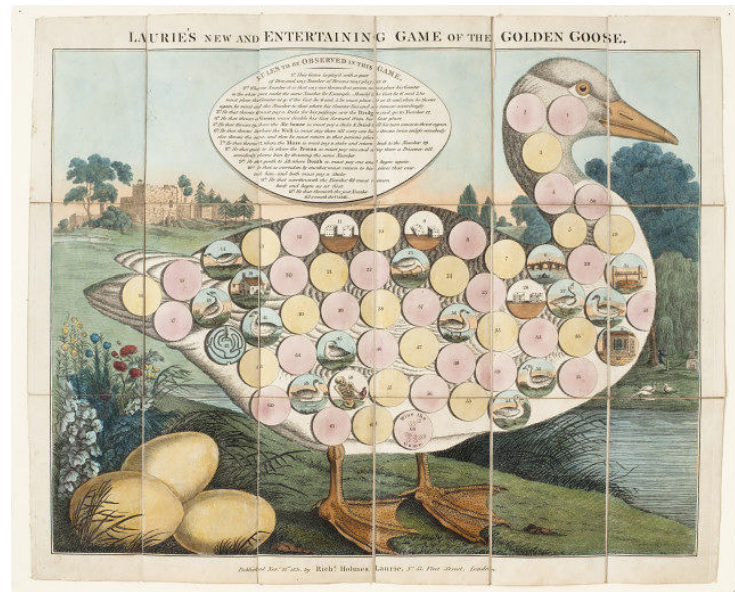


Early Modern Board Games

The Royal Game of Goose

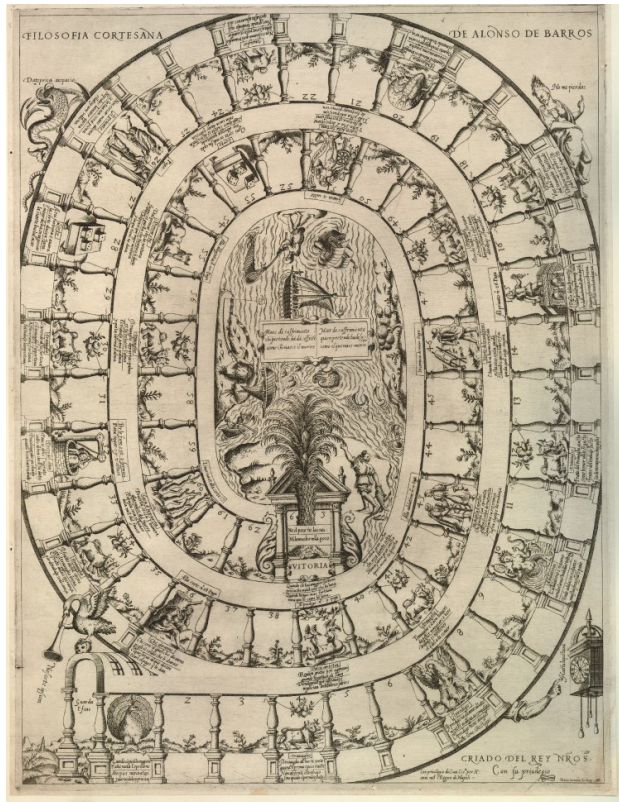
Image: R.H. Laurie, Laurie's New and Entertaining Game of the Golden Goose, London, 1831.
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



imdcgd112 introduction to critical games studies

Eddie Duggan
e.duggan@uos.ac.uk

A Late C16th Board Game ... ?



- Modern race games are derived from The Royal Game of Goose, also known as the Game of the Goose.
- The game originated in Florence as Gioco Dell'Oca in the late sixteenth century.
- A copy of the game was given as a gift to King Philip II of Spain by Francesco de Medici, sometime between 1574 – 1587.

Image: Printed game board. Naples. 1588. [British Museum 1869,0410.2463.+](#)
This particular board would have accompanied the book *Filosofía Cortesana* by Alonso de Barros, describing the game and how to play it. This second edition of the Spanish language booklet and board were produced in Naples for the Spanish market. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum, London.

... or even older?

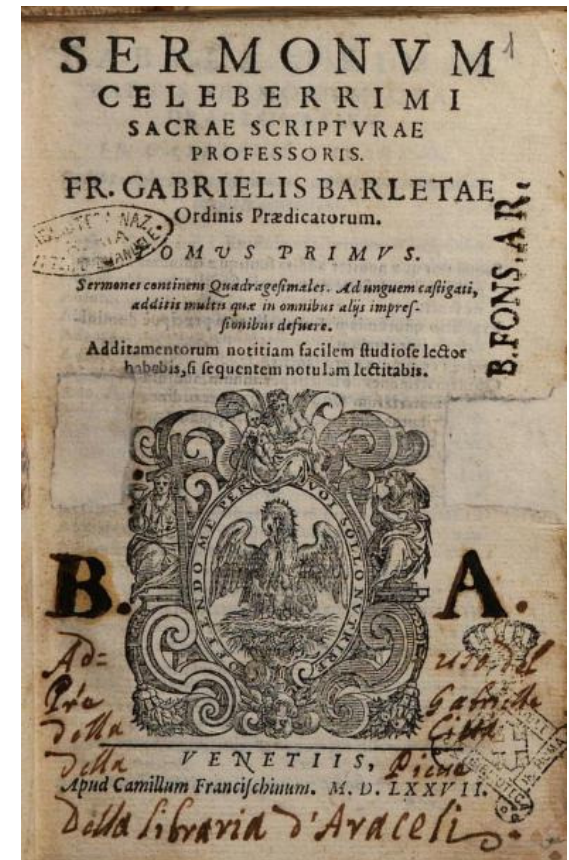
- Adrian Seville notes the earliest known reference to the Game of the Goose is in “an obscure book of sermons” dated to 1480.
- The author, Gabriele of Barletta, is a Dominican priest who is critical of playing cards and tables.

(Seville no date, online)

Image: Barletti, G. *Sermons*. 1577 edition.

Available via archive.org

https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_k_8NMz40P-oC





Follow that goose ...

David Parlett notes the Game of the Goose ‘spread with remarkable rapidity’ in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, citing the following examples:

- [1574 – 1587: Francesco de Medici, the grand duke of Tuscany, gives a Goose game to Philip II of Spain (Parlett 1999, p. 95)]
- 1589: German Goose Game engraved on stone (Graz museum).
- 1597: John Wolfe (who had trained as a printer in Florence) registers “The newe and most pleasant Game of the Goose” at Stationer’s Hall, London.
- 1601: The oldest known French version was printed at Lyon.



(Parlett 1999, p. 98)

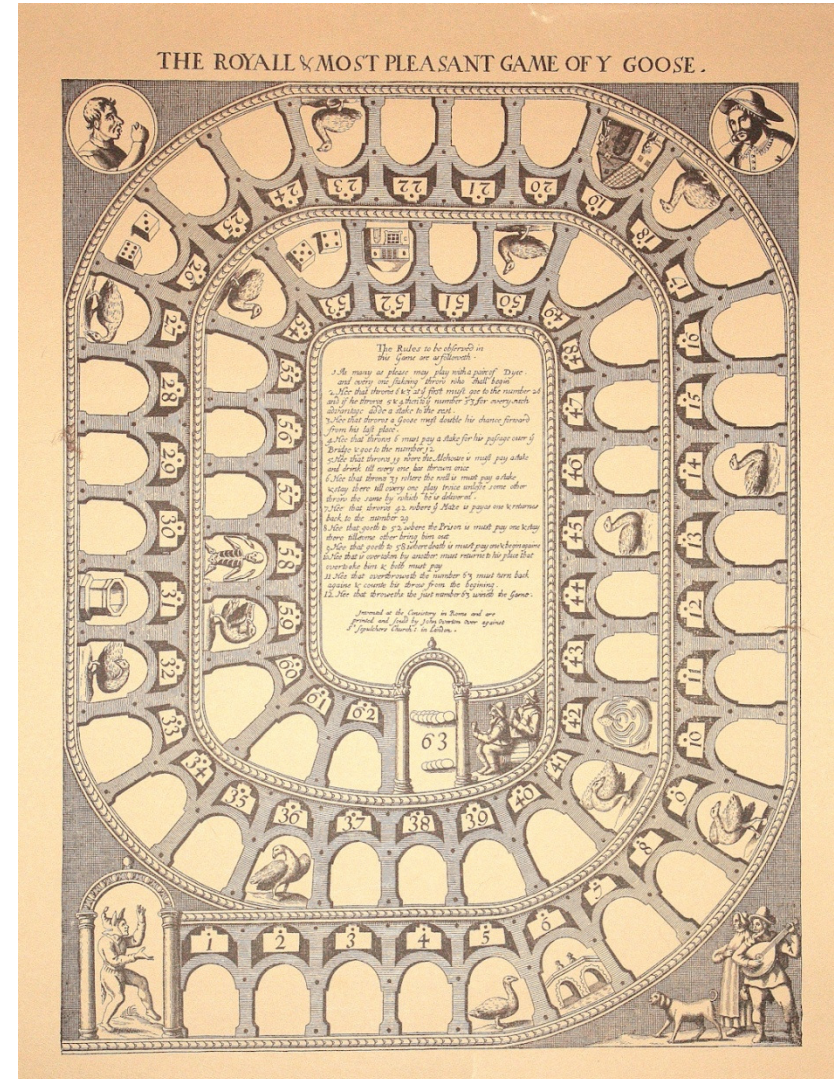
Left: Francesco de Medici (1541 – 1587). This portrait, attributed to Bronzino, was painted ca. 1567, and is now in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

