

FROM SHORT WHIST TO CONTRACT BRIDGE

THE HISTORY OF CONTRACT BRIDGE
AND ITS PREDECESSORS

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Translated by Herman De wael



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From Short Whist to Contract Bridge

**Dedicated to
Paul Magerman**

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Preface

Bridge originated in the second half of the 19th century, and at the time of writing, the game is not older than 150 years. Compared to chess, draughts and backgammon, bridge is a relatively young game and yet, until recently, nobody could say with absolute certainty how the most popular card game of the 20th century came into being. The reason is clear: bridge was not invented overnight; had this been the case, you would have been reading some other book.

After publishing my first book (*Bridge, de geschiedenis van een kaartspel* - Uitgeverij Het Punt – Dendermonde, 2014), my research on the origin and the evolution of the game of bridge continued and so it happened that, in May 2017, Keith Ogborn, honorary historian of the Australian Bridge Federation, sent me his personal collection of 19th and early 20th century newspaper articles. Going through the vast amount of new data, I realised almost immediately that a completely new book had to be written.

At some point, choices have to be made, and after lengthy consideration, I decided to omit the detailed description of some very old card games and to concentrate on the most direct precursors of the bridge game. Still, for historical reasons, an exception was made for *triumphus hispanicus* and *hombre*.

In this book, the main focus will be on the events that took place, broadly, between 1845 and 1930. Therefore, detailed descriptions of the direct ancestors of bridge (*hombre*, *quadrille*, *whist*, *Boston*, *Cayenne* and *préférence*) were reduced to an absolute minimum. We will concentrate on the genesis of *britch*, the progenitor of all future bridge variants, and the evolutionary steps that eventually led to the assembly of contract bridge.

Strictly speaking, I could have omitted the last chapter of this book, but in my opinion, the history of bridge can never be complete without paying tribute, in the proper way, to Ely Culbertson, the man who managed to bring a rather elitist card game under worldwide attention.

For the same reason, some attention will be paid to the creation of the EBL and the WBF; without these organisations, bridge would probably have been degraded to a pastime for all those who were looking for an easier game than chess.

I dedicate this book to my friend and mentor Paul Magerman (1929 – 2007), founder and honorary chairman of the Flemish Bridge League (VBL), former chairman of the Belgian Bridge Federation, former chairman of the European Union Bridge League, chairman of the University Bridge Committee and honorary member of the European Bridge League. Without his efforts, bridge would never have left obscurity in Flanders and in Belgium. And I would never have come into direct contact with ‘the king of card games’.

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Sincere words of thanks go to Drs. Bob van de Velde, Philippe Bodard, Thierry Depaulis, Dr. Albrecht Heeffe, Prof. Dr. Aleksiy Yudin (Ghent University – department of Slavic Languages), Myriam Lodeweyckx (Royal Library - Center for American Studies), Giacomo Visini (Royal Library – I.B.L. service), Stefan Derouck (Central Library of the Catholic University of Leuven), Filip Cremers of the Playing Card Museum in Turnhout, Paul Linxwiler, Editor of Bridge Bulletin, Jac Fuchs, Tim Bourke, Wolf Klewe, Dr. Jurgen Stigter, Dr. John Sugden, David Levy and Keith Ogborn, for their invaluable help throughout, Angelika Eichinger of the University Library Johann Christian Senckenberg for sending me a copy of Vanderheid's book on Jarolash, Freddy Van Hee, Vera Tunina Viktorovna and Dr. Olga Yaetskar for translating Russian texts, the Magerman family and, last but not least, my wife Christine, for her endless patience.

A special word of thanks goes to Herman De wael. Without his proofreading and translation of the original Dutch edition, English-speaking readers would still be going hungry.

The author

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- M. Raymond (www.bridgeguys.com) for his permission to reproduce the picture of E. Culbertson (chapter 14);
- Marc Oram of *United Press International* (UPI) for his permission to reproduce the picture of the Culbertson-Lenz match (chapter 14);

The remaining illustrations were made by the author or no longer qualify for any copyright protection.

Paul Magerman

(1929-2007)

Paul Magerman passed away on 26 September 2007 at the age of 78.

He was without a doubt the most important personality in the history of the Flemish Bridge League (VBL/Vlaamse Bridge Liga).



In 1977 he founded the VBL and as a result, bridge became a concrete, dimensional and permanent concept in Flanders. He provided a solid foundation and, as its first chairman, he laid down all the structures that still exist today: the central committee, the active commissions, the training of teachers and tournament directors and the organisation of both the Flanders Pairs and the Flanders Cup.

