

The Pawn Study Composer's Manual

Mikhail Zinar

New edition updated and edited by Sergei Tkachenko

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Second edition and first English edition

First edition published in Ukraine in 1990

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ISBN 978-5-6047848-1-5 (paperback); 978-5-6047848-4-6 (hardback)

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Introduction

Congratulations on buying this book! It means that you maybe want to learn how to become a pawn studies composer! There is a long road ahead, and you need to start at the beginning. Once you grasp the concept of harmony of the pawn study you will have made substantial progress along your composition journey. So, let us first break down the concept's substance.

Harmony can be defined as the optimal balance of parts within a whole; a sufficient (but not excessive) number of components of an object or process that are required to ensure its successful existence.

Let's also think about why we refer to endgame studies as "compositions". The structural relationships between the parts of an object determine what we call a composition (especially in the various forms of creative art). Ideally, such a composition should be harmonious, in other words it is consistent with its intended criteria, and therefore aesthetic and beautiful. And being an art form, endgame studies naturally have specific features of compositions.

The requirements for harmonious composition naturally apply to the art of chess as well, but with some distinct differences. With a painting, for instance, we are looking at the result of the work, whereas in chess we are looking at the process – or, to be exact, at its external execution through some logical sequence of moves given a set balance of forces in the initial position.

During the battle between two opponents that unfolds on the chess

board, the structure of play and its individual elements cannot be fully predetermined from the outset. Chess composition, on the other hand, uses the rules and patterns of the game (and sometimes others!), but is constructed by the author (or authors) in such a way that a sequence of only moves by both sides (this is what constitutes the composition's harmony) leads to the only possible predetermined or required result.

To better understand what chess composition is, what its main forms are and what harmony of the pawn study means, we now need to digress slightly and take a brief look at the history of chess.

Chess composition first emerged as a separate form of chess creativity at the turn of the 8th–9th century. What is known as a *mansuba* (plural – *mansubat*) first appeared during that period. Mansuba can be translated from Arabic as something that was erected, founded, or built. This term already established a divide between the nascent art of chess composition and chess play per se. Nevertheless, composed positions were tightly linked with practical play. They featured an excessive number of pieces and pawns and had an easy solution – the majority of mansubat can be compared to rather weak actual game fragments. Still, the mansubat not only served as training material for over-the-board play but also sowed the first seeds of chess composition aesthetics.

With time, chess composition got divided into orthodox composition (fully

compliant with the rules of the game), unorthodox, fairy problems and special kinds. The required components of an orthodox composition are checkmate of the king as the goal, a board with pieces and pawns as material, and rules of chess as the means. The main tendency in modern chess composition has been the development of orthodox composition.

There are two kinds of chess composition: problems and studies.

A chess problem is a constructed position on the board where one side (usually white) checkmates the other side (black) in a certain number of moves. Therefore, the number of pieces and relative strength of the sides are not the defining features of problems. Black may only have a lone king, and white may still control his entire army – yet this is not what determines white's success. The main goal is to find some hidden way to checkmate the enemy king in a set number of moves.

An endgame study is also a constructed position, but, unlike a problem, it's more closely related to over-the-board endgames. It's white to move at the start of studies (unless it's specified that black is to move), but the goal of a study is not to give checkmate in a certain number of moves. Rather, it is simply to achieve a win (or a decisive advantage) or a draw. The number of moves (unlike in problems) is not specified. The starting position is subject to strict requirements – it must resemble as far as possible a position that could occur in an actual game.

However, an endgame study is *not* simply a position from a real endgame. In a game position, the possible end result can only be determined after analysis,

which is sometimes very difficult and painstaking. In a study, on the other hand, the result which is meant to occur when both sides make their best moves is already known.

It's much harder to solve a study than a problem. To find the solution, one needs to possess both a certain knowledge of theory and creative intuition. Compared with analysis of actual game positions, however, it's easier to solve a study, because the chances of both opponents are often unclear in games, whereas in studies white has a mathematically precise, only way to win or draw, which is unavoidable no matter what black attempts. In addition, an only winning move in an over-the-board game may be quite simple to find, whereas the key move of a study is always original, ingenious, involving subtle, hard-to-find moves and nuances.

