

# From TRIO to "3 Koningen" (3 Kings)

Article and photos by Fred Horn

**B**y accident, the game TRIO became part of my collection. One day, more than 40 years ago, I had to make a delivery to a lady friend of ours. Upon entering her home my eye immediately caught sight of a gameboard set on her table. I had never seen one quite like it, and out of curiosity I of course asked her which game the board went with. She really had no idea and said the game came to light when they were cleaning her mother's house after her funeral. She planned to give it to her little nephew! Luckily for me knowing my interest in games, she asked, "But perhaps you are more interested?"

*A special story, about a search for information and knowledge, out of the last century.*

I of course was, and quite willing to exchange the game with a more modern one (a duplicate out of my collection)—one that her nephew would probably appreciate more than this older one. It was a nice deal for me and she was also happy with the game I chose for her nephew.



TRIO triangular board and game pieces

TRIO's original box was missing, but the game pieces and the rules had been stored in a small cigar box. Because of the presence of the rules it was still possible to play the game.

TRIO is a game for 3 players, each commanding an army of 1 General, 4 Officers, and 7 Soldiers. The goal of the game is to conquer one of the two opposing fortresses with your General.

As a rule of thumb, games involving three players are usually not that good. Two players first battle each other and then after one's defeat it becomes a two-player game. Furthermore it is a 'slow' game, really out of the last century!

Our friend could not tell me much about the history of the game. Her mother had remembered the game being a gift when they purchased and installed their central heating in the latter part of the twentieth century. This would explain the stamp of the firm 'J. H. E. Koot' on the rules. Also interesting in the introduction of the rules were the date "februari 1919" and the signature 'J. H. A.'. So, dating the game was easy—it was invented sometime before 1919—but who in hell was 'J.H.A.'?

Fortunately the rules also stated an octrooinumber: 'Octrooi 13 februari 1919 Nr 8198 Ned.'. After some research in the Archives of the Dutch 'Nederlandse Octrooiraad,' J. H. A. were the initials of Jan Hendrik Akkermans from Vlaardingen. Akkermans had applied for a "octrooi aanvraag." (Request for a "patent" -N.B.)

In Holland there was a different way to handle what in Anglo-Saxon countries call a 'patent' for the game of TRIO on 18 mei 1917. It concerned a triangular wooden board with rounded edges and



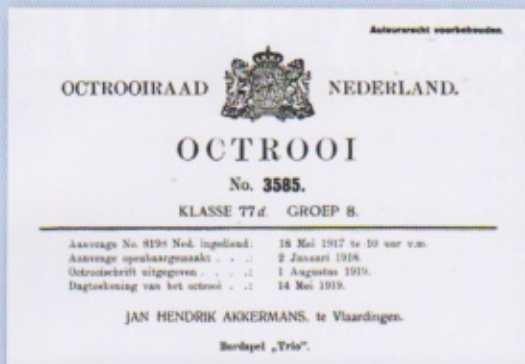
The rules state an octrooinumber: 'Octrooi 13 februari 1919 Nr 8198 Ned.'

beautifully turned pieces. Akkermans allowed the game's manufacture in the Netherlands.

As mentioned in the rules (translated):

'For me it was a pleasant experience that our "Nederlandsche Industrie" (Dutch Industries), in my case, personalized Mr. M. Butter, owner of the "Amsterdamsche Houtwarenfabriek" (Amsterdam Timberfabrik), at first encountered TRIO and was willing to produce and manufacture the game in technically equal quality as abroad, and I also imagined, after learning about the game from the "Nederlandschen handel" (Dutch trade) and from the "Nederlandsche publiek" (Dutch public) such admiration TRIO gave its practitioners.'





*Octrooi: Bordspel, TRIO*

In the early 1970s I became curious and wanted to know more about “octrooien” because of the ‘gift’ of TRIO and my purchase of SCHADA (a crossover between chess and draughts from the 1930s) which both had an Octrooinumber. Thus I visited the “Octrooiraad” located in Rijswijk. Those were the days: access to everything, no security checks, and pleasant, amiable, and very helpful staff!

Arriving early in the morning and inquiring what research was possible on “Octrooien” of games, they handed me a set of lists from which I then had to search for specific sections. When I found all of the sections I wanted to know more about, I headed over to a huge wall containing many small drawers holding “fiches”/small cards with more explicit information.

It wasn't a problem to remove these “fiches” (the staff would later file them away in their proper order) and bring them up to the desk. After several hours of hard work, I had collected an impressive pile of cards with interesting titles and again brought them over to a woman behind the desk. She believed the next phase would take me several more hours so it was best to break for lunch first and then start again in the afternoon.

After lunch I was taken down to the vaults where all the “Octrooien” were stored in maps, which themselves were placed into cardboard boxes. She showed me a small table, put my collected “fiches” on the table and then explained how the system was organized. I was left alone with all of the boxes and it was now “up to me.”

I had to search for the corresponding maps with my “fiches,” and take them back to my small table to see what I could figure out. When I did find something worthwhile, in between all of the rubbish as most of information referred to children's playthings or some mechanical device, or use of material, I had the unique opportunity to make photocopies on, *for that time*, an advanced XEROX! After that, I had to replace the maps and start over again with my next “fiche.”

This really was a ‘hell of an undertaking,’ but at the end of day I had found not only the “Octrooien” for TRIO and SCHADA, but also for some other games as well. In the meantime, I had forgotten all about the time and a guardsman walking around and shutting off the lights found me there still working! He told me it was time to leave and as he wanted me out right away, I could even take all of my photocopies I had made without paying for them.

After finding the “Octrooi” further research for any records or information about Mr. Akkermans, who had lived in Den Haag, Vlaardingen and Amsterdam, did not pay off. Also I've looked for more examples of the game, but I have never seen another one.

In my opinion, selling the game must have proved difficult and thus Akkermans faced something that today's private publishers experience: a box full of unwanted games. It seems the best

Mr. Han Heidema (editor-in-chief of the Dutch game magazine SPEL!) concerning a game he had been offered and purchased but without rules. Did I have any idea about the rules for “3 Koningen?”

One did not have to be a detective to see that this was the same game as TRIO! The game is published by HOMAS, as indicated by the ‘stickers’ with that name on the box and on the backside of the board. But what was the link between HOMAS and the “owner(s) of TRIO?”



*3 Koningen box cover*



*3 Koningen board and game pieces*

guess is that the firm J. H. E. Koot, Oude Leliestraat in Amsterdam, which sold and installed complete kitchens, heating, electric, and the like, came to the rescue, and took over all the existing inventory of the game and used them for promotional activities. For me, that was a definitive end to my research.

But to my great surprise and after more than 40 years of me ‘closing the books’ on TRIO, I received an e-mail from a

How did they know about the game and when did they publish it?

HOMAS and all its company archives no longer exist so it is not possible to find out anything more. Also, the HOMAS catalogue does not mention this game. That is why dating the game becomes a troublesome guess. In summary, there is still enough we do not know, thus stopping is not an option. [AGPC](#)



*The HOMAS version!*