

Vocation and Memories of an Accounting Historian by Esteban Hernández Esteve¹

Mr. President, Honourable Authorities, dear friends, and colleagues:

I would like to give this contribution of mine a degree of warmth and intimacy, since all of us cooperate on and have taken part in research activities therefore, I am going to use a supporting and collective approach, without diminishing the respect I have for all of you.

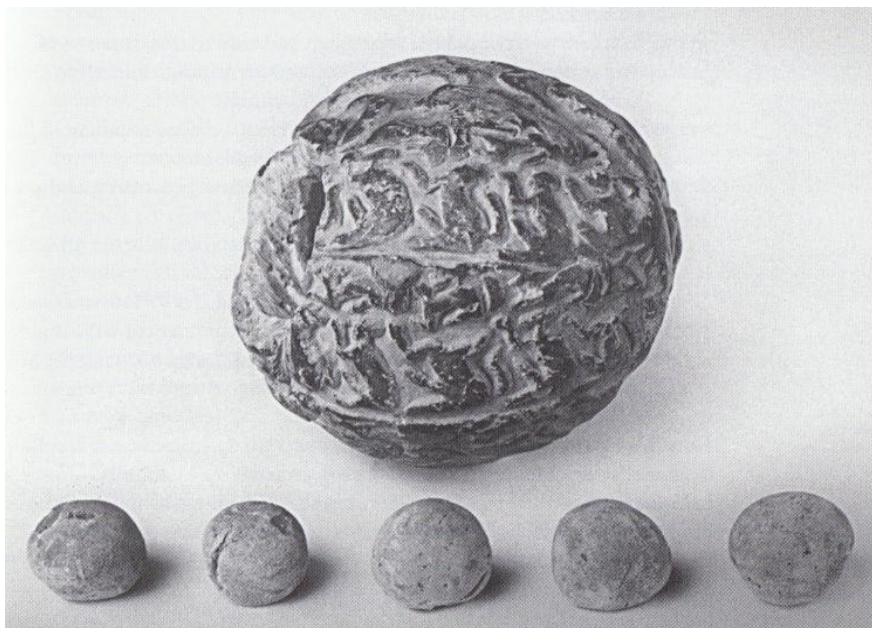
As its title can tell, my contribution will concern the emergence of my vocation as a historian, including its circumstances, reasons, and their changing over time, as well as the phases of its approach and development, including the current approaches carried out concerning the mission and the importance of accounting history.

Despite the fact that some my works have already contained some of my words on these matters, the truth of it all is that I never wanted to talk about myself too much². However, now that, given my advanced age, this is going to be my last public intervention, I think my words may be of some use. Precious few uses, actually; in order for the experience to have any effect, things should be lived by everybody involved on their own. Nevertheless, some of the young people here are starting to create their first tools in the field of scientific research.

Concerning the topic of my contribution, I am going to start it by stating that, first and foremost, the great importance of accounting should be underlined. Accounting is not only necessary; it is vital for the development of human life. Without accounting, be it as simple as it may, no human life is conceivable. And this is exactly how the surveys carried out by archaeologist Denise Schmandt-Besserat showed that the ancient dwellers of Mesopotamia, 8000 years ago, that is to say several millennia before writing was discovered, kept track of goods and of their ownership through symbolic items put inside clay balls having signs indicating their content.

¹ Reprint from: Della Corte Dei Conti journal, Special Issue 1/2021. With permission of the journal.

² However, I remember that I explained, at least in part, the origins of my historiographic vocation in my unpublished work titled: "Origeni della mia vocazione per la storia della contabilità", presented during the X Meeting of Accounting History, in Las Palmas, Spain on October 13 and 14, 2016.



Clay ball showing signs of its content, Susa, Iran, end of the fourth millennium B.C.

(This image, like all the others in this document, is taken from the Internet)

From then on, around 3200 B.C., clay tablets were used, and they featured inscriptions with their accounting significance. This was the first step towards proto-cuneiform writing.³

Indeed, even considerably before the people from Mesopotamia were able to create clay balls, and afterwards also clay figurines or "tokens", as they are commonly known, men had to find specific procedures in order to record their accounting. Therefore, their use of jagged and indented sticks to record purchase, sales and debts of every kind is well-known, including their duplicate keeping so that every party involved may keep proof of their transactions.

Therefore, we may know about the recording of accounting deeds and amounts for a timeframe of at least 37.000 years, i.e. the time approximately separating us from the Lebombo bone, that is to say a bone found within those mountains standing between the Republic of South Africa and Swaziland. However, some archaeologists think that the Lebombo bone does not contain numbers or figures, but only dates instead. On the other hand, the Ishango bone tracing back to the Palaeolithic era, being about 20.000 years old, and that was found in 1960 within the region having the same name, near the springs of the Nile, in the former Belgian Congo, is generally accepted as containing accounting signs.

³ On this, please see my book titled *Aproximación al estudio del pensamiento contable español*, Madrid: AECA, 2013, pp. 78 ss.



The Lebombo bone

Considering the same accounting purpose, the use of string-based systems, called "quipus", has been recorded. These systems were used in places where writing was unknown. For example, this system was used in South America, especially within the Inca Empire this is a very well-known subject, also because several ethnologists carried out their research activities on the matter. This is logical, not only considering accounting but also mathematics and culture.

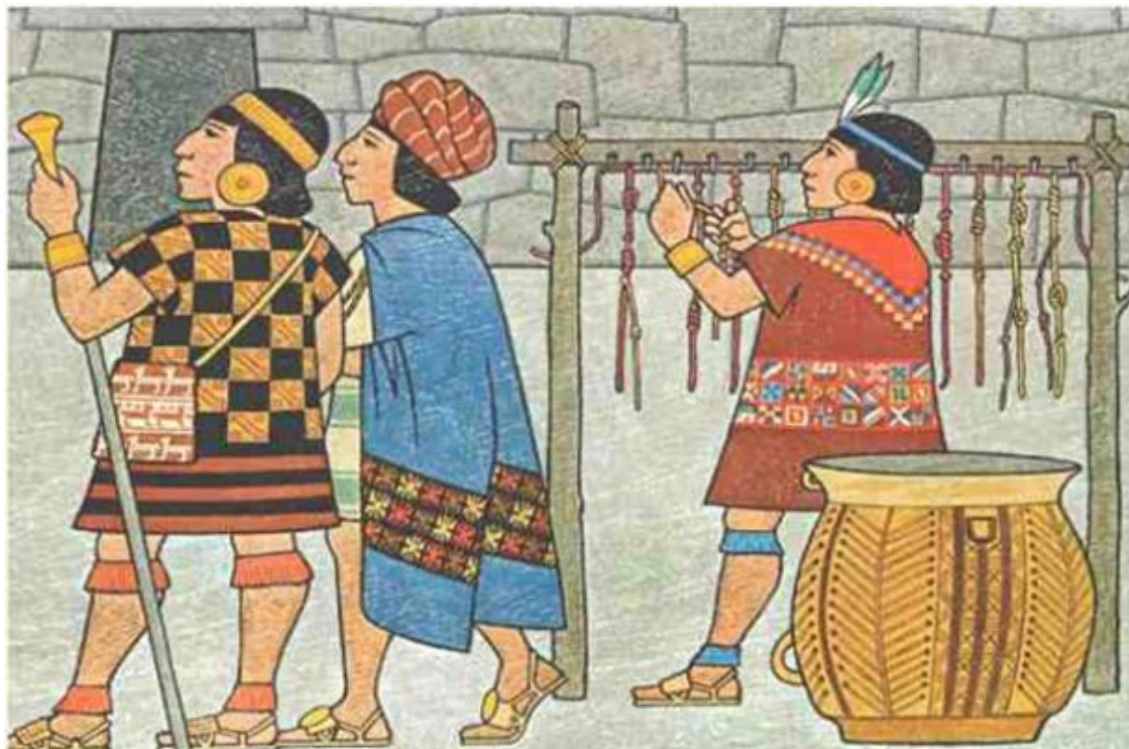
Several studies have been focused on this contraption, even if several of them take their sources and from the manuscript titled *Primer buena coronica y buen gobierno* by Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, declaring himself Inca, Lord and Prince. It seems like he started his work as a letter to Felipe II, the Spanish monarch, in 1584, even if the author was so verbose that he did not succeed in finishing its 1.179 pages before 1615; therefore, he had to compose a letter for his successor, Felipe III. The original manuscript is held within the Royal Library of Denmark, where it ended up, or so it is thought, after the purchase made by the Danish ambassador at the Spanish Court, Cornelius Pedersen Lerche. Before this purchase, this system was a part of the library belonging to Gaspar de Guzmán, Count-Duke of Olivares, who died in 1645.⁴

