

The Tarock of the Skat Inventors Part II: The Weimar Classics and a Ludemic View on Tarock, Hombre, and Skat

*Dir wünschen wir nach altem Brauch
Zum neuen Jahre Glück und Segen
Doch unter andern auch
Der nötigen Zerstreung wegen
Ein tägliches Konzert mit Pauken und mit Zittern
Den ganzen Horizont beladen mit Gewittern
Und pour accomplir le bonheur
Im taroc ombre Spiel beständig les honneurs.*

J. W. v. Goethe

The starting point for this series of articles was the *Taschenbuch der Freude und der ernstern Unterhaltung* (Pocket book of joy and more serious entertainment, see bibliography) which was published by Wilhelm Webel in Zeitz in 1801. In its part about “more serious entertainment” the book deals mostly with *Taroc*. A detail, the trump II as an ultimo card, led to a reconsideration of what should properly be defined as Grosstarock. Grosstarock was previously thought to be the great German variant of the games played with the tarot pack. But we already observed that the *Taschenbuch* deals mostly with another variant of Tarock: three quarters of the text are devoted to “*Taroc à l’Hombre*” (Tarock Hombre). We will see that Tarock Hombre must have been a major card game in the entire area of the Saxonian petty states, to which not only Zeitz (in Stift Naumburg-Zeitz) belongs, but also Weimar, the place of activity of Goethe, Schiller etc. But also Altenburg is close, and in Altenburg the German national game of Skat was born around 1810. We will see that Tarock Hombre throws new light on the origin of Skat: its popularity as well as a comparison of conceptual games elements reverse previously held views about the relations of the popular games at the place and time. But first we need to look at the rules of Tarock Hombre.

1. Tarock Hombre rules “at the expense of the Compagnie”

While doing research on the card playing situation in Altenburg I contacted Gerd Matthes, collector and sales manager at ASS, who has a page on *Altenburg und das Kartenspiel*. Unexpectedly, he informed me that he owns a previously unknown handwritten booklet with rules for “*Tarock-spiel à l’Hombre*”. It turns out that these may be the oldest in German, if not at all, we know of! Gerd Matthes’ manuscript is entitled “*Regeln des Tarock-spiels à l’Hombre in Beziehung auf die*

Title page of the Compagnie Rules of Tarock Hombre (collection Gerd Matthes).

dabei festgesetzten Strafen" (**R**ules for the **g**ame of **T**arock à l'Hombre in relation to the applicable penalties; bold face indicates enlarged letters). Places are given, "Prag und Wien", but unfortunately no date. The document was created "Auf Unkosten der Compagnie" (At the expense of the Compagnie). Because of that I have called them "Compagnie Rules". It is unknown what Compagnie that was.

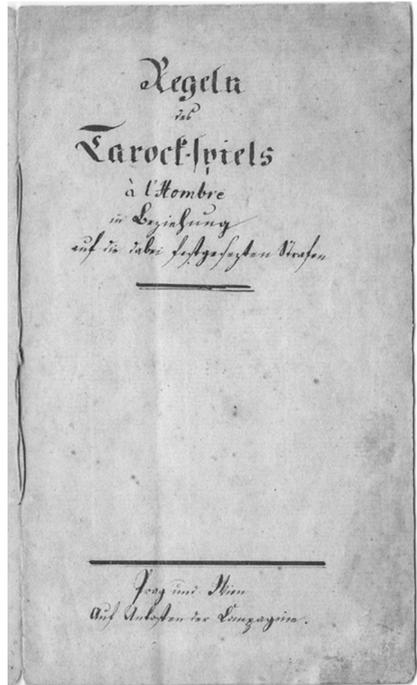
So far, the oldest known rules of Tarock Hombre appeared 1795 in *Der beliebte Weltmensch* (Vienna: Gerold). The Compagnie rules may well be older, which would make them the oldest rules in German. Should the manuscript be older than 1787 we would have the oldest rules in any language: so far Tarock Hombre appears first in *Primi Elementi e Regole del Giuoco de Tarocchi* (Turin) under the name "Permesso".¹

The age of the manuscript is suggested by (a) the handwriting, which is German *Kurrentschrift* of the 18th century, not of the 19th;² (b) some of its Tarock terminology as well as the general style is pre-1800: *Skar* not *Scat*, *Pacat* with "c", *Skies* not *Sküs*; (c) only the earlier rules of the game are dealt with. — It would be of great importance if a better dating of the manuscript could be made.

2. Tarock Hombre rules

Many German accounts of the game differentiate between an earlier and a later version. This is the case in the *Taschenbuch* but not in either of the Austrian ones (*Compagnie* and *Weltmensch*) from before 1800, which know only the earlier one. The rules for the Compagnie are incomplete: they take the basics of the game as known, only penalties and scoring are explained, as indicated by the manuscript title.

