

# Shogi Internationalization: Europe

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## **Preface**

I have started playing shogi 10 years ago, being inspired by Japanese manga. At some point I began to dream about becoming a professional shogi player. In 2017 that dream came true. I know that many people share with me an even bigger dream - spreading shogi through the world. I hope this thesis will bring some light onto how to walk toward that goal.

First of all, I would like to thank Professor Brett Collins, who spent hours on proofreading and gave me a huge motivational support into finishing this work.

I would like to thank all the shogi friends, who have answered my long questionnaire, shared many important data or spend literally days on exchanging emails with me. It was a pleasure to exchange ideas with you.

Above all special thanks to my mother, who read my work the most carefully of all.

Kofu, January 9, 2018

Karolina Styczynska

## Research Objectives

Shogi is a Japanese game that has gained popularity around the world. The origins of shogi are the same as western chess (i.e., Indian chaturanga), hence the alternate name of shogi is Japanese chess. Modern shogi (i.e., hon shogi) has an approximate 400-year history, dating from its approval by the Tokugawa Shogunate (c. 1612). Largely unchanged over time, shogi contains many traditional aspects of Japanese culture. For example, Chinese characters label pieces, and Japanese greetings are used before and after a match. Cultural differences, such as language, create many problems for non-Japanese players, as non-Japanese players often cannot read the Chinese characters or are unaware of the Japanese manners. Such differences also cause distinctions from the Japanese approach to several aspects of the game. For example, in the style of shogi played in Europe, Chinese characters are sometimes substituted with symbols or letters, especially for novice players. Also, traditional Japanese greetings are changed into local language equivalents, for example, *yoroshiku onegaishimasu* (I'd like to rely on you to play this game with me, [Kawasaki, 2013, p.101]) into "have a good game".

Japanese people are often accustomed to playing from childhood, for example,

being taught by their fathers or grandfathers. Also in Japan, shogi is often seen on TV programs, for instance the NHK (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai* - Japan Broadcasting Corporation) channel airs the shogi tournament called the NHK Cup, broadcasted every Sunday. Moreover, there are tournaments for children and adults all around Japan. Anyone can go to places called *shōgi dōjō* (shogi practice places), where people can find opponents matched to a similar level, after paying the entry fee. Europeans have similar customs with chess. Children in Europe also learn chess from parents, join chess clubs at school, or join local chess tournaments. There are professional chess players in Europe as there are shogi professionals in Japan.

The European way of thinking about shogi is different from the Japanese one. Contrary to Japan, where shogi is connected to childhood memories, for Europeans, shogi is just a strange oriental version of chess with a difficult to understand design and complicated rules. The number of shogi players in Europe is still low. Therefore a different approach to promoting shogi is needed and should be taken when promoting the game in Europe. In order to negotiate the cultural differences of shogi for the purpose of promotion in Europe, the following topics need to be studied: How has shogi changed so far under the influence of other cultures? How could the international shogi community help non-Japanese people learn shogi? How could the international shogi

community help to establish and sustain shogi organizations or societies outside of Japan and especially in Europe?

The objectives of this study are the following:

1. Describe the historical and the current position of shogi in Europe – popularity, existing organizations, existing events.
2. Describe the view of shogi outside Japan and how it has affected the game.
3. Discover the difficulties to learn (rules and studying) shogi and how to solve them.
4. Describe new ways to develop shogi around the world (while preserving Japanese culture).

Apart from statistical data, to the best of my knowledge, no researchers have studied shogi development in Europe. To answer research questions, a questionnaire method was used. Question topics concerned each player's histories and language abilities, development of shogi organizations in the player's' country, knowledge of international tournaments and organizations, availability of learning materials and tools, and received organizational support. Additionally, older English shogi literature was compared with current literature.

## **Background**

The background was divided into two chapters: the first one describes situation of shogi in Europe before the year 2000, and the second one talks about shogi in Europe after the year 2000. The first part concentrates mostly around Shogi magazine (1976) and the second part analyses the data from the Federation of European Associations database (Fesa home page - home, 2010-2017).

### **Shogi in Europe in years 1975-2000**

“Shogi: Japan's Game of Strategy Book” (Leggett, 1966) was the book that inspired George Hodges to pick up shogi, according to Fairbairn (1987, November). In 1975 Hodges has founded The Shogi Association (TSA) and from 1976 he has been publishing the SHOGI magazine, reaching total of 70 issues. The magazine was officially recognized by the Japan Shogi Association (Hodges, Editorial, 1976, October) and The London Shogi Club was recognized as a shogi branch of the Japan Shogi Association (Hodges, Editorial, 1979, January). However, this was not the only shogi magazine in those times. There are mentions of magazines in other countries such as the Netherlands and the USA.

The Shogi magazine is full of information about shogi news in Japan and

Europe, shogi strategies theories, tournaments invitations and results, articles about professional world and Japanese culture (worth noting author was John Fairbairn), reports of shogi players visiting Japan and more. Since the beginning the Shogi magazine used the mix of English and Japanese shogi phrases to comment shogi games. Later it published articles about Japanese notation and a shogi dictionary.

The magazine contains Letters to the Editor and in later issues Comments sections that gives us an insight to mind of people of that period of time.

Comparison to chess by McDonnell (1977, November):

... Shogi gives each player two long-range pieces and many powerful short-ranged pieces, but greatly increases interest and complexity by allowing drops. However drops do allow a defender with pieces in hand, to circumvent the rules of movement as it were, and path up a weakened position weaknesses which might prove fatal in Chess are transient in Shogi and it is thus much harder to shift the balance except in a direct attack on the King. Another equilibrating factor in Shogi is the similarity in the value of the major pieces, there being nothing like the contrast in Chess where a Queen is comparable in strength of three minor pieces. This means that the advantage to be gained by the exchange of a Silver for a Bishop, say, is not great while winning the exchange in Chess is frequently



decisive - the balance is that delicate. Perhaps even more obvious though is the contrast in mobility in the two games. Shogi has to practically introduce mobility with drops, and indeed the game would be unpayably slow without them. Chess on the other hand has to reduce mobility by means of the unique nature of the pawns which are actually able to form immovable barriers. It is not unreasonable in fact to say that the pawns give Chess much of its character being at the same time the weakest pieces and potentially the strongest. ... (p. 18-19)

This letter points out the differences between shogi and chess: shogi has increased mobility and complexity, because of the drop rule, and the values of the pieces in shogi are similar to each other.

Comparison to chess by Kaufman (1980, March):

Despite my recent sensational result in chess, I consider Shogi a much superior and more interesting game. I learned Shogi in 1977 and my interest in it has grown steadily since, in proportion to my knowledge and skill. I always felt that chess was inherently too drawish and that openings were too important relative to the rest of the game. I even tried to think up ways to improve the rules to solve those defects. Shogi seems to me to be the answer to my problem. It is very near to being the perfect game. In Shogi, the player who plays better wins, much more so than at

chess. The combinations and attacks are beautiful, the game is logical, and the opening is not unduly important. The handicapping system is another huge plus. My goal is to become the strongest Occidental player and to popularize this great game in the west. (p. 2)

Unlike chess, shogi games do not often end in a draw. The opening stage is not as determining as in chess. Because of the similar values of the pieces, the handicap games are more entertaining in shogi than chess.

About westernizing by Knudtsen (1980, March):

... I think Shogi is a great game, maybe much better than ordinary chess - but to my mind its somewhat too "oriental". I do not much care for tradition, for the typical japanese aspects of the game, such as the use of japanesee words (untranslated) and the characters in the diagrams, for example. I think that to become international in the real meaning of the word the game must also be <<westernized>>. One may think this a pity or not, but it's really shame if such a good game as Shogi should be virtually unknown outside a small circle of devotees in our part of the world, because of unwillingness to touch japanese game-tradition. I say, if the japanese have invented a good game, let's transplant it into our society, changing what must be changed and building up our own way of

looking at the game and playing it, to spread it properly as it deserved! The  
japanese have so often taken western ideas and have fitted them into their society,  
that I don't see that it would be such a big crime to this time turn it the other way  
around... And as you know, the roots of the game may not even lay in Japan but in  
China and Korea. ... (p. 2)

The traditional Japanese expressions are hard to understand for European  
players. Forcing the Japanese culture might create small closed groups of players. It  
might be a good idea to adapt shogi to fit into European society, so that everybody can  
enjoy it equally.

About teaching by Bloomers (1980, July):

... My advice to Ingar: simply teach beginners the moves first on a Western  
set, and explain the basic strategic points. While playing point out a few tactics, but  
beware of overloading the novice with information. After the second or third game  
graduate to the Japanese set and never touch the Western one again. ... (p. 2)

Ideally, the players could learn shogi using Western pieces, then learn the  
traditional Japanese set.

Other interesting data that pointed out the countries that were interested in  
shogi was the list of clubs in the world (probably limited to the clubs that informed the

magazine of their existence) and tournament results. From those we can see that pioneer countries of shogi in Europe are Great Britain, Netherlands, Belgium and France.

The Shogi Association was selling shogi merchandise, visible in the advertisements in the Shogi magazine. Among usual products like Japanese, English or bilingual shogi books, traditional shogi sets or shogi puzzles, we can find unusual “westernized”, “graphical” or “large pieces with animal motif in addition to the Japanese kanji” sets. The Shogi magazine also defined the shogi notation, which is the similar to the modern chess-based notation (explained in the notes). The same notation was years later used in one of the most famous books “The Art of Shogi” (Hosking, 1996).

The magazine gives a lot of space to other shogi variants like *chu shogi* (middle shogi), *tori shogi* (bird shogi) and others as part of “great shogi games”. There are discussions between viewers about handicap system or reports about teaching children at school and finally about shogi tournament for under 18 years old children in Great Britain in 1987 (Campbell, 1987, May, p.9).

Parallel to this, national associations (called national bodies) in Netherlands, Belgium, France and finally in England itself were established. On 26th August 1985 in Merelbeke, Belgium, The Federation of European Shogi Associations was created.

