

The

CHESS COLLECTOR

VOL XVI No 3. 2007



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Editor's Comment

The last few months have seen a lot of activity in the chess collecting world. There has been three auctions in the UK and two European CCI meetings, one in Germany and one in France. There has also been three books published with a fourth book on it's way. We have reviews, reports and pictures from all these events. Finally there was the World Chess Championships in Mexico and there is a new World Chess Champion: Vishwanathan Anand.

We are looking for assistance in writing reviews for the magazine. If any member is interested in becoming a reviewer for the magazine then please contact the editor.

Do you have a favorite set or piece? Or does a set in your collection come with an interesting story? Then we want to hear about it for the members page.

I have to correct a repeated error on my published fax number and apologise to any member who has tried to fax anything to me. My contact details listed on this page are now correct.

Keep your comments coming in!

Jim Joannou
Editor

Front Cover

A German tournament chess clock, circa 1920. Sold at Bloomsbury auctions in Sept 2007. It sold for £320, which was over three times its estimate.

~~~~~ Research Information Request

If any CCI member who collects BRITISH CHESS COMPANY sets or even unusual old British playing sets, wish to share information including photos of sets, I would be very interested in contact with them. Proven sets with original boxes are of particular interest to me.

e mail guy.lyons@ntlworld.com
~~~~~

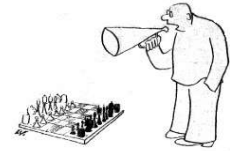
### Reminder

Membership subscriptions are now due for the next year.

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Send your comments to :

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YOUR MOVE !



MEMBERS PAGE

My Favorite Chess Item Dermot Rochford. Ireland.

One of my 'favorites' is an early German Games box (probably Nuremberg C1600.) It has 3 boards, one for chess, tric-trac and merels. It measures 36cms x 36cms x 8cms. Each square is beautifully inlaid with ivory and hardwoods and overall it is in great condition considering it is approx. 400 years old. It is a favorite of mine not just because of its quality and age but also because of the fortunate circumstances in which I was lucky enough to obtain it... In the mid 1980s when my teenage son and myself were starting to collect Chess sets, we were on holiday (in reality it was just a chess set hunt in every antique shop we could find) in Scotland. It wasn't going well, but on the last day we found an Old English pattern ivory chess set signed by Calvert in an antique furniture shop! As relatively new collectors this was our first opportunity to purchase a signed ivory set - however there was one major snag, the dealer did not want to sell or even put a price on it until the "very good" games box, in which the set

had been bought, came back from the restorer. The dealer eventually agreed to sell the chess set on the basis of a commitment from us that if the board was as good as he made it out to be that we might be interested in purchasing it; in reality at that point in our collecting career we had no real interest or knowledge about old games boxes.

About 4 weeks after returning home we got a formal letter from the dealer basically saying he expected us to fulfill our commitment to purchase the games box and he attached a Polaroid image of it. He wanted £450 for it (a lot of money for us at that time). My son recognised it for what it was and thereafter our only objective was to try to get it before some other collector or dealer saw it in his shop. A number of complex moves were necessary to make this happen. Anyway when we saw the games box in the flesh we could then appreciate what an impressive item it really was. So apart from the good fortune of having a bargain 'forced' upon us we were also fortunate that through this purchase we as new collectors got an immediate appreciation of the very fine craftsmanship associated with early games boxes.



Members Comments

"I have just received The Chess Collector, 2007 No 2. Congratulations for editing this magazine, much appreciated." Miquel Artigas. Spain

"As a member of CCI I would like to complement you as Editor of "The Chess Collector" on the excellent production. I hope there will be another issue before the end of 2007? "

Chris Hall

"I let my membership in CCI lapse last year... My frustration with the CCI publications has been that they seem to be heavily weighted to what I would

(uncharitably) characterize as social chatter, and have not recently had anything resembling quality of information...my personal passion is Staunton and playing sets, and I think the CCI membership regards them (particularly Staunton) as, BORING....I have now had a chance to review Vol XVI No 1. 2007. Unfortunately, it has persuaded me not to renew my CCI membership".

An Ex CCI member.

Clearly not everyone is happy with the magazine. I think the comments above are a little exaggerated but I can only publish what members send me!

Editor

Getting closer to the Roots

More Hard Facts for the Origin of Chess in India

Jim Joannou (From information supplied by Manfred Eder)

In "The Chess Collector" Vol. XV No.3, 2006, we reported that the German CCI-Member Manfred A.J. Eder organised a trip to India early in 2007 for "Further Investigations on the Origin of Caturanga". He was accompanied by Dr. habil. Renate Syed, an Indologist and Sanskritist from Munich University, Dr. Leander A. Feiler, also from Germany, and Dr. Robert S. Dinsmore from California, USA, both Members of "FSG" - Foerderkreis Schach-Geschichtsforschung e.V., a Charity Trust for Chess Historic Research. FSG was set up (under German Law) in 1996 to promote and support research intentions in Chess-Origin and Development as well as its Fore-runners (i.e. Earlier board games). Initiator and founding member Eder, emphasizes that his Charity Trust emerged from "IGK" - Initiative-Group Koenigstein, which itself was formed by CCI-Members in 1991.

