

INTRODUCTION

Ado Kraemer – even today, 40 years after his death, his name has a particular, even outstanding ring to it in the problem world. Together with his congenial friend **Eric(h) Ernest Zepler** he formed the third notable German pair of Dioscuri (after J. Kohtz and C. Kockelkorn in addition to O. Fuss and F. Möller); they were both followers of the Logical-New German Problem School and both created – separately and together – numerous unforgettable and immortal masterpieces of that problem genre. Their top problems (mostly as “Letztform” [ultimate form]) have been bequeathed to posterity in their own anthology *Im Banne des Schachproblems* and are therefore easily available to all who are interested.

The situation is less favourable if you wish to know about Ado Kraemer’s life. The existing chess encyclopaedias provide only poor or insignificant information on him, if they contain an entry on Ado Kraemer at all. In the much vaunted *Oxford Companion to Chess* it is Eric Zepler who is primarily considered while Ado Kraemer is only mentioned in passing. In other chess works you will find partly misleading or simply incorrect statements on Kraemer. Significantly, a number of years ago the well-known Dutch chess columnist Tim Krabbé turned to the chess public (via Richard Forster’s *Chess History Center*) with an enquiry, in order to find out biographical details of Kraemer and Zepler for his own web site *Chess Curiosities*. The result of this enquiry must have been quite disillusioning, but it was the catalyst for my own investigations.

At first sight it may surprise readers that there has never been an attempt to produce a detailed biographical portrayal of one of the greatest composers in the realms of problem art. However, a researcher would soon realize that Ado Kraemer’s life is only known in general terms and that the total existing knowledge is not sufficient to compile a real biography. For some time a short biography of Kraemer has circulated on the internet¹, it was taken from a private edition (edited by the *Gesellschaft für die Geschichte des Weines* [Society for the History of Wine], ²2002) and forms until now the most fruitful summary of Ado Kraemer’s life. But naturally it is fragmentary and leaves countless questions unanswered.

¹ See http://www.geschichte-des-weines.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=332:kraemer-ado-1898-1972&catid=45:persoenlichkeiten-a-z&Itemid=83.

Tim Krabbé's above mentioned enquiry, however, had given me the impetus to set out in search of clues, in spite of the unpromising source material situation, and to investigate Ado Kraemer's development more closely. This search started in approximately 2003, has extended over several years, and was carried out sporadically as other works and book projects had priority. Initially it was debatable whether my efforts would ever be published. As expected, it turned out that from the widely scattered "tesserae" on Kraemer, nothing more could be formed than a biographical sketch which, though it covers the significant occasions in his life, remained unclear or incomplete on many issues of detail. The subtitle of this work makes allowance for that.

Of course I was anxious to make the man, the personality Ado Kraemer, at least a little more transparent, to bring him to life as far as possible, by the use of citations either from himself or from contemporaries and companions who had known him. At the same time it was desirable to avoid in my elaborations the character of a mere material compilation; readers may judge how far I have been successful in that. The disadvantage of a biographer who can describe his "subject" only with the help of historical source material and not by virtue of a personal acquaintance is hard to compensate. Finally, depictions of such a kind will always come across as more dreary and more sterile than those which can resort to personal experiences and impressions.

Numerous problems from Kraemer's workshop have been added to the biographical sections: they shed light on the themes Kraemer has dealt with in the different stages of his life and on his elaborate construction skills. In the selection on problems (and endgame studies) I have largely refrained from reprinting pieces from the Kraemer-Zepler anthology – anyway every problem enthusiast will have this anthology readily available on their shelves. But in my text I have occasionally referred to problems from that book where that seemed reasonable.

Therefore the reader will be able to enjoy problems largely unknown today, which don't belong to the top selection of the said anthology, but are still so interesting and rich in content that they deserve to be snatched from oblivion. Naturally the enclosed problems have been computer-checked by me – unfortunately many an interesting piece had to be discarded in the writing because of defects. It is known that Ado Kraemer's proportion of cooked problems was comparatively high.

Parallel to the work on this book I have compiled a database of Kraemer productions which also functioned as an ancillary tool for selecting the problems in this book. Currently this database contains about 850 problems, correct as well as incorrect ones. Not all relevant magazines have yet been combed through, which is mainly attributable to the sources lacking in my own library and so, many additional problems are likely to await inclusion. It is intended to make this PDB available to the problem world at a later date.

In the present book Ado Kraemer is for the first time portrayed as an OTB player, a separate subchapter being devoted to this subject. Kraemer commenced particular intensive activities in OTB chess in the 1920s, moreover he was entrusted with several club functions in that period. He didn't achieve any significant success in the few supra-regional tournaments he participated in, but as an enterprising player "free from any theory" he was a strong support for his Detmold chess club in matches. I have included a few of his games with short contemporary annotations. Altogether I have been able to discover only 20 games by Ado Kraemer; they are all recorded in the annex. The number of Kraemer games in current electronic mega databases turns out to be even lower.

The combination of text and pictures, of citations and articles, problems and studies, games and material of and about Ado Kramer presented in this script should afford entertaining reading. This book is *also* a storybook to amuse problem friends. Even so my original objective remains unaffected, to present a substantiated, historically sound and, as far as possible, complete portrayal of Kraemer which is based on reliable references. As the last could only be partially successful, I would appreciate notes from readers which throw additional light on the still dark passages in Kraemer's life. I plan an extra page on Ado Kraemer on my web site which will be online before the publication of this book and which, among other things, is intended for such additions.

I have forgone a glossary on problem terminology as the terms used here can mostly be looked up in the standard works. The solutions are almost all taken from the original historical sources; the problem theory communicated there is essentially related to the period 1920–1970 which corresponds to a large extent to the developmental period and height of the Logical-New German School. Maybe this publication will prove an additional stimulus for chess problem newcomers to deal more profoundly with Ado Kraemer's chess problem estate? That too would represent a success for my book.

Meerbusch, in August 2011

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