

north the Tropic of Cancer crosses the Sahara and divides us from the Arabic division; in the south the Tropic of Capricorn approximately divides us from South Africa. The reason for his suggestion is that many of the factors common to the States of Tropical Africa are not shared by South Africa.

This report, then, covers Tropical Africa, which comprises 35 Member States of the United Nations. It is notable that only eight have responded to the invitation to attend this Conference and that, on the second day of the Conference, when this report is being delivered, only three (Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya) have arrived and are seated.

Among the factors common to the States of Tropical Africa are that they are all members of the Organization of African Unity and within the operational area of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; they are all developing countries, and, according to statistics published by the United Nations, they form the largest single block of States with a low gross national product. This, in practical terms, means that they all have pressing problems of basic needs in such fields as health, education, food production, the creation of communications and industry. It follows that they find it difficult to spare either funds or suitably skilled manpower for low-priority projects, among which, regrettably, toponymy must be included.

Hundreds of different languages are spoken in the region. Fortunately for our work, they fall into recognizable groups—thus south of the equator most of them belong to the Bantu group, in which Swahili (or

Kiswahili) is the most widely used as a *lingua franca*. Furthermore, they nearly all use English or French for the daily business of government. It has been suggested that the division is too large and should be subdivided; there is, however, no obvious way of doing this. Such division as exists tends to be between anglophone and francophone States; this is neither an ethnic nor a geographic grouping and must in time disappear.

The convening of a divisional conference has also been considered. However, it seems unlikely at the present time that many Member States would attend. A circular questionnaire was sent out by the United Nations Secretariat on behalf of the Divisional Expert and evoked only 13 replies. From these it appeared that few of the Member States have active toponymic organizations. The States represented at this Conference are, of course, among those few which do actively engage in toponymic processing.

It appears that anglophone States tend to set up their own organizations, whereas work in francophone States is carried on with the aid of the IGN in France (see the Report by the French Government, document E/CONF.61/L.64).

The field for toponymic work in Tropical Africa is still immense, and if significant progress is to be made, external aid, particularly in the provision of finance, and possibly also with processing, will be needed. The Group of Experts has made tentative approaches to some possible sources of aid, but thus far without success. The search will continue.

REPORT PRESENTED BY IRAN*

INTRODUCTION

The present report is an attempt briefly to review progress made in Iran during the period since the First Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in Geneva in September 1967. Throughout the report, as far as possible, the various questions have been dealt with in the order of the resolutions of that meeting.

NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

In line with resolution 4 a national authority on geographical names was established as early as 1968. This authority is the Geographical Sub-Committee of the Iranian Academy, whose structure has been modified in such a way as to include, in addition to the members already there, representatives of the National Geographic Organization, geographical institutes and university geography departments, as well as outside scholars whose scientific background or research activities entitle them to membership.

The Sub-Committee holds regular weekly meetings at the headquarters of the National Geographic Organiza-

tion, where the secretariat and office of the Sub-Committee are located. The Sub-Committee has divided its time and efforts equally between two main functions, namely, the standardization of geographical names and the establishment and standardization of geographic terms. In fulfilling its first function the Sub-Committee, through the various facilities provided by the National Geographic Organization, takes full account of the guidelines and recommendations adopted by the Conference and outlined in the Report of the Conference.¹ By April 1972 no less than 1,000 Geographic names had been thus treated, standardized and placed on file for inclusion in the Gazetteer of Iran. A sample sheet of a questionnaire relating to this gazetteer, one devoted to the province of Khuzestan, is shown in annex I.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION

Although there are a number of Government agencies engaged in geographical activities which play their part in the standardization of geographical names, it is the

* The original text of this report was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.102.

¹ *United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, vol. 1, *Report of the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.68.I.9).

National Geographic Organization that has the main responsibility as well as the most effective means for carrying out the objectives. It is therefore considered necessary to refer to the various activities of this Organization, especially in the areas directly related to functions of the Conference.