This article provides an update on the research-trip to India and some additional information focussing on the project-objective "We must find the Gaming-Pieces – of Caturanga", started in November 1997, exactly ten years ago.

Some more Background

In 2001, FSG published a book by Dr. Renate Syed (in German), entitled "Kanauj, die Maukharis und das Caturanga – Der Ursprung des Schachspiels und sein Weg von Indien nach Persien" ("Kanauj, the Maukharis and the Caturanga - The Origin of Chess and its Route from India to Persia") - ISBN 978-3-934474-09-3.

Following is an "Abstract" of this book:

"According to several Persian and Arabic sources it was an Indian king who conveyed the game of chess to his contemporary Khusrau Anushirvan (531-579), the Sasanian king in Ktesiphon. In a Middle Persian source, the Wizarishn i Catrang (dated in the late 6th or early 7th century), this Indian king is called Devasharman, while Arabic historians of the 8th and 9th centuries call him "Shaharam" or "Shaharan", and Firdousi in his Shahname (late 10th century) refers to him as the "Ray of Qanuj", "the Raja (king) of Kanauj".

All these references point to the king Sharvavarman of the Maukhari dynasty, who ruled in Kanauj from 560/65 to 585 as the most powerful ruler during the 6th century in Northern India. From the work called Harshacarita ("The life of [king] Harsha"), written by the poet Bana around 630/640 AD, we learn that at the court of King Harsha, who also ruled in Kanauj, around 630/640 AD caturanga was played on a board of 64 squares, the ashtapada. Harsha of the Pushyabhuti dynasty had conquered Kanauj after the death of the last Maukhari king Grahavarman in 606 AD.

What is noteworthy about the caturanga and its connection with Kanauj is the fact that king Sharvavarman Maukhari was the grandfather of Grahavarman, Harsha's brother-in-law; Harsha's sister Rajyashri was married to Grahavarman Maukhari. At Harsha's court in Kanauj chess was played, and Harsha had come to the throne of Kanauj as the heir of the Maukharis: Had he also taken over the war game caturanga from the Maukharis? The political and dynastic relations between the Maukharis and the Pushyabhusis existed, as it seems, for generations, and having a common enemy in the Huns, they led several joint campaigns against them. Therefore, the exchange of artefacts and cultural goods also must have taken place between the Maukharis and the Pushyabhusis during the 6th century. If caturanga was played around 630/640 in Kanauj, it was doubtless also known some decades before in Kanauj, when the Maukhari king Sharvavarman ruled here. There are only about 50 years between Sharvavarman's year of death, 585, and Bana's mention of caturanga, and only around 25 years between 585 and Harsha's ascension to the throne in Kanauj approx. 610 AD.

We can assume that the game caturanga was invented around 450 AD (or even earlier) in Northern India and quickly spread, also to Kanauj, when this had become the most important city in the North in the middle of the 6th century. The invention and the spread of a war game imitating battle, the progress of

Getting closer to the Roots

Continued

which does not depend on luck in throwing the dice, but purely on the achievement of the mind, on strategic and tactical considerations, is not surprising at this particular time and in this geographical area, for the late 5th and 6th centuries were an age of mutually repellent and warring states engaged in petty internecine jealousies, and hence statesmanship and military skill of a high order were called forth to hold the empires together.

In Kanauj as well as in the surrounding cities, numerous small terracotta figures of armed warriors, horses, elephants and chariots were found, which archaeologists date to the time from the 4th or 5th century AD onwards. Regarding their representation and their size, which is between 5 and 15cm, they could be chess figures. The book seeks to demonstrate the connection of the city of Kanauj with the game of chess and furthermore, it presents the said terracottas, the meaning and function of which are unclear, and discusses their possible use as chessmen.”

Following the research trip to India, “The Times” of London ran an article on March 12th 2007, and here is an extract:

“...Now a research team claims to have moved a step closer to proving that chess originated around the northern Indian city of Kanauj in the 5th century. The team of four believes that terracotta figures found in the area are not toys, as long assumed by Indian experts, but pieces used in a strategic board game called chaturanga. Renate Syed, an Indologist from Munich University, who was on the team, has already claimed to have found textual proof that an Indian king transferred chaturanga to Persia in the 6th century. Dr. Syed hopes that the terracotta warriors, horses, chariots and elephants found around Kanauj, in modern-day Uttar Pradesh, will constitute the first physical evidence to back up her theory. She and her colleagues visited Kanauj this month (March 2007) and examined and photographed about 40 of the thousands of figures lying in museum vaults...”

As a next step of the project “We must find the Gaming-Pieces – of Caturanga” Manfred Eder presented a paper on this work and the findings in India at the “XIX. International Congress on South Asian Archaeology”, July 2-6, 2007, and the following “Abstract” was first published by the Department of Archaeology, University Bologna (Ravenna Section), on behalf of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists:

“Early Terracotta-Figures from Kanauj: Chessmen?”

