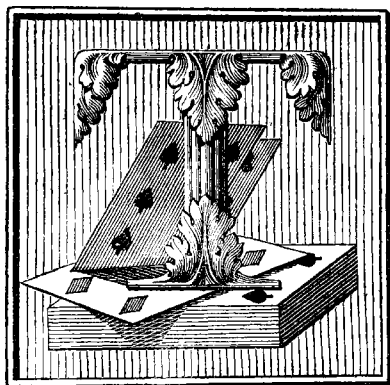




RESEARCHES INTO THE HISTORY  
 OF  
 PLAYING CARDS, &c.



THE origin of many of the most important inventions of human ingenuity, notwithstanding the influence they have had on the progress of civilization, seems lost in the darkness and obscurity of the traditional annals of remote ages. Most of them have, however, met with that attention from curious inquirers into the history of manners and customs, which their respective importance has appeared to deserve. And among the rest, the games, sports, and pastimes, which took their rise with the dawn of refinement and civil polish, have been considered among the most interesting objects of research.

The game of chess in particular has been fortunate in the attention which has been paid to its history and probable origin, by the learned, and the curious; while Cards, which will be found in the sequel to be intimately connected with chess, and certainly not of much less interest, have met with but few inquirers into their history, and from those few but very cursory attention.

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As we presume the origin of Cards to be much anterior to the period<sup>1</sup> usually affixed to their invention, our attempt will be to trace their origin backward, as the traveller ascends a river to seek its source ; and, though we may not discover the spring-head, yet will this retrograde journey along the stream of time be attended with its advantages ; as in its course we shall probably meet with much that is of curiosity and interest to beguile the tedium of the way. Proceed we, therefore, to notice the earliest mention of them, by writers of various European nations, passing from one country to another in regular order.

According to *Breitkopf*, and *Heinecken*, a<sup>2</sup> book printed in the fifteenth century, mentions the year 1300 as the precise period of the introduction of Cards into Germany ; and the former observes, that the information may be relied on with some degree of confidence, as it coincides with evidence derived from the old town<sup>3</sup> books of several German cities ; in which Cards are not named previous to that period, but that in many of rather subsequent date they are expressly mentioned.

France, it should seem, cannot boast a prior acquaintance with them ; for those<sup>4</sup> who have appealed to a decree of St. Louis as a testimony, have assuredly been mistaken: it appears to allude

<sup>1</sup> The reigns of Charles V. or VI. of France, about the close of the fourteenth century. MENESTRIER, BIBLIOTH. CURIEUSE ET INSTRUCTIVE, t. ii. p. 174; followed by Bullet, Schoepflinius, Fabricius, Fournier, Daniel, St. Foix, and numberless other writers.

<sup>2</sup> DAS GULDEN SPIEL, printed by Gunther Zeiner, Augsburg, 1472, folio. Tit. 5. Nun est das spiel vol vntretu vn als ich gelesen han, so ist es kommen in teutschland der ersten, in dem jar. Da man zalt von crist geburt tausend dreihundert jar.

<sup>3</sup> That of Augsburg, 1275, which is attested by the emperor Rudolph I. al-

though it mentions other games, makes no mention of Cards. The ancient Code of Nuremberg, wherein gambling high is prohibited, between the years 1286 and 1299, does not enumerate them among other common games. But in a later one, of 1380-4, Cards are mentioned among the games which are permitted. Breitkopf presumes that if the other old town books in Germany were examined, it is more than probable the precise time of their first introduction into that country might be fixed.

<sup>4</sup> PAPILLON Traité Historique de la Gravure en Bois, &c. Tom. I. p. 80.