Right: Philip II of Spain (1527 – 1598). The portrait of Philip in armour, by Titian, was painted in 1550-1551. It is now in the Prado, Madrid.



London's Lost Goose

- No known copies exist of the game registered by John Wolfe in 1597, but it would not have been too dissimilar from this ...
- The Royall & Most Pleasant Game of Y Goose (1690)
 - Invented at the Consistory in Rome and are printed and sold by John Overton over against St Sepulchre's Church: in London.





Start here...

- David Parlett suggests The Game of the Goose “usher[s] in [the] modern period of board gaming characterized by the introduction of illustrative and thematic elements”

(Parlett 1999, p. 95).

Image: The oldest example of The Game of the Goose in the V&A collection consists of a hand-drawn game board pasted to a wooden board. It was produced about 1800. This particular board has 61 squares rather than the usual 63.

[V&A MISC.292-1981](#) Image © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



When is a goose not a goose?

- When is a Game of the Goose not a Game of the Goose?
- When it has been re-skinned as something else!
- Let's review some non-Goose versions of the game...

Un nouveau
jeu de l'oie
(A New Game
of the Goose)
Marie Claire,
France, 1940s.

giochidellaoca.it
catalogue no. 2191

**Wartime
theme**



Il Gioco del
Giro D'Italia
(Game of the
Tour of Italy)
*La Gazzetta
dello Sport.*
Italy, 1950.

[Cycling
boardgames](#)

**Cycle race
theme**



But the geese haven't
entirely disappeared:

Jeu de l'Oie
(Game of the Goose)
Schmidt, 2016.

Available via
amazon.fr

Goose theme

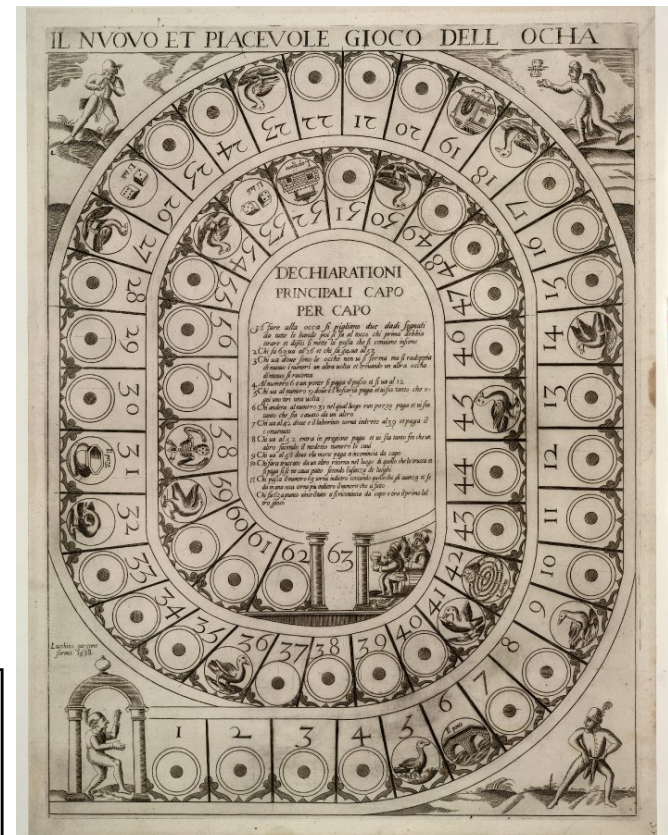


<https://www.amazon.fr/Schmidt-88112-Plateau-Classic-Line/dp/B000SOEQMG>

A Certain Consistency

- The Game of the Goose remains remarkably consistent in terms of game board layout and iconographic elements over time.
- Adrian Seville refers to a “classic” goose game as “having a 63-space spiral, the same hazards on corresponding spaces, geese in the same two interleaved series spaced by 9, and rules as stated in the centre” (Seville 2016, p. 112 n. 8)

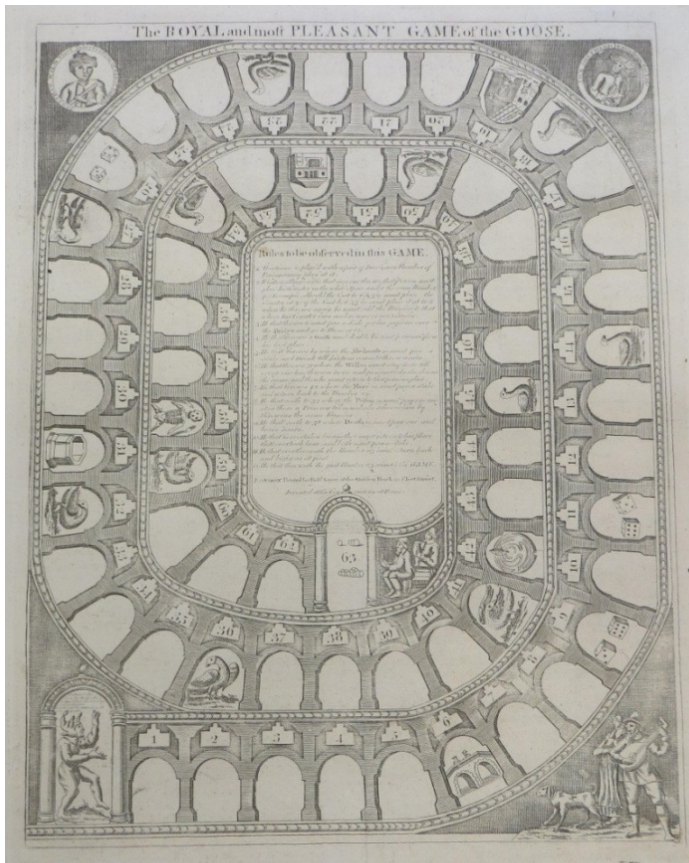
Image: Il nuovo et piacevole gioco dell ocha.
Printed game board. Lucchino Gargano, Italy (1598).
[British Museum: 1869,0410.2465.+](https://www.britishmuseum.org/objects/1869,0410.2465)





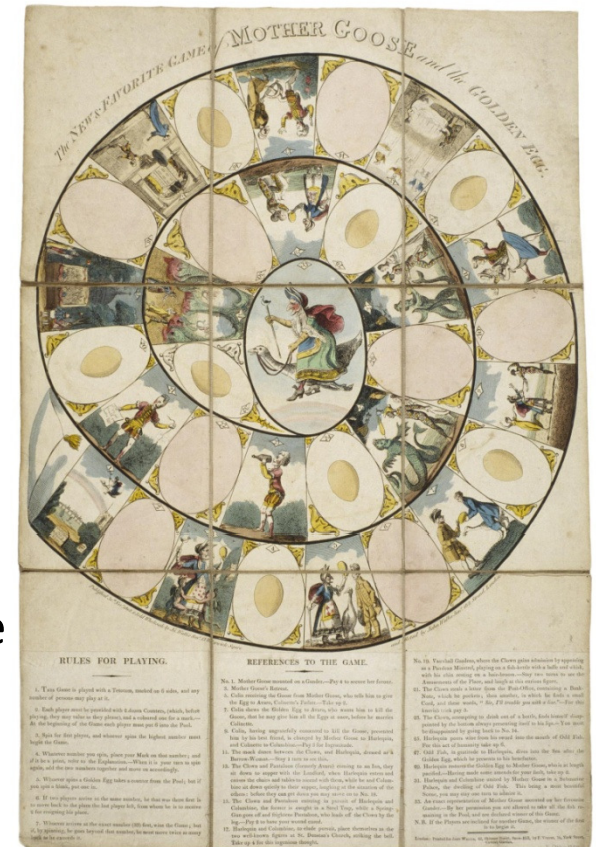
- The following slides will review some of the constant design elements ...





