



**XXVIII
Board Game Studies
Colloquium
April 27 – 30, 2026, Alicante**

Book of Abstracts

With the kind support of



XXVIII Board Games Studies Colloquium

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Edificio German Bernácer,
University of Alicante,
03690 Sant Vicent del Raspeig, Alicante, Spain

April 27 – 30, 2026

With the support of

Associação Ludus
Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Arqueología y Patrimonio Histórico
University of Alicante

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Foreword

The Board Game Studies Colloquium will take place in Alicante, in April 2026.

Renewing our commitment to the study of board games in all its forms, in 2026, the Board Game Studies Colloquium will be held in Alicante (Valencian Community, Spain), in cooperation with the University of Alicante. Alicante is a region that holds the highest concentration of board game evidence from the pre-Roman period. This heritage was celebrated in the 2021 exhibition on the relationship between the Iberians and games, followed by the international conference “Warriors at Play.”

The region’s extensive network of museums showcases numerous examples of game sets dating from the 4th century BCE to the Roman era. To this end, the 28th edition will focus on the main theme: *Board Games and War*, identifying new case studies where individuals identified as warriors engaged in practicing, collecting, or representing themselves through the act of board gaming. The colloquium will be held at the Edificio Germán Bernacer on the university campus.

We are proud to organize the twenty-eighth colloquium in the series. There will be a natural outlet for written versions of presented works. Selected papers will be encouraged to submit to the Board Game Studies Journal (reference-global.com/journal/BGS).

Please send your submissions for editorial considerations to bgs@ludicum.org.

You can get more information at:
boardgamestudies.site

The organization

Program

Monday, April 27

9:00 Registration Desk Opens

9:30 **Opening session**

Teresa Lana Villarreal, José Maria Ferri Coll, and Raimon Graells i Fabregat
(University of Alicante)

9:50 **Session 1**

Games in South Eastern Cameroon: navigating conflict

Alex de Voogt (Drew University)

Knucklebones in the Iberian World: An Elusive Game

Miguel F. Pérez Blasco (Museo Arqueológico y de Historia de Elche)

Q&A

10:50 **Coffee Break**

11:20 **Session 2: Games in Transition**

Board Games in the Federal Republic of Germany (1949 to 2000)

Tom Werneck (Bavarian Games Archive)

Juegos Crone and Rojas y Malaret, two companies that pioneered contemporary board games in Spain

Oriol Comas (Independent Researcher)

Nike & Cooper (NAC Games): Historical simulation games in Spain, 1980s

Antonio Catalán (Rovira i Virgili University), Jan Gonzalo (Rovira i Virgili University),
and Antonio José Planells de la Maza (Tecnocampus-UPF)

Q&A

12:40 **Lunch Break**

14:20 **Session 3**

*Dutchmen at war? The magnum opus of Wim van Mourik, Arie van der Stoep
and Jan de Ruiter*

Liuwe H. Westra (University of Groningen) and Marten Walinga (Independent Researcher)

Chessboards: Indo-Portuguese Typologies, 16th-17th Centuries

Patrícia Cabaço (NOVA University of Lisbon)

Q&A

15:50 **Tea break**

16:20 **Session 4**

The Illustrated Guide Of Combined Chess And Draughts Sets

Doug Polumbaum (Independent Researcher)

*The Knight Tours Designed by King Krishnaraja Wodeyar: War Strategies,
Combinatorics, and Verbal Codification*

Arjun Bharadwaj (Chanakya University and Prekshaa Pratishtana, Bangalore)

*The Chessboard as Battlefield: War Scenes and Strategic Positions in
Şatrançname-i Kebir*

Ömer Fatih Parlak (Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University)

Q&A

17:40 **Showcase**

*Presentation of “Libro de los Juegos de Ajedrez, Dados y Tablas de
Alfonso X El Sabio”*

Jose Sanchez (Asociación de Ajedrez Callejero de Guadalajara)

18:00 **Informal Game’s Night**

Tuesday, April 28

9:30 **Session 5**

Fragments of Play: The Liubo Records of Liu He

Fangyi Cheng (Sun Yat-sen University) and

Jacob Schmidt-Madsen (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)

Gaming equipment from the Roman-period quarter on the north-eastern side of the acropolis of Istros

Liviu Mihail Iancu (The National History Museum of Romania)

Playing with spheres: Ceramic balls and games in Iron Age Iberian contexts

Pablo Camacho Rodríguez (University of Alicante)

Q&A

10:50 **Coffee Break**

11:20 **Session 6**

Board Games, War, and the Oracle: Divination, Strategy, and Uncertainty in Play

Joan Josep Pons (Tecnocampus, Pompeu Fabra University)

Charging into Battle with nothing but a Helmet: Gambling by Warriors in Pre-Modern Japan

Dan Sherer (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Board games, dicing, and gambling in pre-Islamic Java (8-15 th c. CE): a look from the Maritime Silk Route

Jiri Jakl (Palacky University)

Q&A

12:40 **Lunch Break**

14:20 **Session 7**

Casting Lots - Tracing the origins of chance in ancient texts and challenging the divination narrative.

LIvo Herzl (Donau Uni Krems, private researcher)

Probability Aspects of Games with Binary Dice in North and South America

Arkady Shemyakin (University of St. Thomas)

A non comprehensive catalogue of board games on quantum mechanics

Daniele Aurelio (IIS "Volta")

Q&A

15:50 **Tea break**

16:20 **Session 8**

Learning to hunt through board games

Stella Maris Ferrarese Capettini (Alle Kuzen Ethnic Toy Museum)

Translatio ludorum: from Cercar la liebre to American Hunting

Nicolás Martínez Sáez (Argentinian National University of Mar del Plata)

Pachisi, Poleana and Patolli: Resistance and Organized Crime as a Factor in the Unusual Diffusion of Games

Alfonso Atala-Layún (Independent Researcher)

Q&A

18:00 **Showcase**

Presentation of the project "Hispania Ludens" Mari Paz López, Olimpia Navarro, Oriol Vaz-Romero Trueba, and Aramis López (University of Alicante and Barcelona)

Wednesday, April 29

9:30 **Session 9:**

Asymmetrical Conflict

Bruce Whitehill (Independent Researcher)

Modeling the Politics of War in Board Games

Mike Cosgrave (University College Cork)

My Time: Hybrid Card Games for Life Storytelling

Melissa J. Rogerson, Fangxing Zhao, Wei Zhao, Lucy A. Sparrow, and

Jenny Waycott (University of Melbourne)

Q&A

10:50 **Coffee Break**

11:20 **Session 10**

An overview of the pie rule from ancient mancalas to modern board games.