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to dice and chess only. Cards make their appearance, in the annals of Provence about the year 1361, and it appears, that the knave, (*Valet*,) was then designated by the name of *Tuchim*, the appellation by which a formidable band of robbers were known, who, at that time were committing horrible ravages in the *Comtat Venaissin*.<sup>2</sup> Their further progress in France is presumed to be proved from the mention made of them in the chronicle of *Petit Jean de Saintre*<sup>3</sup> under the reign of Charles V. and from a decree of that monarch against gaming in 1369. It appears, therefore, that the Germans and the French became acquainted with them about the same time. A recent discovery of M. Van Præt seems, however, to establish it as certain, that Cards were known in France, at least as early as 1341. He has found them mentioned in a MS. belonging to M. Lancelot, entitled “*Renard le Contrefait*.”

Si comme fols et folles sont  
 Qui pour gagner au bordel vont  
 Jouent aux des, aux *Cartes* aux tables  
 Qui a Dieu ne sont delectables.

This romance appears by some subsequent verses to have been

<sup>1</sup> TUCHIM. Pillard, Traitre, Rebelle. ROQUEFORT, Glossaire de la Langue Romane, *in voce*.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. et Chronique de Provence par CESAR NOSTRADAMUS, Lyon, 1614, the popes, it is said, were obliged to preach a crusade against them.

<sup>3</sup> The passage is as follows: *Iehā de Saïtre pour celle nuit sen va coucher en la chābre de l'Escuier q̄ luy dict mō filz Saïtre jay grāt regret que nous laissez mais je suis tresjoyeux de vostre bien et puis dist aux autres paiges du roy qui entour Saïtre estoient or advisez mes enfans nesse pas belle chose que du bien faire & destre doux hūble & paisible & a chascun gracieux; Vez cy vostre cōpagnon q̄ pour estre tel, u ac-*

*quis la grace du roy, & de sa royē & de tous. Et vous qui estes noiseux joueux de Cartes & des dez, & Suivez deshonetes gēs tavernes & Cabaretz ne pour buttre quen vous face ne vous puis chastier, dont par ainsi combien que de lieux vous estes tant p̄f croisses si vous ne mandez & plus chetifs & mechans serez: en disant ces parolles to<sup>s</sup> furent despouillez & sen vōt coucher. Ch. xx.*

Cards are not named in the decree of 1369: various games are enumerated in a circumstantial manner: “*tous jeux de dez, de Tables, de Palmes, de Quilles, de Palet, de Soules, de Bailles; et tous autres tels jeux qui ne cheēt point a exercer, ne habiliter nos diz subgez a fait & usage d'armē, a la defence de notre dit Royaume, sur peine*

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composed by its anonymous author in a period of 13 years, i. e. from 1328 to 1341.<sup>1</sup>

The circumstance of the fleurs de lis being found in every court card, has been adduced as a proof that Cards were invented in France; but they are likewise found among the ornaments of the Romans at an early period, and also on the sceptres and crowns of the emperors of the west, in the middle ages, and on those of the kings of Castile, and of England, before the Norman conquest. But the early Cards of which we have given specimens, will be found not to bear this mark of French origin; the circumstance can only be considered, therefore, as an indication of the taste for armorial devices, prevalent at the time they were first known in France, and not any proof or assumption that they were invented there.

Cards are mentioned as being in common use among the Italians at the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> *Tirabcschi* quotes a MS. of the date of 1299, in which they are expressly named.

We should, however, be enabled to boast a still earlier acquaintance with them in England, if the prohibition of the synod of Worcester, *De Ludo Regis et Reginae*,<sup>3</sup> in the year 1240, or the passage from the wardrobe Rolls of Edward 1st, quoted by *Anstis*,<sup>4</sup> could

*de quarante sols parisiis.* Ordonnances des Roys de France, t. v. p. 172.

<sup>1</sup> JANSEN *Essai sur l'Hist. de la Gravure*, t. I. p. 99. Paris 1808, 8vo. the whole of this extract will be found in the Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> STORIA DELLA LETTERATURA ITALIANA, t. vi. part 2. p. 402.

