

Chitrang in Ancient Time: In Shahnameh and Timur's era

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Abstract: *Chitrang is a board game with a great history in India. Then it grew on in fourth or sixth century in India. Chaturanga originally was taken from Sanskrit comprising four pieces invoking four members of Indian army as chariot, elephant, rider and padati (pawn). The method of the play was a kind of war stratagem that the Indian kings used to arrange the battle field in this manner and they practiced bravery, made decisions on the scene of the battle, accompanied with patience and courage. This game was brought to Iran at the time of Khosrow Anoshirwan; the Sassanid king, and by little changes in playing method, named Chatrang, and after conquest of Iran by Arabs, named Shatranj. This game was brought in Europe and Russia by Iranian and Arabs in 9thAM, and kept its original name; Shatranj. The story of genesis chitrang is composed by Ferdowsi (c.940-1020) in Shahnameh- One of the masterpiece epics in the world and of Iranian classic literature in particular-through innovative manner. Shahnameh artistically depicts an ancient life since the creation of the first human. Furthermore, it represents manifestation and evolution of civilization by narrating the regular battles with all devil symbols and historical eras and extinction of the last government of ancient Iran. years after chirang was created and became popular among nations, it is interesting to be found through the somewhat ignored parts of history of Iran, in Timur's era. This study considered Shahnameh as potentially a main source for the culture and history of ancient world and Iran in particular. Beyond many believes and notions in other books and studies, there could be found number of facts from Ferdowsi's narratives indicating the governing policies and battling manipulations. Chess has passed a long and unclear way along the history and found many branches and changes. For these reasons the study aimed at investigating many facts about it in Shahnameh and also the history of Iran. The result showed a significant correlation between chitrang and decision making policies in the ancient time. Chitrang was a thought ful game that grew in ancient time of humanity, and up to now, people believe that chess is a game to practice their mind.*

Keywords: *Chitrang, chess, Shahnameh, epic, Backgammon, ancient Iran.*

1. Introduction

Shatranj is a board game with a great history in India. This game was named Chaturanga (Sanskrit: चतुरङ्ग; *caturāṅga*) and its board named Ashtāpada that was created by Gupta emperor. Then it grew in fourth or sixth century in India. Chaturanga originally is taken from Sanskrit, which means four members invoking four members of Indian army as chariot, elephant, rider and padati (pawn). The method of the play was a kind of war strategy that the Indian kings used to arrange the battle field in this manner and they practiced bravery, made decisions on the scene of the battle, accompanied with patience and courage. The shape of pieces was inspired by nature; Indians had the tight relation with nature and its features. For this reason, they made some pieces in Chaturanga like animals with human duties and they gave personification to nature. Two armies formed of 32 pieces with two different colors, were set on board. The goal of each was, to arrest and kill the rival king.

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1.1. Features of the Pieces:

  Padāti or Bhata, foot-soldier or infantry, pawn also known as Sainik, warrior although is the weakest piece in chitrang, but it is the most important to fight. Pawn stands in a row in front of the others.

  Ashva, horse; knight has the ability to jump. It moves as **L** in all sides. Horse can undermine an opponent's defense forces.

  Gaja, elephant; later called fil; early form of bishop moves obliquely.

  Ratha, chariot; rook or castle moves straightly in four main sides that are placed in four sides of the board and its shape is like castle.

  Mantri or Senapati, counselor or general; ancestor of ferz; the early form of queen can move on every grid that wishes in every sides which is placed close to king.

  Raja, king is the important and weakest pieces in chitrang. King can move just one grid in all sides.

This game developed in other countries. Xiangqi is a common pastime in Chinese cities and it is the traditional game that passed some changes.

Xiangqi dated back to the Warring States period; according to the first-century-BC text Shuo yuan (說苑/说苑), it was one of Lord Mengchang of Qi's interests. Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou wrote a book in AD 569 called Xiang Jing which described the rules of an astronomically themed game called xiangqi or xiangxi (象戲/象戏). The word xiàngqí 象棋 is usually translated as "elephant game" or "figure game", because the Chinese character 象 means "elephant" and "figure"; it originated as a stylized drawing of an elephant, and was used to write a word meaning "figure", likely because the two words were pronounced the same.

