

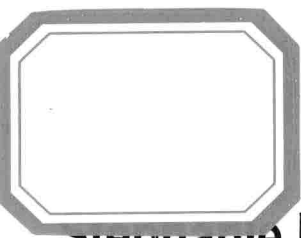
The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a dense forest. The trees are tall and slender, with dark trunks and vibrant green foliage. A narrow, light-colored path winds through the forest floor, which is covered in a thick layer of green plants and small white flowers. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

Stephanie B. Tansey

# Recovery of the Heart

Dialogues with People Working  
towards a Sustainable Beijing





**Stephanie B. Tansey**

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**NEW WORLD PRESS**

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## Foreword

China has the largest indigenous rural population in the world. Now China also has the largest middle class in the world. For seven thousand years we cultivated an agriculture and values-based way of life in rural communities despite limited land and water resources. This had positive externalities that are yet to be recognized. Most developing countries in Asia, like rural China, still have such agricultures as well. Heterogeneous and diverse are important characteristics of an ecological civilization.

In western-centric culture, only a few progressive intellectuals in the West respect and recognize the value of community agriculture in Asia, even when such practices possess the same standards of sustainability and permanence as privatized agriculture. In 1909, Franklin Hiram King (1848–1911), an American agricultural scientist visited Korea and Japan and learned about their agricultural practices and customs. Two years later, in 1911, his pioneering book, *Farmers of Forty Centuries or Permanent Agriculture in China, Korea and Japan* was published which has helped many western private farmers grow sustainably.

One hundred years later, echoing Mr. King's pioneering work, Ms. Stephanie Tansey, through her dialogues with both Chinese and non-Chinese residents of Beijing, encourages us to collaborate with nature as a city in *Recovery of the Heart: Dialogues with People Working towards a Sustainable Beijing*. Ms. Tansey, like Mr. King, has listened and learned from indigenous people on the ground, even though both come from a developed country where developmentalist ideologies are ubiquitous.

Following the 1949 land revolution in China, all arable land in villages was distributed in the form of property rights to all households according to the number of people in the family. This property distribution created a community-based village rationality that could internalize the cost of negative

unforeseen effects through the long-term working behaviors within the villages. This village rationality was originally derived from a traditional rural culture that stressed resource sharing, income parity, cooperative solidarity, social justice, and the morality of village elites.

However, in the 1980s, the capitalized government accelerated modernization. Village rationality was gradually replaced by individual rationality, accompanied by the application of reformed social sciences that produced and propagated the capitalized official ideology. The effect was severe pollution.

In 2007 the Chinese central government embarked on the current national strategy of “Ecological Civilization.” The government’s long-term agricultural policy followed suit in 2008 seeking to create “resource conserving and environmentally friendly agriculture.” Unfortunately there have been problems and failures.

The intent of this book is to demonstrate that individual Beijingers do deeply support the idea of a sustainable city. Sustainable agriculture is an important way to repair human relations with mother earth. Fair trade is the way to construct the foundation for the rural-urban solidarity needed to encourage a sustainable society. Also important are communal skills so city-wide common resource allocations and problems can be resolved through dialogues. Betsy Damon’s delight at finding living water communities, and Jim Spear’s encounters in Mutianyu, highlight a history of oriental rationality in rural communities in the past. I believe that today a new oriental rationality that includes conversations between grassroots people, intellectuals, and even expats with good listening skills, can move us towards our ecological civilization.

We very much need the solidarity this book proposes. China now has the largest number of pro-food safety and pro-ecology advocates in the world. As shown by Wang Zhiqin and Yang Jing, ordinary people want to connect to nature again. Together, we could create a fair trade-based sustainable consumption campaign that would transform our cities. Beijing should lead the way.

Wen Tiejun

Dean

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# Introduction

The purpose of this book is to open up a dialogue with citizens here in Beijing and around the world. We are already doing things that make our cities environmentally more sustainable. The citizens in this book are like you. They, like you, have a passion for what they do. They, like you, know who they are and where they are going.

We won't always see this dream come true in our lifetime. The day all urban residents pay farmers a good price at the market so rural children can get a good education. When farmers can revel in being honest and hardworking instead of using chemical fertilizers to make ends meet. We can all work, though, towards a time when people lead meaningful lives that are enriched by our relationship with nature.

The future will be far better because we are here now. Our water will run pure and fresh and invigorate life with new purpose. People will welcome waste treatment centers to their neighborhoods. Someday the local villages around Beijing will become places where citizens make wise lifestyle choices and live sustainably on the land. Beijing will become a healthy place to raise children.

