

History

Tablut is a Tafl game, a family of games played on latticed boards with “armies” of uneven numbers. Tafl variants include Ard Rí (Scottish), Brandub (Irish), Hnefatafl (Scandinavian), Tawlbwrdd (Welsh), and of course Tablut (Sámi). Tafl games were largely supplanted by chess in the 12th century, however Tablut was played in Sápmi until at least the mid-1700s, and likely survived into the late 19th century. In 1732, while on a botanical expedition to the Lapland, Carl Linnaeus recorded the rules of Tablut along with a drawing of the board and pieces in his journal. This is the only recorded version of a Tafl game’s rules.

Rules

Modern Standard

1. Tablut is played on a board of 9×9 squares.
2. There are 25 pieces: a king and his eight defenders (Swedes), and sixteen attackers (Moscovites). These are placed in the shape of a cross with serifs.
3. The attacking side takes the first move.
4. Pieces move any distance orthogonally, not landing on nor jumping over other pieces on the board.
5. The central square, called the "castle", may only be occupied by the king. Other pieces may pass through the castle when it is empty, but are not allowed to land on it.
 - a. The king can go in and out of the castle at any time.
 - b. The king may not return to the castle once he has left it.
6. A piece other than the king is captured when it is surrounded orthogonally on two opposite squares by enemies.
 - a. It is usually acceptable to place a piece deliberately between two enemies without harm; capture must be a deliberate act.
7. The king can pair up with a defender for the purpose of capturing attackers.
8. A piece may also be captured between an enemy and the empty castle.
9. When in the castle, the king is captured by surrounding him on four orthogonal sides with attackers.
10. When stood beside the castle, the king may be captured by surrounding him on the remaining three sides with attackers.
11. Elsewhere on the board, the king is captured as other pieces.
12. If the king when in the castle is surrounded on three sides by attackers, and on the fourth by a defender, the defender may be captured by surrounding it between an attacker and the king.
13. The king wins the game on reaching any square at the edge of the board. The attackers win if they capture the king.
14. The game is drawn if a position is repeated or if the players otherwise agree it.
15. If a player cannot move:
 - a. They lose the game.
 - b. The game is drawn.

Variants

While the above rules are based on the original Latin, the first English versions of Tafl games were based on a mistranslation (concerning how to capture the king). This gave the Swedes an advantage, so additional rules were added in an attempt to rebalance the game. As such you can find a wide variety of rule variants. The typical differences lie in:

- The method for capturing the king
- How and if the king may participate in captures
- Where the king must escape to

Original Latin and Direct Translation

| Tablut. | Dablio |
|--|---|
| 1. Arx regia. Konokis Lappon., cui nullus succedere potest. | 1. The fort of the king (<i>gånågis</i> in Saami), which nobody can enter. |
| 2 et 3. Sveci N:r 9 cum rege et eorum loca s. stationes. | 2 & 3. Swedes, 9 of them with the king and their squares or positions. |
| 4. Muscovitarum stationes omnes in prima aggressionē depictæ. | 4. The positions of the Muscovites at the beginning of the attack. |
| 0. Vacua loca ¹ occupare cuique licitum, etiam Regi, idem valet de locis characterisatis præter arcem. | 0. Empty squares can be occupied by any piece, also the King. This also applies to the specially marked squares except the fort. |
| Leges | Rules |
| 1. Alla få occupera och mutare loca per lineam rectam, non vero transversam, ut <i>a</i> ad <i>c</i> non vero <i>a</i> ad <i>e</i> . | 1. Any piece may occupy a square and move from one square to another in a straight line but not diagonally, as from <i>a</i> to <i>c</i> , but not from <i>a</i> to <i>e</i> . |
| 2. Nulli licitum sit locum per lineam rectam alium supersalire, occupare, ut <i>a</i> <i>b</i> ad <i>m</i> , alio aliquo in <i>i</i> constituto. | 2. It is not allowed to pass over any other piece that may be in the way, or to move into its place, for instance, from <i>b</i> to <i>m</i> , in case any were stationed at <i>i</i> or somewhere else(?). |
| 3. Si Rex occuparet locum <i>b</i> et nullus in <i>e</i> , <i>i</i> et <i>m</i> positus esset, possit exire, nisi ² mox muscovita aliquod ex locis nominatis occupat, et Regi exitum præcludit. | 3. If the king should stand in <i>b</i> , and no other piece in <i>e</i> , <i>i</i> , or <i>m</i> , he may escape by that road, unless one of the Muscovites immediately gets possession of one of the squares in question, so as to interrupt him. |
| 4. Si Rex tali modo exit, est praelium finitum. | 4. If the king be able to accomplish this, the contest is at an end. |
| 5. Si Rex in <i>e</i> collocaretur, nec ullus s. ejus s. hostis miles esset in <i>f</i> <i>g</i> sive <i>i</i> <i>m</i> , tum aditus non potest claudi. | 5. If the king happens to be in <i>e</i> , and none of his own people or his enemies either in <i>f</i> or <i>g</i> , <i>i</i> or <i>m</i> , his exit cannot be prevented. |
| 6. Ut Rex aditum apertum vidit, clamet <i>Raichi</i> , si duæ viæ apertæ sunt <i>tuichu</i> . | 6. Whenever the king perceives that a passage is free, he must call out <i>råjgge</i> 'hole' and if there be two ways open, <i>dujgu</i> 'hither and thither'. |
| 7. Licitum est loca dissita occupare per lineam rectam, ut <i>a</i> <i>c</i> ad <i>n</i> , nullo intercludente. | 7. It is allowable to move ever so far at once, in a right line, if the squares in the way be vacant, as from <i>c</i> to <i>n</i> . |

