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The material form of the Game of the Goose

Some aspects of printing history

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Abstract

This article discusses the material form of printed games, principally the Game of the Goose, relating this to the commercial practices of the workshops in Western Europe that produced them from the late sixteenth century onwards. Printing methods, colouring and presentation of the games are analysed.

Keywords : history of board games; printing history; Game of the Goose

Introduction

The Game of the Goose is a simple race game played with dice, recorded from the 15th century, but spawning literally thousands of variants throughout Western Europe up to the present day. These games are usually discussed in terms of their playing structure, iconography and rules, or in regard to their place in cultural history.¹ Instead, the present article discusses the factors that shaped their physical production.²

Though the earliest games show considerable variety of form - such as manuscript on paper or parchment, painted wood, inlay work, and even incised stone - the vast majority of surviving games were printed and it is only these that are considered here. However, these printed games were just a side-line in any commercial operation, typically constituting perhaps one per cent of the titles offered. Comparison of the games with the other output of their publishing houses shows that the commercial need to follow in-house practices had important consequences for the production of games, influencing their appearance and their presentation in many ways.

¹ For a discussion in these terms, see: Adrian Seville, *The Cultural Legacy of the Royal Game of the Goose: 400 years of Printed Board Games*, Amsterdam University Press, 2019.

² Many of the games discussed may be found on the Giochidelloca.it website maintained by Luigi Ciompi and the present author. References to the catalogue number are indicated by the symbol #.

Printed games: a side-line in commercial publishing

As evidence on comparative numbers of printed items, consider the 1614 stock list of Andrea and Michelangelo Vaccari of Rome, in which only the following entries are of printed games:³

Schacchiero con la sua dichiarazione [chess board with rules]

Il giuoco del pela Chiu [the Game of Pluck the Owl]

Il gioco dell'Ocha [the Game of the Goose]

Il gioco del Gambero [the Game of the Prawn].

By contrast, the total number of other prints is over one thousand, listed individually or as groups, on 770 lines of text. Or consider the output of the Dartons, the pre-eminent publishing house for children's educational material in nineteenth-century London.⁴ From their Gracechurch Street address, they produced in all only 4 race games akin to Goose, compared with some 300 other printed items, not including their printed books. Even from their later Holborn Hill establishment, at the height of the golden age of English game invention, they produced only 20 such games out of about 1000 items. The same proportions were broadly evident in the field of popular prints, as witness the output of the major producer of *Bilderbogen*, Friedrich Campe of Nuremberg,⁵ or that of Pellerin at Épinal,⁶ or of the Milan *fabbriche d'immagini*,⁷ though in these latter cases the absence of complete listings makes the exact proportions difficult to estimate. As we shall see, the processes of production of *Goose* and other printed games were therefore largely those used more generally by the various printing houses for their other work.

Printing processes before lithography: relief and intaglio

The production of printed board games began in the late sixteenth century. From then on, until the introduction of lithography for that purpose towards the middle of the nineteenth century, two markedly different techniques were in use: relief printing and intaglio printing. Relief printing used a simple press,⁸ in which a central vertical screw was used to force a pressure plate, (known as a platen), down onto a horizontal inked forme on which the paper rested. The forme could consist of a woodblock, in which the design was cut in relief, or a body of type for printing letterpress, or a combination of both, so that an illustration could be printed with associated text in a single working of the press. An inherent limitation arising from the construction of the press was that the platen

³ The brothers Andrea Vaccari (1573-1627) and Michelangelo Vaccari (1576-after 1630) were printers and publishers in Rome. Their catalogue of 1614, now in the Biblioteca Civica of Mantua, lists about 1500 prints. It was republished by Francesco Ehrle, *Roma prima di Sisto V*, Rome: Danesi, 1908. The games are listed at p. 62.

⁴ Jill Shefrin, *The Dartons*. Los Angeles: Cotsen Occasional Press, 2009.

⁵ Elisabeth Reynes, *Friedrich Campe und seine Bilderbogen-Verlag zu Nürnberg*. Nuremberg: Stadtbibliothek, 1962.

⁶ Thierry Depaulis, *C'est une image d'Épinal*. Épinal : Musée de l'Image, 2013.

⁷ Alberto Milano, *Fabbrica d'immagini – gioco e litografia nei fogli della Raccolta Bertarelli*. Milan: Vangelista, 1993

⁸ The earliest presses, known as 'common presses' were made of wood. Similar presses, but made of iron, were introduced early in the nineteenth century. It is likely that some woodcut board games would have been printed on iron presses.

could not be too large if a sufficiently uniform pressure was to be exerted across the whole of the sheet.

Intaglio printing was very different. The design was formed of indentations in a flat metal plate, usually beaten copper, either made directly by engraving with a sharp tool (a burin) or indirectly by etching, where a needle was used to scratch the design in a coating of wax, so that immersing the plate in an acid bath would create the indentations. In either case, the cleaned plate was inked all over, then carefully wiped so as to leave ink only in the indentations. A roller press exerting high pressure was used for printing: a cylindrical roller was rolled across the dampened paper sheet, forcing the paper into the depressions and absorbing the ink in them. The method had the advantage, compared with the common press, that the paper size was limited only by the width that the roller could accommodate. However, the plate had to be wiped after re-inking for each impression, so that the process was inherently slower, and hence more costly. A further disadvantage was that printing in relief from a body of type could not be combined with intaglio printing in the same working of the press, so that text – a normal requirement for Goose and allied games – had to be engraved or etched with the design itself: this could be done so as to be nearly as regular as type, but the skill level required was high. The intaglio process therefore tended to be used for high quality work, sold at a higher price than that from the relief presses.