Cosmo Cardellicchio (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche)

*Single Player Games and Multiplayer Vexiers: Some considerations
regarding puzzle games*

Tiago Hirth (Ludus, CIUHCT)

The meaning of complexity in modern board games

Micael Sousa (CAPTRS)

12:40 **Lunch Break**

16:00 **Excursion: Guided tour at the MARQ Alicante**

Thursday, April 30

9:30 **Session 11**

Next BGSC

Raghu Dharmendra and Gyaneshwar Singh (Ramsons Kala Pratishtana)

Ambivalent Public Pedagogy in Pax Pamir 2e: Empire, Memory and Afghan Agency

Corey Wesley (University of British Columbia)

A Curious “Game Piece” in Appian’s Mithridatic Wars

Atagün Karayel (Sapienza Università di Roma)

10:50 **Coffee Break**

11:20 **Session 12**

Playing Through Crisis: A Microhistory of a Japanese Go Professional

Daniela Trinks (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, ASTRA),
and Akira Maekawa (Independent Researcher)

*Across the Light and Dark Sides of Play. Cooperative Board Games between
Pacifism and Agonistic Play*

Michael A. Conrad (University of Konstanz)

The board game in book format: definition and essential characteristics

Pablo Javier Pereira Hurtado (University of Almería)

12:40 **Lunch Break**

14:20 **Session 13**

*From Wargaming to Peacegaming (and back) – Pacifism through military games
in H.G. Wells’ Little Wars – A Game for Boys*

Christian Hoffstadt (Denkhafen, KIT)

From conquest to collaboration: reconfiguring the meanings of board games in school

Edgard Dias da Silva (SESI College of Education),

Paulo Henrique Amorim Biazoli (SESI College of Education)

*From Conflict to Cooperation: Cultivating Ludic Diplomacy through Cooperative
Board Games in the Classroom. Practices for Lower Secondary Education*

Cornelia Hofmann (University Bielefeld)

15:50 **Tea break**

16:20 **Session 14**

A Study of the Chinese Shuanglu Text Pu Shuang

Kishi Kaori (Osaka Elector-Communication University)

Narrating War from the Board: This War of Mine and the Narrative Experience

Carla Acosta (University of Alicante) and

María Samper (Miguel Hernández University)

Piece: The evolution of a neo-latin ludonym from antiquity to the Renaissance

Marco Tibaldini (University of Bari)

Q&A

17:40 **Cloture**

Abstracts

Monday, April 27

GAMES IN SOUTH EASTERN CAMEROON: NAVIGATING CONFLICT
ALEX DE VOOGT (DREW UNIVERSITY)

The river Congo basin has a confluence of people who escaped violent conflict and economic malaise in the neighboring Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo and even, more recently, in western English-speaking Cameroon. Games research was conducted in Dioula. Dioula is an ethnically plural village that is located on the main road, consisting of a dirt track, connecting Yokadouma and Moloundou. The latter is also the last town in Cameroon on the northern bank of the Ngoko River, which forms the border with the Republic of Congo. The two majority ethnic communities in Dioula are Baka and Bangando, in roughly equal numbers and accounting for 80 percent of village inhabitants. Bangando and Baka people play Songo, a mancala game, Jeu de Dames, or International Draughts, and a handful of card games. The card games are mostly used for gambling while the board games are often played competitively. Understanding the role of board and card games in navigating conflict in Dioula was a central research question during this visit of which the main findings are central to the proposed presentation.

KNUCKLEBONES IN THE IBERIAN WORLD: AN ELUSIVE GAME
MIGUEL F. PÉREZ BLASCO (DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO Y DE HISTORIA DE ELCHE (MAHE))

The presence of astragali in Iberian archaeological contexts constitutes one of the most difficult categories of material culture to interpret. These bones are commonly found both in certain burials and within domestic spaces in settlements. They may appear unmodified or exhibit various alterations, and can be either burnt or unburnt. They are found in highly variable quantities, ranging from a few isolated specimens to large accumulations. Their presence is documented from the earliest phases of the Iberian Culture through to its final stages. Regardless of archaeological context, quantity, or physical characteristics, they have so far been interpreted collectively as objects associated with divination, gaming, and as markers of social status.

GAMES IN TRANSITION: THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN BOARD GAMES IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (1949 TO 2000)
TOM WERNECK

After World War II, around 20 companies that had produced games before the war resumed production with modest resources. However, the range of unimaginative start-to-finish games based on the basic pattern of the Game of Goose was small. Things only started to change in the late 1950s with “Memory” and “Barricade”. In the mid-1960s, the 3M Company triggered a wave of game series, but this quickly subsided. However, from around 1970 onwards, a play-by-mail scene and a culture of criticism emerged in parallel, with publications in newspapers, radio, and television.

An almost explosive surge began in 1979 with the “Game of the Year” award. This changed structures. Game inventors became game authors; game producers became publishers. The world’s largest public trade fair was established in Essen.

Of the game publishers that had started up after the war, only three survived the turn of the millennium, but well over 100 new companies had been created. The result was fierce, innovative competition, which also produced the sophisticated “German Game” type with phenotypic protagonists such as “Catan” and “Carcassonne.” This not only shaped the German market, but also accelerated developments in many other countries, such as the USA, South Korea, and France. In Spain, the positive trend can be observed at the DAU in Barcelona.

It is a multi-layered process that was not driven by individual factors but is based on a complex interlocking of many influencing factors.

JUEGOS CRONE AND ROJAS Y MALARET, TWO COMPANIES THAT PIONEERED CONTEMPORARY BOARD GAMES IN SPAIN

ORIOI COMAS, INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

When the current push for contemporary board games began in Europe, mainly with the creation in Germany of the Spiel des Jahres award (1978) and the Spiel games fair in Essen (1983), and with the magazine *Jeux & Stratégie* (1980-1990), the Cannes games festival (1986) and the development of a network of specialized stores in France, the situation in Spain continued to be marked by the absolute dominance of Monopoly and by two companies with a long history: Juguetes Borrás (created in 1894) and Cefa (1946). But at the same time, two other people should be mentioned among the precursors of contemporary board games in Spain: Francisco Rosselló (1900-1986) and Eduardo Rojas (1922-1991).

Francisco Rosselló held many jobs, such as captain of the merchant navy, and promoted many businesses, a hotel on Rambla de Catalunya in Barcelona, for example. Among them it stands out Juegos Crone, a personal project for the creation of board and card games. During the 1950s and 1960s, Francisco Rosselló adapted or created, designed, illustrated, produced and marketed around thirty games.

Eduardo Rojas created the company Rojas y Malaret in 1961 to manufacture and market board games. In the following five years the company published four war games, created by Rojas himself, in the Grandes Batallas del Mundo collection. They represented the first attempt in Spain to publish board games with modern criteria, a high quality production and boxes filled with miniatures.

NIKE & COOPER (NAC GAMES). HISTORICAL SIMULATION GAMES IN SPAIN, 1980S

ANTONIO CATALÁN (ROVIRA I VIRGILI UNIVERSITY), JAN GONZALO (ROVIRA I VIRGILI UNIVERSITY), ANTONIO JOSÉ PLANELLS DE LA MAZA (TECNOCAMPUS-UPF)

The study of board games in Spain has been restricted to a nostalgic vision, accessory to the world of toys and treated only by individual authors (Comas 2005, Hermida 2021) and never as an industry or culture (Whitehill 1999, Boutin 2020, Werneck 2024). War simulation games have primarily interested the English-speaking world (Perla 2011, Suckling 2025, Sabin 2012), with some exceptions (Klusher 2023, Gonzalo 2024). They were not entirely absent from Spain, although far from the revolution of the 1980/90s with Hobbygames (Woods 2012). Spain did have several initiatives, such as the publisher Juegos NAC, unknown outside of Spain, coinciding with the golden age of wargaming (Dunigan 2005), and other European phenomena like International Team. Juegos NAC (1980-1987) was an initiative that differed from the existing offerings (Monopoly, Scrabble, Cluedo, etc.), manufactured by Juguetes Borrás (Catalán 2023). Their first game, La Fuga de Colditz (Breachin, Degas, Reid 1973), based on a television franchise, launched the publication of historical simulation games focused on simple rules and visually appealing aesthetics for young people. Their more than 40 titles, such as La guerra civil española (1981) and Bailén (1981), with their affordable price and wide distribution, were a catalyst for creating a new fan base of players that continues to this day. This report, compiled from catalogs, interviews, forums, and other sources, aims to fill a gap in the history of games in Spain, as part of a broader project covering the last 50 years.