There are many versions of three-player xiangqi, or san xiangqi, all played on special boards. Banqi is best known in Hong Kong than in mainland China. San Guo Qi, Sanrenqi are the same with some **changes in rules**. Janggi (including romanizations changgi and jangki), sometimes called Korean chess: a strategy board game popular in Korea (Wikipedia) Makruk (Thai: หมากruk; RTGS: Mak Ruk; [mà:k rúk]), or Thai chess, is a board game descended from the 6th-century Indian game of chaturanga or a close relative thereof, and therefore related to chess. The variety of chess played in Cambodia, called "Ok" (Khmer) or "Ouk Chatrang" is virtually identical to Makruk, with a couple of minor differences. (Wikipedia)

Chitrang found some changes through the course of time and by its entrance to a country took some parts of the culture and rationales. Iran like the other countries which above mentioned, was not an exception, and find some alterations.

Bahar-i- Ajam has written Sitrang that is the Persian word, means a root which is like the human body, so they say the human plant -mardom gia- for most of the beads have the name of human. He also indicated that Sitrang was Arabicized of Chitrang which is Indian word, contains *Chitr* means four and *Ang* means member. Except Raja=king and Mantri=minister, Chitrang Fuji had had four bases: the four are: Gaja=Elephant, Ashva=Horse, Ratha=Rook, and Padāti or Bhata= foot-soldier or infantry; pawn. (The same- Wikipedia)

The 4×16 chitrang which its shut out depend on two tosses. If it will be one, lose a pawn and two: a rook, three:, a horse, four: an elephant, five: minister and finally six: the king.(Nafayes- l-fonun)

The circle chitrang; which its shape is circle and there is a small circle in the center of it. Whenever the king will be helpless, comes into and remains safe. Pawn in this kind cannot change to minister. Elephants face each

other and when two pawns came from one side, could omit each other and losing rules are like the aforementioned type of chitrang.

Four- castle Chitrang; it is 10×100 with four castles on the corners and four Dabbabats which are like rook but move in deviation. Pawn cannot change to minister. If the king is troubled, goes to these castles to stay safe. The Great chitrang; it's another type of Four-castle Chitrang, but there are giraffes, lions and camels and some others.

Part 1:

The story of genesis chitrang is composed by Ferdowsi (c.940-1020) in Shahnameh- One of the masterpiece of Iranian classic literature- through innovative manner. Shahnameh is an artistic depiction of millennium history and life of ancient Iranians' since the creation of the first human and manifestation and evolution of his civilization, the regular battles with all devil symbols and historical eras and extinction of the last government of ancient Iran. The validity of Ferdowsi's speech is since as that he had gathered and recited the history, culture and the values of Iran and ancient Iranians. Shahnameh comprises three significant parts: - The mythology (The Pishdadian era), - The heroic and epic (The Kianian era), - the historic (The Sassanid era). In this regard, we focus on the historical section of Shahnameh in Sassanid era; Khosro I, is King Anoshirwan. The main source of historical part of Shahnameh was composed of stories, Khoday- Namag based on the documents found in royal archive written by historians.

Khosro started to make necessary reforms. (Zarinkoob, Roozegaran, p.232) At the beginning of his kingdom, he suppressed Mazdak followers whom their power threatened his dynasty. (Same, p.236) Suppression of Mazdak followers, gave rise to Zoroastrian priest. As a result, this group named him the just king and Anoshak-ravan; eternal spirit. His kingdom was not only a successful political and military era, but also it was considered as a social reform. (Same, p.238) Khosrow's fame was due to his philosophy as seen in his writings. Even so Byzantium historians have appreciated his attention to philosophy. Presumably it was coincident with his conquer to Yemen and domination of red sea, he showed interest to India, although this didn't turn to set off his army toward India. He started to interact by sending heralds and exchanging gifts with the Indian kings. He got acquainted Iran with Chitrang.