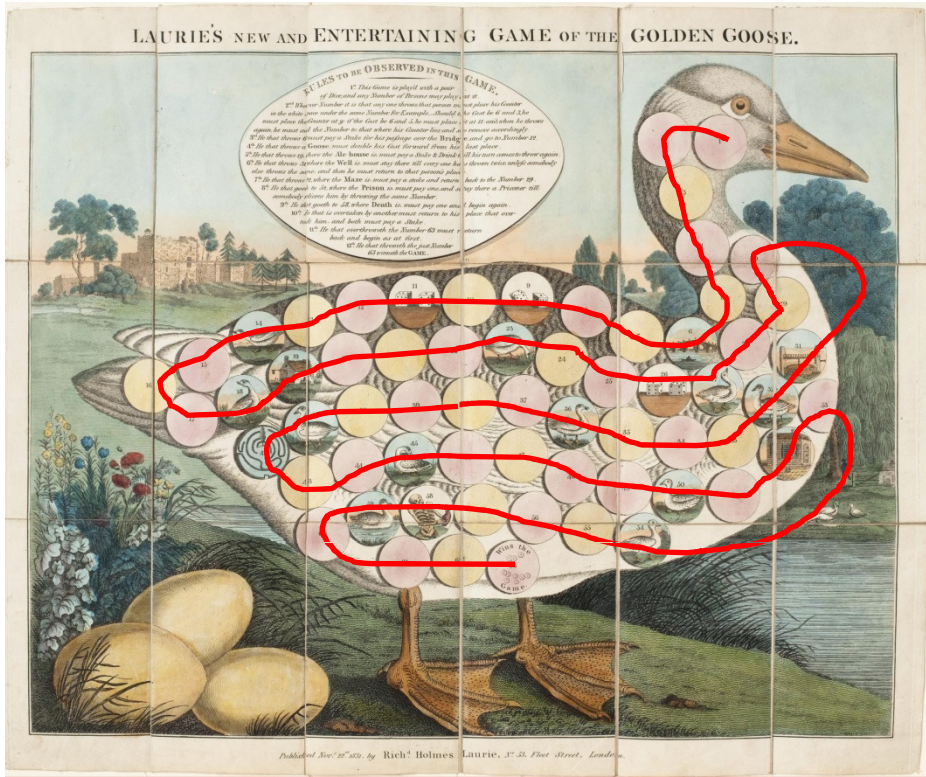
Spiral Track

- The board on the left, showing [Jack Sheppard](#) and [Jonathan Wild](#) (1750) has a 63-square track.
- The board on the right, (1808) themed with the Mother Goose pantomime (starring the popular clown, [Grimaldi](#), who is shown in square 21) has a track of 33 squares.



Left: The Royal and Most pleasant Game of the Goose (1750) [[V&A MISC.296-1991](#)]

Right: The New & Favourite Game of Mother Goose & the Golden Egg (1808) [[V&A E.1764-1954](#)]



- The spiral track is still evident in R. H. Laurie's 1831 design (left).
- It is more obvious in Spears's 1910 edition (right).

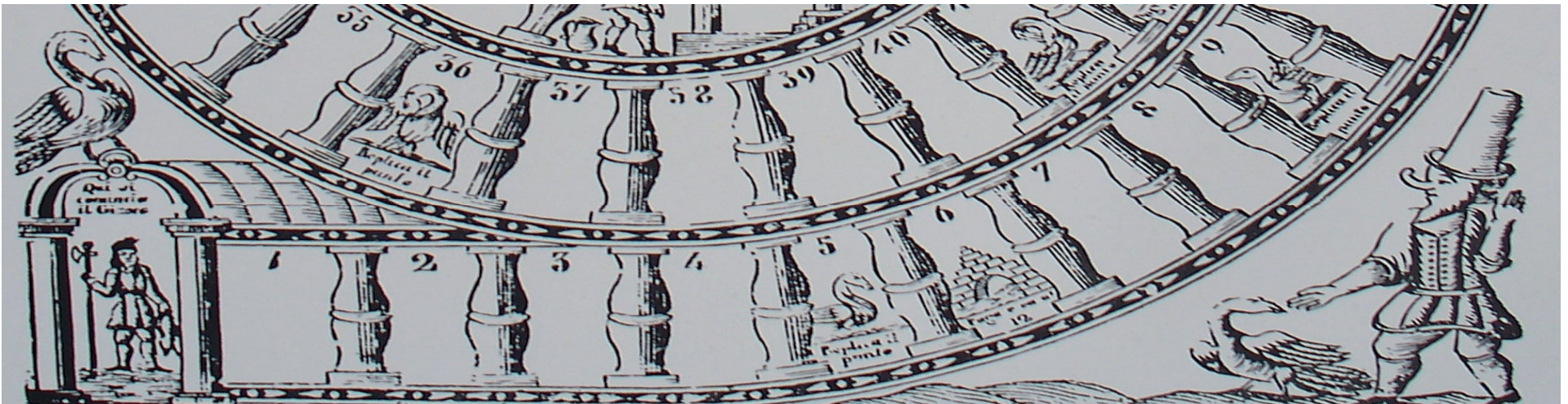


[The red line is not part of the game board but is added here to indicate the spiral track]

Left: Laurie's New and Entertaining Game of the Golden Goose (1831) [[V&A CIRC.230-1964](#)]
 Right: The Game of the Goose, John Spears & Son (ca. 1910) [[V&A MISC.164&:1-1986](#)]

The Bridge

- The Bridge is usually on Square 6, but is sometimes found on Square 5.
- A player landing on the bridge pays to cross the bridge by putting a token in the pool and then moves to Square 12.

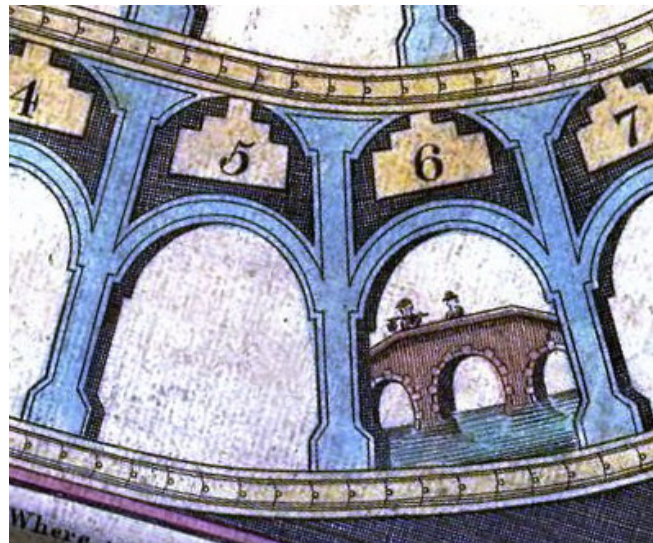
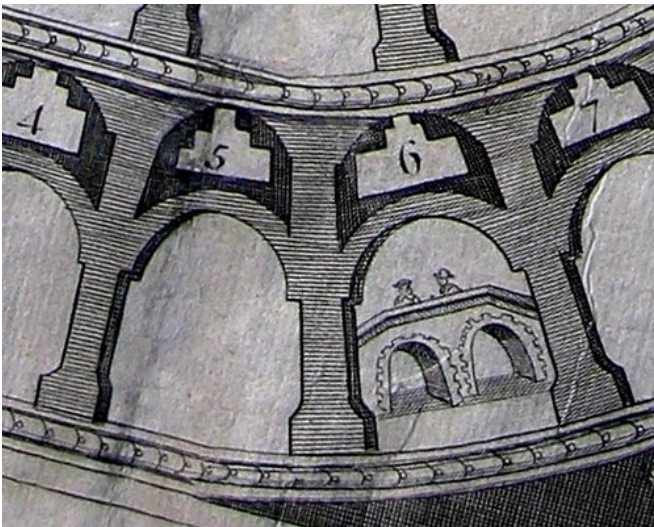