More and more people, passionate about a personal hobby that connects them to the sustainable needs of their city, will take the time, purposefully, through art, culture, and great conversations, to reconnect themselves to earth and their society and begin to look forward to taking part in the grand idea of becoming a sustainable society, because they want balance in their lives again.



The people in this book are not here for the short term. They are success stories because they think about being part of the process. They are common people just like you. They are self-educated or formally educated. Some have left good jobs to pursue a dream. They thrive on the idea that they are making a difference, and that the future will be better.

Most of them are Chinese, but not all. Beijing is a crossroads, just as it has been for many thousands of years. Though now gigantically bigger. Some people are here from somewhere else in China because they got into good universities here. Others were born here. Some stay for a while and then go home. Some work outside of government, others inside it.

I like to think of each of them as an Everyman. An Everyman means an ordinary person who depicts the human being in extraordinary circumstances. This is a Western term but I think we should have a global way to describe people like this who can be found, of course, all over the world. Such people are individuals out to help their society in times of crisis. Let's call these people "Everyhumans." Each will be familiar to you in some way.

To think that Beijing is going to become a sustainable city is extraordinarily idealistic at the moment. Beijing is running out of water. A place once awash with river water is now dry as a bone. Good and bad decisions made in Beijing affect not only the wellbeing of its citizens and the environs of Beijing Municipality, but also send messages out to other cities.

Just like in capitals and great cities around the world, Beijing Municipality weighs the impact of policy decisions against a complex set of priorities. I do not condone corruption. I am angry when I see stupidity and greed. But I also recognize these in other capitals and cities elsewhere. This book is not where you are going to find justice for such bitter fruit.

## The Art and Power of Dialogue

People don't believe in the power of dialogue today. But we have in the past. For example, Shakespeare in *Hamlet*:

*What a piece of work is a man, How noble in Reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, In action how like an Angle! In apprehension how like a god, the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.*

The cry of man so angry, but at the same time an infinite call towards what we can be.

As witnessed in the Tang Dynasty in China, the Heian Period in Japan, the European renaissance, the Hindu renaissance, and the American renaissance, and certainly among indigenous peoples around the world in Africa and the Americas – when what it means to be human, connects with art, that dialogue is transformational.

The dialogue between these Chinese Everyhumans and yourselves is an important one. Chinese culture nurtures a consciousness that contains a certain wisdom that is distinctive and old. We can say that they have on glasses with different colored lenses than ours. While Americans may have blue lenses on, Indians pink ones, Russians green. What is important to realize is that Chinese lenses are red. You think they see the world in a blue/pink/green light but they do not. They think you see red but you do not.

Although my glasses are sometimes opaque no matter what the color, I have been lucky because some friends have let me inside China. I also was born and raised in Asia, in Japan, and have been a Buddhist for many years so I am familiar with some of the values implicit in why Chinese think the way they do. Not always, as you will see from this book. There are others whose lenses seem to be able to blend or change colors, and they can see from both perspectives. I have learned much from them.

Now that Beijing has become such an important place in the world, we all have to find a way to see life from the Chinese perspective too. Or to have a set for “reading” people who are not like us. We both have to work hard at this.

Much of what Beijingers say is implicit, just as only New Yorkers and Londoners, and Parisians, and Tokyoites understand what undercurrents are going on in their city and in the ethos of their culture. Add to this the last 60 years as the capital of the People’s Republic of China, much of it isolated from the world, and you can understand that this inside world and our outside world grew up very differently after World War II.

For this reason I have added a brief history of Beijing and its relationship with the land beneath it. I also have added some of the most fundamental values that Chinese philosophy possesses, which can have a positive impact on the environment of the future. I have left out others that are more familiar but don’t have such a bearing on how Chinese think intrinsically about nature and the role this can play in conceptualizing a sustainable society.

At the same time, fresh ideas from inside and outside of China, have been streaming into Beijing since before Huangdi became the father of the Chinese people, and they continue to impact the values, cultural traditions and economic reality of Beijing. Jicheng, Yanjing, Zhongdu, Dadu, Peking or what is now Beijing, has always been a place where many cultures and ideas mixed together. Ideas about humanity, culture, writing, music, poetry, as well as advances in agriculture, science, technology and communication. New ways of designing resulted. New engineering ideas. New ways of doing business, and new inventions.

Perhaps we can think about sustainable cities in the same way. After all, cities are all going to have to become sustainable. It is no longer possible to think, with water resources so low in the world, with pollution so pervasive, and population climbing, that we can do anything else. It is only a matter of when, and where, that tipping point will occur first.

