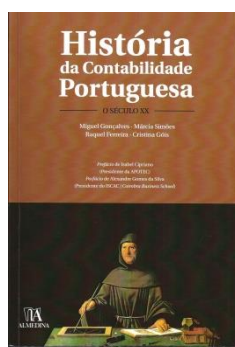

COMENTARIOS BIBLIOGRÁFICOS / BIBLIOGRAPHIC COMMENTARIES

REVIEW TO “HISTÓRIA DA CONTABILIDADE PORTUGUESA – O SÉCULO XX”, BY MIGUEL GONÇALVES, MÁRCIA SIMÕES, RAQUEL FERREIRA AND CRISTINA GÓIS ALMEDINA, COIMBRA, PORTUGAL 2023

Carlos Ferraz

c_ferraz@outlook.pt*Associação Portuguesa de Técnicos de Contabilidade (APOTEC)*
Portugal

Welcome to this book about Portuguese accounting throughout the last century. It is not a History of Accounting in Portugal in the 20th Century, but rather a “chronological repository” of the “most significant milestones” of that period, in order to pay homage to Joaquim Fernando da Cunha Guimarães (1958-2012) who, in his works, often resorted to chronological tables. However, as you will see, it is not a simple chronology. It is much more than that. Throughout its 127 pages, it is structured as follows:

- Opening note
- Preface
- CHAPTER I – Delimitation of the Research: objectives, importance, reasons of interest, motivation, expected contributions, method, methodology and epistemological aspects
- CHAPTER II – Political, economic and social context of the Portuguese 20th century
- CHAPTER III – Evolution of Portuguese Accounting throughout the 20th century
- CHAPTER IV – Accounting in Portugal in the 20th century: analysis and discussion
- CHAPTER V – From a finalist perspective: reflections for a global vision of the history of portuguese accounting in the 20th century
- Afterword
- References
- Thanks

In the Opening Note the book presents itself, dividing the 75 milestones to be analyzed into five primes or themes of analysis, in what is original: (i) Associativism; (ii) Teaching; (iii) Literature; (iv) Accounting standardization; and (v) Profession.

It considers that the development of Portuguese accounting in the 20th century was due to four generating factors: (i) “*Código da Contribuição Industrial*” (Tax Code) (1963) and the creation of “*técnicos de contas*” (accountants recognized for tax purposes); (ii) Official Accounting Chart (1977); (iii) Carnation Revolution of 1974 and the creation of associations; and (iv) Regulation of the profession of 1995.

The Preface is by the President of APOTEC, Dr. Isabel Cipriano, who states that “the History of Accounting and its research are one of the strongholds” of her Association. Chapter I alludes to the importance of notable personalities and facts, but also to the social agents involved, focusing on the importance of databases, listing those that exist in Portuguese accounting. He emphasizes that they contribute “so that younger generations can quickly gain empathy” for the discipline. It presents the other chapters, after defining the method as bibliographic and documentary, the methodology as narrative and the work as traditional history. He hopes that “the reader will feel pleasure in discovering” the History of Accounting and “gain familiarity with (its) most accredited Portuguese authors”.

Chapter II provides a summary – brief, precise, well-founded and pertinent – of the History of Portugal throughout the period, in the political, economic, social and cultural aspects.

In Chapter III, the 75 milestones are analyzed, listing them as follows: year/statement/theme/comments, based on references. For example, with two extreme examples: the shortest and the longest. That one is from 1985 and gives an account, in three lines, under the theme “literature” of the publication of the Informative Bulletin of the “*Câmara dos Técnicos de Contas*” (Accountant Association). “Reference (Guimarães, 2009)”.

Referring to 1963, occupying four pages and under the themes “Profession” and “Accounting Standardization” comes the above quoted “*Código da Contribuição Industrial (CCI)*”. Here the legislation is referred to, describing the division of companies for taxation purposes and the ways of doing so, namely by “real profit”. The creation of the figure of the “*técnico de contas*”, as well as its origin and responsibilities, is highlighted. The CCI prescribed the preparation of accounts in compliance with “sound accounting principles”, an expression that, although its meaning is not specified in the Code, achieved notoriety and was a beginning of standardization. The regulation of the profession and the number of professionals at the beginning (1964) and in 1975 are reported.

Chapter IV suggests that similar works be applied to other related areas: “taxation, auditing, management accounting, legislation on public accounting, the non-profit sector, accounting law, congresses and conferences of accounting or the accounting of former Portuguese colonies”. In this way and *a contrario sensus*, we are delimiting the scope of this book and encouraging new works. In “a country that did not invest in education” the evolution of accounting teaching and the market for accounting professionals is summarized, as well as the consequences of taxation for so long on “normal profit” and the corporatism of the Salazar regime, with the consequent “narrowness of Portuguese capitalism”. However, the period from 1974 to 1999 “can and

should be marked as the Twenty-Five Glorious Years of Portuguese accounting in the 20th century". The chapter ends by noting that the selection is subjective and partial and with judicious quotations, which we allow ourselves to transcribe:

"The facts that historians present to us as events of the past are in reality the researcher's value judgments" (Habermas).

"Accounting is not and has never been a natural phenomenon, rather a social practice" (Hopwood).

"Objectivity and absolute truth are illusions" (Mattesich).

In the fifth and final chapter it is stated that it is "one of the main functions of studying the history of accounting: to help understand and realise the past and present and to help envision and project the future of accounting". It is stated - rightly so - that "higher Accounting courses themselves would benefit, from a scientific-pedagogical point of view, if more content from the History of Accounting discipline were included in their overall study plans". The professionals of 1940 are quantitatively compared with those of 2021 and accounting development is related to economic development.

Finally, in an Afterword, the President of ISCAC/Coimbra Business School, gives, in topics, the "series of significant changes and developments".

The selection made of the milestones and their respective approaches shows how knowledgeable the authors¹ are on the topic. Of course, they do not intend to make the history of "milestones" here. However, they are raw material for the History. Hence its succinct framework and references, which, after consulting the bibliography, allow us to know more, compose the "state of the art" on the subject and, perhaps, start an investigation from there. It is the invitation that is made in the firm hope that the work will be received with empathy by the new generations.

For example: the eight lines that follow "1933 *Revista de Contabilidade e Comércio Tema: Literatura*" are very few for what is said to be "the reference periodical for accounting in the 20th century". But, with this ending, the reader's curiosity is awakened and there are references for the bibliography. Anyone who has the ability to go around, may choose a topic and research it in the 240 published issues.

Please note the extensive and complete bibliography. Anyone who wants to study the accounting in 20th century Portugal has a guide here, an inspiring, framing and facilitating tool. On the other hand, the work is mandatory consultation for any new work on the topic. Even for reading/studying what has already been published, it is very useful for the respective time frame.

¹ The Prof. Miguel Gonçalves is an active and award-winning agent in the History of Accounting, with several books edited and hundreds of articles published.