He was the first in Europe to have bridge recognized as a sport by the BOIC, when fellow countryman Jacques Rogge was its chairman. This led to a worldwide breakthrough and, as a result, bridge is now also recognized by the IOC. He remained chairman of the VBL until 1985. Afterwards he became Honorary Chairman. Subsequently, he was also chairman of the Belgian Bridge Federation.

He laid the foundations for a number of national championships and was chief organisator, for many years to follow, of the Mixed Trophy in Ostend, the Belgian Seniors Championship and the University Championships.

From 1967 onwards, he organised a whole series of European Championships in Ostend, often hosting more than a thousand participants. He was chairman of the European Union Bridge League before its fusion with the EBL. Quite a number of international youth championships saw the light under his direction, e.g. in Hasselt and Ghent.

He devoted the last fifteen years of his career mainly to youth bridge. In 1993 he organised the first international championship for university teams, with the city of Antwerp as its host.

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Under his stimulating guidance, this initiative grew into a resounding, worldwide success and in the meantime, he led no less than ten European and three World Championships (Istanbul, Tianjin and Bruges).

Its success also led to the recognition of bridge as university sport by FISU (who organises the Universiads), and by EUSA (European University Sports Association). He was also chairman of the 'University Committee', in both the WBF and the EBL.

His worldwide commitment to bridge was also repeatedly awarded: he was twice awarded the gold medal of merit of the World Bridge Federation (the last one in 2007 in Antalya). The European Bridge League made him an *Honorary Member* and renamed the European Championship the *Paul Magerman Trophy*. Last but not least, he launched several fellow countrymen in leading positions, both nationally and internationally.

All those who have worked under his guidance in the pioneering days of the VBL or in the championships that he organised, will always remember the vigorous way in which he supported, stimulated and motivated his team members.

We deeply regret the loss of a great man and a real friend.

To his memory we dedicate this book.

The author, the Magerman family

Foreword



THE WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION

With the present edition of his book, the author makes another contribution to the rich library of bridge books. The fact that Masterpoint Press has published this book is, on its own, testament to the value of this addition to the panoply of notable bridge books. On behalf of the World Bridge Federation, the undersigned wish to congratulate Hans Secelle for this initiative and achievement.

Dedicating the book to Paul Magerman and his family is a most appropriate gesture. During his lifetime, Paul contributed significantly to the development of bridge, both in Belgium as well as abroad. He inspired numerous bridge lovers to not only play the game but also encouraged many to volunteer and assist with the organisation of competitions and events. In particular, Paul inspired young people to join bridge teams. His love for and dedication to bridge also had significant influence on his own family. From his wife Hedwige to his sons Bart and Geert and his daughter An, all have evolved with the consequences of his dedication to bridge. Through them, the memory of Paul remains vivid.

The author of this book, Hans Secelle, is a very active bridge fan – not only at the bridge table, but also as member of the logistic team for the various Ostend Championships. Hans has been an enthusiastic supporter of our beloved sport. Contributing now through his thoughts and pen, only increases our appreciation of him.



Marc De Pauw Gianarrigo Rona
WBF Treasurer WBF President

Introduction

—

Homo Ludens, the playing man

To play by the rules : a short history

No one can say with certainty when homo ludens, the playing man, made his first appearance; playing simple games must have been part of human existence from the very beginning. With mind games, matters are different; they appear on the scene no sooner than the fourth millennium BC. For the time being, the Egyptian game of *Senet* (3500 – 3100 BC.) and the Babylonian *Royal Game of Ur*, also known as the *Game of Twenty Squares* (2600-2400 BC), are the oldest boardgames we know.

Unfortunately, very few written sources mentioning the rules of the most popular games of the (pre-)medieval era, have survived the first half of the 13th century. We'll have to wait until the year 1283, when *Juegos diversos de Axedrez, dados, y tablas con sus explicaciones, ordenados por mandado del Rey don Alfonso el sabio*, commissioned by Alfonso X, king of Castile, Galicia and Léon, is published. This manuscript provides us with the rules of chess, in all its known variants, alquerque (the precursor of the game of draughts), games with dice, backgammon and some other lesser known games. Playing cards weren't introduced in Europe before 1370 and therefore, no card game is found in Alfonso's compendium.

The original manuscript, which is housed in the library of the Escorial (Madrid), can safely be considered as the oldest games compendium in history.



