

Figure 3: The white pieces may be captured by any of the moves shown. The three white pieces at the bottom right can be captured at once, as per rule 8.

- 11. The markings on the corner intersections can take part in captures, by either player, as if there were pieces of that player's colour sat upon them. These methods of capture are shown in Figure 3.
- 12. A piece may come to rest voluntarily between two enemies, without being considered captured.
- 13. The king is permitted to act like one of his defenders for the purposes of capturing.
- 14. The game is drawn if a position is repeated, if one player is completely immobilised, or if the players otherwise desire it.

© Damian Walker 2014. All rights reserved.  
<http://tafl.cynningstan.com/>



## ALEA EVANGELII

### 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, hne-

fatafl 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.

Alea evangelii is the largest of the hnefatafl games. It was played in England, and was noted at the court of king Athelstan (reigned 924-939). It featured an impressive 73 pieces: the king, his 24 defenders and 48 attackers. The rules have been built from a medieval document that depicted the board, with some internal evidence and borrowings from other hnefatafl games to complete the picture.

## HOW TO PLAY

1. The *alea evangelii* is a contest between two players, one taking the side of a king with twenty-four defenders, the other controlling forty-eight attackers. It is played on a board of nineteen rows of nineteen playing spaces.
2. The pieces are laid out on the intersections of the board in an elaborate array, the king's defenders surrounding him in the centre of the board, the attackers distributed towards the edge, as shown in 1.
3. The king's object is to reach one of the citadels, the marked intersections at the corners of the board. Upon reaching any of these places, the king has won the game. The attackers' object is to capture the king.
4. The king's forces take the first move.
5. In each turn, a player may move a piece as far as desired along a row or column, as shown in Figure 2.
6. No piece may jump over nor land on another in the course of its move.
7. No piece but the king may land on the central space. Nor can any piece land on the corner cells that bear markings; only the king can reach these, and his reaching them signifies the end of the game.
8. Pieces are captured by surrounding them on two opposite orthogonal sides. Two or three non-adjacent enemies are simultaneously captured if they become surrounded with the same move.
9. The central playing space can take part in captures by either player, once the king has left it, as if there was a piece of that player's colour sat upon it.
10. The king when in the central space is captured by surrounding him on all four

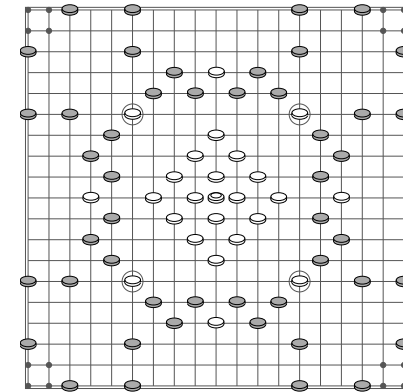


Figure 1: The initial layout for *alea evangelii*.

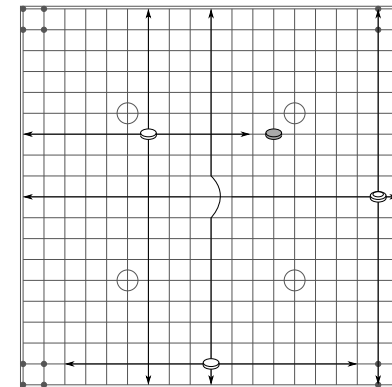


Figure 2: Examples of movement for the king and defenders.