-Herald came from India and China,

All praised the King. (Shanameh, V.5, P.1670)

It has been written that in Anoshirwan's kingdom; The Sassanid just king; by the time of Anoshirwan's throne, some envoys came to express their support, congratulation and submission:

The sent came from India and China,

They made a great appraisal of the king. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1670)

Once Anoshirwan wore the crown, sat on the ivory throne and admitted. Zoroastrian priests gathered around him and the borders of Balkh, Bamian and Korzoban entered in the palace. They reported to the king the herald of Indian's Rhye have an audience with the king accompany some elephant, an umbrella, which was the sign of sustainability of an eternal emperor on a land called Vikunta(limitless kingdom) with no fear and sorrow(Mythology&Art,P.96), riders of Sind, and a thousands of camel's load as present. When the king heard that news, he sent the armies to welcome. As the herald arrived in, prayed like elders and worshiped the creator of the world. Then gave him precious gems, ten elephants adored with earrings and jewels, the Indian umbrella adorned with gold and various gems, with the huge load of silver, gold, musk, ambergris, aloes wood, gemstones like ruby and diamond and an Indian sword covered with silk as the present.

The herald presented the letter, which the Indian Rhye had written and wrapped in the silk. The Indian governor had written, with the wish for eternity, in his letter. "I send a chitrang board. So ask your wise to figure out what this wonderful innovative game is. They have to know its chitrang pieces and can set them in their place on the board. If you decode this game, I will in rather send the tribute that the king has appointed. If

Iranian famed have not enough knowledge to find how to play this game, for they do not endure our knowledge, do not expect to receive tribute from us. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1766)

Put chitrang near the King,

He looked at the piece for a while (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1766)

The pieces from ivory and the teak in black color on the board,

-asked him the victorious King,

About the figure, piece, musk and throne.

He answered the King,

All rules meet the battle (Shahnameh, V.5, and P.1766)

-when you find the method of the game,

You can figure the style of the battle and the move of rook and elephant. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1766)

The King asked for seven days, unless they lose on the eighth. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1766)

They entertained the herald warmly. Then the sage and the wise accompanied the Zoroastrian priest to the king and put the board and everyone persevered to manage the game, but nobody found the clue. Buzarjomehr- The minister of Kasra- came and found him upset. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1766)

-He told O'king,

I will find the way to get through,

Wisdom guides me to find the clue (Shahnameh, V.5, and P.1766)

Anoshirwan called his wise minister, this problem will be solved with you, otherwise, Ray Konoj will say the king has not even a wise in his court, and this will be a heavy defeat. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1767)

Buzarjumihir set the chitrang,

Sat cool, calm and collected. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1767)

He played the pieces to left and right,

Till he found their place of fight

A day passed, he found the rules,

He then hastened towards the king.(Shahnameh, V.5, P.1767)

Buzarjomehr asked the king to recall the herald to show him the battlefield. Therefore, he put the board like a battlefield, put the king in the center, riders on the left and right, the pawn lancer in the front , then minister close to the king for it could guide him in the battle. The fighter that chases the horse down from both sides, and to its left he put the aggressive elephant, and above that put war horses. All wondered When Buzarjomehr moved that corps. The herald became sad of this victory, and was wonder that he had not seen Chitrang before and has not also heard anything from genius Indians. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1768)

-The wise arranged a battle,

Put the king in the heart,

-Riders arrayed from right to left,

Pawns with spear fronted the king,

-Farzin consciously stood by the king,

Ushered him through the battle,

-knight who, has

The elephant to his left,

Beyond the elephants, there were war horses
Set near by the king. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1768)

Kasra was so pleased of Buzarjumihr that gave him a chalice full of regal jewel, bag of Dinar and a saddled horse and praised him a lot.

When Buzarjumihr went to his room, put a board and a compass and focused on the Chitrang and Hindu's prudence. He ordered 30 pieces to be made from ivory and a teak (black & white color). He divided the board in two parts that should be a battle- like chitrang from two sides. He made six boxes in front of each other. It contained two divisions with eight pieces, all prepared to conquer the city, one side the teak pieces and the other side the ivory pieces. He arranged 14 pieces in the other half of the page; 7 white pieces in one side and the 7 black ones in front of them. He connected two boards with a taller base which was kept by hinges. When you looked at the board, it resembled to mind the mountain and plain. Two dices have the role of kings that in such a way controlled the strategy of the game. Pieces must be closed more than one, if a piece left alone, the opponent's piece will surmount it and would be left out. The game goes ahead until all pieces from one color can gather in one side. The way as I described, he arranged the board-the backgammon. (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1769)