Chapter II

Half an Answer and More Questions

Exactly 26 years ago, “Chess” was subject to the Body of South Asian Archaeology for the first time, when J.E. van Lohuizen – de Leeuw presented “A unique piece of ivory carving – the oldest known chessman” at the 6th Conference, in 1981, at Cambridge. Unfortunately, not questioning the 2nd-3rd Century AD as the dating for this 1.7 cm high “Quadriga”, this treasure was born too early to belong to the world of the Game “Caturanga”, which was invented some 250 years later, by miniaturizing a “didactic model” (as per the definition by R. Syed) of Indian army-schools onto an existing gaming planogramme, the “Ashtapada”.

“Approaching the Roots of Chess” was the title of the first ever Chess-Historic Research Symposium in India, carried out at Pondicherry University in November 1996. As one of the results of this Congress and its follow-up in Wiesbaden in August 1997, FSG initiated the Project “We must find the [Gaming-] Pieces” – of Caturanga – because plenty of uncertainty dominated the theories about which “pieces” Chess was played with in its beginning.

In her paper “Early Terracotta-Figures from Kanauj: Chessmen?”, presented at the 15th IC-SAA in 1999 at Leiden (NL), Renate Syed identified archaeological finds of artefacts in the Museums’ collections of several cities along the Ganges-Valley, which could be interpreted as

Getting closer to the Roots

Continued

objects suitable for a sort of sand-pit exercise to instruct young warriors-to-be in the art of warfare: Foot-soldiers, Elephants, Horses (with Riders) and Chariots, representing - as a reproduction of reality - the four wings of the traditional Indian army, which she suggested to discuss. - [See Illustrations opposite.]

Recently, the idea that terracotta-figures used in the said "didactic model" could have caused the creation of a battle on a field to play a game on, found support by two new readings of the first Indian reference to Chess in the literature, Bana's famous "Harsa-Carita", in which the poet gives an account of King Harsavardhana, residing in Kanauj as the successor of the Maukhari-Dynasty, under which, most likely, "Caturanga" was invented as a Game:

The Maukhari King Sarvavarman obviously was the Maharajadhiraja who sent Chess from Kanauj to the contemporary Sassanian King Chosrow I Anushirwan in Ktesiphon, in between 560/65 (the beginning of Sarvavarman's reign) and 579 AD (the last year of Chosrow I).

Earlier translations of Bana's respective text speak of "figures of sculptors" (Cowell & Thomas, 1961) or "royal figures of sculptors" and "earthen bodies in the manufactures of dolls" (Kane, 1965 and 1973), while a new look at the line pustakarmanam parthiva-vigraha disclosed the meaning "Es gab (kämpfende) Tonkrieger, aber keine kämpfenden Könige" (Syed, 2005) [There were fighting terracotta-warriors but no fighting kings – transl. MAJE] and "When this king [Harsa] reigns, the fight among kings is confined to terracotta statuettes" (Rajendran, 2006).

This new perception enforced the necessity to further investigate three "T's":

*The Terracotta-figures in question,
the Territory they come from and
the Time-frame (Gupta – Maukhari – Harsha)
they belong to,
where and when warriors as foot-soldiers, war-
elephants, horses, ideally with warriors as rid-
ers, and chariots suggested themselves for the
use in the strategic and tactical planning or the
analysis of battles in theory and practice.*

[One may wonder, why King and Advisor ("Queen") find no mention in this search: The assumption is, that in these military sand-pit exercises as a teaching concept, the "King" and his "War-Minister" were not participants on the improvised battle-field but guided the positions and the manoeuvres of the "four wings" as the tutors! They only took their place in the middle of their troops, when Caturanga was transferred onto the Ashtapada-"Board", the 8x8 squares' planogramme, outlining the territory of war in the game.]

The purpose of our mission from February 26th to March 9th, 2007, however, was not only to obtain more information about terracotta-figures of plausible "Caturanga"-nature, but no less to draw the attention of the Archaeologists and Historians in the Museums in the Doab to the possible use of such miniatures matching the criteria to having been device in the "didactic-model" preceding the game Caturanga – which may well go back to the later Guptas."

Manfred Eder finally commented: "There is still quite a lot of work to be done on the material and ideas brought home... We have only 'scratched the surface', but may hope now, that we can motivate the Indian Archaeologists to move towards digging".

- - -

Have we already found some of those terracotta-figures representing "warriors" = Chessmen?

The illustrations on the next page were published by Manfred A.J. Eder in:

"Bagdad - Bergkristall - Benediktiner - Zum Ex-oriente des Schachspiels", Begleitschrift mit Katalog Schach zur „Ex-oriente“-Ausstellung in Aachen 2003 (ISBN 978-3-934474-11-6).

Getting closer to the Roots

Continued



Caturanga figure: War-Elephant (Bishop),
Terracotta. Northern India, suggested date:
late Gupta-Period



Opposite Side View of above Caturanga figure



Bottom View of above Caturanga figure

(Above piece was first presented at the Exhibition "Alte indische Schachfiguren" in Wiesbaden in 1997 for the 4th Symposium of Initiative Group Koenigstein "Searching for Facts".)



Caturanga figure: Armed Rider on Horse
(Knight), Terracotta, Northern India,
suggested date: 6th Century AD



Close-up view of above caturanga figure
(Very similar to a single find in Afrasiab,
dated around 700AD)

A CHESS GAME IN BRONZE IN WASHINGTON D. C.

