

## Geographers and China

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*This paper reviews the discipline of China geography and the contributions China geographers have made to the field of China studies, focusing primarily on the period since World War II and on China geographers working in North America. Outside of the PRC and North America, other key centers are in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. China geographers (outside of China) are relatively few in number, but have been increasingly productive ever since the opening of China in the late 1970s and the resulting expanded opportunities for doing fieldwork and collaboration with scholars there. This paper provides synopses of leading China geographers in order to offer insights into the scope and evolution of the discipline. The field has become increasingly sophisticated, and the practitioners are increasingly Chinese émigrés. Publications have been heavily focused on urban geography, as well as various aspects of economic geography, environmental studies, and cultural geography. Major gaps remain in cultural, historical, social, population, and political geography. These gaps are areas of greatest interest to other China scholars—thereby accounting, in part, for the low visibility of China geographers. Collaborative research, especially in these areas, greater involvement in the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) and similar*

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organizations, and more publications in China studies journals could help to raise visibility.

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China has long been of interest to geographers. One might say that Western geographers have been studying China<sup>1</sup> since at least the days of Marco Polo and his epic journey and years of residence in China (1275-1292). While Polo probably never thought of himself as a geographer, what he did—especially in writing the celebrated story of his adventure, *Description of the World*—was very much in the earliest geographic tradition. The term, *geography*, comes from the Greek words *geo* ("the earth") and *graphos* ("to write about or describe"). "To describe (and explain) the world" remains the foundation of geography to this day, although the task is carried out with vastly more sophisticated tools and techniques than were available in Polo's day.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, while geography is very old as a field of intellectual inquiry, the discipline today is relatively small in numbers of professional geographers, and those who specialize in the study of China represent a tiny fraction of the whole profession. While the work that this small cadre of China geographers produces is of high quality and a significant contribution to the field of China studies (as well as geography) as a whole, the visibility of China geographers to the general China studies field remains limited. How

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this paper, "China" is used in the broadest sense to include the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, devoid of any political implications or intentions that are sometimes associated with the concept of "Greater China."

<sup>2</sup>Strictly speaking, geographic study of China actually long preceded even Marco Polo, in the form of the classic *Dilizhi* (地理誌 Geographic Records) found in the dynastic histories dating back to Ban Gu's (班固) *Dynastic History of the Han* (漢書). These documents were important encyclopedic compendiums of all kinds of geographic information about places in China, and remain important sources of data for scholars of China to this day. Beyond these documents, there were the writings of early travelers and explorers that were important texts in China's long geographical tradition. This paper, however, does not attempt to explore that rich but ancient body of literature on China's geography and history.

to explain this situation? This paper is an attempt to answer this question and to provide an overview of the field of China geography—its players, publications, important contributions, and historical evolution in the twentieth century.

Section one provides a brief summary of geography as a social science discipline (for the benefit of non-geographers). Section two begins the review by presenting an overview of the scope of China geography within the profession of geography in North America, and in other key world centers of geographic research on China. Section three, the main part of the paper, highlights a selected number of China geographers working in North America over the past 70-80 years who have made important contributions to the field of China studies. A final section evaluates the role of China geographers in the field and offers suggestions on how to improve the contributions these scholars make to both the field of geography and the China studies field, and in the process hopefully increase the visibility of the discipline of China geography.

No attempt is made here to present a comprehensive review or bibliography of the many contributions North American China geographers have made. Nor is the objective of this paper to present a theoretical analysis of the field of China geography. Others have already attempted such.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>These include the following: C. Cindy Fan, Laurence J. C. Ma, Clifton W. Pannell, and K. C. Tan, "China Geography in North America," in *Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, ed. G. L. Gaile and C. J. Wilmott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, in press). This is an overview of the sub-field of China geography, yet focuses entirely on peer-reviewed publications (especially journal articles) published since 1989, and largely ignores Taiwan (the Gaile/Wilmott volume is designed to highlight all of the specialty groups in the Association of American Geographers [AAG] and their research output for the 1990s only, and hence restricted the authors of the China geography piece in what they could cover). An earlier, annotated bibliographic review, much more comprehensive in scope, is: Roger M. Selya, *The Geography of China, 1975-1991: An Annotated Bibliography* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, Asian Studies Center, 1992). Murphey wrote one of the earliest reviews, reflecting the paucity of output during the Maoist era: Rhoads Murphey, "The Geographic Study of China," in *Geographers Abroad*, ed. M.W. Mikesell, RP 152 (Department of Geography, University of Chicago, 1973), 94-109. Leeming did a similar piece from the British perspective: F. Leeming, "On Chinese Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 4 (1980): 218-37. Pannell did another analysis at the same time: Clifton Pannell, "Geography," in *Science in Contemporary China*, ed. Leo A. Orleans (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980), 167-87. Ma and Noble did a study focused just on urban geography: L. J. C. Ma and A. Noble, "Chinese Cities: A Research Agenda," *Urban Geography*

Overall, the contributions of China geographers have been heavily skewed to certain sub-fields, especially urban geography, with subsidiary strengths in a few others, such as environment, economic geography, and some aspects of cultural geography, but with huge gaps in other areas, including political, historical geography and others.

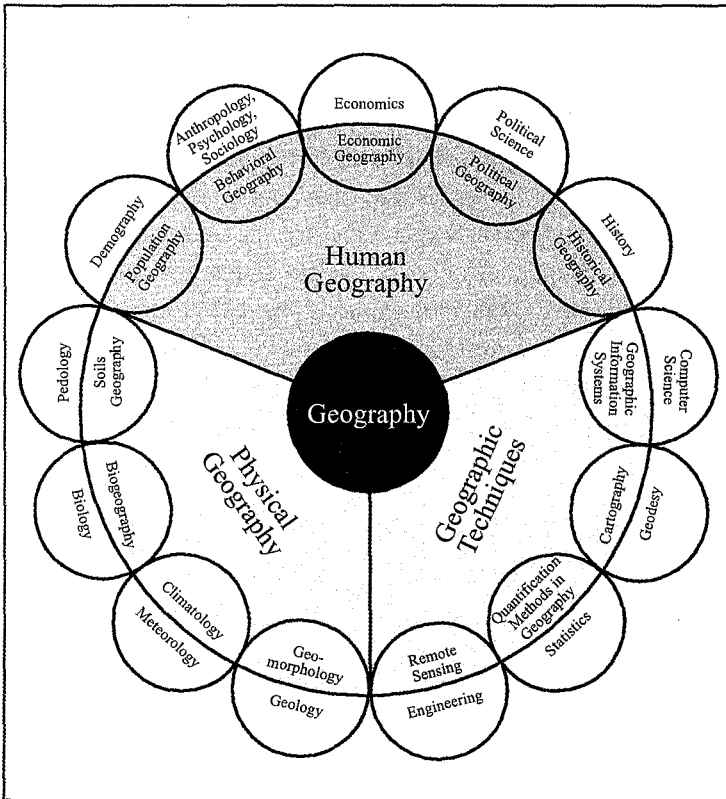
### The Scope of Modern Geography

Geography's evolution is closely linked with the millennia-long process of exploration and discovery of the world. That process has involved mapping the world's features, giving them names, and describing them. While most of that process has been completed by now, non-geographers still tend to associate the discipline of geography with place names, maps, and description. While these are certainly still fundamental parts of geography, the discipline has become a much more complex and sophisticated field, especially in the last half century. Part of the ambiguity about exactly what geographers do lies in the fact that geography is a holistic discipline that synthesizes and integrates knowledge from many fields (see figure 1). As arguably the oldest of academic disciplines, dating back to the classical Greek scholars—Herodotus, Aristotle, Eratosthenes, and Ptolemy, geography was the progenitor of a number of key academic disciplines that are now directly involved in the study of China, such as history, political science, economics, anthropology, and sociology, as seen in figure 1.

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7, no. 4 (1986): 279-90. Pannell did the same a few years later: Clifton Pannell, "China's Urban Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 14 (1990): 214-36. Yan took a stab at the same topic in the mid-1990s: X. P. Yan, "Chinese Urban Geography Since the Late 1970s," *Urban Geography* 16 (1995): 469-92. One of the most recent analyses of China geography was by Lin: George C. S. Lin, "Changing Discourses in China Geography: A Narrative Evaluation," *Environment and Planning A* 34 (2002): 1809-31. Lin's assessment is limited to refereed journal articles on China only (excluding Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as books), and is devoted particularly to the sub-field of urban geography and the work of Laurence Ma. Solinger and Chan recently published a survey on how various disciplines, including geography, have studied Chinese cities since the PRC was established: Dorothy J. Solinger and Kam Wing Chan, "The China Difference: City Studies Under Socialism and Beyond," in *Understanding the City*, ed. John Eade and Christopher Mele (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 204-21.

