



Observer report French Open 2017 (RCR, RERS-2)

Observer: Nicole Haasbroek

Date: June 17th – 18th 2017

Place: Marseille, France

Website or other source(s) of information: All information on the website www.chuuren.fr/mers2017/ : registration, program, list of participants, names of referee and EMA observer, tips on travelling and accomodation, format (Hanchans 1-7 round-robbin style, next 2 hanchans were playoffs. After the first segment the best 4 players played for ranks 1-4, keeping only 50% of their previous score; the rest played for ranks 5 and following, and were placed according to their overall score).

Participants: 32 players

Represented countries: France: 21; Finland: 1; Germany: 1; United Kingdom: 5; Slovakia: 1; Switzerland: 1; The Netherlands: 2.

Playing schedule: 2 days, 9 sessions (5+4) of 90 minutes.

Location: 22, Rue Montgrand. The room was large enough to accommodate all players and properly lit. Wi-Fi available. Even though it was unbearably hot outside, the aircondition worked wonders keeping us cool.

Equipment: Japanese mahjong sets and junkmats on all tables. Tenbo were used and extra could be borrowed from the referee.

Refereeing: Yulong Zhao acted as a non-playing referee.

Complaints: Two. 1) One player complained about the playing surface, which was too soft in his perception. After relaying this complaint to the organizers, they immediately came up with a solution. Afterwards I checked how the player felt about the alterations upon which he told me the problem was resolved satisfactory. 2) A few players mentioned this, but only one made a formal complaint to me about the length of the breaks, which he found too long. I too had issues with the length of the breaks. It occurred numerous times players finished their hanchan early (which is common in riichi tournaments) and as a

result of the long breaks had too much time to kill, losing their concentration in the process. I myself had a 1-hour break at one time! I strongly recommend shorter breaks of 15-20 minutes. 15 minute breaks are in compliance with 'EMA requirements and guidelines for MERS tournaments', so shorter than that would be unwise (and not in the best interest of the players).

Information / communication during the tournament: During the tournament a clock was present. The referee informed players at the beginning and at the end of the sessions. An interactive website informed players (and other interested parties) of the current ranking and seating: <http://live.chuuren.fr/> (32 players). There was also a printout of the ranking on display in the recreational area, which was kept up to date between each session. Club president Simon Picard made a few additional comments at the start of a few sessions.

Sessions: Excellent playing atmosphere, FFF (Fair-play, Friendly and Fun).

Catering: Lunch on the premises: on the first day an Asian meal, on the second various hot quiches, pastas, couscous, etc. On the second day there was also the option of having breakfast together. Throughout the tournament cold and hot non-alcoholic drinks (incl. Japanese tea), cookies, sweets, fruit, cakes and pasteries were available at no extra charge.

Prizes: All top-3 players received mahjong sets. In addition, the winner received the French Champion challenge cup: a glass trophy. Both numbers 4 and 5 got a mahjong themed cushion.

Possible Learning Points: None (I truly believe Chuuren Potos has set the standard for future riichi tournaments!)

Conclusion: An excellent tournament in Marseille. The game format ensured the top of the ranking was indeed dominated by the strongest players; thus creating a far more balanced ranking than we normally see in Europe. Streaming the final 2 hanchans of the top-4 players live on Twitch (with excellent running commentary) is unheard of in the Western mahjong community; what a treat! With over 250 live viewers it was a complete success (more viewers on YouTube, and still counting!). Furthermore the finalists had the unique opportunity to test out Simon Picard's project, a portable tenbo reader, which also heightened the tournament experience. Our hosts went out of their way to make this tournament a success, and all players really enjoyed themselves. Long story short: the "Championnat de France 2017" couldn't have been in better hands than Chuuren Potos's!