



The Mancala game

By: Chanel S.

AFN 121; BMCC

Prof. Remi Alapo

Fall 2021





Origin

Mancala is the oldest board game still widely played today. It is popular around the world but very much so in Africa. Mancala pieces have been found in Egyptian tombs, the Phoenicians played it in the sixth-century BCE, and so did the people of Axum in the first centuries CE. The word itself comes from the Arabic *naqala*, meaning “to move.” Its origins are rooted in **ancient Egypt**. Stone Mancala boards from 1400BC have been found carved into the roofs of Kurna temples in Memphis, Thebes and Luxor. The game spread from Egypt to many parts of Africa and then to the Middle East. Proof was found in Palmyra in Syria. Mancala is one of the oldest two-player strategy games in the world and has been played throughout Asia and many other regions.

Understanding Mancala

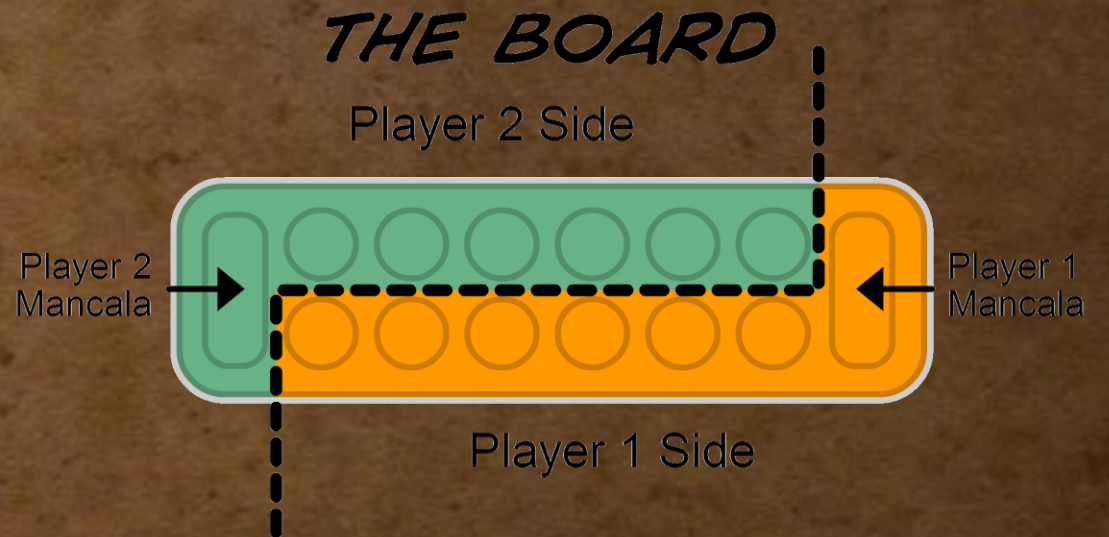
To be quite clear, mancala is not just one game, there are various versions that have been named differently in different places. However, all games consists of the same conceptional factors regarding wooden boards, small stones/marbles, seeds and beads. Extremely educational game through sowing and capturing.

Educational Game

- Although it looks simple, it is not a game of luck but of skill, calculation and strategy: its variations and complexities have often been compared to chess and to the Asian go. Unlike these other famous strategy games, the rules of mancala games have never normalized or unified. There are as many rule variations as there are ethnic groups or even towns.

What do you need to play?

- two players
- marbles/stones, beads
- carved wooden board (mancala board)



How to Play Mancala

Set Up

set up the game by distributing marbles/beads equally in the holes of the wooden board. The number of marbles/beads is a multiple of the number of holes the board has. West African games of mancala generally use 48 seeds, which means placing 4 seeds in each of the 12 holes. Players can begin the game.

Sowing

Each player have alternate turns, meaning that one player would go first, followed by the other player, which is the repetitive rotation in the game. During each turn, players can select a group of stones from a hole on their side of the board. Each stone is dropped one by one in the holes around the board, including their Mancala but not their opponent's Mancala.

Captures

If the last stone lands in an empty hole on the player's own side, he would capture all of the stones from their opponent's hole directly opposite of the player's hole, including their stone.

Free Turns

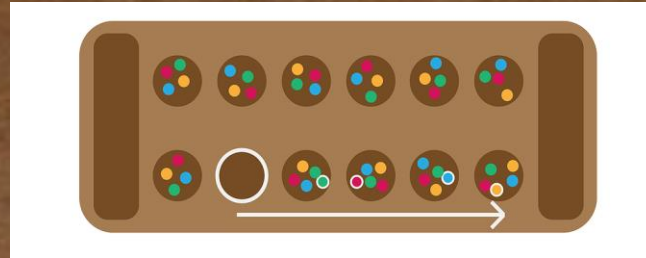
If the last stone lands in the player's own Mancala, that player would be given a free turn which allows them to make another move.

End Game

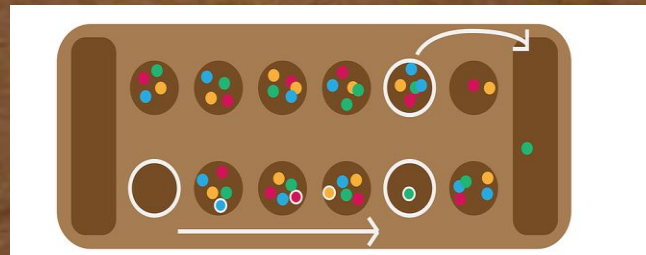
The game will end if a player clears all of their stones from their side of the board. The winner is the player with the highest number of stones in their Mancala and any remaining stones on their side of the board.

Example of How to Play Mancala

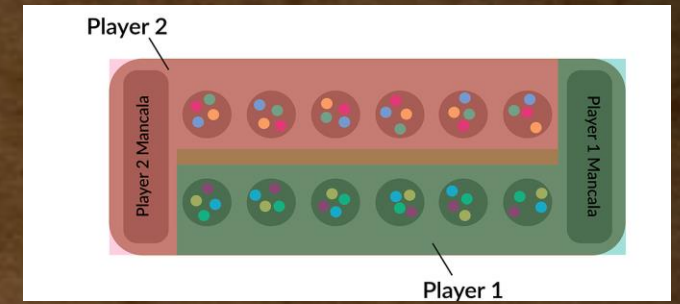
Sowing



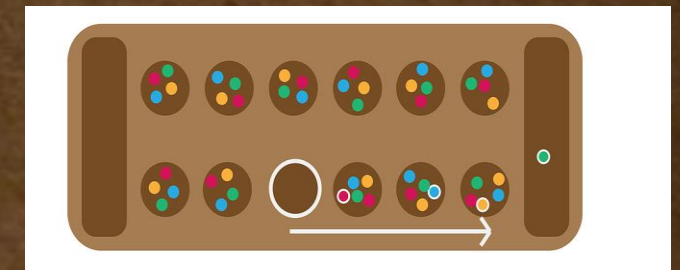
Free Turns



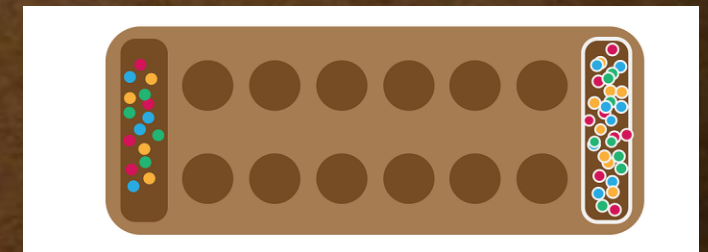
Set Up



Captures



End Game



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