



THE
MISSING
PEACE

Artists & the Dalai Lama

The Committee of 100 for Tibet
& The Dalai Lama Foundation
Foreword by H.H. the Dalai Lama

Helen Mayer Harrison & Newton Harrison

On my birthday an old friend, a neuroscientist from the university, came into our studio and asked, given the nature of our work, what I thought about the idea of His Holiness for a peace park.

I said, "His Holiness who?"

He said, "Why the Dalai Lama, of course."

I said, "Tell me about the Peace Park."

He handed me a book and opened it to first one quote then another.

"If our generation exploits everything available—the trees, the water, or the minerals—without any care for the coming generations and the future, then we are at fault, aren't we? But if we have a genuine sense of universal responsibility as our central motivation, then our relating with the environment will be well balanced."

"It is my hope and dream that the entire Tibetan Plateau will someday be transformed into a true peace sanctuary: an entirely demilitarized area and the world's largest natural park or biosphere."

He said that our work might interest the Dalai Lama.

I said that His work certainly interested us. He said he was going to India to meet with His Holiness on various matters and would discuss our work with Him and would we write a greeting to the Dalai Lama.

So we offered greetings:

GREETINGS:

"We hold that the ocean is a great draftsman.

In response to our millennia of manipulation of fire,
the Ocean has answered gracefully

By rising slowly,

And moment by moment

Redrawing the shorelines of the world.

And as the oceans rise gracefully

Changing all boundaries

And means of production

The ways of all living beings will change as well.

To this continuously graceful drawing and redrawing

Can we respond

By withdrawing with equal grace

To the High Ground?

It seems to us that envisioning Tibet as a World Peace Park,

Certainly High Ground,

Is an act of equal grace."

The Dalai Lama responded to us a first through our friend, who turned out to be the Dalai Lama's science advisor, finding common grounds in our greetings. Then, later, directly to us, encouraging us to proceed.

We told him, "We have the notion that all countries downstream from Tibet, along the Indus, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Salween, Mekong, Hwang-Ho and Yang-tse Rivers, share common interests and concerns relating to the effects of overgrazing, abusive agriculture, deforestation, and desertification of Tibet since these countries share the undesirable downstream consequences of impoverishment of riverine life and shore line habitats. Thus, we feel that all these countries downstream from Tibet could have an interest in sharing in the process of rebuilding the ecology and we are beginning to search for a metaphor that might draw their interests together."

Therefore,

FOR THIS PROJECT, WE INTEND

To create a very large scale model of Asia, where Tibet as the High Ground is manifest and the Seven Principal Rivers are clearly stated. This model would make clear the implications of the deforestation of Tibet for the many nations of the continent of Asia.

To come to a clarified statement of the research on the outcome to the rivers, riverine life and riverine surrounds including the dams and other river projects, in other countries as well as Tibet, of the deforestation of Tibet.

To develop a conceptual design for the regeneration of Tibetan forest, farm and meadowland. We would hold that a conceptual design for this kind of transformation carries a moral force in advance of criticism of any kind.

After all,

Tibet is the high ground

and the high ground is the hardest to generate

and the easiest to lose

We began to think about Ranil Senanayake's analog forests and a new life web for Tibet.

To develop a conceptual model that envisions a probable life web for the deforested areas of Tibet. This ecological model, working with the idea of analog forest, or a simplified woodland-rainforest ecosystem, would also have yields of recognizable value to those who inhabit the surrounds. The process would suggest an analog for the forest that once existed, less complex than the original, but nonetheless with overstory, understory, canopy and appropriate niches. This forest would also serve to conserve existing or replaced topsoil and protect riverine and wetland ecologies first—in Tibet proper and then in the countries below.

