

The Chess Collector Magazine

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In memory of Dr Thomas Thomsen (1934 – 2026)



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Editors’ Comments

We unfortunately have to start this issue with the heartbreaking news that Dr Thomas Thomsen, our beloved Thomas, died unexpectedly and suddenly at home on Thursday 2 April 2026 at the age of 91. Thomas was synonymous with CCI, and his death leaves a huge void which will be impossible to fill. He was the warmest and friendliest person anyone could meet and a ray of sunshine in an often gloomy world. My first contact with Thomas was shortly after joining CCI- I was looking for information on a particular chess set and, although he didn’t know me at all, Thomas very generously spent time collating this information for me which I received by post. But that was Thomas- always kind, helpful and generous. I then had the great pleasure of meeting him in person in Oxford in 2024 and in Nuremberg last November. I was looking forward to many more wonderful conversations with him- how I wish that I had met him earlier. The world is definitely a sadder and poorer place without him.

We would like to celebrate Thomas’s life in full in the next issue of the Chess Collector Magazine so please do send us your memories and photos of Thomas. For the time being, our current CCI President, Michael Wiltshire, reflects on page 4 on a wonderful person and a life well- spent, which nevertheless still feels cut short as Thomas still had so much to give and so many plans.

We also regret to announce the death of Barry Martin- please see the obituary by Jim Joannou on page 8. In happier news, we report on a successful book launch and meeting of the Italian section of CCI on page 5, followed by information concerning a chess collection for sale and an announcement on page 8 for the 21st biennial CCI Congress meeting to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, between 7 and 11 October 2026. Our regular “Meet the Collectors” column features Corsta Danner on page 9 and our first article on “The BCC Popular” chess sets by Peter Armit starts on page 15. But spoiler alert- were they really made by BCC or by another well- known company? You will have to read the piece to find out! This is followed by two articles taking us

further afield than usual- on page 18, Bram Ueffing discusses figural chess sets from Madagascar and on page 22, Sergio Coellar Mideros and Peter Whitehead present a unique Galápagos- themed chess set. We then have the first of two book reviews in this issue, both by Peter Whitehead. On page 24, he discusses Massimiliano De Angelis's book "Antique Italian Chess Sets- Playing sets from the 18th and 19th century in History and in Art", whereas on page 28, Peter reviews the first volume (focused on India) of the series dedicated to "The Horta-Osório Collection of Antique Chess Sets" by CCI members Sir António Horta-Osório and Jonathan Crumiller. In between the two, we have a short Auction review on page 27.

Talking of book reviews, we need to mention that by Rick Knowlton of Larry List's wonderful book on Man Ray and Chess which you can find in the current issue of the CCI- USA magazine. I bought this book when it was first published being a huge Man Ray fan and cannot recommend it enough.

We would also like to remind all members that subscription fees for 2026 are now due.

Finally, please join us in welcoming new members Nahuel Crusta from Spain, Andreas Witticke from Germany and Luca Cardola from Italy.



Thomas Thomsen seated in between CCI members Corsta Danner (left) and Sir António Horta-Osório (right) at the 2024 CCI Convention in Oxford.

If you have any comments or suggestions for future issues of the magazine, then please send your Comments to: jimjoannou@btinternet.com and peter@whitehead.com

Front Cover

Top photo- Dr Thomas Thomsen receiving the 2025 Lasker Prize from the Chairman of the Lasker Society Thomas Weischede and from the President of the German Chess Federation, Ingrid Lauterbach.

Bottom photo- Thomas in March 2026 whilst visiting CCI member Reinhard Egert (seated middle) with CCI member Sir António Horta-Osório (seated right).

Members Section

Obituary- Dr Thomas H. Thomsen

By Michael Wiltshire, CCI- President



Dr Thomas Thomsen died unexpectedly and suddenly at home on Thursday 2 April 2026 at the age of 91. Thomas was the guiding light of CCI and followed Dr George Dean as President in the early 1990s. He was also co- founder of IKG, the Königstein Initiative Group, and the FSG- Förderkreis Schach-Geschichtsforschung e.V. Thomas was remarkably knowledgeable about chess sets and always happy to give advice to fellow collectors. His expertise was also sought after by the top auction houses.

After the first CCI meeting held in London in 1986, Thomas arranged the meeting in Munich in 1988 and thereafter annual meetings in Germany primarily for German members but also attended by a few eager and interested international members. He was also the main organiser of the European International biennial meetings in Paris, St Petersburg, Vienna, Florence, Madrid, Berlin and Dresden. For the 1994 St Petersburg meeting, Thomas and Franz-Josef Lang twice travelled there to arrange accommodation and make other arrangements, whilst in 2018 he and I spent two weekends visiting Prague to find a suitable hotel and make all arrangements for members. Although CCI- President *Emeritus* since I took over as President in 2010 at the Cambridge meeting, Thomas was still heavily involved in organising CCI meetings (including the recent German meeting held in Nuremberg in November) as well as enabling museum exhibitions and writing research articles about chess collecting. Thomas was awarded the 2025 Lasker Prize in recognition of his efforts at promoting chess as a cultural and educational asset, succeeding none other than former World Champion Magnus Carlsen who received it in 2024.

Many CCI members will have had the pleasure of spending a weekend at his home in Königstein, perusing his enormously large collection and enjoying his wonderful hospitality. Thomas was a great personality, a first- class skier who was regularly on the black slopes and a lover of the Salzburg annual festival. He was open and friendly, and always made everyone feel welcome.

Thomas was what we would call in England a “true gentleman”. He leaves a huge void in CCI and the wider chess- collecting world. He will be sorely missed.

Massimiliano De Angelis Book Launch and Assembly

Meeting of CCI- Italia, the Italian Section of CCI



The launch of Massimiliano De Angelis's latest book, "Antique Italian Chess Sets- Playing sets from the 18th and 19th century in History and in Art", took place on 21 January 2026 at the prestigious "Nuovo Circolo degli Scacchi", housed in Palazzo Altieri, Piazza del Gesù n. 49 in Rome. The author (who is also President of the Italian Section of CCI) engaged in discussion with the President of the Italian Chess Federation, Luigi Maggi, and with CCI- Italia Secretary Roberto Cassano (photo left). Massimiliano also answered questions from the audience of more than 60 attendees, including a significant number of Italian collectors and CCI members. A drinks reception was held following the event. A review of this book can be found on page 24 of this issue.

Following the book launch, an Assembly meeting of CCI- Italia, the Italian Section of CCI, took place in Rome on 22 January 2026 in the premises of the Accademia Scacchistica Romana, located at Via Luigi Pulci 14. The following 14 CCI-Italia members were present (listed alphabetically by surname): Maria Rosaria Adinolfi, Roberto Cassano, Corrado Ciano, Massimiliano De Angelis, Marco Di Domenico, Giovanni Longo, Giovanni Lorusso (with Antonella), Carlo Mola, Massimo Morganti, Rodolfo and Milly Pozzi, Uberto Quarta (with Greta), Diego Spinelli (with Angela), and Giampaolo Torselli.

The Assembly was honoured by the presence of Luigi Maggi, President of the Italian Chess Federation, who spoke about the Federation's primary mission, which is certainly competitive play, but also the preservation of chess culture, as no other sport has a history as ancient as that of chess. For this reason, since the beginning of his first term in 2021–2024, he has promoted the establishment of the "Culture and Honours Commission", whose main responsibilities include the publication of the quarterly magazine SCACCHITALIA (a free online publication) and the reunification of the Federal Library, currently housed at the Bertoliana Library in Vicenza, for the cataloguing of approximately 6,000 books and thousands of periodicals. Mr. Maggi also informed the Assembly of the existence of a very large amateur chess movement, from which CCI-Italia may draw in order to promote growth in its membership.

At the Assembly meeting, which actually marked the 25th anniversary of CCI- Italia, the new Executive Committee of CCI- Italia serving for the four- year term 2026 – 2029 was unanimously elected, being composed of:

President: Massimiliano De Angelis
Vice President: Gregorio Granata
Past President: Rodolfo Pozzi
Treasurers: Rodolfo Pozzi and Giovanni Longo
Public Relations: Milly Pozzi
Board Member: Diego Spinelli
Board Member: Carlo Mola
Secretary: Roberto Cassano

A number of scheduled activities took place following the conclusion of the Assembly meeting which were greatly appreciated by those present, including a presentation of the book “La Scacchiera sotto il Calicanto” by CCI member Giovanni Lorusso (please see the book review in The Chess Collector Magazine, Vol XXXV, No1, March 2025), a chess and book market, an informal lunch at the restaurant “Strada Romana” where traditional Roman dishes and good wine were enjoyed, and a guided visit of Massimiliano De Angelis’ chess collection. Please find below a selection of photos from this meeting.



Above left- the chess market; Above right- Giovanni Lorusso (standing on the right) presenting his book “La Scacchiera sotto il Calicanto”.

Below- CCI- Italia members enjoying lunch; clockwise from bottom left: Roberto Cassano, Carlo Mola, Rodolfo and Milly Pozzi, Massimiliano De Angelis (President of CCI- Italia), Luigi Maggi (President of the Italian Chess Federation), Giovanni Longo, Giovanni and Antonella Lorusso, Marco Di Domenico, Corrado Ciano, Giampaolo Torselli, Massimo Morganti, Uberto and Greta Quarta, Angela and Diego Spinelli.



Chess Collection for Sale

Ian Iceton, a long-standing CCI member, is looking to dispose of some or all of his collection; and is interested in receiving expressions of interest from members who may be interested in buying one or more sets (please note that Ian will give preference to buyers interested in multiple sets). The collection comprises around 70 sets in total that have been acquired over the last thirty years. About half the sets were bought at auction, mostly from Bloomsbury, Christies and Bonhams in London, especially when Luke Honey was curating the sales. Most of these sets were acquired for between £300 and £1000 at the time. Ian's chess collection also contains a variety of individual purchases, often bought on holiday from around the globe, mostly on a "casual or fun" basis, but nevertheless still very interesting.

