

BOOKLETS OF MID-17TH CENTURY LEHRKARTEN

Franco Pratesi

Educational cards, representing a large area of non-standard packs, are discussed in every history of the subject; for a useful introduction, see D.Hoffmann *Die Welt der Spielkarte*, pp. 38-43. After the famous Desmarests' packs, engraved in Paris by the Florentine Della Bella in c1640, whole series of similar packs followed in most European countries with the same idea of a new kind of handbook, much easier to read and memorise, as Thomas Murner had already shown at the beginning of the 16th century. Germany was perhaps the most active country in that domain, and many packs still exist from that provenance; unfortunately, we are often left with cards without precise information about printers and particularly dates.

It may therefore be useful to consider four booklets printed in Nuremberg only a few years after the Paris packs and which were evidently devised in order to accompany the corresponding packs: Geographical, Historical, Astronomical and Moral. The printing is almost entirely in Gothic characters, and the format is apparently the same as that of the cards. Copies of the booklets are preserved in the Gambalunga Library in Rimini.

All of them were published in Nuremberg by printers of the Endter family, and both the Astronomical and Geographical booklets bear the 1656 date on the title-page, thus belonging to the first specimens of a long series of similar German editions. The Endter family is less well known to card historians than the Hoffmann one. However, already the father of the two brothers Wolfgang and Johann Andreas, who printed these booklets and the corresponding cards had already obtained privileges from the Prince of Saxony, according to p. 9 of Geographical booklet. Later, further members of the family continued the printing business, since in subsequent editions of educational cards we find the addition "Seel. Erben" i.e. "dead, heirs". The packs and the printers enjoyed some popularity in their time; for instance, a quotation may be found on p. 57 of the Latin treatise about games by jurist F.E.Lehmann, printed in 1680.

Not only is it very difficult in general to suggest a chronological order for the many successive issues of similar German educational cards, but also the exact order of four booklets under consideration is not very plain. For instance, the Astronomical pack is stated to be structured similarly to the Geographical and Historical packs, so making it seem to be the third pack issued. But the Geographical booklet, although printed in same year as the Astronomical one, actually corresponds to a second augmented edition, the first having possibly been printed some months earlier. Let us consider the individual booklets in more detail.

1. Geographical

The booklet of 36 pages originally accompanied a 52-card pack. It is dedicated to the Elector Prince John George of Saxony, and is full of erudite matter and quotations from classic literature. It therefore seems likely to be the first of the series, still needing to find favour in the eyes of the authorities. Near the end, there are several poems in German and in Latin, with the last verse promising that everybody who has studied the pack will become a veritable Columbus. In this case, geography is extended to the whole world, including America. The four suits are thus related to the Continents: Green (Grün or Laub) to Europe, Yellow (Schellen) to Africa, Red (Herz) to Asia, and Gold (Eichel) to America.

The title-page reads as follows:

Das Geographische Kartenspiel : Das ist: Kunstartige Ausbildung der vor- trefflichsten Königreiche und Land-
--

schafften in der ganzen Welte / auf
 52. Karten Blättern /
 Zu Behuff und erfreulichem
 Nutzen der lehrgerigen
 Jugend /
 Welcher / durch so beliebte
 Weise / durch viel spielen viel zu
 lernen / unfehlbare Mittel an die
 Hand gegeben werden.
 Ludendo discere mundum
 Quis vetat?
 Zum zweyten mal aufgelegt / und
 vermehret
 Nürnberg
 In Verlegung Wolffg. Deß Jüng.
 und Johann Andr. Endtern / 1656

[The corresponding cards are more easily traced as they more closely resemble the Desmarests original. Allegorical figures of countries have the usual type of caption beneath. I am convinced that the packs I have found are published by Endter, but whether or not they are all the 1656 edition is impossible to say. German suitmarks. Complete packs in my view of 52 cards (but no booklet) in Kunstbibliothek, Berlin, Inv. 30, 94. There is also a part pack in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London E6303-(1-29) 1910. There are also several other candidates.]

2. Historical

The booklet of 67 pages also refers to a 52-card pack. It is stated that it follows Geographical issue, and that a pack of Famous Men as well as the Astronomical pack are expected to follow if this one is well accepted by the readers. The Famous Men pack is not mentioned in other booklets of this series *[though a pack of German-language "Famous Men" certainly appeared; examples from at least one version are in the V & A]*

The title page reads as follows:

Historisches
 Kartenspiel
 von den
 Berühmten Weibern.
 Erstlich von
 M. Jean des Marests,
 in Französischer Sprache
 beschrieben.
 Nun aber in das Teutsche
 gebracht / und mit einer
 Vorrede
 gleichständiges Inhalts
 vermehret.
 Faemineum ludendo noscere sexum
 Quid vetat ?
 Nürnberg
 Bey Johann Andreas Endtern /
 und Wolfgang deß Jüngern
 Seel. Erben.

