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NEW LIGHT ON THE HISTORY OF CHESS.

THERE is no finality about knowledge, and the eighteen months which have elapsed since the publication of my *History of Chess* have seen some important additions to our knowledge of the diffusion and history of chess. It may interest readers of the *B.C.M.* to have some account of this new information.

I. MALAGASCAR.

Chess has now been recorded as played in the South-East of Madagascar by the Tanala of Ikongo under the name of *Samantsy*, evidently a corruption of the Arabic name of the game, *shatranj*. The Rev. W. E. Cousins, who spent many years in missionary work on the island, tells me that there was formerly a considerable colony of Arab settlers in this part of the island. The pieces are: King, hova (=prince), a tall cylinder; Queen anakova (petty prince), a medium height cylinder; Pawn, zaza (child), a short cylinder; Bishop, basy (gun), shaped something like a low teapot minus the handle; Knight, farasy (horse, the Arabic *faras*), a tall piece shaped like a bottle; and Rook, vorona (a bird), a small truncated pyramid on a square base.

The Kings are placed opposite one another and the remaining men as in our chess. The moves are those of the older Muslim chess, but the Bishop is said to be unable to jump over an occupied square (this, I think, is probably a mistake of the observer's). The Pawn on promotion becomes an Anakova (Queen) only (Capt. Ardant du Picq, *Bulletin de l'Academie Malagache*, Vol. X., 1912).

II. MUSLIM CHESS.

In the spring of 1914 Mr. J. G. White purchased a collection of eight small MS. works on chess from Constantinople, and kindly forwarded them to me for examination.

The MSS. proved to be as follows:—

1. An undated Turkish work without diagrams with the title *Adab satranj*, "Rules of Chess," giving a brief account of the modern game on pp. 2—13.

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2. A modern Turkish collection of problems of the modern Turkish chess. The 96 pages contain 188 diagrams, and the problems are arranged by the length of the solutions.

3. A fragment (51 leaves) of an important Turkish work dealing with all aspects of chess, and describing the three games, Turki chess (the modern Turkish game), Rumi chess (the older Muslim game), and Franji chess (European chess), which was written A.D. 1586. Unfortunately the section describing the three games is missing. The MS. concludes with a collection of 40 problems, to which a later owner has added two on the fly-leaf. Sixteen of the problems are of the Rumi chess.

4. A Turkish collection of 42 problems of the modern Turkish game, written A.D. 1641. Nearly all these problems occur in MS. No. 2 also.

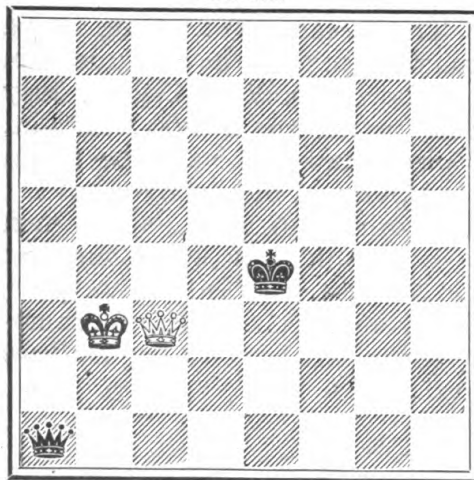
5. An Arabic MS. of 41 paper leaves, written A.D. 1564, which contains problems of the older Muslim game only. The solutions are generally identical with those in the ISS. AH and V (see my *History*, pp 171, 174). The MS. is imperfect but it contains 45 diagrams, and the solutions to four more problems.

6. A Turkish MS., written A.D. 1671, containing 91 problems and three diagrams of openings of the modern Turkish game on 25 leaves.

7. An undated Turkish MS. of 4 pages in at least three different hands, containing 44 problems and openings of the modern Turkish game.

8. A modern Turkish work of 84 pages describing the modern Turkish game and containing 37 problems of a more advanced type than that found in other MSS., and an appendix of 21 problems of the older chess, which are said to be extracted from the works of al-'Adli and as-Suli.

