A Book of Diversions

Compiled from various sources
by
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Game Report: Early French Tarot
Class: Cards
Type: Trick-taking
Number of Players: up to six (four is best)
Reconstructed mainly from secondary source
Date redacted: May 13, 1997
Redactor: Justin du Coeur
Sources: Michael Dummett's *The Game of Tarot*, London:
Duckworth, 1980. This game is mostly Dummett's "Seven-
teenth-century French Tarot (second version)", combined
with a few elements from the first version to fill out the
game (pg. 215). Dummett's reconstruction is based main-
ly on *La maison academique des jeux*, 1659.

Reconstruction
The Tarot deck reaches back well into peri-
od; while its exact origins are a bit unclear, it appears
to have come into being not too many decades after
the more "conventional" decks did in the latter half
of the 14th century.
All the available evidence indicates that
the Tarot was used more or less exclusively for
card games during the Renaissance; the Tarot's
occult associations appear to have arisen later, in the 18th cen-
tury. For a detailed examination of what is known about the occult history
of the Tarot, the interested reader is referred to The Game of Tarot, which spends a couple
of chapters on the subject, and to the book A Wicked Pack of Cards (by Decker, DePaulis and
Dummett), which is devoted to the occult history of the deck. This discussion will concern itself
solely with a period game played with the deck.
This particular Tarot variant is highly simplified, possibly a shade over-simplified -- it
omits a few common but (to the novice) annoying concepts like inverted suits. It should give an
idea of how the family generally works, though. The sources that this description comes from
are slightly out of period; I suspect that something like this variant was probably known in
period (we know that Tarot games were common enough in period, and this is a fairly elemental
version), but the purists should get Dummett's book and judge for themselves.

Equipment
One 78-card Tarot deck. The typical Tarot deck has four suits (wands, swords, coins,
and cups), with fourteen cards each (ace through ten of pips, plus King, Queen, Knight, and
Page), making in all 56 suit cards. To this are added 21 "trumps", each of which has a particular
image depicted, and which count in a particular order, plus the "Fool", a special card that isn't
really a trump for gaming purposes, although it is often lumped in with the trumps today.
Period Tarot decks looked a bit different from the usual modern Rider-Waite-influ-
enced deck. Most conspicuously, the pip cards did not usually have a picture on them; instead,
they simply had a stylized representation of the appropriate number of things (six wands, four
cups, and so on). The trumps (which are now often called the "major arcana") were fairly
similar to the modern trumps, although the details of the iconography have changed over the
years, as people have added extra mystical layers to the symbolism. The order of the trumps was
apparently a bit flexible, as were the exact card list, but the usual modern list is pretty typical
for a period deck. The explicit numbering of the trumps apparently came a bit late; for earlier
periods, players were apparently expected to simply know the order of the trump cards. For a
variety of pictures of period Tarot decks, the reader is referred to Stuart Kaplan's exhaustive
Encyclopedia of Tarot (which is still in print), particularly volume 1, which has the bulk of the
pictures of period decks.
None of these differences of nuance significantly affect game play, however; the game
described below can be played with most conventional modern Tarot decks. I commend repro-

duction period decks to the serious player, not just to get the atmosphere right, but because the simpler pip cards are easier to count with than the modern pictorial ones. But you can get started perfectly well with a Rider-Waite deck or something similar.

In this particular game, the ranking of cards is basically intuitive: higher suit cards beat lower, trumps beat any suit card, and higher-numbered trumps beat lower. Note that this is not universal in Tarot games: it is common in these games to reverse the order of Cups and Coins, so that, eg, the three of Cups would beat the eight. As this has no particular effect on the game save to confuse unwary players, I choose to leave out that particular twist.

Play

The game is played by up to six players; this was explicitly variable, but four players was accounted best. Choose an initial dealer by some usual method such as cutting the deck for high card.

The dealer should deal twelve cards to each player, and set the remainder aside (they will not be used during this hand). Dummett says that deal would normally be counter-clock-wise; I am not sure whether this is the case throughout France, or only in the south. My understanding is that deal tended to be counter-clockwise in the southern parts of Europe, clockwise in the northern, but I can't claim to be any sort of expert in this. Regardless, it shouldn't make a significant difference, as long as you are consistent.

Play twelve normal tricks, with the Eldest hand leading the first trick, and the winner of each trick leading the next. You must follow suit if possible; if you cannot, you must play a trump if you have any. If you are void of both the suit led and trumps, you may play any card, but will lose the trick. If a trump is led, you must play a trump if possible. The trick is won by the player who played the highest trump, or the highest card of the suit led if no trumps were played.

The Excuse:

The Fool is known as "the Excuse" is many Tarot games, and serves a very specialized function. You may play the Fool at any time, regardless of suit led (hence the name). The Fool can not win the trick; however, at the end of the trick, the player who played it takes it back, and lays it down as if he had won that card. He gives any other card that he has won to the player who actually won the trick, as a sort of consolation. If he has no other cards, he may hold onto the Fool, and later pay the consolation out to the player who would have won the Fool -- only if he wins no tricks at all must he surrender the Fool to the player who would have won it.

(If the Fool is led, it is essentially invisible; the next player can play whatever card he feels like, and subsequent players should consider that card to be the lead for the trick.)

The Fool is the highest card by scoring value, and it is very difficult to lose it (you can usually win at least one trick), so getting it in your deal is a Very Good Thing indeed.

Scoring:

After all the tricks are played, each player totals up his resulting score. If you have won fewer than 12 cards, you lose one point for each card you are short of 12; if you have more than 12 cards, you gain one point for each card above 12. To this, add the following scores for scoring cards you hold:

- The Fool: 5 points
- The World (trump XXI): 4 points
- The Mountebanke or Magician (trump I): 4 points
- each King: 4 points
- each Queen: 3 points

•each Knight or Cavalier: 2 points
•each Page or Knave: 1 point
The other cards do not count towards your score, except in counting how many cards you hold.

A Game is played to 50 points. If no one has 50 or more, play more hands until someone wins. Dummett (and, I suspect, the original source) are not explicit about what to do if multiple players exceed 50 in the same hand. The easiest solution is probably that, in this case, the player with the highest total wins, and if there is a tie, they split the stake. However, other alternatives are obvious. For example, there might be an "instant win", in which players count their scores continuously, and the first player to declare themselves above 50 during play wins. Make sure that you agree how you will deal with this issue in advance, since this situation can happen fairly easily.

Evaluation

As of this writing, I am about to start teaching this game, so I don't have much experience to judge from. It certainly appears to be a good, simple trick-taking game, actually more straightforward than the majority of such games from period.

Summary

The order of play is:
•Deal 12 cards to each player.
•Play 12 tricks: you must follow suit if possible, and if not, you must play a trump if possible.
•The Fool serves as the Excuse: it cannot win a trick, but the player who played the Fool immediately takes it back and replaces it with another card from his winnings. He only needs to surrender the Fool if he never wins any other cards to replace it with.
•Lose one point for each card under 12 you end up with; gain one point for each card over 12. Add the value of the scoring cards.
•The game is played to 50 points.

Opinional Rules for Gambling Purposes

(written by Tristan Ap Elwin and dedicated to Rabah's Caravan)

All of these rules, some, or non can be used without majorley changing the playability of the game. These rules are no way researched as a period form of gambling and may entirely be unperiod in nature. Though commen sense would dictate some form of gambling is possible with this game, and these rules are reasonable in that fashion. These rules add a whole new dimension to the game.

Opitional Rule 1:

A pot is exstablished at the beggining of the game. The amount each player must bid should be discussed or may even be handled like in poker. The player who gets to 50 wins the pot.

Optional Rule 2a:

Each trick every player bids x amount of coins. The person who wins the trick doubles his bid from the house. Everyone elses bid goes to the house.

Optional Rule 2b:

A player may place a bid at the beginning of any trick before any cards are played. Any bid of a losing player on the table after the trick is lost goes to the house. Any winning bid can ride to the next trick. Any winning bid can be cashed in between any two tricks. Use the chart below for cash in values:

1 winning trick	double the bid
2 winning tricks	triple the bid
3 winning tricks	x4 times the bid

and so on……

Game Report: Gleek
Class: Cards
Type: Trick-taking
Number of Players: 3
Reconstructed mainly from primary source
Date redacted: August 1996
Redactor: Justin du Coeur, with some reference to Earl Dafydd's *Introduction to Period Card Games* and Parlett's *History of Card Games*.
Sources: Cotgrave, *Wit's Interpreter*, London, 1662. Plagiarized with some changes in Cotton, *The Compleat Gamester*, 1674. Also described in Francis Willughby's *Volume of Plaies*, c1665. This is the Cotgrave version, with help from Willughby. 1st attest: *Elyot's Knowledge*, 1533 (OED).

<p align="center">Reconstruction</p>

Equipment

French-suited, 44 cards (discard deuces and treys). Aces count high.

Beginning

Decide on a stake. Period examples range from farthing up to crown. Note that a lot of stakes trade hands. I will assume a penny stake herein.

Lift for the deal; lowest card deals. Dealer shuffles; another player cuts. Deal 12 cards to each player, 4 at a time. Place remaining 8 cards face-down on the table, stacked. Flip the top card to determine trump. If this is Tiddie (the four of trump), the dealer gets tuppence from each other player immediately. According to Willughby, Tiddie may be turned up during the Mournival phase, or wait until it shows in a trick, and each opponent immediately pays tuppence then, and it does not score specially at the end; this seems to match some unclear language in Cotgrave. (The rationale is that it is consolation for having the worst trump.) Both Cotgrave and Cotton mention that scoring Tiddie is optional, but usual; decide in advance.

