

Essentials of CHINESE CHESS and of KOREAN CHESS

The chess game best known in the West, and predominant in international competition, is – with modification – the Persian descendant of a game originating further east. Most authorities believe that chess has its origins in an Indian game known (in transliteration) as ‘Chaturanga’, ‘Shaturanga’, or ‘Tschaturanga’.

In any event, there are variant forms of chess, including *Shogi* (Japanese chess), *Jangki* (Korean chess, also called ‘Tjyang-keui’), and *XiangQi* (Chinese chess, also called ‘Shiang-Chi’, and called ‘Jeuhng Keih’ in Cantonese).

This document presents the essentials of XiangQi and of Jangki, with XiangQi principally in mind. A set for XiangQi can be used to play Jangki, and vice versa.

OVERVIEW

Like Persian chess, XiangQi and Jangki are two-party wargames contested on a two-dimensional board. Each party has various pieces, one piece of principal importance. If and when that principal piece is placed in one of certain relations to other pieces, its party has lost; if and when a party has no legal move, that party has lost. The objective of each party is to bring the principal piece of the opponent into such a relation, while avoiding the same for its own principal piece, or to place the opponent in a position where the opponent has no legal move.

THE BOARD

The board is based upon an eight-by-nine grid. See Figure 1a. Pieces are placed at and moved to *intersections of the grid-lines*, rather than within squares. (An equivalent board, with pieces placed within the squares, would be nine-by-ten.)

The two four-by-eight territories of the board are separated by *the river*, which is one by eight. The river has special significance in XiangQi. In the center-rear of each territory is a two-by-two grid (usually distinguished by diagonal lines within it) which is its *palace* (sometimes called ‘fortress’ or ‘castle’). See Figure 1b.

THE PIECES

The two sides in XiangQi are, respectively, red and black. In Jangki, they are respectively red and black, red and green, or red and blue. Pieces are typically disks with ideograms, but are often instead disks with icons. (Traditionally, pieces in Jangki are actually dekahedral; octagonal when viewed from above.) See Figure 2. In XiangQi, the disks are of uniform diameter. In Jangki, the generals are larger than other pieces; the pawns and guards are smaller.

When ideograms are used, there is often sufficient distinction that color is superfluous. (However, some XiangQi sets use the same ideogram both for red and for black chariots, and both for red and for black horses.)

Both in XiangQi and in Jangki, there are seven types of piece; each type in XiangQi has a close analogue in Jangki, with the same number of pieces.

In turn, five of these types are (with varying precision) analogues of types found in Persian chess. Each side has a total of sixteen pieces.

Players alternate turns, and in each turn a player may move one piece. In XiangQi, a party *must* move in its turn, unless it cannot. No piece may move into a position already occupied by a piece from the same side. A piece from one side takes that from another by coming to rest at the same intersection. No piece may leave the board, except when captured.

The **general** is, like the Persian king, the principal piece. However, he is confined through-out the game to his palace. When he moves, it is one intersection at a time. He may not move into a position from at which his piece could be taken at the next move of the opponent (check). Each side has one general.

In XiangQi: The general is *not* permitted to move diagonally. He must not move into a position facing the opposing general (along a grid-line) unless there is a piece blocking the line-of-sight.

In Jangki: The general may move diagonally or rectilinearly. When a party moves such that one general faces the other (along a grid-line), without a piece in between them, any legal move of the opponent either moves the general or places another piece between the generals; however, the party that has forced this situation thereby forfeits the ability to win; any subsequent move that would have produced a victory for that party now instead produces a draw. (Actually, the principal piece in Jangki is a **dynasty**, rather than a general, but that distinction will be ignored above and below.)

The **guard**, with the general, is confined to the palace. When he moves, it is one intersection at a time. In XiangQi, his movement is confined to the palace diagonals; in Jangki, he may move diagonally or rectilinearly. Each side has two guards.

Each side has two **elephants** or two **bureaucrats**.

In XiangQi: The elephant/bureaucrat is rather like the Persian bishop, in that he may only move diagonally. However, when he moves, it must be two intersections at a time, he may not jump over other pieces (the intermediate intersections must be vacant), and he may not cross the river.

In Jangki: The elephant/bureaucrat may cross the river. When he moves, it is somewhat like a horse, one intersection rectilinearly, and then two diagonally further away (at an obtuse angle). See Figure 3a. He may not jump any other piece – the two intermediate intersection points must be vacant.

The **horse**, like the Persian knight, moves one intersection rectilinearly, and then one diagonally further away (at an obtuse angle). See Figure 3b. As with the elephant, however, he may not jump over another piece – the intermediate point must be vacant.¹ Each side has two horses.