There were several people involved in the FESA creation, for example Pieter Stouten (who became president of Dutch Shogi Association), Hans Secelle (the first FESA president) and Peter Blommers. Shogi.net webpage and Shogi-L (the Shogi Discussion List - a mailing list) were created in the 1990s as platforms used to exchange information about shogi online, and in 2001 reached around 400 subscribers (The Shogi Discussion List, n.d.). The First European Shogi Championship was run on 24th-26th August 1985 in Hague, Netherlands.

The creation of the FESA and the first ESC was only briefly mentioned in the Shogi magazine by Hodges. G.F. in Editorial (1985, January), then in a note at the bottom of the page (1985, September):

*It was also the intention of TSA to stage the very First European Championship but we have heard recently of plans to form The European Federation who would then be the proper body to stage such a championship. We await further details in due course. (p.3)*

*The very first European Shogi Championship was staged in Den Haag, Netherlands, on 24th, 25th and 26th August 1985. There were twelve entries in this event and the winner was Hans Secelle of Belgium with a splendid performance. He obtained a perfect score of 7-0. Many congratulations to Hans on this fine*

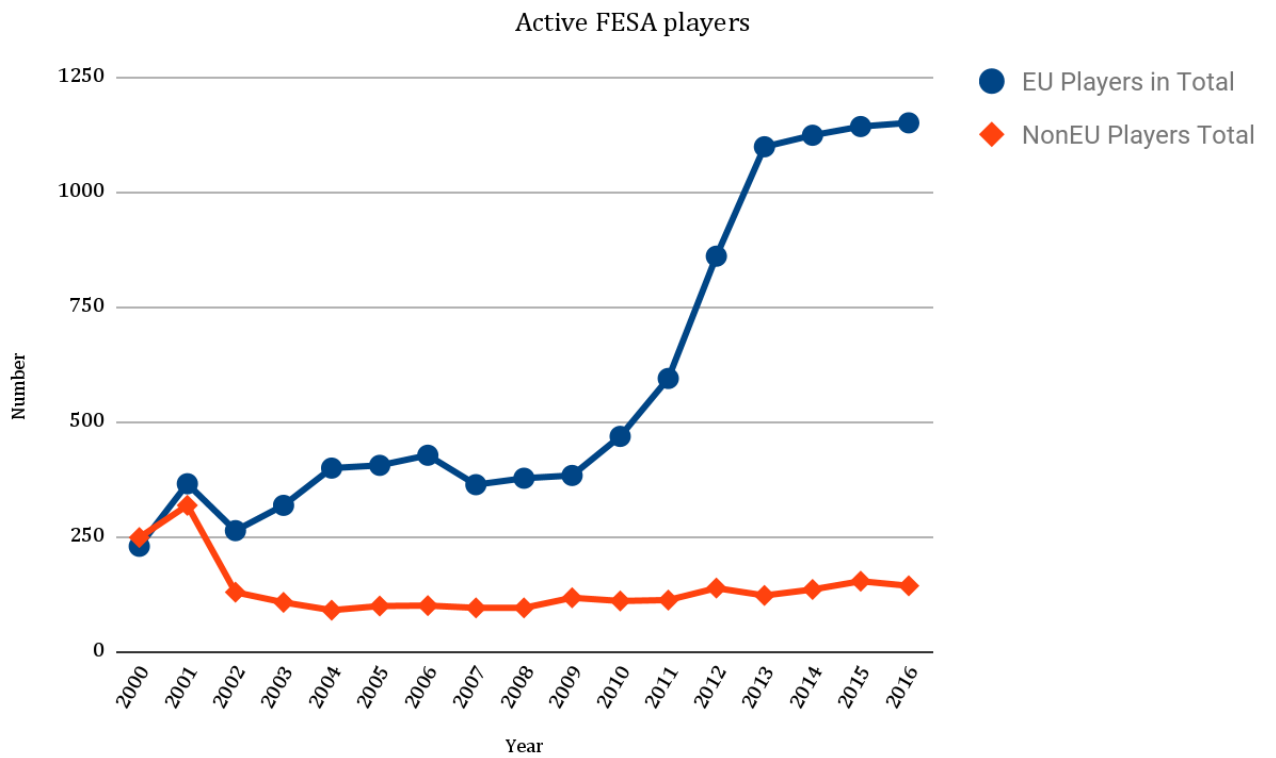
*achievement: he is now designated as European Shogi Champion of 1985 and has now also secured his promotion to 2-dan. The runner-up was Mike Sandeman, 3-dan of UK, who scored 6-1. Congratulations also to Eric Cheymol of France who gained his 2-dan grade. (p. 14)*

The little information that Shogi magazine published on the topic of the FESA and ESC might have been caused by dispute between those organizations.

In the end, the Shogi magazine and The Shogi Association ceased to exist, while the FESA is continuing its activities until now as one of the main organizations in Europe. One of the FESA duties is to control the rating system of players, therefore there is a great database of tournaments and players is available after year 2000.

### **Statistics between years 2000-2017 (January)**

Figure 1 and Figure 2 are showing the statistics in years 2000-2017. The data was taken from the official FESA homepage (Fesa home page - home, 2010-2017). The FESA have ELO ratings not only for European players, this is why there are two graphs for both.



*Figure 1.* Number of FESA listed players per year. Active players are players, who participated in tournament over the last 2 years. Number of players of a given year is taken from next year's January ELO list.

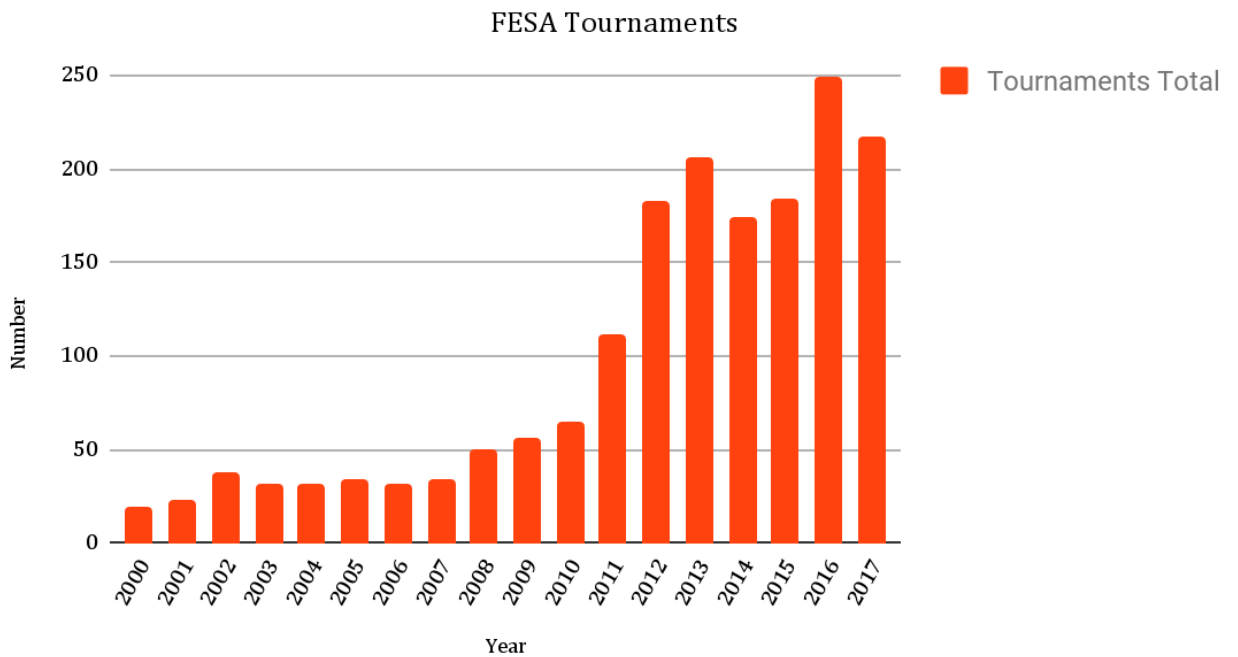


Figure 2. Number of tournaments acknowledged by the FESA per year.

Seeing the general data we can see that there is a raising number of players in Europe. Tournament numbers is raising each year as well. From the figures we may conclude that numbers started to raise around year 2010. In that year, international shogi server 81dojo.com appeared over the internet, following the Hidetchi video channel start in 2008 year. 81dojo.com was a platform that allowed many European players to communicate with each other, between and inside the countries, and made easier different forms of cooperation. Online tournaments and events were organized as well. This could be one of the reasons - people encouraged by the internet, created more offline tournaments. General data did not give a specific image of the situation, so more



detailed statistics for each country were created.

## **Existing Shogi Organizations**

The organizations that are important from European point of view

Japan:

1. The Japan Shogi Association (JSA) or Nihon Shogi Renmei (NSR) - founded in 1924, a public interest incorporated association (公益社団法人, kōeki shadan hōjin) since 2011. The JSA offices are placed in Tokyo and Osaka. The general objective of the JSA is to promote the culture of shogi and Japan and the activities are negotiating contracts with domestic media, providing game scores of professionals, publishing shogi magazine and results of the games, organizing tournaments and lectures, establishing new clubs and classrooms, train shogi coaches (指導員, shidōin), in purpose of shogi promotion and guidance, etc. (事業概要 | 将棋連盟について | 日本将棋連盟, Jigyō gaiyō | Shōgi Renmei ni tsuite | Nihon Shōgi Renmei, 2016). All of the shogi professionals and most of ladies shogi professionals are members of the JSA. The JSA operates the internet Shogi Club 24 server and officially supports other websites like 81dojo.com website. The JSA supports shogi internationally, one example is by the

organization of the International Shogi Forum since 1999.

2. The International Shogi Promotion Society (ISPS) - a non-profit organization supporting shogi popularization. Established in 1995, since 2000 became a specified nonprofit corporation (特定非営利活動法人, tokutei hieiri katudō hōjin). Their activities include gathering and providing information on the promotion of shogi outside Japan, enhancing network of foreign shogi players, making textbooks of shogi in foreign languages and assisting foreign people to learn shogi (ISPS Top Page).
3. Nekomado Co.,Ltd. - a joint-stock company (株式会社, kabushiki gaisha) that corporate vision is to promote shogi to the world (事業紹介|株式会社ねこまど, Jigyō shōkai | kabushiki gaisha Nekomado). Inside various activities, the one that affected the international world the most, could be publishing and selling English books and shogi merchandise abroad.

