA fee paid by homeowners. Consequently, baoan's service is expected to satisfy three parties: Anquan, Zeze, and homeowners. However, when the interests of homeowners and Zeze conflicted with each other, the baoan team acted solely in the interest of Zeze. Consequently, those activists saw baoan as the talons and fangs of Zeze that has become the foe of many homeowners. The divergences between Zeze and homeowners harden the work of baoan, who stand in-between Zeze and homeowners, and who actually impose rules designed by property managers and the HOC among all residents on a day-to-day basis.

Security Technologies Versus Baoan

As a part of the trend in the industry of private security in residential areas, the security of Dadi increasingly relies on technologies, which are more efficient and more effective than personnel (baoan) in monitoring and regulating a population as large as 60,000. The labor cost in China is increasing year by year; therefore, technologies could save homeowners more money in the long run in theory. Nevertheless, technologies also bring out many problems that require baoan's

involvement and sometimes may even heighten the need for human beings who are flexible in imposing rules compared to technologies.

The ACIS does not allow cars that do not pay quarterly parking fees to enter Dadi. However, Zeze allows visiting cars with legitimate reasons to temporarily park in Dadi as long as homeowners offer the license plate numbers to Zeze office before the vehicles arrive. Baoan have a notebook recording all the license plate numbers of the cars that Zeze office permits in that day as well as cars belonging to people having guanxi with Zeze managers. Baoan remove the barrier for those cars with a remote controller in the watch box, collect the parking fees, and hand the cash to Zeze office every evening. They operate the system under the supervision of the technology and do not have any latitude in making decisions. The new system requires lots of human involvement, and the operation becomes low-efficient and troublesome again.

A young female homeowner complained that *baoan* at the gate did not allow the Didi[14] car she took coming into Dadi. She worked overtime in the office every evening and usually took a Didi back to Dadi. Since she could not offer the license plate number to Zeze office in advance, those baoan at the gates did not let the car in. "The community is so big and the winter nights are so windy and dark. I have to walk a long way to my home every night. What if I came across a bad guy on my way one day?"

A baoan told me that he wished he could let a Didi car or a taxi in if he were sure that the car would leave immediately after dropping off the passenger. However, since it was impossible for him to tell a ridesharing car from a private car, he dared not to take the chance. If the car stayed, it would require a considerable effort to track the car and to contact the driver to move it. Once property managers or Delong discovered what he did, he would lose one-day wages.

[14] Didi is a ridesharing application in China, similar to Uber and Lyft. It is commonly used in Shanghai and other big cities in China.

Upset residents whose cars or whose visitors' cars were blocked by the system often vented their frustration towards baoan standing at the gates. Many of them tried to coerce baoan into removing the barrier for their cars. However, baoan must prioritize the order from Zeze to guard the gates against unauthorized cars. They usually referred to these discontent drivers and passengers to Zeze office for more information. For the first month of the new system, gate No. 1 was in utter chaos. Some residents even made a big scene on the road and attracted reporters from local media. I had described a violent scene at the beginning of the Introduction.

A few days after Jianhong's injury, Delong told me that he was bitterly disappointed about how baoan being treated. "Homeowners looked down upon us and took us as the punching bag to vent their anger about Zeze's decision. You have seen what happened to Jianhong, right? Even the police do not uphold justice. Their scales always tilted to the locals no matter which side is wrong," He said.

Those property managers criticized baoan for not actively solving the problem. For example, if baoan locked the tire of a car violating parking-rules and the car owner refused to pay fine, baoan usually told them, "Zeze asks us to do that. You should go to talk to Zeze." This was the only way that they could get themselves out of a predicament. Those angry car owners often run to the Zeze office and pick quarrels with staffs in Zeze. During one meeting, Zeze managers threatened Li Jian that they would not renew the contract with Anquan if the baoan team continued passing the buck to Zeze.

When Li Jian brought the message back to the baoan office, the baoan felt they were wronged. Delong said, "they hate to deal with those unreasonable homeowners, so do we. However, they are the people who formulate policies and made orders. We are just baoan, in no position to reason with homeowners or to make decisions." The other baoan agreed, "How could we solve it

by themselves? If we refused to unlock the tie, the homeowners would not let it go. If we unlocked the car without receiving a fine, Zeze would be mad at us. What should we do?"

"By talking politely and skillfully!" Li Jian said, "What we provided is service, instead of quarrels. If we were very polite and the homeowners still did not listen, then we should call the police instead of calling Zeze. The latest public security law rules that anyone who disturbs public order such as blocking the gate of a community could end up being arrested."

Li Jian's advice did not help in practice. Because of low social status, the greatest difficulty that baoan encountered when they enforce rules with homeowners is the lack of authority. Thus, talking nicely and politely would not add more weight to their orders, but might further discount their authority. In many times homeowners refused to follow their orders no matter what they said and what they did. Based on my observation, baoan also avoided getting the police involved unless Zeze managers asked them to. They were afraid that calling the police would further infuriate homeowners who had the resources and power to seek revenge on them in later days. Without the opportunity of seeking help from Zeze, baoan could do nothing but bear anger, insult, and sometimes assault from homeowners when they carry out duties.

Local *Baoan* versus Nonlocal *Baoan*

The power structure inside the walls of Dadi epitomizes the social stratification in urban China—the local hukou holders precede migrants while the propertied precede the unpropertied. The state agencies that represent the power of the state is always at the top. Homeowners are in second place. Below them are tenants who rent a whole unit or a room in a regular unit. They are mostly from other provinces but have decent jobs or other sources of high income to support the rent in Shanghai. However, when I worked in Zeze office, I noticed that they did not walk as tall

as homeowners when they complained about Zeze's service, even though they pay a substantial amount of rent. Those staffs working for Zeze belong to the same socioeconomic group as homeowners, and many of them indeed own properties in Dadi. They manage the space and hire informal workers to do the everyday jobs of security, gardening, cleaning, construction, and so on. These informal workers, along with qunzu tenants, constituted the feared group in Dadi. In this section, I will elaborate on the hierarchy within Dadi to indicate the position of nonlocal baoan in the system for better understanding of homeowners' mistrust.

The Middle Class and the State

Homeowners in Dadi are mainly made of three types of people: (1) Shanghai local people, many of whom may not have good-pay jobs but have accumulated wealth through purchasing condos before the housing price started to skyrocket; For example, Lao Liang was a retired middle-school teacher and purchased his two-bedroom condo in 2002 when the average price was RMB 7,000 per square meter, compared to RMB 70,000 per square meter today; (2) the new rich from other provinces who invested in Shanghai's real estate; For example, Ms. Guo, a businesswoman based in Wenzhou, purchased three condos in 2006, sold one in 2011 and rented the rest two to a sublessor all the year around; (3) the elite migrants who have decent jobs and have taken roots in this city; For example, Mr. Qi was middle-level manager of a transnational company and purchased a three-bedroom condo in 2014 by using all the savings of his and his wife's families as a down payment for the mortgage.

How to define the new middle class in China's social context? In western literature, the class is often defined based on education, income, and occupation, and so on. Ezra Vogel (1963) equated new middle class in Japan to the white-collar employees of large business corporations

and government bureaucracies, in contrast to the small businessmen and landowners who are considered declining old middle-class. However, Li Zhang disagrees (2010) using occupation as the primary criterion to define a social stratum in China's social context. She believed that it was difficult to gauge people's income based on their occupation in China. For example, many Chinese families' wealth is not from salary but investment in the stock market and real estate. An unemployed local person who owns multiple properties is much richer than a person who has a decent job but has no property. Thus, Zhang argued that the new middle class is "complex and unstable social formation consisting of people with diverse occupations and social backgrounds" (2010:5).

After 2002, Jieceng (stratum) was more often adopted to refer to jieji (class) in China's official discourse. The new middle class is called xin zhongchan jieceng, which can be literally translated into "the new middle propertied strata." In doing so, the official discourse tries to avoid the highly politicized interpretation of class and the memory of brutal class struggle during the Maoist era. Jieceng is a depoliticized word only referring to socioeconomic differentiation. It avoids counterposing the poor to the rich as the working class to the capitalist (Goodman 2014; Zhang 2010). Luigi Tomba named (2015) this group of people "a new property-owning class" to emphasize their economic conditions—owning housing. Zhang also pointed out that even though the new middle class is heterogeneous, the members shared at least one commonality—homeownership, which also brings out distinctive lifestyles.

Even though many Zeze staffs did not receive high education and receive a salary similar to baoan's, they all own properties in Dadi or other gated communities. One day when a middle-aged Shanghainese homeowner behaved patronizingly and arrogantly in the Zeze office, a male staff stood up from his chair and tried to beat the homeowner. Fortunately, the other female staffs

separated them. I remember that the male staff shouted in Shanghai dialect, "You think you are really something because they own a condo in Dadi? Let me tell you, I own three condos here!"

The middle class has a longstanding and close relationship with the state since its birth in the 1980s. It has benefited from the economic reform and other state policies, such as the housing privatization; thus, it is politically-loyal to the party-state in general. Even during conflicts, the middle-class homeowners try to stand in line with those state agencies. No matter how homeowners and Zeze staffs quarrel with each other, I never saw anyone doubting the decisions of residence committees or the sub-district office, who act like a parent mediating a peaceful solution to conflicts among children.

Zeze staffs, belonging to the middle-class, often bring up the party-state when they reason with homeowners. When many homeowners criticized ACIS, manager Yin told them aloud, "Even if President Xi established a new policy, probably half of the population would support him while the other half would not. It's the same here. There is no way for us to satisfy every homeowner." In a different day, a resident refused to pay quarterly parking fee by saying, "We own this place! How can you force us to pay a parking fee to you?" Manager Zhou smiled and answered, "All of these state regulations are compulsory, what can you do? Ignore them or fight against them?"

Referring to the state was a communication skill that these staffs learned from their long-term experience of dealing with homeowners. Because they and homeowners are evenly matched in social status, they had to borrow the symbol of the state to legitimize their policies and to justify their enforcement. Vice versa, these homeowners also adopt the language of the party-state and emphasize the importance of maintaining social order when they confronted property management (Zhang 2010). Those languages were not strategic slogans. Instead, the middle-

class homeowners grew up with these languages and bought into those ideas that "were rooted in their long-lived experience" (Tomba 2015:1). Outside of the same consideration, Anquan used to let baoan wear uniforms resembling those of the police and the military, in the hope that it could add weight to their orders and make baoan more confident. However, I never caught baoan using any of such languages or trying to associate their pursuits with state policies.

A Shanghainese's Superiority Complex

Wenfeng, the team leader of the new security department of Zeze, took the middle shift from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. He liked to hang around in the baoan office every evening. Although he was over 50 years old, he kept fit and looked much younger than his age. Wenfeng enjoyed bragging his experience in front of baoan. One day when a *baoan* asked Wenfeng if his son was a baoan as well, he seemed offended by this question. "If my son dared to take a job as baoan, I would beat him to death," he said, "if not the most useless men, who else from Shanghai would be a baoan?" Wenfeng did not hide his disdain for this occupation and seemed not caring at all if his listeners would be embarrassed.

He further explained, "Many kids in Shanghai would rather be unemployed than work as a baoan. It is a shame for a young man from Shanghai to be a baoan." That is true. I personally never saw a young baoan from Shanghai.

"If they are unemployed, do they live on their parents?" One young *baoan* asked.

"No. Many parents do not have jobs, either."

"Then what do they live on?" Those nonlocal *baoan* became curious.

"You must have known what the biggest cost of living in Shanghai is. The rent! Since they are locals, they own properties. If they have more than one property, they can either live on rent

or sell the other condo for millions, which is enough for the rest of their lives," Wenfeng answered.

Those *baoan* were all silent—they knew Wenfeng had told the truth. Many of them chose to be *baoan*, mainly because the job offers free accommodation. In Dadi, the rent for a one-bedroom unit is above RMB 6,500 (about USD956). According to data from Mycos (www.mycos.com.cn/En), the average monthly salary for new college graduates in China's first-tier cities in 2016 is RMB 5,437 (about USD800). Even though these young people were mostly white-collars, they might save even less money than *baoan* did after paying the rent. For those young people from Shanghai, life would be much easier because they most likely already have places to stay. Since affordable choices for food and clothes are available in big cities, without worry about survival, young men from Shanghai can get by regardless and are reluctant to do low-status manual jobs. Their parents would feel losing face if their sons work as *baoan*, a menial job reserved for local old men and non-locals.

Before Zeze contracts with Anquan and Kexin, Wenfeng as a team leader was the second-lowest-level staff in Zeze and only those Shanghainese *baoan* were under him in rank. He has been an object of ridicule from Lao Yan and the two project directors of the security department. One day Lao Yan sneered at Wenfeng by calling him "a moron only good at kissing up to women." Wenfeng was irritated by this comment but dared not to talk back or even to object. However, when in the *baoan* office, Wenfeng acted vigorously and conceitedly, seeming like a different person. He enjoyed staying at the center of attention when all those nonlocal baoan silently smoked and listened to him preach. One day when I walked into the *baoan* office, Wenfeng was bragging about his love experience—how he maintained a long-term affair with a beautiful married woman and made her economically support him in his thirties. Some *baoan*

expressed their envies, which was exactly what Wenfeng desired. Wenfeng proposed that I interviewed him in front of other *baoan*. So I did.

Wenfeng was born to a well-educated family—both his parents are college graduates, which was rare in the 1960s in China. Because he is the youngest child in his family, his mother spoiled him very much. He had been a lousy student in his life. When he was in middle school, he sold all of his textbooks for cigarettes. He often fought and brawled on the street, and even stole steel from a construction site and sold it for money to gamble. Not surprisingly, he failed to graduate from high school. "My parents were very disappointed at me because my elder brothers and sisters are all state cadres," he said. He had done many different kinds of work. In 1989, he founded a factory producing wooden floor. He stole a truck and modified it for shipping his products. After bankruptcy, he went to the southern part of China and smuggled cigarettes across the border. He admitted that "If my family had no *guanxi*, I would have been in prison many times." His words somehow sounded very proud because his family did have *guanxi* that all of his audiences did not have. In 2002 when Wenfeng was in his late thirties and unemployed, the first phase of Dadi was just accomplished and launched on the market. One of Wenfeng's cousins asked if he would be interested in working in the management company of Dadi. Since then Wenfeng has been staff in Zeze and has held a few low-level positions.

In the pyramid (graph 1 in the first chapter) showing the organization of security service in Dadi, the seven formal workers on the top were all from Shanghai, while the 82 informal workers under them were all from other provinces. The hierarchy among people from local and nonlocal areas is self-evident. Even though a Shanghainese *baoan*'s life was full of notorious records, the social environment still trusts him better than nonlocal *baoan*. Many Shanghainese like Wenfeng has an innate sense of superiority, which is not from their positions, educational

degrees, or experiences, but from the homeownership, the hukou registration, and guanxi associated with their birthplace.

Two Different Types of Preference

The Shanghainese *baoan* team working for the two quarters were entirely replaced by migrant informal workers hired by Anquan and Kexin in 2014 and 2017 respectively. When I talked to homeowners, I found there were two distinct opinions towards this change. Mu was a new-Shanghainese (xin shanghai ren) and a software engineer. He disliked the previous *baoan* team because he believed that they were undisciplined, careless, and even arrogant. He told me, "I cannot say that those baoan we have now been excellent, but I am sure that they are much better than previous ones. You won't believe that before the baoan team was replaced, every time I passed by the gate, I could smell strong alcohol. They came to work in drunk!"

Homeowners like Mu prefer *baoan* from security companies for several reasons: First, these baoan are more docile, compliant, polite, humble, and disciplined. Their behavior is strictly constrained by conduct codes as well as reward and punishment mechanism. For example, they are not allowed to smoke while they are on duty. Second, the workloads of those Shanghainese *baoan* are very light. One homeowner complained that "they (*baoan*) came to work as if having a vacation in a resort and only took a walk occasionally."

In contrast, those migrant *baoan* have to do different kinds of chores for homeowners, making them good helpers for managing the space. Third, since those *baoan* are from a social space distinct from homeowners, they have their social circle and are not interested in poking their nose into homeowners' business or in meddling in homeowners' private affair. Their detachment might be regarded as "irresponsibility" by elderly Shanghainese homeowners but as

"professional" in the eyes of residents who value privacy and independence. Fourth, *baoan* from Anquan were relatively younger, considering that nearly all of those previously-hired *baoan* were above 50. Lastly, *baoan* speak mandarins instead of Shanghainese dialect that many nonlocal homeowners do not understand.

Despite obvious advantages, many Shanghainese homeowners, especially those elderly ones, strongly dissatisfied with the new *baoan* team and believed that Zeze hired these cheap nonlocal labors only for saving the cost. Some of them talked about the new team in a tone of contempt. "They are all nonlocals (*wai di ren*). You don't know who they are and what they did in the past. They got meager wages that can only meet their basic needs. People like them might do anything possible for the money." Their words seemed to suggest that moral traits were naturally associated with one's birthplace and social classes—a *baoan* from local communities was more likely to be kind, honest, and responsible, and trustworthy.

Except for those discriminated comments, those homeowners' preference of the former *baoan* team is explicable by their life experience. I noticed that they were above 50 years old and had lived in the Maoist era. It is evident that those Shanghainese *baoan* more resembled gatekeepers in the Maoist era—they were from the same community and spoke the same dialect as homeowners. This cultural familiarity may offer homeowners a sense of security. Also, local *baoan* usually had a similar socioeconomic background as homeowners, and they were warmhearted to homeowners whom they acquaint with. Therefore, their watch plays a similar role as "neighborhood watch." To conclude, some elderly Shanghainese homeowners trust Shanghainese *baoan* because they share culture, social relation, and economic status. In their eyes, those local *baoan* guard the community more as members of the community than as service staffs; thus, they were more trustworthy.

A homeowner in his sixties told me that he used to chat with *baoan* every evening while they smoked cigarettes together at the gate. Since they were like friends, he believed that these *baoan* would pay special attention to his property and his family's safety. His words somehow reflect a mindset of the planned economy in the Maoist era when only *guanxi* could make an exception for an individual to get quality-guaranteed goods and service. On the contrary, those younger residents prefer paid-service provided by a professional without personal emotions or *guanxi* involved, reflecting an ideology of market economy that attaches all of the service and even bodies with price tags.

The Mistrust of Nonlocal *Baoan*

One day in autumn 2017 while I was working in Zeze' office, a middle-aged woman came in. Her face showed that she was apparently upset. She wanted to speak to the manager who was out for a meeting. When I asked her what was wrong, she shouted, "my electric-bicycle was stolen, AGAIN!" Her previous electric-bicycle was stolen one year before. A staff in Zeze gave her a routine answer, "call the police." The woman had gone through all the process and knew from her previous experience that such a case would not be treated seriously. The police often recorded the report perfunctorily and passed the buck back to the management company. Many people in the same situation had given up and accepted the loss as their bad luck. However, the woman insisted on the compensation from Zeze because she suspected that the theft was an inside job done by *baoan*.

The staffs in Zeze laughed at her request and argued that her accusation was baseless. The woman said that she came across a suspicious scene at one midnight. She saw three young men lifting electric-bikes onto a truck and covering them with a piece of plywood. Another man who

happened to be in Zeze office said that his neighbor had seen a similar scene—some people were moving electric-bikes into a white van.

"You hear that? If these thieves did not collude with baoan, why would they have been so bold? Why didn't *baoan* at the gates stop those suspicious trucks?" The woman asked.

"That is absolutely impossible. If you saw these suspicious activities, why didn't you report it immediately to a baoan?" Zeze staff asked.

"I couldn't find baoan anywhere at midnight. They must have been taking naps in some warm places. Look at those men guarding the gates. Their salary was so small. How can we expect them to be responsible when they got paid so little?"

It is not rare that residents who lost their bicycles blamed *baoan* for not fulfilling their duties or even suspected that it was an inside job. In fact, since 2014 *baoan* in night-shift had caught thieves a few times either when they were stealing bicycles or when they attempted to exit the gates with stolen bicycles. In April 2018, when *baoan* Changshun was on patrol at 1 a.m., he noticed a woman and a man breaking the lock of an electric-bicycle. He immediately notified his team members, and they gave the two thieves a surprise. The man ran away, and the woman was caught. Besides, baoan at the gates in night-shift would ask suspicious people to restart their electric-bicycles, to check if they had the right keys. In most cases, thieves would leave electric-bicycles behind and run away. Some of them got caught before running far.

Nevertheless, since local *baoan* were replaced in 2014, *baoan* have become the primary suspect of thefts in the opinions of some homeowners in many cases. After some cars parking in garages were broken in, rumors were also spread among residents that a few nightshift *baoan* stole those valuables in cars. Two residents recalled that they had seen a person in *baoan*'s uniform looking inside a car window with a flashlight in wee hours. They thought it was a *baoan*

patrolling at night, so did not think twice until they heard those thefts. In order to clear their names, Delong watched surveillance videos and found that one man sneaking into garages wore a uniform similar to that of *baoan* in Dadi. "The thief is not one of us. You can find plenty of similar styles of uniforms on Taobao[15]," Delong said. However, some homeowners did not buy this version of the story.

The Reasons behind the Mistrust

Why do so many homeowners mistrust *baoan*? There is more than one factor influencing homeowners' perception towards this informal working group. First of all, some of their accusations might be true. Based on my observations, *baoan* in Dadi are very likely to be slack in duties at late night when Zeze staffs are off work, and no one supervises them. A newspaper's investigation seems to confirm such an impression. A journalist in Fuzhou, Fujian province visited 51 gated communities in 2014 during 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. when the crime rate was the highest in a day and found baoan in only seven communities awake and on duty. *Baoan* in 44 communities were either away from their posts, or sleeping in the watch box, or focusing on their smartphones (Liao 2014).

