generation of lay patronage, but ... it accorded directly with Buddhist theology and its preoccupation with the alleviation of suffering (dukkha)” (252). By her own admission, many of the questions Shaw raises in her study of dams and habitation settlement sites in this region will require further investigation to be fully substantiated. However, Shaw successfully presents a picture of the Buddhist monastic community as participating in the broader social and economic milieu within the region. Shaw’s evidence repeatedly suggests that, contrary to the picture of the aloof or retiring Buddhist monk provided in certain textual sources, from an early date the monastic communities around Sanchi found “practical” and “active” ways to encourage economic support from local residents.

In her introduction, Shaw notes the challenges involved in the study of ancient Indian religions, which benefits from the approaches of several distinct disciplines. As the current “underlying academic infrastructure” makes the acquisition of the required skills and training quite difficult for an individual student to achieve, Shaw suggests “what is now required is meaningful and focused dialogue across and between the various disciplines” (26), while also noting the challenges involved in this sort of productive dialogue, in which “it is as difficult for an uninformed archaeologist to ask the right questions of a scholar of Buddhist texts as it is for the latter to recognise the potential contribution of a pile of potsherds or hydrological data to their own research” (26). In the years since Shaw published her study, a number of contributions from scholars working in a range of disciplines have emerged that engage some of Shaw’s larger questions. For example, Jonathan Silk’s Managing Monks: Administrators and Administrative Roles in Indian Buddhist Monasticism (2008), Andy Rotman’s Thus Have I Seen: Visualizing Faith in Early Indian Buddhism (2009), and Akira Shimada’s Early Buddhist Architecture in Context: The Great Stūpa at Amarāvatī (ca. 300 B.C.E.–300 C.E.) (2012) all address, in part, ways in which monastic communities engaged in economic transactions. By greatly expanding our understanding of the broader landscape and social contexts that surrounded the long-lived and justifiably famous Buddhist site at Sanchi, Shaw’s work, along with a number of other studies, most certainly contributes to the very sort of interdisciplinary dialogue she proposes.

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In his English-language overview of Shang civilization incorporating up-to-date archaeological, art-historical, and transmitted textual and epigraphic information, Thorp attempts a Herculean task. This is a much needed contribution to a field that has not
had a synthetic treatment of the subject in English since K. C. Chang’s work in the early eighties (1980, 1983). As the jacket cover states, China in the Early Bronze Age aims to be both an introduction to Shang civilization for those who can’t read Chinese and “a handbook and research guide” for those who can. Given the pace of archaeological work in China, its rapidly multiplying and frequently scattered publications, and the difficulty of accessing, let alone synthesizing, the results of such diverse and esoteric sources of information as oracle-bone and bronze vessel epigraphy, transmitted texts with their millennia-deep commentarial traditions, and current art-historical and archaeological approaches to material culture and its interpretation, Thorp’s relative success or failure to achieve his stated goals must be seen in the context of the enormity of his task.

Thorp’s preface is a Western scholar’s thirty-some-year backward glance at the context and development of archaeological practice in the PRC during what has been termed “the Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology.” Here, as throughout the work, the writing style is straightforward, the language simple, and the text amazingly jargon-free. Thorp’s informative use of subject boxes aimed at an introductory audience supplement the text and introduce such concepts and institutions as “mythic narratives,” “cultural relic (wenwu 文物),” and “Institute of Archaeology (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所).”

The introductory chapter provides the geographical setting and Neolithic cultural background to the Chinese Bronze Age. Thorp tackles the important but tricky issue of de-linking geographical China from the modern Chinese nation-state and Han 漢 ethnicity in a manner that is both concise and easy to understand. The idea of providing a regional geographical context for ancient societies in China is a good one, but Thorp’s use of Skinner’s (1985) map of Qing 清 dynasty macroregions (which are not, contra Thorp, entirely “natural” in the sense of being independent of human economic, cultural, and technological developments) is perhaps not ideal. A topographical map would have been more useful, and one or a series of maps that took into account the paleo-environment and the distribution of archaeological cultures within it would have been even better.