'Chess problem nr. 35'

An illustration from *Juegos diversos de Axedrez, dados, y tablas con sus explicaciones*

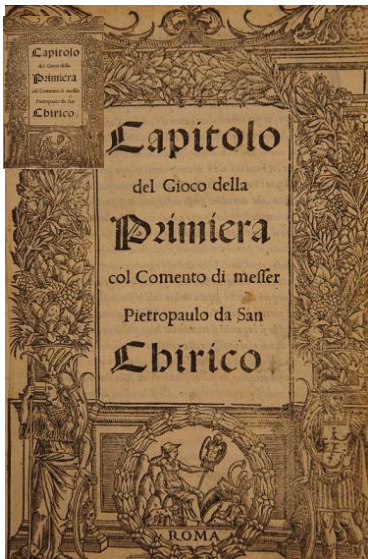
Alfonso's manuscript does not pretend to be exhaustive – the number of games it describes is far too small – but it sets the tone for all compendia that will be published in the years to come.

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Still, for details about card games, we will have to wait until the year 1426.

In that year, the city of Nördlingen (Germany), by way of a Municipal Ordinance, informs its citizens of the games that will be officially admitted during the annual festivities. One of those games is karnöffel, a card game played mainly by soldiers and peasants. Its rules are described in detail in a poem by Meissner (± 1450) and one of Bisschop Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg's sermons (1496).

One of the first books that is entirely dedicated to a single card game, is published in the early 16th century: in 1526, we are presented with Francesco Berni's *Capitolo del Gioco della Primiera col Comento di messer Pietropaulo da San Chirico*, in which the author provides us with a description of the rules of primero, casually mentioning another card game, trionfi. The latter was developed in Italy and already mentioned in 1440. This game will play a crucial role in the genealogy of the English card game ruff and honours, the direct precursor of whist.



Capitolo del Gioco della Primiera col Comento di messer Pietropaulo da San Chirico is published in 1526.

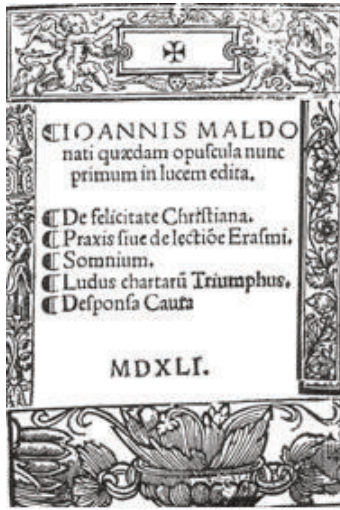
The book mentions trionfi, the game that will evolve into both the Spanish game of hombre and the English game of ruff and honours.

Shortly after, in 1538, *Linguae latinae exercitio*¹ is published, an exercise book for latinists, written by Juan Luis Vives (1493 – 1540), in which the basic rules of Triumpho Hispanico, the Spanish variant of trionfi, are set out.

A few years later, in 1541, Juan Maldonado's *Quædam opúscula nunc primum in lucem edita*² is published. This time, the rules of *Ludus chartarũ Triumphus* are described in full detail.

[1] “Exercise in the Latin language”.

[2] “Some works that have now been edited (brought in the light)”.



Juan Maldonado's *Quædam opuscula nunc primum in lucem edita*.

Chapter 4 provides us with the rules of 'Ludus chartarū Triumphus' ('The card game triumph').

The importance of this Spanish trionfi variant (see page 12) must not be underestimated: this card game is the immediate precursor of hombre and quadrille and the 'grandfather' of Boston, a game that will be crucial in the evolution of whist (see page 22 et seq.).

From Sorel to Cotton

In the 17th century, the time has come for the publication of some new games compendia: in 1642, we see the publication of André Sorels *La Maison des jeux*³ and in 1654, his compatriot, de La Marinière, publishes the first edition of *La Maison académique*⁴. In the latter, the author describes a mere three card games – of which only piquet will survive the transition to the modern era – but as far as the description of card games and their rules is concerned, the first stone is finally laid. And soon also the British authors decide to put in their oar: around 1665, Francis Willughby sets out to publish *A Volume of Plaies*, a work of encyclopaedic proportions that gives a detailed description of all known card games but, unfortunately, his gigantic task was never completed.