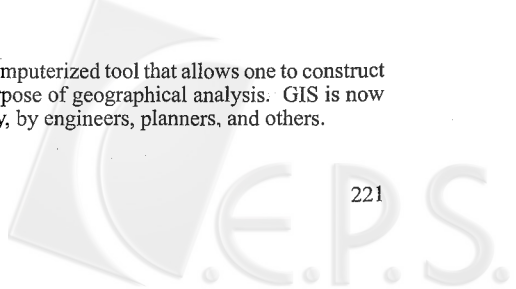
Figure 1



**Source:** Adapted from Figure 1-6, in *World Regional Geography: A Development Approach*, ed. David L. Clawson, 7th edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2001), 11.

Thus, for example, an economic geographer today is grounded in the principles of economics as well as human geography, and may well employ one or more of the major geographic techniques, or tools: remote sensing, quantitative (statistical) methods, cartography, and/or geographic information systems.<sup>4</sup> A well-rounded economic geographer will also have some

<sup>4</sup>Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, is a computerized tool that allows one to construct and manipulate layers of spatial data for the purpose of geographical analysis. GIS is now widely used beyond the profession of geography, by engineers, planners, and others.



understanding of physical geography, knowing that the physical environment has a direct bearing, for example, on the distribution of economic patterns.

Perhaps the one element that most distinguishes geography from its sister disciplines, however, is what geographers call the "spatial" dimension. Geographers not only locate (map) and describe the distribution of human activities on the surface of the earth, but more importantly today they also try to determine and explain the reasons for those spatial distributions. Geographers believe that the holistic (integrative and inherently multi-disciplinary) and spatial dimensions of the discipline make it ideally suited to the comprehensive study and analysis of patterns of distribution (of all phenomena) on the earth's surface. This is a key contribution that geographers make to the study of China (or any other place).<sup>5</sup>

### **China Geography: An International Overview<sup>6</sup>**

China has always been the country within Asia of greatest interest to

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<sup>5</sup>This spatial approach can be seen, for example, in a hypothetical analysis of China's steel industry. An economist might refer to the various locales for steel production, their output and other significant characteristics, and likely discuss government policies relating to the economy and steel industry (and perhaps how these relate to world steel production and trade), probably with some econometrics thrown in. The economic geographer would likely do much of the above, too, but also show those patterns of steel production in map form, and explain (and possibly map) the various factors accounting for those patterns, including sources of coal and iron ore, transportation patterns, markets, and so on, and how those patterns fit into government policies and the national economy, among other things. Geographers actually refer to four main traditions that characterize the discipline: the location of physical and cultural features and activities (spatial tradition); the relationships between people and the lands that support them (man-land tradition); the existence of distinctive areas or regions, including analysis and explanation of how they came to be formed (area studies tradition); and the physical characteristics of the earth (earth science tradition).

<sup>6</sup>The focus of this paper is primarily on the post-World War II era and hence largely ignores, with the exception of Cressey, that long period from the late nineteenth century up to WWII, when a number of famous geographers/explorers did pioneering work in China and helped establish the foundations of modern regional geography. These would include, among others, such luminaries as: the German geographer, Ferdinand von Richthofen, who wrote a five-volume geography of China around the turn of the century that remains a classic integration of physical and human geography; the French geographer, Jules Sion, who published another classic regional geography of China in the early twentieth century; and Owen

geographers in North America.<sup>7</sup> China's unique role in Asian (and world) history, its ancient and rich culture, its huge size and population, its tireless efforts to reinvent itself in the modern era (especially since the PRC was founded), and the growing importance of China in the twenty-first century—these and other factors make this ancient civilization and modern nation-state a favored focus of geographers from a great range of specializations within the discipline.

The Association of American Geographers (hereafter AAG), the principal professional organization for geography in North America,<sup>8</sup> had 6,731 members in 2001, of whom 221 listed China as their principal region of professional study. Of these, 128 were dues-paying members of the China Geography Specialty Group<sup>9</sup> (hereafter CGSG) within the AAG, of whom perhaps half (or less) are regularly engaged in serious research on China (members include students and teachers at non-research-focused institutions of higher learning). While this latter number (128) was less than 2 percent of the total AAG membership, China remains the single most popular country in Asia in terms of interest to North American geographers.<sup>10</sup>

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Lattimore, who worked actively in China in the first half of the twentieth century, and whose work on Turkestan was classic geography. This whole era and its great players in regional geography and exploration would be a fascinating study by itself.

<sup>7</sup>This paper focuses primarily on North American geographers for the following reasons: (1) the greatest concentration of geographers studying China, outside of China at least, is found in the United States and Canada, just as is true for Sinologists in most other disciplines; (2) bibliographic information on research and publications is most readily available for scholars in the United States/Canada; and (3) space limitations preclude delving much into the work of geographers outside of North America.

<sup>8</sup>AAG includes many Canadian geographers as well, although Canada also has its own, much smaller Canadian Association of Geographers.

<sup>9</sup>To accommodate increasing professional specialization, over recent years AAG members have organized some 54 or more "specialty groups," which serve as the main mechanism for organizing annual meeting panel sessions and venues for promoting collaborative research and other activities. China, Canada, and Russia are the only specialty groups devoted to individual countries.

<sup>10</sup>Altogether, some 930 members of the AAG claimed a country or subregion of Asia as their "area proficiency." Some of these are duplications, however, as some members might claim more than one part of Asia as being of special interest to them, and hence their names would be included more than once. The Asian Geography Specialty Group is the only other specialty group, besides the China one, devoted to Asia, and many members of the CGSG also participate in the Asian SG. Source: <[www.aag.org](http://www.aag.org)>.

Regardless, compared to most other disciplines in the social sciences or humanities involved in the study of China, geography is definitely one of the smaller, at least in simple numbers of practitioners. On the positive side, however, small numbers do tend to promote a strong sense of esprit de corps; the CGSG is one of the most active of the specialty groups.

To be sure, important geographic research and publishing on China is carried out in other countries and regions. After North America, the other main concentration of non-Chinese scholars of China's geography is found in several of the European countries, with the United Kingdom leading, by far, in terms of volume of output and the number of scholars working there. Terry Cannon and Alan Jenkins are notable examples.<sup>11</sup> Denis Dwyer is a British geographer who has contributed much to the field.<sup>12</sup> Frank Leeming has been a leading researcher on China since the 1970s.<sup>13</sup> T. R. Tregear has written other widely used treatises on China.<sup>14</sup> German geographers also do work on China, but only some of their output finds its way into the international English-language literature, such as Schinz' work on Chinese cities.<sup>15</sup> Wolfgang Taubmann has been a leading German geographer on China.<sup>16</sup> Albert Kolb produced a fine cultural geography of East Asia in

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<sup>11</sup>These two scholars have authored numerous papers as well as widely used monographs on the geography of China. See, for example: Terry Cannon and Alan Jenkins, *The Geography of Contemporary China: The Impact of Deng Xiaoping's Decade* (London: Routledge, 1990). Cannon later edited another volume, *China's Economic Growth: The Impact on Regions, Migration and the Environment* (London: Macmillan, 2000), with contributions on a variety of topics by British geographers and other scholars.

<sup>12</sup>Dwyer's edited volume, *China: The Next Decades* (UK: Longman Scientific & Technical, 1994), brought together essays by mostly British geographers (plus some American and Chinese contributions) to try to map out various aspects of China's future development.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example: Frank Leeming, *The Changing Geography of China* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); and Frank Leeming, *Rural China Today* (Harlow: Longman, 1985).

<sup>14</sup>See T. R. Tregear, *An Economic Geography of China* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Company, 1970); and T. R. Tregear, *China: A Geographical Survey* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980).

<sup>15</sup>Alfred Schinz, *Cities in China*, vol. 7 in *Urbanization of the Earth* (Stuttgart: Gebrüder Borntraeger Berlin, 1989).

<sup>16</sup>Taubman, at the University of Bremen, recently organized a special issue on China for the journal, *Geographische Rundschau* 53, no. 10 (October 2001), which is the German equivalent of the *Geographical Review* in the United States, and has long-standing links with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.