DUTCHMEN AT WAR? THE MAGNUM OPUS OF WIM VAN MOURIK, ARIE VAN DER STOEP AND JAN DE RUITER

LIUWE H. WESTRA (UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN), MARTEN WALINGA (INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER)

In 2025, Wim van Mourik, Jan de Ruiter and Arie van der Stoep published their monograph *Schaken, dammen en triktrak*. WvM and AvdS consider this work to be their final contribution to the history of the classical board wargames chess and draughts in Europe. WvM was a well-known participant of the BGS for more than a decade, but has decided no longer to visit because of his age. AvdS is seriously ill. Thus, it seems appropriate to give a joint analysis of their recent magnum opus, together with its predecessors *An Iconography of Draughts* (2019) and *Chess, Draughts, Morris and Tables in Past and Present* (2021). All three works offer a wealth of visual material and literary sources and analyse aspects of the history of draughts and chess and their relationship, covering not only the history of the games as such but also their place in culture and society. Their main thesis is that for centuries draughts was more popular than chess, that chess owes more to draughts than vice versa and that international draughts

in its modern form goes back to the sixteenth century at least. We will first give a characteristic of the work of the three authors and then offer a critical evaluation both of vdS's reconstruction of the history of the rules of draughts (Walinga) and of all authors' use of visual and written sources (Westra). It will be shown that vdS, dR and in particular vM have collected a wealth of material, but that their analysis is only a first step.

CHESSBOARDS: INDO-PORTUGUESE TYPOLOGIES, 16TH-17TH CENTURIES
PATRÍCIA CABAÇO (NOVA UNIVERSITY OF LISBON)

This paper examines a corpus of 30 selected Indo-Portuguese chessboards produced during the 16th-17th centuries in the context of intense cultural exchanges along the Indian western coast. This study focuses on the material play object itself, exploring how its form and decoration shaped play practices within the hybrid cultural contexts in which it was produced and commissioned. The research proposes a typological classification based on structural and formal criteria, distinguishing three main categories: tripartite, foldable, and reversible boards. These typologies reveal distinct technical solutions and functional adaptations related to portability, modes of use, and evolving practices of play that reflect interactions between Indian craftsmanship and European patronage. Each category is further divided into groups according to decorative languages, artistic influences, and three main production centers: Deccan, Gujarat, and Sindh. Analysis of materials, techniques, and decorative programs, together with comparison with Indo-Portuguese furniture, highlights the circulation of decorative models and the dialogue between local artistic traditions and European commissions, enabling interpretive connections. By situating chessboards within the framework of game studies, this research reinterprets them not merely as leisure instruments, but as works of art and mediators of cultural transfer, embodying the visual and material complexity of the early modern Indo-Portuguese world.

THE ILLUSTRATED GUIDE OF COMBINED CHESS AND DRAUGHTS SETS
DOUG POLUMBAUM (INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER)

The concept of combining chess and draughts (checkers) into a single set of round playing pieces did not emerge until the mid-19th century. This is significant because, for over a thousand years, these two distinct classic board games of chess and checkers were played on the same 8x8 squares game board—but always with different types of pieces. Backgammon, although played on a different board, has also used 15 round pieces - essentially the same as draughts for more than 1,400 years. Despite these games' long histories, no round pieces were created with a draughts design on one side and chess symbols on the flip side. These “dual-purpose” pieces, known as “Combined Chess and Draughts Sets,” were first made in gutta percha material by the British Gutta Percha Company in England 1851. To date, virtually no research has been published about these innovative sets. Interestingly, the pieces from these sets are also perfectly suited for playing backgammon, making them ideal for all three classic games: chess, draughts (checkers), and backgammon. This article traces the origin and shows examples of these sets.

THE KNIGHT TOURS DESIGNED BY KING KRISHNARAJA WODEYAR: WAR STRATEGIES, COMBINATORICS, AND VERBAL CODIFICATION
ARJUN BHARADWAJ, (CHANAKYA UNIVERSITY AND PREKSHAA PRATISHTANA, BANGALORE)

Knight tours have fascinated all gamers and mathematicians for centuries. The seed of this idea, perhaps, originated in India and has fascinated scholars and poets alike. Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, the renowned king of Mysore, is known for his treatises on card games, board games, and puzzles. His works 'Kautuka-nidhi', 'Sankhyaa-ratna-kosha', and 'Chaduranga-saara-sarvasva' document numerous knight tour problems along with their solutions. The knight tours are designed for chessboards of different dimensions and, in most cases, relate to specific war strategies. For instance, a knight is required to 'capture enemy fortresses' on the four extreme corners of a chessboard, without 'catching the attention' of the other, while conquering one. In a sense, such knight tour configurations suggest espionage, involving the elimination of the enemy. The author has designed over two hundred such knight tours and has not only provided their visual representations but has also codified them in the form of Sanskrit verses. He has also intuitively arrived at numerous possible solutions to a given problem and has configured many of them in the form of magic squares. The study of these knight tours, known as 'Ashva-gati' in the Indian languages, throws light on the unique skills the author possessed, especially in combinatorics, verbal codification, and war strategies. In addition to this, the proposed talk will also touch upon the various multiplayer chess games the author has designed.

THE CHESSBOARD AS BATTLEFIELD: WAR SCENES AND STRATEGIC POSITIONS IN ŞATRANNAME-I KEBIR
ÖMER FATİH PARLAK (FATİH SULTAN MEHMET VAKIF UNIVERSITY)

This paper examines representations of warfare in Şatranname-i Kebir (1503) through its chess positions and narrative framing. Rather than treating chess merely as recreation or didactic exercise, the text encodes war scenes directly into specific board configurations, tactical motifs, and piece hierarchies. These positions mirror battlefield organization, strategic patience, sacrifice, and controlled aggression, reflecting Ottoman and Islamic conceptions of war as a regulated and ethical practice. Kings, viziers, elephants, horses, and pawns function as agents within a rule-bound conflict that translates martial experience into diagrammatic form. The chessboard emerges as a miniature battlefield where political power, sovereignty, and moral conduct are rehearsed without physical violence. By reading chess positions as visualized war narratives, the paper argues that Şatranname-i Kebir uses play as a medium for thinking through conflict, strategy, and authority. This approach contributes to board game studies by highlighting chess diagrams as cultural texts that mediate between warfare, ethics, and play in the early Ottoman world.

Tuesday, April 28

FRAGMENTS OF PLAY: THE LIUBO RECORDS OF LIU HE

FANGYI CHENG (SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY), JACOB SCHMIDT-MADSEN (MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE)

The ancient Chinese game liubo is one of the great mysteries in board game history. It was widely played for almost a thousand years before disappearing sometime in the early to mid centuries CE, leaving behind numerous boards, pieces, sticks, and dice, but precious little information on how it was played. It was only in 1999 when Lillian L. Tseng proposed to combine a mnemonic game formula with a liubo divination diagram, both from the early centuries BCE, that a plausible path of movement through the enigmatic board could be reconstructed.

