

# About this Booklet

## How to Print:

This booklet will print best on card stock (110 lb. paper), but can also be printed on regular (20 lb.) paper.

**Do not print Page 1** (these instructions).

First, have your printer **print Page 2**.

Then load that same page back into your printer to be printed on the other side and **print Page 3**.

When you load the page back into your printer, be sure that the top and bottom of the pages are oriented correctly.

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## Pawn Promotion

Notice the long diagonals creating a large “X” across the playing surface. These lines mark the promotion squares. When a pawn (*nè*) moves onto one of these lines, on his opponent’s side of the chessboard, the pawn may be promoted to a queen (*sit-ke*), *only if the queen has been captured and is out of play*. If a player has a pawn standing on one of these promotion squares, not yet promoted, he may choose to promote the pawn at any time, as long as the pawn is on the promotion square and the queen is available, off of the board. Choosing to promote the pawn in this way constitutes a move, and the player does not move any piece on the board until his next turn.

## Winning the Game

Like other forms of chess, the object of this game is to entrap the enemy king (*min-gyi*) so that he is threatened and can not avoid capture. If at any time a king is threatened with capture, he is said to be in check and must move so that he is no longer threatened. If no possible move brings him out of check, he is in checkmate and has lost the game.

In this game, stalemate is not allowed. It is not permitted to trap the king, leaving him no legal move, while he is not actually being threatened with capture. The attacking player must make some other move, not creating a stalemate.

If it becomes apparent that neither player has enough force of pieces to create a checkmate, the game is drawn, without a winner.

## Variations

The game of sittuyin has existed for over a millennium without a unified body of rules in all regions. The rules given here are based on the Burmese Chess Federation rules established after World War II, but they are by no means universal for this game. If you come upon this game in other contexts, among other players, ask about the exact rules of piece deployment, pawn promotion and endgames. There may be interesting differences.

## Graphics in this Pamphlet

The cover illustration is from the title page of the 1924 Burmese publication *Min-ma Sit Bayin Lan-nyunt Sa-ok Gyi*. All other photos and diagrams are produced by AncientChess.com.

## Further information

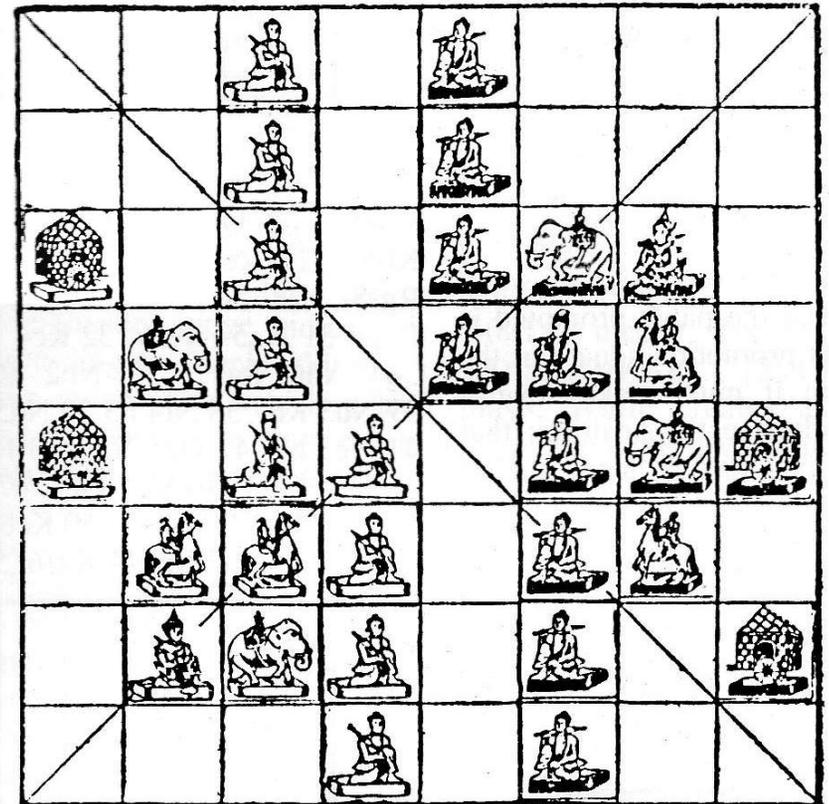
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# Sittuyin

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## Burmese Chess

The Traditional Chess of Burma  
the country also known as Myanmar

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## Burmese Chess

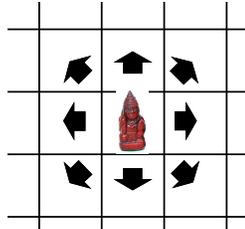
The traditional chess of Burma, *sittuyin*, has many similarities to ancient Indian forms of chess, and bears a unique innovation in the initial array of pieces. Unlike most styles of chess sets, the Burmese pieces have never settled into a simplified, abstract design, but are almost always carefully carved figures, representing people, animals and sometimes legendary characters on the battlefield. These unique sets are highly prized by chess collectors.

