

Chapter 26

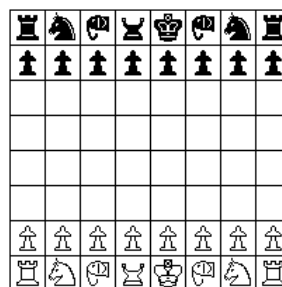
The Near East, Europe, Africa

[Although India may have been the birthplace of chess as we know it, the Near East saw its growth and development, and it is convenient to look first at the main historical thread leading from the earliest known forms of chess to our own and then at the most prominent regional variants.]

26.1 The thread leading to modern chess

Chaturanga. The seminal Indian game, considered in greater detail in chapter 29. No contemporary account appears to have survived, but as reported in Arabic sources it seems to have been essentially the same as the later Persian and Arabic game except in three respects: (1) the elephants started in the corners and jumped two squares orthogonally, (2) a player won by baring his opponent's king even if his opponent could immediately return the compliment (a rule retained by the people of Hijaz and called by them the Medinese Victory), and (3) stalemate was a win for the player stalemated. Al-Adli, as quoted by Murray: 'And this form is the form of chess which the Persians took from the Indians, and which we took from the Persians. The Persians altered some of the rules...' [Text editorial, relying on page 57 of Murray. According to a later note in Murray (page 159), the Persians used elephants on their chessboards even though it was not a native Persian animal, and it was the Persian word 'pil' which was subsequently Arabicized as 'fil'.]

Chatrang, also known as **Shatranj** (and also as the Small Chess to distinguish it from the various forms of Great Chess on larger boards, though the use of this name in the present era of minichess and microchess would surely cause confusion). Persian and Arabic names for the old form of chess, as played in the Islamic world for more than a millennium. It was replaced in Europe by the medieval game. The firzan (fers) and fil (alfil), pieces peculiar to the game, survive in several regional forms of chess. Board 8x8 uncoloured; set-up as for orthochess with firzan and fil in place of Q and B, but see (7) below; only the rules differ.



(1) The Firzan moves one square at a time, diagonally only; opposing firzans can never meet unless one of them is a promoted pawn.

(2) The Fil moves two squares diagonally, leaping the intervening square. It has access to only eight board squares. The fils cannot attack one another.

(3) Pawns move one square at a time and promote only to firzan.

(4) No castling.

(5) A player in stalemate may transpose his king with any other of his pieces so long as this does not put the king in check. The transposition counts as a move.

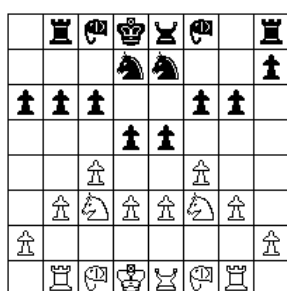
(6) Win by checkmate, delivering stalemate or depriving opponent of all his men ('bare king'); however, if a player whose king is bared can bare the opponent on the next move, the game is drawn.

(7) The K and firzan could be transposed in the initial position, but if so, the arrangement would be mandatory for both sides.

(8) Either player starts.

The game is slow and tends to be positional. Much of the skill lies in attaining positions in which the firzan and fils are active. Strong squares are those that can be controlled both by firzan and fil, weak squares those that can

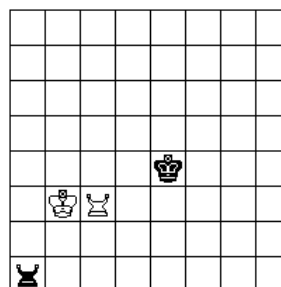
be covered by neither (there are eight of each). A fil is worth only about the same as a central pawn, the fil on the same colour as the firzan being slightly the stronger of the two. Because these pieces are weak, lessening the danger, the king can often be used as a fighting piece. The ta'bia, or battle array, was the opening stage of a game in which the players endeavoured to establish a favourable position based on the pawn formation. Often there was no collision of forces until 14 or 15 moves had been played. Ta'bias, of which Murray has a splendid collection in *A History of Chess*, had imaginative names like the Goat-peg and the Slave's Banner. The ta'bia illustrated below was one of three 'starting positions' laid down for a correspondence tournament organized by *Deutsches Wochenschach* in 1914.



