

THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF THE ROYAL GAME OF THE GOOSE

of Printed **400 years** Board Games

The subtitle of this book: "400 years of Printed Board Games" is a 'statement' much too comprehensive for the story covered. Besides the ROYAL GAME OF THE GOOSE, only a few other printed games are from these centuries. But the value of this book is just that: the history of the *Game of the Goose* placed within its cultural context by "Goose Man" Adrian Seville, a noted collector and researcher on the subject.

It is not only a book with interesting images of the games but it also takes you on a journey of the game's development and function in its time through its existence today.

From Seville's vast collection, a full-color illustrated catalog was published for the 2016 exhibition of games held at the Grolier Club in New York. A wider range of these printed games were presented, but only with text explaining the games displayed: (*The Royal Game of the Goose* ISBN 978-1-60583-057-5)

In his latest work, looking at the *Game of the Goose* and its history with a focus on its "Cultural Heritage," Adrian Seville is virtually the first person to tell about non-abstract games in this way. It is an interesting story based on intensive research by a passionate scholar writing about a subject he loves.

The book tells the complete story, where as the catalog only presented a rough history and development of the game—from Italy in the 15th Century to present day versions.

After the introduction, Part I continues with the game's expansion throughout Europe, ending with some existing examples of the games in the Americas (in European languages).

Part II discusses the cultural context of the game and the various presentations used for satire, advertisement, propaganda, education, and much more.

Despite all of the research done by Seville and his fellow fact-finders, how, when, and where the *Game of the Goose* originated, or was first invented, remains unclear. One can assume a direct relationship is evident with the rise of typography.

For all intents and purposes, the *Game of the Goose* is found as a 'print' on paper. Versions on other materials do not exist, or at best are very, very rare. Because of the use of paper, a material susceptible to fast disintegration, not many early games have survived.

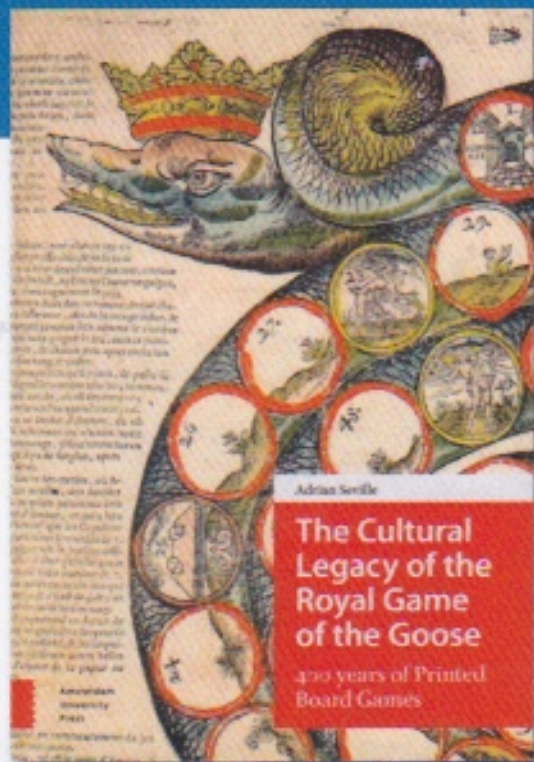
Although the author does not provide any clue, it's doubtless the *Game of the Goose* is a "race-game with hazards."

In its day (the Middle Ages) prepared tracks for racing events, calling attention to high points/festivities or special occasions during the year, were well known way before the 15th Century.

Perhaps the potential of easier reproduction (by printing) was the catalyst for bringing the outdoor events (with real runners) to the indoors with a representative (pawn) running for you along a path. Putting the course on paper also made it easier to bring in hazards and all types of symbolism pictured on

certain areas of the track. The first thing that catches your eye is the division of the track in 7 parts of 9 fields. A good guess is that these 7 periods of 9 steps represent the 7 different phases of an individual's life, from infancy up to an elderly age.

This is similar to what can be found in Holland on the so called "Merklap," an embroidery done by young girls to show their skillfulness, that always includes a "Life-stair" with 3 steps up, 1 highest level, and 3 steps down. Numerologists will have a field day with these "holy" numbers.



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An interesting point is the author traced down: "LE JEU ROYALE DE CUPIDON" (THE ROYAL GAME OF CUPID) from around 1640, a print based on older examples, where the track is divided into 9 periods of 7 fields, also ending with 63, but the theme now being LOVE!

One can assume that both games originated during the same time frame but that the "*Game of the Goose*" was found more interesting or had more potential to be used for all kinds of other things, which resulted in its surviving over the centuries while the other game sunk into oblivion. Both games are filled with symbolism and references to rituals which are nowadays completely unknown to us and thus the game changed from one for adults to the present-day use as a "race-game" for children.

Great Britain is Seville's home and therefore his research and story about the "*Goose Game*" is focused on that country as well as France, due to the input from game-expert Thierry Depaulis. Other European countries along with the rest of the world were researched to a lesser degree, but still new and interesting facts have been noted. For my own country, the Netherlands, there is a lot more to learn about the game but within the context of the book there was an appropriate overview.

The book is written in a clear style and also "tells a story." Seville has put the game into its historical context and has given us the best insight into the subject including the latest facts. Not only will "game-buffs" love the book but also as a "picture-book" it is well worth thumbing through its pages. As well, people interested in "cultural heritage" will find a lot of fascinating facts. Well worth as a reference-book in your library! **5/5**



Le Jeu Royale de Cupidon (The Royal Game of Cupid)