

By the time I was completing this book in early 2018, the circumstances of most of those I had known since 2007 had changed, and Dashalar no longer resembled the neighborhood with which I was familiar. I therefore decided to use the past tense in narrating my friends' stories.

The full value of the characters for *Dashalar* is *Dashanlan*. Tourist websites tend to use *Dashilar* or *Da Zha Lan*. In previous publications I have used *Dashalanr*, but here I prefer *Dashalar* as a compromise between the phonetic value of the characters and local oral usage.

*Dazayuan* is variously translated as “compound courtyard,” “big messy courtyard,” “big, mixed courtyard,” “tenements,” or “slums.” I use Wu Liangyong's “big cluttered courtyard,” from his *Rehabilitating the Old City of Beijing*, out of respect for an architect who designed a model for the conversion of Beijing's *dazayuan* into modernized structures that retained a feel of the traditional courtyard.

All those who appear in this book wanted me to use their real names. However, I have preserved their anonymity due to the ongoing political sensitivity around the state's program of urban regeneration. The pseudonyms I have created combine characters from local people's names, some phonetic or semantic element from their “real” name, and the term of address I used with them. The only exception is Jia Yong, whose identity I have decided to retain, given his prominence as a local businessman and photographer.

All direct quotations as transcribed from my recordings or based on my field notes appear in quotation marks or indented paragraphs.

The chapter headings are mostly named after the head of the household in question. This includes chapter 2, named after the eldest woman of the household. Even though in local cultural custom, her gender meant that she could not be acknowledged as “household head” (*jiazhang*), she enjoyed a local reputation as the key figure maintaining the unity of her family.

Unless noted otherwise, translations from archival and recorded materials are my own. XWDG is my abbreviation for Xuanwu qu dang'an (Xuanwu District Archives).