

# Reseñas de las Actas del II Congreso Internacional Historia a Debate

**Autor:** Claudio Canaparo

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Carlos Barros, ed. (2000) *Historia a Debate*. A Coruña Xunta de Galicia/*Historia a Debate*, pp. 1235, 3 volumes.

This monumental work contains the Actas of the II International Congress History under Debate that took place in Santiago de Compostela on July 1999. More than 800 academics, journalists and intellectuals from 40 different countries, attended this Congress. In the year following the Congress, more than 30 reviews relating to it were published around the world -which is a quite unusual événement-.

The three volumes are a selection that includes 79 papers and the transcriptions of 19 debates ("round table"). This event (comparable only with the Congress of the International Association for Intellectual History in the Anglo-Saxon environment) has indeed been unique, not only because of the number and the various origins of the participants, but also because of the wide range of areas and arguments considered. In fact, as a consequence of the Congress, a huge web-site has been developed ([www.h-debate.com](http://www.h-debate.com)), where readers can have access to the "book of abstracts", which contains the résumé of the total papers presented in the Congress. *Historia a Debate* contains papers in English, French, Galician and Castilian -and the presentation of the three volumes follows the way in which the Congress was divided by subject and problems-.

The first volume, untitled "Cambio de siglo" (Change of Century), contains 15 papers in Castilian, six in English and four in French. The volume was thematically divided into six parts historiography in the twentieth century, change of paradigms, return to the "social subject", mentality/pluriculturalism, and visions of the past, present or future. The volume also includes the transcription of four different "round table" debates between several participants.

The second volume, untitled "Nuevos paradigmas" (New Paradigms), contains thirteen papers in Castilian, three in English, one in Italian, and one in Portuguese. The volume was divided according to the follow patterns the history of the twenty-first century, how to make "global history", new technologies and writing history, and what history are we going to teach in the new century? The transcriptions of eight "round table" debates completes the volume.

Finally, the third volume, untitled "Problemas de historiografía" (Problems of Historiography), contains fifteen papers in Castilian, six in English, and one in French. Transcriptions of seven "round table" debates are also included in this volume.

Of course, it is not an easy task to set in some sort of structure or format the diversity and variety of papers included in *Historia a Debate*. the editor chose the easy and practical way to do it, that is, to follow the frame under which, they were delivered during the Congress. However, this set-up did not diminish the quality and diversity of the papers, and the reader can easily find another way of reading or contextualizing.

Another general element of interest in *Historia a Debate* is that, among the discussion and perspectives regarding different subjects in the area of history as a discipline, the publication explores the relation with other areas, the possible results of it and, more relevantly, discusses the notion, extension and expectative of history considered as an academic discipline and in relation to a

community considered in the kuhnian sense. If the new technologies -images, media, etc.- are changing the way in which history is written, the situation in universities and academies is also relevant to understand future possibilities as a form of knowledge.

In the first volume ("Cambio de Siglo") the reader can find a very interesting discussion regarding the approach to history after Certeau's and Ricouer's works in France, several articles discussing the problem of demarcation of history as an academic discipline, a very useful article regarding the influence of German historians in Spain, and another discussing the situation of Marxist historians in England.

In the second volume ("Nuevos paradigmas") several articles focus their interest on the analysis of how different approaches, emerging in the last 30 years in Europe -"Histoires des mentalités", microhistory, etc.-, can determine and affect the way in which the discipline is going to be considered in the future - either as a teaching element or as a research subject. How the new technologies available to scholars and to people in general are going to have an influence on the way in which history has been written is also an argument discussed by several authors in this volume.

After the Congress of Historia a Debate it is interesting to see how some authors have crystallized their approaches and thinking regarding problematic issues. There is for example an interesting issue of Rethinking History (volume 4, number 4) that contains a "Round Table" debate whose prelude could indeed be founded in the pages of the "Actas".

Finally, there is another element of interest in this publication. An edition like this is always very welcome in every discipline, but, in this case, it is also welcome because it took place in the Castilian speaking world. In ten years time the Spanish and Spanish-American languages (Castilian-based languages) are going to be the most used languages in Western cultures, and publications like Historia a Debate shows *avant-la-lettre* how this can positively affect the ways in which the disciplines, and the international academic market, can be changed and modified. A more symmetrical dialogue and exchange (in Bloor 1991- terms) with the Anglo-Saxon speaking environment will be an immediately desirable consequence for the discussion of "new historical paradigms" as was clearly expressed by several academics during the Congress. Even if Castilian, Galician, French and English were the four official languages of the Congress, presentations in other languages were also very welcome during the Congress a situation that is not seen very frequently nowadays in social sciences.

Historia a Debate is indeed a reference book, but is also a book that gives the chance for the reader to have a rich and extensive frame regarding the *estado del arte* of the historical disciplines. This book should at least be available to students and scholars in every single library that would sincerely like to keep up-date with new perspectives and approaches in social sciences.

Claudio Canaparo  
University of Exeter