1963 that was reissued in translation in 1971.<sup>17</sup>

Probably the greatest number of China geographers, worldwide, are of Chinese heritage, either born and working in the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, or having emigrated to North America or Europe where they continue to study their homeland. Their cultural background and native language skills give them an inside track to the study of China that geographers of non-Chinese heritage must struggle for years to acquire. Hence, as the discipline has become more sophisticated in recent decades, it is not surprising that the greatest number of China geographers in North America now are émigrés from the PRC, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, working in North American institutions of higher education or other organizations.

Within the PRC itself, there is a flourishing geographic profession, with many departments and research institutes of geography scattered all over the country. Geography is a healthy academic discipline in China.<sup>18</sup> A large volume of research is carried out and published, a majority of which is in physical geography, although human geography is making something of a comeback in the reform era.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of this is published only in Chinese, primarily for an internal audience, with limited impact outside of China simply because of the language barrier. Fortunately, a number of PRC geographers have developed linkages with North American educational institutions and individual scholars since the opening of China in the late 1970s, and some collaborative research has taken place, especially with members of the CGSG. Some of this collaboration was initiated by the first delegation of American geographers to visit the PRC, in 1977, organized on the Ameri-

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<sup>17</sup>Albert Kolb, *East Asia: China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam; Geography of a Cultural Region*, translated by C. A. Sym (London: Methuen, 1971).

<sup>18</sup>One must qualify this statement, however, by noting that the discipline, in the post-Mao era, has been facing some of the same challenges experienced by geography in the United States, United Kingdom, and elsewhere, in terms of attracting undergraduate and graduate majors, weak understanding of the discipline by non-geographers, closing of some departments, and renaming of departments to make them more visible.

<sup>19</sup>Y. M. Yeung and Y. X. Zhou, "Human Geography in China: Evolution, Rejuvenation, and Prospect," *Progress in Human Geography* 15 (1991): 373-94.



can side by Allen Noble and Laurence Ma at the University of Akron. Several members of that group became active afterward in developing linkages with colleagues in China.<sup>20</sup> For example, Christopher Salter played a role in getting Zhao's two-volume geography of China translated into English and published for the outside world's benefit.<sup>21</sup> The language barrier remains a major hurdle, nonetheless, to making the rich output of China's geographic community more widely known to the world.<sup>22</sup>

Toward this end, a handful of North American China geographers have struggled over the years to translate some of the best research output in China into English for publication in North America. Salter began the effort with a periodical, *The China Geographer*, produced at UCLA in the 1980s, containing contributions by American and Chinese geographers. Several Canadian China geographers, led by Shiu-hung Luk and Joseph Whitney (University of Toronto), began a formal quarterly journal of translations in 1986 called *Chinese Geography and Environment*, which evolved into *Chinese Environment and Development*. M. E. Sharpe published both as part of its series of translation journals.<sup>23</sup> Fortunately, the journal *Eurasian Geography and Economics* (formerly *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*) remains as a publishing outlet for China geographers (and others).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup>A reciprocal visit to the United States by a delegation of geographers from the PRC took place in 1978, which included visits to the home institutions of several members of the American delegation in 1977, laying the foundation for some extremely fruitful and long-lasting collaborative relationships, a number of which continue to this day.

<sup>21</sup>Zhao Songqiao, *Physical Geography of China* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986); and Zhao Songqiao, *Geography of China: Environment, Resources, Population and Development* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994). Salter was Consulting Editor for Wiley on this project. These two volumes include contributions from a number of leading PRC geographers, and collaboration with several American scholars.

<sup>22</sup>Examples of leading geographers in China who have had extensive linkages with and impact upon North American geographers include: Cai Qiangguo, Cai Yunlong, Cui Gonghao, Gu Chaolin, Hou Renzhi, Hu Zhaoliang, Liu Changming, Liu Peitong, Ning Yuemin, Shen Daoqi, Wang Ying, Wu Chuanjun, Xu Xueqiang, Yan Xiaopei, Yan Zongmin, Yao Shimou, Ye Shunzan, Zhao Songqiao, and Zhou Yixing. See Fan, Ma, Pannell, and Tan, "China Geography in North America," 1.

<sup>23</sup>Unfortunately, the market for such specialized journals is extremely small, and Sharpe was unable to continue the China journal after 1996.

<sup>24</sup>The renaming of this journal (and restructuring of the editorial board) signifies increased

Hong Kong and Taiwan are important sub-centers of geographic research about China, with Hong Kong geographers focusing primarily on Hong Kong and the PRC, and Taiwan geographers largely working on Taiwan topics. The work of Hong Kong geographers has probably seen the most international attention.<sup>25</sup> Hong Kong geographers in recent years have come to play a leading role in China geography,<sup>26</sup> for a number of reasons: (1) the international, cosmopolitan character of Hong Kong, as an intermediary between the outside world and China, gives its scholars a unique perspective and ability to work comfortably in transnational modes; (2) the educational system trains geographers well in the geography departments at the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Baptist University; and (3) the widespread use of English, the international scholarly language, gives Hong Kong geographers easy access to the academic communities in North America and elsewhere, so that most Hong Kong geographers receive their Ph.D. degrees abroad and then either return to Hong Kong or take up positions in North America or other locales.

Taiwan, with its more limited geographic community, has operated something like the PRC, at least until recently, publishing primarily in Chinese for circulation mostly within the island. In the first decades of the ROC on Taiwan, the mainland was treated as if frozen in time and it was impossible to obtain reliable data. Many topics were politically taboo. Students were taught the geography of China, filtered through Kuomintang (KMT, or the Nationalist Party) censorship, but not the geography of Taiwan. After the political climate in Taiwan changed in the late 1980s,

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interest in the socialist economies of Asia, especially China. A number of CGSG members are co-editors, associate editors, or members of the editorial board.

<sup>25</sup>For example, the quarterly journal, *Asian Geographer*, published in English by the Hong Kong Geographical Association and the Department of Geology and Geography at the University of Hong Kong, with an international advisory board, has evolved in the last ten years into a leading journal of articles about both China and other parts of Asia.

<sup>26</sup>Included in the cadre of geographers at the three universities in Hong Kong who do significant work on China are: George Lin, Victor Sit, Simon Zhao, and Anthony Yeh at the University of Hong Kong; Yue-man Yeung and Jianfa Shen at the Chinese University of Hong Kong; and Li Siming at Hong Kong Baptist University.

it became possible to study the PRC in a serious, unbiased academic way.<sup>27</sup> Since the late 1980s, academic linkages, joint conferences, and collaborative work of various kinds between geographers in Taiwan and the PRC/Hong Kong have thus begun to flourish. National Taiwan University's (NTU) Department of Geography, the leading research center of geography on the island, has been especially active in these exchanges.<sup>28</sup> The department also publishes an annual scholarly periodical,<sup>29</sup> but it, like most geographical publications in Taiwan, sees limited international usage or recognition. The department at NTU is making a concerted effort, however, to increase the global linkages and visibility of the department and the discipline of geography in Taiwan, in line with the island's already well-established global presence in other areas, especially the economy.<sup>30</sup>

Lastly, it is worth briefly noting that a small number of geographers in Japan and South Korea also do work on China, yet their output also is published almost entirely in their national languages for internal audiences

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<sup>27</sup>Some geographers who went to Taiwan with the ROC after 1945 attempted to continue to do serious research about the mainland through the late 1940s into the 1960s, with great difficulty. Chen Cheng-siang, at NTU, was notable among these, but his most important contributions were actually various geographic studies and atlases of Taiwan that are useful historical records of early postwar Taiwan. See, for example: Cheng-siang Chen, *Geographical Atlas of Taiwan* (Taipei: Fu-Min Geographical Institute of Economic Development, Research Report No. 93, 1959). Hsieh Chiao-min was another, who eventually made his way to the University of Pittsburgh where he served many years. Hsieh wrote an early basic geography of Taiwan (Chiao-min Hsieh, *Taiwan: Ilha Formosa*, Washington: Butterworth Company, 1964), and produced a useful atlas of China in the Maoist era: Chiao-min Hsieh, *Atlas of China* (McGraw-Hill, 1973), with Christopher Salter as editor.

<sup>28</sup>Geographers at Taiwan Normal University have also done useful work on China in recent years, and now a few geographers are showing up in other universities on the island who have an interest in China studies. Scholars outside geography who specialize in the study of the mainland are even more numerous, of course, many of them affiliated with the Academia Sinica at Nankang, on the outskirts of Taipei.