Concerning written accounting, we are now going to tackle the surveys carried out by important archaeologists.

The research activities carried out by ancient historians, specialized in the history of Mesopotamia, such as Hans Nissen, Peter Damerow and Robert Englund (1990), together with those of another, the German A. Falkenstein (1964), allow us to affirm that the first written documents, themselves made up by thousands of clay tablets featuring proto-cuneiform writing and engraved during the fourth and the third millennium BC, that is to say 5.000 or 4.000 years ago, contain only accounting numbers and

⁴ Gregorio Marañón: "La biblioteca del Conde-Duque", en *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, tomo 107 (1935), p. 677.

texts. In order to achieve such a result, the ancient Mesopotamians implemented *ad hoc* numerical systems, which Nissen and his collaborators were able to decipher and explain.



An Inca Quipus

During the middle of the fourth millennium BC., at the time of the Sumerian civilisation, some peoples belonging to identified ethnic groups started using the proto-cuneiform writing. In the beginning, such writing was substantially pictographical in nature, i.e., it featured simple drawing representing objects. It seems that around 3000 BC, that is to say during the period called Uruk III but also Jemdet Nasr, the connection between ideograms and phonetic elements started a brand-new consequence “being one of the cornerstones of writing itself” (Nissen et al., 1993, p. 117). Therefore, some signs gained a double value, both pictographic and phonetical. A typical example of such a trend is symbolized by the sign representing an “arrow”, whose pronunciation is “ti” and that, from then on, took also the meaning of “life” and gained the “til” pronunciation.



Signo T

Considering all the difficulties connected with clarifying the passage from the pictographic to the phonetical writing, doubtlessly the Sumerians had a decisive role in the field. Phonetic abstraction was made easier by the fact that the vast majority of Sumerian words was made up by a single

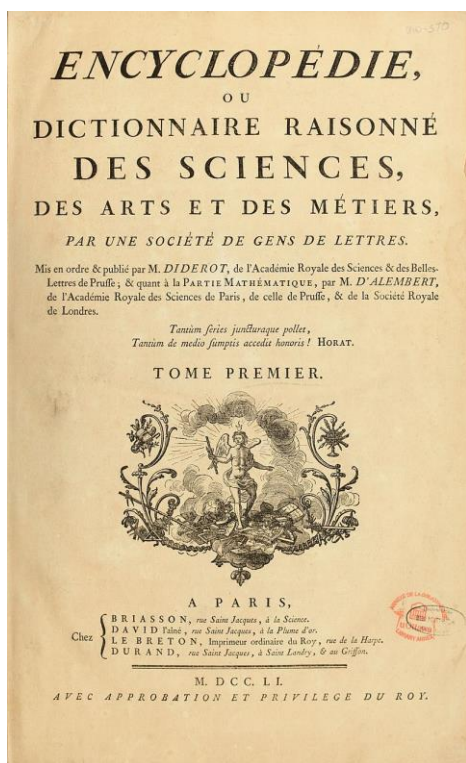
syllable. Therefore, the ancient ideographic writing went on to develop a writing form featuring the coexistence of ideograms and syllables. Therefore, names and words for which there were no signs, suddenly became a part of the language. All these data and circumstances justified the idea that writing was due to accounting, as a way to register all what was owned and owed.

On the other hand, the progress writing experienced during the fourth and third millennia BC coincided with the fact that the vast majority of the 5.000 tablets created during those periods dealt with administrative procedures alone, without any religious, narrative or historical issues (Nissen et al, 1993, p. 21). Nissen and his coauthors ended this paragraph as follows:



Tablillas de arcilla sumerias con escritura protocuneiforme

“Such an outcome seems to strongly suggest that these texts have simply never been written. This does also clearly refute the hypothesis that writing may have been invented in order to register religious or narrative records ". Concerning the times we are living in, even if accounting-related works were present in the XVI, XVII and XVIII Centuries, amongst which some references to some specific authors and to the history of this discipline may be mentioned, such as the Spanish Sebastian de Jócana y Madaria in 1793,



it is indeed true that the first book specifically dedicated to the study of the origins and development of accounting and bookkeeping, including references to English texts on the topic is due to Benjamin Franklin Foster, and published it in English in 1852: the origin and evolution of bookkeeping, involving a report of the works published from 1543 to 1852, including critical and historical observations as well. However, this book did not seem to spur a significant degree of enthusiasm within the professional and academic world in Great Britain, since, until 1887, no other publications were issued in England, such as the one connected with the lecture William Henry Fox held at the Chartered Accountants