The 12 pages on the Late Neolithic begins with a 6-page discussion of terms such as “Terminal Neolithic” and “Age of Jade” and a brief overview, followed by a history of the changing meaning of “Longshan 龍山” and some sites associated with this historical narrative. This history-of-the-discipline approach provides a common thread among most of the topics in the book and is a valuable contextual addition when it does not get in the way of an overview of what is currently known on a particular subject. For the purpose of introducing students unfamiliar with Chinese archaeology to the topic, I would have preferred to have more systemically presented information on what is presently known than the history of particular sites or concepts, especially in a short treatment of a huge topic (or rather, a huge complex of topics). In the six pages left to an overview of the Late Neolithic, Thorp covers the concept of a Chinese interaction sphere, lists walled sites and briefly discusses some of them, and defines “early states.” He then ties these threads together to argue for the presence of “complex societies, some possibly incipient states” in the Terminal Neolithic (20).

While I do not necessarily disagree with his conclusions, there are some problems with Thorp’s presentation of the material that are symptomatic of more general problems with the work. First of all, the focus on walled sites to the exclusion of non-walled sites seems an odd choice in the context of a discussion of regional survey and settlement hierarchies, particularly when it means some of the largest sites such as Liangchenzhen 梁城鎮 (245 ha) in Shandong 山東 are ignored. Secondly, although this section of the introductory chapter is devoted to the Terminal Neolithic or Longshan period, the only maps given are from Chang (1986), all of which are for periods earlier than the Longshan (3000–2000 B.C.E.). For an introductory text, the lack of an up-to-date map and chronological table of archaeological cultures is a serious oversight. Thirdly, although Thorp gamely joins the fray on the issue of social complexity in China, he is apparently unaware of the magnitude of
By definition, early states were stratified societies with regional settlement hierarchies, two characteristics that are visible in the archaeological record. Disparities in grave goods and the widespread distribution of walled sites are significant indicators that complex societies had formed in several regional settings. (19)

Even if one were to make the simplifying assumption that there is a scholarly consensus about the definition of an early state, “stratified societies with regional settlement hierarchies” covers a lot of social evolutionary ground. “Complex societies” is equally encompassing, “disparities in grave goods” may be an indication of differential status (but the issue is more one of scale than presence/absence), and “walled sites” are not necessarily related to anything except as possible indicators of warfare and labor invested in their construction and maintenance (one of many possible indicators). In short, when one considers all the ways in which societies can be complex and the paucity of information concerning the actual organization of Chinese Neolithic sociopolitical entities, attempting to place them on a universal social-evolutionary ladder is at best premature and at worst an uncritical and inaccurate appropriation of a deeply controversial body of anthropological theory.1

Chapter 1 introduces the Erlitou 二里頭 culture, including a brief history of its discovery and the site it is named after, its regional context, its bronzes and jades, then contemporary cultures, and the issue of Erlitou’s relationship to the Xia 夏 dynasty. This division gives a good coverage of important aspects of the Erlitou Culture and its significance. The discussion of the Erlitou site, and especially its elite material culture (architecture, jade and bronze artifacts) is informative and comprehensive, yet written in a manner easy for non-specialists to understand. The discussion of regional context and contemporary cultures could have used a more comprehensive overview, a better map, and perhaps some tables to more systematically present the current state of knowledge concerning contemporaneous archaeological cultures in China. On the level of individual details, it should be noted that the dates 1900–1500 B.C. for Erlitou are now considered out of date, with more recent research putting the site at c. 1850–1550 B.C. (CASSIA 2003:81, DDGC 2000:76–77) or even c. 1750–1520 B.C. (Qiu et al. 2005). The claim that “all bronze weapon types presently known from Erlitou seem to be ceremonial gear” (42) is unsubstantiated, and, if arrowheads are included, inaccurate. The Shijiahe 石家河 and Kexingzhuang 客省庄 cultures are generally thought to be earlier than Erlitou (i.e., Longshan period), not contemporaneous as the map on page 49 indicates. The Siba 寺坝 culture is located west of the area shown on the map and important contemporary cultures such as Xiaqiyuan 夏家店, Zhukaigou 尊開溝, Doujittai 道雞台, and Guangshu 光社 or Jinzhong 晉中 are omitted from the map and subsequent discussion. These omissions lead Thorp to discuss potential long-range interaction between Erlitou and distant cultures without consideration of intervening cultures. Thus, some Erlitou-type drinking vessels found at Dadianzi 大甸子 (2% of the total mortuary ceramic sample) are discussed in terms of direct Erlitou–Lower Xiajadian 夏家店 contacts, whereas mediation through the intervening Xiaqiyuan, Jinzhong, or Zhukaigou cultures seems much more likely. Finally, although the search for the Xia section is germane and generally accurate, the Western Zhou bronze vessel Bin Gong Xu 鬲公盨, as the earliest record of the Yu 禹 narrative, is surely relevant and should have been mentioned.