Rodolfo Pozzi

We reported, back in Vol XV No2. 2006 Page 12, about a chess themed bronze statue and we asked if anyone had further information. We received several corrections from USA members, but in addition, CCI member Rodolfo Pozzi, was visiting the USA and offered to visit the statue and write an article. This is the result of his visit and research.

A wonderful bronze sculpture dated 1983, that represents two chess players sitting on a low wall, can be appreciated in Washington D. C. on the side of the U. S. Federal Court House.

According with the news kindly supplied by my friend, attorney Douglas Rosenthal, the two portrayed figures are lawyers who are playing chess during a lunch break or after work. The sculptor is Seward Johnson, who realized in many other cities, several highly realistic and life-size statues, the best known of which is perhaps the one of Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt in bronze on Bond Street in London.



As far as the technical part is concerned, we immediately note that the chessboard is badly placed, and even the Staunton chessmen, even if well executed, do not have a logical position. The white King on f1 is in check by queen a6, while it seems that the

left-hand player is reflecting on his position. The Rook, a1, is not present: or it has been taken by a black Knight from b3. After being caught, for example, by the Bishop which then disappeared; or the Knight b1 and the Bishop c1 went out and then came back along the same line; or the man on far right, who is holding a black Bishop in his hand, plays without one Rook, that really is not on the board; all the situations are possible in theory, but very uncommon.



The Colour of the pieces does not easily distinguish itself, but we can realize that the Pawns b4 and e4 are black, since two white Pawns have gone out from scene.

Apart from these considerations of incorrectness, normal on the other hand in works of art, the sculpture is very interesting: the group, seen from far away seems animated, and it is not unusual to meet onlookers who take pictures near the players.

If some chess-players had the opportunity to go to the American capital and would like to see it, I inform them that the combination is in John Marshal Park, near Pennsylvania Avenue, across from the East Wing of the National Gallery of Art in the Mall.

Have Chess set - Will Travel

A Journey in four parts. Part 2: In Your Pocket

Jim Joannou

In the first part of this journey¹ we studied the historical link between travel and chess. In this paper we look at those designs specifically known as “pocket” chess sets and how this style of board developed up to the late 20th century.

An Internet chess dictionary² gives the definition of a pocket chess set as:

“A portable set, usually small, that folds in the middle. Major & minor pieces are either flat and magnetic that fit into slots or have pegs that insert into holes in the board”

Dr Peter Mark Roget (1779-1869), author of “Roget’s Thesaurus”, is credited as the designer of the pocket chessboard in 1845.³ However Michael Mark in his excellent publication, “British Chess Sets”⁴ quotes an earlier record in 1832 in a publication by van der Linde. Roget was a communicator of science, physician and philologist.⁵ His design was marketed by the Thomas De La Rue Company in April 1846, which was known as the “Economic” chessboard,

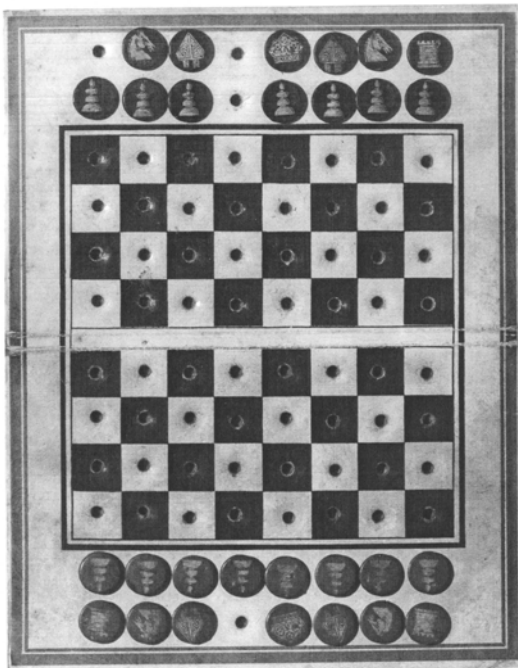


Fig 1. The “Improved” pocket board from the De La Rue Company. Note the “Button” style pieces

however in October of the same year the De La Rue Company, now famous for printing banknotes, registered it’s own design called the “Improved Chessboard”⁶ (Fig 1) also in October 1846 a second version of Roget’s pocket board was marketed by the publishing firm Longman, Brown, Green & Longman⁴.

