

The

CHESS COLLECTOR

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EDITOR: Jim Joannou. 11 Furness Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 6PS. UK

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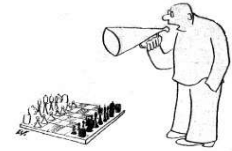
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E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Floyd Sarisohn: Lichess@aol.com
Jim Joannou: jimjoannou@btconnect.com
Mike Wiltshire: m.r.wiltshire@btinternet.com

YOUR MOVE !



MEMBERS PAGE

Editor's Comment

Thank you once again for the comments and suggestions that have been sent to me. It is only by your feedback that we can ensure that I print what the membership wants to hear. Keep them coming!

This issue features 2 "follow up" articles:

- 1) An interview with CCI member & Grandmaster Yuri Averbakh on Chess & Music.
- 2) Dermot Rochford's article, inspired by the Hammond article in the last issue (Vol XV No3 2006)

I have had a number of UK members ask why we don't have a local meeting like some other countries? This is something that the UK committee would need to decide upon, but the issue could be discussed in these pages! Again send in your comments / suggestions.

Jim Joannou
Editor

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## Members Comments.

Thank you for a wonderful edition of "The Chess Collector". These bulletins alone are worth the price of CCI membership... In the last issue there were two small errors. On page 6 "Chess set used by Emanuel Lasker". The correct spelling of Lasker's first name is Emanuel. On page 13 the photograph from the film "Lucky Number Seven" is that of the fine American actor Morgan Freeman and not Sir Ben Kingsley... Thank you for your work. I have enjoyed each & every issue.

Joe Wagner (USA)

*The film "Lucky Number Seven" actually stars both Morgan Freeman and Sir Ben Kingsley, but the photo only showed Morgan Freeman.*  
Editor

## EBAY Warning

I am grateful to a CCI member, who shall remain anonymous, for the following information.

A "Chess Enthusiast", possibly a CCI member, is buying chess sets on ebay using one name and then reselling them shortly afterwards using a second name for higher prices. This is not an illegal practice, and indeed some may say this is just commercialism, and people do this on ebay all the time. However this person calls himself / herself a "Chess Collector" and is deliberately pushing up prices, so there could be a moral issue here.

ebay rules also forbid "shill bidding" where one person has 2 usernames and bids on their own item in order to push up the price. This person has certainly upset one CCI member by their activities, maybe more. If anyone has further information or views on this matter, please send them in.

Editor

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Front Cover

Two Italian Chess pieces, King and Pawn, 17th Century. Carved from a draft at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Picture courtesy of Rodolfo Pozzi, Italy.

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Send your comments to :

The Editor. TCC  
E-mail: jimjoannou@btconnect.com  
Fax: +44(0)2086404796  
Mail: 11 Furness Road  
Morden, Surrey  
SM4 6PS. UK

## This Grandmaster Sweeps the Board

Natalie Graham

Financial Times, London. Published 9th Dec 2006

Overseas investment banker Luay Allawi, 51, has been collecting chess sets since 1981. His hoard of more than 500 sets is worth in excess of £1m, but he insists he collects purely as a hobby rather than part of any financial planning.

Allawi, who lives in Hertfordshire, grew up in Iraq where he learned to play chess at the age of five. He says: "I became a member of a famous club in Baghdad which attracted the best chess players, and from the age of 12 to 15 I won a number of tournaments."

After graduating from London University in biochemistry, Allawi embarked on a banking career. He later bought a Challenger 7 chess computer to take on a long business trip to the Middle East. "While I was in Bahrain in 1981 I saw a very nice hand-carved wooden Indian set that I bought for £200. It rekindled my interest in chess sets," he says.

Allawi began to purchase old chess sets from the major auction houses and specialist dealers. He concentrates on those from the 17th to the 19th centuries that are made from ivory, bone or wood.

"When I started in 1981, a typical John Company set, commissioned by the East India Company, used to trade for around £1,000. Now for a comparable set you are looking at £25,000-plus. Clive of India John sets can reach £40,000," he says.

"These John Company sets were carved in ivory in the late 18th and early 19th century for wealthy individuals. Some collectors think that only 400 to 500 were ever made. They are very ornate and normally feature Sikh Indians versus the British. They are not really playing sets but for display."

Allawi has a set depicting Alexander the Great and Darius, commemorating the battle of Arbela in ancient Mesopotamia, worth £25,000. Made from ivory and polychromed, it is quite rare, from around the mid-19th century and probably French.

There are two main types of chess set. The decorative ones are usually figural and the classic playing sets are typically turned.

The serious playing sets are usually Staunton sets, endorsed by the 19th century GrandMaster Howard Staunton, and designed by Nathaniel Cook in 1849. John Jaques, the sports and games manufacturer, produced the best of these, in wood and ivory.

Before the classic Staunton appeared in the mid-1800s the sets used for playing were St George's sets, and various sets turned on a lathe, including barleycorn sets, Edinburgh uprights and Irish sets.

In the early 19th century, some of the turners wanted to become more imaginative and demonstrate their carving skills, so they would turn then carve certain aspects on a piece. They might pierce the King's crown on top and put a large Maltese Cross on it. These sets were mainly made of ivory and used on Regency games tables.

Allawi says: "While you would pay £300 or £400 for one in the 1980s they would now cost at least £1,500." In the early 19th century more ornate playing sets became popular: Calvert, Lund, Leuchars, Merrifield and Hastilow. Though each piece is turned, they are very intricate. The knight, for example, often has reins. Allawi was buying such sets for £400 when he started out. Now the top range is £5,000 for a good Hastilow set.

## This Grandmaster Sweeps the Board

Continued

In 1997 Allawi's eye for detail found him a real bargain. "I bought a decorative Spanish Pulpit set, in bone, of which the origin is unknown. It was thought they were Persian, but later scholars defined them as Spanish. Collectors now believe they were prisoner-of-war sets from the Napoleonic wars. This one cost £400 nine years ago. Today it is worth £6,000."

From time to time Allawi has been offered the odd chess piece from the very early Islamic times, allegedly going back to Haroun al-Rashid from the 1200s. He says: "They can go for £100,000 to £400,000 a piece, but it is almost impossible to authenticate them as they are so rare. I have never bought one because you cannot be sure what you are buying.

"These early pieces are made of ivory, which is extremely hard to date. The other problem is that they are not dyed, as sometimes you can date a piece by the pigment."

The most Allawi has ever considered paying for a set was £89,000, his highest bid at an auction in France. He says: "It was an early European figural set, on sale four years ago. I did not get it, but the buyer paid £90,000."