Bid for Stock

Go around, bidding for the stock (the remaining seven face-down cards). Bidding begins at 13 pence (12 in Cotton and Willughby). According to Willughby, Eldest must open bidding; Cotgrave is unclear, but this seems plausible. Go around, raising 1 penny at a time, until no one raises. The winner pays out the amount bid, dividing it between the other two players. If there is an odd penny, Cotton says to give it to the eldest hand, or put it in the pot; Willughby says to give it to the last previous raiser; Cotgrave is silent on the subject. I think giving it to Eldest is best.

Winner of the Stock must discard 7 cards, then take in the stock. (Parlett and Dafydd say to take in the stock first, then discard 7, and Cotgrave and Cotton are unclear, but Willughby is quite clear that you discard first.)

Vie for Ruff

"Ruff" refers to a suit -- the winner of the Ruff has the "most of a suit in his hand". Dafydd interprets this as simply most cards of a suit. This seems at odds with this reference: "*And sometimes out of policy, or rather a vapour, they will vie, when they have not above 30. in their hands, and the next may have forty, the other fifty; and they being afraid to see it, many times he wins out of a vapor...*" (Cotton has a similar reference.) It seems impossible to make "30", much less "fifty", out of simple card counts. Fortunately, Willughby clearly states that "In reckoning for the ruffe, the coates are tens, the Ace is eleven". I presume that pip cards are worth their face value, as in Picket.

One important final detail: four Aces counts as the highest Ruff, and beats anything else. Yes, it's inconsistent, but Cotgrave is quite clear about it. (It's also the highest Mournival, so quite nice.)

Everyone tosses tuppence into the pot as an ante. (Cotgrave sounds like you must keep track of money in your head, but it is easier to use the pot as described here.)

Go around. The first to bid may vie or pass; the others may see (and optionally revie), or pass. To vie or revie, put tuppence into the pot; this declares that you think you can win the Ruff. (Similar to a raise in poker.) To pass, say, "I'll have nothing to do with it" (or something like that); at this point, you are out of the Ruff. (Similar to a fold in Poker.) To see, simply match the

vies that have been made since it last came to you; you must see before you can revie.

It is not clear whether an initial pass (before the first vie) takes you out of the bidding (as it clearly does after the vie), or serves like a Poker "check", letting you see the first vie. I suspect the latter, since otherwise passing to the third player would always allow him to win, but this isn't obvious from the text.

The Ruff ends when you return to the last player who vied; at this point, anyone still in the Ruff shows the relevant cards, and the winner takes the pot. The whole process is very like Poker, but with only one kind of hand.

Cotton and Willughby both state that, if everyone passes the Ruff, the stakes of the Ruff are doubled in the next hand. Cotgrave says nothing about this, but I interpret it in terms of the pot. If no one vies for the ruff, then the antes are still in the pot; if you hold that pot over to the next hand, then it is effectively doubled.

Mournival and Gleek

Next, declare your Mournivals (four of a kind), and Gleeks (three of a kind). A Mournival of Aces is worth 8 pence from each opponent, of Kings 6, of Queens 4, and Knaves 2; other cards are irrelevant. A Gleek of Aces is worth 4 pence, Kings 3, Queens 2, and Knaves 1.

It is not clear whether you have to show these cards or not; from the text, I suspect not, since it warns about people who cheat or are careless in these declarations. However, I find it a good practice, and consistent with at least some period games (like Picket).

Play

Now play out 12 tricks as normal. (Dafydd asserts that you must follow suit if possible, or play any card if you have none of the current suit. While I find no concrete evidence for this, it seems a reasonable assumption.) Note that some cards are worth extra in scoring, described below.

Scoring

Score 15 for the Ace of Trump (called Tib), 9 for the Knave of Trump (Tom), and 3 for the King and Queen of Trump. (Cotton also lists 5 for the Five of Trump (Towser) and 6 for the Six of Trump (Tumbler); however, since these are conspicuously absent from Cotgrave and Willougby, I suspect they were new in the 1670's.) I am pretty sure that you do not score Tiddie in this round, since you collected it earlier. (And it would screw up the math.)

Dafydd says to score 3 points for each trick won. While I don't find this obvious from Cotgrave, Willougby indicates strongly that it is the case, mathematically. He points out that the Honors (Tib, Tom, and King and Queen of Trump) total thirty points, and the 36 cards in player hands make 66 points in hands total at the end. Since there are three players with 22 points each, this means that the scoring below should come out even -- one player's winnings should match what is owed to them by others. (This presumes that no one is so dumb as to discard an Honor before taking in the Stock, so the full 66 points are in play.) I find this a compelling argument to believe that Dafydd is correct -- score 3 points for each trick won, or 1 point for each card in your hand, on top of scoring Honors separately.

For purposes of scoring, the dealer adds in the card that was turned up at the beginning, if it is an Honor. (But not if it is a lesser card.)

Subtract 22 from that total to get your final score. You should gain or lose that many pence from your opponents. Thus, if you end with a final score of 2, then you should get tuppence. If you end with a score of -8, you should lose eight pence. It's tricky figuring out how to make this work in terms of who pays who, but easy if you just have the loser(s) put their losses into a pot, and the winner(s) take from that pot. Since there should be exactly 66 points in player's hands, and we have subtracted 66 from those hands, we should have a zero sum, and it should all work out.

(Note that this interpretation of the scoring is somewhat open to dispute. It could also be read as: "If you have 2 points, then collect tuppence from each player. Then, if the next person has -8, he pays 8 to each player in addition to that." And so on. This reading results in numbers proportional to the above scheme, but with much larger sums being tossed about -- wins and losses come out exactly thrice as high. Based on Willughby's wording, though, I believe that the zero-sum interpretation given above is correct.)

Game Report: All Fours
Class: Cards
Type: Trick-taking
Number of Players: 2
Date redacted:
Redactor: researched by Ld. Brusten de Bearsul, re-redaction by Modar Neznanich
Sources:

<div align="center">Reconstruction</div>

Equipment

A standard 52 card deck is used.

Play

The cards are shuffled and each player is dealt 6 cards.

Players look at their cards, then the top card of the remaining card is turned face-up to determine trump. The non-dealer has the right to accept this card's suit as trump or refuse it. If the card is accepted, play begins. However, if the non-dealer accepts the first card turned over, but it happens to be a jack, the dealer earns 1 point.

If the first card turned over is refused by the non-dealer, the dealer then has the right to declare it as trump anyway, or accept the refusal. If the dealer, accepts the refusal, more cards are turned over until a different suit is revealed. That suit becomes trump (no matter whether either player likes that suit or not).

If the dealer, does not accept the refusal, and insists on the original card turned over as trump, then the non-dealer player earns 1 point.

Once the trump suit has been determined, play begins. The non-dealer leads the first hand. The winner of each hand leads the next one.

The high card by suit takes the trick (unless trumped). Aces are the highest cards, deuces the lowest cards. A player must follow suit if he can. If a player cannot follow suit, he must play a trump card if he has one. If a player cannot follow suit and does not have any trump cards, he may play any other card.

Once a round is finished (all six cards played), points are determined, then all the cards are gathered, re-shuffled and the other player becomes the dealer for the next round. The winner is the player to reach 49 (or more) points, first.

Scoring

Points scored are:

1) Any points earned in determining trump (see previous).

2) 1 point for being dealt the highest trump in play. (NOTE: This means the highest trump of the 12 cards used in the two hands.)

3) 1 point for being dealt the lowest trump in play. (NOTE: This means the lowest trump of the 12 cards used in the two hands.)

4) 1 point for being dealt the jack of trump.

5) 1 point for having the highest total of card-points.

Card-points are determined in the following manner:

4 card-points for each ace taken in a trick.
3 card-points for each king taken in a trick.
2 card-points for each queen taken in a trick.
1 card-point for each jack taken in a trick.
10 card-points for each ten taken in a trick.
No card-points (0) for each card 2 through 9 taken in a trick.

Game Report: Rentoy
Class: Cards
Type: Trick-taking
Number of Players: 2-8
Date redacted: 2001/09/29
Redactor: Ruben Krasnopolsky
Known Primary Sources:

Attested in 1598, and over all the 17th century. Rules of 1737, completed and checked with the help of a sample game of 1704, and modern descendent games.

Reconstruction

Equipment
The standard 40-card deck is used. (Remove 8's, 9's and 10's)

Play
At the beginning of each round of the game, players receive three cards, and a final card is shown face-up. The suit of that card is trumps; those are the highest cards in the game, and the only ones with the power of capturing a card that is not of the same suit. The order of the cards in the trump suit is, from high to low: Two, King, Knight, Valet, Ace, 7, 6, 5, 4, and 3. In the other suits, the order is the same, except that the Two is the lowest card instead of the highest.

The first card led to a trick defines the suit of the trick, and only cards in that suit or trump cards can win. If the first card led to a trick is a trump, everybody must play trumps (if they have them); this is called the sweep (arrastre). This is the only case where there is any obligation to follow suit (while this fact is known from modern variants, it is compatible with the early data). In one of the modern variants of Rentoy, played in the Spanish region of Avila, sweeps not only force players to play trumps, but also force them to place a card higher than all cards previously played to the trick, if they have it; this is reminiscent of some Tarot games.