As at Grosstarock the French-suited 78 card tarot pack is used. 25 cards are dealt to each of the three players, typically in a single batch, and there are three extra cards, the "Scat". Dealing in a single batch distinguishes *Taroc L'Hombre* from *eigentliches Taroc*, says the *Taschenbuch* author in the introduction. Later



¹ Dummett/McLeod, *History of Games Played with the Tarot Pack* (see bibliography at the end of this article), rules 8.13 to 8.17.

² By comparison with Johannes Seidl, *Schriftbeispiele des 17. bis 20. Jahrhunderts zur Erlernung der Kurrentschrift* (Perchtoldsdorf 1996: @ Marktgemeinde Perchtoldsdorf).

the author considers dealing the cards in batches of five as common too. It was previously thought that dealing in a single batch was only recorded in an odd note in a single work.³ Rereading the literature shows that this is an oversight: The most copied account on Tarock Hombre already specifies this practice for the later form but not the earlier one.⁴

There is always one playing against the other two. In the earlier variant the dealer gets the three extra cards and discards the surplus, as at Grosstarock; in the later variant the lone player picks up the Scat and discards three cards before demanding further cards from the other players. In a single round of bidding the players say how many cards they “demand” from the other players in order to play alone against them. This may be up to two (“à deux”) in the older version, but only one or none in the later one (“à une” or “sans prendre” aka “Solo”). The player who demands fewest wins the bidding and specifies the cards the others must give him in return for cards from his hand.

Rules of trick play, the role of the Fool, and the card values are just like Grosstarock: In the suits the cards rank king, queen, knight, jack, followed by ten down to ace in black but ace down to ten in red. Trumps rank XXI down to I (Pagat). Card values are kings, Fool, I and XXI 4, queens 3, knights 2, jacks 1 plus 1 per trick for a total of 78. The lone player needs more than half of the card points to win (i.e. 40 or more). In play one must follow suit or trump if unable to do so. The Fool may be played once in a deal at any time instead of following these rules.

Both, the *Taschenbuch* and the *Compagnie*, envisage a slam, called “vole” or “Volte” respectively, although at the *Compagnie* this feature is optional and if played, the slam attempt must be announced while holding at least 8 cards; such an announcement is not found in other known rules. Interestingly, both state that in the case of a slam the Fool must be played to the last trick and in that case wins it.⁵ Previously, this rule for the Fool was only recorded for two other Tarock Hombre descendants: “This special rule is observed in Dijon Tarot and in Stubai Droggn, but is otherwise unknown in all versions of Tarok l’Hombre outside France.”⁶ It turns out the practice dates back to before 1800 and was also observed in Central Germany and Austria. Given the distance in place and time of the games (Prague and Vienna before 1800, Zeitz 1807, Dijon 1923, Stubai Valley 1996) the practice was likely widespread and common but other authors forgot to record it, the slam being a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence.

³ *History*, p. 127, fn. 2.

⁴ *Berliner Spielmanach* of 1797 and all later editions which contain rules for Tarock Hombre. Later form: “... übergibt dann seinen Mitspielern und sich selbst die 25 Blätter zugleich” (... at once, p. 30), but “fünfweise” (in fives, p. 21) in the earlier. This is based on the single word “zugleich” which is difficult to detect.

⁵ The *Compagnie* Rules actually only say: in the last trick the Fool is reckoned to be a trump.

⁶ McLeod, John and Remigius Geiser, *Stubai Valley*.

Unlike Grosstarock there are no declarations of card combinations and no ultimos at Tarock Hombre at this time.

3. Tarock Hombre in Weimar

A discussion in the IPCS online forum turned up quite a few literary references of Tarock Hombre being played by the intellectuals of the age and place.

Let's start with the "greatest of 'em all": Goethe cut a reference to the game from his *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*, presumably in 1777 which, as Thierry Depaulis observes, would make it the earliest German reference to the game:⁷

*"[...] und mein Weib fährt mir in ungeheurer Leidenschaft und mit entsetzlichem Fluchen auf den Hals, traktiert mich als Pluto, als Scheusal, und flieht endlich vor mir, nicht anders als wenn ich in Feuer gekleidet aus der Hölle käme, um sie zu einer Partie Tarock l'Hombre mit den Furien zu intervenieren."*⁸

Carl Ludwig von Knebel, Goethe's "Urfreund", played "Taroc hombre" in 1780.⁹ The poem at the head of this article was dedicated to the countess Gianini for new year 1784.¹⁰ She was *Oberhofmeisterin* of Duchess Louise. Both were rather critical of Anna-Amalia and her bringing all the bourgeois intellectuals to Weimar. I am inclined to think the line "Den ganzen Horizont beladen mit Gewittern" (The whole horizon laden with thunderstorms) may be Goethe's reference to the tension, considering his predilection for natural phenomena to symbolize human emotions. In any case, the countess died that same year, aged 65.

