

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DISPERSAL OF L'ATTAQUE GAMES

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Modern versus traditional games

The study of board games concentrates on board game materials, such as boards and pieces, and game concepts, which include rules for moves and positions. The dispersal and development of materials and playing rules are central in the historical studies that exist on board games from the beginning of the twentieth century dominated by Culin (1895), Murray (1913, 1952) and Bell (1960, 1969) up to the present with a recent overview from Parlett (1999). Even though Murray was an anthropologist by training (Wendling 2002), his histories of board games resulted in a strong historical focus on games from academic disciplines such as archaeology, philology and art history with themes relating to development and dispersal.

Modern and traditional games are understood differently within this context of mostly historical studies. Modern games maybe distinguished from traditional games because their history is not only limited in years but also considered to be of a different kind. Murray, for instance, did not discuss games that had been invented in the United Kingdom in the twentieth or even the nineteenth century. Although Murray does not explain this selection, it is generally thought that games invented by a known individual and distributed by a games company are to be treated differently. Historical studies on such modern games concentrate on tracing patents and discussing the history of games companies (cf. Whitehill 1999) or occasionally the artwork of the printed paper (Goodfellow 1998). On the other hand, the traditional games are seen as part of a long historical development and require research in the field and an inventory of variations such as those made for mancala games (de Voogt 1999) in order to answer questions on development and distribution which seem trivial in the case of modern games.

Both the development and the dispersal of modern games may be in the hand of a games company that determines the written rules and introduces

the game to a chosen market. Only the company changes the written rules and the distribution is regulated through locally acquired patents. As a consequence studies on the distribution and development of modern games are unlikely to exist outside the study of games companies and inventors. The following history has the game *Stratego* at its center. It is traced back to the game of *l'Attaque* and related to Jun Qi as it is found in China. It has a history prior to its patent and distribution in China that took place outside the control of games company.

The game of *l'Attaque*

A study of modern games may have legal implications. The patents refer to the uniqueness of a board game that may include the design of the board, the pieces and the rules. When their origins are questions so are their intellectual property rights. Fortunately, most battles have been completed for the game that is here referred to as the game of *l'Attaque*.

The game of *l'Attaque* has at least four elements that together create a game that can be distinguished from all other board games: the ranking of pieces, the hidden position of the pieces, the presence of both static and movable pieces, the capture mode and the general design of the board. In addition, the military ranks and the conquest of a flag make the game easily recognizable.

l'Attaque was most probably developed at the beginning of the twentieth century or perhaps as early as 1880 in France. Boutin (1999) states a patent deposited by Hermance Edant in 1909 based on a game she developed in the 1880s. A patent on a game, called *Jeu de la Guerre*, was filed in 1907 by Julie Moller for quite possibly a similar game.

After the First World War, the game was also published under the translated name *Attack* by the London-based firm H.P. Gibson & Sons, Ltd. So far, this is the only publication of this game at the time.

The board consists of 9×10 squares. In the center of the board there are three obstructions in the shape of three lakes with a size of two squares each. There are movable and immobile pieces. The first are ordered by rank. Each higher rank is stronger than all lower-ranked pieces. Two, or in rare cases four, players fight each other with an army of pieces while the rank of the pieces of one player is hidden from the opponent. The players may position the pieces on their side according to their own views. The purpose of the game is to conquer the flag of the opponent.

Each piece moves one square orthogonally and in some cases more than one

square. Pieces are captured after they are engaged in aduel with a neighboring piece. The strongest piece then remains on the board.

This general description of the rules is valid for all *l'Attaque* games, variations mostly relate to the size of the board and army. *l'Attaque* is resembling *Stratego*, a game that became internationally successful when it was published by Jumbo in the Netherlands. Before establishing a possible link between *l'Attaque* and *Stratego*, the latter's recently uncovered patent history is recounted.

Patent history of *Stratego*

On April 20, 1942, the name *Stratego* was registered by Van Perlstein & Roeper Bosch N.V. in the Netherlands. Four years later the game was published by Smeets & Schippers in Amsterdam. Between 1948 and 1949, the game was also produced using the brand name Clipper. In 1951 the license to produce the game seems to have been returned to Mogendorff by Smeets & Schippers.

This series of events is the prelude to the negotiations between Mogendorff and Hausemann & Hötte N.V. in Amsterdam about the publication of the game under the latter's brand name Jumbo. These talks between Mogendorff and the Jumbo representative de Graaff are said to have taken place between 1952 and 1957. On February 28, 1958, Van Perlstein & Roeper Bosch N.V. sign over the property rights of *Stratego* to Jacques Johan Mogendorff. Correspondence between Mogendorff and de Graaff confirm this and also note that an international registration is still to be completed and that *Attack* seems to be a copy of the game *Stratego*. Further research shows that the Hausemann & Hötte company has a 1920 *l'Attaque* game in their archive suggesting that the similarities between the two games were known to them. On March 7, 1958, Smeets & Schippers N.V. also declared that Mogendorff can use the name and the appearance of the *Stratego* game. An official mention in *Merkenblad* confirms Mogendorff's registered name under number 130494. From May 17, 1958 until April 8, 1960, the *Stratego* name becomes registered in a series of countries, including England, South Africa, Australia, USA and Canada.