A city is a living organism. Like all of life, it exists as part of an ecosystem. You can forget this, you can tamper with it and/or reshape that ecosystem if you like, but to be healthy, life has to come from a healthy ecosystem. We

can either be the tipping point, or have the tipping point come from nature. So here are some best practices in Beijing, and let's think about how they fit into the global roadmap to the tipping point that we want to see, the one we create ourselves. These are not the only models, of course, but they are a good place to begin.

## **Human Beings, the Land and the Culture**

People have been living here for 710,000 years. Beijing sits on an alluvial plain rimmed with mountains on the west (Western or Xishan Mountains) and northwest and north (Jundu Mountains). The plain tilts as it goes towards the Bohai Sea to the southeast.

The mountains shield the land and inhabitants from the desert sands of the Gobi Desert. Major rivers flowing through the municipality include the Yongding River and the Chaobai River, which is part of the Hai River system. Both flow from northwest to southeast. There are also several smaller rivers. Once it became the capital, it was the northern terminus of



Peking Man 755,000 years ago



The hill in Fangshan County where Peking Man lived

the ancient Grand Canal that began in Hangzhou, near Shanghai. The Miyun and Huairou Reservoirs are crucial to the water supply.<sup>1</sup> They feed the lakes inside the city as well.

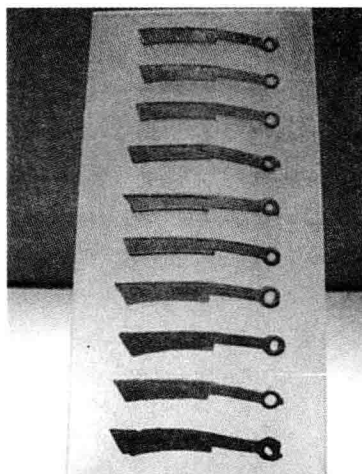
But before it was the capital of China, it was the capital of smaller states. Before that it was home to nomads from the north, and before that to Neolithic peoples and before that to Paleolithic human beings 710,000 years ago.

Peking Man, as he is known, his family and clan members, lived in caves in the mountains that are the southwestern border of Beijing. This is now Fangshan District. These first humans enjoyed many of the same things that later people enjoy. At least until the development of Beijing as a big walled city.

It was an inter-glacial period, so slightly warmer than today. The mountains were full of trees and he and his family gathered nuts – hazel, pine, elm were good to eat, as were rose seeds. On the grasslands (which is now the city) he hunted several kinds of deer and smaller animals. Peking Man was a cave dweller, toolmaker, fire user, gatherer, and hunter. Viewing fossil records and cultural remains, he was superb in adapting himself to his environment both physiologically and creatively.



Bronze Steamer in Yan Dynasty  
(Capital Museum)



Sword-shaped Yan coins  
(Capital Museum)



When he died out (no one knows why), Neolithic peoples came and settled around the plain – up in the north around the Changping area as well as in the south as before. Millet agriculture began about 7000 BCE. They developed the ability to store and redistribute crops, and had specialized craftspeople as well as a social and political order. They drew pictographs mainly of grazing animals, agriculture and hunting, perhaps to pass these skills on to their young.

The Ji people, part of the Han culture, lived in their town, Jicheng. Dongjialin, where the Yan people, also Han, lived just to the southwest, had another center. Eventually in the 11th century BCE, the Yan overthrew the Ji. The State of Yan set up its capital at Jicheng, because it was closer to the Yongding River. Lotus Lake and wells supplied water for daily life. Yanjing beer is still a favorite beer in Beijing today.

It was a prosperous market town. The river irrigated the crops. The hunting and foraging were good. The river, though turbulent, had abundant fish. The forests were full of trees. Traders came back and forth over the mountains going south and east. These two trade routes continued to be important.

In 221 BCE the Emperor, Qin Shihuang, established the first unification of China and set up his capital in Xianyang in Shaanxi to the west. Jicheng/Yanjing ceased being a capital and became just a prefectural town, though an important trading center. The Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE) unified China but did not last long.

Emperor Qin was concerned about invasions from nomads to the north from the Xiongnu empire. He ordered the building of a new wall to connect some older fortifications along his newly acquired mountain ranges to the north. Thousands of people died putting up this Great Wall over the centuries. It was completed by the Ming in the 16th century.<sup>2</sup>

In the Sui Dynasty (581-618) the trading center became known as Zhuojun. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), it was renamed Youzhou and became a military outpost. During the Tang Dynasty, it supplied troops as they headed east to the kingdoms in Korea and back. It has remained part of military districting ever since.