If we turn to the other "star" we find "Lotte", the later wife of Friedrich Schiller, writing to him in 1788:

*"[...] auch bin ich gar fleissig jetzt und lerne Taroc hombre, wenn man kein Interesse am Gespräch findet, so sehe ich jetzt ein, dass ein Spiel nicht übel ist und der gesellschaft einige Unterhaltung mehr giebt, zumal bei einem Spiel wo der Verstand sich doch auch dabei beschäftigten muss."*¹¹

She was apparently more fond of interesting conversation. It seems that Friedrich himself was still looking around when he became professor in Jena a year later, at least he wrote to his friend Körner:

⁷ Unless the Compagnie rules were found to be older.

⁸ Unfortunately my English capabilities are too limited to properly translate our master poet. Kindly reported by Robert Sedlaczek on the forum, appears in Mayr/Sedlaczek, *Das grosse Tarockbuch* (Vienna n.d.: Perlen-Reihe), p. 215.

⁹ Koch, Gerhard ed., *Imhoff Indienfahrer: ein Reisebericht aus dem 18. Jahrhundert in Briefen und Bildern* (Göttingen 2001; thanks to Thierry Depaulis), p. 261.

¹⁰ "Neujahrsposse", *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, vol. XXV (1904 @ Wikisource; also found by Thierry Depaulis), p. 59–60.

¹¹ "I am rather studious now learning Taroc hombre. I see now that a game is not bad and gives some more entertainment for the company if there is no interest in conversation. In particular if that game keeps the mind busy." Charlotte Lengefeld, letter to Friedrich Schiller, 22 Nov. 1788, in: Ruest, A., *Schiller und Lotte: Ein Leben in Briefen* (6th to 11th ed. Berlin n. d.: Herrmann Seemann successors), p. 88 @ Google Books.

“Von dem hiesigen Frauenzimmer kann ich schlechterdings noch nichts schreiben. Eine ziemliche Auswahl habe ich zwar gesehen, worunter aber nichts Auszeichnendes war. Ich wohnte einem Ball bey, wo ich sie größtentheils beysammen sah, ich hielt mich aber an das Spiel und ennuyirte mich mit Griessbach und Succow beim Taroc-hombre.”¹²



Schiller, Griessbach, and Succow at Tarock Hombre – Actually a cut from an engraving in von Düben, *Talisman des Glücks*, Berlin 1819: Flittner.

The elder statesman of the Classics, Christoph Martin Wieland listed “Taroc-ombre” among many other duties in 1780 and again in 1781. His to-do list reads:

“[...] Fürsten und Fürstinnen zu hofiren, Merkurs zu redigiren, Druckbogen zu corrigiren, Briefe zu lesen und zu schreiben, Gelder einzutreiben und auszuzahlen, Fremden Audienz zu geben, Taroc-ombre zu spielen, und über all dies noch ein grosses Hauswesen (fürstlich zu reden) zu regiren und glücklich zu machen [...]”¹³

“Weimar Classics” in a narrow sense means Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, and Herder — of these only Herder is currently absent from their Tarock Hombre round (i.e. we have no reference implying that he played it).

For a final literary reference, in a novel from 1792 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi refers to the game as one of the many virtues that one should learn sometimes.¹⁴

4. Tarock Hombre books

There are also quite a few printed books specializing in the game. The *Taschenbuch* with its emphasis on Tarock Hombre saw two editions. There is another work which explicitly deals with that game, and also saw two editions — and was

¹² “I cannot say anything about the women over here. I have seen a good selection, but nothing exceptional. I attended a ball where I saw most of them together. However, I remained with the game and entertained myself with Griessbach and Succow at Taroc-hombre.” Letter to Christian Gottfried Körner, 28 May 1789 @ Friedrich-Schiller-Archiv.

¹³ “[...] flatter princes, revise Merkurs, correct printed sheets, read and write letters, collect and pay money, give audience to visitors, play Taroc-ombre, and, above all this, govern a large household (courtly speaking) and make it happy [...]” Karl Wagner, *Johann Heinrich Merck: Eine selbständige Folge der im Jahr 1835 erschienenen Briefe an J. H. Merck* (Darmstadt: Diehl 1835 @ Google Books), p. 192 (1 Oct. 1781). See also: Leuschner, Ulrike et al. eds., *Johann Heinrich Merck: Briefwechsel* (Göttingen 2007), vol. 2, letters no. 378 (17 Jan. 1780), p. 360, and no. 484 (1 Oct. 1781), p. 657; courtesy of Thierry Depaulis.

