

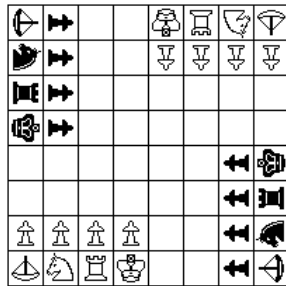
## Chapter 34

### Games using a single square or rectangular board

[Although what became the standard single-board four-handed game used a board with extensions, the earliest known four-handed game used a standard 8x8 board, and it is convenient to consider this and other such games first.]

#### 34.1 Classical Indian four-player games

**Chaturaji**, also known as **The Game Of The Four Kings**. Four-handed Indian game, once thought to be the germinal chess game and associated with Chaturanga. The first firm reference to it is now believed to be about 11th century. The game could be partnership or all-against-all; it could be played with or without dice, or with dice determining the opening moves only. Turn of play was clockwise. Each side has four pieces, Rajah (K), Elephant (R), Horse (N) and Boat (B) and in addition four Soldiers (P). As usually given, the pawns were placed on a2-d2, g1-g4, h7-e7, and b8-b5, with the pieces in order BNRK behind them, but it is very likely that the arrangement of the pieces and the rules of play were subject to change from time to time and from place to place.

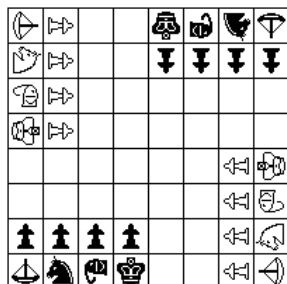


The K, R and N move as in orthochess; the B moves two squares diagonally, leaping the intervening square. The P moves one step at a time and promotes on reaching an end rank (six moves) but only on the start square of a N or R, promoting to the appropriate piece, and then only if the player has already lost at least one P, otherwise the pawn waits until the condition is fulfilled. A pawn reaching any end square other than that of N or R does not

promote and is rendered immobile. However, if a player is reduced to a P, or a P and a B, then the P can promote to any piece (including a K) on any end square. Kings are subject to capture like other pieces. The object of the game is to earn points by capturing opposing kings and/or occupying the throne square of a rival. A player occupying the throne of an ally takes over his partner's forces. An exchange of captured kings could be agreed between opponents, the kings then being restored to their original squares. A player with a bare king could then retire honourably (draw). None of the four boats can ever attack another but if a player moves his boat adjacent to the other three so that the four form a 2x2 square, the two opponents' boats are captured and the player takes over his ally's boat. Since there are only five positions where this get-together could happen, the coup seems at best improbable. A long (four-sided) or cubic die was used in the dice game which was probably associated with gambling. The die was cast at the start of each turn to determine the type of piece to be moved. A player unable to move a man of the type indicated lost his turn. The game has been an inspiration to other inventors.

[This topic has been hashed and rehashed in numerous books on chess and David's index sheet for the game gives over a dozen references, but the primary sources on which they explicitly or implicitly rely appear to reduce to two: the 11th-century manuscript of al-Beruni referred to under Chaturanga in chapter 29, and a Bengali account, now regarded as dating from around 1500. The 15th-century *Caturanga-Dipika* on which the following entry is based apparently came to light only in 1924.]

**Four-Handed Dice Chess according to the Caturanga-Dipika.** The origins and workings of this ancient Indian game are obscure. The following version, symbolising a war between two kings and their respective allies, is as good (or as bad) as any other and is perhaps the most authoritative as it is the most recent and exhaustive.



