

# UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



51431

Distr.  
LIMITED



E/CN.14/CART/184  
26 August 1966

ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
Second United Nations Regional  
Cartographic Conference for Africa  
Tunis (Tunisia), 12 - 24 September 1966  
Provisional agenda item 13

## ATLAS OF TUNISIA PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS /

Paper submitted by the Government of the Republic of Tunisia

/

M66-1012

ATLAS OF TUNISIA  
PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS 1/

Since the first edition of the National Atlas of Finland in 1899, few countries remained without producing a National Atlas.

Thus, on our continent, Egypt was the first to have its own, in 1928, the present Ghana was next, in 1932, and produced a second edition of its Atlas as early as 1949. The French colonies joined them in 1934, Tanganyika published an Atlas in 1942 (third edition in 1958). The Congo, Belgian at the time, since 1948, the Portuguese colonies in 1948, Sierra Leone in 1953, Morocco since 1954, the Spanish colonies in 1955, Kenya in 1959, Uganda in 1962. And, since 1964, most African countries, if not all of them, have started work on Atlases.

At the present time, for developing countries, an Atlas is one of the most objective foundations of development:

- It makes it possible to collect all the precise data relating to the country (we all know, from experience, that it is not possible to write at length on an imperfectly known subject, while it is impossible to map it).

An atlas thus offers an opportunity to prepare a study programme to fill the gaps.

- It also affords the opportunity of coming rapidly in contact with the general features of the country to the young people who will have to organize it and to specialists in a particular field who wish to have an idea of other data and to find out their correlations with their own field of study.

The study of correlations between phenomena is a present tendency that has asserted itself in 1964 at the XXth Congress of the International Geographical Union in London, and at the Symposium of the International Cartographic Association in Edinburgh, where the thematic maps produced in many countries were exhibited.

1/ Translation submitted by the Tunisian Government.

A valuable example is that of the study made in Morocco by Mr. Joly; the first operation was the study of characteristic phenomena of the physical environment and of life in Morocco, of rainfall, bioclimatic indexes, minimum winter temperature, nature of pasture, quantitative and qualitative distribution of crops, location of mines and industries, town population, transportation network. Starting from these special maps, each of which answers only a very limited question, the geographer sets out to study the relation between these different phenomena; and the superposition of corresponding maps made the division into regional maps possible.

In Tunisia, apart from the Atlas of Algeria and Tunisia produced between 1929 and 1937 by Augustin Bernard and Flotte de Roquevaire, the only small-scale maps published up to the present time were made up around 1950 and only related to:

- Geology (Geological Department maps on the 1:500,000 and 1:2,000,000 scales).
- Annual precipitations (map on the 1:500,000 scale, under the supervision of Messrs. GAUSSEN and VERNET).
- Land taken up by vegetation and cultivated crops (map on the 1:1,000,000 scale, under the supervision of Mr. Gausсен).

The only map dealing with an essentially human and economic phenomenon was presented in 1960 in the Review "Annales Economies Sociétés Civilisations" by Messrs. Lalue and Marthelot; it examines the geographic distribution of the Tunisian population in 1956.

For us, therefore, an Atlas answers the need of a country wishing to develop its economy for reliable geographic information.

A problem was posed as soon as the idea began to take shape:

What job should be given priority, a National Atlas or a Practical Atlas? The solution was dictated by working conditions.

The information available in Tunisia is still incomplete, while there is an urgent need for having on hand the main elements of the country's physical and human data.

A further reason for the choice is that it is preferable to do some preliminary preparation before starting a more accurate and a more exhaustive study.

Very soon, final year secondary school pupils, students and Government officials will have at their disposal a volume of handy size, giving directly legible information on the main physical and economic features of the country.

However, it is not necessary to start work on the National Atlas, to wait for the completion of this Practical Atlas. All the more since a National Atlas does not aim at checking the sum of knowledge arrived at, but at providing a starting point for further study in the fields where some areas have not been explored. Seen in this light, it becomes one of the tools of economic and social planning.