<sup>3</sup> DU FRESNE GLOSS. T. ii. p. 2, pag. 154, in voce LUDI DE REGE ET REGINA. "Synodus Wigorniensis, an. 1240, cap. 38, Prohibemus etiam Clericis, ne intersint ludis in honestis, vel ludant ad aleas vel taxillos: nec sustineant Ludos fieri de Rege et Regina, nec arietes levare, nec palestras publicas fieri."—videtur innui ludus quem vulgo CHARTARUM dicimus si quidem ea ætate notus fuerit. Mr.

Gough says, "it rather seems to refer to the King and Queen of Twelfth day, derived from the Roman Saturnalia; it may, however, have referred to Chess, which must have been brought from Asia by the crusaders previous to this period.

<sup>4</sup> History of the Order of the Garter, V. 2. p. 307, where he cites the following passage, from the Wardrobe Rolls of the 6th year of Edw. I. "Waltero Sturton ad opus regis ad ludendum ad *quatuor reges*, viii. s. v. d." This game, *Anstis* conjectures, might be *cards*, wherein are *Kings of four suits*. He thinks the game of some antiquity, from the application of the word *Knave* to a youth placed next the King and Queen, and being as it were their son, in which sense that term was

be applied to Cards; but it is the opinion of several of our most able antiquaries, that they relate to other games.

Spain has found a champion for her claims to the invention of them in the *Abbé Rive*,<sup>1</sup> who was induced, from the consideration of the term *Naibi*, by which Cards were known among the Italians about the year 1393, to suppose that they were brought into Italy by the Spaniards, at the time when they entered Sicily and Calabria under the Castilian princes, in 1267, and under Peter III. of Arragon, about 1282, because the term which continued to designate Cards among them until the fifteenth century, is nearly similar to that by which they are known to the Spaniards even to this day.

The Spaniards call their Cards *Naipes*, which word<sup>2</sup> Bullet derives from the Biscayan *Napa*, signifying *flat, even*. The relation which this signification has to Cards, is not so obvious as Bullet imagines, and the *Abbé Rive* justly observes, that the learned men of Spain must be more competent judges: he therefore refers to the great Spanish Dictionary, in which it is said, that the word *Naipes*,<sup>3</sup>

used. Chaucer says, “The King of Northumberland begot a knave child;” and this use of the word is frequent in his poems. In France also, this card is called *Varlet*, a name given to the King’s son.

<sup>1</sup> *Eclaircissements Historiques sur l’Invention des Cartes à Jouer*, 8vo. Paris, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> *NAIPEA*, carte à jouer. *Ba.* Naypes, cartes en vieux Espagnol, de la le terme *NAIBIS*, que lon trouve dans la vie Latine de Saint Bernadin, qui signifie des cartes à jouer & non pas un cornet comme l’ont cru les continueurs de Bollandus, et les nouveaux Editeurs de Ducange. *MEMOIRES SUR LA LANGUE CELTIQUE*, fol. Besancon, 1760. t. iii. p. 192. La racine de ce mot et *Napa* plat, uni, il designe fort bien les Cartes, et repond à la signification du mot Latin *Charta*. *RECHERCHES*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> *NAIPE*. s. m. Carton cortado a la proporcion de la vigesima quarta parte de

un pliego común, en que se pintan con diversos colores algunas figuras, en numero determinado, para jugar a varios juegos, formando un numero di quarenta à quarenta y ocho cartas, divididas en quatro palos ò manjères que son oros, copas espadas, y bastos, y en cada uno de estos, tres figuras, que se llaman Rey, Caballo, y Sota, y los demás por los números hasta siete ò nueve, llamandose el primero, as. *Tamarid* quiere que sea nombre Arabigo, y lo mismo el *Brocense*; pero comunmente se juzga que les dió este nombre por la primer cifra que se les puso, que fué una N y una P con que se significaba el nombre de su inventór *Nicolao Pepin*: y de ahi con pequena corrupcion se dixe *Náipe*. Lat. *Charta picta Lusoria*. *DICCIONARIO DE LA LENGUA CASTELLANA*. Madrid, 1734, fol. t. iv. p. 645.

