

GINKAMMURI

No. 3 SEPTEMBER 2025

THE MINSK SHOJI CLUB MAGAZINE



DARIKO TODUA

15 years in shogi

SHASHKI

THE ORIGIN OF DRAUGHTS AND RELATED GAMES

BACK TO THE 1900s

THE EARLIEST KNOWN COMMERCIAL LOCALIZATION OF SHOJI OUTSIDE JAPAN

ANDREI KASPEROVICH

A FORGOTTEN HERO OF OUR TIME





May 25, 2025

Participants of the youth tournament "11th Young Generals Cup."



June 15, 2025

Participants of the "Minsk Shogi Open 2025" tournament.



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GINKAMMURI

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Issue No. 3

For months, the same question kept coming up—both within the club and from readers abroad: “*When is the third issue coming out?*” As editor-in-chief, my answer was always the same: “*Any day now—almost ready.*” Yet the release kept slipping further and further away.

And now—finally—it’s here.

Admittedly, this issue has evolved differently from what was originally planned. It contains no game analyses, no tournament reports, not even a single shogi diagram—a lack that might seem almost unthinkable for a shogi magazine. But what it does have is everything that resonated most with our readers: interviews and portraits of remarkable people, vivid memories from Minsk’s gaming community, and my own historical explorations. Perhaps this is what the true mission of our magazine has quietly become. We didn’t plan it that way—but our initial ambitions have, inevitably, met reality.

I’ll be honest: we still don’t have enough resources to bring all our ideas to life. While the first issue received an unexpectedly warm response for such a niche topic, we eventually fell behind schedule. That, understandably, led to some doubts among readers and a modest number of subscribers—which, in turn, severely limits what our small team can do. We set high standards for our contributors, yet we can’t offer payment or the motivation of a large readership. And pure enthusiasm, as inspiring as it is, doesn’t always align with deadlines or consistent quality.

Still, the project lives on. As long as there’s genuine interest in a “print edition” within the club, we’ll keep going. Not monthly, as we once hoped, but as the material comes together—issue by issue. And there will be a fourth one! Content for it is already taking shape, though mostly written by me so far. But I’d hate for this magazine to turn into a one-man blog. So we’re working with authors, seeking variety, and hoping for your continued understanding and support.

Thank you for staying with us.



Andrei Lysenka

Editor-in-Chief
andrei.lysenka@gmail.com

Sample issue

The full version is available here:

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“THINGS THAT GROW SLOWLY OFTEN LAST THE LONGEST”

The editor-in-chief of *Ginkammuri*, Andrei Lysenka, sat down with **Andrei Kasperovich**—one of the founding figures of the modern Belarusian shogi community—to look back on its history and discuss where it stands today.

Now 57, Andrei Kasperovich is a dedicated teacher, enthusiast, and promoter of chess-related games.

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The Origin of Shashki

An Exploration of the History of Draughts and Related Games

—by Andrei Lysenka

Photograph by Russian Museum of Ethnography

(Continued. See Part 1 in Issue No. 1.)

The Shashka of Discord

The earliest known mention of the term *shashka* [Rus.: шашка] in the context of board games appears in E. Weismann’s *German–Latin–Russian Lexicon* (1731), where the word carries two meanings: a “chess piece” [Ger.: Stein im Schach-Spiel] and a “small circle” or “disk” [Lat.: orbiculus] used in a board game [Ger.: Stein im Brett]¹.

This duality in the meaning of *shashka* and its derivatives—for example, *shashechnaya igra* (literally “**shash** game”; here and below, for convenience, “**shash**” is used as an adjective

derived from *shashka*)—could denote either chess or checkers/draughts in the modern sense, and it persisted in Russian literary sources well into the 20th century. Furthermore, across this timeline, one can clearly trace a gradual shift from the predominant sense of “chess piece” to the unambiguous meaning “round disk” or “counter.”

Although the terminological uncertainty that arose during this transition occasionally led to confusion (particularly, as already mentioned, in translations from and into Russian), contemporaries themselves seem not to have experienced any serious difficulties because of it—which is quite telling in itself. However, this definitional ambiguity did not arouse signifi-

¹Weismann, pp. 523, 603.

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However, considering what has been discussed above, it cannot be ruled out that some of them may in fact depict other games. In particular, there are examples showing distinct positions more characteristic of draughts than of chess

(see Figs. 6, 7, and 8). This suggests that certain material artefacts of the past, traditionally considered exclusively chess-related, may warrant closer scrutiny.

To be continued...

