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The Geology of Spain, edited by Wes Gibbons & Teresa Moreno, 2002. The Geological Society of London, Brassmill Lane, Bath (Somerset), United Kingdom BA1 3JN. 649 pp, paperback; GBP 27.50, USD 46.00 (for GSL and AAPG members GBP 22.50, USD 37.00; ISBN 1-86239-127-0. Hardback GBP 85.00, USD 142.00 (for GSL members GBP 42.50, USD 71.00; for AAPG members GBP 51.00, USD 85.00). ISBN 1-86239-110-6.

The 'paperback' edition that I received for review is not a true paperback: its size (27.5 x 21 x 3 cm) imply that it is a robust volume, not easy to take with you while travelling. Yet, those working in Spain but living elsewhere should bear this 'burden': it is worth the effort.

Spain is a geologically interesting country. It has attracted researchers for many decades: numerous students from Western Europe did their fieldwork here, often resulting in a Ph.D thesis. It is interesting to find this reflected in the reference list that, in itself, is a major achievement: it takes 98 (!) pages, with 40-odd references per page. In combination with a 41-page index, this provides a wealth of information. Those who carried out their fieldwork in Spain some time ago, will easily find this way how concepts have changed, en how detailed knowledge has become.

It was certainly not an easy task for the editors to realise such a project. Spain has a long geological history (Precambrian is present at several places), some areas have undergone strong deformation during mountain building (in some cases, areas have been affected by several orogenies), and the peninsula has travelled an interesting course through time. The complex geological development has been interrupted by magmatic periods with volcanism, and these have contributed to the wide variety of ores, and other resources in the country (there are also important coal measures). To complicate things further, the book includes the geology of the Balears (in the Mediterranean) and the Canary Islands (off Africa), which have geological histories of their own.

With so many aspects to be dealt with, the editors made the only choice possible: they follow a systematic approach. Most chapters are devoted to a specific period, and these chapters are subdivided according to the geographical units distinguished on a geological basis. Apart from this, there are two chapters on Alpine tectonics, two chapters on Cenozoic volcanism (one for the peninsula and one for the Canary Islands), and a chapter on economic and environmental geology. Such an approach requires detailed knowledge, and is is therefore well understandable that over 150 authors contributed to the book. The result is an impressive work, in which I miss only one chapter: an overview of the geological history of the peninsula as a whole; the structure of the book now, by necessity, makes it time-consuming to obtain a rough outline of such a history, even for only one of the 17 geographical areas distinguished.

The book is well printed, as we are used to from this publisher, and the figures (there are even colour figures included) are - in general - well prepared. The detailed information in the figures unfortunately sometimes has led to small-sized letters or symbols that are not easy to read. Photographs are scarce; it is difficult to understand what was the philosophy behind their choice. Considering the fact that they do commonly not contribute much to the understanding of the text, and that their quality is in general not excellent, I could have imagined that the editors had chosen for a book without any photographs et all. The many maps, correlation sections, and other line drawings provide much more, and more useful, information. This makes the book a 'must' for all geologists who want to understand the framework in which they carry out fieldwork in Spain, or who want to know how geological units like the Iberian peninsula develop during geological time. The hardback edition may be expensive, but the 'paperback' edition is certainly not.

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