Some accusations from homeowners were not wholly baseless. Two girls reported to Zeze that they saw two baoan destroying cars' license plates, which was illegal. "That must be a rumor, right?" I asked Delong, "Why would any baoan do that?" "Well," Delong hesitated for a second and said, "Zeze asked us to do that." There were many "zombie cars" having parked in Dadi for months or even years without paying the parking fee and started to rust. Zeze was not able to make car owners move their cars. Thus, Zeze ordered Anquan's baoan to bend or break the

[15] www.taobao.com is the largest B to C shopping website in China.

plates on those cars secretly so that the tow truck could tow these cars without going through a complicated procedure. “We did this only to those zombie cars and only after midnight, like 3 a.m.,” Delong said. Baoan followed the orders from Anquan or Zeze to perform controversial or semi-legal conducts, which may eventually tarnish the reputation of *baoan* as a whole occupational group. Homeowners consequently perceive people in the baoan industry to be low-*suzhi*, irresponsible, and undependable.

Some accusations might arise from misunderstanding. One day when I was in *baoan* office, a boy about nine years old came to *baoan* office with his friend. He was polite and a little shy. He told Delong that his bike had been missing since last week, and his friend saw a *baoan* on it this morning. The other boy testified for him. “What kind of uniform does he wear?” Delong pointed to a *baoan* in the office, “Is it the same as his?” “I know it is your *baoan*,” the boy answered, “because I followed him and found he was on-duty at gate No. 3,” Delong asked the boy to leave a unit number and promised to provide more information after an investigation. A few days later, Delong told me what he had found out. The boy did not park his bike in a designated location with yellow marks on the ground. Any bikes that did not park in the garage or designated area would be assumed as unclaimed bikes and dumped into the trash bin. Some *baoan* occasionally look for things useful in the trash bin. When that *baoan* saw the nice bike, he took it. Delong accompanied the *baoan* to the boy’s home to offer an apology and to return the bike.

Set the Wolf to Guard the Sheep

When homeowners expressed their fear of nonlocal *baoan*, they revealed their anxiety in the ignorance of these *baoan*’ background and life history. Who are they? Where are they from? How can we trust these strangers to protect us? In 2018, a 55-year-old *baoan* in Xi’an fought

with a homeowner over parking fees. The police took him to the police station and took his DNA sample as a part of the routine. It turned out that this *baoan*'s DNA matched the DNA left in a murder crime scene seven years before. The police later believed that the *baoan* had murdered the landlord's 21-year-old daughter when he was a tenant of that family and when he tried to rob of money for drugs (Ning 2018).

In the summer of 1999, Liang killed his townsman on the street and fled from Jiangxi province. Nineteen years later, the police found that Liang had stolen someone else's identity card and worked as a *baoan* under a different name in a high-end community in Zhejiang province. Because of the low entry-barrier and the informality of this job, some outlaw and ex-felon do see *baoan* as a convenient job to earn a living while concealing their identities.

Much similar news proves that private security companies or management companies throughout China generally do not follow the regulation to practice background check on *baoan*. There are mainly three ways in which *baoan* found this job in Dadi: (1) network; (2) employment agencies; and (3) walk-in employment. The third way is not rare. People passed by Dadi and asked the *baoan* at the gates if they were still hiring. It was very likely that they got hired immediately after talking to the project leader and moved into the dormitory on the same day. In this case, homeowners' concern is justified—no one knows what kind of person the *baoan* is. Can homeowners rely on Bing, who stole dozens of electric-bikes in the past years, to protect their electric-bikes? If Bing had not lost his wallet, he would still work in Dadi. Even though the scandal was covered up by Anquan and Zeze, homeowners in Dadi instinctively mistrust the market-directed mechanism of selecting and training *baoan* and the authorities' ability to enforce regulations. They were worried that in the *baoan* teams might hide a few bad people, and the job of *baoan* offered them a perfect opportunity to approach victims and to

commit crimes. “Hiring people with a dubious background as *baoan* is like setting the wolf to guard the sheep,” One homeowner said to me.

In reviewing the history of security guards in Ancient China, we can find that dart masters or yamen runners had remained a cooperative and win-win relationship with the criminals. Besides, bandits were often recruited by the ancient dynasties to be soldiers, and soldiers often rebelled and became bandits. When the residents accused baoan of colluding with criminals in stealing and damaging their property, I wonder if this mistrust was also inherent in the dialectic relationship between gangs and guards.

The Role in the Liminality

Fear must point to a danger, which is always the other, the outsider, the nonmember, and the alien in a secular society no matter how topics change over time. In post-socialist China, the state’s various campaigns against the low-end population and the middle-class’s active talk of fear have portrayed the feared class, who are culturally and socioeconomically out of place, as criminally high-risk groups in urban space. The feared class may enter the walled space either as qunzu tenants or as service providers, such as food deliverymen, couriers, garbage collectors, maintenance workers, domestics, peddlers, prostitutes, and *baoan*.

Baoan is different from all the others because homeowners invite them into the gated space as a remedy for urban fear. On top of all factors I discussed above, I believe that the homeowners’ conflicting feelings—reliance, mistrust, disdain, and fear—are inherent in the contradiction between *baoan*’s socioeconomic position which constitutes a threat and their job function which should be a cure for fear. Even though *baoan* got the entrance ticket to the gated community, they are socioeconomically unqualified to come in. The farness in social position and the

closeness in spatial proximity make them a complex of contradictions. One female homeowner expressed her fear of nonlocal *baoan*, "It is disturbing to think that those *baoan* know everything about us. They know how many people are in my family, when our kid is alone at home, when I go out for work, and when we take a vacation. What if one of them is a criminal? It is scary because we know nothing about them." Her words show her feeling of vulnerability by being spatially close to nonlocal *baoan*, a group of anonymous migrant workers.

When *baoan* put on their uniforms and started their working day as a *baoan* every morning, they temporarily entered a status of liminality. Drawing on Van Gennep's the rites of passage (1909), Victor Turner further developed (1967) and elaborated (1974) on this middle-stage of a ritual, in which people had left their previous status but have not begun their transition to the new status. I believe that the concept of liminality could refer to a moment when the constant structure of identity was disrupted, and the social rules were suspended, no matter the transition is realized or not at the end. When *baoan* put on uniforms, the whole population in Dadi accept a set of temporary social order, so that *baoan* could play a role of a security officer and could impose orders among these masters of the space.

Before or after the 12-hour-long duty, these nonlocal *baoan* take off uniforms and live in another 12-hour as a part of the feared class whom the homeowners desired to exclude from the walled space. Even though their days were divided into half and half, the off-duty half was considered a constant status in contrast to the transient status when they are on duty. All homeowners participate in the moment of liminality, which is beneficial for common interests. However, households— "the residence in which people sleep, eat and relax"—is considered to be their last line of defense against the dangers and threats of the urban environment" (Middleton 1986:134). Thus, they instinctively suffered the emotions—insecurity and fear—associated with

the liminality due to the uncertainty that if *baoan* would exploit their vulnerability during the "role-play" in the liminal stage and if the social and moral order could be restored to the pre-liminal stage.

For *baoan*, their persistent otherness is defined by the socioeconomic condition in urban space. Even if their work duties and borrowed authority define their identity temporarily in their working hours, they socially, culturally, and economically do not belong to this community. Their position on the threshold or in the margin of the social space eventually makes them a "danger" to the whole system (Douglas 2001[1966]:124).

Chapter 4 The Conspicuous Consumption of *Baoan*'s Bodies

On a recruitment advertisement posted on a gate of a high-end residential community in Shanghai, the first two requirements are for age—between 18 and 38, and for height—above 170 centimeters. They are followed by all other requirements such as "veteran first"; "speaks standard mandarin"; "skilled at communication"; and "good psychological and comprehensive *suzhi*." Since the first two requirements are much stricter than those for Dadi, the pay is significantly higher—RMB 5,500 (about USD809) after tax.

Age and height have become the two most important things for a *baoan* to bargain on his wages in the industry of private security. No matter how the personnel changes in the *baoan* teams of Dadi, the two team leaders are always under 30 years old even if they do not have an assertive personality in leading a security team that consists of all middle-aged *baoan*. Why is this industry so obsessed with the young, tall, and robust bodies? This chapter firstly analyzes the desires for status symbols and cultural capital behind homeowners' eagerness to have a bigger security team and more securely-guarded gates. It then goes into detail about the conspicuous consumption of young and robust bodies in an aging society and offer a different perspective to look at the middle-class homeowners' fear.

The Pursuit of Authentic Gatedness

In the lobby of the building No. 53 where I lived, there was a Ping-Pong table and a sofa. Some residents from that building hanged out in the lobby every evening, chatting, using

smartphones, and playing Ping-Pong. Sometimes I joined them as well. Lao Liang has been living in Dadi since the completion of the building in 2003. The thing he was most unsatisfied about Zeze was its failure in the promise on security. When he first bought the condo and moved in, there was one lobby *baoan* in each building on top of those *baoan* patrolling and guarding four gates. The real-estate developer, Zeze's parent company, promised to keep this ratio of *baoan* to the buildings. However, one year later it became two buildings sharing one lobby *baoan*. "See what happens now?" Lao Liang said. Since many years ago, those lobby baoan have been gradually replaced by building managers (*lou guan*) who are mostly middle-aged Shanghainese women; one manager provides service for many buildings. Even though no property and violent crime have ever happened in this building in their memories, a few residents who were listening to our conversation also appear discontent about the absence of *baoan* in their lobby.

The Pseudo-gatedness of Dadi

An elderly couple discovered in an early morning that their electric-bicycle parked in front of their building was stolen. They came to Zeze office to complain to the property managers. Their rage intensified a negotiation into a quarrel. The female resident yelled in the office: "I feel very unsafe living in Dadi! See, everyone can enter our community freely. The walls, the gates, and the *baoan* are all like decoration! *Baoan* never perform their duty. That explains why homeowners' bicycles are stolen every day!"

"What do you expect *baoan* to do?" manager Qin asked.

"They got salaries from us and should at least guard well our gates. They must check every visitor and every car's identity and not let those strangers in."

"It is impossible," manager Qin replied with a smile, "Dadi has never been a sealed residential quarter (*feng bi xiao qu*)."

It is the first time that I was confirmed by a professional that, Dadi was not a gated community, although many people thought it was. It is safe to say that nearly all the new housing developments in Shanghai since the 1980s took the physical form of gated communities. Between 1991 and 2000, 83% of the residential communities in Shanghai were gated in a variety of ways. During a similar period, Guangdong Province gated 54, 000 communities covering more than 70% of urban and rural residential areas, and containing more than 80% of the population. The percentage must be even more significant today. It is the housing form for the majority of Chinese urban residents. Even those low-income communities have built walls and hired *baoan*. While I was a journalist in Shanghai after college, I first lived in a dilapidated community that was built in the 1950s by a work unit and was privatized in the 1980s. That community was walled and guarded by two senior *baoan* who took alternative shifts for 24 hours. Because gating is not solely for the rich in China, a large-scale survey conducted in Shanghai concluded that contradicting research findings in western societies, gatedness was not an obstacle to the creation of the sense of community in China (Yip 2012).

Gating is no longer a choice but a way of urban living for nearly everyone. However, the degrees of gating are distinct. In spite that the access of those communities is namely restricted to residents and their visitors, the rules are difficult to implement in most communities in China. Suppose *baoan* in Dadi had to stop and question every pedestrian and every car, the residents would have to wait in a long line to get home. Therefore, in Dadi and similar communities, *baoan* only occasionally stop the ones who are obviously out of place, for example, beggars, ragpickers, and peddlers.

Technologies such as the access-control system could help small-scale communities to achieve the authentic gating but are not suitable for large communities. Zeze installed one-meter-tall fence gates for sidewalks at gate No.1 in 2017. When the project was ongoing, I was very skeptical about the plan that the two fence gates would be closed at night and residents could only open them with keycards. Since lots of visitors, service providers, and business workers who do not have keycards come into and out of Dadi at night, if both gates were closed to pedestrians, it would increase the tremendous workloads of *baoan* to confirm those visitors' identities and to decide if they should be allowed in. As expected, after the project was completed it turned out that only one sidewalk was closed at night, again suggesting "pseudo-gatedness" (Yip 2012). Nevertheless, Delong believed that closing one sidewalk could at least guide the flow of population and is useful for *baoan* at the gate to observe the crowds and to stop escaping criminals if there is any.

There are fully-gated communities for the upper-class in China; however, they usually have a much lower population density and a much bigger security team. Giroir described (2006) Purple Jade villas in Beijing: in addition to technologies and guardrooms at the entrance and park area, 40 *baoan* dressed as soldiers patrolled the whole area with Alsatian dogs in day and night all year long. Except for those privileged communities, even those high-end communities such as Yuxing, where HOA fee is three times of that in Dadi, are not fully gated. Based on my observation when I lived in Yuxing, *baoan* only stopped male strangers on foot or on a bicycle—who are most likely to be food-delivery men and couriers. People in cars even if they were stopped at the gates could randomly say a unit number and get in. Strictly speaking, most residential communities in urban China merely bear physical and architectural resemblance with gated communities in Western countries. The number, the training, and the design of duties of

baoan limit the function of gates, making them exist in name only.

Enclaves of Fear

Fear is evident in the woman's disappointment when she was told that Dadi was not a gated community or in those homeowners' concern for the reduction of security hands. Since the economic reform in the 1980s, the fear has dominated the social life of the newly-emerged middle class in China. In their everyday conversation or online participation, they are active in talking about their fear of various things, for example, smog, unsafe foods, GMOs, children trafficking, and so on (He 2014). As in the western culture where "the fear of violence is one of their main justifications" for gating (Caldeira 1996), the propertied class in China defends their physical means of territorial control also in the name of fear of neighborhood crimes.

Scholars have discovered that social and economic factors, such as income polarization, economic uncertainty, dissolution of social solidarity, and the spatialization of class can all increase the sense of insecurity (Caldeira 1992; Wilson-Doenges 2000; Low 2001; Low 2003; Ellin 2003). However, there are also many scholars noticed that even if the feeling of fear is real, it is not necessarily corresponding with the distribution of danger, but more related to "perceived" risks (Glassner 1999). In fact, the higher one stays on the social ladder, the more strongly one may experience a sense of victimization (Altheide 2001; Low 2003). Thus, the people living in the most heavily guarded fortress and having most security resources are often the most fearful ones (Middleton 1986; Flusty 1994). In this light, gating and a big *baoan* team may not alleviate the homeowners' fear but instead would highlight their feeling of being victimizers.

Homeowners in Dadi are eager to have more *baoan* to fulfill the authenticity of gatedness. Their demand is also grounded in fear of crimes, which is in accord with the whole class's

obsession with fear. However, when I asked dozens of homeowners in the interviews what issues concerned them most in Dadi, they often prioritize (1) *qunzu*, (2) the depreciation of facilities, and (3) insufficient parking spaces, instead of crimes. From their answers, I found two other important reasons behind homeowners' desire for more *baoan*— they expect *baoan* to ensure their exclusive entitlement to facilities and to realize a purified and prestigious community. The two needs may be as essential as security for the prevalence of *baoan* but are usually not articulated in the rhetoric of developing private security in residential space.

Exclusive Entitlement to Club Goods

Glasze et al. (2006) argued that seeing safety concern as the primary cause of the spread of gating simplifies the problem because security is generally packaged up with other services and civic goods. A gated community is seen as a club realm of consumption between the public and private arena (Webster 2001; Webster et al. 2006), and the "small publics" are granted with exclusive entitlement to "club goods" (Buchanan 1965) for which they have paid.

During the interviews, homeowners in Dadi expressed their hope that a stricter gate could prevent free-loaders from taking advantage of resource and facilities that were located inside Dadi. When looking closer at the daily or special duties of *baoan*, it is evident that *baoan*'s duties lay particular emphasis on maintaining spatial order and ensuring homeowners' collective and exclusive entitlement to these resources. For example, *baoan* are present at the gates to guarantee the normal operation of ACIS, which was built to prevent outside cars from taking up limited parking spots; they facilitate this system through maintaining order, making exceptions, and sometimes using coercion when someone disrupts the automatic system. They also patrol in

public area to look for broken and nonfunctional amenities, to impose parking rules, and to participate in raids to keep away *qunzu* tenants who burden facilities within walls.

Homogeneity and Prestige

Since the economic reform, the Chinese society has gone through a dramatic transition, and pre-established cultural norms for evaluating and recognizing social status have been absent. As a result, "consumption becomes the main conduit to gain cultural and symbolic capital and the key for claiming and authenticating social status" (Zhang 2010: 9). Through studying different middle-class communities in Kunming, China, Zhang (2010) argued that the middle-class homeowners use the spatial exclusion, the lifestyle practice, and cultural differentiation to seek social distinction that was intentionally denied and blurred in the Maoist era (Zhang 2010). Among all consumptions representing social distinction, the middle class always pursuits homogenous and purified residential spaces, where they could exhibit lifestyle taste, remake moral order, and create cultural milieu belonging to themselves. Such a place has to stay away from "contamination" from the lower class, especially the feared class, that represents the deprived, uncivilized, and backward hinterland. In this sense, the security the middle-class expects from a gated community does not only mean personal and property safety, but also

"securing the privilege conferred by wealth, which is the sole selecting and sustaining criterion of membership of the community; securing privileged access to the resources required to maintain the lifestyle of conspicuous consumption; securing the living environment from the decay, inherent threat and hostile envy of those without and by exclusion of all undesirables; and securing all the social advantage that confers presumptive continuity of the privilege, ease and comfort within the confines of the gated community" (Sardar 2010:9-10).

In a densely-populated metropolis, such aspiration can only be realized by a small handful of privileged communities. The highly-secured gates and a big *baoan* team, which are necessary conditions for homogeneity and purity, eventually became symbols of prestige that the middle class aspires to. Caldeira pointed out that the symbolic elaboration of gating has transformed "enclosure, isolation, restriction, and surveillance into status symbols" (2002:239). It became self-evident in China that the more highly secured of the space, the more prestigious of the property and the wealthier of the homeowners, and vice versa.

Fear of crimes is oft-professed to be the impetus for the appeal for more security hands and more secured gates. Homeowners' needs for exclusive entitlement to "club goods" and for a homogeneous and prestigious living space are rarely communicated in their everyday conversation or media representation but are equally important. After all, all of these needs are fundamental for the middle class' ultimate goals—retaining the value of assets and making a class.

The Conspicuous Consumption of *Baoan*'s Service

Thorstein Veblen introduced at the beginning of the 20th century the concept of "conspicuous consumption"—the leisure class consumed to display their power, wealth, and status (Veblen 1967[1899]). After more than a century, conspicuous consumption exists beyond the class of elites and western culture but as a universal phenomenon throughout the world. The range of subjects that are being conspicuously consumed is even more extensive, from goods to services to lifestyle. Carolan pointed out (2005) a new phenomenon that people displayed control of their own bodies instead of material resources as a conspicuous way to gain distinctive prestige from

others. What has not changed is that the privileged class is always pursing a social distinction through consuming or owning something that the rest society was not able to obtain.

Baoan's service does not only have a practical function in facilitating homeowners' needs as I discussed above but has also become a product of conspicuous consumption. As Veblen argued, because the nouveau riche leisure class had so much "social duties" and the conspicuous consumption of leisure and living had grown "so elaborate and cumbrous" that they had to hire persons to aid. The middle-class homeowners' desires for security, for exclusive entitlement to resources within walls, and a homogeneous and purified space have made the job of *baoan* indispensable in China's dwelling culture.

Baoan is the occupation that aids in community chores on top of providing security in everyday life. The community chores include guarding the gates, expelling scavengers, maintaining order, regulating parking, and reporting facilities damages, and so on. In the era without *baoan*, these chores are usually performed by the residents themselves. Since the private security service has become a necessity for nearly all communities in urban China and no longer a distinction, homeowners look for other more outstanding services to disassociate themselves from the lower class or even the rest segment of the middle class.

In Yuxing, after passing the gates of the community, a visitor wanting to enter a building had to buzz the video doorbell connected to a screen in the condo. Homeowners can confirm the identity of the visitor through videos, and remotely open the gate and activate the elevator which could only stop on the designated floor containing only one household. Despite the cutting-edge intelligence system, there are still sitting in each lobby one person who has a fancy title "butler" and namely takes cares of chores in the lobby for 36 households. The title "butler" (*guan jia*) reminds the Chinese people the traditional lifestyles of British nobility in a mansion, which is

exactly the cultural capital that the new rich in China crave for. Having a butler in each building was a selling point that the developer of Yuxing boasted to distinguish the property from average communities on the market. Lao Liang and his neighbors wished that Dadi could follow the example of high-end communities to have one building manager in each building so that Dadi could cast off the reputation of "urban slum," which is obviously untrue.

Veblen argued (1967[1899]) the essence of conspicuous consumption lies in the element of wasting time and resources. Based on my observation, these butlers are generally bored, and their main work is to keep under their desks delivery packages that could not fit into the automatic-password mailbox for each household. Because they do not have much work to do, the property company reduced the number to make two buildings share one butler. However, this reduction of hands incurred Yuxing homeowners' complaint, just as the removal of lobby *baoan* did in Dadi.

