

Development of Xiangqi in Germany

German Xiangqi Association (DXB) : Rudolf Reinders, Xue Zhong

Local start-up of Xiangqi in Germany

In the last century up to about 1970 to 1980 only very small groups of Chinese people were living in Germany. Therefore, for the average German at that time almost no sources were available to get in contact with the game of Xiangqi (Chinese Chess). Only sinologists had the chance to get access to Chinese literature on the game and its history. However, most of the German sinologists were focused more on the modern language, politics, economy, history etc. It seemed that Xiangqi was not really considered as an important cultural heritage and a game with similar intellectual challenges as the international chess. Some travelers to China reported on a board game similar to Chinese checkers or Draughts and did not even recognize it as the Chinese counterpart to international chess with a long history and tradition. In the 1980s at different regions in Germany some activities started to introduce Xiangqi to a broader community. Just to mention some places exemplarily:

Mannheim: most players were Vietnamese; they organized e.g. a visit of a Chinese delegation with a simultaneous display of Master Zhao Guorong.

Aachen: Vladimir Budde, a Master in International Chess, founded a club and published an introductory book on Xiangqi including historic aspects



Cover of the Quarterly XIANGQI

Hamburg: Uwe Frischmuth and Dr. Michael Naegler founded a Xiangqi club in 1989 called „Spielgemeinschaft Chinaschach von Hamburg von 1989“. Later they organized different events including visits of Chinese delegations with Hu Ronghua.

Berlin: Here most of the activities were initiated by Rainer Schmidt. Because he studied sinology he was able to translate information on Xiangqi from Chinese to German.

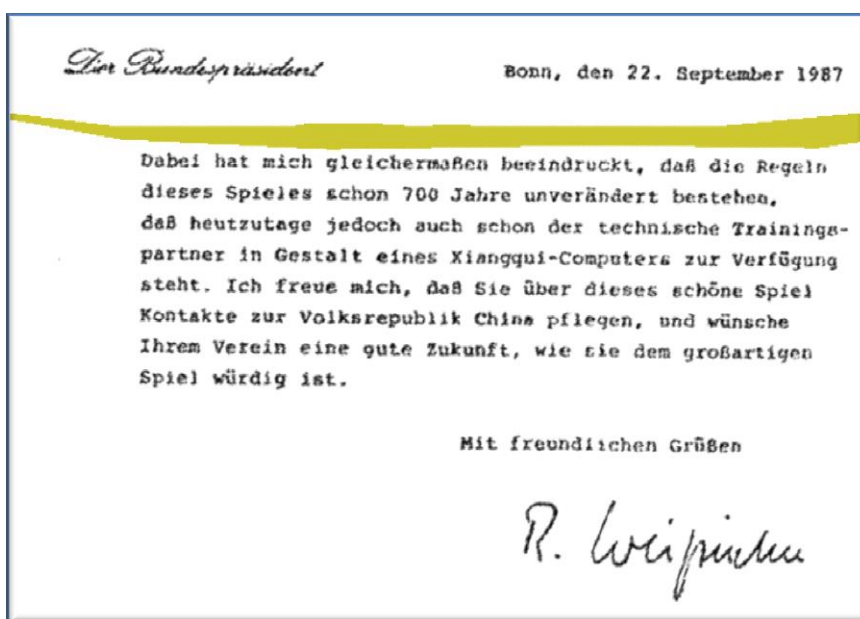
He published books on introduction to Xiangqi, Openings and Games in China. From 1986 to 1989 he together with Rainer Caspary published a quarterly called „XIANGQI, Zeitschrift für chinesisches Schach“. His focus was also on the history of Xiangqi, a topic about which he published some articles and even recently he founded a work group on predecessors of Xiangqi, e.g. Liubo.



Rainer Schmidt, Berlin in 1993

In 1985 he was co-founder of a registered association „XIANGQI“. This club organized tournaments, visits to China, contacts with chinese delegations and introductory courses as well. Later, together with the Hamburg group they started german wide the organization of Xiangqi tournaments which was the basis for the German Xiangqi Association (DXB). It must be specially mentioned that German Xiangqi Association was established by the Germans, aiming at popularizing Xiangqi among non-Chinese people. Its members are mostly Germans.

