

**CHESS MASTERPIECES:
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DR.
GEORGE AND VIVIAN DEAN
COLLECTION**

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

World Chess Hall of Fame
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2012



1.1. Neresheimer French vs. Germans Set and Castle Board, Hanau, Germany, 1905-10. Silver and gilded silver, ivory, diamonds, sapphires, pearls, amethysts, rubies, and marble.

Before WWI, Neresheimer, of Hanau, Germany, was a leading producer of ornate silverware and decorative objects. Sketches and documentation for this tour-de-force work were lost when the factory was destroyed in the war.

The faces and hands were produced by the German master ivory carvers of Erbach. The pieces on the German side are gilt over silver with gemstones inset into the bases of all pieces. German pawns' helmets sport gargoyles while the French pawns' helmets are topped with fleur-de-lis. The castle functions as a true fortress, containing drawers in which to secure all the pieces behind the heavy, locked doors.

Game Position:

Wilhelm Steinitz vs. Emanuel Lasker. London, 1899. Vienna Gambit. Steinitz Variation



2.1. Abstract Bead and Dart Style Set with Board, India, 1700s. Natural and green-stained ivory, black lacquer-work folding board with silver and mother-of-pearl.

This classical Indian style is influenced by the Islamic trend toward total abstraction of the design. The pieces are all lathe-turned. The black lacquer finish, made in India from the husks of the lac insect, was first developed by the Chinese. The intricate inlaid silver grid pattern traces alternating squares filled with lacy inscribed fern leaf designs and inlaid mother-of-pearl disks. These decorations combine a grid of squares, common to Western forms of chess, with another grid of inlaid center points, found in Japanese and Chinese variations of chess.

Game Position:

Vinyaka Rajarama Tope Problem: Mate with Pawn in Four Moves c. 1893



2.2. Rajasthan Style Figurative Set, India, 1700s. Carved polychromed ivory.

This set is in the probable style of early Indian chess sets—elaborate and realistic in depicting the components of an Indian army. A rajah, with driver, was perched atop the tallest elephant with his “mantri,” or advisor, on an elephant to his left

(later, in Europe, replaced by a queen). These were typically flanked by elephants (later to become bishops), though in this case, they are camels with drummers; cavalrymen (later to become knights); and chariots or elephants, (later to become rooks or “castles”). A frontline of eight foot soldiers (pawns) completed each side.



2.3. Mogul Style Set with Presentation Case, India, 1800s.

Beryl with inset diamonds, rubies, and gold, wooden presentation case clad in maroon velvet and silk-lined.

The warrior Zahir ud-din Muhammad Babur, from Kabul, Afghanistan, became the first Mogul Emperor of India in 1525. His Muslim dynasty exerted the influence of Persian culture upon his Indian subjects, including the preference for highly abstracted forms for chess pieces and the crafting of bejeweled sets from precious materials, such as this one of beryl, a crystalline emerald-like mineral found in Northern Pakistan.



This rare group of 700-900 ivory, stone, alabaster, and glass Persian pieces is small in size but huge in influence. They show how Islamic designers created abstract versions of the earlier figurative Indian pieces.

3.1. Pil (Elephant) with 2 Horns, Persia, 700-900. Ivory with circular pierced decorations.

The two protrusions signify the tusks of the elephant found in the earliest figurative Indian sets. These two symmetric points are later transmuted into the points of the Bishop's headpiece, the mitre, in European sets.

3.2. Pil (Elephant), Persia, 700-900. Stone with incised arch motif.

The linear arch motif designs may be mimicking the protruding tusk motif usually expressed in three dimensions. This arch motif may also be a precursor to the later "tulip design" chess sets that evolved in Turkey.

3.3. Pil (Elephant), Persia, 700-900. Stone with horizontal decorative bands.

In this variant, the horizontal banding may have aided in identifying the piece.

3.4. Payadah (Pawn), Persia, 700-900. Glass with traces of small, regular painted or incised circular decorations.

3.5. Pil (Elephant), Persia, 700-900. Persia. Alabaster.

In this variant, traces of lathe-turned incised horizontal banding may have aided in identifying the piece.

3.6. Asp or Faras (Horseman), Persia, 700-900. Alabaster.

Here, the form of a horse in profile, without rider, has been reduced to a simple, but symbolic silhouette.



3.7. Mushroom Style Abstract Set and Engraved Silver Board, Syria, 1600s. Chased, stamped, and engraved silver alternately gilt.