In the *DICCIONARIO TRILINGUE DEL CASTELLANA BASCUENCE*, (SAN SEBAS-

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is derived from the initial letters of the name of the inventor of Cards, N. P. *Nicolao Pepin*, in consequence of which he thinks himself authorised to consider the Spaniards as the inventors. Whether this etymology be more probable than that of *Bullet*, or whether the name of the supposed inventor has not rather been manufactured from the denomination of Cards, may be reasonably doubted, as there have been so many similar fables invented to illustrate historical doubts.

The earliest mention of Cards, however, among the Spaniards, is that adduced by the *Abbé Rive* from *Gutery's Translation*<sup>1</sup> of *Guevara's Epistles*: and this testimony, it must be confessed, is very doubtful, as it does not occur in the original Spanish text of any of the editions.

The prohibition of them, by John I. king of Castile, in 1387, is less disputable.<sup>2</sup>

It is not improbable that the Spaniards were acquainted with Cards at a much earlier period; we cannot however consider, that we have any thing like proof of their having been the inventors, but they probably derived them immediately from their Moorish invaders.

TIAN, 1745, T. ii. pag. 110,) is the following explanation of the term: *Naipe*, es voz Bascongada, *naipea*, aunque no los usamos, de *nai* querer, y voluntad, y *pe* *pea*, debaxo, inferior, y à los *naipes* les quadra el nombre, por que debaxo, ù en la parte inferior, estan las figuras, ò palos, y se reparten quedandose ocultos, y debaxo; y por que esto excita, y se junta con el deseo y querer vencer, y ganar, bien se lo diò el nombre de *naipes*, *Cartá*, y en adelante *naipea*. Lat. *Churta Lusoria*.

<sup>1</sup> Antonio de Guevara, Archbishop of Mondoñedo, Historiographer to Charles V. The first Spanish edition of his "*Epistolas Familiares*," was printed at Valladolid in 1539. Of Gutery's French translation, the first edition appeared in 1588, at

Lyons, in 4to. In which Alphonso XI. of Castile is said to have prohibited *Cards*, among the other games in the Statutes of the Order of the Band, in 1332. The passage stands thus "Commandoit leur ordre, que nul des Chevaliers de la Bande osast jouer argent aux CARTES ou dez, &c. It is, however, extraordinary that none of the Spanish editions, nor the Italian, German, or English translations of these letters, contain a syllable about *Cards* in this passage; the whole of the Abbé Rive's Hypothesis therefore rests upon the testimony of Gutery's translation, and the fable of their name being derived from the initials of their inventor: slender grounds upon which to establish an historical fact.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.

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It is so difficult to account for the Spanish name of Cards, *Naipes*,<sup>1</sup> from Spanish idioms, that *Breitkopf* was induced to seek its origin from the Arabic: the mixture of which with the Spanish language is well known, the conjecture and deduction are very ingenious. He says, “ I was confirmed in my opinion by the signification of the Hebrew word *Naibes*, for the old Italian name of Cards, *Naibi*, resembles the Hebrew word still more, and in both languages it denotes *sorcery, fortune-telling, prediction, &c.* This applies much better to Cards, than the Biscayan word *Napa, flat, even*, as there is a certain foresight required in almost every game of Cards. That the Spaniards should transform *b* into *p*, is perfectly natural; *b* is by them pronounced *v*.<sup>2</sup>

And this opinion of *Breitkopf* is still further confirmed by the circumstance of the denomination of the Knave, *Tuchim*, which seems to partake much more of Arabic than French origin. *Tuchán*, in Arabic, signifying *darkness, obscurity*, it might probably be bestowed upon this band of depredators, on account of their concealment in forests and obscure places. The Eastern origin of Cards appears still more probable, when we consider that we owe the introduction of chess among us to that people. The term *Naipes* is as much of oriental origin as the name of chess, *Ssed renge*, or Hundred Cares, by which it is known among the Arabians. And on reference to *Cobarruvias*<sup>3</sup> for his explanation of the term, we find that he cites authority in support of its Arabic derivation.<sup>3</sup> The learned <sup>4</sup> *Salvini* has also thrown

<sup>1</sup> Cards are also called *Naipes* in the Portuguese language.