<sup>29</sup>*Dili xuebao* (地理學報, Journal of Geographical Science) (Taipei: National Taiwan University, Department of Geography). Issue no. 31 (June 2002), for example, has four articles on: the impact of the 1999 earthquake on aboriginal land rights; the regional lock-in effect of agglomeration of firms; a case study of Taiwan's southern science-based industrial park; and a study of the impact of Taipei's MRT. Although the journal has an international advisory board, only the first article in this issue is in English.

<sup>30</sup>Especially prominent in this effort for many years have been David Ch'ang-yi Chang and Nora Lan-hung Chiang (herself originally from Hong Kong) at NTU, aided by other colleagues in the department. They have been exemplary in building bridges between Taiwan and other countries, including the PRC.

and hence, unfortunately, remains largely unknown to the international community.<sup>31</sup>

### **North American China Geographers**

The contributions to China studies made by North American geographers are presented in the following synopses of a few select geographers whose body of work in both quantity and quality has made or is making a particularly lasting impact, in the opinion of this author, in the field of China studies.<sup>32</sup> The geographers selected range from individuals of the past to younger scholars still in the prime of their careers, the purpose being to show not only how the discipline has evolved over the last half century or more, but also to give some indication of the range of types of geographic research and writing that scholars in this discipline carry out.

#### *George Cressey*

George Cressey is illustrative of a class of geographers who flourished in the decades leading up to World War II and shortly after into the 1950s, before the technological/quantitative revolution began to transform geography. That was also a time when knowledge of other countries, including China, was very limited, and there was a genuine need for what

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<sup>31</sup> An exception is the *Geographical Review of Japan*, an English edition of which is published by the Association of Japanese Geographers for the benefit of the international community, and which occasionally has pieces about China.

<sup>32</sup> No slight is intended for those China geographers not included in this paper. The sum total contribution of all China geographers to the field of China studies is far greater than this brief study could ever attempt to convey. The author of this paper is of the generation with Ma and Pannell, and has been active in the CGSG since its inception. Unlike most other China geographers, the author chose to remain focused primarily on Taiwan as his main research arena, along with Roger Selya (University of Cincinnati) and a few others, on the premise that Taiwan was in itself a unique research laboratory for geographers of all specializations. The author's writings over the years have reflected his interests initially in rural land use (including a dissertation on the sugar industry), evolving later into urban and regional development, including, most recently, ongoing work on Taiwan's environmental struggle. The author also contributed a piece about Taiwan's role in the Chinese diaspora for the book edited by Ma and Cartier, cited later in this paper.

was called "regional geographies": surveys of individual countries that provided an overview of physical and human resources, regional patterns of economic development, demographic and ethnographic patterns, and other topics.<sup>33</sup> These geographers were fervent believers in rigorous fieldwork and language skills. Fieldwork in those days often had elements of old-fashioned exploration. These geographers were not purely library researchers. Cressey went to China in 1923 to do fieldwork as a faculty member of the University of Shanghai. During the next six years he traveled over thirty thousand miles, under often primitive and even dangerous conditions, seeing most of the country, and began to write what was to become his classic study, *China's Geographic Foundations*.<sup>34</sup> Cressey was typical of old-school geographers in having a solid grounding in physical geography, and was able to synthesize a vast array of data to produce a survey of a country still little known to the Western world. He wrote, moreover, in a style that is highly readable but not much in vogue in today's academic scene. Take the following excerpt, for example:

The roots of the Chinese go deep into the earth. The carefully tilled gardens, the hand-plucked harvest, and the earthen homes all tell the story of man's intimate association with nature. On every hand a substantial peasantry industriously labors to wrest a meager livelihood from the tiny fields. Innumerable groups of farm buildings, half hidden in clumps of bamboo or willow, suggest the intensity of man's occupation of the soil, and the ever-present grave mounds serve as reminders of the heritage of this venerable land. The most significant element in the Chinese landscape is thus not the soil or vegetation or the climate, but the people.<sup>35</sup>

Cressey went on to a renowned career at Syracuse University, and

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<sup>33</sup>There still is a need for such regional geographies, especially as texts in geography courses or as reference volumes for individuals or libraries, yet the academic environment today is not encouraging to scholars who want to write such geographies. Production of these virtually ceased by the 1990s. In addition to the ones already cited from British geographers, also see, for example: Clifton W. Pannell and Laurence J. C. Ma, *China: The Geography of Development and Modernization* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983); and Christopher J. Smith, *China: People and Places in the Land of One Billion* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991). Smith did produce an updated volume in 2000: Christopher J. Smith, *China in the Post-Utopian Age* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000).

<sup>34</sup>George B. Cressey, *China's Geographic Foundations: A Survey of the Land and Its People* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1934).

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

published a number of other important studies of China, including an update of his 1934 classic in the 1950s.<sup>36</sup> While large parts of Cressey's writings are now dated, portions still have great relevance and reveal a deep understanding of China. As encapsulations of China at that time, his writings remain valuable historical references—and reminders of a much different era for the profession of geography.

### *Rhoads Murphey*

Rhoads Murphey was of the next generation of geographers to follow. He went to Asia right after World War II, living in India, and in China before the PRC was established. Murphey was uncommon among China geographers in having a serious scholarly interest also in India and South Asia, and his later writing reflected this duality. With a solid grounding in history, as well as regional geography, Murphey also focused on urban geography, and in the early 1950s published the first definitive study of Shanghai in the postwar era.<sup>37</sup> In many ways, this was a pace-making book that set the standard for future city studies that urban geographers would produce in the decades to follow.<sup>38</sup> Effectively combining history and a solid analysis of geographical and other factors that gave rise to the great city of Shanghai, Murphey's book is still required reading for anyone wanting to really understand that city.

After a number of years on the faculty at the University of Wash-

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<sup>36</sup>George B. Cressey, *Land of the 500 Million: A Geography of China* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1955).

<sup>37</sup>Rhoads Murphey, *Shanghai: Key to Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953).

<sup>38</sup>See, for example: Roger M. Selya, *Taipei* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995); Victor F. S. Sit, *Beijing: The Nature and Planning of a Chinese Capital City* (Chichester, N.Y.: Wiley, 1995); and C. P. Lo, *Hong Kong* (London: Belhaven Press, 1992). Sit also was editor of an earlier volume on Chinese cities: Victor F. S. Sit, ed., *Chinese Cities: The Growth of the Metropolis Since 1949* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Lo (University of Georgia), a member of the Hong Kong émigrés who figures so prominently in the China geography circle in North America, published extensively through the 1980s and 1990s on various facets of China's economic and urban development. As examples: C. P. Lo, "Foreign Manufacturing Investment and Regional Industrial Growth in Guangdong Province, China," *Environment and Planning A* 28, no. 3 (1996): 513-36; and C. P. Lo, "Personal Contacts, Subcontracting Linkages, and Development in the Hong Kong-Zhujiang Delta Region," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no. 2 (1993): 272-302.

ington, Murphey moved to the University of Michigan, where he was not only an internationally prominent geographer (now retired), but also very active in the Association for Asian Studies, which is headquartered there. Murphey also headed the Committee on China Geography, which was established by the AAG because of the looming importance of China. The AAG recognized the need to promote the geographic study of China. The China Committee eventually evolved into the CGSG in the 1970s, a forerunner in development of the whole specialty group system in the AAG. Over the years, Murphey produced a number of articles and books on Asian urban history, contemporary Asian urban problems, and problems of development in Asia, including one of the first studies of China's departure from the Maoist path of development.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Norton Ginsburg*

Norton Ginsburg was of the same generation as Murphey. Former professor and chair of the Department of Geography at the University of Chicago, Ginsburg was more an Asianist than purely a China geographer, yet he left an indelible stamp on the field of China geography due to his tireless promotion of the field, nurturing of future China geographers, and strong support of the CGSG over a period of several decades. Ginsburg had broad interests and moved easily among non-geographers, bringing visibility to the overall discipline. A true regional geographer in the classic sense,<sup>40</sup> Ginsburg also had strong interest in urban geography. He edited, or co-edited, a number of volumes over the years that emanated from conferences he supported either as organizer or participant. Some of these were focused just on China, while others looked at the broader Asian realm but with China as an important component.<sup>41</sup> Explicitly within the field of

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<sup>39</sup>Rhoads Murphey, *The Fading of the Maoist Vision: City and Country in China's Development* (New York: Methuen, 1980).

<sup>40</sup>Ginsburg excelled at bringing together groups of scholars to present papers at conferences or to produce books of broad appeal. For example, like Spencer, he edited a long-used basic regional geography of Asia, of which China occupied a conspicuous part: Norton Ginsburg, ed., *The Pattern of Asia* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1958).