Since the Koran discouraged depiction of humans or animals, this is one of many Islamic design motifs inspired by plant forms. Technically, this is a superb example of chasing, a process of hammering or stamping sheet metal to create 3-D forms. These forms, as well as the board were then covered with a combination of complex overall engraved and embossed decorative patterning.

Game Position:

as-Suli (c. 880-946). Problem: White Plays and Wins. Old Muslim Rules. Weak Queen and Leaping Bishop



3.8. Jade and Marble Set and Board, Persia, 1800s. Jade and marble pieces with a board of jade and marble inlaid into a niello decorated gilt silver 4-legged base.

In this lathe-turned and carved set the elephants are not represented as 2 tusked but rather with single, downturned trunks. Western influence can be seen in the cavalry pieces depicted as horseheads, similar to western knights, and the chariots reduced to a wheel motif translated into the crownlike crenelated ramparts of a castle, like the European style rook.

The arching, scalloped cutaways of the gilt silver base are more suggestive of Islamic style as are the profuse leaf and vine decorative motifs related to those on Persian prayer rugs. The designs are executed in niello technique originated by the Egyptians, a black mixture of silver, copper and lead is rubbed or inlaid into engraved or etched metal to heighten the detailing.

Game Position:

al-Adli (c. 800-870). Problem: White Plays and Wins. Old Muslim Rules. Weak Queen and Leaping Bishop



3.9. Braided and Embroidered Moroccan Travel Set and Board, Morocco, 1800s. Silver and gold lace braid, glass, wood, silver, velvet, and brocade.

This is an example of *passementerie*, gold and silver decorative braiding techniques, used to create an entire chess set. Silver and gold was braided over wooden forms fit into chased silver bases of Moroccan coins. Their slight flexibility and eccentric abstracted forms suggest exotic growing plant life. Only the turban-like top of the Queens and the horse head form with inset glass eyes of the knights are recognizable figurative elements. The folding board of heartwood clad in velvet with durable gold thread embroidery and brocade decorations was made for caravan travel. The red and green color scheme harkens back to the rubies and emeralds in the earliest Indian sets.

Game Position:

as-Suli Problem: Black Plays and Wins. Old Muslim Rules with Weak Queen and Leaping Bishop.



3.10. Abstract Tulip Style Set with Ashtāpada Board, Natural and stained ivory pieces, velvet and gold embroidery board.

Tulips originally grew wild in Persia, Turkey, and near Kabul but came to symbolize nobility and refinement. The Great Mogul Emperor of India, Babur, was a tulip fancier as was Ottoman Sultan Ahmed III (1703-1730), whose reign (1718-1730), was referred to as “The Tulip Era.” Here a combination of deft lathe-turning and hand-carving was used to depict the ensemble of chess pieces as stages in the growth cycle of this celebrated flower.

Travel was long and arduous, even for nobility, and since chess was a favored pastime, boards that could be easily folded or rolled and packed were popular. This un-checked board of velvet and gold embroidery was made or the Indian game Ashtāpada, which was derived from the eight by eight square grid of the Vastu Purush Mandala, believed by early Indians to be the universal template for social organizations. “Ashtāpada means “eight lines, rows, or steps”.

Game Position:

as-Suli Problem: White Plays and Wins. Old Muslim Rules with Weak Queen and Leaping Bishop.



5.1. Burgundy Rock Crystal Set and Board, France, Early 1500s. Carved rock crystal and smoky topaz, silver, gilt, and metal foils.

Chess sets of topaz and rock crystal, which is the colorless form of quartz, were highly prized by European nobility. The rarity of crystal and topaz that is both flawless and large enough to carve chess pieces from made them greatly desired. To carve and polish the complex shapes in this set would have required the most skilled artisans with the most advanced technology of the era. The crystal and topaz “bodies” are mounted in patinated silver and gilt bases and topped with hand wrought crowns, horseheads, and caps of the same materials. This is the only complete set of its kind.

The board surface is comprised of alternate crystal and topaz squares under-laid with silver and gold foil. The surrounding base is of gilt silver moldings, top and bottom, separated by a band of elaborately chased silver decorations. Each corner is supported on the back of a gilt tortoise, a symbol of slow but determined armored warfare.

Game Position:

Giulio Cesare Polerio vs. Lorenzo. 1575.

