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The Royal Game of Ur

ABOUT US

A board game is a game in which counters or pieces are placed, removed, or moved on a premarked surface or "board" according to a set of rules. Games may be based on pure strategy, chance or a mixture of the two and usually have a goal which a player aims to achieve. Early board games represented a battle between two armies and most current board games are still based on beating opposing players in terms of counters, winning position or accrual of points (often expressed as in-game currency).

There are many different types and styles of board games. Their representation of a real life situation can range from having no inherent theme, such as Checkers, to having a specific theme and narrative, such as Cluedo. Rules range from the very simple, such as in Tic-tac-toe, to ones which describe a game universe in great detail, such as in Dungeons & Dragons, although most of these are Role-playing games and the board is secondary to the game, serving to visualize the scenario. The length of time it takes to learn to play or master a game can vary greatly from game to game. Learning time does not necessarily correlate with the amount or complexity of rules; some games, such as chess and Go, have simple rules that can still lead to complex scenarios.

Board games have been played in most cultures and societies throughout history; some even pre-date literacy skill development in the earliest civilizations. A number of important historical sites, artifacts and documents exist which shed light on early board games.

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HISTORICS

SEPTEMBER 2010
Issue 9

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The Royal Game of Ur gets its name from two boardgames which were found in tombs by Sir Leonard Wooley, who was carrying out excavations in the ancient city of Ur in the 1920s.

1800BC

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Senet is an Egyptian race game and may be the ancestor of our modern backgammon. We know of this game through ancient Egyptian boards that have survived to this day.

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GO origin from ancient China. There are a tangle of conflicting popular and scholarly anecdotes attributing its invention to two Chinese emperors, an imperial vassal and court astrologer.

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AstralCastle.com brings us

The Royal Game of UR: Its Discovery

The Royal Game of UR was well known during Biblical times. The discovery by Sir Leonard Woolley of four boards dating back more than 4,500 years -- three of them complete, and some with accompanying “dice” and playing pieces -- makes UR the oldest known complete board game found anywhere in the world. During excavation of the “Royal Cemetery” in the city-state of UR in Mesopotamia (about 105 miles west-northwest of what is now Basra in modern Iraq), four boards which varied from simple to fine workmanship were found in tombs which date primarily to the Early Dynastic IIIA period (around 2600-2500 B.C.E.).

Though the boards had been made of wood and were in varying states of decay, careful archeological work allowed at least one of the boards to have its playing surface preserved in its original configuration prior to being moved.

One of the finer boards, made from shell and lapis lazuli, did not survive intact, but allows us to imagine the craftsmanship put into creating a game played by kings -- as well as commoners, since similar boards have been found throughout the near east dating back to 2,000 B.C.E., some of them scratched into paving stones by those who couldn't afford the “royal” version of the game.



Design, and How The Royal Game of UR is Played

The game board consists of three rows of eight squares, with two squares -- the fifth and sixth on the top and bottom -- left out. The board is marked with rosettes.

The games found in the city of UR were accompanied by pyramidal dice, each one with a corner shaved flat -- and each with two of its four corners decorated or inlaid in some way to make them stand out. When rolled, each die thus had a fifty-fifty chance of coming up “marked” or “unmarked” -- an unusual configuration and method, then or now, when we would use the flip of a coin. Each game had six dice -- two sets, one for each player -- and the rolling of three dice would then give four possible outcomes: one marked, two marked, three marked or no marked sides, representing moves of one, two, three or (no marks) four spaces. Four marks allowed not only a move, but another roll.

Fourteen playing pieces in two different colors -- seven for each player -- are moved around the board according to the throw of the dice (although some versions have five per player) -- with the object being to bear all your pieces off the board first. Rules written in cuneiform on tablets dating back to about 200 B.C. have provided most of the rules for the game of that time, except that there was no explanation of the direction of travel, so that still leaves room for some discussion as to how the game was played. The most common rules have pieces remaining on their own side of the board when not sharing the middle. The more logical is based on the distance between the rosettes marking the board and the maximum possible distance moved with a throw of

the three dice -- four spaces.

Using the latter rules, the two colors first enter the board above the middle rosette on opposite sides -- black on the top, white on the bottom. They then head along to the rosette on their path on the long side of the board, then turn and return across the middle. Thus they start off alone on their path, and only meet conflict with the opponent when the pieces trek along the middle track; if a roll allows the player to land a piece occupied by the opponent's, then that piece is off the board and must start over -- with the exception of pieces resting on squares marked by rosettes -- they are safe and cannot be knocked off. Once the pieces cross the narrow middle bridge, they then follow a looping path around the small end -- first heading for the rosette on the opponent's side and then around the end squares to the rosette on their own side of the board, from which point they can bear off the board (exact throws are not required).

The popular version of the

game has pieces remaining on their own sides or on the middle track -- not crossing in the final portion to the opponent's side -- but this makes for less exciting conflict and also less sense in terms of the distance from one rosette to the next.

Historical Context for The Royal Game of Ur

The city of Ur was the largest city in a fertile area, known as Mesopotamia, that lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, more than 6000 years ago. There were other cities in the area -- Uruk, Eridu, Nippur, Lagash and Kish -- but none was as grand as Ur -- all of these were called temple towns, and are considered the beginning of civilization -- moving from farming societies into true cities which eventually grew into city-states.

The first settlers in the area were known as the Ubaidians, but it was the Sumerians who came in the second wave of settlers who brought

with them more complex art and literature. Biblical Abraham lived in Ur (he was born around 2170 BC) and it is said he was in this city when called by God. Ur was known in the bible as "Ur of the Chaldees" because, around 900 B.C. it was settled by the Chaldeans.

As is true of the history of mankind all over the planet, Ur experienced many long periods of war, suffered conquest, endured its own dark ages, but it also enjoyed years ruled by good kings, including Ur-Nammu (circa 2060 B.C.) who took time to rebuild his city, and who built the most spectacular of the buildings that, until recently, lay buried under the shifting sands: the Ziggurat (a ziggurat is a pyramid-shaped temple with receding terraces forming its triangular shape). Ur-Nammu is also considered to be the first creator of a code of law, which bears a relation to biblical law.

During all these periods, no doubt, The Royal Game of Ur was played by kings and the court, as well as the ordinary folks of the city.



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The Royal Game of Ur

This is one of the oldest board games in the world first played in mesopotamia over four thousand years ago.

you can play the game online at:
www.mesopotamia.co.uk



The Royal Game of Ur

Article by Catherine Soubeyrand

This time we leave Egypt to move East and reach the region of Mesopotamia. The Royal Game of Ur gets its name from two boardgames which were found in tombs by Sir Leonard Wooley, who was carrying out excavations in the ancient city of Ur in the 1920s.