He arranged two armies in eight parts,
All gallant fighters to conquest
The board was like a battle in four sides,
With two precious and good natured king,
More or less they both,
Can fight each with no defeat,
By their command, from both sides,
The fighters arrayed a fast corps,
If one surrounded with two,
The firm will change for to back up
Everywhere, trough the army, here and there,
Two kings were walking gracefully in the battle,
They started fighting,
Some times on the mountain, and sometimes in the field,
On this manner they try to defeat the other,
Until two kings with their army gathered. . (Shahnameh, V.5, P.1769)

In this way, he equipped the backgammon, went to the Shah (king), and explained to him in details. Anoushirvan wondered about his wiseness. He ordered to prepare many camels full of treasures and recalled the herald of the Hindu Ray and wrote a letter; first named God and then said o'thou the Hindu famous king! Your herald came with an umbrella, elephants, chitrang board and your massage. We took a time of Indian wise until the intelligent minister researched and found the code of the game. Now I send him to Konoj, accompanied with two thousands of camels bar and, I have sent you backgammon instead. You certainly have many wise Brahmans that can find the code of this game. If they try and cannot find the code, you have to send back two times of this.

Part 2

Years after chirang was created and became popular among nations, it is interesting to be found through the somewhat ignored parts of history of Iran, in Timur's era. He was the founder of Timurid dynasty. Timur (1336-1405AD) who was known as Amir Timur, Timur the lame, Timur Gurkan Sahebkran, was a Turku-Mongol conqueror. He was the most brutal fighter and founder of Timurid Empire in Persia and central Asia. He

conquest Kharazm, Khurasan, Gorgan, Mazandaran, sistan, Herat, Fars, some part of Iraq, Lorestan, Azerbaijan, Khazar, India- Delhi. His capital was Samarkand, where he established gohartaj mosque, and built some centers and spent a lot of money on greatness and glory of that city.

Timur was a great conqueror with less failure, and his conquests signed his deep c consciousness of martial affairs, his high accuracy for war logistics. There is no clear evidence that whether Timur's interest to play chitrang led to his intense interest to the castle-making or enjoying the conquest of castles pushed him to be interested about this game. For he had extreme fancy to castle making with precision. He did not overlook the conquest of any castles. From this, in Timur's fights, in general, castle making was the most important in his fighting. The strategy of castle making was interwoven with ruling on his strategy of fighting. His techniques of making the castles varied uniquely from one to another whereby he did not retake in the previous and the next. With regards, Timur is known as the outstanding strategist. He used exclusive methods in castle making, like burrow, using Dabbabat(a kind of Tank), to water near the wall of the castle, throw stones by catapult, using shots fixed on the wall, flowing water toward castle, also castle making with some guys that get hung with a rope and enter to the castle from the top.

Ibn-i- Arabshah wrote in the astonishing life of Timur, P.297: Amir Timur often played chitrang whereby he examined and cleared his mind on a small chitrang and then he desired playing the Great chitrang which its board was 10×11 with extra pieces such as two camels, two giraffes, two pawns, two dabbabats and a counselor. There were variation of pieces in the Great chitrang, and its picking method was more like a battlefield. There was, in the face of a main piece, a pawn with the same name, for example: in the face of the elephant, there was an elephant- pawn, even king had a king-pawn. Rook is castle that its shape remains like castle. The other pieces were Kashaf(Arabic) =turtle, Dabbabat, Talieh(Arabic)=pawn, giraffe, Hamal(Arabic)=lamb, Sowr(Arabic)=Cow, Asad(Arabic)= lion, Faras(Arabic)=horse.

2. Conclusion

Chitrang was a thought ful game that grew in ancient time of humanity, and up to now, people believe that chess is a game to practice their mind. For a long time it has helped kings, elders of the crown and the wise think about their war strategies by which they find the prose and cones of battling. It was a great practice to manage their thought and mind. It taught them patience, calmness, planning, using pieces in the best way, thinking about their moves before any action.

Yet tumult of kings and their armies could be heard through history on the chessboard that they managed long and costly battles thoughtfully and logically. They used to plan ,for a long time, on a board and guide a bloody battle against enemies, and it has carved the name of generals or braves who fought many battles in their career into the heart of history.

3. Implications

Chess is one of the essential materials lesson to arise rational and prudence. It should be implemented in educating and training specific battling and political stratagems in both army and government. Further it can play a crucial role in manipulative political

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