

hips

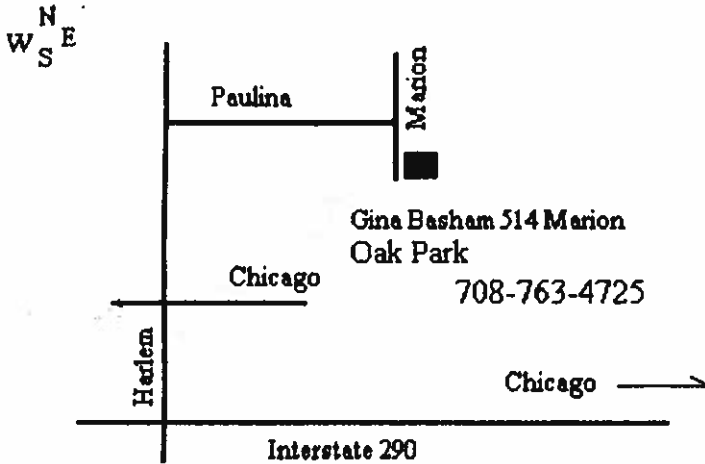
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November
1998

Next Shire Moot

The next shire moot will be Sunday, November 1st at the home of Gina Basham. Moot starts at 6:30pm. Call her at 708-763-4725 if you have questions.



Shire Party

Over 20 shire members came to eat steak sandwiches, play bocce and hit softballs around at our 25th anniversary party in October. The shire would like to thank all who came, we hope you had a good time.

Boy Scout Demo

Thanks go out to Ethelwulf, Culwyn, Baal and Kiyohara for their help with a recent Boy Scout demonstration arranged by Katherine for Gregory's Scout group. We have also been approached by the Buffalo Grove Cub Scouts who would like us to perform at a Blue and Gold Dinner, Saturday, February 20th. In return the group will donate \$100 to our group. Ethelwulf will hit you up for volunteering as we get closer to the date

Ringmail, the Midlands Newsletter

Our region's newsletter, Ringmail, is now available online. The shire will receive one copy for our records but not the additional copies we used to get. However, anyone can subscribe to the electronic version for free and it will be sent to you in adobe acrobat format, as is Chips. Ethelwulf is maintaining the website and converting the mailed version into the electronic. You can find the website by navigating to <http://users.aol.com/ringmaile/welcome.htm> note the "e" after ringmail.

I Should Have Taken That Right Turn at Alquerque (?) !!

A final essay on unusual period games of Dark/Age Medieval Europe, by Culwyn Caernarfon

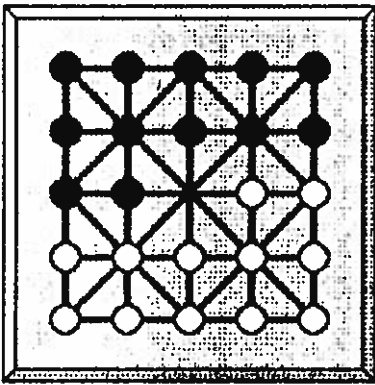
I. History

The last game I'm going to discuss is "Alquerque." The chances are you've never heard of it. I hadn't until about a month ago, but, it has been with mankind for some time: boards have been found cut into the roofing slabs of the temple at Kurna in Egypt, which would date the game at the 15th century BCE. A game called Quirkat is mentioned in several 8th - 11th century texts, but the earliest surviving set of rules is found in the Libro de Acedrex, Dados e Tablas, a magnificently illuminated manuscript compiled between 1251 and 1282 by order of the King of Leon and Castile, Alfonso X. The game's Spanish name, derived from 'El-quirkat', was Alquerque. Since the reign of Alfonso the Wise is precisely the theme for our next shire event, I decided to dig a little further and see what I could learn.

As with most of these early games, there are a large variety of variations, based primarily on number of pieces and squares. But most interesting, cross-fertilization between Alquerque and Chess created the game played in schools the world over as 'Draughts' or 'Checkers'

II. Rules

The board in illustration one shows the pieces laid out for the start of the game. Sources disagree as to whether each player's foremost two pieces are placed to the right of the board (as shown) or to the left. The



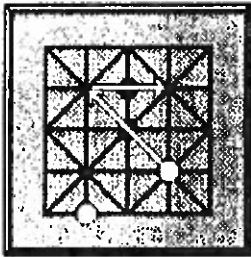
transposition does not affect the game.

The basic rules, presented in Libro de Acedrex, Dados e Tablas, are as follows. One player has 12 white pieces, the other 12 black pieces. They decide, by

whatever means, who will move first. Each player, in his turn, moves one of his pieces from its current location to another point. A piece may move along one of the marked lines to an adjacent unoccupied point.

Alternatively, if an adjacent point (along one of the marked lines) is occupied by an opponent's piece but the point beyond that (in a straight line) is vacant, the player may capture his opponent's piece by jumping over it to the unoccupied point. If, after the jump is completed, another of the opponent's pieces is now Enprise, that piece may also be captured even if the

second jump is along a different line to the first, (see figure). Thus, two or more pieces may be captured in



a move, but the same piece must be used to make all the captures.

If a player is able to capture an opponent's piece during his move, he must do so. If he does not, his opponent may, at the start of his own turn, huff the piece that could have made a capture.

(This is in addition to the player's normal move.)

