Book Review

Atlas Nacional de México, 3 Volumes (68×47 cm) Ed. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Geografía, México, D. F. 1990, Organizing Committee: Maria Teresa Gutiérrez de MacGregor, Atlantida Coll-Hutado, Ana Garcia de Fuentes, Coordinator: Ana Garcia de Fuentes

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This new National Atlas of Mexico is a Masterpiece of art in double sense. On the one hand, it shows all the characteristics of a professional craftsmanship, on the other it represents a high perfection in form, artistic style and printing. This can already be admired when looking at the facsimile reproductions of some 50 historic maps which date from the 16th to the 20th centuries and show the development of the geographic knowledge as well as of the cartographic presentation of the country.

The whole work consists of seven main chapters in three volumes:

Vol. I:

- I. General maps, including historical cartography.
- II. History (pre-spanish, colonial, 19th century, territorial divisions).
- III. Society (demography, migration, urban systems, housing, education, culture, health, socio-demographic typology).

Vol. II:

- IV. Natural phenomena (geology, tectonics, landforms, climate, hydrology, soils, biogeography, oceanography, physio-geographic regionalization).
- V. Environmental aspects (natural components of the environment, the impact of man on the ecology, evaluation of the natural and cultural heritage, synthesis of the environment).

Vol. III:

- VI. Economy (agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, fishery, electricity, oil industry, mining, manufacturing, transport and communications, tourism, trade and services, economic regionalization etc.).
- VII. Mexico in the world (international relations, commerce etc.).

The following evaluation refers only to Vol. I which is made up of 46 double pages (not bound) with a total of 246 maps or other graphic presentations. The scales of the country-wide maps vary between 1:4 million on a double-page (67×91 cm) and 1:35 million, the majority ranging between 1:8 and 1:16 million. In addition, there is a number of maps of cities or small areas in various other scales. Overleaf of each double page there is a full reference of sources and relevant literature as well as a translation of the title and the competent legend into English and French.

Apart from valuable information on the settlement expansion and the economic activities of the pre-spanish and colonial periods, a great part of the large historical section (70 maps) is dedicated to detailed maps on rebellions and wars, mainly of the 19th century, but also including the Mexican Revolution of 1910. 26 maps show the changes of the political and administrative divisions within the country since 1521.

The majority of Vol. I refers, however, to the spatial differentiation of demographic and social aspects by states, cities or municipalities. Great part of the socio-economic statistics are based on the 1980 Census of Population and Housing, because more recent data are not yet available. Of the 1990 Census, only preliminary results regarding the total population by states have been published. Other information (e.g. the infrastructure of education, culture and health) date from the end of the 1980s. A few remarks should be made on some maps, whereby most of the following numbers cover one topic which includes several maps.

In Map III.1.2, the combination of the rural population density (in colour-tones) and the absolute distribution of the semi-urban and urban population (in dots and circles), may lead to confusion. In several maps (e.g. III.5.1 D, E, F) one would prefer percentages of other relative values instead

of the absolute figures, while, in a few other cases the design seems unnecessarily complicated. As regards migration (III.2.1), it should be explained that, in the Census, only those persons were considered as migrants who had crossed a state border. No inner-state mobility (e.g. from a village to a neighbouring city or to the state capital) was taken into account, although, in many states this is more frequent than long-distance migration. Under these circumstances the French translation "nés dans un autre 'lieu'" (borne in another 'place') is not correct, and for non-Mexicans even the English term "entity" (for state) may be misleading. Finally, in map III.8.2 A which represents the demographic transition by municipalities the term "fecundidad" (fertility) should be replaced by "natalidad" (birth rate), because it is defined as "number of births for every 1000 inhabitants".

Apart from this, the map is quite interesting showing comparatively high birth and death rates even in those indigenous areas which are located in the centre of the country. Only a few of the other topics which convey numerous information can be mentioned here. III.3.3 and 3.4 describe the hierarchy of the enormous expansion of the three major metropolitan areas (Mexico-City, Guadalajara, Monterrey) up to 1990 and the spatial patterns of some social aspects within them. III.4.1 depicts the problem of housing, III.5.2 and 5.4 the considerable development of higher education with many new universities all over the country. III.6.1 shows "elements of popular culture" with maps on handicraft production as well as on religious and non-religious "fiestas". Finally, map III.8.1 is an interesting attempt of a socio-demographic typology for each municipality.

On the whole, this Atlas reveals very instructive pictures of the regional disparities which exist between north and south, centre and periphery or even within smaller areas of Mexico. The editors and the numerous collaborators of the Institute of Geography should be congratulated for the elaboration of this very valuable instrument which serves a rapid and detailed information on the spatial development of this country.

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