¹⁴ Along with “ball beating”, “*Ball schlagen*”, i.e. the German variant of Baseball or Cricket; Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich, @ Eduard Allwills Briefsammlung. Mit einer Zugabe von eigenen Briefen (Koenigsberg 1792), p. 242.

printed in Weimar, by Gädicke Bros.: *Das verbesserte Taroc à l'Hombre* (The improved Tarock Hombre).¹⁵ The Gädickes were in contact with Goethe around 1800.¹⁶ Unfortunately none of the researchers has seen that book so far. It would be extremely interesting, the advertisement promises an improvement to make the game more scientific, so to say:

*“Das Taroc und vorzüglich das Taroc à l'hombre, bedarf unter allen Karten-Spielen am meisten einer schicklichen Vereinfachung; und der Verfasser dieser wenigen Bogen glaubt diess Spiel dadurch zu verbessern, dass er den Einfluss des Zufalls auf den Gang des Spiels beschränkt und die Geschicklichkeit des Spielers mehr geltend macht.”*¹⁷

Not only in Saxony was the game popular. Dummett already noted that the *Berliner Spielalmanach* of 1797 deals exclusively with Tarock Hombre in its Tarock section.¹⁸ And there is another title, *Taroc-L'Hombre, eines der feinsten Kartenspiele* (one of the finest card games) from Nuremberg in 1796.¹⁹

5. The popularity of Tarock Hombre

There is a report saying that in 1789 “*Taroc-Ombre*” was the most popular game in the city of Hanover (replacing Whist) while “*Taroc*” (with Quadrille and Trisett) was played little or not at all (but in the provincial cities L'Hombre and Whist were most popular).²⁰ This makes it clear that is important to distinguish Grosstarock and Tarock Hombre.

In the light of all this, how important was Tarock Hombre? One may object to judging the importance of a game from just a handful of literary references and a single report from Hanover. But one has to take into account the many filters it takes for a specific name of a game to appear in a written record: First writers must find playing games of any kind worth noting, then it is specifically a card game that is mentioned. Writers who don't play card games won't be able to distinguish between different types of playing cards, but even those who do need to distinguish between different games played with the tarot pack, so as not to run them all together under the generic term Tarock. Thus, from the many game books specifically dedicated to the game and the literary references it is clear that Tarock Hombre was a major card game in the time and area of interest.

¹⁵ *Das verbesserte Taroc à l'Hombre* (1796); 2nd ed.: *Das verbesserte Taroc à l'Hombre und Boston-Spiel* (1801).

¹⁶ Goethe, *Briefe* (1764–1832) @ Zeno.org search for “Gädicke”.

¹⁷ “Of all card games Taroc and specifically Taroc à l'hombre is in most need of a neat simplification, and the author of these few pages believes the game can be improved by limiting the influence that luck has on the course of the game to bring out the player's skill more.” *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (Jena and Leipzig 1801 @ Google Books), column 1070. The two editions of *Das verbesserte Taroc à l'Hombre* as well as the second edition of the *Taschenbuch* are at Anna-Amalia-Bibliothek in Weimar – evidently a necessary stop for Tarock researchers!

¹⁸ *Game*, p. 281; unchanged in the History, p. 126.

¹⁹ Oettinger, *Contingent*, no. 78. If a copy still exists anywhere is unknown.

²⁰ *Annalen der braunschweigisch-lüneburgischen Churlande* (3. Jg., 1. Stk, Hannover 1789: Pockwitz jun. @ Google Books), p. 775.

What fascinated the players about Tarock Hombre? It was seen as a highly intellectual game, as Lotte has already noted. Here is what we read in the *Berliner Spielalmanach*:

*“Das Spiel lerne und übe nur der, der einen denkenden und beobachtenden Geist besitzt. Ohne dieses wird man es nie recht lernen, und mit Feinheit spielen: denn es ist von zu grossem Umfange und zu vielen Abwechslungen. Eben sein Umfang und seine Menge von Dispositionen machen es schwer, aber dabei so angenehm und anziehend, dass noch keiner, der es spielt, einen Ekel dagegen bekommen hat.”*²¹

And in the *Weltmensch* the author observes:

“So angenehm und unterhaltend das [...] Tarockspiel al ordinaire ist, so ist doch gegenwärtiges Taroc l’Hombre Spiel in Rücksicht mehrerer dabey vorkommenden Abwechslungen und Feinheiten jenem weit vorzuziehen.” The game has “so sehr allgemeinen Beyfall gefunden, dass solches heutigen Tags fast in allen Gesellschaften, als das beliebteste und angenehmste Unterhaltungs Spiel gespielt wird.”²²

In part I we saw that according to Prof. Wilde of Göttingen Grosstarock “requires really more mental strength than the ordinary game of Chess”. Hombre was the great game of the age where players bid to plays alone against the combined strength of the other two.²³ The very name Tarock Hombre makes it clear that the game provided the union of these two exciting concepts, Hombre-style Chess for three, so to say.

The general impression is that Tarock Hombre, not Grosstarock, was the major tarot game in Thuringia, Saxony as well as in Austria and Bohemia already well before 1800.²⁴ There can hardly be a doubt that it was a major game played by the players at Brommé’s house in Altenburg around 1810.

