



Nine Mens Morris and Tic Tac Toe

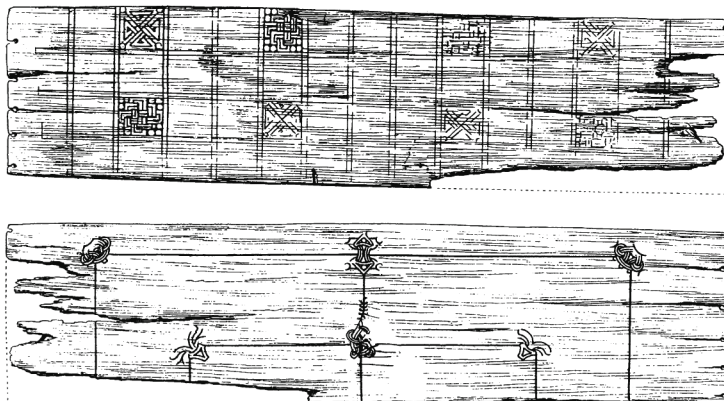
For centuries people have been passing time playing board games. The Vikings also liked to play board games, even on board their ships, if the weather allowed it.

In a Viking ship burial from Årby in Uppland (Sweden) a game of Nine Mens Morris was found carved in a piece of timber, which was probably one of the strakes from the ship itself. And in a ship burial in Gokstad (Norway) a loose game board with Nine Mens Morris on one side and Nefatavl on the other, was found. A game board from the 10th century much like that from Gokstad is also known from the Faeroe Islands.

The old Danish name for Nine Mens Morris was Nitavl or simply Tavl (meaning nine-board or board) – and the game dates back in history to the ancient Egypt, Troy and the Roman Empire. But people were not playing it in Scandinavia until the Viking Age. By the 14th century it had become one of the most played games in greater parts of the European continent.

The game from Aarhus

In 1994 when excavating the city square of the Danish city of Aarhus archaeologists found a plank with the game of Nine Mens Morris. That particular plank was originally part of the deck from a Viking ship, and eventually reused in a wooden covered well in the beginning of the 13th century. Besides the game board the plank also included the possibility to play a game called Tretavl, which we today know as Tic Tac Toe - a smaller version of Nine Mens Morris. The game of Tretavl had been added by in carving some extra lines in the middle of the game board of Nine Mens Morris.



The Gokstad-game board with Nine Mens Morris on one side and Nefatavl on the other.





Rules of the games

Nine Mens Morris

Two contestants get 9 dark or light coloured pieces each – the one with the light colours begin. Both players take turns in placing one piece at a time on the board where the lines meet, in no specific order.

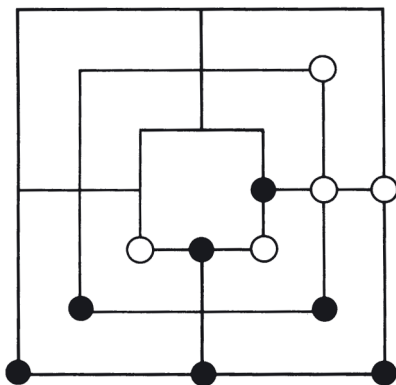
The goal is to try to get Nine Mens Morris, which means 3 pieces of own colour on a line. All the while the opponent of course tries to prevent it, he is trying for himself to get Nine Mens Morris on the board.

When all the pieces have been placed on the board, the game continues by using the pieces already on the board. The players take turns by moving one piece at a time from one line crossing to another.

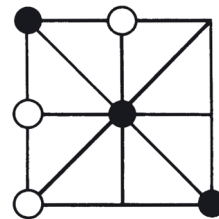
Every time a player gets Nine Mens Morris he is allowed to take one of his opponent's pieces out of the game, but not one that is already in a Nine Mens Morris position though.

The most strategic way to play Nine Mens Morris is to place the pieces in a position where it is possible to move just one of them back and forth between two line crossings and then get Nine Mens Morris in every move.

When one of the players is left with only 3 pieces he can jump with his pieces and place them on every free line crossing. Finally when one player is reduced to only two pieces the game is finished.



Nine Mens Morris



Tretavl / Tic Tac Toe

Tretavl / Tic Tac Toe

The game is much like what we know today as Tic Tac Toe. It's all about getting 3 pieces on a line and at the same time prevents the opponent from achieving the same.

The two players have 3 pieces each, which they take turn in placing on the board where the lines meet. After the first round the pieces can jump to any free space on the board where the lines meet.

The player that first manages to get his three pieces in a line wins the game.