Ian is also selling books related to chess- collecting, auction catalogues and selected chess memorabilia including items signed by Magnus Carlsen and others, and items related to the Sinquefeld cup and the World Chess Hall of Fame events.

Ian Iceton is based between Milton Keynes and London in the UK, so can arrange in-person delivery within that area, or he can arrange appropriate packing and postage to all destinations in the UK, Europe and worldwide. Please see the photos below for some examples, and an inventory of his collection has been added as a loose- leaf insert into this issue. For all further enquiries and additional photos, please contact Ian directly by email on i.iceton@sky.com.



Example items on sale by Ian Iceton- original Olivia Pilling chess set (above left), 19th Century English Barleycorn set (above right) and a 19th Century mahogany travel set with bone pieces.

Obituary- Barry Martin

By Jim Joannou



Barry Martin, Artist, Chess player and avid enthusiast of Howard Staunton, sadly passed away on 12th December 2025. Barry was not a chess set collector, but he wrote a number of articles in the 1990s and early 2000s discussing the origins of the Staunton Chess design. He took an artist's viewpoint and suggested that Nathaniel Cook(e) could not have designed the Staunton Chessmen, even though he registered the design as a patent in March 1849.

A number of articles were also published by CCI members Michael Mark and Robert Stoller (most notably Stoller's three-part publications 'Reflections on the Staunton Design') giving their research and views into the mystery of the Staunton design. Other detailed articles were later written by CCI member Marc Loost. Barry Martin wrote a couple of counter articles which were published in the Chess Collector Magazine in 2003 / 2004, in which he criticised Messrs. Mark and Stoller's viewpoints. Ultimately, Barry Martin's ideas on the Staunton Design / Nathaniel Cook(e) were not taken seriously by chess collectors.

Barry Martin was instrumental in founding The Staunton Society together with Brian Clivaz and CCI member Raymond Keene and in raising money for properly marking Howard Staunton's grave in Kensal Green cemetery in West London (picture right- standing from left to right- Adam Black, Brian Clivaz, Barry Martin and Raymond Keene).

A Full obituary can be found here: <https://www.thearticle.com/barry-martin-rip>.



21st Biennial CCI Congress to be held in Lisbon, Portugal

This is a "SAVE THE DATE" announcement for the 21st Biennial CCI Congress which will be held in Lisbon, Portugal, between Wednesday 7 October and Sunday 11 October 2026.

The congress hotel will be the Novotel Lisboa on Av. José Malhoa, 1 – 1A, 1099-051 Lisboa, Portugal.

Further details of the schedule will be communicated in the July issue of the Chess Collector Magazine.

Meet the Collectors- Corsta Danner

Peter Whitehead



Photo above- Corsta with an 18th century ivory Italian “Sea Life” set on a 17th century Spanish/Italian chess and tric-trac board.

When did you start collecting chess sets (or chess- related items)? In 2019.

What was the first item which you acquired? A “Burmese” Ivory Chess Set stained wine red.

What inspired you to start collecting? Since childhood, I have loved the film “The Thomas Crown Affair” with Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway. And I always particularly liked the scene where the two of them grow closer during a game of chess. The set in the film was a kind of “Burmese” Ivory set. For this reason, it was also the first set I ever bought, from an antique dealer in England.

How many sets do you own? Around about 100 sets and boards and approximately 200 individual pieces.

What is your collecting philosophy? My criteria are as follows: first, I simply have to like the set or the board. Secondly, I collect everything from the 19th century onwards. Thirdly, I only collect sets that were carved, i.e. made of ivory, bone, wood, rock crystal, horn, mammoth ivory, mother of pearl or amber.

What are the oldest, rarest and most valuable items in your collection?

A French Chess Board from 1613 (picture right together with a chess set representing the French in green versus British in red).



What makes your collection special? For me, a chess set only makes sense if it is placed on a board that is as suitable as possible for the set. That is why I have as many boards as I have chess sets 😊. When beautiful pieces are placed on a beautiful board, it pleases my eyes very much- 32 figures on 64 squares exert a magical pull on me!

What does your collection mean to you personally? My collection holds a special place in my life, especially since we deal almost exclusively with digital things on a daily basis these days. I find it fascinating to look at my display cases and experience an analogue pleasure. I always wonder who carved these pieces, how long they worked on them, who it was made for, what journey it has undertaken and what tools they used. I am constantly amazed by these artists who possessed incredible sculptural skills. Peaceful moments whenever I think about it.

What do you enjoy the most about collecting chess sets? Over time, I have had the pleasure of meeting many interesting people. Friendships have developed, and when you delve into a set's origins and the era from which it comes, you learn an incredible amount about materials, time, craftsmanship, and ultimately, improve your historical knowledge.

How has your collection evolved over time? Admittedly, at first, I was almost exclusively interested in Indian sets. However, this quickly changed after I had the opportunity to visit a few collectors. Now I collect all genres. My focus is clearly on artistically high-quality designed sets, rather than on playable sets.



Indian Chess Sets from Corsta Danner's collection- clockwise from top left- John Company Set, Polychrome ivory Rajasthani set with animal protomes for the minor pieces, a "Kashmir"- style set on a Visakhapatnam board as a folding book, and a John Company set with bishops as juggernauts on one side and war chariots on the other.

Do you regularly curate your collection? (e.g. sell/dispose of a set when you acquire a better version? Keep your collection to a certain number of sets?) If so, how do you decide which items to keep or let go off? Does this really ever come to an end? (Laughing 😄) I don't think so. But there will certainly be space problems at some point.

If you could add any set to your collection, which one would it be and why? Oh, there are quite a few. But right at the top of the list would be the Animalier set from the Dr. Jean-Claude Cholet Collection, Christie's, South Kensington 2 May 2007. It is breathtakingly beautiful.

Have you considered the legacy of your collection? Having had the privilege of acquiring some sets from older collectors, I would be delighted if one day a young collector stood on my doorstep, sharing the same enthusiasm that I had at their age. We chess collectors maintain and preserve cultural heritage well. And who better to protect that than someone who truly loves and cherishes these things?

What advice would you give to a new collector? Please share your insight and expertise. Only collect what you truly love. Otherwise, you will soon be selling it again.

How do you store, maintain and display your chess- related items? I keep all my sets in beautiful, glass display cases, and they are all very well illuminated by internal lights. I won't store any sets in drawers because I want to see them several times a day. That's what I enjoy. Please see photos below.

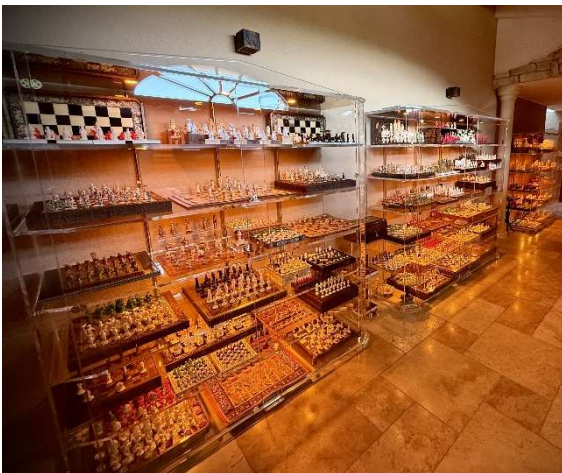


Photo above- “Hermes” Erbach Ivory and Ebony Set, only purchased in autumn 2025 from our beloved Thomas Thomsen.

Do you fix issues with pieces yourself? If so, what is your top repairing tip? Yes, I have repaired and re-carved quite a few things myself. However, only swords, sabres, or other small items. My tip is always to use a very high- magnifying glass, because the finer points are absolutely in the details, and you need a lot of patience.

Do you play chess and if so, at what level? Seahorse level 😊.

How long have you been a member of CCI and what do you enjoy about CCI? Since 2019. Contact with other collectors is invaluable – finding people who love the same things in one way or another. The way you love it is simply wonderful. You speak more or less the same language and can completely lose yourself in each other's passions. And it is also lovely to forge new friendships.

Photo right- 19th century Indian rock crystal set on an antique Ashtapada cloth board.



Photo left- 18th century ivory Dieppe set.



Photo right- 19th century natural and polychrome Japanese chess set made for export to Europe. The pieces stand on a unique carved and lacquered 19th century Japanese export board, possibly the only one in existence.



Tell us one thing about you that no- one would guess? At 15, I first completed an apprenticeship as a carpenter. And for this reason, I have the utmost respect for the artists who crafted these unique chess sets.

Are there any other special features in your collection that you would like to mention? Oh yes, I especially love the small and tiny chess sets. For example, I have the smallest Cantonese set and also the smallest Indian Rajasthani set that I have ever seen. I am absolutely amazed at how so much detail and character could be carved into such tiny pieces. To illustrate the size of the pieces, I have included a one- euro coin with each set in the photo below.



Photo Above- North Indian Bengali polychrome ivory set.



Photos on this page (clockwise from top left)- 19th century Erbach “Thirty Years War” set on a leather faux book board; early 20th century Egyptian ivory set; 19th century Thai “Gods against Demons” set on an 18th century Kashmiri Nard board; 18th century French ivory set on an Italian folding leather board; 19th century ivory polychrome Rajasthani set on a Burmese Sittuyin board.

Dear chess friends,

Thank you for your attention, for
reading my answers, and for
viewing my pictures.

All the best and see you soon!

Your chess-collector friend,

Corsta.



The BCC Popular

Peter Armit

The British Chess Company (BCC) advertised the Staunton Popular in 1899 (1), but sets of the same pattern continued to be sold for a number of years after BCC ceased trading. Some of these later sets appeared in boxes stamped Ayres at least until the middle of World War I.

Image 1 below shows boxwood Popular pieces above an advertisement for the sets taken from the 1902 BCC booklet suggesting “Laws for the Regulation of Games Played by Telegraph”, which offers the Popular in sizes 3, 4, 5, 6 on the BCC scale (height of king probably ca.10 cm down to ca. 7.0 cm). A later advert attached to the 1908 edition of Chess Amateur also lists a size 8 set (height of king just over 6.0 cm).