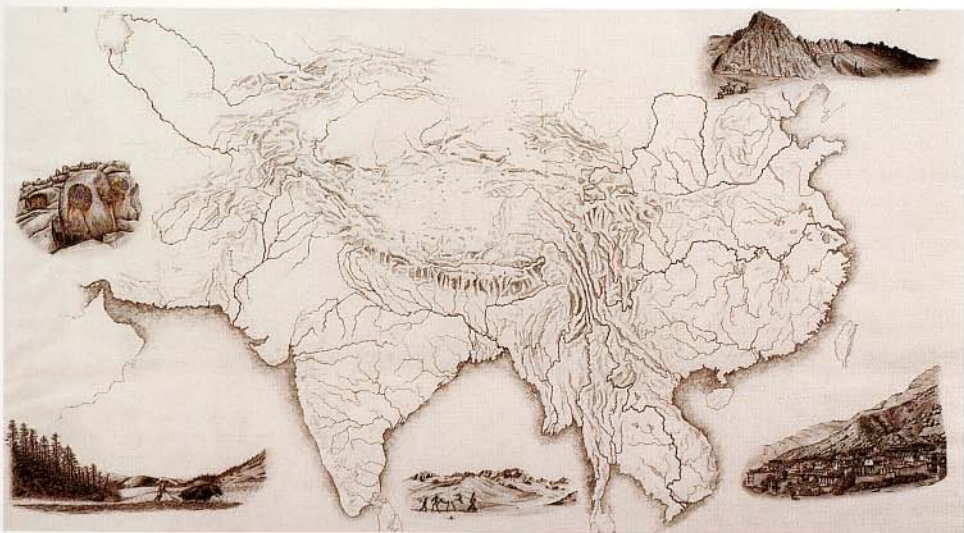
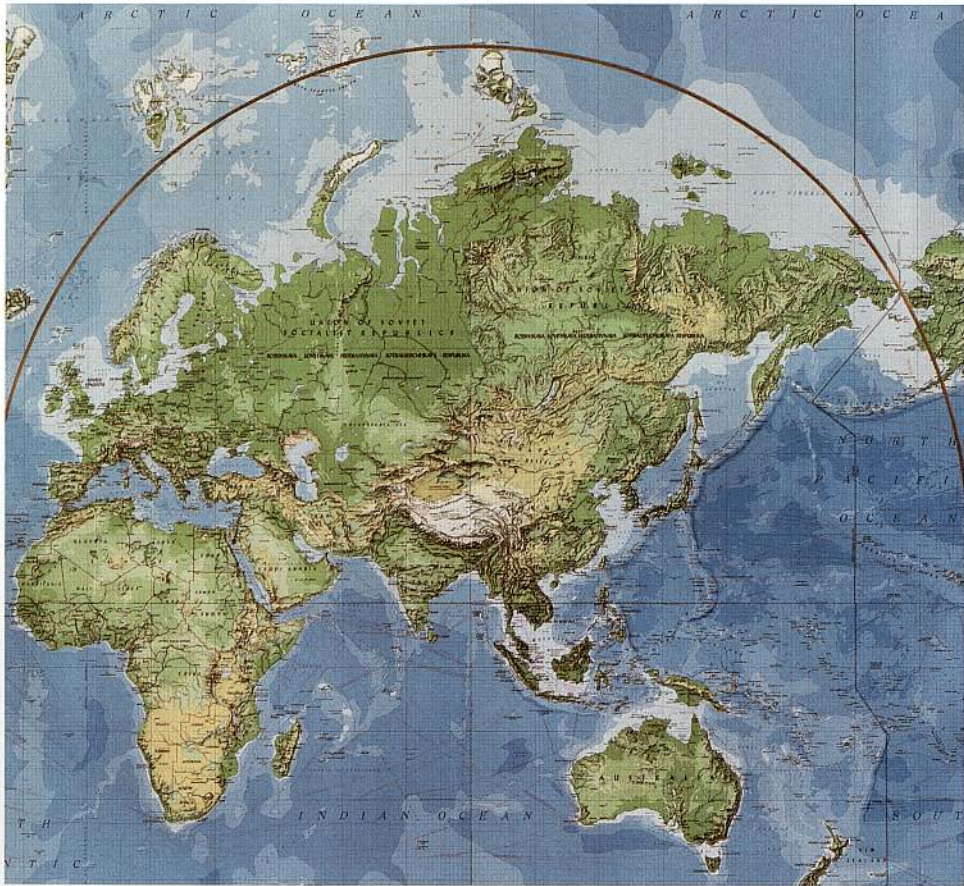
More is at stake here than the simple regeneration of a new kind of forest. The forest knits Tibet, China, Nepal, Kashmir and all the bordering countries together from an ecological point of view. The rivers which spring from Tibet are also waters that bind these countries. We would hold that a conceptual design expressing these understandings can be the basis for generating a conversation based on common interest as opposed to conflicting interest.

We hold that putting in place a working model of this kind is a necessary addition to the present discourse on saving the Tibetan culture, peoples and children and to preserve the terrain from emerging abuses such as atomic waste dumping.

Helen Mayer and Newton Harrison 1991

And now, 15 years have passed. Climate change is acknowledged. Ecological consciousness has grown. The poor management of forest reconstruction in the region has been documented. The difficulties arising of fragmented responses to severe whole systems degeneration are manifest, and in no place more than the sites in Tibet where the Seven Sacred Rivers begin. We propose that the time is now to begin again a visioning process leading to action on the ground, of what a sustainable whole systems concept would be. Creating an analog, as it were, to what once existed there.

Our belief that the time is now is bolstered by the growing ecological consciousness worldwide and the massively increasing body of ecological knowledge that now exists. It is time to begin again by gathering the information necessary, forming the teams necessary, sequestering the funds necessary, creating the words and imagery necessary, creating the consensus necessary, toward considering the well-being of the seven sacred rivers that emerge from the Tibetan plateau, and the watersheds and all within these through which the waters flow.



Tibet is the High Ground, 1991-2006
Relief map and drawing
10 x 8 feet