Figure 1a Impressio Librorum from the Series 'Nova Reperta' by Jan van der Straet. Antwerp, 1580-1605, showing a common press. © Trustees of the British Museum 1948,0410.4.194



Figure 1b *Sculptura in Aes* from the same series, showing a rolling press. © Trustees of the British Museum Ii,5.174

The workshops for these two processes were strikingly different, as shown in figures 1a and 1b, so that printers tended to specialise in one of them, rather than having equipment and skilled craftsmen for both. This difference in printing techniques had a very significant influence on the appearance of the games, as will be seen in the next sections.

Games printed from woodblock alone

If there is no requirement for much text to appear on the face of the game, woodblock is a very suitable production medium for the classic Game of the Goose. Striking effects can be achieved at a modest cost. The woodblock preserved at the Imprenta Guasp in Mallorca is a fine example – there are no rules on the game sheet and the essential numerals are well executed (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Original woodblock for a Goose game, in the collection of the Imprenta Guasp, Palma de Mallorca (Image courtesy of La Cartuja de Valldemossa).

Printing from woodblocks alone (without type) was also used successfully for some Italian games in which very little text appeared on the game sheet. However, the well-known Venetian example by Carlo Coriolani exhibits not only a summary of the rules, mostly indicated in the relevant spaces, but also mottoes in the corners.⁹ The precision cutting of the letters is impressive but even so the effect is unpleasing and hard to read (Figure 3a). Where the cutting is not so skilful, the result is markedly unsatisfactory, as exemplified in Figure 3b, printed from a woodblock by Allabre of Chartres, where the difficulty of cutting text is painfully evident, especially in the smaller size used for the ‘particular rules’ in the lower half.¹⁰



Figure 3a: (left) Detail of the Gioco di Loca by Carlo Coriolani. Venice: ca. 1640 (#0243).



Figure 3b: (right) Detail of the Jeu de l'oye by Allabre. Chartres: ca. 1750.

Combination of woodblock and type

Where woodblocks were used to print the track along which the tokens of the payers moved, full statements of the mode of play and detailed rules were often provided on the game sheet in letterpress. This was the overwhelming practice of the French provincial printers. Their main output was of illustrated sheets with subjects such as *Lives of the Saints*, where woodblock illustration and letterpress could easily be combined by locking up a rectangular body of type against an edge of the woodblock: sometimes several edges had adjacent type. However, in the Game of the Goose and allied games, the French tradition was for the rules to appear in the central oval on a sheet printed in landscape format. This allowed the largest possible track for a given paper size, thus maximizing the size of the playing spaces and improving the playing experience. The means of achieving this has not been recorded. However, the experienced printer and printing historian, Paul Nash, considers that

⁹ Ilio Negri and Virgilio Vercelloni: *I giochi di dadi d'azzardo e di passatempo dei gentiluomini e dei pirati*. Milano: C M Lerici Editore, 1958, pl. F.

¹⁰ Maurice Jusselin, *Imagiers et cartiers à Chartres*. Paris: Librairie d'Argences, 1957, p. 152, reproduced in: René Saulnier, *L'Imagerie du Val de Loire*. Angers: Editions Jacques-Petit, 1945, p.29.

the most likely method was to for the printer to cut a central hole right through the woodblock, into which the type block, often of irregular shape, could be wedged.¹¹ A successful example of this presumed technique is shown in figure 4, a Toulouse print by Peyrane: both the letterpress in the centre and the woodcut lettering of the imprint in the lower left corner are well executed.

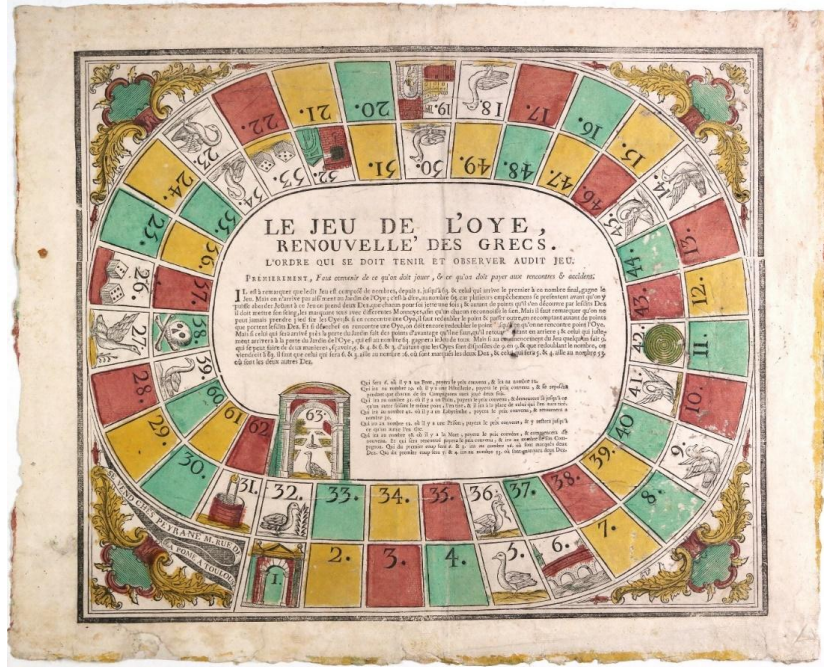


Figure 4: *Le Jeu de l'œye*. Toulouse: Peyrane, ca. 1750 (author's collection, #2320) showing combined woodblock and letterpress.



Figure 5: *Le Jeu royal de l'œye*. Chartres: Hoyau, 18th century (author's collection, #2617).

¹¹ Private communication, 2021.