Europe:

1. The Federation of Shogi Associations (FESA) - the FESA is a non-profit organization (FESA homepage, 2017) that is responsible for organization of ESC and WOSC, and managing the ELO system. The FESA is currently

working on creating official documentation concerning its laws.

2. National shogi organizations - each country has only one national shogi organization, often belonging to the FESA federation. One of the responsibilities of the organization is to organize qualification tournaments for ISF.
3. Local clubs - players divided in each country by distance, create shogi clubs in their cities.

**Internet:**

The 81dojo website (2010) - an internet shogi server, under patronage of the JSA, created by Tomohide Kawasaki. Kawasaki is one of the shogi pioneers abroad, creator of the famous Shogi series videos on youtube and translator of shogi books. The website is considered the most international website, as it allows to have large number of international players and the application is available in over 20 languages. Its forum allowed international communities to communicate and organize together online activity, for example online tournaments.

## **International Events**

List of the international events that influence the shogi players in Europe, divided by the organization that manages the event.

Organized by the JSA:

1. International Shogi Festival (Shogi Forum) - organized once per 3 years since 1999. Representatives from countries around the world are being invited to Japan, including European champion and Vice Champion. To choose the representative of the country, local organizations run a qualification tournament. Often it is connected with the national championship: the champion becomes the representative. It is currently the most prestigious shogi event.
2. Online eliminations for female Ricoh Cup (Joryu Oza tournament) - administered by 81dojo.com, officially approved by the JSA. A two league system with final 3 matches battle, where the winner gets to be invited for professional tournament in Japan.

Organized by the FESA:

1. European Shogi Championship (ESC) - organized since 1985, the top 32 players

with highest ELO rating are allowed to participate. Tournament system is knockout system, there is an additional game played for third place.

2. World Open Shogi Championship (WOSC) - organized as ESC side tournament since 2000, open for all the players around the world. Swiss or MacMahon tournament system, number of wins determines the final positions of players (in MacMahon in their respective group`s position).
3. European Youth Tournament - organized in Poland by Wojtek Jedynek, tournament for players under 18 years old, held first time in 2017.

Others:

1. Mind Sport Olympiad (until 2012) - shogi was part of Mind Sport Olympiad.
2. Online tournaments - in the past there were many events online through years, for example European League or 81dojo.com title matches. The most recent tournament example is World Shogi League. There are also other smaller events that are organized by individual players.

## **Methodology**

### **The Questionnaire**

The questions (Appendix C: The Questionnaire) were divided into four sections: Background, Environment, Teaching Materials, and International Activity.

The Background section included questions about players' past: country of residence, spoken languages, shogi history including promotional activities, opinion about shogi as a game, faced difficulties when starting shogi, opinion about necessary changes in shogi world. The questions were asked to identify the respondent's background (especially whenever the person can read Japanese), shogi teaching and playing experience, difficulties that the respondent faced when started playing shogi, and the most important - gather the information about expected or needed changes in shogi world, encouraging to give own ideas.

The Environment section included questions about situation inside the country (statistics, popularity), local association, clubs, tournament systems, events online, acquiring information routes, problems inside the country, contact with outside organizations like the JSA and the FESA. Those questions were designed to find out the shogi position in the country, asking about the statistics and then focusing on the way

tournaments are being organized and whenever the country is teaching children, and if money are being earned this way. Other questions inquired opinions about the JSA and the FESA activities, then whenever the country had inside problems.

The Teaching Materials section included questions about available materials in English or local language, materials or tools that the country is lacking, used notations and types of shogi pieces used when promoting or playing shogi. Questions were asked to find out how many books there are in local language and whenever the materials in English are enough. The second reason was to find out about notation styles used in Europe to write down a game record and finally what types of pieces are used by players to promote and to play shogi in tournaments. This part especially was expected to show differences from Japanese world.

The International Activity section included questions about participation in international events and knowledge about the JSA tournament invitation activities. The reason behind those questions was to find out, what knowledge about shogi world did the player have and how well propagated are the JSA activities.

Additional questions have been asked to the respondents, if the answers they presented were inconsistent or unclear. In case of Belarus the data was acquired through direct interview.

### **About respondents.**

Countries of the respondents and the identification number:

- Czech (1 respondent + 1 respondent moved to Czech last year), nr 1 and 3
- Netherlands, nr 2
- Sweden, nr 4
- Malta, nr 5
- Poland (2 respondents), nr 6 and 10
- Romania, nr 7
- Portugal, nr 8
- Great Britain, nr 9
- France, nr 11
- Germany, nr 12
- Spain (1 respondent + 1 respondent currently living in Japan), nr 13 and 14
- Belgium, nr 15
- Belarus (this data was acquired from direct interview), nr 16.



Additional data about the respondents:

- 15 respondents from Europe: 14 living in Europe, 1 living in Japan, 1 moved to Czech last year.
- Shogi ratings from novice to advanced players.
- Shogi playing experiences from few months to over 40 years.
- 5 respondents said they could speak Japanese.
- 3 respondents said they are learning, speaking a little or can understand Japanese.
- Age not given in all cases, varies from 16 to 61 years old.

## Results

The results section presents the results and analysis for the questionnaire and statistical data.

### Results of the Questionnaires and Interviews

#### Questions relevant to shogi promotion.

Table 1

*How did you and your friends learn about shogi? (how did you know about shogi)*

Response	Identification number
Manga / anime/ Japanese culture	1,4,6,12
Books / articles / Wikipedia / program / webpages (unconnected to Japanese culture/shogi)	2, 3,5,7,9,15, 16
Shogi organization	13
Friends / family member	2,8,10,11,14,15

Comment: Surprisingly, not many people learn about shogi through Japanese

culture. Often it is a friend or fact of finding shogi in books or web pages. It might indicate that one of the reasons of why people don't get interested in shogi is simply that they never heard of it.

Table 2

*What is shogi for you?*

Response	Identification number
Great/ wonderful game	9,11
Way to spend time / home entertainment / fun / joy in life / enjoyment / hobby	2,3,4,6, 8, 10
To get playing experience?	10
Job	3
Important part of life / more than it should be / something one think about all the time	1, 13, 14
Mean to know about oneself and others / way to learn about life (like accepting defeat etc.)	12, 13
Way to make new friends / way to meet new people / way to communicate with people	6, 10, 12, 13,15
Way to improve Japanese language or to know about Japanese culture / opportunity	10,11, 13

to discover Japanese culture

Part of Japanese culture, mean to transmit  
the culture further 15

Different than other games / off the beaten  
path / interesting chess variation /  
interesting two people game variation 5,7,9

Brain training 4

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Comment: Most of the respondents answered that shogi is a joyful hobby, and a great way to meet new people. Shogi is one of the ways to socialize with other people, and even between two different cultures.

Table 3

*What is the most interesting point in shogi?*

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Response	Identification number
Rules: drops, promotions, various pieces	1,2,4,5,10,11,13,14
Complexity: Many variations / unlimited possibilities [game positions that do not repeat] / wide range of strategies / dynamic	1,8,9,13,14,15
Way to communicate without words	15
No limit to what you could theoretically	12

achieve	
Chance for winning until the last move	10
Not many draws – most games have an ending	11
Idea behind the game	9
Programming challenge	7
History and culture	6
Different, extraordinary and interesting game	3

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Comment: The most interesting part in shogi is undoubtedly its original rules and complexity.

Table 4

*What difficulties did you face, when you started playing shogi?*

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Response	Identification number
Lack of literature in English / local language	1,7,8,11,14,15
Recognition of the pieces	1 (friends),4,13 (for promoting)
Personal difficulties	13

Lack of chess experience	2,6
Difficulty to find an opponent	10
Game mechanics: Nifu (double pawn): Losing games / remembering openings / different rules than chess	5,7,9
Did not face any / do not know	3,12
Difficulty to convince people to play shogi when they already knew chess [promotion category]	11

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Comment: The problem of lacking the literature in English or their local language was a big issue for the respondents. Recognition of Chinese characters on shogi pieces is considered difficult for beginner players. Shogi, as having different rules than chess, is considered as a more complex game, therefore learning new game mechanics brings difficulty. Shogi, considered as Japanese Chess, gives troubles for players that did not have chess experience before.

Table 5

*What can we do to promote shogi better?  
If you could change shogi world, how would you do that?*

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Response	Identification number
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Shogi Marketing: Promote shogi better / let people know about shogi existence / making manga / getting recognition outside shogi world / need more people, who are passionate about shogi / make tv documentary / promote among females / finding way to get anime enthusiasts to play shogi	1,2,3,4,6,7,8,12,13
(International) tournament with cash prizes / make attractive events around shogi (maybe connected with chess) / combine chess and shogi clubs	1,11,12, 14,16
Streaming professional games (camera) / English commentary (live or not) / game analysis in English / make pro scene available in English	1,5,7,9,16
Teaching children / promote among young people / visiting schools	2,12,13
Using special pieces with help element to promote	3
Allow specific non-kanji sets on tournaments in world tournaments	3
Make interesting shogi variants	7
Collaborate with Japanese Culture Ministry or local embassies / cooperate with local Japanese communities	8,12
Cooperation with other industries (example:	8

film industry)

Do not change shogi to `fit western tastes`	9
Make material easier to find / make tools more available / make tools cheaper	9,10,13,15
Make interactive problems website	9
Make website with actual information about shogi world / place to exchange experiences and information about events and tournaments	10
Support local players / teachers / organizers	10
Publish materials (studies, books, articles) / materials in local language	10,11,14
Regular visits of shogi professionals	11,12
Make application for only beginners to play	15

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Comment: Many people feel like study materials and tools are still not easy to acquire. They mostly propose live commentaries in English, because books get outdated quickly. What is more interesting, respondents strongly indicated that shogi promotional acts, in other words marketing, is necessary. One of the reasons is that there is a need for new people to help promoting. Other interesting responses were showing need of making more attractive shogi events in hope it attracts more people, including chess



players. Combining shogi events with chess events was suggested. Those events would also bring more exciting challenges for active shogi players and reason to continue playing shogi.