The ta'bia could be played out formally. The players each made an agreed number of moves independently of the opponent, the only rule being that neither player could cross the centre line. Murray (*British Chess Magazine* 1903) gives a complete early game which, because of its swift conclusion, cannot have been typical. A match between H. Jacobs and G. A. (later Sir George) Thomas took place at the City of London Chess Club in 1914 (*The Times*, London, 5 March 1914).

The endings differ widely from those in orthochess because a promoted pawn cannot mate without assistance. Murray records many theoretical endings and their outcome. Checkmate was apparently rare between good players, the lesser victory of bare king being a more likely outcome, and hence it was usual for play to be directed towards this end. Even with disparate forces, draws were common due to the relative impotence of fil and firzan. The end position below, which is over a thousand years old, reflects the high degree of

skill attained at the time. The famous Muslim player as-Suli (10th century) boasted that 'no one on earth has solved it unless he was taught by me', and this was to remain true until Averbakh demonstrated the winning method in a pamphlet *The Secret of As-Souli* written for the Dubai Olympiad of 1986. Subsequent analysis by computer slightly refined Averbakh's solution, but he rediscovered everything that mattered.



To win by 'bare king', White must capture the black firzan without immediately losing his own. If he moves first, victory is swift: 1 Ka2 Kd3 2 Fb4 Kc4 3 Fa3 and the Black king cannot approach. With Black to move the play is more subtle, and the longest line runs to 20 moves by each side. Black's best defence is 1...Kd5, putting his king the same distance and direction from the White firzan as the White king is from the Black firzan. We call positions with this property 'balanced', and if White is to move they are good for Black because White cannot home in on the Black firzan; Black will play exactly the same moves to home in on the White firzan, creating a new balanced position at each turn, and will eventually be able to answer KxF with KxF. To win from such a position, White must first move away from the Black firzan until one of the far edges of the board prevents Black from setting up a new balanced position, after which he may be able to come back and force the win. Play therefore continues 2 Kb4! Kd6! 3 Kc4 Ke6 4 Kd4 Kf6 5 Kd5 Kf7 6 Ke5 Kg7 7 Ke6, and Averbakh played 7...Kg8 thinking that Black would do best to keep presenting White with a balanced position as long as possible. He then played 8 Kf6, which is certainly simplest although 8 Ke7 forces the win one move sooner, and after 8...Kh8 he continued with the elegant line 9 Kg6 Kg8

10 Fd2 Kf8 (10...Fb2 loses more quickly)
 11 Fc1 Ke7 12-15 Kc2 Ka3 16 Kb1 and
 17 Kxa1. However, the computer has shown
 that Black can hold out longer by playing
 7...Kf8, and the sequel is even more
 instructive.

White must get back to the bottom corner
 without allowing Black to set up another
 balanced position, and the simplest way to
 start doing so is to move to a balanced position
 himself: 8 Kd6. Black, presented with a
 balanced position, must move away from it,
 and play continues 8...Ke8 9 Kc6 Kd8 10 Kb6
 Kc8. Now 11 Ka6? would allow 11...Kc7
 12 Kb5 Kd7 once more attaining a balanced
 position, but 11 Kc5! leaves Black nothing
 better than 11...Kd7, and after 12 Kb5 White
 is back on track. Play continues 12...Kc7
 13 Kc4 Kd6 14 Kb4, and with 14...Ke5 Black
 tries one last throw: White cannot play the
 balancing move 15 Kc3 because his firzan is
 occupying this square. However, he can play
 15 Ka3 forcing 15...Kd5 (so as to meet 16 Ka2
 with 16...Kc4), and after 16 Kb3! we are back
 at the position after Black's first move but
 with Black to play. The rest is easy: 16...Kc5
 (nothing else is better) 17 Fd2 Kd4 18 Kc2 K~
 19 Fc1 K~ 20 Kb1 and 21 Kxa1. It is one of
 the most remarkable chess endings of all time,
 and there is nothing remotely like it in modern
 chess.

