

# THE SLOW WAY WEST: OR HOW BADUK TRAVELLED FROM CHINA TO EUROPE –

## CHAPTER 3

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*Continued from Chapter 2 in BGJ 194, this is based on an article written for Myong-Ji University, Korean baduk university, in 2005, adapted for the British Go Journal.*

During the second half of the seventeenth century the Dutch Republic was one of the main European centres for the collection and dissemination of information concerning the Far East. One reason for this was the commercial activity of the Dutch East India Company in East Asia, which included the South China Coast, Japan and the Dutch colonial adventure in Taiwan and its aftermath.

One of the most influential Dutch publications of this period was Johan Nieuhof's 1665 report of the first Dutch embassy to Peking. He took part in the first official mission sent by the Dutch East India Company from Batavia to the Chinese Emperor to obtain more favourable trade conditions.

His book was a digest of knowledge concerning China, mainly taken from the writings of the Jesuits.<sup>1</sup> It was illustrated by a great number of fine engravings, based on sketches made in China by Nieuhof. The book went through a number of reprints and was translated into all major European languages of the time. A translation to Dutch of Trigault's description of baduk was inserted. The text became more incomprehensible the more it

was translated and incorporated in other works. The Dutch translation gives us the impression that baduk is a game related to tiddlywinks and marbles!<sup>2</sup>

**Arnoldus Montanus** compiled an important book with information on Japan in 1669.

In 1670 an English-adapted edition appeared in London under the title of *Atlas Japonensis*. This illustrated work is based on information furnished by Portuguese Jesuits and the travel records of Caron, Frisius, Wagenaar and others. Andries Frisius had taken part in the "court journeys" to Edo (the old name for Tokyo) in 1649 and 1650 as a special emissary. Zacharius Wagenaar had been chief executive (opperhoofd) at Deshima in 1656–1657 and 1658–1659.

Baduk is mentioned on two occasions, in both cases as an occupation of Japanese guards. These guards are playing baduk during their service along the walls of the Imperial castle of Edo.

*'They use a Game or Play among them, not unlike our Draughts, which requires great Leisure and Study: In this Exercise they spend much time in their foremention'd Watch-houses; or else they*

<sup>1</sup>Nieuhof, Johan, *Het gesantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham etc.*, Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1665, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Blom, Jaap K. 'Go in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century', *Go world*, 1982. - No. 27, Spring, p. 50-56. Reprinted in: *The Go Player's Almanac* 2001, p. 31-37.

smoke Tobacco, exercise their Pikes, fence with their Swords, or shoot at a Mark.<sup>3</sup>

Then, we find a similar description for the guard-post at the gates of a small town, Faccone:

*'In the Gallery sit the Soldiers, who spend most of their time with a game call'd Pifango, not much unlike our Draughts, which requires much Consideration and Care.'*<sup>4</sup>

The description is illustrated. In the central part of the figure we see two players sitting at the goban and two standing kibitzers. All of them seem to be involved in a discussion on the game, as we are accustomed to see while replaying the moves after finishing the game. It is not totally clear if this 'pifango' is really baduk, but it looks like it.



**Montanus**

In another Dutch book published in 1682 about all the extraordinary things to be found in America, Asia and Africa, we find Montanus' quote about 'pifango' again. This book is also illustrated and this time by Romeyn de Hooghe, the foremost etcher in Holland. He never visited any of the countries mentioned but invented his own etchings on the examples in other books. He drew the Japanese soldiers playing a game looking more like draughts.<sup>5</sup>



**De Hooghe**

The game is named draughts in the English version, but in the original Dutch edition and its French versions it is named chess; this shows the difficulties of Europeans in assessing the nature of the game.

<sup>3</sup>Montanus, Arnoldus, *Atlas Japannensis*, London : John Ogilby, 1670, p. 102.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 356.

<sup>5</sup>Vries, Simon de, *Curieuse aenmerkingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische verwonderens-waerdige dingen etc.* vol. 4. Utrecht, Johannes Ribbius, 1682, p. 1052.

**Thomas Hyde** (1636 –1702<sup>6</sup>) was a renowned scholar, expert in Oriental languages and the greatest board game expert of his time. Hyde provided us with a milestone work in 1694, the first complete treatise in Europe on board games and their history.<sup>7</sup>

The section devoted to Go is seven pages long. Compared to the earlier sources, Hyde’s description is remarkably advanced.

He obtained an original Go set and got in touch with a Chinese native, Shin Fo-çung who could explain the game. It is however evident, from the information that he transferred to Hyde, that he never played a game with him.

new description of the game, coming from his Chinese informant. He gives two different names for the game, Hoy Kî or Wei Kî, with the same meaning: circle, or circular, or circuit game. This is the first time that the Chinese name of baduk is given. The game finally has a name!