A few years later, in 1674, Charles Cottons' *The Compleat Gamester* (printed by A.M. for R. Cutler – London, 1674) is published, and this time card games finally get the attention they deserve. Cotton describes no less than twenty different card

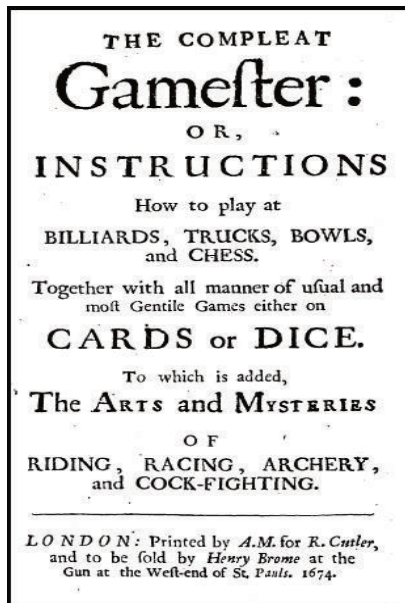
[3] Full title: *La Maison des jeux, où se trouvent les divertissemens d'une compagnie par des narrations agréables et autres entretiens d'une honeste conversation* (Nicolas de Sercy – Paris, 1643).

[4] Full title: *La Maison académique contenant un recueil general de tous les jeux divertissans pour se réjouyr agréablement dans les bonnes Companies* (R. Le Nain & M. Leché, 1654).

games, including whist, the game that will stay the world's most popular card game well into the 19th century.

By the end of the 17th century, whist is already becoming increasingly popular and the great Cotton himself is clearly the last one to question that:

“Ruff and Honours (alias Slamm) and Whist, are Games so commonly known in England in all parts thereof, that every Child almost of Eight years old hath a competent knowledge in that recreation, and therefore I am unwilling to speak any thing more of them than this, that there may be a great deal of art used in Dealing and playing at these Games which differ very little one from the other.”



The Compleat Gamester

A detailed description of this ‘mother of all card games’ is included in Chapter 2 (see page 22).

In the first half of the 18th century, chess is still a game for the clergy, the nobility and the upper bourgeoisie, but card games have settled in as a popular pastime for those who can afford the purchase of a deck of cards. That explains the importance that Abbé Bellecour, the successor to La Marinière, attaches to the various card games.

In the third edition of his *Académie universelle des jeux*, published in 1730, Bellecour reserves no less than 340 pages – from a total of 710 – for 36 different card games, but strangely enough, Cotton's whist is still conspicuous by its absence.

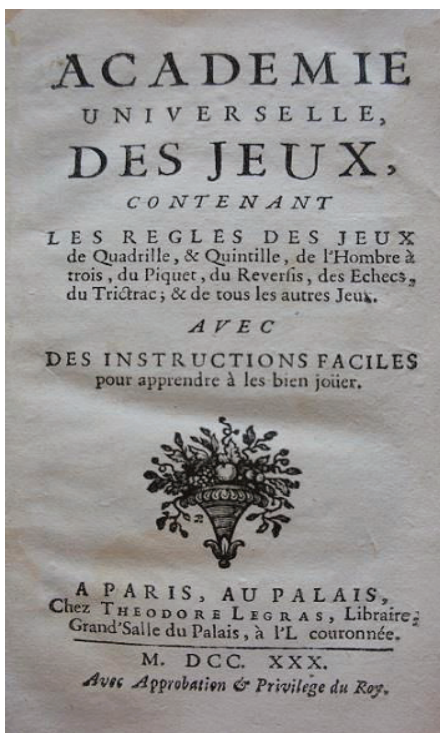
It will take some time for whist to appear in French literature; in 1766, an anonymous author publishes a plagiarized version of the *Académie universelle des jeux* in

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which he describes a game called 'Le Whisk'. Finally, in 1777 – i.e. 103 years after Cotton and 29 years after Hoyle (see page 27) – readers will find a complete set of whist rules in an official reprint of the aforementioned *Académie universelle des jeux*.

The 1777 edition provides us with the rules of no less than 43 card games, thus making clear that card games have acquired a permanent – and not insignificant – place in the games arsenal of the homo ludens. It is still too early to get acquainted with *Boston of Lorient*, a game developed in France, and *Cayenne*, a game played in Germany and Austria. The historical importance of these rather advanced whist variants will not be acknowledged before the fifth decade of the 19th century.

And the same goes for *préférence*, a lesser known card game for three players...



Académie universelle des jeux
(Théodore Legras – Paris, 1730)

Bellecour reserves more than 340 pages for a description of 36 different card games, but for the time being, whist players are still going away empty-handed.

PART I

—

PRECURSORS

Chapter 1

—

Hombre and Quadrille

“Que hablen cartas, Y callen barbas”
(“Let the cards speak, and the players be quiet”)

(Spanish precept)

Triumphus Hispanicus

Juan Luis Vives' *Linguae latinae exercitio*⁵ is published in 1538. It is a handbook for latinists in which the rules of *triumpho hispanico*, the Spanish variant of the original game of trionfi are set out. Shortly after, in 1541, Juan Maldonado's *Quædam opúscula nunc primum in lucem edita*⁶ is published, a book in which the rules of the *Ludus chartarum Triumphus* are described in more detail.