The two boards date from before 2600 BCE. Each of the game boards is composed of a set of twelve squares and a set of six cases linked by a bridge of two cases. One of the two boardgames is famous and is exhibited in the collections of the British Museum in London. It is sumptuously decorated with shells carved with lapis lazuli and limestone. The squares are all covered with geometrical designs. The picture below tries to give you an idea of the beauty of this game board. Notice the five squares with a rosette.

The second game board is decorated with sheets of shell carved with images of animals and fighting beasts. Sets of pawns were also found: seven white pawns with five black dots on each and seven black pawns with five white dots. Also two sets of three pyramid-like dice.

Another game board was found more recently in the tomb of the Queen Shub-ad, located about one thousand kilometers from Ur. The design is simpler with only three squares decorated with a rosette.

A cuneiform tablet of Babylonian origin that describes this game has recently been discovered by Irving Finkel, curator at the British Museum. The tablet dates from 177-176 BCE but it describes the main elements concerning the course of the game. Interestingly enough, at that time people used knucklebones instead of pyramidal dice.

“The tablet shows the number and the names of the pawns, one of the dice (two knucklebones: one of sheep, one of ox), and a few details concerning the throws. It appears clearly that each of the five pawns owned by the players were different from one another and that a special throw was required to place each pawn at the beginning of the game. Among the twenty squares on the game board, five are generally decorated with a rosette and it seems that those squares are important in the course of the game. The tablet shows that those squares brought good luck, to place a pawn on them gave an advantage. If a pawn did not stop on a rosette, a penalty had to be paid. The scribe has described the fate of each pawn in a poetical way, the wins and the losses corresponding to the same efforts required to win enough food, drink and love.”

A description of the movement of the pawns is unfortunately missing. The back of the tablet shows four by three squares with zodiac signs and messages of good and bad luck. Mr. Finkel supposes that this was a simple game and a way to foresee the future and the fate of the players.

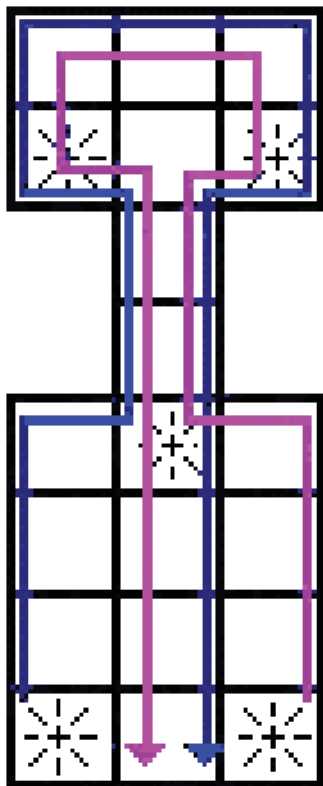
All of these give very interesting hints but not enough solid information to actually play the game. So I base my description here on the rules given in “Le monde des Jeux”, which are based on two older rule sets proposed by R.C. Bell (“Board and Table Games”, OUP 1969) and Frederic V. Grundveld in “Games of the World”.

Rules of the Game

Each player has seven pawns, and three pyramidal dice each with two red and two white vertices. This is a race game. The goal is to introduce the seven pawns, to move them along your designated path, and to be the first to have all the pawns out of the game, similar to backgammon. The start square for each player, the path followed by each player, and the five special, rosette squares are shown in the drawing below. The exit square is the one between the two rosettes.

Movement points are determined by the roll of the dice as follows:

- * three red vertices yields 5 points and the right to take another turn
- * three white vertices yields 4 points and the right to take another turn
- * two white vertices yields no points and the turn passes to your opponent
- * one white vertex gives 1 point and the turn passes to your opponent



1. Draw lots to determine the first player.
2. The board is empty at the beginning. Pawns may be introduced on your first square by rolling a 4 or 5.
3. Any pawns already on the board may be advanced one square along your path for each movement point thrown.
4. Except when they are on the refuges (see point five of the rules) or have entered the central line, pawns may be attacked by opposing pawns moving in the same direction. If a pawn lands on a square already occupied by an opposing pawn, the opposing pawn is removed from the board and has to restart the game from its start square.
5. A player may have as many pawns on the board as they wish. Each square, except for the rosette squares and the leaving (last) square, may be occupied by one and only one pawn.
6. The rosette squares and the last square are refuges: several pawns of different colors may be present without any danger.
7. Each pawn must reach the last square from which it can leave the board on a throw of 4 or a 5.
8. The winner is the first player who moves all of their pawns off of the board via the exit square.

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SENET

From Egypt

New Kingdom, 1550-1069 BC

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The Game of Senet

Article by Catherine Soubeyrand

Senet is an Egyptian race game and may be the ancestor of our modern backgammon. We know of this game through ancient Egyptian boards that have survived to this day. More than 40 have been discovered, some in very good condition with pawns, sticks or knucklebones still intact. The oldest known representation of Senet is in a painting from the tomb of Hesy (Third Dynasty circa 2686-2613 BCE).

The game board is composed of 30 squares: 3 rows of 10 squares each. If we number each square, the board can be represented like this:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

The path of the pawns probably followed a reversed S across the board.

Squares 26 to 30 have symbols on them. We will represent them in order by X, O, III, II and I. It seems that the square with an X, carrying the sign nfr, was beneficial, whereas the one with an O, associated with water, had a negative meaning. Square 15, also called the “square of Rebirth,” might have been the starting square.

Other elements found with the gameboards were pawns. The Hesy painting shows a game with seven pawns for each player. Then, some time after 1600 - 1500 BCE, the players were represented with seven or five pawns. Some games have even been found with ten pawns per player.

The movement of pawns was probably decided by the throw of four, two-sided sticks (as depicted in the Hesy painting) or, later, knucklebones might have been used to determine the moves.

What was the function of Senet? A game or something more? In his book, Lhôte notices that the first pictures show two human players whereas later the human player is depicted alone with an invisible opponent. It appears that Senet began as a simple game and later acquired a symbolic, ritual function.

Of course, the original rules of Senet are not known. No record of the rules on papyrus or tomb wall has ever been discovered. It is very difficult to reconstruct the game through the pieces and the tomb images.

Rules of the Game

Kendall's Rules

1. At the beginning of the game the seven pawns per player alternate along the 14 first squares. The starting square is counted as the 15th. In the oldest games this square featured an ankh, a "life" symbol. The pawns move according to the throw of four sticks or, later, one or two knucklebones. When using the sticks the points seemed to have been counted from 1 to 5: 1 point for each side without a mark and 5 points if the four marked sides were present together.