Image 1

The boxwood Popular pieces in Image 1 above show the characteristic “compressed” heads on the King and Queen, the large mitre- topped Bishop with its wide “gash” extending all the way to the collar, and the distinctive wooden Knight. The sets were made in Boxwood and Ebonised Boxwood, and it appears that initially, those sold by BCC, whilst it was still in business, came in labelled boxes with BCC crown stamps on the King’s side Knight and Rook. The stamp on the Knight was on the base, which was a feature of their other patterns of sets which had Xylonite Knights’ heads (2). The crown stamps were very quickly superseded by a “starburst” mark being used to denote the King’s side Knight and Rook (see Image 2 below). Very few of either of these stamped sets seem to have survived.



Image 2

After BCC had ceased trading, it was still possible to buy Popular sets via the Chess Amateur Magazine with which William Moffatt, co-founder of BCC, was closely associated (the magazine continued to offer BCC items from what was called the “Chess Amateur Depot”).

In the early Popular sets, the Knights’ heads were fixed to the base by means of a metal screw which was also a BCC practice. However, in most other BCC sets, the heads are attached by an ordinary metal screw being driven through the base (and usually the lead weight, if loaded) up into the head. In the original “starburst” Popular sets, the metal screw was adapted and fitted into the head so that it screwed downwards into the base (See Image 2 above).

There are, however, some features of Popular sets which were not characteristic of sets manufactured by BCC, most notably the absence of Xylonite heads on the Knights. The Rooks in the largest Popular size set had 5 merlons in their crenelations whereas, in all other BCC sets, the Rooks had 4- in smaller Popular sets, this was probably as a result of size constraint, rather than deliberate design. In both the Staunton pattern sets made by F H Ayres and the Popular, the merlons are thinner than those on the BCC Staunton. The crenels (embrasures) also sloped downwards and outwards in the Popular – a characteristic of Rooks in sets made by Ayres – whereas in normal BCC Staunton sets, these are horizontal. Image 3 below left shows an Ayres’ Staunton Rook, a Popular Rook, and a BCC Staunton Rook. The Kings’ crosses are also typical of Ayres and not the distinctive BCC version- see Image 4 below right. The Queens in the 10cm Popular set can have more than eight points on their coronets, whereas the BCC Queens, and those of smaller Popular sizes, have only eight.



Image 3



Image 4

It therefore seems probable that, as stated by Deasey and Lyons (1), the Popular sets were not made by BCC: it appears more likely that they were made by Ayres. This would explain the Ayres’ features in the sets, why the sets continued to be produced after BCC had ceased trading, why the price of the sets was considerably less than other BCC sets (the 1895 Strand Magazine article by William Fitzgerald “How Games are Made” shows that Ayres had the facilities to produce the sets quickly and in quantity, making them cheaper), and why some subsequently appeared in boxes with an Ayres stamp.

Image 5 below right shows the white pieces from an original BCC Popular set beside the black pieces from a smaller, later Popular set sold by Ayres. The pattern is identical.

As mentioned before, in the early sets identified by the “starburst” on the King’s side pieces, a metal screw protruding from the Knights’ heads was used to fix them to their bases as shown in Image 2. This unusual method of adapting the screw to fit into the Knight’s head would almost certainly have led to an increased cost in manufacture. Very quickly, this method of attaching the heads was abandoned in favour of attaching the heads by means of a peg (Image 6 below left). The screws and “starbursts” are absent in the much more common sets sold later from the “Chess Amateur Depot” and also by Ayres through other outlets. It was still possible, however, to request the Knights’ heads to be screwed to the base if ordered via “the Chess Amateur Depot”. In this case, the screw was driven up through the base (and weight) in the old BCC manner.



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7

After World War I, Ayres continued to sell versions of the Popular design, but they came with “French Style” Knights’ heads as shown in Image 7 above right.

References

- (1) The British Chess Company, Stroud and London by Mick Deasey and Guy Lyons.
- (2) For an image, please refer to “Jaques and British Chess Company Chess Sets” by Alan Fersht, p52.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Jonathan Angell for Image 7 (see his website, <https://www.the-chess-cabinet.online/>).

Thanks to Mick Deasey and Guy Lyons for their assistance in writing this article.

Figural Chess Sets from Madagascar

Bram Ueffing

All photos by Bram Ueffing unless stated otherwise.

Figural chess sets from Africa exist in many variations, but not much is known about them in collector circles. As chess is not a popular game in Africa, sets are almost exclusively made for the tourist trade. Most of us will have seen sets from the Makonde tribe in one shape or another. Such sets were made in high volumes, and the design of the pieces is often quite basic. Of course, there are also individual craftsmen who break out of the mould and make more elaborate sets. In this article, I would like to showcase two figural sets shown below from Madagascar that are made by local Malagasy artisans.



I want to start with a little bit of Malagasy chess history. When travellers in Madagascar pass by a street or park, it is highly likely that they will encounter people playing a game of “fanorona” which dates back to the 17th century (photo left by Tahina R). This game is much more akin to checkers than chess. Chess has only recently started to gain ground in Madagascar, thanks to those who organize local competitions and promote initiatives in schools. There is a small player base that is very passionate about the game, but with its 30 million inhabitants, Madagascar hasn’t produced a single grandmaster yet.

What piqued my interest as a collector was a contemporary set (photo top left) offered on a local marketplace in France about a year ago that I was able to acquire with the help of a friend. This set, which is made from local Fanazava wood (a rare, light- cream coloured wood commonly used to craft figures for nativity scenes), looked much more refined than the typical tourist set. There is a certain melancholy present that really attracted me in the pieces, with their dreamlike expressions. Unfortunately, the carver that made this set passed away last year.

The figures are depicting a classic scene of Malagasy people going out and dancing. The queen is holding a parasol, which has historically been associated with wealth or comfort, providing mobile shade. The bishops are holding an “aponga”: a small percussive instrument. The rooks represent “trano manara”: a “cold house”, identical to wooden nobles' houses except that they had no windows or hearth. The knights represent “aloalo”: a funerary pole sculpture that, along with the skulls of slaughtered zebu (a type of domestic cattle), is placed on the tombs of important people in the south-western region of Madagascar.



After acquiring the set, I decided to do more research and found an old advert on Facebook offering a figural set in a typical Malagasy style. I contacted the seller Hérifâtro Pânârivô and found out that he owns a shop located in central Madagascar called Mahats'art- photo left. Through our interactions, it was evident that he has a huge passion for the game of chess. Pânârivô actively promotes the game locally and organises events for his chess club.

We became enthralled with the idea of creating a new set to communicate Malagasy culture in an expressive way, while retaining authenticity. After discussing several ideas, we decided to go for a theatrical theme, showcasing dancers and musicians performing a typical Malagasy opera known as Hira Gasy. For pawns, the set would feature dancers on one side and musicians on the opposing side, resulting in a nice tension on the chess board. The following short clip was used as inspiration for the set:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWmMmx9ToDA>.

Hira Gasy is a vibrant, living art form deeply rooted in the culture of Madagascar's Highlands, particularly among the Merina people. It is a popular open-air performance combining singing, dancing, music, oratory (kabary) and comedy (picture below left, photo credit to Collectif 12). Every gesture, word, and note carries symbolic, educational, and spiritual meaning. Its origins date back to the 18th century, when King Andrianampoinimerina enlisted artistic troupes to gather the people and convey political and social messages. King Radama I continued this vision. Over time, Hira Gasy evolved into a true “people’s opera,” addressing themes of love, solidarity, justice, and ancestral wisdom through ohabolana, traditional proverbs rich in meaning. The costumes are flamboyant: men wear red frock coats adorned with braids, while women wear flowing dresses in bright colours. Instruments such as the violin, flute, drums, aponga, kabosy, and farara create an atmosphere that is both festive and solemn.



To realise our vision, Pânârivô hired Narindra (pictured bottom right on prior page), a local carver who was able to capture the poses and facial expressions of the dancers and musicians in local hardwoods and bring the characters to life. I feel fortunate that he was willing to lend his talents to this project. There were significant setbacks during this project as the political situation in Madagascar became very unstable. Narindra had to endure some terrible events along the way, but persevered, resulting in the first Hira Gasy chess set. I couldn't be prouder of what was achieved- please see photos below.



The characters depict the court of king Radama I during his travels performing a Hira Gasy opera in the 1800s. The queen is Ranavalona, who became known as the mad queen when she seized (and abused) power after Radama's death. The bishops represent rhythm beaters, the knights are Aloalo (funerary poles) and the rooks represent tranomanara (cold houses).

The pawns (shown below) are dancers and musicians (each one in a different pose or playing a different musical instrument) translating important messages to the people of Madagascar.



Radama I (reigned 1810 –1828) is considered the first sovereign to be recognized as "King of Madagascar" by European powers, transforming the Merina Kingdom from a regional power into a dominant entity controlling two-thirds of the island. Known for modernization, he opened the country to international trade and abolished the slave trade. His attire was strongly influenced by contemporary British costumes.



Publications for Sale

The FSG- Förderkreis Schach- Geschichtsforschung e.V.- is a non- profit organisation created in 1996 with the aim to initiate and promote research on the origin and development of chess, with a special focus on Archaeology and Indology. Over the years, the FSG has produced a number of publications including:

- “Arabisch-islamische Schachfiguren” (“Arabian- Islamic Chessmen“) accompanying the 1997 exhibition in Wiesbaden with articles in German and English
- “Alte indische Schachfiguren” (“Antique Indian Chessmen“) accompanying the 1997 exhibition in Wiesbaden with articles in German and English
- “Jean- Marc Antoine Mila de Cabarieu’s Chess sets” (in English and German, dedicated to the 17th Biennial CCI Congress, Paris 2016)

In addition, a number of CCI publications are still available or could be reprinted if there is sufficient demand. If you are interested in any of these FSG publications or in a listing of the CCI publications, please email me at peter@whitehead.com.