In 2011 more than a thousand bamboo slip fragments relating to liubo were discovered in the tomb of Liu He, Marquis of Haihun, who died in 59 BCE. A survey of the fragments were published by Bo Yang in 2020 but only reached a small audience of primarily Chinese archaeologists. Yang identified the inscriptions on the fragments as play notations and divided them into twin categories of placing and moving pieces. Despite their obvious importance for reconstructing the rules of liubo, the fragments have yet to be seriously engaged with by board game scholars.

The present talk builds on the work by Tseng and Yang and discusses their findings in the larger context of game mechanics and board game history. It shows how the ancient play notations can be used to unlock the rules of liubo and suggests that they represent actual games played by Liu He himself. If correct, this would be the earliest example of recorded games anywhere.

GAMING EQUIPMENT FROM THE ROMAN-PERIOD QUARTER ON THE NORTH-EASTERN SIDE OF THE ACROPOLIS OF ISTROS

LIVIU MIHAIL IANCU (THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY OF ROMANIA IN BUCHAREST)

This paper presents the finds related to board games from the Temple sector at Istros, a Greek colony on the Black Sea coast, near the mouths of the Danube, which existed from the mid-7th c. BC to the early 7th c. AD. On the NE side of the acropolis, a sanctuary operated until the mid-1st c. BC, when it was destroyed. In the Roman period, the area was repurposed for workshops and housing. The finds that may be connected to board games include a few dozen astragaloi and rounded ceramic sherds, a fragmentary board with 15 preserved squares incised on a Late Hellenistic or Early Roman tile and a white glass counter typical of the Roman times; the latter two are the focus of this paper. The board discovered in a pit near the temple of Aphrodite, was probably used for playing ludus latrunculorum and finds parallels in two stone slabs recovered near the tumulus TA95 in the nearby settlement of Orgame, where a rich cultic activity possibly related to the founding hero of the city is documented throughout ages. These contexts may reveal the symbolic importance attached to board games in the West Pontic Greek communities at the time of the Roman conquest. Yet the discovery of a fourth board, also on a tile and from Istros, but from a commercial area, may speak against this hypothesis. The glass counter, typical for the settlements along the Roman Danube frontier, attests the high popularity of board games even (or especially) on this remote, heavily militarized border of the empire.

PLAYING WITH SPHERES: CERAMIC BALLS AND GAMES IN IRON AGE IBERIAN CONTEXTS

PABLO CAMACHO RODRÍGUEZ (UNIVERSITY OF ALICANTE)

Ceramic and stone spherical objects (commonly referred to as “balls” or “marbles”) are among the artefacts most frequently associated with play in Iron Age Iberian archaeology. Despite their widespread presence in both settlement and funerary contexts across the Meseta and adjacent regions, these objects have received limited focused attention, largely due to their morphological simplicity and the ambiguity of their function. This presentation reassesses ceramic and stone balls from Iron Age Iberia, with particular emphasis on funerary contexts. Drawing on data from major necropoleis, it will examine their morphology, raw materials, decoration, chronological trends, and contextual associations. The analysis shows that these objects occur in graves of individuals of different ages, sexes, and social status, and

are not restricted to military assemblages, despite occasional associations with weapons. Their frequent appearance in sets, sometimes with closely comparable dimensions and decorative features, strongly supports their interpretation as gaming objects. Rather than proposing a single function, this paper argues that play constituted the primary use of these objects, while acknowledging occasional secondary or symbolic roles. Their inclusion in funerary contexts reflects the social significance of play, identity, and everyday practices in Iron Age Iberian communities.

BOARD GAMES, WAR, AND THE ORACLE: DIVINATION, STRATEGY, AND UNCERTAINTY IN PLAY
JOAN JOSEP PONS (TECNOCAMPUS, POMPEU FABRA UNIVERSITY)

Board games have long served as entertainment and as divinatory tools across cultures. Archaeological evidence shows gaming pieces and dice were often used for prognostic purposes; for example, astragali in Hellenistic sites functioned as both gaming pieces and ritual objects, illustrating the intersection of play and divination (Steinmeyer, 2022). Dice and other randomization tools were linked to fortune-telling and ritual practices (Salvatore, 2022), while games such as mancala incorporated geomantic principles, showing structured gameplay could mirror methods for interpreting fate (Van Binsbergen, 1995). Hearth-centered games blended leisure and ritualized practice, demonstrating the domestic integration of gaming and oracular behavior (Lamaze, 2022). Historical studies highlight board games as cultural artifacts reflecting patterns of chance, strategy, and social interaction (Murray, 1952). Modern wargames abstract real or hypothetical battlefields through maps and rules, modeling unpredictability and strategic choice (Sabin, 2012). Games operate along a spectrum from ritual augury to structured simulation, with dice, pieces, and maps mediating both fate and competitive outcomes. Recent scholarship emphasizes the layering of ludic and divinatory practices across eras, showing continuity from ancient to early modern contexts (Tibaldini, 2023).

CHARGING INTO BATTLE WITH NOTHING BUT A HELMET: GAMBLING BY WARRIORS IN PRE-MODERN JAPAN
DAN SHERER (THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM)

Warriors of Pre-Modern Japan gambled, and gambled frequently. Even in an age of endemic warfare, where faltering in battle could mean a dog's death and military prowess could make a ruler of a peasant, tales abound of soldiers wagering away their armor and weapons in their camps. Further tales speak of arguments about dice rolls devolving into fatal brawls, about backgammon advice leading to a beheading, and about a son disinherited because he had to give up his seat at a game. Laws promulgated by warriors banned gambling (to no avail), banned certain games, and warned that land holdings could not be wagered. That such prohibitions were issued over and over again suggests that they do not seem to have been particularly effective. This talk seeks to examine the phenomenon of warrior gambling by examining descriptions of warriors in literary and historical sources, and warrior law codes from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. Did warriors play games differently than non-warriors? Why did some warriors go to great pains to ban gambling while others tolerated it? And most importantly, can we see evidence to support the widely believe assertion that gambling games were a destabilizing influence that made warriors worse at their profession? By trying to answer these questions, this talk will provide a deeper understanding of gambling and gaming by Japanese warriors and in Japanese society at large.

BOARD GAMES, DICING, AND GAMBLING IN PRE-ISLAMIC JAVA (8-15 TH C. CE): A LOOK FROM THE MARITIME SILK ROUTE
JIRI JAKL (PALACKY UNIVERSITY)

Pre-Islamic Java had a rich tradition of playing board games (backgammon, chess, mancala), which was often accompanied by gambling. As a key point at the Maritime Silk Route, and a major place for transshipment of Moluccan spices, Java was influenced by South Asian and Chinese gaming cultures since the second half of the first millennium CE. I will discuss textual evidence for board games and dicing implements documented in Old Javanese and Old Sundanese epigraphy and literary texts (8 th to 15 th c. CE), reading this evidence against rare iconographical data. For the first time, I will also

discuss material objects interpreted as gaming pieces, which were recovered from Javanese and Sumatran archaeological sites. One important place is Liyangan in Central Java, a site destroyed in the mid-11th century CE by a volcanic eruption of Mount Sindoro, which offers a unique insight into the Javanese gaming culture. Another site is Bongal, a pre-Islamic and Early Islamic site in west Sumatra that has yielded a rich corpus of gaming material. In the final part of my talk, I will discuss material evidence for board games and gaming recovered from shipwreck sites in the coastal waters of Java, Sumatra, and Thailand, from the period between the 9th and 15th centuries CE.

CASTING LOTS - TRACING THE ORIGINS OF CHANCE IN ANCIENT TEXTS AND CHALLENGING THE DIVINATION NARRATIVE.