Chapter 2 continues the narrative of North China Bronze Age civilization with discussion of the Erligang 二離崗 culture divided into two long sections on “a network of sites” and “technologies of power and prestige” and two short sections on “Erligang Society” and “Erligang and the Regions.”2 The section on site networks is further divided into discussions on “walled capitals (du 都),” “satellites or citadels,” and settlements (yi 邑). There is some anachronism in using the Eastern Zhou word for capital to describe the Shang period (oracle bones record only yi-settlements or
large yi-settlements). This might explain Thorp’s otherwise odd fixation on walled sites throughout the work, despite the fact that Erlitou and Anyang were unwalled. Nevertheless, the introductions to the Yanshi Shangcheng and Zhengzhou sites are a good mixture of overview and historical background with a nice box on pounded earth construction perfect for introductory students. The subsection on smaller Erligang walled sites gives a good introduction to the subject. The example of the Taixi site rounds out a selection of the range of Erligang-type sites and their possible relationships.

There are, however, a couple of minor points that should be addressed with respect to the archaeological record of this period. Thorp’s assertion on page 76 that houses and workshops do not survive in great numbers, while elite burials frequently appear in publication, conflates two issues: Chinese archaeological interest and archaeological preservation. There are in fact plenty of houses and, to a lesser extent, production remains, but they are much less frequently the focus of investigation and even less of publication. Another assertion conflates Erligang culture and a putative “Shang state,” two completely different things:

The actual extent of Erligang Culture is far from clear-cut. Dozens of additional sites are recorded as the result of surveys and limited excavations, but very few have the depth and range of remains that have been discovered at the few, best-known, sites discussed above. In many cases, therefore, pottery alone suggests the presence of the Erligang Culture, an archaeological horizon, without however, any clear evidence that the locality in question was or was not part of a Shang state. (76–78)

The lack of evidence for a Shang state hardly makes the extent of Erligang Culture (which is defined mostly in terms of ceramics anyway) difficult to define. It is rather the extent of the Shang state that is far from clear-cut. In fact, none of the work done at the larger, better known sites allows one to be certain that they are all part of a single Shang state, only that they share ceramic and elite material cultural traditions.

The section on elite architecture and bronze casting is the most detailed and comprehensive in the chapter, especially the bronze casting subsection, which discusses everything from mining to mold preparation and the final casting of the bronzes. The short section on Erligang society should have been renamed Erligang burials. Furthermore, any attempt to talk about Erligang society really ought to incorporate some of the admittedly more scattered and difficult to synthesize information on workshops, tools, ceramic vessels, and middens. The section on Erligang and surrounding regions is dedicated to describing the Wucheng Culture and its relationship with Erligang. While this is an important site, and Thorp’s discussion is good, as in previous chapters and indeed throughout the book, neighboring archaeological cultures are dealt with only in piecemeal fashion and no comprehensive overview is attempted (nor is any map given showing the distribution of archaeological cultures).