Allawi believes that with the advent of computer processing power, the charm of playing chess has been diminished.

"If you go back to the 20s and 30s, with Capablanca, Lasker and Reti, they were all great players with great charisma. They were such characters in their own right that they contributed enormously to the growth and popularity of the game.

"We don't have that today. And much of the psychology and human interaction in the game has gone."

## With Yuri Averbakh about music. An interview with Juan María Solare

We are in Berlin, today is 25th May 2006. At the *Galerie Sophienstrasse* is an exhibition about '*Chess and Art*' organised in the frame of the XII Congress of Chess Collectors International. Here I meet GM Yuri Averbakh (born 1922) and we begin a casual dialogue about chess and music.

**JMS:** Did you get to know Sergei Prokofiev?

**YA:** I even played with him, without knowing it was him. It was 1937 in Moscow, I was a child, and I had to go to the dentist but I thought, "*if I go to the dentist I cannot play chess*", so I headed for the Chess Club. It was quite early, so there was nobody there. At that point I played in the second category. In some moment, a man arrived who seemed to me a foreigner. I was the only possible rival in the club, so he asked me to play a game of chess. He approached me and at first asked how strong I was in chess. After my answer that I was a second category player, he invited me to play.

He won a first game quickly. For the second game I took it more seriously, and after some time I had a pawn more and a better position. In the meanwhile, it was 11 in the evening, and the man said '*well, it's late, it's time to sleep*'. But I wanted to play on: my position was better and I wanted revenge! '*No, we should adjourn the game, it's too late*' he said. So we adjourned the game. I was quite late at home and my father was a little angry. Nevertheless, the day after I went to the club and asked where was that foreigner. '*What foreigner?*' I described him, and the others said '*It was not a foreigner, he is a very important music composer, Sergei Prokofiev!*' But he didn't come that day, also not the week after, and actually we never met again.

**JMS:** Do you still have the score of the games? Do you remember something of

## With Yuri Averbakh about music. An interview with Juan María Solare

Continued

those games? Which opening or something? Who played white?

**YA:** My games vs. Prokofiev had been published many years ago in our chess magazine, and I need time to find it. It was published in the 1990's, either in "*Shakmaty v SSSR*" or in "*Shakmaty v Russia*". I will try to find it later.

**JMS:** Some months later (December 2006), Averbakh sent me that article, called "*The meeting with the mysterious 'foreigner'*" and published in "*Shakmaty v SSSR*" nr. 12, 1991 (pages 38, 39 & 42). It includes details of that meeting and the second of the games mentioned before, which is now published in the "West" most possibly for the first time. Thanks to MI Dirk Poldauf for his idiomatic support (the article is in Russian, of course). Among the most important historical details:

- The meeting Averbakh-Prokofiev was in September 1936 (not 1937) in a club called "*Chess & Dames Mastery*" related to the WZSPS (something as "Sovietic Central Committee of Unions"), placed in the historical boulevard *Arbat* at the corner with *Weslin*. ("*Arbat*" is comparable to "*Unter den Linden*" in Berlin.)

- After Averbakh left the school to go to the dentist, he had to wait so long at the *Polyclinic* that his pain gradually began to decrease - so what to do? Back to school? Never. To home? Too early. At the end, his legs "*lead him from being alone to the chess club*".

- Averbakh was reproducing games from the weekly magazine "64" when Prokofiev arrived.

- Averbakh played actually in the third category at that moment, which meant a certain strength.

- Prokofiev was very elegantly dressed and using a monocle; Averbakh describes him with extreme precision.

- Averbakh was quite happy to play against a "foreigner", it was his first time. "Surprisingly" for the kid, Prokofiev spoke perfect Russian without any trace of accent.

- Before the first game, Averbakh hid two pawns behind his back, Prokofiev choose his right hand and there was a black pawn. Yuri began with 1.e4 and it was a Spanish opening (a Nabokov variant). Prokofiev played with much confidence, Averbakh committed some mistakes and lost

- About the second game: at 11:30 pm the "foreigner" said, "*it's time that you go to sleep*" (after all, Yuri was a kid). They made an appointment for the next day at 8 pm, but Prokofiev never showed up; also not in the following days.

**Sergei Prokofiev - Yuri Averbakh [D36]**  
Moscow, September 1936

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♕g5 ♗bd7 5.e3 c6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♞c2 ♕e7 8.♕d3 ♖f8 9.♗f3 ♗e6 10.h4! h6 11.♕xf6 ♕xf6 12.0-0-0 ♞a5?! 13.g4 ♕d7 14.g5 ♕e7 15.♗e5! ♕d6 16.♗xd7 ♗xd7 17.gxh6 ♞xh6 18.e4? ♕b4? 19.exd5 cxd5 20.♞a4+ ♞xa4 21.♗xa4 ♞ah8 22.♕b5+ ♗d6 23.a3 ♕a5 24.b4 a6 25.♕e2 ♕d8 26.h5 ♗f4 27.♕f3 ♗xh5 28.♗c5 ♗c6 29.♗d3 ♕c7 30.♗e5+ ♕xe5 31.dxe5 ♗f4 32.♞hg1 g6 33.♗b1 ♞d8 34.♞d4 g5 35.♞c1+ ♗b6 36.a4 ♞c6 37.a5+ ♗b5 38.♞g1 ♞c3 39.♕d1 ♗e6 40.♕e2+ ♗c6 41.♞dg4 d4 42.♗b2 ♗d5

In his comments to the second game, Averbakh underlines the originality of Prokofiev's novelty **10.h4**, quoting David Bronstein's comments to the game Bronstein-Stahlberg, candidates 1953 (i.e. several years later): "*when preparing this game I gave much hope to this move, which seemed me to refute the plan with Ne6.*" Averbakh found this plan used only before in Gligoric-Stahlberg (Olympiads, Helsinki 1952), so he gives the credit of his invention to Sergei Prokofiev. (According to my own large database, that was also the first time 10.h4 was played.)

Averbakh also says that with **16.** or **17.g6** the musician could have consolidated his advantage. Up to that moment, Prokofiev had played perfectly. Unfortunately he later committed a series of mistakes (as **18.e4?**). In the adjourned position, after **43.Re1** black must seriously consider resigning.

Unfortunately we do not have the first game, which Prokofiev won... Now we jump back to May 2006 in Berlin and go on speaking with Yuri Averbakh "the eldest".

