

## **THE INFLUENCE OF THE QUEEN ISABEL LA CATOLICA ON THE NEW POWERFUL DAMA IN THE ORIGIN OF THE DRAUGHTS AND MODERN CHESS GAME.**

Until now the different scholars practically limited themselves to indicating France as the country of origin of the draughts game, among them the famous chess scholar Harold James Ruthven Murray<sup>1</sup> is emphasized. With respect to the new powerful dama in the modern chess game that was developed around the end of the XV century, the situation is not much better, since the scholars of this game believe that France, as well as Italy, could be the native countries of this modality of the game, in spite of the fact that the first chess book, Luis Ramirez of Lucena, with such new modality dates from 1497 and is of Spanish origin<sup>2</sup>.

In draughts we see a similar situation, since the first Spanish books about the game<sup>3</sup> of draughts have a very high level and date from the XVI century, while the first French book<sup>4</sup> comes from the XVII century and the game described is a very elemental one. Contrary to this evidence, the scholars did not consider it necessary to grant Spain the honour of being the creative country of the game of draughts and of the new modality in the chess game with the new dama. How is it possible that the different scholars never took into account the rich Spanish bibliography on both games? Was it a linguistic problem or were there other existing circumstances that forbade this reasoning? In the case of draughts, this could be a reasonable cause for the Dutch scholars that did not master the Spanish language, but not for the English scholar Murray who knew several languages, among them Arabic. On the other hand, regarding the chess game it is difficult to accept that none of them knew the Spanish language. Therefore there had to be other motives for them to deny that Spain could be the country of origin of the new powerful dama in chess. Whatever it may be, there can be several motives, but happily in the last years we have observed a trend of two outstanding scholars that began to modify this point of view.

In the case of the new powerful dama in the chess game in Spain we rely on an outstanding chess investigator, Dr. Ricardo Calvo, who, since the eighties defends Spain as being the country of origin of the new powerful dama in the game of chess<sup>5</sup>. His investigations and discoveries of ancient written chess manuscripts from the XV century make it possible to assert that this new property is of Spanish origin<sup>6</sup>.

1. MURRAY, HAROLD JAMES RUTHVEN. (1952) A history of Board-games other than chess, Oxford. p. 75.

2. LUCENA, LUIS RAMIREZ DE (1497). Repetición de amores e arte de Axedres con CL Juegos de Partido. Salamanca.

3. TORQUEMADA, ANTONIO DE (1547). El ingenio, ò juego de Marro, de punta, ò Damas. Valencia.

4. MALLET, PIERRE (1668). Le jeu des dames - *Avec toutes les maximes et règles, tant générales que particulières, qu'il faut observer an icelui. Et la méthode d'y bien jouer*". - Paris.

5. CALVO, RICARDO (1985a). Un nuevo manuscrito de ajedrez del siglo XV. Revista Jaque. San Sebastián Año XV. Núm. 173. 15 de abril, pp 252-253.

CALVO, RICARDO (1985b). Ein neues Schachmanuskript aus dem 15. Jahrhundert. Europa Rochade. Maintal. N.3, p. 28.

CALVO, RICARDO (1985c). Un nouveau manuscrit échiquéen du XV siècle. Europe Échecs. Besançon. N. 319-320. juillet - Août, pp 434-435.

6. CALVO, RICARDO (1991). Birthplace of modern chess. New in Chess, Alkmaar (Holanda). Núm. 7:82-89.

CALVO, RICARDO (1992). Valencia, Geburtsstätte des modernen Schachs. Schach-Journal. Berlin. Núm. 3:34-46.

CALVO, RICARDO & MEISSENBURG, EGBERT (1995). Valencia und die Geburt des neuen Schachs. Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften, Wien, pp 77-89.

With respect to the draughts game we must not forget to mention Ir. Gerard Bakker of Utrecht (Holland), who with an initial work in 1983 and another advanced one in 1987 praises the Spanish<sup>7</sup> origin of draughts from the alquerque and chess game. Those were good starting points, but still there were remaining dark points in the solidity of this hypothesis.

