

Storia e Futuro

Special section of the journal “Storia e Futuro”

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Introduction

The twelve texts that make up this special section of “Storia e Futuro” were presented as papers in the 54th International Congress of Americanists, held in Vienna in July 2012, in a symposium entitled *The circulation of political ideas in the Atlantic area. Comparative dimension in the study of taxation, natural resource management, social integration and foreign policy (1770-1880)*.

The International Congress of Americanists (ICA) is a large-scale scientific activity that celebrates triennially in alternate Continents. It represents the oldest scientific tradition of interdisciplinary work on the subject, for it has continuously held since 1875, and brings together specialists from diverse disciplines: anthropology, archeology, art, law, economics, education, philosophy, geography, history, linguistics, literature, sociology, urban planning and disciplines related to the scientific and technological area. A characteristic of these conventions is the huge variety of scientific and cultural activities developed around symposia, round tables, conferences, work-groups and international associations and organizations meetings associated with Americanism.

Our symposium brought together historians and social scientists from the Americas and Europe, with the goal of analyzing comparatively the evolution of political thought defined as *Atlantic*, in a secular chronology beginning in the 1770s – when the liberal political model of the modern state is born–, and ending in the 1880s – with the transformation of that model by incorporating new ideas of economic progress and social justice.

There was a claim at the starting point of that proposal that defined the selection of participants: the emphasis on those elements shared at the time by the various countries of the *Atlantic world*, in order to overcome traditional approaches for a long time reproduced in nationalist political discourse and detached from the environment. The response – now displayed in these pages – could not be more in line with the original plan: a myriad of spaces of interaction, common themes and different methodologies, all rose in comparative perspective, with the healthy goal of transcending local observation and opening communicating vessels through the *Atlantic* concept.

Atlantic studies and comparative methodology

Atlantic studies and comparative analysis have gained significant importance in the academic world in recent years. Far from being a fad it is a result of reasoning caused by the new framework of globalization. Facing the internationalization of markets, political boundaries of States and Nations need to be reconfigured. In a scenario of widened economic space, nationalist historiographical approaches are being revised after verifying the need of starting from inclusive frameworks that allow comparative analysis of different regions in a broader context.

The Atlantic-Western world began to set in the sixteenth century and has matured over the last five centuries. Formed by the United States, Canada, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean and large parts of Africa colonized by European powers, it shows differences among themselves and within themselves (languages, customs, diets, habits), but it is also true that most societies that make up this large space shared cultural values and common economic behaviors that distinguish them from the Islamic world and Asia. It is the result of a slow expansion in which different cultures and ways of life have been incorporated throughout centuries (sometimes traumatically). The rule of law, transparent functioning of the institutions, respect for human rights, democracy, the power of dialogue to reach consensus, the separation of powers, the recognition of personal effort as the basis for improvement and as a mechanism for social mobility, the existence of clear and fair rules that encourage competition, freedom, equality of all citizens before the law, the defense of transparent governance and separation of faith from science are all basic values shared by this Atlantic-Western world.

The Atlantic-Western world made significant progress in the early nineteenth century, when liberal political theory (proclaiming equality of all citizens before the law) and economic liberalism (promoting the interplay of supply and demand in the context of clear and equal rules for all agents) helped overcome the stratification logics of absolutist societies of the ancient regime based on social inequalities and discretionary politics. At that time, the nationalist discourses of the new nation-states were built on the basis of a narrative that confronted the own (internal) with the foreign (external). In the early twenty-first century there is a need to rethink the nation-state and its explanatory statements in the context of an expanded and inclusive, rather than exclusive, Atlantic area.

Historians know well that the 1812 Constitution was not a text born *ex nihilo* on the island of San Fernando, but should be understood in the context of the Atlantic revolutions of the Western world. Deputies arrived to Cadiz in 1812 on behalf of all the kingdoms of the Spanish Monarchy met to discuss and adopt a liberal Constitution capable to overcome the rigidities of absolutism. For them it was clear the potential of creating a shared global space that would be able to respect regional autonomy. They used the concepts of freedom and equality that were present in the Atlantic-Western world; they knew and managed the concepts of French, German, American, British, Italian, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese authors; and in the Spanish case they combined the scholastic legal tradition of the sixteenth century with the Enlightenment ideas of the eighteenth century and the liberal political ideology of the early nineteenth century, demonstrating that, far from contradictory and mutually incompatible positions, they all were part of the Atlantic-Western tradition. However, for various reasons, the aim of creating a Latin American community – a sort of *Hispanic Commonwealth* – (Article 1 of the Constitution stated that “The Spanish nation is the gathering of all the Spanish of both hemispheres”), not only was not achieved, but led to the creation of multiple nation-states. The history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has given a good account of this process.