Meanwhile, on June 10, 1958, Mogendorff and Hausemann & Hötte agreed to publish and distribute the game *Stratego* for Europe. A second agreement for the rest of the world was added with a royalty agreement on April 21, 1961. In August of that same year, Mr. Mogendorff dies and his heirs make a new agreement with the company that transfers all the rights to Hausemann & Hötte, a situation that has persisted up to this day.



1 The Canadian connection

The 10×10 board of *Stratego* requires a higher number of pieces than the board of *l'Attaque*. The principles of play appear near identical to each other. The route of dispersal is partly revealed by the presence of an intermediate game, owned by the late Mr . Voorn and discovered in Leiderdorp, the Netherlands.

Voorn's father had made one issue of a game he called *Tek*, presumably in 1942. The game had been made at the instigation of a shot-down Canadian pilot who was in hiding. The leaflet with the rules and the instructions on how to manufacture the game is still in existence. The maker had been unfamiliar with *Stratego*.

Both Voorn and Mogendorff had been residing in The Hague during the Second World War, and it is suggested that such a contact may have transmitted the idea of a *l'Attaque* game to Mogendorff.

Although the firm Gibson had published *Attack* before, both the name and the rules of the game had not been registered by Gibson in England. But in 2003, the heirs of Gunger Sigmund Elkan from Vancouver, Canada, commenced a lawsuit against Hasbro, the license holder in the USA of *Stratego* since their grandfather had registered a game named *Strategy* on June 1, 1948 and a booklet with the same name registered on May 25, 1948 in the USA. A vague copy of the rules was entered as well that mentioned a 10×10 board but did not mention any blocking fields. The case was not strong but

shows a possible American connection. They mention Mr. Elkan who was to have invented the game in the Second World War after which he emigrated from Europe to Canada. Where in Europe is unknown and all involved, Mogendorff, Elkan and Voorn have since died so that their possible connection cannot be established.

This short history of l'Attaque and Stratego shows that multiple inventors and different routes of dispersal are possible and likely.

That transmissions of an idea took place with and without the help of patent offices that only assist in settling an ownership debate but not a chronology of events and inventions. This transmission of an idea is further illustrated with a Chinese game for which no patents are known.

The Chinese connection

A number of different companies produce *Jun Qi*, or flag game, under various names, including *Liuzhangqi*, *Siguodanzhanqi* (played with four people) and even with an English translation of their name *Superduty Amry Chess* (sic) or *ChaojiLuzhan Qi*. Rules and descriptions can be found in Lhôte (1994) and on the internet (www.chessvariant.com/oriental.dir/tezhi.html). They come in hard plastic or carton boxes, which depict tanks, army planes and helicopters. The pieces are small, i.e. 1.5 cm, rectangular blocks made out of plastic and with printed or relief Chinese characters. The board invariably consists of a plastic white sheet with red print. These sheets are also common for other board games popular in China, including Chinese chess. Some luxury editions do not have printed carton but fabric-covered boxes, which contain massive plastic stone-like pieces with engraved characters but of a similar size. Few if any of the games are accompanied by game rules, even though the rules appear quite complicated and are of at least two different kinds.



All pieces are blank on one side and have Chinese characters on the other side indicating the (military) rank of a piece. Sometimes the characters for the Army Flag also feature a flag symbol. Pieces move one square at a time and enter combat as in *Stratego*. Except that the board features a railroad on which pieces move unlimited empty squares in one direction along the track. The Engineer may also take corners on the railroad within one move. The board consists of a grid of 13 rows of five intersections each. Each player places his pieces on their six rows of five intersections. The middle or seventh row is left empty and has only three positions thereby limiting the connection between the two camps.

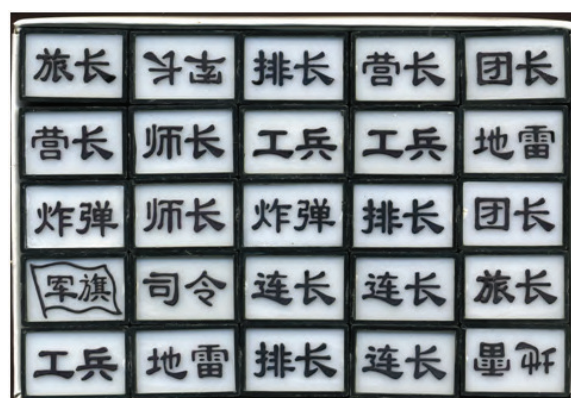
Each side has five army camps, usually depicted as round, which are safe havens in which pieces cannot be captured but which are also left empty in the initial set-up. Therefore, only 25 pieces for each player are used in the line up. Diagonal lines connect the five camps with all surrounding positions, i.e. eight connecting lines. The third and the fifth row count two of those camps and the fourth row has one in the middle which is connected to the remaining four. There are two encampments at the bottom of the board of a different shape either of which should contain the flag in the initial set-up in certain variations of the game.