IVO HERZL (DONAU UNI KREMS, PRIVATE RESEARCHER)

Presenting a master thesis of game studies challenging the academic status quo, that play with chance evolved from divination practices known as cleromancy, via literary analysis. From the myth of Athrahasis to the Iliad, humanity's earliest written myths have Gods dividing the cosmos by casting lots. Mesopotamian inheritance contracts and repeated references in the Old Testament show casting lots not as divination, but as a common technique for property division. It suggests established roots in pre-literate societies for institutional impartial decision-making long before the Kleromanteion of Greek democracy. The Greek term *klēros* later underwent a semantic transformation through Christianity into "clergy," a theological elite. Distancing itself from Jewish and Roman tradition, Christianity reframed earlier practices as pagan divination, notably displacing the powerful deity of Fortuna of feminine randomness with masculine divine determinacy. The term "cleromancy" emerged only in the 6th century CE and entered scientific language via the European Renaissance, Romantic mysticism, anthropology, into later game studies literature, most notably *The Study of Games* (Avedon & Sutton-Smith, 1971) and *The Oxford History of Board Games* (Parlett, 2018). Roger Caillois classified chance (*Alea*) as the only of his four categories uniquely played by humans. The hypothesis proposes divine determinism evolving from humanity's cultivation of chance, not the reverse, seeking further research.

PROBABILITY ASPECTS OF GAMES WITH BINARY DICE IN NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA
ARKADY SHEMYAKIN (UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS)

Binary dice made from sticks, beans or seeds were used in multiple games of chance in pre-Columbian America. In his 1907 book, Stewart Culin amassed an impressive catalogue of indigenous North American games. Similar descriptions exist of games played in South America prior to the Spanish conquest. The rules of these games suggest a certain degree of familiarity with the concept of probability. A parallel can be drawn with the emergence of probability thinking in the 17th century CE.

A NON COMPREHENSIVE CATALOGUE OF BOARD GAMES ON QUANTUM MECHANICS
DANIELE AURELIO (IIS "VOLTA", PAVIA, ITALY)

Teaching quantum mechanics to an audience with yet little specialized knowledge is a significant challenge due to the counterintuitive nature of this branch of physics. This is particularly evident when introducing a selection of topics from this subject in last-year high school physics classes, since traditional methods necessarily rely on complex mathematical formulations, making it difficult for students to develop an intuitive grasp of key principles such as superposition, entanglement, and quantum measurement. In recent years, educational board games have emerged as innovative tools for introducing these concepts in an engaging manner, more accessible than their traditional teaching counterparts. This paper reviews existing board games designed to popularize key concepts of quantum mechanics to a general audience, including QTris, Quantum race, Quantum chess, and others. Each game is analyzed in terms of its physics content, its pedagogical approach, gameplay mechanics, and effectiveness in conveying notions in quantum mechanics. The focus will be on how these games incorporate quantum principles and the extent to which they balance accuracy with playability. Additionally, we discuss the limitations of current quantum-themed board games and identify potential areas for improvement, such as the integration of more advanced topics and the refinement of game mechanics to better reflect quantum behaviours.

LEARNING TO HUNT THROUGH BOARD GAMES

MG (DNDA) STELA MARIS FERRARESE CAPETTINI (CULTURAL, PEDAGOGICAL AND ETHNOLUDIC RESEARCH CENTER ALLE KUZEN ETHNIC TOY MUSEUM)

“In addition to games of agility and dexterity, the Araucanians also had other games that we could call recreational, which they practiced only occasionally” (Rvdo. Olivares, p. 42 en Matus 1920, p. 5). Although various historians point out that the indigenous peoples of South America did not have games upon their arrival in the vast territory, on their journey from north to south the Spanish conquerors found different games, among which we can highlight those that may have been created by hunter-gatherers to teach their children to hunt (Magrassi, 1975 y Pati en Aguerre, 2000, p. 122; Huarita 2021). A petroglyph found in the north of Neuquén province testifies to their presence prior to the appearance of the current indigenous peoples (Ferrarese Capettini, 2007, p. 66). The research conducted between 1982 and 1998 among indigenous peoples allowed me to observe the struggle or war between hunters, through the children or their dogs, and the hunted animal, to see who would win, whether the animal would be hunted or a dog would be killed by the cornered animal, putting the lives of the people at risk, who abandoned hunting as Pati recalls: “he would corner himself, or a circle would form among all the boys, grown-ups, a circle would form and a ball would be thrown. . . (p. 122). But social change led them to abandon hunting and adapt to modern life, leaving the game in the memory of the elders and passed down as a recreational activity (Matus, 1920; Ferrarese, 2007; 2024).

TRANSLATIO LUDORUM: FROM CERCAR LA LIEBRE TO AMERICAN HUNTING

NICOLÁS MARTÍNEZ SÁEZ (NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MAR DEL PLATA, ARGENTINA)

Asymmetrical hunting games appear to be a late development in the history of board games. The oldest and most reliable written testimony appears in *Libro del ajedrez, dados y tablas* (1283) by the Spanish king Alfonso X ‘the Wise’, where *Cercar la liebre* is described — a board game played in imitation of one of the eutrapelic practices preferred by the medieval nobility: the hunt. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the game spread to the New World with conquistadors and missionaries, acquiring symbolisms and local adaptations distinct from those in Europe. In South America, certain indigenous hunting games can be identified which, because of the essential similarity of boards and rules, we consider derivatives of the European *Cercar la liebre*. Games such as *Leonera*, *El coyote y las gallinas*, *Yagua*, *Yaguareté kora*, *Jogo de la onça*, *La leona*, *Komican*, *Trapial Kuzen*, and *El león y los perros*, among others, form part of a family of games that we propose to designate under the category ‘American Hunting’. Several of these games are still played today, offering valuable material for studying continuities, cultural appropriation, and ludic reinterpretation.

PACHISI, POLEANA AND PATOLLI: RESISTANCE AND ORGANIZED CRIME AS A FACTOR IN THE UNUSUAL DIFFUSION OF GAMES

ALFONSO ATALA-LAYÚN INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

In the 2013 and 2023 colloquia, the case of Poleana was presented—a derivative of the Pollyanna game (Parker Brothers, 1915) rooted in Pachisi. This phenomenon is unusual because inmates from distant correctional facilities in Mexico play the same game. The most plausible explanation is that it circulates through persistent cooperation networks involving prisoners, recidivists, and ex-convicts. How Pollyanna became Poleana remains unresolved due to the absence of written records and the unreliability of informants. In archaeology and anthropology, using present-day ethnographic records to infer past practices is known as ethnographic analogy (Binford, 1967). Looking backward, Pachisi reached prominence under the Mughal Empire (16th century), while comparisons of pre-Columbian and early colonial codices confirm the simultaneous appearance of the cruciform Patolli board. If the cruciform design originated in India, the question concerns a diffusion process that leaves almost no trace beyond the board itself. Just as organized crime explains Poleana’s spread in Mexico, from the 15th century onward Muslim pirates championed resistance to Spanish expansion across the Pacific. If we consider pirates as a subaltern group, lacking access to historical representation of their *homo ludens* condition, we may infer a silent yet effective path of board-game diffusion.