It may be observed that the Alfonso manuscript does not give a sufficient set of rules for the game. Since we cannot determine the precise Medieval rules, we have to resort to guesswork based on more recent versions of the game. (Indeed, it is quite possible that there was never one single set of rules.) There are essentially two variants, which I shall describe below. Players should decide in advance which rules they will use.



Variations

An example of this variant is described by R. C. Bell, in Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations.

Pieces may only be moved directly forward, diagonally forward, or sideways. A piece may not move onto a point it has occupied before.

Bell also suggests that a piece reaching the opponent's back row may not move except to make a capture (sideways, presumably). This last rule seems unnecessary, except that it shortens the game slightly. Play continues either until one player has lost all his pieces, or until he cannot make a move. That player loses the game.

If a player has lost all his pieces, he pays his opponent

two stakes, plus two more for every piece the winner has remaining on the board. If the game was lost because a player was unable to move, the loser pays two stakes, plus one stake for every piece the winner has on the board, but minus one stake for every piece the loser has on the board.



II. Glossary

Capture: An opponent's piece is captured by jumping over it; it is then immediately removed from the board, as in checkers.

En prise: A piece is en prise if an opponent's piece is able to capture it, without the need for any intervening moves.



Huff: A piece may be huffed as a penalty for failing to capture; the piece is immediately removed from the board.

Point: A point is any location on the board where a piece may be placed. An Alquerque board has 25 points, joined by lines.

Stake: Stakes are used to record wins and losses; they may be (numeric) points recorded in a suitable manner, or - for a more medieval ambience - items, preferably of small value, such as cheap bangles or reproduction coins.

IV. Bibliography

R. C. Bell, Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations, revised edition with 2 vols bound as one, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1979. ISBN 0-486-23855-5.

David Pritchard, The Family Book of Games, Brockhampton Press, Hodder Headline plc, 1994. ISBN 1-86019-021-9.

Patrick J. Smith (“Brustan de Bearsul”), Period Pastimes, The Compleat Anachronist #71, Society for Creative Anachronism Inc., 1994. (Describes the basic game rules, as in the Alfonso manuscript.)



Electronic Pilgrim

Ethelwulf Kildare

Since this issue is really close to Halloween, I thought that I could dig up some scary sites. As usual, if you find any good websites of medieval interest, feel free to email to me at ebless@aol.com.

Anglo Saxon Cemeteries:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/Acad/Archaeology/staff/jwh/ascems.html>

Twelve early Anglo Saxon cemeteries are detailed here. Very detailed in nature with databases set up so that you can determine the location of every bone fragment. The best part is information on the issues and problems faced by the researchers and the drawings of the sites.

Virtual Excavation:

Medieval Archaeology

<http://web.lemoyne.edu/~begieral/start.html>

A tutorial for those wanna be grave robbers among us. Includes a primer about archaeology, a test case, with history and then the actual exercise where you put together the proposal and even get the chance to excavate the site!

**Wharram Percy:
The Lost Medieval Village**

<http://loki.stockton.edu/~ken/wharram/begin.htm>

Interesting history of a typical peasant village. They note that it was commonly believed that the black death was responsible for the depopulation of many villages. However they state that on the contrary, that there are over 3000 “deserted” villages that were actually depopulated by economic forces in the 15th century. Wharram Percy is one such site.

**Ruins of Gardar:
An Insight Into Norse Religion in Greenland**

<http://www.mugsy.com/gardar.htm>

Discussion of how Christianity came to Greenland. You gotta love how Olaf Tryggvason used the forceful conversion to solidify his power in Norway and Iceland, the things they make saints for...Culywn should write an article... The site also has a detailed description of the cathedral located at Gardar, dated about 1200 AD.

Local Event Schedule

Event updates can be found on the Midrealm website:
<http://www.midrealm.org> navigate to the midrealm
calendar.

November Not a darn thing??

December

5 Jongeurs and Japes, Grey Gargoyles and Tree-
girt-sea, Chicago, IL

12 Boar's Head, Caer Antherth Mawr, Milwaukee WI

Submission Guidelines

We welcome all submissions. If the information is time sensitive please call the chronicler, to reserve space, but in general, submission deadlines are 7 days before the next moot. Submissions are best if they are in Word (Win95) format and can be either dropped off on disc or send via email to ebless@aol.com. If you can only provide a printed copy, please set your type style to Times Roman and font size to 14points (its easier to OCR that way). Art can be in any form, we have a scanner. The chronicler reserves the right to refuse or edit any submission.

Shire Activities

Thursday: Fighter Practice at the Rokkehelden site, 6:30-9:00pm. Call Earl Bless 630.351.5802 for directions

Thursday: Arts and Sciences at Kris and Michelle Southerland's from 6:30 pm until whenever they kick you out (Subject to confirmation — please call before coming and for directions). Phone 630.510.3468.

Brewers Guild: Meets on an as need basis, call either Earl Bless 630-351-5802 or Kris Southerland 630-510-3468 if you want to brew.

Sewing Guild: Meets on an as need basis, call Maxine Grief-Bless 630-351-5802 for time and place.

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Note: Shire policy dictates that officers change every two years unless there is no successor in line. If you are interested in a position, contact the Seneschal who will inform the current officer. Final decisions regarding officer changes is up to the current officer and the Seneschal.

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