

**The Urban Environment.** IAN DOUGLAS. Baltimore: Edward Arnold, 1983. 229 pp., maps, photos., diags., tables, index, and biblio. \$18.95 paper (ISBN 0-7131-6392-5).

The goal of this text, written by a British physical geographer, is to demonstrate the applicability of the methods and concepts of physical geography to an understanding of urban problems and issues. Three initial chapters introduce the city as an integrated social and biophysical system, dependent on its surroundings for both energy and substance. Following this are chapters on urban energy, water, and mass balances, with a stronger emphasis on abstract principles, uncertainties, and research questions than is found in the rest of the book. Chapters 7 through 10, comprising almost one-half of the book and emphasizing applications of biophysical knowledge, treat urban geomorphology, biogeography, waste disposal, and health and disease. The final two chapters suggest avenues for incorporating biophysical understanding into urban management and planning.

My reactions are mixed. On the positive side, Douglas succeeds in demonstrating the relevance and interest in a physical geography of cities. The selection of topics and geographical coverage are good. The text presents a more comprehensive conception of biophysical relationships between cities and their environments than do most of its competitors, making its use attractive where a more limited focus on natural hazards, pollution control, or geology is not desired. Douglas balances a slight emphasis on British applications with numerous examples, many based on personal experience, from the U.S., Australia, and developing nations. The text as a whole, and particularly Chapters 7 through 10, include a wealth of case studies, applications, and research results with the potential to excite students of both urban studies and physical geography by demonstrating the applicability of classroom knowledge to their immediate environment. I frequently found myself stifling momentary urges to begin exploring my own city, to map the intraurban distribution of bird species or to identify the changing sources of building materials, for example.

My misgivings revolve around the appropriateness of the text for North American audiences. The development of basic physical geography concepts is generally insufficient for U.S. university students without prerequisites. The writing style is dense, and graphics, although plentiful, frequently do not fully support the text. For example, the reader is too often presented with a relatively technical verbal description of a case study from outside the U.S., illustrated by a large scale map without a locational inset or adequate symbolization of features important to an understanding of the text (see, e.g., pp. 21-22 and 87-88). Finally, inclusion of a glossary for both technical terms and occasionally unfamiliar British usages, along with a guide to metric notation, would have eliminated many small barriers to North American use. None of these difficulties is serious by itself, but together they restrict comprehensibility.

In sum, although the text is a welcome contribution to the literature for urban studies, and would serve well as a reference or sourcebook, successful use as a text in a North American setting would depend on the prior background, and seriousness, of students. University students of environmental science, geography, architecture, planning, and urban management are suggested audiences, but few introductory students of physical geography, and few urban planning students at any level, would have the requisite background. This mismatch is unfortunate, for these are probably the two largest potential audiences for this text. Key Words: *urban geography, applied physical geography, environmental studies.* Rebecca S. Roberts, University of Oklahoma.

**Geomorphology of Europe.** CLIFFORD EMBLETON, ed. New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1984. x and 465 pp., maps, diags., index and biblio. \$79.95 cloth (ISBN 0-471-80070-8).

Regional geomorphologies are difficult to write because they require unusual field experience and knowledge of a vast and rapidly growing literature. They also demand a balance between several competing perspectives, namely the structural-lithological, the historical erosional, and the morphometric-analytical paradigms. Finally, they can be approached at different scales, ranging from watershed studies to megamorphostructures. Two early attempts to synthesize the geomorphology of Europe illustrate some of the problems: F. Machatschek (*Das Relief der Erde*, Berlin, Borntraeger, 1st ed. 1938, vol. 1) was preoccupied with morphostructural criteria, whereas L. C. King (*Morphology of the Earth*, London, Oliver and Boyd, 1st ed. 1962) was obsessed with a blueprint for ancient erosional surfaces.

Embleton has attempted to circumvent some of these problems by employing the talents of numerous authors, by focusing attention on some 13 major morphostructural regions (as well as the surrounding submarine features), and by trying to strike a balance within each of 88 subregions by dealing with structural controls, key erosional ensembles, and Quaternary sculpture or sedimentation. But the book was initially conceived as a text to accompany and explain the *International Geomorphological Map of Europe* at 1:2.5 million, to be compiled by the Commission on Geomorphological Survey and Mapping (International Geographical Union). Although the volume did diverge substantially from this more limited role in the process, the basic tone was set by the East European structural-lithographical geomorphologists who dominate the Commission. This is primarily a conservative Russian school, talented in terms of broad conceptions but preeminently descriptive, and still hesitant to accept the critical implications of plate tectonics—to which there are only six cursory references in the entire volume, and half of these negative. It also is a presentation mode that lends itself poorly to appreciating the scope and significance of Quaternary landscape modification or creation, nor is it suitable as a base for an applied geomorphology that can be integrated with human geographical concerns. The editor has, therefore, been forced to work with a stacked deck. Embleton is a first-class glacial geomorphologist and one can only wonder about his private misgivings implementing a volume within such a traditional paradigm.

The proof is generally in the pudding, and it is to Embleton's credit that despite the recipe, he has produced a book of quality craftsmanship and scholarly value. The presentation and its effectiveness can be illustrated with respect to a specific region. The Iberian Peninsula is treated in three chapters by Maria Sala (Barcelona): one of these deals with the Pyrenees and Ebro Basin, another with the Baetic Cordillera and Guadalquivir Basin of Andalucía, and the third with the Iberian Massif, essentially the area in between. This subdivision is justified primarily on grounds of tectonic history, because similar landform constellations tend to transcend all three structural provinces within specific categories such as "young" fold mountains of sedimentary rocks, upraised igneous/metamorphic masses, or sedimentary basins. When the whole is thus jumbled up into multiple parts, the reader is likely to lose sight of the unifying patterns and to fail to grasp the characteristics of the different Iberian landscapes. Yet the analysis itself is sound, providing balanced interpretative judgments that go well beyond the existing literature, and each theme is illustrated by excellent geomorphic maps that vividly display salient features, including examples of morphometric representation by Bruce Gladfelter and by Sala herself. By comparison, the East European chapters are less successful in highlighting characteristic landforms, but they derive interest by making accessible a large body of literature.

Embleton has provided regionalists and geomorphologists with a major work of reference that invaluable updates the synthetic literature. Whatever the limitations of the organizational and theoretical framework, the serious reader will profit greatly from this meticulous and well-written historical introduction to Europe's physical landscapes. **Key Words:** *Regional, Historical and Structural Geomorphology: Europe* Karl W. Butzer, University of Texas at Austin.

**An Introduction to South Asia.** B. H. FARMER. London and New York: Methuen, 1983. ix and 253 pp., index. £14.95 cloth (ISBN 0-416-72600-3); \$10.95 paper (ISBN 0-416-72610-0).

Good books written by geographers primarily for a mature audience of nongeographers are, regrettably, all too rare. *An Introduction to South Asia* may now be added to that group. Its author, B. H. Farmer, former Director of the Centre of South Asian Studies at the University of Cambridge, of which he is now an emeritus reader, is particularly well qualified for the task he set himself: to describe, in the words of the blurb, "the geographical and historical background to the diversities of the region." Specifically, the areas considered are those presently comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Temporally, the book concentrates on the period since 1947, when India and Pakistan attained their independence; but the colonial era is also briefly discussed.

Excluding a brief introduction and *envoi*, the text comprises five chapters. Chapter 2, "The Environments of South Asia: Natural and Social," gives surprisingly short shrift to the natural and treats the several social systems of the region primarily from the hierarchical perspective implied by caste in India and more or less analogous institutions elsewhere. Chapter 3 dis-

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