A Galápagos- themed Chess Set

Sergio Coellar Mideros and Peter Whitehead

All photos by Sergio Coellar Mideros unless stated otherwise.



The Galápagos are an archipelago of 127 islands lying in the Eastern Pacific around 900km west off the coast of Ecuador to which they formally belong. The Galápagos Islands are named after the giant tortoises which were once plentiful there. The islands were first recorded in 1535, when the Spanish bishop Tomás de Berlanga arrived there by accident during a trip. Later, pirates and whalers visited the islands to resupply and make repairs but left no permanent settlements. In 1835, Charles Darwin spent five weeks exploring the Galapagos aboard HMS Beagle. His observations, especially of finches adapted to different islands, inspired his theory of evolution by natural selection. Darwin's revolutionary ideas were captured in his book “On the Origin of Species”, which forever links the Galápagos to the study of evolution. As recorded by Darwin in “The Voyage of the Beagle”, he even learnt to play chess aboard the Beagle under the guidance of Captain FitzRoy!

Today, the Galápagos are home to a small human population of around 30 000, concentrated mainly on the islands of Santa Cruz, San Cristóbal and Isabela. Their focus is on ecotourism and conservation, under strict regulations designed to protect their unique ecosystems. The Galápagos National Park, created in 1959 by the Ecuadorian government, and the Charles Darwin Research Station play a fundamental role in promoting sustainable tourism and the preservation of this UNESCO World Heritage site.



The islands are the habitat of unique and fearless wildlife including the Galápagos brown pelicans, magnificent frigatebirds, blue- footed boobies, marine iguanas, flightless cormorants, the Galápagos seahorses (which can reach up to 30cm in size), bottlenose dolphins, sea turtles, fur seals and sea lions as well as the Galápagos penguins (the only penguins found north of the equator), in addition to their eponymous giant tortoises.

The unique Galápagos- themed chess set shown above embodies some of this wildlife in tagua nut. There can be no doubt that inspiration for the pieces came from the wildlife found uniquely in the Galápagos as the queen and king (shown on the left) are portrayed as the highly distinctive magnificent frigate bird and the Galápagos brown pelican respectively.

The rooks are depicted as bottlenose dolphins, knights and bishops as Galápagos seahorses and penguins respectively, whilst the pawns are giant tortoises (photos below). The dolphins are on a pedestal as though riding a wave and their added height aesthetically balances the arrangement of the pieces on the board.



The Galápagos Islands were also the habitat of Lonesome George, the last individual of the Giant Pinto Tortoise species, which became extinct on June 24, 2012. One can only speculate that this chess set, created in 2013 by an unknown artist, was created in memory of Lonesome George.

Ecuador has always been a significant producer of tagua nut since it was first marketed in around 1865 with a first shipment to Germany for use as high- quality buttons in the clothing industry. Also known as vegetable ivory, the polished endosperm of the seed of the *Phytelephas macrocarpa* palm tree resembles animal ivory in look and feel. It can also be carved and dyed. In Ecuador, tagua is obtained from *Phytelephas aequatorialis*, which exists in the subtropical zone between the Andes and the Ecuadorian coast, especially in the province of Manabí. However, the tagua nut is small in size explaining the king height of 5.9 cm in this set.

Book Review

“Antique Italian Chess Sets- Playing Sets from the 18th and 19th century in History and in Art”- by Massimiliano De Angelis

Massimiliano De Angelis- or simply Max as he is affectionally known- is a long- standing CCI member and President of the Italian section of CCI. He has been an enthusiastic chess collector for more than thirty years, with a particular emphasis on Italian pieces. His focus on antique Italian chess sets not only relates to collecting but also researching their origins and evolution in order to propose a taxonomy of such chess sets. This passion led to the publication in 2018 of his first book “Antique Italian Chess Sets- Playing sets from the 18th and 19th century” which received enormous praise and success both at home and abroad (please see The Chess Collector Magazine Volume 28, No. 2, June 2019, page 7 for a book review). Following an intermediate research update published in the Chess Collector Magazine (Volume 30, No 1, March 2021, pages 8-13), Max has now produced a significantly enhanced version of his book, resulting from the incorporation of in- depth study on previously unknown rare abstract Italian chess sets from the 18th and 19th century. The discovery of these additional sets has further enabled Max to propose new considerations on the classification of chess sets that were produced and sold in this period in Italy. His new book aims to provide certainty to the chess world regarding the attribution of 18th and 19th century Italian playing sets produced and sold in certain specific areas of the Italian peninsula and further cements his position as the expert on such antique Italian sets.



Before carrying out a detailed review, a few general comments are in order. At 123 pages and with ~100 photos (compared to 95 pages and ~80 photos for the 2018 book), “Antique Italian Chess Sets- Playing sets from the 18th and 19th century in History and in Art” is significantly revised and enhanced- even the bibliography has more than double the entries of the earlier edition. But as Max does make clear, this is not a completely new book- it does build on the previous version, and the reader should not be surprised to see some unchanged material for those chess sets whose attribution was fully finalised in the previous edition. In several cases, Max has rearranged prior content to reflect updated conclusions which makes this new version more consistent both chronologically and from a reading perspective. This book has been put together by the same team as the earlier one- same publisher, graphic designer, photographer and translator- and therefore exhibits the same high levels of quality which made the 2018 book such a pleasure to read - the high- quality colour photographs, and

attention to detail from a graphics design and typographical perspective further enhancing the reader’s experience. As previously, the text has been translated into English making this easily accessible as well to an international audience- hopefully this will have a self- reinforcing effect on further publications in this area as non- Italian speaking collectors from around the world bring to Max’s attention examples of Italian playing sets in their inventory.

The first part of the book after the preface, presentation, introduction and acknowledgements deals, somewhat paradoxically given the book’s subtitle, with antique playing sets dating from before the 18th century. However, unlike the later periods, Max does not attempt to classify these early pieces but rather they enable

him to introduce a recurring theme in this book- namely the difficulty in drawing conclusions about age, origin and design evolution/impact (all prerequisites for classification) when confronted with the lack of evidence resulting from either the absence of documentation, and/or the scarcity of playing sets available in the public domain. This challenge doesn't only apply to such early periods but also to the later ones covered by his book. It is *precisely* the discovery of certain documents and additional playing sets which has facilitated the expanded taxonomy of Italian playing sets detailed within this updated book.

The section on the pre- 1800s is actually new to this updated version. It provides the correct home for the earliest chess set shown in the 2018 edition- at that time, although clearly stated by Max as being from the late 17th century, it had to be placed somewhat suboptimally at the end of the chapter on "Other 18th century sets". This pre- 1800s section has also allowed the inclusion of lovely photos of several early sets and pieces which readers will find very interesting, together with how the design details on pieces from one early set have facilitated the dating of another one. As an aside, the 16th century set shown on page 27 is very similar to the bust set F63 which Dermot and Ciaran Rochford flagged as one of the favourites in their collection (please refer to "Meet the Collectors", The Chess Collector Magazine, vol XXXV, No. 2, July 2025 and https://www.chessantiquesonline.com/rochford_collection/secbig/ritabust.html).

In the 2018 book, Max had only been confident in proposing two classes of chess sets for his taxonomy, namely the "classic Tuscan" and "Piedmontese" sets. As a result of the discovery of additional material, Max's proposed classification of Italian playing sets has been greatly enhanced with the *addition* of the following types of playing sets- "Ancient Rome", "Mazzinian", "Bishops with terminals with simple triangles", and "Bishops with terminals with overlapping triangles". All classes, with the exception of the "Piedmontese" type, belong to the 18th century.

This book considers Italian *playing* sets from the 18th and 19th century rather than the *figural* sets for which Italian craftsmen were celebrated during this period. Max uses different terms interchangeably in this regard- *non- ornamental*, *abstract*, *non- figural*, and of course *playing*. However, the boundary between figural and non- figural is subjective as specific playing sets may be partly composed of individual pieces which are themselves figural. This is always in the eye of the beholder. A knight depicted as a horse's head is figural but also the standard representation of that piece for sets considered as purely abstract. As Max states on page 16, a truly figural set is impossible to play with due to the exotic nature of its theme, and are instead ornamental objects for display as works of art. Readers should therefore not be surprised to see the inclusion of "Ancient Rome" sets as a separate class in this enhanced taxonomy even though, as illustrated on pages 38 and 40, a number of their pieces are definitely figural. In addition to making his classification more complete, the inclusion of Ancient Rome sets also enables a better dating of the fully abstract "Mazzinian" chess set types thanks to the very close similarities in the carving of the knights and in the use of spiral finials across both "Ancient Rome" and "Mazzinian" sets.

Giuseppe Mazzini was a leading figure in the *Risorgimento*, the unification of Italy in the 19th century, and was part of the triumvirate of the short- lived Roman Republic of 1849. He owned a chess set which is on display in the Museo del Risorgimento in his hometown of Genoa. Even though Max did state his belief at the time that this set dated from the late 18th century, Mazzini's own set was actually presented in the chapter on 19th century sets in the 2018 edition and, furthermore, as a stand- alone set of interest rather than representative of a larger body of similar sets. This gets upgraded in the new edition in two ways- the similarities in the knights and use of spiral finials with those from several "Ancient Rome" sets providing him with the required evidence to classify this set as 18th century, and the discovery of other sets with similar features to that owned

by Mazzini enabling Max to conclude that, far from being a one- off set, this was clearly in local production at the time, leading to the introduction of a “Mazzinian” class of Italian playing sets in Max’s taxonomy.

The book content related to the classic Tuscan class is essentially unchanged from the 2018 version- the removal of the photo of the ebony and ivory set which was definitely not “classic Tuscan” making this fully consistent in this updated version. Similarly, the content on the 19th century “Piedmontese” type of chess set which had already been proposed in 2018 is largely unchanged- the main change being the addition of a photo of a painting depicting such a set in use. “Piedmontese” sets are those with the knights in the shape of “question marks” with which readers are likely to be the most familiar.