Moreover, it's not necessary to use all the remaining pieces to achieve a win in an actual game; in an endgame study, however, *all* pieces on the board must be directly or indirectly involved in the solution. Any chess idea should be expressed in an artistic form and subject to formal requirements. What are these requirements?

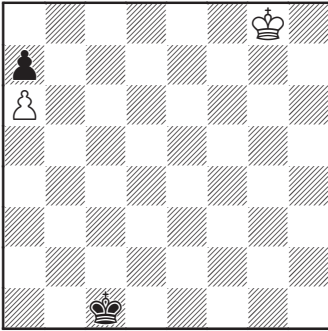
Legality of the initial position

The initial position of the study must be reachable from the initial position of a real chess game. An example of an illegal position: white pawns on a2, a3 and b2 – it cannot be reached from the initial position.

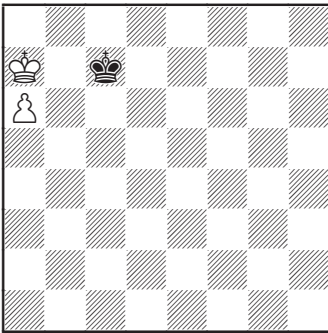
Solvability

The goal of the study should be reached in all possible lines. If the goal

cannot be reached in at least one of the lines, the whole study is unsolvable. An example of unsolvability: if we put the black king on c1 in **Study 1** of chapter I where white is supposed to play and win.

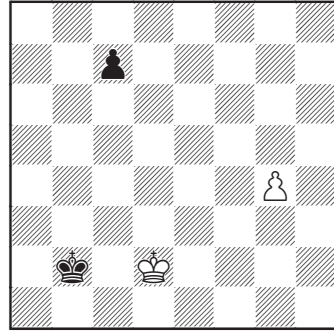


After 1. ♔f7 ♕d2! 2. ♕e6 ♖e3!
3. ♕d5 ♖f4! 4. ♕c6 ♖e5 5. ♖b7 ♕d6
6. ♕xa7 ♖c7, there's a draw. White failed to reach the goal – the position is unwinnable.



Uniqueness of the solution

The goal should be achieved in exactly one way. If there's another way, then the study has a side solution. For instance, if we remove the black e6 pawn in **Study 82**, also where white is supposed to play and win.



In addition to the author's solution, white can simply play 1. ♕d3 ♖b3 2.g5, and the pawn promotes with check.

If the study fails to meet any of the above requirements, it has no right to exist.

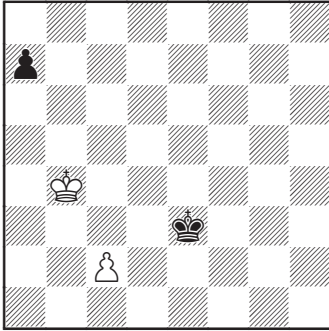
In addition to the formal requirements, there are also some artistic requirements, but we shall discuss them later, after reading the main part of the book. First, let's study some special terms. Some of these terms are not used in this book, but you may encounter them elsewhere in your studies adventures.

Analytical study – a type of study where analytical elements prevail over artistic ones. Analytical studies are very close to endgames from real games. Therefore, such studies are often categorized as endgames that still comply with the requirement of the uniqueness of the solution.

Author's solution – the solution of the study that was intended by the author.

Blocked pawn – a pawn that is stopped by the opponent's pawn or piece standing immediately before it.

No. 16. N. Grigoriev
64, 1931



White to play and win

1.c4 ♖d4 2.c5 ♗e5! Another continuation is also interesting: 2...a5+ 3.♕b5 a4 4.c6 a3 5.c7 a2 6.c8=♗ a1=♗ 7.♗h8+ with a win.

3.♕a5! ♗e6 4.♕a6! ♗d5 5.♕b5! Black is in zugzwang, and white wins.

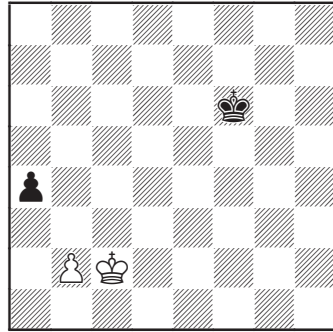
There can follow **5...♗e5** (or **5...♗e6 6.♕c6**, and at the end of the line the black king gets checked by the newborn white queen) **6.♕c6 a5 7.♗b7**(b6, d7) **a4 8.c6 a3 9.c7 a2 10.c8=♗ a1=♗ 11.♗h8+**, curtains.