Wednesday, April 29

ASYMMETRICAL CONFLICT

BRUCE WHITEHILL (INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER/WRITER)

War is not usually a balanced proposition. One side may have more men. One combatant may have more weapons or employ different movements. And the two warring parties might have different goals: one to vanquish or capture the other, the other merely to elude or escape the aggressor. In the game world, we think of war games as those in which two armies of men do battle, hoping to out-gun or out-maneuver the other, each side aiming for victory. But there are many “war” games where the contestants are not men in uniform, not even human, but abstract pieces; or animals. A clash between four-legged foxes, for example, and two-footed feathered flocks are usually described as “hunt” games but are in fact war games. In the game Fox and Geese, the fox (or foxes) is trying to kill or capture some or all of the geese, while the geese are trying to encircle the fox or escape. But they are not equal in number, they have different ways in which they are allowed to move, and they have different objectives. These are asymmetrical games, and they have been around for centuries. This paper examines different asymmetrical games and the characters that make up the forces engaged in battle. Are the fox and the geese really any different from the soldiers in the game of Siege? Or different from the cops-and-robbers games in which the police seek to capture the crooks, whereas the goal of the bandits is merely to escape? Can asymmetrical games actually be balanced?

MODELING THE POLITICS OF WAR IN BOARD GAMES

DIGITAL HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

This paper surveys board games that address the politics of war and how their mechanics model political–military decision-making. A well-known example is Diplomacy which models realist approaches to IR Games that deal with the outbreak of war are rare (Crisis 1914), but some address the politics of war during active conflict. Some explore the grand strategy of alliances between states or factions (Churchill, Triumvir), while others examine how the internal politics of the participants shape strategic outcomes (Pericles). Some board games also model the peace negotiations that mark the end of wars and often sow the seeds of future conflicts, including Versailles 1919 and Congress of Vienna. Some board games model wars within states rather than between them. These simulate “small wars” in which combat is often less important than influence actions. In these games, players may be in conflict without always being in combat, and the mechanics model both combat in an abstract way and a range of political actions. This paper will examine how novel mechanics model incomplete information and historical constraints. It will look at how game mechanics model theories of International relations such as rational actor, organisational process or bureaucratic politics theories. This paper will therefore examine how designers have created games that simulate the political–military nexus in historical conflicts and what game mechanics they have used.

MY TIME: HYBRID CARD GAMES FOR LIFE STORYTELLING

MELISSA J. ROGERSON, FANGXING ZHAO, WEI ZHAO, LUCY A. SPARROW, JENNY WAYCOTT (SCHOOL OF COMPUTING AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA)

Autobiographical life storytelling is valuable for older adults but is typically presented in static, one-way formats. We developed My Time, a hybrid interactive storytelling card game. In a pilot study, we worked with two Storytellers, James (78) and Betty (89), to create personal games featuring key personal and historical events from their lifetimes.

Players sort game cards into timeline order. The scannable cards show a short text and photograph of an event, with the corresponding date on the back. A custom app accesses a recording of the Storyteller discussing the event, and adds a collection mechanism. The flip-to-reveal and scan-for-story elements invite engagement and discussion.

Cards focus on the Storyteller’s personal experience. Betty’s historical events include the end of World War II, when her family took a train to join a street celebration. James’s include Mawson’s journey to

Antarctica, which he later visited.

We evaluated My Time through play with Storytellers' families. The game encouraged sharing of new stories, turning storytelling into a group activity. Historical events allowed younger players to connect personal stories to known events. While players liked the app, they preferred to discuss events in person and use the app when the Storyteller was not present.

My Time shows how a hybrid boardgame can create an innovative, accessible, and interesting playable life story record that encourages intergenerational family story sharing.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PIE RULE FROM ANCIENT MANCALAS TO MODERN BOARD GAMES.
COSIMO CARDELLICCHIO (CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE)

The pie rule is a well-known solution for fair division problems summed up by the phrase: "I cut; you choose". Its presence throughout history is well documented in inheritance laws dating back to the Middle Ages. Alex Randolph popularized it in board games starting in the 1970s, to balance the first player's advantage. In its simplest form, a player makes the first move and the opponent can choose whether to continue playing, or switch roles. Since then, many contemporary board games have applied this simple but effective idea. However, early applications of this strategy can be found in ancient mancalas and in other less famous games. A brief overview of the pie rule in board games will be presented.

SINGLE PLAYER GAMES AND MULTIPLAYER VEXIERS: SOME CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING PUZZLE GAMES
TIAGO HIRTH (LUDUS, CIUHCT)

This presentation follows the investigation into the importance and effect on the number of players. Instead of focusing on a single game family and its variability in numbers of players like in previous BGSC, here we will fix the number of players and look at the variability

THE MEANING OF COMPLEXITY IN MODERN BOARD GAMES
MICHAEL SOUSA, CHIEF GAME DESIGNER AT THE CENTER OF PREPAREDNESS THREAT RESPONSE SIMULATION (CAPTRS)

BoardGameGeek (BGG) is the dominant online community for modern board gaming, hosting millions of user ratings. Players rate games on various dimensions, including "complexity," but this term lacks clear definition. We employed AI tools (Claude.AI, ChatGPT, Gemini) to analyze BGG's content—forums, wiki pages, discussions—followed by source verification. Our prompt: "Identify the definition of complexity and its sources in www.boardgamegeek.com." Results revealed no explicit definition. BGG describes it as "Community rating for how difficult a game is to understand. Lower rating means easier." Complexity appears under "weight/complexity rating" based on user votes (boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/Weight). Forum discussions reveal six deeper dimensions:

- Rules design: Time to learn and rulebook difficulty - Cognitive load: Mental effort for analyzing and planning - Strategic depth: Thinking required to master the game - Random factors: Impact of chance elements - Player requirements: Reading, calculating, pattern analysis - Learning curve: Plays needed for mastery

Longer duration correlates with higher perceived complexity. Improved visual design may reduce rules complexity, lowering cognitive load. Randomness emerges as an outlier, potentially reducing strategic depth in younger-audience games. We propose formal classification of complexity dimensions to better understand modern board game design and player preferences.

Thursday, April 30

**AMBIVALENT PUBLIC PEDAGOGY IN PAX PAMIR 2E: EMPIRE, MEMORY AND AFGHAN AGENCY
COREY WESLEY (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH CO-
LUMBIA)**

Pax Pamir: Second Edition is a strategy game about nineteenth-century Afghan politics and the “Great Game.” Players act as Afghan power brokers navigating British and Russian imperial rivalry. This paper asks what kinds of historical understanding the game invites when read as public pedagogy about war, empire, and local agency rather than neutral simulation.

Drawing on cultural studies and postcolonial theory (Hall, Said, Bhabha) plus game-studies work on historical play, I combine close reading of the rulebook and designer diaries with analysis of key mechanics of loyalty, influence, and Dominance Checks. I show how the design recentres Afghan actors and highlights imperial dependence on local networks, yet does so through aesthetic and mechanical conventions shaped by Western hobby markets.

The analysis traces three linked sites of ambivalence: (1) visual and textual representations that construct Afghanistan as a contested object of memory; (2) a hybrid player position that asks largely non-Afghan players to “see like” Afghan elites while still rewarding familiar optimisation; and (3) rules and paratexts that stage the Great Game as unstable and contingent, with coalitions collapsing and dominance precarious. I argue that Pax Pamir 2e exemplifies how contemporary board games about war can function as ambivalent pedagogical sites that expose, rather than resolve, the tensions of representing imperial violence on the tabletop.