<sup>41</sup>Among the most important are: Norton Ginsburg, Bruce Koppel, and T. G. McGee, eds.,



China studies, one of Ginsburg's most enduring contributions was to serve as general editor of the redoing of Hermann's classic *Historical Atlas of China*.<sup>42</sup> Other China geographers over the years have played similar roles as editors or producers of atlases of China, continuing the mapping tradition of geography.<sup>43</sup>

### Ronald Knapp

Ronald Knapp is of the generation of geographers that overlapped the later years of Murphey's generation. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and student of Chiao-min Hsieh, Knapp (SUNY-New Paltz) over the past more than thirty years has established himself as a leading cultural geographer of China. Few China geographers have pursued cultural geography over recent decades, despite the fact that China presents such rich research opportunities in this specialty. The reason is that the sub-field of cultural geography in general fell somewhat out of favor in the profession as the quantitative and technological revolution swept geography. Knapp thus carved out a niche for himself. Like Murphey, Knapp also was

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*The Extended Metropolis: Settlement Transition in Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); Norton Ginsburg and Bernard A. Lalor, eds., *China, the 80s Era* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984); and C. K. Leung and Norton Ginsburg, eds., *China: Urbanization and National Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Department of Geography, Research Paper No. 196, 1980). The latter volume included essays by Murphey, Pannell, Sit, Whitney, and others mentioned elsewhere in this paper.

<sup>42</sup>Norton Ginsburg, ed., *An Historical Atlas of China*, by Albert Herrmann (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1966). This work, originally published in 1935 by Hermann, then Professor of Historical Geography at the University of Berlin, via the Harvard-Yenching Institute, was a classic gone out of print. As China studies exploded in the post-WWII era, there quickly became an urgent need for a quality historical atlas of China. Thus, Ginsburg led the effort to reprint the atlas without substantial revision of Hermann's original work, but with addition of some contemporary thematic maps of China, and a new introductory essay by Paul Wheatley (University of California). The atlas remains a valuable reference work to this day.

<sup>43</sup>Another China geographer who has been prominent in the mapping tradition of geography, as well as urban geography, is Mei-Ling Hsu (University of Minnesota). With a strong cartography background, she has published various pieces over the years on the history of Chinese mapping. As just two examples: M. L. Hsu, "The Qin Maps: A Clue to Later Chinese Cartographic Development," *Imago Mundi* 45 (1993): 90-100; and M. L. Hsu, "An Inquiry into Early Chinese Atlases Through the Ming Dynasty," in *Images of the World: The Atlas Through History*, ed. J.A. Wolter and R. E. Grim (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 31-50.

able to bridge between geography and other disciplines, and has been very active in the AAS. He probably is one of the best-known China geographers outside the discipline, due both to his work in the material cultural landscape of China and his ability to write with a universality of appeal.

As with many China geographers who were trained before the opening of China in the late 1970s, Knapp did his dissertation fieldwork in Taiwan in the 1960s, an experience that ignited his interest in folk or vernacular architecture. Inspired, in part, by the work of Joseph Spencer,<sup>44</sup> Knapp was intrigued by the many forms of folk architecture and the insights such architecture provided into the nature of Chinese society. From this passion sprang a series of books through the 1980s and 1990s that cemented his reputation. A volume on rural architecture in 1986 provided a review of the historical evolution of the Chinese house through the dynasties, with a section devoted to the Taiwan scene.<sup>45</sup> Extended fieldwork in Zhejiang (浙江) in 1987-88 led to a volume on that province's vernacular architecture, with rich analysis of the many forms and characteristics of housing.<sup>46</sup> In the following decade, Knapp turned out three volumes in the Oxford University Press series, *Images of Asia: on the Chinese house* (1990), *bridges* (1993), and *walled cities* (2000).<sup>47</sup> Another book in 1999 continued Knapp's investigation into housing, this time focusing on ornamentation and folk belief symbols.<sup>48</sup> Then, in 2000, Knapp published yet one more

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<sup>44</sup>Spencer was an earlier, highly respected cultural geographer, whose primary focus was Southeast Asia, but who, like Ginsburg, included much of Asia in his study realm. Spencer's most famous work probably was his classic: Joseph E. Spencer, *Asia, East by South: A Cultural Geography* (New York: Wiley, 1954; revised and co-authored with William Thomas in a 1971 edition), which included China as a major part of the volume. Spencer also wrote the monograph, *Oriental Asia: Themes Toward a Geography* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

<sup>45</sup>Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Traditional Rural Architecture: A Cultural Geography of the Common House* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986).

<sup>46</sup>Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Vernacular Architecture: House Form and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

<sup>47</sup>Ronald G. Knapp, *The Chinese House: Craft, Symbol, and the Folk Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Ronald G. Knapp, *Chinese Bridges* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Walled Cities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>48</sup>Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Living Houses: Folk Belief Symbols and Household Ornamentation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

volume, on old dwellings, that in some respects was an updating of his 1986 study.<sup>49</sup> This prodigious output (including publications not cited here) over more than two decades has made Knapp arguably the foremost American authority on Chinese folk architecture.

### Vaclav Smil

Of the same generation as Knapp, Vaclav Smil is illustrative of another minority group among China geographers—those interested in resources, environment, and physical geography. Of this minority group, Smil is probably the most widely known outside the discipline due to his landmark work in the environment of China. Educated in Czechoslovakia, Smil went to Pennsylvania State University in 1969 for his Ph.D., and then began a distinguished career at the University of Manitoba in the 1970s. With strong training in the physical and natural sciences, Smil is illustrative of the fact that many China geographers do not devote their entire research careers to the study of just China. Smil was fascinated by the resource and environmental challenges facing China, but also interested in the wider world, and produced some important treatises on world energy resources.<sup>50</sup>

With an interest particularly in energy, Smil began his focus on China back in the 1970s, with one of the very first analyses in the post-Mao era of China's energy scene. This was updated with a volume in the late 1980s.<sup>51</sup> Smil's primary reputation, however, came from his analysis in the mid-1980s of China's overall environment, *The Bad Earth*.<sup>52</sup> With clever word play in the title, borrowing from Pearl Buck's famous novel of the

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<sup>49</sup>Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Old Dwellings* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

<sup>50</sup>Two of his more important works in this regard were: Vaclav Smil, *Biomass Energies: Resources, Links, Constraints* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1983); and Vaclav Smil, *Carbon, Nitrogen, Sulfur: Human Interference in Grand Biospheric Cycles* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1985). Smil brings his knowledge of China into these studies in numerous aspects, and thus these volumes can also be useful to China scholars interested in these topics.

<sup>51</sup>Vaclav Smil, *Energy in China's Modernization: Advances and Limitations* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1988).

<sup>52</sup>Vaclav Smil, *The Bad Earth: Environmental Degradation in China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1984).

1930s, *The Good Earth*, Smil's book was the first comprehensive study of China's deteriorating natural environment that outsiders had seen, and this publication created a sensation in China circles and even the popular media. Through careful analysis of the scientific evidence, Smil showed the true severity of degradation of soil, water, and other resources in China, shocking many. The Chinese government was understandably reluctant to have such unfavorable publicity about the state of China's environment made public.<sup>53</sup> Given the widespread success of *The Bad Earth*, Smil published a revised and updated version in the 1990s that still stands as the definitive work on China's environmental problems, albeit not without its critics.<sup>54</sup> Smil's collective body of work on China's energy and environment, which includes numerous scholarly articles not cited here, are among the most important contributions of geographers to the field of China studies.<sup>55</sup>

#### *Laurence J. C. Ma*

Laurence (Larry) Ma (University of Akron, retired) was one of the pioneers in promoting China geography in North America, and in developing close linkages with colleagues and institutions in China. A former

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<sup>53</sup>With Smil's pioneering study out in the open, He Bochuan, a scholar inside China, wrote his own analysis of China's environment that was initially circulated only among a limited government and academic audience in China, but finally was publicly released in 1991. See He Bochuan, *China on the Edge: The Crisis of Ecology and Development* (San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1991). This study also created quite a stir outside of China.