Bodies for Conspicuous Consumption

The homeowners do desire not only more *baoan*, but also more young and strong ones. In the *baoan* industry, age is always the most critical quality for bargaining on salary. The height and physique are the second most important. All of the three are always explicitly listed on recruitment advertisements. Delong attributed his fast promotion to his physique—188 centimeters tall and over 100 kilograms—far above the average of Chinese men. When Delong was recruiting new *baoan* on a job interview, what he concerned most was also the age and the physique of the job seeker. The other conditions such as work experience, educational background, character, mentality, or criminal records are less concerned or even overlooked in the recruitment process. To explain why the age and physique precede other requirements,

Delong said, “if they look good, I mean tall, handsome, and young, the homeowners would be happy, and the property managers would be happy too.”

(In this recruitment ad, it says: (1) you should be a man; (2) your age should be between 20-40 and your height is above 165 centimeters; (3) you should be healthy, have a middle-school degree, and no criminal records; (4) veterans or previous experience first.)

The Aging of the Chinese Society

The obsession with young *baoan* should be examined in the context of the aging of the Chinese society. The senior population have been growing as a proportion of the whole population in China. At the end of 2017, the percentage of people aged 65 years old and over was 11.4%, compared with 4.9% at the end of 1982. In 2013 the “selective two-child policy” (*dan du liang hai*) was enacted, representing the termination of the notorious one-child policy that had been existing since 1985. The “selective two-child policy” allows one couple to give

birth to two children as long as one parent is a single child. However, the birthrate in the following years by no means met the expectation. Thus, the Chinese state has allowed all Chinese couples to give birth to two children since the first day of 2016.

At the same time, the population aged 15-64 accounted for 71.8% of the total population at the end of 2017, dropped from 74.5% at the end of 2010 (China Statistical Yearbook 2018). In 2011, the working-age population (between 16-60 years old) reached a peak of 941 million or 69.8 percent of the population in China's history. After the first decrease of 3.45 million in 2012, the working-age population continuously decreased and saw its most significant decline in modern China's history in 2015, having fallen by a record of 4.87 million (Zheng 2016). According to the prediction, after 2023 the working-age population will decrease eight million every year on average. Meanwhile, the floating population also took a twist in 2014. When it continuously grew from 2000 and reached a peak of 253 million in 2014, it has decreased year by year since then (China Statistical Yearbook 2018).

The aging of the population will shrink the labor pool, undermine innovation, burden the social security system, depress consumer market, and limit economic development. Thus, many cities have taken part in the competition for people since 2017. The aging of the population in China has deteriorated age discrimination and has dramatically raised the cost to hire young people in a variety of industries, from manufacturing factories to service sectors. The *baoan* industry that relies on abundant cheap labor in China is also confronted with the shortage in labor supply, especially the young ones.

The Shortage in Young People

According to media reports, due to low pay, low social status, and lack of prospects, the national turnover rate for the job of *baoan* is over 80% (Worker's Daily 2015). My observation

in Dadi is consistent with the data. *Baoan* come and go all the time, and in most cases, they leave voluntarily. Where did they go? Some of them went back to hometown for a variety of reasons; some moved from one private security company to another, and some of them take up a different occupation. No matter how frequent the team members change, the majority of them were always above 45 years old. These middle-aged and senior men who do not have skills see *baoan* as an ideal job for their later years, while these young men often take *baoan* as a transitional job.

The occupation of *baoan* is often a makeshift for young *baoan*, who just arrived in Shanghai, knew nobody, and had no place to live. Once they get familiar with the geographical and social environment and save up some money, they would leave for better opportunities. Many of them end up becoming food-delivery men and couriers. The boom of online-order delivery in 2016 has drawn tens of thousands of young labors into this new industry. Meituan, a high-tech company focusing on food-delivery expands extremely fast and needs "riders" (*qi shou*) to deliver millions of online-orders every day. The entry-barrier for riders is as low as for *baoan*. A person only needs to obtain a smartphone and a motorcycle or an electric-bicycle before they can start to work. Since a rider's income is made of base salary and commission, the more orders one delivers, the higher commission he/she gets. Some smart and diligent riders can earn over RMB10,000 each month. Thus, many young people would rather dash in the streets and lanes than stand at the gates, making it more and more difficult for private security companies to recruit young people.

Three Standards

When I was in Dadi in 2017, the then project leader told me that this project recruited *baoan* under 45. However, when I asked again in 2018, Delong said to me that their requirement was

relaxed to under 50. Those managers of Zeze was upset about the increase of the average age of the *baoan* team and always pushed Delong to replace them with younger ones. Under pressure, Delong had to replace some old *baoan* with younger ones in March 2018, even though he knew that those young *baoan* would not stay long. Like his predecessor, Delong intentionally arranged old *baoan* to take the nightshift in the hope that the dim light at night could conceal these *baoan*'s senescence from the managers of Zeze and homeowners in Dadi.

"If Zeze would like to pay more, we could definitely recruit younger and stronger men, as we do in some high-end communities," Li Jian once told me. Not until that day I learned from him that Anquan provided three different standards of service based on the price that party A pays. The interesting part is that the so-called standards are all about age. *Baoan* of standard A are under 35 years old; *Baoan* of Standard B are between 35 and 45 years old, and *baoan* of standard C are 45 years old and above. "Since Zeze pays the fee for standard C, we can only afford *baoan* from 45 to 50 years old," Li Jian said.

Not every *baoan* in Dadi falls in the age category of standard C. Usually there were three to four *baoan* were under 30 years old while about six or more *baoan* were above 50 years old. The youngest *baoan* I met in Dadi was a 19-year-old boy, tall and slim, looked like a teenager. The oldest *baoan* whom I had interviewed in Dadi was 54 years old. Delong told me that he would keep Lao Wang for another couple of years because he looked much younger than his age. Of course, when property managers asked for the rectification of the age composition of the team, they did not mind those *baoan* younger than the standards but only wanted to remove those old ones.

Private security companies attempted to cheat in the age of *baoan* through different tricks. One common and tactic practice is that when they first take over the project, they provide all

young *baoan* and then secretly replace them with older *baoan* one by one. It is usually hard for property managers or homeowners to detect the change until one day they noticed that all those strange faces in the team look much older than before. When I first moved into Yuxing and when the developer was still selling some new construction condos inside the community, those handsome young *baoan* at the gates impressed potential homebuyers. However, half a year after all the condos had been sold, all those young *baoan* were gone. Homeowners in Yuxing also noticed this change. One woman grumbled in the WeChat group that those veterans when the property was first on the market had been replaced by "a flock of old guys."

To Stay or To Leave

Some young men stay in the private security industry in the hope that the job would be a path leading to upward mobility. For example, the 24-year-old *baoan* Qiangqiang left Shanghai in spring 2018 after spending two years in Dadi. Even though his middle-class family disapproved him to be a *baoan*, he eventually came back to the team after Delong promised him the position of team leader and depicted to him a bright future of this career. Li Jian believed that the *baoan* position in Anquan offered all young *baoan* excellent promotion prospects as long as they embrace the enterprise culture of Anquan. From 2016 to 2017, the number of projects that Anquan was in charge of increased from over 400 to 775, creating 300 openings for project leaders, 600 openings for team leaders, and many for quality-control managers and so on. Li Jian was confident in the opportunities that Anquan could offer because he was merely a *baoan* five years ago. However, the upward path is only open to young people. Both Delong and Li Jian joined Anquan at a very young age and now are in their late twenties. Following the same rule, Delong always selected the young men under 30 to be team leaders, no matter if they were

qualified in other aspects. For example, Qingqiang has been the team leader of the day shift team since May 2018. However, the lack of confidence and communication skills made it tough for him to direct the *baoan* team made of all older men from different provinces.

In spite of without promotion prospects, those overage migrant *baoan* want to stay in this industry because they are very likely not able to find other jobs offering comparable wages in cities. They sometimes move from one private security company to another only for immediate reasons such as a bit higher wage, more friendly co-workers, lighter workload, and better-tempered team leaders and so on.

The Symbol of Wealth and Status

Placing disproportional emphasis on the age and physique to some extent suggests that the bodies instead of the service have become the commodity. Someone may argue that the young bodies exhibit a better capacity for stopping crimes and for protecting homeowners. It is true. However, as I pointed out in the *Introduction* and previous chapters, the environment is generally safe, and the everyday jobs do not include any dangerous tasks. Therefore, those elderly, frail, or even disabled men are competent for this position. Also, *baoan* has by no means obligation in interfering the crimes or other dangerous situations when their own safeties are in risk. Still, someone may argue that, even if those situations were rare, a young and robust *baoan* could at least better provide homeowners a sense of security than those old *baoan* could. This argument may be confronted by the question: Are not the experience of handling emergencies, the sense of responsibility, and the communication skills equally crucial for providing such sense of security?

I propose that *baoan*'s bodies instead of their service have become commodities of the fear economy. A friend told me that one could tell whether a residential community is a high-class

one or not by looking at its *baoan*. If they are young and tall, especially look like veterans, the property management office must have paid a higher wage to hire them, which suggests that the homeowners' association fee is not cheap. For an old and cheap community, the homeowners' association fee could be as low as RMB10 per unit per month, and consequently, it can only afford a couple of physically-week senior *baoan* who can merely sit in the watch box and keep an eye on the gate. Standing at the gates of residential communities, *baoan* are the persons whom homeowners and visitors first see when they come to the gate of the community. Thus, *baoan*'s appearance and manner are often believed to represent the quality and taste of the community. A handsome *baoan* team may increase the value of the property. Vice versa, the "wrong" image of the *baoan* team, might affect the price of housing in this community. Since housing is the most substantial investment for most Shanghai families, homeowners do not want to see the value of their properties depreciated for any reason.

Young and Robust Bodies for Conspicuous Consumption

In June 2018, Anquan decided to promote one *baoan* to be a project leader for another new project. The announcement was circulated among WeChat groups of Anquan's different projects. The *baoan* in Dadi also read it. Even though there are merely two requirements—younger than 30 years old and taller than 175 centimeters—none of those team members in Dadi qualify.

Why are these young and robust bodies extremely preferred in the *baoan* industry? One important reason was that they are rare. Most informally-employed *baoan* are from peasants' or lower-working-class families in less developed areas. The lack of food and nutrition in their childhood had probably led to their small and weak physiques. While the young bodies are rare in an aging society, the tall and strong bodies, which suggested more resources and investment

from the family, are even scarce among the feared class that *baoan* usually belong to. Against this background, the upper-and middle-classes homeowners' enthusiasm for young and robust *baoan* is precisely like their cravings for luxury goods, exceptional food, exotic culture, or prestigious service.

The extraordinary obsession with the age, height, and physique of a *baoan* demonstrate that their desire has shifted from consuming service to consuming bodies, which is rarer and more precious in current society. When the security technologies, service levels, and architectural skills are all advancing, the upper-and the middle-classes homeowners are no longer content with displaying tall walls, sophisticated lifestyle, and honored service, which is more and more available for average communities. They started to crave for those young, tall, and robust bodies, which could be conspicuously displayed at the gates and are becoming rarer among the migrant informal workers, namely, the feared class, in an aging society.

The homeowners are obsessed with young and tall bodies not only for believing that vigorous security personnel are physically capable of protecting them. More importantly, they believed that a group of robust but docile bodies could be better than a grand clubhouse or a well-maintained lawn in demonstrating the affluence and prestige of people living inside the community and in dignifying their social status.

Masculinity and Docile Bodies

While the labor cost increase year by year in China and the HOA fee in Dadi remained the same, Zeze cut the number of *baoan* who always stayed in the lobby of the building, namely, lobby *baoan*. Eventually, all lobby *baoan* were substituted by building managers (*lou guan*), each of whom provides service to many buildings at the same time. Lobby *baoan* and building

managers did much the same works—keeping an eye on the people in and out and forward homeowners' requests for fixing facilities to the maintenance team. Why does Zeze also change the title of this position? Because building managers are mostly women above 50 and only work in the daytime, making them do not fit the typical profile of *baoan* in China. Those uneducated and unskilled middle-aged women who are between 50 to 60 are at the bottom of the job market and have the highest rate of unemployment. Of course, they are also the "cheapest" workers in the market. Many homeowners are discontent with this change because the redundancy and low status of this gendered labor group deprive of the conspicuous meaning of this position.

There are female *baoan* in residential and business space of urban China; however, the absolute number and the proportion are both negligible. How does the predominance of men in the industry of private security impact the masculinity of *baoan*? We should examine this question against the background of a patriarchal society of China, in which males hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property. Although education and employment have greatly empowered Chinese women in cities, men still have the superior power in families and working places, especially in those less-developed areas. It is generally believed and explicitly expressed in Chinese culture that dignity, honor, and face are more important for men than for women. Typically, men's dignity is tightly associated with social status, power, and wealth. For example, it is common in China that men exhibit their male superiority through providing bride price, housing, and cars when they marry women. If they failed to do that, they and their families would lose face in society.

Those *baoan* around 45 or older in Dadi are mostly from rural areas, where the tradition and patriarchy are still dominating in social relations. As a male head of the family, they inherently

have higher status and enjoy respect and reverence from other family members. However, when they look for jobs in the service sector in cities, they are less-advantageous compared to young females. From hair salons to massage centers, to restaurants and nightclubs, or factories requiring dexterous hands (Pun 2005), these industries all prefer young women to men.

Baoan is one of the few jobs in the service sector that predominantly requires males to apply. Different from the posts on construction sites or in factories, *baoan* is the job that requires frequent interaction with people—mostly local people. When I asked *baoan* what part of this job they disliked most, most them mentioned the difficulty in reasoning with dictatorial homeowners or enforcing orders with homeowners who are also clients. "There is no dangerous criminal, but only dangerous homeowners," they bitterly joked after Jianhong was injured by the young man whose car was stopped at the gate.

As nonlocal informal workers, these *baoan* locate not only at the bottom of the social ladder in urban space, but also at the bottom of the power structure within a gated community. Any residents and anyone in Zeze office or grassroots state agencies could boss them around. During the process of interaction with homeowners, some homeowners show little respect and friendliness to them, according to my observation. If there were conflicts between their duties and the homeowner's interests, they could also suffer the language of discrimination and insults. The *hukou* system and the chasm of wealth, status, and power between them and the urbanites enhanced their sense of inferiority. The contrast between the superior status in hometowns and the inferior status in cities stripped them of dignity that is indispensable to male's masculinity in Chinese culture. On the other hand, the domination over those masculine bodies better exhibits the middle-class homeowners' power, which is also bound up with fortune and status.

Disciplining Unruly Bodies

People's Daily, the Chinese communist party's official newspaper, has listed eight traits that an "ideal" *baoan* should have on its website: www.people.com.cn. An ideal baoan (1) should have knowledge and skills of fire-fighting, theft-stopping, and catching and grappling, so as to provide the community with security; (2) should get familiar with landscape and homeowners of the community, and keep vigilant watch over strangers in and out; (3) should be responsible for and dedicated to his duties and should not chat or idle while on duty; (4) should be human and volunteer to help homeowners at his best, such as helping the elderly to carry heavy stuff; (5) should respond to homeowners' needs and emergencies promptly and solve problems in a timely and careful manner; (6) should strictly follow the rules to regulate vehicle-parking, ensuring that the roads in community is unblocked; (7) should treat homeowners respectfully, politely, and civilly, and should not talk dirty words; (8) should wear uniform and have solider-like demeanor and a tidy appearance (Liberation Daily 2001).

From what was stated above, we can see that the ideal of *baoan*'s body and the role is expected to be externally intimidating, masculine and robust, while inherently obedient, feminine and disciplined. However, these two distinct traits are rarely possessed by one *baoan*, especially in informal employment. Eventually, there are two types of *baoan* staying in this industry. The first type is local *baoan* who still exist in some old and relatively-cheap communities. They are most from local neighborhoods and are over 50 or even 60. To compensate for their disadvantage in age and physique as well as in the lack of training and discipline, they often voluntarily show humanistic faces—considerate, cooperative and caring—to homeowners.

Baoan in the second type are nonlocal informal workers such as all of the *baoan* from Anquan. The property management and the private security company set requirements for their

age, height, and physique during recruitment. Although no one dislikes strong *baoan*, some homeowners feel that undisciplined muscular bodies would instead increase their sense of insecurity of living among nonlocal *baoan*. The feared class may generally include female informal workers; however, young males are believed to have the higher possibility in participating in political riots and violent crimes and the local urbanites are on guard against them. Thus, the industry of private security applies strict control on these males' everyday practice and even after-work lives to ensure their compliance and allegiance. To win trust, these cultural and socioeconomic "others" have to work hard to exhibit the robot-like traits: disciplined, professional, and obedient.

Foucault has proposed (1977) that the body is invested with relations of power and domination. Different from those Shanghainese *baoan*, the nonlocal *baoan* belonging to the feared class are the targets of structural and everyday power. The regime of private security and disciplinary techniques transform these rural and unruly male bodies into docile and disciplined laborer that could be utilized as a remedy for urban fear. In this process, not only their bodies, but also their behaviors, minds, habits, and attitudes, and beliefs are being disciplined, dominated, and transformed, so as to build a sense of security for the propertied class inside walls and for the authorities.

Those disciplinary techniques include codes of conduct outlining all different rules for *baoan*'s behavior, manner, and language, making them receptive to further domination. As we discussed in the third chapter, *baoan* in Dadi have to sign a contract containing multiple agreements. One agreement instructs that no smoke, phone, chat, or nap is allowed during work and no dangerous tools, alcohol, or fight is allowed both during work and in the dormitory. The

violation of rules would result in fine or firing. These rules are much sterner than the ones imposed on local *baoan*, in order to create the docility and utility out of those migrant bodies.

Veblen pointed that, those service staffs whose time and energy are employed by the leisure class had to follow "all these observances," as well as to pay attention to "irksome but altogether unavoidable" conspicuous consumption. Those nonlocal *baoan* working in communities, especially in those high-end ones, are following dress codes and are trained with courtesy and protocols. For example, they must greet the visitors and residents with a respectful salute and "Hello" (*nin hao*). All these techniques target producing the externally masculine and inherently docile bodies, which are representing homeowners' conflicting feelings: reliance and mistrust.

Fear—a Moral Value for Conspicuous Consumption

Conspicuous consumption is regarded as immoral in many societies. It is widely believed that, a person's obsession with conspicuous consumption arises from his/her negative personality traits such as wastefulness, pompousness, superficialness, vanity, and superiority, while the popularity of conspicuous consumption in a society is rooted in the dissolution of social solidarity and the deepening of socioeconomic inequality. This belief has led to a curiosity: If conspicuous consumption is morally objectionable, then why does this behavior still gain popularity throughout the world?

Some scholars argued that some moral values can paradoxically increase conspicuous consumption. When the moral value regarding the group's welfare, for example, authority, loyalty, and purity, is given to the behavior of conspicuous consumption, then this behavior can be morally permissible or even preferable (Goenka and Thomas 2019). Drawing on this theory, I become able to connect the talk of fear in middle-class homeowners' everyday conversation with

their enthusiasm in the conspicuous consumption of *baoan*'s service and bodies.

Blakely and Snyder argued that no matter the threat to residents in gated communities "is actual or perceived, these residents' "fear itself is very real" (1997:101). However, the definition of "real" is also disputable. Fear is usually seen as a vulnerable, impotent, and passive emotion that people desire to avoid. The fearful ones are usually innocent and harmless, compared to the feared ones. Fear could strengthen internal solidarity among the vulnerable. Scruton see fear as a cultural mode that has the social function of leading to "the confirmation of and adherence to compelling values and norms" (Furedi 2005:137). Ulrich Beck argued that "in an age where trust and faith in God, class, nation and progress have largely disappeared, humanity's common fear has proved the last ambivalent resource for making new bonds" (Beck 2002:46). Following Beck, Giddens argued that fear could be offered as the "negative moral foundation for community renewal" (Furedi 2005:137). As we discussed in previous chapter, the new middle class is internally heterogeneous, and the fear is one of the few things that the members can share with each other. Fear became a form of cultural capital that they obtain for acceptance, allegiance, and belonging within their groups.

When fear is given the meanings of internal solidarity, innocence, and vulnerability, it totally changes the light in which the world perceives and evaluates the middle class's consumption of *baoan*'s service and body. The job of *baoan* namely serve the function of alleviating the fear of homeowners and protecting potential victims from danger, mainly the feared class. In playing the role of the fearing and the vulnerable, the middle-class homeowners in China justify their consumption of *baoan*'s service and camouflage their desire for young and robust bodies, making the consumption of young *baoan*'s service morally permissible and even desirable. In

this sense, fear became a moral value that could increase conspicuous consumption and facilitate homeowners to achieve their ultimate goals—retaining the value of assets and making a class.

Even though fear is believed to be beneficial for internal solidarity within a particular group, it more often clearly demarcates boundaries (Middleton 1986:134) through stigmatizing and criminalizing certain socioeconomic groups and has destructive consequences on social relations. Some scholars have proposed that fear was beyond a personal internal feeling and could also be an entitlement. Based on the analysis of *Candy Man*, Breifel and Ngai pointed out (1996) that in horror movies, the fearful ones are often middle-class homeowners, who usually own a house or a vacation cabin and are engaged in routines such as moving to a new home or going on a vacation. Thus, they argued that fear and proprietary rights are inalienable, conferring dignity and legitimacy to the people who own both. Drawing on Breifel and Ngai's work, Humphrey argued that fear is a property that is automatically entitled to "homeowners and possessors of bourgeois values" (2013:288).