Array as shown, two cubic dice. The four sides are Red (East), Green (S), Yellow (W) and Black (N). The moves of the pieces do not

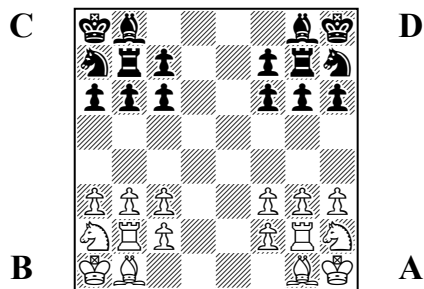
correspond with those of earlier writers. The elephant moves one square orthogonally, the boat one square diagonally, the king, knight and pawn as in orthochess (no pawn-two). The dice are both numbered 1-6. Nos. 1 and 6 carry no value (zero). King or pawn move on a throw of 5, elephant on 4, horse on 3, boat on 2. The players throw in turn. The two dice are cast on each turn. If the numbers are different, both men move (if a 5 is thrown, either the K or a P is moved). If either but not both can move, the higher number moves. When a double is thrown, the piece moves twice. A number that can't be utilized is forfeited. A pawn is promoted on the end rank to the file piece, but not to king or boat. Kings are taken like other men (i.e., no checking) and allies can be back-stabbed. A stake was paid for each man captured. There were seven classified levels of victory and defeat, which affected the stake. (*Caturanga-Dipika*, edited and translated by Manomohan Ghosh, Calcutta Sanskrit Series 21, Calcutta 1936)

**34.2 Modern games using a single 8x8 board**

**Alternation Chess**, also known as **Partnership Chess [Alternation]** and **Tandem Chess [Alternation]** (origins unknown). Partnership game in which partners move alternately without consultation. (*Illustrated London News*, 7 August 1875, also *British Chess Magazine*, September 1903)

**Diamond Chess-Whist** (A. K. Porterfield Rynd, 1887). Partnership game, each partner having half a set. A normal set can be used, queens serving as kings with one army of each partnership capped or otherwise distinguished.

in Diamond Chess, that is diagonally, one square at a time', and capture vertically or horizontally, but never move or take backwards; nothing said about promotion, but the statement that pawns 'move as in Diamond Chess' perhaps implies that they promote in the same way. Mate both enemy kings to win. Pieces of a mated player are frozen. Partners cannot consult. Some 'exceedingly pretty finishes' achieved. (*Irish Chess Chronicle*, August 1887) [Text revised]

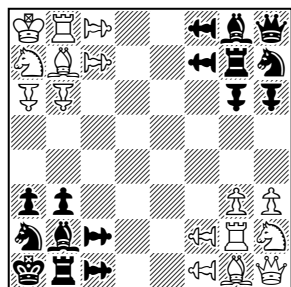


Partners sit side by side, A and B against C and D. Order of play ACBD. Pawns 'move as

**Slater's Game** (E. T. O. Slater, 1954). Designed as a fast four-player partnership game, which Slater attempted to keep as close as possible to orthochess. The rooks were dispensed with on the grounds that they take time to develop and slow down the game, a necessary sacrifice to accommodate the extra K and Q. Partners sit side-by-side, baseline KQBN/NBQK fronted by 8xP as usual. Ideally, two different sets of men are used so that the forces of each player are distinctive. Players move in sequence, colours alternating. The aim is to mate both the opponents' kings. When a king is mated, it is removed from the board, its owner ceases to play and his

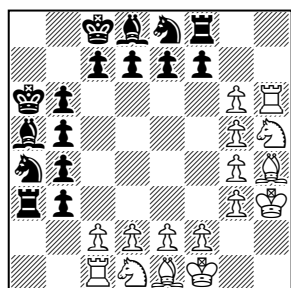
remaining men are inert though subject to capture. A faster game calls for only one king to be mated. (*Nouveaux Jeux d'Echecs Non-orthodoxes*)

**Double Skak** (Soren and Christian Kirk, 1970s). Four-player partnership game using standard set, but equally playable by two.