The former President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Richard von Weizsaecker, is very interested in international chess and a quite good hobby player. Therefore, the Berlin Xiangqi players forwarded information on Xiangqi and the activities in Germany to the President. He acknowledged the establishment of contacts to the People’s Republic of China with the following letter dated 22 September 1987.



In the last part he wrote:

“I am glad you are establishing contacts to the People’s Republic of China by means of this marvelous game. I wish your Association a good future worthy of this magnificent game.”

Wishes from Richard von Weizsaecker, President of the Federal Republic of Germany

Public attention was attracted in Germany when the famous german International Grandmaster (IGM) of international chess, Dr. Robert Huebner, got in contact with the Berlin Xiangqi group. He attended the sessions of a chinese delegation (with Hu Ronghua, Qian Hongfa, Xu Bo) for getting experience and practice for some tournaments. He participated in the European Championship in Paris 1987 (6th place), the European Championship in London (2nd place), the third „Seven Star Cup“ (七星杯) in Chengdu, Sichuan in 1987 (24th), and the World Championship in Beijing 1993 (36th, but best NCNV player!).



Dr. Robert Huebner, 1980 ranked No. 3 in the world of International Chess

1993: The Year of Launching the International Popularization of Xiangqi

1993 was a busy year for the German xiangqi players. In September the Queens Cup was carried out in Hamburg with Uwe Frischmuth on the second place behind Pu Minggang (a Chinese player from Hamburg). In the same month Uwe Frischmuth and Hajo Siewert participated in an international tournament in the UK (The Chinese Chess Week Exmouth), and finished on place 3 and 4 resp.

The European Championship was held in Paris in October. Germany was represented by 18 players. Nguyen Van Dua was ranked 15th of 56 players with 31 Asian players. Best non-Asian player was Stefan Scholz from Team Germany on rank 22.

Furthermore, the Berlin Summer Cup was initiated which this year has its 20th anniversary.

However, the real highlight of the year was the Xiangqi World Championship held in April at Beijing. 11 female and 76 male players attended the competition. The new World Champion became Xu Tianhong (China) followed by his compatriot and world champion of 1991, Zhao Guorong. From Germany 12 players participated in the tournament (11 are NCNV players):

Dr. Robert Huebner, Hajo Siewert, Dr. Michael Naegler, Uwe Frischmuth, Simon Henke, Markus Brenner, Stefan Scholz, Siegfried Huber, Do Tuyet Ha (Vietnamese), Jan Berents, Falko Stockter and Sven Diederichs.



World Champion Xu Tianhong



Runner-up Zhao Guorong

The year 1993 was very important for the international popularization of Xiangqi. In Beijing the World Xiangqi Federation was founded, aiming clearly for world wide popularization of the Chinese cultural heritage, Xiangqi.

At a WXF meeting Uwe Frischmuth gave a speech with the vision, that Germany could also be more active in the International community of Xiangqi. He ended his statements with:

(Friendship first; Competition second) 友谊第一; 比赛第二.

This vision becomes more and more reality, so Germany conducted several European Championships and regularly internal tournaments for individual and team championships. Regular participation in European and World Championships is now normality.

German delegates are involved in official functions of the WXF.

- Dr. Michael Naegler, the strongest NCVN player in Germany, is Vice President of the WXF
- Siegfried Huber is Member of the Qualification Commission and Study Commission
- Xue Zhong, Claus Tempelmann are members of the Promotion Commission



Uwe Frischmuth giving a speech, 1993

Rudolf Reinders , Claus Tempelmann and Michael Naegler acted as international arbiters.



Beijing 2012: Wang Tianyi vs Xue Zhong
Arbiter: Rudolf Reinders



Dr. Michael Naegler in a Xiangqi-Master Show at Tsinghua University

Latest News: The German Xiangqi Association was commissioned to host the coming „Hanxin Cup“, 2014 in Hamburg Confucius Institute!



A Xiangqi-Master delegation from Chinese Xiangqi Association (CXA) led by Secretary-General Ms Liu Xiaofang at a reception at the Hamburg City Hall during European Xiangqi Championship in 2010

The German Xiangqi Association (DXB) would appreciate continuing the very good relations to the World Xiangqi Federation (WXF) and devoting to the international popularization of Xiangqi among non-Chinese people!