

BAGH CHAL

by Damian Walker

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about bagh chal can be found in the following list of books.

Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Board-Games Other than Chess*, p. 112. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, p. 194. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Copyright © Damian Walker 2011 - <http://boardgames.cyningstan.org.uk/>

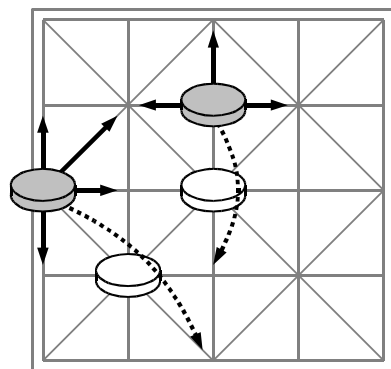
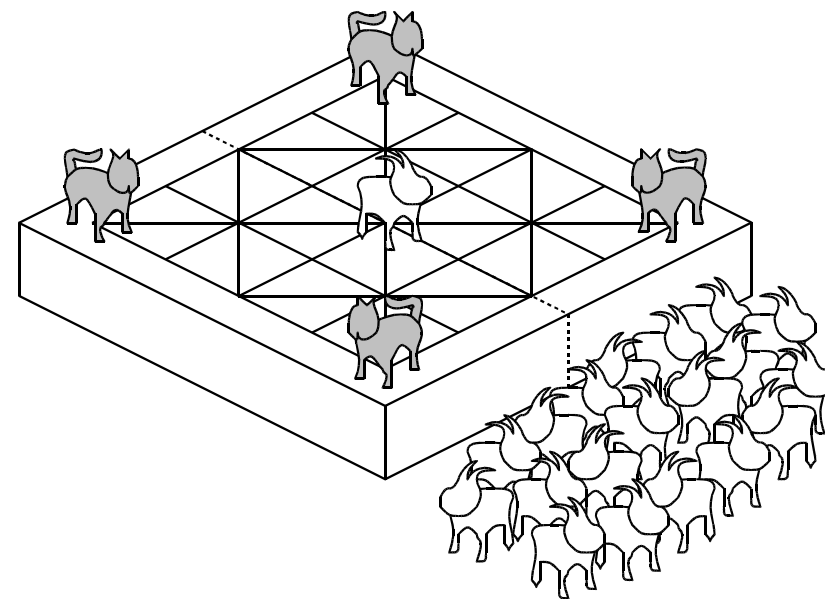


Illustration 3: all possible moves and captures for the two tigers. Note that the top tiger cannot move diagonally, as no diagonal lines pass through his position. Once all goats are placed, they move in the same way as the tigers, but cannot jump.

INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Bagh Chal is an ancient hunt board game from Nepal, whose name means “moving tigers”. It is played by two players, one controlling tigers, the other controlling goats. Some have called it the national game of Nepal, though other non-board games also claim that title.

It is said that the game is a thousand years old. Some sources

say the game originated in the Himalayas, and others that it came from further south in India, where similar games have been played for centuries. Whatever its antiquity, the game is still popular today, with traditional brass sets with cast pieces still being made and sold across the world by Nepali craftsmen.

HOW TO PLAY

Bagh Chal is played on the *alquerque* board (Illustration 1) by two players. One has four tigers, while the other has twenty goats. Henceforth they will be called the tiger player and the goat player.

Beginning the Game

1. The game begins with four tigers on the board, one in each corner, as shown in Illustration 2.

2. The twenty goats are kept in hand by the player who has taken their side.

3. The goat player takes the first turn.

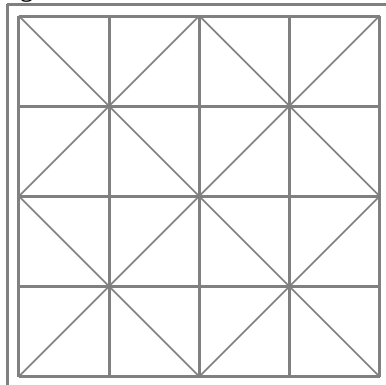


Illustration 1: the board for bagh chal.

Placement and Movement

4. If the goat player has goats in hand, he must use his turn to place one on any empty point on the board.

5. If the goat player has placed all the goats, then he must instead use his turn to move one of the

goats from its current position, along a marked line in any direction, to an adjacent empty point.

6. The tiger player in his turn may move a tiger from its current position, along a marked line in any direction, to an ad-

jacent empty point.

7. Only one piece may occupy a point at any one time; stacking of pieces is not allowed.

Eating the Goats

8. A tiger may sometimes capture, or *eat*, a goat, instead of moving as described in rule 6.

9. To eat a goat, the tiger player must jump with one of his tigers along a marked line, over an adjacent goat, to an empty point beyond. The goat is then removed from the board and takes no further part in play.

10. The tiger may not change

direction in the middle of its jump. A goat is only in danger of being eaten if on one side it has a tiger, and on the other an empty space.

11. Only one goat may be eaten in any one turn. Multiple jumps are not allowed.

Some examples of moves and captures are shown in Illustration 3.

Ending the Game

12. The tiger player wins when his tigers have eaten five goats.

13. The goat player wins if the tigers are trapped and the tiger player has no legal move.

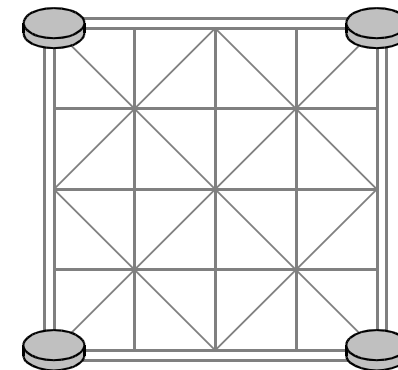


Illustration 2: the tigers are set out ready for play.