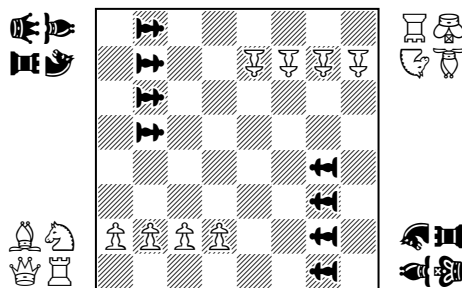
Partners occupy opposite corners, one having the K and the other the Q. No pawn-2 or castling, promotion only to captured piece. White (bottom right) has first move, play in rotation anti-clockwise. The eight inside pawns have noses to indicate their direction of movement; their first move can be in either direction, but they are then rotated and are restricted to the same direction subsequently. Aim is checkmate. (*Variant Chess* 21/22)

**Gemini [Fisher]** (P. Fisher, 1981). Four-handed partnership game in which players occupy adjacent sides:



Pawns move towards end rank opposite them, promotion to Q possible; no castling. The object is to mate either of the opponents' kings. The allied forces can unite for this purpose. If a player is obliged to move into check this is a loss. A player in check moves in turn. (Personal communication)

**Chatty Chess** (Ian Richardson, 1989) Partnership game using the standard set. In each partnership there is an Attacker who has the Q and a Defender who has the K. Partners occupy opposite corners, attackers on Q side, defenders on K side.



The pawns are set up as for chaturaji. The pieces may be arranged in any order on the squares behind them. WA (a1-d1) sets his pieces first, then the other players in clockwise order. Pieces behave as in orthochess but pawns are confined within their initial four files or ranks, no pawn-two or castling. WA begins, then BA, WD, BD. For the first four moves of each side a player may only move his own men except to escape check. Thereafter, play stays in rotation but a player may move any man of his own colour. Communication between partners is allowed but should be formalized to avoid anarchy. (*Variant Chess* 1/52)

**Chitty-Chatty Chess** (Richardson, 1989) is a simplified version intended to introduce chess to beginners. Two pawns per player only (a2/b2 etc) and three pieces typified by QBN on a1-c1 and KNB on h8-f8 (no rooks, and no flexibility as in Chatty Chess). Players can only move their own men except if a king is in check, when the next player can move one of his partner's men to escape. Partners may communicate, either informally or formally on some pre-arranged system which would allow a player to retract a move on his partner's advice. The game develops quickly but is likely to be stereotyped. (Personal communication)

**Crompton's Chess** (George Crompton, 1960). Four-player partnership game, partners sitting opposite. Each player has KQBB, 5xP.

White A sets BQKB on c1-f1 with 4xP in front and the extra pawn, known as the corner pawn, on b2. The other players do the same in rotation round the board (all queens on own colour). Move in rotation clockwise. Initial pawn capture prohibited and unmoved bishops may not be captured by corner pawns. No pawn-two. Promotion on 8th rank to R or N only. Object is to mate both opponents' kings. A mated player's men are removed from play. (Photocopy of inventor's rules brochure) [David added 'Curious and suspect' in the first edition, but I cannot wholly agree. Curious, certainly, but suspect? The source is neatly printed and claims the authority of the inventor himself, and the shadows of staple marks in the centre of what is only a four-page document can be explained by assuming that it originally had a cover which has not been copied. I tend to use 'suspect' only when I believe that a game has been incorrectly reported somewhere along the line and did not really exist, and in no sense can this be said to apply here. Nor is there any reason to suspect plagiarism, which would be another reason for

using the word. This leaves the possibility that it was merely a joke, but in that case its author went to uncommon trouble and expense.]

**Forchess** (Proprietary game, Smalbook Associates; T. K. Rogers, 1992). Partners sit opposite each other, and each has an (almost) full set of men. Array for White 1 (h1-e1 and upwards) KRNP, RQBP, BN-P, PPPP, other players by rotation (so knights on c2/a3, b6/c8 etc, and only four empty squares). Pieces behave as in orthochess. Pawns move diagonally towards opposite corner and capture straight ahead, promoting on reaching board edge (four moves). Object is to capture both enemy kings. A player whose king is captured quits the game but his remaining men stay on the board. A mated player whose king awaits capture is allowed a 'token move' with any other piece, the object being to inflict the maximum damage before extinction. Described as 'the ultimate social game', Forchess is mayhem from move one. An international tournament was planned for 1994. (Proprietor's rules booklet)