[Treatment of the as-Suli ending revised. It
 will be noted that the ta'bia illustrated assumes
 kings and firzans interchanged as allowed by
 rule (7). The game quoted by Murray in the
BCM was repeated as column 47 on pages
 263-5 of *A History of Chess*.]

Medieval Chess. A generic term for the game
 of shatranj, as played and subsequently
 modified in Europe for over seven hundred
 years until the introduction of the modern
 game. There were many national and regional
 differences introduced by reformers who
 attempted to rectify flaws they perceived in
 the old game, particularly as regards its slow
 pace. One manuscript of the 13th century
 gives the rules of 44 variants. It was during
 this period that chequered boards and the
 double-step of the pawn were introduced, and
 the modern bishop first made its appearance
 (in Courier Chess, described later in the
 chapter).

Sets of rules called **Assizes** were drawn up
 to regulate the game within a nation or region.
 Murray identifies five: the Long Assize
 (effectively the ordinary medieval game), the
 Short Assize (pawns and pieces advanced
 before the game proper begins in order to
 speed up play), and the Spanish, Lombard, and
 German Assizes (sundry provisions relating to
 the opening privilege leap allowed to certain
 men, the two-step pawn move, and the
 treatment of stalemate and bare king). The
 details, together with some other regional
 variations, occupy him for more than a dozen
 pages.

At the end of the period Lucena published
 rules which included e.p. and unrestricted
 promotion. The king on its first move, if never
 having been checked, could jump to the third
 square in any direction (from e1, to c1, c2, c3,
 d3, e3, f3, g3, g2, or g1), though not across a
 square commanded by a hostile piece; an
 unmoved firzan could leap to the third square
 orthogonally or diagonally, though not to
 capture, and a newly promoted firzan could do
 the same. 'Bare king' and stalemate were
 considered victories, the former even if the
 loser could immediately bare his opponent's
 king, but they now ranked below checkmate.
 However, none of these new rules was
 universal.

Sadly, no record of a game has survived
 from this period. [Text revised.]

New Chess. Term used here to describe the
 successor to Medieval Chess from its origins
 in the late 15th century until the codification
 of the modern rules. Throughout this period,
 national and regional rule differences
 persisted. New Chess is characterized by the
 increased powers of Q and B:

The Bishop black, in black must march,
 And therein use his skill,
 For in the white he may not come,
 No man to hurt or kill.

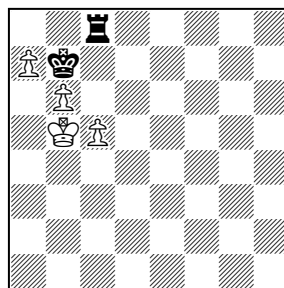
The other major change was the general
 acceptance of the two-step initial advance of
 the pawn. Many of the features of Medieval
 Chess, such as the leap of K or firzan (now Q),
 were retained for a while. Castling as we know
 it had widely replaced the king's leap towards
 the end of the 17th century. In Italy and

certain other countries, though not in France or Britain, the manoeuvre afforded a choice of moves. For example, White when castling K-side could choose between Kg1/Rf1, Kg1/Re1, Kh1/Rf1 and Kh1/Re1 (or even Rd1). ‘There can be no doubt’, wrote J. H. Sarratt in his *Laws of Chess* (1817), ‘of the superiority of this method of castling over ours’. Sometimes castling was performed in two moves. The rules of stalemate and pawn promotion were also diverse. There is record of stalemate being adjudged a draw in the 15th century, but in the 17th we have Barbier (after Saul) stating ‘Whosoever giveth a stale; which is when the distressed king is uncheckt, can remove nowhere but in Checke, and hath no man to stirre, looseth the game and his side’.

In the matter of promotion, practice varied widely. Salvio (1570-1640) thought that pawns should only be promoted to queens, but a century later Lolli favoured promotion to any piece previously lost. Saul concurred: ‘Whereas the bringing up of a Pawne of yours to your Adversaries first Ranke, in any of his Noble Houses (squares), is the absolute making of a Queene; yet ye shall make no Queene of that Pawne unlesse your Queene bee already lost; but you may there make it what piece you please, that already you have lost’. A common stricture was to limit a player to one queen on the board at a time on the grounds that two might seem to endorse bigamy! Amongst less popular innovations was one that a pawn could promote to a Hydra, a piece with two successive moves of a knight; another that a pawn should promote to Cadet and move to the first rank, there to wait as a replacement for the next piece lost by the player. Well into the nineteenth century it was not uncommon for both players to make consecutive moves at the start of a game. Although voices for radical change persisted throughout the period, there were few who listened.