The **chariot**, like the Persian rook, may move rectilinearly in any direction until an obstruction, the boundary of the board, or a desired intersection; any given move of the chariot is along only one line. Each side has two chariots.

In Jangki: The chariot may also move along a palace diagonal.

Each side has two **cannons**.

In XiangQi: The cannon, like the chariot, may move rectilinearly in any direction until an obstruction, the boundary of the board, or a desired intersection, with the very important exception that *to take a piece the cannon is required to jump over exactly one other piece* in between.

In Jangki: The cannon must move along a straight line (including a palace diagonal), and must jump exactly one other piece for *any* movement. (Hence, it cannot move along a diagonal from the center of the palace.) The piece over which the cannon jumps must not be a cannon. The cannon must not take another cannon. The cannon must not be the first piece moved by its party.

Both in XiangQi and in Jangki: The piece over which the cannon jumps (known as a ‘gun mount’ or ‘screen’) may be of the same side, or of the other. The piece over which the cannon jumps may be more than one intersection away from the cannon, the piece to be taken, or both. The cannon must *not* jump over more than one piece at a time.

Each side has five **pawns**.

In XiangQi: The pawn becomes more powerful after crossing the river. Before crossing the river, it may advance, one intersection at a time (never two); after crossing the river, it may advance (until it reaches the opponent's back line), or move to the left or right, one intersection at a time. Pawns do not move diagonally.

In Jangki: The pawn may advance (until it reaches the opponents back line), or – even before crossing the river – move to the left or right, one intersection at a time. The pawn must not move diagonally unless along a palace diagonal.

¹ The horse cannot *ell* its way around an obstruction.

Both in XiangQi and in Jangki: Pawns cannot retreat; they move towards or parallel to the backline of the opponent. Pawns do not move diagonally (except, in the case of Jangki, for a palace diagonal). When a pawn has reached an opponent's backline (that row furthest in the territory from the river), the pawn may continue to move left or right. Pawns are never promoted.

INITIAL PLACEMENT OF PIECES

Initial placement of pieces in XiangQi is as in Figure 4a. The general, guards, elephants/bureaucrats, horses, and chariots are placed symmetrically upon the backline (that row furthest from the river). The general is in the center of the backline, the guards to his right and left, elephant/bureaucrats next outermost, then horses, and then chariots. Two points ahead of each horse is a cannon. Three points ahead of each chariot, each elephant/bureaucrat, and the king is placed a pawn.

Default initial placement of pieces in Jangki is as in Figure 4b. Initial placement is as in XiangQi, except that the general is in the center of the palace (where the diagonal lines cross), and that on each side the place of *one* horse may be exchanged with that of its adjacent elephant/bureaucrat (at the discretion of its party). (Note that this reversal is an *initial placement*, rather than a move like castling in Persian chess.)

PLAY

Parties alternate turns, each party moving one of its pieces in turn. In XiangQi, traditionally, the red party gets the first turn; in Jangki, traditionally, the red party gets the second turn. When a general could otherwise be taken in the next move of the opponent, its party is required to move it unless it cannot. In XiangQi, a party must move in its turn unless it cannot. In Jangki, a party need not move unless it may legally move *and* its general is otherwise required to move. Play proceeds until one of the following occurs:

- A general can be taken in a next move of the opponent, and the party of the general is unable to change this situation with its current move.
- A party has been placed in a position such that it cannot make a legal move during its turn. In XiangQi, the party unable to move in its turn has lost. In Jangki (as in Persian chess), this stalemate results in a draw.
- Victory has become impossible for either side.

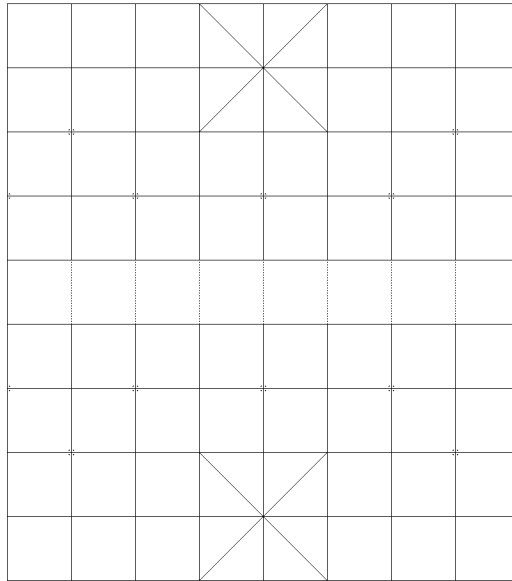


Figure 1a. The Board.