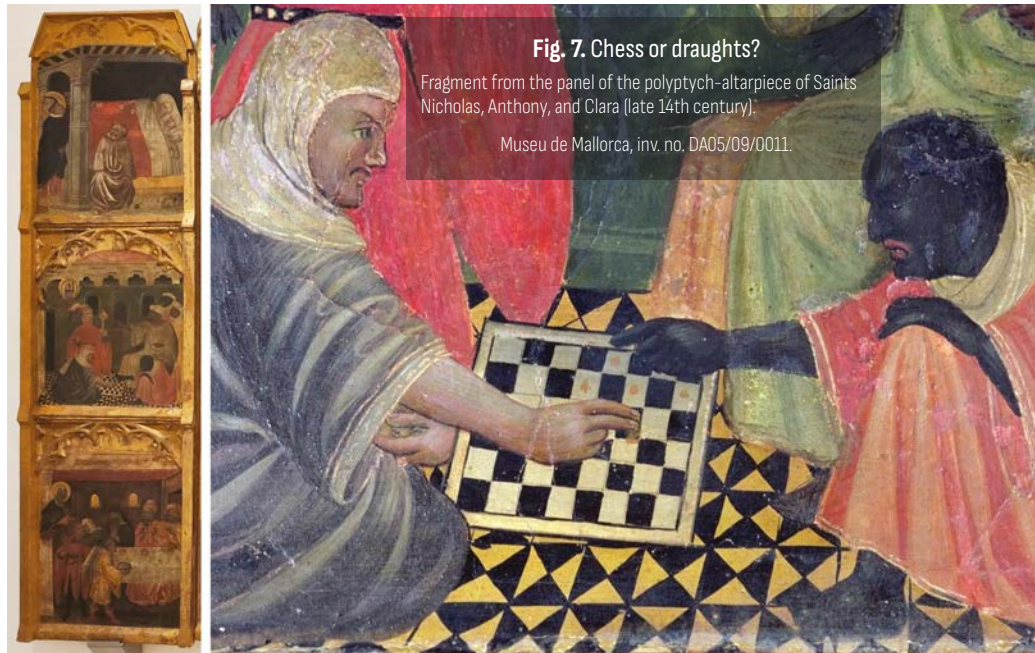


Fig. 7. Chess or draughts?

Fragment from the panel of the polyptych-altarpiece of Saints Nicholas, Anthony, and Clara (late 14th century).

Museu de Mallorca, inv. no. DA05/09/0011.



Fig. 8. Chess or draughts?

Fragment from the painting *Johann Friedrich the Magnanimous in Captivity Playing Chess with a Spanish Captain* (1548), attributed to Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen.

Leipzig City History Museum (Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig), inv. no. K/258/2000.



Playing at Draughts. (Harleian MS. 4431.)



Fig. 9. Charles Knight's *Popular History of England* (1857) vs *Harley MS 4431* (15th century)

The difficulty in finding images of medieval draughts that align with the modern perception is well illustrated by an example from *Charles Knight's Popular History of England* (1857). In the second volume, which covers the period 1377–1547, an engraving based on a drawing from a 15th-century manuscript (*Harley MS 4431*, fol. 133r) is used to illustrate draughts (p. 14). To create a recognizable image, the artist had to resort to a certain artifice: drawing round counters onto the chessboard, placing one such counter in the hand of one player, yet inexplicably leaving a figural piece in the hand of the other. Compare the engraving (left) with the original drawing (right).

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Dariko Todua

29 years old, 1-dan (FESA)



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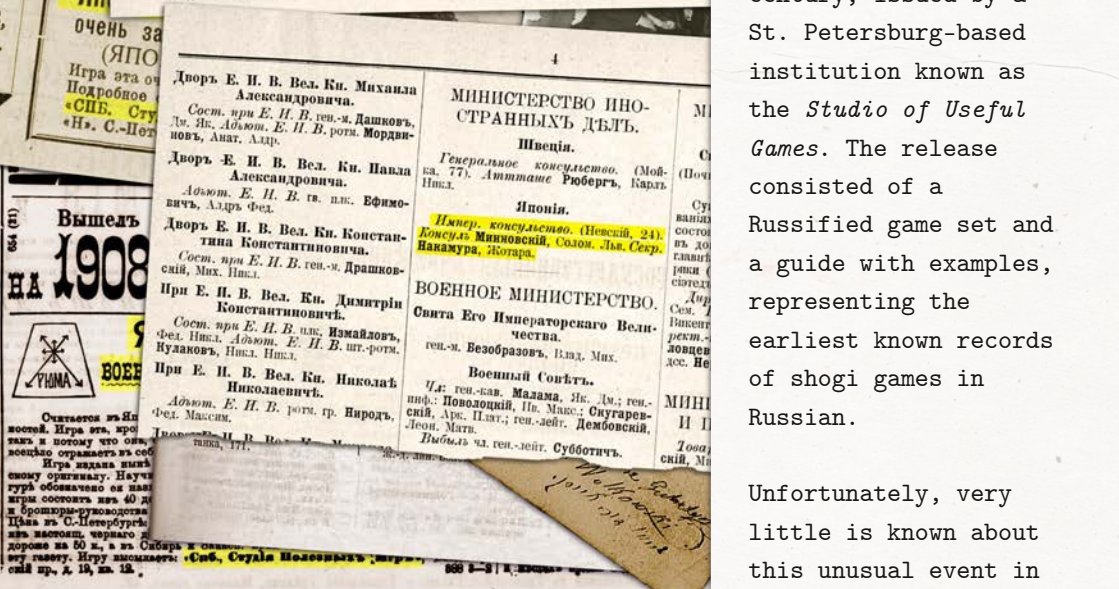
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ж. д.

More than a hundred years ago, lines such as ‘The famous Japanese game shogi (Japanese chess) has been released in Russian.’ appeared in the early 20th century, issued by a St. Petersburg-based institution known as the *Studio of Useful Games*. The release consisted of a Russified game set and a guide with examples, representing the earliest known records of shogi games in Russian.



CASE FILE of The Studio of Useful Games

A historical investigation by Andrei Lysenko

Unfortunately, very little is known about this unusual event in the history of shogi - possibly the very first case of commercial localization of the game outside Japan. This series of publications is the result of my research into this topic.

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