**JMS:** Prokofiev played chess a lot with the violinist David Oistrakh.

## With Yuri Averbakh about music. An interview with Juan María Solare

Continued

**YA:** Yes, actually both played a match that same year [1937!] in Moscow, a match that remained unfinished. Oistrakh always played violin for us after a tournament. It was a must, after finishing a chess tournament in Moscow, that he played violin for us.

**JMS:** Prokofiev kept his musical career quite separate of his chess activities.

**YA:** Yes, as Mark Taimanov. For Taimanov chess and music were also separate activities. I will tell you something: actually, in his piano duo with his wife, *she* had the leading voice.

There is another story with Taimanov: in our chess trainings, Taimanov usually played piano (mainly Chopin, his favourite composer) and Smyslov sang Russian songs. But Kotov couldn't play any instrument. Once the Russian pianist Jakob Flier challenged Kotov and said that in two weeks he couldn't learn Beethoven's "*Moonlight Sonata*". So Kotov went, learned a part of the Moonlight Sonata, and in the following training sessions we had Taimanov at the piano, Smyslov singing, and Kotov playing that part of the Moonlight Sonata.



**Juan María Solare (left) and Yuri Averbakh (Right)**

**JMS:** And you? Do you play some instrument?

**YA:** I am the black sheep of my family, because I do not play any instrument. My cousin Albert Markov, who lives in America, plays violin professionally. His son Alex Markov also. His wife is a violinist too.

**JMS:** You also met Pyatigorsky, the cellist and chess player, didn't you?

**YA:** Yes, in Los Angeles, at the time of the tournaments in Santa Monica, around 1955 or 56. I think he was so happy to find somebody that talked Russian, that we talked a lot in the two weeks that I visited him. But we didn't talk much about music. He told me that when he left Russia with two friends, first they went to Berlin. They had to play in bars for a few coins. One of those friends also liked fishing, and one day, while fishing, he met the ambassador of China. They talked and the ambassador told him that he could arrange a passport for him to go to the United States. '*But I am here with two other persons!*' '*I can only give you one passport, but maybe you can buy the other two from some friends in another Embassy.*' And he mentioned Haiti. So they gathered the money, bought the other passports and went to the US.

**JMS:** And there he began to make real money with his music.

**YA:** Yes, but don't forget that he also married a quite rich woman; it helps. Later they sponsored some chess tournaments, and he was one of the sponsors of the match Fischer-Reshevsky.

\*

**JMS:** I transcribed this conversation by memory after meeting him. Mr. Averbakh checked this text twice per post before publication

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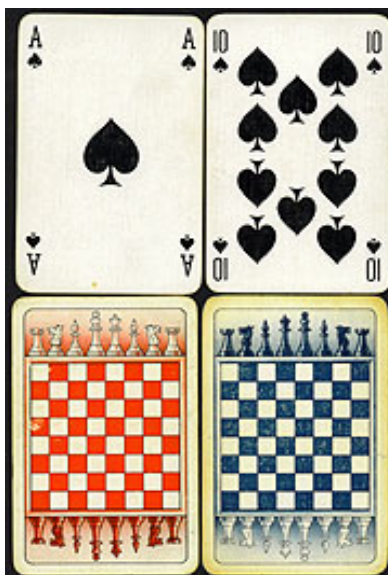
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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Chess back playing cards

An internet website, which specialises in playing cards like those from the De La Rue company, had the following Chess related cards for sale at \$9.50.

[http://www.intercol.co.uk/acatalog/misc\\_11.html](http://www.intercol.co.uk/acatalog/misc_11.html)



England mixture of Chess Backs, 39 very used cards without Court Cards. C1950.

### Sotheby's Auctions

A German, ivory and ebony marquetry games board went under the hammer at Sotheby's auctions in New York in Jan 2007. The board was partially engraved in the manner of Virgil Solis (1514-1652) It was listed as early 17th Century and estimated at \$40,000—\$60,000. (It was unsold on the day)





# *CHESS ON EBAY*

Guy Lyons

Having recently joined the CCI, and enjoyed the magazines that I have received, I thought ebay was a subject that many CCI members might have limited information on. I have been collecting chess sets, boards, clocks and chess trivia on "The Bay" for about three years now, with the username "chesspurr".

What is ebay? Officially it is the number one online auction site. I describe it simply as the world's biggest antique and collectable fair, which is never ending.

Why would any collector want to buy unseen items from people they don't know? Well the easy answer is: They clearly do! The Internet offers collectors the opportunity to get discounted sets and other related collectables, in countries where such items are not available.

Are there any risks involved? Yes there are, and care is necessary. But on the evidence of my three year period of collecting, ebay is simply a must see market for every CCI member no matter what country you live in.

I have seen some pretty rare sets on "The Bay", not least an 18<sup>th</sup> century Phlidor set in wood which fetched around \$5000.00, a Jaques clock used in the 1927 Alkehine / Capablanca match, reached over \$11000.00 (if my memory serves me correctly), a rare ivory 4 inch Jaques set, Dieppe sets, quality wooden figural sets, quality eastern sets from Vizagapatam, Burma and Delhi, and endless other sets that one sees at auction houses. I could write thousands of words describing what has been sold on ebay.

However this is just the tip of the iceberg, because where ebay makes a huge impact is in the collecting of vintage and limited edition, 20<sup>th</sup> century sets. Such items are not so easy to locate in the numerous collectors books, but collectors who buy, plastic sets as an example, seem pretty well informed already and have some precious knowledge which will, no doubt, end up in future collecting books. Through ebay I have bought 11 Bakelite type sets, but in most collectors books even the word Bakelite is omitted let alone any sets being mentioned, bar "Greys of Cambridge" in Gareth Williams' Master Pieces.

Ebay also offers, "contact" through the fantastic group for chess collectors set up by the

Honourable Dutch collector Robert van der veur. It was possible before, but recently ebay had made communication between fellow members very difficult. Our group now has over 310 members and growing steadily. All this would not have been possible if the bay had not existed.

Dealers can now promote their web sites through the ebay collectors group, and fellow group collectors have also been building web sites too, so as to offer collectors a chance to study their collections. The ebay member "computojon", a likable fellow who I had the pleasure of meeting at a Bloomsbury auction, has given so much to our group with his web site, that he simply has to be commended. I hope you don't mind Jon.

One also has to note that ebay has been a fantastic addition to the world of chess collecting. New collectors such as myself would never have become chess fanatics without the opportunity to see just what is out there and met the far larger numbers of collectors that exist in the world. I discovered that I have a fellow group member living 5 minutes walk from my home! That was an amazing discovery, and going to my first Bloomsbury auction in Oct 2004 was an excellent compliment to my ebay chess buying. In the past three years I have met the frank, down to earth, no nonsense Alan Dewey, what a refreshing fellow, the likable dealers, Tim Milard, Dermot Rochford and Savi Sorosi, and of course Luke Honey of Bloomsbury auctions. All totally Internet focused people as they realise that it's the future of chess dealing / collecting.