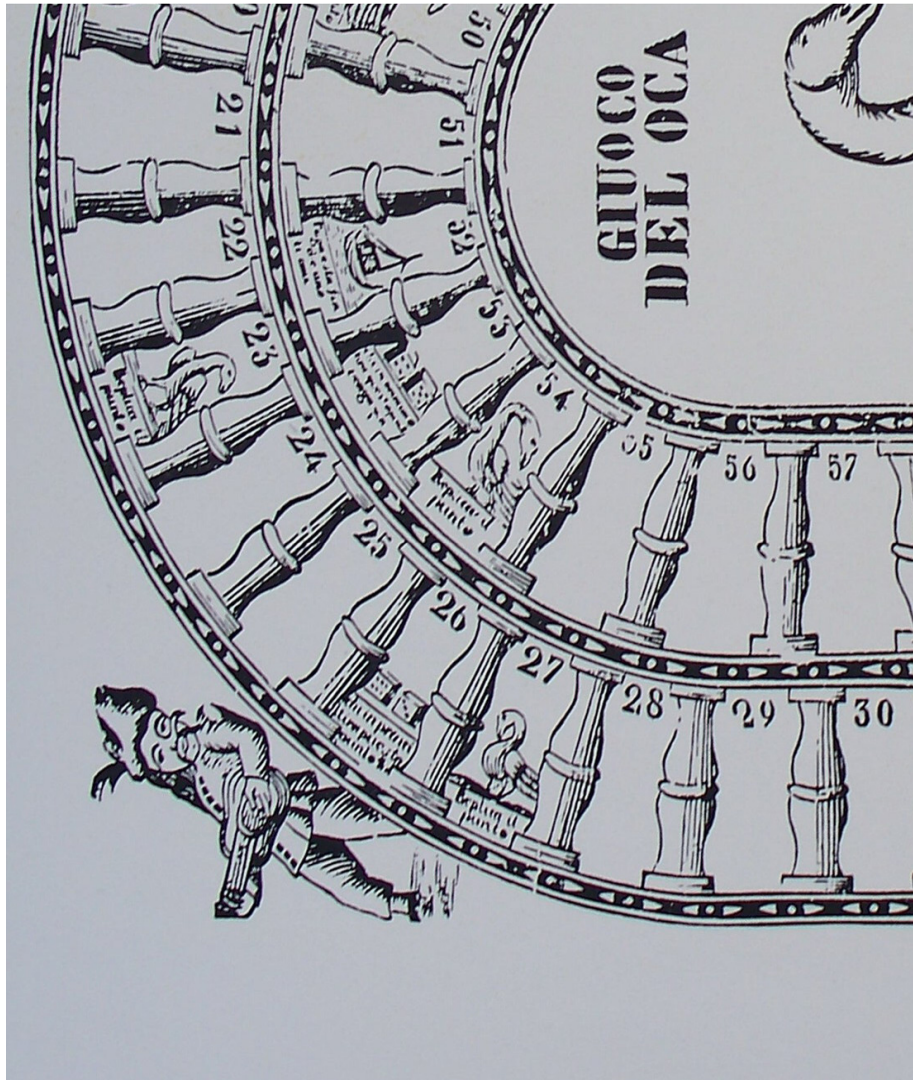
The Bridge

Left: Robert Sayer, London (1725-1750) [giochidelloca.it 926]

Centre: Lumsden & Son, Glasgow (1825) [giochidelloca.it 1222]

Right: Unknown, Italy [Milan?] (1920-30) [giochidelloca.it 357]





The Dice Squares

- Square 26 and Square 53 are marked with two dice:
 - Square 26 with 6 & 3;
 - Square 53 with 5 & 4.
- If a player throws 6 & 3 or 5 & 4 on his first throw, he moves directly to square 26 or to square 53.
 - If this particular mechanic were *not* implemented,* a player throwing a 9 on his first throw would win the game by advancing on every goose square to 63!

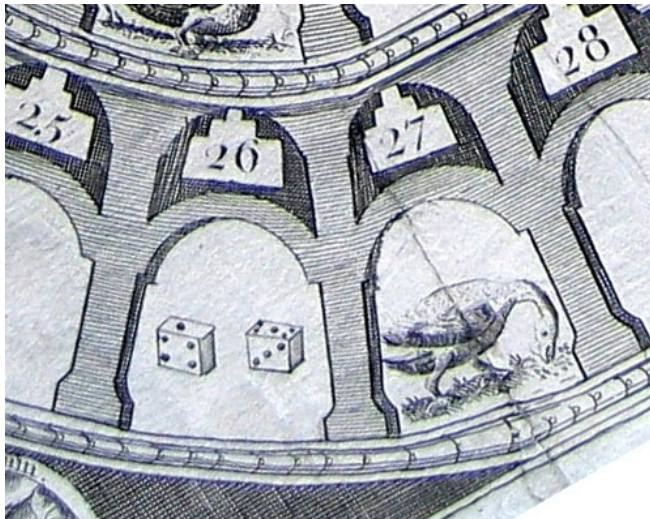
* cf Elias *et al* on problems in evolved games.

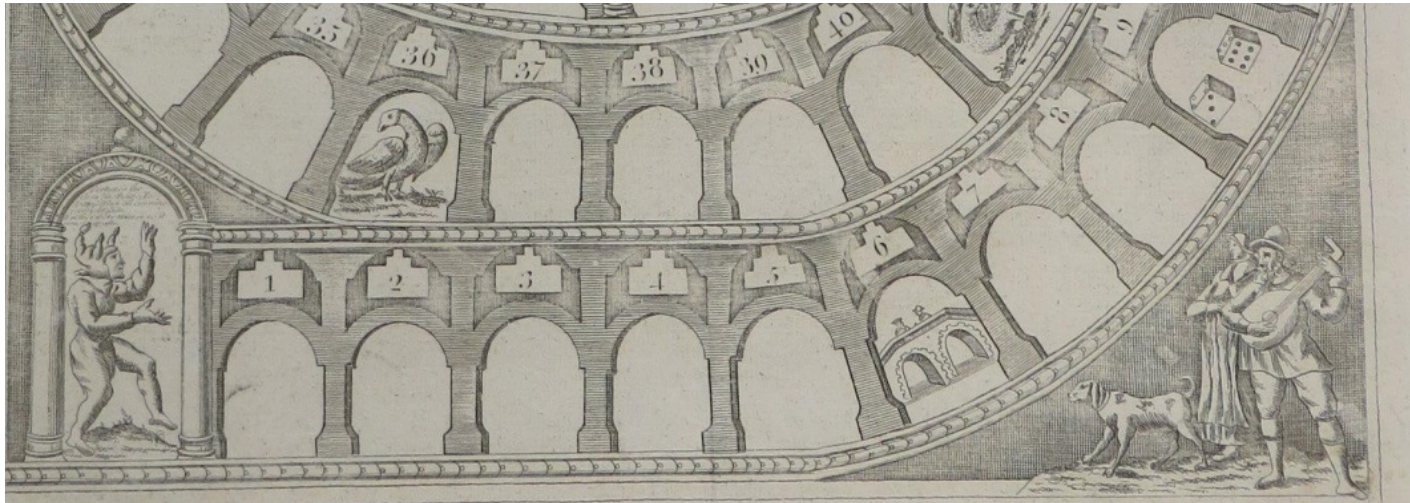
The Dice Squares

Left: Robert Sayer, London (1725-1750) [giochidelloca.it 926]

Centre: Lumsden & Son, Glasgow (1825) [giochidelloca.it 1222]