A more problematic example is shown in figure 5, by Hoyau of Chartres. Here, the uppermost line of the text is very close to the woodcut's inner line and indeed, if the apostrophe is included, the top edge would intersect it. Paul Nash suggests that the text block could still have been inserted, by making a small extra cut-out for the apostrophe, as indicated by the blue outline in the figure. Alternatively, the type block could be positioned slightly higher in the woodblock, but with down-steps at the ends, formed by reducing the height of the first and last types (L and E) of the title. He considers that either of these 'bodging' methods are more likely than the alternative of printing the woodcut and the type in two separate workings, which would have added considerably to the printer's cost.

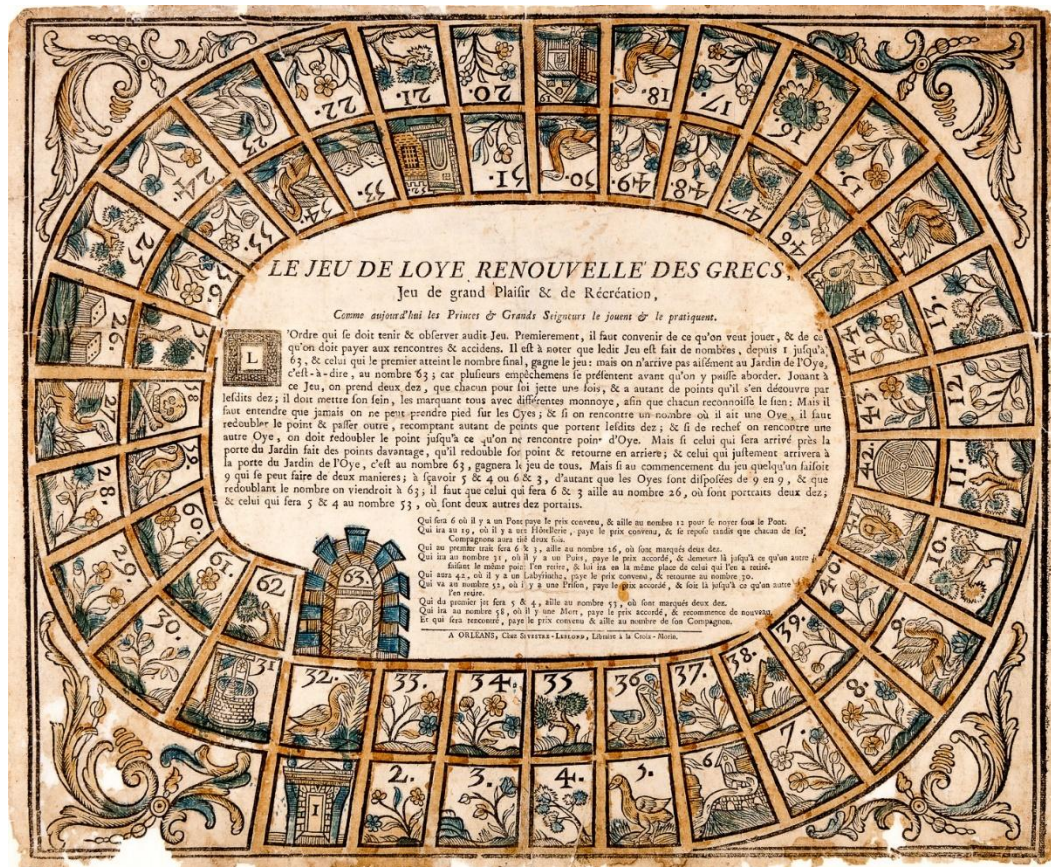


Figure 6: *Le Jeu de loye*. Orléans: Sevestre-Leblond, 1771-1780. Mucem, 1951.31.14

Cutting a hole in the block risks damaging its remaining printing surface. Traces of this are visible in figure 6, a print by Jean-Baptiste Sevestre-Leblond of Orléans, where the inner border of the track is missing at the points where the woodblock has been cut away to accommodate the type.¹²

Combining type with illustrations was particularly problematic for these *imagiers* of France, who were subject to strict regulations. They were classed with the *dominotiers* (producers of decorated paper) and – being a free trade without a guild of their own – came under the control of the printers' guilds. As a result, they were forbidden to print letterpress. Letters Patent of Henri III, 12 October

¹² This block was used earlier by Le Blond and Sevestre, showing the same damage – see Auguste Martin, *L'Imagerie Orléanaise*. Paris: Editions Duchartre & Van Buggenhoudt, 1928 (nos. 12 and 20). Martin claims that the same block was later reprinted by Letourmy but careful examination shows that his was a different block, though a close copy.

1586 state:¹³

Faisons deffenses aux dominotiers de tenir en leur maison ny ailleurs autres presses que de grandes, accommodées de grands timpans pour imprimer l'histoire et d'avoir grosses ny petites lettres, et s'ils en ont à faire seretireront par devant les maitres qui ont des lettres, en convenant du prix avec eux pour leur imprimer ce qu'ils auront à faire.

[We forbid the dominotiers to have in their establishments any presses except those of large format, equipped with large frames for printing *histoires*, and to have neither large nor small letters, and if they need to print them, they must apply to the master printers who have such letters and agree a price with them for printing what is required.]

The games producers thus were constrained to take their woodblocks to a Master Printer for the text to be set in type and incorporated within the block.

Intaglio printing

Both forms of intaglio printing (etching and engraving) have been used for board games from a very early date. A notable example is a Game of the Goose printed by Lucchino Gargano in Rome, dated 1598 on the plate: this is wholly engraved on copper.¹⁴ By contrast, *Il novo bello et piacevole gioco della scimia* (the new beautiful and pleasant game of the monkey) signed Alittenio Gatti and dated 1588 on the plate, is an etching.¹⁵ Frequently, the two techniques were combined.



