

Chapter 11

Multiple boards

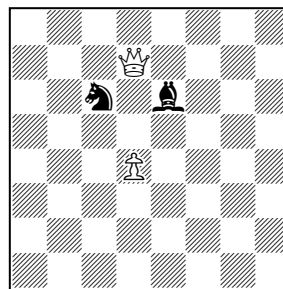
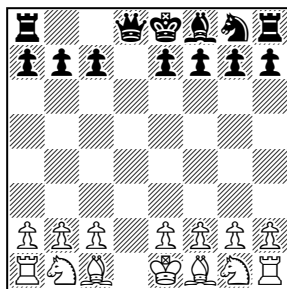
[In this chapter, we consider games where the play extends over several boards. Such games can also be considered as examples of three-dimensional chess, and in choosing how to classify them we take a pragmatic view: if the boards are normally set side by side it is a multiple-board game and is considered here, if they are stacked one above another it is a three-dimensional game and is treated elsewhere. We have also treated Kriegspiel elsewhere, because the logic of the game is completely different and play really takes place on a single board even though three boards are needed to realise it.]

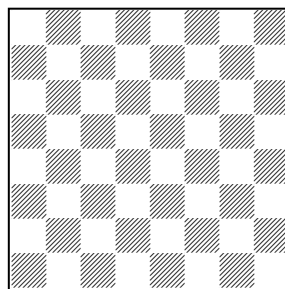
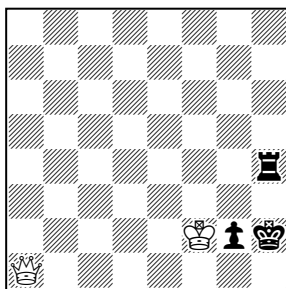
11.1 Two boards

Alice or **Alician Chess** (V. R. Parton, 1953, named after Lewis Carroll's eponymous heroine). Two boards A and B are set side-by-side. Normal array on A; B empty. A piece on completing its move passes 'through the looking-glass' to the corresponding square on the other board. After the first turn, when moves are necessarily made from A to B, a player may move on either board. The rules are simple: (1) a move must be legal on the board where it is played; (2) a man can only move or capture if the corresponding square on the other board is vacant; (3) on completion of its move, a man is at once transferred to the corresponding square on the other board.

Certain truths follow from these rules. A pair of corresponding squares can never be occupied simultaneously, nor can a piece on one board capture a piece on the other. A direct check can only result from a piece moving on the opposite board to that on which the king stands; a discovered check is only possible on the board occupied by the king. Men must be defended on the other board, as the capturer will be obliged to transfer to it.

Despite its simple rules, Alice Chess is confusing, and certainly for the beginner, since a mental fusion of the two boards is called for. The king is especially vulnerable: it can neither stay in check nor move into check on the board where the attack is delivered, and it can neither move into check nor capture an undefended piece on the looking-glass board. Little serious research has been done on the openings but 1 d4>B is generally considered best for White; it also lends itself to a simple illustration of some of the game's tactics. White has an immediate threat of 2 Qxd7>B and 3 Qb5>A, which is mate (!) because the king's only move ...Kd7 is illegal on A and an attempted interposition such as ...c6 merely transfers the man to B. The reply 1...d6>B loses the queen to 2 Qxd8>B, and if 1...Nf6>B to guard d7 on B then 2 Bg5>B threatens 3 BxN with a reinstatement of the original threat. However, Black can safely play 1...Nc6>B, as after 2 Qxd7>B the reply 2...Be6>B wins White's queen; each of his 14 possible destination squares is either occupied on A or guarded there.





The miniature problem above, by Ronald Turnbull and Peter Coast (*Variant Chess* 2004), illustrates much of the beauty of the game. Board A is as shown, Board B is empty, and White is to play and mate in 2.

To mate an unmoved Black king in 2, White must play his queen to B at move 1 and back to A at move 2, and Black will spoil this if he can play his king to B at his own move 1. So White's first move must stop Black's king from moving, and the only possibilities are 1 Qh8/f1>B (guarding h3/h1 on B) and 1 Qh1>B (guarding h3 and occupying h1).