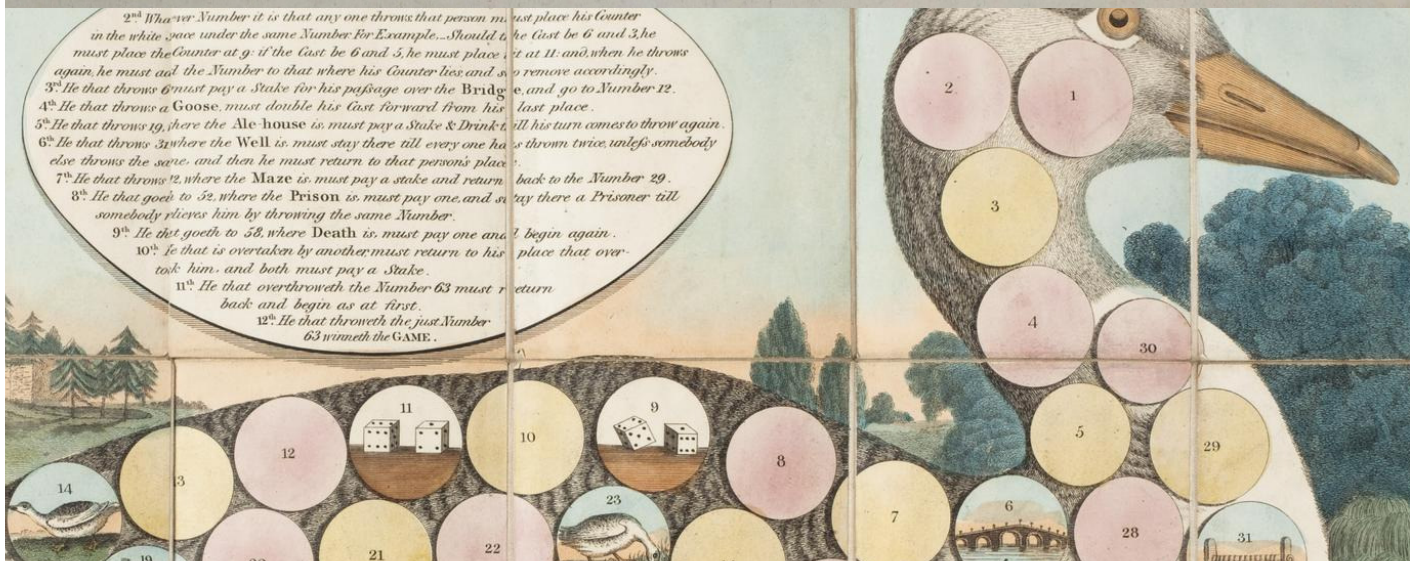
Right: Unknown, Italy [Milan?] (1920-30) [giochidelloca.it 357]





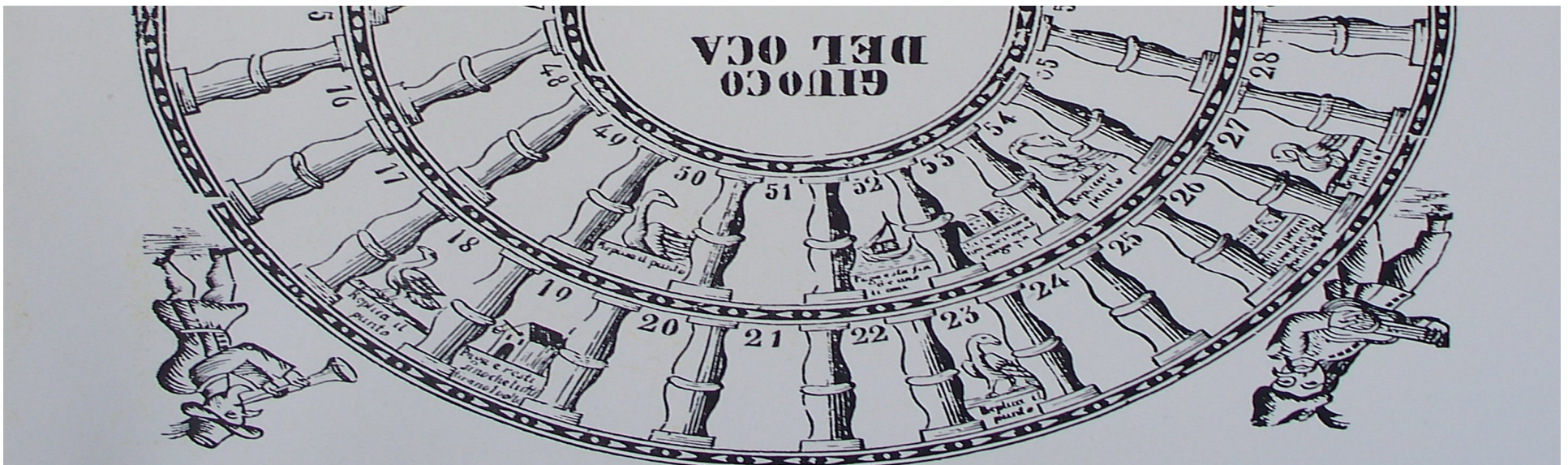
Square 6:
The Bridge;

Square 9:
Pair of Dice
(usually a
goose in a
“classic”
goose game)



The Inn or The Tavern

- The Inn or The Tavern is usually on Square 19.
- Pay for your drink by adding a token to the pool and miss two turns (sometimes three).



The Inn or The Tavern

Left: Robert Sayer, London (1725-1750) [giochidelloca.it 926]

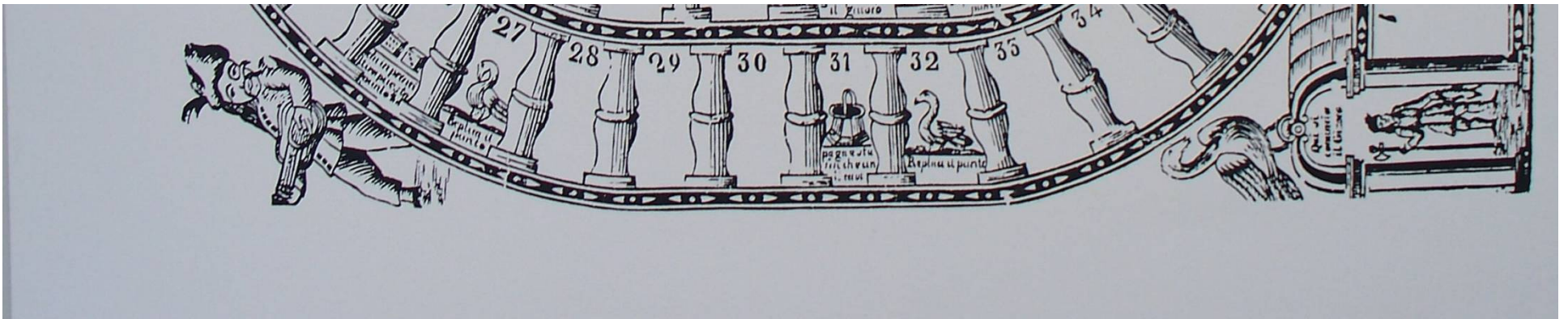
Centre: Lumsden & Son, Glasgow (1825) [giochidelloca.it 1222]

Right: Unknown, Italy [Milan?] (1920-30) [giochidelloca.it 357]



The Well or The Spring

- Usually on Square 31.
- Pay to use the well by adding a token to the pool and miss two turns while bathing.
- If another player lands on the well *before* the first player has moved, the first player no longer has to miss turns.

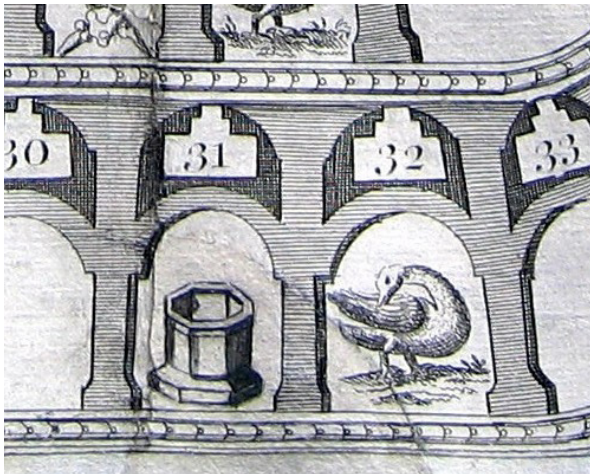


The Well or The Spring

Left: Robert Sayer, London (1725-1750) [giochidelloca.it 926]