2. When a pawn reached a square already occupied by an opponent pawn, they have to exchange their positions.

3. The special squares have the following effects on play:

* 15 : House of Rebirth, starting square and the return square for the pawns reaching square number 27.

* 26 : House of Happiness, a mandatory square for all the pawns.

* 27: House of Water, a square that can be reached by the pawns located on squares 28 to 30 which moved back when their throws did not allow them to exit the board. They have to restart from square 15.

* 28 : House of the Three Truths, a pawn may only leave when a 3 is thrown.

* 29 : House of the Re-Atoum, a pawn may only leave when a 2 is thrown.

4. The winner is the first to move all of their pawns off the board.





Bell's Rules

Another version of the rules was proposed by RC Bell.

Each player has 10 pawns. Four two-sided sticks (one side painted) are thrown to determine movement.

- * When only one painted side is visible : 1 point.
- * With two : 2 points.
- * With three : 3 points.
- * With four : 4 points.
- * With none : 5 points.

1. At the beginning of the game there are no pawns on the board.
2. Each player in turn throws the sticks, and puts his pawns on the board on the squares with the symbols I, II, III, X, O according to the number of points thrown. Only one pawn may be present on each square. So if a pawn is already present the turn is lost.
3. A player may either move one pawn or add a new pawn to the board, if possible, with each throw. The pawns located on the marked squares are in shelters.
4. Pawns may not be stacked. When a pawn arrives on a square already occupied by an opponent pawn, the opponent is removed and must restart from the beginning. This rule does not apply for the marked squares which are shelters.
5. The first pawn to reach square number 1 earns a bonus of five points and it fixes the goal of the game: that player's other pawns have to reach odd squares whereas the opponent must reach the even squares. The game ends when the pawns of the two players are alternately placed on the first and second rows.
6. When a pawn has reached its last square, it cannot be attacked.
7. The first player to have put all his pawns on his own squares wins the game and earns 10 points. He also gets one point for each move his opponent makes while placing all of his remaining pawns.

History of Wei-qi (GO)

Brought to us by weiqi.com

GO origin from ancient China . There are a tangle of conflicting popular and scholarly anecdotes attributing its invention to two Chinese emperors , an imperial vassal and court astrologer .

One story has it that go was invented by the Emperor Yao(ruled 2357-2256 B.C.) as an amusement for his idiot son . A second claims the Emperor Shun(ruled 2255-05) B.C created the game in hopes of improving his weak-minded son's mental prowess . A third say that one Wu , a vassal of the Emperor Chieh(ruled 1818-1766 B.C.), invented go as well as games of cards. Finally , a fourth theory suggests that go was developed by court astrologers during the Chou Dynasty(1045-255 B.C.).

In any event , it is generally agreed that go is at least 3000 to 4000 years old which makes it the world's oldest strategic board game .

Go has not always enjoyed its current status as the world's most challenging and intellectually stimulating board game . In its infancy , go was said to have been used by astrologers to divine the future . Later , according to Chinese classics such as The Analects of Confucius , Tso-chuan , all of which were written no earlier than the sixth century B.C . , it became the pastime of gamblers and other idlers .

While there might have been even the earlier references to the existence of go in ancient China , the books that contained were probably burned during the reign of Ch'in Shih Huang Ti , who in 221 B.C , ordered that all books be burned .

Beginning around 2000B.C., go and poetry enjoyed golden age in China , until about 600 A.D. . Whatever its sources and early reputation , by this time go obviously occupied a prestigious position . For example , in the second century A.D , the poet Ma Yung is said to have made himself famous by celebrating go in his verses . Of the many anecdotes about go that have survived from ancient China , the two most popular are these .

Sometime during the late third or early fourth century A.D , a go player named Osan gained historical immortality for his amazing ability to replay entire games(consisting of anywhere from 150 to more than 300 moves) from memory , move for move .

Today , of course , all professional go players and many strong

amateurs can do the same . In fact , the customary teaching technique used in Japan is for the teacher to reconstruct-play by play-games played with his students in order to criticize their moves . Nonetheless , this anecdote demonstrates that strength in go and a powerful memory go together .

The second anecdote illustrates the esteem in which go was held during its golden age in China . During the Chin Dynasty(265-420 A.D) , Hsieh An was at war with his nephew Hsieh Hsuan . After many bloody but inconclusive battles , these two warlords decided to spare their remaining soldiers and instead to allow the outcome of their war to be decided on the go board in a game played between themselves . Unfortunately , the result of this contest was not recorded.



Rules of the Game

The primary reason why Weiqi can have such enormous attraction is that it is easy to play. Weiqi does not have complicated rules like some games have. There is certainly no two sets of gameplay alike in Weiqi.

The 4 basic fundamental rules of Weiqi are

- (1) Moves are played on the intersections .
- (2) The stones do not move after being played.
- (3) Black play first.
- (4) Black and white alternate in making their moves.

Fundamental Rule 1

The seeds in weiqi can be only placed at the intersection of the lines. This is shown in the figure on the right. And this point must not be occupied by another seed, regardless of colour.

Fundamental Rule 2

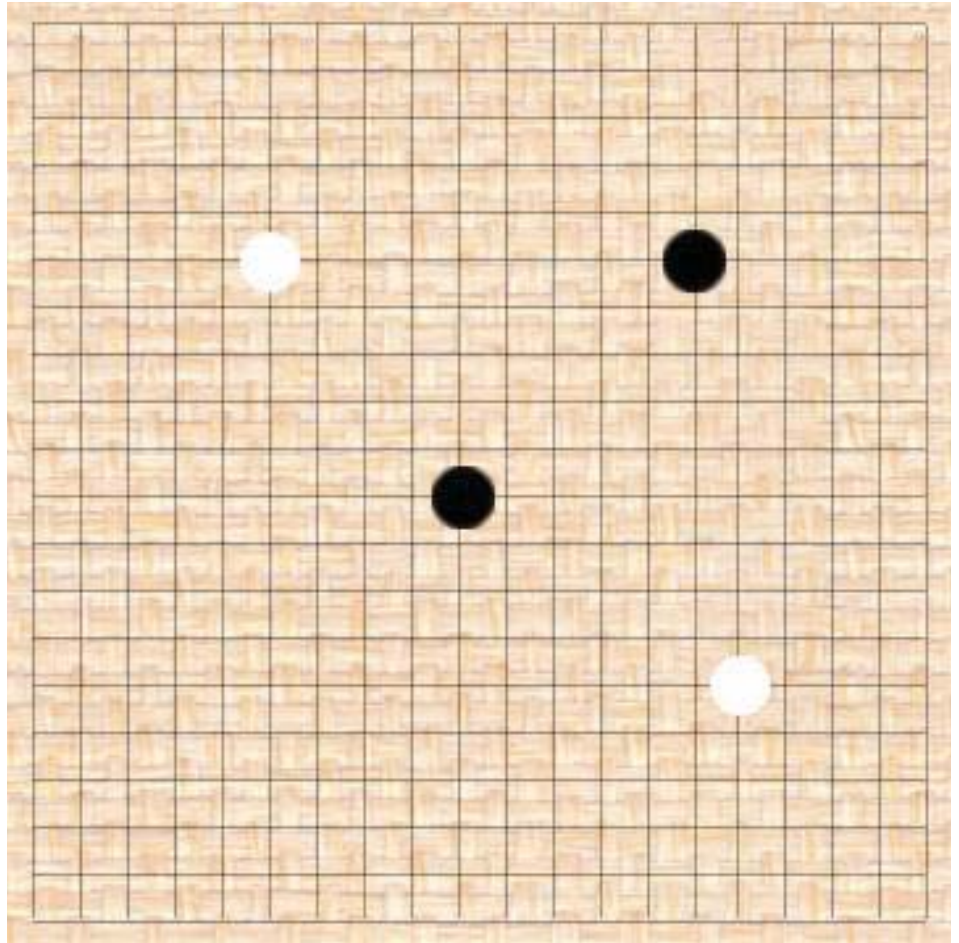
The seeds are not allowed to be removed or replaced by other seeds until it has 'died'. In addition, once the seed has been placed onto the board, the player is not allowed to alter his move again. This is to ensure fairness of the game, as practised in most chess games.

