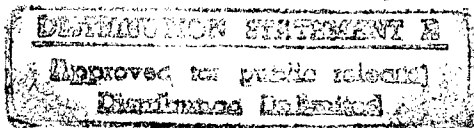


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RECENT WORK ON THE ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY OF CHINA

[Translation]



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RECENT WORK ON THE ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY OF CHINA

[Translation]

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Economic geography is one of the oldest branches of learning in China. We can obtain the first information on the economic geography of that country from the "Shi-chi" ("Historical Notes"), the classic work of Sym Chien, the founder of Chinese history and an outstanding traveller who lived in the second century B.C. Great interest was shown in questions of economic geography by Shen Ko, an amazingly versatile scholar of the middle of the eleventh century. In the seventeenth century, on the basis of the abundant regional material in the many-volumed series "Ti-fang-chi" ("Description of Localities") and his own observations, Kux Yen-woo wrote a work "Tien-hsia shun-kuo lee-ping shu" ("Book on the advantages and disadvantages of the principalities of the Celestial Kingdom") which constituted essentially the first summary of the economic geography of China.

Chinese economic geographers have been active also in the contemporary period. In the 1920s and 1930s a number of specialized works were published on the economies of individual districts of the country and the first atlases of economic maps appeared. A considerable amount of factual material was collected and several new methods of research were mastered. However, the development of the subject was often hampered by the uncritical acceptance of the theories of bourgeois Western economic geographers.

With the triumph of the people's revolution economic geography was confronted with the task of actively assisting the socialist rebuilding of the economy and culture of the country. In the ten years which have elapsed since the formation of the KNR (Kitoyskaya Narodnaya Respublika -- People's Republic of China), economic geography has made great advances. A considerable increase has occurred in the number of scientific research institutions, and large cadres of scientific workers have been trained. With the aid of economic geographers a series of large-scale complex expeditions have been organized which are investigating the natural-economic conditions in districts under settlement and providing valuable scientific data for the planning bodies. The economic districting of the country is being carried out. The results of scientific work are published regularly in periodicals.

The Soviet Union has made an important contribution to the development of economic geography in China. The Chinese economic geographers are creatively utilizing in their work the methods which have been developed by Soviet scholars. The monographs and textbooks published in China are usually organized according to the same principles as in the case of many similar works in the Soviet Union. This is the case, for example, with the plan of the large monographic work "Geography of China". Work on this monography was undertaken in conformity with a decision of the First Congress of the Geographic Society of China held in 1953. According to the original plan it was to have consisted of two equal sections: physical-geographical and economic-geographical, which it was proposed to prepare and publish simultaneously. However, the course of the work on these two sections diverged. The physical geographers were engaged in a study of the natural regions of China and this quickly became a large independent theme in which scholars in many different fields became engaged. The Soviet reader is already acquainted with the first results of the work on natural regions. At the present time the plans for subject and over-all treatments of natural regions are being made more precise and deepened. At the same time the economic geographers reached agreement rather quickly concerning the economic regions which would serve as the bases for the systematization of their data. The entire country was divided into ten regions. Work then began on the economic geography of each of the regions and was to be completed by a general survey.

The editorial board of the monograph decided to publish the regional studies separately. The first of this series "Economic Geography of Inner Mongolia appeared in 1956", the second "Economic Geography of Northern China," appeared in 1957 and the third, "Economic Geography of Central China" appeared in 1958. At the present time the remaining regional studies and the general survey are being completed. One of the three regional studies which have already appeared has been translated into Russian² and from it our readers may judge the series as a whole. In this series a great deal of factual material is summarized concerning very diverse aspects of the economic development of the KNR. Particular attention is given to regional variations.

The growing requirements of practical workers require Chinese economic geographers to seek constantly for new means and methods of research. Of special interest in this connection is the three-volume work published in 1958, "Course on the Economic Geography of China,"

1. See "Physical Geographical Regions of China", Foreign Literature Publishing House, 1957.
2. See "Northern China. Economic Geography," Publishing House of Geographical Literature, 1958.

which was prepared by the Department of Economic Geography of the National University in Peiping under the direction of Prof. Hsun Ching-chi. This major work is distinguished by a new approach to the field of investigation and will make a considerable contribution to the further development of the methodology of economic geography. Special attention is paid to development trends and progress is noted in the setting up of the main branches of the national economy.