Whichever team wins at least two of the three tricks, gets one point, which is the base value of the hand; and the game is played to twelve points. However, the value of the hand can be raised; the first player to make a raise, raises the value of the hand to 3 points. The opposite team may either stay, raise, or fold. If a team stays, they keep the right to raise again at any later time. This is conceptually similar to the rules for the doubling cube in Backgammon. The successive values the hand can take are 1 point (the base value), 3 points (first raise), 6 (second raise), 9 (third raise), and 12 points (the full game staked on a single hand).

An example:
Let's suppose Team A has already collected 4 points, and Team B has 5. Cards are dealt, and a new hand begins, with its base value of 1 point. Let's suppose that team A raises the value to 3 points, and team B answers accepting it, and raising it further to 6 points.

The possible results are: A may fold, in which case the score is A:4--B:8; A may accept the raise, in which case the final score will be either 10--5 or 4--11, depending on who wins two tricks; or, A may answer (then or later) with its own raise to nine points. If B refuses this raise, the score is 10--5. If B accepts, the tricks are played out, and whoever wins two tricks has won this whole game of Rentoy, because both 9+4 and 9+5 are at least 12 points. It would be pointless for Team B to answer with a raise to twelve points, because nine points are enough for either side to win; the only possible reason to do so would be a hope to find Team A distracted.

Variants
The most common variants of Rentoy consist in adding some extra cards to the suit of trumps. For instance, in the 1704 sample game, the Valet of Coins is the highest trump, placed above the Two of trumps. In modern variants of the game, it's frequent to see an even larger number of special high cards: in Canarian Envite, these are the Three of Clubs, the Knight of Clubs, and the Valet of Coins; observe that the two traditional wildcards are present here.

In this same Canarian variant, the highest trump enjoys the advantage that the play-

er holding it is not required to play it to a sweep; this can be very advantageous, for instance if one's teammates have already won the trick with a lower trump.

Protocols

What happens with the raises/matchings/folds when teammates disagree? What is the proper order for speaking? How much communication is allowed? The most probable answers to these questions are as follows:

Communication

Communication is allowed either in the form of chat (seldom truthful:-) or of standardized signals. There is a signal for each high-card, and players try to pass signals without getting caught by the opposite team. The early sources are very clear that making signals in this way is essential to the game of Rentoy; some of these early signals are recoverable. However, I have decided that authenticity in game structure is better served by using a full system of signals, even if it is not identical to that of old sources. Such systems can be found in modern descendents of the game of Rentoy, and here I propose the system used in the Canarian game called Envite.

It is customary that these signals are passed only to one of the players, an informal leader of the team. It is convenient to choose the "youngest" player of the team for this.

List of signals:
- Three of Clubs: raise the nose, lower the eyebrows
- Knight of Clubs: twist the mouth to one side, without opening it, as if contracting one cheek.
- Valet of Coins: wink one eye
- Two of Trumps: show the tip of the tongue. This curious gesture is attested in early sources
- King of Trumps: raise the eyebrows.
- One single lower trump in hand: raise one finger.
- Two lower trumps in hand: slide the tip of the thumb over the tips of the next two fingers in the hand.
- Three trumps: fill up the cheeks.
- Bad cards: close both eyes.
- Lowest card of the trump suit: raise the shoulders.

Protocols of order

To place a raise, it is necessary to have the turn to play; the raise can be proposed either before or while playing the card. Any player of the opposite team is allowed to speak up, but it is recommendable to give the duty of "speaker" to the player who has received the signals. The answer may be either a fold, a match, or a raise -- observe that when answering, a player (but not a team) can raise out of turn. In case teammates disagree, the first person to speak counts.

Game Report: Truc
Class: Cards
Type: Trick-taking
Number of Players: 2-8
Date redacted: 2001/09/29
Redactor: Ruben Krasnopolsky
Known Primary Sources:

Game well attested in the 17th century, and probably also in the 16th. Reconstruction based on rules of 1739 and 1674.

Reconstruction

Equipment

The standard 40-card deck is used. (Remove 8's, 9's and 10's)

Play

This game is probably of Catalan or Valencian origin; although the existence of a 17th century English variant (called Put), together with ancient and modern French variants, is suggestive of other possibilities.

The game mechanics and betting system are identical to those of Rentoy. The difference is in the capturing order of cards, and in the way tricks are made.

Using the 40-card deck, the basic order of the cards is 3-2-1-King-Knight-Valet-7-6-5-4. Variants where 4s and 5s were discarded were frequent and standard. The English variant uses the full French deck, with the order 3-2-1-King-Queen-Knave-10-9-8-7-6-5-4. Variants with special high cards were known; one of the oldest and most successful, was called Rat-slayer in Castile (Matarrata) and also Truc-of-the-Sword (Truc d'Espaseta) in Catalonia. It has the following four high cards: the Ace of Swords, the Ace of Clubs, the Seven of Swords, and the Seven of Coins.

When capturing tricks, suits are completely irrelevant. There is no trump suit. There is no concept of suit led to a trick, and any card of any suit can capture any card of inferior rank, no matter its suit; for instance, a Three of Cups can capture a Two of Clubs. This means that tied tricks are possible. What to do with them?

Tied tricks: a difficulty of the reconstruction

The earliest written rules for this game that I know of, are those for English Put, a two-player game (Cotton, 1674). There the rule is set forward, that if each player makes a trick and a tie, the hand as a whole is tied. However, this contradicts all modern versions of the game; in all versions, nowadays played in places so diverse as Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay, Jaén, Valencia, Catalonia, and France, ties are decided in favor of the earliest trick made. In the improbable case of three tied tricks, some of the modern rules keep it as a tie; but more of them give the game to the eldest team.

Following Cotton's rules (but no others I know of) there is also the question of who has the lead to the third trick in case the second was tied. Cotton does not answer this question, but the most probable answers are that it must be either the eldest player, or the winner the first trick.

This question does not appear in other variants, because there if a team has won the first trick and tied the second, it is the assured winner, and the third trick is not played.

I believe that the universal agreement of all modern versions against Cotton on this point is a strong hint that the rules for ties described by Cotton are specific to the English variant, perhaps even an idiosyncratic invention of Cotton. More research is needed...

Signals

Signals are used just as in the game of Rentoy. The high-cards being different, the signals themselves must be changed. Again, I have decided to adopt a complete modern set rather than using the incomplete remains found in early literary sources.

List of signals:

- Ace of Swords: raise the eyebrows
- Ace of Clubs: wink one eye
- Seven of Swords: move both lips to the right (maybe showing the tip of the tongue)
- Seven of Coins: move both lips to the left (maybe showing the tip of the tongue)
- Threes: bite the lower lip.
- Twos: kiss the air
- Lower Aces: open the mouth a little.
- Bad cards: close both eyes.

These are the signs used in the modern Argentine variant, very similar to those used in Valencia.

Variants

The earliest variants are remarkably uniform. They differ in the size of the deck (40, 32, or 52 cards), presence or absence of a few high cards above the Threes, and the number of points needed for victory (Cotton's Put is played to 5 points instead of 12), which also changes the value of the successive raises (for instance, Cotton has only one raise, and that one for the whole game).

Modern versions are more varied; some have a large array of special high cards, many have side-bets derived from the games of Flor and Cacho, etcetera.

Game Report: Ruff and Trump
Class: Cards
Type: Trick-taking
Number of Players: 4 (2 or 3 in variations)
Reconstructed mainly from primary source
Date redacted: October 1, 1996
Redactor: Justin du Coeur
Sources: Francis Willughby's *Volume of Plaies*, c1665. Some comparisons made to Ruff and Honours in Cotton's *Complete Gamester*.

Reconstruction

Ruff and Trump seems to be one of a family of relatively straightforward trick-taking games, with fewer extra elements than Picket or Gleek. It is primarily a partnered game, which may interest those who are fond of Bridge or Whist. It appears to be a close relative of Ruff and Honours, described in Cotton; at first, I thought them to be the same game, but have concluded that they are more likely variations on a theme. (Ruff and Trump does not appear to do anything with the honors; Ruff and Honors, curiously, does not appear to have an actual Ruff.)

Note that this is a reconstruction in process, and deserves more research (based on more sources).

Equipment

A full 52-card French-suited deck.

Beginning

The game can be played either "double-hand", with partners working closely together, or "single-hand", with every player working alone. Willughby implies that the double-hand variant is both more interesting and more common. If played double-hand, the partners should be sitting opposite each other (since, obviously, partners sitting next to each other would have too much opportunity to see each others' cards).

Dealer deals 12 cards to each player, 4 at a time. This will leave 4 cards left over; these are stacked face-down in the middle of the table -- Willughby calls this pile the "head". (It corresponds to the "Stock" in Cotton.) Flip the top card of the head, to determine trump.

Ruff

Next, reckon the Ruff. As in most games, the "Ruff" refers to the strongest suit you have in your hand. Willughby isn't entirely explicit, but it appears likely that each pip card is worth the number of pips it shows, court cards are worth ten, and Aces are worth eleven. (The only part Willughby says explicitly is that Aces are worth eleven.) Add up the value in each suit to get the strength of that suit.

If you choose to use the trump suit for your ruff, you may count the card turned up to determine trump along with the cards in your hand. (Obviously, if you aren't using the trump suit, you can't add in that card.)