We have examined some instructive positions that are still artistically valuable even in our times, because good knowledge of them will allow you to understand endgame studies better and will make composing easier.

Additionally, when these techniques are woven into the study's canvas, they add a "game-like" character to any study, eliminating the "schematic" character of some ideas. This is especially true for the "roundabout way" and "feint" techniques, which haven't reached the status of "textbook ideas" yet.

1.2. Roundabout way

No. 17. F. Cassidy
The Chess Monthly, 1884



White to play and win

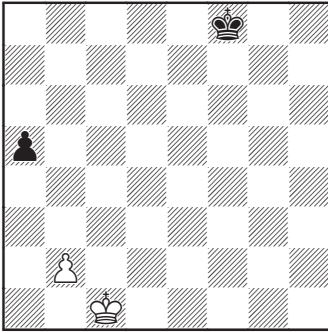
1.♕b1! An amazing move! The king chooses the longest possible way towards the pawn. However, **1.♕c3?** is met with **1...a3!**, and black is safe.

1...a3! 2.b3! But not **2.b4?** ♗e7 3.♕a2 ♗d6 4.♕xa3 ♗c6 5.♕a4 ♗b6!, with a draw.

2...♗e7 3.♕a2 ♗d6 4.♕xa3 ♗c6 5.♕a4! The continuation **5.♕b4?** missed the win – **5...♕b6!** etc.

5...♕b6 6.♕b4!, and the opposition is achieved. In this case, the roundabout way was chosen because white was concerned about a4-a3.

It was previously believed that the authorship of this study belonged to F. Dedrle, who ostensibly published his discovery in 1921. This study was actually composed by F. Cassidy back in 1884, and Dedrle only skillfully added one brilliant move to the already-known idea! Here's his version:

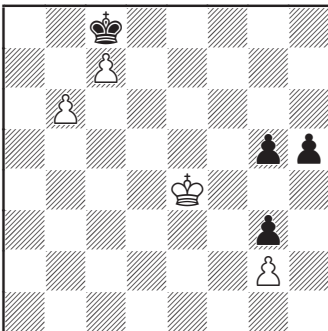


1. ♔c2!! a4! 2. ♔b1! etc.

In 1927, Alexei Troitsky added an exchange introduction to Dedrle's position, and in 1952, Josef Moravec of Czechoslovakia made a mirror copy of the 1921 position.

In the next study, white is worried about a black king move, rather than a pawn one.

No. 18. M. Zinar
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1988

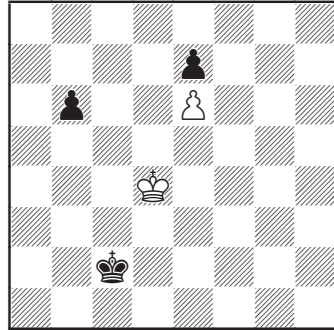


White to play and win

If 1. ♔d5?, then 1... ♔d7 with a draw. The correct move is **1. ♔f5! h4 2. ♔e6! h3 3. ♔d6 hxg2 4. ♔c6 g1=♚ 5. b7#**. White reaches the c6 square in four moves instead of two!

The theme of the roundabout way was expressed well in the following study.

No. 19. M. Zinar
64 – Shakhmatnoe Obozrenie, 1985



White to play and draw

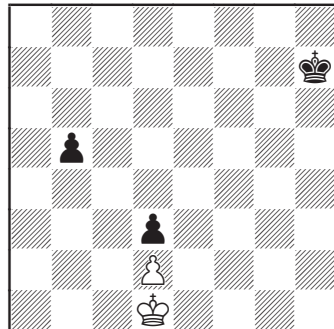
The straightforward 1. ♔d5? loses to 1...b5! 2. ♔c5 ♔c3 3. ♔xb5 ♔d4, shouldering the white king.

The correct move is **1. ♔c4! ♔d2 2. ♔b5 ♔d3 3. ♔c6! b5 4. ♔d7** with a draw.

1.3. Feint

The feint technique appears much more often.