Figure 7: Combination of etching and engraving on a copper plate re-issued by Crépy (author's collection, #0939).

A clear example (figure 7) of this is the *Nouveau jeu historique et chronologique des rois de France*, as revised by Crépy in 1775 following the death of Louis XV in 1774. The etched portraits of earlier monarchs are hardly legible due to wear, while the engraved text and decorations remain quite fresh.¹⁶ Etched lines were frequently reinforced by the burin to make them deeper and therefore capable of carrying more ink: this had clearly not been done with the portraits.

¹³ I am grateful to Thierry Depaulis for this reference. A further *règlement* to similar effect was added in 1618.

¹⁴ British Museum 1869,0410.2465.+

¹⁵ British Museum 1869,0410.2461.+

¹⁶ Adrian Seville, *Cultural Legacy* op. cit., p. 336.

Use of printing techniques for games – differing national practices before lithography

Across the nations of Western Europe in which the Game of the Goose circulated, the problem of combining text with graphic material in printed games was approached in markedly different ways, until the advent of lithography circumvented the problem. In Italy, perhaps because the game was well known in its birthplace, it was often printed without detailed rules.¹⁷ The less familiar Game of the Owl [*Gi(u)oco di Pela il Chiu*] did require some explanation but this could be kept short and accommodated in woodcut. The collection of woodblocks from the Tipografia Soliani in the Galleria Estense, Modena, exemplifies this point clearly – letterpress is not usually combined with woodcut, as in France.¹⁸ For Italian games where more text was thought necessary – for example, in the *Gioco del Gamaro*, which had some unusual rules – intaglio printing was preferred.¹⁹

The separation of printing techniques by kind of workshop was particularly evident in France, where the provincial printers used woodcut almost exclusively,²⁰ while the Paris printers, particularly those in the rue St Jacques – many equipped both for letterpress work and intaglio printing – generally catered for a more affluent market.²¹ Their market was not confined to Paris, though: their prints were distributed across France, while those of the provincial publishers were distributed also in the capital, in numbers. A clear example showing how the printing process depended on the workshop is furnished by the *Jeu de l'oie renouvelé des Grecs*, embellished with nonsense verses: this was first issued as a copper engraving in Paris by Basset in about 1810 but copied (in the same size but without the verses) as a woodcut, with letterpress in the central oval, by Pellerin in Épinal some ten years later (figure 8).²²

¹⁷ For example, the 'Luna – Sole' version, in which text is confined to brief instructions in the active spaces [Bertarelli coll., m.3.16].

¹⁸ Soprintendenza per i beni artistici e storici di Modena e Reggio, *I Legni incisi della Galleria Estense: quattro secoli di stampa nell'Italia settentrionale*. Modena: Mucchi, 1986, pp.165-168. These woodblocks do not have a central rebate for letterpress.

¹⁹ See the etched example by Angelo Salvadori of Venice, made between 1616 and 1637 [Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna] #2525.

²⁰ An exception is the magnificent copper engraving (#2440) of the *Jeu du Point au Point* by Le Bossu of Dijon. See H. R. D'Allemagne, *Le noble jeu de l'oie*. Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1950, plate 13.

²¹ In the second half of the 18th century, an engraved and hand coloured Parisian print of excellent quality could be had for 16 to 18 livres: three or four times the price of a woodcut *jeu de l'oie* from Chartres or Orléans, coloured au pochoir. See: A. R. Girard and C. Quétel, *L'histoire de France racontée par le jeu de l'oie*. Paris: Balland/Massin, 1982.

²² D'Allemagne, op. cit., p. 202. This design was later redrawn and issued by Pellerin as a lithograph, as noted below – figure 8, bottom illustration.

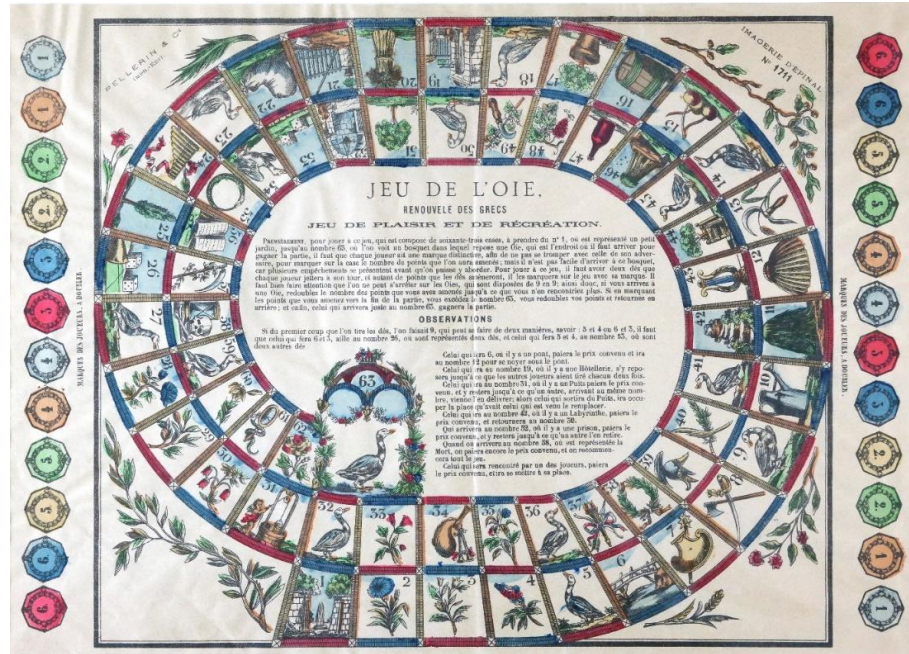


Figure 8: Three incarnations of a *Jeu de l'oie*. Top: original copper engraving by Basset, Paris: 1810 (coll. L Ciompi, #2318). Centre: woodcut edition by Pellerin, Épinail: 1820 (coll. L Ciompi, #0680). Bottom: lithographic edition by Pellerin, about 1870 (author's collection, #0468).

