

Chess

Origins: Unknown for certain but in Ganges basin around 550 BCE

CHATURANGA is a Sanskrit word for an early chess like game

Spread across 7th Century Byzantine & Persian Empires

It also spread west, but not east as it made little headway against the Chinese game GO

Medieval Europe:

Arabs into Byzantium but didn't spread west from there

- 1 Through Spain – Muslim Moors invasion of Iberian peninsula
- 2 Into Italy – Merchants of Venice who traded with Muslims in East Mediterranean
- 3 Through Sicily by Normans between 1061 & 1091 then Normans North through Europe

By 1050 it was played in all the courts of Europe. Arab association meant it was opposed by the Catholic Church, as a game of intellect which was considered to be devilish. This eventually ceased in 1250.

Chess pieces

Many design across Europe - designs evolved and turned sets became most popular as they could be made fairly simply turned on a lathe as opposed to the rather ornate carved pieces from earlier.



Figure 1.4 Copies of stylized, Arab, bone chessmen from the eighth or ninth century in mulberry wood.



Lewis Chessmen

Of course there are the world famous Lewis chessmen, a 12th century set found in 1831 and now in the British Museum.



Figure 1.9 Resin replicas of a king, queen and knight of the Lewis chessmen.

Staunton:

Howard Staunton was England's first world chess champion. He allowed his name to be appended to the most successful design, registered in 1849. It is the set used today for championship matches and can be bought from Amazon for under £10.

Originally manufactured by Jaques & Co., and is still made by Jaques and available today.



Men of a Staunton club set made in ivory by Jaques circa 1865.

The Staunton set obtained the stamp of approval of [FIDE](#), the World Chess Federation, when in 1924 it was selected as their choice of set, for use in all future international chess tournaments

St George Set:

These are named after the St. George's chess club in London, where this style of play was used during club activities. Very popular until around 1850, when the Staunton sets replaced the prominence of the St. George's sets.



Figure 1.48 Pieces of a St. George set in box and ebony, leaded and of unusually large size (the king $5\frac{1}{4}$ in. (133 mm) high). This large-crowned variant of the English-pattern was popular in England during the first half of the nineteenth century, and was named after England's patron saint—there wasn't any association with the St George's chess club in Hanover Square, London, which was founded in 1843.²²
Polumbaum Collection. Photograph by Risa Korris.