### The Pieces and Their Moves

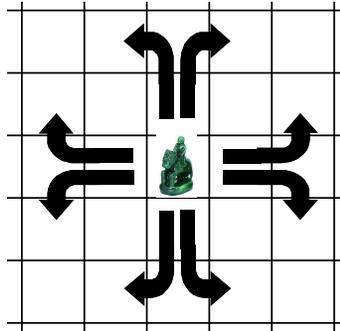
Like other forms of chess, each of the six different sorts of pieces has its own move on the chessboard. Some are similar to the modern, international chess and some are more ancient. Let us first consider the pieces with more familiar moves:



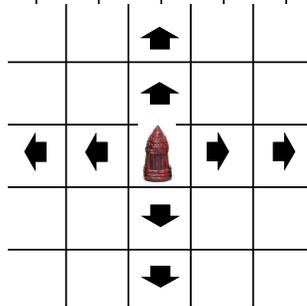
The **king** is called *min-gyi*, the Burmese word for “king.” His move is also familiar: one space in any direction. As in other forms of chess, the king may not move where he is threatened with capture, since his preservation is all-important.



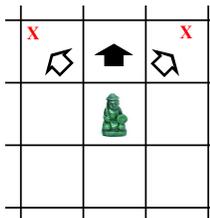
The **knight** is called *myin*, meaning “horse.” It moves in the peculiar L-shaped pattern seen in other types of chess: two spaces forward, backward, left or right and then one space at a right angle (see diagram). This is the only piece which may not be blocked. It simply leaps over any pieces in its way.



The **rook** is called *yahhta*. Although this word indicates a sort of “carriage,” the piece is usually depicted as a kind of ceremonial hut. This piece moves exactly like the familiar rook: any number of spaces straight forward, backward, left or right. It can be blocked by a piece in its path, or may capture an enemy piece if it meets one.

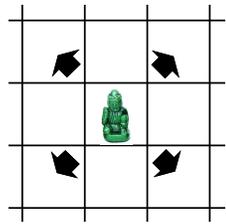


The **pawn** is called *nè*, an unusually honorable name for this weakest of pieces, indicating a “feudal lord.” These little lords move just like our modern international pawns, one space forward when not capturing, or one space forward-diagonally to capture. Only the pawn has a special move for capturing. All other pieces capture using their normal moves, and landing on the square of the opposing piece. See the back page for discussion of pawn promotion.

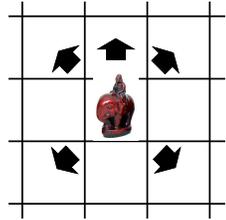


...And here are some moves that you may find a little bit strange...

The **queen**, *sit-ke*, is a “general” in this game. He has the ancient move of traveling only one space diagonally. A very common move found in ancient and Asian chess forms, but very different from the all-powerful queen of modern, international chess.



The **bishop** is called *sin*, meaning “elephant.” It may move one space in any of five directions. That is, one direction for each of its appendages — including the trunk. Accordingly, the elephant moves in any of the four diagonal directions (for the legs) or one space forward (for the trunk). This move has been very widespread in ancient chess forms, and was recorded in India way back in the early 11th century.



### Starting the Game

Here’s what’s unique about the Burmese chess tradition. First, the pawns (*nè*) are set up well advanced on the board. As shown in the diagram, each player starts with pawns at his left on the 3rd row, and pawns at his right on the 4th row. The players then proceed to set up the rest of the pieces in their own chosen arrangement, following a few guidelines:

### Setup Guidelines

- 1) The player playing Red first sets up all of his pieces; the player playing black (or green) then sets up all of his pieces.
- 2) The back row (first rank) on each side of the board is reserved for the rooks (*yahhta*). They are placed anywhere on that row.
- 3) The remaining pieces are set up wherever the player wishes, on the second and third rows, behind the row of pawns (*nè*). These pieces (*min-gyi*, *myin*, *sit-ke* and *sin*) may not be placed on the first row.
- 4) The player with the black (or green) pieces, who begins after the red pieces are already set up, may not place a rook (*yahhta*) in a direct line with the opponent’s king (*min-gyi*) unless there is at least one piece, other than a pawn (*nè*), standing somewhere in the line between the rook and king. The piece between the two may be of either color. This simply reduces the second player’s advantage in setting up an immediate attack once he sees how his opponent’s pieces have been deployed.
- 5) After all of the black (or green) pieces have been set up, red makes the first move and the players alternate moving one piece at each turn through the rest of the game.