**A CURIOUS “GAME PIECE” IN APPIAN’S /MITHRIDATIC WARS/
ATAGUN KARAYEL (SAPIENZA UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA)**

This presentation examines an intriguing episode in Appian’s account of the Mithridatic Wars of the first century BCE. During Sulla’s siege of Piraeus, two Athenian slaves betray crucial military information by slinging stones toward the Roman camp. In the text, the stones are called /pessoi/, a word typically signifying board-game pieces. This usage appears unique to this passage, providing key support for reconsidering the term’s semantic range and suggesting a possible new definition.

**PLAYING THROUGH CRISIS: A MICROHISTORY OF A JAPANESE GO PROFESSIONAL
DANIELA TRINKS (MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE, RESEARCH
GROUP ASTRA), AND AKIRA MAEKAWA (INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER)**

Board games persist through crisis not only because people continue to play, but because the conditions of play are repeatedly renegotiated. This paper examines career continuity in modern Japanese professional Go through a microhistorical case study of Sugiuchi Kazuko, whose exceptionally long career from 1942 to 2025 provides a useful lens for analysing how Go professionals sustain participation and recognition under changing circumstances. Treating “crisis” broadly as recurring pressures on careers and institutions, including periods of social and political disruption, the study traces how changing game conditions, such as time settings, tournament formats, women’s titles, promotion pathways, and other organisational arrangements, shape visibility, access to competition, and endurance. It also considers shifting life-course priorities that can interrupt or reshape professional careers, influencing when and how professionals are able to remain active. Methodologically, the paper draws on qualitative analysis of Go periodicals, Japanese newspaper coverage, and publicly available institutional records. If feasible, an interview may be conducted subject to consent. By linking evolving competitive conditions to narratives of professional longevity, the paper contributes to Board Game Studies by showing how continuity is supported, challenged, and explained within professional Go culture in Japan.

ACROSS THE LIGHT AND DARK SIDES OF PLAY. COOPERATIVE BOARD GAMES BETWEEN PACIFISM AND AGONISTIC PLAY
MICHAEL A. CONRAD, UNIVERSITY OF KONSTANZ, INSTITUTE FOR LITERATURE, ART, AND MEDIA STUDIES

Given this year's theme of war and board games, the paper wants to explore the tensions in the history of European game culture between pacifist and bellicose tendencies. In particular, it examines cooperative board games, a genre that is often perceived as a counter-concept to war games and other genres that center on inter-player conflict. As will be shown, the idea of cooperative board games originated in peace science and related disciplines that, in the aftermath of World War II, sought alternative, more peaceful, methods for conflict management and conflict-solving. Theo F. Lentz, one of the founders of peace science, was among the first to propose concepts for cooperative board games, notably by transforming existing agonal games, such as chess. On the other hand, Brian Sutton-Smith and others later re-evaluated player aggression as a positive force and understood conflict as a central element of human play. After tracing this tension-laden intellectual history, the paper will close with remarks on how more recent examples of cooperative board games, such as "Hispania" (Miguel Marqués, Draco Ideas, 2024) and "The Gang" (John Cooper/Kory Heath, Kosmos, 2024) combine cooperative structures and aggressive acts in surprising and fascinating manners. In doing so, they take the reverse route of the original pacifist impulses by integrating "dark play" into cooperative play.

THE BOARD GAME IN BOOK FORMAT: DEFINITION AND ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS
PABLO JAVIER PEREIRA HURTADO (UNIVERSITY OF ALMERÍA)

This presentation aims to establish and define, in a more complete way, a specific category of board game: the board game in book format. This category would encompass all board games included and distributed through the book format, covering as well those published in magazines, illustrated albums, etc. This term was proposed in the thesis entitled "Incorporation of digital interactive mechanics into the illustration of the board game in book format" (Pereira, 2019), in which a sample of board games of this type was analyzed. The thesis concluded that these games possess a series of specific characteristics derived from their format of distribution, affecting both the treatment of the graphic elements of the illustration of the board and the physic components of the game. The result is a more compact type of board game, capable of providing ingenious solutions to optimize both space and game components, adapting to the constrains of book format.

This presentation not only shows the most important results from this thesis concerning the board game in book format, but analyzes new examples of this type of games, expanding the sample analyzed and consolidating and refining its characteristics, as well as revealing a wide range of games, from simpler games for children to a very interesting examples of more complex wargames. Finally, a new board game in book format created by the author is included to illustrate the characteristics of this category of board game.

FROM WARGAMING TO PEACEGAMING (AND BACK) – PACIFISM THROUGH MILITARY GAMES IN H.G. WELLS' "LITTLE WARS – A GAME FOR BOYS"
DR. CHRISTIAN HOFFSTADT (DENKHAFEN, KIT)

This talk asks what happens when a pacifist designs a military game. H.G. Wells' *Little Wars* presents toy-soldier skirmishing as a "game for boys" yet repeatedly interrupts play with arguments against real war. I read *Little Wars* as paradoxical pedagogy: players rehearse tactics, uncertainty, and consequence through miniature violence, while Wells' commentary and rule choices push toward restraint, accountability, and the imaginative possibility of ending conflict.

After a brief genealogy of wargaming (from staff-training simulations to hobby miniatures), I place Wells between militarized play and later "new games" and cooperative design movements that searched for non-competitive, non-zero-sum fun. *Little Wars* functions as a hinge text: it keeps the aesthetics of battle but experiments with alternative end states, negotiated pauses, and the moral weight of "casualties," anticipating contemporary debates about ethical theming and designer responsibility.

Tracing how "peacegaming" can emerge inside warplay, I propose non-binary notions of winning and losing in board games, where success may mean de-escalation, care, or learning rather than domination. I close by turning back to today's resurgent wargames and serious games, asking how Wells' ambivalence can inform current design ethics.

FROM CONQUEST TO COLLABORATION: RECONFIGURING THE MEANINGS OF BOARD GAMES IN SCHOOL
EDGARD DIAS DA SILVA (FACULDADE SESI DE EDUCAÇÃO), PAULO HENRIQUE AMORIM
BIAZOLI (FACULDADE SESI DE EDUCAÇÃO)

This work examines how board games, historically shaped by war and militarization, have long served not only as simulations of battlefields but also as cultural tools for interpreting conflict and rehearsing decision-making and power relations. Although many modern games still reflect these martial origins through themes of dispute, occupation, and territorial conquest, contemporary educational contexts have reappropriated board games for purposes that contrast with this heritage. The study analyzes an ongoing project in Brazilian public schools — Collaborative Board Games and Cooperative Learning in the Classroom — which uses cooperative games to foster collaborative and dialogic learning within problem-solving and inquiry-based methodologies. Rather than reinforcing competition, these games encourage students to construct shared meanings, negotiate strategies, and participate in collective decision-making. Grounded in socio-interactionist theories and in the framework of Critical Mathematics Education, the study argues that cooperative board games operate as counter-narratives to traditional martial logics, offering a symbolic “demilitarization” of the game space. It shows how classrooms can transform conflict-driven structures into practices that cultivate solidarity, democratic engagement, and inclusive, critical educational experiences.