No. 20. M. Zinar
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1985



White to play and draw

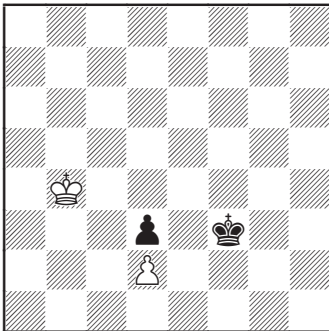
It's obvious that white should not forget about the b5 pawn. The natural 1.♔c1? is met with the immediate 1...♗g6 2.♔b2 ♕f5 3.♔b3 ♕f4 4.♔c3 ♕e4 5.♔b4 ♕f3, and black wins. Therefore, white should first create threats to the d3 pawn.

1.♔e1! Now 1...♗g6 is bad due to 2.♔f2, and the pawn falls. Black has to weaken his position.

1...b4. Now the attack 2.♔f2? does not work due to 2...b3! But this is exactly what white was counting on: he's going back to the initial square.

2.♔d1!! ♗g6. White has lost two whole tempi! But...

3.♔c1 ♕f5 4.♔b2 ♕e4 5.♔b3 ♕f3 6.♔xb4

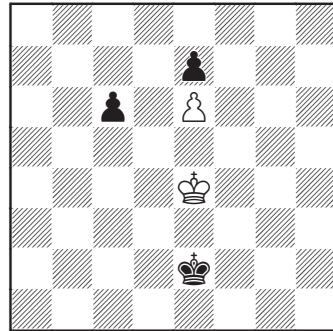


And since 6...♔f2? 7.♔c4! ♕e2 8.♔c3! now even loses, black is forced to make a draw with 6...♔e4 (or 6...♕f4).

Without a doubt, the feint technique is aesthetic because of the comeback element.

A feint can consist of several moves as well. Here are some more simple examples to make understanding easier. **Study 21** is similar to the previous one.

No. 21. M. Zinar
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1986



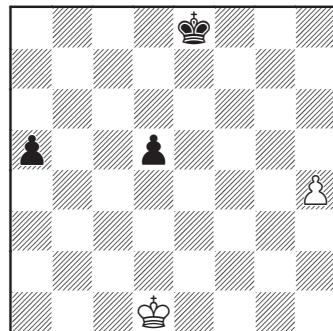
White to play and draw

1.♔d4? loses: 1...♔f3 2.♔c5 ♕e4 3.♔xc6 ♕e5 4.♔c5 (4.♔d7 ♕f6, and wins) 4...♔xe6 5.♔d4 ♕f5 etc.

The correct move is 1.♔f5! c5 2.♔e4! And now, after the feint, there's shouldering.

2...♔f2 3.♔d5 ♕f3 4.♔xc5 ♕e4 5.♔c4! ♕e5 6.♔d3 ♕xe6 7.♔e4, with a theoretical draw.

No. 22. M. Zinar
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1985



White to play and draw

1.♔c2! ♕f7. The passed d-pawn is more dangerous, but white cannot win it immediately: 2.♔c3? ♕g6 3.♔d4 a4!

Chapter II

STUDY IDEAS

You can solve some studies, such as **Study 47** by Reti, without specialized knowledge: either only black promotes his pawn, or both sides promote their pawns, or only the bare kings remain.

But there's a group of endgame studies that require knowledge of endgame theory, because the entire play is based on the ability (or inability) to reach a certain position. And without theoretical knowledge, it's hard to predict whether this position is won or drawn.

Can such studies be truly considered works of art? The classical legacy says, of course they can! For instance, a lot of brilliant studies are based on the solid foundation of Troitsky's theoretical research into two knights vs. pawn endgames – one of the most complicated areas of endgame theory, which nobody except the author of the analysis could comprehend at the time.

Pawn endgames don't have such complicated theory, but pawn study authors still need to know the subtleties. First of all, they enable you to compose great studies that will look different from others (in a good way) and add an interesting twist to well-known tactical tricks. Secondly, this knowledge will allow you to create studies with different ideas. Thirdly – you will raise your general chess culture.

It's better to classify studies with theoretical ideas according to their final positions. They are called “beacons”, because the techniques used to achieve them are common to many ideas: sacrifice, shouldering, corresponding squares, feint, avoiding capture, roundabout way, etc.

