reveals more about himself than those he writes about. Likewise this review might have said more about the reviewer than the reviewed.

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This is quite an ambitious book, even if it does not have the full scope suggested by its title. The author, a geographer who was connected with the Center for East and South East Asian Studies in Copenhagen, outlines the economic policies of the Chinese central government over a period which is not only very long, but also characterized by major breaks. The First-Five Year Plan, Great Leap Forward, Retrenchment, Cultural Revolution, Opening to the West and Economic Reform all brought major changes in socialist planning. Larsen concentrates exclusively on the economy, and does not go into other regional issues such as devolution of central government power, treatment of national minorities, or social policies such as education and health care. He has derived his information mainly from Western-language books and Chinese articles of the early and mid-1980s translated by the Joint Publications Research Service.

The portrayal of government policy in this book (reflecting its heavy reliance on official Chinese sources, but also a sympathetic attitude towards socialist planning) is a rather idealized one of top-down commands or at least consensus-decisions. Nowhere do we find deviance or conflicting policies within the Centre or conflicts of interests between Centre and provinces. Nevertheless, there exists a great deal of evidence of debates and conflicts between policy-makers and regions about most issues of economic development, much of which has been produced since the CCP’s reevaluation of its former policies in 1981. The omission of such divergences, and the adoption of much of the language and bureaucratic-socialist outlook of the Chinese planners by the author tend to obscure the
dynamics, flexibility and give-and-take between different levels of
the Chinese economic planning system (with the value of hindsight,
these characteristics may have helped to save it from a Soviet-type
collapse). Also, by sticking too close to his official sources, the
author forgets to pose some most relevant questions as to the
human and economic costs of failed policies such as the Great Leap
Forward or the economic effect on rural areas of the state
monopolies of trade and most industries instituted in the early
1950s. Where the Cultural Revolution fits into his conventional
scheme of four different developmental strategies (classic Soviet,
mass mobilization, adjustment, and reform) is not very clear. The
heavy reliance on statistical data (particularly on industrial output)
underlines the authors' quantitative rather than qualitative
perceptions of economic development and growth.

Nevertheless, a great deal of useful information has been
presented here, both about policies and about economic and, in
particular, industrial growth in China's provinces. The final chapter
"Results of Regional Policy" takes up one-half of the book, with 200
pages and 37 tables with provincial statistical data, for selected
years. Sometimes, the author ventures beyond the descriptive and
presents some interesting reflections on Chinese economic growth
and the way it used to be planned. He concludes that in industry,
inherited regional inequalities have narrowed since 1953, but that
in agriculture, "divergent regional inequalities" have emerged. The
development of growth poles, a major component of the Chinese
government-led development strategy, is contrasted with the
industrialization of rural districts by semi-autarkic local
communities, but no firm conclusion is drawn about the effects of
various policies on inter- and intraregional inequalities.

The book is useful as an introduction to Chinese socialist thinking
about economic planning and to a variety of western articles about
the industrial aspects of China's economic development and also as
a collection of economic data. However, our present state of
knowledge about China's economic development and its policies
before the 1980s still has major lacunae. Larsen's ideas and
conclusions about the effect of government policies on regional
inequalities in China could use some more reflection, integration
and a somewhat wider base of source materials. The many issues
raised in this book should challenge economic geographers and socialist planning specialists to think again about socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Eduard B. Vermeer
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If the present reviewer could start anew in a life of leisure, he would happily spend his days monitoring the developments in Chinese archaeology. The most obvious reasons for this are of course the incredibly thick cultural layers, the unique working situation of using the archaeologist’s tools in your right hand while holding relevant historical sources in your left hand for immediate consultation, and finally, the thrill of never reaching a conclusive answer, because you are guaranteed unending strings of new discoveries which will keep you busy and marvelling. (The standard work on Chinese archaeology by K. C. Chang is already in its fourth edition, the latest edition having to make a cut-off point around 1000 B.C. because of the rapid increase in source material).

We can also use K.C. Chang as the starting point of the less romanticizing part of this review. When characterizing the Bronze Age of China, Chang says that it "was not accompanied, insofar as our available archaeological record suggests, by a significant use of metal farming implements, irrigation networks, and use of draft animals, or the use of the plow. For a breakthrough in agricultural technology in China, we will have to wait until about 500 or 600 B.C., when cast iron began to be used widely and for agricultural implements." (Chang 1986: The Archaeology of Ancient China, p. 364).

Donald B. Wagner, of the Department of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen, has, in his study on iron and steel in ancient China, given us an eloquent and impressive statement about this major shift in Chinese technological history. He maps out the beginnings of this development, surveys early iron artifacts,