<sup>2</sup> *Naipes*. Libro disenquadrado en que se lee comunmente en todas estados que pudiera estar en el catalogo de los reprovados. Dixeronse naipes de la cifra primera que tuvieron; en la qual se encerrava el nombre del inventor. Eran un N y P. y de alli les pareció llamarlos naipes; pero las dichas letras dezian Nicolao Pepin. *Tamarid* piensa ser Arabigo, y lo mismo el *Brocence*. TESORO DE LA LENGUA CASTELLANA. Madrid, 1674, folio.

<sup>3</sup> In the Arabic, *Nabaa* signifies, he has emitted a gentle voice, as sorcerers do; from which root are derived *Naba*, the Sorcerer's drum, and *Nabi*, a prophet or fortune-teller. *Eichorn* in his Introduction to the Old Testament explains the Hebrew words *Nabi, Nabim*, by divine inspiration, and by individuals acting from divine inspiration. COURT DE GEBELIN derives it from an oriental word *Nap*, which is said to denote as much as, *to take, to hold*.

<sup>4</sup> *Naibi* cioè Carte a giocare, in Ispag-

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out the same conjecture on the origin of the word *Naibi*, and even has gone so far as to say, that it is probable, for the knowledge of cards, we are indebted to the *Moors*.

History points distinctly at the road by which the Europeans may have derived their knowledge of Cards from this nation. The Saracens having spread with rapidity over Asia and Africa, had attempted to cross the sea, as early as the seventh century. In the year 652 they invaded Sicily, which they had completely conquered, by the year 832. We find them in Spain in the year 710, and about 731 they penetrated through Languedoc into France as far as Arles, and continued in possession of the southern parts of Spain until the year 1492. About the year 842, they proceeded from Sicily to Calabria,<sup>1</sup> and a few years afterwards to Rome and the Tuscan territory. They maintained themselves in different parts of Italy until the tenth century, and their power was such, that the pope and other Italian princes made use of their assistance in their wars with each other. In the beginning of the tenth century, a party of Saracens settled on the borders of Piedmont, penetrated as far as the Alps in the Valais, and safety from their inroads was purchased by ceding to them a tract of country among the mountains, about the middle of the same century.<sup>2</sup>

Their long continuance in the immediate vicinity of the Italian, Spanish, and French people, and their consequent communication

nuolo *Naipes*, forse venuta in Ispagna, come molte altre dall' Arabo: e forse le Carte medesime venner da' Mori. Salvini. *Annot. sopra la Fiera di Buonarotti. Firenze* 1726, fol. p. 393.

<sup>1</sup> They settled at Bari on the coast of Calabria, whither the Prince of Benevento had invited them to assist him against the Prince of Salerno; on which occasion they took possession of the town. Even after their expulsion from Sicily, when the remainder were brought back to Apulia, as prisoners, by the Emperor Frederic II.

in the year 1221, and Nocera was their appointed residence, they were in Italy at an earlier period than the Spaniards, who only found their way there about 1267, with the two Castilian Princes; or in the reign of Peter of Arragon, about 1282.

<sup>2</sup> MURATORI, t. v. p. 422, relates that they occupied the convent of St. Mauritius in the Valais, and plundered and murdered travellers: but that in the treaty of peace with Hugo, King of Italy, they were promised the mountainous district between Italy and Suabia to settle in.



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with them, afforded these nations opportunities of becoming acquainted with their literature, arts, customs, and amusements. It is by no means necessary to suppose, that one nation derived an acquaintance with this game from the other; they might each have obtained it immediately from these oriental hordes themselves. They were at that time an enlightened people, compared with the inhabitants of Europe, and as it is acknowledged that we are indebted to them for the dawn of science and letters, and certainly for the game of chess, why may we not also have derived from them our knowledge of Playing-cards? which seem to owe their origin to a different modification of the same principle. An objection may be started that the Alcoran forbids all games of chance, but it is not necessary to suppose, that hazardous betting or playing for stakes, which among us is generally connected with the game, was usual with them; or, perhaps, they knew how to avoid transgressing the law in that respect, as well as they do with regard to the prohibition of the use of wine. At least, the Moors are now fond of playing at ombre in secret: according to Höst, they learnt this game from the Spaniards,<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr<sup>2</sup> says, that he saw European Cards among the Greeks at Cairo, but not among the Mahometans; but he found the latter playing at Cards in Bombay, and that on his appearance they hid their money.