Early German printed games were mostly printed from copper plates. Nuremberg was the main centre of production: the chief producers were G N Renner, Friedrich Campe, Johann Raab and J. G. Klinger. As well as producing picture sheets of various kinds, Renner was also a manufacturer of playing cards and decorated paper. Evidently his range of publications was such as to require both relief and intaglio printing – some of his *Bilderbogen* employ woodcut plus type, but for others, including the printed games, he used etching, before he later adopted lithography. An instructive example, by an unknown publisher, is a seventeenth-century German Goose game, decorated with an animal alphabet (Figure 9).



Figure 9: German Game of the Goose with animal alphabet. Mid-seventeenth century. (author's collection, #2742).

It incorporates a substantial block of text in the centre, which does indeed appear to have been printed from an inserted page of type. This is confirmed by the fact that several of the decorative sprays to the right of the block have been cut off as if by a straight line, while a similar truncation is also evident on the left, particularly where the horn played by a goose has lost part of its bell. Cutting the woodblock to accommodate the right-hand corners of the page of type has damaged the inner margin of the track, as is particularly seen at space 51. Woodcut games continued to be produced in Germany well into the nineteenth century.²³

In the Netherlands, a clear distinction can be made between the productions of Visscher, essentially a fine art printer, whose occasional printed games (Games of the Goose, Snake and Owl) are printed from high quality copper plates, and the games from the producers of the *centsprenten* ['penny prints']. These were printed from woodblocks, which was by far the more common medium for Dutch printed games before the advent of lithography.²⁴ The centres of the woodblock games usually incorporated text giving the rules in letterpress, sometimes with a further woodblock illustration included.

The advent of lithography



Figure 10: The lithographic printing establishment of Lemercier & Cie., Paris, mid-1840s. In the centre, talking to a client, is Joseph Lemercier (1803-1887) the director of the firm. Behind him on the main floor are at least thirty lithographic presses, while artists and writers work on the balconies along the sides. Against the walls are cabinets filled with hundreds of limestones, catalogued and held for reprinting. The statue of Senefelder stands at the end of the press room. [Graphic Arts Collection of the Firestone Library, Princeton GC 077]

²³ Theodor Kohlmann, *Wer spielt mit? – Gesellschaftsspiele auf Bilderbogen* [exhibition catalogue]. Berlin: Museum für Deutsche Volkskunde, 1978.

²⁴ P J Buijnsters and L Buijnsters-Smets. *Papertoys – Speelprenten en papieren speelgoed in Nederland (1640–1920)*. Zwolle: Waanders, 2005, p. 105 (in Dutch). A notable exception is the *Ghansespel* by R and J Ottens, printed in about 1750 from a 17th-century copper plate: this has engraved rules in the centre.

In the mid-19th century, the general transition to lithography as a medium for illustration was naturally reflected in the production of games.²⁵ By that time, the production had become industrialised, though hand presses were still also used (Figure 10). The design was drawn in greasy ink on a slab of fine-grained limestone. A careful series of surface treatments fixed the image and ensured that, when oil-based ink was applied to the dampened stone, it adhered only to those areas of the stone which had been protected by the greasy ink of the image and was repelled by damp in those areas that had been exposed to the chemical treatment. The stone was then ready for printing, the paper being forced into contact, usually by a scraper.²⁶

A development that made this process ideally suited to the production of printed games was that of transfer lithography. By using transfer paper, text set in letterpress could be transferred to the stone for printing. Printers formerly using woodblocks converted to lithography: for example, the previously mentioned Pellerin woodcut, the *Jeu de l'oie renouvelé des Grecs*, dating from about 1820, was redrawn and reprinted as a lithograph in about 1870 (figure 8, bottom).

Initially, lithography was executed only in monochrome. Developments using colours are described in a later section.

Paper sizes

The paper sizes used by printers of board games also reflected the printing technique. As mentioned earlier, relief printing on a common press limited the size that could be used. Thus, the maximum dimension of games produced by the French provincial printers using woodblock were around 45 cm. By contrast, the Paris printers using copper plates, especially when producing the more elaborate thematic variants, were not so constrained, so that the maximum dimension was often in excess of 50 cm and could well reach 70 cm on a single sheet.²⁷ They were accustomed to using these large format sheets for the production of fine art prints, landscapes and views. A different constraint governed games that were designed to be sold by *colportage*, where compactness was the aim. Here, the small, square format was useful, such as in the *jeu de l'oie* measuring 24 x 24 cm issued by Glemarec.²⁸

²⁵ D'Allemagne (op. cit.) lists (p. 202) a *jeu de l'oie* lithographed by the Paris firm of Jean with an attributed date of 1806, but the prints by Jean in the BnF are all engravings, so this would be an unusual production for the firm, if it is indeed a lithograph. He also lists a lithographed *jeu de l'oie* by the firm of A.M.Thomaron and dates it to ca. 1820; however, Antoine-Marie Thomaron took over Rousseau's firm only in 1868. More reliable as an early example of a lithographed game in France is the *jeu de l'oie* by Cocqueret, dating from about 1840.

²⁶ For details of the early presses, see: Michael Twyman, "The lithographic hand press 1796–1850", *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, Vol. 3, 1967.

²⁷ Size comparisons are taken from D'Allemagne, op. cit.

²⁸ D'Allemagne op.cit. p.202.