Table 6

*What notation do you use to write down a game record?*

*Can people read kanji records?*

*Do you prefer to use kanji or other kind of pieces to teach / promote shogi?*

*Do you use Dobutsu Shogi, pieces with arrows, Hidetchi pieces, one kanji pieces and when?*

*What pieces do you use in official tournaments?*

Response	Identification number
Kifu taken on application on phone or computer	1,4,6
Western shogi notation (1a or 11)	2,3,5,4,6,7,11,12,15
Japanese notation	10
Kifu	9
Recording on 81dojo	13
Other types of pieces for promotion / workshops	4 (prefers but never taught),5,6,9 (children only),10 (children, beginners / promotion),11 (moving slowly towards kanji),13 (events only),14,15 (kids)
Czech pieces for promotion / club meetings /	1,3,12 (goal is kanji)

teach	
Kanji for promotion	2,8,15
Kanji for teaching	6,10,13,15
One piece kanji for promotion	9,10
Not only kanji on tournaments	3
Kanji but allowing other types for beginners on tournaments	6,11
Using kanji on tournaments	2,3,8,10,12,13,14,15
Can read kanji notation	1 (only him), 2 (not many people),3 (most of CAS people), 4 (2 people can), 6(some students),7,9,10,11 (advanced players),12,13 (most of us),14

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Comment: The most often used notation is Western shogi notation (either 1a or 11 style). Though, asked if they use other types of pieces, respondents admitted that they use other types of pieces for shogi promotion or teaching the beginners. Kanji are widely used on shogi tournaments, only few respondents have admitted to allow other types of pieces and only on lower tables (beginner players).

### **Summary of other questions.**

- Getting and sharing information: Mostly Facebook, association web pages.  
  
Always using the internet.
- Materials and tools: Buying over the internet (Nekomado, local associations, auction websites, other) or borrowing from local associations. Some respondents buy books directly in Japan. 3 countries had at least one book in their own language. Other country use English materials. Few respondents can read Japanese materials.
- No significant problems inside associations were mentioned.
- Internet tournaments or events seems to cease to exist. (this could explain raising number of local tournaments).
- Usual tournament prizes are top 3 prizes: trophies or medals. Sometimes small gifts are given to participants. Few tournaments get sponsorship. Often, costs of prizes, location and snacks are being paid by fees. One tournament has actual cash prize – Cracovia Open.
- Received support: local associations or clubs, individual people, the JSA, ISPS, Nekomado.
- Open question about known the JSA activities and invitations to tournaments:

(among advanced players) the JSA activities connected to ISF are widely known and are considered very helpful. Knowledge about other international activities are limited. Mostly known is Ricoh cup tournament invitation for foreign lady player. Knowledge about invitation for Amateur Ryou tournament is almost nonexistent (1 respondent). Some respondents mentioned past professional visits in Europe as helpful. One respondent shared a view that the JSA is Japan focused. Other respondents shared wishes that the JSA publish more in English language.

- The FESA is valued for making European Shogi Championship and World Open Shogi Championship every year, and managing the European rating system or providing the rating list. The FESA is considered by respondents as a “small organization run by volunteers” or that “committee members are too busy with local activities” and therefore might be lacking of resources to offer more for the member countries.
- 6 respondents (from 5 countries) answered that there are events or shogi lessons in their country. 4 respondents (3 countries: Czech, Poland, Belarus) respondent that they earn money for teaching.

### **Summary about Belarus.**

In 2005 Belarus received wide national TV coverage, because of participation in International Shogi Festival. New shogi group appeared in Minsk State Pedagogical University. Internet shogi portal was created: shogi.by. “Belarus shogi community became the leading in the post-soviet space and made a great impact for the shogi spreading in the post USSR countries”. In 2010 Sergej Lysenko organized shogi club in Minsk Place of Youth. Quality of players increased a lot. Now there are 6 places in Minsk to play shogi. “I think every team needs a good webmaster, several shogi coaches and a media person. I was lucky to create it in Belarus”. He indicated that new generation taking over is important. There are Russian books that are used. Western notation is used to write down games, because it is a tradition. They can read Japanese notation. Studying strategies from professional games (hard to find the games after [wiki.optus.nu/shogi/](http://wiki.optus.nu/shogi/) [unofficial shogi database of games] was closed). One tournament per week. Meetings to play shogi very often, 3 times per week in the evening; there are clubs for children working since the morning, pay 20 dollars to join. There are shogi teachers available. Wanted changes: creation of the International Shogi Federation, making of international competitions that are more serious than ISF, shogi world where amateur can compete with professionals in serious games (this would raise the

excitement and show strength of professionals), organizing open tournaments with big prizes, similar to igo and xiangqi worlds. Shogi is known in Belarus because of tv coverage. Depending on the person, the needs change. While some need a club to play in, others would need books to study, or they might need a big tournament as a challenge. Received help from ISPS in the past (books, shogi sets, visiting the tournament, helped to invite professionals). This kind of help is important to start shogi in the country.

### **Comment about Each Country Statistics as Compared to Questionnaire Results**

This section presents chosen countries graphs. For the developing countries, the data is further compared with questionnaire and interview results in order to propose the explanation for the reasons of prosperous situation of shogi in the country.

Note: Graphs shows number of players based on the following years ELO list.

Number of tournaments for the year 2017 is incomplete.

### **Recessive shogi promotion countries.**

The examples of recessive countries are Ukraine and Sweden.

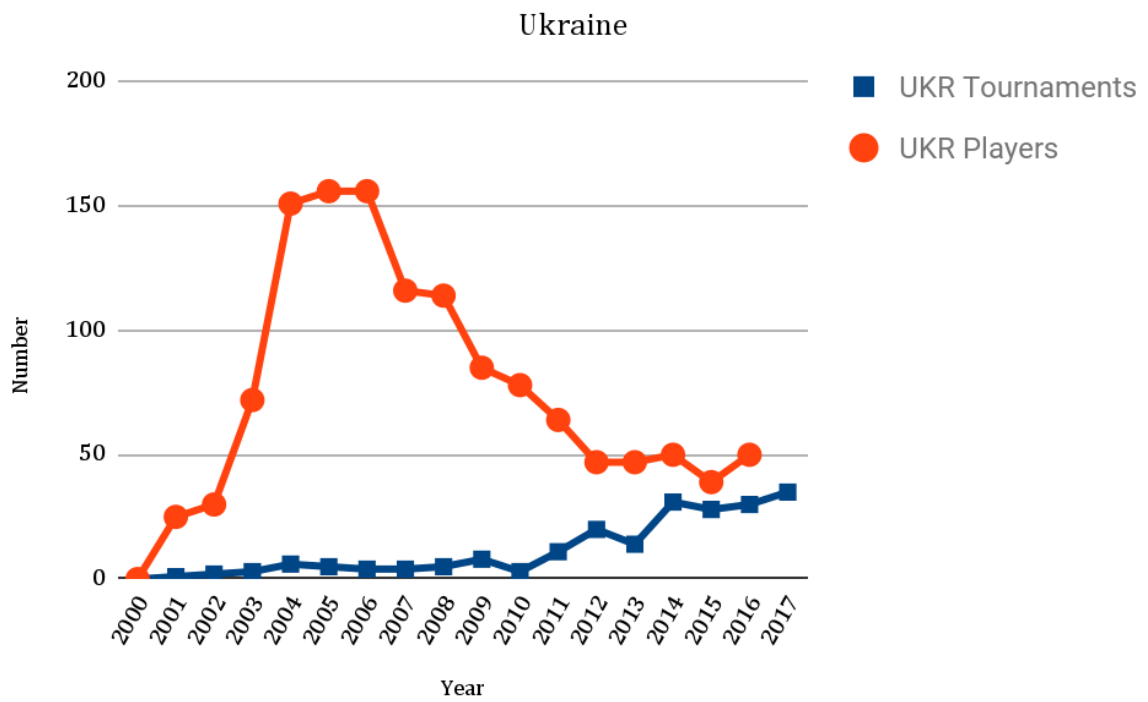


Figure 3. Number of players and tournaments in Ukraine per year.

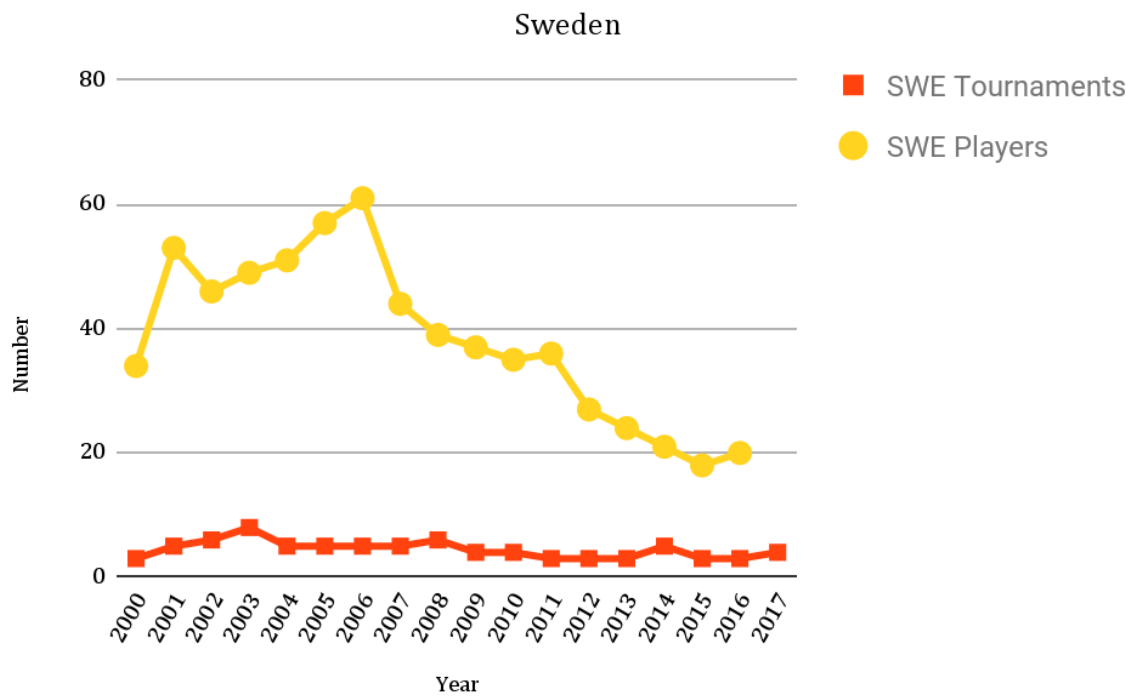


Figure 4. Number of players and tournaments in Sweden per year.