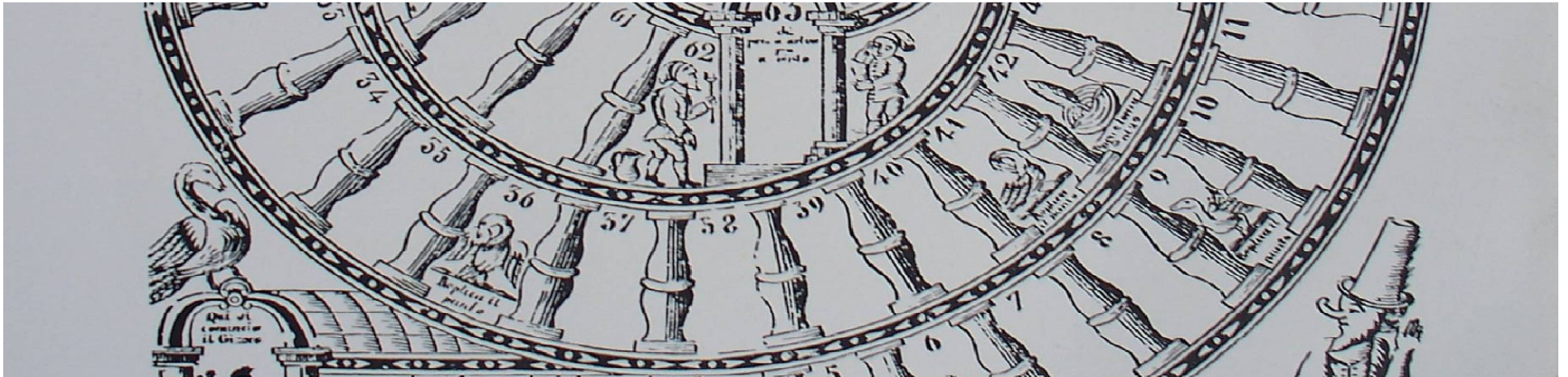
Centre: Lumsden & Son, Glasgow (1825) [giochidelloca.it 1222]

Right: Unknown, Italy [Milan?] (1920-30) [giochidelloca.it 357]



The Labyrinth or The Maze

- Square 42 is usually
The Labyrinth or The Maze
- If you land on this space,
you will get lost and will be
redirected to 30 or 39.

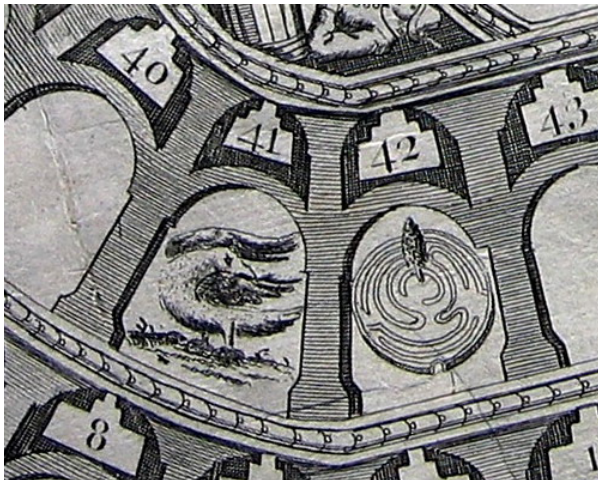


The Labyrinth or The Maze

Left: Robert Sayer, London (1725-1750) [giochidelloca.it 926]

Centre: Lumsden & Son, Glasgow (1825) [giochidelloca.it 1222]

Right: Unknown, Italy [Milan?] (1920-30) [giochidelloca.it 357]



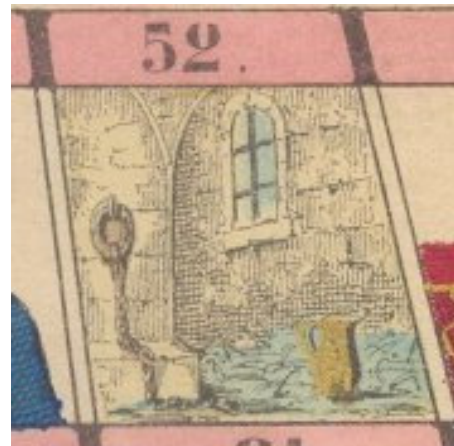
The Prison

- Usually square 52
- It is sometimes shown as a ship (e.g. imprisoned as a galley slave)
- Miss three turns; or stay in Prison until someone else lands there to take your place!



The Prison

- Various unidentified designs for The Prison taken from the Prison Page of giochidelloca.it

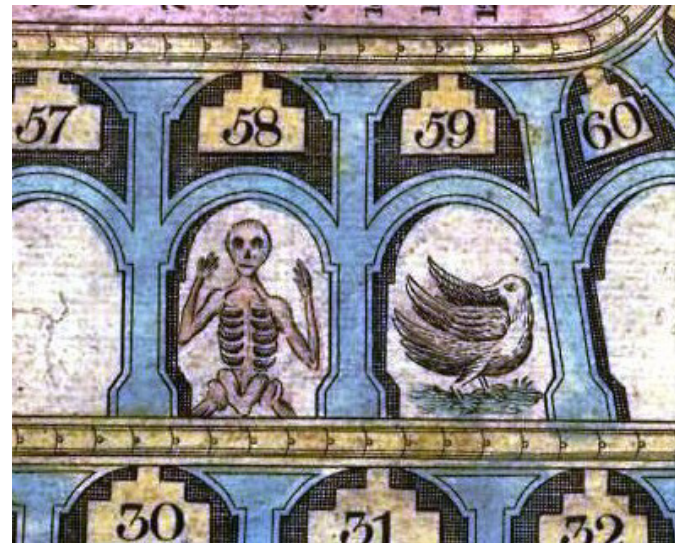
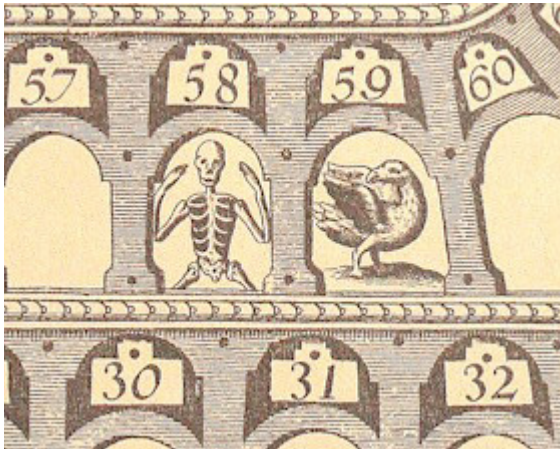


Death

Left: Robert Sayer, London (1725-1750) [giochidelloca.it 926]

Centre: Lumsden & Son, Glasgow (1825) [giochidelloca.it 1222]

Right: Unknown, Italy [Milan?] (1920-30) [giochidelloca.it 357]

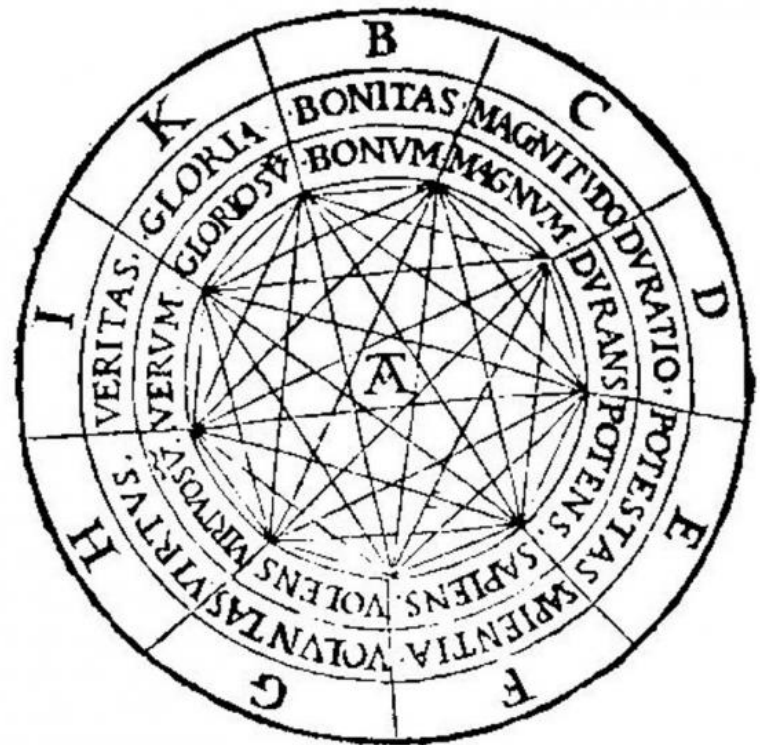


Numerology and Symbolism

- Seville on numerology:
 - The significance of the number sixty three as representing the "Grand Climacteric" of human life is an ancient belief, traceable to early Greek philosophers.
 - Significance of 9: 3 X 3 (the Trinity of Trinities)

(Seville 2016, p. 102)

PRIMA FIGURA.