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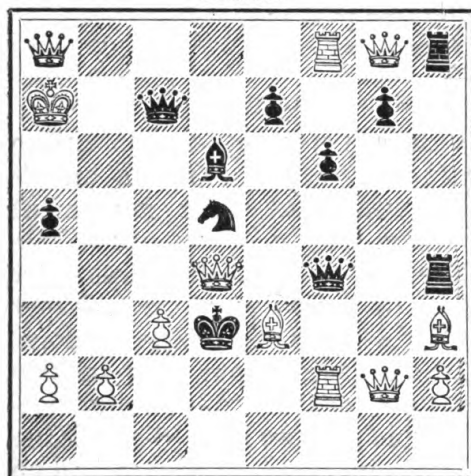
WHITE.

Black plays but White wins.
Solutions invited.

to squares of one colour. The game is won by capturing the Black Queen in such a way that the White Queen cannot be taken the following move.

MS. No. 5 adds four problems to my collection of Muslim problems in Ch. XV. of my *History*, and enables us to restore the missing Queen to the diagram of my No. 122. This problem is an interesting one historically, because as-Suli describes it as so difficult that no one but himself had ever solved it. It enables us, accordingly, to form some idea of the skill of the Muslim players. I give the corrected diagram here, and hold over the solution in order that the reader may try to find it for himself. He must remember that the Queen can only move diagonally one square at a time, and keeps

BLACK.



WHITE.

White plays and wins.

lines of play is unusual in an early Muslim problem.

Of greater interest historically is the evidence which these Turkish MSS. provide for the antiquity of the modern Turkish game. Until now we had no evidence from the Muslim side older than the 18th century, and none from the European side before 1620-40. Ibn Sukaikir, who was writing on the older game in 1571, was in Constantinople in 1567, and saw nothing of the new game, yet it was sufficiently established by 1586 to be the subject of an ambitious work. The crosswise arrangement of the Kings—probably the most distinctive feature of the Turki chess—was already the rule when Mr. White's sixth MS. was written in 1671.

These MSS. show an attempt to remodel the older *ta'biyat* (see my *History*, Ch. XIV.) so as to suit the newer game, though the attempt does not seem to have been very successful.

Another interesting fact revealed by these MSS. is that the bulk of the existing problems of the Turki chess were composed at an early date, and are as traditional as were the mediæval problems in Europe. There is good reason to believe that the bulk of the problems which we know from later Turkish MSS. (*e.g.*, MS. Landberg, Berlin) were composed in the first hundred years' life of the Turki chess!

The MSS. throw some light upon the question of Stamma's originality. I have searched these MSS. in vain for any of Stamma's positions. On the other hand, I find much similarity in the arrangement of the non-essential pieces with which Stamma loaded his diagrams. There is no doubt that his work was thoroughly Oriental in spirit and inspiration, even though no actual borrowing can be established.

I thought formerly that the MS. Landberg, Berlin, contained some problems of the older Muslim game. In the light of the information which these new MSS. supply, I withdraw that opinion (see *History*, p. 357, lines 2-4) entirely. The Dilaram position is solved under modern rules.

H. J. R. MURRAY.

* The Queen only moves one square diagonally, the Bishop moves diagonally also, leaping over one square into the one beyond. The other pieces move as in the modern chess.

MS. No. 3 adds six problems to my collection. Ten new positions out of the 86 of the older Muslim game which these MS. give, is a rather surprising gain. The positions are, of course, very similar in style to those which we knew before, but MS. No. 5 adds rather a pleasing *dulabiya* or water-wheel problem in the following :*

1 B—K B sq ch, K—K 5 (or K—B 5, &c.); 2 Q—B 3 ch; 3 B—Q 3 ch, K—K 3; 4 Q—B 7 ch; 5 B—K B 5 ch; 6 Q—Kt 7 ch; 7 B—Q 7 ch; 8 P—Q Kt 3 ch; 9 B—Q Kt 5 mate.

The existence of *two* main