Italian Game: Classical. Closed Variation



This group of French and German pieces from the 1500-1700s shows the rebirth and growing sophistication of figurative carving as European chess set design emerged from the influence of Islamic abstraction.

6.1. Springer (Knight) or Turm (Rook), Germany, 1500s. Ivory.

6.2. Cavalier (Knight), France, 1500s. Ivory.

Falconry, like chess, was one of the knightly talents of the Middle Ages, which helps to identify this piece as a knight.

6.3. Fou (Fool), France, 1500s. Ivory.

Wearing a patterned costume and sitting back-wards on a donkey, are characteristics of the unique French tradition of sub-stituting a “fou” for the bishop.

6.4. Fou (Fool), France, 1500s. Ivory.

The fool may have replaced the bishop because of the similarity between the two-pointed mitre headpiece of bishops and the two-pointed caps of court jesters.

6.5. Fou (Fool), France, 1700s. Ivory.

This French “fou” has long pointed donkey-like ears, another variation on the two-pointed cap of the court jester.

6.6. Königin (Queen), Germany, 1500s. Ivory.

6.7. Königin (Queen), Germany, 1600s. Ivory.

6.8. Reine (Queen), France, 1500s. Ivory.

These queens reveal their gender and gentility by riding sidesaddle.

6.9. Tour (Rook), France, 1500s. Ivory.



6.10. Eger Wood Chessboard with Low Relief Carving, Eger, Germany, 1600s. Carved and inlaid wood.

In the 17th century, Eger, Germany, was noted for its specialized woodcarving techniques: figurative intarsia and marquetry. Figurative intarsia is the creation of recognizable images by gluing woods of different color and grain to a backing and then carving in low relief, while marquetry is the creation of images or patterns by inlaying woods of different color and grain on a flat surface.

These techniques are most often used to create decorated furniture, church interiors, and public buildings, but this low-relief carving of the Biblical tale of David and Bathsheba offered a moral tale for personal contemplation.

Its companion chessboard features alternating fruit and flower marquetry motifs. Such works that include both chess and backgammon boards, as this one does, are extremely rare. They represent a high point in European wood carving, composition, and drawing.



6.11. & 6.12. Staunton Chess Set with Jaques Carton-Pierre Paper Mâché Box, England, 1850s. Turned and carved natural and stained ivory pieces and cast, laminated, and painted paper mâché box. Nathaniel Cooke, designer.

Designed by Nathaniel Cooke, an early example of a Jaques and Sons style, this chess set was famously endorsed by Howard Staunton, the nineteenth-century English chess champion and noted Shakespearean scholar. It was the first chess set design endorsed by a player and one of the earliest examples of product endorsement by a champion.

By 1924, the Staunton set had been accepted by Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) as the only style of chess set to be used for all official competitive play worldwide. It is the most widely used style of chess set in the world.



6.13. Macbeth Set, England, Early 1800s. Jasperware by Wedgwood. John Flaxman, designer.

A prime example of Josiah Wedgwood's impeccable craftsmanship, these pieces were inspired by Greek motifs and British Gothic sculpture. The noted sculptor John Flaxman was commissioned to portray Shakespearean actress Sarah

Siddons as Lady Macbeth and her brother the actor, John Philip Kemble, as the King. Each pawn is a unique figure as well.



7.1. Battle of the Sexes, Austria, Pieces, 1783; Board, 1815. Silver and gilt pieces and gilt silver, lapis, and malachite board.

The battle of the sexes has long been a social and moral theme in art and drama. The battle depicted here is comparatively sedate, with the pawns of the gilt side as young gents in fine jackets and jaunty hats in pursuit of the short-skirted peasant girl pawns of the silver side. Each piece is stamped to certify it is pure silver and with a maker's mark, "FB" or "JB." The kings of each side do not wear a cross on their crowns as they typically would during this era, hinting that the set was originally made for a client of another faith.

The board, of the same style and stamped with silver and maker's marks, was made 32 years later, also in Vienna. Resting on cast griffin's paws, gilt silver frames the dazzlingly sensuous malachite and lapis lazuli inlaid board.

Game Position:
Adolf Anderssen vs. Howard Staunton. London, 1857. French Defense: Normal Variation



8.1. Europeans vs. Africans Set and Board, Italy, 1800. Coral, ebony and marble pieces with coral, ebony, marble, lemonwood, and silver board.

