

Andreas Seibert
The Colors of Growth
China's Huai River

Lars Müller Publishers

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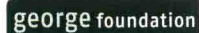
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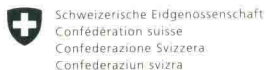
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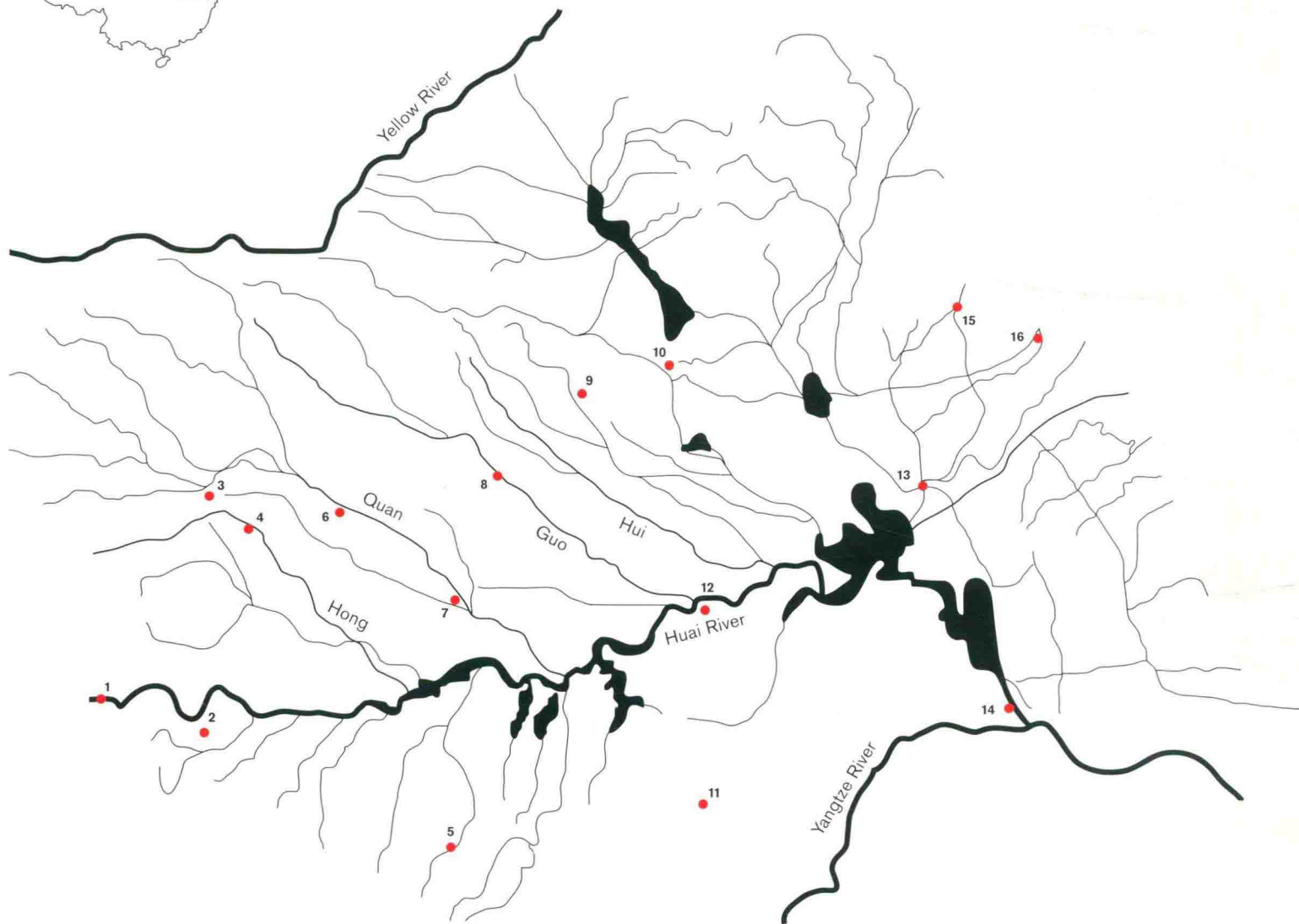
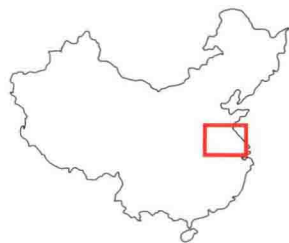
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7 Introduction

