

Chapter 6

Unorthodox pawn properties and powers

[The pawn is the most idiosyncratic of the chessmen, and what is surprising is not that there have been several variant forms of it but that there have not been more.]

6.1 Historical rules regarding promotion

The present rules regarding pawn promotion have been standard since late in the 19th century, but many other rules have been in force at various times. One such was **Promotion Only to Queen**, mirroring the ‘promotion only to fers’ of the ancient shatranj. The **Single Box of Men** rule allowed promotion only to replace a captured piece (if none was available, the pawn had to remain immobile until something was taken), and the **Dummy Pawn** rule allowed a pawn to remain unpromoted and immobile on the 8th rank for ever. Many sets of rules failed to prohibit promotion to a piece of the opposite colour, and a few trick problems duly took advantage.

[Text editorial. This is strictly the province of chapter 26, but a brief summary appears appropriate here. Rook-and-pawn endings such as White Kd8/Pc5 against Black Kf4/Rh1 are now drawn by 1 c6 Ke5 2 c7 Kd6 3 c8(N)+, but in the days of ‘promotion only to queen’ they were wins for the rook. The ‘single box of men’ rule knocks out all wins which require promotion to a second queen. Only the ‘dummy pawn’ rule has no practical effect, though positions can be constructed where such a promotion is the only move to save or win the game; T. R. Dawson found a position where White had to do it three times running (*Caissa’s Fairy Tales*, 1947).]

6.2 Other changes affecting promotion

Mecklenbeck Chess [Eickenscheidt and Schwarzkopf] (Bernd Eickenscheidt and Bernd Schwarzkopf, 1973). Pawns may promote on 6th and 7th ranks as well as on 8th (where promotion is compulsory). Introduced as a problem theme but also played as a lively game (*Feenschach*, October 1973). In **Fast-Track Chess** (Philip Cohen, 1986) pawns promote optionally (but on moving only) on any rank from 5th to 8th. On the 5th rank a pawn promotes to knight, on 6th to knight or bishop, on 7th to knight, bishop or rook, and on 8th (obligatory) to any piece (*Nost-algia* 299). [There is also game in which pawns promote on the 7th rank, Tom Russell’s **Glasgow Chess**, but this appears to have been

seen only in problems and it was not on David’s list.]

Promotion-Demotion Chess (Matthew Montchalin, 1994). A friendly pawn adjacent to the K can be promoted, and a friendly piece demoted (to a P), in each case instead of moving. (Manuscript notes presumably deriving from personal communication)

Ur Chess (Philip Cohen, 1997). Usual set-up except pawns on 3rd and 6th ranks. Ps may promote anywhere within the opponent’s first three ranks to a piece previously captured. No pawn-two, castling, or repeat position. (*Nost-algia* 363)

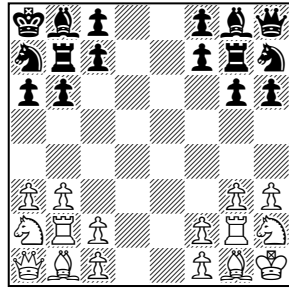
6.3 Move diagonally, capture straight

Berolina Chess, also known as **Berlin Chess** (Edmund Hebermann, 1926). Pawns move one square diagonally forward (or two on their first move) and capture one square straight

forward. Promotion normal, e.p. possible. The game is highly original and draws are rare. Pawns have greater mobility and can concentrate in the centre, a common opening

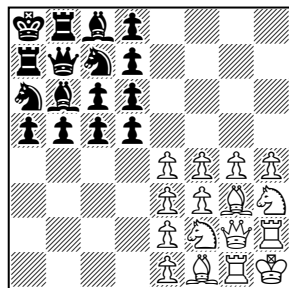
strategy. Against this, their capturing power is reduced, and since a pawn can defend only one man, a defence chain is impossible, with the result that open files are commonplace. In the end game, pawns are dangerous as the path to promotion is easier. Tournaments have been held, combination games have been tried, and ‘Berolina pawns’ have long been popular with problemists. (*Funkschack*, August 1926)

Corner Chess [Paletta] (Tony Paletta, 1980). A modern two-player version of the Game of the Four Seasons (see chapter 38). Array :



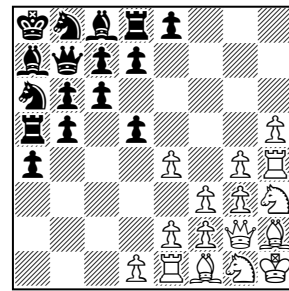
Pawns move diagonally forward and capture vertically, one square at a time; promotion normal. (*Chess Spectrum Newsletter*)

There are also games where the players sit cornerwise. **Diamond Chess [Rynd]** (J. A. Porterfield Rynd, 1886) has array

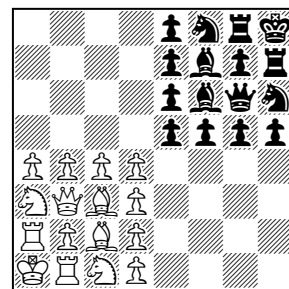


and the board is placed diagonally between the players so that White’s ‘forwards’ direction is along the diagonal h1-a8. White’s pawns advance in this direction one step at a time, capture by a one-step orthogonal move at 45 degrees, and promote anywhere along the edge a1-a8-h8; Black’s conversely.