'Students' Society of London. The following important book on the matter was issued, in England yet again, in 1895, by Beresford Worthington, providing an historical description of bookkeeping professionals. More or less during the same period, the great *Enciclopedia ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* was published in France between 1751 and 1772, under the supervision of Denis Diderot and Jean Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert. The purpose of this work was to put together and disseminate through a clear and accessible texts the fruits of knowledge gathered through the critical use and the sifting of reason. Furthermore, the secularist, pragmatist, materialist and bourgeois ideology that was the main legacy of the Enlightenment was to be recorded there for all to see. The Encyclopedia contains 72.000 articles, by more than 140 collaborators, such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Baron de Holbach and, Turgot, to name just a few of them. Despite the substantial intellectual nature, the work was intended to have, several entries within the Encyclopedia concerned accounting, bookkeeping and the entities charged with managing them. Generally speaking, the conference held by Ernesto Luchini in 1869, upon the inauguration of the Accountant's Academy in Milan, spurred sudden interest for the work carried out by Luca Pacioli and, therefore, for the history of bookkeeping as a whole. Indeed, even if, in 1868, Emil Ludwig Jäger already made a short reference to Luca Pacioli, the studies on this author, and on his treaty titled *De Computis et Scripturis* and on bookkeeping in general did not start until 1871. However, from the

conference held by Luchini until the end of that century, accounting history was almost exclusively the province of Italian- and German- speaking scholars: maybe this was due to the fact that in two cases, two Italians authored two accounting books, as well as to the penchant Germans have always shown for history. On the other hand, as it is generally known, already in 1685, the study of history was subdivided, by the German historian and Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Halle, considering three centuries of history first and foremost: ancient, middle and modern ages, even if such a periodization proved to be really valid only for European history. French historiography established a fourth age, i.e. the

1st edition 1751-1772

780

COM

Bureau où l'on compte & paye les droits dûs au Roi à Bordeaux; mais on entend par le terme de *comptable*, ou qu'on appelle *droit de comptable* ou *coutume de Bordeaux*, le droit qui se paye même dans ce bureau, & qui se perçoit au profit du Roi dans la fénéchauffée de Bordeaux à l'entrée & à la sortie de toutes les marchandises, vivres & denrées, contenues au tarif qui en a été dressé, sans exception du sel.

Pour entendre ce que c'est que ce droit de *comptable*, & en quoi il diffère des droits qui se payent ailleurs, il faut observer que la généralité de Bordeaux est toute entière hors l'étendue des cinq grosses fermes, & par conséquent réputée étrangère à l'égard du reste du royaume. C'est pourquoi l'on a établi dans cette généralité divers droits d'entrée & de sortie pour toutes les marchandises. Les deux espèces les plus générales de ces droits, sont ceux de coutume & de comptable, & ceux de convoi. Les premiers, c'est-à-dire les droits de coutume & de comptable, sont locaux, & se perçoivent spécialement dans la fénéchauffée de Bordeaux à l'entrée & à la sortie de toutes les marchandises, vivres & denrées.

Ce droit de *comptable* qui produisoit peu de chose dans son origine, appartenoit autrefois à l'abbaye de Sainte-croix; les religieux s'en défrent en faveur de la ville de Bordeaux, sur laquelle ce droit a été dans la suite confisqué avec celui de convoi au profit du roi Louis XIV. lorsque cette ville eut le malheur de lui déplaire.

Depuis ce tems, dans tous les baux des fermes générales on comprend nommément la ferme du convoi & *comptable* de Bordeaux, de même que celles des doïanes de Lyon & de Valence, Patente de Languedoc, &c.

Pour ce qui est des droits de convoi, voyez ci-après au mot CONVOI DE BORDEAUX. (A)

COMPTANT, sub. m. terme qui dans le Commerce a plusieurs significations.

Il se dit ordinairement entre négocians pour signifier de l'argent réel & effectif, qu'on donne & qu'on reçoit sur le champ pour le prix convenu de quelque marchandise. J'ai vendu comptant, j'ai acheté comptant; &c. en ce sens il est opposé à crédit. Voy. CRÉDIT.

2°. *Comptant* signifie le fonds qui se trouve en argent monnoyé chez un banquier ou négociant, &c.

3°. *Comptant*, argent comptant, s'entend des monnoies ayant cours, ou des espèces sonnantes dont on stipule que certains payemens seront faits, par opposition aux billets, écritures, ou papiers. Ainsi payer comptant, c'est payer en argent & non en lettres de change ou promesses.

Comptant, en terme de Finances; on appelle ordonnance de comptant, une ordonnance que le Roi donne pour être payée & acquittée au trésor royal, où il n'est point expliqué la destination des sommes accordées, & pour le paiement de laquelle il n'est besoin d'aucunes formalités. Voyez le Dictionnaire du Commerce, Trév. & Chambers.

COMPTE, f. m. (Commerce) est un état calculé ou non calculé d'effets possédés, administrés, acquis, reçus, dâs, ou dépenfés. Ce terme a un grand nombre d'acceptions différentes dans le Commerce. On dit en ce sens que trois sortes de comptes sont absolument nécessaires pour la clôture des livres en parties doubles; le compte de capital, le compte de profits & pertes, & le compte de bilan.

Le compte de capital est un compte particulier ouvert au débit du grand livre: il contient tous les effets d'un négociant, c'est-à-dire son argent comptant, ses marchandises, billets, promesses, obligations, parties arrêtées, meubles meublans, immeubles, &c.

COM

généralement tout ce qui lui appartient, franc & quitte de toutes dettes & hypothèques.

Le compte de profits & de pertes est ouvert sur le grand livre: il est composé de tous les gains ou pertes qu'un négociant a pu faire dans son négoce. Les pertes s'écrivent au crédit, & les profits se portent au débit. Voyez CRÉDIT & DÉBIT.

Le compte de bilan ne s'ouvre au grand livre que pour la clôture des livres. Quand il s'agit de la sortie des livres, on l'appelle compte de bilan de sortie; & lorsqu'il est question de prendre de nouveaux livres, on le nomme compte de bilan d'entrée. Dans le premier on porte au débit tout ce qui est dû, & au crédit tout ce que l'on doit. Dans le second on porte au débit tout ce qui est au crédit du compte de bilan de sortie, & au crédit tout ce qui est au débit de ce même compte de bilan de sortie.

COMPTES (livres de), ce sont des journaux, registres, sur lesquels les marchands, négocians, banquiers, & autres, portent leurs effets, leur recette, & leur dépense.

Ouvrir un compte, c'est le placer pour la première fois dans le grand livre; ce qui se fait en écrivant en gros caractères les nom, surnom & demeure de celui avec qui on entre en compte ouvert; ensuite on le charge des articles, soit en débit soit en crédit, à mesure que les affaires se présentent; & l'on fait en même tems mention de ce compte sur le répertoire ou alphabet. Voyez ALPHABET & RÉPERTOIRE.

Apoftiller un compte, c'est mettre des notes & apostilles à côté de chaque article, aux uns pour les allover, aux autres pour les débattre.

Vérifier un compte, c'est l'examiner.

Clorre un compte, c'est l'arrêter, & en fixer le reliquat.

Finis de compte, se prend pour l'arrêté même du compte.

Coucher une somme sur un compte, c'est enregistrer sur le grand livre, soit en crédit soit en débit, les parties dont les particuliers deviennent débiteurs ou créditeurs.

Pointer les parties d'un compte, c'est mettre un point à côté de chaque partie que le teneur de livres vérifie, pour justifier que la rencontre est juste.

Contre-partie d'un compte, en termes de banque & de commis aux bureaux des fermes du Roi; c'est le registre que tient le contrôleur, sur lequel il enregistre toutes les parties dont le teneur de livres, si c'est pour la banque, ou le receveur, si c'est pour les fermes du Roi, charge le sien.

