

2025-12-20

On firzán, alferza, reyna and dama

**GIOCHI DELI PARTITI:
ALA RABIOSA.**
Dice lo biancho alo negro che li dara mato in doi
trati ne piu ne mancho lo biancho iocara prima la
pedona in-a, e sera mato lo negro per forza p che se
dara scacho. lo biancho se coprita cō lo cavallo & li
dara scacho mato in discuberto. e si lo biancho iocasse
aleramēte nō se daria. p ch lo negro iocaria lo ro-i. b.



Loeges de partidos de la dama.
Dize el biancho q li dara mate in dos lances ni mas
ni menos. el blanco iuega primer el peon in-a. y al se-
gondo lances mate in descubierta. y si iugasse in o-
ro modo nō se daria. por che lo negro iugaria su ro-
que in-b. y se cubreria con el. y esta es la defensa.
F i.

— Damiano, 1512 (1967 edition). Author's library. Note the typical extensive descriptive notation of the moves. At the bottom, we see the use of dama in Spanish.

Here is a new text by José A. Garzón, whom I would like to thank. He told us about in Valencia last September.

You can find a summary in English and download the [full text in Spanish](#) in PDF format.

It was published in the book *Pasiones Bibliográficas 8*, which has just been released, edited by the Societat Bibliogràfica Valenciana Jerònima Galés.

Summary in English

The article examines the origin, naming, and nature of the queen in chess, arguing that the late 15th-century reform of the game was not the result of a gradual feminization of an existing piece, but rather the creation of a completely new piece, endowed with a new name, a new movement, and a new strategic role.

In ancient and medieval chess (shatranj), the piece next to the king was called ferz (or firzán, alferza) and had a very limited range of movement. In medieval Europe, under the strong influence of Jacobus de Cessolis' moral treatise, the piece was often referred to as regina or domina in Latin, and reina in Romance languages. However, these feminine names did not bring about any change in the rules.

III.
*Ninguna pieza ni debe jugar de la casa de su mismo
 color, exceptuando quando se enroquea el Rey, quando el
 Rey, que se muda al mismo tiempo con la Torre; pero
 en este caso no puede adelantarse el Rey de la Torre ni
 otro algarave como con el caso de promoción en Italia, si
 ando entonces sobre las Juegas.*

IV.
*Siempre que un Rey llega a alguna de las casas de
 la ultima linea de l Tablero, que es la primera linea
 del enemigo, se hace Dama o Reyna, con qual sea su
 marcha; excepto y particular de la Reyna; y es el
 Rey de Torre, el Rey de Rey, y el Rey de Rey, y es el
 Rey de Torre, el Rey de Rey, y el Rey de Rey, y es el
 Rey de Torre, el Rey de Rey, y el Rey de Rey, y es el*

V.
*El Rey que llega a la ultima linea no debe hacer
 de Dama quando la Torre es el color del mismo Rey, pero
 puede convertirse en la pieza que desiere de las otras
 por que se fahcen para evitar la desigualdad de otros
 a una Dama, como practican en Alemania, mas
 mayor numero de Torres, Alfiles, y Caballos de loro
 que corresponden a cada partido.*

General Laws of the Game of Chess (Barcelona, 1781).

Author's library. Queen and King remain synonymous two centuries after Ruy López's treatise. It is noteworthy that pawns are prohibited from promoting to queens if the original queen is still on the board, as was already the case in *Scachs d'amor*. Minor promotion was probably accepted in Spain at the beginning of the 18th century.

The core argument of the article is that the term dama does not represent a simple linguistic shift, but appears exclusively with the birth of modern chess, first attested in the poem *Scachs d'amor* (Valencia, c. 1475), the foundational text of the reform. The authors of the poem did not merely rename a piece: they deliberately created a new chess piece, initially conceived as a "total piece" combining the movements of all others, except the knight, whose inclusion was eventually rejected as impractical.

A systematic analysis of early sources shows that in all technical Spanish chess treatises of the first century of modern chess, the piece is consistently called dama. Medieval terms such as reina, regina, or alferza survive only in moral, allegorical, or transitional contexts. The shift from reina to dama therefore marks a conceptual break, not a linguistic continuity.

The article also critically examines attempts to link the powerful queen to a real historical woman (such as Isabella the Catholic). These interpretations are considered secondary and largely symbolic: the reform is fundamentally technical and internal to the game. Political references in *Scachs d'amor* do exist, but they are allegorical and sometimes even critical rather than celebratory.

Finally, the introduction of the queen, together with the modern bishop, radically transformed chess. Jumping pieces (except the knight) were abandoned, long-range movement became dominant, and the game shifted toward strategy, tactics, and opening theory. This was not a slow evolution, but the creation of a new game, explicitly identified by contemporaries as the chess of the queen (*axedres de la dama*).

[A propósito de firzán, alferza, reyna y dama - José A. Garzón \(1.0 MiB\)](#)