

ing books for further information.

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Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Board-Games Other than Chess*, p. 99. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, p. 187. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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CATCH THE HARE

by Damian Walker

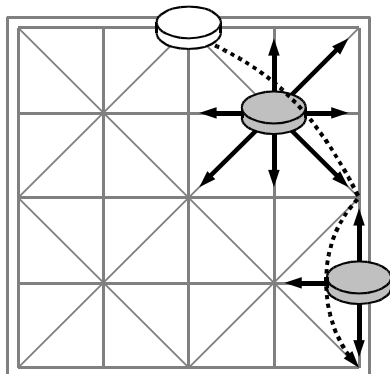
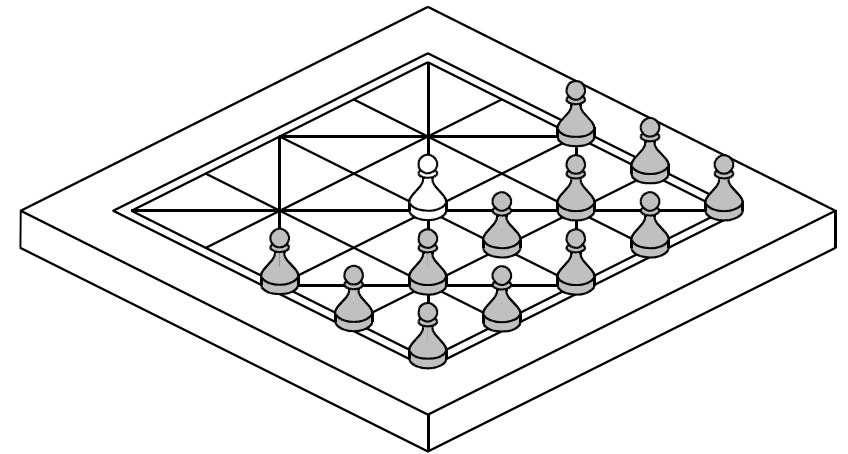


Illustration 3: example moves for black, and captures for white.

INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Hunt games, where a large number of hunters are set against a small number of prey, have been played across the world for centuries. But the earliest mention of such a game in Europe is *cercar la liebre*, a game played in Spain from the 13th century to the present day. It was first recorded in Alfonso X's book of games in 1283.

Cercar la liebre means "catch the hare", and the object of the game is for a group of twelve hunters or hounds, controlled by one player, to catch a hare, controlled by the other. This hare is more vicious than most, though, and may capture the hunters to make their task impossible.

It may be that this game was brought to Spain by the Moors, along with the game *alquerque* which is played on the same board. But there is no mention of catch the hare, or any similar game, in Arabic

literature.

The game was taken by the Spanish conquerors to their territories in Central and North America. It was adopted by the American natives, who made adaptations of it, calling it *coyote & chickens*, and *Indian & jackrabbits*. In particular, they reduced the number of diagonal lines on the board, and in some cases eliminated them altogether. In one interesting case, there was no piece for the hare, but its position was indicated by pointing with a stick.

The game continues to be popular in Spain, under the name *juego de la liebre*, and on the modern board, all the diagonal lines are omitted. As far back as 1283, Alfonso noted that the hunters have the advantage, and that a good player might reduce his force to eleven, or even ten, and still have a chance at immobilising the hare.

HOW TO PLAY

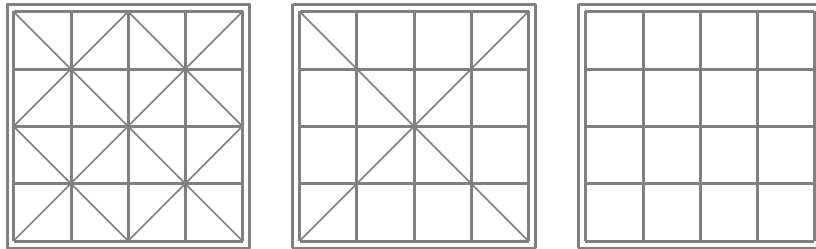


Illustration 1: three different boards: original (left), North American, and modern (right).

In these rules the original board will be used, along with the traditional European names of the pieces.

Beginning the Game

1. Catch the hare is played on the points of an *alquerque* board, that is, a grid of five lines by five, on which some of the diagonals are marked (Illustration 1, left).

2. One player starts with a single piece, the hare, while his adversary has twelve hunters, all arranged on the board as shown in Illustration 2.

3. The hunting player moves a piece first, followed by the hare, turns alternating thereafter until the game is finished.

Moving the Pieces

4. All the pieces move in the same way: one step along any marked line to an adjacent point, as shown in Illustration 3.

5. A piece may move in any direction, provided that there is a line present on the board.

6. A piece may not land on

FURTHER

Readers who are game might like to

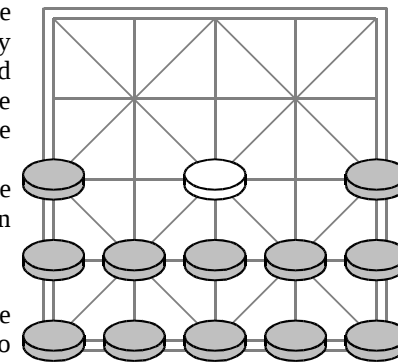


Illustration 2: pieces set out for play.

the head of another.

Capturing Pieces

7. The hare captures an adjacent hunter by leaping over it onto the empty point beyond, removing the hunter from the board (see Illustration 3).

8. As with movement, a line must be present in the direction of the leap.

9. If, after leaping, the hare is in position to make a further leap, it may do so, continuing to leap and capture until it can leap no more.

10. Each leap may take only a single hunter; it is not possible to make a long leap over a row of hunters to take them all.

11. The hunters cannot leap over the hare.

Ending the Game

12. The hunters win by enclosing the hare so that it may not move in its turn.

13. The hare wins by capturing so many of the hunters that they may no longer enclose the hare.

INFORMATION

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