

rules 4-11.

The imbalance of the vela game is not as extreme as it at first appears. The approach and withdrawal capture method allows

the disadvantaged player to capture large numbers of pieces quickly, while not offering large lines of pieces for the opponent to capture.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers can find more information about fanorona from the following books:

Bell, R. C. *Discovering Old Board Games*, pp. 34-35. Aylesbury: Shire Publications Ltd., 1973.

Bell, R. C. *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*, vol. 2, pp. 24-26. New York: Dover Publishing, Inc., 1979.

Botermans, J. et al. *The World of Games*, p. 115. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1989.

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

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 248-249. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Pritchard, D. *Brain Games*, pp. 60-65. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1982.

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## FANORONA

by Damian Walker

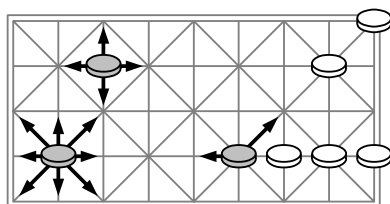
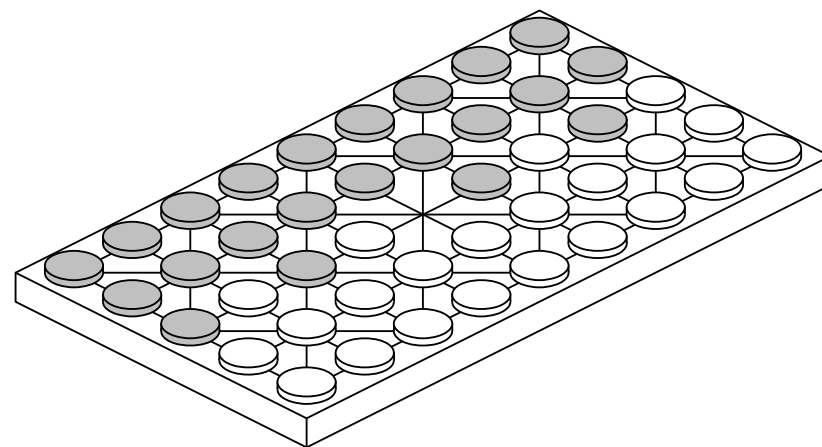


Illustration 3: some example moves and captures for black. Two white pieces can be captured by **approach**, while three can be captured by **withdrawal**.

## INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Many will know Madagascar for its exotic and diverse wildlife. But fans of traditional board games will also know it for one of its cultural gifts to the world: the interesting and strategic board game *fanorona*.

Fanorona is not entirely original, having been developed from the more widespread game of *alquerque* in about 1680. The size of the board has been almost doubled, as has the number of pieces. But fanorona also has other changes which afford it an identity

completely separate from its parent game.

The game was often played purely for amusement, a fact attested to by the common occurrence of makeshift boards incised into stone. But there was also a more ritual purpose. It is reported that during the storming of the capital by the French in 1895, the last native monarch Queen Ranavalona III put more trust in a ritual game of fanorona than in the strength of her armed forces.

## HOW TO PLAY

There are two ways to play fanorona. Games are often played in pairs, and in this case the second game adopts certain rules which put the winner of the first game at a disadvantage. This special game, called the *vela* game, is described at the end of these rules.

### Beginning the Game

1. Fanorona is played on a board of lines which intersect at 45 points, these points being the playing spaces of the game. The empty board is illustrated in Illustration 1.

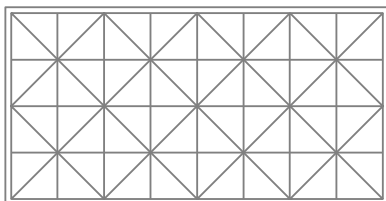


Illustration 1: the empty board.

2. Two players take part, each player having 22 pieces. They are set out as shown in Illustration 2.

3. The white player starts the game, black and white alternating turns thereafter.

### Moving the Pieces

4. In each turn a player may move a single piece. A piece may be moved from one point, along a marked line, to an adjacent empty point. Diagonal moves are not available from every square, as shown in Illustration 3.

## Capturing Pieces

5. If a player has moved his piece directly towards a line of enemy pieces running in the same direction, such that the player's piece is now adjacent to the enemies, the enemy pieces are captured by *approach*. The enemies are removed from the board.

6. If a player has instead moved his piece directly away from a line of enemy pieces running in the same direction, and the player's piece was adjacent to the enemies before the move, the enemy pieces are captured by *withdrawal*. The enemies are likewise removed from the board.

7. If a move qualifies for capture both by approach and by withdrawal, the player must choose which set of pieces to capture; one cannot capture by approach and withdrawal at once.

8. If it is possible to make a capture, then the player must do so, though where different captures are possible, the player has a free choice which one to take.

9. On a player's first move of the game, only one capture is allowed. On subsequent moves, if the moved piece

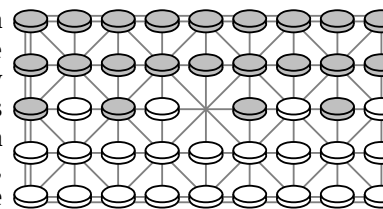


Illustration 2: pieces set out for play.

may move and capture again, it must do so, and must continue to do so while further captures are available.

10. When making multiple captures, each capture must be along a separate line; it is not permissible to slide back and forth along the same line in a single move.

## Ending the Game

11. The game is ended when one player has lost all his pieces, his opponent being declared the winner.

## The Vela Game

The vela game has a number of differences from the first game.

12. The loser of the previous game takes white and starts in the vela game.

13. The winner of the previous game refrains from making captures in the vela game until he has sacrificed 17 of his pieces.

14. The loser of the previous game captures only one piece each turn, that being the enemy piece nearest his own in the enemy line he

approaches or withdraws from.

15. After the previous winner has sacrificed these 17 pieces, the game continues as per