At the same time, the final positions themselves are trivial (with rare exceptions), so this group can be classified as “playful” studies without a finale, and therefore evaluated by the sets of tactical tricks used.

2.1. Pawn beacons

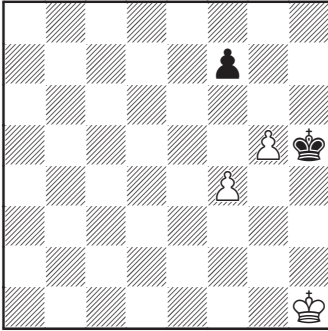
This subgroup comprises studies where everything is decided before the queens are involved. In **Study 102**, both sides fight for the key squares of the passed pawn. The solution of the study was original at the time: the pawns – and, therefore, the key squares – move forward by means of sacrifice.

Theory shows that passed pawns have “key” squares, and if the king gets to one of those key squares, it

ensures the pawn's promotion. These squares are located two ranks ahead of the passer. The means of the struggle is “opposition” – to achieve the goal, the king should be located two squares away from the opposing king on the same rank.

In **Study 102**, the white pawns are doomed. The key squares of the f7 pawn, which is going to become passed, are located on the fifth rank, and the black king will seize them.

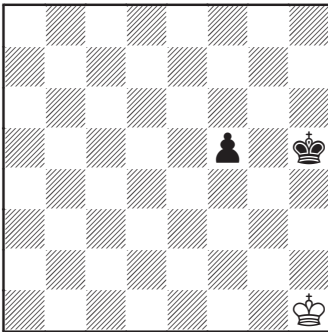
No. 102. H. Mattison
Deutsches Wochenschach, 1918



White to play and draw

1.g6! fxc6. Black is forced to capture with the pawn, which moves the key squares one rank lower. But it's too early to celebrate. After **2.♔g2? ♕g4 3.f5 gxf5 4.♕f2 ♕f4**, the black king makes it to the key squares in time. While after **2.♕h2? ♕g4 3.f5**, it breaks through to the key squares with **3...♕xf5 4.♔g3 ♕g5 5.♕h3 ♕f4** etc.

2.f5! gxf5



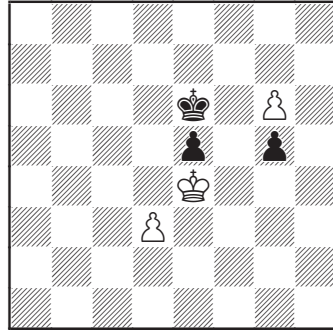
3.♕g1! Giving the black king an opportunity to reach the fourth rank.

3...♕g5 4.♕f1! ♕g4 5.♕g2 with a draw.

In **Study 103**, the struggle for opposition is compounded with

avoidance of capture. It's clear that the d3 pawn is the one that decides matters.

No. 103. N. Grigoriev
Shakhmaty, 1923



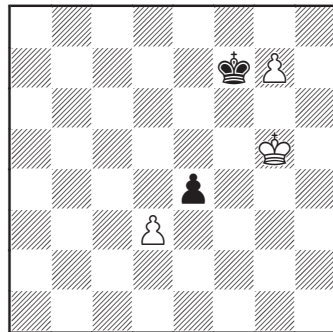
White to play and win

1.g7 ♕f7 2.♕f5! Because the g5 pawn is more dangerous.

2...♕g8! To meet the natural **3.♕xg5?** with **3...e4! 4.dxe4 ♕xg7** and get a draw.

3.♕g4! ♕f7! Sticking to the same tactic.

4.♕xg5! e4. Black expects white to play **5.dxe4**. But...

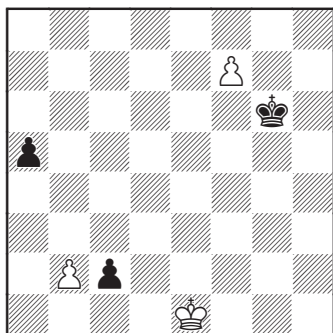


5.♕h6! ♕g8 6.dxe4, and wins.

Rook pawns have their own special features. Their value is diminished

because it's enough for the king to seize the corner square or trap the opposing king there to achieve a draw. In most studies on this theme, these nuances come into play.