This is, humbly speaking, the purpose of this book, to seek evidence and to situate Spain in an outstanding place that it naturally deserves. For such effect we chronologically treat the texts studied between 1283 and 1700, gathering more than 950 bibliographical references that can be more easily consulted by future scholars.

From 1986 we maintain the hypothesis that the origin of the game of draughts is a Spanish one and to such effect we have sought answers and evidence for some 10 years. We started on the basis of the fact that the chess game reflects the royal situation of a time. So we can ask ourselves why the queen in the modern chess game has more power than the king. If we study the life of Spanish royalty in the XV century we see that this question is not so difficult to answer. There was, in 1469 a dama in Castille that was married to a future king of Aragon, Fernando. Some years later, in 1475, this dama, Isabel la Católica, was crowned queen with greater effective power than her husband, Fernando. So much, so that when Spain in 1492 was released from the last Moorish outpost in Granada, discovering America and enforcing one sole religion in its territory, it was suddenly justified to use in chess a new queen with more power than her "king". But, concerning the name "dama", what is its origin? We know that the word "domina" was already translated in the XIV century by the French word "dame" in chess manuscripts and it is supposed that in the XV century, due to the influence of the printed books of Jacobus of Cessolis, one began to use frequently in Spain the dama term for the queen in chess. But was it not also due to the idealization of the woman to dama in court poetry, where the supremacy of the dama is one of the characteristics of the frustrated love?

The new modality of the game in chess was given several names abroad. Thus, we see contemptuous terms as: "alla rabiosa" in the Italian translation and of "dame enragée" in the French translation. In Spain we see a neutral term: "Axedrez de la dama". Motive by which we also believe that France as well as Italy cannot be the country of origin of this new type of chess. Other historians asked themselves how it was possible that this peculiarity of the game could be introduced and maintained in all the European countries. This is not so difficult to explain if we take into account the fact that in 1492 Spain banished some 250.000 Jews from its land, who were distributed all over Europe with all its political and economic influence. Furthermore, the Spanish king Carlos V spent more time away from Spain than within its boundaries in function of the defence of the Spanish hegemony in Europe.

The new "powerful" dama of the chess game would have much to do with the invention of draughts and with the use of this new piece. To such effect we have chronologically treated in this work the bibliographical texts, whose commentaries are mostly translated into Dutch. The original texts are basically Spanish, though we have not forgotten to mention the most notable foreign books in Latin, German, English, French, Italian and Dutch.

<sup>7</sup> BAKKER, IR. GERARD (1983). *Damtijdschrift Het Nieuwe Damspel*, Utrecht, p. 44.  
BAKKER, IR. GERARD (1987). *Damtijdschrift Het Nieuwe Damspel*, Utrecht, p. 42-46.

The first chapter deals with ancient Egyptian games, since they were considered erroneously by some scholars<sup>8</sup> as precursors of the dama. In the same chapter reference is made to the "Ludus Latrunculorum" game, that was taken by Thomas Hyde<sup>9</sup> as antecedent of the draughts-game. Below are described similar games to the now disappeared "Ludus Latrunculorum", some of those which still exist. Chapter two describes a board game with squares (alternatively white and yellow?) the "Jaldeta", that was forbidden in the XIII century and was no longer practised around the end of the XV century. In chapter three we see ourselves in the Spain of the XV century, being able to observe the general influence of the Queen "Isabel la Católica". We discuss the expulsion of the Jews and the conversion of the Moors to the catholic religion. It was between 1474 and 1492 when the new powerful dama was developed and this time it can be considered as a dormant stage. The definitive beginning originated in 1492 when the queen was at the height of her reign : 1. Conquest of the Morish outpost "Granada"; 2. Discovery of America; 3. Expulsion of the Jews; 4. Loss of power of the nobility due to the administrative reforms.

In chapter 4 the Latin terms "scuporum" and "calcolorum" are examined. In the subsequent chapters (5, 6, 7, 8,) Spanish words, which previously were designated to the draughts-game, such as "marro", "marro de punta", "andarraya" and "alquerque" are studied in detail. We demonstrate with bibliographical proofs that "punta" does not mean field, as Branch<sup>10</sup>, Murray<sup>11</sup>, Kruijswijk<sup>12</sup> and Van der Stoep<sup>13</sup> claim, rather "punta" means diagonal. Thus the game "marro de punta" is nothing more than a game with a diagonal direction. The denominations "marro" and "marro de punta" belong to the kingdom of Aragon and those of "andarraya" and "alquerque" to the kingdom of Castille.