8–47	Tongbai Mountains, Henan Province (source)	1
48–51	Xinyang, Henan Province	2
56–77	Luohe, Henan Province	3
78–89	Xiangcheng, Henan Province	4
92–105	Jinzhai, Anhui Province	5
106–107	Jieshou, Anhui Province	6
108–111	Fuyang, Anhui Province	7
112–117	Guoyang, Anhui Province	8
118–169	Suzhou, Anhui Province	9
171–178	Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province	10
179–181	Hefei, Anhui Province	11
182–201	Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province	10
203–221	Bengbu, Anhui Province	12
222–233	Huai'an, Jiangsu Province	13
234–245	Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province (Yangtze River confluence)	14
246–251	Lianyungang, Jiangsu Province	15
252–269	Yellow Sea, Jiangsu Province (estuary)	16

The Huai River drainage basin is a complex water system. It consists not only of the Huai River itself but of many tributaries both large and small, of canals, lakes, ponds, and natural and artificial reservoirs. In order to get a solid understanding of the river, one must travel in a nonlinear fashion, taking detours along the way. While the places I visited are not located on a linear route, the images in this book are arranged so that by flipping from one page to the other, the reader is virtually traveling from west to east, from the river's source to the river's mouth.

A.S.

The high-speed train from Shanghai to Hefei, the capital of Anhui Province, is moving through a severe thunderstorm. I look out the window. Lightning flashes in the rapidly darkening sky. Heavy raindrops drum down on the roof and windows of the train, making it impossible to see the passing fields and villages. The train slows down.

About a week prior, on July 23, 2011, two high-speed trains collided on a viaduct near the city of Wenzhou, in similar weather. Cars were derailed and plunged off the bridge. There were 40 people killed and over 190 injured in the accident. The badly damaged cars were buried on the spot, without further investigation. The official explanation was that this was to make room for emergency vehicles.

I pick the newspaper up again and read a commentary about the accident: “For many in China, the train wreck has become a symbol of concerns about whether the government is achieving breakneck development without proper heed to people’s life and health....” And it continues, “If nobody can be safe, do we still want this speed? Can we drink a glass of milk that’s safe? Can we stay in an apartment that will not collapse?”

