

Ana Simões, Ana Carneiro, Maria Paula Diogo, Luís Miguel Carolino, Teresa Salomé Mota, *Uma História da Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa (1911-1974)*. Lisboa: Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa, 2013. Pp. 266. ISBN 978-989-98296-0-2.

By Agustí Nieto-Galan*

Commemorative practices in science usually become serious challenges for professional historians, keen to preserve their intellectual freedom (Pnina G. Abir-Am, Clark A. Elliot, (eds.), *Osiris*, 1999). Things become even harder when the main aim is the historical reconstruction of a prestigious scientific institution, such as a Science Faculty, and its evolution through different political regimes in the 20th century. Nevertheless, the history of the Science Faculty at the University of Lisbon, which Ana Simões, Ana Carneiro, Maria Paula Diogo, Luís Miguel Carolino e Teresa Salomé Mota, have recently written, is an excellent example of how to find a right balance between academic rigor and local institutional and political constraints.

Chronologically organized, the book covers the institutional life of the Science Faculty created by the Portuguese Republic in 1911, its evolution through the dictatorial times of the Estado Novo up to the Revolution of 1974. More precisely, the timeline is divided into three main periods: from the Republic to the early years of the military dictatorship (1911-1930); the core of the Estado Novo (1931-1963); and the last 10 years of that authoritarian regime up to the Revolution (1964-1974). Nevertheless, the book is far more than a simple chronological reconstruction of an institution and its actors. *Uma História da Faculdade de Ciências* covers highly relevant thematic issues for the historiography of science: the never-ending tension between teaching and research, and the “research school” model in a “peripheral” context at an European level; the crucial importance of specific sites of scientific practice inside the Faculty itself; the establishment of disciplines, areas of specialisation and departments; the gender factor and the significant role of women students; and finally, the spread of research, teaching and popularization to Portuguese territories overseas.

* UAB - Barcelona

The entire analysis is also suitably complemented by a detailed historical reconstruction of two journals, the *Revista de Faculdade de Ciências de Lisboa*, and *Scientia*, which played a crucial role in the internal cohesion of the Faculty's academic community, but also in its relation to society at large. The book includes biographical approaches to the members of the Science Faculty, who later became rectors - three of them during the Republic, and three more during Salazar's dictatorship. In addition, for those interested in a more detailed description, an appendix provides exhaustive data on lecturers, chairs, areas of specialisation, subjects, and syllabuses.

Several sites of scientific practice that developed under the banner of the Science Faculty are also described in detail; these include the *Instituto Geofísico Infante D. Luis*, the *Observatorio Astronómico*, and the *Museo e Laboratorio Mineralógico e Geológico*. Together with the analysis of the *Laboratório de Física*, all these spaces help the reader to assess the nature of the academic research that was carried out in the Faculty, from the old applied science deriving from the nineteenth-century *Escola Politécnica de Lisboa*, to the conflicting boundaries between natural science, medicine and engineering and the inevitable troubles that result from establishing standard research schools in the local context.

Details of the “anatomy” and “physiology” of the Science Faculty at the University of Lisbon are also provided through careful analysis of *Revista* and *Scientia*. These are valuable primary sources for the historical reconstruction of internal debates on the kind of teaching and research that had to be implemented in the Faculty at different periods, but they also provide considerable insight into the role of student associations in relation to different political contexts, and into the popularization of science as a tool of internal cohesion for the academic community and as a powerful strategy for the social legitimization of the Faculty.

Uma História da Faculdade de Ciências is an excellent product with which to divulge a significant part of Portugal's scientific culture in the 20th century to its society at large. As a further positive indication of the vitality and dynamism characterising the Lisbon group of historians of science, widely represented in this work, the book also contains valuable raw material for the further production of academic papers in the History of Science to be published through international journals. Many colleagues will undoubtedly relish the articles that will now be appearing as fruit of this collective research (though probably better placed in a more ambitious comparative framework) covering still-unknown aspects of twentieth-century Portuguese science.