The position in the next column is given in Alexandre’s *Collection des plus beaux problèmes d’échecs* (1846) as a win, but according to Oskar Korschelt it first appeared

in Salvio’s 1634 book *Il Puttino* as a position from play with promotion permitted only to queen and conclusion 1 c6+ Ka8 2 b7+ Kxa7 3 bxc8(Q) stalemate. Promotion to knight or bishop, had it been permitted, would have won.



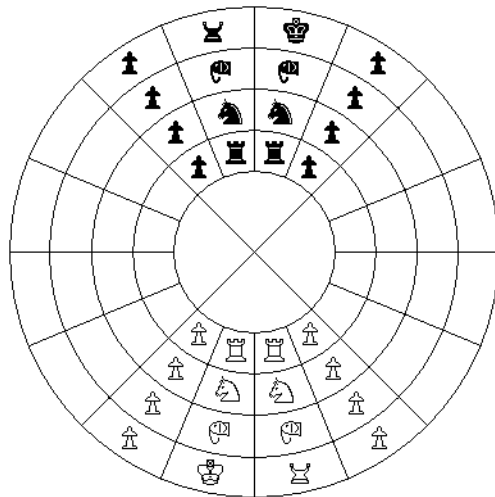
Orthochess. Term used here to describe the game whose laws are regulated by the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) and embracing, more loosely, the same game in all essentials as played universally for the past 150 years.

[‘Orthochess’ is not of course a fixed game, and even since the publication of the first edition of this book there has been a change to the laws as promulgated by FIDE: it was decided to ignore the ever longer endgame wins being discovered by computer analysis, and to allow a player to claim a ‘fifty-move draw’ in over-the-board play irrespective of whether an eventual win could be forced with the remaining material if play was allowed to continue. Furthermore, it would appear from *Chess Life* (December 2006, page 31) that the United States Chess Federation considers itself entitled to deviate from the FIDE laws in domestic events, at least in matters of procedure, so the era of local variations is not yet over and probably never will be; in the words of the commentator, ‘If FIDE makes a bad rule, must we copy them?’ Be it also noted that the laws now include provisions for regulating certain forms of rapid-play chess, so that as far as the lawmakers are concerned these have now become mainstream forms of the game.]

26.2 Other games played in the Near East

Byzantine Chess, also known as **Circular Chess**, **Round Chess**, and **Zatrikion**. The seminal circular-board variant, with a history going back at least to the 10th century. Said to have been popular in Byzantium and to have been played at Timur's court, it was revived in the late 18th century.

The board, probably unchequered originally, has 64 cells arranged in four concentric rings of 16. The medieval game had two forms, one of which was shown in chapter 23. The pieces and pawns behaved as in shatranj, the firzans were on the same circuit and were therefore able to capture each other, and usual shatranj rules (bare king, stalemate) obtained. Pawns did not promote; two pawns of the same colour confronting each other were removed by the opponent.



In the second form, shown above, the centre was divided into four quadrants, known as citadels, and the pieces were arranged in reverse order with the kings and firzans on the outside. If the king was able to reach a quadrant he could not be captured and the game was declared drawn. Berloquin allows a king to gain sanctuary only in the opponent's quadrant, which would seem a sensible rule since a king has little difficulty in reaching the near citadel. The same source allows a piece other than a king to seek sanctuary in a citadel, which appears less plausible. (Murray, also Berloquin, *Livre des Jeux*)

[Quadrant diagram based on the description given by Murray. There may be more information in the British Library manuscript 'Cotton Lib., MS. Cleopatra, B. ix', where a diagram (I think non-quadrant) is on page 'f. 9'. Murray describes the accompanying text as 'completely erased' (page 343), but when I examined the manuscript a few years ago I found that this was misleading (or perhaps the meaning of the word has changed); it is not erased, merely obliterated, and a fair amount remains visible. Sadly, 'visible' did not mean 'intelligible', at least not to me, but if the page were to be X-rayed to bring out what lies below the obliterating lines, and the result treated by modern image-enhancement techniques, I think somebody familiar with the handwriting and languages of the period might be able to recover something. Van der Linde claimed to have read five words in Latin, but Murray could not see them and neither could I, and the rest of the manuscript is in what I take to be 13th-century Anglo-French. If somebody with the necessary linguistic knowledge were to take up the matter, I think he would find the Library authorities sympathetic.]