The role of fear and victim are informed by perceived membership. Members, that is the upper-and middle-classes homeowners in this case, use certain language such as "it is so horrible" to circulate and reproduce fear, and to socialize. Popular culture uses the stories of victims to bring forth "tears, joy, and vicarious emotional experience" among members (Altheide 2002:181). At the same time, those who live in higher risk of danger and crimes, e.g. the feared class, are deprived of access to the victim club, and their fear is overlooked and even denied in mass media and popular culture. In fathoming the actual power dynamics between the feared and the fearful, we can better understand that the conspicuous consumption of young, tall, and strong bodies of *baoan* is not based on the fear of crimes but based on their deep insecurity about their fragile economic status and social standings in a fast-changing society.

Chapter 5: *Qunzu*—The Battle Over Space and Fear

The first *baoan* in Dadi I got familiar with is Hangjing, a 26-year-old man from Anhui province. He was the then team leader of the dayshift team in the east quarter of Dadi and accompanied me to the scenes of raids against *qunzu* for the first a few times. While most *baoan* in Dadi did not receive education beyond junior high school, Hangjing had a diploma from a middle-high school. Hangjing was smart and ambitious. He had not planned to be a *baoan* when he first came to Shanghai in 2015. Instead, he had intended to work with two townsmen to do little business (*xiao sheng yi*). Three of them stocked lots of popular toys from Yiwu, Zhejiang province and sold them on the busy streets of Shanghai while living together in a *qunzu* unit. When the weather was warm and dry, they could earn over RMB 500 per day. However, those *chengguan* (public security officers) soon noticed their activities and confiscated their goods three times within one month, forcing them to give up their little business.

When Hangjing's friends continued to try their luck in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Hangjing stayed and became a *baoan* in Dadi. Because he was below 30, reached 170 centimeters tall, and had a middle high-school diploma, he was soon promoted to the dayshift team leader. However, he had never been satisfied with his life. "I feel that I am wasting my time in doing all these trivial and meaningless things day after day. Look at those old *baoan*. I would eventually be one of them if I do not leave," he said. Not long after this conversation, he quitted his job and went back to his hometown. He got married there with his girlfriend.

Hangjing could not find a job in the hometown that paid him as much as the position of *baoan* in Shanghai did. A few months after the wedding he left for Shanghai with his bride, looking for other sources of income. One day I passed by a high-end gated community and saw on the wall a poster for recruiting *baoan*. The monthly salary it offered was RMB 5,000 (about USD729), which was RMB 1,800 higher than what *baoan* got in Dadi at that time. I took a photo of the poster with my phone and sent it to Hangjing who was still in job-seeking. Hangjing soon replied, "Thank you. It looks good, but I am not interested in being a *baoan* anymore." It sounded that he resolved to stay away from this industry. Five months later another *baoan* working in Dadi came across Hangjing on the subway. To my surprise, Hangjing told him that he had ended up being a *baoan* again in another gated community.

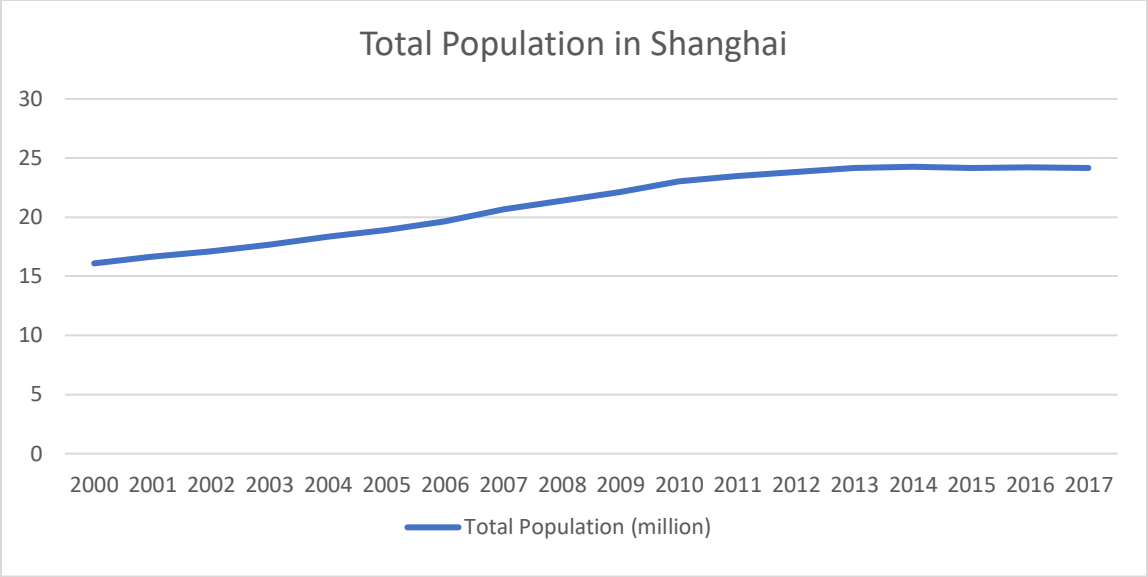
Hangjing's life trajectory was influenced by spatial production directed by the fear of the state and middle-class homeowners. This chapter gives a detailed account of the campaign against *qunzu,* in which *baoan* played an indispensable role, and discussed the relationships between *baoan* and different actors in the raids. It explores the reasons why the state and the homeowners wanted to eliminate *qunzu* and discusses how these spatial strategies might influence the life courses of Hangjing and other feared population.

Two Spatial Strategies

When the aging of the population happens nationwide, China is no longer a beneficiary of the demographic dividend. Against this background, nearly every second- and third-tier cities city in China has developed policies aimed at attracting young people to stay. For example, the public security bureau of Xi'an announced in March 2018 that any college students could register their *hukou* in Xi'an and the procedure is so convenient that they only need to present their identity

cards and student identity cards. The city of Wuhan has promised new college graduates a series of attractive policies including a 20%-off the market price of housing. In April 2019, the central government issued *2019 Plan for Developing New Type of Towns* (《2019 年新型城镇化建设重点任务》), representing its intention to encourage rural to urban migration. Under the plan, cities with permanent residents' population under three million should remove all limits on *hukou* and cities with populations between three and five million should entirely relax *hukou* restrictions on new migrants. Even though the proportion of the elderly in Shanghai has risen to 31.6%, Shanghai, the metropolis with a population of over 24 million, along with other first-tier cities continue limiting the population size. I understand it as national coordination—the state intends to move the laborer from rural lands and megacities to small-and middle-sized towns.

The Shanghai government has formulated *the Shanghai Master Plan 2016-2040* as a blueprint and a guiding principle for future development. The Plan announces that in order to alleviate the tension between the population growth and natural resources, the Shanghai authority will control the population below 25 million in 2020 and 2040. Since the population of Shanghai in 2016 is 24.2 million, the goal suggests that the population could increase only 800 thousand in the next twenty years. According to the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of PRC and Shanghai Bureau of Statistics, the preliminary results had been achieved—the population number decreased 70,000 from 2014 to 2017. Although the number is small compared with the large population, the chart below shows that the decrease in 2015 indicates the turnabout of population growth in Shanghai's history.



Since January 1st, 2018, the Shanghai government has introduced the merit-based *hukou* registration system—the resident card credit system. The system most welcomes domestic migrants who have a strong educational background, and advanced English and computational levels, who work for the public sector, who have started up their own companies, and who own properties in Shanghai. In contrast, the feared population are least favorable by the system and are the targets of the cutdown on domestic immigrants.

There are many ways to selectively control the population size in first-tier cities. A fire broke out in an apartment building of Beijing in 2017 and killed 19 people. In taking it as a pretext, the Beijing authority initiated a city-wide campaign to check and remove "security hazards." The police force raided rental apartments at midnight, cut off water and electricity, threw out luggage, and kicked the tenants out. Since most of these affected tenants are migrant workers, the campaign was believed to target the "low-end population" (*di duan ren kou*) who were also regarded as politically-unstable factors in many incidents.

Different from what happened in "Beijing Fire," the Shanghai government did not expel the unwanted population via coercion. Instead, it employs spatial strategies to achieve its goals—

explicit goals of limiting population size and maintaining public security as well as implicit goals of ensuring social order and political stability. Two specific tactics are targeting the floating population: first, taking away their living space through demolishing illegal construction (*weijian*) and through forbidding *qunzu*; second, taking away their livelihood by clearing away street vendors and food booths. The two practices reveal the spatial aspect of the social struggle between the feared class and the fearing state and citizens.

The Ban on Street Vendors

Along with the rapid increase of housing price, the rent of commercial space has also risen steeply since the housing privatization. Chen Liang, a *baoan* in Dadi, had been a successful Peking-duck chef owning three delis in Shanghai before 2003. He recalled that the monthly rent for a small shopfront on a busy street of Shanghai was about RMB 3,000 in 2003; however, the monthly rent for the same shopfront could have reached RMB 30,000 in 2017. The urban poor and migrants, who could not afford the rent but wanted to take advantage of the massive flow of population, manage to sell products or provide service to passersby on the curbside. One could find on streets a big variety of foods; one could also buy toys, hats, clothes, seasonal fruits, and roasted sweet potatoes or find a cobbler to mend shoes, a barber to give a haircut, or a handyman to fix bicycles before the ban. These carts and booths provide great convenience to citizens but are also accused of obstructing the traffic and spoiling the cityscape in the official account.

For migrants who do not have capital, relationships, and educational degrees, to do little business in the densely-populated urban space was one of the few choices they had to make a living in cities. Even though "self-employment in businesses that are not registered with the state" (Swider 2015:5) is also a type of informal works, it was more promising for social mobility than

being employed in the informal economy. Not a few *baoan* told me during the interviews that they had planned to do little business on streets when they first came to Shanghai.

Drawing on Lefebvre's insights that view space as a means of production and domination, Zhang argued that local power dynamics and migrants' negotiation with the state get articulated "through the temporal contestation of space" (2001:8). Zhang discussed (2001) how these petty entrepreneurs appropriate physical space in their everyday struggle for social power and turned part of the urban space into their own places. Based on established past practice, they claimed the right to the public space and the right to a livelihood. However, such appropriation of public space is not tolerated by the state and local authorities. The authorities of many big cities have imitated campaigns to clear away street vendors and food booths, shattering the dreams of many migrants like Hangjing.

In addition to ensuring the smooth flow of traffic and the environmental sanitation, there are many other reasons behind the prohibition but are not articulated in the propaganda. First, street vendors usually evade taxes and do not buy themselves social insurances, which means that they could not contribute to the local economy in the ways that are expected by local authorities. Second, because street vendors are usually not registered with the system and move frequently, they could avoid any contact with state agencies. Consequently, it is challenging to surveil their activities and track their identities. In case of any quality problem, it is also hard to find the person to take accountability. The ban on street vendors is consistent with the state's goal of driving out the feared population of urban space if the surveillance on them could not be absolutely guaranteed.

The strict control of space in Shanghai has effectively repressed migrants' "contestation of space" (Zhang 2001). *Chengguan* is the main character that performed the duty of expelling

street vendors. They "are not police yet are charged with policing urban space and enforcing local regulations" (Swider 2014:702). Their main tasks are to remove illegal construction and to expel street vendors. The general practice of this position is to use coercion to confiscate goods, detained carts, and impose fines on street vendors. Not willing to stomach the loss, some street vendors engage in violence to obstruct law enforcement. Such violent confrontations have brought several deaths to both parties according to media reports. The people who lost the source of livelihood but still want to stay in Shanghai have to look for employment opportunities in the manufacturing industry, construction sites, or service sectors, where only low-income informal works available for them.

The Living Space of the Feared Class

In the 1970s, the PRC had approximately 80 percent of its population living as peasants on the land, but by 2013 roughly half the total population lived in towns and cities across the country. Where do the migrants live in cities? In the early 1990s when almost all urban dwellings being state-allocated and enterprise-owned, 40% of these newcomers "live in residents' homes" including "renting space in peasants' huts along the outskirts of the city"; 20% are "in collective unit shelters" such as factory dormitories; 20% are in private inns and underground hotels; the remaining 20% are in "various other places" including train stations and under bridge. These informal ways of living prevented these migrants from leading "a regular city life" (Solinger 1999: 133-134). Migrant workers and urban underclass had also aggregated in urban villages (*cheng zhong cun*), most of which had been pulled down to give ways to glamourous residential, commercial, and leisure spaces in recent two decades. For example, Dadi was built on the former biggest shanty town in downtown Shanghai.

The Ban on Weijian (Illegal Constructions)

According to data in 2012, over 40% of migrant workers believed that the rent had reached or beyond the limit of their bearing capacity (Shan 2012:6). Because the rent increased disproportionately fast to wages, more and more employers in the informal economy started to provide dormitories for their employees, so that they were able to hire enough hands while keeping the wages low. After 2010, the choices about where to stay for the feared class in Shanghai became fewer. They mostly stay in three types of places: (1) dormitories provided by employers including those simple work sheds on construction sites, (2) illegal constructions in lane-housing and *shikumen*, and (3) *qunzu* units in gated communities.

Since many of them work in the service sector as couriers, waiters/waitresses, garbage collectors, maintenance workers, food deliverymen, domestics, and nannies and so on, their first concern when looking for dwelling place is to stay close to the workplaces and clients. Hence, some homeowners of *lane-housing* and *shikumen*, which are dilapidated but located in downtown, built extra rooms attached to the main structure and rented them to low-income migrants who are concerned more about price and proximity than living condition. These privately-built constructions are called "*weijian*," meaning that they are unauthorized and illegal. They are not only for low-income migrants to live; many urban poor and migrants also do little business in these constructions, for example, selling breakfast to the neighborhood. Most of these constructions have also been torn down by *chengguan* in the recent decade.

The demolition of unauthorized constructions and urban villages leave these migrants with *qunzu* as one of the few affordable choices of living in cities. However, the middle-class homeowners and the state agencies have worked together in eradicating *qunzu* as well. When all

options of affordable living were eliminated, the feared population can only leave the city or look for jobs providing dormitories.

Many people believed that these two spatial strategies that aimed at controlling population size in Shanghai fitted into the state's big picture of guiding the population from the first-tier cities to the third- and fourth-tiers cities. The sublessor (*er fang dong*) Big Zhu agreed with this. He managed around 200 *qunzu* units in different communities of Shanghai and saw many young people moving to suburbs or completely leaving Shanghai in recent a couple of years. He believed that the decrease of residents in Dadi not only because of the campaign against *qunzu* but also because the general environment is not hospitable to domestic migrants except for social elites. "The central government will not allow Shanghai and Beijing to soar aloft alone while smaller cities remain underdeveloped," he said, "by adopting all these measures, Shanghai can keep elites and force out the low-end population. Those young laborers will either move to smaller cities for jobs and go back to hometowns, which is good news for the depressed housing market in those less-densely populated cities."

Zhang has pointed out that, "one of the obvious differences between being a floater and being a permanent urban resident is in the degree to which the state intervenes in one's private space and activities in the public space" (2001:37). In forbidding the feared class to occupy the public space as vendors and to live in affordable private space as tenants, the state and local authorities intentionally raised the cost of living in cities for the feared class and force them to leave when they lost sources of income. These spatial tactics could mediate internal migration, eliminate politically-unstable factors, and prevent potential riot resulting from the competition for limited resources in big cities. In various fear-orientated campaigns, Hangjing lost his dwelling place, livelihood, and aspiration, and eventually became a *baoan* in Dadi.

The Campaign against *Qunzu*

I started to search for a room in Dadi immediately after I came back to the field in the autumn of 2017. During the searching time, I stayed with my relatives in a gated community Yuxing located in another district of Shanghai. I commuted to Dadi by taking subways across the city, which took me almost three hours every day on the way. I first went to a few realtors' offices. These realtors showed me nice pictures of Dadi's condos on their computers. However, the cheapest one-bedroom condo on the market at that time was RMB 6,800 (around USD 1,000), which was far beyond my budget. Those realtors suggested me to find a roommate to live in the living room and share the rent, which I was not able to. When I walked towards the gates of Dadi, I always saw on the curbside dozens of little paper boards, on which were handwritten sentences such as "bedrooms from 1,200 to 2,600, call the number xxxx". I knew at that moment that the only choice I have was to *qunzu*.

Since at that time I have already attended a few raids against *qunzu*, I got familiar with those sublessors (*er fang dong*) who was forced by the resident committees to follow the team. *Er fang dong* could be literally translated into "the secondary landlord." They rent properties from landlords at a lower price and re-rent them to tenants to earn the price difference. Some *er fang dong* have hundreds of properties in hands and make millions of Chinese yen per year. The sublessors in Dadi were mainly from other provinces and worked in kinship or townsmen groups. I exchanged contact information with some of them after the raids. When I told them that I was looking for a *qunzu* room, they were amused since they saw me as a representative from Zeze to supervise the raids. They did not take my request seriously until I convinced them that I was not an *undercover* staff trying to test if they were hiding more *qunzu* units in Dadi.

In the following two days, three sublessors, one middle-aged woman and two men, took me around Dadi and showed me available rooms by letting me sit on the backseats of their electronic-bicycles. I decided to rent a master bedroom for RMB 3,600 per month from the sublessor Mr. Xiao, who was in his early twenties and from Jiangxi provinces. The room had its own bathroom, air-conditioning, a desk, and a closet; however, it was located in a *qunzu* unit. The living room had been partitioned into two bedrooms; therefore, there was no living room but a corridor in the middle of the unit. One good thing about *qunzu* was that I did not have to worry about finding roommates by myself because the other three rooms had already been occupied by strangers, who would share the kitchen with me.

The Evolution of Qunzu

I had been living and working in Shanghai from 2004 to 2009. According to my observation as a resident in that period, *qunzu* had emerged and grown as a companion to the rapid increase of rents and housing price in Shanghai since the beginning of the 21st century. Before 2010 most *Qunzu* units did not have partitions. Landlords or sublessors put lots of bunkbeds in bedrooms and living rooms for tenants to sleep on, charging RMB 600 to 800 for each bed per month. In a downtown gated community, some two-bedroom units could accommodate more than twenty people who did not know each other.

After 2010 it has become a standard practice that sublessors partition a *qunzu* unit into many tiny rooms and rent each room to an individual or a couple. These rooms are so tiny that the Shanghainese citizens called them *pigeon cages* jokingly. The price of *qunzu* rooms varies with the conditions, meeting different people's needs. Some of them in very crowded units might charge RMB 1,200 (about USD176) per month, while some in good condition charged as high as

RMB 4,000 (about USD588) per room per month.

(The subesslor says, “I guarantee that everyone has his/her own bedroom”)

Since 2015 the Shanghai government has formulated N+1 policy (N means the number of bedrooms) to define *qunzu*. According to the policy, a licit unit (1) can have at most one extra bedroom in addition to original bedrooms, and the extra bedroom can only locate in a living room that is larger than 12 square meters; (2) no one is allowed to live in the space reserved for kitchen or bathroom on the floorplan; and (3) the average area for each person has to be more than five square meters. Any forms of renting that violate either of the above policies are considered as *qunzu*. Upon the requests from homeowners, state agencies including offices of the Bureau of Housing, sub-district offices, and local public security stations raided *qunzu* units from time to time in different gated communities. They usually put the address of the *qunzu* unit on a waiting list after receiving complaints from homeowners. The waiting could be a few months long. Once the raiding team left, the sublessor would very likely restore everything. The homeowners had to wait another couple of months for their units being rechecked. Such inconsistent raids could not effectively suppress the profitable industry of *qunzu*, which emerged

out of the enormous demand for affordable renting.

Qunzu in Dadi

Dadi is believed to be one of two gated communities that have the highest rate of *qunzu* units in Shanghai. When Dadi was completed at the beginning of the 2000s, a significant portion of its units was sold to the wealthy investors from Wenzhou, Zhejiang province and other nearby cities. Most of these investors have never lived in Dadi and have rented their properties to sublessors. Homeowners blame *qunzu* for crimes, pollution, noise, vandalism, and fire hazards, and so on. Therefore, there were always many conflicts between sublessors and homeowners who live in Dadi.

Local media reported one violent incident in 2013 (Shi 2013). While condemning Zeze for not effectively suppressing *qunzu*, the homeowners in many buildings have used the maintenance funds to apply technologies to control *qunzu*. One of the most effective technologies is to install the access-control systems on the gates to the lobby and the elevators and limited the number of keycards that each unit can apply. Since the staircases in these buildings were all locked to prevent people from entering corridors from staircases, the residents without keycards to elevators could not go back to their rooms. In order to prevent people from sharing keycards, some retired homeowners voluntarily formed a security team to supervise the process all the time. The same day they noticed that two women entered the lobby through sharing one keycard, hence stopped them from going inside. The two women were *qunzu* tenants. They called the sublessor from whom they rented the room. Soon five sublessors arrived. They beat up these senior homeowners and broke furniture in the lobby until the police arrived and arrested them.

After the incident, the property management cooperated with state agencies and intensified the raids against *qunzu* for a period in 2013 as they did before. However, at that time those Shanghainese *baoan* were not obligated to participate in raids. The lack of hands confined the frequency and intensity of these raids. *Qunzu* had never been eradicated in Dadi. Instead, it had reached a peak by 2016—nearly half of all units in the east quarter of Dadi were *qunzu*-ed. Dong, the vice president of Zeze, estimated that there had been probably over 70,000 people living behind the gates before the campaign, which means that seven people living in one unit on average. Some residents and *baoan* described to me what it had been alike before 2017 to walk in Dadi in the mornings—people were packed like sardines in every elevator, and they had to jostle each other in a crowd when exiting the gates of the community.