To sum up, my humble advice to fellow CCI members who might shun ebay.... Wise up, it's the present and the future.

Watch, enjoy and even buy.... Ohhh what fun it is, for all the negative stuff one can throw at it, as I sure have, it's here to stay.

# CHESS ART FROM THE NETHERLANDS

Margreet Wevers



(Schaak means chess, kunst means art)

The combination chess and art has a history going back many centuries. No other sport, even not football, inspired so many artists. Many centuries ago there were drawings, paintings, sculptures and chess sets, and everywhere numerous professional artists represented chess play in a very creative way. Present-day artists keep managing to make something new of this very old theme.

In the summer of 2005, Margreet Wevers and Geert van Tongeren (both from The Netherlands) got the idea to do something with the combination of chess and art. They called this project and the company: Schaakkunst (schaak=chess and kunst=art). Schaakkunst made contact with several artists who use the theme of chess in their work and in August of 2005 they started the website [www.schaakkunst.nl](http://www.schaakkunst.nl). In the beginning they only had two artists along with their own work. Margreet Wevers designed a number of products, including “puffs”, calendars, chess notation booklets, etc and she is also the designer and creator of the website, naturally based on the chess theme. Geert van



**Boldrian. Watching Eye**

Tongeren made several mosaic mirrors and he designed a radiant chess-table. Schaakkunst organized their first exhibition in April 2006. After that progress was fast and they are often present at chess-tournaments displaying many works of chess art. Organisers of chess tournaments were very pleased with this, because players and visitors could see more than just the combat at the chessboard. For example: Schaakkunst was present in Hilversum during the Dutch Chess Championship and they will be present at the Corus Chess Tournament in January of 2007.



**A. Kalverda. Chess Set 1**

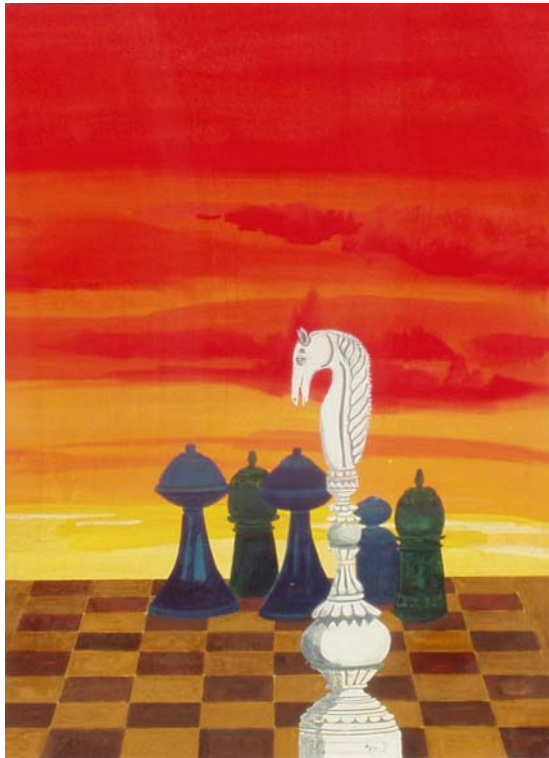


**A. Kalverda. Chess Set 2**

## CHESS ART FROM THE NETHERLANDS

Continued

Schaakkunst was also asked to organize a comprehensive exhibition for a paper in Limburg. This paper wrote: "This is the most beautiful and largest chess-art exhibition of Western Europe!"



**A. VdBosch. Red War**

In the meantime about 10 more artists joined the original initiative. With the new artists and their chess art, [www.schaakkunst.nl](http://www.schaakkunst.nl) became a large site with many and various art works displayed. Most of the work shown is for sale and there is an online shop with smaller articles, like calendars, art prints, chess art wine, etc. All nice things to get or give as a present. In the near future several chess sets will be added to the range of items for sale. Specially for clubs and companies, Schaakkunst designs and produces chess notation booklets, diaries and so on, according to the wishes of the client



**A Cool. Chearfull Pawns**

A short while ago, you could find Schaakkunst at [www.chess-art.eu](http://www.chess-art.eu). Alas, this site still is in Dutch, but the expectation is that the translation to English will be done in a few months time. Hopefully the site will be translated in Spanish and German in the near future also.

The next comprehensive exhibition of Schaakkunst will take place during March and April 2007, In Druten (a small village near Nijmegen in the Netherlands). Where many works displayed on the website, will be exhibited. One can admire paintings, sculptures, and beautiful chess sets. More about this exhibition can be found at:

[http://www.chess-art.eu/Schaakkunst\\_exposities.htm](http://www.chess-art.eu/Schaakkunst_exposities.htm)

## Establishing Provenance of Antique Chess Sets

Dermot Rochford

In Gareth Williams' excellent article on Alex Hammond in the last edition of the Chess Collector (Vol. XV No. 3, 2006), the first image shown (titled 'an expert on chess sets') is that of Alex Hammond examining a chess piece in front of a cabinet of chess sets (see Image 1).

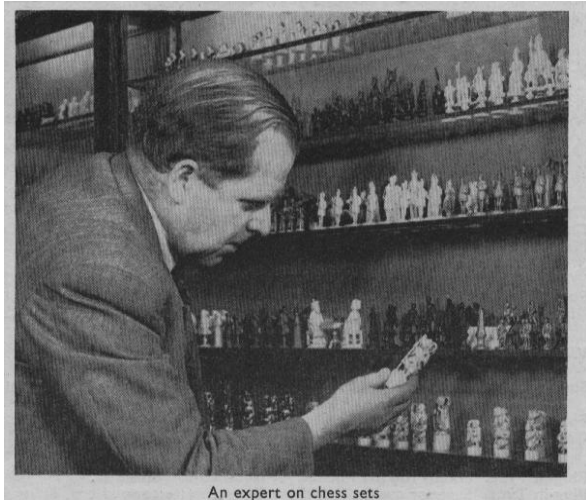


Image 1

This image had originally appeared in the December 1950 edition of the British Chess Magazine. The chess piece he is holding appears to be the king piece from an ivory Japanese set which is on the shelf in the background.