Made during an era of the rampant colonization of Africa the subject of this set is the opposition of races and cultures. The pieces are depicted as sensitively carved individual busts mounted on pillars and plinths.

The Europeans are carved of pinkish Mediterranean coral atop black marble pillars trimmed with yellow Siena marble. The Africans are of black marble atop Siena marble bases trimmed with coral. Each African bust is further detailed with inset Siena marble eyes and coral lips. The king, queen and bishops also have coral earrings and turbans.

The board is black marble and coral inlaid into a rectangular box of lemon-wood and ebony with a storage drawer for the pieces. As with the *Burgundy Rock Crystal Set*, this board is supported at each corner by a patinated silver tortoise, symbolizing slow, but determined warfare.

Game Position:

De Beaurevoir vs. Domenico Ercole Del Rio. Casual, 1798. King's Gambit: Declined. Classical Variation General.



8.2. Good vs. Evil Set and Board. Italy, 1700s. Natural and stained ivory pieces with carved and engraved ivory and ebony board.

As with the **7.1. Battle of the Sexes**, the battle between good and evil has long been a major theme in western art and drama. This ensemble was likely made in Florence at the end of the de Medici dynasty. The "good" king and queen stand dignified, flanked by bishops with Bibles and with 8 different angels as pawns. The "devil-red" evil side queen poses seductively next to her king, Mephistopheles, the Devil himself, while their bishops hold copies of *Dante's Inferno* and leering satyrs act as their pawns.

Game Position:

Giambattista Loli vs. Domenico Ercole Del Rio. Modena, 1755. Giuoco Piano Game: Italian Variation.



9.1. Catherine the Great Amber Set and Board, Russia, Late 1700s. Carved amber and ebony.

This set was created by a German amber carver in the St. Petersburg workshop of Catherine the Great of Russia, who was an avid chess player. The material came from her royal amber mines in Kaliningrad. Crafted of clear and darker wine-colored amber, the ensemble exudes a passionate inner glow, portraying

Catherine in a décolleté gown with her lover and minister, Prince Grigori Potemkin, opposed by her son, Prince Paul I, and his wife, in equally alluring garb.

Harkening back to Indian origins, the rooks are depicted as elephant heads. The board alternates amber inlays with ebony squares, beading, and borders.

Game Position:

Smith vs. François André Philidor. London, 1790. Bishop's Opening: Berlin Defense.



9.2. Napoleon and Josephine vs. George III and Queen Charlotte Set, France, Early 1800s. Polychromed ivory with **Erbach Ivory Board**, Erbach, Germany, 1800s. Natural and stained ivory.

Marshal Joachim Murat, the King of Naples was married to Napoleon's youngest sister, Caroline. A letter from the Murat family suggests that this set was owned by Napoleon, a serious chess player, and was then given to Murat. Carved in Paris, this set features Napoleon himself; his empress, Josephine; Marshals Michel Ney and André Masséna as bishops; French dragoons as knights; and his Old Guard as pawns. King George III and his queen are flanked by Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson and the Duke of Wellington as bishops; British dragoons as knights; and Royal Scots Grenadiers as pawns.

This display set was kept on a table at Café de la Régence, the nineteenth-century center of French chess, with a plaque that said Napoleon had

played chess there. The ivory Erbach chess board features decorative appliqués of flora and fauna.

It is said that Napoleon is the most popular subject of chess sets.

Game Position:

Smith vs. François André Philidor. London, 1790. Bishop's Opening: Berlin Defense Variation.



10.1. Early Meissen Set and Tray Board, Germany, 1740. Multi-colored glazed porcelain.

Legend has it that Augustus II, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, nearly emptied his kingdom's treasury with his passion for buying Chinese porcelain. Porcelain making was a well-guarded secret of the Chinese and was so profitable that it was referred to as "white gold."

Augustus locked up the alchemist, Johann Böttger for seven years and ordered him to turn lead into gold. Instead, in January of 1708, with help from fellow alchemist Walter von Tschirnhaus, Böttger created porcelain from kaolin clay mixed with alabaster. He also discovered how to glaze it with complex designs and colors. The tray-like board of this early chess set is the reminder that most porcelain was used for elaborate table services.

Augustus II established the first European porcelain works, Meissen Porcelain Factory, near Dresden in 1710. Augustus guarded the secret of porcelain-making, but 25 rival firms sprang up in Europe by the end of the century.

