

## Chapter 20

### Games presented as families

[We have seen several informal families of games in this book, often reflecting second and later thoughts by the inventor. Some games have been more formally presented in the form of families, originality usually lying in the assemblage rather than in the individual components. There are two broad flavours: a set of games is presented and the players choose one either by lot or by agreement, or each player makes his own choice and the two are then put together.]

#### 20.1 The players choose jointly

**De Saagh's Games** (Albert Saaghy de Saagh, 1898). In *Le Jeu des Echecs Agrandi et Perfectionné*, the author argues for a number of board sizes (9x9 up to 13x13) with added pieces: Lions (placed between rooks and knights, move like knights but 3-1 instead of 2-1) and/or an extra queen for the larger boards. His reason for introducing an extra queen has the merit of novelty: he remarks 'it has always appeared to me astonishing that the white king has his spouse on the left side'. A morganatic marriage in other words: bigamy is clearly preferable. De Saagh also advocates open lines and lines of retreat to avoid the constricted openings of the 8x8 board. He offers several alternatives for the 10x10 board:

(1) The 32 men are placed in the usual order but on the 2nd/3rd and 8th/9th ranks with the outside files empty.

(2) As (1), but with the rooks and knights and their respective pawns on the 1st/2nd and 9th/10th ranks.

(3) As (1), but with the c and h files empty.

(4) A combination of (2) and (3).

**Superchess [Letmanji Stevan]** (Letmanji Stevan, 1954). Prompted by the 12:12 draw in that year's World Championship match, the author proposed various forms of 'Superchess' on 6x6, 8x8, and 10x10 boards with modifications including playing to take all the opponent's men instead of just the king, setting up the initial array by lot, and using additional pieces (*Reforma u Sahu*). [Text revised. Unfortunately the photocopy of *Reforma u Sahu* in David's files is now defective, and it would appear that the key pages were removed for translation and have

not been replaced. The material that remains includes a picture of an aeroplane and a reference to a 10x10 game 'sa 2 raketna aviona, sa miniranim poljama e5, f5, e6, f6', but it is not possible to be more precise.]

**Jet Chess** (Proprietary game, Interplay Inc, 1972). Board 3x3 on one side, 4x4 on the other. Pieces are flat discs representing chessmen, any number of which may be stacked on a square. 3x3 game starts with WKb1, WP on top, and BK/BPb3. At each turn a player has two choices: (1) move an uncovered man to an empty square, or on top of a friendly man, or to the square of an enemy man thereby capturing it; (2) introduce a new piece to the board, putting it on an empty square or on top of a friendly man (not an enemy). Only the top piece of a stack can capture or be captured (so if you capture with your K and thereby leave it immediately on top of the enemy K, you effectively forfeit all chance of mating). P on first rank has two-step option; P on 3rd rank is temporarily a Q, but reverts to P on departure. In the 4x4 version, start with kings b1/b4, queens c1/c4, friendly P on top of each. (Rules as reported by Philip Cohen, personal communication; original game apparently not seen)

**Chezz** (D. Trouillon, 1975). Without defining board dimensions, composition of forces or array, the choice of which was left to the players, the inventor expanded the powers of the various chessmen. Any originality would appear to have been confined to minor detail. (Correspondence between John Gollon and Philip Cohen) [Final sentence editorial]

**Flexichess** and **Varichess** (Roy Keene, 1980s onwards). Board 9x8 or 9x9, six basic arrays on both boards. Extra pieces can include Archbishop (B+N), Chancellor (R+N), and Empress (Q+N). (Author's rules pamphlets)

**Babylon, The Game of Empire, Mad, Moslon** (Thomas Varghese, 1986-7). Games forming a complicated family featuring enlarged boards, combined pieces, multiple square occupancy, piece transformation, reintroduction of captured men, etc. It is not clear whether they have ever been published. (Author's rules pamphlets) [Text editorial]

**Quantum Chess** (Proprietary game, Quantum Development Corp, 1993). Compendium of five games: (1) ordinary chess; (2) board 10x10, 20 pieces a side; (3) as (2) but 30 pieces a side; (4) as (3) but board 12x12; (5) as (4) but 36 pieces a side. Additional pieces familiar apart from the Bowman, which makes a knight move to an unoccupied square and then, without further movement, captures or checks any enemy man a further knight's move away along the same line of movement. Pawns retain the two-step move at all times (e.p. permitted), promote to any previously captured piece and themselves return to any vacant second-rank square, and in addition are 'knighted' (replaced by a knight) on promotion if a previously captured knight is available. Men are identified by movement symbols. (Manufacturer's publicity leaflet, also *Variant Chess* 17) [Text editorial]

**Superchess [van Haeringen]** (H. van Haeringen, 1993). Not a game but a system that offers a range of boards and some 50 new pieces to choose from. These include the Amazon (Q+N), the Empress (R+N), the Princess (B+N) and the Veteran (K+N). The aim is to negate opening knowledge and in the long term to establish an ideal combination of board and pieces since, as van Haeringen observes, chess is an imperfect game. Players agree a set-up before play. A 10x10 and 10x8 version was called **Monarch [van Haeringen]**. A handsome book *Schaak en Superschaak* describes the system in detail. There is also a briefer book in English, *Superchess*. Chess, declares the inventor modestly, is just a variant of Superchess.

