



## The oldest clock of the Chess

(Abstract)

- The most antique chess world clock is a Venetian one.
- - Venice 1499: the first chess clock is invented.
- - French 1564: the first ingenious change of the Venetian clock is made.

Which was the first clock of the chess?

Who was the inventor?

About the second half of the nineteenth century the chessplayers began using a common sand-glass in order to the reflection time duration. The use of the unpleasant sand-glass declined as the London tournament took place in 1883, in fact in that occasion it was replaced by a double mechanic clock that let the player block his reflection time after the move.

The historians attribute this invention to the English T. B. Wilson.

But originally the invention of the first time-clock of the history must be attributed to an Italian anonym.

This first clock and its operation, are illustrated, in a book published in Venice, in 1499: *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.

But the first genial modification to the Venetian clock is introduced in another book: *Isle Sonante* by Rabelais, published in France, in 1562-64.

In both the books, her duration of the music regulates the movement of the chess pieces. (1) In fact in the *Hypnerotomachia*, we read:

*The musicians started to sound .... the white pieces they moved on the chessboard in base to the duration of the*

*music. When the sound started again the movement was up to the black pieces.*

The music is alternatively played for the white pieces and for the black pieces. The pieces have available the duration of the music for to move on the chessboard.

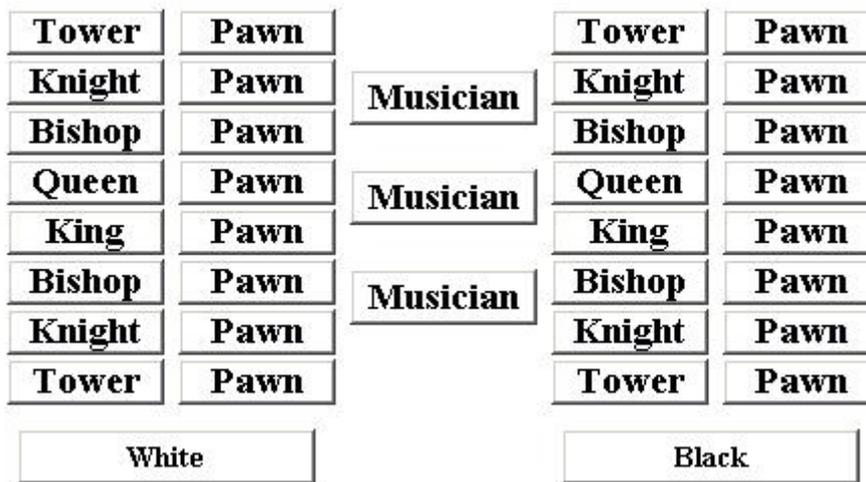
The concept is also repeated in the following passage: ... *In accord with the duration of the music the pieces moved on the chessboard.*

It's the first time-clock of the chess history.

Dated 1499.

Extraordinary creative invention.

The instruments are characterized by a tuneful melody and can change tone, "tempo" and measure. The instruments are three in the Hypnerotomachia:



The instruments are sixteen in the **Isle Sonante**.

The authors don't specify what sort of instrument is, maybe wind or stringed one.

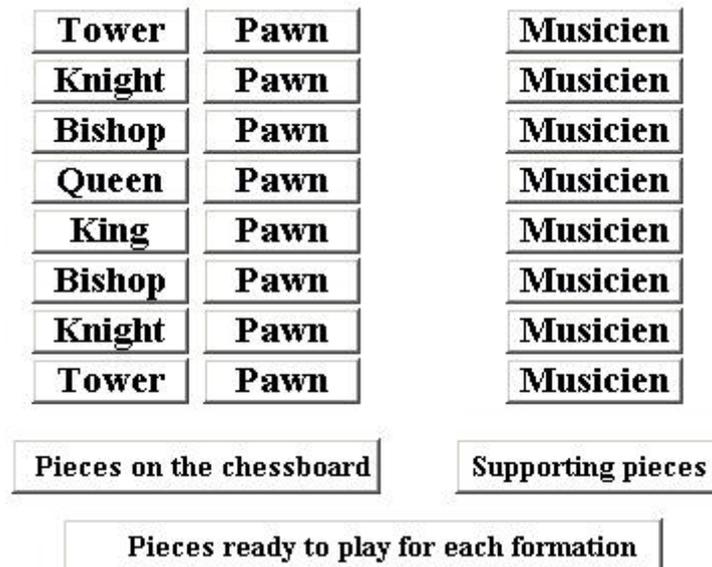
Even though Rabelais plagiarized this creative invention, he put a new element in and made it perfect. He increased the number of the musicians up to the eight (2) for the whites and for the blacks.

*each team was supported by his musician friends; they were eight for each team.*

So considering the game with living pieces by Rabelais the musician are not neutral (differently from the musicians in the Hypnerotomachia, they are not simple arbiters).

But they represent supporting pieces.

The teams thought by Rabelais is the following:



The music is strictly connected to the pieces movement: in fact, when the musicians accelerate the music the game it becomes rapid chess.

Notes:

(1) Even though we are not so sure that Marcel Duchamp and John Cage knew these literary works, they successfully tried a new game that was the exact opposite. They played a chessgame where the pieces movement interrupted the tune (music by Tudor and Cross). Duchamp pointed out a close affinity between music and chess in several interviews. It is worth mentioning some of the music compositions dedicated to the Chess: Chec au Roi (checkmate), 1930 by a Czech composer, Borislav Martinù and Checkmate 1937, by an English composer, Arthur Bliss. In 1983 Björn Ulvæus and Benny Andersson (two components of the Abba) have composed the musical **Chess**.

**(2) Sixteen musicians are not enough to assign an instrument to each chess pieces, whether it is the White or the Black one. We dared to create this interesting musical-chess combination, associating a musical instrument to each chess pieces. Actually the result is extraordinary and would be centuplicated in a game with living pieces.**

**Carmelo Coco.**

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