Fundamental Rule 3

The player using black seeds get to play first. This is because there is 1 more black seed than white seed in weiqi.

Fundamental Rule 4

The players place one seed alternatively. There is no skipping of turn.



Dogs and Jackals

Article by
Catherine Soubeyrand

We continue our trip on the shores of history but remain in Egypt.

This time let me introduce you to a game whose name and rules have also been forgotten among the mists of the past. It is known as the game of "Dogs and Jackals." We know of it by way of a famous board-game found in an Egyptian tomb. It belongs to a family of games named "game of the thirty points" or "game of the fifty eight holes".

Many gameboards or pieces of gameboards have been discovered in Egypt but also in Palestine, Mesopotamia and Assyria. A very nice boardgame has been found in the tomb of Reny-Seneb, XII dynasty, about 1800 BC. This beautiful game in ebony and ivory, has the shape of a small piece of furniture. The gameboard is a rectangular (15x10cm) wooden box, put on four animal legs. The top in ivory is carved with a palm tree and fifty eight holes.

In the drawer within the box, ten pawns were found. They look like short sticks, five carved with a dog head and five with a jackal head. The pawns were placed in the holes of the gameboard, they certainly describe a trail that the pawns have to follow. Holes showings marks (15), circles, or inlays might have played a special role in the course of the game. Were the lines between 10 and 24, or 20 and 22 some short-cuts ?

Rules as Proposed by R.C.Bell

The game is for two players. Five dogs are given to one and five jackals to the other. You will need three pieces of money to use to determine movement. The goal is to reach the five points (25 to 29) on your side of the board and win the dates.

For the moves the conventions are:
one head = one
two heads = two
three heads = three
three tails = five and a free move

The Play

1. Both players agree on a stake.
2. The right side of the board belongs to the dogs and the left to the jackals.
3. The brown circle above the palm tree is the starting point. The pawns move then on the side of the gameboard trying to reach the top of the tree (25 to 29).

4. Exact throws are required to reach the final positions. The order in which it is done has no importance.

5. The two players throw the three coins in turn. A five is required to introduce a new pawn on the starting point. Then the pieces are thrown again to move the pawn.

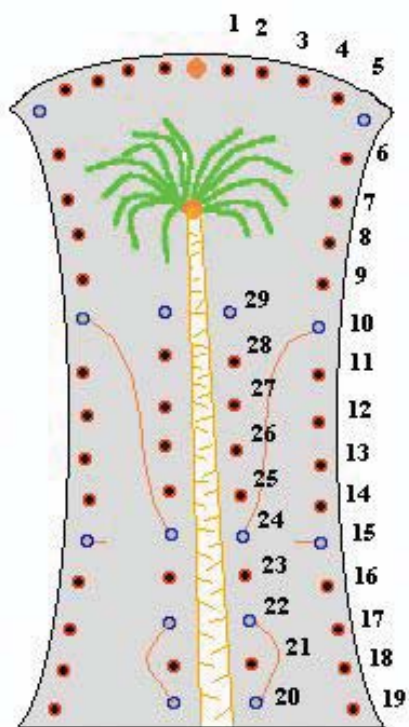
6. The first pawn to reach a hole with an horizontal mark (15 on dog side) wins the stake.

7. Only one pawn may be put on a hole. If no move is possible the throw is lost for this player.

8. If a pawn reaches a hole linked to an other hole by a path (10-24, 20-22), it follows the line which acts like a ladder to the victory.

9. A player must move his pawns when he can do so. If he can move no pawns, his or her opponent is allowed to add his throw to his or her own .