The vertical lines are called 'files'; the horizontal lines are called 'ranks'.

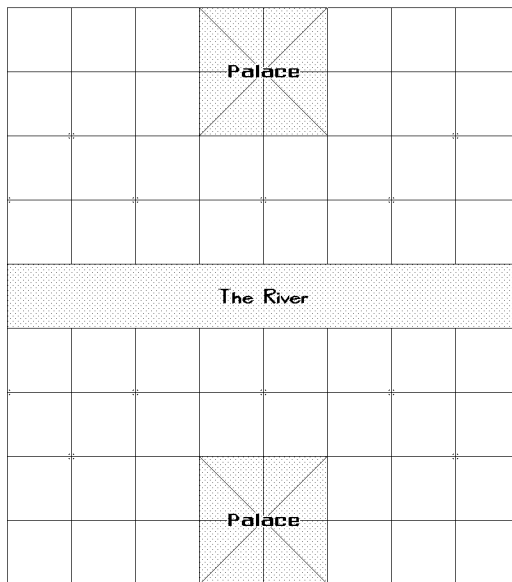


Figure 1b. The River and the Palaces.

The river has special significance in XiangQi.








	count on each side	GRAPHIC	IDEOGRAM				Persian Analogue
			CHINESE		KOREAN		
			Red	Black	Red	Green	
PAWN SOLDIER	5		兵	卒	兵	卒	PAWN
CANNON GUNNER GUN CATAPULT	2		炮	砲	包	包	N/A
CHARIOT	2		俚	車	車	車	ROOK CASTLE
HORSE	2		馬	馬	馬	馬	KNIGHT
ELEPHANT MINISTER BUREAUCRAT BISHOP	2		相	象	象	象	BISHOP
MANDARIN GUARD ADVISER	2		仕	士	士	士	N/A
XiangQi: GENERAL Jangki: DYNASTY	1		帥	將	漢	楚	KING

Figure 2a. Pieces in XiangQi and in Jangki.

	IDEOGRAM	Mandarin (Pinyin / IPA)	Cantonese (Yale / IPA)	Persian Analogue
RED				White
R E D	SOLDIER	兵 <i>bing</i> /piŋ/	<i>bing</i> /biŋ/	PAWN
	CANNON	炮 <i>pao</i> /p ^h au/	<i>paau</i> /pauː/	N/A
	CHARIOT	俥 <i>che</i> /tʂ ^h ɛ/	<i>che</i> /tʂɛ/	ROOK
	HORSE	馬 <i>ma</i> /ma/	<i>mah</i> /mah/	KNIGHT
	MINISTER	相 <i>xiang</i> /ɕ ^j ɛŋ/	<i>seung</i> /sɜŋ/	BISHOP
	ADVISER	仕 <i>shi</i> /ʂi/	<i>sih</i> /sih/	N/A
	GENERAL	帥 <i>shuai</i> /ʂwɹi/	<i>seui</i> /sɜi/	KING
BLACK				Black
B L A C K	SOLDIER	卒 <i>zu</i> /tsu/	<i>jyut</i> /dʒ ^j ut/	PAWN
	CANNON	砲 <i>pao</i> /p ^h au/	<i>paau</i> /pauː/	N/A
	CHARIOT	車 <i>che</i> /tʂ ^h ɛ/	<i>che</i> /tʂɛ/	ROOK
	HORSE	馬 <i>ma</i> /ma/	<i>mah</i> /mah/	KNIGHT
	ELEPHANT	象 <i>xiang</i> /ɕ ^j ɛŋ/	<i>jeuhng</i> /dʒœŋ/	BISHOP
	ADVISER	士 <i>shi</i> /ɕ ^j i/	<i>sih</i> /sih/	N/A
	GENERAL	將 <i>jiang</i> /tɕ ^j ɛŋ/	<i>jeung</i> /dʒɜŋ/	KING

Figure 2b. Pieces in XiangQi /ɕ^jɛŋtɕ^hi/ – Mandarin and Cantonese Names.
(IPA values approximate.)

