



## Le Jeu de France - Pierre Duval's Map Game

### Pierre Duval and his Map Games

Pierre Duval will be familiar to many as one of the distinguished school of French geographers initiated by Nicolas Sanson. Born at Abbeville on 19 May 1619, he was the son of Pierre Duval, merchant and consul of Abbeville, and of Marie Sanson, Nicolas's sister. He was appointed Géographe du Roi in 1650 and became known for his educational maps. He died in 1683.

Less familiar is the fact that Duval invented the first educational map games. His first such publication was *Le Jeu du Monde*, a race game using dice. Published by Mariette in Paris in 1645, it had a spiral track made up of 63 circles, each being a small map of a different country of the world: the final winning circle represented France. There followed two other map games by Duval on a similar plan. Etienne Vouillement published *Le Jeu de France* in 1659, in which each circular space was a small map of a province of France. Then, in 1662, Nicolas Berey published Duval's *Le Jeu des Princes de L'Europe*: here, each of the 63 circular spaces was a small map of a region or country of Europe, with France as the winning point.

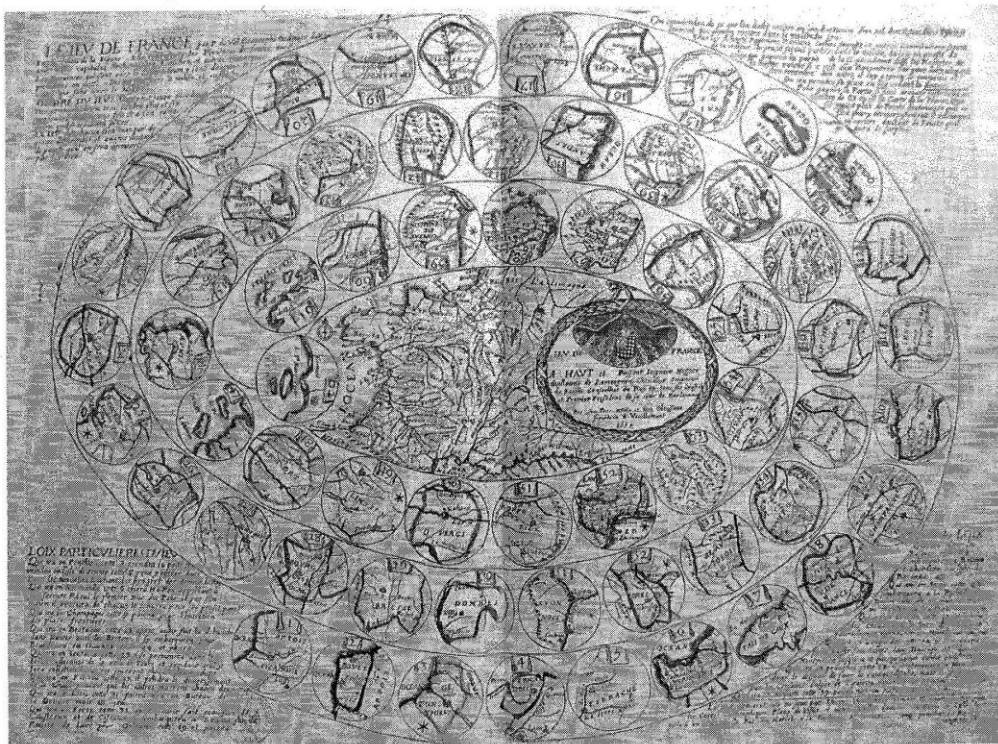
Duval also designed another spiral race game, *Le*

*Jeu des François et des Espagnols pour la Paix*, published by Nicolas de Fer in 1660. In this there were only 26 spaces, each representing in schematic map form the disposition of the French and Spanish forces in the 25 years of war leading to the peace of 1659/1660. A map game of quite different form was Duval's *Le Jeu de France pour les Dames*, consisting of a draught board in which the non-white squares each contained a map of a province of France.

Of these games, *Le Jeu de France* has been chosen for detailed description here. One reason for this choice is that it may readily be viewed on the web site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/anthologie/notices/00410.htm> where the excellent zoom tool enables detailed study. A second reason is that this game is one of the 63-space games derived from the *Jeu de l'Oie*.