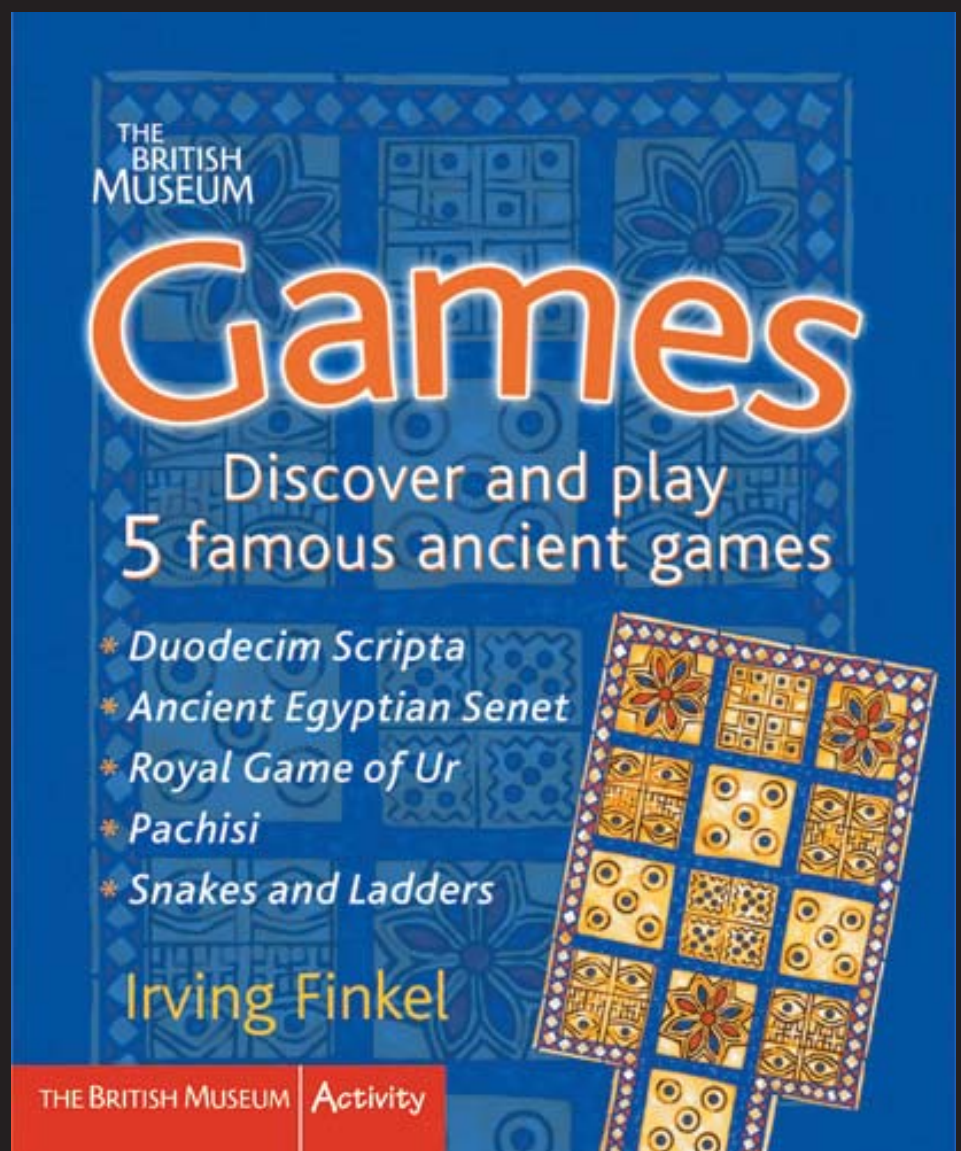
10. The first player having put his five pawns in the five holes (25 to 29) wins the game.



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Board games have been played since prehistoric times, passing from person to person and country to country all over the world. This colourful and unique book explains the origins of five of the most long-lasting games, with five fold-out game boards and rules so that you can play the games yourself. To play the games you can use ordinary modern dice and anything you like for counters: buttons or sweets will do!



The Game Of Tabula

In the history of backgammon, one of the most ancient variations is the game of Tabula. The game of Tabula originated in ancient Greece several centuries BC. The game of Tabula was also the first popular backgammon variation in ancient England. The Greek emperor Zeno is responsible for most of the historical knowledge regarding the game of Tabula. Records that date back to around 480 AC! The game of Tabula used rules very similar to the game of backgammon as we know it today. If you know how to play backgammon then you will have no problem in learning the game of Tabula.

The game of Tabula is played on a standard backgammon board. The first major difference between the game of Tabula and backgammon is that Tabula uses three dice instead of two. In addition, both players begin playing with their checkers off the board. In the game of Tabula, the players enter the board on the same starting place and they both advance in the same direction. The objective in the game of Tabula remains the same, to reach the home board and to bear off all of your pieces.

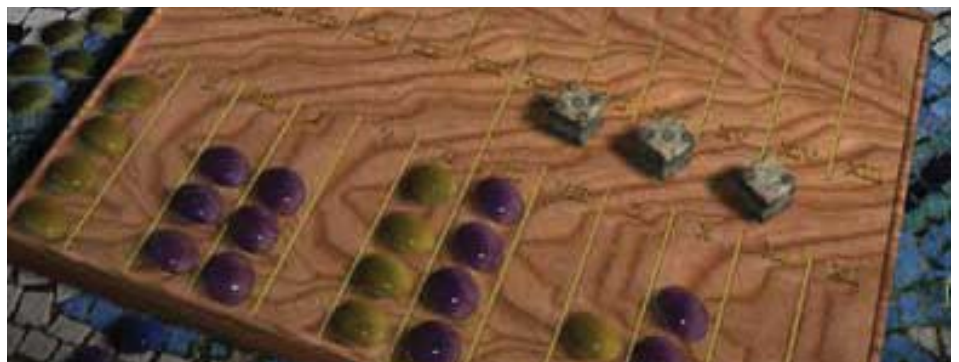
In the game of Tabula, the decision on which player will start is decided by a roll of a single die. The player who rolled the higher number then throws all three dices and begins to play accordingly. To enter a checker in the game of Tabula, a player needs to move it to a number that one of the dices shows. What this means, according to the Tabula rules, is that if you rolled 1-3-4 you



can place a checker on the first point, third point and the fourth point. Just like in backgammon, when playing Tabula you can not enter a checker on a point that is already occupied by two or more of your opponent's checkers. On the rolls to follow you may enter new checker to the board or move already entered checker, although in the game of Tabula you can not move them to the next part of the board until you have entered all your checkers.

Hitting in Tabula is performed in the same manner as in backgammon – if you hit your op-

ponent (blot) it is moved to the bar. Entering from the bar in the game of Tabula is also made in the same manner – the player needs to enter his pieces to the starting table. If you can not enter your checkers then you must enter the checkers that you can and forfeit the remainder of your roll. Bearing off in the game of Tabula is also done in the same way as in regular backgammon. You must get all your pieces to the final table and then remove them from the table according to the dices show. The first player that gets all his pieces off the board in the game of Tabula – wins!



Tabula Backgammon Variant

Tabula is a Roman Backgammon variant that harks back to ancient times. This Backgammon game eventually reached Europe and was very well-liked in England, where they called it Tables. The Tabula rules are mainly derived from Emperor Zeno's documents that date back as early as 480 CE.

How does Tabula differ from Backgammon?

1. The starting point for both of the player's checkers is outside of the Backgammon board.
2. Every participant possesses 3 dice and plays a single move for each number that comes up on the roll. Doubles do not exist in Tabula.
3. A checker can only be moved into the other half of the Backgammon board when the rest of your checkers have been brought in.
4. Each participant brings his 15 checkers to the same beginning table and then they both make the same counterclockwise course across the board.

Perhaps the most poignant difference between Tabula and other Backgammon variants is that Tabula is played with 3 dice, rather than the 2. When the game begins, every single checker is off the Backgammon board. Each participant brings his 15 checkers to the same beginning table and then they both make the same course across the board.

As with all Backgammon variants, the object of the game is to get every one of your checkers to move all the way around the Backgammon board and bear the checkers off.

To begin play, every player rolls a single die and the player with the bigger number gets to play first. He then gets to roll his 3 dice in order to start his initial turn.

