

empty square by moving one of his own pieces onto the enemy's square, at which point the captured piece is removed from play. This is the only time a piece may land on a square that is not currently empty.

11. All pieces can capture pieces within the range of their ordinary move, except the soldier, which must instead move diagonally forward to capture. A soldier cannot move straight forward to capture.

12. The king may not be cap-

tured. But if a player's king is threatened with capture, a situation called *check*, it must be moved or protected on the player's own turn.

Ending the Game

13. The game is ended if a player's king is threatened with capture, and he cannot move it to safety or otherwise protect it on his own turn. This is *checkmate*, and he loses the game.

14. Stalemate is not allowed in sittuyin. A player must leave his opponent with some legal move.

FURTHER INFORMATION

As has already been mentioned, accounts of the game are often imprecise and contradictory. The list of books consulted for this leaflet is no exception, but is given here so the reader can look further into the game.

Bell, R. C. *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*, vol. 2, pp. 28-30. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979.

Bell, R. C. *Discovering Old Board Games*, pp. 24-26. Aylesbury: Shire Publications Ltd., 1980.

Falkener, E. *Games Ancient and Oriental*, pp. 178-190. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1961.

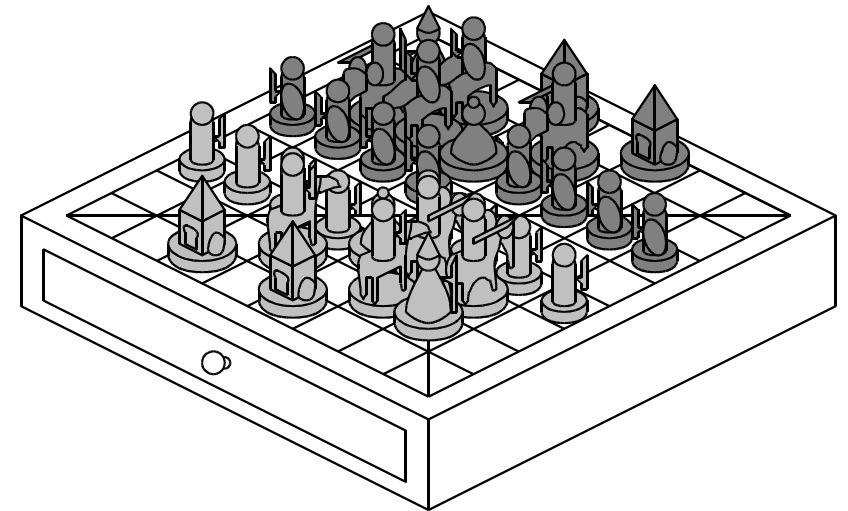
Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Chess*, pp. 108-113. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 294-295. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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SITTUYIN

by Damian Walker



INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Sittuyin is a form of chess otherwise known as *Burmese chess*. It is of unknown antiquity, but chess is thought to have been brought from India by the seventh century, with the migration of Buddhism. The Burmese game has some similarities with older Indian and Persian forms of chess. But where western chess speeds up the game by giving some of the pieces more powerful moves, Burmese chess keeps the older moves of the pieces but brings them closer into contact at the start of the game. This gives the feeling of a close melee.

The game has kept its popular-

ity till the twentieth century, being still played in Mandalay in 1950 and in the north-west Burma even today. It is traditionally played sat on the ground, and the board is made in the form of a shallow box to make this more comfortable for the players. The box usually has drawers for the black and red wooden pieces, which are ornately carved as realistic figures.

Sittuyin was first described in English in about 1800, and accounts down the past two centuries have been contradictory. This leaflet relies mainly on the books of H. J. R. Murray and David Parlett.

HOW TO PLAY

Sittuyin is played on an unchequered board of eight rows of eight squares. A line joins the each of the extreme diagonals together from corner to corner. Pieces are red and black, and for each side consist of eight soldiers, two chariots, two horsemen,

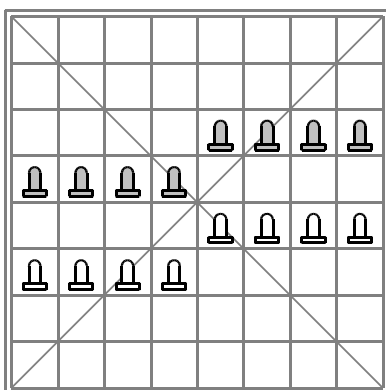


Illustration 1: Soldiers set out for play. The major pieces are set out at the discretion the players.

two elephants, a commander and the king.

Beginning the Game

1. The game begins with the soldiers only set on the board, in the layout shown in Illustration 1.

2. The red player begins the game by placing

his major pieces anywhere behind his soldiers.

3. It is permissible to place a major piece on a square already occupied by a soldier, in which case the soldier is moved to another empty square behind the soldiers' line.

4. When the red pieces are all placed, the black player deploys his pieces in the same manner.

5. Once all the pieces have been placed, the movement phase of the game begins, with red making the first move.

Moving the Pieces

6. In his turn a player moves one piece, each piece having its own special mode of movement:

(i). the king may move a single step in one of eight directions to an adjacent square;

(ii). the commander moves one step diagonally, to an adjacent square;

(iii). an elephant may move one step diagonally or one step directly forward, to an adjacent

square;

(iv). the horseman moves one step diagonally and then one step horizontally or vertically away from his current position, jumping over any piece in his way;

(v). the chariot moves horizontally or vertically as far as the player wishes, though it cannot jump over other pieces;

(vi). the soldier moves one step forward to the next square, unless capturing, when he moves one step diagonally forward.

7. No piece may land on a square already occupied, unless it is making a capture.

8. If a soldier sits on the diagonal line on the far side of the board, and if the player has no commander in play, then the player may

promote the soldier to a commander instead of making a move.

9. A soldier cannot be promoted once he has passed the diagonal line at the far side of the board.

Capturing Enemies

10. A player may capture an en-

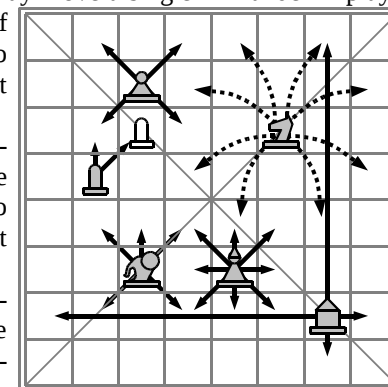


Illustration 2: the moves of the pieces. Only the chariot (bottom right) may move as far as it pleases, and only the horseman (top right) can jump.