6. Card games at Altenburg around 1800 and the first recorded game of Scat Card games were much played in Altenburg.²⁵ As expected, official records deal mostly with illegal gambling games which had names like “Grobhannes” (Rude John), “Süssmilch” (Sweet Milk), “Käseschüssel” (Cheese Bowl), and so on. The well known “Pharao” was widely played, most notorious was

²¹ “Only those should learn and play the game who have a thinking and observant mind. Without that they will never really learn its subtleties. It has too great a scope and too much variety. Its very scope and multitude of configurations make it hard, but at the same time so pleasant and attractive that nobody who plays it has developed a distaste for it.” *Berliner Spielalmanach* of 1797, p. 38.

²² “As pleasant and enertaining ordinary Tarock may be, the present Tarock Hombre is by far preferable, considering its greater variety and refinement.” The game “has gained so much general acclaim that today it is played in almost all circles as the most popular and pleasant game of entertainment”. *Weltmensch*, p. 288.

²³ Thierry Depaulis, “Un peu de Lumière sur L’homme”, *The Playing Card*, vol. 15, no. 4; vol. 16, no. 1 and 2 (1987).

²⁴ If this is the case, it might have been the Tarock not only of the Weimar classics but also of Mozart. Wolfgang Mayr and Robert Sedlaczek in their *Kulturgeschichte des Tarock* (Vienna 2015: Edition Atelier) assume he played Grosstarock.

²⁵ This section is a very short summary of Gerd Matthes, *Altenburg und das Kartenspiel*.

“Polnische Bank” (Polish Bank), which, like others, was often renamed in an attempt to circumvent bans. In order to protect themselves from police, players at the *Rossmarkt* (horse market) placed guards in the streets. The higher strata of the society met in houses for regular play in circles (*Gesellschaften*²⁶), one of the most important being the Masonic Lodge “Zu den drei Reissbrettern” (To the Three Drawing Boards) which saw famous visitors around the time of the Battle of Leipzig (1813), like the Prussian generals Scharnhorst and Blücher, or the Russian colonel Prendel.

Another such place was the evening circle (*Abendgesellschaft*) at Poschwitz castle, home of the von der Gabelentz family. To this circle also belonged Hans Carl Leopold von der Gabelentz (1778–1831). Hans von der Gabelentz had the habit of keeping a detailed account of the gains and losses at the games he played: his famous *Spielkladde*.²⁷ The first entry dates 4 Nov 1798, the last 4 April 1829 – almost his entire life as a player is recorded. The games played at Poschwitz castle were the common ones of its age: *L’homme*, *Taroc*, *Woyda* (later spelt *Voida*), *Trisett*, *Piquet*, *Whist*, *Quinze*, and *Remis* appear first before 1800, *Lansquenet*, *Casco*, *Pharaon*, *Pharaon B.*, *Vingtun*, and *Boston* shortly after.²⁸

A man who was well-liked in Altenburg’s society and attended many playing circles was Friedrich Ferdinand Hempel (1778–1836). He also visited the Poschwitz circle. And there he introduced a new game: It is in Gabelentz’ *Kladde* that the game “Scat” was first recorded in 1813.

Apparently, Scat was most intensively played from 1821 to 1824. While Gabelentz had won 1 Florin 13 Groschen at Scat in 1813 he lost more than he won in the 1820s. Unfortunately, at that time Hempel could no longer participate in the Altenburg circles. Due to his overwhelming gaming debts he went broke in 1819 and had to leave the city (first to Odessa in Russia, later to Pest in Hungary).

7. Tarock and Skat: state of knowledge

The research of Gerd Matthes gives a much more detailed view on the life and play in Altenburg around 1800 than the great *Skatspiel* by Margot Dietrich and Detlef Hoffmann which otherwise still represents what we know about early Skat. According to them “Scat” was first recorded as a game played in 1813 at the Bromme’sche Gesellschaft also then known as *Bromme’sche Tarock Gesellschaft*.

²⁶ The term does not denote a formal club or society in this context.

²⁷ The *Kladde* is still owned by the family von der Gabelentz. I have not seen it but Gert Matthes had the chance to make photocopies.

²⁸ The rules for most of the games can be found in German game books of the age. *Woyda* does not appear in them, an inquiry in the forum yielded the result that it is most likely a variant of Triomphe, see Johann Siegmund Popowitsch (1705-1774), *Vocabula Austriaca et Stiriaca*, ed. Richard Reutner, (Frankfurt, Main 2004), vol. 2, p. 749, source provided by Thierry Depaulis. *Casco* is a Hombre-play-alike with the German-suited 32 pack, rules can be found in Pierer’s *Encyclopädie* (Altenburg 1857). It is currently unclear to which variant of Tarock Gabelentz’ entries refer. It may be Grosstarock but if Tarock Hombre was the most played or only Tarock game in that circle it may also be that game.

This must have been a circle at the house of some Bromme. The alternative name indicates that Tarock was the most popular game played by the circle at Bromme's.