Among the other porcelain-works are the Vincennes Manufactory (France),

1740, supported by Louis XV, renamed Sèvres, in 1756; the Lomonosov Porcelain Factory (Russia), 1744; Villeroy and Boch (France), 1748; Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur, KPM, by Frederick II of Prussia (Germany), 1763; Wedgwood (England), 1759; Spode (England), 1767; Limoges (France), 1771; Royal Copenhagen (Denmark), 1775.

Game Position:

François André Philidor vs. John M. Bruehl. London, 1788. Chess Variants



10.2. Murano Blown Glass Set with Stained and Inlaid Chestnut Board, Italy, 1700s.

As the popularity of chess grew in Europe, artisans in all different crafts sought to produce distinctive sets.

Accented with gold and red, this set was created by the greatest glassworkers of the era on the island of Murano, near Venice. These forms echo, in miniature, the hollow lamp forms and chandelier decorations which were among the Murano craftsmen's specialties ever since 1291. With cork-stoppered bottoms, each piece was to be filled with colored liquor intended to be drunk by the capturing player.

Game Position:

Domenico Ercole Del Rio vs. Portocarrero. Modena, 1790. King's Gambit: Accepted. Cunningham Defense



11.1. Pique Sable Set, France, Late 1700s. Natural and stained ivory pieces displayed with sand in a Wedgwood vase.

Literally meaning "sand pike" in French, this style was invented when seventeenth-century French prisoners of war whittled pointy-stemmed pieces from scavenged mutton bones and played on grids scratched into sand. The famed French ivory carvers of Dieppe refined the style by fashioning pieces on long ivory or metal pins to be used by the leisure class in the sand at the beach. Louis XIII of France popularized Pique-Sable play on checkered needlepoint pillows during long carriage rides.

Game Position:

Wilhelm Steinitz vs. Curt von Bardeleben. Hastings, 1895. Italian Game: Classical Variation. Greco Gambit, Traditional Line



11.2. Insects Set and Board, Italy, c. 1790. Ivory and ebony pieces and board.

In 1766 the word entomology, "the study of insects," was created following the 1735 publication of Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae*, which presented

an early classification system of insects. Concurrently, Rene Antoine Ferchault de Reaumur had begun classifying insects by their functions.

This early entomological ensemble portrays different butterflies and insects. The kings and queens are mature examples of four different species. Bishops are crickets, knights are dragonflies, and rooks are caterpillars. The pawns are also different varieties of insects. As rigorous in intent as Linnaeus and de Reaumur, the maker of this set inscribed the bottom of each piece with its species in Latin.

Game Position:

Domenico Lorenzo Ponziani vs. Domenico Ercole Del Rio. Modena, 1770.
Queen Pawn Game: Steinitz Countergambit



12.1. Habsburg Dynasty Set and Board, Austria, Early 1900s.

Patinated silver, gilt, enamel, garnet, turquoise, pearls, emeralds, and diverse other gemstones and mother-of-pearl and tortoise board with silver and gilt inlay and enamel decorated base with gemstones.

Commissioned in the era of the last Habsburg monarchs, this Austrian Rococco style set has 32 unique figures fashioned of silver and gilt and decorated with seed pearls, enamels, turquoises, amethysts, carnelians, and inset garnet gemstones into which portrait heads have been reverse engraved or intaglio carved.

The fortress-like splayed walls of the chessboard base comprise a history-rich Quaternion—a four-sided heraldic display—with an enameled and gilt coat of arms belonging to a major ruler on each side. These are flanked by three smaller enameled noble crests, which represent constituent estates of that ruler’s part of the empire. Spear-wielding knights on horses symbolically protect the ruler’s crest elaborately framed with open-work vines. Large horses rear from the four compass-point corners of the empire/board, which is encircled by an unbroken chain symbolizing orderly succession of rulers and the protection of all through the unification of the empire.

Game Position:

Johannes Zukertort vs. Joseph Henry Blackburne. “Zukertort’s Immortal.” London, 1883. English Opening: Agincourt Defense



13.1. Soviet Propaganda Set, Russia, 1923. Polychrome Porcelain. GFZ - Gossudarstvennyi Farforovyi Zavod (State Porcelain Factory), Leningrad. Natalia & Yelena Danko, designers. **Karelian Birch Burl veneer Board.**

This 1923 porcelain Soviet Propaganda Set was made by the Danko sisters at the famed GFZ, State Porcelain Factory. Capitalism vs. Communism was one of the central ideological conflicts of the 20th century.

