FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers wanting more information on this game should consult the following books.

Bell, R. C. *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*, vol. 1, pp. 47-48. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1979.

Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Board-Games Other Than Chess*, pp. 65-71. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 243-247. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Illustration 3: some moves and captures.

ALQUERQUE
by Damian Walker
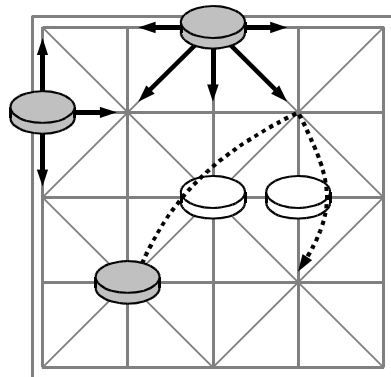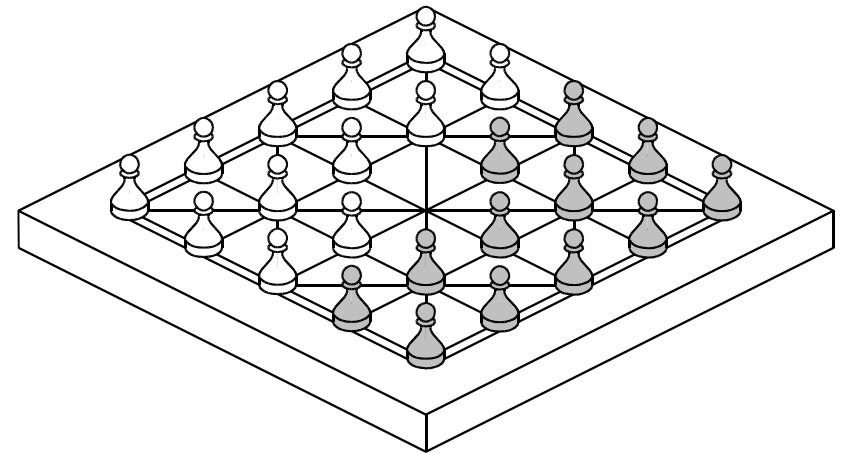

Board Games at ⊞ CYNINGSTAN
Traditional Board Game Series
(Second Edition)
Leaflet #3

Introduction & History

Those who enjoy the game of draughts may be interested to learn of Alquerque, a game which is probably its most direct ancestor. It was popular in medieval Spain, having been introduced there by its Moorish conquerors, though it achieved but fleeting popularity in the rest of Europe. The game was popular elsewhere, spreading into Africa through Egypt, and east into Asia. While in Europe it was replaced by its descendant, draughts, it lasted long enough to allow the Spanish conquistadors to introduce it to the natives of Central and South America.

Alquerque gave rise to a number of descendants and variants.

Draughts was created in Europe, seemingly by marrying alquerque with chess, taking most of the rules of alquerque, using the board from chess, and introducing the forward motion and promotion of the chess pawn. Other peoples stayed truer to the original. In Africa, the board was quadrupled in size. In the far east, triangles were added to the edge of the board to provide enclaves of playing space. In India and Latin America a variety of new shapes and sizes were tried for the game board.

This leaflet teaches the rules of the original, as played in medieval Europe before the coming of Draughts.

How to Play

The rules of the game are subject to controversy, as those left to us by Alfonso the Wise are ambiguous, and leave some of the finer detail to the imagination of modern players. Those given here are chosen for their soundness in play, and for their
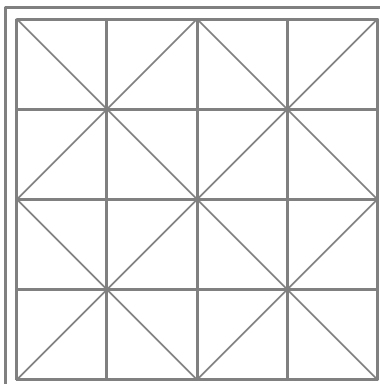

Illustration 1: the empty alquerque board.

lack of innovations like promotion, that were not mentioned in contemporary accounts.

Beginning the Game

1. The game is played on a board of five points by five, the points being joined by horizontal and vertical lines in a lattice pattern, with some diagonals added (see Illustration 1).

2. The game begins with twenty-four pieces, divided between the two players, twelve black for one player and twelve white for the other. The pieces are laid out on the board as illustrated (Illustration 2).

3. The player who begins is decided at random, or at the agreement of the players. The first player is at a slight disadvantage. Each player moves a single piece as described below.

Moving the Pieces

4. A piece can be moved from its starting point, along any marked line, to an adjacent empty point, as shown in Illustration 3.

Capturing Enemies

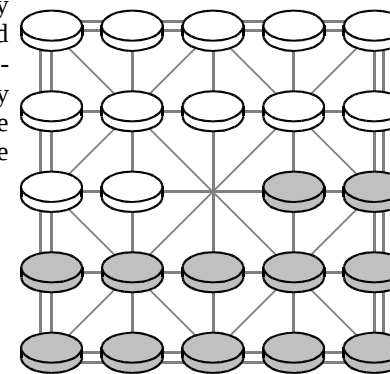5. An piece can capture an adjacent enemy piece, if a marked line joins their respective points, by leaping over the enemy onto the empty point beyond. The enemy is then removed from the board.

6. If such a capture can be made, then it is compulsory. If there is a choice of such captures, then the player may choose whichever capture he pleases.

7. When a piece has captured an enemy, and is in a position to capture another in the same manner, then the further capture must be made. The capturing piece may, indeed must, perform as many such captures in its turn as are possible (see again Illustration 3).

Ending the Game

8. The game ends when one player has lost all his pieces. His opponent is the winner.

9. The game is drawn if both players are equal, and neither can safely engage the enemy without himself losing the game. This most often happens when both players are reduced to one or two pieces each.

Illustration 2: the pieces set out for play.