No. 104. M. Zinar
Pobeda (Feodosia), 1981



White to play and win

After 1. ♔d2? ♚xf7 2. ♔xc2 ♚e6 3. ♚b3 ♚d5 4. ♚a4 ♚c4, it's a draw. First of all, the black king is deflected as far from the main action as possible.

1.f8=♟+! ♚g7. An inventive reply as well, anticipating 2. ♟e6+?

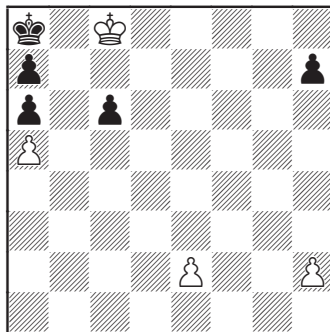
2. ♔d2! c1=♚+ 3. ♔xc1 ♔xf8. And now we have the position from J. Moravec's 1952 study. (As we know, the "patent" actually belongs to Dedrle who first published it in 1921.)

Now, a feint follows: 4. ♔c2!! a4. And we see Dedrle's 1921 study on the board – see **Study 17**. (And this position, as we know, was actually composed by Cassidy back in 1884.)

5. ♚b1! etc. A synthesis of simple but beautiful techniques: underpromotion, feint, and roundabout way.

In **Study 105**, several ideas are synthesized serially.

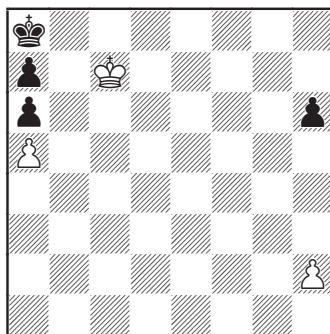
No. 105. N. Grigoriev
Shakhmaty, 1929
5th– 6th honorable mention



White to play and win

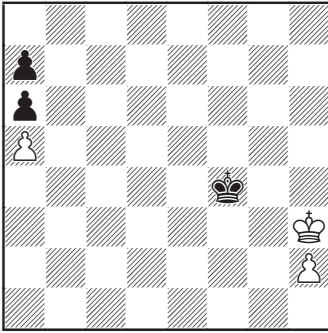
1.e4 c5 2.e5 c4 3.e6 c3 4.e7 c2 5.e8=♟! A rare idea: to force the trade of a promoted piece by interposing against a check.

5...c1=♚+ 6. ♟c7+ ♚xc7+ 7. ♔xc7 h6! Now it's necessary for white to keep the h2 pawn on the initial square – then, after the trade of the h-pawns, the black king won't make it to c7 or c8 in time.



8. ♔c8! h5 9. ♔c7! h4 10. ♔c8! h3 11. ♔d7 ♚b8. 11...♚b7 is met with 12. ♔d6!, winning.

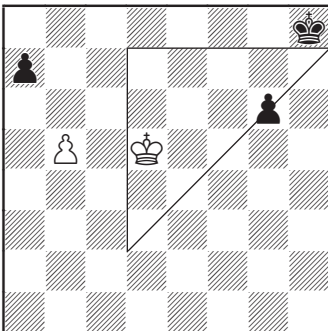
12. ♔e6 ♔c7 13. ♔f5 ♔d6 14. ♔g4 ♔e5 15. ♔xh3 ♔f4



16. ♖h4! ♗f5 17. ♖g3! ♗g5 18. ♖f3
 ♗h4 19. ♖e4 ♗h3 20. ♗d5 ♖xh2
 21. ♖c6 ♗g3 22. ♖b7 with a win.

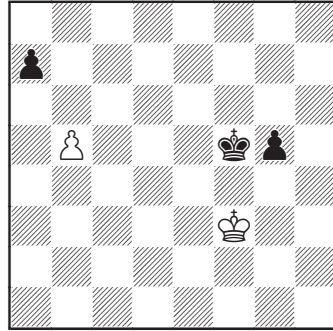
A Bahr's triangle is depicted on the diagram for **Study 106**, with a rook pawn and an opposing pawn on the neighboring file. If the passed pawn is inside the triangle (as it is on the diagram), and the kings are in a "normal" position (here, ♖f4–♗f6), then black wins regardless of who is to move. If the passed pawn is outside the triangle, it's a draw. If the a+b pawn pair are moved down the board, the passer always wins. Here, white lures the black pawn from the winning zone with a feint.