This triggered me to look again at a set I had bought some time ago and which I thought was similar to that which Hammond was holding (more on this below) and this in turn raised in my mind, the whole area of the importance of establishing 'provenance' of antique chess sets we happen to 'temporarily' own. As chess collectors I believe we have a role and indeed a responsibility to try to leave information (even if its only partial or incomplete) on our sets so that when we are long gone, others can use this information for further research either on antique sets in general or in undertaking more research to establish the provenance of a particular set. Over time, many fine sets pass from collection to collection, some acquired in circumstances, which allow a clear provenance to

be established e.g. when a set is directly acquired from the owner or where an auction house is selling the contents of a publicly named collection. But the reality is that most good chess sets come to the market in circumstances where it is almost impossible to establish who the previous owner or owners were - for instance trying to trace previous owners of chess sets through the auction houses which sold them, is impossible because of the auction houses' privacy rules.

This was highlighted for me last year when two high quality antique sets (see image 2 and 3 over the page) appeared on the market in different locations - both were housed in almost identical fine period tooled leather cases which had felted slots designed to the shape of individual chess pieces - the cases looked like they have been specifically built for each set by the same maker.

It suggested that the chess sets may have been together at one time in the same collection and got split up due to inheritance or some other factor, but because one of the auction outlets would not divulge the name of the vendor, it was impossible to establish if they were originally from the one collection. Maybe auction houses might consider amending their rules to allow genuine research queries to at least be passed back to the vendor who might be agreeable to provide the information being sought. All this is to suggest that all of us who collect antique chess items should, as a matter of standard procedure, label our sets with information as to when and where they were acquired and if possible also provide any other data as to previous owners of the sets.

Apart from anything else, such information would greatly enhance the interest in a chess set if and when it came to be sold and would also allow potential new owners to be more confident that it was a genuine antique and not some recent reproduction masquerading as being old.

Now back to my attempt at 'provenancing' my own chess set mentioned at the top of this article - I was interested to find out if there was a link between the chess set in the Hammond picture. (Image 1) and the set I purchased a few

## Establishing Provenance of Antique Chess Sets

*Continued*



Image 2

years ago (image 4 Right). When I purchased a Japanese ivory chess set (which is signed) in December 2001, from the London chess dealer Garrick Coleman, he had just acquired it from a retired military officer. The officer had informed Garrick that his father (whose name was Pitcon) was a senior British military intelligence officer based in Egypt in the 1940s and had been given the set as a gift from King Farouk of Egypt when he was returning back to England. Now, King Farouk, who reigned in Egypt from 1936 to 1952, was famous (or infamous) for his lavish spending on antiques which he purchased from dealers all over the world. Apparently the set acquired by Garrick had originally been presented to King Farouk by the French Ambassador to Egypt. Interestingly, Hammond would have had his Japanese set available for sale in the 1940s in his London shop, and if some arm of the French Government was seeking a quality antique chess set to present as a gift, Hammond's shop would have been a logical place to purchase one. In this way Hammond's set could have ended up in Farouk's collection and he in turn



Image 3

could have passed it on as a gift to the British Officer at the end of his tour of duty in Egypt. Further research has shown that what appears to be an identical Japanese ivory set to the one shown in Gareth's article is illustrated in Hammond's own book 'Book of Chessmen' on page 106 with the following attribution; "Half a Japanese set made about 1840, doubtless copying the Chinese theme. The pieces though small, are very detailed; it should be noted that the pawns have something of a Central European character in that they represent different trades or professions.



Image 4

The opposing side is gilt and decorated. Note the details in the Kings and Knights; such a set must have taken six or seven years to produce". Again while the picture in Hammond's book is small, the set seems to be identical to the one shown in images 1 and 4. Now I know none of the above actually proves that the set pictured in Hammond's hands was the one pictured in his book or the one I purchased but as I have not seen another similar set in any chess literature or for sale in auction catalogues in over 20 years, it is obviously a very rare type of set and therefore there must be a reasonable chance that it is the same set in all the images.

It would be nice to think this linkage outlined above is correct and if only the French authorities would respond to my emails enquiring if any records exist on the purchase of a chess set from Hammond in the 1940s, then it might be possible to say more definitively that they are one and the same set. Another way of approaching the issue would be to see if it is possible to access Hammond's own sales records of that period—so, if anyone has any ideas in this regard I would be very happy to hear from them.

E-mail [dermot\\_rochford@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dermot_rochford@yahoo.co.uk)

## ***A DIFFICULT JOURNEY TOWARDS THE TRUTH***

Gianfelice Ferlito

In 1850, an old anonymous Italian chess manuscript was discovered by Cav. Antonio Fantacci in the Magliabechiana Library of Florence.

The title was: “*L’Elegantia, sottilità, verità della virtuosissima professione dei scacchi*” (*Elegance, sharp, truth about the very virtuous chess profession*). Scholars of chess history were perplexed about two fundamental points. The first: who was the author? The second: was this old codex preceding or following the Lopez’s chess book printed in Alcalá in 1561 with the title “*Libro de la Invention liberal y arte del juego de Axedrez.*” ?

If preceding, was this old manuscript a source of inspiration for the great Lopez?

If following, was it a personalised translation of the Lopez’s book done by some Italian chess player?

In the historic research many pages have been written about this dilemma. In this article I shall try to show the various steps of this difficult journey towards the truth, illustrating the different interpretations and suppositions, which were provided by eminent scholars of chess history. Finally I shall express my personal opinion and supply additional information.

### 1850 circa

Cav. Antonio Fantacci from Florence, a good chess player and an enterprising researcher of old chess manuscripts which were buried in the archives of the Italian Libraries, discovered the codex “*L’Elegantia*” in the Magliabechiana Library, which today is part of the Biblioteca Centrale Nazionale of Florence. The Ms is known as Magl. Classe XIX, codex 65, it has 157 folios.

### 1854

Cav. Fantacci sent a handwritten copy of “*L’Elegantia*” to the renowned chess player and director of the “*Chess Player Chronicle*”, Howard Staunton (1810-1874), to obtain his opinion on it. H. Staunton advanced the hypothesis that the codex was an original work by some unknown Italian author, from whom the Spanish Ruy Lopez could have exploited as a starting point for his chess treatise, updating it with the appropriate criticisms regarding the openings of Portuguese Damiano, author of “*Questo libro e da imparare giocare a Scacchi et de le partite*”,

written almost entirely in Italian and printed in Rome in 1512.

