

SEEJEH

Seejeh is an ancient Egyptian game for two players, whose origins are uncertain, but which is still played by the Bedouins, the nomads of the desert, so the rules are known.

Tables of the Seejeh were found carved on the stone of several Egyptian temples dating back to 1300 BC, unfortunately there is no way to know if these carving were made by the workers at work during the construction of these temples or in later times.

This game, we said, being very old, has some variations in the name and in the rules due to the passage of time. Other names by which this game is known are: Seega and Sija, for example, and also denote the area of diffusion of the game, which went from North Africa to the Middle East.

The Seejeh was played above all by the poor and by the Egyptian nomads, it did not have a game board or sophisticated pieces like other ancient games such as the Senet, the game of 20 squares, the Mehen or the Dogs and jackals, all games, these, practiced for mostly by the rich and the pharaohs. To play Seejeh, on the other hand, the peasants or the Bedouins carved the stone or drew it on the sand and used stones of two different colors.



Table of Seejeh game board engraved on the wall of the temple in the complex: Elkab Amenophi III, Egypt. Photo: Bruce Allardice, July 2, 2013.

One thing that can be seen from the inscriptions is that while the nobles and the rich gambled a lot, the poor preferred to play strategy games without the random component.

The rules that have come down to us have been handed down orally since ancient times in the Egyptian Bedouin populations and among the peasants; were observed and noted in the nineteenth century. by Edward William Lane, an English Arabist who spent a long time in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s.

At the end of his travels, Lane published the essay “An account of the manners and customs of the modern Egyptians”, in which he described the rules of the game of Seejeh and many other games, however, while also recording some strategies, he did not understand them. A strategic analysis of the game was made at the end of the century, in 1890, by H. Carrington Bolton in his article “Seega, an Egyptian game”, but lacked a study of the rules of the game. Finally, in 1892, Edward Falkener combined both works in his book “Game ancient and oriental, and how to play them” which made many ancient games definitively popular in Europe and the Western world.

From the various archaeological excavations and anthropological studies carried out during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, different sized playfields of the Seejeh have been found: 5x5, 7x7 and even 9x9. Consequently, the number of total pieces varies, respectively: 24, 48 and 80, divided in half.

The rules are the same for all versions, including variants, they only vary:

- The playing time, which increases according to the size of the floor and the greater number of pieces on the field to be eliminated.
- The limit number of pieces to declare the opponent's defeat: 1 piece for the 5x5 version, 7 pieces for the 7x7 version and 11 pieces for the 9x9 version.

In the leather version we provide a game board of 5x5 and 24 pieces, divided into two colors.

PURPOSE OF THE GAME

The aim of the game is to eliminate all of the opponent's pieces. The player whose pieces are eliminated loses the game and the opponent is the winner.

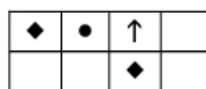
The player wins when he leaves the opponent with only 1 pawn or, in the event of a stalemate (i.e. when neither player is able to make a move anymore), whoever has more pawns on the field.

GAME'S RULES

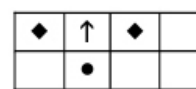
1. Starting with the free play plan, each player chooses a color and draws lots to determine who goes first, for example by flipping a coin.
2. In turn, each player places two pawns at a time in any empty cell of their choice, except the central square with the Ankh symbol.



3. Once all the pieces are in place, the pieces are moved, one at a time, to the free spaces.
4. Pieces can only move horizontally or vertically, **not** diagonally. The movement is only one square at a time and it is not possible to skip squares or pawns, own or of the opponent.
- 5.
6. The same piece cannot move back and forth on the same cells more than twice (which is why you can get to the stall even if you have free squares).
7. The central square, depicting the Ankh, is a safe square and the pieces placed on it cannot be captured.
8. To eliminate a pawn from the game, the "capture for custody" is used, ie player A must surround on two sides - horizontally or vertically, **not** diagonally - the pawn of player B with two of his pawns (and vice versa). The capture occurs only after a specific movement to sandwich the opponent's piece. If, on the other hand, you move your piece between two enemy pieces, the capture does not take place, it is a simple move.



The piece is removed from the game board

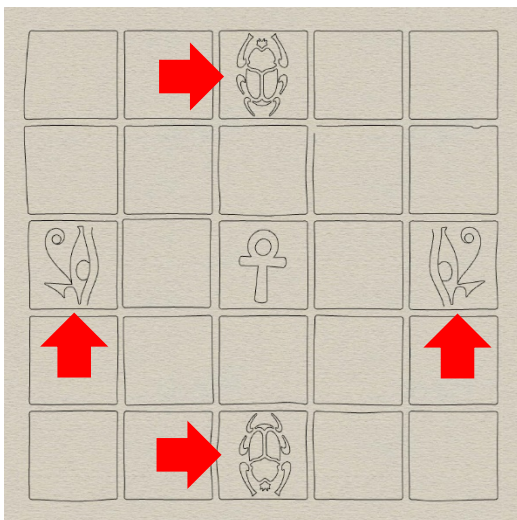


The piece remains where it was placed

9. Simultaneous capture. It occurs when, by moving a pawn, a player sandwiches a pawn belonging to an alternating series (for example on a row there are white and black pawns alternated by positioning and white closes the last black pawn in the row, all the pawns blacks enclosed by two whites are captured).
10. When a player captures an opponent's pawn, he can move again to capture another piece, if possible, so he can move how many line moves will allow catches in sequence of the opponent's pieces. When it is no longer possible to make further capture moves, the turn passes to the other player.
11. If a player is trapped and cannot move any piece in any way (including the inability to move a piece for the third time on a square it has already been two more times in a row), the opponent can capture one of his pieces and choose which one.
12. If you get to a stalemate in which it is impossible for both to eliminate the opponent's pieces, the game can end by mutual agreement (in case you want to shorten the playing time) and the one who has more pieces on the board wins, for the opponent's "surrender". Otherwise, you continue to move into the free squares until you resume capturing and eliminating enemy pieces from the game.

GAME'S VARIATIONS

VARIANT RULE NR. 2



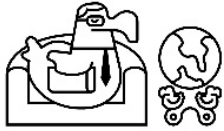
A game variation is expected that the first placement of the pawns move for both players, is mandatory. In this variant, the first player must place his first two pawns on two boxes with the Eye of Ra, and the other has to place his on the boxes depicting the beetle.

All subsequent moves take place according to the rules above.

Curiosity: this variant, according to Lane's research, was the main rule played in Egypt, while later, in the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai Bolton found that they played according to rule no. 2, without prior placement of the first two moves.

VARIANT RULE NR. 10

The variant is to make the "free" player continue the movements as long as the trapped player has no way to move, in which case the trapped player will not be eliminated a pawn.



THE ADVICE OF THE DODO

During the initial placement, the player should always try to occupy at least one cell (preferably two) adjacent to the central cell, in order to be able to enter once started the movement of the pieces and do not get caught and lose tokens already in the first moves of the game.

After occupying two adjacent cells in the center, each player should try to occupy as many cells as possible on the outer rows, as this will allow him to move towards the center and trap the opponent's pieces.