

THE FORMATION OF RAILWAY NETWORKS IN IBERIAN PENINSULA

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Abstract

The proposal is to analyse the trends of railway network development in Iberian Peninsula using cartographic tools from the beginning until 1883.

1 The maps as instruments of historical research

Prof. Albert Carreras co-ordinates a research at the European University Institute on the development of European transport and communication networks.^[1] The maps are an outcome of the project and were elaborated with the program ATLAS Desktop Geographical Information System, of the Strategic Mapping Inc. The geographical and the railway layers were extracted from the CD-ROM Digital Chart of the World, produced by the American Defence Department:

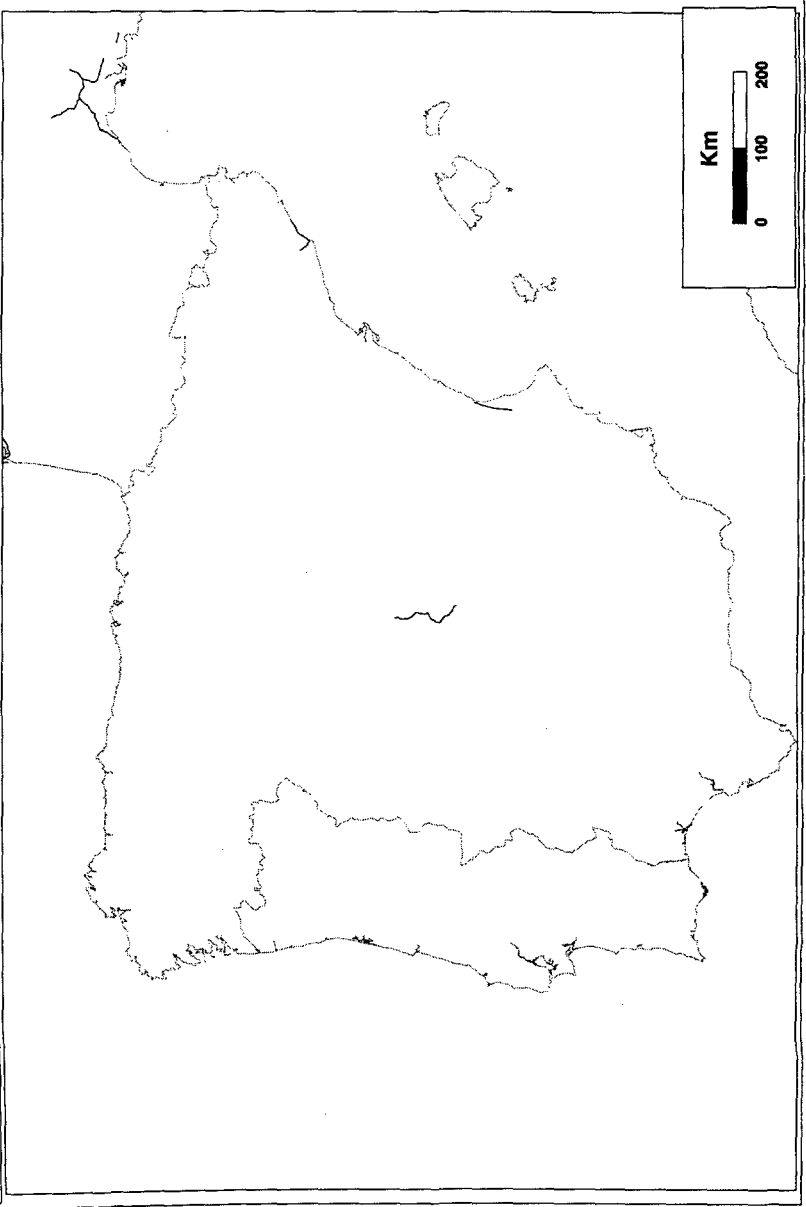
2 - Pattern of growth of the railway networks in the Iberian Peninsula

The particularity of the development of the railway network in the Iberian peninsula was affected much more from the policies of railway construction drawn by national governments and the natural barriers compared with other European countries that were affected with political fragmentation and the changing of the borders.