Max’s expanded taxonomy additionally contains two new 18th century classes both characterised in terms of features of their bishops, namely “Bishops with terminals with simple triangles”, and “Bishops with terminals with overlapping triangles”. In the earlier edition, Max had already shown extracts from two Italian books on chess published in the first half of the 19th century with drawings of bishops with overlapping triangles, together with photos of one set depicting such a feature. However, at the time, Max considered this set “extraordinary”, and as a one- off, unclassifiable. The acquisition of another similar set, together with a technical drawing from a proposed chess spin- off game showing this feature, gave him the confidence to postulate the existence of such a class of chess sets. The class of bishops with simple triangles is completely new in this updated edition- the 2018 edition did not even contain a single set displaying such a feature whereas Max has included photos of two such chess sets now.

As in the earlier edition, Max also has sections covering 18th and 19th century sets which keep on resisting classification due to the lack of material to facilitate their attribution. These are wonderful sets in their own right and beautifully reproduced in the book. Definitely Italian in origin, hopefully their classification will follow in time.

As previously mentioned, this updated edition was facilitated by the fact that more Italian playing sets were made accessible to Max for his research (either directly entering his collection or brought to his attention by private collectors), thereby enabling him to postulate a firm taxonomy for the classification of these sets. But, given the popularity of chess during this period, the scarcity of Italian playing sets in the possession of chess collectors is perplexing compared with the prevalence of those from other European countries, especially from the 19th century. Max explains this puzzle by the fact that such Italian sets were usually family- owned, cherished and passed down from one generation to the next, and consequently relatively few sets are to be found on the open market compared with, for example, their French, English or German equivalents.

The impact of this family tradition is amplified, as Max mentions, by the historical fragmentation of Italy in different states, kingdoms, and duchies prior to unification in 1861, the often hard political boundaries reinforcing the natural lack of diffusion of specific types of sets and/or their design outside of their original localisation resulting from the mistrust and derision which different parts of the peninsula felt for each other anyway. However, when such sets do become available, they tend to be in pristine condition having been kept safely stored in custom- made, oak cylindrical containers such as those shown on page 111. They also benefit from the practice, common to Italian artisans, of turning and carving each piece from a single piece of wood rather than through the joining of bases and bodies separately turned and carved but more likely to suffer damage. This rarity of sets is an ongoing challenge to researchers, and I am sure that Max would love to hear from you if you have an Italian playing set in your collection!

This complexity in classifying sets is magnified when it comes to quantifying the impact of the design of one type of chess set on subsequent classes as well as the effect that foreign designs may have had on local ones, and *vice-versa*. For me, one of the most exciting sets included in Max's book is the mid- 19th century English bone one (natural and red stained) shown on pages 74 and 75 which uniquely has bishops with pairs of overlapping triangles!! This difficulty is also illustrated through the incorrect attribution of the origins of sets even by experts. A good example is given by Max on pages 54 – 55 relating to the set auctioned as Lot 129 by Bonhams on 14 October 2008 and described as from Nuremberg although this is clearly a "Classic Tuscan" set.

This book is definitely a worthy addition to any library on chess collecting as it fills a significant gap in our chess knowledge. As Max has highlighted, Italian playing sets from the 18th and 19th centuries are hard to find within Italy and even rarer outside the peninsula. Could this diminish the appeal of the book for non-Italian members? I sincerely hope not as they would definitely be missing out otherwise. After all, if you cannot own an Italian playing set, then the next best thing has to be owning a very informative book full of beautiful photos of such sets- and this is precisely what Max has produced. I am also conscious that a number of our readers are likely to have already purchased the earlier 2018 version and this begs the question- should you buy the updated version as well? My answer would be a resounding YES. The enhanced taxonomy with details of 4 new classes, and photos of previously undocumented chess sets are definitely worth the upgrade!

Finally, please note that CCI members will receive a special 30% discount on the publishers' book price- to avail yourself of this offer, please contact Max directly by email at maxchess2001@yahoo.it to purchase the book rather than contacting the publishers.

Peter Whitehead

Auction Review

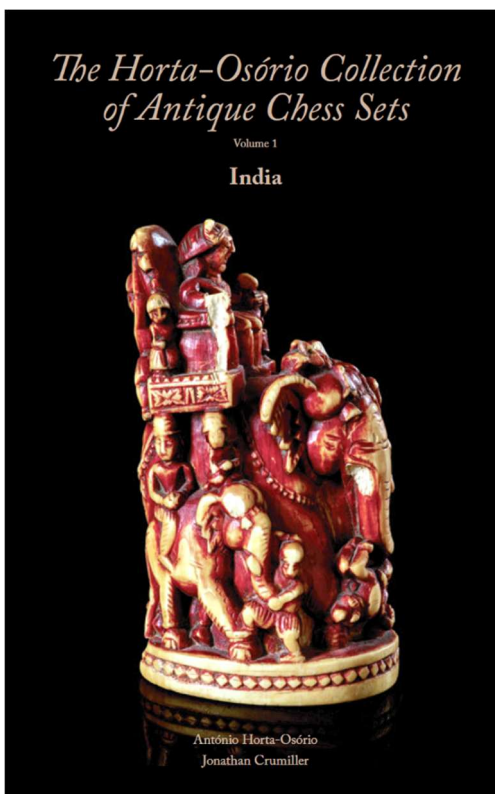
The personal set of the greatest chess player of the 18th century, François- André Danican Philidor (1726 – 1795), was sold at auction in Paris for a hammer price of EUR 65k (£57k, \$75k) (photo right). The set, in boxwood and rosewood with 10cm kings, dating to ~1750, and with a replacement white pawn, had until now been kept by his descendants. A 19th century Russian "Archangel" pattern chess set (photo below) sold for a hammer price of £3100 (\$4100, EUR 3550).



Book Review

“The Horta-Osório Collection of Antique Chess Sets- Volume 1- India”- by António Horta-Osório and Jonathan Crumiller

I was absolutely speechless when I first set eyes on Volume 1 of the planned series of books on the antique chess set collection belonging to CCI member Sir António Horta-Osório. Magnificent. Superb. Outstanding. I cannot find enough superlatives to summarise my emotions. Even now, after having spent a reasonable amount of time reading and looking at it in detail, it still takes my breath away. I have most books on chess collecting but this one surpasses them all and by a considerable way. I do believe that it is unparalleled. As a book, it works on different levels. It is one of the most stunning coffee table books that I have ever seen on any topic. At 424 pages in length and weighing in at 3.1kg, it is a mighty tome. In the Introduction, António states that “We have placed special emphasis on the quality of the photos”. That is the understatement of the decade! The quality of the photography is unbelievable. You feel as though you are holding the pieces in your own hands up close with all details perfectly visible. Each single page is 28cm by 30cm which is between A4 and A3 paper size. Imagine a full- page photo of a board or a single chess piece in that sort of detail. Many of the chess sets are shown across double page spreads which are much wider than A3 size! The photographers have ensured that every photo is the best it can be- giving attention to the composition and layout of the pieces on the page, revealing close- up details, and everything in perfect focus which is not easy given the three-dimensional nature of intricate figural chess sets. Even the reflection of pieces in the surface on which they are standing is often captured on film!



But this is so much more than “simply” the best coffee table book you will ever own. The book is divided into themes, each a chapter and semi- independent essay written by world- renowned chess experts and historians to accompany and illustrate items from the collection. In the Introduction, António emphasises that a key aspect of the pleasure of collecting for him is researching and documenting his sets and this is definitely reflected in this book which will also serve as an invaluable research tool for collectors and become one of the standard reference texts on antique Indian chess sets, if not the reference. The chapters are scholarly but definitely not dry. António provides the personal touch to many of the items illustrated through recurring “Fond Memories” nuggets which really bring the items to life. The chapters are split mainly by region (e.g. Visakhapatnam, Rajasthan, North India, South India and so on) but also by theme (e.g. John Company sets, Islamic pattern sets, domestic Indian sets) and special topics (e.g. material and techniques, single pieces, chess boards in the Age of Discovery). The list of authors of individual chapters is as follows- António Horta- Osório, Jonathan Crumiller, Ulrich Schädler, Thomas Thomsen, Raymond Keene, Jackie Eales, Jacob Schmidt-Madsen, Leander Feiler, and Hugo Miguel Crespo. I will consider each chapter in turn.

Chapter 1, the Introduction, is written by both António Horta-Osório and Jonathan Crumiller. Over several pages, António describes his chess collecting journey and how, over as little as 25 years, he has been able to build arguably one of the best collections of antique figural chess sets in the world- his lack of enthusiasm for Staunton and other such playing sets resulting from too many matches played with such sets in his youth- a clear example of “familiarity breeds contempt”. António is very clear about his collecting criteria- antique (19th century or earlier), figural or Islamic, in carveable material (with gold the exception); and antique boards also in carveable material but older (ideally 17th century or earlier) than the chess pieces as boards are more resistant (and hence relatively more abundant for a given period). He also collects individual pieces when full sets do not exist anymore or are extremely hard to find. These criteria should give you a clear idea of the quality of his collection. In total, António has around 600 chess sets and 200 boards- of these, 160 are from India or the Indian sub-continent and 150 are included in this book (the few exclusions being mostly replicas). In addition, the book details 24 boards and 10 individual pieces.

Many of the sets shown in this book are carved out of elephant ivory, the collecting of which can be a controversial topic which all collectors would have thought about at some stage. Jon addresses the subject of “Antique Ivory in Today’s World” by emphasising that all ivory items in António’s collection are at least 100 years old and governed by CITES. He is clear that the mandate to protect the world’s surviving elephants is “incontrovertible” but that this is not incompatible with protecting the world’s cultural history- sacrificing those artefacts will not preserve today’s remaining elephants in any way. Personally, I agree with Jon although others may take a harder line on this topic. Nevertheless, I am always reminded of the duality of man- both ruthless predator and admirer of great beauty. António closes the introductory chapter by thanking Jon for all his efforts in making this publication possible. We should all extend our thanks to Jon as well!