Yet, despite the recorded fact that the game Scat was named after the discard of Tarock, Dietrich/Hoffmann don't think Tarock was a major contributor: "*With its 78 cards, consisting of a full four suited pack with a court card, the 'knight,' added and a trump sequence of 22 on its own, the Tarock is only of very limited influence on Skat.*"²⁹ Consequently, they spend just half a page on Tarock, never fully explaining any rules. The main contribution according to the authors came from Hombre proper. But how could a game that was most popular with the inventors of Scat be only of minor relevance in its design?

There are problems with the argument, even considering the time when it was made. One problem is that Dietrich/Hoffmann think it must have been Grosstarock that was played at Bromme's – they recommend to interested readers the respective chapter in Dummett's *Game of Tarot*. But Dummett also has a section on Tarock Hombre, even if only a comparatively short one. Then there is a chapter on "Bavarian Tarock and its Relatives" in Dummett's work. These are games played with a French or German suited pack of 36 cards with the same ace = 11, ten = 10 card point system as Skat (I shall call them Ace Ten Tarock, they are not just Bavarian). Now, if the argument of Dietrich/Hoffmann – many cards, added court card, extra trump sequence – holds against a contribution of Tarock to Scat then it should equally hold for Tarock against, well, Ace Ten Tarock. Which would be absurd as some of these games *are* explicitly called Tarock, just like the Bavarian 36 card pack. Dummett convincingly shows how players adapted the Tarock mode of play to the ordinary pack. The fundamental problem of Dietrich/Hoffmann's argument is that there is no comparison of the *conceptual game elements* of the various candidates of Tarock with those of Scat, they only look on *instrument of play*, the composition of the pack.

In retrospect it is easy to see this, after more than 30 years of research which has revealed a lot of evidence on card games in general and tarot games in particular. From the short account on Tarock Hombre in Dummett's *Game of Tarot*, consisting only of references to game collections, it is extremely difficult to estimate the significance of the game around 1800. Also, now that we know a Tarock Hombre descendant existing side by side with an Ace Ten Tarock, it is clear that Ace Ten Tarock may well be an adaptation of Tarock Hombre rather than of Tapp Tarock, as Dummett originally thought.³⁰

Assuming that it was not Grosstarock but Tarock Hombre that was most popular at Bromme's – which should then be called the *Bromme'sche Tarock-Hombre Gesellschaft* – what does a little comparison of the elements of the games in question – Scat, Tarock Hombre and Hombre proper – reveal about their

²⁹ Dietrich/Hoffmann, p. 28, my translation.

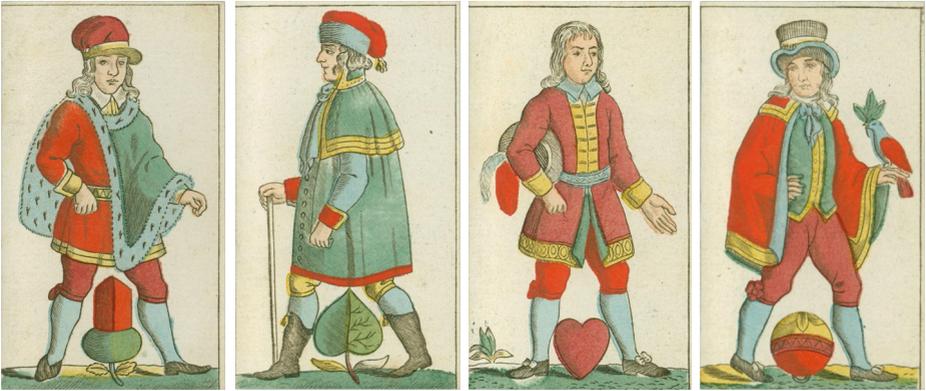
³⁰ McLeod/Geiser, *Stubai Valley*.

possible relation? In order to answer this question, we first need a deliberation on the rules of "Protoscat".

8. From Schaafkopf to Protoscat

Since Scat was derived from Sheepshead we need to look out for Sheepshead games of the age.³¹ It remains that the only known source for rules of "Schaafkopf", so spelt, from around 1800 is Paul Hammer, *Die deutschen Kartenspiele*. There were four editions from 1810 to 1817.³² I have not seen any of these, but the account on the game was reprinted in von Alvensleben's *Encyclopädie*.³³ Save for one, all the *Schaafkopf* games listed are point trick games of the ace-ten group.³⁴ The characteristic feature of the Sheepshead group is the promotion of unters and also sometimes some obers as "wenzels" to the top of the trump suit.

For the origin of Scat we need to look only at the games using a single 32 card pack and unters only as wenzels. Cards rank in trumps: wenzels, ace, king, ober, ten, nine, eight, seven. Non-trump: ace, king, ober, ten, nine, eight, seven. The



The unters of a Skat pack ("*Neue Schwerdter Karte*" made by Industrie-Comptoir Leipzig c.1809, Collection Sigmar Radau).

tens rank below the obers. Unters rank acorns, leaves, hearts, bells. Card points: aces 11 each, tens 10, kings 4, obers 3, unters 2, others 0. Total = 120 per pack.