### The Jeu de l'Oie

The *Jeu de l'Oie* (Game of Goose, Gi(u)oco dell'Oca, Ganzenspiel, Gänsepiel etc) is historically the most important spiral race game ever devised. It has its roots in the Italy of Francesco de' Medici (1574-87), who, it is reported, sent it as





a present to King Philip II of Spain. The game took hold there and elsewhere in continental Europe, where it is still played. It is a spiral race game, played with double dice and the usual tokens, the aim being to arrive exactly at the final space, numbered 63 in the standard form of the game. Images of geese denote the favourable spaces. After landing on a goose, the player goes on by the amount of the throw. There are also unfavourable spaces, or hazards, which involve paying to the pool and other penalties. Most notable of these is **death**, on space 58: the unfortunate player who lands here must begin the game again. The other usual hazards are at 6, a **bridge** - go on to 12; 19, an **inn** - lose two turns; 31, a **well** - wait until another reaches the space then exchange places; 42, a **maze** - go back to 39 (usually); 52, a **prison** - wait as for the well. Being hit by another player's token involves changing places and paying to the pool. Winning requires the player to land exactly on space 63 - overthrows are counted backwards. This adds greatly to the excitement, since an overthrow may hit the 'death' space. Indeed, the rules are ingeniously contrived to produce a highly playable game. Waiting in the prison or the well for some other unfortunate to arrive and take one's place is a chastening experience!

In this traditional form, the game was evidently a game of human life. It was also imbued with numerological significance, deriving from the theories of the Cabala. This was a system of Jewish mystical theology developed in Spain in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries but then adapted for Christian use in the Renaissance, by Italian scholars especially. In this system, the number 63 was highly significant, representing the crucial year, or 'grand climacteric', of life.

Innumerable variations of the game have been produced throughout Europe. Indeed, in several countries, the term 'jeu de l'oie' is used loosely to mean any dice game, or any game of chance, or even any accident of fate. As we shall see, Duval adapted the rules of the traditional *Jeu de l'Oie* for his *Jeu de France*.

#### Duval's *Jeu de France*: the print

The *Jeu de France* is a print from an engraving on copper, 385 mm high and 585 mm wide, measured to the plate mark. Duval's description of the game begins in the top left corner:

*LE JEU DE FRANCE par P. du Val Geographe Ordinaire du Roy. Explication de la figure. Elle represent les Prouvinces de France, avec leurs Villes capitales, Archeveschez, Eueschez, et autres remarques. Les Provinces qui font vers le Septentrion y font decrites les premieres en suite, celles qui font vers le milieu, et enfin celles qui font vers le*

*Midy.*

The anticlockwise spiral track contains the small circular maps of provinces, numbered 1 to 62 beginning as follows: *PICARDIE, BOVLENOIS, PONTHEVS, VERMANDOIS...*

At the centre is an oval, numbered 63, which contains a map of France and, inset, the dedication. This reads, in the BnF edition:

#### *IEV DE FRANCE*

*A HAUT et Puissant Seigneur Mefire / Guillaume de Lamoignon, Cheualier Seigneur / de Bauille, Conseiller du Roy en tous les Confeils / et Premier President de la cour de Parlement / Par son Tres Huble et Tres Obeiffant / seruiteur E. Veuillemont / 1659*



A note at the bottom right corner supplements this information:

*Le tout Graué et mis au jour par Etienne Vouillemont Graveur Ordinaire du Roy pour / les Cartes Geographiques, Plans de Villes et autres tailles doüces. A Paris en L'ille du / palais, au coin de la Rue du Harlet, a la Fontaine de Iouence. avec priuilege du Roy pour / vingt ans 1639*

The present author's copy is a later edition, identical except for being dated 1671 in the central dedication and with a manuscript note:

*A Paris chez A. De Fer dans / l'isle du palais a la Sphere / Royale 1671. avec priuilege / du Roy.*

#### General Rules – as in Goose

The general rules of the game are those of Goose. It is played with two ordinary dice; from two to six players may take part; each player has a different token, to be advanced according to the total on the dice. The stake is to be agreed beforehand, whether a Sol, a Teston or a Pistole, which each player puts in the middle of the game beforehand. All the other payments:



#### *Tous les Achats, Payemens, Rancons, Sorties, Impôts et autres Contributions*

are to be of that same value, as is the payment for a hit. To win, one must arrive exactly at 63; and overthrows are counted backwards.