Everyone announces their ruff, and the player with the highest ruff wins. Willughby does not address whether one is allowed to bluff low on the ruff; I would tend to assume that you can. The winner does not show his ruff yet, but scores 12 points for winning it.

Rub

Next, the player who holds the Ace of Trump gets to "rub" the head. They take in the 4 cards of the head, then discard four cards from the resulting 16-card hand. (Willughby is explicit about the order here -- rub, then discard.) If the card turned up for trump was an Ace, the dealer gets to rub the head.

After the rub is dealt with, the winner of the ruff must show the relevant cards. This does not happen until after the rub, because it could affect the cards chosen for discarding. Willughby does not address the question of what happens when someone miscounts their ruff; I would presume that they must pay a forfeit, and the true winner counts the 12 points instead.

Play

Play as in a standard trick-taking game. Eldest leads the first trick; you must follow suit if possible; trumping is optional. Aces are high.

Scoring

After all the tricks are played, count the cards that you hold. If playing double-hand, score one point for each card over two dozen that the two partners jointly hold; if playing single-hand, score one point for each card over one dozen that you hold. So, for example, if you are playing double-hand, and you and your partner have 28 cards, you score 4 points (since 28 - 24 = 4).

A set consists of 52 points (Willughby gives some probably spurious reasons for this point value). Continue to play until one side or player reaches this value. Willughby does not address what happens if you pass 52 points in the middle of a hand (if, for instance, the 12 points for winning the Ruff pushes one over the top). I would assume that the game ends as soon as someone achieves the point-value. Willughby explicitly states that extra points above 52 do not count towards subsequent games; presumably, this was a point of occasional debate.

Variations

As mentioned above, the game can be played either double-hand (with partners) or single-hand (singly). Also, it may be played with fewer people. Willughby states that, in a 3 player game, a set consists of 40 points, and in a 2 player game, it is 36. Since there will be more than four cards left over in the head, you should rub the top four cards of the head, instead of the entire thing.

He also presents alternatives to this: play 3 players with 16 cards each, or 2 players with 24 cards each. In these versions, there is a four-card head as normal, and play is to 52 points.

Summary

The game, in brief:
•Deal 12 cards to each player, 4 at a time.
•Stack remaining 4 cards face-down; flip the top one to determine trump.
•Players count and announce their ruffs. You may use the trump card towards your ruff, if appropriate. Winner of the ruff gets 12 points.
•The player who holds the Ace of trump rubs: take in the head, then discard 4 cards. If the trump card was an ace, the Dealer rubs.
•Winner of the Ruff reveals it.
•Play 12 tricks.
•Double-hand: score one point for each card over 24 in your joint hands.
•Single-hand: score one point for each card over 12 in your hand.
•Play until someone passes 52 points.

Game Report: Poch
Class: Cards
Type: Trick / Vying
Number of Players: 3-6
Date redacted:
Redactor:
Sources:

Setup:

Poch is a card game for 3 to 6 players. It is played with a 32-card deck with four suits of ace, king, queen, jack, 10, 9, 8, and 7. Each player starts with the same number of coins (about 40). Before play begins each player places a coin in seven of the eight compartments on the board: A, K, Q, J, 10, K-Q (marriage), and 7-8-9 (sequence). The eighth compartment, Poch, is used later. After the initial ante is paid, each player is dealt 5 cards. The dealer then turns up a card from the deck as trump.

A	K	Q	J
10	K-Q	7-8-9	Poch

Play:

The game is played in three phases. You will be using the same hand of cards for each phase. The first phase is sweepstakes. Anyone holding the card or cards in the trump suit matching one of the seven compartments collects the coins from that compartment. If someone holds both the king and queen of trump, they collect the marriage compartment in addition to the king and queen compartments. If someone holds the seven, eight and nine of trump, they collect the sequence compartment. All unclaimed wagers are carried over to the next deal.

The second phase is similar to poker. Players take turns betting, raising the bet or dropping out. Bets are placed in the Poch compartment. Once every player has either matched the bet or dropped out, hands are compared. The winning hand is the one with the best combination: four of a kind, three of a kind, a pair, or no pair. In the case of ties, higher valued cards beat lower valued cards.

In the final phase, beginning with the winner of phase two, players take turns placing cards on the table trying not to exceed 31. Face cards count for 10, aces 1. If the next person cannot stay under 31 they do not play a card. The person who put down the last card receives a coin from each player and they then begin the next sequence by laying down a card. The first person to run out of cards receives one coin from each player for each card still remaining in their hand.

The game ends after each player has had a turn to be dealer. Any coins left on the board, after the last hand, are lost. (Option: On the last deal any coins left in the first seven compartments are moved to Poch and won in the second phase.) The player with the most coins is the winner.

Game Report: Primero
Class: Cards
Type: Vying
Number of Players: 4 probably best; works for 2 through 6-ish
Reconstructed from primary and tertiary sources
Date redacted: October 13, 2002; updated October 28, 2002; updated October 26, 2003
Redactor: Justin du Coeur
Known Primary Sources:
• Gerolamo Cardano's *The Book on Games of Chance* (*Liber de Ludo Aleae*), c. 1520. Original Latin available on the Web at http://home.t-online.de/home/099191080-0002/cardano_de_ludo_aleae.htm. English translation by Dr. Sydney H. Gould, originally published in *Cardano, the Gambling Scholar* (by Oystein Ore, Princeton U. Press, 1953); subsequently republished as a slim separate book (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961). Quotes herein come from Gould.
• *Pleasant and Delightfull Dialogues in Spanish and English*, by John Minsheu (John Haviland, printer; London, 1623).
• *Second Frutes* by John Florio (1591).
• *Jeu de Prime de Lyon* (c. 1693).
• *Regles du jeu des minquiattes* (c. 1770).
• *CAPITOLO SOPRA / il gioco di Primiera* (c. 1560?).
• *Il gioco di primiera* (1681).
• *Commento al Capitolo della Primiera*, by Francesco Berni (1526).

I am a bit embarassed to say that, at this point, I've really only dug properly into the first three. I've done some looking into the latter five (which Thierry Depaulis was kind enough to provide), but my Italian and French are weak enough that I can't say I've done them anything remotely resembling justice. This should all be considered extremely preliminary until I've rectified that.

Prior Reconstructions: I am aware of the following well-known reconstructions:
• Jeff Suzuki's Primero: A Renaissance Cardgame.
• David Parlett's description in *A Dictionary of Card Games* (Oxford University Press, 1992).
• "Primero: A Period Card Game", by Rowan Harbinger (SKA Rowan O'Sidhe) in Tournaments Illuminated 122. (Suzuki has comments comparing this with Cardano in the Letters in issue 123.)
• David Whittaker's reconstruction, on the Elizabethan Geek Wiki.

There are a couple of other descriptions on the Web, but without any supporting information that I can find. As of this writing, I have begun some serious re-evaluation based on some of Whittaker's ideas, but they have not yet been incorporated into the main text here. See the appendix below for some initial opinions.

Reconstruction: Italian Primero

Broadly speaking, Primero can be thought of as the period equivalent of Poker -- it is a vying game with a number of different hand types, where bluffing is a crucial component. You should not carry this connection too far, though: last I've heard, there does not appear to be any lineal connection between the games, and there are some very important differences. But broadly speaking, players who like Poker tend to also like Primero.
It is widely agreed that Primero was well-known around Europe during the 16th century; references are common in at least Spain, France, England and Italy. However, it also appears that the game varied considerably from place to place. Finding that the above primary sources appear to contradict each other in some critical ways, I am therefore breaking this into two distinct reconstructions: Italian Primero and English Primero. While both descriptions draw from all of the sources, the Italian description is based mainly on Cardano, and the English mainly on Minsheu and Florio.

Equipment

The game is played with a standard deck of cards, with the eights, nines and tens discarded, making a forty card deck.

There is not a common pot in this game; when you make a bet, you place the money in front of you, but do not place it into a common pool in the center. This makes it easier to manage some aspects of the game.

Card Values

The cards have the following values:
- Ace: 16 points.
- 2: 12 points.
- 3: 13 points.
- 4: 14 points.
- 5: 15 points.
- 6: 18 points.
- 7: 21 points.
- Jack, Queen, King (aka "face", "coat" or "court" cards): 10 points.

So the 2-5 have 10 added to their value; 6 and 7 are trebled; aces are work 16 and coats are worth 10. It takes a little practice to get used to this, but it becomes intuitive after a while.

Hand Types

Italian Primero has five hand types. In ascending order from least to greatest (and using the original Latin names given by Cardano), they are:
- Numerus (or point) is the most common hand type, when you have two or three cards in a single suit. Note that you only count the cards in that suit when counting up the hand's value. The lowest possible numerus is 20, (two face cards of a suit). The greatest is 54 (the five, six and seven of a suit).
- Primero is having one card from each suit. The lowest possible value is 40 (one court card from each suit); the highest is 81 (three sevens and a six).
- Supremus is a numerus of 55 (that is, the six, seven and ace of a suit). Note that, despite being technically a numerus, it beats a primero.
- Fluxus (or flush) is having four cards of the same suit. The lowest possible is 42 (the three coats and deuce of a suit); the highest is 70 (the seven, six, five and ace of a suit).
- Chorus is four of a kind: four cards of the same face value. This is technically a fancy primero, but beats all other hand types. Note that, despite the fact that the coats all have the same point value, they do not match each other for chorus: three kings and a jack are not a chorus; four kings are. The lowest chorus is 40 (four coats); the highest is 84 (all sevens).

