

move.

13. A game is drawn if both players have only their king, or if

otherwise there is no way for either player to achieve victory.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers interested in learning more about shatranj would find the following books interesting:

Bell, R. C. *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*, vol. 1, pp. 57-61. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1979.

Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Chess*, pp. 186-338. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 206-209. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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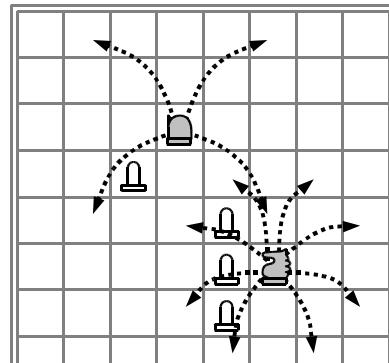
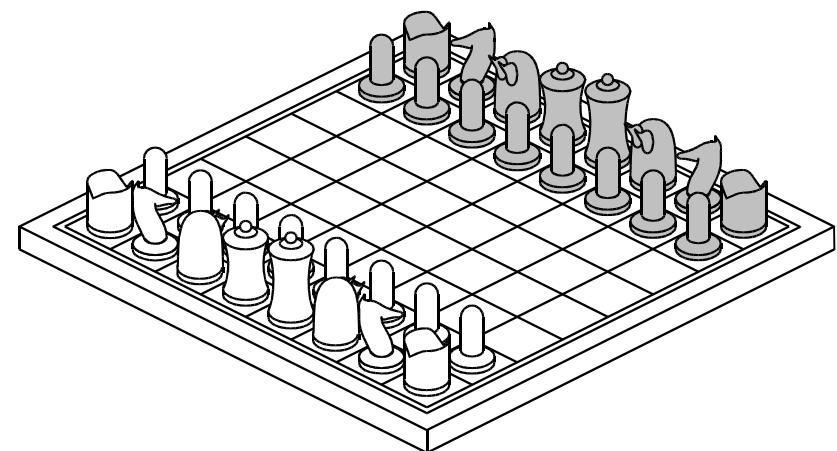


Illustration 3: the moves of the jumping pieces.

## SHATRANJ

by Damian Walker



## INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Shatranj is sometimes called Islamic chess, or medieval chess. Those tired of modern hustle and bustle may want a change of pace from the relatively frantic modern chess, and shatranj is one way to provide it.

The game is close to the original chess invented in India, spreading to the Persians in the 6th century and to the Islamic world and the Byzantine court in the 7th. The best medieval chess grand masters were from the Islamic world, such as as-Suli in the 10th century.

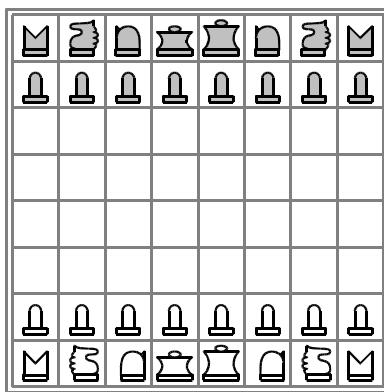
## HOW TO PLAY

Shatranj in the Islamic world was more standardised than its European counterpart, the Arabs being content to leave the rules alone. It is these rules, then, that are reproduced here.

### Beginning the Game

1. Shatranj is played on a board of eight squares by eight, the squares being of uniform colour.

2. There are two players, one known as white



*Illustration 1: the pieces set out to begin. From the bottom left they are the chariot, horse, elephant, vizier and king, with the pawns in front.*

It was around as-Suli's time that shatranj entered Europe and became known as chess. Europeans experimented with the rules over the next five centuries, but the game remained largely the same until the modern chess quickly replaced it at the end of the 15th century. It lasted until the 16th century in Islamic areas, and this older game, rather than the modern chess, is the basis for many regional variations around the world, some of which are still played today.

and the other black.

3. Each player has sixteen pieces of his own colour: 1 king, 1 vizier, 2 elephants, 2 horses, 2 chariots and 8 pawns. At the start of the game, they are laid out on the board as in Illustration 1.

### Moving and Capturing Pieces

4. White makes the first turn, then black plays, turns alternating thereafter until the game is over.

5. A turn consists of moving one of the player's own pieces from one square to another, according to that piece's abilities, removing (capturing) an enemy piece if it occupies the destination square.

6. The abilities of the pieces, shown in Illustration 2 and Illustration 3, are as follows:

(i). the king may move to any of the eight squares adjacent to him, with some limitations explained below;

(ii). the vizier may move to any of the four adjacent diagonal squares;

(iii). the elephant may move exactly two squares in a diagonal direction, jumping over any piece that occupies the intervening square;

(iv). the horse moves one square horizontally or vertically, then one square diagonally away from its starting point, jumping over any pieces that occupies the intervening square;

(v). the chariot moves any distance horizontally or vertically, but may not jump over intervening pieces,

which block its way;

(vi). the pawn moves one square forwards, unless it wishes to capture, in which case it moves one square diagonally forwards.

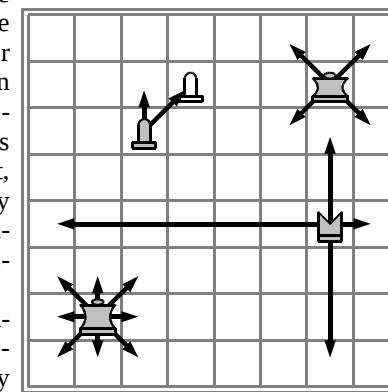
7. If the king is threatened with capture, he must move to a safe square, another piece must move to protect him, or the aggressor must be captured.

8. A king may never move into a square that is threatened by an enemy piece. Neither may a piece protecting the king move so as to expose him to capture.

9. If a pawn reaches the far row, it immediately becomes a vizier.

### Ending the Game

10. A player has won the game if he threatens to capture his opponent's king, and the opponent can do nothing to prevent this.



*Illustration 2: moves of the non-jumping pieces. The chariot is blocked by the vizier, and the pawn moves diagonally only when capturing.*

11. A player also wins if, at the end of his opponent's turn, he has two or more pieces left but the opponent has only a king.

12. A player wins if his opponent has no legal