

## Did Yuan Dynasty Mongols bring Golf Game Into Europe?

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More and more historical records and archaeological findings are telling that the royal game of "Chui-Wan", which translates "striking-ball", was very popular in the Northern Han Dynasty China; the course layout and the rules of the game were very similar to today's golf.

During the last ten years, I have collected nearly a thousand of Chui-Wan pellets which are made of various materials: stone, ceramics, Tang tricolour pottery, superfluous wood, agate etc. The earliest one can be dated back 1500 years ago.

Meantime, I have also collected more than hundred historical books of all kinds related to the game. According to Wan Jing (*Classic of Chui-Wan*), by Ning Zhizhai, published in Yuan Dynasty in 1282, the Chui-wan is an ancient game which was originally played in the "Warring States Period" from year 475 B.C to 221 B.C.

Another book, "Explanation of Chinese Language" by Piao Tongshi, a Chinese language textbook published in Gaoli – nowadays Korea – in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, gives evidence that a form of modern-day golf was then already played. It recorded very clearly that golf was practiced among the noble classes in China some 500 years earlier than in Scotland, contradicting the traditional notions that Scotland was the birthplace of golf in the 15th Century.

The Wan Jing book (*Classic of Chui Wan*) lists 32 chapters, ranging from competition rules to financing management, from play partner choices to the essentials of playing skills, from the manufacture of clubs to the maintenance of the greens, from keeping a perfect psychological situation to knowing well partner's characteristics and moral level of golfing behaviours, talks and etiquettes. The overall game processes which were described in

this voluminous work doesn't seem to be even a little less "professional" or refined than the modern game of golf. Chui-Wan was played with 10 different kinds of clubs. Take the Dipper stick example: its basic function is same as the Driver today; the Hand flapping stick, putter-like. The first stroke had to be played from a base and each subsequent stroke being played from where the ball last stopped. The score ways were various. There is a detailed description in the book "Explanation of Chinese Language" (*op. cit.*), including one-stroke into hole and two-stroke into hole and triple-stroke into hole. It was surprisingly similar to modern golf wording such as Birdy, Bogey, Double bogey. Chui-Wan competition also can be conducted between two persons or groups.



Old Chiu-Wan club and ball.

We using the word "hole" as there was most probably a hole in the old times. Emperor Ming Xuan Zong was described 500 years ago as playing Chui-Wan on a 10 holes course.

Chui-Wan was also played on some naturally undulating areas. But also courses were artificially laid out on flat grassland, raising barriers and digging ditches.





*Song Dynasty (960-1279) copper made with engrave hollow crafts.*

To start playing a hole, Chui-Wan had a special tee, which was called Ji, which translates to "base" in English (see also Appendix – Fact 2)

From Chinese paintings, we have strong evidence of the Chinese golf sport in history. A Chui-Wan drawing, featuring ancestors of the Chinese, on a stamp, was issued in 1986, Painters from the Yuan (1279-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties laid out scenes: respectively an emperor waving a golf-club-like and a player striking a golf-ball-like into a hole. The painting shows the Emperor Xuanzong, of the Ming on the Spree, in plain clothes, striking the pellet in the field. This painting also shows the course, the clubs, and the coloured banners.

In Europe, the game of golf was first seen on paintings in the 14th and 15th centuries. That was at least 1000 years after the Chinese games of Chui-wan.

Chui-wan was originally called "bu da" (walk and hit), a game in which the player scored points by hitting the pellet into a hole in the ground. The game was developed from Polo of Tang Dynasty; a popular game in palace between women. Wang Jian, a poet of the Tang Dynasty, describes the game in one of his poems: "Stands have been set up on both sides of the palace hall, during the Hanshi festival court people play the bu da ball. They walk and kneel in competition, and the champion thanks the emperor when he wins." This proves that bu da, a game similar to golf, had been popular more than 1,000 years ago.

Some professionals concluded that golf only arrived in Scotland after it was exported to

Europe by Mongolian travellers during the late Middle Ages.

There are some descriptions in Wan Jing that, in the old times, Chu Wan had been favoured as a game for training soldiers, as it was helpful both physically and mentally.

According to the British-published book "*The Encyclopedia of Golf*", golf first appeared in Scotland around 1319. It became so popular that even military men became tirelessly absorbed in the game. Hence the Parliament of King James II of Scotland decreed in 1457 that "Golfer be utterly cried down," so that the people might again turn their attention to the practice of archery for the defence of the realm.

During the Yuan Dynasty, China and Western countries' exchanges in business and culture reached a high level, and I think it is not surprising that Chui-Wan was introduced to other countries at Genghis Khan era.

Most people living in the Mongolia grasslands, and taking sheep to pastures, developed skills similar to driving a golf ball to recall sheep which went far away.

Most books and records, about the European golf, are originating the birth of golf game in Scotland and referring to year 1457. This is six or seven hundred years after the Tang Dynasty and after the Yuan Dynasty – "Wan Jin" book was written 200 years later.