**Augmented Knights** (Ralph Betza, 1995). Knights have additional powers selected by lot. A first number 0-9 specifies the power to be added (none, move of one square orthogonally, ditto diagonally, leap of two squares orthogonally, ditto diagonally, leap of three squares orthogonally, ditto diagonally, 3-1 leap, 3-2 leap, ability to proceed in straight lines of knight moves as long as the road is clear), and a second number 0-2 says whether the added power can be used both for movement and for capture, or only for capture, or only for movement. Additionally, cases 1-5 are very close in value, which opens up the possibility that the players may restrict themselves to these five and choose independently as in *Equal Armies* below. (*Eterosacco* 74) [Text editorial]

**Heraldic Chess Games** (Módest Solans, c.1996). Proprietary games system featuring chessmen, playing cards, and dice, including scope for the players to make their own rules. (*Variant Chess* 22) [Text editorial]

**Meta-Chess [Brown]** (John W. Brown, 1997). Meta-Chess is really many games - many different boards, many different men, many different rules. It is inspired by Herman Hesse's 'game of games' in *The Glass Bead Game* and draws on the rich fabric of chess before it was shaped in its present form sometime in the 15th century. A studiously researched book by the inventor, *Meta-Chess*, runs to over 300 pages.

**Chessquito** (Proprietary game, SentoSphère, 1999). Board 4x4; each player has 1 x Q, R, B, N (no pawns). Three games are offered; in all of them, the pieces are placed alternately on empty squares. First player to place also moves first. (1) Capture all opponent's pieces to win; (2) Q moves forwards or backwards one square, captures one square diagonally in any direction; (3) Q is K, win by checkmating. If no capture in five successive moves, a game is decided by pieces remaining. Charming painted wooden men, ideal for the very young. The games are far more skilful than they might appear. (Photocopy of review in *Fairplay* 58, possibly supplemented by information from a set in David's games collection)

**20.2 The players choose independently**

**Equal Armies** (Ralph Betza, 1979). A game in which the players have different but balanced forces. Betza's concept was to form armies equal in strength, though not in composition, to the orthochess army. An army could then play any other army, including the orthochess army, on level terms, creating a wide range of different, but well-matched games. The task was approached by devising a computer-generated system for calculating the value of a great variety of pieces, giving each piece a points value based on a common datum. The system analysed a number of factors including interaction, strength ratio at different stages of a game, and so on. Certain conclusions were reached as a result of which a total of ten armies, called Simple Armies, were assembled and researched; two were subsequently abandoned, and two revised. The orthochess array can be used in all cases, the regular pieces substituting for the new pieces. Pawns are identical on both sides but need not be those of orthochess; players can agree to use Berolina pawns, shogi pawns, etc.

Many of the new pieces are based on the elementary Fers (moves one square diagonally), Wazir (ditto orthogonally), King, Alfil (leaps two squares diagonally), Dabbaba (ditto orthogonally), Knight, and Horse (as N but one step orthogonally and then one diagonally, and the intermediate square must be empty). A rider is the corresponding piece that continues to move in the same direction as long as the road is clear. Thus a rook is a wazir-rider, a nightrider a1 moves to b3, c5, e7, c2, e3, or g4, and a dabbaba-rider a1 moves to a3, a5, a7, c1, e1, or g1. In the lists that follow, the royal piece is given first, then his consort, and then the other three pieces.

Simple Army 1. Royal piece e1 moves as D or W, captures as K. Consort d1 moves as A or D or N or K, captures as B or N. Piece c1/f1 has a two-part move: as A, then optionally one square straight back (the two parts making a knight's move). The second step is forbidden if the first is a capture. Piece b1/g1 moves and captures as N but can also capture forwards and move backwards as B. Piece a1/h1 moves as R but can capture only if there is one man between it and its target (as Cannon in xiangqi).

Simple Army 2. Royal piece e1 moves as K, captures as D or W. Consort d1 moves and captures as B or D or N. Piece c1/f1 moves and captures as D or F. Piece b1/g1 moves as H, captures as A or D but only if there is a man on the intervening square. Piece a1/h1 moves and captures as D or N, castling allowed.

Simple Army 3. Royal piece e1 moves as N, captures as A or D or W. Consort d1 moves and captures as A or K or N. Piece c1/f1 moves as A or D or F, captures as D or F. Piece b1/g1 moves and captures as H, or as A but only if leaping a man, or as D ditto, or one square straight forward (as P). Piece a1/h1 moves as A or D or N, captures as D or N.

Simple Army 4. Royal piece e1 moves as W or D, captures as K. Consort d1 moves and captures as A or D or K or N. Piece c1/f1 moves and captures as D or F. Piece b1/g1 moves and captures as H, also as A or D if leaping a man. Piece a1/h1 moves and captures as A or K.