### 1874

Antonius Van der Linde (1833-1897), the well-known Dutch scholar of chess history, examined the manuscript and arrived to the conclusion that “*L’Elegantia*” was a personalized translation of the Lopez treatise, written by an expert Italian chess player. Van der Linde identified this Italian as Giulio Cesare Polerio (1550c-1610c), who was a well known chess player, very close to the Duke Giacomo Boncompagni (1548-1612). The Duke was considered by Polerio “*his Patron and Master*”. According to van der Linde the handwriting of the codex had many resemblances with other Polerio MSS handwritings and he suggested that Polerio could have compiled “*L’Elegantia*” in the period between 1580 and 1584.

### 1897

Baron Von der Lasa (1818-1899), the German chess player and keen scholar of chess history, considered van der Linde’s supposition as being possible but rejected the authorship of Polerio on the ground that “*L’Elegantia*” contained inconsistencies, which a player of Polerio’s ability would have certainly avoided.

### 1913

H.J.R. Murray (1868-1955), the great English scholar of chess history, wrote “*a more ambitious work, in essence an Italian version of Ruy Lopez, with the addition of some Italian games of the style contained in the Polerio MSS, exists in two MSS, which however exhibit some small differences in their contents: MS. Florence XIX,7,65 “L’Eleganzia” (sic!) and MS J. G. White, Cleveland, USA with the title “Regole per il giuoco de’scacchi” (p.822,8)*

So Murray turned down Staunton’s hypothesis, without even giving it the honour of being mentioned in his work and supported van der Linde’s opinion that the translation was by an expert player but did not attribute the work to Polerio. Regarding the period in which this old Ms was compiled, Murray induced us to believe that the period was between 1572 and 1584. This was because the Ms. Boncompagni N.2, “*with a dedication to Jacopo Buoncompagno, Duca di sora, (was) written between 1572 and 1584 (as*

**A DIFFICULT JOURNEY TOWARDS THE TRUTH**

Continued

appears from the list of the Duke's titles)."(p.822-10)

1959

Adriano Chicco (1907-1990), the famous Italian scholar of chess history, in his "*Libro completo degli Scacchi*" supported completely the van der Linde 's opinion with the statement "Many MSS of Polerio were kept in possession of the family Ludovisi-Boncompagni ;one of them is nowadays in the national library of Florence (CL XIX,65) with the title "L'Elegantia ".(p.38)

1971

A.Chicco again confirmed in his "*Dizionario enciclopedico degli scacchi*" his previous opinion , " a free translation of Lopez ,with the title "L'Elegantia " has to be attributed to Polerio" (p.401)

1980

A. Chicco, once more examined the situation but he changed his opinion stating in his booklet "*Ruy Lopez De Segura*": "Staunton's former supposition has a credibility not inferior to the hypothesis made by van der Linde. It has been seen that one of the principal characteristics of the Spanish text is the frequency with which the Portuguese Damiano is criticised; well then the name of Damiano hardly ever appears in "L'Elegantia". This makes legitimate the hypothesis that the very numerous severe criticisms directed to Damiano in the Lopez's treatise are an addition of the Spaniard author, that implies a priority of the Florentine codex.(p.22) So Chicco in 1980 supported the plausibility of the two opinions which were both defined as "legitimate", however with a preference towards the Staunton's hypothesis. Regarding Polerio and the period of compilation Chicco wrote "in fact nor the attribution to Polerio nor the same period had indisputable elements "(p.22) to confirm it. However he did not advance alternatives for the period and for the author of the Ms.

1986

Franco Pratesi, (1940), a keen scholar of chess history, discovered at the Biblioteca Riccardiana of Florence the codex N.2595, written in Castilian bearing the title "*La Elegancia Primor y verdad de la birtuosisima profession del*

*ajedrez*". According to Pratesi the manuscript is "written on a paper of Roman origin dated around the last quarter of the XVI century or the first quarter of the XVII century and it seems structured in a similar way as the *magliabechiano codex* . The handwritings do not allow one to be precise on the epoch of both manuscripts" which however "are compiled in a different way from the Lopez's chess book printed in 1561 The hope of finding new materials that precede the Lopez's chess book, unfortunately fade away after a deep examination."(p.31) According to Pratesi "the author of this manuscript was an expert Spanish chess player who had probably written this manual to catalogue everything known in that period. The Author, never identified, must have kept count of the necessity in improving the Lopez's EXISTANT text, making it more complete, less messy, without the criticisms to Damiano and more suitable to the chess game played in Italy. This work was requested by an excellent appassionato Prince –not identified- to be written by the strongest Spanish player- not identified- at the time in the Roman court.(p.32)

It is strange that Pratesi never thought of the Duke of Sora, alias Giacomo Boncompagni, as the "appassionato Prince". In fact in this Ms. is described a chess game (chapter 63, folio 118) in which the Duke of Sora was one of the spectators. The game was played by an expert but unknown Spanish chess player who declared to have found a stratagem at move 14 for winning a lost game, but the solution was left to the discretion of the readers. The game was as follows: 1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.Nf3 g5 4.Nc3 c6 5. Bc4 h6 6.d4 d6 7.h4 Bg7 8.hxg5 hxg5 9.Rxh8 Bxh8 10.Ne5 dxe5 11.Qh5 Qf6 12.dxe5 Qg7 13.e6 Nf6 14 .exf4 and the game was won by White because Black ,instead of playing Ke7 (winning move) played Kf8 15.Bxf4 Nxh5 16. Bd6# or if 15.gxf4 16.Qc5#

The same game was reported also in the Italian Ms.Cl XIX, 65 chapter 56 but without mentioning the attendance of the Duke of Sora. Pratesi clearly rejected Staunton's hypothesis, in 1980 preferred by Chicco, but did not accept either van der Linde's supposition that the author of "L'Elegantia" was Polerio.

1990

Adriano Chicco, in his last masterly work

**A DIFFICULT JOURNEY TOWARDS THE TRUTH**

Continued

"*Storia degli scacchi in Italia*" changed his previous opinion on 'L'Elegantia' and clearly stated that "*the Tarsia 's translation was not the only version of the Book (i.e.Lopez's Book) circulating in Italy*". In fact beside "L'Elegantia", a second codex is considered to be a derivation from Lopez. This codex is *Urbinitis latinus 1275 (94)* in addition to that "*the Dutch professor van der Linde deduced rightly that the compiler of "L'Elegantia" should have been a practical player.*(93) Chicco however had reservations on the name of the author and denied that Polerio , a professional chess player, could have written the manuscript on the base of three arguments. The first, was that Polerio was a courtesan who used chess for obtaining favours from powerful people. The anonymity was not therefore a logical strategy for Polerio if he wanted to obtain favours. The second, was that Polerio's manuscripts were always signed, as in the *Manuscripts Italiens 948 and 955 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* or the book expressly dedicated to the Duke of Sora and known as "*Trattato de' Scacchi di Giulio Cesare Polerio*" once kept in the archives of Boncompagni-Ludovisi (codex known as Boncompagni n.3) and nowadays lost. The third was that "L'Elegantia is written in sufficiently correct Italian whilst Polerio was clearly an illiterate. (94 Chicco , after examining the Spanish text of "L'Elegancia", found by Pratesi, observed that in folio 118 ,chapter 63,there was a clear mention that "*a esteemed chess player exhibited a subtle trap ("primore")in front of the Duke of Sora .*" This note was not shown in "L'Elegantia". That important note implied that the manuscript was written at the time in which Giacomo Boncompagni was already Duke of Sora.

