in their own group than of that within others. Unfortunately, however, despite much ingenuity, the theory is not rigorous enough to provide unequivocal explanations for many of the phenomena. As an example, consider the interesting finding that people are far more likely to attribute their own behaviour to an external event than they are that of other people, which they tend to attribute to internal dispositions. The authors argue that the situational factors that "drive and constrain one's own behaviour are far more salient than the same factors in others". But one could equally argue that a person's own mental states are far more salient than those of others, thus making the wrong predictions. It could even be that people tend to attribute their own behaviour to external events because they dislike blame

or, if they are modest, praise.

A further set of experiments examines how far people's ability to reason is affected by training in different subjects. Statistics and experimental design were found to be helpful, logic was not. It is reassuring to know that a good use has been found for statistics.

Almost any reader will find the experimental chapters of this book interesting, and the more determined will find flashes of insight in the theoretical chapters, but even the most dedicated may be hard put to piece the full theory together into a coherent whole. Maybe the authors should return to Hume, if only to study his perspicuous prose. □

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Chinese features

M.M. Sweeting

Physical Geography of China. By Zhao Songqiao. Wiley: 1986. Pp.209 plus colour plates. £24.95, \$29.95.

Physical Geography of China is essentially an English-language version of Volume I of a 12-volume work in Chinese summing up the chief features of China's physical geographical environment. It is in many ways a team effort, embodying the work carried out by Chinese geographers since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, but Zhao Songqiao with the help of the Science Press in Beijing and of Wiley has done a good job of organization and translation of the material. The text is clear and readable, and is divided into two parts. The first seven chapters deal with different aspects of the physical geography of the whole of China — climate, geomorphology, surface and ground water, soils and biogeography — while the second part of the book consists of regional studies of the country's natural divisions. This arrangement emphasizes the main factors which shape China's physical environment.

China occupies 6.5 per cent of the total land area of the world and has 23 per cent of the world's population. It is a vast country, containing a large variety of physical environments, and stretches from the Nansha coral islands near the Equator to the Heilong river (Amur) at 53°N, and from the islands of Taiwan and of the Pacific coast in the east to the Afghan frontier in the west. This immense area is divided into three natural realms — Eastern Monsoon China, the Nei Mongol–Xinjiang arid realm and the Qinghai–Xizang (Tibet) Alpine realm. These realms have been further subdivided into 7 natural divisions and 33 natural regions, and the

subdivisions form the basis for the second half of the book. Since 1978 a comprehensive land classification and mapping programme has been in progress, based on that used by CSIRO in Australia. The text is illustrated by samples of the land types covered by this mapping at a scale of 1:100,000; examples given include the dissected loess plateau area and the Turpan Basin.

The general chapters are particularly good on China's climate and water resources, the accompanying maps showing the various features of China's monsoon climate with its very cold winters and its extreme continentality. The section on geomorphology is a little less sharp but covers the vast area well and, like the whole book, is modern in its outlook; new ideas on peri-glaciation, glaciation and neo-tectonics are well represented. The chapter on the classification of the soils is based on the FAO–UNESCO System.

In the second part, each of the 33 natural regions with its subregions is identified and described in terms of its physical fea-

tures and areal differentiation. In addition, the regions are assessed for their potential for agricultural development and settlement. The descriptions are well balanced and introduce the main characteristics of each region — climate, geomorphology, vegetation and potential biological resources. The results of the work of the Desert Research Institute at Lanzhou and of the Symposium on Qinghai–Xizang in 1980 are incorporated into the excellent sections on north-west and west China. Considerable attention is also given to the developing areas of the cool temperate north-east and tropical south China.

Almost all of the many references given at the end of each section are in Chinese, indicating how much work is now available to those geographers who can read the language. The numerous maps, profiles and tables are very clear, and there are 15 pages of well-chosen colour photographs which depict aspects of the physical geography and vegetation. Eleven Landsat images are included, illustrating some striking areas such as Lop Nor. There is, too, a useful topographic map of China, though not all of the place names mentioned in the text are included on it. Modern pinyin terminology is used throughout (rather than the older Wade–Giles romanization), and it is helpful for English readers to be introduced to the administrative units in Chinese and to the more commonly used Chinese words and units of measurement. A glossary of place names in Chinese is also included.

The presentation of *Physical Geography of China* may be orthodox; but this is the best modern book on the subject and demonstrates clearly the great intellectual developments made by Chinese geographers in the past 30 years. □

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Above it all — Landsat image of the area around Dongting Lake, south-central China.