

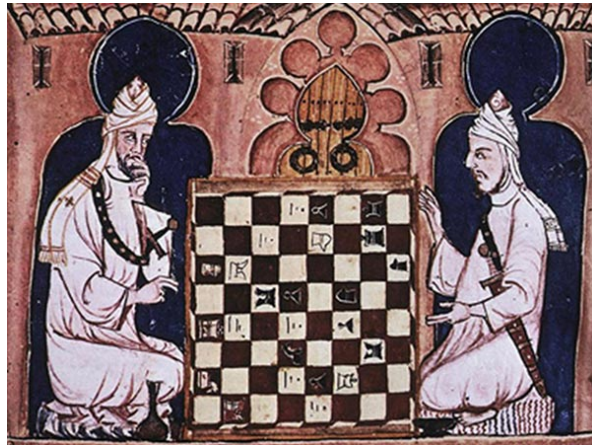


THE CHESS WARRIOR'S CHESS STORY

A Chess Warrior Passed Pawn knows: Ancient Chess

Modern Chess is descended from a war game called *Chatrang* played in Persia more than 1500 years ago. That Persian game, almost modern chess, had been derived from the older Indian game *Chatranga*, meaning four. The pieces took on the roles of the four elements of the military: chariots, cavalry, elephants and infantry, each with its own powers. The king and his councilor stood in the middle of the board to direct the action.

The term checkmate comes from Persian *Shaw mat*, which means the king is exhausted, i.e. dead. You win a game of chess when you checkmate, or kill your opponent's king. The game was considered an important part of the education and training of young nobles and military officers. It required players to evaluate a situation, make long-range plans, marshal forces, and use tactics to implement a strategy. It also turned out to be fun and was very popular.



Chatrang in sixth century Persia.

Chess found its way to Arabia about the time of the Islamic expansion. The Arabs loved the game they called Shatranj and took it with them in their wars against the Byzantine Empire in Eastern Europe and across North Africa into Spain and Sicily. Through this contact Europeans were exposed to and enthusiastically adopted the game.

A Chess Warrior Knight knows: Middle Age Chess

Power structures in Christian Europe were different than those in Muslim Arabia. So the roles of the pieces were modified to express European culture. In Late Middle Age and Renaissance Europe there was a rising middle class. Pawns, the common soldier, were given their double first move and broader promotion options.

In Europe there was growing separation in the powers of the Church and State, and there were no elephants in Europe. European bishops replaced the Indian elephants. The elephant's limited, choppy, diagonal move was smoothed and extended across the board, giving these new European bishops much greater power.

In Christian Europe kings were expected to marry only one woman who frequently became the king's most trusted advisor and who therefore possessed great power. On the chessboard the European queen replaced the Persian councilor. The queen's purpose was to protect her king and project his power. The new chess queen was given moves that made it the most powerful piece on the board. The new game was sometimes called "Mad Queen Chess".



Sofonisba Anguissolo, The Chess Game, 1555, National Museum, Poznan', Poland.



The Chess Problem, Libros de los Juegos 1283

Books about the new game that included all three changes began to appear at the end of the fifteenth century. The earliest that survives, Discourse on Love and the Art of Chess with 150 Problems, by Luis Ramírís de Lucerna, was published in Valencia, Spain circa 1497. The game had long been noted for its slowness. The new rules greatly speeded up the game. The game was played by both men and women and was considered an important part of any courting ritual. Players like Francois Philidor and Louis-Charles La Bourbonnais developed theories of how to play chess. The modern game of chess had arrived.

A Chess Warrior Bishop knows: Evolved Chess

Chess is known as a thinking game. It is therefore fitting that it should come to full flower in the Age of Reason. Chess knows no class or gender. In egalitarian seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe anyone could, and almost everyone did play chess. It became a popular parlor game in the growing middle class. Chess was played anywhere people gathered, especially in cafés. Good players favored certain cafés, which became centers of chess competition. The most famous examples are the Café de La Régence in Paris and Simpson's Divan in London.

By the middle of the nineteenth century chess tournaments began to offer significant prizes. Good players became heroes who represented their home region or nation. Matches between well-known players garnered special press coverage just as big sporting events do today.

At first the style of play was the swashbuckling, all out attack Romantic style. Tactical players like Paul Morphy and Adolf Anderssen left their mark on the game. Soon however, professional tournament players began to realize that, while wild attacks could sometimes garner a spectacular win, they could also lead to a humiliating defeat. Players learned that they could win more games just by not losing, by chipping away until they could queen a pawn. The positional theories of Wilhelm Steinitz and Aron Nimzowitsch, sometimes called the Scientific Style, began to hold sway. Hypermodern players like Emanuel Lasker and José Raúl Capablanca in turn challenged these positional theories. Europe had adapted the roles of the Persian/Arabic chess pieces to fit European roles. Now chess and chess players were helping redefine social roles in European society.



Sammy Reshevsky, on tour, age 10.
1922



Lasker, Alkine, Capablanca, Marshall and
Tarrasch. St. Petersburg 1914

A Chess Warrior Rook knows: Where We Are Now

Political tumult in Europe was reflected in the chess world. Chess issues developed along national lines. In 1924 the Fédération Internationale des Échecs, or FIDE (pronounced “FeeDay”), was founded in Paris, France to regulate chess competitions and settle international chess disputes. Today FIDE, the World Chess Federation in English, is recognized as the worldwide authority for chess rules. They determine player ratings and grant FIDE Titles: Master, Grandmaster, and International Master. FIDE also presides over a network of regional, national and international chess tournaments that support a World Chess Championship Match that determines the world’s best chess player. As of January 2015 the World Chess Champion is Magnus Carlsen of Norway.



Bobby Fischer



1997, Deep Blue defeats then world champion
Garry Kasparov

The popularity of chess gave it propaganda power. The Soviet Union invested huge resources in an effort to use chess to embarrass the West and the United States. This proxy struggle in the Cold War reached its climax in the 1972 Match between the Russian champion, Boris Spasky and American savant, Bobby Fischer.

More recent drama in the chess world centers on the growing power of computers on the chessboard and how mere humans should deal with this challenge. You get to determine what happens next.