

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers who want to learn more about saturankam will find further information in the following sources.

Botermans, J. et al. *The World of Games*, pp. 33-35. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1989.

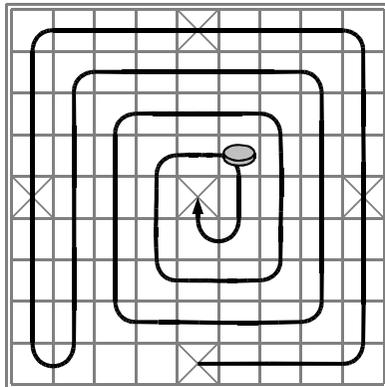
Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Board-games Other Than Chess*, p. 130. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, p.56. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

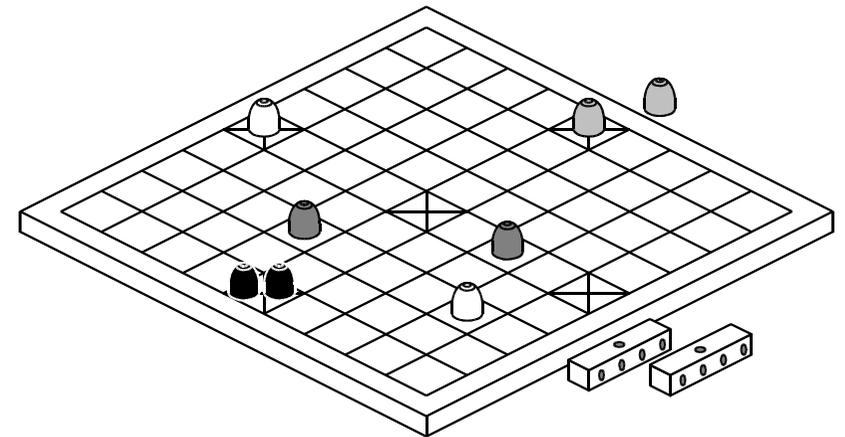
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## SATURANKAM

by Damian Walker



*Illustration 3: the path of a player's pieces, from his start square to the centre of the board. The piece shown must be borne off by the throw of a double 4 (see rules 3 and 6).*



## INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Saturankam is a race game played on a square board, around which the players' pieces move in a labyrinthine path. It is played in southern India and Sri Lanka. It is of unknown antiquity, but square-board race games in India are thought to pre-date chess.

The name *saturankam* in fact means "chess", and chess is thought to have been designed around an 8×8 square race game board. The dice in saturankam, called *kemadi*, often made of brass, have values marked with holes in the faces.

## HOW TO PLAY

The saturankam board is square, and is divided into nine rows of nine cells. The central cell is marked, as are the cells in the centre of each edge of the board, as shown in Illustration 1.

There are two four-sided dice used in the game, each marked with the numbers 1, 3, 4 and 6.

The game can be played by two, three or four players. When two play, they sit at opposite sides of the board.

### Beginning the Game

1. Each player starts the game with two pieces. These sit on the marked square on his side of the board, as shown in Illustration 2.

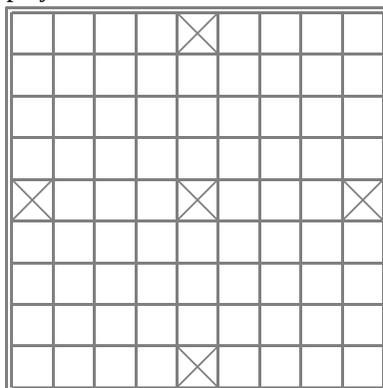


Illustration 1: the empty saturankam board, with markings shown.

### Moving the Pieces

2. A player begins his turn by throwing the two dice.

3. The player then moves one or both of his pieces along its path (see Illustration 3) according to the value shown on the dice. Each player's path starts at the marked square nearest him.

4. The total of both dice may be used to move a single piece, or the total may be split in any convenient way to move both pieces. For example, a throw of three and six may be used to move one piece four and another five spaces.

5. However the values are divided, the full total

of the dice must be used whenever possible.

6. When a piece is one, three or four spaces from the central square, it cannot be moved further, but must be borne off the board with a double, for example, four and four to bear a piece off from the fourth square.

7. A player throwing a double gets to throw again after moving his pieces.

### Capturing Enemies

8. If a player lands on a piece belonging to his opponent, the opponent's piece is removed from the board.

9. Such captured pieces can only be re-entered on the first

square with a throw of one and one.

10. Pieces sitting on marked square are safe from capture; a player cannot therefore move a piece to a marked square if an opponent's pieces are sitting there.

### Ending the Game

11. The game is won by the first player to bear both his pieces off the board.

### Variations

12. All the pieces start off the board, and each player's pieces enter at the marked square on his side of the board.

13. Captured pieces may re-enter the board on any throw, as at the start of the game.

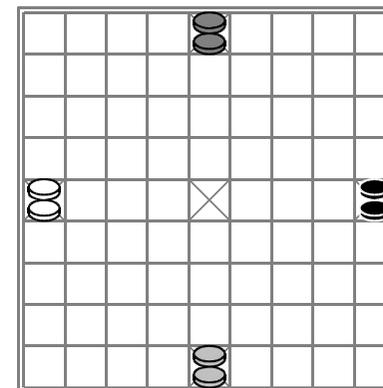


Illustration 2: pieces set out for a four-player game.