Interesting in our context is the determination of the trump suit. This is either (a) fixed to bells as the permanent trump suit; or (b) there is a single bidding round which could be called quantity overcall: The side with most prospective trumps in one hand has priority, and if this results in a tie there are additional decision criteria.³⁵

³¹ The following discussion is based on the evidence provided by Dietrich/Hoffmann.

³² Dietrich/Hoffmann report the editions of 1810, 1811, and 1813. John McLeod owns one of 1817 (private communication), but it also appears in library catalogs. All editions were printed in Leipzig.

³³ "Schaafkopf", in: Alvensleben, p. 465-481.

³⁴ There is a plain trick game for players as individuals.

³⁵ Fortunately, David Parlett is not quite right when he thinks that the original jacks

There is no record of a *Schaafkopf* variant for three players in Hammer, but the story of how Hempel discovered the game indicates that those might have existed. Dietrich/Hoffmann list several possibilities for three-player Sheepshead or “Protoscat” variants. Features common to all: ten cards out of 32 are dealt to each player, one player plays alone against the other two, takes the remaining two cards (the “Skat”), and discards two which count in his favour in the end.

The listed variants of the game are: (1) Dealers are the lone players and turn one of their cards for trump (as at Whist); (2) bells are permanent trumps but each of the players may choose to become the lone player;³⁶ (3) dealers are the lone players but may choose the trump suit after looking at their hand and the Skat; (4) each of the players may choose to become the lone player, bells as trumps may be over-called with a better suit according to wenzel suit order. The last two are the games which are mentioned in the first article on Scat, “*Das Skadspiel*”, in *Osterländische Blätter*. This magazine appeared 1818 to 1819 and was edited by Friedrich Hempel.³⁷

From the sources given by Dietrich/Hoffmann it seems that the first was the earliest variant; from Hammer one would guess the second might already have existed. It is obvious that it must have been a game without the quantity quality overcall bidding system, since that would likely have been adopted had it been known. The ranking of the ten is not reported for the first and second game, but its rank between ace and king is made explicit in the *Skadspiel* article.

9. Hombre, Tarock Hombre, Scat: ludemes

David Parlett calls “ludemes” the *conceptual* elements of games and defines them as follows:³⁸ “A *ludeme* is an element of play, comparable to, but distinct from, a game

only game is now extinct (“History of the game”, *Skat* series @ *Gourmet Games*): A modern descendant exists under the name “*Bauernstoss*” or “*Alter Schoofkopf*” in two villages in the Palatinate, wonderfully documented online by Gerhard Zwick (@ “*Bauernstoss*” – ein unterhaltsames Kartenspiel aus Erfweiler/Pfalz, latest update March 2015). A six wenzel game with the particular bidding procedure is still played on the Faeroe Islands (“*Sjavs*” @ McLeod’s *Card Game Rules*), and at Fehmarn they play the plain trick-taking game *Scharwenzel* which shares many other game elements with early Sheepshead (John McLeod, “Playing the Game: *Scharwenzel*”, *The Playing-Card*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2006). Finally, the Lithuanian game of “*Avinas*” has quantity overcall as a secondary trump determination mechanism (@ *Card Game Rules*).

³⁶ This is still a popular format with eight wenzels and ten high. It is the variant of the @ World Sheepshead Series in USA, but also played in the Palatinate, as I am told by Mr. Zwick (with hearts as permanent trumps – in the Palatinate the most popular game is a variant of Bavarian *Schafkopf*).

³⁷ “*Das Skadspiel*”, *Osterländische Blätter*, Jg. 1818, Nr. 30, p. 238–239, reprinted in Dietrich/Hoffmann, p. 8–9. In issue 9 of the same year Hempel published a poem featuring various card games, among them *Skad*, see Matthes, *Altenburg und das Kartenspiel*.

³⁸ “What is a ludeme? Who invented it and what does it mean?” (2014), *Incomplete Gamester* series @ *Gourmet Games*.

component or instrument of play. Kings, queens, bishops, knights, rooks, pawns, and a chequered board, all constitute the instruments of play or the components of the game of Chess. Ludemes are the conceptual elements of the game, most typically equivalent to its 'rules' of play. For example, whereas the material piece shaped like a horse and designated 'knight' is a component of the game, the distinctively skewed move of a knight is a ludeme of the class 'rule of movement'."

The particular pack used for a card game is thus the *instrument of play* and as such not a ludeme.

Hombre, Tarock, Hombredans and Skat are all trick taking games with trumps of the usual European kind. In all three games there is one player against the other two — this is the great feature Hombredans brought into card play.