### 34.3 Two or more 8x8 boards joined as one

**Mecklenburg Chess [Four-Handed]** (inventor unknown, 1824 or earlier). Two 8x8 boards side by side, forming a single board 16x8; partners sit alongside each other, moves alternate crosswise over the table. Usual partnership rules. The game was seen at the Café de la Régence in Paris in 1824 and analysed by Bilguer in 1836, and was played in Mecklenburg for at least 20 years. (Letter in *Schachzeitung*, September 1848)

**Alliance [Liptak and Babcock]** (Mark Liptak and Rick Babcock, 1990). Two 8x8 boards one beyond the other, forming a single board 8x16; each team has a primary player and a secondary player. White (primary) and Yellow play Black (primary) and Gold, the sequence of play being WBYG. The object of the game is to mate the primary opponent's king. Normal arrays on ranks 1/2 (White, playing up), 7/8 (Gold, playing down), 9/10 (Yellow, up), 15/16 (Black, down). The secondary forces are confined to their respective halves of the board; the primary forces can move over both halves. Only W and G move on the

bottom half, B and Y on the top; thus if W plays a rook to the top half it is controlled by Y unless and until moved back again. All pawns promote only on ranks 1 and 16 and always to W and B. Mate of a secondary king results in its forces (including any primary pieces in that half of the board) being frozen. Thereafter the primary player moves on his own turn and on partner's turn. Partner's forces can be unfrozen only by the primary player moving his king to that side of the board. Each team takes an equal number (up to four, as agreed) of caucus chips at the start of a game. If a team wants to converse at any stage it surrenders a chip, but there is no penalty on consultation if one member of a team is mated. (Authors' rules booklet)

**Six-Handed Chess [Lange]** (Max Lange, 1881). Three 8x8 boards side by side, treated as a single board 24x8. Whites face Blacks. Usual array on each board, sets distinguishable. Rules of Four-Handed Chess apply. Assuming that the boards are numbered 1-3 from the left, the order of play is W1, B2,

W3, B1, W2, B3. As Boyer pointed out in *Les Jeux d'Echecs Non-orthodoxes*, the boards can be extended indefinitely to accommodate any number of players, though he conceded that such a game would be 'too long and complicated to be agreeable'. (Verney)

**Six-Handed Chess [Godneff]** (M. Godneff, 1940s?). As Lange but the boards are placed

end-to-end and so are treated as a single board 8 x 24. White 1 on ranks 1/2 playing up, Black 1 on ranks 7/8 playing down, Black 2 on 9/10 playing up, W2 on 15/16 playing down, W3 17/18, B3 23/24. Pawns promote in the usual way on their respective boards. The sequence of play is W1, B2, W3, B3, W2, B1. Awkward seating if nothing else. (*Les Jeux d'Echecs Non-orthodoxes*)

#### 34.4 Other square or rectangular boards

**Social Chess [Head]** (W. Head, 1834). Board 12x12; 2-4 players; 4 sets of men arrayed centrally on each side, thus corners (2x2) vacant at start. Kings of allies may occupy adjacent squares. Partners (White and Black against Yellow and Red) sit opposite each other, light-coloured queens on light-coloured squares (so light and dark queens face each other). 'If,' declared the inventor, 'a game could be formed in which two, three or four persons could join, so that where two had met to play, a casual third or fourth need neither prevent the intended game, nor stand out - this, I say, may appear an advantageous improvement', adding. '...all who have as yet honoured it with their attention are unanimous in their opinion of its superiority in interest over the common game, in the same ratio as four minds may be expected to be more comprehensive than two'. (*The New Game of Social Chess*)

**Neo Chess [Nayler and Ower]** (J. L. Nayler and E. Ower, c.1925). Board 10x8, partners side by side. Each player has one of each piece and five pawns, baseline RNBKQ/QKBNR on each side. Usual four-handed rules: object is to mate both opponents, pieces of a mated player are frozen. Castling only with own rook, not partner's; allied kings can occupy adjacent squares; e.p. by either opponent. White player with Kg1 starts, then Black player opposite him, and so on. (*British Chess Magazine*, October 1928)

**Decimal Four-Handed Chess** (V. R. Parton, 1950s). Board 10x10. Parton experimented with four arrays, all with partners diagonally opposite and the turn proceeding clockwise.