Figure 11: Box for colportage, ca. 1880. Initials of Charles Burckardt, Wissembourg. Coll. Charles Muller, Wissembourg.²⁹

For the producers in Alsace and in the Lorraine, whose mass-produced output was circulated widely in the latter half of the nineteenth century, whether by road or rail, uniformity of size was a consideration relevant to ease of packing. One of the wooden boxes used for distribution by Charles Burckardt of Wissembourg in about 1880 still survives (figure 11) and its dimensions (21x50x36 cm) fit typical *Bilderbogen* sheets.

The German and Dutch producers also used formats for their games consistent with their main output of illustrated sheets. Typical sizes would be a little over 40 cm maximum. However, educational games, mostly copied from French models, were of larger format.

The colouring of games by hand

Before colour printing was in use for producing games, black-and white prints were hand-coloured, either by brush; or – much quicker and therefore cheaper - by stencil and dabber, usually referred to by the French term *au pochoir*. The expectation of high quality in their market meant that for the Paris printing houses, colouring by brush was required. The French provincial printers, on the other hand, adopted colouring using a stencil, both for cheapness and because they were familiar with the method through the colouring of playing cards: trained hands were therefore available for this similar work. Looking at the game by Peyrane (figure 4), it is easy to guess how the playing spaces were coloured by dabbing through the near-rectangular openings in the stencil. In some of these spaces, the colouring has run slightly under the stencil mask. Probably some of the finer colouring on that game was executed using a quick stroke of the brush, but without much care to follow the printed outlines. The standard of finishing may be contrasted with an example of a late seventeenth-century game by the up-market print dealer Mariette of Paris (figure 12).

²⁹ Katharina Siefert (ed.), *Heilige, Herrscher, Hampelmänner. Bilderbogen aus Weißenburg*. Catalogue of an exhibition at the Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, 1999, object number 21. Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 1999.

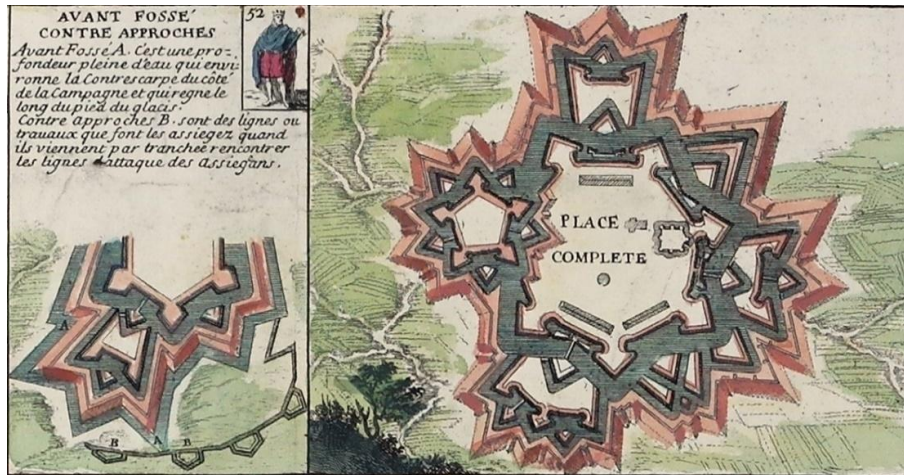


Figure 12: Detail of the Jeu des fortifications by Mariette. Paris: 1697 (author's collection, #0090).

In England, the great flowering of printed games at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries was led by the London map publishers like John Wallis, who advertised his 'Map Warehouse' in Ludgate Street, and William Darton, whose 'Map, Print and Chart Warehouse' was at Holborn Hill. These games were expensive and aimed at an affluent market, so that it is not surprising that the standard of hand colouring was high. For example, in Edward Wallis's 1830 catalogue of 'Historical, Geographical and other Instructive Games, finely engraved and of large size, fitted upon cloth and in cases, each accompanied by a box and apparatus for playing', the *Game of the British Tourist* cost 12 shillings coloured but only 9 shillings plain. John Harris, too, published maps but also books, especially those for children. These books were also often hand coloured, by brush. Harris's game, *The Jubilee*, published in 1810, exists in two states of colouring, as shown in figure 13. Possibly the overall wash colouring of the spaces was done by stencil: it may be contrasted with the meticulous brushwork in the central space, a technique used for all colouring in the other example. The time spent colouring the more detailed example must have been extreme; however, the advertisements for this Harris game do not show that two qualities were offered and it may be that the lower quality was a later introduction for reasons of economy.

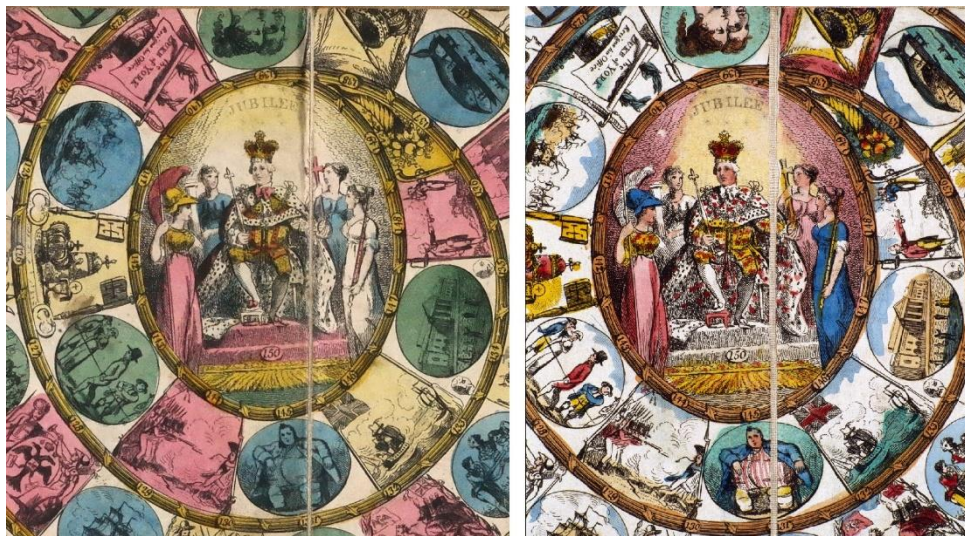


Figure 13: Two standards of colouring in details from *The Jubilee* by John Harris (author's collection/Victoria and Albert Museum E.216-1944, #1373).