A checker can be brought into the board when you put it on the point of the number you rolled, but you can't bring a checker onto a point that is held by at least 2 of your opponent's checkers.

When you have brought in at least 1 of your checkers, you can use the following rolls in order to continue to move the checkers and/or bring in more checkers. A checker can only be moved into the other half of the Backgammon board when the rest of your checkers have been brought in.

Players need to move their checkers in accordance with the points that correspond to the numbers that come up when they roll the dice. These are the rules of checker movement in Tabula:

1. A checker can only be placed on a point that isn't held by any of the opponent's checkers.
2. There are 3 dice in Tabula and the numbers on each of them signify 3 independent moves.
3. You have to play all of your roll whenever you can.

In this Backgammon variant, whenever you have at least 1 checker on the bar, your number 1 priority should be to get those checkers in your opponent's home board. The way to do this includes moving a checker to an available point that matches 1 of the numbers you've rolled. In the case that you succeed in bringing some, but not every one of your checkers, then you have to bring in as many as you possibly can and forsake the rest of your turn.

When every one of your checkers is in your home board, you can start to bear off. In order to bear off, you need to roll a number that matches the point that checker stands on and then take that checker off the Backgammon board. The winner of Tabula is the first participant that bears off every one of his checkers.



Rules of Tabula

Our knowledge of the rules of Tabula comes primarily from records kept by Emperor Zeno in 480 CE.

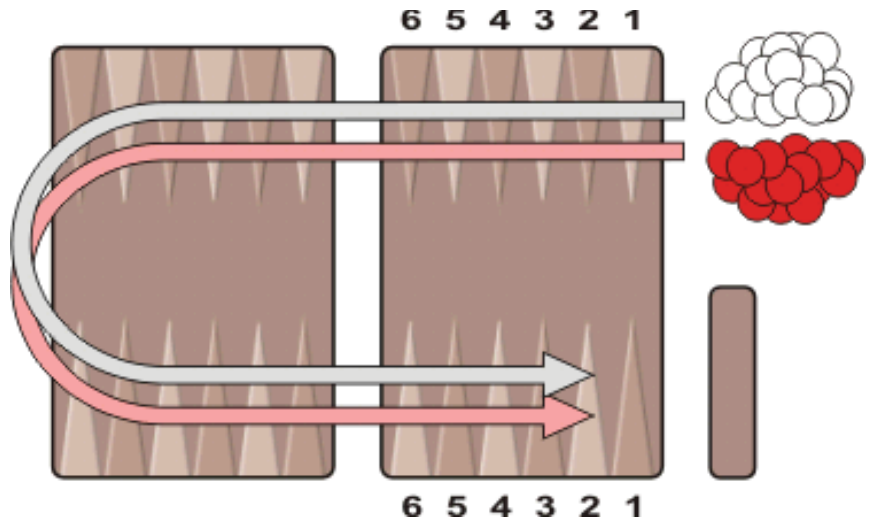
SETUP: The equipment for Tabula is the same as in backgammon except that each player has three dice instead of two. All checkers start off the board. Both players enter their fifteen checkers into the same starting table and move them around the board in the same direction.

OBJECT: The object of the game is to move all of your checkers to the finishing table and then bear them off. The first player to bear off all his checkers wins the game.

TO START: Each player rolls one die. The player who rolls the higher number goes first. That player then rolls all three of his dice to begin his first turn.

ENTERING CHECKERS: You enter a checker onto the board by placing it on a point in the starting table corresponding to a number rolled. For example, if you roll 6-3-1, then you may enter three checkers, one on each of six-point, three-point, and one-point. However, you may not enter a checker onto a point occupied by two or more opposing checkers.

Once you have entered one or more checkers, you may use subsequent rolls to move those checkers forward, to enter more checkers, or both. You may not move a checker to the second half of the board until all of your other checkers have been entered.



MOVEMENT: The roll of the dice indicates how many points, or pips, the player is to move his checkers. The following rules apply:

- * A checker may be moved only to an open point, one that is not occupied by two or more opposing checkers.

- * The numbers on the three dice constitute separate moves. For example, if a player rolls 5, 3, and 2 he may move one checker five spaces, another checker three spaces, and a third checker two spaces. Or a player may move one checker using two or all three rolled numbers, but only if the intermediate points are open.

- * You must play all three numbers of a roll if possible.

HITTING: A checker sitting alone on a point is called a blot. If an opposing checker lands on a blot, the blot is hit and placed on the bar.

ENTERING FROM THE BAR: Any time you have one or more checkers on the bar, your first obligation is to reenter those checker(s) into the starting table. You reenter

a checker by moving it to an open point corresponding to one of the numbers on the rolled dice. If you are able to enter some but not all of your checkers, you must enter as many as you can and then give up the remainder of your turn.

BEARING OFF: Once you have moved all fifteen of your checkers into the finishing table, you may begin bearing off. You bear off a checker by rolling a number that corresponds to the point on which it resides, then removing the checker from the board. The first player to bear off all fifteen of his checkers wins the game.

Differences from Backgammon

- * All checkers start off the board.
- * Each player has three dice and makes one move for each number thrown. (There is no such thing as “doubles” in this game.)
- * You may not move checkers to the second half of the board until all of your checkers have been entered.
- * Both players enter in the same starting table, move counterclockwise around the board, and bear off from the same finishing table.



Tarot Cards History and Origin

Article by Gloria Jean



It's all about games. Mankind has forever been drawn to the playing of games. Games of chance, games of skill and gambling. Tarot cards evolved from ancient playing cards and they differ from standard playing cards only in the fact that more cards were added to a deck of regular playing cards. The added cards were the trumps known as "trionfi" which means triumphs. Also added were four queens and the fool.

Tarot Cards Evolved from ancient playing cards

So why add 26 more cards to the standard deck of cards? It was for the development of the game. Today, tarot games are point-trick games in which you must trump if you have no card of the suit led. The 21 new trump cards were added to perform the then new role of being trumps. The four queens eventually replaced the pages in a modern standard deck of cards, but the pages still remain in most tarot decks as part of the court cards.

When looking for the origin of tarot cards themselves, you will find that most historians agree that the first deck of tarot cards was created in Milan (northern Italy) sometime in the early 15th century. These cards were designed as playing cards. The thing that set this new card deck apart from others was the addition of the four queens, the fool, and 21 trump cards.

If we are looking for the origin of what we know as the traditional occult tarot decks we see today, then we have to look to the origin of regular playing cards in general. If you insist on drawing a hard line between regular playing cards and occult tarot cards, it might be hard to draw such a line because regular playing cards have been and are still used for occult purposes and divination, and tarot cards have been and are still used for playing card games. There is no real hard line between the two. It is all in how they are used and in how you think of them.

