

Hnefatafl **A Viking Good Time**

Tafl emk orr at efla

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Warnings

- Artefacts
 - Aunt Martha's and Darn Things
 - Wooden pieces
 - Game piece or pebble
- Words
 - So few and incomplete
 - Why are they written?



Sagas tend to talk about exciting things – like when a fight breaks out

Archaeology



Ballinderry 24cm sq, Yew 10th c. 7x7

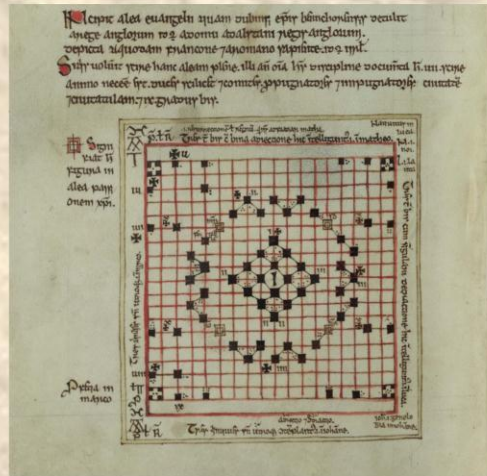
- also Faroes & Gokstad 13x13; Trondheim 11x11; Wimose & Coopergate (Broken – 18 and 16 respectively)

Pieces of: glass, bone, jet, ivory, whale bone, amber, antler, tusk, bronze (these from Gunnarshaug, Norway)

Ockelbo Sweden – rock carving

Writing

- Oxon 122 – c. 925



Deep Christian significance – christ in centre, surrounded by 4 disciples, etc etc

Writing

- Oxon 122 – c. 925
- Linneaus – July 1732

Tablut is played on a board of eighty-one squares marked as in the diagram. One side consists of the King, who is stationed on the central square, and eight Swedes, who are placed upon the shaded squares. The other side consists of sixteen Russians, who occupy the crosscut squares. All of the pieces have the same move that of the Rook in chess. Play is by alternate moves, and the one player attempts to bring his King to the edge of the board, while the other tries to confine him so that he has no power of moving. In either case the game comes to and end. The King cannot be taken; any other man is taken when two of the opposing men occupy two squares adjacent to it and in the same straight line with it. No other piece than the King can ever play to the central square.

Tr. Sir J.E. Smith in 1811



Keys – “king to the edge”; “confine <king>”; “central square”

Writing

- Oxon 122 – c. 925
- Linneaus – July 1732
- Robert Ap Ifan – 1587

The above board must be played with a king (brenin) in the centre and twelve men in the places next to him, and twenty-four lie in wait to capture him.

These are placed, six in the center of every end of the board and in the six central places. Two players move the pieces, and if one belonging to the king comes between the attackers, he is dead and is thrown out of the play; and if one of the attackers comes between two of the kings men, the same. If the king himself comes between two of the attackers and if you say 'watch your king' before he moves into that place, and he is unable to escape, you catch him. If the other says gwrheill(?) and goes between the two, there is no harm. If the king can go along the line (missing text here) that side wins the game.

Tr. Murray, A history of board games other than chess



Keys – “king himself comes between two”

Starting positions



- Linneaus Board



- Possible Ifan Board



- Alternate Ifan Board



“twelve men in the places next to him”

“six in the center of every end of the board and in the six central places”

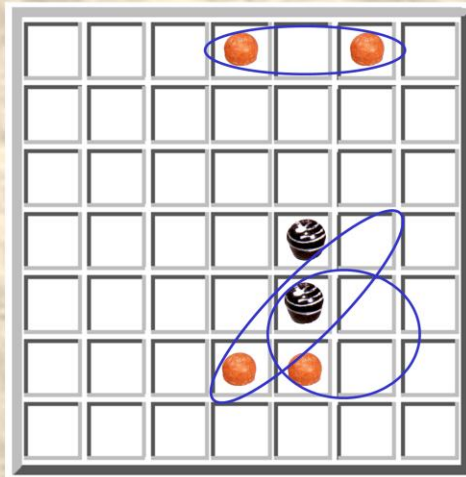
Basic Capture



- Movement
 - Straight lines
 - Unlimited distance
 - No diagonals
- Attack from behind