Chapter 2 by Ulrich Schädler provides an “Overview of Antique Indian Chess Sets (For Export, but Not Only)” covering not only the main regional centres (such as Rajasthan, Berhampore and Visakhapatnam) involved in manufacturing chess- related items mainly for foreign customers but also examines some of the historical and political influences impacting these activities. I was not actually aware that checkered wooden boards with alternating colours (especially in black and white) were the “signature” of boards destined for the European market, Indian boards being usually made of cloth with only distinct markings for the central and corner squares as well as the central squares of each of the four edges. As the production areas summarised by Ulrich in this chapter are then considered in detail in the rest of the book, I will only highlight another interesting fact showing my ignorance- in Rajasthani sets, red typically indicates Hindus and green Muslims. The matching essay on “Domestic Antique Indian Chess Sets” is provided later in Chapter 14 by Leander Feiler.

Thomas Thomsen’s chapter on “Techniques and Materials Used by Craftsmen in India for the Manufacture of Chessmen and Boards in the 18th and 19th Centuries” is similar in spirit to his contribution “Materials and Techniques” in Ref 1, whilst at the same time being more detailed within a narrower focus- namely the carving and turning of chessmen (and their associated staining and painting) as well as the manufacture of boards in India only. This is a highly instructive essay full of interesting facts- from the structure of commercial workshops to the importance of free- hand drawing and the fact that Indian craftsmen preferred African or Burmese ivory rather than that available locally (due to their finer grain and the fact that local ivory was more prone to yellowing). And how do you polish ivory? I would never have guessed- using fish scales and chalk! Thomas considers the two basic types of Indian chessmen- turned (with possibly additional carving) exemplified by all Muslim sets as well as those from Visakhapatnam and Berhampore; and the purely carved figural type epitomised by John Company sets and those from Rajasthan. Both types could be made either in a single piece or in sections which are then joined by threads or pegs. He also describes the century- old tools

which would have been used, emphasising that there is no evidence of the use of British ornamental lathes such as that by Holtzapffel in India. Thomas then details the staining process for ivory pieces as well as the source of dyes for the ubiquitous red and green colours used in India (including the boiling down of old red British uniforms to recover dye!). His description of the *sadeli* process originating in Persia used to inlay chess boards reminded me of a recent visit to Granada and a demonstration by an artisan near the Alhambra of the production of eight- pointed Islamic star mosaics for inlaying in chess boards.

The first three chapters being more general in content, the detailed essays and their illustrations using items from António's collection begin in earnest from Chapter 4 by Ulrich Schädler on "Medieval and Antique Pieces (Single Pieces, 7th to 18th Centuries)" in which he discusses early individual chess pieces. These provide us with information about the iconography, style and technique of early modern Indian chess sets prior to British colonial rule and with Indo- Portuguese themes- a description of the context of each piece complementing close- up photos in which every detail is visible to the reader. Ulrich finishes this topic by considering the unusually large "elephant kings" only a handful of which exist, the most famous one being the 16cm tall so- called "Charlemagne" piece held in Paris and long thought (most likely erroneously) to have been a gift from the Abasid Caliph to the Holy Roman Emperor. António actually has two such elephant kings in his collection- the 16.2cm "Red Elephant" which has been dated by radiocarbon and pigment analysis to the 6th – 9th Century and a 12.5cm piece radiocarbon dated to the 7th Century. Both are lavishly illustrated from all angles over several pages in the book with Ulrich providing a comparison of them to the other known elephant kings in museums and private collections in Paris and Germany. The chapter concludes with a discussion of one of the key outstanding questions relating to such "elephant kings"- given that no other chess pieces have survived which could have formed sets with these "kings", should these be considered as chess pieces or individual items crafted without reference to the game?

The next two chapters relate to chess sets made in West Bengal on the far eastern side of India, ~200km north of Kolkata, specifically the manufacturing centres around the towns of Murshidabad and Berhampore. In Chapter 5, Jon Crumiller considers "The Chess Sets of the East India Company" (EIC) which, for most collectors, are arguably the pinnacle of chess collecting both in terms of rarity (~100 – 150 sets in existence today) and artistry. More commonly known as "John Company" sets after the nickname for the EIC (probably deriving from the "Jan Compagnie" moniker used for the Dutch EIC, an earlier competitor of the British EIC), these chess sets were crafted in the Berhampore area under the control of the EIC. Historically, the East India Company is probably unique among commercial entities and really functioned more as an occupying force with up to 250 000 soldiers, mostly hired Indian sepoys. Typically, after the EIC secured a territory, it took over control of the manufacturing of goods in that area, including chess sets. After the Battle of Plassey in 1757 in which the British EIC secured a decisive victory against the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies, the East India Company took complete control of Bengal. This also marked the end of French influence in India and the start of almost 200 years of British domination and colonial rule in India.

The British leader at the Battle of Plassey was Robert Clive, also known as "Clive of India" which is the most popular theme followed by John Company sets- both sides in battle formation, pawns armed with rifles on one side and spears/swords on the other, the king riding on a howdah on an elephant (usually with a canopy), the queen also riding on an elephant (but typically) under an umbrella, bishops as riders on camels, knights as horsemen and rooks as towers. The two sides are normally distinguished by their bases- one natural, the other stained (red, green or black), with the body of the pieces usually unstained. The rarest John Company sets have a different representation for bishops- as "juggernauts" instead- large, elaborate chariots drawn by horses, water buffalos or other such "beasts of burden". Other variations on the "standard" representation do occur-

use of other animals such as lions, rhinoceroses, water buffalos, and rooks as Bengal- style boats and even “Roman” chariots. Jon masterfully explains these peculiarities in his essay. If I counted correctly, 16 John Company sets are depicted in this chapter with expert commentary and not only those adhering to the “standard” representation- all possible variants are shown. And the juggernauts in Figure 3 on page 38!!! Absolutely stunning!!

Jon also discusses a set which is “probably” a John Company set (although it may have been manufactured elsewhere in Northern India) and uses this as a launchpad for the question of “what is a John Company set?” Must there be a clear business association with the East India Company (which was decommissioned in 1874 so that any sets made after this date would not fit into this classification) or are references to its well- known design style sufficient? And what about sets in which most pieces are definitely “John Company”, but key pieces are clearly different? As Jon mentions, the John Company design continued to be made and marketed well into the 20th century but with degrading quality making the use of the term in such modern sets meaningless compared to the real examples covered in this chapter.

Chapter 6 “Other Sets from Murshidabad and Berhampore” by Ulrich Schädler is the second essay covering chess sets made in West Bengal, specifically those erroneously- called “Kashmir”- style and Berhampore sets (including monobloc ones). But naturally, the examples depicted here are superb- that set with the bishops as double- headed camels shown in Figure 9 on page 40!! Unlike John Company sets, the pieces here were turned and carved in different parts and then screwed together (usually base, stem and top) so that the same single elements could be used in different combinations in different pieces resulting in a certain level of homogeneity in style. The sets do share some design similarities with John Company ones- namely rooks as architectural towers and, when the pawns are figural, then these are represented in the shape of standing guards or soldiers. However, the turned and carved sets from Murshidabad and Berhampore share many more artistic features with those from Visakhapatnam- a preference for the same sort of detailed and flamboyant ornamental elements such as overhanging or upright leaves, floral scrolls, the use of galleries as structural parts and the same representation of bishops as “flaming mitres” and knights as horses’ heads- although those from Visakhapatnam tend to be a lot more slender than their “chunkier” West Bengal counterparts. Several Berhampore sets shown have stylistically “British” bodies (of “Dublin” and “St George’s” patterns) to which an upper part reflecting “Indian” designs have been added. The chess pieces in the sets in this chapter are mainly non- figural but the chapter finishes with an example of an exceptional figural set from West Bengal with one side representing Europeans and the other Orientals.

Chapters 7 and 8, both by Ulrich Schädler, deal with chess- related items made in Visakhapatnam, a harbour town on the east coast of India about 600 km north of Chennai and 900 km south of Kolkata. The British East India Company took control of the town in 1765 and thereafter, its importance as a commercial port grew. Prior to that, the Dutch, French and English all had trading posts there. Chapter 7 addresses “Classic Board Games and Chess Sets from Visakhapatnam” which are easily recognisable given the standardisation of shapes and manufacturing techniques. The boxes and boards are made by thin layers of ivory, horn, tortoiseshell or sandalwood being inlaid or (more commonly) veneered onto a wooden “carcass”. Decorative details such as floral motifs or Chinese scenes are engraved onto the ivory and then filled with black lacquer resulting in the typical Visakhapatnam black and white style. The game boxes and boards typically have chess on one side and backgammon on the other. Some game boxes were constructed to hold 3 smaller boxes (one each for the white and black chess pieces, and the third for all the backgammon counters) whereas others only had one box for the pieces. Miniature Visakhapatnam chess tables display ivory fretwork techniques for decoration, and this was also used on boxes and boards in Games Compendiums (e.g. Figure 7 on page 39).

The chess pieces borrow stylistic elements from both European and Indian influences. Ulrich makes a strong case that French, Central European and Danish chess design components are reflected in Visakhapatnam chess sets. The “Classic” style is for two sections- a turned, slender pedestal/stem resting on a flat or conical plinth on top of which rests the feature distinguishing the actual chess piece. The stem may consist of several elements- oval shapes with a series of discs or rings and a possible gallery. Often this lower section is identical for king and queen, and for bishop, knight and pawn differing only in size. The top section represents the actual piece- for example, a crown, mitre, horse’s head or a turret for rooks (although these also often stand directly on the board without stem). The white side is made of ivory whereas the black side is usually in horn or sandalwood although occasionally in ivory stained green or red. Only minor variations exist in this “classic” Visakhapatnam design with embellishments including Maltese crosses on top of crowns for the kings, flames on top of both king and queen pieces, feathers on horse’s heads and flags or figures on turrets. As you would expect, all of these features of boxes, boards and pieces are illustrated via wonderful examples from António’s collection. As Ulrich mentions, these “classic” Visakhapatnam sets were made in large enough numbers that it is usually always possible to find comparative sets. Not surprisingly, the chapter concludes with an example of a set for which no comparable can be found!