From the mention “Seel. Erben” under the name of one of the Endter brothers, however, some doubt exists that this undated booklet may represent a later reprint of the original work. Part IV, on pages 41-60, is especially concerned with the rules of Hoc. The well-known game, in which one gets rid of cards by placing as many as possible in suit sequence onto the stock, is here explicitly referred to as French and is described in some detail. In particular, the final step is here preceded by three successive biddings and showdowns based on point, sequence, three and/or four of a kind.

[No date here, but the style suggests c.1674. There is a part pack in the Germanisches Museum, Nuremberg (405-454), and also in the Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Inv. K.1.13396/1-3, and probably others.]

3. Astronomical

The title-page reads as follows:

Das Astronomische Kartenspiele : Das ist : kunstrichtige Abbildung aller Gestirne am Him- mel / ober und unter der Erden / Zu Behuf der lehrgie- rigen Jugend / Gleich den Geographi- schen und Historischen Spiel- karten verfasst. Ludendo discere stellas Quis vetat? Nürnberg In Verlegung Wolgff. deß Jüng. und Joh Andr. Endtern . Im Jahr 1656.
--

The booklet of 60 pages also accompanies a 52-card pack. In the frontispiece there is an engraving with the main constellations. Besides the usual games, the 52-card pack may be really used – by placing cards side by side – to study the sky, and particularly the exact order of the Zodiac and the principal constellations.

[These cards seem to have been of original design, the format producing a number of successors. The concept was also copied, sometime later than the two editions given here. The imprint (as given above) appears to have been a new arrangement, as von Reise, in a manuscript held by the Deutsches Spielkarten Museum, gives for 1655 the style simply Joh. Andr. Endtern, Verlag. Probably an identical edition, with the same frontispiece but reworded title-page, appeared in 1674 under the imprint Verlegung Wolfgang Moritz Endters und Johann Andreas Seel. Successors. (Mann, 2651, cards and booklet.) German suitmarks. Lengthy typeset captions below illustration of constellation.]

4. Moral

Contrary to the other booklets, the text is here written parallel to the longer edges of the pages. The title-page reads as follows:

Die Moralische

Spielkarten /
in welchen
Die Tugendlehre /
mit gegengestellten
Lastern /
kunstsinnig ausgebildet worden.
Nürnberg
In Verlegung Wolffg. deß Jüngern /und Joh. Andreas Endtern .

The booklet has 95 pages, and is concerned with the illustration of virtues and vices; an engraving with the representation of several virtues is directly printed in the frontispiece. It is in some ways different from the others of the series. Above all, it accompanies a 36-card pack, stated to be suitable for Piquet, Triumph, and similar popular games. The alleged reason is that virtues are not so numerous as stars, or historical personages. (Among the topics giving rise to 52-card packs, “renowned stories” are also mentioned, and were already used as a basis for a French pack, though they do not seem to have been mentioned any more in these early German editions [*even if a German booklet concerning a pack of fables does exist in D. Temperley’s collection*].)

Among several uses suggested for the cards, building card castles by children is mentioned; it is precisely to children and young people that the pack is recommended so that they can learn as soon as possible the represented topics, as well as their meaning.

[No date here, but the style of name suggests c.1656. I have been able to find only two illustrations of cards probably belonging to this pack. (Or to a later one, closely related, in which Latin fonts are used instead of Gothic - F.P.) They appear in Hoffmann’s Die Welt der Spielkarte, as plate 70a, with an inventory number of B712 in the Deutsches Spielkarten Museum. These cards, with the same format as before, have German suitmarks, and an allegorical figure stands above the caption.]

The four booklets were gathered together. A fact that may help in dating some of the corresponding packs. With regard to contents, while the three earliest books and packs have an acknowledged French source (even quoted on the title-page in the case of the Historical booklet), the Moral item, intended to spread knowledge about virtues, appears to be the most original. At the outset, the Endter brothers asked for privileges by the authorities, stating that they had not cared to change the original copperplates of a work formerly devoted to the King of France. They later developed original drawings, better related to German popular usage and in particular to the typical 36-card pack; a process that appears to have continued with similar modifications introduced into the standard subjects. It must be acknowledged, however, that dating German educational cards in general remains a difficult task, even with clues of the above mentioned kind.

I gratefully acknowledge the collaboration of Miss Sylvia Mann; in particular, hers are the comments in italics in square brackets.