Not a Capture



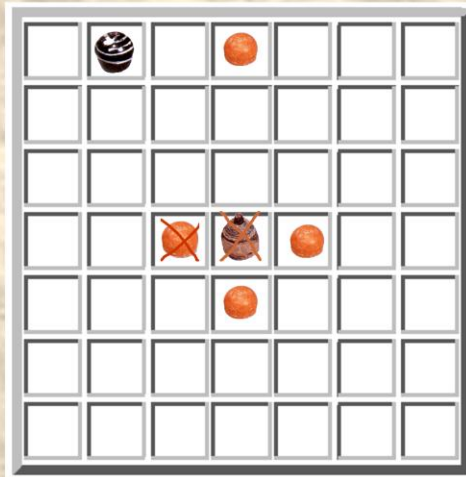
- Combat tactics
- Move between
- Diagonals
- Corners



Double Captures



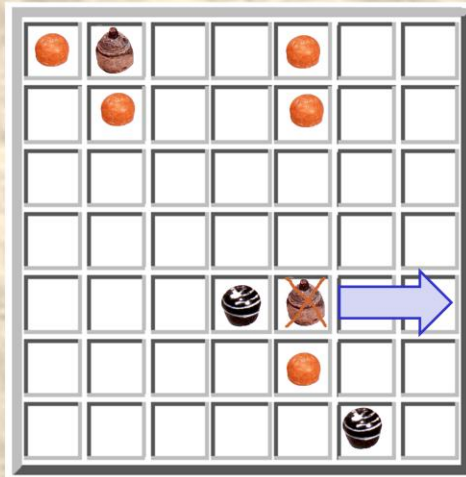
King Capture



- Four men capture
- Sometimes two
- King can capture too



King Not a Capture



- Not surrounded

- King can escape
- King is trapped



1. Not a capture – Not surrounded
2. Not a capture – “Gwrheill” King can escape on next move
3. Perhaps a capture since king can’t escape?

Additional Rules

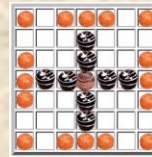
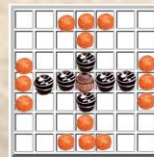
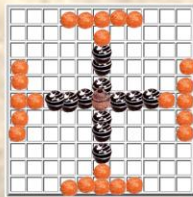
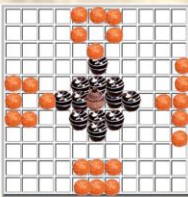
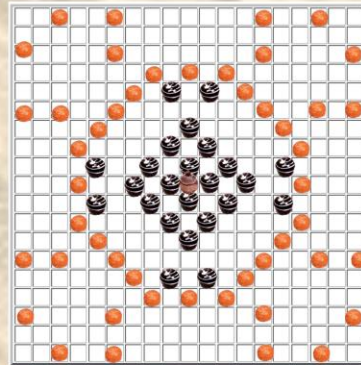
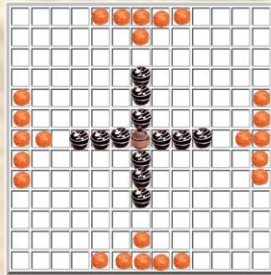
- Center and corners belong to the king
 - No one else can stop there
- King escapes through a corner or the side
- Two or Four men to take the king

Funny Rules

- Corner or center acts as “an opponent”
- Can’t escape through attackers territory



Starting positions



Closing Thoughts – Games & Culture

- Movement
 - **Tafl:** limitless world, equal players
 - **Chess:** Limited world, rank has privileges
- Killing
 - **Tafl:** Bare is the back with no brother
 - **Chess:** Land is everything – fief
- Strategy
 - **Tafl:** Most aggressive player wins – Valhalla awaits
 - **Tafl:** King is powerful
 - **Chess:** Protect king and pieces
- Monopoly: Property and Money matter
- Video Games / Party Games



Questions?

Contact Us

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What Now?

- Pick a partner
- Pick a board
 - 7x7, 9x9, 11x11, 13x13, 19x19
- Pick starting positions
- Agree on rules
 - King to side or corner?
 - 2 or 4 to capture the king?
 - Funny rules (corner capture)
- Play
 - Drinking is optional



Starting positions