This Iberian variant uses a deck of forty-eight cards in which tens and queens are absent and in which, between the king and the jack, a knight has nestled. In the cups and coins suits (later to be replaced by hearts and diamonds), the sequence is, top to bottom: king, knight, jack, ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9; in the other suits, swords and sticks (later to be replaced by spades and clubs) the sequence is the more natural, top to bottom: king, knight, jack, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 and ace.

As the Italian researcher Franco Patresi indicates, the description of Maldonado is the clearest and most complete one and the rules and manner of play can be reconstructed quite precisely from it.

Maldonado states that the game gets its title from the fact that the winners triumph over their opponents, like those that win a real battle. The game can be played in two ways: each man for himself, or with a partner; the latter is the more usual and practical one. Normally, the deal is assigned by lots and passes to the left, but in the examples that Maldonado develops, the cards are first dealt face up until a king shows up. The player to whom the king is dealt collects the cards and becomes dealer.

Every player receives nine cards, the thirty-seventh is turned over and determines the trump suit.

[5] *“Practice in the Latin language”.*

[6] *“Some works that have now been edited (brought in the light)”.*

The ranking of the trump cards

Both black aces are always part of the trump suit, even when hearts or diamonds are trumps. Moreover, the ace of spades, the *espadille*, is always the highest trump and the ace of clubs, the *baste*⁷, is always the third highest trump, regardless of which suit has been designated the trump suit. This also means that the deck contains twelve trump cards when hearts or diamonds are trumps, but only eleven when spades or clubs are trumps. It is also clear that the highest and third highest trump stay the same and that only the determination of the second highest trump requires some attention.

Whichever is the trump suit, the lowest card in the natural ranking promotes to second highest and is then called *manille*. When spades are trumps, the two of spades becomes the second highest trump card, between the *espadille* and the *baste*. The same is true for the two of clubs, when clubs are trumps. When hearts or diamonds are trumps, the *seven* of the trump suit is promoted to *manille*. The *espadille*, *manille* and *baste* are also called *matadors*, because they best all other cards, being the highest trumps.

The game is played for points and whoever ‘reaches’ 32 points first, wins the game. The way the points are counted is not totally clear. Patresi remarks that the points are not related to the number of tricks won, but rather to the way certain trump cards have been played.

Also, Maldonado’s text is silent about the number of cards to be played. In none of the examples he describes, is a hand played to the end; possibly because the remaining cards were worthless.

Hombre

Hombre for four (Primitif Hombre)

The early 17th century sees the appearance of a new triunfo variant. Players sitting directly opposite one another play as partners and forty cards are in play, a Spanish deck from which the eight, the nine and the ten have been removed and in which players are allowed to talk (or rather...‘bid’): *Hombre*⁸ (‘The Man’). Initially, it was thought that *hombre* descended from an even older Spanish game, *primero*, based on a theory developed in 1734 by Richard Seymour (*The Compleat gamester* –

[7] Named after ‘bastos’ (the Spanish word for ‘sticks’, the suit that was replaced in Western Europe by clubs).

[8] Depaulis prefers the phonetic spelling *ombre*; Parlett also calls the game *ombre*, but indicates that *hombre* is the correct spelling.

London, 1734), but Cavendish (pseud. Henry Jones) rejects this theory, for the simple reason that those games are not related in any way.

Samuel Weller Singer⁹ presumes that *hombre* existed prior to 1611, the year in which a dictionary appeared by Sebastian de Cobarruvias, even though the term *hombre* does not appear in it.

The rules of the game

Nine cards are dealt to each player, anti-clockwise. The remaining four cards are put on the table face down; the top card of the stack is turned over and designates the trump suit.

In a first round of bidding, beginning with the player to the *right* of the dealer, the players need to indicate whether they want to play in the trump suit that has been designated. If a player thinks he can make more tricks than each of his opponents, he declares himself *hombre* (“*Yo soy el Hombre*”). The player who has been dealt the ace of trumps can take the faced trump card off the stack and exchange it for one of his own cards. It is not clear what happens when no-one wishes to play in the designated trump suit. Depaulis believes that he who has the ace of spades gets to designate a new trump suit; if no-one happens to have the ace of spades (because that card is in the stack), then the player who has the ace of clubs takes over this privilege. If he doesn’t make use of it, the choice of the trump suit can be made by the player to the dealer’s right and, if he refuses, by the third player, etc., after which the bidding phase comes to an end.

During play, following suit is compulsory and a player who cannot follow suit *must* ruff. Players sitting opposite each other play as partners. The game is won by the side that wins most tricks.

