

Figure 3: The white pieces may be captured by any of the moves shown. The two white pieces at the bottom right can be captured at once, as per rule 10.

## BRANDUB

### INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Hnefatafl is a game invented by the Norse, often referred to as the Vikings. A king at the centre of the board, with his band of faithful defenders, faces a horde of attackers twice their number, who are lined up at the edges ready to attack from all sides. The king must escape from the board, while the attackers must capture him.

It was first played in the first millennium; boards and pieces from that era have been found in all parts of Scandinavia. As the Norse raiders, adventurers and settlers spread further afield, the game was introduced to other cultures: the Sami in the north, and the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish in the west. Norse traders took the game east with them to Russia and Ukraine.

From the east, however, hnefatafl would have come face to face with another game, one that would eclipse it and drive it from fashionable tables in all the lands it had invaded. By the twelfth century, chess had replaced hnefatafl in Scandinavia itself. Only in remote lands did the game survive, in Wales till the sixteenth century, and in Lapland till the eighteenth century.

Brandub was the game played in Ireland, from the time of the Viking invasions, till at least the 13th century. The rules were lost, but there are many passages in stories and poetry that give clues about the game. From these, and more certain rules from other variants of hnefatafl, brandub has been reconstructed.

## HOW TO PLAY

1. The game is played with a king and four defenders against eight attackers. They start the game laid out as shown in Figure 1.
2. The attacking player takes the first turn.
3. In each turn, a player may move a piece as far as desired along a row or column, as shown in Figure 2.
4. No piece may jump over nor land on another in the course of its move.
5. Only the king is allowed to land on the marked corner squares. No piece may land on the central square, not even the king once he has left it, but any piece may pass over it when it is empty.
6. A piece is captured by surrounding it on two opposite sides along a row or column by two enemies.
7. A piece may also be captured by surrounding it between an enemy and one of the marked centre or corner squares.
8. When the king is on the central square, he must be surrounded on all four sides by attackers in order to be captured.
9. When the king is beside the central square, he must be surrounded by attackers on the remaining three sides.
10. It is possible to capture two or three enemy pieces at once, if all become surrounded against separate enemies in the same move.
11. The defenders win the game when the king reaches one of the four corner squares.
12. The attackers win the game when they capture the king.

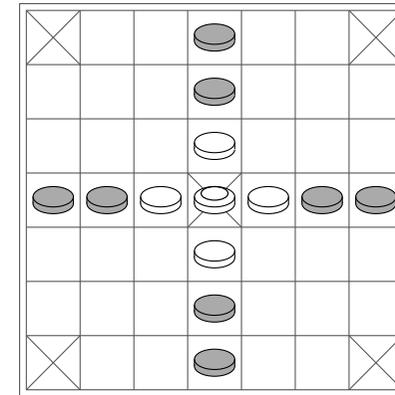


Figure 1: The initial layout for brandub.

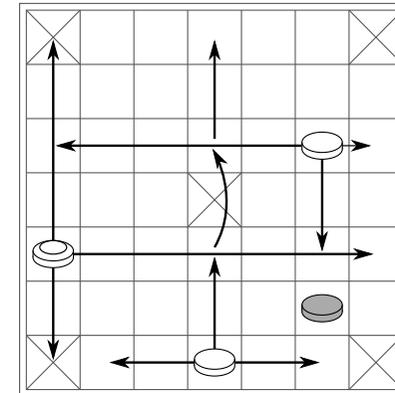


Figure 2: Examples of movement for the king and defenders.