<sup>54</sup>Vaclav Smil, *China's Environmental Crisis: An Inquiry into the Limits of National Development* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

<sup>55</sup>Smil is not entirely alone, however. For example, two Canadian geographers (formerly at the University of Toronto), Joseph Whitney and Shiu-hung Luk, carried out extensive research on China's environment over the years. One of their most important publications was: Joseph Whitney and S. H. Luk, *Megaproject: A Case Study of China's Three Gorges Project* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), an edited volume of translated articles originally in *Chinese Environment and Development*, which still stands as one of the best sources about that immense and controversial public works project. Earlier, Ma and Noble had put together a collection of essays about various facets of environment and environmental management, comparing the United States and China, that is still useful today: Laurence J. C. Ma and Allen G. Noble, eds., *The Environment: Chinese and American Views* (New York and London: Methuen, 1981). This volume contains essays by several members of the CGSG.

student of Murphey at the University of Michigan, he is also one of the leading members of the sub-field of urban geography, which has attracted the interest of the greatest number of China geographers by far. Chinese cities and the whole process of urban and regional development in China have had a special appeal to China geographers for decades, for complex reasons, including (among others): the uniqueness of China's long urban tradition and huge number of significant cities in a nation that, nonetheless, remains predominantly rural; and the key role that cities have played in the PRC's development for more than half a century, including the striking contrasts in urban policies and processes between the Maoist era (1949-76) and the reform era (1976 onward).

One of Ma's earliest books was an outcome of the historic visit to the PRC of a group of geographers that he helped organize in 1977, as already noted. Knowledge of Chinese cities was extremely fragmentary at that time, and Ma put together a collection of papers by noted geographers (and some non-geographers) that represented an early effort to understand the complexities of Chinese cities and urban development in the PRC.<sup>56</sup> In the following two decades, Ma authored or co-authored an impressive collection of publications, especially journal articles, which cemented his reputation as one of the foremost authorities on cities and urban development in China.<sup>57</sup> A firm believer in collaborative work, Ma teamed up with numerous individuals over the years, many of them visiting scholars from

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<sup>56</sup>Laurence J. C. Ma and Edward W. Hanten, eds., *Urban Development in Modern China* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1981). Contributors included, besides Ma: Lynn White, James Chan, Clifton Pannell, David Buck, Yin-Wang Kwok, and K.I. Fung.

<sup>57</sup>Space limitations permit listing only a sampling of these, from the 1990s: L. Ma and C. Lin, "Development of Towns in China: A Case Study of Guangdong Province," *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 3 (1993): 583-606; L. Ma and M. Fan, "Urbanization From Below: The Growth of Towns in Jiangsu, China," *Urban Studies* 31, no. 10 (1994): 1625-45; L. Ma, "The Spatial Patterns of Interprovincial Rural-to-Urban Migration in China, 1982-1987," *Chinese Environment and Development* 7, nos. 1 and 2 (1996): 73-102; L. Ma and Y. Wei, "Determinants of State Investment in China, 1953-1990," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 88, no. 3 (1997): 211-25; L. Ma and B. Xiang, "Native Place, Migration and the Emergence of Peasant Enclaves in Beijing," *The China Quarterly*, no. 155 (1998): 546-81; and Laurence J.C. Ma, "Urban Transformation in China, 1949-2000: A Review and Research Agenda," *Environment and Planning A*, 34 (2002): 1545-69.

China. Ma was truly in the forefront in the ongoing effort to globalize the discipline of geography in the PRC.<sup>58</sup> One of Ma's most recent and significant publications is a collection of essays that he co-edited with Carolyn Cartier (University of Southern California) on the Chinese diaspora, a key theme of China's modern history that has seen little geographic analysis, and a departure from Ma's long-standing focus on urban development.<sup>59</sup> Even in retirement, Ma continues his work on China's urban scene, presently co-editing a volume with Fulong Wu (University of Southampton) on China's rapidly changing cities, which will contain pieces by a number of the scholars cited in this paper.<sup>60</sup>

### *Clifton Pannell*

In the same generation as Ma, Clifton Pannell (University of Georgia) is a product of the University of Chicago and student of Norton Ginsburg. Like all China geographers who had to do their dissertation fieldwork in the 1960s or 1970s, Pannell also had little choice but to do his research in Taiwan, in the 1970s, producing a study of the city of Taichung (台中市) for his dissertation. Like most, but not all, budding China geographers, Pannell then switched his focus to the PRC after the opening of China in the late 1970s. Pannell also has been a major promoter of China geography in North America, a leading figure in the CGSG, and prominent in other geographic circles because of his many activities beyond just China geography. Among his important China publications, besides doing a basic regional geography of China with Ma,<sup>61</sup> he has contributed a number of key studies in various facets of urban geography.<sup>62</sup> A number of other

<sup>58</sup>For a much more detailed, and justifiably laudatory, analysis of Ma's many contributions, see Lin, "Changing Discourses in China Geography."

<sup>59</sup>Laurence J. C. Ma and Carolyn Cartier, eds., *A Geography of the Chinese Diaspora: Settlement, Society, and Economy* (Boulder, Colo.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

<sup>60</sup>Laurence J.C. Ma and Fulong Wu, eds., *Restructuring the Chinese City: Changing Economy, Society and Space* (in progress).

<sup>61</sup>Pannell and Ma, *China: The Geography of Development and Modernization*.

<sup>62</sup>See, for example: C. W. Pannell, "China's Continuing Urban Transition," *Environment and Planning A* 34 (2002): 1571-89; C. W. Pannell and L. Ma, "Urban Transition and Interstate

writings by Pannell are cited elsewhere in this paper.

*K. C. Tan*

K. C. Tan (University of Guelph, Ontario, retired) is another prominent China geographer, and representative of the Canadian group that works closely with the Americans and others, who has specialized in urban and regional development. A native of Singapore, he received his Ph.D. from the University of London, UK. Tan is yet one more example of the émigré group of China geographers working in North America, but also with strong collaborative linkages across the Pacific to the PRC. A special focus of Tan in his research is small towns and the role they are playing in China's development.<sup>63</sup> Tan also has played a key role in the 1980s and 1990s in the CGSG.

*The New Generation*

Within the past ten to fifteen years, a number of new, younger geographers have begun to come to prominence through their research and writings, beyond those already cited above. Well-trained, with strong skills in geographic tools, these geographers are destined to leave their mark in China studies and to bring much greater visibility to the role of China ge-

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Relations in a Dynamic Post-Soviet Borderland: The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 38, no. 3 (1997): 206-29; C. W. Pannell, "The Role of Great Cities in China," in *Urbanizing China*, ed. G. E. Guldin (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 11-40; C. W. Pannell, "China's Urban Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 14, no. 2 (1990): 214-36; and C. W. Pannell and G. Veeck, "Zhujiang Delta and Sunan: A Comparative Analysis of Regional Urban Systems and Their Development," in *The Environment and Space Development in the Pearl River Delta*, ed. X.Q. Xu, A. Yeh, and C. E. Wen (Beijing: Xinhua Publishing, 1989), 237-52.

<sup>63</sup>See, for example: K.C. Tan, "Small Town Development and the Environment: Hope and Reality," in *Resources, Environment and Regional Development*, ed. C. K. Leung (Hong Kong: Centre for Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1989), 332-52; K. C. Tan, "Small Towns and Regional Development in Wenzhou," in *The Uneven Landscape: Geographical Studies in Post-Reform China*, ed. Greg Veeck (Baton Rouge, La.: Geoscience Publications, 1991), 207-34; K. C. Tan, "China's Small Town Urbanization Program: Criticism and Adaptation," *GeoJournal* 29, no. 3 (1993): 155-62; and K. C. Tan and H. Luo, "The Rural Enterprise as the Emergent Core of New Socioeconomic Organizations in the Chinese Countryside," in *East Asia Perspectives*, ed. M. Chen, C. Comtois, and L.N. Shyu (Montreal: Canadian Asian Studies Association, 1995), 157-78.

ographers. All of these scholars also are active in the CGSG in the AAG. Unfortunately, space permits reference to only a few of these.

*Kam Wing Chan* (University of Washington) is another leading figure today in the field of urban geography and China. Born in mainland China but growing up in Hong Kong, Chan did his Ph.D. training at the University of Toronto under Joseph Whitney and others, graduating in 1988. A specialist especially in urbanization and migration, Chan has published a string of important contributions to the field of urban geography. His 1994 book, *Cities with Invisible Walls*, was an outgrowth of his doctoral dissertation that examined and reinterpreted urban development policies in the Maoist era.<sup>64</sup> The book, whose title is a play on words, referring to the double meaning of *cheng* (城, as both "city" and "wall"), examines the *hukou* (户口, household) registration system employed by the PRC to control rural-to-urban migration over the decades—a system which is still in force.

