

Ancient African Civilizations

LD 10: The Mancala Game Challenge

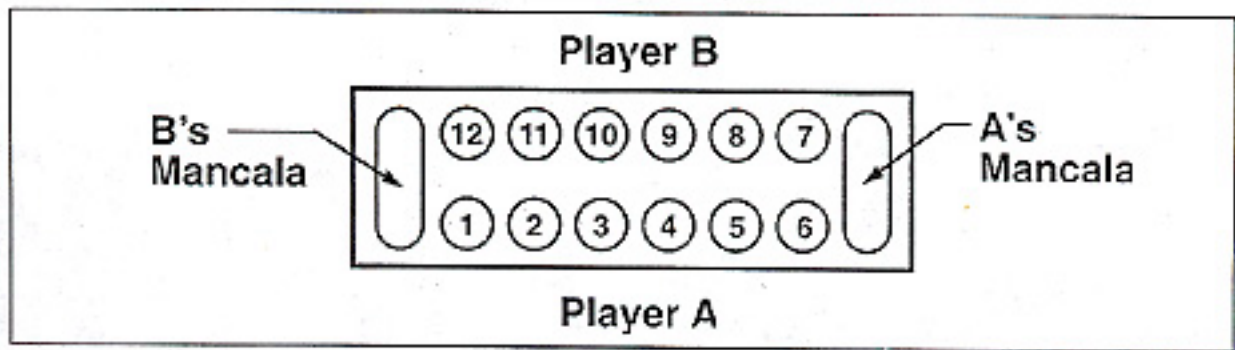
Introduction: *Mancala* is perhaps one of the oldest surviving games of chance played by humans, and it is a game that originated in Africa and spread throughout the world from the African continent. Though the earliest evidence for the game is several thousand years old and the game's respective origins appear linked to the Bantu expansion out of West Africa into central and southern Africa, the game holds great popularity throughout Africa and many other areas of the world to this day. Many variations of the game exist, including those pertaining to the ancient Egyptian engagement with the game by the pharaohs of dynastic Egypt. Other names and variations for the game played in Africa to this day include *wari* (Senegal), *woro* (Gambia), *awele* (Guinea), *kboo* (Liberia), *ayoayo* (Nigeria), *kale* (Cameroon), and *aghi* (Suriname). Our objective with today's lab deliverable is to challenge one another to learn the basics of the game with sufficient proficiency so as to gain an understanding of the African social, cultural, and symbolic identification with this oldest of games of chance.

Instructions: First, using the game board, prepared in this instance on a photocopied sheet of paper or in other suitable template or format, you should attempt to visualize the game pieces as the seeds, and the linear arrangement of spaces or holes in the board as the fields into which you will sow your seeds. In this instance, there are a total of 12 "holes" or spaces, with two storage "bins" or "mancala" bins located at opposite ends of the board. Your instructor will provide you with the game "board," and 24 seeds per player, for a total of 48 seeds per game board and pairing of opponents. In order to play the game, please note the following instructions (please note that many variations of the game exist and the following instructions should serve as a general guide to one version of the game):

1. Each game board will include two players competing with one another.
2. Each player will deposit or "sow" the seeds in groupings of four into each of the six circular "holes" or spaces on their respective side of the board.
3. To begin the game, the opponents will either toss a coin or marked seeds so as to determine which player will start the game.
4. The starting player will collect all four seeds from any one of the six "holes" on their side of the board and begin to "sow" the seeds by depositing one seed each (of the four) into the individual "holes" (including one's own "mancala" bin, but not that of one's opponent) lying immediately to the right – in a counter clockwise direction – until the last seed has been deposited.
5. If the player places the last stone in their own "mancala" bin, they receive another turn at "sowing" seeds.
6. If the last "seed" is placed in an empty "hole" on the players side of the board, then that player "captures" all of the "seeds" in the hole immediately across from the "hole"

in question...thereby, capturing the opponents "seeds" in said hole. All captured "seeds" and the capturing "seed" are placed in the players "mancala" bin.

7. Once a player "touches" any of the "seeds" they must be played, and players are not permitted to count their "seeds."
8. The game ends when a player empties all the "seeds" from their respective "holes" or small bins.
9. When one player clears their small bins, the opposing player is permitted to gather all of their remaining "seeds" for placement into their respective "mancala" bin.
10. The winning player is the one whose "mancala" storage bin holds the greatest bounty of "seeds" from the "harvest."



References

Mancala: An African Stone Game. Great American Trading Company, York, PA 17402
(www.gatco.net)

Russ, Larry. The Complete Mancala Games Book: How To Play the World's Oldest Board Games. Marlowe & Company, New York, 2000.