The Grand Climacteric

Sir Thomas Browne summarises it thus:

- The numbers 7 and 9 which multiplied into themselves doe make up 63 commonly esteemed the great Climactericall of our lives; for the dayes of men are usually cast up by septenaries, and every seventh yeare conceived to carry some altering character with it, either in the temper of body, minde, or both. [...] The year of sixty three is conceived to carry with it the most considerable fatality. (Seville 2016, p. 102)

Numerology and Symbolism

- Seville on symbolism:
 - If the geese represent spiritual advancement, it becomes easy to see that the hazard spaces represent obstacles to that advancement. There is no contemporary interpretation giving more detail but in general terms it is clear that the **bridge** is a rite of passage, perhaps marking adulthood, the **inn** represents earthly distractions, the **well** and the **prison** mean that help of another is needed, and the **labyrinth** symbolises error; **death** is not physical death but death of the soul, requiring a fresh start.

(Seville 2016, pp. 102 – 103)

5 + 8 = Death



- The death space is 58
- Is it coincidence, or a matter of numerological significance (related to the Christian Cabala) that 58 could also be seen as 5 + 8? (**5 + 8 = 13**)
- 13 is, in Seville's words, "the 'fatal' number"
 - However, this leaves any numerological symbolism for the other hazard squares still to be determined ...

(See Seville 2016 p. 103)

Commencing countdown, engines on...

- The other hazards are placed as follows: bridge on space six; inn on space nineteen; well on space thirty one; labyrinth on space forty two; and prison on space fifty two. The numerical distances between these are successively 13, 12, 11 and 10 - an arrangement that is unlikely to be a matter of chance, though the progression is broken by the death space at fifty eight.

(Seville 2016, p. 103)

The reverse-overthrow rule and the death space

- Another approach to the numerology of the death space is to note that the reverse-overthrow rule means that if a throw of nine were made from space fifty eight, then the backward count beyond sixty three would arrive at space fifty nine, which is a goose space: the throw-doubling rule would then take the player back successively to spaces fifty, forty one, thirty two, twenty three, fourteen and five at which point a failure would occur since a continuation to minus four is not possible.

continues ...

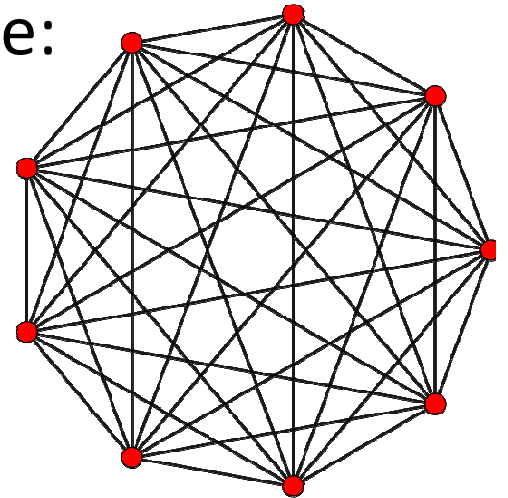
And rebirth ...

- Apparently, the inventor of the game has cleverly removed this “bug” by making fifty-eight a hazard space on which a player cannot stop but must return to the start. But a more fundamental insight is obtained by suggesting that the second series of geese are in fact placed explicitly to symbolise this “death of the soul” by providing a path for the return to the start.

(Seville 2016, p. 103)

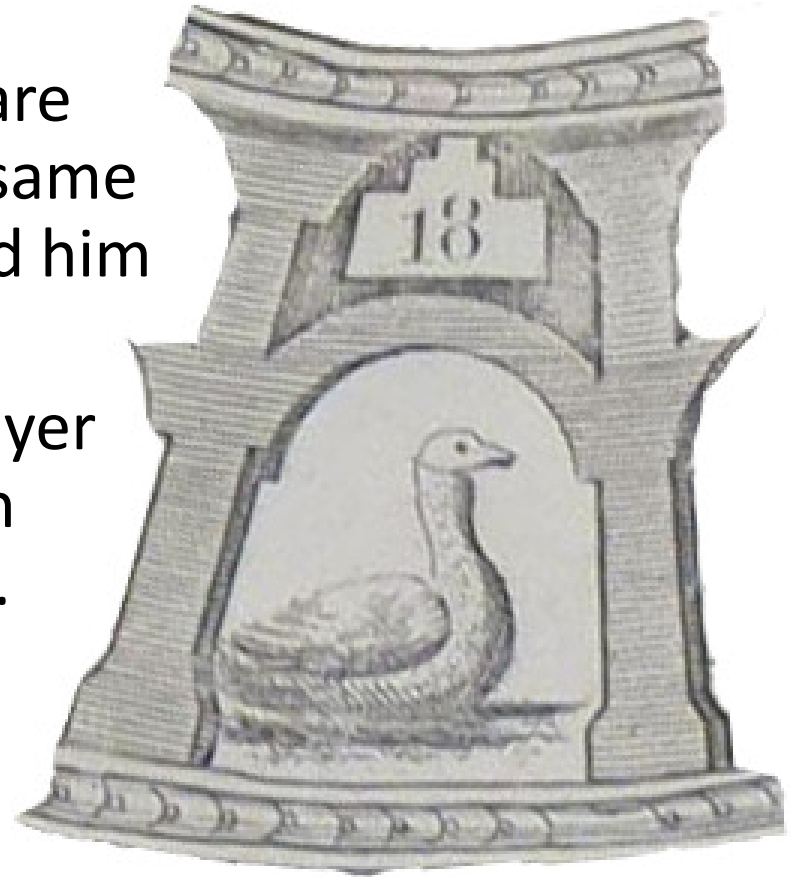
nonagonic

- A goose appears on the following squares:
 - 5, 9, 14, 18, 23, 27, 32, 36, 41, 45, 50, 54, 59
- The significance of 9 should be apparent: there are, in fact, two sequences in multiples of nine:
 - 5, 14, 23, 32, 41, 50, 59
 - 9, 18, 27, 36, 45, 54



Sauce for the goose

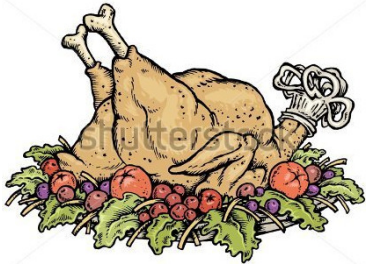
- A player landing on a goose square moves his piece forward by the same amount as the throw that caused him to land on the goose.
- If moving forward causes the player to land on *another* goose, he can continue his forward movement.



Throw and move

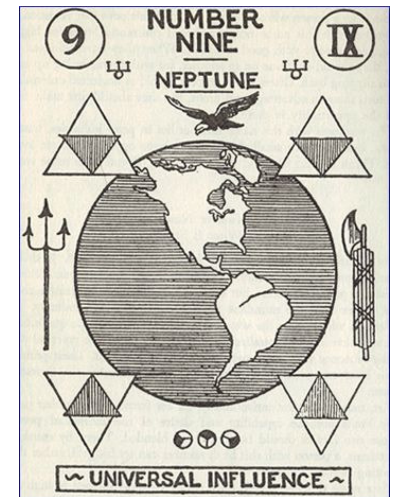


- The Game of the Goose requires no skill: it is a simple dice-driven race game.
- The aim of the game is to be the first to reach the home square.



Why Geese?

- The goose is a symbol of good luck in Italy where the Game of the Goose originated.
- It could also be the goose simply represents a feast.
- The goose is on the 9th square (in a series of 9) and 9 is numerologically significant (Trinity of Trinities etc)
- Or it could be, as Seville suggests, that the bird is a pelican (significant in Christian iconography), seen in medieval iconography without the distinctive bill, and subsequently mistaken for a different bird – the goose.



- In this mid- C18th French Goose game, the bird on the final square resembles “the Pelican in her Piety”, a symbol in Christian iconography.

See Seville 2016, pp. 104 – 105.



A problematic game

- Seville identifies a number of problems posed by the Game of the Goose:
- Difficult to identify precursors to the late C16th game
 - There is no evidence of a link between the Game of Goose and Mehen, the ancient egyptian spiral game.
- It could be a simple drinking/gambling game, or it could have spiritual significance, or both!
- Numerology may be Cabalistic

A person wearing a grey suit jacket, white shirt, and dark tie is holding a large white sign. The sign has the text "time for a break!" written in a black, cursive font. The letter "b" in "break!" is highlighted in red. The person's hands are visible at the bottom corners of the sign.

time for
a break!

After the break ...

- Get into groups of 4
- Get a board
- Get some dice
- Get some pieces ...
- And play The Game of the Goose ...



