

FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers wishing to know more about Pachisi will find plentiful information about it among the following books:

Bell, R. C. *Discovering Old Board Games*, pp. 14-16. Aylesbury: Shire Publications Ltd., 1973.

Bell, R. C. *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*, vol. 1, pp. 9-12. New York: Dover Publishing, Inc., 1979.

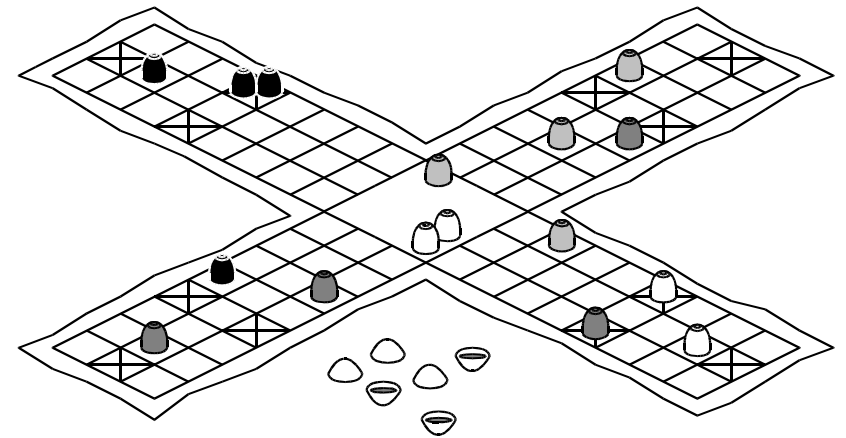
Murray, H. J. R. *A History of Board-Games Other than Chess*, p. 135. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 42-46. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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PACHISI

by Damian Walker



INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Among the many board games that India has given the world, *pachisi* is one of the most copied and better known. British readers will note its similarity to *Ludo*, and Americans may recognise the inspiration it gave to the creators of *Parcheesi*. But unlike these western games which have been simplified for children, *pachisi* is a game of partnership requiring a little more skill than its western descendants.

Its antiquity is uncertain. Similar games are reputed to have existed in the 3rd century, and it is probable that this game existed in the 1st millennium. It was at its height during the Mogul period, in the 16th to the 19th centuries, when the emperor Akbar played games with human pieces on boards of inlaid marble, the remains of which may still be seen.

HOW TO PLAY

The game is played on the cross-shaped board shown in Illustration 1, between two teams of two partners. Each partner has four pieces of his own colour, usually black and yellow against red and green. Six cowrie shells dictate the movements of the pieces.

Starting the Game

1. At the start of the game, all pieces start in the *char-koni*, or central square.

2. All players throw the cowrie shells, noting the value of their throws. The value

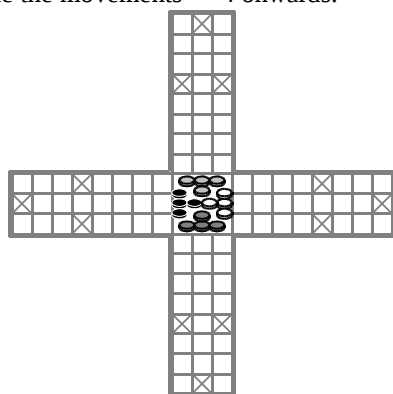


Illustration 1: the pachisi board with pieces set out for play.

of a throw is the number of shells landing with their mouths up, except: 0 mouths counts as 25, and 1 mouth as 10.

3. The player throwing highest starts the game as described in rule 4 onwards.

Taking a Turn

4. A player starts his turn by throwing the cowrie shells and noting their value. Values of 6, 10 and 25 are known as a *grace*.

5. The player may then move a piece along the path shown in Il-

lustration 2. The path is rotated for each player; a player's pieces start and end their journey along the path that points towards that player's seat. It is permissible for a piece to pass by the player's home path and make an extra circuit, but it is not permissible for two or more pieces to occupy a square.

6. A player's first piece may set out from the *char-koni* on any throw. But subsequently, a piece may start only on a *grace*.

7. A piece must finish its journey at the *char-koni* on an exact throw. The exception is when the piece is adjacent to the *char-koni*, when it may finish on a *grace*.

8. If the last throw was a *grace*, the player may take an extra turn.

9. Throwing and moving are optional. A player may end his turn at any time.

Capturing Pieces

10. If a piece lands on an enemy piece, that enemy piece is captured and returned to the *char-koni*.

11. A piece

cannot be captured when it sits on a marked square, or *castle*. In such a case no enemy may land on that square until the piece has moved from it.

12. Capturing a piece allows another turn to be taken.

Ending the Game

13. The game is ended when both partners of a team have brought their pieces home to the *char-koni*. That team wins the game.

Alternative Rules

There is no official rule set for *Pachisi*, and the rules given are the simplest from among a number of sources. Additional rules commonly used allow pieces to be doubled, ie. to occupy the same square. Doubled pieces move with a single throw, and may be captured

only by other doubles. Triples and Quadruples are possible. It is left to the reader to find or formulate playable rules for this.

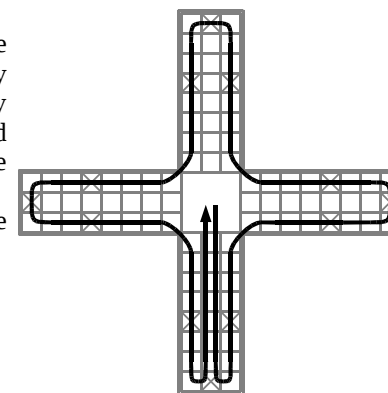


Illustration 2: the path of the pieces.