Talkhand's Chess (Muslim legend relating to the origin of chess). Board 10x10; the pieces included, apparently, rooks, knights, alfil and fers in addition to the king and pawns. Texts differ as to the names and moves. (Murray)

Camel Chess (Muslim, 8th century). Board 10x10; extra pieces are camels, placed in the array in the board corners. Moves not recorded. (Murray) [Name editorial]

The Complete Chess, also known as **The Full Chess**, also as **Arabic Chess** (Muslim, 9th century according to Forbes). Board 10x10; extra pieces are Dabbabas (move as K but have no royal powers), placed on either side of K and firzan. 10xP in normal position (Forbes), on 3rd and 8th ranks (Murray). Van der Linde attempted to popularize the game in the 19th century with modern Q and B moves.

Acedrex de las Diez Casas (Alfonso MS, 1283, but probably of 8th century Muslim origin). Board 10x10; the additional pieces are

two Judges (and two pawns). The move of the judge is not recorded and the only slight clue is that, in the dice version of the game (the die used having seven faces), the judge comes between the knight and the fil. (Murray)

Grande Acedrex (Alfonso MS, 1283). Origin attributed to India but Faidutti points out in *En Marge du Jeu d'Echecs* that the gryphon (see below) belongs to Arab, not Indian mythology. Board 12x12; pieces Lion (leaps to third square orthogonally), Unicorn (moves first as N but does not capture, then as modern B), Aanca (=gryphon, 'a bird so big it can lift elephants', one step diagonally then any number orthogonally), Giraffe (4-1 leaper), Crocodile (modern B), K and R normal but K may move (leap) two squares in any direction on its first turn. Pawns one-step only, promoted to file piece (to Gryphon on f-file). Array (a1-l1/a12-l12) RLUGCKACGULR; 12xP 4th/9th ranks.

[The first edition included a second 12x12 game with unicorns attributed to the Alfonso MS, but I have not seen a reference to this in any description of the manuscript, nor can I find a source reference in David's files. I therefore suspect that its inclusion was an error, but I record it in case information should come to light elsewhere. Board 12x12; extra pieces are 2 x Unicorn (B+N), 1 x Counsellor (K+N), 1 x Fool (K); baseline (a1-l1/a12-l12) RNUBFQKCBUNR. It is not clear whether Q and B have their old or their modern moves.]

Citadel Chess (14th Century?). Board 10x10 with four extra projecting squares, called citadel squares, orthogonally or diagonally adjacent to the four corner squares (the precise siting of the extra squares differs with different authorities). The citadels were sanctuaries for the kings. If a king reached an opponent's citadel, the game was drawn. Each player had two dabbabas, moving like the modern bishop, placed on either side of K and firzan, with corresponding pawns. Kings on e1/e10 but Murray quotes alternative arrangements for both kings and dabbabas. Another version (van der Linde) has two citadels on a 10x9 board, adjoining a8/j2. In an article on the Seljuks in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1902), the board is 12x12 with the citadels in the four corners and

the wing files vacant in the array. The extra pieces are described as lions and are placed outside the rooks. [Games of this kind were also recorded elsewhere, and this entry might alternatively have been put under 'India' or 'Central Asia'. I have placed it here because van der Linde explicitly captions his board 'Persisches Citadellenschach'.]

Persian Chess [Chatrang]. Chatrang as described above, the game as played in Persia for around a thousand years.