Made by Red Communists, the “good” side depicts hard work for the

common good. A hammer-wielding black-smith is king; a farm maiden is queen; guardian soldiers stand in for bishops (since all religion had been banished); horse heads on red star-forms are knights; boats bearing stars with the sickles and hammers are rooks; and sickle bearing harvesters are pawns.

Capitalism is represented in various forms of evil. The king is an armored death’s head swathed in ermine while the queen seductively spills gold from a sack and her breasts from a lacy open bodice. As a reminder of their past oppression, the bishops are members of the Romanoff Dynasty Imperial Guards; the boat-like rooks bear shields emblazoned with the executioner’s chain and axe and the pawns are forlorn, hopelessly enchained workers. Consistent with their political visions, the Capitalist pawns are looking right while the Communists are “leftists.”

Game Position:

Fyodor Ivanovich Dus Chotimirsky vs. Frank James Marshall. Moscow, 1925.
Nimzo-Indian Defense: Normal Ragozin Variation



14.1. 1905 Fabergé Kuropatkin Set and Board with Presentation Case, Russia, 1905. House of Fabergé.

Aventurine quartz, kalgon jasper, and silver pieces and Siberian jade, apricot serpentine, aventurine quartz, and cast and engraved silver

board. Karl Gustav Hjalmar Armfeldt, designer.

This set was commissioned by the Russian royal family and the officers who served with General Alexi Nikolayevich Kuropatkin to commemorate his faithful, though not victorious, duty in Manchuria.

Engraved around the bottom of the silver base of the board are the dedication and the names of twelve or more of the most important royals, officers, and other major figures of state. Like the Burgundy Rock Crystal Set, the turned and polished “bodies” are set in silver bases and topped with impeccably sculpted silver crowns, horse heads, and caps. With the exception of the knights and the rooks, the pieces are abstract.

Czar Nicolas II, a serious chess player, sponsored early international tournaments in 1909 and 1914. He created the title “grandmaster” and conferred it upon the top five players: Alexander Alekhine, Raul Jose Capablanca, Emanuel Lasker, Frank Marshall, and Siegbert Tarrasch.

Game Position:

Georg Rotlewi vs. Akiba Rubinstein. “Rubinstein’s Immortal.” Lodz, 1907. Tarrasch Defense: Symmetrical Variation



14.2. 1915 Fabergé Egyptians vs. Assyrians Set with Presentation Case, Russia, 1915. House of Fabergé. Cast silver and gilt. Karl Gustav Hjalmar Armfeldt, designer.

This set was perhaps inspired by *The Excavation at Babylon*, a popular 1914 book detailing a major archaeological project (1900-1912) in Mesopotamia by German architect and archaeologists Robert Koldewey and Walter Andrae.

Silver and gilt, this set was executed by Karl Gustav Hjalmar Armfeldt, the same Fabergé master silversmith who had fashioned the 1905 Fabergé Kuropatkin Set. Created during WW I, this design relies directly on Armfeldt’s considerable skills at working in Egyptian and Assyrian sculpting styles and imagery instead of the use of dazzling rare and precious materials and details.

These are the only two known chess sets by Fabergé in the world. Complete with their custom, silk lined presentation cases, each emblazoned with the Fabergé logo and their cities of origin, this is the first time these two sets are exhibited together in public anywhere in the world.

Game Position:

Alexander Alekhine vs. Nikolay Tselikov. Moscow, 1915. Spanish Game: Exchange. Keres Variation



15.1 Ball-in-Ball Style Set, China, 1800s. Natural and stained ivory. With **Floral Decorated Lacquerwork Folding Board**, China, 20th century. Urushi lacquer.

Nineteenth-century Canton China produced ivory ball-in-ball, or puzzle-ball, bases for the chess sets it produced for British East India Trading Company to export to Europe. Each base has seven hollow, loose, lace-thin, concentric spheres hand-carved inside each other from one solid lathe-turned ivory ball. Rich floral and figural sculpted designs cover the outermost surfaces, echoing the patterning on the Manchu Dynasty clothing of the chess figures.

The **Floral Decorated Lacquerwork Folding Board** is a twentieth-century example in the style of Pingyao Lacquerware, famous for its elegant flower and landscape motifs, much sought after and exported to Southeast Asia, Russia and England from the time of Manchu Dynasty. Here, the chess squares with black craquelature pattern are bordered with sinuous branches of needlepine clusters which frame traditional Chinese sailboats, floating in a bottomless ocean background of black, all hand-buffed to a lustrous finish.