Play

To begin with, choose a dealer. This was probably done by cutting the deck ("lifting"); the lowest card probably dealt. The dealer shuffles the cards, and deals two cards to each player, face-down.

Phase 1:

Begin to go around, beginning with the first player to receive cards. On his turn, each player may do any of the following:
- Vie -- you toss in a bet (that is, put some money in front of you), and declare a bid. You bid a particular point value with a particular hand type -- "Numerus 45" or "Primero 40" or suchlike. If a bid has already been declared, you must bid a higher value within the current hand type, or a higher hand type, than that. At this point, you can declare any bid you see appropriate, but remember that you'll have to make that type in order to win. You may discard one or two cards and draw new ones, if you choose.
- See (or Hold) -- match the currently-vied bet. If you See the bet, you may then Revie: that is, you can increase the bet and the bid. If the hand has been Vied, and gets around to the last player with no one else having Seen it, the last player must See it: he is not permitted to Pass or Fold. You may discard and draw one or two cards after Seeing and/or Revying.

• Pass -- discard one or two cards, and then draw new ones from the deck, and then go to the next player. You may only Pass once after the last Vie; that is, if a Vie has gotten to you twice and not been Revied, you must See the current bet, or Fold. You do not have to discard if you have Vied or Seen the current bet (that is, you have matched the pot).

• Fold -- you can declare yourself out of the hand, and take back half of the money that you have bet so far. The remainder stays in the pot for the winner.

The rule about getting around to the last player deserves a clarifying example. Say you have players A, B, C and D. A Passes; B Vies; C and D both Pass. A now must See the bet, even if he doesn't have much of a hand. After this, play continues around the table. B Passes (and does not have to discard, since he has already Vied the pot). C and D must now make up their minds: C Folds, and D Sees. The pot now being right, Phase 1 ends.

If a player runs out of money, he may go "all in", in Poker parlance. Once all of his money has been placed in front of him, he no longer bets, but may continue to See any further Vies and Revies without putting in any further money. If he winds up winning the hand, he collects an amount from each other player equal to the amount that he bet. The remainder goes to the second-highest hand.

Once the hand has been Vied, and everyone has either Seen the current bet or Folded, move on to Phase 2.

Phase 2:

Deal two more cards to each player. Begin going around as before, but with some tweaks. Specifically:

• When vying, if the bid is numerus or supremus, you must exchange one or two cards.

• You can bluff -- you can state a better value than you have -- but you may only understate your hand type in specific ways. If you have a supremus, and another player has bid primero, you may claim to have primero. If you have chorus, and another player has bid primero or fluxus, you may claim to have that hand type. Other than those exceptions, you may not understate your hand type. However, you may understate your point value.

Again, play continues until the hand has been Vied and everyone has either Seen or Folded. At this point, everyone shows their hands. The winner is the remaining player with the highest point value in the bid hand type. You must at least equal the bid in order to win. If you have a hand type greater than the bid, you lose, unless you fit one of the exceptions above. (Note that this means that a bad draw can blow your hand -- if the bid is, eg, numerus, and you draw to a fluxus, you lose.) If no one can win, the money remains in the center for the next hand. In case of ties, the eldest hand wins. You must show all of your cards, to demonstrate that you do not have a higher hand type that cannot win under these circumstances. Winner collects all the money on the table.

Variation: Losing Primero

Cardano mentions a variation, in which you are trying to get the lowest hand rather than the highest. He implies that the game is otherwise identical, and is not very common.

Reconstruction: English Primero

This version is based on the same sources, but with a different emphasis. In this case, I am using Minsheu and Florio as the main focus when there is contradiction between them and Cardano, but otherwise assuming that the game is probably similar to the Italian version. In general, this reconstruction will refer back to the Italian version, so you should read that first.

The Equipment, Hand Types and Card Values are probably the same as in Italian Primero, above. In this English version, I suspect that you do bet into a common pot, unlike the Italian version.

Play

Before starting, settle on a Stake (the amount for each bet) and a Rest (the final bet).

Conventionally, the Rest is thrice the Stake. Choose a dealer by lifting for it -- the lowest card by point value deals. The dealer shuffles the cards, and deals two cards face-down to each player.

Phase 1:

Begin to go around, starting with the first player to receive cards (the eldest). This works similarly as in Italian Primero, but the options are slightly different:

• Vie -- you toss one stake into the pot. You may then optionally discard and draw any number of cards.

• See (or Hold) -- match the currently-vied bet. If you See the bet, you may then Revie: that is, you can increase the bet by one stake. If the hand has been Vied, and gets around to the last player with no one else having Seen it, the last player must See it: he is not permitted to Pass or Fold. You may discard and draw any number of cards after Seeing and/or Revying.

• Pass -- you may optionally discard any number of cards, and then draw new ones from the deck, and then go to the next player. You may only Pass once after the hand has been Vied; that is, if a Vie has gotten to you twice and not been Revied, you must must See the current bet, or Fold.

• Fold -- you can declare yourself out of the hand, leaving all of your bets in the pot.

As in the Italian game, a player can go "all in" when he runs out of money, and vie for only the part of the pot that he can match.

Note the differences from Italian Primero:

• There is no concept of bidding -- as far as I can tell, in the English game, you never declare your hand. In this respect, it is much more like Poker than the Italian game.

• You can discard all of your cards at once; in the Italian game, I believe you are limited to two.

• There is no apparent concept of taking back half your bets when you fold, as in the Italian game.

As in the Italian game, once the pot has been Vied and everyone has either Seen or Folded, move on to Phase 2.

Phase 2:

Deal two more cards to each player. Continue to go around as in Phase 1, but with the following differences:

• If you go all the way around the table without anyone vying, you throw in your hands and redeal from scratch; this is known as "swigging". The money on the table remains for the next hand.

• At any point, instead of vying the Stake, you may instead vie the Rest; that is, you toss the Rest in. This is effectively calling for a showdown. The Rest cannot be Re-vied; once someone has tossed in their Rest, the others can only See, Pass (once) or Fold.

• If someone Vies (but does not Vie the Rest), and everyone else Sees or Folds, you continue to go around as in Phase 1. There may be multiple rounds of Vying before someone Vies the Rest.

If someone Rests, then go around until everyone has either Rested or Folded. At this point, everyone left shows their hands. The highest hand wins. Since there is no bidding, there is no concept of understating your hand.

Summary

Given the complexity of the game (and the length of this writeup), I've written a one-page cheat sheet in Word format, covering both versions of the game. It's very terse, but should suffice as a reminder.

Primero Cheat Sheet
(2-6-ish players)
(40 card deck – no eights, nines, tens)

Card Values
Ace: 16 points
2-5: 12-15 points (face plus 10)
6: 18 points (face x 3)
7: 21 points (face x 3)
King, Queen, Jack: 10 points

Hand Types
In ascending order:
Numerus: two or three cards in one suit. Worth the point value of those cards.
Primero: one card from each suit. Worth the total of those cards.
Supremus: the ace, six, seven of a suit. 55 points by definition.
Fluxus: aka Flush, four cards of a suit. Worth the point value of those cards.
Chorus: four cards of the same kind. Must be identical: King does not match Queen. Worth the point value of the cards.

Italian Primero
Phase 1:
Lift to choose dealer: lowest card deals. Deal 2 cards to each player.
Go around; in turn, do one of these:
Vie: bet some money on table (not in common pot), and bid a hand type and point value. Must be higher than previous bids. May discard and draw 1 or 2 cards.
See: match the bet. May revie with another bet and higher bid. Last player after Vie must See the bet. May discard and draw 1 or 2 cards.
Pass: discard and draw 1 or 2 cards. May only Pass once after the Vie. Don't need to discard if Vied or Seen already.
Fold: quit the hand, and forfeit your bets.
If you run out of money ("all in"), you may still See, but can only win as much as you bet. Second-highest takes remainder.
Once Vied and all have Seen or Folded, go to:
Phase 2:
Deal 2 more cards per player. Go around, but if bid is numerus or supremus, you must exchange one or two cards. Supremus may claim to be primero if primero is bid; chorus may claim to be primero or fluxus if those are bid. Otherwise, cannot understate hand type. There is no obligation for anyone to See.
After Vie and all have Seen or Folded, show all cards. Winner is highest hand in bid hand type (or one of above exceptions). You must make or better the bid to win.

English Primero
Agree on a Stake and a Rest (usually Stake times 3-5). Rest is maximum bet per round. Lift to choose dealer; lowest value deals.
Phase 1:
Deal 2 cards to each player. In turn, do one of these:
Vie: toss one stake into pot. May discard and draw any number of cards.
See: match the Vie. May then Revie. Last player after Vie must See the bet. May discard and draw any number of cards.
Pass: discard any or all cards, and draw. May only Pass once after the Vie.
Swigg: quit the hand; leave all bets on table.
May go "all in", as in Italian Primero.
Once Vied and all have Seen, go to:
Phase 2:
Deal 2 more cards per player. Go around as in Phase 1. There is no obligation for anyone to See.
Once someone has Vied and all have Seen or Swigged, show all cards. Highest hand wins, without restriction.