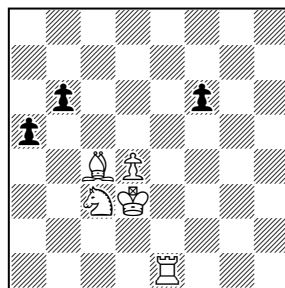
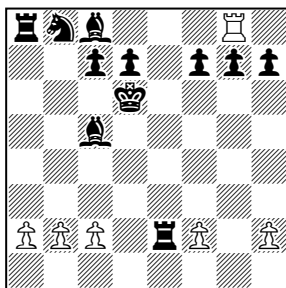
Let's try 1 Qh8>B. A Black move upwards (1...Rh5/.../h7>B) allows mate by 2 QxR>A and any other rook move (1...Rg4/.../a4>B, Rh3>B) allows 2 Qh4>A, the queen moving to the square the rook has just quitted and leaving it curiously helpless. However, Black also has 1...g1>B (the promotion doesn't matter), and there is no mate.

All right, try 1 Qf1>B. Now 1...g1>B can be met by 2 Qg2>A, but there is no mate after

most of the rook moves.

So it must be 1 Qh1>B, when 1...g1>B 2 Qg2>A still works and 1...Rg4/.../a4>B 2 Qh4>A comes back again. The mates 1...Rh5/.../h7>B 2 QxR>A also still work (though not the clever 2 Qh4>A because Black can reply 2...Rh3>A, bypassing on B the square occupied by the checking queen on A and then transferring to the other board to block the check), but what about 1...Rh3>B, after which 2 Qh4 is no longer possible? Ah, 2 Qg1>A, making use of the fact that the rook on h3 is blocking its own king's flight square.

And a game from a postal tournament played in 1997-98. 1 d4>B Nf6>B 2 Bg5>B Rg8>B 3 Bxf6>A exf6>B 4 e4>B Rg6>A 5 Qf3>B Qe7>B 6 Ne2>B Qxe4>A+ 7 Kd2>B a5>B 8 Nbc3>B Bb4>B 9 Bc4>B Rxg2>B 10 Qe3>A Qxe3>B 11 Kxe3>A b6>B 12 Rhg1>B Bc5>A+ 13 Kd3>B Rxe2>A 14 Rg8>A+ Ke7>B 15 Re1>B+ Kd6>A. The boards are now as shown below



and White announced a mate in 8 by 16 Nb5>A+ Kc6>B 17 Rxc8>B+ Kb7>A 18 Bd5>A+ Ka6>B 19 Nxc7>B+ Ka7>A 20 Nb5>A+ Ka6>B 21 Bb7>B+ Kxb7>A 22 Rc7>A+ Ka6>B 23 Ra7>B.

[The first of Parton's own booklets dates from 1961, and the earliest printed reference is

in Boyer's *Nouveaux Jeux d'Echecs Non-orthodoxes*. This was nominally published in 1954, though the copy in the library of the British Chess Problem Society carries a manuscript greeting to Dennison Nixon dated December 1953. The examples of play after 1 d4>B are from Nixon's review in the March

1954 *British Chess Magazine*; the later examples are from issues 45 and 29 of *Variant Chess*, the mate in 8, whose appearance here is very definitely my responsibility, having been announced by David himself. Boyer's exposition differentiates between 'mat orthodoxe' (the king would be mated even in ordinary chess) and 'mat alicien' (he would have one or more flight squares in ordinary chess, but the corresponding squares on the other board are commanded or occupied). According to the *Oxford Companion to Chess*, a specifically 'Alice' mate may be demanded by problemists, but players, if they ever made such a demand, have long since abandoned it.]