When the trump suit is either hearts or diamonds, the ace of the trump suit also gets a new spot in the hierarchy. It is placed behind the *baste* but *before* the king and is referred to as the ‘*ponte*’. To clarify all this, the ranking of the cards is represented schematically in the table below, in which the (Q)ueen replaces the (Kn)ight. Within the natural ranking of the black suits, no place has been reserved for the ace since the black aces are always trump cards.

The natural ranking											
Spades/Clubs	K	Q	J	7	6	5	4	3	2		(A)
Hearts/Diamonds	K	Q	J	A	2	3	4	5	6	7	

[9] *Researches into the History of Playing Cards* (Samuel Weller Singer – Printed by T. Bensley and Son for Robert Triphook – London, 1816).

From Short Whist to Contract Bridge

The ranking of the trump cards												
The trump suit is ♠	♠ A	♠ 2	♣ A	♠ K	♠ Q	♠ J	♠ 7	♠ 6	♠ 5	♠ 4	♠ 3	
The trump suit is ♣	♠ A	♣ 2	♣ A	♣ K	♣ Q	♣ J	♣ 7	♣ 6	♣ 5	♣ 4	♣ 3	
The trump suit is ♥	♠ A	♥ 7	♣ A	♥ A	♥ K	♥ Q	♥ J	♥ 2	♥ 3	♥ 4	♥ 5	♥ 6
The trump suit is ♦	♠ A	♦ 7	♣ A	♦ A	♦ K	♦ Q	♦ J	♦ 2	♦ 3	♦ 4	♦ 5	♦ 6



If the trump suit is *cups*,
the seven becomes the
manille.



If the trump suit is *swords*,
the two becomes the *manille*.

(cards printed in Sevilla in 1525)



The *manille* is ...
... the seven of *cups*, or



...the two of *swords*

(cards printed in Madrid in 1729)

From Short Whist to Contract Bridge



The Ace of *swords*,
the *espadille*, is always
the highest card.



The Ace of *sticks*,
the *baste*, is always
the third-highest card.

(cards from a 17th century deck from Jehan Prou)

Quadrille

*Le Quadrille n'est, à proprement parler, que l'hombre à quatre,
qui n'a pas à la vérité, la beauté, ni ne demande pas une si grande attention
que l'hombre à trois, mais aussi faut-il convenir qu'il est plus amusant...*

(Amsterdam, 1766)

Hombre and beyond

Despite its widespread and entirely legitimate popularity, even an advanced game like *hombre* cannot resist the laws of evolution. Fortunately so, because some of its direct descendants have quite probably, to a more or lesser degree, contributed to the eventual appearance of the game of bridge. Of all the descendants, *quadrille* is far and away the most important, because most authors consider it a direct ancestor of Boston and it probably also inspired the designers of *Cayenne* (see chapter 2).

Quadrille, which from the second half of the eighteenth century becomes the most popular card game, has itself been the object of some changes in playing rules, in the sense that after some time, a number of declarations are added to it. In England this enriched *quadrille* retains its name, but the French consider the changes important enough to come up with a new name for the new variant: 'médiateur'.

Strictly speaking, *quadrille* and *médiateur* are younger games than *whist*, the game that is dealt with in the next chapter, but because of their close relationship with *hombre*, both games are dealt with here.

Quadrille and Médiateur

The name of the game indicates at once that it is to be played by four persons, and the names of the principal cards, as well as other appellations made use in playing Quadrille, shew that we have it from the Spaniards: but that it has come to us through the French, may also be inferred from some terms, which have been adopted from that language.

Q. Quanti, 1822

At the start of the 18th century – probably around 1720 – a new card game starts to find its way to fashionable French and English salons of that time: Quadrille, the *hombre* variant for four players, that reaches England from Spain via France.

The description that follows is based on *A Short Treatise on the Game of Quadrille*, as included in *The Accurate Gamester's Companion* (Edmond Hoyle – London, 1748), the chapter on Quadrille appearing in the *Académie Universelle des Jeux* (Edmond Hoyle & François André Danican Philidor - Amsterdam, 1766), *Quadrille Elucidated* (Q. Quanti [pseud.] – Cheltenham, 1822) and the chapter on Quadrille, included in *The Handbook of Games* (Henry G. Bohn – Harrison and Sons – London, 1860).

The cards

The number of cards (forty) and their ranking are identical to those of *hombre* for three and just as in *hombre*, the black aces always qualify as trump cards. The ace of spades, the (e)spadille, is always the highest trump card and the ace of clubs, the *baste* or *basta*, is always the third highest trump card. A red trump suit therefore always counts twelve cards and a black one eleven.