The last three chapters of the book all concern the Anyang period, to which the first half of the book serves as an introduction. Chapter 3, “The Shang Kings at Anyang,” provides a history of the excavations at Anyang and a discussion of the site, including subsections on the palace-temple area, workshops, royal tombs and “elite cemeteries,” and elite material culture including ceramic, bone, ivory, marble, jade, and bronze artifacts (bronze vessels are left to the discussion of divination and sacrifice in chapter 4). While one might wish for more on the non-elites at Anyang, Thorp can hardly be blamed for the general lack of information on the subject. As you might expect from an art historian who has spent most of his career studying the Shang, the discussion of Anyang elite material culture is both insightful and comprehensive. Indeed, it is probably the best chapter in the book, with the discussion of elite material culture other than bronze artifacts especially welcome. Nevertheless, chapter 3 could have used a more comprehensive map showing place names and locations of the cemeteries, workshops, and “palace-temples” discussed in the text.
There are some minor points about which I would like to quibble. Thorp states that the Xiaomintun 員民屯 foundry was a “tiny site in comparison to Miaopu North” (苗圃北) and that tool and weapons mold fragments were most numerous (142). Thorp does not seem to be aware of more recent work done at Xiaomintun SE, where over 10,000 mold fragments have been discovered, mostly for ritual vessels (CASSIA 2003; Li 2003). The discussion of “elite cemeteries” also contains a number of problems. Firstly, it has recently been estimated that at least 10,000 late Shang burials have been excavated outside the royal cemetery (Tang 2004), not 3000 as Thorp states. Secondly, the claim on page 152 that these were for “petty elite” lineages who enjoyed “a social status far above the rest of the population” is simply inaccurate. Tombs in these cemeteries range from a few large tombs frequently associated with chariot pits that have ramps and rich furnishings (including death attendants, bronze vessel sets, and jade artifacts) to unfurnished pits just large enough to fit a body. Indeed, based on my own preliminary study of Yinxu 殷墟 burials, the majority (over 80%) of burials were small rectangular pits with a single coffin, a few ceramic pots, perhaps a cowry shell, and occasionally a couple of bronze weapons or tools. Given that this is what ordinary Chinese Bronze Age burials look like elsewhere, there doesn’t seem to be any good reason for calling them “petty elite” burials or for speculating they had a status far above a population of which we have no evidence. It seems more likely that the occupants of these cemeteries were the majority of the population. The claim that there is little indication of settlements “among or nearby” the cemeteries is also inaccurate. Although this has come out in recent work of which Thorp may not have been aware, it seems most late Shang residential areas have tombs among or nearby the houses and the Western cemeteries at Yinxu are no exception.

Chapter 4, an overview of the royal Shang divination and sacrifice rituals that “held society together” (172), is divided into three parts: oracle-bone divination, bronze ritual vessels and inscriptions, and social relations. The first of these sections is based on David Keightley’s work (1999) and is a fair attempt at summarizing another scholar’s views while adding some insights of Thorp’s own. It does contain some inaccuracies such as the claim that in late periods the king was the only divine (179) and that there was generally a correspondence between ancestors’ day-names and the day of divination. The section on bronze vessels is stronger; it goes into more than enough detail for an introductory text. It should be noted, however, that the functions assigned to Shang bronzes are based on the received textual tradition rather than systematic residue or use-wear analysis; thus, while the statement that yan 鼎 were used for steaming grains may be broadly correct, the possibly steamed human skulls found in yan in three different Yinxu burials suggest that grain may not have been the only thing yan were used to steam (Tang 2005: 15–18). The final section on Shang bronze inscriptions and their relationship to social relations is an important inclusion and Thorp gives a good introduction to the issues.