All this does not, however, prove that the Arabians were the inventors; in the same way that they obtained the game of chess from India through the Persians:<sup>3</sup> they may have derived Cards from

<sup>1</sup> Höst's *Efferetninger om Maroks og Fes*. Kiøbenhavn. 1779, 4to.

<sup>2</sup> Niebuhr, *Voyage en Arabie*, T. 1. p. 140. Amst. 1776. 4to. Les Arabes appellent le jeu des Cartes. *Lāb-el Kamar*.

J'ai vu a Bombay des vieux marchands Arabes jouer avec des Cartes chinoises. Elles sont incommodes, Je me souviens d'avoir vu jouer quatre personnes, dont chacun en eut tant, qu' à peine pouvoit elles les tenir dans les deux mains.

<sup>3</sup> The Persians did not, however, obtain the game of Chess from India, until the age of the great *Cosroës*, or *Cosru*, in the middle of the sixth century. It reached China nearly about the same period, in the reign of the Emperor *Wu-Ti*. But it was most probably unknown in Europe previous to the crusades. The first written mention of the game among the Europeans, is in some of the old romances of the Round Table; they, however, mention

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them, or some other nation. There cannot, however, be a doubt, that they were introduced by their means into Europe, although it is now in vain we seek direct evidence of the fact. Had the work<sup>1</sup> which the learned Hyde projected on this subject come down to us, it would no doubt have set the question at rest, and thrown much light on the kind of Cards in use, and on the games played with them among the oriental nations. To developpe this part of their history, much skill in the languages of the East would be requisite, and it is to be desired that some curious orientalist may, at a future period think the subject worthy an attentive inquiry.

It has been asserted that Cards and Dice were invented by the Lydians, during the affliction of a famine in the reign of Atys; but, setting aside the improbability of the relation, the passage of Herodotus<sup>2</sup> from whence the deduction is made, does not warrant the mention of Cards in any degree. Among all the games mentioned by the antient Greek and Roman writers, there is not one which can, with good foundation, be supposed to designate cards; we may therefore safely conclude that they were unknown to them; for, possessing as we do, so many writers who have given a minute detail of their habits and manners, both public and private, had they been then in use, some mention of them would certainly have been made. Ovid<sup>3</sup> has on one occasion enumerated several games, proper to be

it as in use at the time of King Arthur; but this, among many other anachronisms common to them, can only be accepted as a proof, that it was known at the time they wrote. The game did not reach us before the twelfth century; it is therefore impossible that the ivory chess men with Arabic inscriptions, formerly shewn among the treasures of the abbey of St. Dennis, could have belonged to Charlemagne; or that a Bavarian Prince should have been killed by a blow with a Chess board at the court of King Pepin. Hyde thinks the mistake may have arisen by confounding the game of Draughts, (*Ludus Latrunculorum*) which

was known to the Romans by that name, with Chess. *Latro* had the same signification with the old Teutonic word *Schach*, both of which signify robbery, and robber, according to *Du Fresne*. From *Schach* also is derived the word *Schæcher* (scoundrel.)

<sup>1</sup> We gather from the preface to his book *de Ludis Orientalibus*, that he had prepared an appendix "*in quo erit Historia Chartiludii, & Hist. Culilæ et Dimnæ, &c.*" I have been unable to obtain information whether the work, or his collections for it, exist in MS.

<sup>2</sup> *Herodot.* lib. i.

<sup>3</sup> *De Arte Amandi*, lib. ii.