**private property/私产(Sī Chǎn)**

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**Basic meaning**

In ancient Chinese, the left part of 私 means rice seedling, and the right part means own self. The original meaning is rice seedling owned by a person. Later, its meaning was extended to privately owned lands / family member / clothes. It can also be used as an adjective to mean "private, own" as opposed to "public".

As for 产(產), it originally means the growth of plants and trees. For example, Xu Shen's *Shuowen Jiezi* believes that the word takes "生" as the shape side, and "彦" omits "彡" as the sound side. The ancient character of "生" looks like the sprouting of plants and trees drilling out of the ground. The growth of plants and trees leads to the meaning of fertility and production. Yan Zhitui's "Yan Family Instructions · running the family": "the livestock of vegetables and fruits are produced in the garden." It can also be interpreted as a natural product, such as *Zhou Li · Chunguan · Da Bo*:" taking natural property as Yin virtue, preventing it with middle courtesy; taking real estate as Yang virtue, preventing it with harmony and joy. " Zheng Xuan explained: "Natural animals are the genus of six animals; real plants are the genus of nine valleys." Finally, it means land, houses and property owned by people. For example, the biography of *Guo Dan* in the *Later Han Dynasty*: "Dan came out of Dianzhou county and became a high level official, but his family has no heritage and his children are in poverty."

Therefore, private property generally refers to land, houses, property, etc. owned by individuals / individuals.

**Private property, family property and public property**

Generally, people think that public property is the opposite of private property. Abstractly speaking, there is no problem in itself, but in history and reality, the situation is much more complex, and there are some intermediate states between them. In ancient Chinese society before the late Qing Dynasty, family was the basic socio-economic unit, "property" It is shared, used and benefited by family members. The labor, income and livelihood of family members are arranged by the family. Compared with public property, family property is exclusive and private to other ordinary people outside the family; but for family members, it can be considered public. In the family, there are restrictions on family members' ownership of private property, such as It is recorded in the book of *rites · qulishi* that "when parents are still alive, people should have private wealth"; it is said in the book of *rites · Fangji* that "when parents are still alive, people dare not to distribute their property"; Sima Guang even pointed out in the book of *Sushui Jiayi* that "anyone who is a son of man is not allowed to accumulate private wealth. Salaries and land and house income belong to his parents. When they use them, they can ask for them. They dare not take private leave and dare not share them privately." However, in fact, private property is bound to exist. For example, the property obtained from an official's salary or from the army, becoming an adoptive son a son-in-law from his adoptive father's or father-in-law's family can no longer be included in the property distribution of the original family; the property obtained without relying on family property/resources, such as the income from going out to do business alone or gifts; the wife's dowry, including dowry property and land, etc. These properties are private properties in the modern sense. It is worth noting that a considerable part of these private properties are converted from the properties of other families, and these private properties will become the properties of the new family when their owners become independent families.

In the world view of the ancient Chinese, people can accept that "产"（property） belongs to the 天子（son of heaven）. Because "产"（property）essentially belongs to the heaven and earth, it comes from the heaven and earth, and man is only a temporary manager. As the representative of heaven's will on earth, the son of heaven can naturally own all "property" under the kingdom under this concept. Although many dynasties separated the property of the emperor or the emperor's family from the national treasury, in fact, the emperor could use the money of the national treasury for the needs of the his family and reward it to the royal family members, other officials and people. Therefore, it is said that 家天下（"family is the world"）. However, even in ancient China, the state's "property"，to a certain extent, still has the nature of public ownership, because it was used in public interest, such as public infrastructure such as canals, water conservancy and post roads, grain reserves for disaster prevention and famine, and so on.

Therefore, public property, family property and private property can be converted to each other.

**Private property protection and Dynasty replacement**

In ancient China, there were policies similar to western private property protection, which protected the state, family and private "property" to a certain extent according to relevant laws and regulations.

It is worth noting that in ancient times, due to the low level of productivity and limited material production, if the polarization between the rich and the poor was too large, it would easily lead to social unrest and even Dynasty change. Therefore, on the basis of frugality, all Chinese dynasties advocated the equalization of the rich and the poor. Therefore, on the one hand, those that can reduce the polarization between the rich and the poor should be protected and encouraged as much as possible. For example, the sparse discussion of the laws of the Tang Dynasty once stated: "Those whose grandparents and parents are alive, but they themselves have different places to live and private property, should be put into prison for three years." This is because the existence of a large family is conducive to ensuring that there will be no obvious differentiation within the family members. On the other hand, the state power is to crack down on the super rich and powerful. It has long been the policy of various dynasties in China to crack down on large private property and protect small private property, including emphasizing agriculture and restraining commerce, salt and iron official business, etc.

However, there was a cycle in each dynasty. At the beginning of the dynasty, the emperor and officials at all levels often experienced long-term political and military experience, had strong ability, and were able to make great efforts to govern. These policies were still well implemented. However, with the passage of time, on the one hand, the bureaucratic system was still cautious, on the other hand, the commodity currency relationship gradually broke away from all kinds of constraints and began to change the erosion of the bureaucratic system eventually leads to the continuous concentration of private property (especially land) of small private owners into the hands of large private owners, and more and more farmers lose their land. Once they encounter the impact of natural disasters, they may arouse farmers' uprising and even Dynasty change.

In English, the property of private property comes from the Old French propriété, which comes from the Latin proprietās. It has the meaning of "nature and characteristics" in Aristotle's philosophy, but it is more connected with private rights and legal rights, which refers to the legal status of the property owner and the specific things belonging to someone. Therefore, unlike the original meaning of "life" in ancient Chinese, the birth of the western concept of property was inseparable from the emphasis on personal rights and interests.

While considering the protection of private property, we must also realize that the threat to private property is often not the state, but other private property. Especially in today's era, many countries "property" (or "wealth") distribution gap has widened to a dangerous level, and we need to think more deeply about public and private property.