Under the pressure from homeowners who lived in Dadi, the sub-district office, the four resident committees, and the management company Zeze had started a new campaign in the summer of 2016. This campaign, which lasted one year, was the most serious and most intensive one in Dadi's history. The team carried out raids every morning from 8:00 a.m. to noon and from Monday to Thursday. Every time after a *qunzu* unit was raided, the team would follow up and recheck it in a few weeks to make sure that the sublessor did not restore partitions.

When I started my fieldwork in Dadi, the campaign was still ongoing. The property managers announced that the campaign would not end until every *qunzu* unit was rectified. After a few months, I perceived that the number of residents in Dadi had become smaller. At the same time, the absolute number of property crimes and accidents has decreased as well. However, we cannot conclude that the decrease in property crime is only because of the campaign. At the same time, Zeze offices also take many other security measures such as installing gates to bicycle garages and security cameras in all garages.

The Order: Baoan and Authorities

Because the raids in Dadi had become a routine during the year of the campaign, neither the personnel in the police force nor the *chengguan* department was able to sustain the intensity and frequency of raids without receiving any rewards or compensation. However, the new *baoan* team in Dadi could. Those *baoan* are employees of Anquan, a privately-owned company, and combating *qunzu* was not supposed to be Anquan's business. However, since the order was from the subdistrict office, a state agency, via Zeze office, the patron, Anquan could not disobey. *Baoan* follow the order from Anquan to perform those controversial practices—tearing down illegal partitions and doors, removing electricity and Internet wires, and destroying furniture. [16] Their presence on the scene is also a symbol of violence backed up by the authority, which could effectively deter any sublessors or *qunzu* tenants from obstructing the process. It is safe to say that without the new *baoan* team that consists of all informal workers, the campaign could by no means have been successfully and efficiently carried out in Dadi.

Typically, a raid was led by the party branch secretary (*shu ji*) of one of the resident committees. He carried a notebook having a list of *qunzu* units. Nearly all of these units were turned in by homeowners, who noticed an unusual number of people taking elevators and tracked which units those people were from. When the team came to a unit, the sublessor who controlled the unit would take out the key to open the door. They had no choice because the door would be forced open by a locksmith otherwise. After having a quick tour in the unit, the party branch secretary would decide which parts should be torn down. The worst *qunzu* I have seen was a 110-square-meter three-bedroom unit that was partitioned by plywood into twelves bedrooms,

[16] In China, it is usually the landlord or sublessor to provide all the furniture including the mattress.

most of which are so tiny that could only fit one twin bed. Some rooms accommodated two people. The tenants had to access their rooms through a narrow and dark corridor. A few rooms in the middle did not have windows. A man with glasses lived in the small kitchen, and his bed was next to the gas pipe. The only remaining bathroom in the unit was filthy.

Since the sublessors were very likely to restore partitions that were pulled down by *baoan*, the secretary asked *baoan* to destroy these articles and materials used for partition. *Baoan* moved bedroom-doors out of the units and smashed them with a hammer. Sometimes the secretary asked the sublessor to destroy these articles with their own hands as a promise that they would never restore it. Of course, sublessors hated the campaign that took away their source of income. They complained to me in private that they had suffered a significant loss, considering the fee they had paid for remodeling, furniture, and advertisement, and at least one-year contract they had signed with landlords. However, they had to be cooperative in the raids, which are endorsed by the state and local authority. They were willing to come to the raids also because they wanted to keep themselves informed about which *qunzu* units had been discovered and how badly the team damaged the interior.

In a typical morning, the team could raid as many as 30 units scattered in different buildings. In the first day when I participated in the raid, I was wearing a pair of low-heel slippers. Hangjing, who was asked by manager Yin to take me to the team, looked at my shoes and said, "You'd better join us tomorrow when you wear a pair of more comfortable shoes." I assured him that this pair of shoes would not be a problem because I wore them walking for one hour every day from and to the subway stations. However, I was wrong. Since the area of Dadi is vast, it is always a long walk from one building to another. In order to save time, the team walked quickly

and sometimes climbed stairs instead of waiting for an elevator. After four hours' walking and standing, my feet were badly blistered.

Everyone in the team was exhausted after a long morning. The party branch secretary once grumbled at those sublessors, "I know you guys hated this campaign. I hated it too! I had lost my weight. If you guys had not restored everything repeatedly, we would have already ended it." However, I never heard complaints from *baoan* who in fact provided all physical labor in the raids. The other people in the team—a woman from the sub-district office always wearing a mouth mask to avoid the bad air in the *qunzu* units, the secretary and another middle-aged man from the resident committee, and I, from the Zeze office—were all there to supervise the work of *baoan*. When the busy morning ended, *baoan* went back to their everyday duty without taking a break. No matter how tired they were, they had to stick to the toilsome routine every day because they could not afford to lose income for the day that they took off.

At the beginning of the campaign, in order to rope these *baoan* in, the staffs in sub-district office orally promised to pay each *baoan* RMB50 per day for their additional work in the raids. Those *baoan* were excited and wished that they could take more shifts in the raids. However, when the campaign prolonged day after day and when raids became a routine job for the *baoan* team, no one from the sub-district office or Zeze mentioned the rewards again. More than one year after the campaign ended, the sub-district office has not yet fulfilled its promise. Many *baoan* like Hangjing had left Dadi without receiving the reward.

Inside the Room: Baoan and Qunzu Tenants

I had participated in raids as a representative from Zeze office. At the same time, I also experienced the feeling of being raided as a *qunzu* tenant. One morning around 8 a.m. when I

was still in bed, I was woken up by loud bangs outside the unit door. I got up, opened my bedroom door, and saw the two girls living in another bedroom came out as well. They looked terrified and asked me, "What's wrong?"

The campaign had ended three months before that morning. Mr. Dong announced that the number of *qunzu* units in Dadi had decreased by 70%-80% after one year's campaign. "It is a significant achievement; However, it is a long war," Dong said. Even though the team had been dissolved, Zeze still sent *baoan* to raid *qunzu* units upon the requests from homeowners. The unit where I live luckily got away from the campaign but was no longer lucky this time.

The door was opened, and a dozen people squeezed into the corridor. Two female Zeze staffs and five *baoan* were followed by a few onlookers including homeowners of other units and two sublessors of this unit. Because I was working in the east quarter office of Zeze, the two female staffs from the west quarter office did not know me. I did not plan to let them know my association with Zeze either. A female staff peeked inside my bedroom while I was standing at the gate in pajama. "How much is the rent?" She asked. "RMB 3,600," I answered. "That's not cheap," She muttered.

Since the living room was partition into two bedrooms, violating the policy, they decided to remove the one that had no tenants inside at that moment. Following the order, *baoan* started to dismantle the "wall". In 15 minutes, the corridor became messy with broken materials piled on the floor. The interior of the tiny bedroom, including the tenant's underwear hanging on the window, was exposed to the crowd. An elderly female homeowner, probably the informer, seemed not satisfied with the result. She pointed at the other room where the two girls live, "the noise was also from this room." "No. no. We cannot tear down that one," the Zeze staff explained to her, "the Shanghai policy allows every unit to have one extra bedroom in the living

room." After the crowd left, two sublessors who were business partners of Mr. Xiao immediately came back and started to repair the wall and door. To my surprise, only in half an hour, everything had been put back. The girl who lived in this room came back two days later and did not even notice that the raid had ever happened.

The *baoan* and Zeze staffs were relatively polite in this raid undoubtedly because this *qunzu* unit was in a much better condition than some of the others. They knew that the rent for the rooms in this unit was not cheap. Consequently, the tenants might not belong to the feared class. One day the raiding team rechecked a unit, which had been raided two months before. The sublessor only kept one extra bedroom in the living room and rented four remodeled bedrooms to four young girls at a higher price. In one bedroom lived a black woman in her twenties. In order to meet her needs for a private bathroom, the sublessor changed the balcony outside of her bedroom into a bathroom with glass walls. The party branch secretary requested the foreigner to stop using the bathroom because the water was leaking to the downstairs unit. In finding that she could not understand mandarin, he wanted me to translate his words. In the whole process, he was in a respectful and polite manner.

In most cases, *baoan* rudely knocked on the bedroom door and started to dismantle the wall of the bedroom without any explanation to tenants. In a hot and sultry morning of summer, the team raided a *qunzu* unit without air-conditioning. Two young men who shared a bedroom were lying on their own beds only in underpants when *baoan* opened the door. The secretary did not talk to them but ordered *baoan* to cut their mattresses. After hearing this order, the two young men immediately jumped out of beds and put on their trousers. One *baoan* took out his phone to take photos as a record of their successful job. Both topless young men stood in the room and watched the process indifferently. When I looked through the spaces between doors and frames, I

also saw people, including young women, half naked, lying on their beds, either sleeping or using their phones. They neither looked curious about the chaos and noises in the corridor, nor tried to protest, to complain, or to ask a question. Why were *qunzu* tenants so numb in a raid that violated their rights to privacy and dignity? The answer may lie in the urban culture of dwelling.

The Stigmatization of Qunzu

Qunzu has been forbidden and stigmatized in Dadi; therefore, when a female front-desk staff of Zeze asked me where I was living, I spontaneously lied that I was still commuting between Dadi and Yuxing. After the lie, I realized that this form of renting had brought me a sense of inferiority among Shanghainese co-workers. This awkward feeling enabled me to sympathize with the seemingly indifference and numbness of those *qunzu* tenants.

Even though these *qunzu* tenants had different social backgrounds and vocations, the urban culture has represented *qunzu* units as fearsome criminal dens and portrayed *qunzu* tenants as an inferior group of low-income, poor education, and a high proportion of outlaws. The campaign against *qunzu* was also propagandized and carried out in this way. In front of the main gate of Dadi, there was a striking red banner saying, "Completely eliminate security hazards; Absolutely forbid illegal *qunzu* units." The slogan tried to associate security hazards with *qunzu*. When I discussed *the qunzu* concern with those homeowners in the building where I live, the homeowner Lao Liang said, "Among these *qunzu* tenants may hide many outlaws such as thieves, robbers, rapists, and murders. You will never know who the person is living next door." Of course, he did not know that I was also living in a *qunzu* unit in his building. Some *baoan* had the same opinion about *qunzu* tenants. The *baoan* Meng Qi told me that police had arrested three thieves who were

living together in a *qunzu* unit. Although one swallow does not make a summer, *qunzu*, as a way of living, gradually became a label to identify, categorize, and deprecate people.

In addition to crimes, the homeowners also believed that those suicides in Dadi were mostly young *qunzu* tenants, who were economically and emotionally vulnerable by being far from their families. However, during the year I was in Dadi, two suicides were both committed by local senior residents. Because sublessors usually pull lots of electrical wires in one *qunzu* unit, fire hazards also became a big concern to homeowners.

A *qunzu* tenant had to be very cautious when living in Dadi. The first rule they learned from sublessors was that they should not answer the door except for someone they knew, to prevent some meddling homeowners from peeking into the unit. That explains why the raiding team had to use the locksmith to enter the unit even though there were tenants at home. Second, if any facilities were broken, tenants should not call the maintenance team of Zeze for help. Sublessors would either fix these facilities by themselves or hire a handyman to do it. Third, these tenants should avoid seeking help from *baoan* or the police, which may put the unit in risk of exposure to the authority.

A young man Lee befriended with another man Yun who lived in a *qunzu* unit of Dadi. They came back together to Yun's room at one night. After Yun revealed his homosexuality and attempted to approach Lee sexually, Lee hastily exited the room. Not until he arrived at the gate of Dadi, Lee discovered that his iPhone was still in Yun's room. He tried to walk back to retrieve it but soon found that he had forgotten on which floor was Yun's room. Lee called the police while seeking help from *baoan*, who watched the video from the camera in the elevator and located the floor. After helping Lee to get back his iPhone, the police ordered Yun to move from the unit the next day. Yun argued that he had not stolen or done anything illegal. The police

officer answered, "*qunzu* is illegal." Later the two *baoan* suspected that the police officers had just used *qunzu* as an excuse to expel people whom they disliked.

Living every day among homeowners who loathed *qunzu* and acting like underground guerillas make *qunzu* tenants feel like inferior citizens in urban space. They gradually become getting used to the campaign after going through so many ill-mannered and arbitrary raids. Moreover, immersed in a culture that depicts *qunzu* as a threat to happiness and security of the middle-class homeowners, even these tenants themselves started to believe that their existence "polluted" a community. They felt that they were not welcomed and not legible to stay in this territory although they paid rents. Consequently, they often showed timid and guilty when they confronted homeowners and when they were mistreated in the raids.

Who Are Qunzu Tenants?

Qunzu tenants were from different provinces and even different countries. Since the monthly rent ranges from a little over RMB 1,000 to RMB 4,000 in Dadi, the tenants also range across the socioeconomic spectrum. Some of them might be informal workers or jobless migrants who shared one pigeon cage with strangers and split the rent of RMB 1,200; some of them have decent jobs and live in fully-furnished bedrooms having *en suite* bathrooms. Their education level and social backgrounds also vary. I had encountered *baoan*, HR assistants, cam-girls, domestic workers, airline representatives, and bank tellers living in *qunzu* units. The only few similarities that most of them share are: nonlocal and nonelderly.

I talked to Mr. Ling who had lived in a *qunzu* unit for a couple of years after he came to Shanghai as a new graduate in 2005. Currently, he is a senior executive of a bank and owns two condos in Shanghai. "From my experience, most *qunzu* tenants are young entry-level white-

collars (*xiao bai ling*) who cannot afford down payments to buy condos, nor want to spend more than half of their salaries on rents," he told me, "Actually, those farmer workers did not *qunzu*. They used to live in urban villages or rural-urban fringe zone. After such places were torn down, most of them now live in the dormitory provided by their employers."

His words match the information I gathered from observation and interviews. In these better conditioned *qunzu* units, tenants are mostly single and young white-collars. Many of them are college graduates from middle-class families of other provinces. Take the *qunzu* unit where I lived as an example. The tenant who lived in the room that had once been torn down was a 23-year-old girl from Jiangxi province. She just graduated from college and was going to attend graduate school in the UK. "I am staying in Shanghai for a language program. I don't have income and don't want to spend too much of my parents' money on the rent," she said. The two girls sharing another extra bedroom were both senior college students and were interning in the same company. Since each of them got paid RMB 3,500 (about 515USD) per month, they had to share a *qunzu* room for a total rent of RMB 2,000 (about USD294) per month. The young man living in the other original bedroom was an accountant, and his monthly salary was RMB 8,000 (about USD1176) before tax. The rent he paid was RMB2,600 (about USD382). He told me that because of unaffordable housing price; he would eventually leave Shanghai for a more comfortable life in a smaller city. Suppose *qunzu* had been completely eradicated, the sublessor of this unit would increase the rent of three bedrooms by RMB700 (about USD103) each to make up the loss from giving up the fourth one. These young people at the early stage of their career might have to leave Shanghai because they did not have an alternative to *qunzu* for affordable living in the metropolis.

On the other hand, the feared population living in *qunzu* units are not as many as some

homeowners surmised. When I was doing fieldwork in Shanghai, I had asked waitresses in restaurants, therapists in Spa places, and hairdressers in hair salons, and other staffs in the service sector the same question: where do you live? Nearly all of them live in dormitories as *baoan* do. It proves that providing free accommodation has become a common practice for employers in the informal economy. Vice versa, whether offering dormitories or not has also become a top concern when the feared class look for jobs. To conclude, along with the continuing increase of rent in Shanghai, the living conditions of the unpropertied have deteriorated—informal workers are gradually moving out of the *qunzu* units into free dormitories, while those entry-level white collars are moving from regular rental units into *qunzu* units.

Baoan Who Lived in Qunzu Units

Baoan play an indispensable role in expelling *qunzu* in Dadi. Ironically, several *baoan* who participated in raids also rented *qunzu* rooms in order to live with their spouses. Zhang Wei, 48, from a village of Jilin Province, had been working in Dadi for two years. His wife was a cleaner who also worked for Zeze. Although her salary was only RMB 2,550 (about USD375), she worked from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. every day and had time to do cleanings for homeowners in the afternoons and evenings. In order to live with his wife, Wei did not stay in the dormitory but rented a room in the west quarter of Dadi. When I asked him if that was a *qunzu* unit, he avoided my eye contact and faltered, "I don't think so." After hearing my story of living in a *qunzu* unit, he embarrassedly smiled but did not comment. Later on, a coworker of Wei told me that the couple lived in a very crowded *qunzu* room that charged RMB1,500 (about USD221) per month.

These *baoan* had participated in raids and were aware of how residents and Zeze staffs detested and looked down upon *qunzu* tenants. They were even worried that if Zeze found out

that they *qunzu*-ed, they might not be allowed to work here anymore. After I shared my story, *baoan* Liu Cheng admitted to me that he lived in a *qunzu* room with his wife who was a waitress working for a nearby big restaurant. Their 9-year-old son was on summer vacation and living with them amid the campaign. Liu was in a worry that he might undertake a task to raid his unit, which would scare and embarrass the boy. Fortunately, that unit had never been on the list.

On the other hand, the *baoan*'s dormitory located inside Dadi is much more crowded than any *qunzu* unit. There are two big rooms, each having more than 20 bunk-beds. When I visited it in one afternoon, one room was locked, and every one of the nightshifts was sleeping behind the door. Many *baoan* in nightshift complained to me that it was hard to fall asleep in the daytime due to the influence of circadian clocks, noises from roommates, and brightness behind the curtain. Moreover, 40 *baoan* share one kitchen and one bathroom, making the sanitation worse in shared space. Nevertheless, many *baoan* told me that they took this job because they could immediately move into free dormitory, which they were in dire need of when they just arrived in Shanghai. One *baoan* said in a proud tone, "I can save more money than a college graduate. Yes, they may earn RMB 6,000 (about USD882), but they have to pay at least RMB 3,000 (about USD441) for the rent; I received RMB 4,200 (about USD618) and no need to pay any rent."

Selective Application of Regulations

Upon receiving complaints from homeowners, the raiding team once opened the door of a unit and saw an unusual scene. Inside the un-partitioned two-bedroom unit, there were more than ten beddings. Except for three beds, most people made their beddings on the concrete floor. There was no other furniture, not even a table or a chair. Two beddings were even laid on the open balcony, making me wonder what if it rained. The secretary of the resident committee

talked to a senior woman in the unit and found that all these tenants were dustmen/dustwomen working for the company with which Zeze contracted. They claimed that they were all relatives and townsmen. In other words, the family company rented this unfinished unit and made it into a dormitory. Since those people were working for Zeze, the secretary wanted me to seek Manager Yin's advice on how to deal with this unit.

Manager Yin seemed embarrassed for a moment after I told her the condition of the unit. Later she told me in her office that the raiding team should leave the dormitory alone because it did not violate the policy. She said, as long as there was no unauthorized partition and every person's space was larger than five square meters on average, the unit should not be considered *qunzu*. She would warn these tenants to keep the unit quiet and clean, and not to get too much attention from neighbors.

Manager Yin must have intentionally or unintentionally forgot the regulation about *qunzu* enacted one year before the N+1 policy. The regulation of 2014 stipulated that (1) the landlord or sublessor can only rent a bedroom instead of a bed to a tenant; (2) each room can at most accommodate two people except that the extra people are lawful caregivers. In a typical dormitory, the employer rent a two- or three-bedroom unit in a gated community, put four to six bunk-beds in each bedroom, and let its staffs of the same gender live in the same room. The regulation of 2014 explicitly illegalized this form of dormitory and the previous form of *qunzu* inside a community.

The sublessors have exploited the loophole of the policy and developed the new form of *qunzu*. Also, because white-collar tenants living among strangers require at least some privacy and safety, the sublessors use partitions to separate each bed, so that every tenant had his/her own room. Aiming at the new form of *qunzu* that soon spread across gated communities, the

Shanghai and Beijing government enacted N+1 policy in 2015 to illegalize partitions. If we combined the regulations in 2014 and 2015, neither *qunzu* nor dormitory is licit. Due to the obvious resemblance between dormitories and *qunzu* units, homeowners saw them as the same thing and complained to Zeze about both. However, state agencies and property management that carry out regulations solely adopted the N+1 policy, because they "always follow the latest regulation of the state," as one property manager argued.

The motivation behind Zeze managers' selective implementation is explicable. If they exactly followed the 2014 regulation that allowed only two people in one bedroom, these dustmen had to rent more units to live, which would significantly increase their living cost and make them unable to survive with a low income received from Zeze. If their lives were not sustainable and had to leave Dadi, where could these property managers find another team of cheap labor to maintain the public sanitation of Dadi? Therefore, the property managers interpreted the policy in a way favorable to them and turned a blind eye to the dormitories.

Even though the selective application of regulation is common in gated communities, there is no official clarification vetoing such behavior. The sub-district office staffs and the party-secretaries of the resident committees also supported selective application and tolerated dormitories. Why does the authority eagerly forbid *qunzu* while leaving one side of the net open to dormitories? Speaking of living conditions, the conditions of many dormitories are worse than most *qunzu* units; Speaking of residents' socioeconomic status, the residents in dormitories almost all belong to the feared class. I propose that the sophisticated implementation of policy intentionally target a group that is believed to be economically and politically unstable, and that is too fluid and anonymous to be surveilled and controlled.