As with other recent China urban geographers, Chan's publications have been primarily in journal articles. A number of these have reflected his interest in migration studies.<sup>65</sup> Other important studies by Chan include articles on the increasing urban social stratification in China in the post-Mao era, the financing of urban services, and labor migration policies.<sup>66</sup>

*C. Cindy Fan* (UCLA), also a native of Hong Kong, and graduate of Ohio State University in 1989, is illustrative of a healthy trend for a discipline that used to be entirely male-dominated, but now has a growing number of female members. Fan has become a specialist particularly in

<sup>64</sup>Kam Wing Chan, *Cities with Invisible Walls: Reinterpreting Urbanization in Post-1949 China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>65</sup>See, for example: K. W. Chan, "Rural-Urban Migration in China, 1950-1982: Estimates and Analyses," *Urban Geography* 9, no. 1 (1988): 53-84; K. W. Chan, "Urbanization and Rural-Urban Migration in China Since 1982: A New Baseline," *Modern China* 20, no. 3 (1994): 243-81; K. W. Chan and Xu Xueqiang, "Urban Population Growth and Urbanization in China Since 1949: Reconstructing a Baseline," *The China Quarterly*, no. 104 (1985): 583-613; and K. W. Chan and L. Zhang, "The *Hukou* System and Rural-Urban Migration in China: Processes and Changes," *The China Quarterly*, no. 160 (1999): 818-55.

<sup>66</sup>K. W. Chan, "Post-Mao China: A Two-Class Urban Society in the Making," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 20, no. 1 (1996): 134-50; and K. W. Chan, "Urbanization and Urban Infrastructure Services in the PRC," in *Financing Local Government in the People's Republic of China*, ed. C. Wong (Hong Kong and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 83-125.



various aspects of regional development in China. A selection of her publications reveals her already significant impact in advancing our understanding of the process and policies of regional development in the PRC, and the complex issue of regional inequality that has emerged in post-Mao China.<sup>67</sup> More recent publications reflect Fan's interests in migration and gender issues as well.<sup>68</sup>

Greg Veeck (Western Michigan University), a graduate of the University of Georgia under Pannell, has become a leading authority on China's agricultural geography and regional development. His writings are far-ranging and have added measurably to our understanding of the dynamics of China's rural economy and environment.<sup>69</sup>

Yehua Dennis Wei (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) is illustrative of a growing group of China geographers from the PRC itself who are now part of the émigré group in North America. Wei, a native of Zhejiang, was a student of Laurence Ma at Akron before doing his Ph.D. at UCLA

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<sup>67</sup>C. C. Fan, "Of Belts and Ladders: State Policy and Uneven Regional Development in Post-Mao China," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, no. 3 (1995): 421-49; C. C. Fan, "Developments From Above, Below and Outside: Spatial Impacts of China's Economic Reforms in Jiangsu and Guangdong Provinces," *Chinese Environment and Development* 6, nos. 1 and 2 (1995): 85-116; C. C. Fan, "Economic Opportunities and Internal Migration: A Case Study of Guangdong Province, China," *Professional Geographer* 48, no. 1 (1996): 28-45; C. C. Fan, "Uneven Development and Beyond: Regional Development Theory in Post-Mao China," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21, no. 4 (1997): 620-39; and C. C. Fan, "Migration in a Socialist Transitional Economy: Heterogeneity, Socioeconomic and Spatial Characteristics of Migrants in China and Guangdong Province," *International Migration Review* 33, no. 4 (1999): 950-83.

<sup>68</sup>See, for example, C. C. Fan and L. Li, "Marriage and Migration in Transitional China: A Field Study of Gaozhou, Western Guangdong," *Environment and Planning A* 34, no. 4 (2002): 619-38; C. C. Fan, "The Elite, the Natives, and the Outsiders: Migration and Labor Market Segmentation in Urban China," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 1 (2002): 103-24; C. C. Fan, "Migration and Gender in China," in *China Review 2000*, ed. C. M. Lau and J. Shen (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), 217-48; and C. C. Fan and J. Lu, "Foreign Direct Investment, Locational Factors and Labor Mobility in China, 1985-1997," *Asian Geographer* 20, no. 1 and 2 (2001): 79-99.

<sup>69</sup>For examples of his work, see: Greg Veeck, Z. Li, and L. Gao, "Terrace Construction and Productivity on Loessal Soils in Zhongyang County, Shanxi Province, PRC," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, no. 3 (1995): 450-67; and Greg Veeck and Clifton W. Pannell, "Rural Economic Restructuring and Farm Household Income in Jiangsu, People's Republic of China," *ibid.* 79, no. 2 (1989): 275-92. Veeck also edited a collection of essays about various aspects of China's regional development: Veeck, ed., *The Uneven Landscape* (cited in note 63 above).

under Cindy Fan. Like Fan, he shares an interest in regional inequality in China, a topic that has occupied the attention of many China geographers, partly because of its inherently spatial nature.<sup>70</sup>

George C. S. Lin (University of Hong Kong), strictly speaking, is not a North American China geographer. He is included here, however, as a young representative of that group of Hong Kong geographers, stationed in Hong Kong, who straddle the Pacific and participate regularly in the AAG and have close links with North America.<sup>71</sup> Lin did his Ph.D. at the University of British Columbia under Terry McGee, graduating in 1994. Also an urban geographer, but with broad interests in urban and regional development, Lin is making his mark with sophisticated studies of China. His book, *Red Capitalism in South China*, an outgrowth of his dissertation, is an analysis of the development of China's key economic region of the Pearl River Delta (珠江三角洲).<sup>72</sup> Some of his recent journal articles illustrate the breadth and depth of his research in China's urban and regional development.<sup>73</sup>

Piper Gaubatz (University of Massachusetts), graduate of UC-Berkeley, is illustrative of that group of China geographers in the new gen-

<sup>70</sup>See, for example: Y. Wei, "Spatial and Temporal Variations of the Relationship Between State Investment and Industrial Output in China," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 86, no.2 (1995): 129-36; Y. Wei, "Fiscal Systems and Uneven Regional Development in China, 1978-1991," *Geoforum* 27, no. 3 (1995): 329-44; Y. Wei, "Regional Inequality of Industrial Output in China, 1952-1990," *Geografiska Annaler B* 80, no. 1 (1998): 1-15; Y. Wei, "Regional Inequality in China," *Progress in Human Geography* 23, no. 1 (1999): 48-58; Y. Wei, "Fiscal Reforms, Investment, and Regional Development in Jiangsu Province," *Issues & Studies* 36, no. 2 (March/April 2000): 73-98; and Y. Wei, "Widening Intercounty Inequality in Jiangsu Province, China, 1950-1995," *Journal of Development Studies* 38, no. 6 (2002): 142-64.

<sup>71</sup>See note 26 above.

<sup>72</sup>George C. S. Lin, *Red Capitalism in South China: Growth and Development of the Pearl River Delta* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

<sup>73</sup>George C. S. Lin, "The Growth and Structural Change of Chinese Cities: A Contextual and Geographic Analysis," *Cities* 19, no. 5 (October 2002): 299-316; George C. S. Lin, "Metropolitan Development in a Transitional Socialist Economy: Spatial Restructuring in the Pearl River Delta, China," *Urban Studies* 38, no. 3 (2001): 383-406; George C. S. Lin, "Transformation of a Rural Economy in the Zhujiang Delta, China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 149 (1997): 56-80; and George C. S. Lin, "Changing Theoretical Perspectives on Urbanization in Asian Developing Countries," *Third World Planning Review* 16, no. 1 (1994): 1-23.

eration who are not of Chinese ethnic heritage. Gaubatz has focused on urban policies and urban forms in a range of articles.<sup>74</sup> Her 1996 book, *Beyond the Great Wall*, an expansion of her doctoral dissertation, looks at urban development in Outer China, a niche largely ignored by other China geographers.<sup>75</sup>

Carolyn Cartier (University of Southern California), graduate of UC-Berkeley, is bringing further intellectual vigor to the China geography field with a number of publications since the late 1990s. Her 2001 book, *Globalizing South China*, on the economic dynamism of South China, has added to the growing geographic literature on that key region of modern China.<sup>76</sup> Her recent articles reflect her strong interests in urban and regional development.<sup>77</sup>

Tim Oakes (University of Colorado, Boulder) did his Ph.D. at the University of Washington under Kam Wing Chan. His contributions are in bridging the literature in China regional studies, cultural geography, and cultural studies.<sup>78</sup> His 1998 book, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, building on his dissertation, interprets the experience of modernity in Guizhou (貴州) through the use of contemporary cultural geography theory.<sup>79</sup> Both

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<sup>74</sup>Piper Gaubatz, "Changing Beijing," *Geographical Review* 85, no. 1 (1995): 79-96; Piper Gaubatz, "Mosques and Markets: Traditional Urban Form on China's Northwestern Frontiers," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 9 (1998): 7-21; and Piper Gaubatz, "China's Urban Transformation: Patterns and Processes of Morphological Change in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou," *Urban Studies* 36, no. 9 (1999): 1495-1521.