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| 8. Svecus et muscovita in gressibus alternant. | 8. The Swedes and the Muscovites take it by turns to move. |
| 9. Si quis hostem 1 inter 2 sibi hostes collocare possit, est occisus et ejici debet, etiam Rex. | 9. If a player can move so that the enemy is between two of his pieces, it is killed and taken off, likewise the king. |
| 10. Si Rex in arce 1 et hostes in 3 ^{bus} ex N:r 2, tum abire potest per quartum, et si ejus in 4 ^{to} locum occupare potest, si ita cinctus et miles in 3 collocatur, est inter regem et militem qui stat occisus, si quatuor hostes in 2, tum rex captus est. | 10. If the king, being in his own square or castle, is encompassed on three sides by his enemies, one of them standing in each of three of the squares numbered 2, he may move away by the fourth. If one of his own people happens to be in this fourth square, and one of his enemies in number 3 next to it, the soldier thus enclosed between his king and the enemy is killed. If four of the enemy gain possession of the four squares marked 2, thus enclosing the king, he becomes their prisoner. |
| 11. Si Rex in 2, tum hostes 3, sc. in α et 3 erint, si capiatur. | 11. If the king be in 2, with an enemy in each of the adjoining squares, α , α and 3, he is likewise taken. |
| 12. Rege capto vel intercluso finitur bellum et victor retinet svecos, devictus muscovitas et ludus incipiat. | 12. When the king is taken or imprisoned, the war is over, and the winner takes the Swedes, the loser the Muscovites, and the play starts all over. |
| 13. Muscovitas sine rege erint, suntque 16 in 4 ³ phalangibus disponendis. | 13. The Muscovites have no King and the 16 pieces are deployed in 4 units. |
| 14. Arx potest intercludere, æque ac trio[tertio?], ut si miles in 2 et hostis in 3 est, occiditur ⁴ . | 14. The fort can block, as a third [piece], so if there is a soldier in 2 and enemy in 3, it is killed. |

Design & Fabrication

The board was designed in Adobe Illustrator, and fabricated using CorelDRAW and a VLS6.60. The pieces were designed in AutoDesk Inventor, and fabricated using Z-Suite and a Zortrax M200.

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Works Cited

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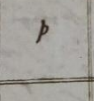
















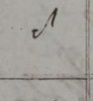

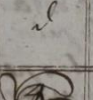



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Linnaeus's Original Journal Entry

Tabula

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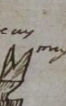
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| o | n | m |  |  |  | 4 | x | 1 |
| z | p | i | f |  |  | 1 | p | |
| g | f | a | d |  |  | p | 1 | p |
|  | c | b | n |  |  | x | b | v |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | c | b | a |  |  | b | e | y |
| g | f | e | d |  |  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| z | x | i | d |  |  | 1 | 1 | x |
| o | n | m |  |  |  | n | v | o |

1. Arx regia. Konokis. Ep. cui nullus succedere potest.

2. & 3. Sveci. No 9 cum rege. et eorum loca. stationes.

4. Imperatorum stationes. via in prima appropinquat depicta.

5. vana loca occupare non licet, in Regi, idem. vales de locis characteris, sicut are.

 Rex
 Sveci
 Imperator

Leges.

1. Illi qui occupare mutas loca per lineam rectam. o vero transposui. ut a ad c.

2. nulli licetum sit locum per lineam rectam, alioque per se, occupare. o vero a ad e.

3. ut a b ad m, alio alioque in i constituto.

4. Si Rex occupat locum b. exiit a nullus in c, i d m postea est, postea exiit, sicut rex imperator alioque ex locis nominatim occupat, et Regi exiitum pedit. f. rex.

5. Si Rex tali modo exiit, et peditum finitum.

6. Si Rex in e collocatus, nec alioque f. g. h. i. m. est in f. g. f. i. m. tunc ad h. non potest claudere.

7. ut Rex alioque apertum adit, claudet Raichii. si duo viderentur finitum.

8. Licetum est loca depicta occupare per lineam rectam, ut a c ad n nullo intercedente.

9. Sveci & Imperator in graphis alternant.

10. Si Rex in are. i. et hostes in are. 2. l. m. alioque potest per quatuor b. f. g. h. i. m. tunc ad h. non potest claudere.

11. Si Rex in are. i. et hostes in are. 2. l. m. alioque potest per quatuor b. f. g. h. i. m. tunc ad h. non potest claudere.

12. Si Rex in are. i. et hostes in are. 2. l. m. alioque potest per quatuor b. f. g. h. i. m. tunc ad h. non potest claudere.

13. Imperatorum loca rege erant, sicut 1. 2. in 4. phalangibus 2. Thronibus.

14. Arx potest intercedere ex o. n. m. ut si o. n. m. in 2. et hostes in 3. g. h. i. m. tunc ad h. non potest claudere.