Whichever is the trump suit, the lowest card in the natural ranking promotes to second highest and is then called *manille*. When spades are trumps, the two of spades becomes the second highest trump card, between the *espadille* and the *baste*. The same is true for the two of clubs, when clubs are trumps. When hearts or diamonds are trumps, the *seven* of the trump suit is promoted to *manille*. The fourth highest card, the *ponte* or *ponto*, is the card that in the normal order takes the fourth place, unless the trump suit is a red one; in that case the ace of the trump suit counts as *ponte* (instead of the king). The *ponte* is therefore always a black king or a red ace.

Every player gets ten cards, which can only be dealt in sets of three or four (3-3-4, 3-4-3 or 4-3-3).

The aim of the game

In general, a rubber of quadrille consists of forty games, unless the players decide otherwise. Still, the number of games is always divisible by four, so that every player becomes dealer as often as any other.

From Short Whist to Contract Bridge

Despite quadrille being basically still an individual game, the actual purpose of the game consists of capturing, alone or with a partner, six of the ten tricks. The player who, alone or with the help of a partner, tries to achieve this, is the ombre or 'the man'; it is he who sets the trump suit. If he succeeds, he wins the stakes (the 'pot'); if he fails, he is 'the beast'. When the ombre succeeds, the stakes are paid immediately. When he fails, the existing stakes are doubled by the beast and they can be won only in a later game. Quadrille is usually played for money, but during the actual game, chips are usually used, for the ease of the players.

The stakes can be gathered in two ways: either the dealer alone puts chips in the pot, or all players do this with every hand. Since every player deals in turn, the result is the same. In 18th century England there is even another way to do this: at the start of the session, all players put a predetermined number of chips in a bowl ('the pool' or 'the common stock') out of which, at the start of each game, six chips are taken and put in the pot, to form the basic stake. The premiums that are paid to the winner are taken out of the bowl.

The play of the game

After the dealer has put the agreed number of chips in the pot, the player to the dealer's left cuts the deck, and just as in classical *hombre*, the cards are dealt and played anti-clockwise.

The player to the dealer's right is the eldest hand, to his right is second hand, left of dealer is third hand and the dealer himself is the youngest hand.

The eldest player leads to the first trick, regardless of who is ombre. The trick is won by the highest card in the suit led, or by the highest trump. The player whose card wins the trick leads to the next trick. Following suit is compulsory, and when a player can't follow suit, he can either ruff or make the discard of his choice.

The Solo

The original game, Solo, is played by a single player, who contracts to win at least six tricks, without the help of a partner. The solo player sets the trump suit and if he succeeds in taking at least six tricks, he wins the contents of the pot; additional premiums are dealt with further on.

If more than one player intends to play Solo, the seating of the players will determine the order of precedence. The eldest player (the one to dealer's right) has the first choice of declaring Solo. If he passes, then the player to his right, second hand, has the right to speak; if he also passes, third hand can talk, and only if he passes can the dealer, the youngest hand, make his intentions known.

If everyone passes, it is common practice to deal again and double the size of the pot. This continues until a brave soul declares Solo.

Still, repeated redealing is soon discovered to be boring and new methods are being devised in which the stake can be attributed to some player on nearly every game. Some creative players of quadrille introduce a new variant ...

Auction Quadrille

The principle is straightforward: if no-one calls, then the pot will be attributed to the player who bids and makes the highest number of tricks (less than six). Playing for less than six tricks has the advantage that even on weaker hands something can be done, thus avoiding the need of redealing; this is a plausible argument for the introduction of this interesting new feature.

With this form of the game, the principle of bidding is further developed, an aspect that will pave the way for the ongoing evolution towards new games like Boston and auction bridge. No premium is attached to the making of the number of tricks that are bid, but honours are paid out if the omber had them in his possession.

The auction can develop as follows:

eldest	second hand	third hand	dealer
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
3	Pass	4	5

When none of the players has declared Solo, the auction continues. Eldest sees he can make three tricks, second hand passes, third hand bids four tricks and the dealer is confident of collecting five tricks. The dealer is omber and sets the trump suit. Eldest leads and play proceeds anti-clockwise.

Of all the authors that were consulted, Quanti is the only one who deals with 'auction quadrille'. At the time of writing – 1822 – Boston is already being played, and therefore – despite Boston presumably being a direct descendant from quadrille – it is not impossible that this way of playing was derived, in reverse order, *from* the game of Boston.