Oblong Chess, also known as **Persian Chess [Oblong board]**. Origins 9th century or earlier. Played in Persia and a number of Muslim countries; mentioned by al-Masudi. A 'perversion' according to Forbes. Board 4x16, pieces as in shatranj. The set-up appears to have varied considerably: Murray lists seven examples from different sources. Pawns could move two squares initially but only one in those arrays in which they were placed well forward. Promotion, if it existed, was probably to firzan, but any such rule seems academic.

Persian Chess [Camels]. Described in the *Shahnamah* (c. 1000 AD). Board 10x10; the two extra pieces are Camels which move to the second square orthogonally, leaping the intervening square. In the array they stand between the knights and elephants. (Murray)

[In my opinion, this is the game referred to as 'Attama' in the first edition, David having been misled by an incorrect statement of the camel's move in a secondary source. I have therefore removed the separate reference to that game. See Murray, page 341.]

Persian Chess [Vizier]. Described by L. Tressau (1840). The Q is replaced by a Vizier. The game must be opened by e3 with the V moving to the same square (i.e., a knight's move), after which the V moves as the fers, one square diagonally. Bishops are also those of the old game, moving two squares diagonally, leaping the intervening square unless occupied by a K, when the move is illegal. Pawns one square only, promoting to V provided the player has no other V on the board. A curiosity is that the promoted P stays on the board, sharing the V's square. No castling. (Verney)

Persian Chess [K-leap]. A mid-19th century game (*Chess Player's Chronicle* 1846) permits the king to leap once as a knight, provided it has not been checked, and also to castle (0-0 only), the rook moving directly to d1/d8. No two-square pawn move; Queens stand on right of Kings in the array; a player may only have one Q at a time; bare king loses.

Syrian Chess (c.1850). At the start of a game, each player makes a series of moves (but never with the same man twice) independent of the other. Pawns move one square only, promotion is to piece previously lost. Castling was usually performed in two moves. In the array, queens stood on left of kings. (Vincenz Grimm, quoted by Murray)

Turkish Chess. In the last three-quarter-century of Ottoman rule, and possibly for centuries before, orthochess was subject to local rules. Two rules seem to have been general: K was placed on the right of the Q in

the array, and pawns moved one square at a time. Falkener (1845) contended that the K could move once as a N (Murray quotes an Egyptian source of 1892 confirming this) and there was also some freedom in castling. Grimm (1851) said that castling was performed in two or three moves. More remarkably, at the start of the game the players rapidly redeployed their forces without regard to alternate turns, except that neither player could move a man more than once. These last modifications were endorsed by a contributor to the *Chicago Times* (1893), who added that a1 could be black or white (*British Chess Magazine*, January 1894).

Turkish Great Chess (originator unknown, 1806). Board 13x13, corner squares white (*Chess Eccentricities*); extra pieces are a Great Ferz (one step diagonally then three orthogonally, cannot leap), 2 x Rhino (B+N), 2 x Gazelle (3-1 leaper). Array (a1-m1/a13-m13) RNBRhGaGfKQGaRhBNR; 13xP on 4th/10th ranks. (Murray) [Text revised]

26.3 Other games played in Europe

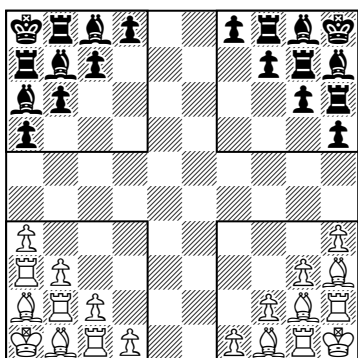
Courier Chess. Origins unknown. Probably 12th century; no record outside Germany although Selenus mentions it was played in neighbouring countries. The game survived until the start of the 19th century in the chess-playing village of Ströbeck, near Halberstadt. The first recorded great chess of European origin; possibly the game depicted in van Leyden's painting *The Chessplayers* (c.1510). Board 12x8; a1 white according to Selenus (*Schach oder Königspiel* 1616, the primary source on the game) but it seems likely that orientation was random. Extra pieces were two Curriers (couriers), one Man (counsellor) and one Schleich (spy, sneak, fool) plus four pawns; hence 24 men a side. Array (a1-l1/a8-l8) RNACMKFSCANR (A = fil or alfil). The Courier (believed then to be the strongest piece) moved as modern B, the Counsellor as K but without royal powers, the Spy one square orthogonally. No P-two or castling. Promotion unresolved - possibly to firzan but with move restrictions. There was a compulsory four-move start to the game: White a4, g4, l4, Fg3 (all privilege moves, not otherwise allowed in play), Black a5, g5, l5,

Fg6. (Verney, quoting Tressau, does not allow the central pawn advance, nor does he allow a pawn to capture until it has moved.)

