

## Chinese Puzzle

The Chinese Puzzle or Tangram was developed in China in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but they first published a book of puzzles and solutions in 1813. Captain Edward M. Donaldson brought the first Chinese puzzle to America in 1817 from China but England sold the first puzzles and published the first books in February 1817. Many British publications followed the same year but most of them copied from Chinese publications only adding a few original puzzles each time. The first American puzzle and solutions appeared in August 1817. Advertisements, in British and American newspapers, for these puzzles as early as February 1817 and continued to appear throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. France and Italy also were producing the puzzles and publishing books but the puzzles did not seem to be as popular as they were in England and the United States.

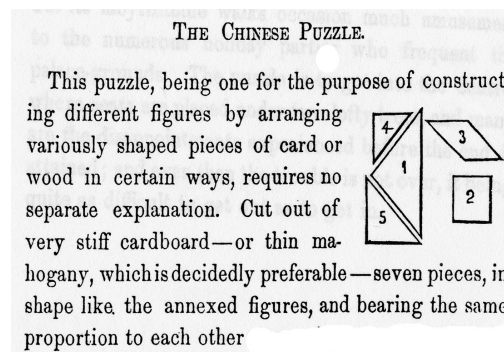
THE NEW CHINESE PUZZLE,  
BONAPARTE'S FAVOURITE AMUSEMENT  
At ST. HELENA.  
**T**HIS Fashionable Novelty, which is constructed on true Geometrical Principles, is manufactured, in the greatest variety of Fancy Wood and Ivory, at various prices, from 1s. 6d. to 18s. each, at  
WALLIS'S JUVENILE REPOSITORY,  
42, Skinner-street, London ;  
And of J. Raw, Bookseller, Ipswich.  
The price of the complete book, consisting of 330 Chinese Characters, is 4s. 6d. plain, and 5s. 6d. coloured ; or the Characters may be had by single sheets at 6d. each.  
N. B. A KEY to all the figures will shortly be published.

*Ipswich Journal*, England July 5, 1817

*New and Fashionable Amusement.*  
**T**HE CHINESE PUZZLE, which, next to the game of Chess, is the most attractive and interesting amusement ever offered to the public. It can be used by one person, or to entertain a company, and is extremely well calculated to employ the mind in exercises of ingenuity and curious device—prices from 16s. to 5 dls according to quality, for sale by A. T. GOODRICH & CO. 124 Broadway, corner of Cedar st. opposite the City Hotel.  
N.B. There are two books, including the key, and a box containing the pieces.  
De 9 2aw3w

*The National Advocate*, New York, NY December 13, 1817

The game pieces of five triangles, a square and a rhomboid could be made from elaborately carved ivory, plain wood, plain or printed cardboard or paper. Directions for making one's own pieces appeared in the *Boy's Own Toymaker*. Below is an excerpt from the book.



Chinese puzzles were not only a game but were used as an educational tool to teach children mathematics. In 1834, *The Girl's Own Book* described it as an "instructive game." In 1848 Thomas Hill wrote a book, *Geometrical Puzzles for the Young* that used the same concept but it was written for younger children; simpler puzzles were given by using fewer pieces to form the figures. He was the first person to coin the term "tangram" but the word "trangram" had been used earlier.

The game seemed to remain quite popular in the United State since they were continually advertised in newspapers as “perfect Christmas gifts” and were used in teaching mathematics well into the twentieth century. In 1903 Sam Loyd wrote the book, *Eighth Book of Tan*, which promoted the hoax that the Chinese puzzle had been invented over 4000 years ago. Even though it has been disproved by modern scholars, Loyd included a great many original puzzles in his book rather than copying from others.

**FUN FOR WINTER EVENINGS; or, GAMES FOR THE LITTLE FOLKS.** This little book embraces the games of Checkers, Fox and Geese, Solitaire, German Tactics, Morrice, and Chinese Puzzle, with a box of checkers to accompany each book, with which all the games can be played, affording an infinite fund of amusement for children or adults. Price, per dozen, \$3.

*American Literary Gazette and Publishers' Circular* Nov. 1, 1865