Compared to the past number of players, Ukraine and Sweden graphs are indicating that interest in shogi is declining. In Ukraine greater number of tournaments is not reflected in number of players.

### Stagnant shogi promotion countries.

The examples of stagnant countries are Great Britain, Netherlands and Belgium.

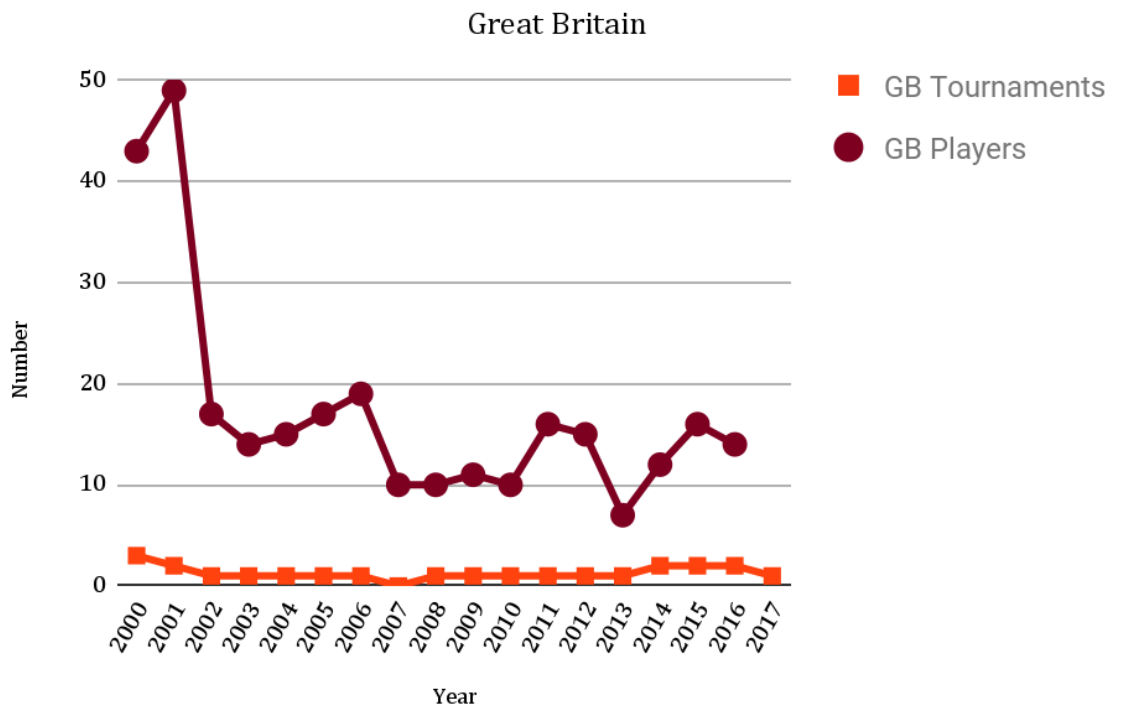


Figure 5. Number of players and tournaments in Great Britain per year.



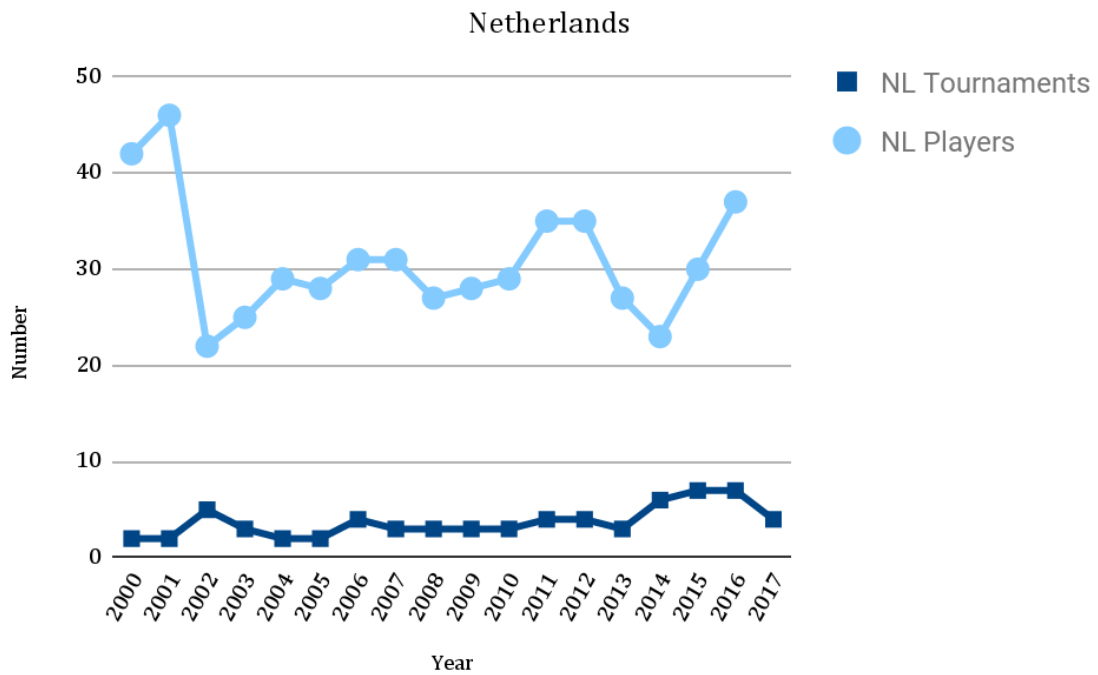


Figure 6. Number of players and tournaments in Netherlands per year.

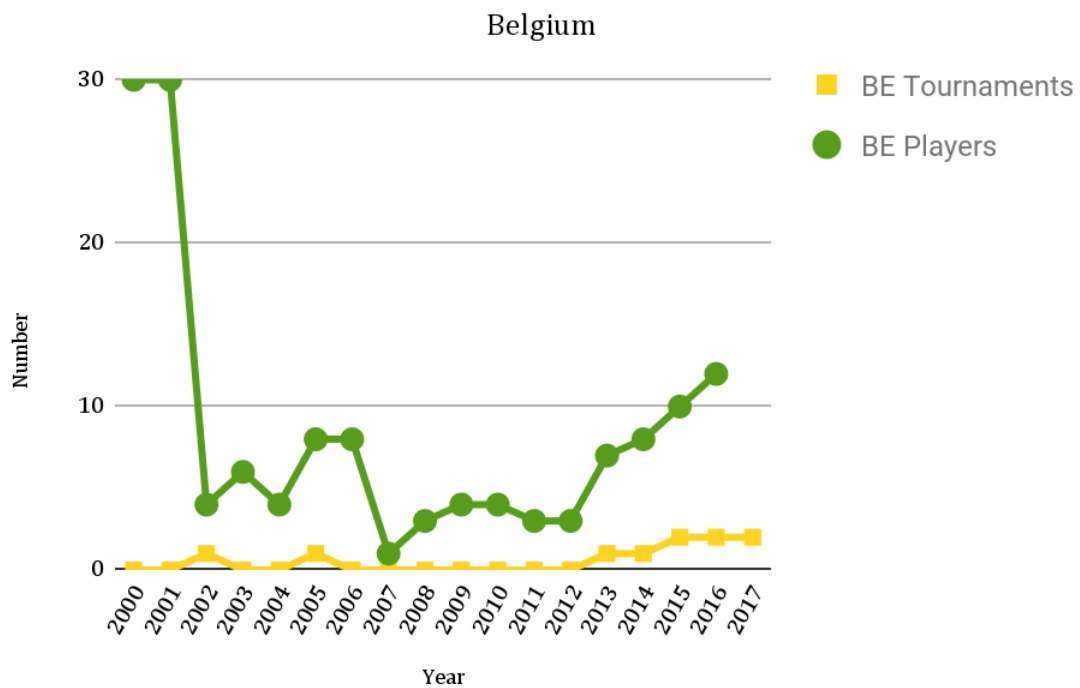


Figure 7. Number of players and tournaments in Belgium per year.

Countries that are considered the pioneers of shogi in Europe have rather unchanged line of tournaments and players. This could indicate that not enough efforts are being put in shogi promotion and every year the same players are taking part in the tournaments.

### **Developing shogi promotion countries.**

Examples of the countries where shogi is developing are Belarus, Germany, Poland and Russia. France was a developing country for shogi until 2013 year, being the first country in Europe to reach over 400 active players.