Revision of existing geographical information through the interpretation of aerial photographs has been the main objective of this Organization over the past 15 years. Photographs have been classified, and existing maps brought up to date by means of aerial observations carried out by reconnaissance aeroplane or helicopter flights, and also with extensive ground surveys, and journeys in motor vehicles and even on horseback to the various parts of the country. As a result about 90 per cent of the work is already done, and the project is expected to be completed in two years time.

Along with this activity all information necessary for bringing the existing village and country files up to date is collected systematically and stored for proper utilization. Maps and records are revised regularly and corrected information is disseminated amongst government agencies and the general public.

A recent scheme for the standardization of names and proper recording of local usages as been introduced and is successfully operational in the south-east of Iran. A phonetic archive has also been started, in which recordings of all names will gradually be filed away for future needs.

In addition to the above efforts, which are primarily concerned with names of individual villages, monographs are compiled at various levels covering counties and districts. These are prepared and checked by senior university students and are intended to supply the necessary material for the new Geographical Dictionary of Iran.

THE ROLE OF THE LITERACY OR "KNOWLEDGE" CORPS

The tremendous role played by the youth of Iran, who under an ingenious scheme spend the major part of their compulsory military service in combating illiteracy in Iranian villages, is a well-known fact.

The National Geographic Organization has exploited the unique opportunity offered by the Military Education Corps for the fulfilment of its various geographical objectives. Annually no less than 15,000 of such young men, who comprise the main body of the Literacy or "Knowledge" Corps, are dispatched to remote villages all over the country. They are by nature educated, energetic and progressive in outlook, and ready to co-operate with all government agencies.

The National Geographic Organization supplies them with the special questionnaire form shown in annex II of this report. In time the conscripts fill in and mail the completed form to the Organization headquarters, where the information supplied is checked and transferred to cards for systematic treatment. The process goes on from year to year, so that numerous ques-

tionnaires are filled in for each village. The system not only supplies up-to-date information but provides a good system for cross-checking names and related data. Already some 20,000 villages have been thus surveyed and the information gathered has been utilized very effectively.

ROMANIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

The system developed by the National Geographic Organization for the romanization of place-names and adopted by the Conference under resolution 13 is now in wide use throughout Iran. Government agencies, as well as private publishers and cartographers, make use of this system in their publications (see annex III).

Since the First United Nations Conference two tremendously valuable atlases have been published using the same method of romanization. These are the "Climatic Atlas of Iran", preparation of which was reported to the Conference previously² and the "Historical Atlas of Iran" published on the occasion of the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Kingdom observed in 1971. The National Geographic Organization, aided by the kind co-operation of the Government, is of the United Kingdom at present engaged in the preparation of a standard general atlas of the world, in which some 20 maps of Iran will replace maps of England.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

It has been previously brought to the attention of the Conference that Persian script is used outside the political boundaries of Iran — notably in Afghanistan. The Persian linguistic/geographic group therefore covers a wide expanse of territory in the Middle East and south-west Asia. It has not been possible to hold intergovernmental meetings for the purpose of standardizing the transcription of geographical names, but a good deal of correspondence has been exchanged on this subject and the road is now paved for holding a meeting. It is realized, and generally admitted, that the present system of transliteration used in Afghanistan differs slightly from the standard approved by the Conference, but there is no reason to think that the slight differences that do exist cannot be removed once delegates from the two countries get together at a conference table.

It is gratifying to note that the United States Board on Geographic Names has recently published an official Standard Name Gazetteer of Afghanistan (publication No. 212432) containing no less than 10,000 place-names. This gazetteer is prepared exactly along the lines suggested in Transliteration of Farsi Geographic Names to Latin Alphabet, the subject of resolution 13 of the First Conference, and it is therefore fully confirmed by this delegation.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, *Proceedings of the Conference and Technical Papers* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.69.1.8), p. 7.