No. 106. M Zinar
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1984



White to play and draw

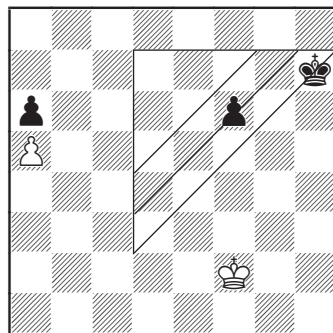
1. ♖c6! g5 2. ♗d5! ♗g7 3. ♖e4 ♗g6
 4. ♗f3 ♖f5



5. ♗g3, with a draw – the white king makes it to c1 in time. For instance: 5... ♖e5 6. ♗g4 ♗d5 7. ♗xg5 ♖c5 8. ♗f4! ♗xb5 9. ♖e3 ♖c4 10. ♗d2 ♗b3 11. ♖c1 etc.

In **Study 107**, where both opposing pawns are rook pawns, everything boils down to whether the king can make it to the corner in time to hold the pawn. This situation is less favorable for the stronger side in comparison with the study above.

No. 107. M. Zinar
Shakhmatny Bulletin, 1984



White to play and draw

Chapter III

ARTISTIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ENDGAME STUDIES

The key artistic requirements for endgame studies are driven by the principles of (1) unity of form and content and (2) harmonic alignment of the main idea and the means used to execute that idea.

Artistic requirements have changed over time in the course of artistic development of chess composition. Violation of these requirements is not punished as severely as violation of the formal requirements we discussed at the start of the book (legality, solvability, and uniqueness of solution). That is to say, studies with a low artistic level still have a right to exist, unlike those that violate the formal requirements. However, neglecting the main historical artistic requirements hinders both creative achievements and success in competitions.

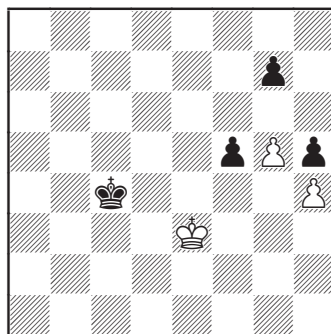
Naturally, as in any other art form, every endgame study artist has his or her own views, principles and unique creative style. A uniform approach to artistic requirements is not possible. Some authors are stricter and more dogmatic in their evaluation of studies, while others are less so. Which of the numerous artistic requirements should be considered the key ones?

1. Expressiveness of the idea – the clear identification of the main line, which explains the very purpose of the given endgame study. The secondary technical lines should not obscure the main play.

This requirement is fulfilled in the following way: the idea should not be ordinary and uninteresting, but it should be prominent and immediately obvious. In the vast majority of studies, this criterion is fulfilled. But let's look at a different type of example.

No. 359. H. Cohn

Maestros Latinoamericanos, 1940



White to play and draw

White is a pawn down. The first move is obvious – otherwise black creates a protected passed pawn.

1.g6! ♔d5 **2.♔f4** ♔e6 **3.♔g5**, and after **3...f4** **4.♔xf4** or **3...♔e5** **4.♔xh5 f4** **5.♔g4** ♔e4 **6.h5**, it's a draw.

Chapter IV

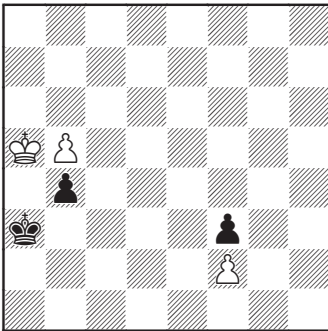
THE PRACTICE OF STUDY COMPOSITION

It's hard to explain exactly how the idea of a particular endgame study arises. It's easier to trace the path from the idea's appearance to its implementation in a concrete position. These paths are always different, but we think that by letting budding composers take a look into an expert's creative laboratory, we might help them develop their own methods and techniques of composition.

An attentive reader has likely already digested quite a lot of information about composition methods while studying this book. We have deliberately increased the number of studies on certain themes to show both what was already done and how the study ideas were developed.

Let's now analyze the composition process further. For instance, how was **Study 278** composed?