The De La Rue Company commissioned several artists to design chess pieces and cover designs, and the “Improved” chess board was issued with at least two different cover designs. The English artist Edward Henry Corbould (1815-1905) designed some pocket style chess pieces in January 1879.⁶ (Fig 2)

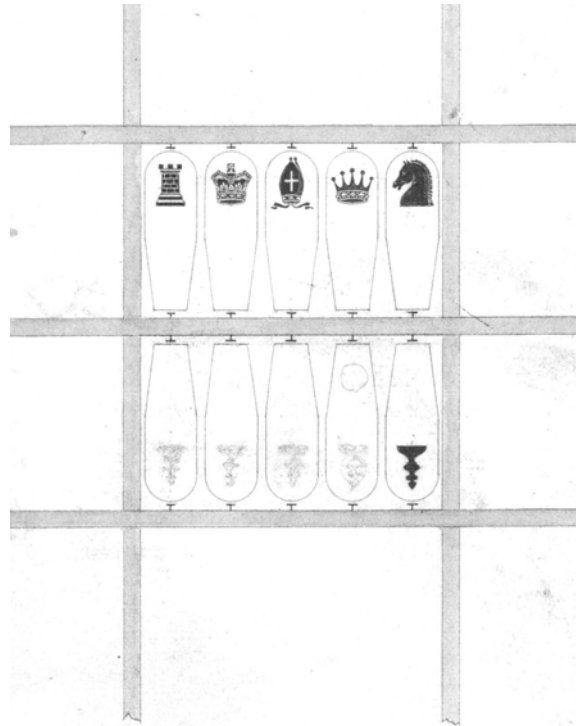


Fig 2. Edward Corbould’s design for the De La Rue Pocket chessboard.

These were first seen in a combined pocket chess and draughts board in the early 1880’s (Fig 3), and were advertised in 1885 in a German catalogue⁴.

In the early 20th century the De La Rue Company produced another “wallet” style board known as the “Dexter” pocket board, which was advertised in the British Chess Magazine between 1901 and 1904. (Fig’s 4 & 5)

Have Chess set - Will Travel
A Journey in four parts. Part 2: In Your Pocket

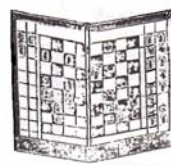
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Fig 3. Combined Chess & Draughts board by the De La Rue company with Corbould's pieces.

Also advertised at this time was the "Crane's" pocket board produced in the USA by the F. W.C. Crane Company.⁷ (Fig 6) This set is very similar in design to the De La Rue combined board of the 1880's. During the early 20th century a number of these "wallet" style pocket boards were produced (Fig 7) and these are now becoming evident at auctions.⁹

CRANE'S POCKET CHESS BOARD



Price 4/6, Post Free.

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F. W. C. CRANE,

LYONS FARM. NEW JERSEY, U.S.A.

Fig 6. The Crane's pocket board, which is very similar in design to the "Combined" chessboard.

The "DEXTER" POCKET CHESS BOARD

IN NOTE CASE FORM

Size: 6 1/4 x 4 1/2 in.

From 5/- each.

Fitted with Xylonite Pieces, and provided with a Pocket for Problems, Games, etc.

Sold by all Stationers. Wholesale only by
THOS. DE LA RUE & CO. LTD. BUNHILL ROW, LONDON, E.C.

Fig 4. The Dexter pocket board first advertised in 1901



Fig 7. Examples of pocket boards produced in Early 20th Century. Origins unknown.



Fig 5. A "Dexter" style pocket board, produced during the English Edwardian period (1901-1910). Again with Corbould's pieces.

This style reached a peak in 1943 when the Dada artist and chess player, Marcel Duchamp, modified one with pins to produce a modern work of art. (Fig 8) He altered a standard board by printing his own design of chess pieces on paper and fitting them between celluloid. He then fixed them in place on the board using a pinhead.⁸

The A.W. Ford Co Ltd in Bristol, UK produced "The Travelers" pocket board for the military in the 1950's and the toy manufacturer, J.W spears & Sons PLC marketed a magnetic style wallet board in 1983. (Figs 8 & 9)

Have Chess set - Will Travel A Journey in four parts. Part 2: In Your Pocket

Continued



Fig 7. "Pocket Chess Set with Wallet", 1943.
Marcel Duchamp.



Fig 8. Pocket board produced in UK for the military after the 2nd WW.



Fig 9. Wallet style pocket board from the Toy maker J. W. Spear & Son. 1983.

In the 1950's a new "pocket" design emerged and these were popular through to the late 1970's and continue to be produced on a small scale today. Fig 10 shows a number of these Pocket sets, utilising wood, plastic and metal.



Fig 10. Three pocket sets made between 1950's and late 1970's.

They may not be inspiring in their beauty or artistic form but they are classic examples of their era. These are the "antiques of the future" and various makers are already becoming well known. Names like "House Martin", "Spears", "K & C Ltd", "Drueke" etc, and even the Jaques company produced their own version. (Fig 11) Sets like these can be found quite cheaply on auction sites and boot fairs, but they are also starting to appear in antique fairs, shops, etc.



Fig 11. Jaques Pocket Travel Set. Metal board with plastic pieces. 1960-1970.

Have Chess set - Will Travel
A Journey in four parts. Part 2: In Your Pocket
Continued

There are still missing pieces of information regarding the development of these “pocket” boards. There has even been a recent suggestion that early designs of pocket and other chess pieces could have influenced Nathaniel Cook and the Staunton pattern! Food for thought..