Chinese lacquer, made from the urushiol-rich tree resin was one of the earliest man-made coatings resistant to water, acids, salts, and scratching. Varying the amount of

iron oxide added to the resin resulted in either red or black color.

Game Position:

Adolf Anderssen vs. Lionel Adalbert Bagration Felix Kieseritsky. London, 1851. Knight's Gambit: Accepted. Bishop's Gambit Bryan Countergambit "The Immortal Game"



15.2. The Incomparable, China, 1700s. Carved natural and stained ivory.

The unsurpassed quality and detail of decorative carving, with each piece unique and each on a base with six different openwork-carved landscape scenes, led chess historian Alexander Hammond to pronounce this set "the most incomparable chess set in the world." Each piece is a specific portrait character outfitted in an elaborate and accurately detailed Manchu Dynasty costume. It was owned for generations by the British Royal family, ultimately by Princess Mary Harewood, daughter of King George V and sister of King George VI (recently popularized in the film *The King's Speech*).



15.3. Carved Coral Figurative Set, Japan, 1800s. Orange and white coral with **Illustrated Lacquerwork Folding**

Board, China, 20th century. Multicolor urushi lacquer.

Stylistic details of many Asian cultures are combined in these figures carved from coral. A crystalline form of limestone created from the calcified exoskeletons of sea animals, the hardness and fine even grain of coral make it ideal for highly detailed carvings which can be polished to a high luster.

Another example of urushi lacquerwork, the **Illustrated Lacquerwork Folding Board** features a luminous, full color landscape vignette of village life centered on each side of the playing area while different village details in red and brown wash fill the identical light squares of each side. A rarely seen detail on boards of this style is the labeling of the ranks and files of chess squares along their borders in red, to aid serious players in their studies.

Game Position:

Adolf Anderssen vs. Jean Dufresne. Berlin, 1852. Italian Game: Evans Gambit Pierce Defense "The Evergreen Partie"



16.1. John Style Set, India, Late 1700s. Polychromed ivory.

The theme of this style set is the opposition of native Indian troops to the John Company soldiers (often British mercenaries). These soldiers

enforced the English control of Indian provinces and guarded the lucrative trade of the British East India Company. Such highly detailed decorative sets were made for display, not play. They were bought from skilled carvers in Berhampur by the British soldiers and traders as mementoes of their time in India serving the Crown. This prime example of the figurative polychromed designs uses the earliest Indian chess color scheme—red vs. green, with red-suited Brits facing off with green-clothed Indians.



17.1. Angkor Wat Set with Wood and Ivory Inlaid Board, Cambodia. 1700s. Stained ivory pieces with wood and ivory inlaid board.

Cambodian craftsmen commemorated their most celebrated cultural site, the twelfth-century temple of Angkor Wat, in this highly ornate, intensely carved figurative chess set. A combination of Khmer style galleried and mountain form structures, Angkor Wat is the largest religious complex in the world. Stained in the original chess colors, red and green, the chess set is complimented by two large additional "display piece" carvings of details of the Hindu deities and their attendants featured at the temple.

The highly figurative set is contrasted by its folding board decorated in a stunningly complex array of abstract geometric designs in ivory and a host of inlaid tropical hardwoods.

Game Position:

Vinayaka Rajarama Tope Problem: Mate with Pawn in Six Moves



17.2. Kashmir Bell Style Set, India, 1700s. Natural and stained ivory with **Philippine Carved Wood Board** with ivory inlay.

The region between India and Pakistan, known as Kashmir, was home to innovative craftsmen who used primitive bow-driven lathes in combination with delicate hand carving techniques to produce distinctive, ornate, highly abstract works. The complexity of forms, uniformity of repeated motifs and astounding details such as the miniscule chains and hanging pendants testify to the Kashmiris' consummate talents.

The Kashmiri craftsmen may have elaborated greatly on design sketches by Jacob Petit published in London in 1824. Petit's designs were intended as patterns to be followed by western gentleman hobbyists who had acquired new, sophisticated European ornamental lathes. However, no western gentlemen's examples of the period compare to these Kashmiri works.

Game Position:

Tiruvengadacharya Problem: Mate with Pawn in Six Moves