Ordre d'un compte, c'est la division en chapitre de recette, dépense, & reprise.

Examiner un compte, c'est le lire exactement, en pointer les articles, en vérifier le calcul, pour voir s'il n'y a point d'erreur.

Soldat un compte, c'est le calculer, le régler, l'arrêter, en faire la balance. Voyez BALANCE & SOLDE.

Passer en compte, c'est tenir compte à quelqu'un d'une somme qu'on a reçue de lui ou pour lui.

Rendre compte, c'est, lorsqu'on est comptable; fournir l'état de sa recette & de sa dépense.

Apurer un compte, c'est en juger tous les débats, & en faire lever toutes les souffrances ou apostilles mises en marge. Voyez SOUFFRANCE & APOSTILLE.

Bordereau de compte, c'est l'extrait d'un compte, dans lequel on comprend toutes les sommes d'un compte tirées hors de ligne, tant de la recette que de la dépense. Voyez BORDEREAU.

Débet de compte, c'est la somme dont la recette excède la dépense.

Soldé de compte, c'est la somme dont le débit excède la recette.

contemporary age, to be considered starting with 1789 (The French Revolution) or with 1776 (The war of Independence of the United States) or, in the end from 1808 onwards (That is to say, from the Spanish War of Independence, as well as from the start of the Wars of Independence in Latin America), since it was thought that a starting era had to be established when, just as Thucydides and Herodotus had done, historians could tell about events they had lived through or that may be reconstructed by direct testimonies. On the contrary, British historiography did not follow such guidelines, and it continues to call Modern Times the times we live in even now.

Getting back to the main issues connected with the emergence and the development of my vocation, given my young age, that is to say, 12 years, I



started studying at the Barcelona Business School, that is Escuela de Altos Estudios Mercantiles, as a free student, i.e., without attending classes, but taking exams at the end, of every course; that is a studying path being usual, as it was then as it is now, in Spain, in the case of certain careers. The business study path, featuring three tiers, from elementary to higher, was the only way in Spain at the time to pursue official studies in the field of economics and business, before the Faculty of Business Sciences was created. When I came into my 16th year of age, I sat the admission exams for three different banks in Barcelona. Even if I passed all three of these



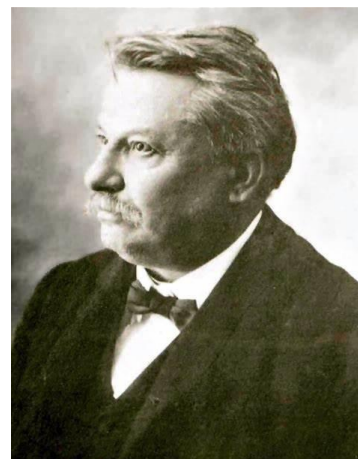
exams, I chose to work at the Bank of Vizcaya, that is to say the only one I had no relatives in, since my whole family was a family of bank clerks; my father, my elder brother and two of my uncles worked for banks. My choice showed that I had some degree of autonomy and independence.

I kept studying at the Barcelona Business School, always as a free student. In 1953, I achieved a superior degree, called Intendente Mercantil in Spanish, that, when the Faculties of Business Sciences were established, was considered equivalent to a degree in the Faculty of Economy and Business. Having achieved this degree, I went to Madrid, intending to sit the examination for the Technical Corps and the Bank of Spain. Since the results of my exams

were good, I was able to choose the city I wanted to work in; I chose Barcelona, so that I was able to keep living home with my parents. By integrating them with my work, I kept studying English and the British Institute and Italian at the Italian Institute of Culture in Barcelona, since I wanted to sit the exam for the Spanish Technical Corps, from where the economic and commercial consultants of the Spanish embassies all over the world were appointed.

In 1955 the Italian Embassy in Madrid promoted a contest for an essay as a tribute for the birth of Italian poet and writer Giovanni Pascoli. I was able to write with a certain ease at the time but, even if modern hermetic poets such as Salvatore Quasimodo and Giuseppe Ungaretti or simply futurists such as Aldo Palazzeschi attracted me, I had never thought I could write articles, books or, even less, poetry, since I consider it very difficult and worthy as a literary genre.

However, Professor Zegni, my teacher at the Italian Institute of Culture had seen a certain degree of passion for literature in me, spurred me to take part in the contest. As a principle, I was against the idea, but he insisted so much that in the end, to please him, I wrote my essay and gave it to him. The professor then sent my essay to the Embassy. I had all but forgotten about the contest but, after a while, I unexpectedly received news about my having won the prize; it was a grant for a summer course at the University for Foreigners in Perugia, within the Umbria Region of Italy.



Giovanni Pascoli

I went there the following summer, and it was a true discovery for me. Please bear in mind that I had never attended a university class before, since I was a free student, as I have already explained. The quality of the lectures I attended at the University of Perugia, together with living shoulder to shoulder with students from all around the world were a great revelation to me, as if a great window was open before me, showing an unknown but tantalizing view. Italy takes great care in fostering its image abroad, and so the teaching staff of the University for foreigners was of high standard.

I was thunderstruck, especially by my history teacher, Mr. Greco. I think I can still remember his name. His conception was indeed materialistic in nature, even if barely. I remember it, as the history being taught in Spain at the time was still burdened with imperialist concepts, which were still present, even after almost sixty years since the loss of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, the last ultramarine colonies Spain had. I think that the teachings Professor Greco gave me, together with his captivating disposition, coupled with his significant methodological and historical rigour were the first seed of my vocation as a historian. It all started there, and I thank him from the bottom of my heart.



The university for Foreigners in Perugia

When I went back to Spain following my experience in Perugia, I went back to my work at the Bank of Spain, but my plans had completely changed. I forgot my will towards the Technical Commercial Corps of Spain, in order to focus my attention on a Ph.D. in Business Sciences at a foreign University.

Therefore, during the summer of 1957, I went to London, in order to evaluate the possibilities of pursuing a Ph.D. degree at the London School of Economics and Political Science – the second oldest school of economics in Europe, established in 1895 after the *École des Hautes Études Commerciales de Paris*, itself founded in 1881-, directly controlled by the University of London, where I had planned to attend this course in the beginning. However, despite the fact that they treated me fairly, they told me that they had already covered their quota for foreigners, even if they told me I could have enrolled for the next course. However, I was under the impression that they did not know about the situation of Spanish business schools, and they did not want to learn about it. Therefore, I went home somewhat disappointed, even if I was not dejected, as I was ready to look for alternatives. When I was still in London, I told Enrique Manuel Casas, a good longtime friend of mine I dedicated my latest and important book to, in a letter.

Enrique was a mechanic by trade, and he was so enthusiastic about what I told him of my Italian experience that he went on to work in Germany, since he did not need language competences in order to work there. He answered my letter asking why I did not want to pursue my Ph.D.

Degree in Germany, as he imagined that Faculties of Economics being as good as the London School in Germany as well.