FROM CONFLICT TO COOPERATION: CULTIVATING LUDIC DIPLOMACY THROUGH COOPERATIVE BOARD GAMES IN THE CLASSROOM. PRACTICES FOR LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION
CORNELIA HOFMANN (LABORSCHULE BIELEFELD, RESEARCH DEPARTMENT LABORSCHULE AT UNIVERSITY BIELEFELD)

This presentation introduces “ludic diplomacy” as a concept to explore how cooperative board games can foster democratic competences and supportive classroom climates, offering a constructive alternative to conflict or war-themed play. Ludic diplomacy frames analog gameplay as structured, rule-bound negotiation and cooperation, where players practice perspective-taking, respectful disagreement, collective decision-making, and procedural fairness: core democratic dispositions. Beginning with communication-focused games like Similo or Codenames, adolescents develop foundational micro-skills such as listening, turn-taking, and opinion acceptance in low-stakes environments. These skills scaffold progression toward complex cooperative games like Forbidden Island, integrating role specialization, interdependence, and shared responsibility. Empirical classroom research evidences that cooperative game-based learning enhances empathy, trust, equitable participation, and conflict resolution, creating democratic classroom climates with ripple effects beyond school. This presentation synthesizes theoretical insights, pedagogical strategies, and empirical findings to argue for the integration of ludic diplomacy into secondary education curricula. It addresses the BGSC theme “Board Games and War Play” by positioning cooperative games as peace-building tools, expanding the political potential of board gaming to nurture democratic attitudes and social cohesion during adolescence.

A STUDY OF THE CHINESE SHUANGLU TEXT PU SHUANG
KISHI KAORI OSAKA ELECTOR-COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY

Shuanglu is a representative board game widely played in ancient China and Japan; however, its specific modes of play have long remained unclear. This study examines the Shuanglu manual Pu Shuang, compiled by Hong Zun during the Southern Song dynasty, with particular attention to the “Changju Pattern System” (常局格制) described in Volume Five, and attempts to reconstruct the game’s baseline rule configuration. By combining close textual interpretation with analysis of the game’s rules, this study demonstrates that the Changju system functioned as a set of fundamental rules that enabled regional variants of Shuanglu to be integrated within a shared framework. Furthermore, through close analysis of difficult and obscure sections of the original text, this study logically reconstructs two core rules that previous research has not resolved: the obligation to leave the rearmost point open (corresponding to a restriction on prime formation) and the individual processing of dice results (step-based movement). Through rule reconstruction grounded in careful textual analysis, this study provides a new theoretical foundation for the study of ancient board games in East Asia.

NARRATING WAR FROM THE BOARD: THIS WAR OF MINE AND THE NARRATIVE EXPERIENCE
CARLA ACOSTA (UNIVERSITY OF ALICANTE) Y MARÍA SAMPER (MIGUEL HERNÁNDEZ UNIVERSITY)

This presentation approaches contemporary board games as narrative media capable of articulating complex experiences through their ludic dimension. From this perspective, it proposes an analysis of the board game *This War of Mine* (2017), focusing on how armed conflict is represented not as a tactical simulation, but as a narrative experience shaped by uncertainty, scarcity, and meaningful decision-making. The game shifts the traditional focus from the warrior to the civilian population, constructing an experience based on everyday survival and the management of moral dilemmas in a context of prolonged crisis. The study draws on a narrative analysis framework applied to board games, attending to elements such as character construction and development, player agency, spatial configuration, and temporal management, as well as the relationship between game systems and narrative. From this perspective, it examines how *This War of Mine* uses its mechanics to generate emergent narratives, in which progress is measured not by victory, but by persistence and the consequences of decisions made during play. The analysis highlights the capacity of the board game to construct narrative discourses on war that engage with ethical and social questions, demonstrating the potential of the ludic medium as a space for narrative reflection on armed conflict within contemporary board game studies.

PIECE: THE EVOLUTION OF A NEO-LATIN LUDONYM FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE RENAISSANCE
MARCO TIBALIDINI (RESEARCHER AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION- BARI)

When games travelled from a culture to another they brought with them their material and immaterial legacy, made of tangible objects, concepts, and also technical terminology. This last is constituted by ludonyms, which, when traveled, were introduced in new idioms. They generally took the form of loanwords, whose morphology suffered minor changes, or were adapted to the local language, but in both cases, they have a relevant historical value that is worth researching and analyzing. Curiously, ludonyms, despite being deeply rooted in a culture, can also change their meaning or be replaced by further loanwords with the very same meaning. In this lecture, I would like to present my research in the field of Neo-Latin languages, analyzing the case of the word 'piece' and trying to shed light on the processes of cultural stratification and intercultural transmission that brought it to be a term of common use in the gaming jargon of various parts of Europe. I don't have a definitive thesis on the transmission of this term, and my reconstruction is still affected by some biases. For this reason, I would like to share it with the members of the Board Game Studies Colloquium to cross my findings and expertise with that of other specialists.

Participants

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Bruce Whitehill	Independent	USA / Germany
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Carles Palanca		Spain
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Mike Cosgrave	University College Cork	Ireland
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Olimpia Navarro		España
Oriol Vaz-Romero Trueba	Universidad de Barcelona	España
Oriol Comas i Coma	Independent	Spain
Pablo Camacho Rodríguez	University of Alicante	España
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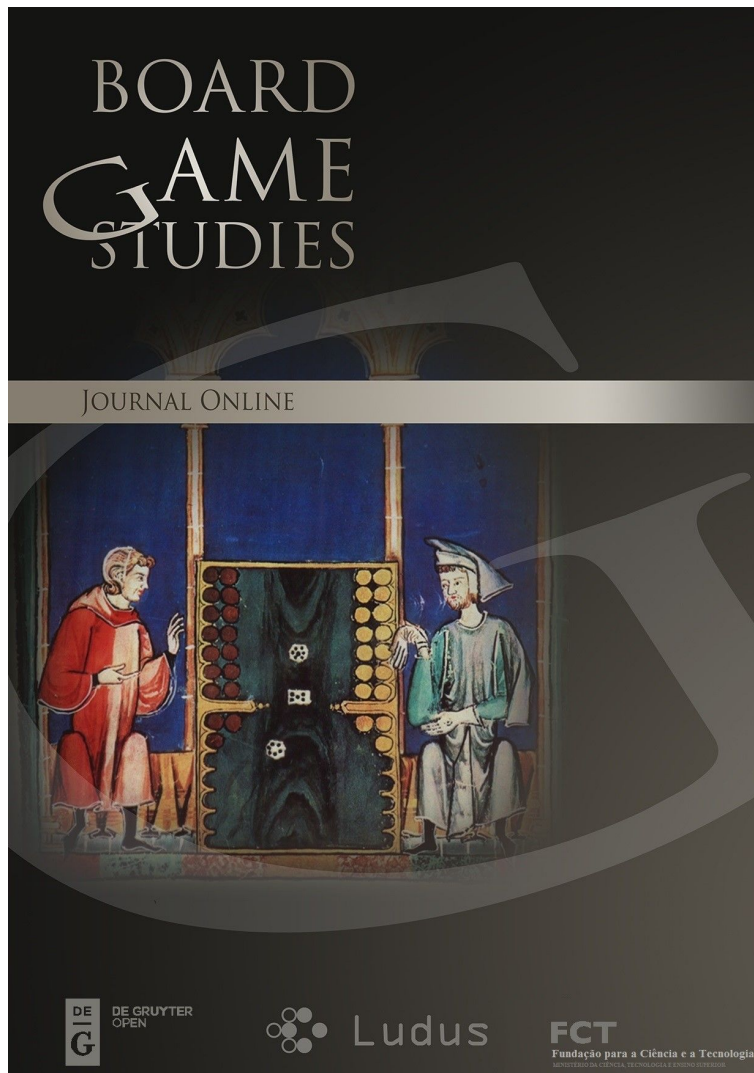
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