



Attacking the Flexible Sicilian

A White repertoire against

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6

Vassilios Kotronias
and Semko Semkov

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Attacking the Flexible Sicilian

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Contents

Bibliography 4

Foreword from Kotronias 5

Foreword from Semkov 7

Chapter 1. Taimanov – Various 7th Moves 9

Chapter 2. Taimanov – 7...♗d6 33

Chapter 3. Taimanov – 7...♘f6 53

Chapter 4. Taimanov – 7...d6 83

Chapter 5. Taimanov – the Giri Variation 7...♘e5 8...♖g3 h5 99

Chapter 6. Taimanov – 6...♘f6 125

Chapter 7. Taimanov – 5...a6 137

Chapter 8. The Pin Variation 153

Chapter 9. Anti-Sveshnikov 167

Chapter 10. Anti-Sveshnikov – Main Line 8...♖c7 203

Chapter 11. Kan 5.c4 – Rare lines 229

Chapter 12. Kan 5.c4 – 6...♗b4 253

Chapter 13. Kan 5.c4 – 6...♖c7 275

Chapter 14. Keres Attack without 6...h6 307

Chapter 15. Keres Attack – Main Line 329

Chapter 16. Anti-Keres 367

Index of Variations 401

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10 Days (www.Chessmix.com)

Chess Publishing (www.chesspublishing.com)

Chess Today (www.chesstoday.net)

Foreword from Kotronias

Dear reader,

This book aims to give you a full repertoire against open Sicilians with 2...e6. Although I wrote it in first person, it is a joint effort by me – with a solid experience with both colours, and Semko Semkov, who is a life-long supporter of the Black's cause and co-author of the best-selling *The Most Flexible Sicilian*. It proved to be a herculean task because of the fluid centre and the many transpositional possibilities. At times we thought we had reached an impasse, trying to crush those ultra solid structures, but then a dim light appeared. This dim light often led us to new ways and the bulk of the book is based on original analysis.

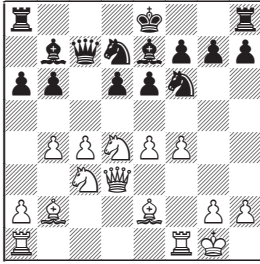
In all honesty, we do not want to claim that such a beast of an opening like the ...e7-e6 Sicilian can be refuted. We just relied on our own chess instincts and powerful computers to reassess latest tournament praxis and anticipate as much as possible future developments.

The underlying logic of this work is simple: Attack when you can, squeeze when you cannot!

We chose the modern set-up with ♙c1-e3 and ♖d1-f3 in the Taimanov,

as the English Attack has run out of steam (Aleksander Delchev and Semko himself played a great role in this with their previous works). It is strategically very rich, as it combines ideas ranging from aggressive pawn storms to endings that might arise after the manoeuvre ♖f3-g3. Contrary to what most people think, Sicilian endings are not always better for Black! The dark-squared complex on the queenside becomes weak without queens, and White's king is close to the battlefield. Of course, Black does not have to oblige and he could keep the queens, but only at the cost of concessions. Commonly he will need to compromise his kingside in order to repel our queen from g3 by ...h5-h4.

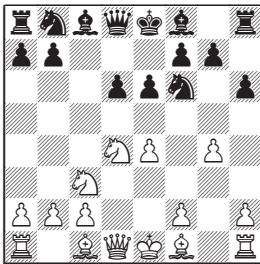
The Kan is even more flexible than the Taimanov, and we decided on a complicated positional-attacking treatment built around 5.c4. It bears the seal of approval of World Champions Carlsen and Anand. White tries to grasp complete control of the centre in this line, hoping to see a Hedgehog formation. We have developed an almost unexplored very aggressive set-up against it:



This is not really a Hedgehog, but only a poor Black's attempt to reach it, as he might not live that long after Bac1 , g4 , d5 !.

Against the Keres Attack, we also offer a surprising approach:

1.e4 c5 2.f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.fxd4 f6 5.c3 d6 6.g4! h6



7.gg1!. We believe that the semi-automatic 7.h4 is inaccurate.

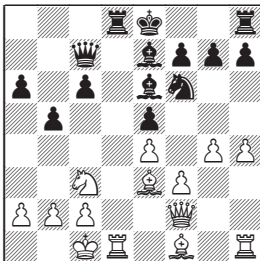
Finally, we chose the radical 6.fxc6 against the Four Knights, avoiding both the Sveshnikov and the annoying 6.fdb5 f6b4 variation. It is a good practical choice, as in the resulting pawn structure Black has problems with the dark squares and he lacks space.