A railroad is depicted on the lines connecting the intersections of the first and fifth file of each player with the exception of the back rows as well as the second and sixth row on either side also including the lines that connect the two opposing camps on the seventh row.

The game is won when one side moves the flag of the opponent to one of their own encampments. As in *Stratego*, in case of a stalemate the party with the greatest number of moving pieces wins.

There appear three variations available in Beijing. One requires each player to design a position as in *Stratego* and continue as described above. A second allows for the game to be played with four persons on an enlarged board that also shows extra bends of the railroad. The third variation requires all pieces to be the same blank color on the outside and different color characters on the inside. These pieces are mixed and put at random face down on the squares used for positioning. With each turn a player may turn a piece or move a piece that is already turned and belongs to their color. Other rules stay the same.

This brief description of *Jun Qi* identifies a number of similarities to *Stratego* that are not likely to be incidental. *Stratego* was never directly introduced to China but when *Stratego* was introduced to the United States, it may have transmitted to Asia and developed into a local flag game as early as the 1950s. The long-time study of Chinese games (Culin 1895, Schlegel 1869, Röllicke 1999) has concentrated on their introduction to the West rather than the other way round. The particularities of a railroad and the marked places on the board warrant further research of Chinese appropriation processes in post-war China.



Development and dispersal

The development and dispersal of *l'Attaque* is complex and crosses many borders. The combination of rules that have made the game unique and suitable for a patent and has also made the connection with China more probable. The transmission and transformation of board games in China is largely unexplored for modern games and opens up an area of board games research as complex and revealing as that of traditional games.

The history of a modern board game is not always in the interest of board games manufacturers and the hesitation of proclaimed inventors and patent

owners is understandable in the light of the above. However, the context in which these games develop and the transformations they experience when they are transmitted from one to the other reveal the processes of development and dispersal that has been at the center of board games research since the beginning of the twentieth century.

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Table 1: Name, rank and number of playing pieces

Strength	<i>l'Attaque</i>	#	<i>Tek</i>	#	<i>Stratego</i> Clipper/Jumbo	#	<i>Computer</i> <i>Stratego</i>	#	<i>Strategy</i>	#	<i>Jun Qi</i>	#
1	Spy	1	Spion	1	Spion	1	Spion	1	Spy	1	Bomb*	2
2**	Scout	8	Soldaat	8	Verkenner	8	Verkenner	8	Scout	5	Engineer	3
3	Sapper	4	Ingenieur	4	Monteur	5	Mineur	5	Engineer	4	Platoon	3
4	Sergeant	4	Sergeant	4	Sergeant	4	Sergeant	4	Corporal	4	commander Company commander	3
5	Lieutenant	4	Luitenant	4	Luitenant	4	Luitenant	4	Sergeant	3	Battalion c.	2
6	Captain	4	Kaptein	4	Kapitein	4	Kaptein	4	Lieutenant	3	Regiment c.	2
7	Major	2	Majoor	2	Majoor	3	Majoor	3	Captain	2	Brigade c.	2
8	Colonel	2	Kolonel	2	Kolonel	2	Kolonel	2	Major	2	Division c.	2
9	Brigadier- General	1	Generaal	1	Luitenant- Generaal	1	Generaal	1	General	1	Army c.	1
10	Commander- in-chief	1	Veld- maarschalk	1	Generaal	1	Maarschalk	1	--		Commander in Chief	1
	Mine	4	Mijn	4	Mijn	6	Bom	6	Mine	4	Mine	3
	Flag	1	Vlag	1	Vlag	1	Vaandel	1	Flag	1	Flag	1

* Bombs may destroy any other rank but is automatically destroyed itself.

** Scouts are allowed to move across any number of empty squares and the engineer in Jun Qi is allowed to move anywhere from one station to another along the entire railroad.

Table 2: Board designs

	<i>l'Attaque</i>	#	<i>Tek</i>	#	<i>Stratego</i> Clipper/Jumbo	#	<i>Computer</i> <i>Stratego</i>	#	<i>Strategy</i>	#	<i>Jun Qi</i>	#
Board	9 x 10		9 x 11		10 x 10		8 x 10		10 x 10		5 x 13 grid	
Center	rivers	3	woods	3	no-man's land	2	emblems	2	?		mountains	2
(size)	(2 squares)		(3 squares)		lakes (Jumbo)		(2 squares)				(1 square)	
					(4 squares)						free zones	10
											flag positions	4

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