In the 10th century, the Khitan, a Mongolian tribe from the western Liao River area in northern China, established the Liao Dynasty in 907. In 936 they occupied Youzhou and named it Nanjing (Southern Capital). It became a secondary capital for the Liao Dynasty. In 938, the city became one of the five capitals of the Kingdom of Liao (947-1125) and the city was renamed Yanjing.

What was life like during this time on the plain? Rice was now cultivated in the marshlands to the east. Handicrafts, pottery, cloth and cooking materials supplied the residents of the city with goods. Workmanship continued to develop. Writing and computation were clearly necessary for the trading of goods. Feeding and clothing of the soldiers, providing for campaigns, entertainment and culture promoted the development of the city.

The farmers and their villages were much the same as before. They fed and clothed the city dwellers. The farmers needed nature to favor them, so rites, agricultural knowledge, and ancient wisdom which connected to the rhythms of nature were important to them. The connection with farmers and city folk was driven by personal relationships and fostered by living close to the land. Government taxes were also part of life as well, but at this point the emperor was far away and disconnected from the local land.

The people inside the city were more cosmopolitan. They were merchants, craftsmen and gentry. Music, dance, food and entertainment were all part of city life. New peoples and ideas mixed into Chinese culture. Buddhism

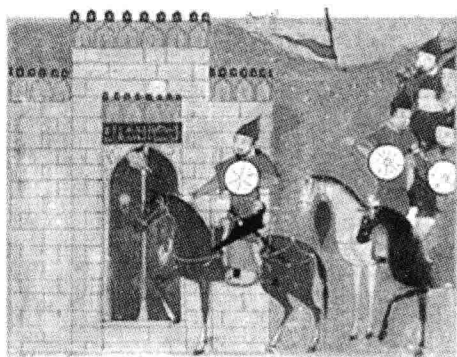


Niujie, the oldest mosque in Beijing, was founded in 996.

in particular, spread from the south, taking hold in the city and then headed east to Korea and Japan, and north to the Mongols. Buddhist temples now dotted the landscape, intermingling with shrines and temples of Christian sects, Muslim beliefs, Taoism and Confucianism.

The Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) was the next big step. The Jurchen, a people from the north, swept south, created an empire and established their capital on the same plain, now called Zhongdu. They improved water conservancy. Though some of their water projects failed, Lugouqiao (known to the West as the Marco Polo Bridge), has stood the test of time.<sup>3</sup>

The Jin Dynasty was short-lived, falling to the Mongols and Genghis Khan. Picture this: You are on the walls of the city looking north. There are huts below and people are cooking and getting ready for dinner. You look north and feel a rumbling. A huge shadow on the plain appears. All of a sudden you realize that shadow are soldiers on horses. Thousands of them heading right towards you. The air becomes filled with panic as you and the small number of soldiers get ready to defend the city and begin to pour from the city. The farmers in their huts outside the city walls race towards the huge mass in front of them with whatever they have in their hands. It is hopeless, of course. The Horde has arrived.



The first Mongol siege of Dadu/Beijing (1213-1214). The city fell in the second siege (1214-1215).



Yuan Emperor Kublai Khan made Beijing his capital.

This is the video that the Capital Museum in Beijing shows visitors about the arrival of the Mongols. A good example of what all Asia and parts of Europe experienced. The Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) with Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, as emperor ruled from Beijing, which was now called Dadu. They improved agriculture, encouraged trade along the Silk Road, built highways and granaries and promoted science and religion. Visits from other parts of Asia and from the West began to be part of everyday life. After the death of Genghis Khan, the subsequent emperors never had the same power and eventually lost the support of the people.<sup>4</sup>

From the Yuan Dynasty to modern China, more and more people were drawn to this plain and its growing metropolis. Water supply continued to be a problem.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) the population of China was about 180 million. Ming rule, with its vast navy and legendary tributary fleet under the Muslim eunuch Admiral Zheng He in the 15th century far surpassed all others in size. There were enormous construction projects, including the restoration of the Grand Canal and the Great Wall and the establishment of the Forbidden City in Peiping (Beijing) during the first quarter of the 15th century.

The Ming attempted to create a society of self-sufficient rural communities in a rigid, immobile system that would have no need to engage with the commercial life and trade of urban centers. This rebuilding of China's agricultural base and strengthening of communication routes had the unintended effect of creating a vast agricultural surplus that could be sold at burgeoning markets located along courier routes. Rural culture and commerce became influenced by urban trends. The upper classes embodied in the schol-



Ming Emperor Yongle moved the capital to Beijing in 1421.