It seems clear, therefore, that in order to rethink the narrative of nationalism it would be necessary to have a more complex history of the Atlantic-Western area than that we have today. It is not about writing a sum of national histories, but rather explaining how the shared values were built and how the differences arose. It is a hard challenge ahead. It requires good historians able both to remember that before the creation of the nation-states there were strong connections and synergies in economic areas in the Atlantic-Western world, and to explain that the ancient regime societies were constituted by a plurality of identities that coexisted in relative harmony. The cities of Toledo, Mexico, Lima, Lisbon and Seville are good examples of these societies. It seems that the time has come to review the discourse made by national histories of the nineteenth century, that generally confronted disorder, inequality, lack of freedom and tyranny of the Ancient Regime societies with freedom and equality of the liberal project in order to legitimize the creation of new nation-states. It is needed to revisit the past again in order to imagine new possible scenarios deprived of some of the nationalist historical narratives based on excluding outdated visions that prevent, in the beginnings of the twenty-first century, the understanding of the potential that lies ahead those societies.

Atlantic approaches had a first impulse in the mid twentieth century. After the debate sparked by the works of Robert Palmer (1959-1964) and Jacques Godechot (1947), in which were described the revolutionary processes in the Atlantic area in the late eighteenth century, specially the cases of the United States and France, several works in Spanish appeared that claimed the need to incorporate Hispanic experiences in the Atlantic area (Rodriguez 1980; Rodriguez 1996; Guerra 1992).

The Atlantic approaches developed quite intensively in the decade of 1970 in Latin American studies when liberal thought was examined from a comparative perspective. Such investigations began to clarify that the influences of liberal thought should not be understood in just one direction (from the U.S. and Europe to Latin America), and therefore that it was not possible to interpret American liberalisms as a “bad copy” of French or Anglo-Saxon traditions, but rather the context of the Atlantic world should be understood as a whole in which the influences coming from all directions gave rise to a complex network of thought.

In the 1990s some American historians, based on cultural approaches, analyzed the problems derived from slavery, for which they joined in their studies the case of Africa (*Black Atlantic Studies*) and also claimed the need to overcome the interpretation extended so far that the bourgeois revolutions should be understood only in the context of Anglo-Saxon traditions. Meanwhile, French researchers studying the influence of the French Revolution in the Caribbean (Haiti) and the evolution of Creole populations, opened new issues stressing the need to ensure that the Atlantic studies were not exclusively centered about the approaches derived from bourgeois revolutions.

At the beginning of the XXI century a considerable number of historians of Anglo-Saxon tradition have stressed the need to study the birth of the Latin American nation-states in the context of the Atlantic revolutions (Pestana 2004; Geggus 2001, Giles 2001; Gould Onuf 2005; Linebaugh-Rediker 2000; Langley 1997; Racine 2003; Sepinwall 2000, Verhoeven 2001), while Spanish, German and American historians have published solid essays that have highlighted the importance of incorporating Hispanic cases to the dynamics of the Atlantic world (Brena 2006 and 2010; Chust-Frasquet 2009; García-Rey Reguillo Sebastiani 2008; Guimerá-Ramos-Butrón 2004, Posada-Carbo Jaksic 2011; Kagan-Parker 2001; Lucena 2004; Morelli-Gomez 2006; Pérez Herrero-Simon 2010; Pietschmann 2002; Portillo 2006; Roig 2000 Cortina-Perez Suarez Vejo 2010).