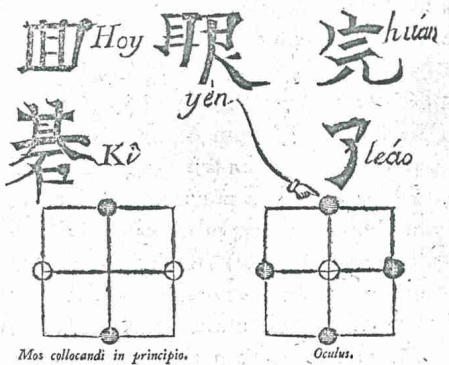
A diagram (with a stone surrounded by four enemy ones) is used to show the way of capturing, and for introducing the concept of an eye, indicated with its Chinese name of Yèn. He explicitly stated that players tend to produce this figure and thus to build eyes.

It is a pity that his Chinese source did not explain the game well enough. Otherwise the game might have been played two centuries earlier in Europe.<sup>8</sup>

**Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz** (1646 –1716), the great German philosopher, mathematician and founder of symbolic logic also wrote an original article on the game of Go. It was written in Latin and published in the official journal of the Berlin scientific academy.<sup>9</sup>

The study included some mathematical consideration of the game, even though based on incomplete knowledge of it.

The author provided his article with the reproduction of an illustration from a Chinese book kept in the



### Hyde

Hyde provides a few diagrams, the main Chinese words involved, and a

<sup>6</sup>This is an ‘Old Style’ date, current at the time; the wikipedia entry for [Hyde](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hyde) uses the ‘New Style’ date year of 1703 – see [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_Style\\_and\\_New\\_Style\\_dates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style_and_New_Style_dates). Thanks to Nick Wedd for pointing this out. *Ed.*

<sup>7</sup>Hyde, Thomas, *De ludis orientalibus : libri duo : Historia Nerdiludii etc.*, Oxonii [Oxford] : E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1694, p. 194-201.

<sup>8</sup>More information about Hyde can be found in articles by Charles Leedham-Green, ‘A seventeenth century reference to Go’, BGJ 192, Summer 2020, p. 11-15 and by Franco Pratesi ‘A Latin English Description’, BGJ 130, Spring 2003, p. 26-29 and ‘Hyde’s Assistants – both inadequate’, BGJ 131, Summer 2003, p. 22-24

<sup>9</sup>Leibniz, G.W. von, *Annotatio de quibusdam ludis : inprimis de ludo quodam sinico, differentiaque scachici et latruncolorum, et novo genere ludi navalis*. - Miscellanea Berolinensia, 1710, p. 25-26.

Berlin Library. The three personages playing Go (on a 17x19 board!) are a Confucian, a Daoist and a Buddhist, as can be seen by their dresses.



Leibniz

**Johann Gottlieb Immanuel Breitkopf** (1719–1794), a famous publisher and printer, mentioned baduk in a book from 1784 about Oriental playing cards.<sup>10</sup>

He reproduced a description of the game from Nieuhof, and illustrated it with the copy of a game diagram taken from a Chinese book. The book belonged to his collection and was a complete treatise on Chinese games, with illustrations. It would take practically a whole century before this kind of diagram could be seen in Europe.



Breitkopf

Interesting information was found in the works of **Andreas Everhardus van Braam Houckgeest** (1739–1801).<sup>11</sup> He was an ambassador in the service of the Dutch East-India Company. His travel report on a journey through China included an annex about baduk. He possessed a baduk set and a Chinese book on baduk. A catalogue of an auction of van Braam's collection at Christie in 1799 mentions 'A printed treatise of the game of *Whey Ky*, with scheme of the board and two bowls with men for playing the game'.

Van Braam was the first Westerner who had at his disposal everything that is needed for playing baduk: a complete baduk set, with board and stones and an instruction manual. It was a pity that the manual was in Chinese and eventually got lost.<sup>12</sup>

To be continued ...

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<sup>10</sup>Breitkopf, Joh. Gottl. Immanuel, *Versuch den Ursprung der Spielkarten, —, erster Theil, welcher die Spielkarten und das Leinenpapier enthält*, Leipzig : Breitkopf, 1784, p. 40-41.

<sup>11</sup>Braam Houckgeest, van A. E. *Voyage de l'ambassade de la compagnie des Indes Orientales Hollandaises, vers l'empereur de la Chine, dans les années 1794 & 1795 etc.: tome second*, Philadelphie: M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, 1798, p. 342.

<sup>12</sup>Blom, Jaap K. 'Go in the West in the 18th century', *Go world*, 2001. - No. 91, Spring, p. 65-68, 55. Reprinted in: *The Go Player's Almanac*, 2001, p. 38-42.