

FIELDWORK IN THE MADRID GEOGRAPHICAL CIRCLE: ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT

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I am a trained historian. Even today I confess to a fascination with deciphering and interpreting the past. I revel in the solitude and reflection of the archive and the library, and I am passionate about the facts revealed to us by writings from a former age. Fortunately, the practice of geography not only has provided me with those satisfactions but also has allowed me to give them new meaning, to adjust my outlook. And it has added a fresh dimension to learning, with the discovery and the satisfaction of the geographical trip and fieldwork.

My experience was a modest part of a much wider development of the field excursion as a formal institution by the Madrid Circle of the Spanish Geographical School. The school was organized at the end of the 1960s around the work of the master geographer Manuel de Terán by the second generation of his disciples, of whom the most important were Eduardo Martínez de Pisón and José Antonio de Zulueta. Those were the closing years of the Franco dictatorship (he died in December 1975), conterminous with the first economic boom in Spain yet still bracketed within the political structures and restraints of the system. Protest was gaining momentum in universities, there were the beginnings of a certain freedom, and the scientific isolation of decades was finally being breached. Fields of knowledge and new curricula emerged. Among them, beginning in 1968, was the second cycle of geography, a branching from the massive shared trunk of geography and history in the humanities faculties. The General Education Law of 1970 paved the way for an impressive growth in the number of Spanish universities and students. University geography studies were formalized in 1990, and now more than twenty-five Spanish public universities offer undergraduate or advanced degrees in geography.

THE INSTITUCIÓN LIBRE DE ENSEÑANZA AND GEOGRAPHICAL FIELD TRIPS

Manuel de Terán (1904–1984) was of the Spanish liberal and anti-Franco tradition. He was personally linked with the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (ILE), a profound movement for regeneration in education at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries, which rose in rebellion against the emptiness of official education and whose influence can still be seen in the most striking of today's Spanish educational initiatives. Before the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), Terán was a teacher at the *Instituto-Escuela*, an educational initiative linked to the ILE but abolished like so many other things after Franco's victory. Many of us—Nicolás Ortega, Eduardo Martínez de Pisón, Ángel Cabo, and I—have written about the educational value of the ILE. I should note, here, that the “educational naturalism” of the ILE, something

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