An attempt was made to popularize the game in Germany by Albers (1821) who proposed several changes: (1) F = modern Q; (2) P = modern P (pawn-2, e.p.); (3) A = 1 or 2 squares (can leap first square); (4) Spy moves as K but without royal powers; (5) Counsellor moves as K or N; (6) P reaching 8th rank must stay there two turns before moving as promoted piece; (7) Castling permitted - K to square of A, R to square of C. Castling forbidden if any square between R and K attacked by enemy man. Courier-Spiel and Modern Courier Chess (see chapter 15) are further attempts to update the game.

Gala, also known as **The Farmers' Game**, **Peasants' Chess**, **The Peasants' Game**. Origins unknown, possibly medieval. A curious game, confined until recently to the area of Dithmarschen in Schleswig-Holstein, but now extinct. According to Bell, a few sets still exist in remote farmhouses. Board 10x10 with each 4x4 corner area surrounded by a line

called a 'deflection line'. Each player has 20 men: 2 Galas (kings), 5 Kornas (rooks), 5 Horsas (bishops), 8 Kampas (pawns). Array :



Kings move normally except that occupation of any of the four central squares permits a king on a subsequent turn to move directly to a vacant square, though not to one of those occupied at the start of the game. Rooks and bishops move normally until they meet a deflection line, when they reverse roles. They revert to normal when again crossing a deflection line. Capture is by displacement, but a bishop cannot capture a man adjacent to it if a deflection line divides them. Pawn moves only diagonally forward until across a deflection line. If it returns to its starting line it is obliged again to move diagonally forward. The object is to capture both the opponent's kings. Check is announced by 'Gala'. A mated king is removed from the board at the next turn. (Bell, *The Board Game Book and Discovering Old Board Games*, Faidutti, Koch, *Spiele für Zwei*, Alfeld, *Brettspiele*) [Research continues and Peter Michaelsen tells me that David's sources have not had the last word, but I have not updated the text.]

Korkser Chess. Derisory term for chess played to unorthodox rules, usually through ignorance. Specifically, a variety of German chess still practised in the 1870s: (1) pawn-two a matter for agreement, (2) promotion only to piece already lost, (3) a king cannot castle if it has been checked, (4) a player giving stalemate loses, (5) an attack on the queen is ineffective unless 'Gardez la reine' has been said, (6) it is 'almost a law' that the game must be begun with two simultaneous moves. (Murray) [Text revised]

Icelandic Chess. Murray declares that 'the most extraordinary alterations in rule were those which were made by the Icelandic players'. He gives a long list of these, most of which appear to have been local. The win by bare king was widely accepted; also the king was allowed to move once as a knight. Promotion only to a lost piece or, in some parts, to the file piece. Remarkable were the different categories of mate and the rule, now long obsolete, that a player delivering mate could give further mates on successive moves provided the position changed each time. A total of nine was claimed as the maximum possible (E. Olafsson) but this would appear to be a considerable under-estimate unless what was meant was the legal limit. Fiske's *Chess in Iceland* sheds little light on the play.

Russian Chess. Term sometimes used to describe the old Russian game in which the queen had the additional powers of the knight. In the 19th century it was common practice in Russia to allow the players to make two (sometimes more) moves each at the start of a game provided no move crossed the centre line. Some Russians were still playing the old chess (queen moves one square diagonally) as late as the end of the 19th century. (Murray)

Welschen-Schach (loosely, 'Foreign Chess'). The reformed medieval game with peculiarities similar to those found in the old Indian, Malay and Soyot games (Murray). Welschen-Schach was confined to Germany and is associated with Ströbeck (see Courier Chess above). Pieces move as in orthochess but pawns one square only except in the initial 'privilege moves' which are mandatory for both sides: the a, d, and h-pawns are advanced two squares and the Q is moved two squares forward. Even stranger are the promotion rules. A pawn on reaching the end rank must then move backwards, two squares at a time (called 'joy-leaps'), to the second rank, where it is promoted. Joy-leaps require the intervening squares to be unoccupied and for this reason getting a pawn safely to the 8th by no means guarantees promotion. No castling. The English master Lewis, visiting Ströbeck early in the 19th century, played Welschen-Schach with the locals whom he found, contrary to earlier reports, weak players.