The research project entitled *The Atlantic liberal thought, 1770-1880. Taxation, natural resources, social integration and foreign policy in comparative perspective* (HAR2010-18363, subprogram HIST), of the Ministry of Science and Innovation (Spain) is part of this approach to the study of Atlantic tradition and comparative studies. In the 54th International Congress of Americanists, held in Vienna in July 2012, several members of the research team presented their papers based on these perspectives, and also opened the call for those who want to *build dialogues in the Americas* – the *motto* of the Congress – from an Atlantic perspective. The texts now published are extended versions of the papers discussed then.

Historiographical vision

The monographic research works presented here have emphasized the importance of an interpretative review of historiography, especially in areas close to the “power” in a Weber sense. The different approaches showed the relevance of a dynamical and unfinished cultural and political (economic, social, institutional) view, where ideas and concepts are defined through the formal framework shaped by the reality in which they were introduced, by means of a dialectical speech interacting with the political determination historically given.

In all essays, more or less explicitly, breathes the influence of various historiographical trends. Appears underlying the French school, which with the *nouvelle histoire* has paid special attention to aspects of social reality previously ignored, and particularly to the mental or ideological factors, assumed as essential for understanding the way in which, over the centuries, men have interpreted the world and their condition. Emerges here the reciprocal relationship between past and present, established by understanding. Understanding the past through the present means that the inertia of the past is significant both in the historical as in the micro-historical, due to the fact that, quite often, the present seems to get rid of the time before: “L'uomo trascorre il suo tempo nel costruire meccanismi, di cui diviene poi il più o meno Prigioniero volontariamente.” – Man walks through his time constructing mechanisms from which he eventually becomes more or less voluntarily prisoner – (Bloch 1969, 51).

In the Italian school, Sandro Chignola refers to the open debate about what history is, how to do history and the existing historiography: “History becomes representable only to the extent that historical experience is already conceptualized and therefore is available in testimonies and documents” (Chignola 2003, 32), highlighting the methodological approach. The first of the elements that have contributed to the renovation, also in Italy, of paradigms of historical and political science, offers, from the analysis of events and structures that interact in the Western constitutional history, the possibility of making a historical generalization, and hence, not only of static-typological nature. Without it, it would not have been possible to differentiate between knowledge, practices and concepts, actually nonexistent in the historical object, nor dissolve it in practices that, responsible of narrating *events*, evade the responsibility of inferring a structural model of historical action from his own observations. The second renewing element consisted on the assumption of *circularity* and *globalism* involved in the State phenomenon, taking into account the specific Hintzean *opening of horizon* (Chignola 2003, 43-44).

Although in these essays the fundamentals of the Weber model are validated (Weber 1973, 61), it is also shown therein that that vision is overcome in the study of concepts of the contemporary state, with the new German school attached to the model of R. Koselleck (Koselleck 1993, 113). The greatest contribution of the latter is due to O. Hintze (Hintze 1990), reread and retaken by Schiera (Schiera 1989) and Duso (Duso 1980), who in turn feed the new Italian methodology proposed.

Finally, it is necessary to have in mind the knot of the Crocean system (Croce 1917), i.e., the dialectics of the “unequal” (*diversi*), as complementary to the “Hegelian” dialectics of the “opposite” (*opposti*). B. Croce (Croce 1909th, 1909b, 1902), constantly aiming at “the concrete” in his methodology of history, fought

against positivism because he considered it an insufficient vision to clarify the reasons of history.

In this methodological general framework is inserted the analysis of discourse, referring to the Foucault vision (Theory of mutations, Foucault 1983) that states the non preexistence of the ideas themselves, nor the words that are rose with them, but rather it is the discourse that develops and gives shape to the ideas. According to this approach, it is assumed that while the word that gives rise to the concept does not appear, it is not possible to talk about it, which does not imply its non existence, but just the impossibility of subjecting it to analysis. This represents a milestone in the definition of concepts, such as "space", "nation", identity or rumors.

Four themes and twelve looks in Atlantic perspective

Taxation

In the chapter by Cristina Mazzeo de Vivó "The commercial and fiscal policy of Peru in the transition from colony to republic" is analyzed in a compared fashion the behavior of the merchant guilds of Peru and Mexico in the period 1740-1840, highlighting the intricate relationships that existed between the costs of war, the interests of the Consulates and the finances of the Crown in the colonial period and in the republican administrations of the post-Independence era. It explains particularly why in Peru subsisted traditional practices of financial management and credit control by maintaining the Consulate of Commerce throughout the nineteenth century.