#### Special Rules

On the other hand, the rules for landing on particular spaces are special to the game:

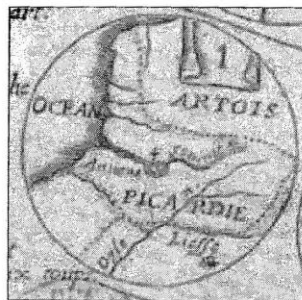
*Qui ira en Ponthieu, cotté 3, prendra la poñte, et viendra en l'ille de France cotté 8, pour y porter dans Paris les nouvelles touchant le progrès des Armées du Roy.* [The reference is to the Franco-Spanish wars mentioned above]

The other special rules are: [he who comes to]

- Normandie, 6: will cry 'Ha-Rou', [the Norman battle cry] calling to his aid Raoul, the first Duke of the Country – and receive the agreed stake from each player.
- Champagne, 9: will pay the agreed stake for maintenance of the frontiers.
- Bretagne, 13: having made a debauch in Nantes with the Bretons, will embark for Bourdeaux in Guienne, 44, and pay. [The Bretons have been associated with the consumption of mead since the sixth century!]
- Touraine, 23: will walk in the beautiful avenues of Tours and, while he dines there, the other players will play two throws.
- Poitou, 25: will go hunting as a diversion while the others play two throws.
- Lyon, 31: will pay not to the Customs Office but to the game.
- Forez, 32: having made provision of knives and scissors, will embark at Roanne on the River Loire for Orléans, 19, and pay. [The area, especially Thiers, was well known for cutlery manufacture. Products were sold throughout France and beyond by a well organised distribution system of teams of young men from the region]
- Les Basques, 39: will embark at Baïonne and go to the Isle de Ré, 47.
- Aunis, 46: will embark at La Rochelle for Toulon (61) and pay, not to the master of the vessel but to the game.
- Limosin, 49: will buy horses at the fair of Chalus and pay the aforesaid price, not to the mer-

chant but to the game. ["Les meilleurs chevaux de selle viennent du Limousin.." – Buffon, Histoire naturelle, v. 4]

- Languedoc, 52: will stay there to spend some time in Toulouse and in Montpellier until someone comes to take his place.
- Provence, 58: will embark at Marseilles with the intention of voyaging to Italy but will be taken by the Corsairs of Algiers and will pay a ransom to continue the game.
- Avignon, 59: will pay not to the Pope but to the game. [The Papal Seat was in Avignon from 1305 to 1338, though some continued to honour the Bishop in Avignon until the Council of Constance in 1414].



Circle no 1:  
Artois and Picardie

The special rules are similar in kind to those of Goose, though they differ in detail and result in a different playing structure. The game is conceived as an evocation of reality, with both historical and up-to-date reflections, rather than sharing the timeless philosophical motivation behind Goose. A sense of humour is also evident!

#### Educational Aspects

Duval's geographical race games, despite being played for money stakes, were intended as vehicles for teaching Geography to youth (and the ladies). This is demonstrated in *Le Jeu des Princes de L'Europe*, which states that anyone who wishes to profit in the study of Geography should say out loud the name of each region as he arrives, and should read the names of the principal towns. Other instructional games of the period included those intended to teach Heraldry (Duval and N. De Fer); Astronomy (A. de Fer) and Morals (Le Bossu).

#### Dissected Maps?

A fascinating speculation is that *Le Jeu de France*, with its small maps, outlined in wash colour, may have suggested the idea of cutting out the shapes and reassembling them as dissected maps – the first 'jigsaws'. Until recently, this speculation had to contend with the objection that dissected maps appeared to be an English invention. Now, however, Jill Shefrin in her well-researched book, *Such Constant Affectionate Care* (2003), has traced the origin of the earliest surviving dissected maps (those made for the children of George III of England) to a French educationalist and governess, Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont, who was born in Rouen in 1711



and came to England in about 1748. Perhaps somewhere in France there may exist a record of dissected maps from this era?

Prof. Adrian Seville

Further Reading:

GIRARD Alain R and QUETEL Claude: *L'Histoire de France racontée par le jeu de l'Oie*, Balland/Massin, 1982

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