

FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers who are particularly interested in this game can find further information about it in the following books:

Bell, R. C. *Discovering Old Board Games*, pp. 51-52. Aylesbury: Shire Publications Ltd., 1973.

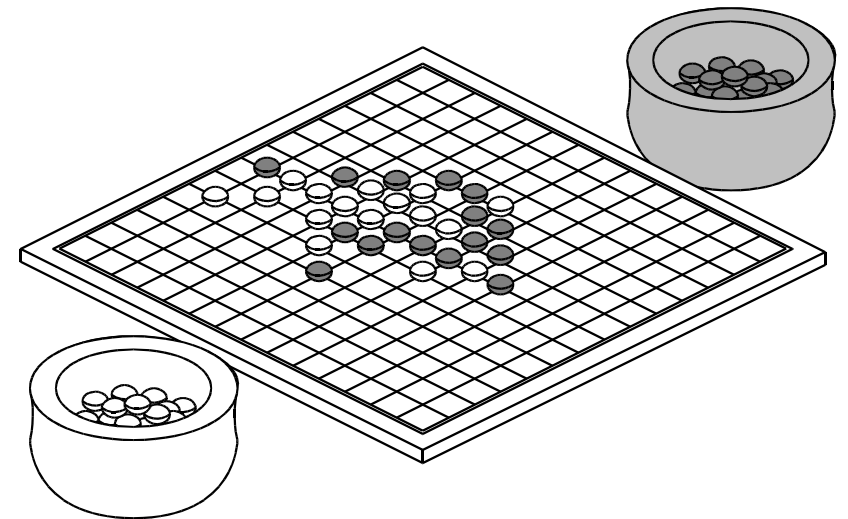
Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 124-125. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Pritchard, D. *Brain Games: the World's Best Games for Two*, pp. 140-144. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1982.

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RENJU

by Damian Walker



INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

For many years in Japan, games have been popular in which the players strive to make a line of five of their pieces in a row. A go board and pieces were often used for this purpose. With the simplest of rules, as played exclusively until the twentieth century, black, the first player, has a distinct advantage, and so the game was not highly regarded.

Since 1900, though, interest has increased in making this attractive game playable, by introducing rules and restrictions to try and reduce black's advantage. *Renju* is the cul-

mination of this process, and it achieves its aim by placing restrictions on black which do not apply to white.

Renju is now popular in Japan, though it is less so abroad. National and regional tournaments of renju take place in Japan, supporting a number of professional players. Renju may be further refined in future, and even now there are tournament rules which allow white to choose specific openings from which the rest of the game will be played.

HOW TO PLAY

There is considerable confusion in western books on renju, probably reflecting the fact that the game is not widely played outside Japan. The clearest account is that of David Pritchard, given in his book *Brain Games*, and it is his rules that are reproduced here.

Beginning the Game

1. Renju is played on the intersections of a latticed board of 15 lines by 15.

2. Two players take part, one possessing 50 black stones, the other 50 white, the board itself being empty at the start of play.

Placing the Pieces

3. Black begins the game by placing a stone on the central intersection of the board.

4. White responds by placing a stone on any empty intersection he chooses. After this, play alternates between black and white, each player placing one stone until neither has stones left to place.

5. Black's subsequent moves are subject to some particular restrictions that do not apply to his opponent:

(i). he may not place a stone so as to create a row of six or more black stones;

(ii). neither can he place a stone so as to create two or more *open fours*. An open four is a row of four adjacent black stones, of which neither end is blocked by a white stone (see Illustration 1);

(iii). he may not place a stone so as to create two or more *open threes*. An open three is a row of three stones, with or without a gap, that may by the placement of one more stone become an open four, as described in rule 5(ii) above (see again Illustration 1).

(iv). It is permissible, however, to place a stone that creates simul-

taneously an open three and an open four.

6. A row of stones, as described in rules 5, 7 and 8, may be horizontal, vertical or diagonal.

Ending the Game

7. Black wins the game by creating a row of five black stones.

8. White wins the game by creating a row of five or more white stones.

9. The game is drawn if, after the placement of all 100 stones, neither player has won the game.

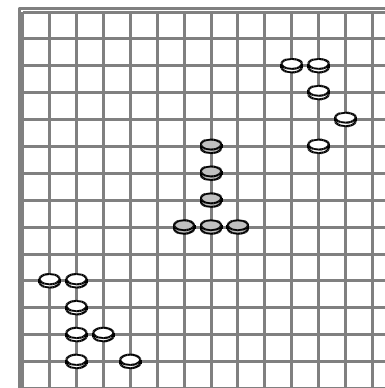


Illustration 1: some positions described in rule 5. The double rows of three and four shown for white are positions not allowed for black. The combined rows of three and four in the centre, however, are allowed.