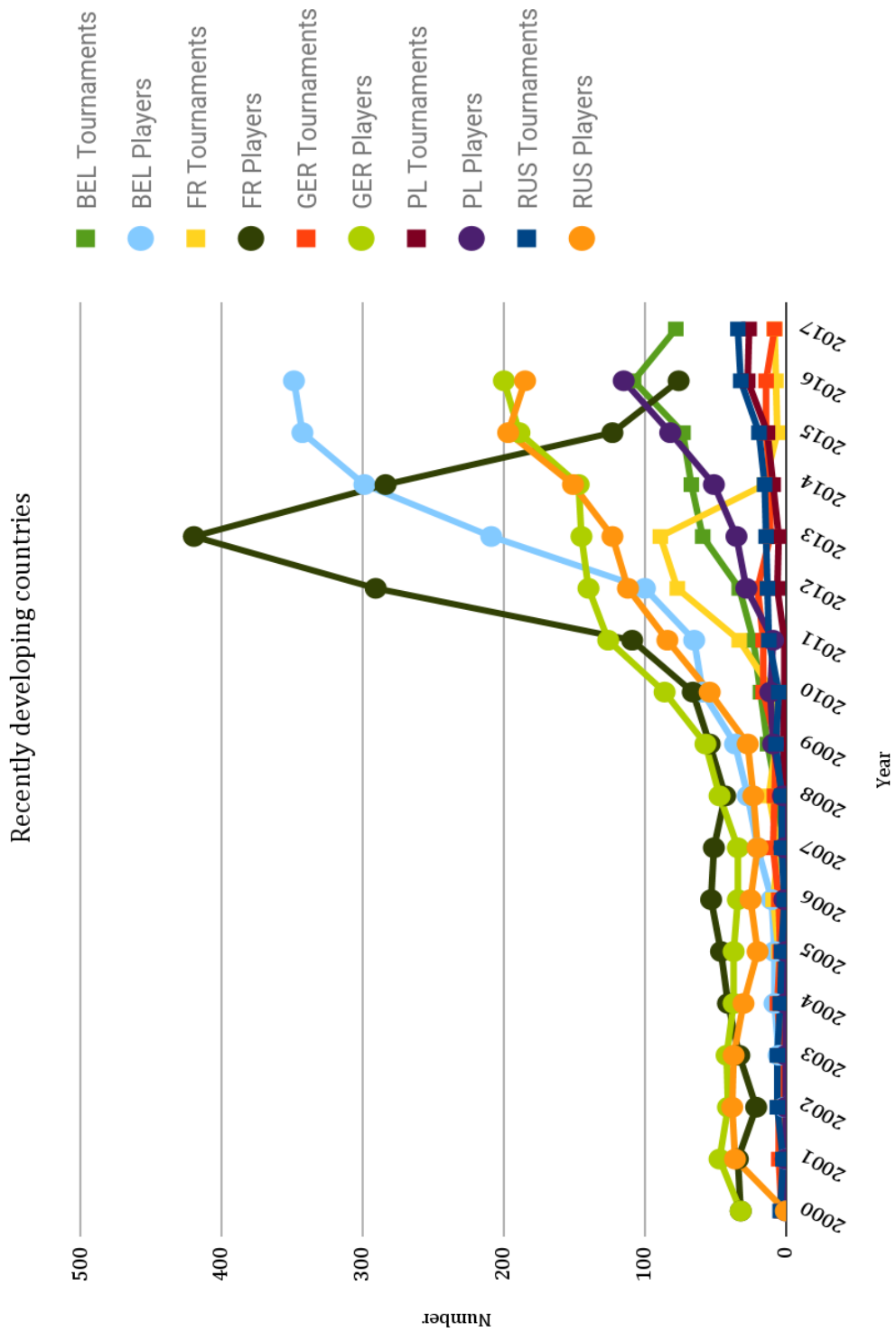


Figure 8. Number of players and tournaments in the chosen countries per year, compared to each other.

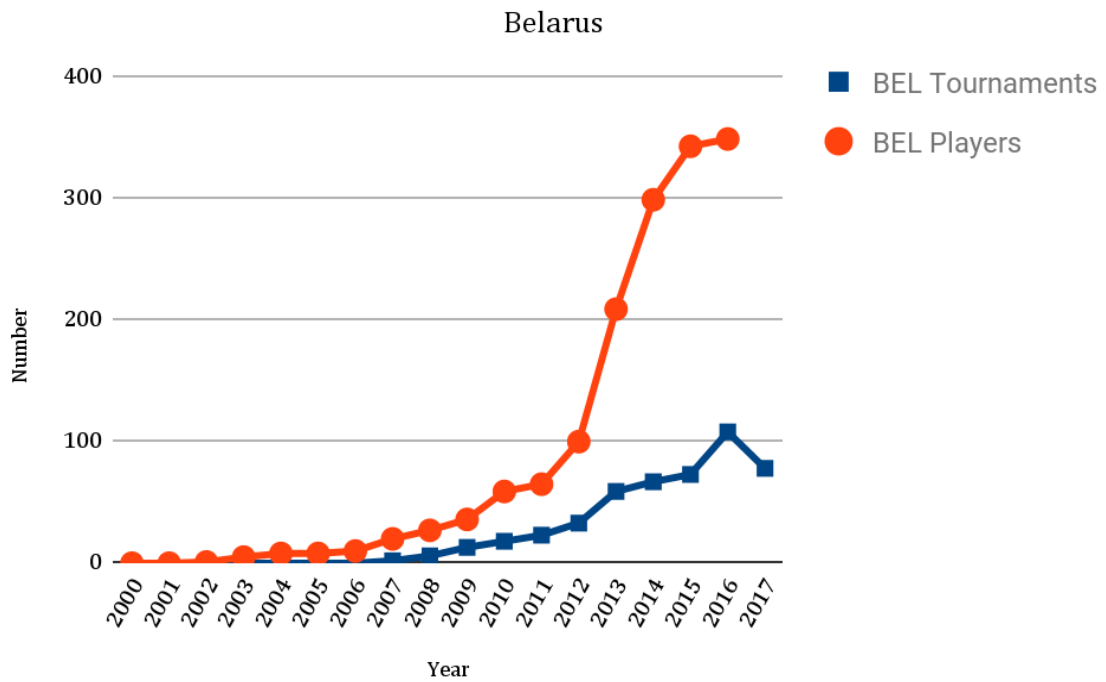


Figure 9. Number of players and tournaments in Belarus per year.

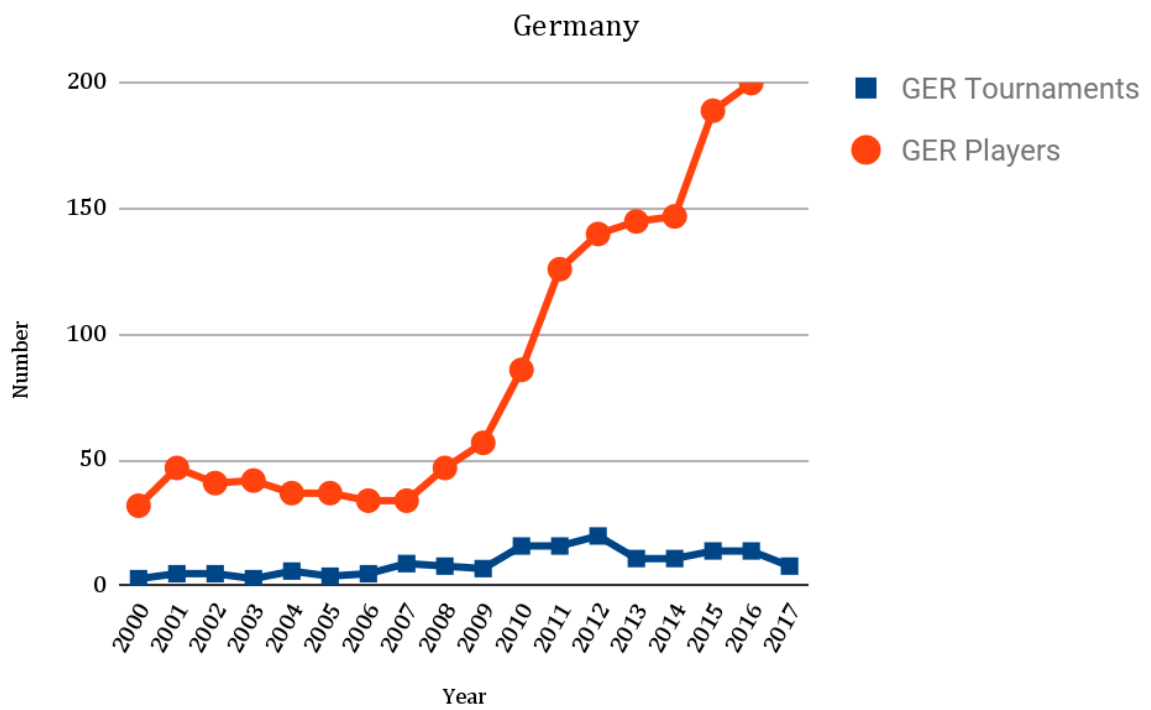


Figure 10. Number of players and tournaments in Germany per year.

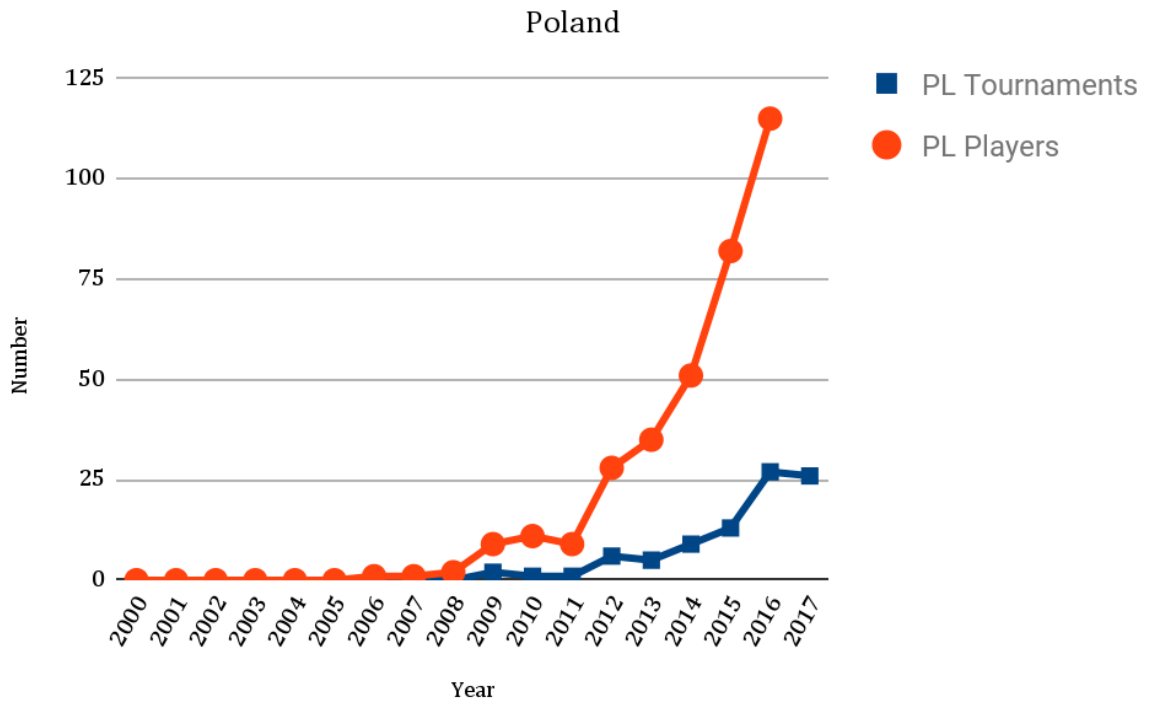


Figure 11. Number of players and tournaments in Poland per year.