No. 361. N. Grigoriev
64, 1929

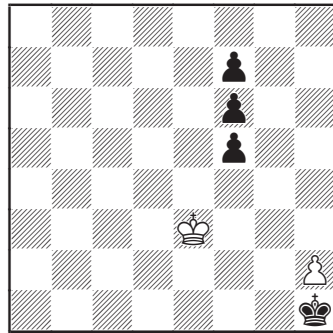


White to play and win

The author of **Study 278** looked at the diagram of **Study 361** many times and eventually noticed that after **1.b6 b3 2.b7 b2 3.b8=♖! ♔a2 4.♔a4! b1=♗ 5.♖xb1 ♔xb1**, another pawn endgame occurs. However, the play was very simple: **6.♔b3!**, winning. But can this second pawn endgame be made more interesting, for instance, by introducing a second underpromotion? And so, the

author decided to use the idea of **Study 362** as the second phase...

No. 362. A. Herbstman
L'Echiquier, 1928

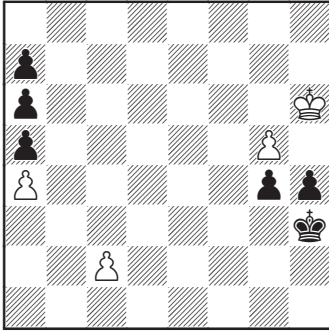


White to play and win

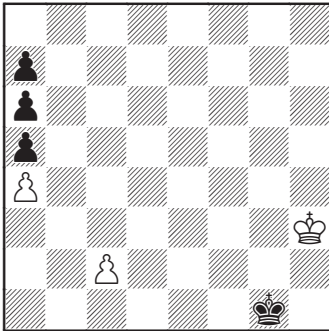
1.h4 ♔g2! 2.♔f4 ♔h3 3.h5 ♔h4 4.h6 ♔h5 5.h7 ♔g6 6.h8=♗! with a win.

To stop the pawn from moving forward too early, another black pawn was added in the first phase.

The following sketch resulted:

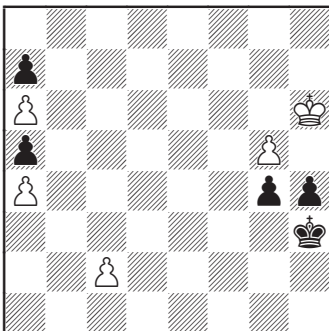


Solution: 1.g6 g3 2.g7 g2 3.g8=♖!
 ♔h2 4.♔h5 h3 5.♔h4 g1=♗ 6.♖xg1
 ♔xg1 7.♔xh3.

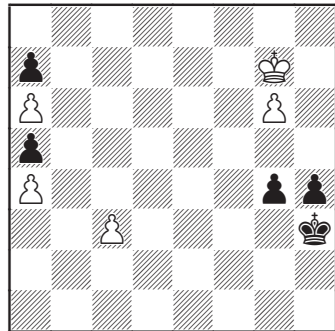


However, simple verification showed that after 7...♔f2 8.c4 ♔e3 9.c5 ♔d4 10.c6 ♔c5 11.c7 ♔b6, the pawn could be promoted to a bishop, not only to a rook.

To eliminate this flaw, the black a6 pawn was replaced with a white pawn.



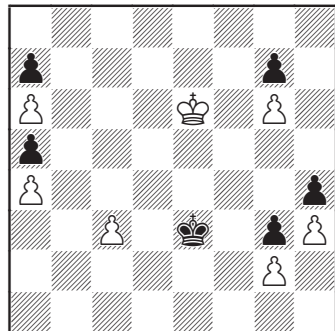
Now 12.c8=♖! is indeed the only winning move, but another verification showed that a new side solution had appeared: instead of 8.c4, white can play 8.♔g4! and wins after taking on a7. This solution was also easy to eliminate: the c2 pawn was moved to c3. The study was ready, only with one final refinement: instead of 1.g6, it would be better to put the white king on g7, the white pawn on g6 and start the solution with 1.♔h6! And voila, we get **Study 278**.



Years later, the author noticed that the kingside pawns could be blocked, which he did. Let's look at the next composition.

No. 363. M. Zinar

USSR Central Chess Club Bulletin, 1978
 (reworked, 1986)



White to play and win

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