The research work of Carlos Armando Preciado de Alba "All for federalism. Fiscal demands in Guanajuato during the first years of independence" analyzes the demands that groups of power from the State of Guanajuato raised to the government of Mexico City in the centralist era, from 1835, in order to return to the federal tax system established by the Constitution of 1824, pointing out the complex interrelationships web that existed between politics, business and power at the national and regional levels.

The essay by Pedro Pérez Herrero "The tax reform proposals of the Finance Ministers of Mexico (1825-1854)" analyzes the memories that ministers of finance of Mexico presented for discussion in the Chamber of Deputies during the first half of the nineteenth century. In particular, it explains why the Secretaries of Finance of Mexico in the first half of the nineteenth century failed to apply with success the fiscal reforms they had proposed in the Chamber of Deputies. At the end, a brief comparison is presented with the cases of Colombia and Chile to understand the behavior of Mexico in the Atlantic framework.

Natural resources

Renato de Mattos, in "Politics and Trade in São Paulo: from the opening of the ports to the Independence of Brazil (1808/1822)" starts from 1808, the year in which, as part of the European Napoleonic Wars a number of important events coincide for the beginning of the process of independence of the American colonies, Portuguese and Spanish. From there, the text describes the case of the Portuguese colony, with the transfer of the Portuguese court to Brazil, until 1822, highlighting specially the opening of the ports, which would have meant, according to numerous authors, besides the British intrusion in the field of Luso-Brazilian trade, the starting point in the transformation of commercial relations within the Portuguese Empire and the first step towards the independence of Brazil. Recently, however, that interpretation of the opening of the ports has been challenged, which is shown by Mattos in his text, which ultimately involves a rethinking of the date of 1808 as the beginning of a series of processes that culminate with the independence of 1822.

Dionisio de Haro, in "Empire With no Silver, Silver without Empire: The Crisis of the Spanish Monetary System (1788-1823)" addresses a part of the history of the Spanish monetary policy, specifically the change, during the Spanish Trienio Liberal, from the traditional to the modern monetary system. In order to do this, he uses the proceedings of the parliamentary commission that deals with the project in the period mentioned above. According to the author, there are two obstacles to the achievement of the project: the persistent traditional monetary fundamentals, and its short life, since very soon the old monetary policy restores. The article analyzes the traditional monetary system and its corresponding fiscal monetary policy, as well as the difficulties it faced once the American flows stopped. The subordination to France is the way out to avoid collapse. It is also explained in the text the monetary reform mentioned. All this to finally try to explain the delay in the process of Spanish monetary transition in the first half of the nineteenth century and the scope of monetary reform in the context of the crisis of the Ancient Regime.

Social integration

Cristina Soriano, in “Revolutionary Voices: The Presence of Visitors, Fugitives and Prisoners from the French Caribbean in Venezuela (1789-1799)” treats the effects of the French revolutionary propaganda in Spanish territories of the Americas. Specifically, she addresses the impact of oral propaganda, not written but spoken, spread by runaway black slaves from the French Caribbean islands in the province of Venezuela during the last years of the eighteenth century. Ports are thus the object of this study for it is in those places where not only people and goods circulate, but information is also exchanged. In a little literate society, says the author, rumors about the French Revolution and other American rebellions circulating among the people had more impact in them than the yields of the Enlightenment, to which only an illustrated minority had access.

Anel Hernandez in “The *Gachupina de los Remedios* and Capuchins Imagined in the Restoration of the Monarchical Order in New Spain, 1808-1813” conducted a study related to the order of Capuchin friars, with its symbolism associated with austerity, penitential attitude and a strong conservatism, and some of its attempts for installation in New Spain, as well as with pulque and its trade. The author focuses on the first truly relevant request to establish a Capuchin monastery in the city of Mexico, dating from the early nineteenth century. The intense political upheaval that began in 1808 is the framework for this attempt to foundation, mostly with Ana de Iraeta in the main role, a character widely described in the article. In these years cohabit images of the Virgin of Guadalupe (the “Indian virgin”) and the Virgin of los Remedios (the “Spanish Virgin”), each representing their respective side in the first battles of the Independence War.

