

PULUC

by Damian Walker

FURTHER INFORMATION

The information for this leaflet was taken from the sources below, and from the computer game Bul by P. S. Neeley.

Bell, R. C. *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*, pp. 89-90. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979.

Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Board Games Other than Chess*, p. 149. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp.226-7. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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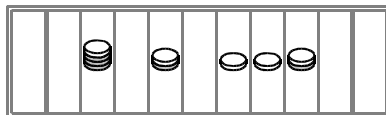
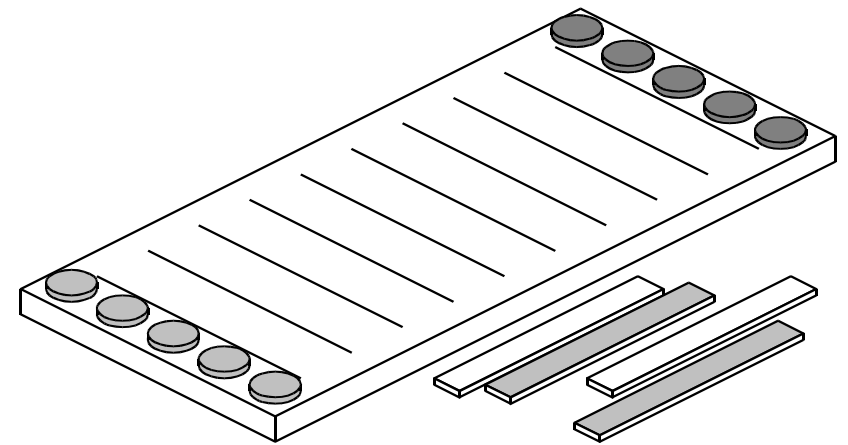


Illustration 4: all of the black pieces are captured and there is no-one to free them. The white player has therefore won the game.

INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Puluc, also called *Boolik* and *Bul*, is a game played by the Kekchi people of North Guatemala in Central America. It is played in the outlying districts, often by the light of a fire. The Kekchi people are descendants of the Mayans, which induces some authors to speculate that *Puluc* is a Mayan game.

It is a running fight game, a kind of war game played on a one-

dimensional track, or “maize highway”. The forces of each player race towards each other into battle, capturing and killing each other until only one side remains on the field. The track is separated into spaces by corn cobs, and the players use pieces of stick or leaf, controlling the moves by throws of ears of corn scorched or marked on one side.

HOW TO PLAY

These rules are based largely on those presented by R. C. Bell. These give an element of player choice which is absent from the rules presented in some other sources.

Starting the Game

1. The game is played by two players on a one-dimensional board, separated into eleven spaces as shown in Illustration 1. The playing space at each end of the board serves as a *home city* for a player, the other nine spaces forming the *track*.

2. Each player starts the game with five pieces of his colour, all starting in his home city as



Illustration 1: an empty puluc board. The thickened lines in the diagram divide the home cities from the track.

shown in Illustration 2.

3. There are four casting sticks that control the movement of the players, the sticks each having one side marked. The value of a throw is the number of marked sides showing, or 5 if all sides are showing blank.

4. The players each throw the casting sticks, and whoever throws the highest takes the first turn.

Moving the Pieces

5. A player's turn consists of throwing the casting sticks then moving one of his pieces.

6. If the player has pieces in his home city he may move one onto the track, by the number of spaces

shown by the casting sticks.

7. Alternatively if the player has other non-captured pieces on the track, he may opt to move one of these by the appropriate number of spaces instead. Some examples are shown in Illustration 3.

8. A player may not land one of his pieces on top of another, unless the latter is a captive of the enemy.

9. When a moving piece reaches or passes the enemy city, he and any freed compatriots with him are returned to his home city, and his enemy captives are killed removed from play.

Capturing Enemies

10. If a piece lands on an en-



Illustration 2: pieces set out for play.

emy on the track, the enemy is captured.

11. Landing on enemy pieces in their city does not lead to their capture.

12. If the captured enemy himself had captives, those captives are freed and accompany their deliverer as described below.

13. If a moving piece is on top of a pile of enemy captives and freed compatriots, then those captives and compatriots move with him till he reaches the enemy city.

Ending the Game

14. A player wins the game when all his opponent's pieces have been either killed or captured, as shown in the example Illustration 4.

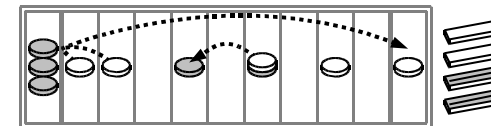


Illustration 3: white pieces to move, and a 2 is thrown. The two pieces on the left may complete their journey and return home. The piece further right, and its prisoner, can move to capture the other black piece. But neither of the rightmost two pieces can move, as they are blocked.