Chapter 8 on “Other Board Games and Chess Sets from Visakhapatnam considers several heterogeneous types of chess sets from the area, namely “Pepys”, “Indo- Burmese”, and “Central Provinces” sets. Pepys sets, with their elegant, slender and beautifully decorated pieces in ivory (one side natural, the other typically stained green) are named after a set supposedly gifted to the famous diarist Samuel Pepys although this does seem to be an incorrect attribution. Four Pepys sets are shown (including Figure 6 on page 39) with detailed comparisons of their structure by Ulrich. “Burmese” ivory sets are another example of erroneous historical attribution as these are now commonly accepted as being Chinese- export products. Ulrich discusses in detail the differences between such “Burmese” sets and a set in António’s collection which Ulrich classifies as “Indo-Burmese” to reflect its likely manufacture in Visakhapatnam. The third and final heterogeneous group examined by Ulrich in this chapter are the so- called “Central Provinces” sets of which 10 are depicted and analysed in detail. These are hard to summarise given their heterogeneity- some show a dependence on John Company sets (bishops as flag- bearing lions echoing the EIC coat of arms), there is a curious mix of references to Britain, India and Classical Antiquity (sphinxes, naked or draped statues) and the depiction of people is not that accurate. Central Provinces sets can however be divided into two groups depending on the representation of the king and queen as either British monarchs or Indian king and vizier riding elephants. The chapter finishes with another exception- a set with rooks as boats which is not made in Bengal (see Chapter 11).

The next chapter, also by Ulrich Schädler, is entitled “Chess Sets from Rajasthan (18th and 19th Centuries)” and details 28 sets from the area in Northwestern India with capital Jaipur and second largest city Jodhpur. The typical Rajasthani set is figural and easily recognisable to collectors, one side stained green and the other red with decorative details painted in other colours, and wonderfully expressive with figures with upturned moustaches and heavily eye- lined faces. There is a real feeling of movement and tension in the pieces which are typically made from ivory, wood or camel bone but also in silver and gold which has then been enamelled. As Ulrich explains, dating the sets as well as attributing them to specific cities within Rajasthan has been problematic. Even the manufacturing techniques employed tend to be obscured by the fact that the pieces are usually fully painted- it is only the examination of damaged pieces which reveals some of the craftsmen’s secrets. The typical iconography is that of king and vizier riding elephants under howdahs, bishops as drummers on camels, knights as cavalry, rooks as elephants and pawns as soldiers. Two themes recur frequently- sets depicting armies ready for battle in which all pieces have weapons, and hunting or processional displays in which only the pawns are armed and likely acting as a personal guard. After analysing

ivory sets along these criteria, Ulrich considers the four gold, enamelled and bejewelled sets from Jaipur which are in António's collection- one of which depicts armies at war; two of which represent most likely wedding processions (including Figure 5 on page 39 with bishops as peacocks); and one atypical set in which the king and vizier are standing (rather than riding on elephants) and the minor pieces are just their associated animals but without riders. A further class of Rajasthani chess sets discussed are those for which the minor pieces are portrayed as animal busts on bases- the rook as an elephant head, bishop as a camel head and knight as horse's head. The kings are typically seated, viziers standing or seated and pawns as standing guards. António's collection also contains unusual Rajasthani sets which do not necessarily fit neatly into all of the above criteria- a polychrome ivory set depicting Mughal men versus women, a hunting party scene in bronze, a small (7.5cm kings) travelling set made of coral, and to finish, a wooden set in which the king and queen are enthroned deities, a polychrome ivory set in which the figures are of male busts, and 32 animal figures as chess pieces.

Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE and Professor Jackie Eales present "Islamic Pattern Chess Sets" in Chapter 10. The relationship between chess and the Islamic world has been ambiguous over the past 1200 years- the game was brought to Europe as a result of the Islamic conquests and the Caliphs of Baghdad were often keen chess players, however the Koran proscribes images and games of chance. As a result, at regular intervals, this prohibition has been extended to chess playing (and then subsequently rescinded). The ban on images and figural iconography has led to the use of non- figural shapes and the development of the Islamic abstract pattern from the early 9th century onwards, although this prohibition did not always extend to animals explaining the use of stylised horses' heads as knights in early sets. This abstract representation is still in use in Islamic countries today and does make the dating of pieces difficult due to the lack of visual clues such as clothing and weaponry. Islamic pattern chess pieces have been made from all available material tailored to the target audience- from luxury rock crystal and ivory for the elite to less expensive bone and wood. The two sides are typically distinguished by staining for ivory, bone and wooden sets with red and green again being very popular (but also blue), together with the possible use of geometric or floral decorative designs. Rock crystal sets may use embedded gemstones of different colours to differentiate the sides and/or gilded motifs. Islamic boards were usually made of leather or cloth making them very portable but not as durable as their western wooden equivalents so very few early examples survive. This chapter displays a wonderful array of Islamic pattern chess sets- 19 in total, including 9 green and red pattern sets, 4 rock crystal sets (one Citrine), and my favourite- a gorgeous Mughal jade and brown hardstone set with matching board (Figure 8 on page 40). Over the course of the chapter, the authors provide a brief summary of the history of chess from the time of the Caliphs and the great player as- Suli to the development of the Staunton design in the mid- 19th century.

Jacob Schmidt-Madsen has written the next two chapters on "North Indian Chess Sets" and "South Indian Chess Sets". In Chapter 11, he considers ivory carving across North India from Bengal in the East to Punjab in the West other than that already covered in West Bengal and Rajasthan in Chapters 5, 6 and 9 respectively. The signature feature of Bengali chess sets is the representation of rooks as boats. Jacob provides an erudite summary of the historical sources discussing this substitution and then proposes a far simpler explanation for it- in the river plains of Northeast India, the use of boats in armies instead of the original chariots is not without merit. He also discusses the significance of the "peacock" boats used on the India side and the "budgerows" on the British side. Two Bengali boat sets (including Figure 4 on page 38) which display John Company influences are analysed and the features that mark these out for local, rather than European, consumption highlighted. Two other Bengali boat sets reflecting styles different from John Company sets are considered next, the first one of which would have probably been used for actual playing rather than display purposes only, and the second one showing features characteristic of sets from Burma (present day Myanmar) which Jacob details.

Moving west from Bengal across the plain of the Ganges, ivory workshops existed in major cities such as Lucknow, Varanasi, Delhi and Amritsar. However, their styles are so similar making the attribution of chess sets difficult apart from stating that they are from Northern India. Compared to John Company sets, the main differences are the use of painted figures and the fact that both sides opposed Indian armies, often a red side possibly identifiable as Hindus versus a green side for Muslims. The dynamic posture of animals associated with John Company sets is largely missing here with animals usually depicted standing still enabling a faster, cheaper and more abundant production. Five such figural polychrome sets from Northern India are shown and analysed by Jacob. This is followed by an unusual set from Lucknow which is not painted but kept in natural ivory on one side and stained red on the other. In addition, kings and viziers are shown seated on thrones on both sides. This set is almost identical to that gifted to the Prussian statesman Bismarck for his 70th birthday in 1885. The next set considered has a French sepoy army on one side (with the queen piece identifiable as Bonaparte) against armed ascetics for which Jacob provides interesting historical and cultural information. The final Northern Indian set of the chapter depicts a tiger hunt and Jacob explains the popularity of hunting in India in art and literature. The chapter concludes with an assortment of polychrome pieces showing elephants fighting tigers and an enlightened discussion by Jacob of the lack of agency given to the wild animals depicted in such hunting scenes.

The representation of pieces on a chessboard can easily move far away from the origins of the game and can often reflect the ideas and misconceptions held by Europeans of the region in which the sets are being manufactured. In Chapter 12 “South Indian Chess Sets”, Jacob Schmidt-Madsen considers local innovations such as “placing Hindu gods, avatars and mythical beasts directly on the chessboard”. This essay consists of three parts- the first dealing with more “traditional” representations to which only a few religious and mythical touches have been added; the second dealing with extensive representations of Hindu deities; and the third considering Goanese figures which have been grouped into sets although these may not have been initially crafted as actual chess pieces. Just as discussed in the previous chapter, John Company sets did exert an influence on the more traditional sets from Southern India although these are easily differentiable from their northern counterparts. In this first section, four sets are considered with three of them displaying John Company like features. The sets show two Indian armies opposing each other with the first two almost identical in iconography but differing in the colouring used to distinguish the two sides. One interesting departure is the representation of the vizier as a general on horseback and the bishops display Rajasthani influence as drummers on camels. But what brings these two sets into the realm of the mythical are the knights in which the horses are trampling “yalis”- a beast combining the head and body of a lion with the characteristics of another animal. Yalis are guardian creatures and form a key part of South Indian temples. A rearing horse will need support for its front legs, and, in the third set, this is provided by the body and shield of a fallen enemy. The fourth and final set does not display John Company features but uses tufts of grass to support the horse’s front legs. This set is the perfect transition to the next, general theme considered by Jacob, namely deities, as the king (seated) and vizier (standing) are both in meditative poses and the rook is shown as a temple chariot. He then discusses in detail the religious context of three sets which place Hindu deities on the chess board- two in natural and green- stained ivory and the third in natural and red- stained ivory. As mentioned with regards to the “elephant kings”, without any additional context, it can be difficult to ascertain if individual pieces were made for a chess set, or grouped as such, at a later stage. He concludes the chapter by analysing four groupings of 19th century polychrome ivory figures from Goa. Jacob argues that although some of the figures look as though they might have been made for a chess set, other groupings look more thrown together. He thinks that two of the groups could work as chess sets but that the third was “even less

convincing” and the fourth definitely not. Regardless of their original purpose and how they work together, these are beautiful figures which everyone would love to have in their collection.