The main entrance of the London School of Economics and Political Science

Indeed, I pondered these opportunities and in 1958, when I had the time and the opportunity of taking a study leave from the Bank of Spain, I went to the German Consulate in Barcelona, where I talked with the commercial *chargé d'affaires* and I actually confirmed the opportunity of attending a Ph.D. path in Germany and the officer had a good knowledge of the schools his country offered in the field of higher learning when economics were concerned. Indeed, in April 1898, the first such learning institution was established in Leipzig, following the input by the Chamber of Commerce and bearing the name of *Handelshochschule*. During the same year, the *Handelshochschulen* in Aachen and St. Gallen were established; in Cologne and Frankfurt they were funded in 1901, while in Berlin in 1906, in Mannheim in 1908, in Munich in 1910, in Königsberg in 1915 and in Nuremberg in 1919. As it is known, in Spain, four business schools, namely those of Málaga, Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao, were turned into the first high-level business schools were established in August 1922. I can only imagine that; with the name they were given in Spain of *Escuelas de Altos Estudios Mercantiles* they might somewhat have connections with the names of the German schools.

I asked the officer of the German Consulate if he could gather some information on the German University being more appropriate for a Ph.D. in Business Sciences and he answered that he could do that, promising me a response for the day after. As he did it, he told me that he was told in turn that the most suitable school for my request was the one in Cologne, since Professor Alfred Müller-Armack, the Vice Minister of the German Ministry of Economy, which was then guided by Ludwig Erhard, was teaching part-time there.



Ludwig Erhard y Alfred Müller Armack

He was also the founder of the economic approach called Social Market Economy, which was introduced in 1947 in his book titled *Wirtschaftslenkung und Marktwirtschaft*, and was then to be applied in the German Federal Republic during the post-war era, to the tremendous results we all know. To be precise, I translated this book with the title *Economía Dirigida y Economía de Mercado*, and it was published in Spain during 1963. Müller-Armack was one of the Professors of my Ph.D. studies.

Considering the favorable circumstances, I was in, during October 1958, I asked a three-month leave at the Bank of Spain and went to Cologne, where my dear friend Enrique Manuel, who then met me at the bus station, was waiting for me. I went to the Hotel he was a guest to in Gummersbach for a week (it was a city being 50 kilometers from Cologne), where he was working at the time, in order to settle in. Afterwards, I moved to Cologne proper, I went to university to enroll in the Ph.D program and then I looked for some lodging in a private house, where I spent a little more than five years. Even since the following days, I started the administrative procedures to leaving Germany, and the like.

Since I had no financial means, I had to look for a job. And I found it, on my first day, at the Berlitz Academy. But, since that Academy was not used to sign working contracts with its professors and I thought that the continuity they offered was not enough for me to take a multi-year leave from the Bank of Spain, I left that post after a month, in order to become a worker at the assembly line of the Ford automotive factory. Indeed, it was a foolish action on my part, and I regretted it as soon as I did it, but it was

also true that I went to Germany filled with energy and being ready to carry out the greatest possible efforts to achieve my goals. Even so, I felt the situation was still not safe enough for me to request a three-year leave from the Bank of Spain. Therefore, I entered the Ford factory after the endorsement of a German economist working there, was married with it female friend of mine from Barcelona.



The Cologne Cathedral with the Hohenzollern Bridge

I worked at Ford for about three months. I carried out my activities for two nine-hour turns, alternating every week and featuring a half-hour break for lunch or supper, which was not counted as working hours. The working itself was simple, but extremely boring. Therefore, I often remembered the *Modern Times*, movie, by Charlot, at the time. Within the assembly line I was a part of, about 3000 unqualified workers, with only two foreigners, an Italian and I. The time of the great migrations towards Germany by the Spaniards, the Italians and then the Turkish were yet to come.

I actually think that this was a cornerstone experience in my training, as I was living with manual workers, and therefore I was able to learn their mindset, their lifestyle and the limitation their life and their work forced upon them. I befriended one on my work companions, who was married and had a 1- or 2-year-old child and that invited me in his home one or two times. I also met his wife and once the trio was taking part in a Carnival party, when I was no longer working for Ford. We lost contact afterwards; there were no cellphones and keeping in touch was considerably more difficult. Even now, I am still sorry about that; they were very lovable people.

This said, when I went back to Spain in order to spend Christmas with my parents, I already had a new job, to be started in mid-January and more suitable to my overall conditions, as I had been hired by the Dresdner Bank, working only in the morning, so that I was able to attend those University courses I could not attend previously due to my working at Ford. The Dresdner Bank helped my requests for a job, asking the Bank of Spain for the authorization to hire me. The directors of the Bank of Spain authorized this request, thanking the Dresdner Bank for the lively interest they showed for me. Such a circumstance was very positive for me, as the Bank of Spain could know that it could rely on an officer that was achieving a Ph.D. in Business Sciences under his own power in Germany and in one of the most important structures in the sector.



The University of Cologne

My enrolment at the University of Cologne offered me, first and foremost, the opportunity of studying and perfecting my knowledge of German, simply by attending those lectures and courses I had a greater interest in. German Universities differ from the Spanish ones and, as it may be inferred, from Latin Universities in general. The University of Cologne is a free University, as the Germans put it; there are precious few basic subjects, at the end of which the students sit the relevant exams. Truth be told, no final exams exist, and several options are available, indeed two, three or four options for every subject exist. Therefore, students can choose the teachers they love more. On the other hand, students having enrolled in any given Faculty can attend lectures and classes from any given Faculty, to be recorded on their booklet, as a part of the whole of a student's academic career. This is useful, as other subjects may very well be useful to achieve the Degree. The vast majority of any given Faculty is optional in nature, so that not all students have to choose them. During their careers, students learn not only the basic mandatory subjects, but also subjects chosen by them within the Faculty, with a minimum number of hours. Furthermore, if students so choose, they can complete their course with

subjects from other Faculties as well. However, classes have no mandatory or supervised attendance. The booklet must contain every attendance hour, so that Professors may sign it every semester. In so doing, students were responsible for their education and their exams do not happen during their education path, except those that have to be mandatorily attended by students for them to attend seminars and courses featuring important foreign experts afterwards. Personally, I attended a really awesome scientific seminar on Plato, featuring the participation of world-class experts.

UNIVERSITY OF LINZ



The Department of Pedagogics in Teaching Economics

Since I held a foreign degree and it was not comparable to that of a local, I had to attend a kind of Ph.D. mode called "Rigorosum", whose attendees had to sit five exams, rather than the usual three. I chose the following five subjects: first, *Economic and Social history*, the subject that was to be that of my Ph.D. dissertation, then *National Economy*, as they kept calling it in Germany, *Business Economy*, *Pedagogics in Teaching Economics* and *Sociology*. The teachers with which I study these subjects, being recognized exceptional specialists in the field, were respectively c: Hermann Kellenbenz, Alfred Müller-Armack, Erich Gutenberg, Friedrich Schlieper and René König.

I have fond and admiring memories of them all, particularly of the "father of my Ph.D dissertation" as they say in Germany, that is to say Hermann Kellenbenz. I remember the others as well and, most of all because of the exams they did to me, René König, whose life was particularly stormy in Hitler's time, so that he had to flee Germany in several occasions, finding haven in countries such as Swiss, Turkey and

Spain. He dedicated me in Spanish his work titled *Fischer Lexikon Soziologie*.