Employees living in dormitories are bound up with various working and social relations. Take

baoan as an example; the authority can easily track a *baoan*'s activities and whereabouts through the employer and his co-workers. In contrast, those sublessors usually do not verify tenants' identities when they sign contracts. Mr. Xiao asked for my ID card number when signing the contract but did not ask for seeing the ID card. Even if I have given him the wrong number, he would not know. Some *qunzu* tenants move frequently and do not know each other in the same unit. Thus, a *qunzu* tenant who was unemployed interacts with none of the *hukou* system, the employer, co-workers, roommates, and grassroots state agencies. They are almost anonymous in the eyes of the authority. Consequently, it is hard for the authority to monitor their activities and political allegiance. Out of these considerations, the local authority is more eager to forbid *qunzu* than dormitories.

After illegalizing *qunzu* and *weijian*, two inexpensive ways of renting, the feared class would have to leave urban space as soon as possible when they were unemployed. The target of the ban on *qunzu* overlaps with the target of the ban on street vendors, demonstrating the same concern behind these spatial strategies.

The Fear of the Middle-class Homeowners

Qunzu has become the biggest headache of fearful homeowners in Dadi. Even though many measures—e.g., the access control system on elevators—were taken in the name of security, no one denied that the main goal was to force *qunzu* tenants out of the building. These homeowners always blame *qunzu* for crimes and express their concern for living among these dangerous people. On top of crimes, homeowners also believed that the large population of *qunzu* tenants should be responsible for facilities' damage and depreciation, vandalism, and poor sanitation in

public areas because *qunzu* tenants were people of low-*suzhi* and would not care about communal facilities.

When the conversation went more in-depth, I found out that the thing most bother homeowners were not the crime that might be committed by *qunzu* tenants, but the depreciation of home values caused by *qunzu*. Because of *qunzu* tenants' low socioeconomic status and distinct lifestyles, homeowners saw them as a threat to purity and homogeneity, which are indispensable for maintaining the prestige of a gated community. As some homeowners said, the reputation for disorder and insecurity has caused the housing price in Dadi increased slower than all surrounding communities in recent 15 years, which suggested that purchasing property in Dadi had been an unwise choice in terms of investment. Since housing is the single most significant investment for most middle-class families in China, these families cannot stomach any risks in housing investment.

Qunzu was detrimental to homeowners' economic interests. However, during everyday conversations, the homeowners have never brought up the low socioeconomic status of *qunzu* tenants and rarely connected *qunzu* with their concern of housing price. Instead, they talked about how dangerous and low-*suzhi qunzu* tenants are. *Suzhi* is embodied in almost all everyday practices. The discourse of *renkou suzhi* (population quality) "may have first appeared in the 1980s in state documents investigating rural poverty that attributed China's failure to modernize to the 'low quality' (*suzhi di*) of its population, especially in rural areas" (Anagnost 2004:190). It is a part of "cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1984) indispensable for an individual's social mobility and national development. *Suzhi* also has the power to articulate the boundaries of China's newly differentiating social strata and "to derogate migrant bodies" who represent the backward masses of China's hinterlands (Anagnost 2004:195). The middle-class homeowners employ the language

of *suzhi* as rhetoric to practice residential separation (Tomba 2015) and to pursue a space of homogeneity.

Why would Lao Liang and other homeowners rather tell a story of fear of crimes than their genuine insecurity about their economic status? The propertied class, who are automatically entitled to fear and given the membership of victim, has the right to define the otherness of non-propertied groups (Humphrey 2013). As Caldeira argued, people use the talk of crime to reorder the world to their end by "elaborating prejudices and creating categories that naturalize some groups as dangerous" (2000:2). Labeling someone as the feared has been the most potent weapon to disempower that person, compared with accusing her/him a risk in a financial sense.

The logic is straightforward. When one accuses *qunzu* tenants as a pollution to one's socioeconomic status or a threat to one's economic interest, one puts *qunzu* tenants in a disadvantageous position, in which people are usually treated with sympathy and benevolence. In contrast, claiming oneself as the fearing and *qunzu* tenants as the feared, one grants oneself a vulnerable position deserving compassion and kindness. In this sense, being afraid became paradoxical empowerment (Humphrey 2013:286) for the homeowners in Dadi. Expressing the fear of crimes could help them to gain a hearing (Furedi 2005), to share an explanation of the "misfortune" (Altheide 2002), and to enhance internal solidarity (Beck 2005). In telling a story of fear of crimes, they could achieve their goal for wealth accumulation without giving up the membership of the victim club and the moral high ground they are taking.

Chapter 6: We Are Not Heroes!

In a morning at the end of November 2016, a young man in black appeared in Dadi. He just arrived in Shanghai by train from Beijing and was looking for his ex-girlfriend who broke up with him a few months before and who rented a unit in Dadi. He wandered about in Dadi for a couple of hours while anxiously talking on the phone. Liu Jun, the *baoan* who patrolled in that zone noticed the man. Since there were all kinds of strange people living in Dadi, Liu Jun did not pay much attention to him. Around noon a young woman walked out of the lobby of building No.39 with a man. At that moment, the young man in black walked directly towards them and took out a knife from his pocket. The couple screamed and ran toward a little grocery store. However, it was too late. The girl was injured, and the man, possibly the girl's new lover, was slain by the young man in black.

Liu Jun was the first *baoan* who arrived at the scene, followed by several others. He encountered the killer who was trying to open the rolling door of the grocery store where his ex-girlfriend was hiding. The other man was lying on the ground, covered in blood. Liu Jun was startled by the scene and did not know what to do. The only thing he remembered was calling the police and the ambulance. When the killer realized that he was not able to enter the store, he gave it up and ran away. None of the *baoan* who were present tried to stop him. The police came in ten minutes. The killer was found and arrested in the railway station later that day.

That was the only homicide case that has ever happened in Dadi since Anquan took over the security service in 2014. Therefore, those *baoan* who were on the scene had narrated it many times during interviews or casual conversations. "If you arrived earlier, you probably could save the man," I commented once when they were discussing the case in the *baoan* office. "You must

be kidding. How could we stop a man who had lost his mind? He had a knife, and we had nothing, not a stick in our hands," Liu Jun said, "I would not even try." Liu Jun was 38, having small physique as most *baoan*. He came from Ziyang, Sichuan province and used to sell fodders to pig farmers in Yunnan province. However, when those farmers on credit were bankrupt, he could not collect his debt and had to close his business.

"What would you do next time if you came across a similar situation?" I asked those *baoan* in the *baoan* office.

"Of course, run!" Qiangqiang said. All the others laughed.

"You are such a coward. I could do better than you, Qiangqiang!" Li Peng said, "I would at least call the police before I run." The audience laughed again.

"Our company (Anquan) always asks us to save our lives first. They wish they would never need to pay compensation for our injury or death," one *baoan* commented.

"We are not heroes. Honestly, we are not even qualified *baoan*," Chen Liang tried to explain to me, "Fighting criminals requires professional skills, but none of us has ever been trained."

"Yes, I am a farmer, and you are a chef," Li Peng echoed.

In this chapter, I will focus on looking at this occupation from *baoan*'s perspective—How they look at this job, their plight and aspirations, as well as their love experience and recreation. After that, I will give an account of the life histories of five *baoan* I met in Dadi.

A Job of Trifles

In addition to low-status, low-income, and intimate relationship with the state, *baoan* in China also differ from private security officers in the U.S. in latitude for violence. Security guards in the U.S. were often trained on elements of arrest and control, first aid and CPR, as well as using

emergency equipment. They were usually armed. Even if they do not carry guns, they at least carry some forms of tools such as batons, pepper sprays, and handcuffs to protect their clients and themselves. In contrast, most *baoan* in gated communities of China were not trained on any professional skills of control and rescue. Take Dadi as an example. Only the fire service trained *baoan* on how to use fire distinguishers once a year. Besides, *baoan* in gated communities are not allowed to carry any forms of weapon. The distinctions partially reflected the mistrust of the authorities and the upper-and middle-classes in *baoan's* allegiance and *suzhi*. They could not set their minds at rest in allowing *baoan* to carry weapons, and they do not believe that *baoan* are capable of dealing with complicate situations requiring professional skills. Therefore, when security guards in American residential places solely focused on safety issues; *baoan* in China is more of a job of trifles, like family retainers (*jiading)* working for those prestigious families before 1949.

"The best thing about this job is 'not hard,' and the worst thing about this job is the same!" When Liang Xin, 40 years old, told me this, he was about to leave for hometown in northeast China for Spring Festival and not sure if he would come back. Why did he choose to be *baoan* in the first place? He told me that after leaving his village, he had been a construction worker for seven years. He had worked as a bricklayer, a steel bender, and a carpenter in different construction sites successively. However, an accident changed his life path. One winter night he came back to work after dinner, during which, he drank a few shots of *er guo tou*, a cheap brand of strong alcohol, with coworkers. He thought that alcohol might keep him warm when he stood on the unfinished high-rise building in cold wind. "Carpentry requires a sharp mind, attention, and dexterous hands. If you slip up over a detail, you may get yourself into big trouble. I was under the influence of alcohol that night, but I was not aware of that. I cut off my finger." He

showed me his left hand. His forefinger is about one inch shorter than normal. “You asked me if being a *baoan* was dangerous. I think being a construction worker is more dangerous than *baoan*. One may fall from a scaffold or get shocked by electricity. There are countless injuries and deaths at construction sites every year.”

Because of his physical disability, Liang Xin could no longer do the same job. Moreover, he became afraid of working on scaffolds. A townsman who worked for Anquan recommended him to this job, and he had been working in Dadi for two years. I asked him to explain why “not hard” is the worst thing about his job. He answered, “This job does not involve skills or brain at all. We follow orders like a robot and to spend all of our time in those meaningless trifles. If you work in a construction site for five years, you will become an experienced bricklayer who can lay bricks faster and better, and your daily wages will be higher than green-hands; however, if you work as a *baoan* for five years, you will be an old and lazy *baoan*. Therefore, the longer we stay, the harder for us to leave.”

Many *baoan* such as Hangjing have the same opinion as Liang Xin. They believe that this job is neither stressful nor difficult; it just exhausts people’s energy and physical power by endless trivial errands. Because of the large population in Dadi, there are always lots of little issues that need to be taken care of. Most *baoan* who had been farmers or other types of manual workers were happy with the easiness of this job at the beginning. While these mindless tasks keep their bodies busy like a spinning top day to day, they feel their brains become sluggish and blunt, and they become less and less competent in other types of job. “We are like boiling frogs,” Hangjing said, “One day when we realize that, it will already be too late to jump out of the pot.”

Chen Liang, the former millionaire, saw this feature of the job in a different light. He believed that he could eventually relax when he needed neither to make decisions, nor worried about

performance. When he was a businessman, he was in constant anxiety and worry, and he had to make important decisions and take responsibility. “In these years in Dadi, I actually found calm in my heart and got a chance to reflect on my life without being disturbed,” He said.

For those men who still vision social mobility, they are often frustrated by the lack of agency during work and find the job of *baoan* an impasse leading to nowhere. That is part of the reason why the turnover rate is so high in this industry. Many of them hop into the industry of food-delivery which started to thrive in recent few years. The income of a food-delivery man depends upon how many meals he delivers. He has the potential to earn as much as twice of *baoan*’s salary. Still, many *baoan* never considered of job-hopping, because they believed that being a food-delivery person is too stressful—one has to make full use of every minute in order to make good money while keeping oneself safe on the roads. “I cannot do that. That is a job for young people,” a *baoan* who was over 50 told me, “*baoan* is a good job for people of our age.”

The Chasm between Social Statuses

Baoan Who Used to be Peasants

Most *baoan* came from villages of less-developed provinces and had been peasants before they sought jobs in cities. They are part of peasant workers (*nong min gong*), the population of which reached 287 million in 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics 2018). Due to the restriction of *hukou* registration, they are doomed to go back to their hometown when they get old. Why did they leave their villages in the first place? Many of them mentioned to me that growing grain had become a money-losing business in China in a recent decade. Due to the low price of imported grain, the prices of grain on China’s market continuously fall. At the same time the prices of fertilizer, pesticide, seeds, and irrigation keep rising. After one year’s hard-working, a farmer

family can roughly earn around RMB1,000 per acre. Zhang Wei, from Gansu province, told me that his family had six acres of farmland which can only bring them a yearly income of RMB 10,000, which was not enough for making ends meet. It was much the same for peasants in other provinces.

In addition to smaller profit yielded by each acre of land, lots of farmer families lost their farmlands to industrialization and rural development. Li Peng, 33, was a farmer in Shanxi province. He blinded his left eye from an accident in childhood. Because the land of his village was planned for building factories, all families lost their means of livelihood after receiving a small amount of compensation. Everyone whom Li Peng knew from his village had left for job opportunities in cities. His wife worked as a waitress in a restaurant close to Dadi, and the couple lived with their 7-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter in a *qunzu* room. Because his son has reached school age, Li Peng considered moving back and working in his hometown. However, the economy in the third-tier city was so depressed that he could barely find a job with a monthly income of RMB2,000, so he was stuck in Shanghai. His wife has moved back to hometown with their children.

For those farmers who still own many farmlands, they can earn just enough money to get by. Zhu Shufeng, 49, was a peasant in Liaoning province. He started to work in Dadi at the end of November. It is an unusual timing for peasant workers to go out for jobs because two months later it would be the Spring Festival. Zhu Shufeng continued to surprise me that he only planned to work in Dadi for one month. His family had 90 acres of farmlands. If there was good weather for crops, they could earn around RMB36,000 in total. During slack season, he wanted to see what Shanghai was like but had no spare money for traveling. He came up with the idea that he could travel to Shanghai and find a temporary job to make up his travel expense. He immediately

found the job of *baoan* as he wished; however, he also complained that the working hour of this job was so long that he did not have time to see and explore the metropolis.

The Right to Say No

Due to their low social status, *baoan* often found hard for them to decline requests or to ask for fair treatment from homeowners and state agencies. At the beginning of the campaign against *qunzu*, the sub-district office promised to pay each *baoan* RMB50 per day for their work in the raids. They were motivated to work hard. Some of them had even planned how to use this money. However, the paycheck never arrived. During the interviews, Meng Qi did not hide his disappointment: "I participated in raids for 40 days and thought I could get RMB 2,000 but it turned out nothing." No one has ever tried to remind the sub-district office or to inquire about it. "Anyway, we did not lose anything. We just spent our time on it," Meng Qi said. His words revealed many of *baoan*'s notions about time, labor, and money—they always prioritize cash and underestimate the value of their time and labor.

Some homeowners take advantage of *baoan* by making very personal requests. For example, in order to save the cost of hiring workers, they would find a *baoan* on duty and ask him to help move large pieces of furniture upstairs. Sometimes homeowners who had asked for help offered *baoan* small gifts such as a packet of cigarettes or merely a bottle of water in return. However, there are also many of homeowners not grateful and believing that their HOA fees have already paid for baoan's time and service. Although doing personal errands or raiding *qunzu* units are not parts of baoan's duty, to my knowledge, none of these *baoan* has ever said "No" to such request.

Even *baoan* themselves sometimes take such exploitation for granted. One *baoan* told me, "Anquan is our boss, Zeze is Anquan's boss, and homeowners are Zeze's boss. How can we

refuse the big boss's request?" Baoan's docility is partially due to their sense of inferiority to homeowners who own properties and who are urbanites, two important labels determining one's position on a social ladder in China.

Baoan believed that their social status is at the bottom and they have no position in bargaining with the people or the agency above, or even to express emotions. I interviewed Jianhong, the *baoan* who had been taken to ground and hurt his back, about this incident. His answer was humble, considerate, and even a little official. He was eager to explain to me that it was not his fault, "I did not argue with him and did not fight back. I just followed the order from my boss and did my duty." When I expressed my understanding and asked his feelings, he still avoid answering it directly, "I did not ask for compensation. It is not a big deal. I recovered very soon. Besides he later came to the hospital and apologized to me." During the interviews or in everyday conversations, *baoan* and the feared class are always less competent to or less willing to express their emotion of anger, disappointment, anxiety, and fear, than the fearful middle class.

Are *Baoan* Snobbish?

When I was accompanying *baoan* on duty at gate No. 1 of Dadi, cars came in and out all the time, and many of them are luxury brands. Some young *baoan* like to watch and discuss those luxury cars. Once I overheard two *baoan* arguing if a Telsa was more expensive than a Porsche. When a Rolls Royce came into Dadi, Qiangqiang recognized this brand and told the others how expensive the car was. Many of them took out their phones to take pictures of the car. During lunchtime, they were still discussing the impressive size of the Rolls Royce.

I recalled one *baoan* told me during the interview, "Before I work in Dadi, I did not know any of these brands. I had never heard of Telsa. Working with co-workers for a period, I became

knowing most of them." Why are many *baoan* interested in luxury brands of cars? If I asked them this question, they would either deny their interests or argue that they were just curious. However, I later figure out that the knowledge of car brands is a necessity for their survival as a *baoan*. Knowing the price of different brands could help them to be more cautious when dealing with these car owners whom they believed that they could not afford to offend.

When I stayed with my relatives in Yuxing, a high-class gated community, I noticed that *baoan* treated different cars differently. I often took a Didi back to Yuxing. Because those ridesharing cars were mostly average cars, *baoan* stopped the cars and asked the driver which unit he lived every time. However, in one night when a Didi driver took me to Yuxing in a brand-new BMW, the same *baoan* at the gate seemed a little hesitated and did not stop his car, despite that it was late-night. In contrast, if a food-delivery person or a courier on a bike came to Yuxing, *baoan* would stop him/her for sure and call the homeowners to confirm. Such selective application of rules is universal among *baoan* in every gated community. Some criminals even conceived a new idea to deceive *baoan* at the gates. According to the news from Guangdong Public Security Department, a young man rented a BMW to enter those high-end communities, and stole cash and properties costing more than one million RMB from condos.

Some people call *baoan* "watchdog" to shows their contempt on this occupation. Many famous idioms in China compare a dog to a snob. For example, "Men are smaller than their actual size in a dog's eyes" (*gou yan kan ren di*), or "a dog bullies people on the strength of its master" (*gou zhang ren shi*). People who had conflicts with *baoan* often used such idioms to strip *baoan* of dignity.

Is *baoan* a "snobbish" occupation? I believe not. *Baoan* often treat different socioeconomic classes differently for a few reasons. First, their mindsets accurately reflect the class stereotype

ingrained in a whole society—the lower one locates on the social ladder, the more dangerous one is. Since most crimes—if *baoan* have ever encountered any—in gated communities of China are property crimes, *baoan* genuinely believe that the rich were less likely to commit such crime. Secondly, *baoan* are worried that if they accidentally upset or offended high-class homeowners or homeowners' important guests, they would get themselves in trouble. According to my observation, *baoan* often get nervous when they challenge the behavior of or enforce order with a person who looks rich and powerful. In such occasions, they have to be cautious with their words and manner, and sometimes they would bend the rules to avoid conflicts. Therefore, telling who is powerful and wealthy from her/his car, clothes, appearance, and manner is an indispensable skill for a *baoan* to survive his position.

Love and Recreation

Baoan's after work lives are often very dull and monotonous. Because they work an extraordinary long hour, they usually do not have the energy and time for any recreation after work. Not to mention that they do not have much spare money to use. Some of them will go out to have dinner together in a small restaurant on the payday. During winter, they will go together to the bathhouse once or twice a month. A smartphone is the most desirable companion of *baoan*'s after-work life. They use a smartphone to read the news, to keep in touch with family and friends back in hometowns, to watch videos or soap dramas, to play online games, or to gamble online. Since most young *baoan* are single, they also try to meet girls on the Internet.

Except for a few young *baoan*, many *baoan* in Dadi have been married. Those wives usually have to stay in hometown to take care of their children and parents who were restricted to their *hukou* registration location due to their needs for education or healthcare. These couples can only

see each other once or twice a year. Even if both of the wife and the husband work in Shanghai, they usually live in each other's dormitory to save the rent. Some bachelors and married men who had not seen their wives for all year round patronize prostitutes occasionally in bathhouses or hostels near Dadi.

For those bachelors, love is always an extravagant hope in cities. The only case of successful love I have heard about is that, one middle-aged widower became acquainted with a middle-aged female domestic worker who was also from other provinces and who frequented Dadi. They fell in love, and he eventually married her. Since *baoan* have to stay in Dadi during most of their time and do not have many connections in the city, social media such as WeChat and Momo have become the practical tools for them to meet women. WeChat has become the largest social media in China. According to Tencent, the number of monthly active users of WeChat reaches 1,040 million in March 2018 (Sina News 2018). Nearly every *baoan* in Dadi has a WeChat account.

I noticed that they liked to use their picture of standing in front of Shanghai's landmarks, for example, the Bund or the Oriental Pearl Tower as their profile picture for WeChat accounts. They may have only been to these places once just like a tourist; however, it does not affect their proudness of living in Shanghai. It also intrigues me that many of their IDs are lyric sentences revealing their relationship status or emotions. For example, "I want to protect you for my whole life. I am single." (让我守护你一生一世，单身中); "I want to hug, but I do not have an excuse." (我想拥抱，但没有借口); "If you find a good man, marry him" (找个好人就嫁了吧); "Only you accompany me in my world space" (我的世界空间只有你陪伴我); "I want to hold your hands and watch the sunset" (我想牵你手看日落). It is evident that their IDs are written for

potential girlfriends. However, their efforts in searching for girlfriends and wives in Shanghai via the Internet often result in vain.