Though in general the standards of the Paris makers of large-format games were not emulated in Germany, nonetheless colouring by hand could be of high quality. For example, the jewel-like colouring of the *Jahrmarkt* game by the Berlin publisher Winkelmann shows something of a miniaturist's finesse in decorating the spaces on a game of relatively small format.³⁰ Games of this quality cannot really be classed as *Bilderbogen*, but even the Alsace production, at least in its earlier days, showed hand colouring of quite good precision – for example, in the games published by F C Wenzel, who set up business in Wissembourg in 1838, even though his was a factory for mass production.



Figure 14: Detail of *Die Vier Hoofdstoffen*, a game by Wijsmuller of Amsterdam (author's collection, #0793).

By contrast, figure 14 shows one of the perfunctory attempts made by the Dutch producers of *centsprenten* to enliven their penny sheets with a splash of colour: this example probably used a stencil and dabber. But sometimes the process was even simpler, as Van Veen describes: *Kleur der ogen* [Colour of eyes]:

By this may be understood the patches in three primary colours, red, blue and yellow, with the addition of green in some later prints, applied in more or less arbitrary places, probably with a dabber, but sometimes with the thumb. This peculiar method of colouring, which was already known at an early stage as *colorier à la manière hollandaise* [to colour in the Dutch manner] was undoubtedly dictated and determined by the need to keep the price of the prints as low as possible.³¹

Lithography in colour

From the earliest days of lithography, it was possible to print in a colour other than black – and also to produce images in more than one colour. However, each colour required a separate stone and therefore had to be printed as a separate working. For high quality work, great skill was required in the drawing of the different colours and in the printing, which required care to maintain true register. The process was slow and expensive, so that lithography in full colour was beyond the range of board game manufacturers until the end of the nineteenth century. However, in the second half of that century, a number of manufacturers produced games in a limited number of colours. The *Game of the Tramway* was particularly suited to this, since it was played by opposing teams, 'red' and 'blue',

³⁰ Adrian Seville, *Cultural Legacy* op.cit, pp. 213-215

³¹ C F van Veen, *Centsprenten*. Amsterdam: Rijksprentenkabinet, 1976, pp. 21-22.

whose markers followed correspondingly coloured tracks. Both Wattilliaux of Paris and Vlieger of Amsterdam produced games using this technique. Comparatively crude blocks of colour were used to decorate the sheet, in two workings for the red and blue, with a black working to provide the detail.

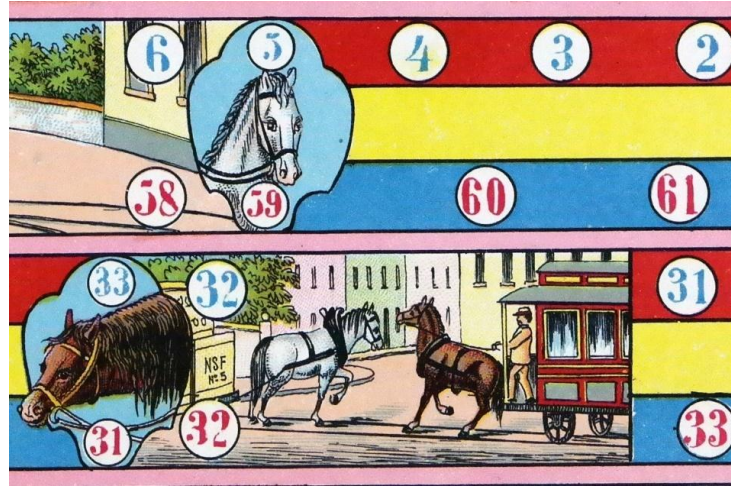


Figure 15: Detail of Mauclair-Dacier's chromolithograph, the *Jeu du Tramway* (author's collection, #0386).

Towards the end of the century, costs came down and manufacturers such as Mauclair-Dacier of Paris were using quite elaborate chromolithography, with many colours, in their upmarket games. Close inspection of their *Tramway* game (figure 15) shows how the technique employed tints (small dots of colour instead of solid blocks) to achieve shading but also shows up defects of register (e.g., small white patches) and of inking (gaps in some of the numbers). However, the overall effect is pleasing and chromolithographed games were deservedly popular.

The presentation of games

The earliest printed games were sold as unmounted sheets on good quality paper, reflecting the practices of the print sellers. Often, the larger-format sheets survive with a single fold, indicating that they were perhaps stored folded into an atlas or a drawer for safe keeping. At the other end of the scale of quality, the Dutch *centsprenten* intended for children were often folded in four:

This is a consequence of the fact that through the centuries children's prints were kept in *schoolborden* (wooden school-boxes with sliding lids and projecting backs with awkward cut-out handles in them). [...] Since they were small in size, their owners were obliged to fold their prints in four in order to be able to put them away.³²

There is a sharp contrast here with the practice of the English manufacturers. As has been said, they were first and foremost map sellers and for their printed games usually adopted the method much used for travelling maps, of laying the dissected print onto linen, so that it could be folded into a slipcase without the damage consequent on folding and unfolding a paper sheet. Alternative presentations were available, however: John Wallis advertised on his game *Wallis's Complete Voyage*