Chapter 5 attempts to put the previous two chapters into regional context, discussing possible political and cultural relationships, regional exchange networks, and Shang material cultural influences. As in previous chapters attempting to deal with archaeological work regionally, Thorp’s account, while introducing important examples, ends up being rather piecemeal and lacks a good synthetic overview. The topic of exchange networks in the late Shang period is important, but Thorp’s discussion is marred by errors. The claim that Anyang copper ore came from the Yangzi 长江 area is unsubstantiated and unreferenced. Northern proto-porcelain may have come from Hunan 湖南, Jiangxi 江西, and Zhejiang 浙江, but only Jiangxi (Wucheng) is backed with a provenience study and that is not without controversy. The claim that nephrite from Anyang and Xingan 新干 came from Xinjiang 新疆 has not been substantiated by any sourcing studies. The claim that lacquer came from the Yangtze area is not, to my knowledge, based on anything more than speculation. Citations would have greatly helped assessment of some of Thorp’s claims here and throughout the book. Although perhaps reflecting the
publisher's policy on introductory texts, their paucity is perhaps the greatest shortcoming of the book, crippling its use as a "handbook and research guide" (back cover).

As an accessible introduction to the Chinese Bronze Age, *China in the Early Bronze Age* is nevertheless the most comprehensive and up-to-date book of its type in English. For more advanced students and courses with space on the reading list, it should ideally be read along with Bagley (1999), Keightley (1999), and Liu and Chen (2003) for comparison. For students who can read Chinese, *CASSIA* (2003) is the most recent and important synthesis of Chinese archaeological research for the Early/Middle Bronze Age. Campbell (forthcoming), moreover, presents an updated and critical synthesis of much the same material in English. The relevant chapters of Underhill (2013) should also be consulted and Flad and Chen (2013) shed light on understudied regions providing an alternative perspective on the centers and peripheries of "ancient China". *China in the Early Bronze Age* can and should be supplemented with the almost daily output of reports, analyses, and syntheses published as monographs and in conference volumes, collections of essays, and a widening array of journals (too numerous, even in English, to list here). As archaeological work in China continues apace, absorbs and develops new methodologies, and increasingly becomes part of an international archaeological community, attempts to synthesize the Bronze Age of China will only become more difficult even while the topic itself becomes ever more interesting. While the '70s and '80s were heralded by some as the Golden Age of Chinese archaeology, I would suggest that Chinese archaeology's Golden Age has not yet come to pass.

NOTES

1. For just a few examples of critiques of neoevolutionary theory see Paynter (1989), Smith (2003), and Yoffee (2005). Even Feinman (1998:132), who was in the vanguard of neoevolutionary theory of the 1980s, has come to write, "an understanding of societal change and preindustrial states requires much more than a single theory, evolutionary scenario, or set of prime movers."

2. Thorp gives 1600–1300 B.C.E. for the Erligang Culture but, although the Xia, Shang, Zhou Duan Dai Gong Cheng 夏商周斷代工程 *Summer* 2000:87 gives the same dates for the early Shang period, Erligang layers only cover 1600–1400 B.C.E. The last hundred years of the "early Shang" is based on radiocarbon samples from Xiaoqiangxiao 小雙橋 and Huayuan-zhuang 花園莊 layers (see tables 15 and 18 in DDGC [2000]), so terming this entire period "Erligang" is inappropriate. Moreover, more recent work on sites such as Huainbeicheng 河北城 at Anyang have caused a widely accepted reappraisal of the Shang chronological scheme, dividing it into early (c. 1600–1400 B.C.E.), middle (c. 1400–1250 B.C.E.), and late Shang (c. 1250–1050 B.C.E.), with the middle period basically corresponding to the Intermediate period proposed in Bagley (1999). The term "Middle Shang" was first suggested for the period between Erligang and Yinshu 殷墟 in Yang and Tang (1999) and the tripartite division of the Shang period is used in the Institute of Archaeology’s recent synthesis of Early and Middle Chinese Bronze Age archaeology (CASSIA 2003).

3. The focus on walls and walled sites seen in Table 2.2 on page 64 gives rise to misleading impressions of the relative size of Erligang-period sites, however. Although the walled area of Panlongcheng 盤龍城 is only 7.5 ha in area, the entire site covers almost ten times that. HBS (2001:2) gives the figure of 1000 × 1100 m = 110 ha, but this near square includes areas of ravine and lake; Sun (2005:8) gives a more accurate figure of 64 ha.