Rules

- See Bell (1979) p. 141
 - A copy of the rules as transcribed by Bell is available in the VLE (log-in required):
https://learn.ucs.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/pid-587647-dt-content-rid-1697234_1/courses/IMDCGD112-16YRD/gooseRules_bell1979_p141.pdf

Interesting Links

- Lucarelli, F. (2012) socks-studio.com. Blog post. August 26.
<http://socks-studio.com/2012/08/26/a-collection-of-italian-board-games-mostly-19th-to-20th-century/>

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- Bell, R. C. (1979) *The Boardgame Book* pp. 140 – 141.
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- Duggan, E. and Gill, D. W. J., eds (2016) *From Cardboard to Keyboard: Proceedings of the XVII Annual Colloquium of the International Board Game Studies Association. UCS Ipswich 21-24 May 2014*. Associação Ludus. Lisbon. [In Press]
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- Goodfellow, C. (1998) 'The Development of the English Board game, 1770 – 1850'. *Board Game Studies Journal* 1. online <<http://ex.ludicum.org/publicacoes/bgsj/1>>.
- .

continues ... /

- Goodfellow, C. (2008) *How We Played: Games from Childhood Past*. pp. 43 – 48.
- Parlett, D. (1999) *The Oxford History of Board Games*. pp. 88 – 102
- Seville, A. (no date) 'Chronology' [1480]. Online.
<<http://www.giochidelloca.it/cronologia.php>>.
- Seville, A. (2005) 'Tradition and Variation in The Game of Goose'. Online.
<http://www.giochidelloca.it/dettaglio_storia.php?id=35>.
- Seville, A. (2016) "The Medieval Game of the Goose: Philosophy, Numerology and Symbolism" in Duggan & Gill eds pp. 96 – 114.
- Strutt, J. [1801] (1969) *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*. pp. 265 – 266.

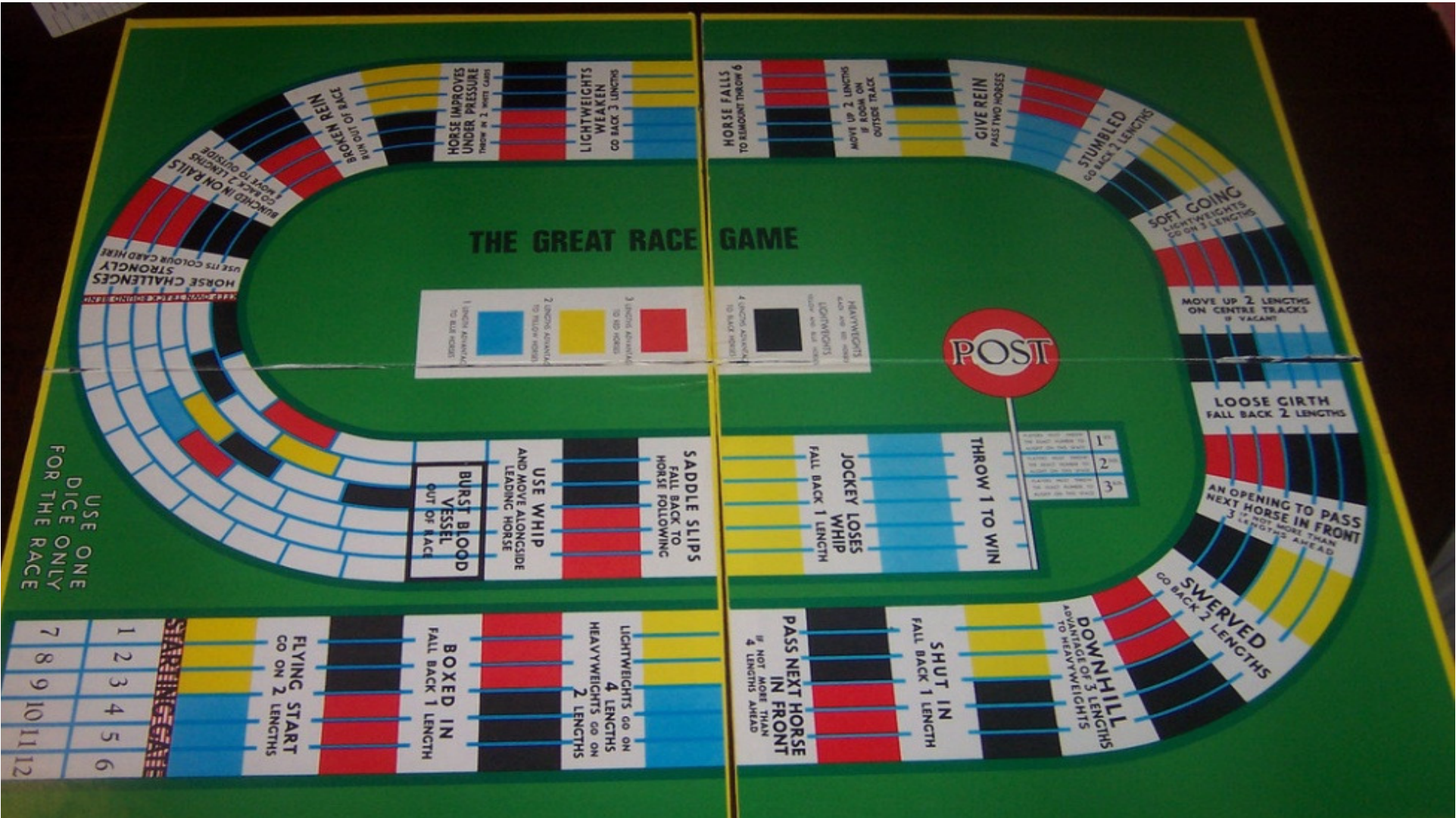


HOW TO PLAY THE PEPSI & MIRINDA OLYMPIC GAME

1. Choose your Olympic sports and place them in the WARMING UP AREA.
2. Throw the dice to see who goes first—highest throw starts.
3. To start you must throw a 6.
4. Whenever you throw a 2 you have another throw and add your score before you throw next time.
5. If your score lands on its own space, you can advance 4 spaces.
6. Only one player is allowed on a space. If one player and both on a space occupied by another player you must stand back and spend that space's duration or retirement.
7. Finally, you must throw the exact number of spaces remaining.



Supplied by the Pepsi Cola Company, East Street, Sydney



THE GREAT RACE GAME

1 LENGTH ADVANCE TO RED HORSE
 2 LENGTH ADVANCE TO YELLOW HORSE
 3 LENGTH ADVANCE TO RED HORSE
 4 LENGTH ADVANCE TO BLACK HORSE

POST

1	2	3
---	---	---

THROW 1 TO WIN

USE ONE DICE ONLY FOR THE RACE

START

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12

BUNCHED IN ON RAILS
 GO BACK 2 LENGTHS
 MOVE TO OUTSIDE

SHAKEN REIN
 RUN OUT OF RACE

HORSE IMPROVES UNDER PRESSURE
 Throw in 2, next 3 cards

LIGHTWEIGHTS WEAKEN
 GO BACK 3 LENGTHS

HORSE CHALLENGES STRONGLY
 USE ITS COLOUR CARD HERE

HORSE FALLS TO KUMMONT THROW 6

MOVE UP 2 LENGTHS
 IF ROLL ON OUTER TRACK

GIVE REIN
 PASS TWO HORSES

STUMBLER
 GO BACK 2 LENGTHS

SOFT GOING
 LIGHTWEIGHTS GO ON 3 LENGTHS

MOVE UP 2 LENGTHS ON CENTRE TRACKS IF VACANT

LOOSE GIRTH
 FALL BACK 2 LENGTHS

AN OPENING TO PASS NEXT HORSE IN FRONT
 3 IF MORE THAN 3 LENGTHS AHEAD

SWERVED
 GO BACK 2 LENGTHS

DOWNHILL
 ADVANTAGE OF 5 LENGTHS TO HEAVYWEIGHTS

SHUT IN
 FALL BACK 1 LENGTH

PASS NEXT HORSE IN FRONT
 IF NOT MORE THAN 4 LENGTHS AHEAD

SADDLE SLIPS
 FALL BACK TO HORSE FOLLOWING

USE WHIP AND MOVE ALONGSIDE LEADING HORSE

BURST BLOOD VESSEL
 OUT OF RACE

LIGHTWEIGHTS GO ON 4 LENGTHS
HEAVYWEIGHTS GO ON 2 LENGTHS

BOXED IN
 FALL BACK 1 LENGTH

FLYING START
 GO ON 2 LENGTHS