References:

- 1) The Chess Collector Vol XIV No.2 2007. Pg.12
- 2) <http://www.chess-dictionary-chesmayne.net/index.html>
- 3) http://www.chess-poster.com/english/chesmayne/brief_notes_on_the_history_of_chess_1800_1.htm
- 4) British Chess Sets. Michael Mark. 2nd Ed. 1996.
- 5) <http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/page.asp?id=4231>
- 6) De La Rue special collection. Reading University Library Archive, UK.
- 7) The Chess Collector Vol 1 July 1989 No.3. Pg 8-9.
- 8) Chess sets. F. Lanier Graham. Studio Vista Ltd. Pg56.
- 9) Bloomsbury auctions catalogue 2005. Lot 169.

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**New Book**

Prof. Hans Hollaender announced the publication of a new chess book, “Scaccia Ludus”, at the German CCI Meeting. More details to follow.

# News In Brief



Original “Fun” Chessboard Postcard.  
It went unsold on eBay recently.

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A Chess set fit for Giants

Wang Wenfu, a 52-year-old teacher from Beijing, has made a giant Chinese chess set from marble. The 32 pieces are 0.4 metre high and 1 metre wide. The Shanghai-based Great World Guinness Headquarters named Wang's chess set as the largest one of its type ever made in the country. He hopes his chess set can go into the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics!

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Advertisement

## Bonhams

### Chess Sale

Make the right move with Bonhams  
An invitation to consign  
Tuesday 26th February 2008  
Knowle, UK

We are currently accepting entries for our forthcoming Chess sale to be held at our Knowle saleroom on Tuesday 26th February 2008. This sale forms part of the Works of Art, Pictures and Furniture sale. All lots will be illustrated on Bonhams’ website and the sales will benefit from the support of Bonhams’ international network of offices and salerooms.

The closing date for entries is 16th January 2008

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## Auction Reviews

Jim Joannou

Several auctions earlier this year saw high prices and good quality items for sale. The general consensus of opinion is that the chess market is strong, however two recent UK sales have had their share of lower quality items and included modern sets in their catalogues. They also had a higher than average number of unsold lots. In addition Bloomsbury auctions are closing their collector's department and this means they will not hold anymore chess sales. Luke Honey of Bloomsbury's said that it was "getting more difficult to get chess sets in" and Gerry Berwyn-Jones of Bonhams stated "it's tough getting the really good lots.." This is reflected in the fact that both Bonhams and Bloomsbury had combined their chess sales with other collectables. All of this has sparked more rumours as to the real state of the chess market.

### Bonhams Auctions. Knowle. 11<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Only a few chess enthusiasts made the journey to this sale, which contained just 51 lots of chess related items. From the catalogue, the estimates appeared to be moderate to low, but this reflected the overall quality of the sets on offer. There were a small number of good quality items and these sold over their estimates, however a lot of the items were either worn or showed signs of some damage. A good Jaques, Staunton set, Lot 196, with a cartonpierre box and yellow label sold just over estimate at £920. (Fig1), however a large size, Whittington pattern travel set, Lot 210, sold under estimate at the bargain price of just £50.



Fig 1. Lot 196. Bonhams Auctions.

An interesting, early 19<sup>th</sup> C, English ivory set, stamped 'Morse' on the rooks, Lot 211, (Fig2) sold for £950 against an estimate of £600-900.



Fig 2. Lot 211. Bonhams Auctions.

There were two other quality sets on sale, one being Lot 222, a very good Mid 20<sup>th</sup> C set by the Nigerian artist J. Dojomo Akeredolu, which sold for £1200 and Lot 226, an early 19<sup>th</sup> C Vitzagapatam, ivory and horn set (Fig3) which sold for double it's estimate of £600-900.

A number of items sold either on or just below estimate so this could be a good sale for collectors on low budgets or beginners to chess collecting, especially as there were a number of items, which failed to sell even at £50 or £60. This regional sale always seems find a few gems to offer in order to generate interest, so whatever your budget, it is worth checking out their website every 6 months.



Fig 3. Lot 226. Bonhams Auctions

### Bloomsbury Auctions. 25<sup>th</sup> Sept 2007

Some of the "usual" faces gathered in London for this sale, however there was a noticeable lack of overseas chess collectors present. This may have been due to the recent German CCI meeting and the imminent Italian / French CCI meeting. A group of CCI members and other collector's had an enjoyable pre-auction lunch and discussion.



## Auction Reviews

*Continued*

The auction items were again listed on eBay and the Bloomsbury website listings had been given a revamp with very good picture quality. There were over 230 items in the Chess and games section of the sale and approx 30 people were present in the room.



Fig 4. The Bloomsbury Sale room prior to the sale.

The sale started, as usual, with books, prints and other ephemera, most of which remained unsold or sold within estimate, like Lot 247, a set of three prints, which sold for £100. (Fig 5). There were quite a number of boards in the sale and the best of these was Lot 274, a Chinese-export board/box, Circa 1810, which sold for nearly three times its estimate at £1100, (Fig 6) and a Jaques Tournament, late 19<sup>th</sup> C board that sold for £1600 against a



Fig 5. Lot 247. Chess print, from St. Stephen's review, March 19<sup>th</sup> 1887.



Fig 6. Lacquered Chess & Backgammon board/box. Cantonese. Circa 1810.

£600-800 estimate. A German tournament chess clock, circa 1920 Lot 292 (See front cover) sold for £320, which was over three times its estimate.