We do sincerely hope that the present work will add a valuable weapon to your Anti-Sicilian armoury. It should keep you ahead in the battle of theoretical novelties.

*Vassilios Kotronias
Athens, January 2017*

Foreword from Semkov

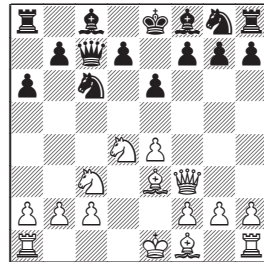
More than a year ago Vassilios proposed to write a book against the Taimanov. I was scandalised – how he dared to challenge my pet system for Black! Still, I politely asked what would be his main line and burst laughing when heard his answer – the English Attack with ♖d2, f3. I definitely did not believe in White’s prospects there. Then I put on my thinking hat and tried to seriously step in White’s shoes. Despite the time passed, my *The Most Flexible Sicilian* still held its ground. Newer publications only seem to confirm the soundness of the Taimanov. For example, Negi has based a whole repertoire on a structure which I had always assessed as totally safe for Black. He advocates to take on c6 and claims that White has some play in the arising symmetrical pawn formation. To me, it is rock solid and I would not spend an hour on it, as it would be pure waste of time. The first line I looked at in the book only confirmed my conviction:



1.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 2.♗h3 ♘d7 3.g5 ♗hx3
4.♖xh3 (Negi so far) 4...0-0!=. Black has full-fledged counterplay with ...f6. His game is even easier since he lacks weaknesses.

Then I got an insight – we should look for gaps in *The Most Flexible Sicilian* and dig there! One weak point was the line:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
♘c6 5.♘c3 ♗c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗f3

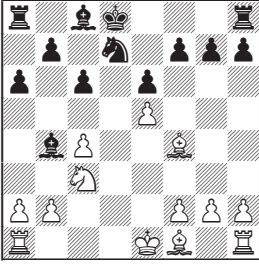


Two years ago this was a very rare sideline and I had almost neglected it. But now it is the cutting edge and every day we see new important games at highest level.

Another omission was the line:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
a6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♗b4 7.♗d3 ♘c6
8.♘xc6 dxc6 9.♗xd8+ ♔xd8 10.e5
♘d7 11.♗f4! It turns out that Black’s position is unpleasant and that cost Anand a crucial defeat against Carlsen (although he could have even won at some point!).

Foreword



Anand even took recently White's side in this line (but again, luck was not with him!).

Kotronias accepted my advice about the direction of his investigation, I also got interested by this unusual role – to work against Black, and so I became a co-author!

You can blame me for any inconsistencies you might encounter throughout the book, as my interference was at last instance.

*Semko Semkov
Sofia, January 2017*

Index of Variations

Taimanov

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞c6 5.♞c3 ♖c7 6.♙e3 a6 7.♗f3

Chapter 1. Various 7th Moves 15

7...♞ge7 15 (7... 7...♞xd4 15; 7...h5 15)

7...♙b4 16 8.♞xc6 bxc6 9.♙f4 17

9.♙d4! 19

7...b5 8.♗g3 20

8.♞xc6!? 27

Chapter 2. 7...♙d6 8.0-0-0 ♙e5 33

9.♞de2 42

9.♞xc6!? 49

9.g3 ♞f6 36,44 (9...b5 36)

9...♞ge7 36 10.♗e2 0-0 (10...b5 36) 11.f4 37

11.♗d2!? 39

Chapter 3. 7...♞f6 8.0-0-0 53

8...♞e5 (8...♙b4?! 56; 8...d6 56; 8...♗b8 56) 9.♗g3 b5 10.f4 (10.♙xb5 57;

10.♞dx5 57) 10...♞eg4 11.♙g1 (11.♙d2!? 74) 11...b4 12.♞a4 ♞h6 58

12...h5!? 60

8...h5!? 62

8...♙e7 9.♞b1!? (9.♙e2 65, 78) 9...♞e5 66

9...d6 66

9...0-0 67

9...h5!? 69

8...♞xd4 70

Chapter 4. 7...d6 83

8.0-0-0 85

8.♞xc6 bxc6 9.♗g3 88 (9.♙c4 88; 9.g4 88)