The ancient word "trecha", that years afterwards was converted into "treta", is analyzed in chapter 9. Apparently the word "castro" (castles game) had a certain link to draughts in Turkey and Palestinian. In chapter 10 this expression is studied in detail. In chapter 11 we extensively analyze the Latin term "domina" and the word "dama". In the conclusion of this chapter different modalities of draughts in different countries are described. Also, in the following chapter the lost book of Antonio de Torquemada is examined. In 13 a vast study on the book of Juan de Timoneda, printed in 1635, is discussed. According to our investigations some of those texts could date from 1550. It is quite possible that some of the positions of draughts that appear in this book will be similar to those which are described in the book of Torquemada.

The Spanish draughts books between 1547 and 1996 and the first European draughts books are discussed in chapter 14, as well as the Spanish game books of the period of 1283-1700. At the beginning of the XIX century, Jose Paluzie y Lucena established the first Spanish bibliographical study of chess<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> WILKINSON, JOHN GARDNER (1878). The manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians. Editie van Samuel Birch, London.

<sup>9</sup> HYDE, THOMAS (1694). De Ludis Orientalibus, Oxford. Deel II.

<sup>10</sup> BRANCH, WILLIAM SHELLEY (1911). The history of checkers from the earliest known date. Its evolution and growth, Cheltenham, England. Written for Pittsburg Leader between October 8, 1911 - April 14, 1912.

<sup>11</sup> MURRAY, HAROLD JAMES RUTHVEN (1913). A history of chess, Oxford, p. 399.

MURRAY, HAROLD JAMES RUTHVEN. (1952) A history of Board-games other than chess, Oxford, p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> KRUIJSWIJK, KAREL WENDEL (1966). Algemene historie en bibliografie van het damspel, Den Haag, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> STOEP, ARIE VAN DER (1984). A history of draughts, Rockanje, p. 81.

<sup>14</sup> PALUZIE Y LUCENA, JOSÉ (1912). Primer ensayo de bibliografía Española de ajedrez, Barcelona 1912, pp. 8-11.

In this modest text we do something similar with draughts. To the existing bibliographical lists in other history books about draughts we can add a draughts book of 1792<sup>15</sup> found by Prof. Dr. Juan Torres Fontes<sup>16</sup> and a manuscript of the year 1690 we found in an Andalusian library<sup>17</sup>. Until now a complete relationship among all the Spanish books, referred to the games in the period 1283-1700, had not been established. Thus our investigations could fill that vacuum. In chapter 15 hypothesis of other draughts scholars are submitted to discussion and furthermore a point of view is offered on the development of the game of alquerque of 12 up to our current draughts. Much evidence exists to assert that Valencia could be the kingdom of origin of draughts, similar to the powerful dama in the chess game, according to the opinion of the chess scholar Dr. Ricardo Calvo. Finally, the Spanish bibliophile of Spanish draughts books, Victor Cantalapedra Martín, expounds in Spanish language, his knowledge of the said books in chapter 16.

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<sup>15</sup>. GARCIA, JOSEF ANTONIO (1792). Garcia juego de Damas (...), Murcia.

<sup>16</sup>. WESTERVELD, GOVERT (1992). Damijschrift: *Het Nieuwe Damspel*, Utrecht, p. 87.

<sup>17</sup>. CANONIGO, EL (1750?). Libro de Juego de Damas, Granada.

<sup>18</sup>. WESTERVELD, GOVERT (1994). Homo Ludens, Der Spielende Mensch IV. Internationale Beiträge des Institutes für Spielforschung und Spielpädagogik an der Hochschule Mozarteum Salzburg, Salzburg.  
WESTERVELD, GOVERT (1996). Homo Ludens. El hombre que juega. Deel 1. Instituto para la Investigación y la Pedagogía del Juego. Salzburg.