The Origins - Ancient Playing Cards

The Islamic Mamluk cards were hand painted playing cards with the suits being coins, cups, swords and polo-sticks. This is very similar to some of the modern occult tarot card suits today with suits of coins (pentacles), swords, cups and wands.

Georgian mamluks (or mameluk, mameluke, mamaluke, or mamluke) were slave soldiers who converted to Islam and served the Muslim caliphs and the Ayyubid sultans during the Middle Ages. Over time, they became a powerful military caste, and on more than one occasion they seized power for themselves. They were the rulers of Egypt in the Mamluk Sultanate from 1250-1517. (wiekopedia.com) This fact may account for the idea that the occult tarot originated from "Egypt." The Italian game of Trionfi (cards of triumphs) did not originate from ancient Egypt, but the card's suits and the deck structure very likely had their roots in mamluk Egypt playing cards of the 13th century.

To further track the origins of these mamluk playing cards one would have to look further into history, war and conquest, and that search would probably take you to China and beyond.

Written records tell that the tarot was regularly used to play a card game similar to Bridge. The game was popular throughout much of Europe for centuries and is still played in a number of European countries, namely: Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland. Each of these countries has its own rather different version(s) of the game.

It makes sense that the first Italian and European tarot cards evolved from ancient hand painted playing cards which according to historians, (tarotmit.com.) came to Europe from Islam about 50 years before the development of the card game *carte da trionfi* (cards of triumphs).

This first deck of tarot cards with the added trumps, queens and the fool originated in northern Italy early in the 15th century (1420-1440) and eventually became known as *tarocchi* (Italian), *tarock* (German) and *tarot* (French). The name “tarot” became associated with the occult decks because it was the French who popularized it as a tool for divination. The meaning of the actual word tends to point to the word triumphs or trumps. (*Trionfi* in Italian.)

Occult Tarot Cards ~ Okay so it started with the French

Occult Tarot: The nature of the images on the Tarot trumps have led people to read occult meanings into the cards. This practice goes back to the 18th century. Although the first known Tarot fortune tellers were from Bologna (and used the Bolognese pack), the currently popular mystical interpretations of the cards originated in France in the last quarter of the century, and use the Tarot de Marseilles and packs derived from it.

Tarot de Marseilles is the forerunner of the modern occult Tarot packs. Used in France until they changed to French suited Tarot cards. Since the 1780's, and especially in the twentieth century, numerous new Tarot packs have been designed explicitly for occult use. Though they all derive ultimately from the Tarot de Marseilles, often the names of the cards and the suits have been altered to fit the theories of occultists and to make them sound more mysterious.

The trumps and fool are known to occultists as the “major Tarot de Marseillesarcana” and the suit cards as the “minor arcana.” The suit of batons is sometimes called wands, and the coins are sometimes known as pentacles and drawn as a star shape in a circle. The order of the trumps is sometimes adjusted, and some of them are renamed - for example the pope becomes the hierophant. “

The Tarot de Marseilles is a 78 card pack of the standard composition. The trumps are labeled and the subjects are: XXI - Le Monde (world), XX - Le Judgement (judgment), XIX - Le Soleil (sun), XVIII - La Lune (moon), XVII - L'Etoile (star), XVI - La Maison Dieu (depicts a tower struck by lightning), XV - Le Diable (devil), XIII - Tempérance (temperance), XIII (death - unlabelled), XII - Le Pendu (hanged man), XI - La Force (strength), X - La Roue de Fortune (wheel of fortune), VIII - L'Hermite (hermit), VII - Le Chariot (chariot), VI - L'Amoureux (lovers), V - Le Pape (pope), III - L'Empereur (emperor), III - L'Impératrice (empress), II - La Papesse (popess), I - Le Bateleur (mountebank).”



How Tarot Cards Work

Article by Stephanie Yeh

The Tarot Deck

There are many varieties of Tarot decks, and there is no standard number of cards across all decks. While the types of cards, the suits and their meanings are the same, the illustrations vary greatly. Decks are based on various themes such as nature, animals, fantasy, dragons, etc. The most common deck in the United States is the Rider-Waite deck, which was created in 1909 by A.E. Waite, a prominent member of the occult group the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and published by Rider & Company. The artist was Pamela Colman Smith. This 78-card deck was the only readily available deck in the United States for many years, which is why it is considered the “definitive” tarot deck in the United States. According to The Hermitage: A Tarot History Site, however, there is no “definitive” tarot deck.

The Tarot deck is made up of the Minor Arcana and the Major Arcana. Like regular playing cards, the Minor Arcana of the Tarot deck includes four suits. Rather than spades, hearts, diamonds and clubs, however, the suits are:

- * wands
- * swords
- * cups
- * circles or pentacles

Each suit has meaning regarding a specific approach to life. The cards within these suits are numbered one through 10 and also include the court cards -- the king, queen, knight and page. The Minor Arcana cards represent the more

minor, practical daily ups and downs in life.

Cards of the Minor Arcana: Aces of wands, swords, cups, and circles and pentacles

The Major Arcana are not associated with the suits. They include the picture cards that represent principles, concepts and ideals. They are numbered one through 21, with the 22nd card (the “Fool”) marked as zero. The Major Arcana cards represent strong, long-term energy or big events in some area of life.

Cards of the Major Arcana: Temperance, Death, The Fool and The Hanged Man

Seeing a Major Arcana card about a particular subject in one reading and then getting a Minor Arcana card about the same subject in the next reading would mean that this subject is becoming less important in your life. To check out various explanations of specific card meanings, see:

* Golden Dawn Research Center: The Tarot

* Paranormality.com: Tarot Card Meanings

* The Mystic Eye: Basic Tarot Card Meanings

* Learn the Tarot: Individual Tarot Cards

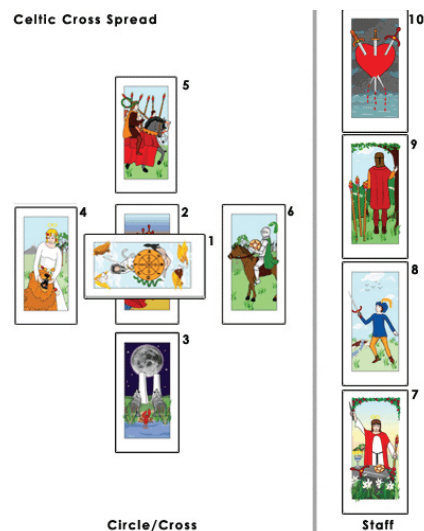
The Tarot Spread

Before a reading is performed, the cards are shuffled by the person receiving the reading. Some say this transfers that person’s energy to the deck. The person receiving the reading should also be concentrating on the question or area for which

they want guidance while he or she shuffles the deck. In some more traditional circles, a more elaborate sorting and separation of the cards is performed (see The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn Web site for this version).