“Chess Sets from the Subcontinent Region of Sri Lanka” form the topic of Chapter 13 by Ulrich Schädler. Chess sets from Sri Lanka do not espouse the warrior iconography present in most Indian chess sets but follow more religious themes instead. In this essay, Ulrich discusses five chess sets. The first is carved from ivory stained green and red, comes with a matching chess table, and depicts most probably a wedding. The king and queen are dressed in outfits worn by the nobility on special occasions, and the pawns wear “dothis”- a cloth wrapped around the lower body with a central loin cloth. The bishop pieces are court nobles dressed similarly to the king but armed, the knights are small elephants and the rooks hexagonal- shaped shrines. The second set follows a similar iconography but is less elaborate in its carving. The third set in natural ivory and ebony follows a completely different, Buddhist theme which Ulrich analyses in detail. The last two examples demonstrate the difficulties in attributing the origins of chess sets. The first is carved in sandalwood and hardwood and displays some iconography reminiscent of Indian chess sets- the rook is an elephant, the bishop a camel rider, the knight a horseman and the pawns, foot soldiers. However, the king and queen are Chinese figures. Ulrich discusses this representation in detail and believes that a Sri Lankan origin would make sense. The last chess set is in natural and lightly- green stained ivory with king and queen meditating, the bishop as a young woman with a vase on her head, knights as rearing horses, rooks as pagoda- like structures and pawns as ascetics. Originally described as Nepalese, Ulrich believes that it might have been made in Erbach.

Leander Feiler presents “Domestic Antique Indian Chess Sets” in Chapter 14 which can be considered the counterpart to Chapter 2 on antique Indian chess sets (mainly) for export. These domestic sets were typically made for the rulers of princely states who tended to play the game and kept valuable works of art, including chess sets, as family treasures. They often formed part of dowries. As a result, such chess sets are not only perfectly preserved, but also rarely, if ever, seen in the public domain. The sets often had inscriptions which helps with their history and dating. Leander discusses five such chess sets as well as the context behind each. Two sets are non- figural (possibly indicating Muslim influence), one figural and two semi- figural. The two non- figural sets are similar- both made of the quartz mineral Aventurine (also known as Indian Jade), of similar height with 8.5cm kings, and all pieces topped by bunches of silver balls (although the first set is more colourful having also pearls and coloured glass beads as well). However, they differ in shape, and the second set also has decorated vertical silver strips. Leander compares these two sets and gives the context behind their inscriptions. Both are dated to the 19th century. The figures in the “Fatehgarh” set are incredibly poignant (Figure 10 on page 40). The Hindu part is made of reddish smoky topaz and the Muslim side of yellowish agate, and the pieces have floral silver decorations which vary on both sides. The 10cm kings, viziers and pawns all have flat round silver caps. From its inscription, this figural set dates to 1746 and was part of a dowry. The iconography of the set is unusual in that it reflects the original four parts of the Indian army- rooks as elephants, bishops as camels, knights as horses and pawns as foot soldiers. Both semi-figural sets date from the 19th century and have figural kings and viziers, and non- figural representations for the rest of the pieces. The heads of the king and vizier in the first set are made of ivory with caps of gold and semi- precious stones, whereas the rest of their body as well as all non- figural pieces are made of camel bone. The second set is made fully of camel bone, the figural pieces with silver decorative bands around the body and the non- figural pieces with silver caps. In both semi- figural sets, the sides are distinguished by red and green staining.

This enthralling book concludes with Chapter 15 by Hugo Miguel Crespo entitled “The Games of Empires: Indian Chessboards and Artistic Exchange in the Age of Discovery” which considers 24 amazing chess boards from India. The “Age of Discovery” relates to the period from the late 15th century up to around the 18th

century when, through maritime exploration and expansion, Europeans became more connected with faraway lands such as India, resulting in mutual influences and artistic exchanges. Hugo starts with a general review of the interactions between India and Portugal, and the Portuguese- commissioned Indian items reflecting their passion for chess, in particular the high- quality artistry embodied by Indian game boards from that period. He then summarises the main production centres on the northwestern coast of India focused on Portuguese clients including Thatta, Gujarat, Thane and Chaul (but interestingly none were made in Goa), as well as those on the Coromandel Coast (including Visakhapatnam) catering to other European customers including the Dutch and British.

Different types of boards were produced in India for European customers- double sided reversible boards (flat or flat folding in half) with one side for chess, draughts and possibly also Hispanic- style backgammon, and the other for (Italian- style) backgammon or the “game of the goose”; game boards or boxboards which fold to form a box with the exterior surfaces for chess and the inside typically for (Italian- style) backgammon; folding- over reversible game boxes with playing surfaces for three different games (front and reverse when the box is closed, and the inner surface when the box is fully opened up); and more complex boards folding into boxes containing drawers. Interestingly enough, the most common type of board in local use was not made for the European market, namely a chess board with drawers and raised on four low legs resembling a footstool and enabling the game to be played whilst seated on the floor. The first board from the collection which Hugo considers is precisely a late Mughal example of this type with two drawers.

In the rest of the chapter, Hugo takes each of the manufacturing centres mentioned above in turn, providing a detailed historical context for each as well as a full analysis of the boards considered together with any similar items known to be held in other private collections and museums. Naturally, every side of every board and game box is illustrated in breathtaking full- page photography.



Figure 1 (left) and 2 (right)- Frontside (left) and backside (right) view of reversible games board, probably Thatta, of teak, ebony, ivory & sandalwood, and *sadeli*; circa 1580 – 1620. Photo by Pedro Lobo, © António Horta-Osório/1950a (left) and 1950b (right).

Thatta is located on the coast in the present- day province of Sindh in Pakistan. A strong Persian presence in the area has been documented from at least the 17th century onwards resulting in the introduction in India of the micro-mosaic *sadeli* work already mentioned by Thomas Thomsen in Chapter 3. Three flat, reversible boards and one game box from Thatta, all dating from the late 16th to early 17th century, are highlighted, every

one displaying intricate *sadeli* work. The reverse of the first board has crenelated sides with semicircular grooves for Hispanic-style backgammon whereas, on the two other flat boards and the games box, this game is accommodated for on the front chess surface with the reverse sides being for the “Game of the Goose” for the two flat boards and (Italian- style) backgammon on the inner surface of the boxboard. Gujarat, on the western coast of India slightly to the north of Mumbai, is known for its production of mother- of- pearl goods and two such reversible game boards dating from the 16th century are considered next with chess on one side and Hispanic- style backgammon on the reverse. These are followed by two complex game boards fitted with drawers and folding into inner boxes which were made in Thane (although the second one was later modified into a flat board). Both are made from teak, veneered with rosewood and ebony and lavishly decorated with inlays of ivory, rosewood, sandalwood, and green- dyed bone depicting amongst others flying birds, flowers, lions and human masks. Another example of a complex game board with fitted drawers which fits into a box was most likely made in Chaul in the 16th century with the added feature that an ivory female figurine appears in the middle of the chess board when a drawer is opened! All three of these complex boards have the bands of semi- circular grooves for Hispanic- style backgammon on the chess board surface.

Hugo then reviews four 18th century boards from Visakhapatnam, one flat folding reversible board and three game boxes. The flat board and one of the box boards would be easily recognisable in style to most collectors from their later 19th century counterparts. The boxboard does have an interesting text and monogram which would suggest that this belonged to Catherine the Great! The other two boxboards are much more elaborate and lavish in their decorations than the usual Visakhapatnam- style although one is made of rosewood inlaid with ivory and sandalwood and the other from sandalwood inlaid with ivory and ebony. In all four cases, the reverse or inner side is decorated with the ubiquitous “Italian”- style for backgammon. He next considers a 17th century “fold over” games box made of exotic wood, ebony and ivory with chess on one side and “Nine-Men’s Morris” (also known as “Merels”) on the reverse side of the closed boxboard, and backgammon on the inside when fully opened up. This board is thought to have been made on the Coromandel coast although attributing it to an exact location there has proved too difficult.

The chapter concludes with a presentation and analysis of nine later boards dating to the 19th century- one from Kashmir shaped as a tray with backgammon on the top surface and chess/draughts on the reverse; two flat folding Visakhapatnam boards of a type well- known to most collectors; two Persian boxboards with incredible *sadeli* decorations; two boards from Gujarat; one from Northern India; and one from Western India veneered in tortoiseshell.

In his Introduction, António mentions two questions which will resonate with all collectors- when to stop collecting (his answer- as long as he still can and is passionate about chess collecting) and the more difficult one of what to do with the collection. Regardless of what eventually physically happens to his collection, António does not need to worry about his chess collecting legacy- this book in itself will guarantee not only his place in the chess collecting “hall of fame” but, much more crucially, it will ensure that these amazing artefacts and their associated history are never forgotten and will keep on being admired for generations to come.

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Peter Whitehead

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Figure 3 (above)- East India Company set, late 18th to early 19th century, on an antique Indian board. Photo by Pedro Lobo, © António Horta-Osório/0700.

Figure 4 (below)- Bengal polychrome figural set, 1820-1860. Photo by Pedro Lobo, © António Horta-Osório/1597.





Figure 5 (top)- Enamel and gold figural part-set, 19th century. Photo by Pedro Lobo, © António Horta-Osório/1259.
Figure 6 (middle)- 'Samuel Pepys's'yle set, 19th century. Photo by Pedro Lobo, © António Horta-Osório/0680.
Figure 7 (bottom)- Visakhapatnam Games Compendium with chess set, board, counters and shaker, 19th century.
Photo by Franco Maria Ricci, © António Horta-Osório/1789.



Figure 8 (top)- Mughal jade and hard stone Islamic-pattern chess set with matching board. Photo by Pedro Lobo, © António Horta-Osório/0735.
 Figure 9 (middle)- 'Kashmir'syle set with double-headed camels, mid-19th century. Photo by Pedro Lobo, © António Horta-Osório/0682.
 Figure 10 (bottom)- Fatehgarh chess set made of semiprecious stones with silver decoration, 1746. Photo by Franco Maria Ricci, © António Horta-Osório/0711.