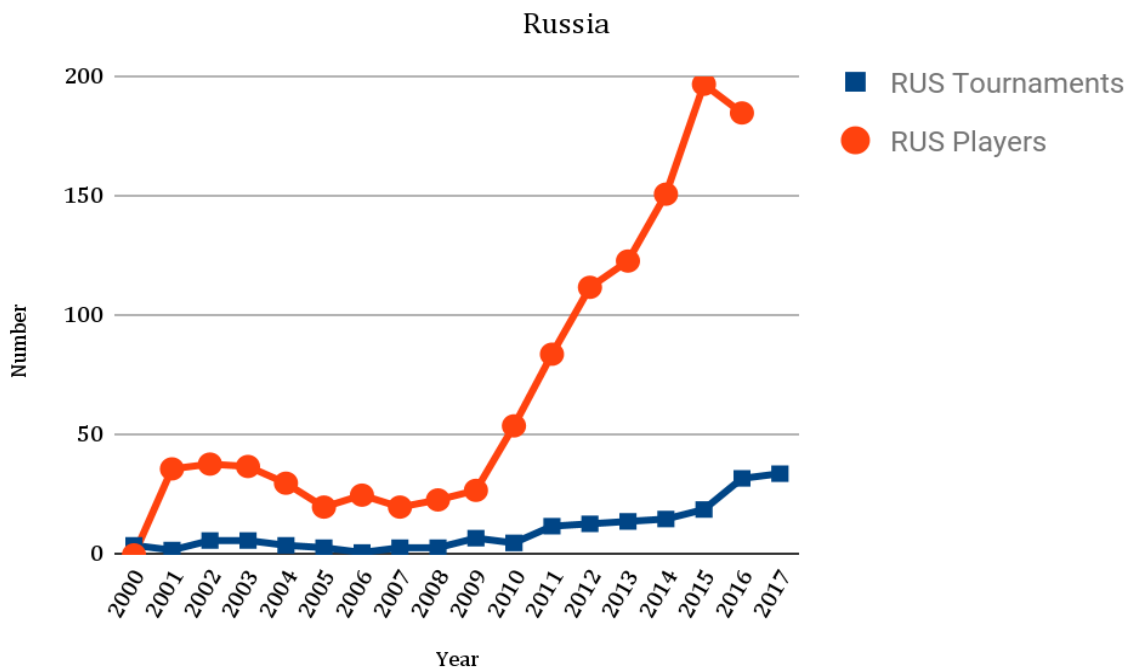


Figure 12. Number of players and tournaments in Russia per year.

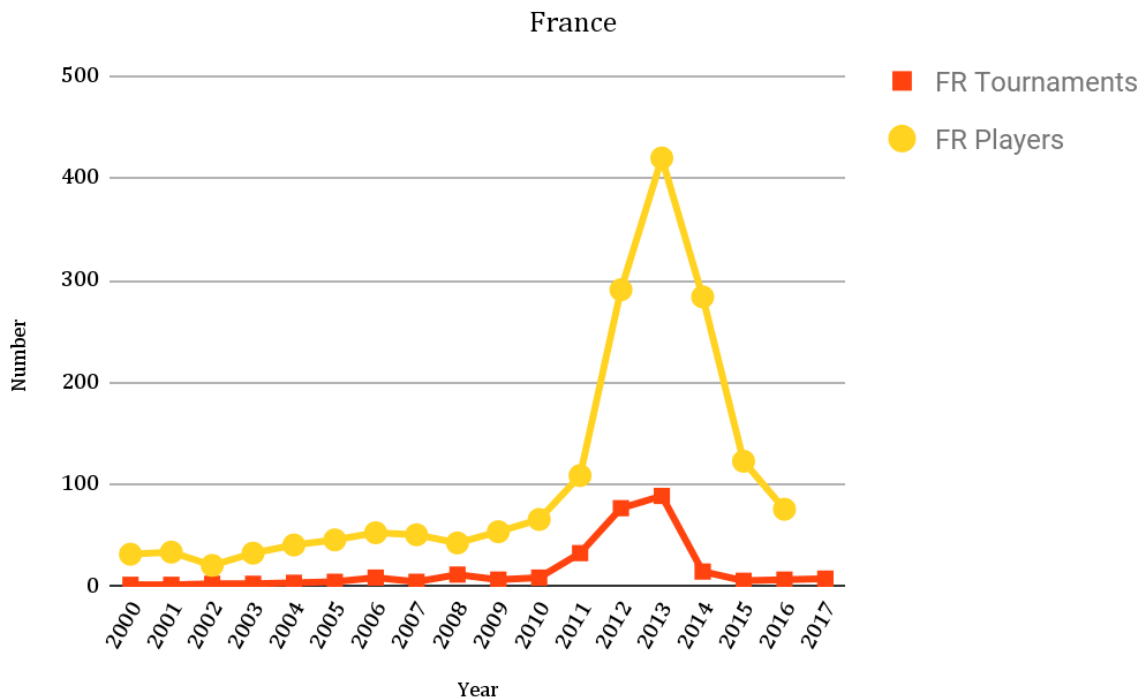


Figure 13. Number of players and tournaments in France per year.

Currently Belarus is one of the most rapidly developing countries in the shogi world. The number of players is reaching the relatively high number of 350 people. In 2016 there were over 100 tournaments.

Though having fewer tournaments, Germany, Poland and Russia also show a great raise of number of players in recent years, which is shown clearly in the graph.

An interesting case is France. France was a greatly developing country up until 2013, where it had 89 tournaments and a huge number of 420 players. But those numbers started to suddenly drop, in 2016 year having only 7 tournaments and 76

players.

### **Analysis for developing countries.**

In case of Belarus, in 2010 shogi clubs for children was organized in Minsk Palace of Youth. Children were taught by shogi teacher frequently. Together with media attention it was possible to raise number of places to play shogi to 6 in city of Minsk. Coordination of team of volunteers allowed to educate big group of children, resulting in one of them becoming European Champion in year 2017.

France is one of the shogi pioneer countries and has had a good literature in French about shogi. According to the additional interview, in the past years there were promoters teaching children, so the number of players raised. However, in the year 2013 there was an internal issue, resulting in sharply declining numbers of tournaments and therefore number of players.

Poland has active teachers who earn money from teaching shogi, in the cities of Warsaw and Wroclaw. Another big shogi center is located in Krakow. There are shogi clubs and regular tournaments. A new European Youth tournament was recently held in Wroclaw city. Even though the cities are at the distance, Polish people are in contact with each other using the internet social networks or using direct phone contact to discuss urgent issues. Shogi tournament in Krakow, Cracovia open, is one of the rare

shogi tournaments offering monetary prizes for top places.



## Discussion

The problems and ideas found in the process of research can be categorized according to resource management theory. According to [businessdictionary.com](http://businessdictionary.com), the definition of resource management is:

“The process of using a **company's resources** in the **most efficient** way possible. These resources can include tangible resources such as **goods** and **equipment**, **financial resources**, and **labor resources** such as **employees**. **Resource management** can include ideas such as making sure one has enough physical resources for one's business, but not an overabundance so that products won't get used, or making sure that people are assigned to tasks that will keep them busy and not have too much downtime.”

Shogi is mostly thought of as Japanese culture or an entertaining game. However, if our view changes for a moment, shogi could be a product or brand. Shogi promotion would be called shogi marketing and shogi promotion associations would be companies.

To sell the product, the company must consider good resource management.

Those resources in Japanese are often referred to 人 (*hito*, people - human skills or labour force), 物 (*mono*, inventory), 金 (*kane*, money, financial resources), and 情報 (*jōhō*, information, know-how, informational technology). There are never enough of those resources available, therefore managing what we have, will allow the company to work efficiently to process selling the product with success. Resources applied to the shogi world would include teachers, promoters, and volunteers. Inventory would be materials, literature, tools and places to play. Finances would be received money, sponsors, received support. Finally, information is the knowledge of how to teach, sharing information platforms, and marketing. The entities who would like to promote the product of shogi or are responsible for promotion are the Japan Shogi Association and Federation of European Shogi Associations, as well local national associations. In the shogi world the companies like the JSA and the FESA could be responsible for the distribution of inventory, finding new financial resources, managing the information flow. They need to support their labor force - shogi teachers and promoters. This makes the shogi players or shogi fans their customers.

### **Found Problems about Shogi in Europe**

Problems related to shogi found in this study:

1. Connected with promoters, teachers and players (人, *hito*)

- Lack of people to help, being alone in the country, only volunteers
- Lack of support of the other organizations
- Difficulties in learning shogi (cultural differences, languages)
- Lack of challenges for players

2. Connected with inventory (物, *mono*)

- Lack of materials, literature and tools
- Lack of unusual shogi merchandise that is available in Japan, because for example high shipping cost fee
- Need of place to play or teach shogi

3. Connected with finances (金, *kane*)

- Not enough finances for various activities
- Need of sponsor
- Getting money for teaching

4. Connected with information, know-how and media (情報, *jōhō*)

- Lack of know-how of teaching shogi
- Lack of interest of media and therefore other people
- Not being aware of other associations activities
- Lack of common platform for information exchange
- Not having access to newest shogi theories
- Lack of information from shogi world because of language barrier

### **Ideas for Solutions**

It is hard to propose actual solutions without knowing exact situation in each country, so the list contains only general ideas.