Once the cards are shuffled and the deck has been cut, the reader lays out the cards in a pattern called the spread. Each position in the spread has a meaning, and there are many different types of spreads, ranging from those that incorporate a single card to spreads that include all 78 cards of the deck. Which spread is used is up to the reader and the specific type of question or reading. Some spreads focus more on a specific type of information. For example, one spread might focus more on emotional matters, while another might bring in more information about the influences of others. One of the most common spreads is the Celtic Cross:

There are many more spreads for Tarot card reading, and readers can even make up their own. For more Tarot card spreads, see Angel Paths.



Below, using the Celtic Cross spread as an example, you can see that there is an order in which the cards are laid down for the spread and that each card position within the spread has a meaning. There are many different meanings that each position can have -- it all depends on who you ask. This set of meanings comes from the Angel Paths Tarot and Healing Web site. The card meanings (see Individual Tarot Cards and the next section) are combined with the position meanings. In addition, combinations of cards or card pairings also affect meanings.



Reading the Cards

Once the cards are laid out, their meanings are interpreted based on their positions and their neighboring cards.

Here is an approach for reading the Celtic Cross spread according to Tarot reader and teacher Joan Bunning [Source: Learn Tarot]. At the right, you can see how this tarot reader and teacher interprets some of the Major Arcana cards.

1. Begin by looking at the Circle/Cross section. The cards in this position represent what is happening in your life at the time of the reading.
2. Next, look at the first six cards in pairs. These cards paint a picture of your immediate situation. The cards in position 1 (the central issue) and

position 2 (the secondary issue that can either be opposing or reinforcing) will identify the central theme of the reading. The cards in position 3 (the root cause that can be an unconscious influence or deeper meaning) and position 5 (your attitudes and beliefs, a conscious influence, your goal or an alternate future) represent things that are going on within you at different levels. And, the cards in position 4 (your past, a receding influence or something that has been resolved) and position 6 (the future or an approaching influence or unresolved factor) represent how people and events are flowing through your life.

3. Next, look at the Staff section of the spread, again considering cards in pairs. Looking at the cards in position 7 (as you are, as you could be, as you present yourself and as you see yourself) and position 8 (your outside environment, someone else's point of view and you as others see you) tells you about your relationship with your environment.

4. Finally, look at the card in position 10 (the outcome-overall, your inner state, your actions or effects) to see the projected outcome.

Joan Bunning suggests to then ask yourself how you feel about the projected outcome. What does it say to you?

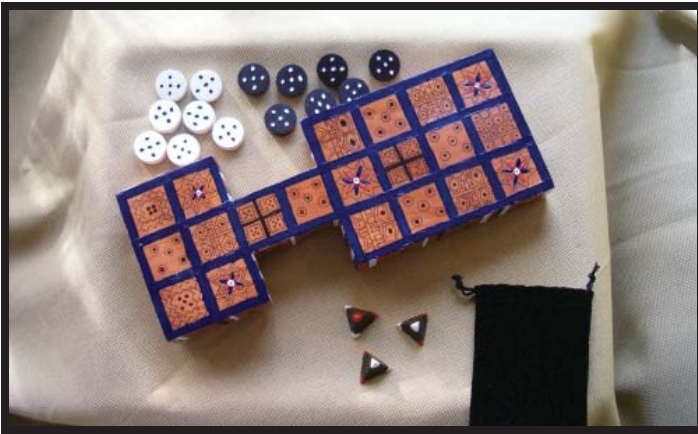
5. Go back and review the cards that led up to that outcome, and see if there is a card that stands out as they key to that outcome. Then, look back at card 5 to see if the projected outcome is also shown as an alternate outcome there. Look at the card representing the near future in position 6 to see if it supports or contributes to the projected outcome. Finally,



look at the card in position 9 (guidance, key factors, hopes and fears or overlooked factors) to see there is any relevance there.

Reversed Cards

Because Tarot cards each have one picture that faces in one direction, it is possible that cards will be facing the opposite direction when dealt. According to most sources, this doesn't change the meaning of the card, but simply weakens the impact of the meaning.



The game pattern on this version of the game is based upon the board from the Royal city of Ur which on display at the British Museum. It is handcrafted from hardwood and comes with special replica game disks and pyramidal lots (ancient dice).

Costs
\$35.38



The Senet board we sell here is a based on those found in various Egyptian tombs including those of Ramses III and Tutankhamen. It is very nicely crafted and comes with genuinely shaped pieces and binary lots (ancient dice).

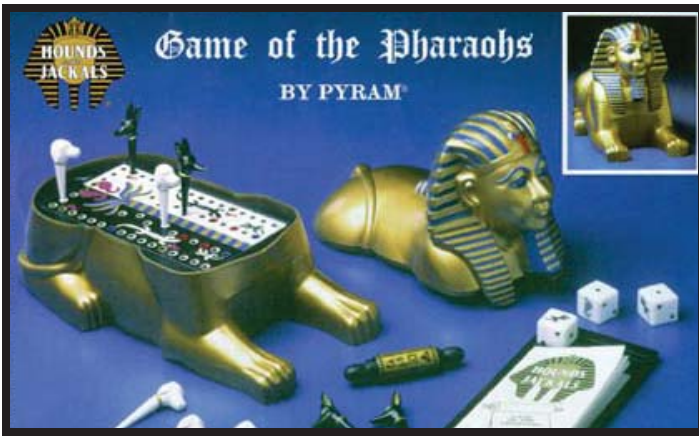
Costs
\$35.38



Wei Qi (or Wei-Ch'i) as it's known in China, Baduk (Paduk or Pa-dok) as it's known in Korea or "Go", as it is known in Japan, is considered by many people to be the worlds greatest strategic game, far surpassing Chess in it's complexity. The object is simply to capture territory by placing down counters on the board.

Costs
From
\$29.93
to
\$273.13

For More Games and Details on Purchasing these Games



Hounds and Jackals is an ancient Egyptian board game of the Pharaohs. It is one of the oldest board games in the world having been found in tombs dated at 3000 and 4000 years old. Only a few examples of the game have ever been found but historians have been able to determine the rules to a good extent.

Costs
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For Backgammon, there is a bewildering array of sets in shops everywhere so it can be tricky for the discerning buyer to know which to choose. We also offer some quality Backgammon sets from Jaques, the world's oldest games company.

Costs
From
\$41.48
to
\$341.44



The Rider Waite Tarot cards by Arthur Edward Waite are illustrated by Pamela Coleman Smith. This Rider Waite set of Tarot cards is the world's most popular tarot pack.

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