4. For instance, far more houses than intact elite tombs have been excavated at Anyang despite the fact that the former appear more rarely in publications. In excavations I participated in at Shachang 沙場 and Sipanmo 四盤磨 in the Anyang area, dozens of houses and tombs were excavated, but no intact elite tombs were found. Moreover, both houses and production sites are increasingly the focus of archaeological attention at Anyang and elsewhere. For Anyang residential areas see Meng 2003; CASSIA 2003; Anyang Team 2009; Tang and Jing 2009. For a sample of work on production at Anyang see Li 2003; Liu and Yue 2005; Haapanen 2005; Campbell et al. 2011; Li et al. 2011; He 2011.

5. Although there is no comprehensive and up-to-date discussion of regional archaeological cultures in the Chinese Bronze Age, Cohen (2001) gives both a critique of Chinese culture-historical archaeological practice and an introduction to the Yueyi culture and issues surrounding it.

6. An exception to this paucity of information on non-elite material culture and practice is Mina Haapanen’s doctoral dissertation concerning food practices and community at Anyang (2005).
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7. This is apparently based on CASSIA (1994: 100) where it is estimated that 6000 tombs of all types (including sacrificial pits) had been excavated at Anyang. In the decade since then, many more tombs have been excavated. CASSIA (2003: 303) states that “more than 7000” of these “lineage cemetery” tombs have been excavated.

8. Tang (2004) confirms this picture. There are also midden burials at Anyang that might represent the lowest stratum of society, but according to Tang (2004: 100–102), no more than a couple hundred of these have been found, accounting for only about two percent of the human remains known from Anyang.

9. This is based both on firsthand excavation experience at a mixed burial and residential site at Sipamno and conversations with Anyang Work Station archaeologists about the site structure in general. Tang Jigen in particular noted that the cemeteries in the Angang 安钢 area did indeed have residential structures nearby but that these were not recognized or recorded by previous investigators who were focused on burials (Tang and Jing 2009).

10. I would also quibble with this overly simple picture of Shang society that seems to imply that all social agency rested in the hands of the high elites. Minimally, such a claim should include an argument for how royal ritual managed to involve the population as a whole and what stake people of different social classes had in it. Moreover, there is a danger of circularity and bias in making a claim for the centrality of royal ritual based entirely on royal divinations and high elite material culture.

11. In period V, for example, there is the Huang 黄 group of diviners. It would be more accurate to say that diviners other than the king were dramatically reduced in number in later periods (at least as indicated by inscribed oracle bones, which were, however, a minority of the scapulas and plastrons used for divination).

12. Rather, there is a correspondence between the day an ancestor received sacrifice and that ancestor’s day-name, as the following example shows (Heji 1979–1983: 776):

Gui Mao day cracked, Ke tested, next Jia Chen day [we should] offer to Shang Jia ten bovines.

癸卯卜，□，翌甲辰□于上甲十牛。

13. These yan and their contents are now on display at the Yinxiu Museum, Anyang (declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2006).

14. Some scholars claim other sources for Anyang copper, such as Yunnan (Jin 1987; Jin et al. 1998).

15. For the argument that Wucheng may have been a source of Central Plains proto-porcelain and hard-ware see Chen at al. (1999). For the argument that Wucheng was not the source of Anyang and Zhengzhou proto-porcelain and hard-ware, see Zhou (2005: 525–530).

16. It is widely believed in China that the material for Anyang jades comes from Hetian in Xinjiang, but this assumption is based on no more than a connoisseurial assessment by modern jade experts examining modern jade sources. Chemical sourcing studies would not be easy given that a chemical database of all known Chinese nephrite sources has not yet been compiled.

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*Book Review Essay by Loukas Barton University of Pittsburgh*

The Garden of Eden or Vavilov’s El Dorado? 
*A review of recent thoughts on the origins of agriculture in mainland East Asia*

Numerous texts, edited volumes, and monographs from around the world address the origins and consequences of agricultural life.