1. Shogi marketing: using new ways to promote shogi, while not concentrating solely on Japanese culture factor since it's considered as a form of entertainment or socializing, or an interesting game
2. Tackling the difficulties of shogi beginners
3. Supporting promoters or at least by acknowledging their hard work
4. Creating new challengers for players, like tournaments or possibility of challenging a professional

5. Creating shogi materials in English and then translating them to local languages
6. Creating a connection between Japanese companies to sell merchandise in Europe or create those merchandises cheaper in Europe
7. Finding sponsors that could support shogi activities
8. Starting a crowdfunding program for given projects
9. Creating teaching materials that can be shared between countries
10. Creating common platform with available literature and ways to obtain tools in English
11. Creating up to date literature or create English commentaries for applications with Japanese commentaries
12. Creating websites with interactive shogi problems in English
13. Sharing shogi news and the JSA international activities in English
14. Creating shogi documentaries and programs in English
15. Taking chance of upcoming 2020 Olympics and International Shogi Forum in same year to promote shogi and to gather media attention

## **Conclusion**

The research questions were:

1. Describe the historical and the current position of shogi in Europe – popularity, existing organizations, existing events.
2. Describe the view of shogi outside Japan and how it has affected the game.
3. Discover the difficulties to learn (rules and studying) shogi and how to solve them.
4. Describe new ways to develop shogi around the world (while preserving Japanese culture).

Data for question 1 showed, how the position of shogi in Europe changed through the years. Before year 2000 there were around 250 rated players, whereas currently nowadays there are over 1000 rated players. In that time more countries have joined the shogi scene by making their national shogi organizations. There are regular international and national events. Even with those changes happening, there is not enough literature about shogi available and shogi still needs much more work put into getting more recognition in Europe.

Data for question 2 showed that shogi is mostly viewed as a hobby,

entertainment, or a way of meeting new friends. This is in opposition to Japan, where chess is called *Western Shogi*, in Europe shogi is called *Japanese Chess*. Through this comparison, the original rules of shogi, like piece drops, promotions, and new pieces types, bring interest to the Europeans as being different than chess, particularly being a more dynamic and complex game.

Shogi has changed to fit the European world. Not many people can write down the Chinese characters, so chess-based Western notation was born. Even for people who can read kanji, when talking about shogi moves online, they usually can only input alphabet. Therefore this notation is preferred. The coordinates of the board respect the Japanese style and start in the top right corner.

The kanji pieces are widely respected type of pieces for the gameplay, especially in the tournament games. Yet, there is a little change of mind, when it comes to teaching new players. It is much easier for the beginners to jump into the game without the need to read kanji, therefore different types of symbolized pieces are being used to propagate shogi. It can be discussed, whenever these pieces could be allowed on the lower tables on the tournaments in order to encourage beginners to join a tournament.

This overlaps the question 3. How to ease the introduction of the new players to shogi. The piece recognition was most often pointed problem and could be solved by

avoiding the kanji in the beginning. After mastering the difficult game mechanics, when the new players get enough interest and experience in shogi games, then they could be introduced further to the Japanese culture.

The returning problem is still lack of the teaching materials. Question is whenever there is poor access to existing materials (that are spread over the internet) or lack of up to date materials. But for certain, that is a problem that needs solution.

Teaching new players and making teaching materials is one side of the coin. Other problem is how to make people interested in shogi in the first place. The questionnaire answers give a hint, that concentrating on the Japanese culture enthusiasts might be effective, but in fact many people get interested in shogi in other ways, like as a chess variant, hearing from a friend, or from a poor coincidence. It might point to the fact that shogi itself has been to well promoted in the Europe and need a “touch of marketing”. This brings us to the last questions of how to promote shogi.

Concentrating on the resources (people, money, materials, and technology), the problems and the needs of the shogi societies could be identified and answered. They should be categorized further, for example for the “people” resource:

- How to find new players
- How to improve playing skills



- How to help shogi promoters and prevents them from burning out
- How to keep players interested in shogi

The organizations that are interested in solving those problems are the JSA and the FESA. Both organizations must set clearer and more detailed goals for the future toward players in Europe. Especially the JSA could restate their position in the future, considering the eventual creation of the World Shogi Association, as it happened in the go and judo worlds. There also a big chance of promoting shogi to the world by the occasion of the 2020 Olympics in Japan, because as the Olympics will bring attention to Japan, it might be a change for Japanese culture to break to the foreign media.

Although the difficulties in learning shogi are connected with cultural and language barriers, they do not seem hard to overcome. The game has adapted to the new environment and the cultural part did not disappear in the process. Shogi is definitely an interesting game in the eyes of European players and has high chances of being accepted in Europe.

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## Appendix A: Note about Game Notation

One of the part of shogi that have changed in the game notation. All the system accept the coordinates starting from top right corner. The traditional notation contains Chinese characters, for example 7六歩 (pawn to square 76). Advanced players can read those notations, but there is a practical problem of not being able to input those characters into their computer, or inability to write them down. Therefore other systems are being used in Europe.

There is a system similar to chess, using number and a letter, for example P7f (pawn to square 7f or 76). Other system is simply translation of the japanese kanji, both using the numbers, for example P76. One of the new proposition was to translate all the kanji without changing the order of characters, for example 76P. The last system was created by Tomohide Kawasaki in his translation works (2011), called K-K Notation, and it uses the mix of numbers and kanji (assuming that players recognize the pieces), for example 76-歩.

It seems that the most used systems are the first two, the chess-like system clearly taking its origin from earliest shogi history (Shogi magazine and The Art of

Shogi) and copying the chess system in a way. This system might have become the traditional system used in Europe, but nothing has been officially decided.

(P - pawn, L - lance, N - knight, S - silver, G - gold, B - bishop, R - rook, K - king, +x - any promoted piece, but sometimes T - token, D - dragon, H - horse; + - promotion sign, = unpromoted sign, \* or ‘ (obsolete) - drop sign, x - sign of taking a piece. Original square of the moved piece is usually written in brackets if needed, like G(69)58.

Sometimes - sign is used to divide piece name with square to indicate normal movement.)

## **Appendix B: Note about Shogi Pieces**

The traditional Japanese shogi pieces divide into two main groups: two kanji pieces and one kanji pieces. When beginners are learning the shogi kanji, they tend to concentrate on the top kanji from the two kanji pieces, so maybe using one kanji pieces is easier (though two kanji is more popular). Advanced shogi players play on kanji pieces of any type.

There are other types of pieces used for shogi promotion: pieces with letters (alphabet), pieces with arrows around the kanji (Kumon pieces). International pieces (Hidetchi pieces), animal pieces (Dōbutsu no Mori), many kinds of pieces with graphic symbols (eg. Kurnik), kanji and movement symbol (Czech pieces).

On the tournaments kanji pieces are widely used. Some countries accept other types of pieces on lower tables for beginners.

## Appendix C: The Questionnaire

About you:

1. Tell me about yourself. Where do you come from? Where do you live? What languages do you speak?
2. What is your shogi history: playing, ranking, popularization, organizational experiences.
3. What is shogi for you?
4. What is the most interesting point in shogi?
5. How much do you know about Japanese culture in shogi?
6. How did you and your friend learn about shogi?
7. What difficulties did you face, when you started playing shogi?
8. Did somebody or some organization help you?
9. What can we do to promote shogi better?
10. If you could change shogi world, how would you do that?

About your environment:

1. How popular is shogi in your country now?
2. Do other people know what shogi is? What is the image of shogi in your

country? For example Japanese chess, oriental game...

3. Would you say that recently shogi is becoming more or less popular? Why?
4. Do you have any shogi organizations in your country? Association? Clubs? Or meetings made by individual people? Where do you play?
5. Do you belong to Federation of European Shogi Association (FESA)? How would you judge FESA activities?
6. Did you contact Japanese Shogi Association? How do you judge its activities?
7. Do you have national championship? What system do you use?
8. Do you have tournaments with prizes? What prizes? How do you acquire them?
9. Do you take participation fee?
10. Do you organize any events on-line?
11. How do you get new information about shogi news or events? How do you share them?
12. How do you get shogi materials like books or tools?
13. Do you get any help from other people/organizations?
14. Are there any people in your country that earn money by teaching shogi?
15. Do you teach shogi to children, for example in schools?
16. Do you have statistical data about number of players, tournaments, etc. past and



current?

17. Do you have any problems inside your environment or between other organizations?

18. What does your organization do other countries do not?

About teaching materials:

1. How many shogi books in your language do you have? What books?
2. What other materials in your language do you have? For example videos, pdf, commented kifu...
3. What notation do you use to write down a game record?
4. Can people read kanji records?
5. Do you prefer to use kanji or other kind of pieces to teach/promote shogi?
6. Do you use doubutsu shogi, shogi with arrows, hidetchi pieces, one kanji pieces and when?
7. What pieces do you use in official tournaments?
8. Where do you get information about shogi strategies, professional games?
9. Is it easy for new people to get own shogi board and pieces they want?
10. Are materials written in English language useful?
11. What Japanese books would you wish to be able to read easily?

12. Are you lacking of some tools? Why? For example boards, clocks, kifu sheets;  
because it is expensive, impossible to buy...

About international activities:

[you = you + other people in your country]

1. Do you participate in International Shogi Forum?
2. Do you participate in European Shogi Championship/World Open Shogi  
Championship?
3. Do you participate in World Shogi League on-line?
4. Do you join tournaments in other countries? How often and why?
5. What did you hear about Japan Shogi Association inviting foreign players for  
tournaments in Japan?
6. What other activities there are in your country? Example exchange programs  
with Japan etc.

Others:

1. Please write freely anything that came to your mind, when answering the  
questions.
2. What other people I could contact about my research? (especially people in your  
country)

3. What other questions do you find interesting to ask?