Rationale

Primero is one of the most important games of the 16th century, but also one of the trickiest to reconstruct. While we have several sources, they are all rather ambiguous, and reconstructions vary wildly. So as to not add too badly to the babble, I present here the reasoning underlying this reconstruction. It is presented roughly in the order that concept appear above, but is rather loosely ordered. Hopefully it isn't too confusing. The intent is that other reconstructors can see where I am coming from, and draw their own conclusions.

To start with, I should emphasize that neither of these reconstructions is anything like settled. The sources are highly ambiguous and tricky to interpret, and there may well be non-English sources of which I am unaware. This is my current best guess of what they are talking about, and are subject to change, especially if new information comes to my attention.

This reconstruction owes a good deal to the previous ones, especially those of Suzuki and Harbinger. I've thought carefully about each of those, and adopted the ideas that I found supportable from the evidence.

Italian vs. English Primero:

The decision to give two entirely separate reconstructions is unusual; the other authors have only given one, even when they are using multiple sources to understand the game. It is driven by my conclusion that the two games really are quite different. If nothing else, the Italian game clearly features bidding, and the English game clearly does not. This changes the complexion of the game dramatically enough that it is best to assume that there will be other knock-on effects. And indeed: treating the games separately has tended to clarify each game by providing mutual contrasts.

Number of Players:

Some reconstructions say that the game is for four or more players, but Florio is clearly describing a two-player game. The upper limit is not clear; you don't want to run out of cards easily, but otherwise there is flexibility. I would guess that six is the most before you start needing to reshuffle the discards.

Hand Types:

Parlett gives only three hand types: the Primero, Fifty-Five and Flush. I assume that this is based on the practice of the modern descendant games. But it is clear in Florio that one can win with a simple point (that is, a Numerus in Cardano's lexicon), and I see no reason to omit Chorus simply because it isn't mentioned in the English sources. It would be a fairly rare hand, so it is unsurprising that these dialogues would omit it.

Lifting for Deal:

This is explicit in the Dialogues. It is not clear how one chooses the Dealer in the other sources, but since lifting for deal is quite common in period, I am guessing that it was probably the norm. It is not strictly obvious that the deal goes to the lowest card by point value (it could, for example, be going to the highest card by conventional rank), but that is my interpretation of what is going on in the Dialogues.

Note that the Dialogues may also imply that the highest card becomes the eldest. I haven't bothered with that tweak, but it sounds like what is happening in the Dialogues. It is not clear whether the players then switched seats, or if the Dealer needed to remember the deal order.

Stake and Rest:

It is quite clear in both of the English sources that there are separate concepts of "Stake" and "Rest"; it is conspicuous that in both cases, the Rest is thrice the Stake, so I am assuming that this was an ordinary convention. It is clear in these sources that the Rest is played at the end. However, there is no intimation of any such concept in Cardano, so I am assuming that the betting in the Italian game is more free-form.

Cards two and two:

Most reconstructions have the Dealer send out all four cards more or less at once, interpreting Cardano as intending simply that you deal two to each player, and then immediately deal two more. I am siding with Harbinger on this one, to instead take Cardano literally: you have two completely separate deals of two cards each. This seems a reasonable interpretation of Cardano's comment that "the cards are dealt around twice". (And is clearly the interpretation that Dr. Gould drew as well, from his footnotes on the translation.) It also fits with the Dialogues, where the dealer says, "One, two, three, foure: one, two, three, foure." Given that there are four players, this comes out as just the right number of cards for two cards each around to four players. And it explains Cardano's obsession with the mean values for a good score in each hand type -- he is explaining how to calculate what to bid, given a two-card opening hand.

Vying and Drawing:

It is quite unclear whether you are allowed or supposed to discard and draw when you Vie or See. Cardano implies that it is required when you Vie numerus or supremus. After some discussion and experimentation, I have chosen to allow it as a general rule -- in practice, it makes the game more interesting, and I see no good reason to disallow it.

First-round Bidding:

Harbinger does not have the players bidding in the first round, only betting. I believe that there is bidding, again due to the discussion in Cardano, where he appears to be discussing what is appropriate to bid with only two cards.

Understating:

This is a point of some controversy. Some reconstructions (such as Harbinger) decide firmly that you cannot understate your hand. I take a softer line than that, on two grounds. First, Florio has a sort of understating bluff: A. claims to have a 40, but actually has a 54. If I am correct that there is no real bidding here, then this is simply table-talk, but the idea is established.

More important than that is the degree of circumlocution that Cardano indulges in on this subject. He states explicitly that certain kinds of understating are permitted: "It is not permissible to count diverse bids as more than the greatest of these, but supremus can be considered as primero when another has bid primero. Also chorus can always be concealed for primero and for fluxus when another has announced it." And there is no hint that you cannot understate your point value. Hence, I interpret the process as bidding, where you must win with the specified hand type or lower except for the given (fairly rare) exceptions.

Can Only Pass Once After Vie:

This is supported very loosely by Cardano's comment that "they change cards once". It's more there as a common-sense rule: otherwise, the players who don't have anything can just continue to pass and pass, delaying the game and not contributing any money. This seems a bit implausible, so I have interpolated my best guess. But it's just a guess.

Last Player Must See:

This one is actually unambiguous in both cases. The Dialogues explicitly have the last player saying, "I must of force see it". And Cardano says, "If anyone places a wager from the beginning, then if someone accepts it, the others are absolved. If no one does, then the last player from him who places is compelled to stake."

Withdraw Half When Folding:

Okay, this one is odd, and no other reconstruction has it. But it is the only interpretation I have come up with for Cardano's long digression about how much one should remove under certain circumstances. I believe he is describing the amount that would be fair to remove when you Fold under certain bid conditions. Note that, while he is describing a relatively complex scheme for what would be fair, he implies that this is not what normally happens -- that you usually withdraw half.

This is somewhat buttressed by the English concept of the Rest. The two systems, while different, are actually analogous: in both games, you have to bet a good deal extra in order to stick around for the showdown. In England, this is direct: you have to toss in a large extra bet in order to see the final round. In Italy it's a bit less so: if you decide to go away without seeing the cards, you can take some back. The effect is similar, however.

"Refusing"?:

Harbinger's reconstruction has a concept that the other players may explicitly refuse an overly high bet, and can thereby argue the original vie down. I'm not seeing any explicit support for that concept in the sources I have, so I have left it out.

Showing Cards?:

Harbinger also says that you show two cards when you declare your bid at the beginning of the second phase. I suspect this is an interpretation of Cardano's discussion of what cards have to be shown under certain circumstances. However, I disagree with the interpretation. I believe that Cardano is instead saying that, during the showdown when cards are revealed, you cannot just show that you have the declared hand -- you must also show that you do not have an illegal higher hand. For example, he says that, if you win with Supremus, you must show the remaining card to demonstrate that you do not have Fluxus. The implication is that you do not necessarily have to show all your cards when you win: I specify that you do mainly because it is simpler, and easier to remember as a rule of thumb.

"All in":

The term is taken from Poker terminology, but the concept is, I believe, in both versions.

In the Dialogues, there is a fairly mysterious sequence of dialogue. L. has Fluxus, which clearly should win the whole pot. However, O. declares that his Supremus wins out over M.'s Primero. I believe this is clarified by L.'s earlier comment that, "I cannot give it over". This is L. saying that he cannot match the Rest, even though he intends to remain in the hand. When it comes out, he wins some of it (saying, "I flush whereby I draw"), but O. wins M.'s Rest, since L. couldn't match it.

Cardano is somewhat clearer on this point. He says, "if one has too little and the others more, then those who so wish can contend separately beyond that which is least. And even though that third player should win, still they contend for the remainder just as if they were playing along among themselves." This describes the all-in concept pretty well.

Swigging:

The notion that you toss in your cards and redeal if no one Vies in the second round comes mainly from Florio, where S. offers A. the option of swigging, and insists that he either do that or lay his Rest. Cardano instead states explicitly, "If no one bets, they are compelled to exchange one or two cards according to their judgement." So I am assuming that this is a difference between the English and Italian games. See Florio's 1598 Italian-English dictionary for another reference to swigging: "to heape vp, to swigge the cardes".

Vies Without Resting:

In the English game, I posit that there may be multiple rounds of Vying and Seeing before someone actually calls for the Rest (and thus, the showdown). This is strictly a guess, based on the vague evidence. In practice, it seems to work satisfactorily.

Must Match the Bid To Win:

Cardano doesn't clearly say anywhere that you have to make the bid value to win. In practice, though, this seems necessary -- otherwise, bidding point values is essentially pointless. Similarly, if you could win with a lesser hand type than the bid, you could simply bid chorus and reduce the game to essentially the English variant, where highest hand wins. The rule that the money remains on the table if no one makes the bid is my own assumption, as the obvious way to deal with the fairly unusual situation.

Drawing to Lose:

The idea that you might draw a card, get a better hand, and then lose (in the Italian game) is, obviously, a little controversial. But it seems the logical outgrowth of the rest of the rules as I've figured them so far, and it does provide a rather interesting twist. It also might explain the rule that you must draw during a bid of numerus or supremus -- it gives the other players a chance to make you blow your hand. In this, it adds a slightly blackjack-like element.