During the Yuan era, there was a large-scale interaction and exchange between East and West. Many oriental cultures and technologies, including games, moved to West – a real tide. The famous French Sinologist Abel-Rémusat has also described a great numbers of cultural aspects about China in his book "*Eléments De La Grammaire Chinoise*".

As a complement of his paper Mr Wu sent us three additional facts which we would like to share with our readers:



### Fact 1. The Genghis Khan expedition.

1219 – 1225, Genghis Khan Expedition arrived in the Caspian and Black Sea far north of Iraq, Iran and India. 1235 ~ 1242, Batu, the grandson of Khan led the expedition even further, to the Kipchak, Russia, Hungary, Poland and other countries and regions.

There are some Mongolian historians arguing that "the descendants of Genghis Khan's western expedition had taken the great inventions of China gradually to the West, leading the indirect impact of the Renaissance in Europe". Sports must also have a direct impact as suggested.

### Fact 2. Some linguistic aspects.

Not only *Ji* is a tee (see above) but also *Gol* in Mongolian language has the mean of ball. Some soccer and basketball players often shout "gol,gol,gol" in gaming.

"f" means kid, then "golf" would mean the son of ball, because it was originated from old times Chinese football, Cuju (Remarks by FIFA president Joseph Sepp Blatter at the opening ceremony of the Third International Football Expo on July 15, 2004 in Beijing that the game's governing body concurs with the findings of the Chinese Football Association (CFA), who concluded football originated in

Linzi, Zibo of East China's Shandong Province, may go someway to settling the matter).

Golf in the English Etymology Dictionary has such a description, the word is first mentioned (along with fut-bol) in a 1457 Scottish statute on forbidden games.

In ancient Chuiwai clubs, one of its was called Spoon stick, is same as the Wood 3 in modern golf.

### Fact 3. Similarities in teaching.

In the WanJing book, published in 1282, vividly described how to play Chuiwan:

The eyes should be kept on the ball when hitting it and not looking at the hole. When hitting, attention must be focused on the ball.

Do not swing too fast; be slow to use your strength. Do not suddenly lower or raise your body.

When two-hand clenched rods, the right hand position should be aligned with the heart.

Is this a coincidence?

Many special thanks from the author to Mr. J-B Kazmierczak's warmly invitation and recommendation.

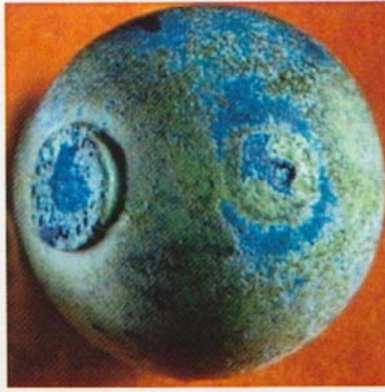


Left: A mural, Yuan Dynasty, located on the Guangsheng Temple, Hongdong county, in the Shanxi province: several officials are playing Chui-wan game. On the ground, there is a plate in a hole; when the ball was holed out a nice sound will announce the winner.





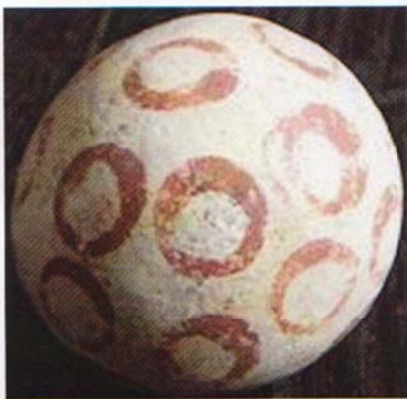
*Tang Dynasty, (618-917)*



*Northern and Southern  
Dynasties (420-589)*



*Song Dynasty (960-1279)*



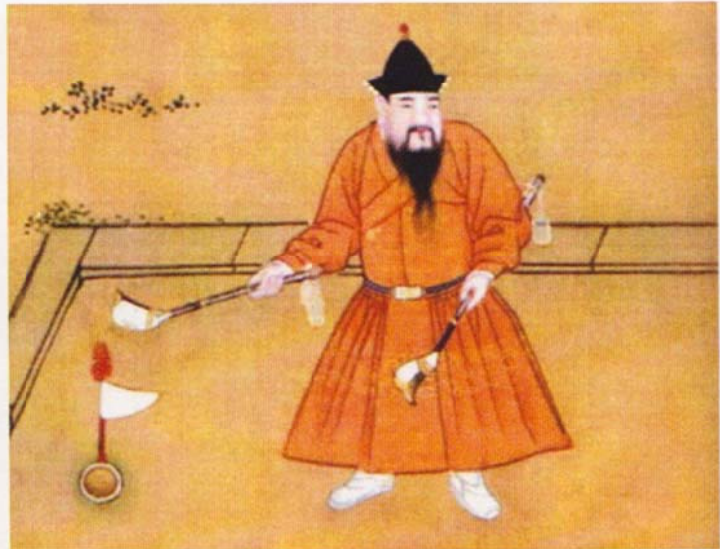
*Song Dynasty, (960-1279)*



*Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368)*



*A Chinese painting, Autumn banquet play*



*Ming Emperor Xuan Zong diem paintings*