9.0-0-0!? 90

8...♗xc6 92

Chapter 5. The Giri Variation 7...♖e5 8.♗g3 h5 99

9.h4 103 (9.♙f4!? 102, 118; 9.♗f5!? 114; 9.f3 102)

9.0-0-0!? h4 10.♗h3 b5 11.f4 ♖c4 12.♙xc4 ♗xc4 13.♙b1! (13.♗he1 105; 13.f5 106, 121) 13...♙b7 14.♗he1! ♙b4 106

14...♗c8 107

14...♗f6 109 15.e5! ♗d5 16.♗e4 ♙e7 17.f5 0-0-0 112

16...♗c8 112

16...♗b4 112

Chapter 6. 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♗c7 6.♙e3 ♗f6 126

7.f4 (7.♗f3!? 126) 7...♙b4 8.♗db5 ♗a5 9.e5! ♗d5?! 130

9...♗e4 131

Chapter 7. 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 a6 139

6.♙e3 (6.♗xc6 139,144) 6...♗f6 7.♗f3!? ♙b4 8.♗xc6 140

8...bxc6 140 9.♙d3 d5 10.0-0 0-0 141

10...♙e7 142

8...dxc6 142

Chapter 8. The Pin Variation 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♙b4 153

6.e5 ♗d5 154 (6...♗e4?! 154) 7.♙d2 ♗xc3 156 (7...d6? 156; 7...♗c6? 157; 7...♙xc3 157, 164)

Anti-Sveshnikov 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♗f6 170

Chapter 9. 6.♗xc6!? bxc6 7.e5 ♗d5 8.♗e4 170

8...f5 177 (8...♗b8 171; 8...♗h4? 171; 8...h6?! 171; 8...♙e7?! 171; 8...♙a6 172; 8...♗b6 174; 8...c5 176)

8...♗a5+ 9.c3 179 (9.♙d2 191) 9...♙a6 182 (9...♙e7?! 180; 9...♗b6?! 180; 9...♗c7 180)

9...f5 183

8...♙b7 184

Chapter 10. Main Line 6.♗xc6!? bxc6 7.e5 ♗d5 8.♗e4 ♗c7 205

9.f4 ♗b6 (9...♙a6?! 205; 9...c5?! 205; 9...♙b7?! 207; 9...f5?! 208; 9...♗a5+ 209; 9...♗b8 211) 10.c4 ♙b4+ 11.♙e2 f5 12.♗f2!? 212

12.exf6 214

10...♗e3 216

Kan

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 a6 5.c4

Chapter 11. 5.c4 – Rare lines 234

5...♞f6 (5...d5?! 234; 5...♞e7 235; 5...g6?! 236; 5...♞c6 236; 5...♙c5 237; 5...♞c7 238; 5...b6 129) 6.♞c3 d6 7.♙e2 b6 242 (7...♞c6 242; 7...♙e7 244)

Chapter 12. 5.c4 ♞f6 6.♞c3 ♙b4

7.♞d3 255 (7.♞f3 262; 7.♙d3 265) 7...♞c6 256
7...d5 257
7...♞c7 260

Chapter 13. 5.c4 ♞f6 6.♞c3 ♞c7 7.♙e2!? 280

7...♞c6 280 (7...d6 280)
7...♙b4 283
7...b6 286 8.0-0 ♙b7 9.♞d3! d6 10.f4 ♞bd7 11.b4! ♙e7 12.♙d2!? 290
12.♙b2! 294

Keres Attack

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞f6 5.♞c3 d6 6.g4!

Chapter 14. 6.g4! without 6...h6 311

6...♙e7?! 313 (6...d5? 311; 6...e5?! 312;)
6...♞c6 321
6...a6 322

Chapter 15. 6.g4 h6 332

7.h4 332 (7.♙e3!? 332) 7...♞c6 8.♞g1 d5! 9.exd5 10.♞xd5 342
10...♞xd5 11.♙g2 ♞e5+ 342
11...♞c4 345
7.♞g1! 353

Chapter 16. Anti-Keres 1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞c6 5.♞c3 d6!? 370

6.♙e3 ♞f6 7.f4 e5 371 (7...a6 370)
7...♙d7!? 378
7...♙e7 382 8.♞f3 e5 382 (8...♞c7 382) 9.♞xc6 bxc6 10.f5
10...♞b8 387 (10...d5 386; 10...a5 387; 10...h5 387)
10...♞a5 390
10...0-0!? 392

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