The King of Fickle (*pao wang*) was a nickname given to a 26-year-old *baoan* Zhang Hen by other *baoan*. They often teased his passion for meeting girls from the Internet, despite these relationships often ended in fruitlessness. After the Spring Festival in 2018, he decided to take five days off to meet a girl with whom he had been chatting online for half a year. His girlfriend lived in Guandong province which was over a thousand kilometers away. After he saw her in person, he immediately regretted his decision because the girl was "fat and tanned," nothing like her looks in photos and videos. The round-trip train tickets, hotel rooms, dining, and presents for the girl, cost him one year's saving. He complained to one of his coworkers and soon became a laughingstock of the dayshift team. He swore in the WeChat group that he would never travel thousands of miles to date anyone.

The WeChat Group

Baoan participate in a few WeChat groups for reporting work progress and for communicating with each other. Supervisors in Zeze and Anquan use WeChat group to monitor *baoan*'s performance in real-time. However, there are two WeChat groups only reserved for *baoan* in dayshift and nightshift respectively. I am also in both WeChat groups. To my surprise, the main content of the dayshift team's WeChat group is about their supervisors' activities. In other words, while those supervisors from Anquan and Zeze oversee *baoan*, they are also monitored by *baoan*.

Mr. Cheng, the president of Zeze's parent company, has no office in Dadi but occasionally went to Dadi for meetings. One day before he came, Delong notified everyone in the WeChat

group that early morning: “Mr. Sheng will be here soon. Be careful with your manners. Do not leave your post or take a nap!” In order to let these new *baoan* be aware of what the person and his car look like, Delong posted a blurred photo of Mr. Cheng that he obtained from his last visit, as well as a photo of the car: a black Audi and its plate number. Once the *baoan* at gate No. 1 saw Mr. Cheng’s car entering Dadi, he immediately texted in WeChat group: “Heads up! he has arrived!” Another *baon* texted, “he is heading to district 3.” All baoan in Dadi formed an information network. Eventually, at 5:20 p.m., another *baoan* texted: “He left from Gate No.2.” Another day when Lao Yan made a sudden check to see if everyone was on duty, Qiangqiang immediately sent a voice message in the group, “Heads up! Lao Yan is checking. He is heading to District 4.” Attached was a photo of the back of Lao Yan and two other staffs from Zeze. “Got it!” Everyone replied to Qiangqiang’s reminder.

Baoan secretly monitor and track the route of every person who has the power to evaluate their work. In doing this, they could relax and sometimes slack without being caught and could save their best attention and energy for the moment when they are being evaluated. This is a sophisticated form of “everyday resistance” (Scott 1987), in addition to other slackness in their daily duties, from using smartphones, spending extended time in the restroom, taking a nap at night, skipping patrols, and so on.

Life Stories of Five Baoan

When those former farmers traveled from rural area to the center of Shanghai, they must have experienced a social difference in power and authority between them and homeowners as well as social, cultural, and geographical unfamiliarity, all of which may bring them a sense of insecurity (Lofland 1973; Middleton 1986). However, such fear and anxiety were rarely revealed in the

interview partially because they were hard to be articulated and communicated. While the whole society focuses on the vulnerability and fears of the upper-and middle-classes homeowners, the lower-working class's needs for dignity and security is often neglected. In the following part, I will tell five life stories of *baoan*, which may uncover their fear and desires as well as the predicament that the feared population are in.

Story One: The Peking Duck Chef

Chen Liang, 42, was an extraordinary in the *baoan* team. He was slim, wearing glasses, looked shrewd and smart. He came to Shanghai as early as in the 1990s. After years of hard work, he had been a skilled chef and a well-to-do businessman until an accident changed his life. He told me his story in January 2018.

Chen Liang was from Yingtan, a third-tier city in Jiangxi Province. After graduating from high school, Chen Liang used his father's connection to get a formal job in a state-owned factory producing china. A job in state-owned enterprises was called "iron rice bowl" before the 1980s, namely a permanent job you can hold till retirement, regardless of your performance. However, in the early 1990s, the privatization of state-owned enterprises had begun, leading to nation-wide lay-off. One year after Chen Liang started his job, the factory followed the state's propaganda to advise its employees to voluntarily accept "buy-out offer" (*mai duan gong ling*), which is a form of compensated termination of labor relations. Not being able to see the future of staying in the factory, Chen Liang accepted the offer and received a small amount of money as compensation.

In losing his "iron bowl," Chen Liang and his cousin learned cooking in a restaurant. In 1998 his cousin migrated to the U.S. with his family to run a Chinese restaurant in California. Chen Liang came to Shanghai with a high-school classmate to work in a Peking duck deli. After two

months, he had already learned all the skills of roasting duck and decided to open his deli. Till 2003, he had owned three delis selling Peking ducks in different districts of Shanghai. His life probably would continue if SARS did not break out in early 2003. In worrying about public health, few citizens were willing to dine out or buy cooked foods during 2003 and the businesses of hotels, restaurants, and delis were collapsed. Chen Liang had to make a hard decision: go back to his hometown.

Chen Liang used his savings to buy a house and one bus route in Yingtan. From the 1990s, public transportation in some cities had also been privatized and individuals could own and run bus routes. Chen ran the bus route for eight years. His yearly income was about RMB100,000, enough for a decent life in a third-tier city. He had thought that would be his whole life until 2012 the state suddenly announced that it was socializing all those private bus routes. Chen Liang sold the route back to the government for over RMB 400,000. At the age of 37 years old, Chen Liang had to think of new ways to make a living.

At the invitation of a friend Xu from childhood, Chen Liang flew thousands of miles far to Wulumuqi, Xinjiang province to co-found a tourist coach company. They owned and drove coaches for tourist agencies between the city and various tourist destinations. Eight months later when Chen Liang was driving alone on a high way, his coach was accidentally hit by a truck. Chen Liang was seriously injured, and he had to go back to Yingtan for injury healing. During the months he was away, his business partner Xu decided all by himself to change the tourist coach company into a tourist trade company and imported auto parts from Russia. On one way back from Russia, Xu was stopped by the Chinese Custom and determined as smuggling. Xu was arrested, and the court seized all the assets of the company. Although Chen was able to prove that he was thousands of miles away and did not participate in the smugglings, he was the legal

person of the company, and the court could not return his portion of the investment RMB 2.6 million. Xu was sentenced to five years and was bailed out by his family after he spent two years in jail. Chen Liang's appeal for getting back his portion of the money was still ongoing. With all of his money frozen by the court, Chen Liang still had a remaining mortgage of RMB120,000 on the house his family lived in Yingtan. In order to keep up with their mortgage repayments and to make a living, he and his wife left their ten years old son with grandparents and came to Shanghai for jobs. He told me that he no longer blamed his friend who also lost a comparable amount of money in this incident. "The life has to continue anyway, right? The only thing we can do now is to live down-to-earth," Chen Liang said.

When he came to Shanghai in 2015, he had no money and connections, just like 17 years ago he came to Shanghai for the first time. At the age of 40, he and his wife joined the floating population searching for jobs in the metropolis. Two days later he was employed by Anquan to be a *baoan* in Dadi, while his wife got a job as a live-in nanny for a household. They felt lucky that both jobs offer accommodation and they did not have to pay RMB1,500 for a restroom-sized *qunzu* room. The massive demand for nannies and domestic workers in Shanghai has driven the wages of these two occupations increased year by year. Because of his wife's experience of early education in kindergartens, after a few job-hopping, she eventually achieved a monthly salary of RMB10,000 by working for an upper-and middle-classes family. At the end of 2016, they paid off the mortgage on the house. Chen Liang planned to save RMB100,000 in 2017 to start his Peking-duck business again in 2018. However, his nephew was diagnosed as cancer at the end of 2017, and the couple gave all their savings of that year to his brother-in-law's family as a gift.

Because Chen Liang understood Shanghai dialect and knew a thing or two, Delong liked him and let him take photos during every assembling and write reports. Sometimes Delong bought

meat and vegetables and let Chen Liang cook for a small group of *baoan*. Chen Liang was also easy-going and broadminded and had never been involved in an argument with any *baoan*. However, his good traits could not help him to succeed in this industry that values height, physique, and age. Due to his weak appearance, Delong had to move him to the night-shift team to avoid the attention of homeowners. Chen told me that it was hard for him to fall asleep in the daytime, especially in a room of "symphony": some people snored, some people ground their teeth, and some people played video games without earphones. He could only get 3 to 4 hours' sleep every day from time to time. However, he did not complain to Delong and seemed satisfied with his life in general.

During the interview, Chen Liang told me that his goal was to save enough money and start his business in Lanzhou, Gansu provinces where his brother in law's family lived and where rent was much cheaper. He did not consider starting a new deli in Shanghai because the rent had become too expensive. Even though he had been doing business for so many years, he had never spent a Spring Festival outside of his hometown. He always went back to hometown to reunite with his parents and children. When I asked his feeling of these dramatic twists in his life, he answered, "Everyone's life is much the same—30,000 days. No matter I am rich or poor, life has to continue day by day. I choose to live every day happily." He also posted this sentence in Moments of WeChat.

Story Two: These Debt Dodgers

Wu Yu, 51 years old, has been a dayshift *baoan* in Dadi since 2016. Despite that the age limit for *baoan* was set at 50, the difficulty of hiring enough hands and the high turnover rate made Delong lower the limit to 55 years old. I learned from Delong that Wu Yu had been a math

teacher before he came to Dadi. Since math teacher was a much more honorable career than *baoan* in China and was provided with a good pension, I became curious in his life trajectory.

Wu Yu proudly told me that he had served in the army in his 20s, thus, he had a relatively strong physique. After the army, he taught math in an elementary school in a small town of Anhui province for two decades. He married a woman from the same village and raised two boys. In 2009 his salary was around RMB 2,000 which was just enough for the family of four people to live from hand to mouth. I asked him what made him quit his job as a teacher. He kept silent for a while and answered that he had wanted to be rich. When some of his friends started to do business and became rich, he also considered making some changes to his life.

At that time, the luxury cars were rare in small towns and some citizens liked to rent these cars for weddings and other important social occasions. Since Wu did enjoy driving, he thought it might be a great idea to be a self-employed luxury chauffeur. He imagined that it could be a promising opportunity for social mobility. Very soon he quitted his job and brought home two second-hand luxuary cars—one is Honda, costing RMB 190,000 and the other is BMW, costing RMB 460,000. He borrowed down payment from a small private loan company at a high rate of interest and took out a mortgage for the rest. His monthly mortgage repayment was RMB 9,600 (RMB 6600 for the BMW and RMB 3000 for the Honda). However, it soon turned out that the decision was a big mistake. In a small town where the market was small, not so many families have such needs all year around as he expected. One check of RMB 1,000 was often followed by many days without business. His income was so little that he was saddled with the monthly payment and other debts he owed. After two years' struggle, he was in arrears with his mortgage and his two cars were repossessed by the bank. In order to recover debts, the usurer sent

gangsters to threaten him. His wife was so disappointed and scared that she asked for a divorce and wished him in jail. Faced with all the mess, he decided to run.

He had been to different cities for all kinds of informal works before he came to Shanghai in 2013. Because he still owed the bank money, he was on the blacklist and could not apply for credit cards or get loans. His first job in Shanghai was nightshift *baoan* in a small gated community containing a few residential buildings. The monthly salary was RMB 3,700. He had nothing to complain about this job except for the working hours. According to the codes: every time he was caught having a snap, he would be fined RMB200.

After a few months, Wu Yu still struggled with getting some sleep in the daytime and staying awake at night. He thought to himself: since he was sleepless during the daytime anyway, why not look for another job to earn more money? He quickly found the second job—cleaning bathrooms in an office building. The pay was low but the working hour just staggered his nightshift schedule. He worked 8 hours in the day and 12 hours at night for months. However, because of sleep deprivation and overwork, he became exhausted. He kept falling asleep at night when he was on duty. His co-worker noticed it and became envied when he learned that Wu Yu was working on two jobs. He mischievously frightened Wu Yu to wake him up all the time and eventually reported Wu Yu's secret to their supervisor. Wu Yu was fired. After searching jobs for a few weeks, Wu Yun found the job of *baoan* in Dadi through a job agency. Because he had been a soldier, strong, tall, and looked younger than his age, Delong agreed to arrange him in the dayshift team regardless that he had already been 49 years old.

During his time of searching jobs, Wu Yu came across a townsman, from whom, he learned that his elder son had been admitted to a college. He was very excited, while at the same time he felt sad that he was not able to contribute to his son's tuition. He felt regret for quitting his job as

a math teacher. If he were still working as a teacher, his salary would have increased to over RMB 4,000, and he would receive a higher pension after retirement, not to mention that he would have been living with his family instead of floating alone in a strange city. At the age of 51, Wu Yu had no other plans but to stay in this position until one day he is asked to leave. He knew that it was impossible for him to pay off the debt by working as a *baoan*. He was afraid that he had to dodge debts for the rest of his life.

Wu Yu was not the only *baoan* who took this job in the first place to evade debts and to dodge usurers. Fang Zhi, 49, from Nantong, Jiangsu Province also came to Shanghai to hide from his usurer. By January 2018 he had been in Dadi for two months. It was his first time to be in Shanghai, and he also found the job through a job agency. Fang Zhi had been a farmer before he started a shrimp farm with all his savings and RMB 100,000 borrowed from a usurer. He must have been confident about his business because the interest rate for the loan was extremely high—20% monthly. Alas, water pollution killed all the shrimps and closed his business. His wife also divorced him.

After running away from his hometown, he changed his phone number. He dared not to go back nor contacted his family because he was worried that he might get his family in trouble. He felt sorry for his mother, who was over 70 years old and would have surgery soon. As the eldest son, he was supposed to be there to take care of her in Chinese culture. He described the usurer as a gangsterdom with deep connections with the police. Even though his family called the police a few times, it did not help. “These people are capable of doing anything terrible. If they know that I am in Shanghai, they will come here to find me,” he told me in a frightened tone, “Fortunately they believe that I have cut off contact with my family and that is good for my

family." Despite that he had my promise, he reminded me a few times that his name and photo should not appear on the Internet.

In order to pay off the debts as early as possible, Fang Zhi hardly spent money outside Dadi and mostly ate pickles and porridge for three meals. He kept in contact with the usurer only through WeChat. Once he saved some money, he transferred it to the usurer through WeChat, in the hope that they would leave his family alone. He resolved to pay off the remaining principal of RMB 80,000. However, he felt desperate that the interest had gone so high that he would by no means pay it off. He was also considering to be a courier or food-delivery man after the Lunar New Year of 2018. "Delivering food or packages will be more tired, right?" I asked. "Yes, but I do not come here to enjoy life; I am here to earn money. When I was a shrimp farmer, I stood in the muddy ponds all day long. I believe being a courier will not be as tough as that." Two months after the interview, Fang Zhi left Dadi. No one knows where he is now.

Wu Yu and Fang Zhi's stories show how the caprice of the fates interact with individual desires and scares. There are also some other debt dodgers, whose debts usually arose from failed business or large bills of treatment that their family members had received. They lived and worked in Dadi all the year around and made rare contact with the outside world. No background check, all-cash salary, and high turnover rate, all make it possible for them to take the gated community as a shelter and to live secret lives. Even *baoan* in the same team seldom asked each other's life histories unless the other one voluntarily talked. Some of them want to stay in Dadi until they are too old to stay.

Story Three: Unsuccessful Male Escort

One day when a young woman passed by Qiangqiang standing at the gate, Qiangqiang noticed her sexy contour in a mini dress. He took out his smartphone and took a picture of her back. Later he sent the picture in the WeChat group. His co-workers, especially those older ones, checked the picture with shy smiles on their faces.

Qiangqiang was 23 years old, from a small town of Henan Province. As the second youngest *baoan* in the team, he had been working in Dadi for more than one year. He was the only son of a middle-class family that owned a purified-water delivery station. Because he was idle around for years after high school, his father was disappointed and demanded him to hew out a new way (*chuang yi chuang*) in big cities by himself. Carrying RMB5000 from his father, Qiangqiang came to Shanghai in 2015 with a high-school friend. Qiangqiang had a baby face, was quiet, and looked like a well-behaved boy. However, his father would never know that his son's first job was in a women's club that was famous for male escorts.

Qiangqiang's co-workers were all young men while customers were mostly rich female. Qiangqiang and his friend's job title was "sales." Their salary consisted of a small amount of base pay and commissions on beverage and service that customers ordered in VIP boxes. In order to survive, they had to continuously get to know rich women, keep in touch with them, and entice them into the club to spend money. In order to make these customers willing to spend as much as possible, it was very common for these young men to perform sexual favors. In addition to commissions, many of them who were handsome and honey-tongued could receive considerable tips, a small portion of which went into their own pockets. A few of them became gigolos of rich women whose money changed their destinies. In January 2019, a male escort in another toy boy club was showered with 28 luxury birthday gifts from the same woman. These

gifts included an Audi car, a box filled with RMB 280,000 cashes, and a gold cup. The police busted the club after the news went viral on the Internet.

Qiangqiang and his friend were new to the city and had few ways to meet rich women online or offline. The manager helped them for the first two months in crediting them with the expense of returned patrons. Thus, both of them had a monthly income of around RMB 8,000 for the first two months. Qiangqiang's friend successfully built connections with a couple of patrons and earned much the same for the third month. However, Qiangqiang had no luck. He believed that he was not able to succeed in this industry because he was not as tall and handsome as his friend and he was not good at communicating with people. Qiangqiang's income dramatically shrunk for the following months and he had to leave. When he left the club, there was only several hundreds of yuan left in his account. A few days later when Qiangqiang passed by Dadi and chatted with a *baoan* at the gate, he learned that Anquan was still hiring. He moved out of his friend's living room and became a *baoan* the next day.

Although *baoan*'s income was less than "sales" in the club, Qiangqiang could save about RMB 800 every month. First of all, he need not to pay rent. When he shared a one bedroom condo with his friend, he paid RMB 2,000 for the futon in the living room. Second, he spent much less on social life. When he was working in the club, their working hour was from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. After getting off work, these young men always took turns in treating each other drinks and night meals (*xiao ye*) in restaurants. In contrast, Qiangqiang's fellow *baoan* led frugal lives and cooked simple meals to feed themselves for most days, not to mention that they worked 13 hours a day and did not have time to spend money. In addition to save more money, Qiangqiang preferred being a *baoan* because alcohols and debauched lifestyle impaired his health while he was in the club. As a dayshift *baoan*, he felt refreshed when he was early to bed and early to rise.

When compared the two jobs, Qiangqiang told me that the hardest part of both jobs was dealing with patrons. While some customers in the club acted rude and arrogant, some homeowners did not respect them either. “It’s hard to reason with someone who looked down upon me,” he said, “when you asked if *baoan* was a dangerous job. Yes. However, the threat was not from criminals, but from homeowners.” He referred to the incident that Jianhong was injured by a homeowner whose car was blocked by ACIS at the gate.

In spite that Qiangqiang easily felt nervous at dealing with homeowners, the happiest moment he could recall about this job was receiving tips and little gifts from homeowners. Once he helped a homeowner to move a fish tank upstairs and received two packets of expensive cigarettes, making him excited for two days. He was also excited about homeowners’ happy events such as a wedding or housewarming. Some generous homeowners would give red packets to *baoan* and other irrelevant people on-the-spot as an auspicious way to celebrate the event — the amount varied from RMB50 to RMB200. Because Qiangqiang was young and cute-looking, he usually got a fatter red packet than his co-workers did.

Qiangqiang lied to his father that he had been a realtor of Home Link for the past two years. Home Link was a real-estate agency company having branches throughout China. Its employees were known for earning considerable commissions during the real estate’s booming years. When I was in Dadi, there were many realtor offices inside and outside of Dadi. I asked Qiangqiang why did not he even try to apply for working for them, he asked me in reply, “Do you think that I have a glib tongue to persuade people to buy homes?”

(a real-estate agency office exhibits all apartments for sale in Dadi)

Qiangqiang kept his job as a secret from his family because he believed that his father would feel losing face. "*Baoan* is probably the most discriminated vocation in our society, am I right?" He did not wait for my answer and continued, "especially because of my age, even my co-workers looked down upon me. They often asked, 'why do you choose to be a *baoan* at such a young age? Can't you do something more challenging?" After the 19-year-old boy left the team, Qiangqiang became the youngest one in Anquan's team as the majority of team members were over 40 years old. I believed that Qiangqiang could openly talk about discrimination and make fun of himself because he was not bothered by it. On the contrary, some *baoan* who had the painful experience of unfairness and who had high self-esteem were often reluctant to discuss the discrimination, or even denied that they were looked down upon.

Qiangqiang has been single for many years. He confided in me that he had one night stand with a girl he met on a social media Momo and patronized a prostitute in a bathhouse once. To his knowledge, a few coworkers patronized prostitutes as well. Some of them were single, and some of them had been separated from their wives for long. In Qiangqiang's parents' opinion, Qiangqiang had reached the right age for marriage. Marrying someone and carrying on the family line have always been an essential part of filial piety for young men in Chinese culture, especially when Qiangqiang was the only Child to his parents. Since it seemed that Qiangqiang had no chance in finding a wife in Shanghai by himself, his father demanded him to go back to have blind dates (*xiang qin*). When Qiangqiang packed all his belongings and left Shanghai in spring 2018, he told coworkers that he would never come back.