Derivatives of Alice Chess. In his 1961 booklet *Chess - Curiouser and Curiouser*, Parton observed that Alice Chess could be played on three boards of identical size (he did not elaborate) giving the players a choice of two corresponding squares for a move. No one so far seems to have embraced this monster. In more conciliatory vein, Parton also introduced a modified version played on the normal board divided into two 4x8 play areas (three-row array RQKR, NBBN, PPPP, with only four pawns on each side). The game lacks the zest of the parent (there are no quick mates) but problem composers have shown some affection for the reduced field. In **Ms Alice Chess** (John Ishkan, 1973) all men have the added power of a Zero, a piece which moves by staying still. This facility allows a man to move to its corresponding square on the looking-glass board, provided the square is vacant. A king cannot escape check with a zero move and castling is disallowed if either R or K have made a zero move (*Nostalgalgia* 165). **O'Donohue Chess** (Michael O'Donohue, 2003) offers an alternative extension: a piece may move to a square that is occupied on the twin board, the move being completed as usual but the transfer being omitted (personal communication). In **Duo Chess** (Jed Stone, 1981) the white array is set up on one board and the black on the opposite

11.2 Three boards

Tritabula Chess (John Bosley, 1980s). A form of Progressive Chess. The game is played on three boards simultaneously, each

side of the other. Rules of play: (1) A piece or pawn moved legally on one board may, but is not obliged to, transfer to the corresponding square on the other board providing it is vacant. (2) A piece, but not a pawn, may transfer to the corresponding square on the other board. This counts as a move. If the square is occupied by an enemy man, this is captured. (3) A king can be checked on the board it stands on or by an opposing piece moving to the corresponding square on which the king stands on the other board. (4) Pawns promote on the eighth rank of either board. The king is mated in the normal way but in addition the corresponding square on the other board must be occupied by a man of the same colour as the king, or be under attack (Stone).

Looking-Glass Chess (V. R. Parton, 1971) is quite different. Two boards and sets are used. A player on turn may move on either board but must then also make the 'looking-glass' move on the other board. Thus, opening Nf3 on board 1, Nc3 must be played on board 2. A move of the king or queen must be mirrored in that of the other. This means that if the queen is moved on one board, the king must reflect the move on the other board even though it may mean moving a number of squares. Castling likewise: if White castles K-side, 'castling' must also take place on the Q-side (Qb1 and Rc1). A move may not be made if the reflection would result in the player's king being placed in check. (*Chesshyre Cat Playeth Looking Glass Chessys*)

Two-Level Chess [Curo] (Forrest Curo, 1975). Two boards; two sets of men except that one set has the kings replaced by additional queens. Instead of moving on the board, a piece can transfer to the corresponding square on the other board, and capture or check in so doing. Pawns have the same privilege but can also change boards and capture one square diagonally forward in the same move. (*Ye Faerie Chessseman*)

board with the normal array. White starts by moving a man on any one of the three boards. Black now has two consecutive moves which

may both be made on one board or separately on two boards. White replies with three moves which he may distribute between the boards as he wishes, and so on. At any time during a move-series a player may transfer one of his own men (but not a king) from one board to a corresponding square (which must be vacant) on another board, the transfer counting as one move of a turn. When a checkmate occurs, that board is dead and no transfers may be

made to or from it. It is possible to checkmate more than one king in a move-series; however, a check (as distinct from checkmate) may only be delivered on the last move of a series. Check must be escaped on the first move of a series. It is possible, through a transfer, for two kings to be in check after the last move of a series. In this case, the responding player must concede one game. (Unprovenanced rules leaflet)

11.3 More than three boards

Megachess [Lange] (Fred Lange, 1994). Six boards in two rows of three, six sets of men on the four back ranks of each player's three boards. White plays three moves, then each side plays six moves alternately. Normal rules plus various additions (long pawns, all-in castling, pieces moving as pairs). If you lose a king, you lose a move at your next turn (and presumably at all subsequent turns); objective is to capture the opponent's last king. Apparently tried out with success at summer schools in Milwaukee. (Originator's

expository leaflet) [Text editorial]

Eternity's Children (Bruce Trone, 1991). An indeterminate number of boards (A, B, C, ...) and sets are required. When a man is moved, an identical man is created on the start square of the move on the next board. Thus if White opens 1 e4, a WP is placed at e2 on B. A man cannot move if its corresponding square on the next board is occupied. A turn consists of one move on any board. Checkmate of any K wins the game. (Personal communication)