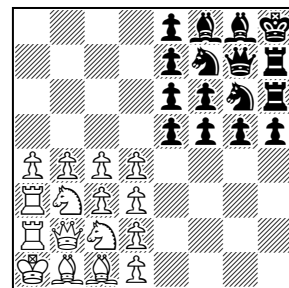
There have been many successors. **Legan’s Game** (L. Legan, 1913) has array



and White can promote only on the squares a5-a8-d8. **Diagonal Chess** (J. A. Lewis, 1943) is the same except that the array is



and White again has the full length of both edges on which to promote, and **Salvadori’s Game** (Roberto Salvadori, 1989) has array



(*British Chess Magazine*, March 1886, *Chess Amateur*, March 1922, *Les Jeux d’Echecs Non-orthodoxes*, Eteroscacco 46)

[The Addenda to the first edition included a “Corner Chess” quoted by Anatoly Burdin, but this has several curious features and appears to be a puzzle rather than a genuine game.]

6.4 Other changes affecting forward movement

Pawn-Two Captures (James Mason, 1893). Mason suggested that since a pawn is allowed to move two squares on its first move, it should be allowed to capture at a like distance on the same occasion. (*Chess Monthly*)

Soldier Chess (quoted by Tony Paletta, 1980). Pawns behave like soldiers in xiangqi (see

chapter 27); no double-step option, capture straight forward. (*Chess Spectrum Newsletter*)

O.K. Chess, also known as **Zip Chess** (Clifford Merry, 1988). After White's first move, pawns may be advanced any distance down a vacant file, e.p. capture sanctioned on any square passed. (Personal communication)

6.5 Sideways and backwards movement

Reform Chess [Voss], also known as **Superpawns Chess** (Norbert Voss, late 1920s). Voss was inspired by the tactical importance of the d- and e-pawns to promote them to 'Oberbauern' (lit: 'high pawns'). They move one step at a time straight forward, diagonally forward, or sideways, capturing in the same manner. A master tournament was held in Berlin in 1930. The power of the oberbauer can be considerable in an end game. (Photocopy of booklet *Reformschach*, also *Nouveaux Jeux d'Echecs Intéressants*)

Wren's Game (Peter Wren, 1957). Backward pawn moves to be permitted. Considered as a 'concession to the oldsters' in Hyde Park (Sydney?) who would not be reconciled to the introduction the previous year (!) of the rule allowing a pawn to move two squares initially. 'The game of the maddened pawn' was the scornful sobriquet of the conservatives. A prize was offered for the best entry illustrating the game's flavour. (*Chess World*, May 1964)

Taxi Chess (Karl Fabel, 1961). Pawns are taxis: they move up to three squares initially (e.p. possible) and also back one square, but not to first rank. Promotion is optional. Pawns moved back to starting position move only one square forward. (*Chess Spectrum Newsletter*)

Fish Chess (David Moeser, 1971). The fish is an enhanced pawn, having the extra power of moving one square straight backwards. A fish on first or second rank may advance 2 squares whether or not it has previously exercised the privilege. En passant allowed on second rank. The fish strengthens the defence since advances are not committal. (*Nost-algia* 280)

Barasi Chess (Paul Barasi, 1970s). Pawns move one square diagonally forward or backward, capture one square straight forward. If between the 2nd and 4th rank, a pawn can move two squares, and it can do this on an unlimited number of occasions. A pawn may move to, or capture on, the first rank. No e.p. but promotion as normal. Pieces, by contrast, cannot move backwards; they can only move forwards, or (Q, R, K) sideways. The game was popular at British Chess Federation congresses in the 1970s. Jonathan Speelman was regarded as unbeatable. (Author's rules pamphlet and exposition)

Chazz (David Moeser, early 1990s). Kings and pawns only in usual starting positions. Pawns may move, but not capture, one square straight back, even to the first rank. Promotion to R, B, N only. Played with clocks set to five minutes, the game is said to have swept America in 1991-2. Two versions have since been under investigation: (1) the players agree on up to three different pieces, with some limitations on strength and movement, which are placed alternately on the back ranks of the players before play starts; (2) the players are allocated points (16 are suggested) and each may add any number of pieces provided that the point total (Q=9, R=5, B=3.5, N=3) is not exceeded. The allocation could include agreed unorthodox pieces. (*The Parkway Post / The Tri-County Parkway Chess Club Bulletin*, May 1992, also personal communication)

Mutant Pawns Chess (Kevin Lawless, 1994). On each turn a player moves pawn, then piece. A pawn can move one square sideways. (Photocopy of inventor's rules leaflet)