1993

Giovanni Baffioni(1920-1998), scholar of many disciplines as Latin, Greek, Etruscan, Italian etc, was able to trace in 1993 the Polerio's manuscript (Boncompagni –Ludovisi n.3) that Chicco and other historians thought to be lost. Baffioni found it at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome. The Polerio's text was known by a handwriting copy made by Signor Coletti on the instruction of Professor Narducci of Rome for van der Linde in 1873.The copy is kept at the Royal Library in the Hague. Baffioni

compares Polerio's book with "L'Elegantia" and with "*Il Giuoco degli Scacchi di Rui Lopez, Spagnolo; nuovamente tradotto in lingua italiana da M.Gio Domenico Tarsia , edito da Cornelio Arrivanebe,Venezia, 1584, )*" (*The Game of Chess by Ruy Lopez; newly translated into Italian by M.Gio Domenico Tarsia, printed by C. Arrivabene*) Baffioni wonders why Tarsia writes that the Lopez treatise is "*newly translated into Italian*" when no other printed translations were in circulation in that period . Baffioni wrote: "*Tarsia and Arrivabene were therefore thinking of other translations circulating as manuscripts. Tarsia must have known "L'Elegantia" ... and I do not exclude that Tarsia may have even read Polerio's manuscript, which had the first seven chapters of the Lopez 's book translated for his friends.*(p.63-64). From an accurate examination of the Polerio's texts Prof. Baffioni observes that his style is *simple, synthetic, schematic, practical with a tendency to the essential, whilst the other two (i.e. L'Elegantia and Tarsia's translation) are diluted and extended. Having to teach chess to the Duke Boncompagni, man of arms, he (Polerio) knows that he must not lose time "because losing time is more regretful to those who have a wider learning (perchè il perder tempo a chi più sa, più spiace)"*(p.51) According to Baffioni the Polerio's style was very different from that of the unknown author of "L'Elegantia". Baffioni is certain that Polerio was not an illiterate, as Chicco defined him, because he used a *varied vocabulary ...remarkable culture quoting even Petrarca, Ariosto, Omero and Virgilio , typical of who came from a good family. Baffioni observes that Polerio passed most of his life with the noble family Boncompagni at Vignola, Rome and Sora, where cultured people were invited ... His Italian prose was sometimes influenced by the Spanish language.* (p.34).

2000

Alessandro Sanvito (1938), the most influential Italian chess historian since Chicco, reported in his catalogue "*L'Arte degli Scacchi*" what Chicco wrote in 1980 (*ipse dixit*). Strange enough he did not refer to Chicco's change of opinion on *L'Elegantia* in 1990. Sanvito reported that *the attribution to Polerio has been definitely rejected by Baffioni's studies.* (p.44/5).



**A DIFFICULT JOURNEY TOWARDS THE TRUTH**

Continued

2005

*José A. Garzón, the keen Spanish historian, took a very firm stand on the priority of the Lopez's book printed in 1561 over a group of manuscripts as the Italian "L'Elegantia" and the Spanish "L'Elegancia". He is rather polemic with Chicco, Sanvito and Pratesi. (p.95) Garzón quoted the 1980 Chicco's opinion but he did not consider the later change of thought that Chicco had in his last book dated 1990. The same criticism was applied to Sanvito. Garzón did not realise that the paragraph quoted from "L'Arte degli Scacchi" was only a "reported" opinion of Chicco's booklet written in 1980. Garzón had a more relaxed attitude towards Pratesi but even he had given "insufficient recognition" to Lopez. As already discovered by Pratesi, Garzón underlined that the manuscript "L'Elegancia", mentioning the name of the Duke of Sora, gives a "crucial piece of information for the dating of the manuscript since the famous chess patron was born in 1548... It is evident [?] that the manuscript must have been composed between 1572 and 1584 and the Italian copies –in which there is no mention of the described episode for obvious reasons- somewhat later, between 1580 and 1584." (p99)*

Garzón does not say why the *terminus post quem* of the compilation of the Spanish MS should be 1572. Maybe he took for granted what Murray had said in 1913 for Boncompagni N.2. But Baffioni demonstrated in 1993 that the codex Boncompagni n.2 had the year 1579 as *terminus post quem*. According to Garzón the ricc. 2595 could have been compiled by Busnardo, a Spaniard professional chess player (p101). In fact in chapter 82 of the Ms is recorded a game by Busnardo versus an unknown player and the same game is recorded in MS 955 of the Manuscripts Italiens of the Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris. Garzón did not advance any opinion on the author of the Italian Ms. Unfortunately in Garzón's text there are some typographical oversights, which should have been avoided. For example the full title of "L'Elegantia" is wrongly written, the Florentine manuscript has an attribution to a wrong class (Class XIC in place of Class XIX), the name of Pratesi is wrong (Adriano in place of Franco). Certainly Garzón has ignored the history of the dukedom of Sora which is a key factor for fixing a reliable *terminus post quem* of the Ms riccardiano.

2006

At the end of this long journey my opinions are:  
1-The two manuscripts have been compiled after the Lopez book. The Spanish Ms. mentions the Duke Giacomo Boncompagni who only at the end of 1579 became Duke of Sora and of Arce.

2- The authors of the two manuscripts were possibly two different professional chess players whose aim was to be noticed by a Prince, also a keen chess player, with the aim to obtain his attentions and sponsorship.

3- Polerio is not the author of "L'Elegantia". The author is still unknown. Busnardo could be a possible author for "L'Elegancia" as suggested by Garzón but we need more convincing proof.