Méiateur

In this variant, a player – who can make five *certain* tricks on his own – tries to take the ombership by contracting for six tricks after which he can exchange a bad card – which the other players do not get to see – for a king of his choice, excluding the king of trumps and knowing that he has to ask for a queen if he holds all kings himself.

The player who hands the king to the omber, puts this card face up on the table, and if the omber succeeds in his quest, the *empoverished* player does not need to pay the play premium.

A detailed description of this quadrille variant transcends the scope of this book, but there are two new features from which this game derives its historical importance: playing *without* a trump suit and the creation of a suit ranking.

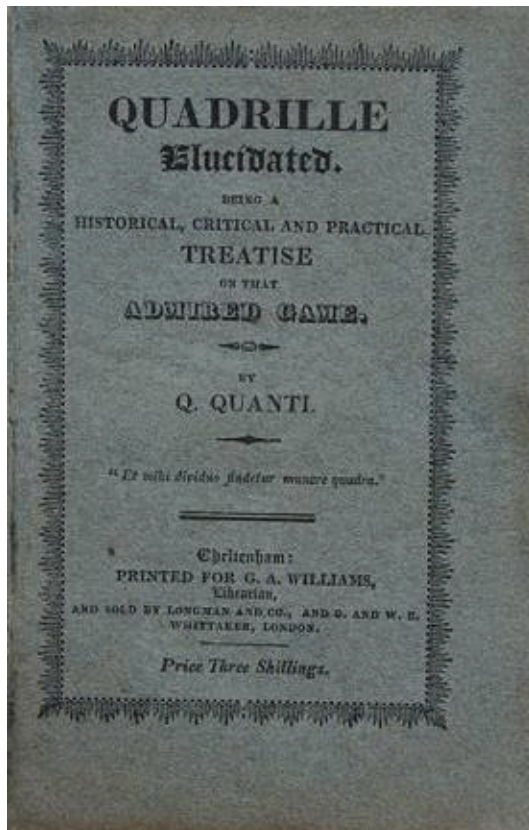
Grandissimo

This form of play, which also appears in later *hombre* variants, does not strictly belong to classical *médiateur*, but it is often added to it, in order to increase its variety and make it more amusing.

It is played by one player who takes on the other three and who needs to take six tricks, but without determining a trump suit and in which only the *espadille* and the *baste* count as trump cards. Other than that, play is at *notrump*.

The preferent or favourite suit

Playing with a preferent or favourite suit means that the players agree before the start of play which suit will gain preference ‘hierarchically’ over the other three suits. Usually, players agree to start *without* a favourite suit and the trump suit in which the first game is won becomes the favourite suit for the rest of the session. If two decks are in play, it is common practice to turn over the top card of the second deck and to consider its suit as the favourite suit; in that case one plays with a ‘floating favourite’.



Unlike his fellow authors, Q. Quanti (pseud.) is the only one to devote a separate book to the single game of *quadrille*.

The booklet – with its heavily de-centered frontpage – is printed in 1822 (Cheltenham) and sold for three shillings.

From Short Whist to Contract Bridge

Quanti states that in some salons *two* preferent suits are used (just like in *Boston of Maryland* and *Two-suited Boston* – see chapter 2), which he severely disapproves of, because this renders the privileged position of the *eldest hand* (i.e. the player to the left of the dealer) to zero and a lot of time is lost before the ombre and his chosen game can be declared.

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Card-playing by some is regarded as reprehensible,
 and by others as contemptible:
 I do not agree with either.
 I look upon cards in general as a rational amusement.
 In some instances indeed they administer to evil;
 but which of man's enjoyments does not ?

(*Q. Quanti* — *London, 1822*)

In *From Short Whist to Contract Bridge*, the author takes the reader on a fascinating journey through space and time and introduces him to such games as Karnöffel, Whist, Hombre, Quadrille, Boston, Cayenne, Vist-Preferans, Russian Whist, Yeralash and Stormwhist. These old and mostly forgotten games will eventually lead to the assembly of a number of 'proto-bridge' variants, of which only Collinson's *Biritch or Russian Whist* will survive the labor pains. In its turn, this 'mother of all bridge variants' will be superseded by its more sophisticated successors: bridge-opposition, auction bridge, royal auction bridge, plafond and, finally, contract bridge, the world's most popular card game...



HANS SECELLE (Schelderode, Belgium) is an expert chess and shogi player who turned to bridge in 1991. Having taken an interest in 18th and 19th century card games, he decided to investigate the transition from short whist to contract bridge and published his first book, *Bridge — The history of a card game*, in 2014. As his research continued, blind spots were identified, errors were corrected and more missing links were discovered, to the extent that reworking his first book became an absolute necessity.



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