It would be gratifying, at the close of this Conference, to see the establishment of a National Committee on the Atlas of Tunisia, which would already have to define the leading principles to be followed in making this Atlas, to determine an optimal table of contents, to fix a programme for studies and publications dealing with the items appearing in the table of contents.

The purely technical problems and those relating to geography will be closely linked from the moment the Committee starts work.

Thus, the choice of format for the Atlas and the basic scale for maps will depend upon the decision on whether to represent the whole of Tunisia or, as was done in Morocco and Canada, to restrict study, on the main maps, to the permanently occupied regions, which in this case are all north of the 32nd parallel. And this point itself depends upon geographic conditions.

The first impression after considering the question of format and of scale is that the 1:1,500,000 scale would be interesting, as the 1:1,000,000 scale requires too large a format without being really necessary, as will be obvious presently. In actual fact, the 1:2,000,000 scale would be quite sufficient for the general maps, and the plate size would consequently be less bulky (45 centimetres in length, as against 60 for 1:1,500,000 and 88 for 1:1,000,000 scales). The detail studies will be made by regions, on the 1:500,000 for instance, which offers better opportunities than the 1:1,000,000.

Another technical problem has to be examined closely: that of printing, which must necessarily be done at the lowest possible cost.

For example, drawing on a scale higher than the printing scale could be envisaged, but, a priori, this costly operation is not necessary if it is remembered that the purpose of this Atlas is primarily utilitarian.

Similarly, the number of printing colours must obviously be reduced to the minimum. One should take this opportunity to mention the Atlas of the State of Mysore, produced for the preparation of a development plan, which is printed in black and is quite legible.

The language question will be partly solved by the production of the Practical Atlas. It will be a question of choosing the languages of publication, probably Arabic and French, of deciding whether there will be a single bilingual publication or a separate one for each language, and in that case, to determine the proportion of copies in each language, it will also be necessary to examine the question of transliteration to toponyms into French, of translating geographic terms into Arabic, and of establishing a type hierarchy for Arabic letters in relation to categories of names appearing on the maps. The geological map of Libya published in English and Arabic is, in this connexion, an interesting reference.

A further argument for limiting the cost of the Atlas is the unavoidable ageing of cartographic data, especially those relating to the economic field. The Committee will, therefore, have to be careful in setting the time limit for the examination of a particular phenomenon, for making up the corresponding maps and for printing them. It will have to plan these operations so that bringing the data up to date will not necessitate a heavy expenditure. The Cartographic Symposium in Edinburgh has, in this connexion, dealt at length with automation as a solution to this problem.

A carefully planned programme must be thought out for the preparatory studies necessary for map making, and the production and publication of the plates will be effected as this information becomes available.

The modes of cartographic representation will be adopted after discussion between specialists in the different subjects, geographers and cartographers, taking account of international conventions, of elements of information acquired from preparatory studies and of map interpretation.

Final determination of the table of contents will come after two kinds of preliminary studies:

- the first general one will be proposed to the Committee by the geographers and will be based upon the work of the International Geographic Union, and in particular on the excellent work achieved in 1960 by the Commission on National Atlases under the supervision of Mr. K.A. Salichtchev and published by the USSR Science Academy under the title "National Atlases - History, analyses, means of improvement and unification".
- the second kind of study will be carried out by the national departments and the specialists concerned who will make, each in his own field, a list of the subjects they deem useful to map, and will determine a hierarchization of these subjects.

During this work, it will already be possible to undertake the immediate publication of a greater number of maps than is suspected. A start could be made right away on the study of stratigraphic, metallogenetic, hydrogeological, pedological and probably many other maps, based on the work and under the supervision of the Geological Department, of the Inventory and Hydraulic Exploration Bureau, of the Pedological Department, and other relevant departments. The specialists of these Departments will present, with each plate or set of plates, a short account written collectively or individually.

Such an Atlas would have no real value if it were not completed by regional atlases (of which there is an embryo for the centre of the country, in the shape of climatic maps published by the Integrated Rural Planning Project of the FAO) and by sectorial atlases; in particular, an atlas for agriculture should be considered.

Besides, this Conference is the ideal platform to launch the concept of atlases for large regions, such as the one for West Africa, which is in the process of being completed.