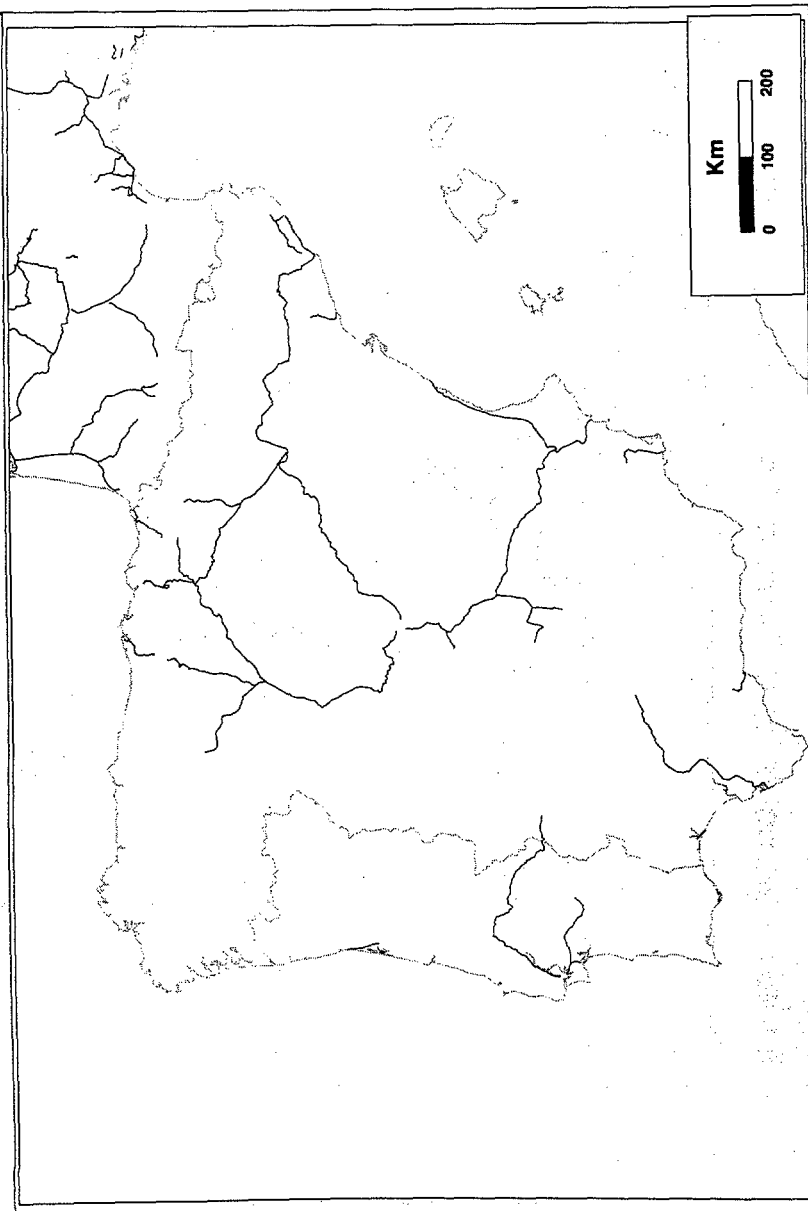
The construction of the first railway lines in the Iberian peninsula started quite late, and the first lines always started from the capitals, Lisbon and Madrid, as it can be seen on the map of 1853. Ten years later the situation improved, due to the basis of a Spanish national network, as the most important cities were linked among them by that time. Still, in this decade, the Iberian peninsula was still left apart from the rest of Europe. The situation improved very much in the seventies because Portugal was finally connected to Spain, and the natural barriers were defeated with a line that linked Spain to France, and consequently the connections with the rest of Europe. In 1883 when in Europe most countries have built the networks that covered the territories, still there was lacking a link from the North and the Northeast of Portugal to Spain.

¹More details about the project can be found on the paper "The development of European Transports XIXth-XXth centuries). A Computerized Cartographical Project."

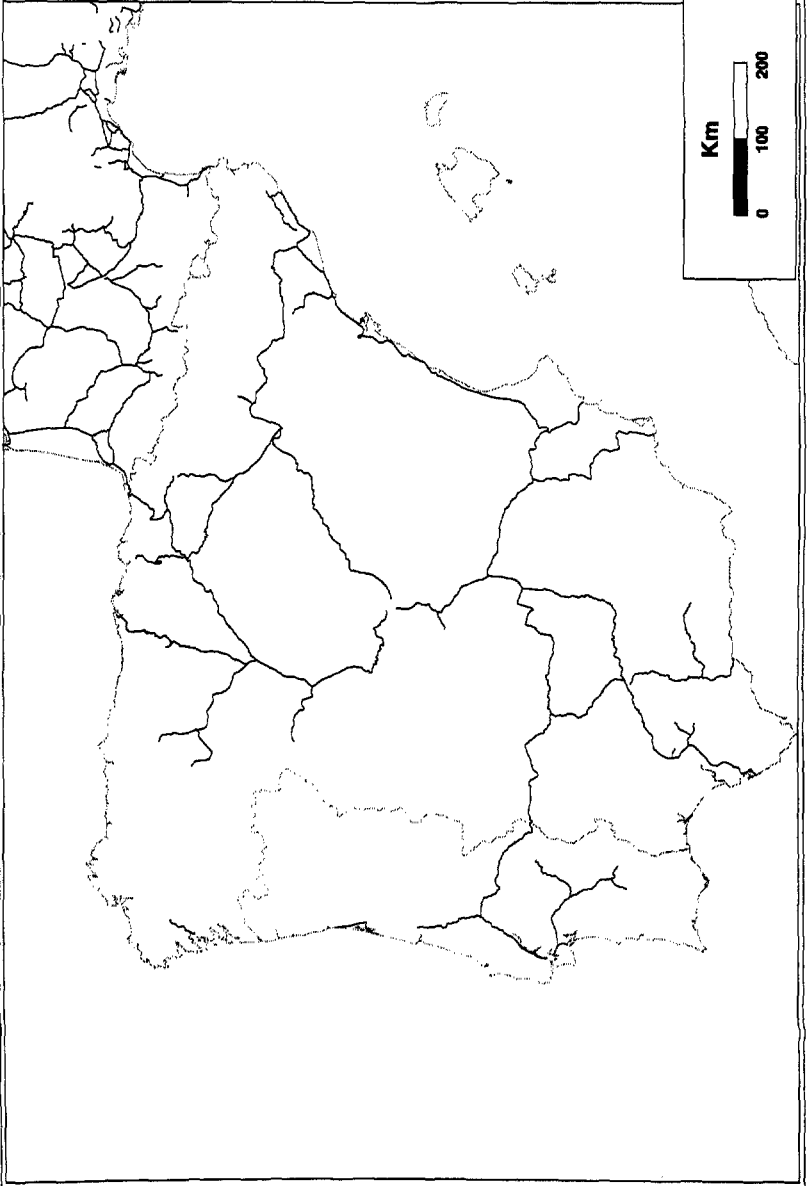
Railway lines in the Iberian Peninsula in 1853



Railway lines in the Iberian Peninsula in 1863



Railway lines in the Iberian Peninsula in 1873



Railway lines in the Iberian Peninsula in 1883