Pedro Pérez Herrero, Inmaculada Simón Ruiz and Eva Sanz Jara in “Visions of the new Latin American republics: travelers and Secretaries of the Treasury in Mexico, the first half of the 19th century” present an analytical approach to images of Mexico divulged by the ministers of finance of that country and by foreign travelers visiting it. The sources for this text are therefore hacienda memoirs and travel books. Both sources are explicit about Mexico and provide abundant and useful information. Supposedly, the images would diverge: romantic that of travelers, and realistic the one from the ministers, for it should be concerned about economic issues. However, it is argued in the article that a project of nation is implied in both, and therefore not all – or at least not always – the observed realities, and the views they arise, may be as different or as independent of each other, but they rather may be strongly influenced reciprocally.

Alicia Gil Lázaro, in “A comparative overview at the Spanish and Italian historiography on return migration (1880-1930)” presents a work of comparative history on migration, taking the cases of Spain and Italy, countries in similar conditions and therefore pertinent to be submitted to comparison. Return migration, which is the specific concern in the text by Gil Lázaro, is a sub-studied issue, compared to leavings or settlements in the host country. In this paper are present some looks by thinkers and writers of the first third of the twentieth century contemporary to the return, as well as the theoretical postulates from which the Spanish and Italian historiographies have addressed return migration after World War II, and proposes near the end an approach to a little-addressed subject, the return assisted by the State.

Policy

After questioning the Mexican model in construction through polarized diplomatic relations in the United States and Europe, Frédéric Johansson concludes in his text “Conceiving Latin America: the laborious emergence of a Latin American self-awareness amid Euro-American and Pan-American identities. A study of Mexico’s mid-19th Century foreign policy” that interventionism led to a defensively-shaped identity clearly expressed in the specific case of Mexico as a nation-state. To him, armed pressure from Europe and North America would force Mexican foreign policy to face those imperialist ambitions by giving shape to dual but simultaneous identity attributes: “Hispanic” against the United States, and “American” before European powers.

The work by Lara Semboloni “The use of the term “nation” in writings by Lucas Alamán and Mariano Otero” focuses on making explicit the Foucault methodology as a tool for studying the flow of ideas in discourse analysis. Addressing the values and ideas that created the nation-state, through the theory of mutations and transmutation of power, language analysis, for this author, determines the construction of Hispanic identities as well as the permanent and comprehensive presence of European ideas.

The essay by Sonia Valle de Frutos and Dora Armonia Bonardo “The cultural dimension in the Atlantic thought: presences, absences and remains between centuries” poses a dialectic interplay about interpreting liberalism through its forms and concepts, and reveals through it the entire span of the

history of identity formation in the state-nations. Among the notions of culture and politics, the westernization of imaginary raised by Serge Gruzinski becomes a necessary tool to understand the complexity and articulation of cultural policy in the Atlantic area.

To conclude, it must be emphasized that the excellent atmosphere of academic and professional dialogue and meeting in which these twelve papers – now turned into essays – were presented at the International Congress of Americanism on July 2012, encouraged the collective support to the publishing project that culminates in the pages that “Storia e Futuro” hosts. We also believe that the essays gathered here constitute a significant progress in the challenges currently faced by Atlantic studies and open, undoubtedly, a transnational space of academic and intellectual exchange that we hope to continue *building dialogues* into the future.

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Biography

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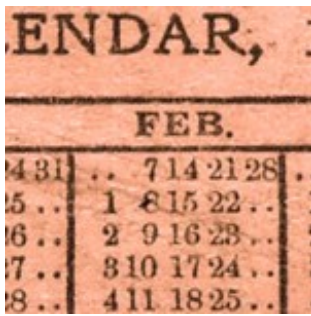
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Contenuti correlati



- Empire with no silver, silver without empire: the crisis of the spanish monetary system (1788-1823)



- The commercial and fiscal policy of Peru in the transition from colony to republic



- Revolutionary Voices The Presence of Visitors, Fugitives and Prisoners from the French Caribbean in Venezuela (1789-1799)



- The tax reform proposals of the Finance Ministers of Mexico (1825-1854)



- Politics and Business in São Paulo: from the opening of the ports to the Independence of Brazil (1808-1822)