<sup>75</sup>Piper Rae Gaubatz, *Beyond the Great Wall: Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontiers* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>76</sup>Carolyn Cartier, *Globalizing South China* (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001).

<sup>77</sup>Carolyn Cartier, "Origins and Evolution of a Geographical Idea: The Macroregion in China," *Modern China* 28, no. 1 (January, 2002): 79-143; Carolyn Cartier, "'Zone Fever', the Arable Land Debate, and Real Estate Speculation: China's Evolving Land Use Regime and Its Geographical Contradictions," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10, no. 28 (2001): 445-69; and Carolyn Cartier, "The State, Property Development and Symbolic Landscape in High-Rise Hong Kong," *Landscape Research* 24, no. 2 (1999): 185-208.

<sup>78</sup>See, for example: Tim Oakes, "China's Provincial Identities, Reviving Regionalism and Reinventing 'Chineseness'," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (2000): 667-92; Tim Oakes, "Eating the Food of the Ancestors: Place, Tradition, and Tourism in a Chinese Frontier River Town," *Ecumene* 6, no. 2 (1999): 123-45; and Tim Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 3 (1997): 509-31.

<sup>79</sup>Tim Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

Cartier and Oakes are good examples of those active in trying to bring geography in closer dialogue with the China studies field, as recommended below.

### Conclusion

Geographers have made important contributions to the field of China studies over a period of many decades, and at an accelerating rate. Especially since the opening of China in the late 1970s, geographers have been prominent in research and publications in a number of areas: (1) almost all aspects of urban development, but particularly urban policies, spatial patterns of cities and urban development, regional inequality, rural-to-urban migration, the role of small towns, and studies of individual cities; (2) economic development, especially in terms of foreign investment and regional patterns; studies of individual provinces and key economic regions; and rural and urban industrial enterprises; (3) environment and agricultural development, resource degradation problems, and conservation efforts; and (4) the rural cultural landscape, especially vernacular (folk) architecture. The above is by no means an exhaustive summation.

All of the successful China geographers, especially in recent years, share some common characteristics: a fascination with and solid understanding of China, strong language skills, belief in the importance of fieldwork and knowing China first-hand, and collaboration with other scholars, especially those in China. These, of course, could be described as the essential requirements for all good Sinologists, in any discipline.

Yet, in the final analysis, the real net contribution of geographers to the field of China studies (as opposed to their contribution to the field of geography itself) is subject to different interpretations, depending on how one analyzes their work. From the viewpoint of just the relatively small number of geographers involved in China studies, geographers are admittedly not highly visible, compared to some of the larger disciplines that dominate China studies, such as history, political science, anthropology, sociology, language, and linguistics. This is apparent, especially, in meet-

ings of the AAS and its regional branches, where one normally sees very few geographers as participants in panels, committee members, or officers in administrative positions.<sup>80</sup>

The primary way by which a discipline is measured, however, at least in the eyes of fellow scholars if not the lay public, is in publications, and refereed journal articles tend to carry more weight in geography, it seems, than in some of the other China studies disciplines. What matters is not just the quantity of articles, but also the number of entries in the *Science Citation Index (SCI)* for physical geography, and the *Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)* for human geography—although the relative weight accorded to such citation assessments is diminishing in some departments, recognizing that such citations are but one measure of quality. Lin's recent assessment of China geographers examined their output based on leading journals in geography, not China studies, and hence the impact on China studies is difficult to discern from that perspective alone.

Regardless, Lin's conclusion was that China geographers are still not well represented in the top geographical journals, although the situation is vastly better today than was true thirty years ago, especially in human geography. Lin also feels that, "It appears that China geography has remained under the shadow of the area-studies tradition and that China geographers need to move beyond their self-confined circle of empirical studies and become actively engaged with major theoretical debates in the disciplines of geography and urban studies."<sup>81</sup> To be sure, North American China geographers are still seriously deficient in the study of China's physical geography, and in the human geography sub-fields of cultural, historical, social, population, and political geography. There is no easy fix, however, for this patchwork quilt pattern, in that it is difficult for the CGSG (or any other body) to dictate or even significantly influence the paths of inquiry in China studies that geographers wish to pursue.

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<sup>80</sup>To be fair, this is partly due to the fact that the AAS and the AAG hold their annual meetings usually very close to each other on the calendar, sometimes even overlapping, and thus China geographers tend to give priority to the AAG meetings.

<sup>81</sup>Lin, "Changing Discourses in China Geography."

Within the field of China studies one has to ask what kinds of publications are likely to have the greatest impact and be read and cited by scholars in other disciplines in the field? To gauge this with any quantitative assurance one would need to do a count of the number of citations of China geographers' output in leading journals in China studies, such as *The China Quarterly*, *Modern China*, *Issues & Studies*, and others, or how often China geographers are quoted or cited in books on China, a task beyond the scope of this present paper. Given that the scholarship being produced by China geographers today is equal in quality to just about anything published by scholars in other China studies disciplines, the explanation for the relatively low visibility of China geographers would seem to lie primarily in the disconnect between the major interests of China geographers and the interests of China scholars in other disciplines. The very fields in which there is a relative scarcity of publications by China geographers are those very fields that other China scholars hold dear. The editors of the leading China studies journals appear to be only marginally interested, if at all, in the subjects that seem to be of prime interest to most China geographers.<sup>82</sup>

If China geographers want to be more visible and have greater impact on China studies, thus, it would seem they need to publish articles of broader interest and value to scholars in other disciplines, and to write more books.<sup>83</sup> Books tend to have greater visibility (e.g., the book exhibit at the annual AAS meetings), and often have longer utility (or "shelf life") than do journal articles. Fortunately, a number of progressive geography departments are now encouraging a greater balance between refereed articles, books, and book chapters in assessing scholarly accomplishment. While

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<sup>82</sup>One fellow China geographer mentioned that the editor of *Modern China* told him recently that the journal had received no more than five manuscripts from geographers and published only two since the journal began publishing many years ago! *The China Quarterly* may be the most notable exception, as a number of China geographers have been publishing in that journal in recent years, especially with articles on urbanization, the one topic that seems distinctively the "property" of China geographers.

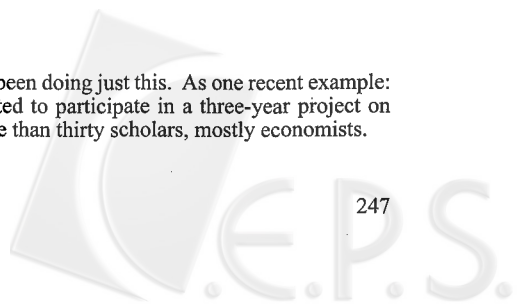
<sup>83</sup>China geographers are also hampered, however, by the pressure in most geography departments for their members to give top priority to publishing in leading geographical journals. Articles in journals outside of geography often receive less credit in merit/salary increases and tenure/promotion decisions.

the plea of Lin (and others) for more theoretically-focused research may be well-founded, at the same time China geographers should not forget their traditions and the importance of geography as a primary educational discipline for the lay public and academic community alike. The impact of this role, however, is very difficult to measure with any degree of certitude or quantification. China geographers also need to participate more fully in the AAS and other organizations that bring China studies scholars together. One way to build these bridges could be for China geographers to engage more in collaborative research with China scholars in other fields, not just with fellow geographers.<sup>84</sup> The fact that some non-geographers still wonder exactly what it is that geographers do indicates that China geographers have much work ahead of them.

Yet, this author is optimistic about the future of the field of China geography, given what he has seen of the crop of China geographers in the last decade or two, and the vigor of the CGSG. The practitioners may still be small in numbers, but they pack an increasingly powerful punch. The overriding task ahead is to make their output more visible.

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<sup>84</sup>A number of China geographers have, in fact, been doing just this. As one recent example: Kam Wing Chan is the only geographer invited to participate in a three-year project on China's economic transition that involves more than thirty scholars, mostly economists.



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