The Kölner Wirtschaftspädagogik Centre in Cologne

Another teacher I have fond memories of is Friedrich Schlieper. After having spent an hour on his comfortable sofa, talking about his subject in his office, he told me: “Esteban, I can imagine that you are going to become a teacher, and so you will encounter students not wanting to study. Let me give you some advice. Ignore them and focus on those who intend to study instead”. We got up afterwards and, as I stood by the door, he opened it, shook my hand and told me: "Alles Gute", that is to say, "May it all go well".

I have remembered his words all my life, together with those he told us within the Aula Magna of the University of Cologne, as it was huge and sat 800 or even 1000 students. Nevertheless, there always were many people listening to him, even sitting on the steps or in the hallways of the Aula Magna. One day, I was able to sit in the front lines and Professor.Schlieper was a bit tense, since he had argued with his wife as the house maiden had tripped and broken a wonderful vase of Sèvres for which his wife was very sad. He told us, that objects such as these were no important, regardless of their significant cost, since they are superfluous, the important are people are what.

THE COLOGNE TOWER



Then he told us: “Since we have arrived at this point, I want to tell you about my life system. No one tells anyone else about it, but I am going to share it with you. First of all: life has meaning. Secondly: its meaning is to make sense. And, thirdly, everything we think, do and everything happening to us in life deploys on the basis of the first two elements”. Schlieper was the founder of the *Wirtschaftspädagogik*, that is to say the application of pedagogy to the teaching of economics. This is a discipline being in its infancy, but already being taught in many German Universities.

During the mid-1960s, as I left my job at the Dresdner Bank, I entered the *Höhere Fachschule für Dolmetscher und Übersetzer der Stadt Köln*, i.e., the School for the

Higher learning of Interpreters and translators in Cologne as a teacher. This school was somewhat dependent from the University, and it is now a part of the so-called *Fachhochschule zu Köln* called, in English, as this place has two names, the *Cologne Institute of Applied Sciences*. This structure was established on August 1, 1971, in order to organise and regroup all the independent vocational schools existing in Cologne up to then.

I kept my job at the *Höhere Fachschule für Dolmetscher und Übersetzer der Stadt Köln* until the end of my stay in Germany and such a development allowed me to have considerably more time for my studies and for my dissertation. Anyway, as I already explained, I dedicated the first two years of my attendance at the University of Cologne to the improvement of the knowledge of German, even if I achieve this result by attending lectures and classes being seemingly more appropriate to enrich my knowledge in the field of economics. At the start of my third year there,

I felt strong enough to decide the topic of my Ph.D. dissertation, or simply *Dissertation*, as they call it in German.

At the University of Cologne, I experienced the very same problem that I had already encountered in Perugia: that is to say, the almost total acceptance, by both professors and pupils, bearing some noteworthy exceptions, of relativistic principles. Right or wrong that I might have been, to tell you the truth, this problem really worried me at that time of my life and that was precisely the reason why I chose to dedicate my dissertation to such a topic. Indeed, it was worth discovering whether the important concepts in life could have arisen in the majority, or in a significant number, of cases, both spontaneously and independently in different parts of the word.

Furthermore, it was worth understanding whether these concepts may affect the



The Bank of Spain

environment and the evolution of their thinking. On one hand, these processes were to take place within a developed society, so that they might be received the necessary attention. However, in order for this to have a meaning worth of studies, the research was to be conducted concerning a society having no contact with our European and Asian cultures, because only such a requirement was able to guarantee that their mindset and their approaches were correct and authentic, without contamination. Such a requirement significantly limited the possibility for research, or so I believed, leaving me with only two possible cultural units: Aztecs and Incas.

I choose the Aztecs between the two, choosing the concept and the world of work is the main topic. Therefore, my Ph.D. dissertation had the following title: *Die Arbeit und die Azteken. Versuch einer wirtschaftssoziologischen Analyse der Arbeit bei den Azteken und ihrer Eingliederung in wirtschaftliche Kategorien*. My dissertation was approved and published in 1964 by the University of Cologne. I had some fallout because of the topic I chose, therefore, some copies of my dissertation exist in the Library of Congress of the United States, as well as in the libraries of the main universities in the USA, as they requested the copies to the University of Cologne directly.

Having achieved a Ph.D. degree, and having therefore concluded my stay in Germany, I went back to my country, and therefore to the Bank of Spain who, because of my studies in Cologne, appointed me directly for their services in Madrid, in the main offices, where I was promoted as the years went by, changing my destination again and again. Therefore, I was in charge of the Administration and Works Department, then in charge of the Hiring office, then of the HR Office with the qualification of Vice General Director, and, finally, I was the head of the General Services Supervision Office of the Bank of Spain, from where I retired once I reached 70 years of age.

In the beginning, as well as working for the Bank, I have been teaching Economics at the CEU University Studies Centre, nowadays a private university during this period, I published some books, by a pair of them I was a co-Author. However, when the Bank made me a senior manager, I left my work at the University and exclusively dedicated my activity to my work at the Bank.



Raymond de Rover

However, in 1979, the pulse of study and research knocked on my door again and I started rereading the books I started in Germany. Amongst these books, there were some by an Author I had always appreciated for his precision, clarity and scope of his judgement. I am talking about the Belgian economist Raymond de Rover, one of the best economic historians of the XXth Century. However, I did not know about his studies, those he carried out when he was still a student himself, such as: “Jan Ympin. Contribution à l’histoire de la comptabilité”, as it was published in the *Bulletin d’études et d’informations de l’École Supérieure de Commerce Saint-Ignace*, in Antwerp in 1928, or his “Jan Ympin: History and technique of the first Flemish accounting trauma”, 1543, published in

Antwerp, on *Veritas*, in 1928. The latter work must have been his dissertation at the end of his business school. Since the two aforementioned studies were not widely available, I had to request them to a Belgian business school. By the same token, not even his commentary, titled. "The commercial revolution of the 13th Century", itself within final part of the the article N.S. Gras, titled "Capitalism- Concepts and history", published in issue 2 of volume XVI, in 1942, of the *Business Historical Society Bulletin* was also not easy to find.

These works by Raymond de Roover, that I had never read before, seemed important to me and, even if they concerned other issues as well, they allowed me to understand, without any doubt, the importance of accounting history as a privileged approach to research, regardless of the topic, in the field of bookkeeping, since they contained not only the operations and the relevant amounts as the owners had made them, but, beyond that, the commercial approach of their owners at the time, including the whole of their worlds and their customs the other traders, people and institutions they had relationships with a making up their commercial world, together with the goods they traded and the relevant prices, as well as, in brief, a significant quantity of information on commercial issues and



Meeting in honour to Enrique Fernández Peña

discipline still did not have received the attention it deserved, especially as an introductory pathway to further study and understand other, bigger and transcendent in nature, phenomena. Therefore, I completed my full acceptance of the vocation that lessons by Professor Greco had put into me some years before, in Perugia.