Game Report: Alquerque
Class: Board Game
Number of Players: 2
Date redacted: 1997, 1998
Redactor: Robert fitz John (Trevor Barker)
Sources: An essay submitted by Robert fitz John to the Guild of Gamesplayers & Gamescrafters in partial fulfilment of the Requirements for Advancement to the rank of Journeyman Gamesplayer, dated xxvii June, AS XX. Permission is given to reproduce and distribute this work, on the following conditions: this must not be done for profit, and this copyright notice must remain attached and unaltered.
R. C. Bell, *Board and Table Games from Many Civilisations*, revised edition with 2 vols bound as one, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1979. ISBN 0-486-23855-5.
David Pritchard, *The Family Book of Games*, Brockhampton Press, Hodder Headline plc, 1994. ISBN 1-86019-021-9.

I. History
　　　　Alquerque is known to date back at least as far as 1400BC, since boards have been found cut into the roofing slabs of the temple at Kurna in Egypt. A game called Quirkat is mentioned in an Arabic work of the 10th Century AD. The earliest set of rules is found in the *Libro de Acedrex, Dados e Tablas*, a magnificently illuminated manuscript compiled between 1251 and 1282 by order of the King of Leon and Castile, Alfonso X. The game's Spanish name, derived from 'El-quirkat', was Alquerque.
There are several variants of Alquerque that use larger boards and more pieces. Cross-fertilization with early forms of Chess created the game we know as 'Draughts' or 'Checkers'.
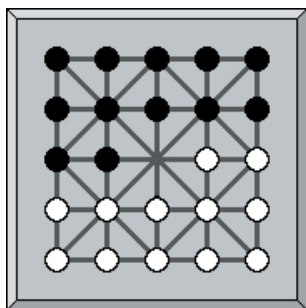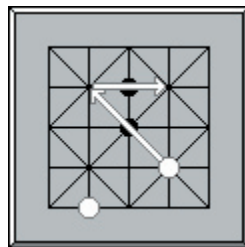
II. Rules
　　　　The board is illustrated at left, with the pieces laid out for the start of the game. Sources disagree as to whether each player's foremost two pieces are placed to the right of the board (as shown) or to the left. For right-handed players I prefer the layout depicted; in any case, the transposition does not affect the game.
　　　　The basic rules, as given in the *Libro de Acedrex, Dados e Tablas*, are as follows. One player has 12 white pieces, the other 12 black pieces. They decide, by whatever means, who will move first. Each player, in his turn, moves one of his pieces from its current location to another point. A piece may move along one of the marked lines to an adjacent unoccupied point. Alternatively, if an adjacent point (along one of the marked lines) is occupied by an opponent's piece but the point beyond that (in a straight line) is vacant, the player may capture his opponent's piece by jumping over it to the unoccupied point. If, after the jump is completed, another of the opponent's pieces is now en prise, that piece may also be captured even if the second jump is along a different line to the first, (see figure). Thus, two or more pieces may be captured in a move, but the same piece must be used to make all the captures. If a player is able to capture an opponent's piece during his move, he must do so. If he does not, his opponent may, at the start of his own turn, huff the piece that could have made a capture. (This is in addition to the player's normal move.)
　　　　It may be observed that the Alfonso manuscript does not give a sufficient set of rules for the game. Since we cannot determine the precise Medieval rules, we have to resort to guesswork based on more recent versions of the game. (Indeed, it is quite possible that there was never one single set of rules.) There are essentially two variants, which I shall describe below. Players should decide in advance which rules they will use.

IIa. First Variant

An example of this variant is described by Bell. Pieces may only be moved directly forward, diagonally forward, or sideways. A piece may not move onto a point it has occupied before. Bell also suggests that a piece reaching the opponent's back row may not move except to make a capture (sideways, presumably). This last rule seems unnecessary, except that it shortens the game slightly. Play continues either until one player has lost all his pieces, or until he cannot make a move. That player loses the game.

If a player has lost all his pieces, he pays his opponent two stakes, plus two more for every piece the winner has remaining on the board. If the game was lost because a player was unable to move, the loser pays two stakes, plus one stake for every piece the winner has on the board, but minus one stake for every piece the loser has on the board.

IIb. Second Variant

An example of this variant is described by Pritchard. Pieces may be moved along the lines in any direction. To win, a player must capture all his opponent's pieces.

IIc. Comment

Of the major variants I have described, I prefer the second for its simplicity. Note that there are many minor variations that I have not listed.

As regards scoring, Pritchard does not suggest a method, but I find it sufficient for each player to wager an agreed stake, winner takes all.

Pritchard also expands upon the obligation to capture if possible. He states that, after the initial jump further captures must be made if possible. If there is more than one way a player can capture, he may choose whichever option he prefers. My interpretation of this is as follows. The figure shows a possible situation with White to move. He is obliged to make a capture, but is free to choose whether to take Black's piece 1 with Y, or pieces 1 and 2 with X. Note that piece X can be huffed if it fails to capture piece 2 after jumping 1. Capturing using piece X will result in both White's pieces being captured by Black's piece 3 in his next move, so White should choose to capture with piece Y.

Concerning huffing, I suggest that if a player makes no capture during his turn, but he has more than one piece with which he could have made a capture, his opponent may choose to huff any one of those pieces.

III. Glossary

Capture   An opponent's piece is captured by jumping over it; it is then immediately removed from the board.

En prise   A piece is en prise if an opponent's piece is able to capture it, without the need for any intervening moves.

Huff   A piece may be huffed as a penalty for failing to capture; the piece is immediately removed from the board.

Point   A point is any location on the board where a piece may be placed.   An Alquerque board has 25 points, joined by lines.

Stake   Stakes are used to record wins and losses; they may be (numeric) points recorded in a suitable manner, or - for a more medieval ambience - items, preferably of small value, such as cheap bangles or reproduction coins.

Game Report: Chaturanga
Class: Board Game
Number of Players: 2
Date redacted: 1995. Last modified on: January 04, 2001
Redactor: Hans L. Bodlaender
Sources: The date of the game's origin is uncertain, but documentary evidence exists from c. AD 620 in the form of a Sanskrit document, *Vāsavadatta* from Subhandu which describes what could be chess pieces. Another document, dated from between 750 AD and 850 AD is *Chatrang-namak* by Pahlavi which describes the arrival of Chatranga to the court of Persia with an Indian embassy. The authenticity of the latter account is doubted by some.

Scientists generally assume that Chaturanga, played in India, in or before the 7th century after Christ, is the oldest known form of chess. Resemblances, both with the current chess, and with Chinese chess are remarkable. The rules below are after Murray and Gollon.
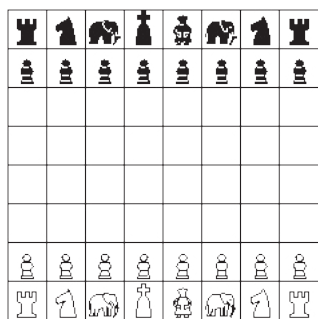
Opening setup
The game is played on an uncheckered board of eight by eight squares.

White
King e1; Counsellor d1; Rook a1, h1; Knight b1, g1; Elephant c1, f1; Pawns a2, b2, c2, d2, e2, f2, g2, h2.

Black
King d8; Counsellor e8; Rook a8, h8; Knight b8, g8; Elephant c8, f8; Pawns a7, b7, c7, d7, e7, f7, g7, h7.

Moves of pieces
The king moves as usual king, but additionally has the right to make one knight-move during the game, provided that he hasn't been checked before he makes his knight-move. Castling doesn't exist.
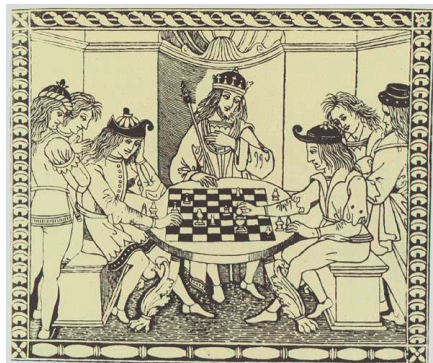
The counsellor moves one square diagonally.
The elephant moves two squares diagonally, but may jump the intervening square.
The knight moves as a usual knight.
The rook or chariot moves as usual rook.
The pawn or soldier moves and takes as a usual pawn, but may not make a double step on its first move.

Promotion
Pawns can promote when they arrive at the last rank of the board, but only to the type of piece that was on the promotion-square in the opening setup, e.g., a white pawn that moves to b8 can only promote to a knight. Additionally, promotion is only possible when the player already lost a piece of the type, so the pawn moving to b8 will only promote to a knight, when the white player already lost a knight during the game. A consequence is that pawns never promote on e1 or d8.

Mate and stalemate
Object of the game is to mate the opponents king. The player that stalemates its opponent loses the game.

Game Report: Shatranj
Class: Board Game
Number of Players: 2
Date redacted: October 23, 1995. Last modified on: December 14, 2001
Redactor: Hans L. Bodlaender

Shatranj is the second known variant of chess. It was purportedly developed from the first known variant, Chaturanga, by making a few minor changes. The game first appeared in Persia around the 7th century AD and remained immensely popular throughout the Arabic world for the next nine centuries! Shatranj is said to have supported professional players, spawned several books and inspired its own body of chess problems.

Setup
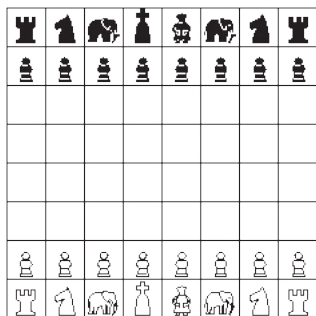
The array is similar to that of Orthodox Chess, with Elephants replacing Bishops and Generals replacing Queens. The game was also played with Generals and Kings transposed; so in all cases, Kings and Generals face their own kind.*

White
King d1; General e1; Rook a1, h1; Knight b1, g1; Elephant c1, f1; Pawns a2, b2, c2, d2, e2, f2, g2, h2.
Black
King d8; General e8; Rook a8, h8; Knight b8, g8; Elephant c8, f8; Pawns a7, b7, c7, d7, e7, f7, g7, h7.