Simple Army 5. Royal piece e1 orthodox. Consort d1 combines piece a1/h1 and piece c1/f1. Piece c1/f1 moves and captures either as A or as Horse whose first move is diagonal. Piece b1/g1 moves as N, captures by leaping one or two squares diagonally. Piece a1/h1 moves as rook but takes as F, not W, on adjacent square.

Simple Army 6. Royal piece e1 moves as W or A-rider, captures as K. Consort d1 combines piece a1/h1 and piece c1/f1. Piece c1/f1 moves and captures as F or A-rider. Piece b1/g1 moves and captures as A-rider or D-rider. Piece a1/h1 moves and captures as W or D-rider.

Simple Army 7. Royal piece e1 moves as K, captures as W or A-rider. Consort d1 moves and captures as K or Nightrider (Nr). Piece c1/f1 moves and captures as F or A-rider. Piece b1/g1 moves and captures as D-rider or one square straight forward. Piece a1/h1 moves and captures as Nr or one square straight forward.

Simple Army 8. Royal piece e1 moves as K, captures as N or A. Consort d1 moves and captures as K or Nr. Piece c1/f1 moves and captures as Camel (3-1 leaper) or A. Piece b1/g1 moves and captures as Gold General (as

W or one step diagonally forward). Piece a1/h1 moves and captures as N or A-rider.

More armies were added later (2003) with the improvement that kings and pawns remained orthodox. The association of the regular pieces with the various Simple Army pieces poses a problem for players. (*Nostalgia* 247 and later, Chess Variant Pages)

**Free Choice Chess** (Bruce Gilson, 1984). Board 10x16, of which the first three ranks at either end are deployment zones with a 10x10 playing area between them. The concept, not altogether new, is to offer a variety of pieces, both orthodox and unorthodox, individually valued in points according to their powers, from which the players select their own forces. Each player is limited to 20 pieces totalling not more than 200 points, and must include at least one single-step mover, denominated the K piece, whose loss decides the game.

Gilson gives a total of 17 different pieces from which to choose, divided into three groups (moves and piece values in brackets).

Group 1 (single-step pieces): Fers (one step diagonally, 5), Wazir (one step orthogonally, 7), Silver General (as F or one step straight forward, 8), Gold General (as W or one step diagonally forward, 10), King (as orthochess, 13).

Group 2 (medium-range pieces): Alfil (leaps two squares diagonally, 4), Dabbaba (ditto orthogonally, 5), Giraffe (as orthochess N but 4-1 instead of 2-1, 8), Camel (ditto but 3-1, 9), Zebra (ditto but 3-2, 9), Knight (as orthochess, 11), Squirrel (as A+D+N, 23).

Group 3 (long-range pieces): Bishop (as orthochess, 14), Rook (as orthochess, 22), Princess (as B+N, 28), Empress (as R+N, 33), Queen (as orthochess, 38).

Each player sets up his army in his own deployment zone. Pieces are placed in turn, except that if one player uses up his 200 points the other player can continue to place pieces until his allocation is exhausted. A piece in the playing area may not be moved if the player still has a piece in the deployment zone, except to capture, avoid capture, or check. The royal piece must not be the last piece to enter the playing area. No piece may leave the playing area once entered. A long-range piece must enter the playing area on the first

(nearest) rank. No castling.

This is the basic version of the game. In the advanced version, a captured piece can be re-entered on the side of its captor at any time anywhere in that player's deployment zone. The game was experimental. It was foreseen that up to a couple of hundred different pieces might be approved, their values constantly updated by computer. Commentators observed that the absence of pawns was a serious drawback. One solution suggested was to dispense with the deployment zones and insert a line of pawns initially along the 3rd/8th ranks. (*World Game Review* 6/7)

**Generalised Chess [Schmittberger]** (R. Wayne Schmittberger, 1980s). A theory on the form that chess might assume in the future. The idea is that each player has a number of points with which to buy pieces from a common pool, the men then being set up with the players alternately placing their pieces on the starting ranks. Some consideration has been given to the pieces, but not so far to the board sizes which would influence their powers. There would only be one of each piece (which would represent a power that could be transferred to a familiar chessman) so that a piece once purchased would be denied to the opponent. If Generalized Chess were universally adopted, the value of each piece, initially assessed by detailed analysis on which the inventor has done much work, would be constantly under review, based on supply and demand in major events. A 'starter' idea is that the 8x8 board with normal array is employed, kings and pawns unchanged, the players 'buying' new powers for the pieces. In the final form of the game, different kinds of kings and pawns might be available; for example, an immobile king which would earn negative points. Schmittberger imagines grandmasters of the future not exploring new opening variations (a pointless exercise) but instead attempting to evaluate different piece combinations and thereby assessing those pieces that are under- or over-valued; an interesting concept. A practical weakness in the idea would seem to be the difficulty players would have in identifying and mentally controlling a range of unfamiliar pieces. (Personal communication)