Therefore, when asked myself whether recent works on the topic were available in Spain, I encountered two articles and the translation of a book by a Spanish author, José María González Ferrando, who, metaphorically speaking, was the modern dean of studying accounting

other issues beyond what could have been simple accounting history.

This intuition was what brought me to fully focus my attention on studying accounting history as, in my opinion, this

history in Spain. The articles were the following: “Gaspar de Texeda, precursor de la teneduría de libros en España”, publicado in *Técnica Económica*, maggio 1956, n. 2, p. 36 43, and “Antich Rocha y la primera obra impresa en España sobre la contabilidad por partida doble” in *Técnica Económica*, as well as “Antich Rocha e la prima opera stampata in Spagna sulla contabilità in partita doppia” published on the “Técnica Económica” review, in May 1958, n. 5, p. 149-154, March 1960, n. 3, p. 73 82. The book he translated into Spanish was the one by Joseph Vlaeminck titled: *history and doctrines of bookkeeping*, published in 1960; and itself an extension of the French original, because of the inclusion by González Ferrando of the news on accounting history in Spain he had learned about when he wrote his previous works.



London Business Studies School

As soon as I knew about his work, I wanted to contact José María González Ferrando and they discovered that he was the director of the Financial Department of the Spanish Instituto Nacional de Industria. I visited him there and he kindly welcomed me, exchanging with me several opinions on his work in the field of accounting history, thus starting a good relationship and friendship, which remained until his death. As we spoke, he informed me about

the existence of an American Association on our topic of interest, the *Academy of Accounting Historians*, offering me to present my application at the same time. This is what happened at its time, therefore I became a member of that Association, becoming a member of its Board of directors and afterwards becoming its president for two following three-year periods, from 2005 to 2010, after which I tendered my resignation due to family-related issues. At the time, González Ferrando also told me that the Third International convention of the Accounting Historians Association were to be held within the premises of the London Graduate School of Business Studies. London seemed to be particularly suitable as a city for such a celebration because this year was the centenary of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. The “Accounting History Society of England” was encharged of the organization of the Third Convention, and Robert H. Parker, from the University of Exeter, and Geoffrey A. Lee, were the main coordinators of the event, which José María and I attended. After these events, my focus on accounting history was set in stone, and José María González Ferrando had a very important role in it, as it has been explained above, starting a

friendship with him, that was to last a whole lifetime. I have a wonderful bronze sculpture of a horse that was a gift of his wife and daughter. As he kept this sculpture on his desktop, so do I.

One of my first works in the field was a book entitled *Contribución al estudio de la historiografía contable en España*, Madrid, Banco de España, Servicio de Estudios, 1981, that is "A contribution towards the study of accounting historiography in Spain", a summary of which was presented at the Annual Congress of the European Accounting Association, which was published in the *Revista Española de Financiación y Contabilidad*, vol. X, no.34, January-abril 1981, y and in *Técnica Contable*, year XXXIII, 1981, no. 390.

In the beginning of 1982, I held a conference on accounting history in Madrid as a part of a cycle organised by the Central College of Commercial and Business Owners in Madrid within the framework of the commemoration events for the centenary of its establishment. This speech was given exactly where I met Enrique Fernández Peña, who was to become one of my best friends ever. However, as it sometimes happens the beginning of our relationship seemed not to foreshadow it. In the lecture, I had offered

my reflections on the Belgian accounting historian Raymond de Roover presenting him as a man having a perfect knowledge of business techniques, as he had been a bank accountant in his youth and had worked at a shipping company in his country. Thanks to this knowledge, De Roover suc-



Enrique Fernández Peña

ceeded in becoming, from a simple accountant, one of the most important economic historians in our time.

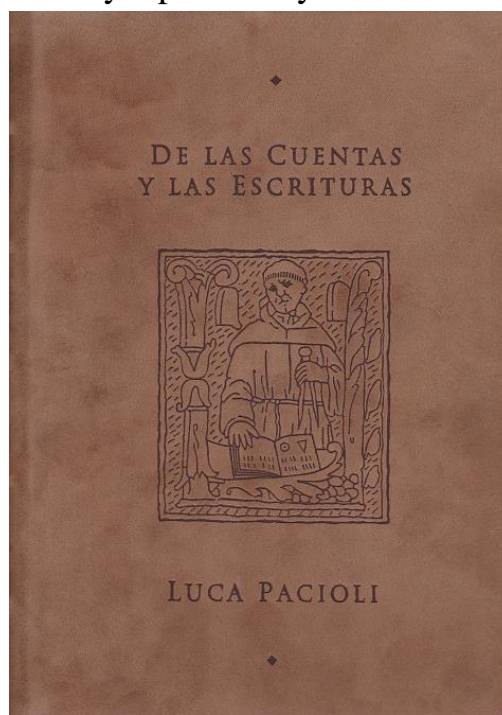
To Enrique's expert ears, the qualification of "simple accountant" sounded offensive and somewhat damaging. Therefore, he let me know these during the question time. I had to apologise, explaining that I had no evil intentions in my mind. On the contrary, I had always been proud of my title as an *Intendente mercantil* achieved at the Barcelona Business School. Therefore, what I wanted to underline at the time was exactly the fact that, thanks to the practical knowledge he acquired as an accountant, Raymond de Roover had been able to provide extraordinary relevant contributions in

the field of accounting history, including banking and credit tools, unveiling issues that no one was able to face effectively before he did. Enrique accepted my explanation and our friendship lasted four entire lifetimes.

Enrique Fernández Peña was the one who introduced me to the AECA and proposed the initiative to create its Accounting Commission. Afterwards, completely deaf to my protests, he gave me his post in the Board of Directors of the Association. And it was still him that, mere days before his death, proposed, alone, my nomination to the Spanish Real Academia de Ciencias Económicas y Financieras. His untimely death, on August 2, 2005, filled us with despair, leaving a void never to be filled. He was a good accounting researcher, and, most of all a simple, modest and extraordinarily generous person.

He was one of the first to be perfectly aware of the development and importance accounting history could have in Spain after this speech I held in 1982, I continuously provided researches on accounting history, especially on double-entry bookkeeping in Spain, a very interesting topic, about which I was able to discover immediately a previously unknown fact,

that is to say, Spain was the first country to decree, at the national level, the obligation for all traders and bankers residing in the Kingdom of Spain, to keep accounting books and to keep them with double entry bookkeeping, that is to say using a cash ledger and its handbook, as it was the custom in Spain. This obligation was set in stone by the decree of Cigales, who took that name from the population of the province of Valladolid where it was issued on December 4, 1549. These Decree was signed by Maximilian, nephew and son-in-law Emperor of Charles V, who was King of Bohemia, married with Infanta Maria, and of the



Mi traducción de *De Computis et Scripturis*

shoulders of whom the kingdoms of Spain had been left during the absence of Prince Philip, as the latter was called to the Flanders by his father, himself busy in Europe with his wars of religion. This decree was issued upon the request of the Courts of law in Valladolid, who motivated it as follows: "the external changes involving cash payments must be recorded,

together with the action taken with the money itself ". That is to say, this accounting measure had to avoid the extraction of gold and silver abroad.