(1) White array (j1-f1 and up) KQRBN, 5xP, other players similarly by rotation (thus

Black pieces on a1-a5, Red on a10-e10, Green on j10-j6). Pawns move and promote normally; thus the pawns of each player move in a different direction from those of the other three. Players agree whether victory is achieved by mating one king or two. In the latter case, a mated king is removed but the mated player continues to move

(2) White array KRB, RQN, NR (no pawns), other players similarly by rotation. Conditions of play as in (1).

(3) White array KBRP, QBN, RN, P, other players by rotation. Pawns are Guards which move as a K but without royal powers. Otherwise play as in (1).

(4) White array KBP, RQP, PPN, other players by rotation. In this game, a pawn may move parallel to either of the sides forming the player's corner. There is no check, and the aim of each side is to capture the opponents' kings. Both cannot be captured by the same player. (*Nouveaux Jeux d'Echecs Non-orthodoxes, Enduring Spirit of Dasapada*)

**Quatre Quest-Chess** (Proprietary game, Conquest Games; Donald Bengé, 1977). The four-handed version of Quest-Chess. Board 11x11, squares f1, a6, f6, k6, f11 blocked out of use; array for player A (k1-h1 and inwards) KQRP, BBNP, RNPP, PPPP, other players by rotation. Player A starts with 2 moves, B makes 4 moves, C 6 moves and D 8 moves; thereafter each player makes up to 10 moves per turn. Pawns move laterally forward, either right or left, and capture diagonally right, left or straight forward (i.e. on opposite-coloured squares). No pawn-two or en passant capture. A pawn promotes to any piece on reaching the far side of the board (nine squares). All Quest-Chess rules apply. If a player checks two or more kings with a single move, or captures

one player's man and checks another player's king at the same time, the players concerned respond in clockwise rotation.

The game can be played as all-against-all (first player to mate a king wins) or, better, as a partnership game. A seven-pawn version, omitting the apex pawns h4 etc, is considered superior. (Proprietor's article in *Conquest Review*, also personal communication)

**Morton's Game** (Proprietary game, P. R. Morton, 1983). Partnership game in which White and Green play Black and Red. Board 12x12 (corner squares can be occupied); White array on ranks 1/2, Green on files a/b, Black on ranks 11/12, Red on files k/l (kings on g1, a6, g12, l6, so WQ/GQ to left of K, BQ/RQ to right). Pawns can advance directly to the 5th rank (1, 2 or 3 squares, or 2 squares from 3rd rank; no e.p.) but thereafter move one square at a time promoting normally on the 10th rank (sic). White and Black can only take each other's men and check each other's kings, the pieces of the other two players serving as blocks; similarly Green and Red, hence a RK can stand next to a WK etc. The object is to mate one of the opponents' kings. The sequence of play is WBRG. (Manuscript note citing patent applications)

**Quattrochess** (George Dekle Sr, 1986). Four players (partnership or all-play-all); board 14x14 with centre squares (g/h 7/8) impassable blocks; 25 men a side. Additional pieces, all drawn from earlier games, are Chancellor (R+N), Archbishop (B+N), Mann (as K but without royal powers), Wazir (one square orthogonally), Fers (one square diagonally), Camel (3-1 leaper), Giraffe (4-1 leaper). A mated king is removed from the board and the partner, or mating player in an all-play-all, takes over the mated player's forces. The aim is to be the last surviving player or partnership. Stalemate is a loss for the player unable to move. Men are set up initially in the four corners; thus White (a-e/1-5) KWQRP, FCaGNP, ChGCaBP, RNABP, PPPPM and similarly for other players. (*World Game Review* 10)

**Quadruple** (Proprietary game, Bork Brettspiele; Heinz Weisfeld, 1988). Board 14x14; White and Black (queens on own colour) play 'Small' White and Black (contrasting set, kings on own colour). Usual men set up on perimeter ranks/files so as to leave 3x3 unoccupied squares in each corner. Object is to mate one of the opponents' kings. (Proprietor's rules booklet)