26.4 Africa

Ethiopian Chess, also known as **Senterej**. About 500 years old. A game of the nobility, still widely played at the time of the Italian invasion (mid-1930's) but now extinct according to Richard Pankhurst. Ethiopian chess is essentially the medieval game but with the addition of a preliminary phase known as 'marshalling'. Board unchequered; usual men as in the medieval game: Negus (king), Fers, Der (rooks), Saba (alfils), Feresenya (knights), Medeq (pawns). Moves as in the medieval game. King on right of fers. Pawn promotes to fers but only on prior loss of that piece (*Dictionnaire de la Langue Amarinna*, 1881) but Ras Imru (1950) states no restriction on promotion to fers, and also allows promotion to any piece previously captured. No castling. A player should ideally leave his opponent with two major pieces. If reduced to one, the opponent has only to move that piece 7 times (10 times according to Ras Imru) to claim a draw. Scale of merit for checkmate ranging from the least honourable (by rook or knight) to the most laudable (pawn). Henry Salt observed of the Tigrans (1809) 'When they have the occasion to take any one of their adversary's pieces, they strike it with great force and eagerness from its place', a practice not unknown elsewhere.

In the curious marshalling stage, players may move as often as they like and out of turn, the game proper starting only when a piece is captured (Pankhurst), but according to Plowden, a 19th century British consul quoted by Murray, only when a pawn is captured. Castling is permitted in this stage about which Plowden says '... in this consists one of the excellencies of a good player, as it frequently decides the fate of the game', adding that 'confusion appears great to a stranger'. (*Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 1971, and *British Chess Magazine*, July 1985)

Madagascan Chess, also known as **Samantsy**. Known apparently only amongst the Tanala of the Ikongo, a forest people. Probably introduced by the Arabs with whom the Ikongo had links. Ardant du Picq (*Bulletin*

de l'Academie Malagache, 1912) gives the pieces as Hova (king), Anankova (prince=firzan), 2 x Vorona (bird=R), 2 x Basy (gun=alfil), 2 x Farasy (horse=N), 8 x Zaza (child=P). The positions of the kings and firzan are reversed in the array. The pieces move as in the medieval game; pawns promote to file piece. The article in the *British Chess Magazine* (May 1915) is a translation of du Picq. James Tattersfield (*Chess*, February 1938) has different piece names: Mpanjaka (chief=K) Foza (crab=R), Vahoaka (people=Ps) and, more importantly, different moves. Thus the knight moves two squares in any direction and the 'bishop' moves as a rook but leaps the first square of its move. However, his observations are suspect since he says that the powers of the king and queen are reversed whilst quoting the normal array. R. Decary (*Mœurs et Coutumes des Malagaches*, 1951) gives du Picq's description and adds that the game 'est exactement le jeu d'échecs' but he adds that the pieces are 'à très peu de choses près identifiés à celle des échecs'.

Algiers Chess. A leading article (*La Stratégie*, October 1902) reported that a small group, including a sheik, met regularly in Algiers to play a version of the old (medieval) game. Members were said to be keen, with others waiting to play. Unchequered board, pawns move one square and promote to lost piece only, king has right to knight's move once in a game if not checked, no castling, stalemate loss for player unable to move. Kings face queens in starting position. No mention of moves of Q or B.

Sudanese Chess. R. J. Darvall notes in *Fairy Chess Review* (October 1945) that in the Sudan two pawns may each be moved one square on the opening turn only, and that the b and g pawns are commonly so advanced by both sides.

According to Murray, there is no evidence of indigenous versions of chess in Western, Equatorial, or Southern Africa.