At the time, it was thought that, besides the book by Benedetto Cotrugli, a part of which was dedicated to commenting double accounting bookkeeping, but without practical examples, these topics had never been discussed in other works before the chapter titled "De Computis et Scripturis" of the *Summa* by Luca Pacioli. Indeed, we now know, since some years that there is a work, written in 1475 by De Raphaeli, from Ragusa, and called *La Riegola del Libro*, offering a complete set of accounting entries, before the *Summa* by Pacioli. I was one of the first to know about the existence of the work by De Raphaeli. It happened exactly like that: two Dutch historians, Johanna Postma and Anne J. van der Helm, who had not been enrolled in the first conference on accounting history in Coimbra on April 4, 1998, were introduced unexpectedly, during the last part of the working day, and gave the communication giving the completely new notice that there existed a manuscript, itself the appendix of the most ancient manuscript copy of the *De l'Arte della Mercatura* book, authored by Benedetto Cotrugli. The manuscript is the one titled *La Riegola del Libro*, whose author was thought to be Cotrugli at the time, but that was actually written by De Raphaeli, as it was discovered afterwards. The volume containing both manuscripts is held, under the common title of Libr. XV and 15802 as its number, in the National Library of Malta. These two manuscripts were composed before the *Summa* by Pacioli: the one by Cotrugli was completed, as per the note at the end of the manuscript on August 25, 1458, while also the document written by scritto Marino de Raphaeli, who was from Ragusa, exactly like Cotrugli, was penned in 1475.

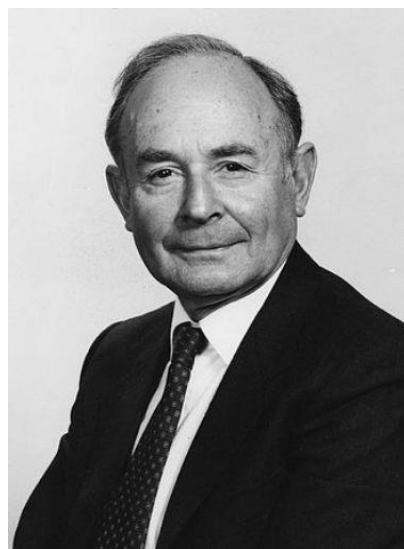
During this very same Convention we shall be lucky because Alan Sangster, who have published several works and, more recently an excellent book on the topic, will inform us on the important book by De Raphaeli.

Coming back to my memories, the translation and the study of the accounting part of the works by Pacioli, requested by AECA in order to celebrate the V Centenary since the publication of the *Summa* itself, widened my horizons, so that, afterwards, I dedicated more than one of my works to study and comment some of the particular features of Chapter XI, titled *De Computis et Scripturis* of the huge *Summa* composed by the good friar from Sansepolcro. Its translation into Spanish was certainly laboured, considering also the fact that we were dealing with XVth-Century Italian, but I found it very interesting and rewarding, intellectually speaking, as these activities allowed me to identify some peculiar features which were

not perceived by the previous translators of these works in other languages. For example, I noticed that Chapter XXXVI and the two parts following it, usually considered a continuation thereof, seemed to correspond with each other, by virtue of several considerations I will not expand upon now, but that should not be conceptualised as being from different Authors. I stated it during the preliminary study concerning my translation of the book penned by Luca Pacioli: *De las cuentas y las escrituras*, page 93, stating the following:

“Several indications exist, that may be interpreted in the sense that the summary recorded as Chapter 36 and the other two following sections usually inserted as final parts, are themselves independent from the corpus of the *De Computis et Scripturis*, as if they were separate, since they make no explicit reference to the previous 35 chapters. Indeed, this final part of the Treaty, that some authors have considered as a part of the 36th Chapter, does indeed present some differences in the accounting conception, while introducing some elements in the text it should summary. Therefore, this chapter might have had a different origin compared with the rest of the text and having been written in different times and circumstances, without positing that the author was different”.

This approach, presenting different versions, in a few of my articles having been published on English language reviews, was expressly accepted by Basil Yamey and, more generally, was never refuted. Upon the impulse of the Managing Director of AECA, José Luis Lizcano, who has always been especially devoted to accounting history, and to Luca Pacioli most of all, specific conventions and meetings were established, and apart from them the “International Meetings of accounting History on Luca Pacioli” of which we are now holding the sixth edition.



Basil Yamey

Besides the satisfactions my research activities on accounting history have always given me I will always be grateful to this discipline because of the opportunities it gave me to meet and interact with very cultured and the lovable people, coming from a plurality of nations and situations, whose companionship I felt in my heart every moment and made my life more likeable and palatable.

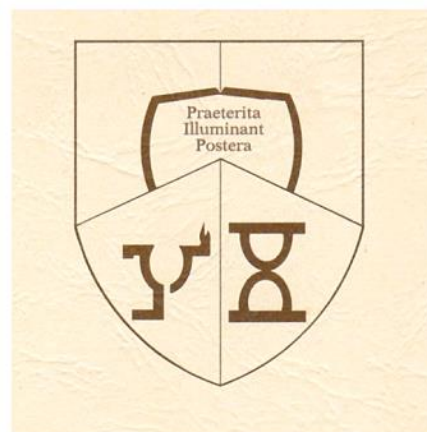


Gary John Previts

This is what happened to me always with my Italian friends and colleagues, both during all my research and working activities. I would like that everyone present here includes himself in this group of friends and companions, as well as everybody knowing and remembering me. Of course, I cannot mention everybody, but I can mention a few ones, I feel nearer my heart right now, starting with Giuseppe Catturi, Giuseppe Galassi, Amedeo Lepore, Matteo Martelli, Giovanna Nobile, and many others. I would also commemorate a very good friend of mine who passed away, Carlo Antinori, that my children called "grandfather Carlo"; by the same token, I will like to commemorate another friend and a brotherly longtime research partner, Basil Yamey, who, like me, was a Lifemember dell'Academy of Accounting Historians -now extinct- and that, like me and only another partner, Stephen Zeff, was an honorary member of AECA, and received, as I did, too times, the most important prize the Academy could award: the Hourglass Award. Such a pleasant memory is set in stone within me.

And, since we are talking about the Academy, one can never forget its founder and everlasting leader: Gary John Previts, also a very good friend.

I would like to extend my greeting and my thanks to everyone present, be they Spaniards or not, since I have never differentiated anyone for his or her sex, race or nationality. What is really important is that they are persons, human beings. Doubtlessly, I have been lucky in this field, as I have been in many others in my life and in every moment, something for which I am grateful to God every day. In my life, I have met only a few people, if ever, I would rather never have met.



Logo de la añorada
Academy of Accounting Historians

This said, I think the time has come for my intervention to end, full as my life has been, of memories and desires very pleasant for me. I thank You all for Your attention. I thank You from the bottom of my heart.