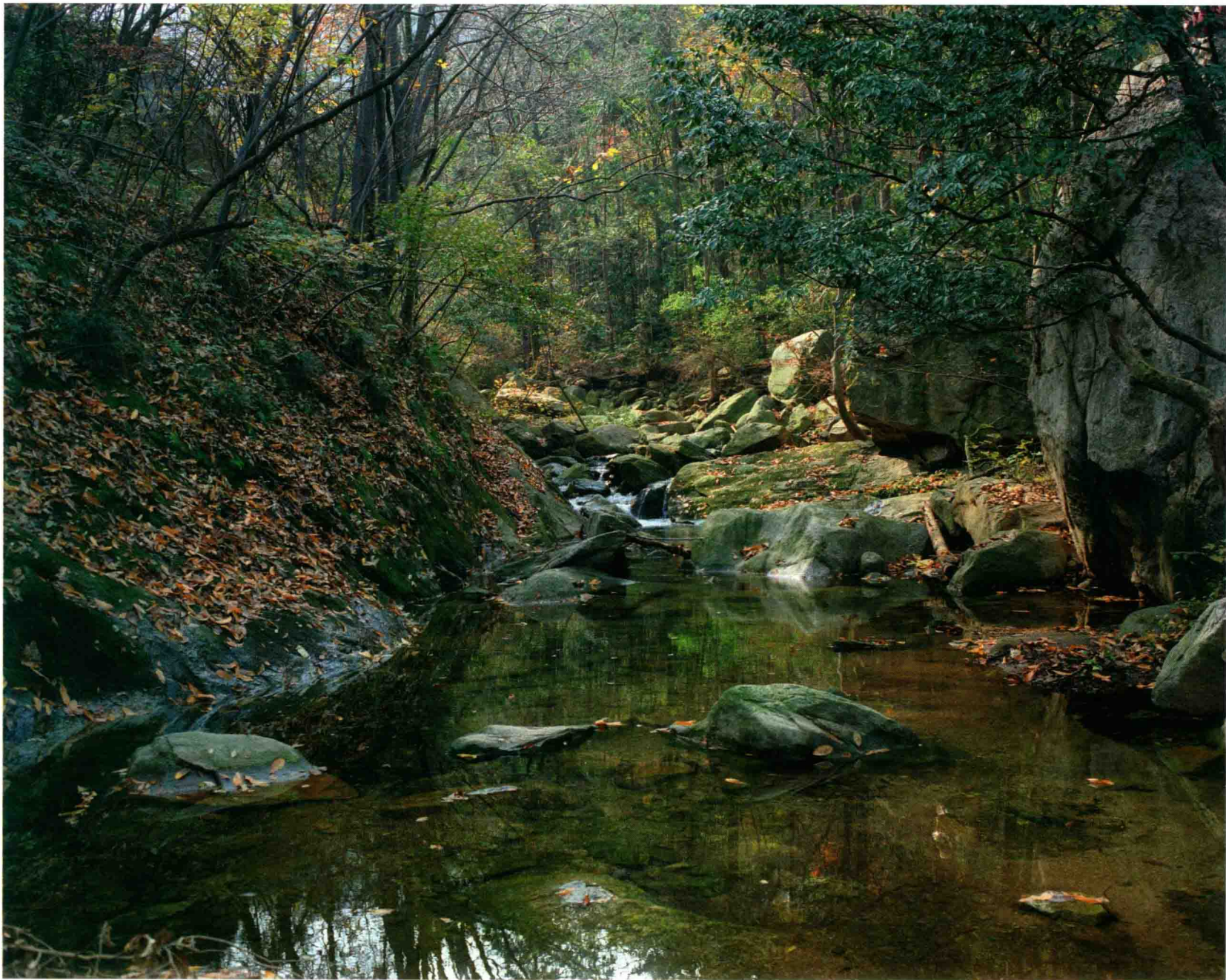
Three decades of unchecked, virtually unregulated economic growth has resulted in unprecedented environmental pollution in many areas of the country. The Huai River, the destination of my journeys and the subject of this book, embodies this problem in a particularly explicit fashion. It is not only a concrete example of how the economy often works in the interests of individuals and companies rather than the benefit of the people, but it is also representative of countless similar situations around the world. My aim was to illustrate what I consider the most pressing questions of our era in which economy is the leading paradigm: What is man’s relationship to nature, and, accordingly, what price is society willing to pay for economic growth?

“We are all passengers in this high-speed train,” headlines the commentary, which goes on to quote Qiu Qiming, a news anchor on CCTV, the state broadcaster, “China, please slow down. If you are too fast, you may leave the souls of your people behind.”

Andreas Seibert

Measures are being taken in numerous Chinese cities to improve the air and water quality, but the interior of the country, where two-thirds of the Chinese people live, is progressively deteriorating into a kind of national landfill. A good example of this problem is the state of the Huai River.

The 1,078-kilometer-long Huai has its source in the Tongbai Mountains in the southern part of Henan Province. From here, the Huai flows through the provinces of Anhui and Jiangsu. Part of the river enters the Yangtze at Yangzhou, and another part flows into the Yellow Sea south of the city of Lianyungang. The source of the Huai (facing page). Tongbai Mountains, Henan Province, November 2011









One of the attractions at the headwaters of the Huai is a waterfall with a fifteen-meter drop. Tongbai Mountains, Henan Province, November 2011



In the Water Curtain Cave above the waterfall, tourists take pictures of each other in front of a stone statue of Sun Wukong, the Monkey King. Sun Wukong, a typical trickster, remains one of the most popular mythical creatures in China. Tongbai Mountains, Henan Province, November 2011