*The positions for the King and General may also be: White King: e1; White general: d1; Black king: e8; Black general: d8.

Pieces

King	Moves as in Orthodox Chess.
Rook	Moves as in Orthodox Chess.
Knight	Moves as in Orthodox Chess.
Pawn	Moves as in Orthodox Chess.
General	Moves to the first diagonal square.
Elephant	Leaps to the second diagonal square, never occupying the first diagonal.

Rules

Historians tell us that Shatranj is the immediate precursor of Orthodox Chess. Perhaps the quickest way to learn Shatranj is to understand how it differs from the Orthodox:

•The board is not checkered.
•Elephants replace the Orthodox Bishops. (See array.)
•Generals replace the Orthodox Queen. (See array.)
•There is no initial two-step Pawn move.
•There is no en passant capture option.
•There is no castling option.
•Pawns arriving at the last rank always promote to Generals.
•Stalemate counts as a win.**
•Bare King counts as a win, provided that your King cannot be bared on the very next move. (See below.)
•Two bare Kings (see above) count as a draw.

**Pritchard cites a rule variation that is not mentioned by all authors: A stalemated King may be transposed with one of its other pieces, as long as this does not result in check.

Game Report: Fox and Geese
Class: Board Game
Number of Players: 2
Date redacted: 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005
Redactor: Baron Modar Neznanich, OPel (Ron Knight)
Sources:

HISTORY:

Fox and Geese belongs to the group of games known collectively as Tafl in which there are battles fought out by two forces of unequal power. Tafl games appear to have originated in Northern Europe. Mention is made of one as far back as AD 1300 in the Icelandic 'Grettis Saga'. Most likely they date back to BC.

RULES:

One player elects to be the fox and the other the geese. The geese (the thirteen counters of one color) should be placed so as to fill up all the points on one side of the board, as shown in the diagram. The fox (the one counter of the other color) can be placed on any vacant point remaining. The fox moves first. On their turn, each side may move one counter. Both fox and geese can move along a line, forwards, backwards, or sideways, to the next contiguous point.

The fox may move along a line or jump over a goose to an empty point, capturing the goose and removing it from the board. Two or more geese may be captured by the fox in one turn, providing that he is able to jump to an empty point after each one. The fox wins if he depletes the gaggle of geese to a number that makes it impossible for them to trap him.

The geese cannot jump over the fox or capture the fox. They must try to mob him and hem him into a corner making it impossible for him to move. The geese win if they succeed in immobilizing the fox.

DIAGRAM:

Fox and Geese board

Board set up (Geese in green, Fox in red)

Sir William of Tyre claimed that he and his fellow knights invented the game of Hazard during the crusades under Charlemagne. They did it to pass the time while laying siege to the castle of Hazarth in 1125. This would imply that the game is named after the castle. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* however, states that game takes its name from the Arabic words *'al zar'*, which means simply, 'the dice'. Geoffrey Chaucer makes frequent mention of the game in his *Canterbury Tales* as an analogy for life, with runs of both good and bad luck.

Hoyle's *Book of Games* says that Hazard is simply another name for the game Craps. This is incorrect. Craps is a simplification of Hazard that was created by the French in the late sixteenth century. The name comes from the English slang term for a roll of two or three, 'craps' which comes from the French slang term *'krabs'*.

Craps Play

The dice roller, who is called the 'shooter' accepts bets from the players betting against him, who are called the 'faders'. If the first roll is 7 or 11, this is a 'natural' and the shooter wins immediately and may play again. If the first roll is 2, 3, ('craps') or 12, ('boxcars') the shooter loses his bet but retains control of the dice and may play again. Any other roll is the shooter's 'point'. Different point totals have different odds and the faders may make additional bets with the shooter or among themselves.

The shooter now tries to re-roll his point without rolling a seven first. If he rolls a seven, he loses both his bet and control of the dice. If he rolls or 'makes' his point, he wins his bet and may play again.

Hazard Play

The shooter first tries to roll a 'main point' or 'faders point', a total between 5 and 9 inclusively. Any other point total is re-rolled. After a main point has been established, the shooter then tries to roll a 'chance point' or 'shooters point', a total between 4 and 10 inclusively, which is not the main point.

However, it is possible for the shooter to win or lose before establishing a chance point. If he rolls the main point again, he wins. If he rolls a 2 or 3, he loses his bet but retains control of the dice and may play again. If he rolls a 12 and the main point is even (6 , 8) he wins. If he rolls a 12 and the main point is odd (5, 7, 9) he loses. If he rolls an 11 and the main point is 7, he wins. If he rolls an 11 and the main point isn't 7, he loses. If that sounds rather complex, you're not alone. My wife refers to this game as 'Medieval Fizzbin'. ;-) The table may be simpler:

Main Point	Wins On	Loses On
5	5	11, 12
6	6, 12	11
7	7, 11	12
8	8, 12	11
9	9	11, 12
any	main point	2, 3

Once the chance point has been established, no other roll matters except the main point and the chance point. The shooter continues rolling until he rolls the chance point and wins, or the main point and loses.

Game Report: Tablero de Jesus
Class: Board Games
Number of Players: 2
Date redacted:
Redactor: Dagonell the Juggler
Sources:

Tablero is a 15th century Spanish gambling game. Players use their own money as playing pieces and play until they can no longer afford it. Friendlier games use thirty wooden markers and distribute them equally between the two players.

The board is seven rows by seven columns, similar to a chess board, but with one fewer row and column. The board is completely undifferentiated, but may be decorated as lavishly as the owner wishes. Two standard dice are used.

Players roll the die to determine who goes first. High roller places one coin in each of the two right-most columns in his home row. Low roller places one coin in each of the remaining columns in his own home row and goes first. The object of the game is to form rows of coins in the center of the board in order to remove them.
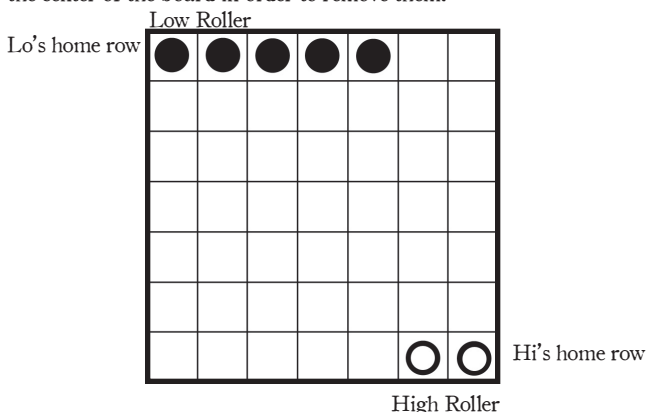
On his turn, each player throws the dice and moves any two coins either forward or backward in their own columns the number of spaces indicated by the dice. Each die must control a separate coin. If, for example, the dice were to come up 6 & 3, you couldn't move one coin five spaces and the other four, nor could you move one coin six spaces forward and three back.

When a player succeeds in getting two or more coins in ADJACENT columns on the same row, other than either home row, he may either remove them from the board and end his turn, or continue to throw the dice hoping to make the row longer and capture more coins.

VARIATION:

If a player succeeds in lining up all seven coins, he not only collects those coins, but an eighth coin from his opponent as well.

If a player throws 7, 11 or 12, he must immediately surrender the dice to his opponent without removing any coins from the board. Mathematically, the probability of this occurring is exactly 1 chance in 4. If a player throws a roll which cannot be made, for example, a six with no coins on either home row, he must also surrender the dice. I have also seen the game played where a player must surrender the dice if he fails to make a row of at least two coins. This is NOT correct and makes the game more difficult with smaller winnings.

When a player removes coins from the board, his turn ends and he hands the dice to his opponent. His opponent must fill the empty columns by placing his own coins in those columns in his own home row. If a player is forced to surrender the dice when there is a row of coins on the board, his opponent may take the coins and return the dice without ever making a throw. When a player no longer has enough coins to fill empty columns, he has lost the game.

ADULT VARIATION:

        In An Tir, they play a drinker's version of this game called Tablero de Gucci. The game is played with seven shot glasses and a can of beer per player instead of coins. The highest ranking female present rolls the dice to determine "The Queen's Number", a custom that began when the Queen of An Tir claimed a number for her own use. The game is played as normally, but instead of removing the shot glass from the board, you drink it dry and place the empty glass on your opponent's home row for him to refill from his can of beer.

        When the Queen's number comes up, the roller may take any shotglass on the board, drink it and place it on his opponent's home row before taking his turn. Skilled players will choose this glass strategically. When all seven shotglasses have been lined up, spectators cry "SET 'EM UP AND KNOCK 'EM DOWN!" as the player collects his winnings. When a player can no longer refill a shotglass because his can of beer is empty, he has lost. Children in An Tir have been seen playing this game with bottles of pop or packages of M&M's. WARN-ING: DO NOT play this game with anything stronger than beer or wine cooler. A skilled player can down at least two shots per turn and come down with alcohol poisoning by the end of the game.