

The Game of the Future

SALTA

and follower of the world-famous game SALTA

Article by Fred Horn



Das Bild zeigt Konrad Büttgenbach beim Salta-Spiel mit der berühmten französischen Schauspielerin Sarah Bernhardt im Jahr 1901.

Konrad Büttgenbach playing Salta with the famous French actress, Sarah Bernhardt

At the end of the 20th Century, just a few decennia ago, some German games like "Catan" spread around the world like wild-fire. Less known is that this has happened before. A hundred years earlier, at the end of the 19th Century, the same excitement occurred within circles of game-lovers.

Konrad Büttgenbach, a German musician, invented a new Halma-variant: SALTA. The game was published in 1899, and for that time, a large publicity-campaign supported its introduction.

Not only were famous people like world-chess-champion Emanuel Lasker and the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt linked to the game, SALTA also received the Gold Medal as a Winner at the Paris World Exhibition.

SALTA clubs and tournaments shot up like mushrooms in autumn. In Monaco for instance, there was a price of 20.000 swiss francs to win. However, with the arrival of the "Great War: WWI" the enthusiasm for the game ended. After the war, the game slowly sank into obscurity and is now completely forgotten.

But success always finds those willing and ready "to jump on the bandwagon," and more than a century ago the circumstances were no different from what occurs today. Not long after the introduction of SALTA, a company in Berlin, Germany, SALA, had the bright idea to publish an almost identical game named after the firm itself!

SALA started as a 'business enterprise' in 1855 and after expanding its assortment of wares with papergoods at the end of the 19th Century, the firm started to produce, publish, and sell (very luxurious) games under its own name.

Though difficult times were had—in and after both World Wars—the family enterprise held on into the last decade of the 20th Century. The firm was only sold because there were no family members willing to carry on the business.

The trademark 'SALA' with its red 'seal' logo disappeared from the game market only a few years later, in 1894. But when the game SALA was published, this logo was not used, which gives us a publishing date before 1908 when the old logo was still used.

Comparing the two games gives some striking similarities: same style of box, same rules, and both with game pieces related to the galaxy. SALA is played on the chess/checkers (8 x 8) board; SALTA is played on a (10 x 10) board. It is remarkable the firm SALA brought their game also to the Dutch market.

Two versions are known: both have the same image on the lid but with different text. Some differences were of course necessary to avoid problems with the copyright of SALTA. Whereas SALTA uses Suns, Moons, and Stars (3 x 5 for each), the game SALA uses as its gamepieces 2 x the 'Signs of the Zodiac' (pictured opposite page).



SALA did not sell well in Holland. The game is very, very rare, unlike its predecessor SALTA which can still be found more easily, and also in its many different variations—from low-priced to expensive.

One special variant of SALTA is directly linked to my country Holland. The game is also published as a puzzle. Questions appeared with a start- and an end-situation, to be solved in as few moves as possible. Probably this was a nice feature for advertising.

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SALTA game graphics—Suns, Moons, and Stars. This differed from SALTA's use of the signs of the zodiac.

In the first part of the 1920s, a Dutch firm from Utrecht used it as a promotional device.

Jack Botermans used a photograph of this game—it is part of my collection, now in the Game Archive in Brugge—in his book: "The BOOK of GAMES" without making a reference to where it came from.

I instead wish to thank Rudolf Ruhle (ESP), Erwin Glonnegger (das Spiele-Buch), and of course Rob van Linden of the website HONGS, for the pictures and the information. [AGPC](#)



SALTA SOLO game boards and game pieces