Qiangqiang did consider staying in his hometown, and he had started to date one of the girls who he met from blind dates arranged by his aunt. However, his search for jobs in a small city was in vain, and he always missed his life in Shanghai without his parents' interference. When the team leader Xiao Fan left Dadi, Delong promised to promote Qiangqiang to this position if he came back. In mid 2018 the real estate market started to cool down, and lots of Home Link offices in Shanghai were closed. Against this background, Qiangqiang decided to tell his father the truth that he had been working as a *baoan* for the past two years and he would like to come back to the team. "How did you successfully persuade your father to let you go?" I asked. "Because I told him that *baoan* in Dadi was a job with a bright future," he laughed, showing it was just another lie. Because of the promotion, Qiangqiang's salary increased by RMB300.

He did not continue seeing the girl who remained in his hometown. Male migrant workers at his age are often faced with the same dilemma—it is hard to find a wife in cities, and it is hard to

find a job in hometowns. When they reach an age of marriage or when they have school-age children, they have to make difficult decisions about whether they should leave or stay.

Qiangqiang was not convinced that he could be promoted to a position higher than team leader, so he was still pondering on what he should do in the future if he did not want to be a *baoan* for his whole life. "Our water-delivery station' business is dwindling, and I do not know what to do in the future. I am sure I will work in Dadi for at most two more years because I do not want to stay here until I am too old to go back on the job market," Qiangqiang said. When Qiangqiang became a *baoan* for the second time, his high-school friend was still working in the toy boy's club and living on money from his lovers.

Story Four: A *Baoan* who Received Silk Banner Twice

Wang Qingjia was the first *baoan* whom Delong recommend to me for an interview. By that time, he was just interviewed by a local TV channel and was well-known among residents. In the summer of 2017 a homeowner family came back from a trip and forgot their backpack in front of the lobby. In the backpack, there were more than RMB 20,000 cash, two laptops, and three passports. Qingjia found the backpack when he was patrolling and returned it to the owners. To show their gratefulness, the owners gifted RMB 300 and a silk banner to Qingjia. The silk banner was hung on the wall of the *baoan* office, saying "Wang Qingjia returned the property he found, he is virtuous and is a moral example of our society." The silk banner was also an honor to Anquan and Zeze. Anquan rewarded Qingjia with RMB 200. Zeze announced in public that it would reward Qingjia RMB 100 as well, but never fulfilled it. Seeing Qingjia's deed as proof of Zeze's excellent service, Zeze invited local TV channel to interview Qiangqiangjia and to

publicize the story—how a poor *baoan* maintained his moral integrity and returned the property he found.

Soon after the first silk banner, Qingjia received the second one. When he was patrolling at one night, he found on the lawn a leather wallet, that contained several credit cards, an ID, and a name card. He reached out the owner of the wallet by calling the number on the name card. The owner was a female realtor specialized in selling properties in Dadi. She was very thankful and also sent a silk banner to *baoan* office the next day. In order to encourage other team members to learn from Qingjia, Delong rewarded Qingjia with RMB 100 from his own pocket. Within seven months worked in Dadi, Qingjia had found numerous lost items including some valuables. His coworkers envied his luck. After joining his patrol once, I discovered that his "good luck" was actually owing to his hobby of searching and picking up things.

Qingjia, 41, was from a poor village of Liaoning Province. He was short, slim, and tanned, just like many other *baoan* from villages. However, unlike most of them, he was outgoing, open, and good at communication. He started to work as a construction worker in his 20s. Ten years working on construction sites tired him up and ruined his health. At the age of 36, he became a *baoan*. After working in Beijing for two years, he worked in the security team on a cruise traveling between Shanghai and Hong Kong/Macao for one year. Although the salary was RMB 5,000 per month and the workload was light, he suffered seasick, primarily when the weather was terrible. When he was back on land, he worked in a few different communities and eventually came to Dadi.

Qingjia was one of few *baoa*n who showed their fondness for this job in interviews. "I want to be a qualified *baoan* of Shanghai," He claimed. He believed that the secret of succeeding in this career depended on "two legs and two lips"—walked a lot and talked a lot to different

people every day. He was good at both. He had nothing to complain about homeowners. Instead, he was proud that homeowners always trusted him. When most *baoan* liked to work in dayshift, Qingjia liked to work in nightshift. He summarized the pro and con of the two shifts. "It is tired to work in dayshift and fatigued to work in night shift," he said, "In the dayshift team we can sleep better, but there are always lots of calls and works. Besides, all supervisors from Zeze work in the daytime, and we cannot take a break. On the contrary, it is very quiet in Dadi at night. I feel at ease and relaxed." At early spring nights, it was dark and cold in Dadi. Qingjia's coworkers all preferred sitting in watch boxes to patrolling. However, Qingjia almost kept patrolling for the whole night.

I accompanied Qingjia in patrol while conducting the interview. We walked along the path across woods and lawns. Suddenly he squatted down and picked up a coin that I would never notice in such a dim-light environment. I had to say that he had excellent eyesight. "You see, that is are what I found tonight," He shook a plastic bag with dozens of pennies and one-yuan coins. I was amazed even considering Dadi was a large community. Qingjia told me that he also picked up 100-yuan bills for dozens of times. They were often lost by drunken men and women who came home in taxicabs at midnight and paid taxi drivers in cash. "Guess how much I picked up in total during the seven months? ￥3,300! That was enough for my expense on cigarettes and alcohol each month." He was very proud of himself. Maybe in worry that I would judge him, he immediately added, "I am a qualified *baoan*. I do not do anything illegal. I neither steal nor rob. I only pick." His gain from picking up things motivated him to patrol all the time, even at winter nights, making him the most diligent and the "luckiest" *baoan* in Dadi.

Qingjia had no plan to leave Dadi shortly, even though he also concerned about his personal issue (*ge ren wen ti*), that is, marriage. He told me that he had painful experience of dating

women. He had a few girlfriends before. He believed that it was reasonable for a man in a relationship to buy his girlfriend gifts and to take her out for dinner. However, none of these ex-girlfriends seemed to have interests in marrying him. After he already spent a lot, they broke up with him by merely claiming that they had no feeling for him. Nevertheless, Qingjia was still expecting to marry a woman from Shanghai, so that he could set up a family in the city and stay here forever. In order to show that he was not building the castle in the air, he also talked about the details of his plan, "I do not have parents and children; thus, I can move into her house, take care of her parents, and let our child bear her last name. All I earned from my *baoan* job will be spent on supporting our family. I don't mind if she had married before or has her child. The only requirement for her is that she should be mentally or physically healthy. If She could warm the bed and cook for me, that is all I want." "Where do you plan to meet a Shanghainese woman?" I asked. "There is the Internet, such as WeChat and QQ," he answered, "I do not sleep in the daytime, so I have plenty of time to meet people if they want to meet me offline."

Story Five: The Tallest *Baoan*

After I spent more time in *baoan* office, Delong often tried to seek my advice on office politics, such as how to bribe Zeze managers into connivance or how to intervene in team members' conflicts. When I told him that I had no experience in these issues, he often replied, "You are highly-educated, and you must know one thing or two." Delong, 28 years old, was 188cm tall and 120 kilograms heavy, often sticking out in the crowd. He was the middle child of a working-class family in a small town of Jiangsu province. After dropping out of high school, he spent a couple of years in playing video games, chasing after girls, and drinking every night with friends. One night when he was engaging in a gang fight on the street, he was caught by the

police. Because one person from the other side was seriously injured in this brawl, Delong was sentenced to two years. However, Delong did not spend one day in Jail. Instead, he was put under house rest for two years after his parent used relationship (*guanxi*) and bribery to help him out. This incident did not leave a criminal record in his file.

When Delong was eventually free to leave his home, he worked in a body shop in his town and learned how to fix cars. He thought the pay was too low, so quitted his job two years later, and went to Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu province in 2012. He firstly served the dishes in a restaurant. However, his bad relationship with his boss led to his resignation two months later without getting his last month's paycheck. After that, he found the position of *baoan* in a four-star hotel and firstly entered this industry. During the two years working in the hotel, he got married to a girl from his hometown. His wife delivered a boy in the same year. At the same time, his elder brother was also working as *baoan* in Shanghai. He told Delong that the salary of *baoan* in Shanghai was much higher than that in Nanjing, so Delong came to Shanghai with his wife and son at the end of 2014.

Only a few months later, Delong was promoted to the position of team leader. His career could have gone off without a hitch if he had not been taken to a casino by a fellow *baoan*. Gambling was illegal and forbidden in mainland China; however, there were still some underground casinos in operation even in Shanghai, a tightly and neatly controlled space. These secret casinos were usually hidden in video arcades or shopping malls and could only be accessed through hidden doors which were exclusively known by insiders. After winning a few hands, Delong thought he discovered a much faster way to earn money than being a *baoan*. He became addicted to gambling and no longer went back to work. He spent all days and nights in different underground casinos in 2016 and kept his life as a secret from his elder brother. Every

time he won a fortune, he squandered his money on entertaining friends with banquets or buying gifts for his wife and son. During that period, his posts on WeChat moments revealed his fantasy about being rich. For example, he posted an online test showing that his matching car brand should be Porsche. His gambling life continued for one year until Lucky Fairy abandoned him and he lost all his own money and borrowed money. Because they could no longer afford the rent in Shanghai, his wife took his son back to their hometown.

When Delong went back on the job market, his elder brother had become a district manager in the same company, which was merged into Anquan in 2016. He helped Delong to find a position as *baoan* in Anquan, and Delong was soon promoted to team leader, and later to project leader within one year. When I asked Delong what made him succeed in this industry, he laughed, "probably because I am tall." That was not a joke. Because tallness, sturdy physique, and youth are all rare "resources" in this industry, one with these characteristics could easily be a standout. Therefore, in the *baoan* team of Dadi, the project leader Delong and the two team leaders Jin Zheng and Da Chun were all young men under 30, while the majority of the team were over 45.

There are some personal traits also making Delong a good team leader. He was firstly dispatched to Dadi with another project leader Liu Qiang at the end of 2017 to ensure the contract renewal on the first day of 2018. However, less than one month, Liu Qiang got knocked out. Because Delong was much more popular among team members, many *baoan* cheered after they heard the news. Distinct from Liu Qiang who was arrogant and hard-hearted, Delong was easy-going, friendly, and cooperative. Those *baoan* liked him also because he often turned a blind eye to their slackness and he could think in team members' shoes. For example, if one hard-working *baoan* were sick, he would let him take one day off, and he would not report it to Zeze so that the person could keep his wage for that day. Delong kept saying that "I have to

restrain myself from having a deep affection for these buddies. Otherwise, it would be too hard for me to make decisions."

When Liu Qiang received a notice from Li Jian and knew that he was demoted to *baoan* in a different community, he lost his temper and smashed the *baoan* office to vent his anger. He must have regretted to do that because three months later, Liu Qiang called Delong to apologize and to ask if he could come back to Dadi. At that time, Da Chun was just removed from his position for no reason by Zeze managers. Delong let bygones be bygones and appointed Liu Qiang as the team leader of night-shift. When I asked Delong why he made this decision, he praised Liu Qiang for his "remarkable ability" and "hard-working."

I also witnessed how Delong dealt with other issues. Homeowners of building No. 42 reported a violation of using elevators. The residents in that building found that they often had to wait unusually-long time for the elevators. The longtime wait bothered them especially in the morning when many of them were running late for work. They watched the videos recorded by the camera in the elevator and discovered that a courier used a package to stop the elevator's door to close on each floor he arrived at. In doing this, once the courier delivered the packages, he could immediately jump into the elevator that was "waiting" for him instead of waiting for the elevator. His selfish action wasted homeowners' time and might cause damage to the elevators, thus, enraged homeowners. One morning when the same courier was delivering packages to this building, one homeowner called the *baoan* office.

Delong and his people locked the courier's motorbike that was parked outside the building and waited in the lobby. About twenty minutes later, the courier came downstairs after delivering all the packages. These *baoan* caught him. He begged them to unlock his motorbike and promised that he would not do that again. Delong hesitated for a while and decided to let him go.

"I can send him to the police station by accusing him of damaging the property, but I don't want to do that. I understand why he did this. In a 34-floor busy building, if he waited 5 minutes on each floor, it would cost him almost 3 hours to deliver all packages in one building. Speed is the most important thing for a courier," Delong said. Later he told me, "Life is not easy for everyone, and I do not want to make it even more difficult for anyone." In an industry where most people want to earn a living and are not passionate about their job, his philosophy made him in good terms with all his co-workers, supervisors, Zeze managers, and even those unwelcomed visitors. On the other hand, his philosophy may not be beneficial to the image of *baoan* in the whole society.

During the Spring Festival in February 2018, Anquan paid the bill to treat all employees who were still on duty to dinner. Delong entertained the nightshift team and the dayshift team with banquets in a restaurant in two consecutive days. During a time for family reunion, many of them, who were alone in cities, felt lonely and homesick. Fortunately, they could get together with similar people and comfort each other with jokes from their work and alcohol. Because they had to go back to work after dinner, they can only drink beer instead of their favorite spirits. A couple of them cried at the table. At 4:16 a.m., Delong posted four photos of these men at the tables and a few words in Moments of WeChat, "Brothers and friends, thanked you all for your company in 2017. We will walk forward together in 2018 and wish everyone's tomorrow will be better!"

Li Jian, the district manager of Anquan very much approved Shanghai government's limitation on the number of private security companies, because "the cutthroat competition will eventually harm the interests of property management companies and homeowners." His words

sounded hypocritical to me at the beginning. It is obvious that a large number of private security companies and the small market will prompt these private companies to lower its service fee to be competitive. As a result, they have to cut *baoan*'s salary to balance revenue with expenditure, which will eventually harm the interest of the people working in this industry. However, Li Jian interpreted the process in a different light.

"The result of cutting baoan's income will be that less and less able men would like to be a *baoan* and that *baoan* take their work less and less seriously. Consequently, the *suzhi* of baoan staying in this industry and the quality of security service they provide will both deteriorate," Li Jian said, "eventually, the safety and happiness of the homeowners will be jeopardized." His prediction reminds me one homeowner's question—how could they expect *baoan* to be responsible when their salary was so little? When *baoan*'s basic rights are infringed, their vital interests are jeopardized, and their own security is endangered, their performance may eventually undermine the function of this occupation and threatened the sense of security of the fearing state and the fearful citizens.

Conclusion

Since the housing reforms in the 1990s, the middle-class homeowners' demand and the state's promotion have stimulated the fast development of the private security industry. Nowadays *baoan* in residential space has been a ubiquitous phenomenon and a culture of dwelling in urban China, making *baoan* one of the commonest jobs that a male migrant worker can immediately find in big cities. Consequently, even though Bing was not qualified to stay in this industry, he always found his way to be a *baoan* in different companies; Hangjing is an ambitious and smart young man who was not resigned to be a *baoan* at his age, but he was pushed back to this industry nevertheless.

This project started with my curiosity: Why do homeowners need so many *baoan*? This ethnographic research answers the question by providing empirical evidence based on the fieldwork in a gated community of Shanghai. It is theoretically framed by "a hierarchical system of fear", that includes *baoan* and *qunzu* tenants in the dialogue. It examines how different actors understand what "security" is and how they articulate their fear and use fear to achieve their political and socioeconomic objectives. Fear is not only an internal feeling of insecurity that is deeply rooted in socioeconomic and spatial inequalities, but also a strategy and a discourse manipulated by different actors for configuring social order and gaining power.

On top of the system is the Chinese state whose legitimacy has been challenged by domestic and abroad dissenters. The regime stability is believed to be its leading political concern, despite that various practices that address this concern are often adopted in the name of public security. For a state obsessed with political and public order, the development and privatization of private security does not suggest giving up a monopoly on violence (Bakken 2000; White et al. 2008).

Instead, *baoan* has become a part of the panoptic surveillance system and a form of informal coercion for controversial and semi-legal tasks that state agencies are restricted from doing (Chen 2017). In this case, the state utilizes *baoan*'s physical proximity to citizens' private life as a supplement to its oversight in public spaces. On the other hand, the state mistrusts the political reliability of private capital and *baoan*, most of whom belong to the feared class. Therefore, it uses strict regulations to surveil and control every company and everyone in the industry and to prevent them from growing into rebellious gangs.

When more and more private security companies in different states of the U.S. are given police power (Goldstein 2007), the *baoan* in China are by no means empowered. Max Weber's class differs from Karl Marx's in the notion that he did not see the economic position as the supreme factor in stratification. He introduced the concepts of "status," a person's prestige, social honor, or popularity in a society, as well as of "power," a person's ability to get their way despite the resistance of others. A police officer in China can have immense power in specific circumstances and has a high status among citizens. A *baoan*'s status and power are hardly comparable to the police due to their respective relations with the state. Therefore, even though the political connection between the industry and the Chinese state is stronger and closer than those in other countries, most workers in this industry are members of the class that is most alienated from the party-state.

The power difference also reflects in media representations. Those negative news about security guards in the U.S. are often on the theme of the abuse of power—security personal wrongly use violence to subdue residents in the name of law and order. For example, in 2017 a 23-year-old security guard who served a residential community of Virginia fatally shoot a 60-year-old Chinese immigrant who was playing Pokemon Go in his car in the community. The

same security guard had also forbidden another homeowner to go out of his home, leaving the family in perplexity. In contrast, occasional negative news on *baoan* in China often relate to crimes, such as theft, burglary, rape, and murder, committed by individual *baoan*, which led to the worry about the *suzhi* of these individuals who take this job and enhanced the public's mistrust in this vocational group.

Below the state, it is the upper and middle classes that had relied on the party-state for its growth (Chen 2013; Tomba 2015). They are beneficiaries of a series of privatization, which also brought about the dissolution of Maoist solidarity and the emergence of socioeconomic "otherness" that did not previously exist in the socialist discourse (Logan 2008). Against this social background, they have a strong sense of insecurity about their newly-acquired assets and social status. Since most middle-class families in big cities are in heavy debt from owning a home, they are anxious in defending the price of their property and their exclusive entitlement to "club goods" (Buchanan 1965) that they have paid for. Nevertheless, their vulnerability in the socioeconomic sense is often expressed in the fear of violence.

They retreat into the "enclaves of fear" and hire *baoan* to deter crimes, to expel *qunzu* tenants, to assist in chores, and to defend a homogeneous space. In addition to practical functions, the upper-and middle-classes homeowners also conspicuously consume the outstanding security service and young and strong bodies of *baoan* to demonstrate social distinction. The role of fearing has become a delicate way of forging class identities and demarcating boundaries, as well as obscuring their authentic insecurity and justifying conspicuous consumption.

On the other hand, the middle-class residents commonly perceive those informally-employed *baoan* as low-*suzhi* and morally-inferior "others" and have ambivalent sentiments toward *baoan*: dependency and mistrust as well as fear and disdain. Therefore, sterner

disciplinary techniques are applied on those migrant bodies so as to transform them into docile and disciplined laborer that could be utilized as a remedy for urban fear.

At the bottom of the system of fear are the large population of migrant informal workers who are mostly from rural and less developed areas. They have been dispossessed of farmland, employment, and other livelihoods by the neoliberal-authoritative governmentality. During various campaigns initiated by the state and the urbanites, the feared class have been depicted as a threat to political stability and to the happiness and security of homeowners. While the state and the homeowners have the privilege to being afraid, the unpropertied's fear of losing dignity, security, and a minimal space to sleep is not acknowledged or even denied.

The bureaucratic system and the increasing economic inequality have deepened a sense of relative deprivation among migrant informal workers (Cai and Dai 2001; Bakken 2005; Li 2004). While the absolute deprivation suggests that their basic needs such as food, water, and residency cannot be satisfied, the relative deprivation indicates that they feel deprived when they compare their living quality with other socioeconomic groups. When the feared class sees that the boom of the economy and the prosperity of urban space to which they have contributed are irrelevant to their lives, the feeling of deprivation became stronger, which in some circumstance may even result in political instability (Li 2004:26).

The state and the upper-and middle-classes' fears shape and are shaped by the job of *baoan*. Since the informalization of this job in more and more communities in recent years, most *baoan* belong to the feared class, onto which the state and the middle class often projects social fear. Gated communities in urban China have become battlefields where different actors compete for their right to fear, with *baoan* standing in the centers of the battlefields. However, *baoan* themselves rarely expressed their fear in everyday conversations or during the interviews. I had

witnessed how some of them were humiliated and threatened by homeowners, but they were reluctant to discussed it or often downplayed their feelings in later conversations. “That is what baoan is,” they said. They either took such experience as a part of the nature of their job or feel too ashamed to recall it.

Doubtlessly, they also concern about personal and property safety and social stability; however, all of these concerns are always outweighed by their top insecurities about survival. During the interviews, they repeatedly mentioned their feelings of uncertainty about future. Since most of them did not have savings and social insurances, they did not know how to survive when they became too sick or too old to work. Ironically, the precariousness of their lives became the testimony of their dangerousness in public security and political-instability.

What is the remedy for urban fear? Humphrey argued that an effective way to make the “others” stop acting in the ways that make us afraid, is to acknowledge their full humanity, and hence their entitlement to all emotions including their own fear (2013:302). In the case of post-socialist China, urban fear is deeply rooted in the dramatic economic stratification, the unfair spatial orderings, and the dissolution of social solidarity since the economic reform. Only when the basic rights of those migrant laborers including *baoan* are safeguarded, when the feared class’s fear about survival was acknowledged, and when those socioeconomic others are accepted as one of “us”, the authorities and the upper-and middle-classes’ fear and uncertainty could be alleviated.

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