Hombredans is a plain trick game, while Skat and Tarock³⁹ are point trick games. This is a crucial difference since the latter calls for strategies like ducking a trick in order to catch a valuable card later which are absent from plain trick taking games.⁴⁰

As to the rank of the ten in Skat: it ranks low in Hammer's *Schaafkopf*, but high in *Skat*. Dietrich/Hoffmann say they "could not resolve the question how the particular ranking of the ten arises".⁴¹ In the main text they write: "Skat is different in this respect [the ten ranking between ace and king] from all other games of the Sheepshead family, but also of Tarock. At L'Hombredans [...] the ten is missing."⁴² Again, this is a game component, not a ludeme. The conceptual point is that at Skat as at Tarock the cards in the side suits rank according to their card point value. This has no equivalent at Hombredans since all cards have the same value.

The relation of trump length to plain suit length is exactly 11:7 both in Skat and Tarock (at Tarock if one counts the Fool as a trump there are 22 trumps and 14 cards in each suit), at Hombredans the trump suit is only one or two cards longer than the plain suit ones.

At Skat and Tarock almost all cards are dealt out to the players, there is a talon, the "Skat", whose size is a fraction of the hand; at Hombredans, the talon is greater than the hand. Also, at Skat and Tarock the Skat is picked up first and cards are discarded afterwards and the card points in the discard count in favour of the lone player. At the standard form of Hombredans players must discard before taking cards from the talon.⁴³ There are no restrictions as to what the lone player is allowed to discard in Hombredans or Skat, there are such restrictions in Tarock.

In bidding of Tarock, Hombredans as well as Hombredans proper more difficult games rank higher than easier ones. This is *not* the case in any of the four early Skat

³⁹ I shall write just Tarock if a feature appears in both, Grosstarock and Tarock Hombredans.

⁴⁰ The *Taschenbuch* has lengthy discussions as to when one should wait for high valued cards and when not.

⁴¹ Dietrich/Hoffmann, fn. 85.

⁴² Dietrich/Hoffmann, p. 45.

⁴³ There were introduced bids like "obscure" or "casco" which complicate the picture.

variants from the previous section. In two of them (variant 1 and 3) the dealer plays alone against the other two. In (2) bells are permanent trumps and one asks around who wants to play, but there is no actual bidding. Only variant (4) allows later players to bid higher than earlier ones by proposing with a higher trump suit – but this does not make a game more *difficult*. Variant (2) resembles Tarock Hombre most with its fixed trump suit. The idea of a suit overcall in variant (4) may have been borrowed from Hombre proper.⁴⁴ Only the later introduction, around 1820, of games without Skat exchange (called “*Hand*” games nowadays) yields the element that more difficult games rank higher than easier ones. And that feature may have well been taken up from Hombre proper together with the term “Solo” as it was called back then.

The rules of trick play of Scat and Hombre are like those of Whist and unlike Tarock where players who cannot follow suit must play trump. It makes of course a crucial difference in game tactics. But if we took this feature as defining different families of games then otherwise rather similar games of McLeod’s *Card Game Rules* would fall into different categories (e.g. the Jass family would have to be split between not only the French, Swiss and Dutch variants, but the latter also into Amsterdam and Rotterdam families of card games).

At Scat and Tarock Hombre the opponents count their card points together whereas at Hombre the whole point is that the opponents don’t throw their tricks together!⁴⁵ –

One could go on and try to identify more ludemes. But by now it should be clear that the difference in the instrument of play of Scat and Tarock Hombre hides conceptual proximity. The conceptual skeleton of Scat resembles Tarock Hombre much more than Hombre proper. Certainly, there are enough crucial similarities to Hombre proper to make Scat a good crossover of those two games with Schafkopf as its foundation. But however exactly one values the game elements, Dietrich/Hoffmann’s note that Tarock was of “only limited influence” on early Skat must certainly be reversed: Both from a “ludemic” point of view as well as considering the card playing culture of place and time: Tarock in the form of Tarock Hombre was a major if not a principal influence for Skat.

So did Hempel’s circle invent Skat based on four-player Schafkopf (as John McLeod has argued long ago) or did a three player game already exist (as Dietrich/Hoffmann think)? We have no direct evidence. But the very name of the game suggests that they might have invented it: If a three player game had existed under the name Schafkopf but with the discard feature (Skat) there would have been no reason to give it a new name. This makes more sense if that

⁴⁴ Or the game of Boston, although Dietrich/Hoffmann reject this hypothesis as unnecessary, see fn. 91.

⁴⁵ Parlett, David, “Ombre: The original bidding game” (2015), *Historic Card Games series @ Gourmet Games*.

characteristic feature was transferred to Schafkopf to turn a four player game into one for three to be played like Tarock Hombre.

That Dietrich/Hoffmann did not even consider Tarock Hombre as a contributor to Skat is certainly due to the fact that the game was entirely forgotten in Germany. So when did this happen? To find an answer we will proceed from Altenburg to Berlin in the next part of this series.

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Modern proof from a copper plate used by Christoph Eberhard Sutor in Weimar after 1795 (Collection Peter Endebrock). Sutor was second servant in Goethe's house, and in 1789 Goethe put a guarantee for a loan of the money to establish Sutor's card factory.