

TRADITIONAL BOARD GAME SERIES

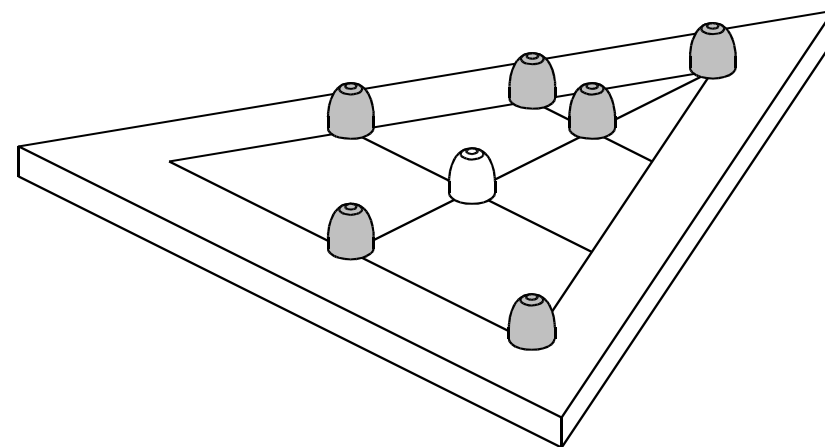
The Traditional Board Game Series is a collection of leaflets describing a range of games from around the world. The first fifteen of these, including this one, cover five millennia, from 3000 B.C. to about 1900 A.D., and represent societies from ancient Rome and Egypt, through medieval and Victorian England, to modern Japan. Below is a list of the first fifteen leaflets.

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|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Tablut | Scriptorum |
| 2. Nine Men's Morris | 10. Shatranj |
| 3. Alquerque | 11. Petteia & Ludus |
| 4. Senet | Latruncolorum |
| 5. Wari | 12. Nyout |
| 6. Fox & Geese | 13. Halma, Grasshopper & |
| 7. Horseshoe & Madelinette | Chinese Checkers |
| 8. Renju | 14. Reversi |
| 9. Ludus Duodecim | 15. Len Choa |

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LEN CHOA

by Damian Walker



INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

In the far east, there are a number of hunt games played on triangular boards, termed *leopard games*, from the name usually given to the hunter pieces. The simplest of these is *len choa*, which comes from Thailand.

The age of this game is unknown, but it was observed by the traveller Captain Low, who published a description of it in the periodical *Asiatic Researches*, 1836.

HOW TO PLAY

The detail in Captain Low's account is sparse, but a similar game from Sri Lanka provides clues enough to reconstruct a playable set of rules.

Beginning the Game

1. Len choa is played on a triangular board of ten points, joined by lines as shown in Illustration 1.

2. Two players take part, one controlling a tiger who starts at the apex of the board, the other controlling six leopards who start in his hand.

3. The leopard player takes the first turn, the tiger moving next, turns alternating thereafter.

Moving the Pieces

4. If the leopard player still holds pieces in his

hand, he must place one of them on any vacant point, thus ending his turn.

5. The tiger in his turn may move along a marked line to any adjacent point.

6. Once all the leopards have been placed, they may move from point to point in the same manner as the tiger.

Capturing Leopards

7. The tiger may, instead of moving to an adjacent point, capture a leopard on an adjacent point by leaping over it onto a vacant point beyond.

8. The tiger may not leap off the board; there must be a vacant point beyond the leopard for it to

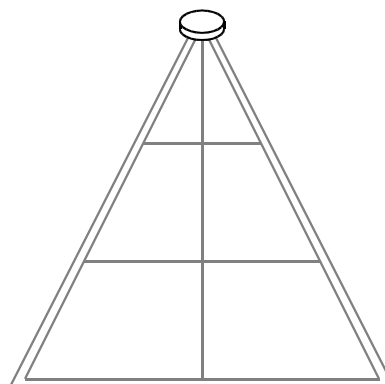


Illustration 1: the len choa board, with the tiger already placed.

land on.

9. The tiger may make only one leap in its turn. Multiple captures as in some other games are not allowed in len choa.

10. Leopards may not leap over the tiger.

Ending the Game

11. The game will end if the tiger cannot move. The leopards then claim victory.

12. The game also ends if the tiger captures three of the leopards. The remaining three leopards are insufficient to entrap the tiger.

A Variation

In Sri Lanka there is a very similar game, called hat diviyan keliya, an account of which was published in 1873. This is played in exactly the same way, but there are seven leopards instead of six.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Players wanting more information on the game of Len Choa would do well to consult the following books.

Botermans, J, et al. *The World of Games*, p. 153. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1989.

Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Board-Games Other than Chess*, p. 106. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 195-196. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.