The first of the Chess sets was Lot 330, a Swiss "Bears of Berne" in pearwood, which sold just under estimate at £920. This was followed by a good Dutch bone set dated circa 1790 with 10cm Kings, which sold for £1050. Most of the European sets sold either on or around their estimates, however Lot 349, a lovely German pearwood and ivory set, (Fig 7) was fought over by several bidders and eventually sold to a London dealer for £3200 against its estimate of £800- £1200.

Nearly one quarter of the 59 British sets on offer failed to sell including a nice, ivory Calvert pattern set, listed at £1000 – £1500



Fig 7. Lot 349. Pearwood and Ivory mounted. Circa 1840. King 9cm.

## *Auction Reviews*

*Continued*

Several bargains were gained by bidders with Lot 386, a modern “Napoleonic” resin set dated 1960 which sold for just £35 and a 19<sup>th</sup> C St George pattern boxwood and ebony set which went for £55. An Early Jaques Staunton set, Lot 392 (Fig 8), with a registration lozenge for 1849 sold for £780 and a Jaques “In Statu Quo” set failed to sell at £300. A Large “pegged” traveling set with Staunton pattern pieces, Lot 407, had the interest of several bidders and it quickly passed its estimate of £200-£300 to sell at £1050.



Fig 8. Lot 392. Boxwood and Ebony Jaques Set. 1849 with Mahogany box and green label.

Most of the Indian sets sold well including a small, 19<sup>th</sup> C, Jaipur ivory set which sold to a phone bidder for over its estimate at £2700 and a large, 20<sup>th</sup> C, Rajasthan lacquered figural set sold for double estimate at £1800. A Chinese-export set, Lot 457, from Canton and dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> C sold for just £130 and an unusual, ceramic “playing card” set dated to circa 1960 also sold for £130. The last lot in the chess sale was a novelty “Simpsons 3-D” set, which sold for £85, and yet these sets regularly come up for sale on eBay for much less!

Bloomsbury always seemed to have the right mix of sets, information, pictures and atmosphere. This is what made it a popular auction amongst collectors. Lets hope that another auction house steps up to fill the gap.

### Christie’s Auctions, S Kensington, London. 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2007

Christie’s auctioned the remainder of the Dr Jean-Claude Cholet collection, which were not the “leftovers” from the first sale earlier in the year, as had been suggested by some collectors, but were items from the collection not previously listed. There were 69 lots as part of a more general sale. Catalogues were not sent out to registered members, which was unusual and this led to some adverse comments from some collectors, especially with regard to picture quality. Pippa Green of Christie’s said “Its very useful to receive your comments with regard to our website images, and I am surprised to hear that clients have found them unclear. The web does allow for each lot to be enlarged and in many respects this provides a clearer representation .. I am also very happy to supply further images to clients on request, and welcome further feedback in the future if clients wish to contact me directly.” However all lots were sold and as they were offered with no reserve, some bidders walked away with a bargain or two. For example, Lot 714, an Italian alabaster and marble set with board for just £31 and Lot 707, a modern Swarkovski cut glass set and board for £62.

Most of the Indian sets sold very well, like a 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian ivory “John Company” set, which sold for over four times its estimate at £4000 and a central Indian figural set, circa 1900, which sold for £4750. The majority of the European sets sold well like a French Dieppe bone set for £1200, but one lucky bidder won an “Old English” pattern boxwood and ebony set along with an English bone set for just £61. The top price paid for a European set on the day was for Lot 824, a German polychrome bone bust set, which sold for £4750. Only a handful of chess collectors were present on the day and the feedback is that it was a good sale and they all enjoyed themselves.

# Book Reviews

## **JAQUES STAUNTON CHESS SETS 1849-1939 A Collectors Guide**

Author: Alan Fersht

No of Pages: 31

Language: English

Published by: Kaissa Publications

ISBN: 13: 978-0-9557325-0-8

Cost: £15.00

Available: Direct from the author on  
Jaques.Staunton@gmsil.com

This detailed study of the most famous of chess designs, is interesting, informative and authoritative. The author discusses, in detail, the changes in design features over the years and systematically looks at individual pieces, their boxes, the labelling and complete sets. There are many pictures comparing pieces together to highlight the differences and show trends. There is also a very useful section giving advice for collectors on what to look out for when buying a Jaques set and a final "dating" summary.

The technical content of this easy-to-read book is impeccable, which is not unexpected considering the author's reputation in this field of study and the contributions by other leading authorities on the Staunton design.

This book will be invaluable to anyone who collects or who is thinking of buying, a Jaques Staunton set. It is a book that all collectors should have on their shelves and should become the definitive reference text for years to come.

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Chessmen Art and History

A new book by May and Ine Kloprogge, from Holland, is about to be published. This book will be reviewed in the next issue of "The Chess Collector" For further information see: <http://www.chessmen.eu>

Ancient Board Games in perspective.

