

# Penitential Rite

Alquerque originated in the Middle East as the game Quirkat. Alquerque boards are carved into the stone slabs which form the roof of the great temple at Kurna, Egypt. The Arabic author Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani mentioned Quirkat in his 24 volume work Kitab al-Aghani ("Book of Songs") c. 950 AD. Alquerque migrated to Europe when the Moors invaded Spain. It was named Alquerque (the Spanish form of El-Quirkat) in the Alfonso X Manuscript which was written between 1251 - 1282 at the command of Alfonso X, King of Leon and Castile. This game is the ancestor of modern day checkers (draughts in the UK) when it evolved to being played on a chess board instead of the standard Alquerque board. The Madagascan game Fanorama may have evolved from Quirkat.

**Set Up:** This game can be played individually or in teams. Shuffle the deck and place it face down in a small basket near the game board. Put an empty basket nearby for the discards.

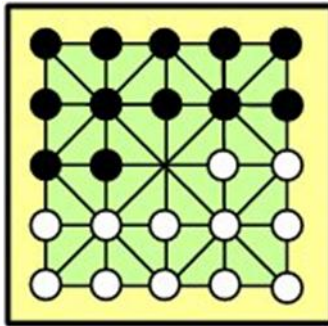


Figure 1: Alquerque board

## Rules

The game of Penitential Rite (Alquerque) is played by two players using a board shown in Figure 1. The board consists of a grid of 25 points with connecting lines. One player has twelve black pieces and the other twelve white pieces. The game starts with each player placing their pieces on the points in the two rows closest to them and in the two rightmost points in the center row. The goal of the game is to remove all the opponent's pieces.

The starting player may be decided with the flip of a coin. The opponents make their moves by turns. To make a possible move you must answer a question (the other player draws a card and reads you the question) about the Penitential Rite. If you are correct you may move one of your pieces. If you do not answer the question correctly, your turn is over.

The players take turns moving pieces as follows. A piece may only move along the lines inscribed upon the board. For each turn a piece makes either a capturing move or an ordinary move.

Whenever a piece has an opponent's piece adjacent to it and the point immediately beyond the opponent's piece is vacant, the opponent's piece can be captured. A piece is taken by simply hopping over it into the vacant point beyond (like Checkers) and removing it from the board. Unlike an ordinary move, a capturing move can consist

of several such hops - if a piece takes an opponent's piece and the new position allows it to take another piece, then it can do so straight away. The move finishes when the position of the capturing piece no longer allows it to take any more pieces or the player could make another capture but decides not to.

An ordinary move is made by simply moving a piece along a line to an adjacent point.

The game is won by the player who first manages to take all his opponent's pieces or by the player who has more pieces when it becomes apparent that no more pieces will be taken. Alternatively, a player can win by rendering the other player unable to move.

A draw occurs by agreement at any point during the game. If it becomes apparent that no more pieces will be taken and both players have the same number of pieces left, a draw is agreed. Draws are very common.