4- Tarsia must have taken at least some months in translating the book before it could be printed in 1584. As it was suggested by Baffioni, Tarsia may have had "L'Elegantia" in front of him to help him in his translation of Lopez's book. So the *terminus ante quem* of "L'Elegantia" is probably 1583. The *terminus post quem* must have been put at the end of 1579 or the beginning of 1580. In fact, in 1579 the Dukedom of Sora and of Arce was bought for 100,000 golden escudos from the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere, by Giacomo Boncompagni with the financial help of his father, Pope Gregory XIII, who personally paid 30,000 golden escudos. Only the 23/12/1579 King Philip II of Spain gave to Giacomo Boncompagni the official ducal investiture in the feud of Sora and of Arce.

5- -The *terminus post quem* of "L'Elegancia" must be 1579/1580 but the *terminus ante quem* could be 1581/82 if *this is the original work* from which the Italian ms "L'Elegantia" derived, as supposed by Garzón.

Some additional information:

Biblioteca Magliabechiana

It derives its name from a Florentine erudite bibliophile, Antonio Magliabechi (1633-1714) who was a great collector of incunabula and old books. His private library counted 30,000 texts, some of which were kept at home and others in the Palazzo Vecchio. At his death the books were stored in the offices of the Dogana (Custom), next to the Uffizi. In 1747 the library was open to the public.

***A DIFFICULT JOURNEY TOWARDS THE TRUTH***

Continued

The Magliabechiana was further enriched by the input of other Florentine private libraries and by ecclesiastical funds. In 1861 the Kingdom of Italy was constituted and with Regal Decree in the same year the Library Palatina was incorporated in the Magliabechiana giving birth to the Biblioteca Nazionale of Florence. In 1855 it was renamed Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence. In 1935 the Biblioteca was transferred to a new building where it is now.

**Biblioteca Riccardiana**

This private Library was created by the Florentine family Riccardi in 1600 and was opened to the public in 1715. For years it was considered an appendix of the Biblioteca Laurenziana to which it was united administratively. Only in 1942 it was declared autonomous.

**Ugo Boncompagni(1502-1585)**

Son of a rich family of Bologna, in 1530 became Professor of the University of Bologna where he taught Law until 1539. In 1542 he studied for priesthood leaving the University. On the request of Cardinal Parisio he went to Rome where he stayed until 1545. He was then sent to Bologna to follow the Trento's Council, which was temporarily transferred to that town. The "clerics" Ugo lived in the Boncompagni Palace in Bologna where he had an amorous relationship with Maddalena Fulchini from Capri, a humble and modest single woman, who was working in the Palace Boncompagni. In May 1548 Maddalena gave birth to a child who was named Giacomo. Ugo legitimised Giacomo two months later as his son in front of the Bishop of Feltre and the Boncompagni brother's convinced Maddalena to marry a Milanese brick builder giving her a dowry of 125 golden escudos.

The "clerics" Ugo advanced in his career and he was sent to Trento for the Council where he stayed until 1562. Ugo in 1558 was nominated Bishop of Vieste by Pope Pio IV and in 1565 Cardinal of San Sisto . When Pope Pio IV died in 1572, Ugo was elected Pope and took the name of Gregory XIII. He died in Rome in 1585.

**Giacomo Boncompagni (1548-1612)**

From his birth up to 1556 he lived with his uncle in Bologna. In 1556 he was with his father in Trento where he stayed up to 1562. Then he went to Padua, to Bologna and to Venice. When his father was elected Pope in 1572 he immediately went to Rome where he was nominated only after

10 days Prefect of Castel Sant'Angelo with a pay of 700 golden escudos. He was then nominated General of the Church's troops. Giacomo went to Ancona and Ferrara to accomplish this important military task. He stayed in Ferrara up to 1574. In 1575 King Philip II of Spain nominated Giacomo Boncompagni " General Captain of the arms" in Milan, which was then under Spanish dominion.

In 1576 Gregory XIII organised a brilliant marriage between his son Giacomo and the grand daughter of Cardinal Sforza , Costanza di Santa Fiora, ten years younger than him. In 1577 the Pope bought the small marquisate of Vignola from Alfonso III d'Este for 70,000 golden escudos for the son Giacomo. In 1579 Giacomo with the financial help of the Pope bought the dukedom of Sora and of Arce from Francesco Maria della Rovere for 100,000 golden escudos. In 1583 Giacomo bought from the Marquis Alfonso III De Avalos de Aquino the feuds of Aquino and Arpino for 243,000 golden escudos. In 1585 Gregory XIII died and Giacomo was deprived of all his privileges by the new Pope Sisto V. He retired to Sora temporarily. In 1588 he went to Milan where he stayed until 1610 to accomplish his military duties for the King Philip II. During those years he frequently went to Rome and Sora. In 1611 he retired from his Captaincy in Milan and finally went to Sora where he died in 1612 at the age of 64.

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## ***NEWS IN BRIEF***

### **Ancient chess strategy guide found**

GORIZIA, Italy, Dec. 29 2006 -- A study of the game of chess by Renaissance mathematician Luca Pacioli has been discovered in northern Italy after it was feared lost. The 48-page manuscript, complete with detailed illustrations, was found by Italian book expert Duilio Contin in a library in the Palazzo Coronini Cronberg. Contin made the discovery while looking through the literary possessions of the last count of Coronini, Guglielmo. Guglielmo died in 1990 and acquired the manuscripts in 1963. Scholars knew of the manuscript's existence when it was cited in other works, but the document itself was believed to have been permanently lost. The manuscript, which experts have already confirmed was written by Pacioli, explains the rules and strategies of chess and features several highly detailed drawings. In addition to being one of Leonardo da Vinci's tutors, Pacioli, born in 1445, is considered the father of modern accounting.

### **Chess Cards on ebay**

A number of chess-themed cards were offered on ebay recently. A set of 6 German cards dated 1930 sold for about \$7. However the two cards, one shown below, were listed as "Sports" cards, and were offered for \$6 but went unsold.



## **CCI DIARY**

### **Schaakkunst Exhibition**

*March—April 2007*

**Druten, The Netherlands**

Further details from: [http://www.chess-art.eu/Schaakkunst\\_exposities.htm](http://www.chess-art.eu/Schaakkunst_exposities.htm)  
See article on Page 10

### **Christie's Auctions**

*2nd May 2007*

**South Kensington, London**

Sale of the Jean-Claude Cholet collection  
See Advertisement on Page 8

### **Fifth Western Hemisphere CCI Meeting**

*25th May—27th May 2007*

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### **Bloomsbury Auctions**

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Contact: [Luke@bloomsburyauctions.com](mailto:Luke@bloomsburyauctions.com)

### **World Championships FIDE**

*11th Sept - 1st Oct 2007*

**Mexico City**

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6th Italian Congress**  
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