	IDEOGRAM		Hangul	Transliteration (Mc Cune-Reischauer / IPA)	Persian Analogue
	RED	BLACK			
SOLDIER	兵		병	<i>pyong</i> /pyəŋ/	PAWN
		卒	졸	<i>chol</i> /tʃol/	
CANNON	包	砲	포	<i>p'o</i> /pʰo/	N/A
CHARIOT	車	車	차	<i>ch'a</i> /tʃʲa/	ROOK
HORSE	馬	馬	마	<i>ma</i> /ma/	KNIGHT
ELEPHANT	象	象	상	<i>sang</i> /saŋ/	BISHOP
ADVISER	士	士	사	<i>sa</i> /sa/	N/A
KING			왕	<i>wang</i> /waŋ/	KING
	漢		한	<i>Han</i> /han/	
		楚	초	<i>Ch'o</i> /tʃʲo/	

Figure 2c. Pieces in 장기 (Jangki /tʃaŋki/). (Hangul with kind assistance of Jeon Yongil.)
 The symbol represented in transliteration as an *l* is more a compromise between the sounds of *l* and of *r*.

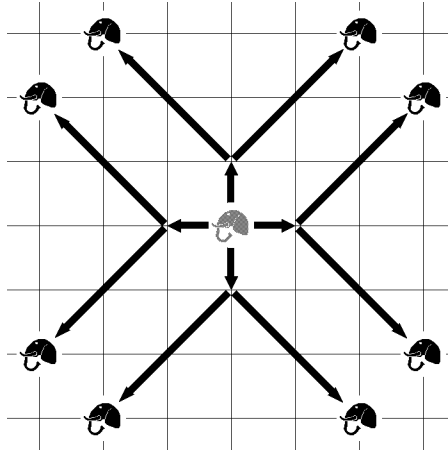


Figure 3a. Jangki: Movement of the Elephant/Bureaucrat.

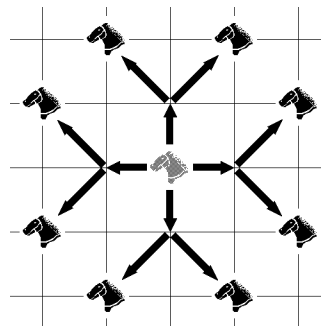


Figure 3b. Movement of the Horse.

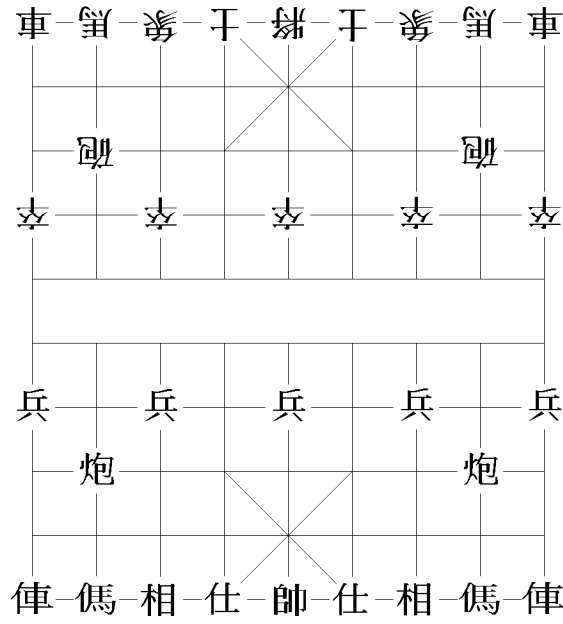


Figure 4a. XiangQi: Initial Placement of Pieces.

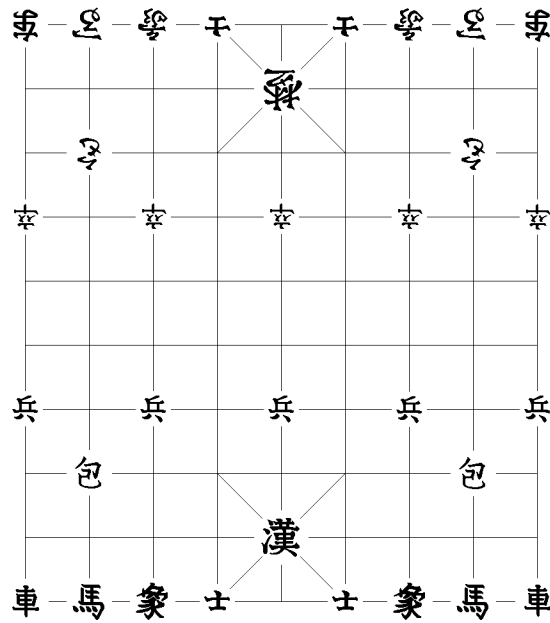


Figure 4b. Jangki: Default Initial Placement of Pieces.

Each party may exchange the position of one horse with its adjacent elephant/bureaucrat.