Edited: I.L Finkel

No of Pages: 281

Language: English

Published by: British Museum Press

ISBN: 13: 978-0-7141-1153-7

Cost: £50

Available: From The British Museum shop

This is a collection of papers presented at a British Museum Colloquium in 1990. These papers have only just been published due to various delays. There are three papers directly concerned with Chess, but several other papers are also relevant. Other games covered in this volume include "Ur", "Go", "Backgammon" and "Mancala". The three chess papers were written by renown names in UK Chess: Michael Mark, R.D. Keene and Richard Eales.

Michael Marks paper is a lengthy and detailed review of current information relating to the origins of Chess and he concludes that chess probably originated in India. The list of references cited is impressive and a great deal of work and thought has gone into this major historical review paper. R.D. Keene's short paper concentrates on the analysis of chess games from Baghdad in the 9th & 10th century, and surmises that chess study had reached a high level at that time. Although it is not clearly stated, he infers that because of his conclusions, Chess must have existed for quite some time previously. Richard Eales' paper looks at how chess spread into western Europe from the East during the middle ages. He uses religious texts and socio-political references to show how this occurred.

This is a scholarly book, which is what you expect from the British Museum. It is not a "Light" read and would appeal to dedicated historians as a good reference text.

FRENCH-ITALIAN CCI CONGRESS

Troyes en Champagne (France), September 27-29, 2007

Rodolfo Pozzi

The Italian chess collectors, after the success of the International Congress of Florence in 2000, organised five national meetings in the following years. This year they thought they would join forces with their French colleagues, and this synergy led to the realization of a French-Italian congress of the Chess Collectors International. The meeting, the first for the French, was held in the attractive medieval city of Troyes en Champagne, and was splendidly organized by Patrice Plain, assisted by Massimiliano De Angelis and Rodolfo Pozzi.

As usual these congresses are attended by collectors from every part of the world, who meet periodically in great friendship. The Troyes meeting was officially received in the Municipality, and there were 27 collectors and scholars coming from France, Italy, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States (1).

Patrice Plain organised an exhibition of chess sets, photographs, books and stamps. In addition visits to the *Maison de l'outil*, that assembled twenty thousand tools from the 18th and 19th century, the Museum of Modern Art and the *Mediathèque* were on the itinerary... and of course you could savour very good quality *champagne*!

The lectures, that were the highlight of the meeting, were very interesting: after the greetings by the International President, Thomas Thomsen, and the welcoming by the national representatives Plain and De Angelis, four members presented their latest researches on chess sets.

Massimiliano De Angelis illustrated "Some little known non figural Italian sets from the 18th and 19th Century". Over the last few years, he has collected and studied some wooden game pieces that were all very similar, from some central Italian regions such as Tuscany. These were absolutely unknown and never documented before. This discovery aims to demonstrate the existence of pieces

produced in the eighteenth century in quantities that can be defined locally as *conventional*.

Rodolfo Pozzi informed the meeting of his research on "the pin chess sets", a characteristic French travel set from the past centuries and used by aristocrats for playing chess in carriages. Very few complete sets have survived but at antique dealers you can find odd pieces, interpreted as chess figures but which belong to *jonchets*, a game similar to the Japanese *Mikado* and to the Chinese *Shanghai*.

Jacques Lamy, who purchases raw materials for chess pieces and paints them meticulously, presented his own film on "self-made chess sets". Finally Patrice Plain presented the history of African chess sets, underlining the difficulty in identifying the origin of some of them, due to the frequent migrations of the population. Little is known amongst scholars of the details and particulars of the characters of these sets, with regard to ritual scarring of the skin and the clothes worn. The sets of the Black Continent form a very varied group and they are interesting above all from an ethnical point of view. The Congress was brought to an end by the usual chess market, during which the collectors were able to exchange sets, books and stamps.

(1) – The following collectors participated: From France, Patrice and Annie Plain, Jacques and Michèle Lamy; From Italy, Massimiliano and Giulia De Angelis, Gaia Montini, Rodolfo and Milly Pozzi, Massimo and Maria Luisa Morganti; From Germany Thomas Thomsen, Brigitte Schenk, Franz-Josef and Rosemarie Lang; From Russia, Nikolay Timochtkouk and Anna Simatova; From England, Michael and Sandra Wiltshire, Tony and Gillian Raynes; From America, Floyd and Bernice Sarisohn, Bill and Hope Levene, Victoria and Larissa Filatova.

Pictures from the French—Italian and the German Meetings



Max De Angelis presenting his paper on Italian sets at the French-Italian meeting.



Thomas Thomsen Welcomes everyone to the German Meeting.



Part of the French—Italian Exhibition, showing Rodolfo Pozzi's Mongolian chess items.



A German Bostendorf Chess set on display at the German meeting.



CCI President, Thomas Thomsen toasting the French organiser Patrice Plain, with Franz-Joseph Lang and other members.



Prof. Hollaender and Lothar Schmidt discuss bone material from chessmen with Elfenbeinmuseum staff.



The Italian contingent in Troyes, France.



The German meeting visiting the Castle of Erbach

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Tue 26th February
Knowle, W Midlands, UK
(See Advert on Page 12)

Details from:
gerry.berwynjones@bonhams.com

The 13th CCI Biennial Convention.

30th April—4th My 2008
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(Birthplace of the CCI back in 1984)

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