³² Van Veen, op.cit., p. 20.

round the World (1796) four other games 'all 6s. each, for the Pocket, on Cloth and Case, or upon a Pasteboard, with Box, Totum and Counters'³³. Later developments included the use (e.g., by William Spooner and by David Ogilvy) of a dissected sheet folding into a booklet with cloth- or paper-covered boards. Whereas originally printed games were sold without equipment for play, using perhaps distinctive coins as markers, with generic counters and dice, the English manufacturers saw profit in providing dedicated equipment, usually in a nicely made mahogany box.³⁴

A presentation using a dissected sheet on linen folding into a slipcase is rare for French games. The author's collection of about 300 French games includes only two presented in this way: a late eighteenth-century *Jeu du Juif* by Crépy and a mid-nineteenth-century *jeu de l'oie* by Coqueret,³⁵ while some games have been dissected and mounted on folding boards, probably as a private commission by the owner. Later in the century, the presentation of French games on folding boards (2, 3, or 4-fold) became usual, as the production of games moved from print sellers to toy manufacturers, who were accustomed to provide goods in specially-made boxes, into which the games could fold neatly. The catalogues of firms like Mauclair-Dacier show this trend clearly.³⁶

For German games, the use of a slipcase is relatively common in the nineteenth century, but despite the folding involved the game sheets are rarely dissected and mounted on cloth. Sometimes the game sheet is mounted on a board folding into four, fitting a small, square box made of pasteboard, with an attractive label on the lid. This label usually bore the title in several languages, whereas the game itself just had the German title, or none. Language-specific instructions were provided by means of separate rule sheets. The German toy manufacturers were astute to exploit international markets and this was reflected in their presentation of games.



Figure 16: box with multi-language label for a German game of Fox and Hens (author's collection, #1354).

³³ #1560.

³⁴ Adrian Seville, 'The Quest for the Pyramids - playing equipment in English printed board games of the pre-Georgian, Georgian and Early Victorian Eras'. Published in: The Games Board, *An Antique Games Compendium*. Brighton: Doplin Books, 2021, pp. 13-26.

³⁵ #2205 and #2627 respectively.

³⁶ Examples of catalogues by Mauclair-Dacier (1901/1902) and Watilliaux (1903) may be seen at the excellent website of Alain Rabusier, <http://www.jeuxanciensdecollection.com/>

Dutch manufacturers used a wide range of presentations depending on their market. A charming insight into the practices of Vlieger in the 1930s is the following reminiscence by G J Vlieger: ³⁷

On the third floor of Amstel 46³⁸ were the board games *in plano*, i.e. sheets of 44x56 cm. They were: Game of the Goose, Zevenzak or Harlequin Game, Tram Game, Travel Game, Journey through Life, Schoolmaster and Collector, Monkey Game, Cat and Mouse Game and St. Nicholas Game. These were still regularly sold, usually folded in a cover, prepared as something to do in the store in quiet periods.



Figure 17: The game of Cat and Mouse by J Vlieger, Amsterdam (author's collection). #0444

Figure 17 shows one of the little envelopes referred to as 'covers', together with the 'cosy winter evening' game itself, which fits neatly inside when folded into eight.

The end of the difficulties

Until the adoption of lithography in the nineteenth century, the manufacture of printed games was a continuing compromise between the difficulties of combining text with illustration at an economic cost. The end of the difficulties came when lithographers used powered machines for the mass production of colour printing in the 1860s. Lemerrier, for example, introduced his first machine of this kind in 1865. By the end of the 1860s, chromolithography had attained extraordinarily high standards, and was reasonably economical when printing large editions.³⁹

A further step towards economical mass production was the invention of offset lithography and the rotary press. The Rubel offset press was the earliest of several rotary offset machines produced in the first decade of the twentieth century. It was invented in 1903 by Ira Washington Rubel, the owner of a small paper mill and lithographic shop in Nutley, New Jersey. In modern offset printing using the lithographic method, the image, drawn in greasy ink, is then fixed much as in ordinary

³⁷ A history of the firm is at <https://www.vliegerpapier.nl/historie.html>

³⁸ The address of the Vlieger shop in Amsterdam.

³⁹ Michael Twyman, London: *A history of chromolithography: printed colour for all*. The British Library, 2013.

lithography, but using a flexible metal plate instead of a stone. The press itself consists of three rotating cylinders: a plate cylinder round which the metal plate is fastened; a blanket cylinder covered by a sheet of rubber; and an impression cylinder that presses the paper into contact with the blanket cylinder. The plate cylinder first comes in contact with a series of moistening rollers that deposit moisture in the granulations of the metal. A series of inking rollers then pass over the plate: the ink is rejected by the moisture-holding areas and accepted where the image has been fixed. The inked image is transferred to the rubber blanket and is then offset onto the paper travelling around the impression cylinder. Successive stages can be used to print in multiple colours and the technique means that printed games can – like any other printed form - be produced in quantity at speed, using powered machinery.

However, offset lithography was not an immediate success for work that required rich colour.⁴⁰ The process limited the amount of ink that could be transferred from stone to paper because of the intermediary blanket cylinder. For this reason, many printers continued into the middle of the twentieth century to print some kinds of chromolithographic work directly from stone even when they had offset machines in their press rooms. It is likely that many high-quality colour-printed board games of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were printed lithographically directly from stones. At the cheaper end of the market, many mass produced game sheets (for example, by Pellerin) show the pale colours associated with early offset techniques. Later in the twentieth century, the flexibility of the lithographic process became such that printed games were no longer shaped by the more general practices of their printshops, as they were in earlier times.

⁴⁰ Michael Twyman, private communication, October 2021.