

© INTERNATIONAL "VON DER LASA" AWARD
FOR THE SEARCH OF FRANCESCH VICENT'S BOOK
(Valencia, 1495)



Introduction:

The *Llibre dels jochs partits del schachs en nombre de 100* was printed May 15th 1495 in Valencia (Spain). This piece was written by Francesch Vicent and printed by Lope de la Roca Alemany and by the bookseller Pere Trincher. It's a crucial work in chess history, since it was the world's first printed treaty and it announced the new rules of modern chess, then known as the queen's chess, which had only existed for 20 years, since its birth in the poem *Scachs d'amor* (Valencia, 1475). The contents of the book have been rescued thanks to investigations mainly developed during the last 20 years, being recognized and accepted by the main contemporary experts that the later books of Lucena (1497) and Damiano (Rome, 1512) are translations to Spanish and Italian of Vicent's work. His 100 problems have been preserved handwritten in an Italian codex of the first years of the XVIth century, keeping the original Valencian writing.

Knowing the contents of the book, it only remains to find it, it being one of Spain's biggest cultural treasures.

Background and foundation of the prize:

In the late 19th century, the search of Vicent's work was promoted by the German Tassilo von Heyderbrand von der Lasa (1818-1899), a German worldwide known authority in chess history, since he was convinced of its importance for

chess history. He visited the main Spanish libraries, wrote plenty of letters and articles and managed to raise awareness for the book among the Catalan Erudites School, which became very important at the end of this century: Tolosa and Carreras, Brunet and Bellet, José Paluzié, Pin i Soler, J. Salvio Fábregas. The writer Pin i Soler told Mr. Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, and it was then when the idea of giving a prize to the one who finds this work began being discussed, taking advantage of D. Marcelino's appointment as director of the National Library in 1898.

Von der Lasa managed to mobilize the Spanish experts of his time, since he succeeded in transmitting Vicent's book value. We are convinced that the book put on sale in Barcelona by the bookseller Salvador Babra around 1913, appeared because of such important men's constant evocation of this work. Would it have been found if the prize had existed? We honestly think it would. The following prize was conceived in the closing round table of the international symposium 'Valencia, cuna del ajedrez moderno' (Valencia, cradle of modern chess). It is blessed with the spirit of this precedent, but specially



with the belief that at least one issue of the 1495 incunabulum exists. The members of this historic session, which took place the 25th of September 2009 in Valencia were the German Lothar Schmid, Thomas Thomsen and Ulrich Schädler and Spanish José A. Garzón (moderator of the session and

promoter of the prize), Josep Alió and José M. Gutiérrez, supporting the idea of Russian historian Yuri Averbakh. Other ponents of the symposium who deserve to be mentioned were Rafael Ferrando, Rafael Solaz, Alessandro Sanvito, Govert Westerveld, José Miguel Fraguera and Harm Wiersma.

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RULES

1. The institutions, associations and people who convene this international Award want to guarantee that the people who contact them remain anonymous.
2. The main objective of the promoters is not to acquire the book, but to get a copy of it in the necessary conditions to be able to perform a posterior research and produce a facsimile edition. This means that the owner doesn't have the enormous responsibility of taking care of this bibliographic treasure. The prize is given after the anonymous obtention and delivery of the book's copy. The promoters of the Award keep the right of negotiation in case the owner wishes to sell the book.
3. The prize is worth 18.000€. It will be awarded exclusively to the first person who, after getting in touch with the promoters, offers complete guarantee of his ability to provide the mentioned copy of the book in suitable conditions. The way of contacting the sponsors is writing to this direction: Fundación Deportiva Municipal de Valencia, Premio Von Der Lasa. Paseo de la Petxina 42 Valencia 46008. This is only to allow communication between the owner and the promoters. The contents of this post and the name of the sender won't be published.

4. The prize comes in force today, 11th December 2012. It expires the 15th May 2015 if the required documents haven't been handled.
5. The International *Von der Lasa* Award is promoted and sponsored by the institutions, associations and people who are named in the annex of the rules. We want to thank their altruistic collaboration in its international spreading to the collectives *Ken Whyld Association* and *Chess Collectors Internacional*.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE WORK IN CASE OF A MUTILATED, INCOMPLETED OR FACTITIOUS COPY

- ¶ It's a book in 4^o, pressed with gothic typography.
- ¶ It has probably between 112 and 128 pages.
- ¶ It has a large group of chess charts (more than 100), similar to the ones we see in these rules. The diagrams take up the whole wide of the writing box.
- ¶ It is written in Valencian language.
- ¶ Title and cover of the work: *Llibre* dels jochs partitis* dels schachs* en nombre de 100 ordenat e compost per mi Francesch vicent nat en la Ciutat de Segorb e criat e vehi de la insigne e valerosa ciutat de Valencia.*
Colophon: *A loor y gloria de nostre Redemtor Jesu Christ fonc acabat lo dit libre que ha nom libre dels Jochs partitis dels scachs en la insigne ciutat de Valencia e stampat per mans de Lope de la Roca Alemany*e Pere trincher*librere a xv. dias de Mag del any MCCCCLXXXV. (*) These words may have the following spelling: libre, partits, scachs, Alamany, trinchet.*

We would like to point out that there are many news about Babra's sale in 1913 in a recent published work. Cf. GARZÓN, José A.; ALIÓ, Josep; ARTIGAS, Miquel. *Nuevo Ensayo de Bibliografía Española de Ajedrez*. Valencia: ROM EDITORS, 2012, pages 72-81 (NEBEA 11) and pages 519-531, where the decisive "Nota 148" is included.

ANNEX

SPONSORS AND PROMOTERS

<http://www.origenvalencianodelajedrez.com>

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