The chapter on industry begins with a short description of special features in the development and location of industry in pre-Revolutionary China. The authors point to the extreme backwardness of the old China. In 1949 industry received only 17% of the gross industrial and agricultural product. China, with one-fourth of the world's population, had an industrial production dozens of times less than those of the Soviet Union, U.S.A., Britain, and many other countries. The structure of industry was characterized by profound disproportions. The most important industrial centers were cut off from sources of raw material, fuel, and markets.

In addition, speaking of the characteristics of industrial development in the new China, the authors emphasize the enormous changes which have occurred in this sphere of the economy during the years of the people's power. The Reconstruction Period (1949-1952) and the First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957) laid the foundations for the country's industrialization. The average annual growth of gross industrial production for the First Five-Year Plan amounted to 19.2%, and there was an especially rapid development of heavy industry. The share of industry in the gross production of industry and agriculture amounted to 40% in 1957. By the end of the First Five-Year Plan China was already providing for three-fifths of its requirements in machines and for ninth-tenths of its rolled steel. The connections between industry and other branches of the national economy have been strengthened.

The authors dwell at length on changes in industrial location. In 1949 the coastal districts, which occupy less than one-tenth of the area of China, turned out three-fourths of the gross industrial product, of which Shanghai alone produced one-fourth. In the new China, along with the utilization of the existing capacities of the industrial base in the coastal districts, new industrial centers have been created in the interior districts of the country, close to the most important sources of raw materials, fuel, and markets. This has laid the foundation for a fundamental improvement in industrial location. In the First Five-Year Plan two-thirds of all the largest new industrial construction projects were located in inland districts.

In the chapter devoted to agriculture, it is pointed out that the most important means for the development of this branch of the economy are improvement of the utilization of the cultivated land

and steady increase in agricultural yields per unit of tilled area. A detailed treatment is given to questions relating to the development of irrigation, improvement of agricultural techniques, mechanization, and electrification of agriculture. The authors speak also of the importance of exploitation of virgin lands, particularly for the creation of food and raw material bases on the borders of the country. During the years of the people's power the Chinese peasants have achieved enormous successes: the gross grain harvest has been increased annually by an average of 4.3%, and in 1958 it doubled. Considerable attention is given in the book to problems of regional development and diversification of agriculture.

In the chapter on transportation the changes are described in inter-regional economic links and traffic flows which have occurred in the process of development of the Chinese national economy.

Seven chapters are devoted to regional descriptions, corresponding to seven large economic regions, or, as they are called in China, regions of economic coordination. Notable is the individual approach to the treatment of the several regions, which is result from a striving to emphasize the major definitive factors in the economies of each. Thus, in the chapter devoted to Northeastern China, special attention is paid to the complex of heavy industry which is being built up on the basis of the largest metallurgical combine in the country, that at Anshan. A prominent place is given to a treatment of prospects for development and location of the machine-building, coal, and chemical industries. Agriculture, however, is considered here exclusively as a supplier of raw materials for light industry.

In the chapter on Northern China all those branches of the economy which have or are acquiring national importance are examined in detail: the coal industry, ferrous metallurgy, chemical and textile industries and the cotton-raising, grain growing, and livestock breeding of Inner Mongolia. In the chapter on Eastern China the greatest attention is paid to the prospects for industrial development in Shanghai.

While in the second volume of "Course of the Economic Geography of China" the more economically advanced regions of the country are examined, the third volume is devoted mainly to regions of new industrial development. In the chapters on Central, Southwestern, and North-western China very great attention is paid to the new branches of industry being set up there. Special mention is made of the industrial branches which will determine the future industrial profile -- ferrous metallurgy, machine-building, and chemicals in Central China, and the oil industry in the Southwest. Agriculture is treated primarily in connection with the light and food industries.

The Chinese economic geographers have only just begun their search for new means of development of their subject. However, there is no doubt but what they have already achieved definite successes in their efforts.

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